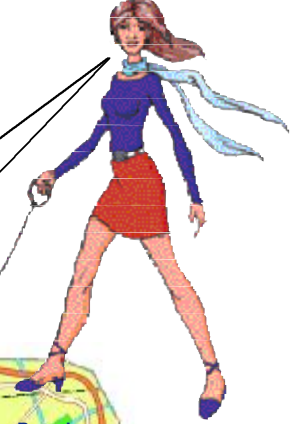




Ile de France

*Bonjour, my name is Juliette.
Follow me on a tour of Paris and
the Ile de France region!*



WITH ABOUT 350,000 square miles, France is the largest country in Western Europe, and roughly the size of Texas. In 2003, its population reached 62 million, of which about 12 million live in or around the capital, Paris.

France also includes several overseas territories: Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean; French Guiana just north of Brazil; Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean; French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna in the Pacific Ocean; and the Antarctic territories.

Since the European Union's inception, some 50 years ago, France has been at the forefront of the construction of a strong and integrated Europe. The European Union remains one of France's top foreign policy priorities. As one of the five permanent members of the United Nations' Security Council, and the fourth highest contributor to the U.N. budget, France is deeply involved in all significant international affairs.

But France is also a country where people are strongly attached to their regional roots. This brochure will help you understand the deep ties the French continue to have with their native regions.

This brochure belongs to a series of six: the Northeast, the Northwest, the Southeast, the Southwest, Ile-de-France, and the overseas territories. Brochures are available on request, by writing to info@ambafrance-us.org.





How Paris Came to Be



GAULS OF THE PARISII tribe first settled in the area that would become the City of Light in 200 BC. They founded a fishing village on what is now the Ile de la Cité. Conquered by the Romans under Julius Caesar in 52 BC, it was renamed **Lutetia** (Marshy Place). Within the space of 50 years, the city grew considerably and expanded first to the right and then to the left bank of the Seine, changing its name to Paris and becoming a major regional center in the process. In 508, Clovis the Frank made Paris the capital city of the Merovingian Dynasty, thereby marking the end of Roman rule. The Carolingian Dynasty succeeded the Merovingians in the seventh century and moved the center of power to the Rhine region. Paris thus temporarily lost its political significance and fell prey to several sieges by Norse Vikings.



Notre Dame Cathedral, built 1163-1285

Following the death of the last Carolingian king, feudal lords elected the Count of Paris, Hugh Capet, as the King of France in 987. He founded the Capetian dynasty and reestablished Paris as the capital of France. The Capetian monarchs built themselves a palace on the **Ile de la**

Cité and oversaw a period of growth and expansion throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries during which Paris acquired paved roads, schools and churches (including the **Notre Dame Cathedral**), and became a thriving trade and intellectual nucleus.

Despite Paris's prosperity, however, there was growing discontent among the people, leading the king, Charles V to abandon the palace on Ile de la Cité so as to secure himself within the fortress of the **Louvre** in 1358.



The Louvre, a Parisian landmark since its construction as a fortress in 1180, served as a royal palace before becoming the world's most celebrated art museum. The glass pyramid, designed by IM Pei, was added in 1989.

After the English occupation and its ensuing period of hardship during the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), a war which was finally won by France, Francis I reconstructed the Louvre as the royal palace. But soon after, the Reformation led to a religious civil war between Catholics and Protestants, leaving the country in ruins. Under Louis XIII, the capital regained its grandeur as new neighborhoods arose and the royal press and French Academy were established.

ILE DE FRANCE

Ile-de-France comprises the territory ruled by Hugh Capet when he became King of France in 987. Enveloping Paris, it is an inland peninsula delineated by the rivers Seine, Oise, Ourcq, and Marne. Its centrality and history as France's center of power make Ile-de-France the most celebrated (and populous) part of the country. Numerous chateaux allude to its history as the royal heartland where rulers lived in grand palaces, including Versailles, Saint-Germain-en-Laye (which housed the kings from Francois I to Louis XIV), Malmaison and Fontainebleu (Napoleon's residence and hunting grounds respectively,) and Vaux-le-Vicomte. Rich in art and architecture, Ile-de-France attracts visitors from around the world.

Parisians stormed the Bastille in 1789, sparking the French Revolution; they also contributed to the subsequent French revolutions of 1830 and 1848. With stability restored under Napoleon III, Paris



Boulevard Haussmann

received a major face lift from the civic planner Baron Haussmann, who, in the 1850's, transformed 60 percent of Paris's buildings, laid out the Bois de Boulogne, and designed the elegant boulevards for which the city is so well known.

