

BEGINNER'S GUIDE



to Visas & Residency



Everything you need to know about travel and second-home owner visas, long-stay visas, and the path to permanent residency in France.

PAGES	CHAPTERS
03-06	French visas: the basics <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Who needs a French visa?» Which French visa do you need?
07-17	French visas for travellers & second home owners <ul style="list-style-type: none">» How the 90/180-day rule works» New for 2024/2025: ETIAS and EES» Travel to France for Brits post-Brexit» Temporary long-stay visas» Travel within the Schengen Area
18-31	French long-stay visas <ul style="list-style-type: none">» What kind of long-stay visa do you need?» Long-stay “Visitor” visa eligibility» Joining a French or EU spouse in France» Applying for a long-stay visa
32-45	French residency & carte de séjours <ul style="list-style-type: none">» The path to permanent residency in France» Your first year in France» Applying for a carte de séjour» Applying for a carte de résident» Applying for French Citizenship» Withdrawal Agreement visas
46-50	Visas & Residency essential vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Need-to-know terms and phrases
51	Moving to France

French visas: the basics

- » Who needs a French Visa?
- » Which French Visa do you need?

French Visas: the basics

More and more expats are choosing to make France their home; in fact, a 2024 study by Remitly listed French visas as the most searched-for in the world. But if you're an American, Brit, or other non-EU immigrant, your dreams of moving or retiring to France one day will require the right documentation.

In this guide, we'll break down all the basics of French visas, both for those looking to travel or enjoy their second home in France, and for those hoping to make the move. We'll look at the different types of long-stay visas required for working, running a business, joining a spouse, or retiring in France, and walk you through the multi-year process of becoming a permanent French resident or citizen.



Who needs a French visa?

- » Let's start with the basics: who actually needs a French visa, and what are the different types of visas that are available?
- » As with entrance to all countries, whether or not you need a visa (and the kind of visa you will need) to visit France depends on three main things:
- » Your country of citizenship
- » The purpose of your visit
- » The length of your stay

EU Citizens

Citizens of any of the 27 countries of the European Union (EU), as well as the three European Economic Area (EEA) countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and Switzerland, benefit from freedom of movement, meaning they have a legal right to live, work, or study in France.

If you're lucky enough to be an EU national (or hold dual Citizenship), you do not need a visa to move to France, nor are you required to register for a residency permit (as is still required in some other EU countries). However, there are still certain things you must do when moving to France - our Beginner's Guide to Moving to France has more on this.

Non-EU Citizens

Citizens of all non-EU countries, which now includes the UK after Brexit, must have a valid visa or residency permit to visit or move to France. The kind of visa you will need, and the associated requirements and fees will depend on the purpose of your visit.

Which French Visa Do You Need?

There are three main types of visas available in France: short-stay visas, long-stay visas, and residency permits (known as a *carte de séjour*). The first two types must be applied for in your

country of residence prior to travelling to France; the latter is, for most people, issued upon renewing a long-stay visa in France.

French Short-Stay Visas

Short-stay visas (*visa de court séjour*) are intended for stays of up to three months (90 days) and allow you to travel within France and the Schengen Area. These visas are not required for visitors from the UK, United States, Canada, New Zealand, and many other countries - instead, you can enter the country visa-free under the 90/180-day rule. See the chapter How



the 90/180-day rule works for more on this.

French Long-Stay Visas

Anyone wishing to stay in France longer than 90 days will need to apply for a long-stay visa. Long-stay visas (visa de long séjour) are intended for stays of three months up to one year and allow you to live in France for this period.

There are two main types (and lots of sub-types, which we'll get into later).

- » **Long-Stay Temporary Visitor Visa (Visa de long séjour temporaire visiteur or VLS-T)** - this is for anyone looking to travel or stay in France for more than three months but less than six months (i.e. a long stay without living in France or becoming resident for tax purposes in France). This is ideal for travellers or second-home owners (including British owners after Brexit) who wish

to enjoy longer 'holidays' in France while still maintaining permanent residence in their home country. You are not able to work or study on this visa, and it's not renewable.

- » **Long-Stay Visa Equivalent to a Residence Permit (Visa de long séjour valant titre de séjour or VLS-TS)** - this is for anyone looking to work, study, or live in France for more than three months up to one year. This 12-month long-stay visa is required by anyone seeking residency in France, including those looking to retire to France or join a French spouse or family member. The kind of long-stay visa you have will affect your rights to work in France, so it's important to choose the right type. See the chapter What kind of long-stay visa do you need? This visa can be exchanged for a residency permit (carte de séjour) at the end of your stay without the need to leave France.

As the spouse or family member of a non-French but EU citizen, you may enter the country without a visa and apply directly for a residency permit in France. However, this isn't always recommended in practice - [see the chapter Joining a French or EU spouse in France](#).

French Residency Permits (or 'Right to Stay in France')

Residency permits in France are known as a Carte de Séjour or Titre de Séjour and allow you to live in France for the duration of the permit. Generally, you must hold a long-stay visa before applying for a residency card - the carte de séjour application will take place towards the end of your first year in France. See the section French residency & carte de séjours for more on this.

French visas for travellers & second home owners

- » How the 90/180-day rule works
- » New for 2024/2025: ETIAS and EES
- » Travel to France for Brits post-Brexit
- » Temporary long-stay visas
- » Travel within the Schengen Area

French Visas for travellers & second home owners

Whether you're looking to travel in France and the rest of the EU or want to spend time at your second home in France, this section takes you through your options.

| How the 90/180-day rule works

Many visitors to France, including American, Canadian, British, New Zealand, and other non-EU citizens, are able to travel to France and the Schengen Area without a visa, provided that they don't stay more than 90 out of every 180 days. However, the way that this is calculated can be confusing. Let's break it down.

Not sure if the 90/180-day rule applies to you? [Here's a full list of nationalities](#) that require a short-stay visa to enter the Schengen Area and those that don't.

Counting your 90 days

Firstly, it's important to remember that the 90/180-day rule applies to the whole Schengen area, not just France, so that means you need to count the total number of days that you spend within any of the 27 Schengen zone countries (including the EEA countries of Norway, Iceland, and Switzerland, and Romania and Bulgaria, which joined in 2024). The count starts from the day you enter the Schengen area to the day you leave.

So, for example, if you flew from the UK (a non-Schengen country) to France (entering the Schengen area), spent five days in France, then drove into Spain for a further five days before returning to the UK (leaving the Schengen zone), you would have spent a total of 10 days in

Schengen zone.

If you flew from the UK to France (entering the Schengen area), spent five days in France before returning to the UK (leaving the Schengen zone) for five days, and then flew to Spain for a further five days, you would still have spent a total of 10 days in Schengen zone.

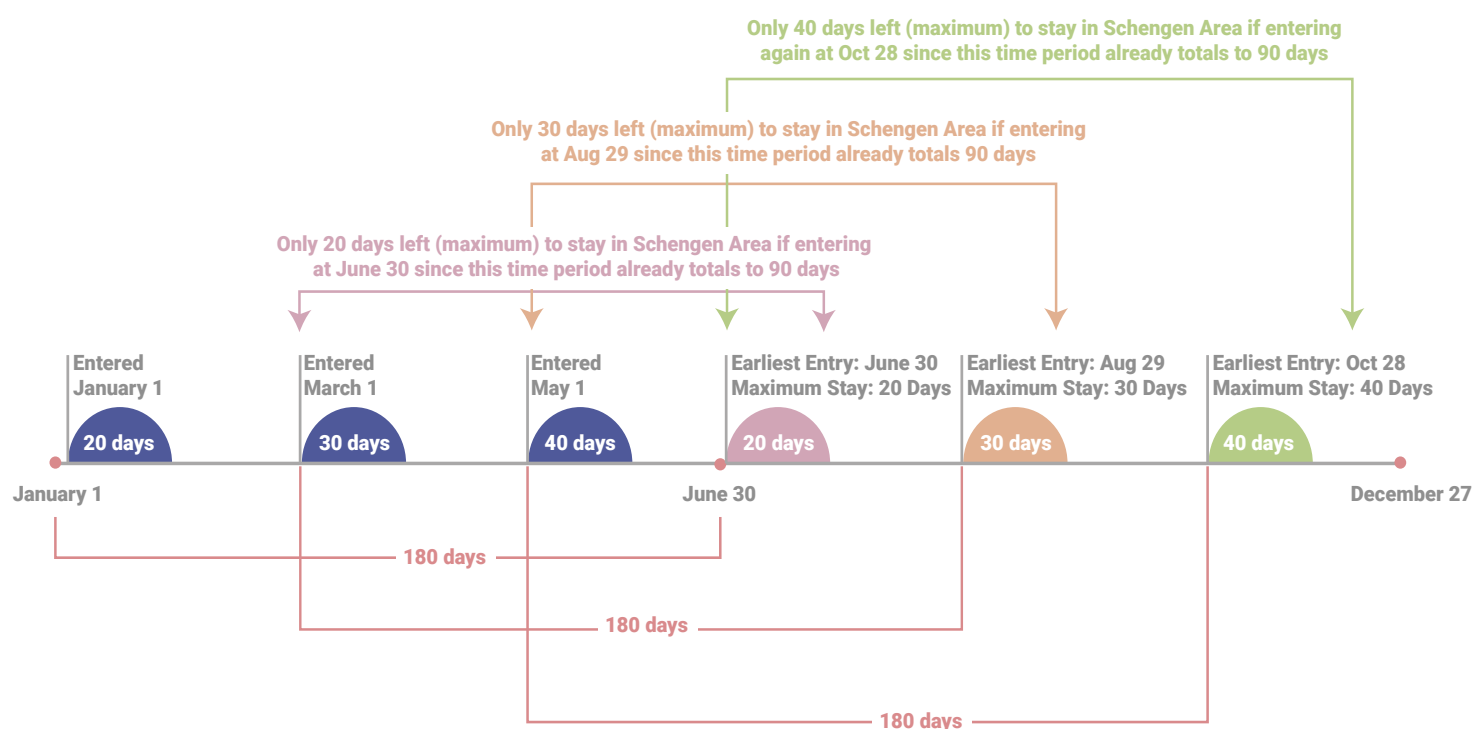
It's the total number of days spent within the Schengen area that is taken into account.

