
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA COLLEGE OF LAW
2025 France Summer Program:
Paris & Arcachon
May 19 – June 20, 2025



PARTICIPANT PREPARATION MANUAL

THIS MANUAL CONTAINS INFORMATION THAT WILL AID YOU IN YOUR
PREPARATION FOR THE FRANCE PROGRAM.
BE SURE TO CHECK MULTIPLE SOURCES AS INFO CAN CHANGE.

Updated October 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your acceptance into the Summer 2025 University of Iowa College of Law International & Comparative Law Program! Our program takes place in the cities of Paris and Arcachon in France, and we hope it will provide you with a variety of enriching academic and cultural experiences. This program includes international and comparative law courses, tours, and an introduction to French and European culture. It also provides a great opportunity to make lasting friendships.

If you have not traveled abroad before, you may not be familiar with the concept of “culture shock,” which is inherent in adjusting to a new country. This adjustment takes some time. While you will probably begin your trip with a great deal of enthusiasm, you may eventually feel homesick for American culture. It is important to remain open minded about the different values and customs that you will learn about France. It is critical to remember that you are a guest in a foreign country and must obey local laws as well.

We hope this manual will help you before the trip as you make your plans and also during the trip as you make your adjustment to life in France. Please take the time to read this manual very carefully and to prepare as thoroughly as possible for this trip. Please consider purchasing a recent travel book from Lonely Planet or another source for France and any other country you plan to visit!

1. PAYMENTS

The cost of the program is \$8,000 for 6 credits, which includes tuition and housing. A \$200 nonrefundable deposit is due upon acceptance of your application. The remaining \$7,800.00 will be charged to ubills, \$2000.00 in May and \$6,000.00 in June (less the \$200 deposit).

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE DEPOSIT WILL BE REFUNDABLE IF THE PROGRAM IS CANCELLED. Students will be housed in the Ibis Styles Batignolle Hotel while in Paris, and the Villa Regina Hotel while in Arcachon, with the latter offering studio apartments or one-bedroom (shared) apartments. The student budget provides the breakdown of other expenses besides the tuition. This budget is the amount students should approach their financial aid office about to determine their eligibility for financial aid. See our [website](#) for more information and links. Contact Andrea Flaherty at andrea-flaherty@uiowa.edu with any issues.

Book and course materials. Prices change each year as each professor puts together or decides what they will use in late spring. Online options may be very low cost and most students make this choice. Books and course materials will be charged separately. Hard copy versions of these items may be printed upon request and will be available through the College of Law ISBA Bookstore with costs that will be determined by the bookstore. University of Iowa students may charge bookstore purchases to their student U-Bill accounts. Non-UI students will be billed for the cost of any faculty-prepared materials, plus shipping if you want a hard copy, as soon as these costs are known, and these materials will be shipped promptly, via FedEx, upon receipt of payment. **To ensure that materials are received prior to your departure for France, payment for these materials is due immediately upon receipt of your invoice.** If you have any questions, please contact Andrea Flaherty at andrea-flaherty@uiowa.edu. Materials may be available electronically through the course website, and a charge may accrue as well.

If you requested **single studio housing** on your housing survey, you will be notified by email of the additional fee for this option. This additional sum should be included with your payment of the balance of the program fee.

For those students who will be accompanied by one or more **guests**, a non-participant fee will be charged for each individual accompanying you who attends various events. This fee will allow your guest/s to attend program functions, including the opening and closing dinner, city tour, Dune de Pyla tour, Bordeaux tour, boat trip, and any other non-law-specific group events. This fee will be predetermined prior to the start of the program based upon the actual costs for events your guest/s attend and all relevant participants will be notified of the charge at that time. Such participants should submit a check for the amount of this fee to Andrea Flaherty as soon as they receive the invoice detailing the charge.

No **damage deposit** is required for housing prior to the start of the program. Please note, however, that if there is damage to your apartment during your stay, the amount will be charged later and split between all residents, unless program administrators are informed of circumstances that would dictate otherwise.

There may be a **two-unit post-program tutorial** open to University of Iowa students **only**, and all Iowa students will receive further information about this option. For those attending the tutorial, the post-program fee will be determined in the spring. This fee will be included on your program invoice and should be included with your payment of the France program balance on April 20. Those who will be accompanied by a guest on the post-program will be charged a post-program non-participant fee. This fee will be determined by May 1, and all relevant participants will be notified at that time. Your check for this amount is due immediately upon receipt of notification, and may also be post-dated to June 1, if you wish.

The names of all post-program participants will be submitted to the Office of Financial Aid. This will enable you to borrow additional funds for tuition and living expenses if necessary. Borrowing an additional sum for the post-program is not mandatory, however, and the costs may be covered with money you expect to save from funds received for the program in France. You should review your plans and budget carefully, however, in making this decision. It is very important that you have sufficient funds to cover your entire trip.

WARNING: The dollar may be weak against the Euro. This means that prices may seem very expensive to us, and students should be very careful about splurging on things until they are accustomed to the costs. We do not want anyone to run out of money.

2. PASSPORTS AND OTHER IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

2.1 Passports

You need a passport to travel to Europe. If you have a passport, make sure it is still valid and will be so for **six months** after your return. **If your Passport has expired, you will need to send it in and apply for a new one.** Non-U.S. citizens need to check with their country's embassy as to the procedures for replacing an expired passport.