During the Franco-Prussian war of 1871, Paris lay under siege for four months until it finally fell. When the Prussian troops withdrew, 92 skilled workers, professionals, and political activists formed the Communal Council and established the short-lived Paris Commune. This socialist government ruled Paris for three months during the spring of 1871, before national government forces retook control of the city.

The turn of the 20th century, coined La Belle Époque, brought a thriving artistic, cultural and social scene to Paris, with the Impressionists exhibiting their paintings in the Salon des Refusés and the emerging bourgeoisie dancing their evenings away in the new sultry night clubs of **Montmartre**. Paris became the international center of entertainment and fashion—performers such as Jane Avril drew large crowds and fashion guru Coco Chanel opened her first millinery shop. In 1895, the Lumière brothers developed the portable movie camera, bringing the earliest movies to Parisian audiences. Meanwhile Art Nouveau was developing and authors such as Flaubert and Zola were writing their pivotal works.



Moulin Rouge - La Goulue by Toulouse-Lautrec

Another wave of additions and transitions took place throughout the 1980's. Under President Mitterrand's direction, an ambitious building program designed to meet the needs of a modern city was implemented. This program included the **Défense Arch**, the **Bastille Opéra**, a renovation of the Louvre, the **La Villette** complex, and the Bibliothèque de France, a computer-age library.

As illustrated by her eclectic architecture built over the course of 800 years, Paris in the 21st century retains a rich historical legacy, yet continues to look forward, thus striking a balance between old-world charm and avant-gardism.

SOME KEYDATES

- 1253-** Sorbonne University is founded
- 1517-** Leonardo da Vinci arrives in France with the Mona Lisa
- 1604-** Le Pont Neuf, Paris's oldest bridge, is completed
- 1682-** Louis XIV, the Sun King, installs his court at Versailles
- 1789-** Storming of the Bastille: The French Revolution Begins
- 1804-** Coronation of Napoleon
- 1889-** The Eiffel Tower is erected
- 1900-** Paris opens its first metro line
- 1920-** The Unknown Soldier is buried under the Arc de Triomphe
- 1989-** The Louvre Pyramid is built

Geography: Inspiring Landscapes



THE ILE-DE-FRANCE REGION, composed of eight departments (Paris, Seine-et-Marne, Yvelines, Essonne, Hauts-de-Seine, Seine-Saint-Denis, Val-de-Marne and Val-d'Oise), encircles the Paris land basin, which covers over a fourth of the region's surface. This sedimentary basin is a vast, saucer-shaped depression, covering about 39,000 square miles and is composed of alternating layers of hard and



Combine harvester (Seine-et-Marne)

soft rock that create a varied relief. Climatic and river erosion molded the landscape into the plateaus, plains, hillocks and valleys found there today. The diverse nature of the land allows for the alternation of field crops (in the plains), mixed-farming and truck farming (in the valleys), making its agriculture very productive, especially for sugar beets and wheat.

LANDSCAPES THAT INSPIRED ARTISTS



Plain Near Auvers - Vincent Van Gogh, 1890

When one thinks of the Ile-de-France region and the bustling urban city life of Paris, it is easy to forget the natural surroundings that inspired many of the great names of the art world. However, as one winds one's way through Ile-de-France, one soon discovers the natural beauty that so inspired them. Even today, one can easily imagine Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), with his easel propped in the corner of a field of wheat near Auvers-sur-Oise (Val-d'Oise), or Pissarro (1830-1903) and Renoir (1841-1919), glasses in hand, soaking up the joyful atmosphere on the banks of the Marne. Under the tallest trees of the forest of Fontainebleau, one cannot help but recall that Manet (1832-1883) and Sisley (1839-1899) painted some of their finest paintings here.

The region's temperate climate is subject to both oceanic and continental influences. Winters are generally cool and mild, although still prone to cold periods (36 degrees Fahrenheit in mid-January) and summers are rather warm and dry (64 degrees Fahrenheit in mid-July). Annual precipitation tends to match the overall average rainfall for France (from 23" to 28" per year).

The region is irrigated by the **Seine** river, France's second longest (after the Loire), whose main tributaries are the **Loing**, **Yonne**, and **Marne** rivers from the south and east and the **Oise** from the north. The river axis of the Seine is an important navigable passageway, making Paris

the number one river port of France. Narrowed between high stone embankments in the capital city, the river carries commercial barges, waterbuses and large tourist boats (*bâteaux-mouches*).