Calculating the 180 days

Where it gets slightly more complicated is the EU definition of '90 days within any 180-day period'. Here, it's best to

think of the 180 days as a moveable timeframe rather than a fixed 180-day period. The 180 days are counted backwards from the date of arrival or departure from the Schengen area. Each time you enter or leave the Schengen area, a new 180-day period will be calculated from that date. You do not need to worry about dates of previous arrivals and departures; you only need to consider the total number

of days spent within the zone during that particular 180-day period. If you arrived in France from the UK on March 15th, it would be the 180 days before March 15th that would be taken into account. If you had already spent the whole months of November, December, and January in France (totalling 90 days) and hoped to return on March 15th, you would be refused entry.



SOURCE: As recreated from KPMG -Finland's 2013 Article by Viltasalo, Sari & Snieders, Heleen

Planning your trip to France

If you are planning multiple trips to France, it can quickly get confusing! Using a [short-stay calculator](#) like the one offered on the EU website can help. Enter the dates of entry and exit, and it will calculate the total number of days (and remaining days) within a 180-day period. The 'control' option allows you to calculate the length of previous stays or your current stay. The 'planning' option

lets you set the date you plan to return to the Schengen area and will inform you of how many days you have left to use.

What are the penalties for overstaying?

For Brits or other non-EU travellers who overstay the 90 days, the penalty is typically a fine (these can vary, but we know of Brits being fined €198 for

or overstaying by two days) and an order to leave the country within 30 days. If you failed to leave the country after that order expires, the penalties would be far more severe.

For frequent travellers and second-home owners, the biggest consequence of this is receiving an 'over-stay' flag on your passport. Not only can this make it more difficult to re-enter France in the future, but it could also affect your chances of receiving a visa in any other country you choose to visit. If you ever wanted to apply for a long-stay visa or seek residency in France, this overstay

flag would almost certainly make your application more difficult and could be grounds for refusal.

Our advice is to make sure you fully understand the 90-day rule, always stay within the limits (do not assume that overstaying by one or two days will be overlooked - it won't!), and make sure that your passport is correctly stamped whenever you enter or leave the zone. The new EES system (see below), set to come into action in late 2024, will make it much easier for those following the rules (and harder for those who are trying not to!).

Additional entry requirements

While visitors to France benefitting from the 90/180-day rule don't need a visa, they should be able to meet the entry requirements and may be asked for any of the following:

- » A passport that is valid for at least six months or at least three months after the date you intend to leave the EU. The passport must have been issued within ten years on the day you enter (see the [official rules here](#)).
- ° Proof of accommodation (options listed below)
- ° Proof of second home ownership (for example, a recent electricity or property tax bill, or copy of the deeds)
- ° Proof of your hotel, Airbnb, gite, or other accommodation reservation
- ° An 'attestation d'accueil' from a host with which you are staying (for example, a friend or family member) - this must be requested by your host from their local Mairie and sent to you prior to your arrival in France
- ° Proof of sufficient funds to cover accommodation if you do not have proof of where you will be staying (see below).
- » Proof of travel insurance:
 - ° Travel insurance policy certificate, which covers you for all medical and hospital expenses in France, including repatriation costs and expenses (which are not covered by your GHIC). See the guidelines on what your travel insurance policy should include here.
 - ° GHIC card (optional but recommended).
- » Onward or return ticket showing the date you intend to leave France and/or the Schengen Zone (it goes without saying that this date should be within the allowed 90-day period)

- » Proof of sufficient funds to cover the duration of your stay - a recent bank statement or cash (for shorter stays). The amount of sufficient funds is determined as follows:
 - €65 per person per day, assuming you already have a hotel or similar accommodation booking.
 - €32.50 per person per day if you are staying with hosts (and have the above-mentioned 'attestation d'accueil') or at your own property.
 - €120 per person per day if you have no proof of accommodation

Will you really be asked for all these things?

In our experience, not everyone is asked to present the above when entering the country; however, it does appear that random checks are carried out regularly. If there is a concern that you plan to overstay or don't meet requirements, then it's within the rights of border control to deny you entry.

With this in mind, it's a good idea to ensure you can access all of the above if asked; however, we wouldn't worry too much about preparing every document ready to present at border control or calculating the exact amount of funds you need. In most instances, showing a hotel booking, return flight, or a credit card is likely to be sufficient.

.....

| New for 2024/2025: ETIAS and EES

The EES, or Entry and Exit System ("Le système d'entrée-sortie" in French), is an electronic passport monitoring system designed to track visitors to the EU under the 90/180-day rule and eliminate the need for human passport checks and passport stamps.

It has been postponed several times but is now set to come into action in late 2024.

The EES will replace the current system of physical passport checks and stamping by border guards with an electronic swipe-in/swipe-out system. These will be similar to the biometric passport scanners already in use at many airports, but they will register extra details such as your immigration status (for those resident in the EU or travelling with a long-stay visa) and how many days you have left of your 90/180-

day allowance, as well as flagging any overstayed visas or other border/immigration offences.

What about non-EU citizens resident in France?

The European Commission has stated that these scanners will only be required for non-residents. If you are resident in the EU, you will be able to use the in-person passport control desks and simply present your residency card as is already the procedure. More details on this will likely be released closer to the time.

How will the EES affect the 90/180-day rule?

It's important to note that the EES Entry and Exit System doesn't in any way change the 90/180-day rule itself. It only

changes the way in which your passport will be monitored upon entering and leaving the EU, reducing the risk of erroneous passport stamps.

For most travellers, this should be a welcome change, as many (especially

UK travellers since Brexit) have reported issues with the stamp system over the past year. However, for anyone hoping to flout the rules or 'get away' with overstaying their 90-day allowance, this system will make it much harder (if not impossible) to do so.

|ETIAS or EU Travel Information & Authorisation System

The ETIAS or EU Travel Information & Authorisation System ('Système européen d'autorisation et d'information concernant les voyages' in French) is a new online visa application service that will become obligatory for all non-EU residents in order to travel to France using the 90/180-day rule. This will only affect non-EU citizens who do not have a long-stay visa or residency card for France.

The ETIAS is expected to be introduced in mid-2025.

What is the ETIAS, and how will it affect travellers to France?

ETIAS will affect all non-EU citizens, including travellers from the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, who intend to travel to France or another EU country under the 90/180-day rule.

It will not affect those travelling to France with a long-stay visa, EU citizens travelling to the EU, or anyone in possession of an EU residency card (such as a French Carte de Séjour or Titre de Séjour).

The 90/180-day rule itself will remain unchanged; however, the process will no longer be free from administration, and you will no longer simply be able to show up and be granted entry at the border. Instead, ETIAS will require an online application prior to travel, similar to the ESTA short-stay visa system in the United States. Travellers will fill out the online application and, once

authorisation is granted, will be able to travel to and from the EU under the rules of the 90/180-day rule. Travellers are advised to apply within 72 hours of travel, but authorisation will generally be issued within minutes.

Further details of the system will likely be announced closer to the time.

There will be a €7 fee for each short-stay visa application made under the ETIAS system, but it will be free for all travellers under the age of 18 or over the age of 70. However, this fee will not be charged for every trip - instead, one ETIAS authorisation will be valid for three years. Travellers will be able to travel to and from the EU as many times as they like within that three-year period, providing they stay within the limits of the 90/180-day rule. When it expires, a new application must be filed, and a further €7 fee will be charged.

| Travel to France for Brits post-Brexit

Since Brexit, British passport holders, who could previously travel in and out of the Schengen zone with no limitations, are now subject to the same rules as other non-EU citizens. This means that if they want to spend more than 90/180 days in France, they must apply for a 6-month or 12-month long-stay visa.

Owning a second home in France, unfortunately, does not change the need for a visa in these circumstances, and despite hope for a second-home owner's visa, there are currently no plans for this to be introduced. Owning a home in France will, however, help your case when applying for a visa- not only will you be able to easily show proof of accommodation, but if you own your property without a mortgage, this will be taken into account when calculating the sufficient funds (read more about this in the chapter Long-stay visa eligibility).

A carte de séjour for second-home owners?

One question we get asked all the time is whether British second-home owners can get a carte de séjour to facilitate back-and-forth trips between the UK and France. While in theory, this may be possible - with an address in France, you may find you are able to fulfil the requirements to apply for a long-stay visa and, afterwards, apply for and receive a carte de séjour.

However, while we are aware of second-home owners who have achieved this, it's something that we strongly advise against. The Carte de Séjour is a residency card and is therefore only intended for those wishing to take

up residency, either temporarily or permanently, in France. By applying for one, you are legally stating that your primary residence is in France, and there are legal obligations that go along with this, such as completing a French tax return, registering for the social security system, and changing your driving licence/car registration.

While you may hear of others "getting away with it", with new systems being brought in and immigration controls tightened over the next year or so, we expect that the French authorities will begin to clamp down on this.

| Temporary long-stay visas

If you are looking to travel to France for more than the 90/180-day limit but aren't looking to become resident in France, the easiest option is to apply for a visa de long séjour temporaire visiteur or VLS-T Visiteur. This visa is the temporary version of a long-stay visa.

With a temporary long-stay visa:

- » You can stay in France for up to six months and enter/leave the country

as many times as you like during that period.

- » You do not have the right to work or study in France.
- » You cannot renew the visa or apply for a residency card (carte de séjour) in France - therefore, this visa is not suitable for those wishing to move to France.