U.S. Passports are valid for adults for 10 years. The Passport agency will return your old passport when they mail your new one. Please check with your local passport agency for qualifications. Passports can be obtained either through the mail or from a U.S. Passport Agency. There is an agency on the UI campus. **Please check ASAP to determine how long it will take to get a new passport. Even expedited requests may take several weeks.**

Protect Your Passport At All Costs! Keep your passport with you at all times! Do not leave it in hotel rooms, etc. Wear it in a money belt inside your pants. However, you should be aware that some hotels may require the passport of one person staying in a room.

If your passport is lost or stolen, go to the nearest Embassy for your country or to local police authorities. If you can provide information that was contained on your passport, you may be able to obtain a new one. It is a good idea to make photocopies of your passport, birth certificate, and other important identification documents, and keep the copies separate from your passport. In fact, it is a good idea to leave a photocopy of the passport with a relative or friend in America.

2.2 Registration with the Study Abroad Office, International Health Insurance and Student Identity Card

IMPORTANT: In accordance with university policy, students travelling abroad through a University of Iowa sponsored program must be registered with the Office of Study Abroad. Students attending the France program will be registered as a group by a Program administrator. You do not need to register individually on the Study Abroad website. Once registered, you will receive an email from Safety Abroad with instructions to complete a mandatory pre-departure course titled, "Education Abroad Pre-Departure Orientation." It is important you complete the course before you depart for France. The Study Abroad Office also recommends you register your travel plans with the U.S. Department of State through their [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP).

Your registration with the Study Abroad Office will also trigger enrollment in the University of Iowa's mandatory health insurance for international travelers. The cost to students for this coverage is **approximately \$1.33 per day** and will be charged directly to your U-Bill. You can find more information about the insurance requirement, policy details, and claim forms at the Study Abroad website's [Health Insurance Information](#) page. Again, registration and inclusion in the International Health Insurance program is mandatory and cannot be waived even if you have an existing insurance plan. You will receive an enrollment notification email with your digital insurance ID card from CISI at your uiowa.edu email address approximately 20 days prior to departure.

Students traveling abroad may also choose to apply for an International Student Identity Card (ISIC). These cards may provide you student discounts at some museums and other tourist attractions. A University of Iowa or other university student ID may get you many of the same discounts, but the International Student Identity Card offers some exclusive discounts that might make it worth getting. There is no age limit to get a card and all that is required is that you are a full-time student. For more information about the International Student ID, contact the Study Abroad Office or visit the [ISIC website](#). For those students who are **not** from the University of Iowa, ISIC cards may also be obtained from your respective universities. You are encouraged to check with your Registrar or university study abroad office.

If you decide to obtain a card, it sometimes takes as much as one month to process an order.

2.3 International Youth Hostel Membership Card

If you plan on staying at youth hostels while abroad, you should be aware that some hostels require organization membership cards. Hostels that require these cards are often of higher quality than independent hostels, and there are a number of international hostel organizations, including Hostelling International and the International Youth Hostel Federation. More information on these organizations can be found at <http://www.hihostels.com/>. You should research these and other options if you think you might utilize this service.

2.4 Student Visas

If you are a United States citizen, student visas are not required for participation in this program. However, if you choose to go to another country while you are in France, you may want to consider that particular country's visa requirements. EU countries will not require you to have a visa. However, some pending EU countries, Eastern European, Middle Eastern, Asian and African countries may require a visa.

If you are NOT a U.S. citizen, you should contact the French Embassy and the embassy of any other country you wish to visit regarding their visa requirements. **YOU MAY NEED TO APPLY MONTHS IN ADVANCE.**

3. FINANCE AND BUDGETING

3.1 Banking and Charge Cards

ATM/Debit and Credit Cards

If possible, students should bring both an ATM/debit card and a credit card. Most ATM cards will work in French ATM machines, and there are several machines in Arcachon, and many in Paris. **ATM/debit and credit cards with the VISA (Carte Bleu) logo are most widely accepted in France. MasterCard and American Express are much less frequently accepted, especially in Arcachon.** If you do not have a Visa Card, you would be wise to call the bank that issues your card and ask if they issue a VISA version of your card. If not, you should seriously consider applying for one! Also, credit and debit cards often get de-magnetized, so you might want to have a contingency plan.

Check your PIN numbers before leaving for France. Oftentimes, machines, such as ticket machines at train stations, will require you to put in a PIN. This is true sometimes even for credit cards because there is no way for you to sign a receipt to verify. You will probably be asked to give a signature more times than you're used to because cashiers will want to compare your signature on the receipt to the signature on the back of your card.

Chances are your banking institution has set a daily limit on both ATM withdrawals and purchases for your account. In addition to informing your bank that you are traveling and will be using your card while abroad, you may wish to speak with them regarding your withdrawal and purchase limits. You will need to know what these limits are, and you may wish to request that they be raised for the duration of your trip.

Of course, most banks and some credit card companies charge fees for overseas use of their cards, but past students have found that banks and credit card companies provide the best exchange rates. The issue with European microchip card readers may occasionally make use of debit/credit cards problematic, but savings can make the effort worthwhile, as ATM withdrawal fees can be significant. There may be fees from the bank sponsoring the machine as well as your home bank. Additionally, there may be currency conversion fees, and certain other flat transaction fees. Withdrawing cash in large amounts (e.g. 300 Euros) is often the best way to avoid fees. Your bank may also charge a fee per debit transaction, however, which could add up quickly, so you should check with your bank and/or credit card company to see which fees apply to ATM withdrawals, debit-card purchases, and credit card purchases. Fees can add up quickly, so it is worth doing some research so you can avoid them as much as possible. **Finally, some banks require notification that the card will be used abroad (i.e. what countries the card will be used in) PRIOR to departure or they will not work overseas. Most problems can be avoided by contacting your bank ahead of time.**

3.2 Online Banking

We assume that nowadays everyone has online banking. French ATM machines cannot display your account balance or make transfers from savings accounts.

