

Belmont in France

*Year abroad
Orientation booklet*

ORIENTATION ANGERS, FRANCE

*"Plus mon petit Liré que le mont Palatin,
Et plus que l'air marin, la douceur angevine."*

*Joachim Du Bellay
16th-century poet*

Your Cross-Cultural Experience

From the very beginning you will notice that life is different in France, the looks and styles of streets, clothing, food, the sounds of voices. Be prepared for a wonderful adventure that will bring you towards a better understanding of France and its people, and a new enriched understanding of yourself and your American heritage and culture.

You and the French Language

Perhaps the most gratifying part of living in France will be the thrill of communicating in another language. You will find that the French that you have learned and will learn in the classroom will be understood. You ask for "un café-crème" and you get coffee with milk. It works! You have chosen the best way to practice and learn French. *Courage!*

The French People

It is easier to meet French people if you make an effort to speak their language. Many French people (of the younger generations) have studied English for a few years in school. That does not mean that they speak it well or even remember it. You are in France. There is only one official language there and that is French. French people are a bit more reserved than Americans. This should not be interpreted as unfriendliness. It is suggested that Americans not go out together in large English-speaking groups. Instead go out in smaller groups and speak French. Upon hearing you speak French, they will realize that you understand them and that they can speak to you. They will also recognize that you are open to learning more about them, their language, and their culture.

Things to know before you go...

Angers: A little history

"In 1152 **Henri Plantagenêt** married **Eleanor of Aquitaine** whom Louis VII had recently divorced. He already held Anjou, Maine, Touraine and Normandy; by his marriage he acquired Poitou, Périgord, Limousin, Angoumois, Saintonge, Gascony and suzerainty of the Auvergne and Toulouse. In 1153 he forced Stephen of Blois to recognize him as his heir and the following year he succeeded him on the throne of England. He was now more powerful than his Capet rival. Henry II of England (Henri Plantagenêt) spent most of his time in France, usually in Angers . . . For the next fifty years there was war between the Plantagenêts and the Capets. In the end it was the latter who were victorious." (Michelin Green Guide, Châteaux of the Loire, p. 48)

You will find a statue of "**le bon roi René**" on the boulevard Roi René in front of the château. Who was he?

"He was the last of the dukes of Anjou and titular king of Sicily. He knew Latin, Greek, Italian, Hebrew and Catalan, painted and wrote poetry, played and composed music and was knowledgeable in mathematics, geology, and law--one of the most cultivated minds of his day. He had the common touch and liked to talk to his subjects; he organized popular festivities and revived the old games of the age of chivalry. He loved flower gardens and introduced the carnation and the Provins rose. At twelve he married Isabelle de Lorraine and was devoted to her for thirty-three years until her death at 47 when he married Jeanne de Laval who was 21. Despite the odds, it was also a happy marriage. Towards the end of his life René accepted philosophically the annexation of Anjou by Louis XI. As he was also Count of Provence he left Angers which he had greatly enriched, and ended his days in Aix at the age of 72 (1480)." (Michelin Green Guide, Châteaux of the Loire, p. 48)

Angers: What to do?

Visit the museums, the churches, the château! Go to the Bureau de Tourisme and pick up maps and brochures. There are walking tour brochures available there. If you ask, there are maps free to visitors of Angers. There is also a tourist train (train touristique) that departs from the Bureau de Tourisme several times daily.

The Bureau de Tourisme in Angers (located across from the Château) offers tours of the "cité" and "la Doutre." There are usually guided tours in English offered at certain times during the week. The Bureau de Tourisme also sells tickets for concerts to be held at the Cathedral (Saint-Maurice).

Visit the flea, flower, and food market that is held every Saturday morning on the Place Imbach. Just walk down the Boulevard Foch until you reach the Jardin du Mail. Cross the street and you're there!

Visit the salons de thé, the cafés, the cinémas, the magasins, the centre nautique at the Lac de Maine (there's a beach there), and learn to use the bus system. Tickets are sold at the main bus station at Place Lorraine (Boulevard Foch). Cotra is the name of Angers' bus company.

Château d'Angers:

". . . a massive shale-and-limestone castle-fortress dating from the 13th century, glowers over the

town from behind its turreted moats. The moats are now laid out as gardens, overrun with deer and blooming flowers. As you explore the grounds, note the startling contrast between the thick, defensive walls and the formal garden, with its delicate, white tuffstone chapel, erected in the 16th century. For a sweeping view of the city and surrounding countryside, climb one of the castle towers." ([Affordable France](#), p. 129)

Within the château grounds, there is a new gallery which houses the great Tapestry of the Apocalypse ("Tapisserie de l'Apocalypse," completed in 1390, was commissioned by Louis Ier, duc d'Anjou. It is 16 feet high and 120 yards long and shows 70 scenes from the Book of Revelation. Guided tours are available in French and English.

Cathédrale St.-Maurice:

A 12th and 13th century cathedral noted for its Romanesque façade, early Gothic vaulting, and original stained-glass windows. Guided tours are available. There are occasionally organ concerts there. Check at the cathedral or the Bureau de Tourisme for dates and times.