- » You must leave the Schengen zone at the end of the visa - although you may re-enter under the 90/180-day rule (more on this below).
- » You must wait 180 days after the expiration of your visa before you can re-apply for another temporary long-stay visa (so you can't have more than one long-stay visa issued for any 1-year period).

Temporary long-stay visa requirements in France

Requirements for a French temporary long-stay visa may vary from country to country, but all applicants must prove that they have sufficient funds and healthcare coverage for the duration of their stay.

As an example, the French Embassy in the UK states the following requirements:

Sufficient funds

Sufficient funds required for a single person are around €1,300-400 monthly net, and you'll need to show that you have sufficient funds for the entire 6-month validity period of your visa (even if you only intend to stay for a few months), either through proof of regular income or by depositing the entire amount in a bank account.

These funds can be from personal income, savings, annuities or pensions, or other valid income sources. You can also be financially sponsored by a spouse, partner, or family member.

It's also worth noting that these are just rough figures based on France's minimum wage. Each application is assessed on an individual basis, and

the required funds would likely be lower for a couple visiting together, especially if you own the property in which you will be staying or if your accommodation has already been paid for in advance.

Healthcare

You must have health insurance for the full duration of the visa's validity period. The good news for British citizens is that the EHIC card (which remains valid for British citizens until the renewal date IF you already had one prior to Brexit) or the Global Health Insurance Card (the UK's new version of the European Health Insurance Card) is typically accepted for this kind of visa. For Americans or other non-EU citizens, private travel health insurance is required, with a minimum cover of €30,000 to cover urgent medical care and repatriation costs.

What documents do you need to provide for a Temporary Long-Stay Visa?

Some of the documents you should expect to be asked for when applying for your Temporary Long-Stay Visa are as follows:

- » Your passport (this must be less than ten years old, with a validity of at least three months longer than the visa expiry date you are applying for).
- » 2 x ID photographs (following passport-style regulations)
- » Proof of residence in the country you are applying if you are not a citizen
- » Proof of your socio-economic situation (retired, employed, self-employed, etc.)
- » An attestation stating the purpose for

your stay (for example, that you are a second-home owner wishing to visit or carry out maintenance on your holiday home) and that you will not exercise any professional activity in France

- » Proof of your travel health insurance
- » Proof of your French residence, rental

agreement, or intended place of residence

- » Proof of sufficient funds (for example, three months of bank statements with your full name and address, those of your spouse/partner along with your marriage certificate, or a savings account with the full amount).



How to Apply for Your Temporary Long-Stay Visa?

You can apply for your temporary long-stay visa via the [France Visas Online Portal](#).

This process can be done online, after which you will need to make an appointment at your local embassy or visa centre. You will need to print out the receipt of your application and bring it, along with all required documents, to the meeting. When your visa is ready, you will go back to the embassy to pick it up, or you can arrange to have it returned to you by courier (fees apply). During the final meeting, you will also have a biometric iris scan and fingerprints taken (these are retained for five years by the French Consulate).

You can start the application process three months before your intended arrival date in France.

How Much is a Temporary Long-Stay Visa?

Typically, a long-stay visa costs €99, which is payable at your visa application interview. There is also a non-refundable visa application processing fee payable at the time of your online application. This fee varies depending on your country of application, but in the UK, it is £26 payable to TLSContact, while in the US, it's \$38.20 to VLS Global. Additional credit card transaction fees may also apply.

Additional fees apply if you opt to have your passport and visa returned to you by courier (in the UK, expect this to cost around £16).

Do I need a Temporary Long-Stay Visa if my partner is an EU citizen?

Yes, if you are married to an EU citizen or French citizen, then the 90/180-day rule still applies to you. If you would like to stay longer in France, then you will need to apply for a temporary long-stay visa, even though your spouse is able to travel without one.

If you are looking to move to France with your spouse, you may or may not need to apply for a visa - see the chapter Joining a French or EU spouse in France.

Can I travel within the Schengen zone on a French long-stay visa?

If you have a long-stay French visa (visa de long séjour), it is only valid for France, and in theory, travel to other Schengen Area countries is subject to

the terms of the 90/180-day rule.

In practice, there are no border controls when travelling between Schengen Area countries (only when entering and leaving the zone). Although you will need an ID (such as a passport or national identity card) to fly, passports are not typically checked on arrival, and you won't be stamped with a 90-day visa.

All of this leaves a bit of a grey area for those travelling to another EU country on a French long-stay visa. The reality is that, due to the lack of border checks, if you have a French residency card or long-stay visa and decide to visit another EU country, say by driving over the border into Spain, there's technically nothing stopping you from overstaying this 90-day rule.

However, it is important to note that you would be illegally residing in Spain once your 90 days are up, and you wouldn't be able to seek healthcare, employment, or any other benefits associated with being a legal resident. This decision might also invalidate any travel or health insurance policies and prevent you from being able to renew your visa if you were found to have overstayed.

Does your visa count towards your 90 days?

Your French long-stay visa and 90-day allowance are not cumulative, meaning that the time spent in France under a long-stay visa does not count towards your 90 days. However, there are some important caveats:

Firstly, in order to validate both your 90-day allowances and/or your long-stay visa, you need to enter or leave France. This means that it isn't possible to arrive using your 90-day allowance

and stay in France through the period of your temporary long-stay visa. Nor is it possible to stay in France after your visa ends using your 90-day allowance. You must leave France in between, even just for one day, in order to have your passport stamped; otherwise, it will appear that you have overstayed your visa and/or 90-day allowance.

Secondly, while your long-stay visa for France suspends the 90-day allowance for the duration of your visa, it does not suspend the 90-day allowance for other countries in the EU. So, if you were to take a trip to Spain, Italy, or another EU country during the period of your visa, this would count towards your 90 days. (As previously mentioned, you may not

have your passport stamped for a trip within the Schengen Area, but if you left the Schengen Zone and re-entered via another country, your passport would be stamped.)

Finally, while you could, in theory, use your 90-day allowance in France, then return on a six-month visa, and then return again to enjoy another 90-day allowance, it is important to understand the consequences of doing so. If you spend a total of more than 183 days in France during any given calendar year, this can mean that you are classed as tax resident in France (and therefore liable for French taxes). You can read more about this in our Beginner's Guide to French Tax.



French long-stay visas

- » What kind of long-stay visa do you need?
- » Long-stay “Visitor” visa eligibility
- » Joining a French or EU spouse in France
- » Applying for a long-stay visa

French long-stay visas



Depending on your personal situation, there are several different routes to residency in France, but all of them start with a long-stay visa. Regardless of whether you are moving to work or study, retiring to France, or joining a French or EU spouse or family member, you will still start the process of residency by applying for a 12-month long-stay visa. This chapter looks at the different types of visas, the eligibility criteria, and the application process.

| What kind of long-stay visa do you need?

We've already covered the temporary or 6-month long-stay visa, which is designed for those looking to visit France, whether to travel, spend time with family, or enjoy time at their second home. But if your goal is to move to France, the kind of visa you need to apply for is a **Long-Stay Visa Equivalent to a Residence Permit** (*Visa de Long Séjour Valant Titre de Séjour* or **VLS-TS**). These visas are valid for 12 months and can be renewed without leaving France by applying for a

residency permit or Carte de Séjour.

There are several different types of long-stay visas (VLS-TS) available in France and it is essential to apply for the visa that suits your required activity, for example, a study visa, a work visa, or a visitor visa.

Here's a run-down of the most common options available, along with the basic eligibility requirements.

Moving or retiring to France without working

One of the most common types of long-stay visa is the **'Visitor' Long-Stay Visa (visa de long séjour visiteur or VLS-TS Visiteur)**. If you are a retired person hoping to move to France, this is the visa you will need, and it's also a popular option for those who don't fit into other visa categories (if you don't qualify for a work visa, for example). The visitor visa may also be an option for those looking to work remotely from France (provided you are not working for French clients or businesses), but it's best to discuss this with an immigration lawyer and/or tax specialist to ensure you meet all the legal requirements of living and working in France.. For more information, see the section on *Long-Stay "Visitor" Visa Eligibility* below.

Family visas in France

Another category of long-stay visas applies to those joining a spouse or family member in France. There are two main possibilities

Visas that allow family accompaniment

For a foreign national in receipt of a visa that allows for the family to join them (such as the Talent Passport or intra-company transfer (ICT) residence permits), there is a simplified 'accompanying family' procedure which allows the spouse/civil partner and any children under 18 to also apply for a multi-year residence permit. Depending on the conditions of the visa issued, you may or may not be allowed to work in France.

Family/spouse visas

The spouse/civil partner, children under 21, or dependant direct relatives of a French or EU national may apply for a 'Private or Family' Long-Stay Visa (VLS-TS vie privée, vie familiale). This visa has a simplified application process and allows the recipient to live, work, or undertake business within France. For more on this, see the section *Joining a French or EU spouse in France* below.

Work & business visas in France

There are various different long-stay visas available for those looking to work in France, the most common of which are listed below. The application process and functionality of these visas are all similar, and the only difference will be the kind of job your visa permits you to do, as well as the supporting documentation required.

Tip! Because of the specific documentation required for work and business visas, we recommend seeking the advice of a relocation specialist or immigration lawyer before making your application.

Do I need a Work Permit or a Work Visa?

The short answer is both. All non-EU citizens coming to work in France will need both a visa that allows them to live and work in France as well as a work permit that gives them the right to employment in France. In practice, however, you will probably only find you need to apply for one or the other

Many types of long-stay visas and residency permits (including the talent passport and entrepreneur visas) automatically serve as a work

permit; these visas allow you to seek employment or conduct business without the need to apply for an additional work permit. If your visa is conditional upon a work contract, your employer will be required to apply for a work permit on your behalf.