3.3 Using Cash

Depending on the value of the dollar to the euro, it may make sense to buy euros in the U.S. before leaving. Depending on the fees your bank charges, it may be less expensive to purchase euros, in your own city. Most banks do not hold foreign currency at the branch, so give yourself enough time to order the currency in advance.

You may purchase euros from exchange booths at the airport or in town when you arrive in Paris, but these booths often charge significant fees and have less favorable rates. US major airports may have booths as well, but the rate will not be favorable. Avoid bringing cash in dollars with you. Most banks only exchange currency for account holders, and even the post office places restrictions on which denominations it will exchange. Past students have found that the cheapest way to get cash while in France is by withdrawing it from an ATM.

3.4 Traveler's Checks

Traveler's Checks are generally not used in France anymore.

3.5 Budgeting

This seems like an obvious point, but many students neglect to plan their budgets in advance and end up running out of money. **Your financial aid may not come for a week or more after arrival. You will want to be sure you have access to sufficient funds for the first week to purchase food, travel from airport to downtown Paris, buy a French phone or simcard, and a train ticket from Paris to Arcachon (50-100 Euros or more).** For the entire program, make sure you account for the exchange rate, weekend travel, souvenirs, etc.

Note that for train tickets, there is a different price for people over the age of 30. Please take this into account in your budgeting.

3.6 Wiring Money

Even when you carefully plan your budget, emergencies happen, and sometimes it is necessary to have money wired from home. Both Western Union (800-225-5227) and MoneyGram (800-926-9400) have instant international wire transfer systems. If you visit one of their overseas offices or call them, you can pick up the money from their office shortly after the wire transfer is made. Another option is wiring money from a U.S. bank to a foreign bank. A more recent option is to set up a Venmo Cash App account. As a *last* resort, there is the option of contacting the U.S. State Department's Citizen Emergency Center (202-647-5225).

3.7 Safety Tips: ATM Fraud

A few students have been victims of ATM fraud. While this is not always preventable, there are a few important things to keep in mind:

- (1) If you have a money belt, it is probably cheaper to take out larger amounts of money in fewer ATM transactions (however, use common sense about this: you do not want to lose or have 500 euros stolen). This is also a good idea because **most banks charge fees for overseas ATM withdrawals**, so using an ATM on a daily or even bi-weekly basis can really add up. Also, for safety reasons, the more ATM withdrawals you make from different ATMs, the greater your chances are of being a victim of ATM fraud.
- (2) Be very careful booking hotels, flights, hostels, etc. with your credit card in internet cafes. Sometimes the computers are set to remember credit card information, and the connections may not be secure. If you do not know how to check the computer settings, it is probably better to call to make these arrangements (but be aware that French airlines usually charge a per-minute fee for telephone reservations).
- (3) Most importantly, check your bank account balance online from time to time so that you know if you are a victim of ATM fraud, and keep track of your spending!

4. MAKING YOUR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Booking your Flight to Europe Rates

Booking your flight should be done as early as possible because rates tend to increase as you get closer to your departure date. Priceline, Expedia, Travelocity, etc. are not necessarily cheaper than buying your tickets directly through the airline! Try Skyscanner or Student Universe. In 2019, students paid anywhere from \$700-\$1300 for round trip tickets from Chicago O'Hare to Paris, so shop around! If you have connections via Canada or Europe, be sure to allow enough time, as you may have to go through customs or a passport control.

Due to possibilities of flight changes or cancellations, you should definitely consider purchasing a refundable ticket or flight insurance. Check coverage carefully !!!

Participants must arrange and pay for their own transportation, including transportation from Paris to Arcachon. While airfare can be purchased at your convenience, train tickets to Arcachon should not be purchased prior to notification by the program director. All students may travel to Arcachon as a group and the director will provide the necessary information when itinerary details are finalized in the spring. Alternatively, you may purchase a Eurail Pass and utilize it for the trip to Arcachon. You may still want to travel with the group but may utilize the Pass when you are provided with the itinerary. The cost of airfare and train travel will be part of the financial aid budget.

Destination

Participants should fly into one of the Paris airports, and arrive no later than Monday, May 19. The quickest but most expensive way from the airport may be to take a taxi, and costs can be cut by sharing a taxi with a program participant. There is a metro from the airport as well, which is very inexpensive, but may have accessibility problems. We will go to Arcachon on that Saturday by high-speed TGV train via Bordeaux. The trains leave hourly and take about 2.5 hours to Bordeaux where you change to a local train that takes another hour. You must pull your own luggage when you switch trains.

If you plan to return to the United States directly after the program, there are two options:

First: You must check out of the Arcachon Villa Regina hotel on June 20th no later than 11am. You will then take a train up to Paris, but by the time you get there, most planes to the US will have left for the day. Thus, you will have to spend the night in Paris at your own expense before your June 21st flight. Some people stay downtown so they can hang out on the 20th evening. Some people may stay at a Paris airport hotel, so they can just rest and be close to the terminal for their June 21st morning flight. There are many hotels at every price point at the airport. One common choice is the IBIS Roissypole. For security reasons, in the past, there has been no actual camping out in the terminal secure area of the terminal. Note, flights to New York may leave in the evening permitting you to leave France the same day that you leave Arcachon.

