

Can I Travel to France Without Knowing French?

So, you're here wondering if you can travel around France without needing to speak French, *oui*? Your trip to visit France is coming up around the corner, and you're worried about traveling to a foreign country without knowing any of the native languages. Don't worry, many people have been here before, and it's possible to have a low-stress vacation without knowing French. This article will cover a few tips and tricks to help you prepare before you leave and some ideas to help you stay at the top of your game while in the country. With this short guide, your US travel to France will be your best vacation yet!

Learn a Little French

While you do not need to be fluent in French to have a fantastic time on your trip, learning a few phrases will optimize your experience while in the country and show your hosts that you are trying to acclimate. Around 40% of French people speak English, so if you're visiting a big city like Paris, you're likely to find somebody who speaks English, but your chances become a little lower outside of the town.

Learning a little bit of French can go a long way, especially if you're looking for the restroom or ordering food in a restaurant. A *Je voudrais* (I'd like) and pointing at a menu item will go a long way with a language barrier. Other must-learn terms include *Bonjour* (hello), *Merci* (Thank you), and *Où sont les toilettes* (where is the restroom). Of course, there are several more. Some travelers will grab an audiobook a week or two before their trip, or some will try Duolingo. Whatever method you prefer is up to you, but this is the best thing you can do before traveling to visit France.

Use Apps to Your Advantage

Getting around in France is a little challenging, especially as almost all of the signs and public transportation signs and announcements are in French. You'll have to make sure that you have an unlimited international data plan for this method, but there are plenty of apps that will help you get around in France and have English settings or translation options to help you get around.

[Citymapper](#): This handy public transportation app is in several French cities, including Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Toulouse, Lille, Bordeaux, Nantes, and Strasbourg. All you need to do is know your destination and this app will take your current location and give you several different ways to reach where you need to go, often giving combinations of bus or metro lines. In addition, it will tell you the exact stop to get off at or transition at and show you your current location. This will help unlock the mystery of the foreign transportation puzzle!

Google Translate: Google Translate has a great phone app that offers both voice and text translation that can be used in real-time. Another feature that not everyone is aware of is that it will translate entire images, so you could take a picture of a menu and try to translate the whole thing instead of typing in each item. This app is a lifesaver in a pinch, especially if you run into a local who is willing to communicate with you through the voice portion of the app when you have a question! Make sure you have this downloaded.

Take Advantage of English Opportunities

Many tourist attractions offer English-speaking tours or English audio guides. Both are great options to learn about the history and culture in a language you understand. However, the best way to avoid any language barrier issues is to pre-book your ticket online and arrive at the attraction or museum to meet your guide.

It's not overly common everywhere, but in the most tourist-heavy locations, you will find restaurants with both English and French menus, making your meal much easier to decide on. The best way to ask for this is: Avez-vous un menu en anglais?

Remember Etiquette

Don't forget that you are traveling to a different country, and in France, there are some different customs and expectations.

Shopkeepers expect you to say "Bonjour" or "Bonsoir" whenever you enter a shop. It's a simple gesture that shopkeepers will appreciate, and you're likely to have a much better experience shopping.

If you need to speak to someone in English, make sure you start with the phrase "Bonjour, parlez-vous anglais?" You'll have much better luck finding someone to help you if you need it if you first start asking in this way.

You'll be all set for your upcoming US travel to France with these few tips. You don't need to become fluent in French overnight to have a fantastic trip to the country; just a few phrases and helpful apps will set you up to succeed in France. Enjoy your trip!