‘Employee’ Long-Stay Visa (VLS-TS salarié)

This visa is intended for foreign workers being hired by a French company or by a foreign company to work in France. This position must be secured before coming to France, and a work contract and work permit will be required in order to submit your visa application.

In this instance, your employer will be responsible for applying for your work permit and, in order to do so, must prove that your job position meets the requirements for international recruitment. For this reason, French

long-stay work visas are typically issued for highly skilled or specialist roles, job fields with known worker shortages, or positions that have failed to find suitable candidates in the French market.

This visa is dependent on your job contract and work permit - it does not give you the right to move to France and seek employment on arrival. However, if you were to stay in France and eventually seek permanent residency, it doesn't necessarily mean you have to stay in the same job or with the same company forever. Depending on your personal and employment circumstances, this visa may allow your spouse and family to accompany you, although they will need to apply for the relevant visas in order to do so.

‘Seasonal Worker’ Long-Stay Visa (VLS-TS travailleur saisonnier) or ‘Temporary Worker’ Long-Stay Visa (VLS-TS travailleur temporaire)



A seasonal or temporary worker visa is also conditional upon having a job contract and work permit in place. However, this visa is for those undertaking seasonal work in France without moving permanently to France. The visa permits you to undertake work for more than three months and to stay in France for up to six months each year (the limit before you would become tax resident in France). This kind of visa doesn't allow your spouse or family to accompany you.

'Business/Liberal Profession' Long-Stay Visa (VLS-TS entrepreneur/profession libérale)

It's also possible to move to France as a self-employed worker or business owner or to set up a business by applying for a 'business/liberal profession' Long-Stay Visa (VLS-TS). This option might be suitable for those who already run an international business or work remotely as a freelancer, but also for those looking to set up a business in France or run a gîte or chambre d'hôte.

For this visa, you will need to apply for a work permit based on your self-employed status or business proposal (you can do that [here](#)). Expect to be asked to prove the viability of your professional activity, which might mean proving that you have the right qualifications if you work in a regulated profession, proving that you have sufficient financial resources or income, or demonstrating the 'economic viability' of your project.

You might also want to consider whether you are eligible for France's talent passport (see below) before applying for this type of visa.

'Talent Passport' Long-Stay Visa (VLS-TS Passeport Talent)

Those looking to move to France who

don't fit one of the above-listed long-stay visa options may find that they are eligible for a Talent Passport (passeport talent). This is a unique long-stay visa in that it grants recipients an immediate four-year residency card or carte de séjour, and means you are free to live in France, seek employment, register as an auto-entrepreneur, or open a business in France. This visa also allows your spouse and family to accompany you, providing they apply for the relevant visas in order to do so.

There are various different situations that may qualify for a Talent Passport, but some include:

- » Investors
- » Start-ups and innovative businesses
- » Graduates of masters degree programmes
- » Freelancers and self-employed people working in liberal professions (see the full list [here](#))
- » Those who can demonstrate a 'provable reputation' in their field, which includes but is not limited to creative, intellectual, scientific, or sporting endeavours.

Study Visas in France

A 'Student' Long-Stay Visa (VLS-TS étudiant) is available to students over the age of 18 who have been accepted by an approved study program, course, or training program in France. Short-stay and temporary long-stay study visas are also available for those undertaking studies or training courses up to six months long in France. Long-stay study visas sometimes allow students to seek part-term employment to supplement their studies, but you must check the terms of your visa.

| Long-Stay “Visitor” Visa Eligibility

The aforementioned ‘Visitor’ Long-Stay Visa (visa de long séjour visiteur or VLS-TS Visiteur) is one of the most popular visas for those moving to France. This visa is suitable for retirees or anyone who doesn’t intend to work in France. Visitor visas have strict requirements regarding sufficient income and health insurance - you must be able to prove that you can support yourself without any help from the French state.

Tip! Although you can’t work on a visitor visa, it is possible to apply for a change of status after one year if you wish to apply for a work residency card later, providing that you meet the requirements.

The most important aspects of this include:

» **Proof of accommodation**

The French authorities want to know that you have a safe and secure place to live for the duration of the 12-month visa. Unlike for the temporary long-stay visa, a hotel or Airbnb booking is unlikely to be sufficient unless you can prove that this is long-term. Instead, viable options include a long-term rental agreement, proof of home ownership, or a signed attestation from a host, for example, if you plan to stay with a family member.

Tip! We’ve heard mixed reports of alternative options or Airbnb rentals being accepted for visa applications, so if you do have a less common living situation or aren’t able to provide documentation of one of the above options, it might be a good idea to use a relocation specialist or immigration lawyer to advise on your application.

» **Sufficient funds**

When applying for a visitor visa, you must prove that you have sufficient funds to cover the entirety of your stay in France. This figure is based on the French minimum wage or SMIC and equates to about €1,400 monthly net, or more than €16,500 annually.

Sufficient funds can be in the form of stable monthly income (from remote work, investments, rental properties, etc.), pension income, or savings (note that these must be easily accessible - showing proof of assets, investments, or long-term savings plans is unlikely to meet the criteria).

It’s essential to provide proof of these funds in a format that is easy for French authorities to interpret. For example, you might provide three months of UK bank statements that clearly show your full name and address and your salary, pension income, or savings of the full amount. Those of your spouse/partner, along with your marriage certificate, would also be acceptable.

Tip! Note that the sufficient funds figure above is just a ballpark, and your individual situation will be taken into account. For example, a married couple moving to France together to live in their French property that they own without a mortgage might be accepted with a combined pension income that amounts to lower than the SMIC. On the other hand, a single remote worker renting an apartment in Paris should be prepared to comfortably meet the minimum income threshold.

» **Private health insurance for your first year in France**

You must have a **private medical insurance policy** that covers the one-year duration of your visa and meets the requirements laid out by the French authorities. A standard travel insurance policy, Schengen travel insurance policy, or GHIC/EHIC will not be sufficient and will likely lead to your visa application being rejected.

Tip! We highly recommend choosing an insurance company that has a track record of providing private health insurance specifically for French visa applications and discussing your needs with them prior to purchase. Such insurance policies should allow for cancellation in the event that it does not meet the requirements for your visa.

Your insurance policy:

- » Should be an international Private Health Insurance Policy, NOT a travel insurance policy.
- » Should cover the entire validity of the visa (i.e. one year), regardless of how long you intend to stay in France and/or should clearly mention that the policy will be automatically renewed. Many visa centres will require proof of the full payment of the policy.
- » Should cover both medical expenses and hospitalisation.
- » Should have a minimum medical coverage of €30,000
- » Should not mention any medical exclusions (pre-existing conditions must be covered by your medical policy)
- » Should cover repatriation.

If you are looking to become resident in France, this health insurance policy may be cancelled (assuming your contract allows it) once you have registered for the French social security system and begin receiving state healthcare - at this point, you may then wish to take out a French top-up healthcare insurance or 'mutuelle' instead.

For British pensioners who have an S1 form from the NHS, this insurance will also only be required up until the point at which you are registered, after which your S1 will cover your state healthcare.

| Joining a French or EU spouse in France

If you are an EU, EEA, or Swiss citizen, you benefit from freedom of movement, allowing you to live and work in France without the need to apply for a visa or residency card (carte de séjour/titre de séjour). These rights also extend to your dependent family members, including:

- » Your spouse or civil partner
- » Children under 21 (of either partner)
- » Children over 21 who are dependents of either partner
- » Direct relatives in the ascending line who are dependants (of either partner)

(Note that in the case of family members or children over 21, proof of dependency is likely to be required.)

Your spouse and/or family members are permitted to join you in France, but they must apply for the relevant visa and/or residency card as outlined below.

Joining a French/EU Spouse: Do I need a visa?

If you are not an EU citizen (which includes British citizens after Brexit) and you plan to move to France to join your French or EU spouse, you must apply for the relevant visa and/or carte de séjour. There are two different methods, depending on whether your spouse or family member is a French citizen or an EU citizen resident in France.

Joining Your French Spouse in France

If your spouse or family member is a French citizen, you must follow national immigration procedure. This dictates that you must apply for a long-stay visa in your country of residence prior to arrival in France.

The type of visa that you will need is a **Visa de Long Séjour Valant Titre de Séjour (VLS-TS) « vie privée, vie familiale » (a long-stay family visa)**, and you can apply online here. You will need your ID, marriage certificate, your spouse's ID and his/her proof of French citizenship, and proof of living together

for more than six months (such as a utility bill in both of your names, a rental contract, or a joint bank account). You will also need to sign an attestation of non-polygamy.

A spouse visa will generally be issued automatically with no further need to prove your income, work situation, or other requirements. However, a spouse visa can be declined if the marriage is suspected to be fraudulent.

Note that your marriage must be entered into the French civil registry if it did not take place in France, and it's a good idea to start this process earlier rather than later as you will not be able

to proceed without it.

The path to permanent residency with your French spouse

Your long-stay visa (VLS-TS) must be validated within two months of arrival in France. You may also be required to carry out a medical exam with the OFII. See the section Applying for a long-stay visa below.

Your visa allows you to stay in France for up to one year, after which you will be entitled to apply for a Carte de séjour “vie privée et familiale” (a

Joining Your EU Spouse in France

If your spouse is an EU citizen but not a French national, the application process is slightly different. As the spouse of an EU citizen, you can enter France without a visa (or with the relevant short-stay visa if required - see the section How the 90/180-day rule works in the previous chapter).

However, you must apply for a Carte de Séjour “membre de la famille d’un citoyen de l’Union/EEE/Suisse” (a residency card marked “family member of a Union citizen”) within three months of arrival - you can do that here.

You will need your ID, marriage certificate, your spouse’s ID and proof of French residency, and proof of living together for more than six months (such as a utility bill in both of your names, a rental contract, or a joint bank account). You will also need to sign an attestation of non-polygamy.