Second: You will notice the schedule states the last exam and evaluations are on June 19th, and there is the possibility of early check out. A second option for your return to the US is to leave Arcachon by train on the 19th in the afternoon. You will arrive in Paris that evening and will still need a hotel at your own expense. Some people then fly on the morning of the 20th instead of the 21st. Some people may stay 2 nights in Paris and leave on the 21st.

Timing

When time allows, students occasionally choose to arrive in Paris a few days before the program begins to enjoy the city. **At the end of the program, some choose to stay in France longer or visit other countries. If you plan to start a summer job/externship after return, you may want to give yourself a few days rest to help cope with jetlag before starting the new opportunity.**

Frequent Flyer Programs

If you do not have a frequent-flyer account set up with a particular airline, it might be smart to set one up prior to buying your tickets. Students have received up to 6,000 frequent flyer miles for this trip, which can really help toward free tickets in the future. If you already have a frequent-flyer account, try to purchase tickets through the same airline to benefit from the additional miles this trip will give you. Airlines usually still give frequent flyer miles for tickets purchased on sites like Expedia and Travelocity.

4.2 Airport Check-In

Arrive early, at least two and a half to three hours before your plane is scheduled to depart. Security measures are even greater for international flights. Upon arrival at the airport, go to the check-in counter for your airline. Call your airline in advance to check international regulations on allowable luggage and weight limits.

For those of you planning to fly within Europe on time off, please note that the weight limit is 20 kilos (44 lbs.) for checked luggage. This is a very light amount! You will have to pay EXTRAORDINARILY HIGH fees at the airport ticket counter if you exceed it. Check with your airline as to the fees and as to the weight of the carry-on bag as well. You cannot carry on the 22-inch roller bags that we use in the U.S. when you are in Europe or elsewhere. The weight limit for a carry-on can also be as low as 8 kilos (17.6 lbs). With these facts in mind, consider packing very, very lightly or plan to incur shipping costs to ship items back to the U.S.

You should also pack your carry-on bag so it can be easily opened by security. Make sure you have identification information both outside and inside the luggage. Your identification information should contain either the address of our Paris hotel or the following address of the Villa Regina Hotel in Arcachon, so your luggage can be delivered there if it is lost.

Your name
c/o Villa Regina Hotel
11 Allee Corrigan
33120 Arcachon FRANCE
Telephone 00 33 5 56 22 02 00

Please cooperate with all security personnel.

Do NOT make any jokes with them about terrorists, bombs, etc.

4.3 The Flight

If you have never flown outside of the U.S., you should be prepared for a very long flight. For example, it takes approximately nine hours from Chicago, not counting layover time. If you are not able to sleep

on the plane, you should bring books, magazines, etc. to entertain yourself. Those students applying for journals might want to work on their submissions on the plane. This will alleviate some of the pressure of completing them while in Arcachon, though students applying for journals should be aware that the proximity of departure to the end of finals makes it likely that you will be very busy working on your journal applications.

If you get motion sick, do not forget your Dramamine. Chewing gum can prevent your ears from popping on the plane's descent. You will probably be served two meals on the flight, along with several drinks. If you have special dietary restrictions, you need to notify the airline in advance. You may want to bring snacks in case the airline food is not to your liking. It is advisable NOT to drink alcohol on the flight, as it tends to prolong jet lag. There is a 7-hour time difference between France and Chicago/Iowa (it is seven hours later in France). Therefore, if you have not slept on the plane, you will have missed the night. To adjust to the new time zone, you should plan on staying up all day and going to sleep at your normal bedtime in the evening. You also may want to avoid taking a nap the first day to make the adjustment easier. It can take several days to get over your jet lag so you can expect to be excited, but very tired.

4.4 What to Do When You Arrive

When you fly into Paris, you will go through immigration showing your passport (and visa if required for certain non-U.S. and non-EU citizens). You will pick up your checked luggage and then may be subject to customs inspection. If you have problems with receiving your luggage, you must put in a claim before leaving the baggage area. The various bus services to downtown Paris have been changing. Consult <https://transfer.airport-paris.com/bus.htm> to see your options, running about 12 euros and taking 80 minutes. Alternatively, you can take a taxi, which is very expensive but has the benefit of going quickly directly to your destination. It is around 55 euros. We do not recommend the cheapest alternative, the Metro. There can be high rates of pickpocketing, plus there may not be an escalator or elevator option, even though there are many flights of steps that may be difficult to climb with your heavy luggage and multiple bags.

If you arrive early and plan to stay in Paris, you can surf the web while still in the States and look for accommodations in an area of Paris in which you might wish to stay. Alternatively, once you get your luggage at Charles de Gaulle airport, visit the tourism office at the airport and make a hotel reservation there. They may have listings for places (maybe some that are cheaper) that do not have web sites.

4.5 Arrival at the Hotel

You should arrive at the hotel on Monday, May 19th, which is the first day your housing will be available. We will give out information in the States and at the hotel, including location for the opening dinner nearby. If you arrive after 7:00 p.m. (really try not to), we will be at the opening dinner. We will leave directions. **IF YOU WILL BE DELAYED AND WILL NOT ARRIVE ON MONDAY, PLEASE LEAVE A MESSAGE FOR ME EITHER BY EMAIL, FACEBOOK, OR MY U.S. PHONE (+1-319-621-7674, when calling from France).**

5. PHONING HOME

5.1 Whatsapp and others

There are many methods for staying in touch for free or for very limited cost. These methods change constantly and might include Skype, GChat, WhatsApp, WeChat, Facetime, Facebook messenger, Viber, Zoom, and others. Please check which method is best before you go.