Musée des Beaux-Arts (Logis Barrault):

Located in a house that once sheltered Cesare Borgia and Mary, Queen of Scots. The museum houses an impressive collection of 17th and 18th century paintings and includes work by Raphael, Watteau, Fragonard, and Boucher.

Musée David d'Angers:

Houses a collection of dramatic sculptures by Jean-Pierre David (1788-1859) of Angers.

Musée Lurçat:

The impressive series of tapestries entitled "Le Chant du Monde" of Jean Lurçat is housed there. This post World War II perspective on the Apocalypse is well worth a trek across the river. See it after you see the 14th-century tapestry.

PLACES TO INVESTIGATE in Angers

Boulevard Foch: There you will find banks, the Eurodif (French K-Mart), movie theaters, cafés, pâtisseries, boulangeries and the bus station (Cotra--place Lorraine by the Jardin du Mail).

Place Ralliement: There you will find the Galeries Lafayette (supermarket in the basement) and a bank teller for the Crédit Agricole which accepts CIRRUS cards. The rues piétonnes surround this plaza.

Rues piétonnes: This is the downtown shopping district. Some streets to investigate are the Rue d'Alsace, Rue Saint-Julien, Rue Saint Aubin, Rue Lenepveu, and the rue Toussaint.

Rue d'Alsace- Pimkie (women's clothing)

Rue Saint-Julien-- Majuscule (book store, paper products)

Rue Lenepveu-- FNAC (record store), Contact (bookstore)

Rue Toussaint-- antique shops, musée David d'Angers

Restaurants in Angers:

Le Cornemuse - Rue Paul Bert (crêperie) very near the CIDEF

Le Connétable- 13, rue des Deux-Hais (galettes)

Le Refuge de la Soulane-- 31 bis, rue Saint Martin (fondue)

Le Grandgousier-- 7, rue St. Laud

Le Soufflé-- 8, place du Pilon (incredible soufflés)

Pub St. Aubin- 71, rue Saint-Aubin Try a salad for lunch or the "assiette du jour."

La Ferme-- Place Freppel (next to the cathedral) For a nice lunch or dinner.

La Trattoria-- 10, rue Hoche Wonderful pizza place

La Pierrade-- (near main post office) Cook your food yourself on a hot stone.

Le Vinci-- boulevard Foch Another good pizza place

La Table Ronde- on the bus from Belle-Beille to town, it's the last stop before the river. The best creperie, super nice owners.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: What is Angers like?

Angers is an average-size French city. It is a city proud of its history, its ties with the Plantagenêts, its medieval château, its churches, its tapestries, and, above all, its "douceur de vivre." It is marked by the limestone and slate composition of its buildings and roofs. It is a city with few tourists (except for the area around the château where you will find tourist buses).

Affordable France (p. 129) describes Angers in this way: "The former capital of the Anjou region, Angers lies on the banks of the river Maine, just north of the Loire In addition to a towering medieval fortress filled with extraordinary tapestries, the town has a fine Gothic cathedral, a choice of art galleries, and a network of pleasant, traffic-free shopping streets."

Q: What's the weather like in Angers?

Variable. Fairly mild, not much snow, quite a bit of rain, summer is hot and winter is cold, but not too extreme.

Q: What are French people like?

Don't believe all you hear. The French are not mean people who hate Americans. You will find French people who are nice, wonderful people. They are, perhaps, a little more reserved than Americans and harder to get to know. Once they decide to be your friend, they will be very good friends for a very long time. Do not interpret reserve as unfriendliness. Try to speak their language. Be respectful of their differences and their lifestyle. Do not travel in packs of loud English-speaking tourists. You should then find the French nicer.

Q: Should I bring a gift from the U.S.?

You might want to bring some small gift or souvenir from the U.S. or from your home town or Nashville or from Belmont University. Students sometimes exchange these with the friends they make from other countries. If invited to someone's home, it is expected that you bring some small thank-you gift (usually chocolates or flowers –avoid chrysanthemums though since they symbolize death!).

Q: How much money should I bring?

This is a very often asked question and it is difficult to answer. Allow yourself \$500 in French francs per month. What you spend will depend on how much you frequent cafés, pâtisseries, and the shopping district. Paris is considerably more expensive than Angers. Plan accordingly.

GETTING READY TO GO

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

If you do not have a passport, get one now. You will need to go to a post office that has passport applications (i.e. Acklen Avenue post office). There, you can pick up an application. You'll need two passport size and quality photos. Follow the instructions on the application form and mail it in. Allow at least two months for processing.

If you already have a passport, check the expiration date. If you do not have enough time remaining on your passport, renew your passport. If your passport expires before you return to the U.S., you can be charged a fee and face long delays before you are allowed to re-enter the country.

When you have your passport, make three photocopies. Leave one copy with the Study Abroad office. Leave another with your parents. Keep one with you separate from your passport.