You will typically be issued with a 5-year residency card (this may be reduced in the instance of a temporary stay - for example, if your spouse has a 2-year work contract in France), but it is renewable. This Carte de Séjour is generally issued with no further need to prove your income, work situation, or other requirements. Spouse residency cards may be declined if the marriage is suspected to be fraudulent.

Once you have been resident in France for five years, you have the right to request a permanent residency card or Carte de Resident, which is valid for ten years and renewable. You also have the right to seek French citizenship if you wish to do so, but this is not a legal requirement.

temporary residency card). Typically, you will be issued a 2-year card. See the section Applying for a carte de séjour in the next chapter.

When the time comes to renew your Carte de séjour, you will have been resident in France for three years. At this point, you have the right to request a permanent residency card or Carte de Resident, which is valid for ten years and renewable. You also have the right to seek French citizenship if you wish to do so, but this is not a legal requirement.



Joining a French resident in France

If you are a non-EU citizen, but a permanent resident of France (i.e. in possession of a 10-year carte de résident), then your rights to residence also extend to your spouse and/or dependant family members (assuming that they apply for the appropriate visa and/or residency permit).

If you hold a French Carte de Séjour and have been legally resident in France for more than 18 months, you may also

apply for your spouse or dependant family members to join you in France. Certain French long-stay visas also allow for accompanying spouses and family members. In all of these cases, the right to bring your spouse or family with you to France will be subject to the terms of your visa/carte de séjour. According to the terms of their visa/residency permit, your spouse or accompanying family members may or may not be permitted to work during their stay in France. Read more about family reunification in France [here](#).

Joining an EU Spouse in France: FAQ

Some of the most commonly asked questions regarding joining your EU spouse in France.

Can I work in France with my spouse/family visa or Carte de Séjour?

Yes. A family visa grants you the same rights to live, work, or start a business as your spouse.

How Much Does a Spouse/Family visa or Carte de Séjour cost?

Family visas and carte de séjours for the spouse of French citizens cost the same as other applications, which is €99 for a long-stay visa and €225 for the carte de séjour application. For the spouse of an EU citizen, the application for a carte de séjour is free, providing that you meet the deadline.

What happens if you don't apply for a Carte de Sejour within three months?

As the spouse of an EU citizen, you must apply for a Carte de Séjour residency card marked "membre de la famille d'un citoyen de l'Union/EEE/Suisse" within three months of arrival. This application is free of charge. If you fail to apply within three months, you may still apply for a Carte de Séjour; however, it will be subject to the full application fee of €200. It's also worth noting that you will be illegally residing in the country at the end of the three months, which will prevent you from integrating into the French social security system and being able to work in France. We highly recommend that EU spouses start the application process as soon as possible on arrival in France.

Can I join a British spouse/family member resident in France under the Withdrawal Agreement?

British citizens who were resident in France prior to January 1st, 2021, have their residency status in France protected by the Withdrawal Agreement. As a permanent French resident, this includes the right to have their spouse and dependent family join them in France.

Is my non-EU spouse subject to the 90/180-day rule?

As an EU citizen, you have the right to have your non-EU spouse travel with you, so in theory, the 90/180 days does not apply. However, national immigration laws may require your non-EU spouse to have a visa if he/she is accompanying you for more than 90/180 days and your purpose is not to seek residency, and this is the case with France.

You can run a visa simulation of your situation [here](#) (click “Do I need a visa?”), which states that a non-EU spouse needs a visa for a stay of over 90 days for tourism purposes, even if visiting with their EU spouse.

Applying for a long-stay visa

For the purpose of this guide, we’re going to take you through the requirements and application process for the aforementioned **‘Visitor’ Long-Stay Visa (visa de long séjour visiteur or VLS-TS Visiteur)**, one of the most popular visas for those moving to France. Additional documentation will likely be required for work, study, and other visas.

*Note that the information below is only intended as a guide - always refer to the official list of documents provided by your visa application centre or embassy.

When should you apply for your French long-stay visa?

You can file your application for a long-stay visa VLS-TS three months before your planned date of arrival in France or six months for a short-stay visa. Processing times vary depending on the country you are applying in, but it’s a good idea to start as early as possible to leave enough time - you will need to make and attend an interview at your nearest French embassy or visa centre. You must apply within one month of your planned arrival date to process your application and attend the visa interview.

Remember that you can start gathering the required documents prior to this. You can also create an online account and begin your application online (just remember to save it!).



How easy is it to get a long-stay visa?

Many non-EU citizens receive long-stay visas to visit France each year, and if you are eligible for a long-stay visa and have all the necessary paperwork, there is every chance your application will go through without a hitch.

However, even if this is the case, remember that France (as always!) is meticulous over documentation. You will need to present every single document requested, as well as any supporting documentation, if the original document doesn't completely meet the requirements. Do not expect to be able to 'explain away' any missing documents, and if you have any doubts about what documents will be accepted, double-check with your embassy or visa centre before your interview and bring all possibilities with you. In fact, this is the 'golden rule of all French administration' - the more paperwork you have to back up your position, the better!

Remember that these long-stay visas are, in many cases, the first step to permanent residency, so it is understandable that the entry requirements are strict. Every visa application is considered on an individual basis, so it is impossible to offer guarantees. However, if you have a strong reason for your visit to France (enrolment in a study program, a job contract and work permit, or you own a French property and have sufficient income and healthcare coverage), and you are able to supply every required document, there is a good chance that your application will be approved.

Applying for your long-stay visa: step-by-step

Step One - Select Your Visa Type

Find out what kind of long-stay visa you need - see the above section. What kind of long-stay visa do you need? for help on this. Start your application process by using the visa wizard on the France Visas website - <https://france-visas.gouv.fr/>.

Step Two - Prepare Your Documents

The visa wizard will give you a list of documents that you will need to start your application process. These may vary depending on your citizenship, country of application, marital status, and type of visa, so be sure to check the list carefully.

However, some of the documents you should be prepared to present include:

- » Your passport (this must be less than ten years old, with a validity of at least three months longer than the visa expiry date you are applying for). You will need to scan all relevant pages (including stamped pages and previous visas).
- » Proof of residence in the country you are applying from if you are not a citizen
- » 2 x ID photographs (following passport-style regulations)
- » Proof of your socio-economic situation (retired, employed, self-employed, etc.)
- » An attestation stating the purpose for your stay (for example, that you are a second-home owner wishing to visit or carry out maintenance on your holiday home) and that you will not exercise any professional activity in France (for visitor visas only)

French long-stay visas

- » Proof of your private health insurance to cover your first year in France.
- » Proof of your French residence, rental agreement, or intended place of residence. For example, proof of homeownership, a long-term rental contract, or an attestation from your host.
- » Proof of sufficient funds (for example, three months of UK bank statements showing your salary with your full name and address, those of your spouse/partner along with your marriage certificate, or a savings account with the full amount).

Step Three - File Your Application Online

Once you have collected all the relevant documents, click 'submit online application' at the bottom of the visa wizard page. You will be asked to create an account, which means you can save your application and revisit it or add any missing documents before submitting it.

Once you have filled in the online visa application form and attached all the relevant documents (typically in a PDF or jpg form, but always follow the specific instructions given), you can submit your visa application.

Tip! It's a good idea to double-check your application before sending it, as mistakes can't be rectified afterwards. Ideally, save it and check again the next day before submitting it.

The visa application fee will be payable when you submit your application. This is a processing fee paid to the visa centre handling your application and is non-refundable, even in the

case that your application is refused. Fees vary depending on the country of application, but for example, in the UK, it is £26 payable to TLSContact, while in the US, it's \$38.20 through VLS Global. Additional credit card transaction fees may also apply.

Tip! If you want a 12-month long-stay visa, you must check the box stating that you intend to stay in France for more than 12 months - otherwise, you will be issued a temporary long-stay visa that is non-renewable and isn't suitable for those looking to move to France.

Step Four - Book Your Visa Appointment

Once you've paid your fee and lodged your application, you will be able to book your appointment at your nearest French embassy or visa centre. This in-person appointment is essential to securing your visa and should be organised as soon as possible - or a minimum of two weeks before your departure date.

Tip! You must print out your receipt and CERFA application form (and it must NOT have the word DRAFT on it!) and bring it to your appointment with you. The easiest time to do this is right after you submit your application, so remember to print or save the documents before you close the window.

Step Five - Prepare For Your Visa Interview

Along with your printed receipt and

CERFA form, be sure to bring all the required documents on the list provided - make sure you bring both the originals and copies. It's a good idea to bring any supporting documentation, too, just in case.

Step Six - Attend Your Visa Interview

Attend the appointment at your nearest French embassy or visa centre, where you will be asked to present all the required documents. The meeting takes around 20 minutes, and they will review your application and documents, capture your biometric data (photo and fingerprints) for your visa, and collect your visa application fee (€99, but additional service charges of no more than €40 may be applied if your visa is processed by an external service provider). Your passport will be retained.

Step Seven - Receive Your Long-Stay Visa for France

You should be able to track the progress of your application online, but you will be notified when your visa is ready to collect from the embassy or visa centre. It's also often possible to organise for your passport and visa to be sent to you by courier (extra costs apply).

Step Eight - Arrival in France

On arrival in France, don't forget to get your passport stamped - if you arrive in France via another country, you must present yourself at your local préfecture to get your passport stamped with your date of arrival. If flying to France, be prepared to present your supporting documents at the border, including proof of your accommodation, sufficient funds, and health insurance certificate.

Step Nine - Validate Your Visa

You must validate your VLS-TS visa within three months of arriving in France - failure to do so will not only mean that you are unlawfully residing in France, but it also means you won't be able to leave and return to France for the duration of your visa. The validation process can be done online [here](#) - you will need to enter the information on your visa and additional personal information, give your date of arrival in France and your French address, and pay the state tax of €200.