5.2 Cell Phones

The situation with phones changes each year, so this information may not be applicable. In 2024, Many students used whatsapp with their US Phone number and an internet connection to communicate.

Some participants use their French phones for pictures and some use their American phones, even if they are not otherwise using the phone as a phone. Another choice is to buy an international phone plan with your U.S. provider, however, make sure you verify data costs, and any sub charges. If you choose to buy a phone plan, remember to cancel your plan when you finish travelling abroad. Another option is to purchase the Orange Holiday Plan, which will give you a French phone number and data for a certain period of time, with the option to top off. More information is available here: <https://travel.orange.com/en>. Verify your sim card is unlocked if you plan to purchase a French sim card to ensure it works.

Please leave the Villa Regina Hotel phone number, **011-33-5-56-22-02-00**, with your family for emergencies, as well as my U.S. cell phone, 011-319-621-7674 (calling from the U.S.). Calling my U.S. phone in France will be a local, i.e. U.S. call for your family.

To call Paris from Arcachon, dial 01- plus the 8-digit phone number. To call anywhere else in France, dial the regional prefix (02 thru 05) plus the 8-digit phone number. The regional prefix for the Arcachon/Bordeaux region is 05.

Students may be able to purchase an international plan with their current mobile carrier. Prepaid SIM cards can be purchased once students arrive in France which will allow them to use French mobile networks. In the past, some students have rented a mobile hotspot. There are many companies that rent mobile hotspots, but a great French option that students have used in the past is [Hippocket WiFi](https://hippocketwifi.com): <https://hippocketwifi.com>.

5.3 Pay Phones / Phone Cards

Few people use the pay phone system anymore, if it even exists. If you do not buy a monthly phone plan for 20 euros, you can buy time. Telephone cards are available in various denominations and are sold at the France Telecom Office, Tabac stores, and at the LaPoste (the French post office). These cards are the cheapest option.

6. FOOD

Students will need to primarily eat out during their time in Paris since there will not be kitchens in the hotel rooms.

There are several grocery stores in Arcachon, including Casino and Monoprix, which are closest to the Villa Regina and most frequented by students. There are also numerous bakeries, charcuteries (sort of delis), green grocers, etc. scattered throughout Arcachon. A better flavor of France can be obtained by visiting the town market ("le marché") downtown near City Hall. It is open mornings, Tuesday through Sunday; about half the stalls are also open Monday mornings. A large supermarket called "Intermarché" is within short biking distance in the neighboring town of La Teste. It offers better prices and a larger selection of food and other necessities.

Eating out is not cheap. Arcachon is a resort town, and the restaurant prices reflect a well-to-do French person's vacation budget. There are, however, several less expensive places scattered about town, including sandwich shops and pizza places. Within a ten-minute cab ride is a McDonalds, in case you cannot do without. Please note that many more French people smoke than Americans, but the restaurants are nonsmoking. Most restaurants also allow dogs. Many restaurants may not permit splitting the bill with multiple credit cards.

7. GETTING AROUND IN ARCACHON AND IN EUROPE

7.1 Getting Around in Arcachon

Bring comfortable shoes, because walking will be your main mode of transportation. Walking to the downtown and beachfront will take 10 minutes.

7.2 Getting around in Paris

Bring comfortable shoes to walk around in. For the metro, you can get small individual tickets at the metro kiosks within the metro, however getting a Navigo pass is recommended as the tickets are easily lost and demagnetized. You can consult the different available options here: <https://www.iledefrance-mobilites.fr/en/tickets-fares/media/navigo-travel-card>. The Navigo pass can be bought at most metro stations at the ticket counter there is a person and then can be topped off at the automated kiosks in the stations. [The weekly Navigo card](#) is a great option and can be refilled in the RATP App.

7.3 Getting Around France:

- [The RATP App](#) can be used for all travel within Paris and will allow students to top-up or verify balances on metro cards: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/bonjour-ratp/id507107090>
- [The Bordeaux Metro](#) app is the best way to get tickets for the metro in Bordeaux and allows students to use their phones as the ticket: <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/tbm-mobilit%C3%A9s/id1492096341>
- [The SNCF Connect app](#) is for the French rail system and allows students to purchase tickets and passes for long distance travel and has up-to-date schedules:

7.4 Getting Around in Europe

If you are interested in traveling around Europe, you might wish to consider a Eurail pass, which can ONLY be purchased in the U.S. You can visit a travel agent for further information and schedules or go online. While this option can be a beneficial and cost-saving option, it should be seriously researched, as there may be potential issues, particularly with regard to scheduling. Go to <https://www.raileurope.com/en-us>. Passes purchased online may take weeks to be delivered, or you can sometimes pay to have them sent via Federal Express a few days before you leave. If you are 27 or under and planning on either going to Europe a few days before the program or spending time in Europe after the program, this is probably going to save you money.

If you do plan to buy a pass, try to coordinate with your friends while you are in the U.S. so you can carefully pre-select the countries you will actually travel through. If you end up not traveling through the countries you pre-selected, the pass is wasted. Also, you may then be paying extra on site to travel to countries you did not pre-select.

Additionally, check into cheap flights within Europe. Some students have not used their pass as much as they thought they would, because it turned out to be cheaper and quicker to fly!