Bateau-mouche on the Seine

From the water you can see fine views of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay, the Conciergerie and the Eiffel Tower. The northern side of the river is described as the **Right Bank** (*Rive Droite*) and the southern side as the **Left Bank** (*Rive Gauche*), because when one faces the direction of the river's flow, the north side is on one's right, and the south on one's left.

The water of the Seine is a very important resource. Electric power stations, thermal and nuclear, draw their cooling water from the river. Half the water used in the Paris region, both for industry and for consumption, and three quarters of the water used in the area between Rouen and Le Havre, is taken from the river. The river is therefore well protected, to minimize any pollution.



Coal barge on the Seine

GEOGRAPHICAL LANDMARKS OF PARIS



The center of Paris: the Ile-de-la-Cité

Paris is divided into twenty **arrondissements** or districts. The first one is in the center of the city, and the others are laid out in a clockwise manner around it. The center of Paris is the **Ile-de-la-Cité**, an island in the middle of the Seine, which hosts the



The hill of Montmartre and the Sacré Coeur

Cathedral of Nôtre-Dame. Another important geographical landmark is the city's highest hill, **Montmartre**, which rises 426.5 feet (130 meters) above the rest of the city and is topped by the large white Catholic basilica, Sacré Coeur.

A Global Economic Powerhouse



ILE-DE-FRANCE is not only France's most economically dynamic region (representing about 28 percent of French GDP), but it is also Europe's richest region. It is home to approximately 609,000 companies, of which 8,000 are foreign—including subsidiaries of IBM, Microsoft, 3M and Honda. And, as the home of the national government and numerous public administrations, the region is naturally at the center of French policy-making.

The population of **Ile-de-France**, 19 percent of France's total population, is younger than the national average, which gives the region a huge potential for growth and innovation. As the largest employment pool in Europe, the region is home to 5.5 million jobs and nearly 23 percent of the total French labor force. The Ile-de-France labor force is also highly qualified; the region's residents make up more than 33 percent of France's senior managers, 40 percent of the staff of national research organizations and 30 percent of the employees of institutions of higher learning.

Central Paris is populated by small, often family-run enterprises that specialize in luxury goods like clothing, perfumes, jewelry, toys, furs and gloves. Paris is also home to numerous book printers and publishers. The **La Défense** district, on the western outskirts of Paris, has become an important business district and the home of numerous corporations in the service and research sectors.



The Grande Arche of La Défense dominates the Paris skyline.

Areas in the east of Ile-de-France have developed a specialty in logistics, industrial services, health communications, and, with **Disneyland Paris**, leisure. In the region to the west of Paris, corporations focus on advanced technology, aerospace, automobiles and electronics. Industry to the south is based around optics, telecommunications, genetics and agricultural products, while the northern suburbs continue to be the base for mechanical engineering, metallurgy, automotive industries and pharmaceuticals.



A Renault employee works on a car at an assembly plant in Flins.

As the home to over 400 financial institutions, 70 percent of French insurance companies and 96 percent of French banks, Ile-de-France is a major financial center. The service sector represents the majority of the region's economy, with 83 percent of its labor force

employed in service-related industries. Both public and private research institutions flourish in Paris, and together they employ 126,000 people. The research sector is one of the strongest in Europe and plays an important role in scientific and technological development worldwide.

Nevertheless, Ile-de-France also remains an important industrial and agricultural region. Heavy industries in the area employ 15 percent of the nation's industrial labor force, and half of Ile-de-France's land area is devoted to agriculture. The region's agricultural strength is best illustrated by the enormous wholesale market in **Rungis**.



The wholesale market at Rungis speaks to the region's productive agricultural industry.

As the millions of foreign visitors who come each year know, Ile-de-France, one of the world's leading tourist destinations, is home to numerous stunning attractions. Indeed, tourism is a major industry in Ile-de-France and the largest source of income for the city of Paris itself. With 11 major convention centers, the region is the top destination in Europe for trade shows and business tourism, hosting over 1,500 events every year.



The Château de Versailles, depicted here during a winter evening, attracts thousands of visitors every year to the Yvelines department of the Ile-de-France region.