Tip! It may not be made clear at the time of applying that you need to validate your visa - if in doubt, there is a full list of visas that this applies to [here](#).

Depending on your visa, citizenship, and circumstances, you may also be contacted by the OFII (French Office for Immigration and Integration) to carry out a medical. This report will be required if you plan to apply for a resident card (carte de séjour) at the end of your long-stay visa. Don't worry; this is just a routine medical and will not affect your residency card application.



French residency & carte de séjours

- » The path to permanent residency in France
- » Your first year in France
- » Applying for a carte de séjour
- » Applying for a carte de résident
- » Applying for French Citizenship
- » Withdrawal Agreement visas

French residency & carte séjours



Applying for a French visa is just the first step in your journey to moving to France. Here, we'll take a look at the entire process, from that initial visa and your first carte de séjour application through to becoming a permanent resident in France.

| The path to permanent residency in France

If your goal is to become a permanent resident in France, it's important to understand the multi-year process that goes into this. While individual situations may vary, most people go through four main steps before receiving permanent residency in France.

Becoming a permanent resident in France

The first thing to prepare yourself for is that the road to permanent French residency is a long one - prepare yourself for a minimum of three years (five in most cases) and a hefty amount of paperwork, regardless of your situation.

The time taken, costs involved, and eligibility requirements all vary depending on your personal circumstances - for example, a retiree, a worker on a talent visa, and the

spouse of a French national - however, the steps are essentially the same.



The Main Steps to French Residency

01

Visa - Year 1

In almost all situations, you will start with a 12-month long-stay visa, which you will apply for in your country of residence, prior to arriving in France.

Long-Stay Visa Equivalent to a Residence Permit (Visa de Long Séjour Valant Titre de Séjour VLS-TS) - Valid for one year

02

Carte de Séjour - Year 2-3

At the end of your first year in France, you will apply for your first “Carte de séjour” - a residency card. Note that you can’t “renew” your visa in France; after your first long-stay visa, your “renewal” is the application for the carte de séjour.

Temporary Residence Card (Carte de séjour temporaire) - valid for one year and renewable.

03

Carte de séjour pluriannuelle - Year 3-5

At the end of your carte de séjour in France, you may apply for a carte de séjour pluriannuelle, which is valid for multiple years. In some circumstances, however, you may only be issued a one-year Carte de séjour and will need to renew this each year.

Multi-year Residence Card (carte de séjour pluriannuelle) - typically valid for four years.

04

Carte de résident - Year 5 +

At the end of your carte de séjour pluriannuelle (a total of more than five years in France), you may apply for a carte de résident. Note that there is a requirement to pass a French language exam at this point, but all recipients with a permanent resident card have the right to work. In some circumstances, you may apply for this card after just three years in France.

Residence Card (Carte de résident) - valid for ten years and renewable.

| Your first year in France

Depending on your personal situation, there are several different routes to residency, **but all of them start with a long-stay visa**. Regardless of whether you are moving to work or study, retiring to France, or joining a French or EU spouse or family member, you will still start the process to residency with a 1-year long-stay visa. Read our chapter on French Long-Stay visas for more on this.

Once you arrive in France, there are several steps that you will need to take during your first 12 months.

Validating your VLS-TS in France

Your long-stay visa VLS-TS must be validated **within three months of arriving in France**. This can be done online [here](#) - you will need to enter the information on your visa and additional personal information, give your date of arrival in France and your French address, and pay the state tax of €200. This is an additional fee to the original visa application fee.

Note that if you don't validate your visa, not only will you not be able to legally travel to and from France within the validity period of your visa, but you also

Tip! While this guide focuses on the official processes required for establishing residency in France and applying for your carte de séjour, there are many other things to do during your first year in France - check out our Beginner's Guide to Moving to France for the full details.

will not be able to apply for your carte de séjour at the end of the first year.

OFII Medical

You will also be contacted by the OFII

(French Office for Immigration and Integration) to carry out a medical. This report is compulsory if you plan to apply for a resident card (carte de séjour) at the end of your long-stay visa.

Details of the medical (as taken from the official guidelines) are:

The medical consists of a general clinical examination, an x-ray of the lungs, a vaccination check, and a blood glucose test for those at risk of diabetes. Additional examinations may be requested by the doctor. Health advice and information on the health system in France may be given.

At the end of the medical examination, a medical certificate certifying that you meet the medical conditions authorising your stay in France will be issued to you. You will need to provide this medical certificate to the prefecture where you live in order to obtain the renewal of

security number.

Most new arrivals will first be issued a provisional social security number, which entitles them to access the state health-care service. Once you have received your permanent social security number, you can also apply for your Carte Vitale - find out about this in our Beginner's Guide to Moving to France.

Applicants may need to provide this social security number in order to continue their carte de séjour application, so it's important not to skip this step.

Filing your French tax return

When you become resident in France, you also automatically become tax resident, which means you will need to file a tax return. It is the legal responsibility of every French resident to file a tax return, whether or not you are liable to pay taxes.

In France, the tax year runs from January to December in line with the calendar year (unlike in some countries, such as the UK, where it runs from April to April). Tax is declared the following year for income earned/received that year - for example, income earned/received in 2023 will be declared on your 2024 tax return.

This means that if you move to France, you won't need to file a tax return until the fol-

lowing year. So, if you moved to France in 2023, you would file your first tax return in April/May 2024. It is possible, therefore, that if you moved to France in January 2023, you wouldn't need to file a tax return until May 2024, almost one and a half years later.

For this reason, you won't be asked for your tax notice (known as an 'avis d'impôt' in France) during your first carte de séjour application. However, this will be-



your residence card.

Registering for social security in France

Permanent residents of France are legally required to sign up for France's state healthcare system or 'L'Assurance Maladie'. To join, you need to have been resident in France for three months, after which you'll need to apply for a social

come a requirement later on in the residency process and could cause problems if you haven't. As a legal French resident, you are, of course, expected to adhere to the same laws and requirements as French citizens.

For more about this, read our *Beginner's Guide to French Tax*.

Tip! Don't forget to tell the tax authorities back in your country of origin that you have moved too. Depending on your situation and citizenship, you may or may not need to file a tax return in both countries, so be sure that you understand the legal requirements.

Applying for your carte de séjour

If you wish to stay in France after the expiry of your long-stay visa, you must apply for a carte de séjour - a French residency card before it expires. You can start the application process **up to four months** before the expiry date of your visa, and it should be filed by the latest

two months before. Processing times can be long, especially if you make a mistake on the application form or are requested to submit additional documents, so we recommend starting this process as soon as possible.

Generally speaking, you will apply for a carte de séjour that has the same title as your long-stay visa - so the holder of a long-stay visitor visa will apply for a carte de séjour "visitor". It is possible to request a change of status if your situation has changed - for example, to arrive on a visitor visa and then apply for a carte de séjour. However, you will need to request this change of status, provide reasons for doing so, and, of course, meet all the eligibility requirements for the newly requested status.

What happens if I don't apply for my Carte de Séjour on time?

If your long-stay visa expires before you've applied, you will incur an extra fee of €180 (on top of the standard application fees), as well as risk being refused for overstaying your visa.

Applying for a carte de séjour

Applying for your Carte de Séjour can be done online [here](#) (click 'Je demande ou renouvelle un titre de séjour'), and you can use the same account that you created when validating your long-stay visa. You will also need to attend a meeting or 'interview' at your local prefecture. The application process is carried out in France; you don't need to return to your home country.

Let's take a look at the process, step-by-step.

Tip! A Carte de séjour and Titre de séjour are essentially the same thing - the 'titre' refers to the permit, and the 'carte' refers to the card that is issued as proof of the permit - but you can't have one without the other, so it's easiest to assume they mean the same thing.

Your Carte de Séjour Application

You will be asked to submit a number of documents (many of which you will already have had to submit for your original long-stay visa, but you will have to re-submit them) and pay the application fee of €225. In order to receive your first Carte de Séjour, you will also need to attend an interview at your local prefecture, where you will be asked to submit documents and have your biometric data taken.

Required documents for your Carte de Séjour application

The exact documents required will depend upon the type of Carte de Séjour - you can view the published lists of requirements here (in French). Below is a list of potential documents you may be asked to provide, including some possibilities for different visa types.

Your long-stay visa or current carte de séjour:

- » Your passport
- » Your full birth certificate (translated into French)
- » Proof of address (dated less than six months old)
- » 3 x passport-style photos
- » OFII medical certificate
- » For a 'visitor' Carte de Séjour:
- » Proof of financial resources (for example, a minimum of three months' bank statements or pension receipts)
- » Handwritten attestation that you will not work in France.
- » Certificate of health insurance covering the duration of your stay

For a 'Family' Carte de Séjour:

- » Your marriage certificate and proof of

registration on the French marriage registry.

- » Passport or National Identity card of your spouse proving that they are a French national.
- » Declaration of honour from your spouse
- » Documents proving a minimum of six months of your residence together in France.

For a 'Work' Carte de Séjour:

- » Your work permit
- » Your work contract

Attending your Carte de Séjour interview

Once you have filled in your application online, you will be invited to attend an appointment at your local prefecture. You will also be issued a list of documents to bring, such as the one above.

During the interview, you will be asked to present all your documents and your photos, sign various documents, and - assuming your application is accepted, you will be given a **Récépissé De Demande De Carte De Séjour**. Hold onto this document as it is the official 'receipt' of your application and will serve as your proof of residency up until you receive your carte de séjour.

After the interview, your carte de séjour will either be sent to you or will be available for you to pick up from the prefecture. This may take anything from three weeks to a few months, depending on the prefecture - you should be given an idea of the timeframe at your appointment.