Bicycles, mopeds and motorcycles are available for rent in Arcachon, at a store on the beachfront. It may cost about 75 euros to rent a bicycle for a month, and you can also rent bikes for smaller intervals. Cars may be rented from AVIS and Eurocar (affiliated with National) located in the train station and on Avenue General LeClerc across from the train station. Please note, though, **that most cars available are manual transmission and may have an age limit for rental.**

Students should take deadlines for journal applications into account when planning weekend travel.

8. HOUSING

You will be given your roommate and housing assignment prior to departure. The program will make every effort to assist students if any problems arise with their accommodations. The apartments are very small, so the pack light admonition below is very important. The hotel cleans the apartments once a week—giving new towels and sheets, but not doing heavier cleaning. The reception desk is not open 24 hours, and some personnel speak simple English.

9. PACKING

9.1 REMEMBER THE PACK LIGHT ADMONITION!

Remember you may be hauling your luggage by yourself up and down stairs through airports and subways without elevators. You may also have to pull it up a hill to the Arcachon hotel. Remember you are carrying your course materials, notebook and other heavy things. I strongly recommend one checked piece, one carry-on that hooks or sits on the larger piece, and one small personal item such as a purse or small backpack. Put luggage tags outside each piece and put a sheet of paper with the

address and phone of the hotel (see supra §4.2) inside each bag so that it can be sent to you if the outside tags fall off. Check with your airline about the weight limit per bag. Some airlines now charge extra for any bag over 50 lbs. and may even put limits on the weight of the carry-on! Your books must fit in along with your notebooks. (Some courses may give you the choice of online materials instead). A laptop will count as your carry-on or personal item and you should not put it in your checked luggage! If you are an Iowa student and applying for a journal, you might consider carrying those materials on as well. Please bring your Bluebook. Also, do not check any valuables such as medicines, money, passport, jewelry etc. Carry them on. **Leave valuable items (jewelry, watches, rings etc.) at home totally.** Pickpocketing abroad can be a much bigger problem than in the U.S.

At the very minimum, you should carry a travel toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, comb/brush in your carry on, along with a change of underwear and maybe a fresh t-shirt, as you are flying overnight and will arrive in the early morning. If your luggage does not arrive, at least you have these basics with you. Remember to wear a flat fabric money belt underneath your pants (not an outside pouch) containing your credit cards, passport, and cash. Pick pockets can abound at the airport or train stations. Wear very comfortable clothes and shoes on the plane as your feet are likely to swell.

9.2 Electrical Appliances

The French electrical system is DC, 220 volts. We use AC in the U.S. If you plan to use an electrical appliance, you should purchase both a converter (to convert DC to AC) and an adapter (to adapt your plug to the shape of the outlet) before you leave for France. **IT MAY BE EXTREMELY HARD TO PURCHASE CONVERTERS OR ADAPTERS ONCE YOU GET TO EUROPE, SO IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU DO IT BEFORE YOU LEAVE!** Some places you may find converters include Walmart, Best Buy, or other major department or travel stores. You can also find them online at retailers such as Amazon. Students bringing laptop computers may only require an adapter, but are encouraged to check their computer's converter, manual, or contact the manufacturer for compatibility information. There are no computers available for classroom use, so you must bring your own. Several stores sell French hair-dryers for around 25 euros. This may be a better option than bringing one from home, especially if you plan to return to Europe in the future. The program has two hairdryers. U.S. hair dryers tend to get fried, even with an adapter and a converter, especially if you stay in hotels or apartments with older wiring.

9.3 Clothing

Again, pack lightly: try one week's clothing as a base. The Villa Regina hotel has a laundry service at approximately 5 euros per wash and 3 euros per dry in 2024 and cannot be paid with credit/debit card. There are dry cleaners nearby to launder suits or other items. Temperatures may range from the low 50s in May (maybe with rain), to the high 70s or even 80s by the time we leave. Students are therefore advised to bring clothing suitable for spring/late winter, as well as summer attire. Air conditioning in all European countries is RARE, and there is **none** in the hotel. In Arcachon, shorts, low cut or belly tops etc. are not worn much in town on the street, and certainly cannot be worn while we are traveling as a group. These items, as well as swimwear, can be worn on the beach or at the hotel pool. Most of you may want to bring a bathing suit, flip-flops, sunscreen, etc. (French women of all ages may go topless on the beach, but I advise our women not to adopt this custom while there!) We have a selection of beach towels, or you can buy one in Arcachon. Relatively conservative dress is

expected on the street, even in a resort town like Arcachon. Europeans generally do not wear shorts. You should bring things that are durable, easy to wash, and things that require little ironing.

You should bring at least one nice conservative outfit, since there will be visits to courts or other professional environments. PLEASE BUY THESE ITEMS BEFORE ARRIVING IN EUROPE! For men, this attire will be a sport coat, tie and dress shirt, or a suit, along with dress shoes. For women, this can be a dress, pantsuit, or suit with a skirt. Bring a pair of dress shoes that will be **comfortable**, since you may have to walk a great distance or wear the shoes for long periods. Some women bring a suit for court and a more festive outfit for dinners or going out. If you intend to visit a church or mosque, shorts or tank tops are usually not permitted. Sneakers or walking shoes are necessary. You should also bring one or more sweaters, a raincoat, socks, umbrella etc., since May (but seldom June) can be quite chilly.

WARNING: Due to anti-American sentiment or the possibility of terrorism, do not bring items that have American flags or American places printed on them such as University of Iowa, New York, sports teams, etc.! I will not permit you to participate in a group activity if you are wearing such an item.