In order to accommodate this influx of tourists, as well as millions of daily commuters, Ile-de-France has a cutting-edge transportation infrastructure. With **Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle**



Control tower, Charles de Gaulle airport

airport, the second largest in Europe, and a vast network of high speed trains, commuter railroads and subway lines, Ile-de-France's transportation network is one of the most impressive in the world.

Ile-de-France's diverse economy, coupled with a strong infrastructure, continue to make the Paris region an important international crossroad.



Discover: PARIS

THE JUXTAPOSITION of historical masterpieces and modern expressions of the imagination creates the unique ambiance that attracts over 20 million tourists each year to the charming, bustling city of Paris.

Discover: MUSEUMS

The **Louvre** (www.louvre.fr) houses the largest art collection in the world with a catalogue listing 300,000 works. Famous pieces in the collection include the *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci and *Liberty Leading the People* by Eugène Delacroix.

The **Musée d'Orsay** (www.musee-orsay.fr), dedicated to late 19th and early 20th century art, is known for its Impressionist paintings, including Monet's water lilies.

The **Centre Pompidou** (www.cnac-gp.fr), famous for its radical inside-out architectural design, houses modern and contemporary art from the 20th and 21st centuries.



The modern exterior of the Centre Pompidou with its colorful pipes

The ultra-modern science museum, **La Cité des Sciences** (www.cite-sciences.fr), zaps guests to the future with glass and stainless steel bridges and suspended walkways, as well as transparent escalators and elevators.

Discover: "QUARTIERS" (NEIGHBORHOODS)

At the heart of Paris, the Ile de la Cité boasts the **Notre Dame cathedral** (www.cathedraledeparis.com), built in the 13th century. This masterpiece of gothic architecture is famous for its flying buttresses, rose windows and gargoyles.

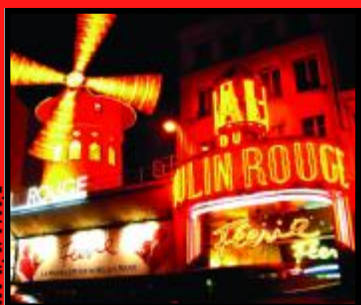
The Opera neighborhood bustles with commerce, tourism and theater. The 19th century grandeur of the area is still very present in the shopping galleries and *grands boulevards* designed by Baron Haussmann. The 17th-century royal square, **Place Vendôme** (www.place-vendome.net), features a statue of Napoleon atop a column and is encompassed by elegant banks and jewelers. Built in the 1860's, **Opéra Garnier** (www.opera-de-paris.fr) is France's oldest



Paris's 19th century opera house

Paris by night

After dining at a charming Parisian café like Les Deux Magots, Le Café Flore, La Coupole, Angelina or the Café des Deux Moulins (featured in the famous French film *Amélie*), experience the colorful nightlife of **Montmartre's** cabarets—Moulin Rouge or Folies Bergères.



opera house. Charles Garnier designed it by incorporating both neoclassical and baroque styles. The five tiered auditorium in red velvet and gold leaf boasts a ceiling painted by Marc Chagall. Opéra Garnier is famous for having inspired the Phantom of the Opera (its underground lake served as the hiding place for Gaston Leroux's phantom). At the edge of the Opera quarter facing the Champs-Élysées, the octagonal **Place de la Concorde** features a 3,200 year-old Egyptian obelisk.



Artists and umbrellas on top of Montmartre

On the bohemian hill of **Montmartre**, artists assemble with their easels and umbrellas, painting portraits at the **Place du Tertre**. As it sits atop the only hill in Paris, it would be hard to miss the 20th-century white neo-Roman-Byzantine style basilica, **Sacré-Coeur** (www.sacre-coeur-montmartre.com).

The **Marais** a fashionable residential area for the wealthy class during the 17th century, is replete with grand mansions and beautiful squares (including the **Place des Vosges**). It is also very trendy thanks to the museums, designer boutiques and ethnic cafes that line its enchanting streets.

Discover: SIGHTS

Napoleon commissioned the **Arc de Triomphe** (pictured) to commemorate his victory at the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805. The 164-foot tall Arc (the 2nd largest in the world) glorifies Napoleon's victories and is the site of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier.



The Arc de Triomphe



The Bastille Day (July 14) parade on the Champs-Élysées

The **Champs Élysées** is the most famous avenue in Paris, leading from the Place de la Concorde to the Arc de Triomphe. This wide avenue attracts many shoppers and diners, and is the site of military parades and celebrations, particularly on July 14 (Bastille Day, France's national day).