Tips for Attending Your Carte de Séjour Interview

It's important to point out that having a long-stay visa is not a guarantee that you will be granted a carte de séjour. If your circumstances have not changed and you can provide all the required documentation, there is every reason to expect your request to be approved. However, it is important to treat this step with just as much importance as that of your initial visa application - this is the first real step to permanent residency, and you should expect your dossier to be scrutinised. Here are some tips to make your application easier:

- » Get organised: you will likely have a LOT of documents that make up your 'dossier', and it's a good idea to invest in a file with plastic wallets to keep all of them safe and presentable. A good tip is to have two files: one for your own copies and originals, and one that can be presented to the prefecture.



- » Be sure that your 'dossier' includes all required documents (don't expect to 'get away' with any missing, incomplete, or alternative documents!). You may be asked for additional documents if those presented are not sufficient, so bring any backup documents, too. For example, to prove your financ-

es, you might bring copies of your current account statements, but also bring details of your savings account, pension, or other income.

- » Bring any extra personal documents that may be relevant, even if you haven't been asked for them (divorce certificates, for example, if you have been previously married, your expired passport if you have recently renewed it, or details of a previous address if you have moved house during your stay in France). The more relevant documentation, the better wherever French administration is concerned!
- » Make photocopies in advance of all the documents you will need to present. Bring the originals to the interview, too.
- » Dress smartly and be on time for the appointment at the prefecture. Be sure that you also bring the 'convocation' (the email or letter with your appointment details on it) - you will need to show this to enter the building.
- » All requested foreign documents (such as your birth certificate, foreign in-

come statements, international health insurance certificate, etc.) will need to be translated into French, and you must use an official French court-sworn Translator - find a full list [here](#).

- » Bring a pen to the appointment - they are not typically supplied, and you may have extra forms to fill out as you wait.
- » Brush up on your French. Appointments will generally take place in French, and there is no guarantee that officials will speak any English. While

French language speaking skills are not a prerequisite for visas and carte de séjours, they are required for most permanent residency cards. Either way, making an effort to speak French will go a long way at the prefecture.

| Applying for a carte de résident

Depending on your situation, after three to five years, you may be able to apply for a carte de résident in France.

This permanent residency card grants you:

- » The right to work, start a business or engage in self-employed work in France if you weren't already able to do so under the terms of your visa/carte de séjour.
- » The right to bring your spouse or children to live with you in France (note that they will still need to apply for the relevant visa or residency card on arrival).
- » The right to spend up to three years living or working outside of France without losing your permanent residency status (it may be possible to extend this under certain circumstances, but you must request permission from the French authorities).
- » A 10-year residency permit with a simplified online-only renewal process (no need to re-submit all your paperwork or undertake an interview at the prefecture each time).

When are you eligible for a carte de résident?

While there are some circumstances in which a carte de résident is issued straight away, for most non-EU citizens moving to France, you will have the opportunity to apply for one after a minimum of three or five years in France. You may apply for a carte de résident after three years of continuous residence in France if you are:

- » Joining your spouse or parent who is a holder of a French carte de résident.
- » If you have also been married to a French spouse for more than three years.
- » If you are the parent of a French child and have lived in France for three years in this capacity under the terms of a "private and family life" visa/carte de séjour.
- » If you are from a country with which France has a bilateral residency

agreement, such as Morocco, Tunisia, Mali, and others (conditions apply).

- » Alternatively, you may apply for a carte de résident after five years of continuous residence in France, provided you meet the eligibility criteria. Note that certain visas and carte de séjours, including study visas, intern visas, and temporary worker visas, do not count towards these five years.

How to apply for a carte de résident

If you wish to apply for a carte de résident, you provide the following documentation:

- » Proof that you have lived in France for five or more consecutive years.
- » Proof that you are registered in the French social security system and have health insurance
- » Proof of stable and sufficient income that meets the national SMIC (minimum wage).

- » Proof of a permanent residence, i.e. property ownership or a long-term rental contract in your name.
- » Proof that you have a level of French equal to or higher than A2 (either a results certificate from a test de connaissance du français (TCF) exam or proof of a university diploma or equivalent that was conducted in French).
- » Proof of sufficient “integration” into French society.
- » As with your carte de séjour applications, the application for a resident card is started online between four and two months before the end of your current carte séjour.
- » Note that you will need to have all documents ready to go at this point, so you should have completed your French language exam (if required) prior to this (TCF exams remain valid for two years after the pass date).
- » You will be invited to an interview at your local prefecture, where you will be questioned on your general knowledge of France and your integration into French life and society.



| Applying for French Citizenship

Applying for French nationality is a possibility for immigrants who plan to reside permanently in France, and it brings with it a number of benefits above that of the permanent residency card, most notably the opportunity to apply for a French passport. However, the application process is long and comprises multiple steps, so it's not a decision to be taken lightly, nor is it a requirement for permanent residency in France.

The benefits of becoming a French citizen

Taking French Citizenship means becoming naturalised and, therefore, becoming a French citizen. The benefits of becoming a French national mean that you will then be afforded all the same rights as a French citizen. French citizenship offers full security of being able to live and work in France regardless of whether your circumstances change, and it can only be revoked in very extreme cases

(such as committing a terrorist act). As a French citizen, you will also be able to pass this citizenship on to your children. Just like French citizens, you will have the right to vote in local parliament and presidential elections or stand for office - you could even run for president if you wanted to!

Finally, becoming a French citizen also means becoming an EU citizen, granting the right to freedom of movement within the EU. You may also travel or even live outside of France for long periods

without losing the right to residency in France. After all, as a French citizen,

France will always be your home!

Can I (and should I) apply for French citizenship?

Applying for French citizenship is a long and difficult process, so it's certainly not for everyone. It's important to note that it is not essential to become a French national in order to live permanently in France, and many long-term residents do not choose to become French citizens.

Before you decide to undergo the lengthy application process, it's important to ask yourself why you wish to become French. Do you consider France to be your home? Is France the place you see yourself living for the rest of your life? Do you speak French and feel fully integrated into French society? Answering yes to these questions should be the bare minimum before considering taking this step.

Do I have to give up my own citizenship to become a French citizen?

It's important to consider whether you are able to become a French citizen without giving up your own citizenship and if this is something that works for you. Some countries, such as France, the UK and the US, allow citizens to hold dual citizenship, meaning that you can be a citizen of two countries (or sometimes more) at one time. You could, therefore, have both a French and a UK/US passport and enjoy citizen's rights in both countries.

However, other countries do not allow dual citizenship, meaning that in order to become a French citizen, you would be required to renounce your citizenship of your birth country. It's important to consider carefully whether this is the right choice before continuing with your application for French citizenship.



Who is eligible to apply for French citizenship?

There are two ways to become a French citizen: by declaration (in instances where you are legally entitled to citizenship) or by decree (whereby you request to become a citizen).

Applying by declaration

Applying for French citizenship by declaration is possible in the following circumstances:

- » If you have been married to your French spouse for at least four years. Find out more [here](#).
- » If you are over 65, are the parent or grandparent of French children, and have lived in France for at least 25 years. Find out more [here](#).
- » If you were born in France to non-French parents or lived in France for at least five years since the age of 11, you can apply for citizenship when you turn 18. There are also other possibilities for those under the age of 18 - see [here](#).

Applying by decree

Applying for French citizenship by decree (par décret) is only possible if all of the following criteria have been met:

- » You are currently resident in France.
- » You have been living in France for a minimum of five consecutive years and within interruption.
- » You hold a valid residence card (except for EU citizens).
- » You are over 18 years old.

What are the requirements for applying for French Citizenship by decree?

Naturally, France does not make it easy for expats to become French citizens, and being awarded citizenship is a privilege reserved for those who are fully settled and integrated into French life.

If you are requesting citizenship by decree - une demande d'accès à la nationalité française par décret - you will need to provide a sizable 'dossier', including various official documents, such as:

- » Proof of five or more years of consecutive residency in France.
- » Your birth certificate and that of both of your parents, plus your parents' marriage certificate.
- » Your marriage, divorce, and birth certificates if you are married, divorced, or have children.
- » Proof of sufficient and stable resources.
- » Previous addresses for the last ten years.
- » Proof that you have paid your taxes in France.
- » Certificate of B2 level French (speaking, writing, and comprehension).
- » Proof of 'good moral conduct', i.e. a clean criminal record.

You can find a full list of the required documents by using the simulator [here](#). All of the listed documents will be required for your application, so use the checklist provided and make sure you have them all ready before you start the application process.

Tip! All birth, marriage, and criminal record certificates should be issued within six months of the date of application and will also need to be translated into French (if they aren't already) by an official translator, so you will need to factor this into your planning.

French citizenship: the application process

You can start your official application for French citizenship via the online portal NATALI, which you can find [here](#). You'll be asked to fill in all your details, attach all the required documents, and finally, pay the application fee (€55) and submit your application.

It's quite a lengthy process, so leave yourself plenty of time to fill it out and double-check each section before you move on. You can also save your application and return to it at a later date.

Applications are processed by your local prefecture, and average waiting times can be anything from 1.5 years to 3 years. At this point, if your application has been accepted, you will be invited to an interview at the prefecture, during which you will be asked about your integration into the French way of life, including passing an oral exam on French history, politics, and culture. If you are successful in this step, you will receive confirmation of your naturalisation within several months of attending the interview.

| Withdrawal Agreement visas

UK citizens who were lawfully residing in France in accordance with EU law prior to 1st January 2021 (the date when the Brexit transition period ended and the UK officially left the EU) are protected by the rights of the Withdrawal Agreement.

In France, such British citizens were required by law to apply for a residency card and were issued with a special Withdrawal Agreement carte de séjour. Two types of cards were issued:

- » A 5-year carte de séjour was issued for those who had been living in France less than five years prior to 1st January 2021 and met the requirements of minimum income, etc. Recipients of this card can apply for a 10-year card on renewal.

OR

- » A 10-year carte de séjour was issued for those who had been living in France for more than five years prior to 1st January 2021; no conditions needed to be met for this visa.