9.4 Other Items

Consider buying all toiletries, contacts, hair products, prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and personal items in the U.S and bringing enough for the entire trip. In Europe, the brand you want or the item itself may not exist or may exist under another name with slightly different ingredients. If you do forget or run out, the local pharmacies and grocery stores have many items. While most students use their phone as a camera, a few may bring a separate camera/video.

9.5 Sample Packing List

(This is not all-inclusive, and I strongly suggest you make your own!)

Carry-On: [Check with your airlines re allowable items, size and weight of carry-ons, etc.]: Passport, printed e-ticket, Student ID card, Eurail (or other transit) pass, credit cards, money, contacts, contact solution, contact case(s), hairbrush, personal protective equipment such as face masks, glasses, sunglasses, prescription medicine, Advil, spare underwear, essential toiletries in a plastic baggy, (toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, etc.) (in case your luggage gets lost), Dramamine, Benadryl/Claritin/Epi-pen, umbrella, camera, computer/tablet, iPod, Bluebook (if you are planning on doing journal applications), reading material for planes and trains (disposable magazines and paperbacks are great.) Consider buying a 22-inch roller bag with four wheels rather than two wheels for maximum flexibility.

Suitcase: deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, makeup, soap, shampoo, etc., notebook(s), schoolbooks, clothes (see infra. §9.3), swimwear, comfortable shoes, hair dryer, travel books (any countries you plan to visit), converter/adapters, travel iron, alarm clock.

10. OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

10.1 Respect for Foreign Customs

It is often easy to forget when traveling overseas that YOU are now the foreigner. While the French and other Europeans are normally very polite and helpful, you should not expect them to go out of their way to help you simply because you are American. While many French and other Europeans speak excellent English, **do not assume that everyone speaks English or is willing to speak English with you!** It is better to first ask the person whether he or she speaks English. Also, keep in mind the following:

- Always respect local habits and customs. For example, in France and elsewhere in Europe, they eat later than in Iowa. They also take two hours or more for dinner, viewing dinner as an opportunity for socializing, during which food will come out at various intervals. It can be next to impossible to turn around a meal in an hour or less. I have found if I am in a “hurry,” it is better to eat in my apartment. When ordering, most waiters do not approach the table to take orders until all menus are closed, signaling that everyone is ready.
- When visiting museums, churches, and other attractions, keep your voices down (Americans stand out because they are loud!), and refrain from touching anything. Also, be sure to look presentable (no shorts, tank tops, etc.).
- Usually there will be no warnings to this effect, but Europeans expect these customs be heeded.
- Be careful about getting into political discussions. You may encounter anti-American sentiment or anti-American-government sentiment.
- Be wary about the combination of alcohol, politics, and innocent discussions with local members of the opposite sex, etc. Bar fights can occur in France, as well as the U.S.
- Remember rude or unhelpful people can occur in any culture.

10.2 Cash

Cash can be preferred for small transactions, especially at the boulangerie but most places will accept credit/debit cards

10.3 Tipping

The practice of tipping in France is different from the practice in the U.S. The French utilize the concept of the “pourboire,” or a small tip for very good service in French restaurants. This means rounding up to the next euro or two, instead of the 15-18% standard in the U.S. Be aware that large tips can create uncomfortable situations—some waiters will try to give it back to you. There is also no way to tip on your debit or credit cards, as you can in the U.S. Consult a guidebook for tipping rates for taxis, hotel luggage carriers, etc. Other countries may have very different tipping practices.

10.4 Medical Matters

International health insurance coverage is mandatory for all University of Iowa students traveling abroad for educational purposes. All students traveling abroad for such purposes must register with the Office of Study Abroad by completing the Study Abroad Registration Form. Upon registering, students are automatically enrolled in a University policy provided through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). This “blanket” policy will be U-billed at a cost of approximately \$1.29 per day for the duration of your trip. Cost of the insurance is calculated into the student financial aid budget. Information and necessary forms are available on the program website. There are a number of doctors in Arcachon and some make house calls. They will request payment after treatment, and you will get reimbursed back home. Phone numbers for emergencies, ambulances, fire, and police are in the hotel lobby (French phones only).

Non-UI students should check with your insurance company before you leave to make sure you are covered in Europe. Some companies charge additional premiums for overseas coverage. The International Student Identity Card also includes medical insurance while overseas.

10.5 Journal Applications

For Iowa students applying for law journals, completing applications in the time allotted can be a challenge. The time you will have to complete the applications once you arrive in Europe will fly by as you cope with jet lag, going to classes, moving, coping with new roommates, and a new language and environment. Each year, however, many program students do apply for and receive positions with journals. In 2024, most participants who applied for journals were accepted, proving that it is well worth the effort involved. Access to copying and printing is limited and expensive in France. We do have program printer/scanners for limited use. Consider bringing two copies of the journal packet as well as the Bluebook, pencils, eraser, and small pencil sharpener.

11. CLASSES

There is a draft schedule of courses available on the program website. Any revised schedules will be distributed just prior to departure, and there may be later updates distributed in France if necessary.

The classroom is in downtown Arcachon in the Startway Coworking facility in the Post Office, about a 10-minute walk from Villa Regina. You will NOT have access to the Startway Coworking facility outside of class time.

