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This Guide

Working abroad sounds to many people like an adventure.

However, without thorough preparation, starting with a successful application, it is bound to fail. Therefore, Expertise in Labour Mobility (ELM) has prepared a set of country guides describing the main routes to employment in over 40 countries. Are you interested in working in Australia, Germany or Japan? Has your partner accepted a job in Hungary, Switzerland, or the United Arab Emirates?

Are you looking for an internship possibility in the UK, Singapore or the United States of America? The Looking for work in... guides from ELM will help you with accurate information and practical tips on working cultures and differences in job hunting in over 40 countries.

As an extra addition to the series – following many requests - ELM introduced a new guide: Looking for work in International Organisations which explains how to successfully look for work in for instance the institutes of the European Commission, UN institutions and NGO's.

This guide contains information on France. It tells you how to apply for a job in France and the cultural differences that you will come across when looking for a job in France.

Do not underestimate those national differences. What is common in one country might be very unusual in another country.

Despite globalisation, to find a job abroad you need to be aware that national differences manifest themselves not only in different languages, but also in different recruitment practices. Thus, looking for work in another country involves more than writing your CV/resume in another language.

No matter the country in which you are looking for work, the key focus of your CV should be to persuade the employer to invite you for a job interview. Accordingly, your CV should be regarded as a marketing tool, adapted to the market in which you intend to use it. The information in this guide, together with the sample CV, will help you to adapt your application for the French job market. However, make sure your application remains a reflection of your personality. Working abroad is one thing, but having a job that does not suit you will definitely cause homesickness!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nannette Ripmeester', with a horizontal line underneath.

Nannette Ripmeester, MA
Managing Director
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Country Profile

Country

France has an area of 551,602 square kilometres (342,750 sq. miles) and land boundaries with Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany in the north-east, Switzerland and Italy in the east, and Spain in the south.

The country is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the west and by the Channel in the north-west.

The capital of France is Paris (11.57 million inhabitants in 2009).

Other main cities are Lyon, Marseille, Lille, Bordeaux and Toulouse.

France is divided into 96 departments plus an extra five overseas departments. The départements d'outre-mer (overseas departments) are the Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique; the Pacific island groups of New Caledonia, Tahiti and French Polynesia; French Guyana, in South America; Réunion, in the Indian Ocean; and Saint Pierre and Miquelon, in the Atlantic Ocean.

The landscape varies from mountains (such as the Pyrenees and the

Alps, including the Mont Blanc, which at 4800m is Europe's highest peak) and hills, to forests and the lowland river valleys of the Seine, Loire and the Garonne.

Climate

France has a predominantly temperate climate, with mild winters, except in mountain areas and the north-east. The Atlantic has a profound impact on the north-west, where the weather is characterised by high humidity, often violent westerly winds and lots of rain. France's north-east has a classic continental climate, with fairly hot summers and cold winters. The southern coastal plains are subject to a Mediterranean climate: mild winters and long, dry summers. In the south you can also experience the 'mistral', a cold, dry wind that blows down the Rhône Valley.

Population

France has 62 million inhabitants (2009) of which 92 percent are French. The main minority groups come from present colonies and former colonies in Africa and Asia (former Indo-china). Native minorities are the Basques, Bretons, Catalans and Provençal, who each have their own culture and language.

History

Although human presence in what is now-a-days known as France dates to approximately 90,000 years ago, the first real settlers

were the Celtic Gauls who arrived between 1500 and 500 BC. After several centuries of conflict between the Gauls and Rome, Julius Caesar took control of the territory in 52 BC, and by the 2nd century AD most of the region had been Christianised. The area remained under Roman rule until the 5th century, when the Franks and other Germanic groups overran the country.

The Middle Ages were marked by a succession of power struggles. Charlemagne claimed the crown of Holy Roman Emperor in 800 and took over France. His reign was followed by the Capetian Dynasty, which declined by the early 15th century after the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453) against England. In 1492, the 17-year-old Jeanne d'Arc, who gathered the French troops to defeat the English at Orléans, boosted the national morale. However, she was turned over to the English, convicted of heresy and burned at stake. Religious and political persecution, culminating in the Wars of Religion (1562-98), continued to threaten France's stability during the 16th century. In 1572, some 3000 Protestant Huguenots were slaughtered at the Saint Bartholemew's Day Massacre in Paris.

By the early 17th century Cardinal Richelieu took power. He established an absolute monarchy and tried to increase French power in Europe.

Louis XIV (the Sun King) ascended the throne in 1643 at the age of five and ruled until 1715. Throughout his long reign, he

created the first centralised French state. But as the 18th century progressed, social and economic needs of the country and the anti-Establishment and anticlerical ideas of the Enlightenment weakened France. By the late 1780s, the French population wanted a change of power and on 14 July 1789 a Parisian mob stormed the Bastille prison. At first, the Revolution was in the hands of relative moderates, but soon the radical Jacobins, led by Robespierre, Danton and Marat took over. They established the First Republic in 1792.

Napoleon Bonaparte used the chaotic situation France was in and due to a series of military victories abroad, he took power of France in 1799. Napoleon began a seemingly endless series of wars in which France came to control most of Europe. However, after a disastrous campaign against Russia in 1812 he was banished to the Mediterranean island of Elba. He escaped and was re-installed as Emperor, however, after only hundred days his forces were defeated by the English at Waterloo. Napoleon was exiled to the South Atlantic island of Saint Helena, where he died in 1821.

During the 19th century France was characterised by inept government, wars and the founding of the Third Republic (1870), which finally established the country in a republican tradition. Around 1910 the Entente Cordiale ended colonial rivalry between France and Britain in Africa.

During World War I France endured great losses as many battles were fought on French territories. During World War II France capitulated to Germany and the Vichy government was installed. General Charles de Gaulle, France's under-secretary of war, set up a government-in-exile in London and led the French resistance against Germany. France was liberated by allied forces in mid-1944. De Gaulle returned to Paris and set up a provisional government, but he resigned as president in 1946 before the adoption of the Fourth Republic. With help from America the French re-asserted colonial control in Indo-china, but their forces were defeated at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. France also tried to suppress Algerian independence, which spelt the demise of the Fourth Republic and the return of De Gaulle to power in 1958. He negotiated an end to the war in Algeria four years later; in the meantime, almost all of the other French colonies and protectorates in Africa had demanded and achieved independence.

In May 1968, student protesters and striking workers surprised themselves and the world at large by bringing the country to a standstill. Just as anarchy seemed about to engulf France, De Gaulle went on national television and told the nation to calm down, go home and leave the running of the country to him. And they did. The government then announced a raft of important changes, including a reform of the higher education system, which was decentralised. De Gaulle resigned as president the following year.