Gustave Eiffel built the **Eiffel Tower** (pictured, www.tour-eiffel.fr) situated at the edge of the Champs de Mars, for the Universal Exhibition in 1889 saying, "France will be the only country with a 300-meter flag pole." At 989 feet, it was the tallest structure in the world at the time.

Les Invalides (www.invalides.org) originally served as a military hospital in the 18th century, but it now houses the massive tomb of Napoleon Bonaparte and a French military museum.



The Eiffel Tower



Discover: ILE-DE-FRANCE

NOT ALL THE JEWELS of the Ile-de-France region are in Paris *intra muros* (that is to say, inside the city proper). All of the seven departments, which together form the Ile-de-France region, have much to offer. Indeed, most contain so many attractions that it is best to set aside enough time for several day trips during one's stays in Paris.

The region became a favorite of French royalty, notably after François I transformed **Fontainebleau** into a true Renaissance palace in 1528. The region is now a cultural gold mine with its châteaux, museums, unusual sites, artists' homes and natural parks. Here is a small selection of places worth stopping by. For more information, visit: www.franceguide.com.

CASTLES AND RELIGIOUS MONUMENTS

The main "must-see" is of course **Versailles**, a palace devoted entirely to the cult of beauty, forged through the will of one man, Louis XIV, the Sun King. His château, one of the most illustrious world heritage monuments, is a unique masterpiece that one never tires of visiting. Its forerunner, a little royal hunting lodge, was built in 1623. After several extensions, the latest and most important said to have been inspired by the Vaux-le-Vicomte chateau, it became a palace fit for a king and is now among the most famous monuments in the world. The park landscaped by Le Nôtre, the Grand Trianon, the Petit Trianon, the King's vegetable garden and the city of Versailles itself... all are worth a close look. The castle is currently undergoing its biggest renovation since the king moved out in 1789. The "Galerie des Glaces," for instance, will be under renovation until spring 2007. Nevertheless, the palace will stay open, and events and exhibits will continue to take place throughout the year. For more details, please visit www.chateauversailles.fr.



Galerie des Glaces, Versailles



Vaux-le-Vicomte demonstrates the grandeur of the Louis XIV style.

To learn more, please visit www.vaux-le-vicomte.com.

A prime masterpiece of Gothic art, the **Basilica of Saint-Denis** was known as the Lucerna (Lantern) in the 13th century due to its exceptional luminosity. Home to the reliquary of Saint Denis, who was buried in the basilica's Gallo-Roman graveyard, it became a necropolis of the kings of France and was one of the richest abbeys in the region (www.saint-denis-tourisme.com).

LANDSCAPES THAT INSPIRED ARTISTS

On the right bank of the Oise river, 20 miles away from Paris, one finds **Auvers-sur-Oise**, which inspired many of the world's most famous artists. From Van Gogh to Pissarro, this medieval village still captures the essence of 19th-century impressionism. After visiting the château, where one is invited on a 'Journey to the time of the Impressionists,' one can immerse oneself in the unique atmosphere of the period at the Auberge Ravoux, which put up Van Gogh before his death in 1890.



Giverny Gardens
Courtesy of www.brodyaga.ru

Another of the must-see villages around Paris is undeniably **Giverny**, a village along the Seine about 46 miles to the west of Paris, where Monet moved to in 1883. Here, he redesigned much of his garden and then painted its water lilies, flower beds and Japanese footbridge, creating the world-renowned "water lily" series. For more information visit www.giverny.org/gardens.

AMUSEMENT PARKS

Before visiting all these historical landmarks in person, you may want to take a stroll across **France Miniature**. This is an exceptional park consisting of a vast map of France covering 5 hectares that includes some 160 of the country's major monuments reduced to 1/30 scale. Explore the whole of France and its main attractions in a few strides for a great general overview!

Based on the comic strip, **Parc Astérix**, located just 20 miles outside of Paris, offers visitors numerous activities to get in the spirit of Gallic France. In addition to roller coasters and water rides, Parc Astérix offers an array of rides suitable for people of all ages. Its most famous roller coaster, "Tonnerre de Zeus," is Europe's second largest. To learn more, visit www.parcasterix.fr.



Tonnerre de Zeus, the star roller-coaster in Parc Astérix



Disneyland Paris, located near the capital, offers over 60 attractions for children as well as grown-ups. Accessible by almost any form of transportation, several days are necessary to take in all that the park has to offer. For more information, please visit www.disneylandparis.com.

