



## French Republic

France today is one of the most modern countries in the world and is a leader among European nations. It plays an influential global role as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, NATO, the G-8, the G-20, the EU and other multilateral organizations. France rejoined NATO's integrated military command structure in 2009, reversing DE GAULLE's 1966 decision to withdraw French forces from NATO. Since 1958, it has constructed a hybrid presidential-parliamentary governing system resistant to the instabilities experienced in earlier, more purely parliamentary administrations. In recent decades, its reconciliation and cooperation with Germany have proved central to the economic integration of Europe, including the introduction of a common currency, the euro, in January 1999. In the early 21st century, five French overseas entities - French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, and Reunion - became French regions and were made part of France proper.

### Physical Geography

#### Region:

**Metropolitan France:** **Western Europe**

**French Guiana:** **Northern South America, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between Brazil and Suriname**

**Guadeloupe:** **Caribbean, islands between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, southeast of Puerto Rico**

**Martinique:** **Caribbean, island between the Caribbean Sea and North Atlantic Ocean, north of Trinidad and Tobago**

**Mayotte:** **Southern Indian Ocean, island in the Mozambique Channel, about halfway between northern Madagascar and northern Mozambique**

**Reunion:** **Southern Africa, island in the Indian Ocean, east of Madagascar**

**Size in Square Kilometers:** **643,801 sq km (total); 551,500 sq km (metropolitan France)**

**Bordering Countries:** **Bordering the Bay of Biscay and English Channel, between Belgium and Spain, southeast of the UK; bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Italy and Spain**

#### Physical Features:

**Metropolitan France: mostly flat plains or gently rolling hills in north and west; remainder is mountainous, especially Pyrenees in south, Alps in east**

**French Guiana: low-lying coastal plains rising to hills and small mountains**

**Guadeloupe: Basse-Terre is volcanic in origin with interior mountains; Grande-Terre is low limestone formation; most of the seven other islands are volcanic in origin**

**Martinique: mountainous with indented coastline; dormant volcano**

**Mayotte: generally undulating, with deep ravines and ancient volcanic peaks**

**Reunion: mostly rugged and mountainous; fertile lowlands along coast**

#### **Climate:**

**Metropolitan France: generally cool winters and mild summers, but mild winters and hot summers along the Mediterranean; occasional strong, cold, dry, north-to-northwesterly wind known as mistral**

**French Guiana: tropical; hot, humid; little seasonal temperature variation**

**Guadeloupe and Martinique: subtropical tempered by trade winds; moderately high humidity; rainy season (June to October); vulnerable to devastating cyclones (hurricanes) every eight years on average**

**Mayotte: tropical; marine; hot, humid, rainy season during northeastern monsoon (November to May); dry season is cooler (May to November)**

**Reunion: tropical, but temperature moderates with elevation; cool and dry (May to November), hot and rainy (November to April)**

### **Cultural Geography**

**Population: 66,553,766**

**Ethnic composition: Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indochinese, Basque minorities**

**Official Language: French (official) 100%**

**Other Languages Spoken: Rapidly declining regional dialects and languages (Provençal, Breton, Alsatian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish)**

**Capital: Paris**

**Other Major Cities: Marseille, 850,636, Region of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Lyon, 491,268, region of Rhône-Alpes**

**Average quality of life: Above Average**

### **Political Geography**

**Date Founded: No official date of independence: 486 (Frankish tribes unified under Merovingian kingship); 10 August 843 (Western Francia established from the division of the Carolingian Empire); 14**

**July 1789 (French monarchy overthrown); 22 September 1792 (First French Republic founded); 4 October 1958 (Fifth French Republic established)**

**Type of government: Semi-Presidential Republic**

**Country's leaders:**

**President: François Hollande**

**Prime Minister: Manuel Valls**

**Head of the IMF: Christine Lagarde**

**Business: Liliane Bettencourt, richest woman in the world**

**Active Military Personnel: 222,200 Active Military Personnel**

**Allies: NATO member states (Example: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.)**

**Enemies: North Korea, Russia, Iran, China**

### **Economic Geography**

**Total gross domestic product (GDP): \$2.647 trillion (2015 est.)**

**Natural resources:**

**Metropolitan France: coal, iron ore, bauxite, zinc, uranium, antimony, arsenic, potash, feldspar, fluorspar, gypsum, timber, arable land, fish**

**French Guiana: gold deposits, petroleum, kaolin, niobium, tantalum, clay**

**Currency: Euro**

**Major Exports and Imports:**

**Exports: machinery and transportation equipment, aircraft, plastics, chemicals, pharmaceutical products, iron and steel, beverages**

**Imports: machinery and equipment, vehicles, crude oil, aircraft, plastics, chemicals**

**Biggest Trading Partners:**

**Exports: Germany 15.9%, Spain 7.3%, US 7.2%, Italy 7.1%, UK 7.1%, Belgium 6.8% (2015)**

**Imports: Germany 19.5%, Belgium 10.7%, Italy 7.7%, Netherlands 7.5%, Spain 6.8%, US 5.5%, China 5.4%, UK 4.3% (2015)**