Both carte de séjours are renewable and have the mention “Withdrawal Agreement”. Under the Withdrawal Agreement between the EU and the UK, these residents are afforded rights similar to those of a carte de résident, with some additions.

Holders of the 10-year card:

- » May leave France for up to five years without losing your permanent residency rights - three years more than the two years permitted for EU citizens.
- » Continue to maintain the same rights to UK or EU-based pensions and benefits as prior to Brexit.
- » May continue to use an S1 form from the UK to access French healthcare if eligible and may still receive one if you are entitled to a UK pension but weren't yet at pensionable age at the end of the transition period.

The rights protected under the Withdrawal Agreement are guaranteed for your lifetime, provided that you maintain your residency in France.

However, the Withdrawal Agreement **does not:**

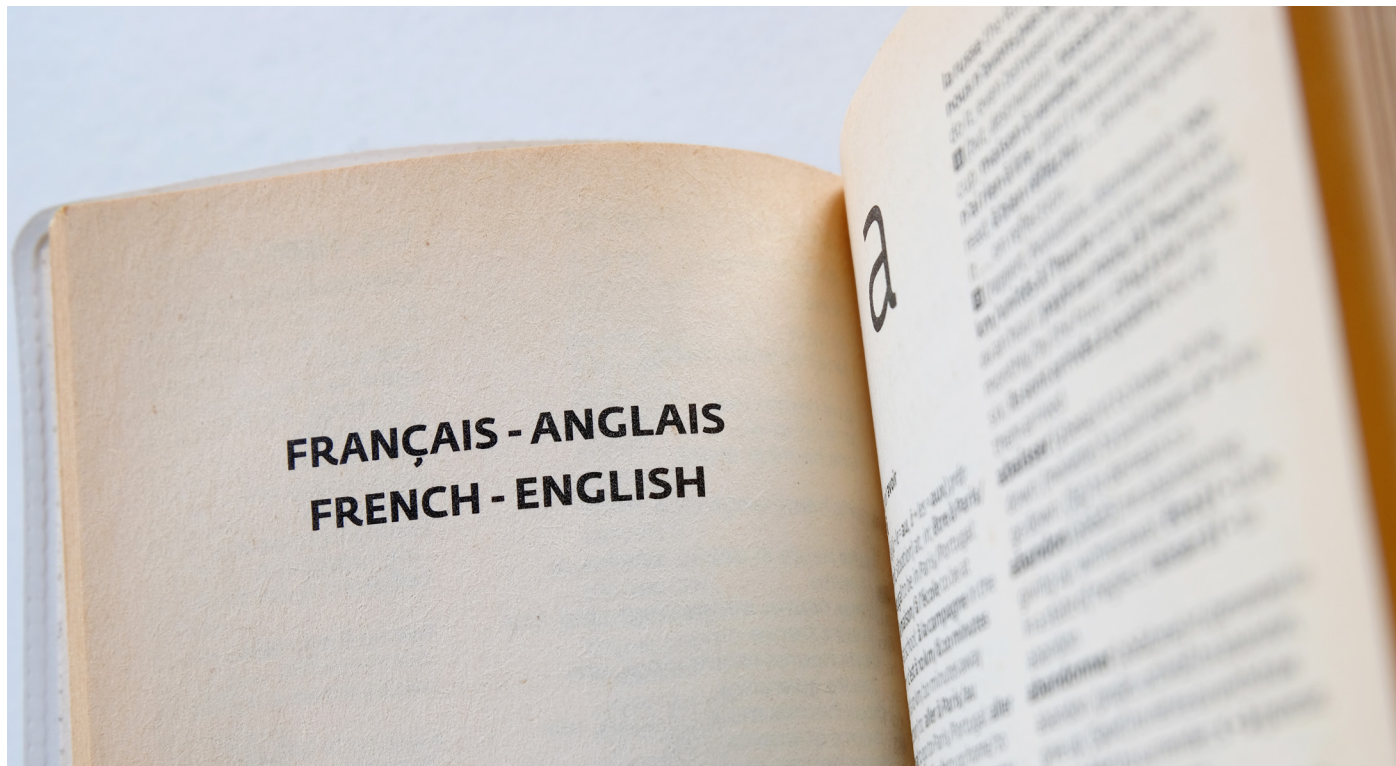
- » Allow UK citizens resident in France to vote in local or European elections as they could prior to Brexit.
- » Allow those with French residency the right to live or work in any other EU country.
- » Allow a future spouse (i.e. a marriage that took place on or after 1st January 2021) to acquire French residency through marriage.
- » Allow free travel within the Schengen Zone - technically, you are still only allowed to travel for 90/180 days in other Schengen Area countries. However, EU guidelines recommend that the passports of resident card holders are not stamped when entering the zone, so this rule is somewhat redundant - however, it is a recommendation not a rule. (We recommend always presenting your French residency card when entering/leaving the Schengen Zone, whether via France or via any other country - typically, your passport will not be stamped.



Visas & Residency essential vocabulary

» Need-to-know terms and phrases

Visas & Residency essential vocabulary



Use this quick guide to look up common terms, jargon, and vocabulary related to French visas and residency.

| Need-to-know terms

Visa de long séjour valant titre de séjour - VLS-TS: a long-stay visa equivalent to a residence permit. This is the main type of long-stay visa that you'll apply for when you move to France. It allows you to stay in France for between three and 12 months and may be renewed for a *carte de séjour*.

Visa de long séjour temporaire - VLS-T: a temporary long-stay visa is valid for between four and six months and cannot be renewed.

Carte de séjour - A French residency card. This can be “temporaire” (temporary, likely for 1-year) or “pluriannuelle” (multi-year, typically for four or five years), and both are renewable.

Titre de séjour - this refers to the residency “permit” itself rather than the physical card or visa.

Carte de résident de longue durée - A long-term residency card. This typically lasts for ten years and is renewable.

Naturalisation - The process of taking French citizenship for someone without family connections to France - ‘naturalisation par décret’ or just ‘par décret’. For those applying for French citizenship by marriage or family connections, it’s par déclaration.

Préfecture - This refers to both the regional government administration and the building in which they are housed, which is typically found in the largest city of the department. In France, each department has its own préfecture, and this is where your carte de séjour application interviews will be carried out.

OFII ou l’Office français de l’immigration et de l’intégration- the French office for immigration and integration, which is best known for issuing the medical examinations required during your first year in France.

valider mon visa - validate my visa

renouveler mon visa - renew my visa

en cours de validité - currently valid, e.g un visa en cours de validité

une demande de titre de séjour - an application for a titre de séjour

mon dossier - your file of documents, but also typically used to describe the entire application, e.g. “mon dossier de demande de titre de séjour”



| A-Z vocabulary

Some common words and vocabulary you might come across when applying for a French visa or residency card.

Une autorisation provisoire de travail ou APT - temporary work authorization

Attestation - a certificate, for example an attestation de domicile (certificate of residence) or an attestation d’assurance. It may be an official document or a handwritten signed oath - both are legally binding.

Bureau des Etrangers - The foreigners’ office at the préfecture.

Carte d’identité - The national ‘identity card’ that all French citizens are issued with.

Un certificat médical délivré par l'OFII - OFII medical certificate

Citoyen/Citoyenne - citizen.

Citoyen européen/e - for immigration purposes, this typically refers to a citizen of an EU or Schengen zone country, not the geographic region. So, a UK citizen post-Brexit would no longer be a “citoyen européen”.

Conjoint - Spouse

L'espace Schengen - Schengen area

Un étranger - foreigner

Date de naissance - Date of birth.

Demeurant - residing. Another way to say adresse on some official forms.

Un duplicata - a copy of a legal document

État civil - your marital status.

Fiche de paie - payslip.

Formulaire - Form.

L'immigration - immigration

Justificat de domicile - proof of address, typically an electricity or other utility bill.

Je soussigné(e) - I, the undersigned. You will often find this on official documents that you need to sign. You might also see *le _____* (fill in today's date) and *à _____* (fill in the place where you filled in the form, e.g. Paris)

Lu et approuvé - read and approved. Sometimes, you will also be asked to write out the words “lu et approuvé” before signing an official form or contract.

Né(e) le - date of birth (Date de naissance is another possibility).

Nom - Your family name or surname (your first name is prénom!).

Nom de naissance - your maiden name or birth name.

Numéro étranger - the identification number printed on your carte de séjour.

Pays Tiers - Third country or any country that is not a member of the European Union, such as the US, Canada, or the UK.

Pays d'Accueil - Host country. Typically, this is the country where a non-EU national legally resides.

les pièces justificatives - required documents

Prénom - Your first name.

Récépissé - a “receipt” of your carte de séjour or other application that serves as official proof of your application for legal purposes.

Regroupement familial - The procedure by which spouses and minor children may join their family members in France.

Renouvelle - renew.

Ressortissant - A citizen/national of a certain country. For example, un ressortissant suisse would be a Swiss national.

Réunification familiale - the procedure of reuniting family members, typically referring to those with protected or refugee/stateless status.

RIB (relevé d'identité bancaire) - a slip of paper with your bank details, most notably your IBAN.

un timbre fiscal - a tax stamp, which is the main way that administrative fees (including carte de séjour fees) are paid for.

Visabio - the French file system that stores biometrics data for visa applicants

.....

Moving to France



While this guide provides a comprehensive overview of French visas and the road to residency, there's more to making the move than just paperwork. During your first year in France, you'll need to set up a French bank account, set up a mobile phone (cell phone) contract, register for the French social security system and apply for a Carte Vitale.

If you plan to stay in France long-term, you'll also need to exchange your driving licence for a French one, take out a mutuelle health insurance, understand French insurance requirements, and file a tax return in France. Not to mention learning French and settling into French life and culture.

Our Beginner's Guide to Moving to France covers everything you need to know.