

RESEARCH OUTSIDE OF PARIS

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CAR RENTAL vs. LEASING

If you are going to be working outside of Paris, it is convenient to make your car reservation for your arrival at the CDG (Charles de Gaulle) airport. Auto Europe guarantees their prices to be lower than others, so call them last (highly recommended). Remember to ask if the VAT tax is included (19.6%). It is possible to rent a diesel but you need to ask in advance. Before you sign or drive away, it is worth the time to check out the interior and exterior of the car thoroughly.

Another option is to lease a new car. If you will be in France for a 6-month period, Peugeot-Sodexa has a good program that is tax-free. The price of the leased car is lower per month than a rented car but, of course, with a lease you are responsible for the upkeep of the car (oil change and 6 month service).

DRIVING THROUGH SMALL TOWNS

The Autoroute is certainly the fastest driving across France but it is limited in its coverage of France. If you decide to take a National highway, you should be prepared for possible hang-ups. For example, through farmland, there will be tractors driving on the road at all hours of the day at a maximum speed of 25 km/h (as well as convoys).

It is easy to lose your way on the *ronds-points* (traffic circles are more common than intersections). You will probably hit several in a row (esp. on the outskirts of Paris). Deciding which way you want to go seem simple at the first one but the signs at second *rond-point* usually only list smaller towns on them. If you are traveling alone, it is impossible to check the map at every *rond-point* and there is never a place to pull over. You can, however, avoid going in the wrong direction, and aid in keeping your sanity, by making a list in advance including both the larger towns and smaller villages that you intend to pass through (in fact, this was a recommendation made by a perceptive Belgian couple).

Keep in mind when driving outside of Paris that restaurants are regularly open for lunch (12:00-14:00) and for dinner (generally after 7:00) and, in smaller towns, everything is closed on Sunday and Monday. If you take the Autoroute there are various restaurants/snack-shops at each rest stop that are always open. If you take the National route, I would recommend bringing along some food, just in case.

LODGING: Short-term

If you are staying for a short time or traveling throughout France, you have an option of staying at inexpensive hotels (rather impersonal and often not all that nice) or staying in a *chambre d'hôte* (bed and breakfast). The *chambre d'hôte* is often in a building alongside the home of the family who runs them. The price for two persons averages around \$40-50 a night and there is often a discount if you stay many nights (be sure to ask about singles prices which are usually lower). A *petit déjeuner* is included. The proprietors often speak some English (if necessary) and are quite helpful with local information. The Gîtes de France has a website that covers many regions of France: <http://www.gites-de-france.fr/fr/index.htm>. If you don't find anything near the town of your choice on the Internet, there is also a large paperback Guide that you can buy at any Office of Tourism. Regional portions of this Guide are free (or you can order them on the website for the price of postage).

On this same website, it is also possible to rent a *gîte d'étape* or *gîte de séjour* weekly. They are generally for groups but sometimes they have space for one. They aren't as comfortable as the *chambre d'hôte* but include kitchen privileges, are even less expensive, and are often located near a source of recreation, e.g. horseback riding.

With any of the accommodations of the Gîtes de France you are guaranteed a certain quality (see number of *épis* for each) and you often have the chance to meet other English, Belgian, or French travelers.

LODGING: Long-term

To find an apartment in your area, you can visit one of the Rental Offices in the largest town in your region. This will give you an idea of prices and location. If you are interested in living in a smaller town, you need to consult regional newspaper and free publications. You can often find copies of these free papers in Laundromats (they are delivered by the post every week). If you are staying at a *chambre d'hôte*, ask the proprietor. If they don't own apartments, they probably know someone who does.

LIBRARIES

It is fairly expensive to take the train in to Paris to use the library. An alternative is to drive to a library nearby. Many libraries are easy to access (e.g. at Troyes Médiathèque, you do not need a library card, you can make your own xeroxes and you access many books on the open shelves).

It is possible to do a search in advance for books at most libraries. The two most useful sources are:

- 1: Catalogue Collectif de France (CCFR includes books at the Bibliothèque Nationale plus numerous other public libraries) : <http://www.ccf.fr/bnf/fr/index.html>
- 2: Système Universitaire de Documentation (SUDOC contains books at university libraries) : <http://corail.sudoc.abes.fr/>

Some libraries are not connected to these two large databases above, thus you will need to check the holdings individually. The addresses for these libraries can be found at the website of the Catalogues de Bibliothèques ABF (Association des Bibliothèques Françaises):

<http://www.abf.asso.fr/liens/catalogues-france.html> or by department at the website of the ABDBP (Association des directeurs des bibliothèques départementales de prêt) : <http://www.adbdp.asso.fr/lesbdp/cataloguesbdp.htm>

INTERNET BOOKSTORES

For new and used books, there is, of course, Amazon.fr (<http://www.amazon.fr/>) but there are numerous others. Among the best are:

- FNAC: <http://www.fnac.com/>
- Chapitre <http://www.chapitre.com/>
- Alapage <http://www.alapage.com/>
- Decitre <http://www.decitre.fr/>

Galaxidion connected to numerous used/antique bookstores in France:
<http://www.galaxidion.com>