12. INTERNET ACCESS

Free Wi-Fi (wee-fee in French) Internet access is available at the Paris hotel and the Villa Regina Hotel. Various restaurants and cafes may have internet, as well. The town of Arcachon has a city Wi-Fi that is increasingly available in public locations. Wi-Fi speeds are often far slower than in the United States, including at Villa Regina. Great French mobile WiFi hotspot rental (<https://hippocketwifi.com>)

13. SPORTS

Swimming is an obvious one, although the water may be very cold well into June. During our time there, the sun certainly will become warm enough to lay out. Cycling is also an option, as is fishing, boating, hiking, golf, and running. Arcachon has a beautiful 18-hole golf course about one mile from the town's center. There is a tennis club, as well. Cap Ferret is a nearby boat trip and very beautiful. In addition, if you want to try surfing, Biarritz is a great weekend trip destination, but you will need a rental car.

14. WEEKEND TRAVEL

While in Arcachon, you may wish to travel over one or more weekends, especially the three-day weekend. These trips can be arranged while in Arcachon, but should be done as early as possible, to secure good prices on tickets, etc. Past students have traveled as far as London, Belgium, Ireland, Barcelona, Geneva, Germany, Italy, Amsterdam, Greece, and Corsica. The most popular destinations for regular weekend travel have been Paris, the prehistoric cave paintings in the Dordogne, the Bordeaux vineyards, the Riviera (Nice, Marseille, Monaco, Cannes), and Spain. Students may travel by train or rent a car for the weekend. Car rentals can be very expensive; online sites offer better prices. Car rental companies give better pricing for longer rentals. Many rental cars have built in GPS but may charge extra for the usage. Gas can be \$10 a gallon or more and is sold by the liter. There are 3.8 liters per gallon, so you may see prices of 1.12 or 1.20, but be aware that these are in liters and euros! Most cars for rent are manual shift. If they have automatic cars, it will be more expensive. Also, many companies do not rent to people under age 25. It might be smart to pack a smaller bag, like a duffel bag, to carry less with you on weekend trips. This smaller bag may be helpful if you end up buying a lot during the program. It is advisable to take your class materials with you so that you will be prepared when class resumes. If you are flying from Bordeaux (BOD), in the past, several students (8-10) have gotten together and booked an airport shuttle from Arcachon to Bordeaux as a cost-effective way of getting to the airport.

Although students often want to make the most of their time in Europe by travelling every weekend, I would advise staying in Arcachon at least one weekend—maybe the first or last weekend—to explore. You will not have all the time in the world to do that when you have class, so take some time to explore the awesome seafood restaurants, walk along the boardwalk, and stroll through the shops in Arcachon. After all, it is a beach resort town so you should enjoy it.

15. TOURIST INFORMATION

Most students get their touristic advice from the internet. Some purchase hard copy travel guides as well. Many European cities have tourist offices that are often staffed with English speaking employees. In Paris, there is a tourism bureau at the Paris airport, as well as elsewhere in town. Consult the internet or current travel guides for the location of these offices, in addition to local hotel and restaurant information.

16. OTHER LOCAL INFORMATION

Information about Arcachon and the local area can be obtained from the internet and the local tourist office, located between the railroad station and the main post office. Check out the city website at <http://www.arcachon.com/>. There is a casino in Arcachon. The International New York Times and USA today are available in limited quantities in Arcachon and are widely available in Paris. The Villa Regina hotel television system may have the BBC English language channel.

17. MAILING YOUR LUGGAGE HOME

There is a small post office in Arcachon, and you can ship boxes or your suitcases back home. The cost changes each year and may be more expensive than paying for an extra bag on your flight. Keep in mind that you may have to provide any boxes you may need. Any zippers and pull-out handles on the luggage that you are shipping must be tightly taped. When you are packing your luggage to ship, make a detailed list of its contents. You will have to declare the contents item by item on a required customs form that will be attached to your shipment. You can expect to wait about 3-4 weeks for your luggage to arrive in the U.S. unless you ship using an expedited method.

18. BRINGING LIQUID SOUVENIRS HOME

As students travel, they often buy souvenirs to bring home. Sometimes, these souvenirs are liquids (a bottle of Bordeaux wine or a bottle of olive oil from Italy to mention a few). Liquid items cannot be mailed through the post office system. They must be packed in your checked baggage. There is not a strict upper limit on the number of bottles of wines or oils that you can bring back but, you will have to go through the U.S customs as soon as you land and may have to prove to the customs officers that these items are for personal use and not for resale. Usually, the weight of the bottles and space limits the students in the number of bottles that they bring back.

Packing your wine or oil in your checked bag can be another challenge. Although many students wrap their bottles with their clothes, this is not advisable because if a bottle of red wine breaks in your suitcase, it can ruin all the contents in your bag. Therefore, as an alternative method, it is recommended that the students buy a disposable “wine diaper” to pack their wines and oils. You can buy the “wine diapers” online.

19. VAT REFUND

Some retailers (especially high-end retailers) may choose to give you a VAT refund. Value-Added-Refund or VAT refund is a tax refund given to travelers who buy merchandise in Europe, and it can range from 15-25% per country, with France averaging 12%. Although you are not entitled to the refund on your hotels and meals, you can get most of the tax you paid on clothes and other souvenirs. One caveat is that you are not supposed to use the merchandise before you leave the country.

In France, your total purchases must exceed €100.01. When you shop, bring along your passport and present it to the retailer when you make a purchase. Then ask the merchant to fill out the “tax-free form.” At the airport or your other point of departure, bring your paperwork and purchases and have the customs officer stamp at the VAT station. Then you can receive the tax refund.

REMINDER: INFORMATION ON ALL SUBJECTS IN THIS MANUAL CAN CHANGE. BE SURE TO CHECK MULTIPLE SOURCES.