STUDENT VISA APPLICATIONS

You will need a long-stay student visa. Go to the website for the Ambassade de France. (<http://www.ambafrance-us.org>). Follow the instructions given for visa application. You must deal with the consulate that serves the state you legally reside in. So, a student from Tennessee will contact the French Consulate in Atlanta. A student from Kentucky will contact the consulate in Chicago. While we will assist you in filling out your application, obtaining your Visa is your responsibility. **Do not procrastinate.** You will need to **allow 3 months for receipt of your visa.** Remember to send the visa application, passport, and accompanying documents by certified mail or fed ex so you can track the documents.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT I.D. CARD (ISIC)

This card is required for all Belmont students studying abroad. You will need 2 passport size photos and the cost of the card. Contact the International Education office for application forms and information on this card. This card gives students some emergency evacuation and repatriation insurance coverage. Please review the materials that come along with the card.

This card expires at the end of each calendar year (in December) so you will need to leave a check for

renewal of the card with the International Education Office.

OTHER NECESSARY DOCUMENTS

Check with the International Education office to make sure that you've completed all necessary documents. You'll need to fill out a **waiver form, a medical form, an additional insurance form, an International Student I.D. card application, a CIDEF application form, and a Travel Request Form. You will also need to have 6 photos (head-shot).**

DOCUMENTS TO TAKE WITH YOU IN YOUR CARRY-ON LUGGAGE

Carry with you a list of important addresses and telephone numbers. You'll also need:

- Passport (with your visa)
- Proof of insurance while abroad
- International Student Identity Card
- Airline tickets (coming and going)
- Copies of all the documents used to attain your student visa

Customs Tip: You may need proof of prior ownership of expensive foreign-made goods, particularly cameras and stereo equipment in order to avoid paying Duty when you come home. Save the receipts for things you buy while abroad. They can prove very useful at Customs on your return.

YOUR PASSPORT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DOCUMENT YOU WILL CARRY WITH YOU ABROAD. IT CONFIRMS YOUR U.S. CITIZENSHIP. YOU SHOULD GUARD IT CAREFULLY. KEEP IT WITH YOU WHEN TRAVELING. Photocopy the identification page and leave a copy with your parents and keep another copy with you separate from the passport. Leave another copy with the International Education Office. Having a copy can speed processing if you have to replace a lost or stolen passport. In addition to your passport, make copies of the following:

- credit cards**
- traveler's checks**
- student I.D.'s**
- airline tickets (both coming and going)**

Leave one photocopy with your parents and carry another with you. Keep it in a place away from the actual documents.

When traveling, always carry your passport securely on your person. Do not EVER leave it in an exposed pocket or unlocked backpack. The best way to carry your passport and other valuables is in a waterproof security pouch worn under your clothes. These pouches are available at any travel store.

HEALTH AND MEDICAL INFORMATION

See your doctor for a thorough examination before you go. Check to see that all your immunizations are current. Review the Center for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov for updated immunizations information.

Get copies of all prescriptions (including eyeglasses or contacts). Be sure to request that any prescriptions include the generic name of drugs, since U.S. brands may not be available. If you rely on any over-the-counter U.S. medicines, take them with you in sufficient quantity for your stay.

Have your doctor write a specific medical history, if you are required to take any medications that might be considered suspicious narcotics in a foreign country.

If you have allergies to medications or if you have a medical condition that a foreign doctor should know

about before treating you, consider seriously wearing a Medic-Alert bracelet or necklace. Note this condition on the Medical History form you must fill out and return to Belmont's International Education office.

You should also schedule a dental appointment before you go. Do this well in advance of your departure so that any necessary dental work can be completed before you leave.

Remember to keep all medications (even aspirin or Tylenol) in their original containers with any prescriptions clearly marked.

If you have allergies or need regular medication, be sure to pack it in your carry-on luggage rather than in the luggage you will check (which could be lost in transit or stolen).

Bring an extra pair of glasses or contact lenses. And, bring a copy of your prescription. Bring extra contact lens solution.

Label any eyeglasses or medical devices as a gift with a value less than \$100 to avoid possible duty charges.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

All Belmont students participating in study abroad programs must be covered by medical insurance. Be sure that your present insurance will be in effect while you are overseas. Many policies will not cover you while abroad.

It's a good idea to take with you some claim forms from your insurance company. Be sure that you understand what your insurance company's method of reimbursement will be while you are overseas. In many cases, you will be required to pay the total cost of any treatment and then wait for reimbursement. It is wise to discuss with your parents a plan for receiving emergency money to pay for treatment, even if you will be reimbursed later by your insurance company.

Should you not have an insurance policy that will cover you overseas, the Office of International Education can provide you with brochures.

AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINES (ATM)

A convenient way to access your cash while in Europe is to use your ATM debit or check card, with a Visa logo) with a 4 digit PIN code. With this card, you may draw money from your *checking account* at home in the U.S. You will receive the commercial exchange rate. There is a limit to the amount you can draw out on any one day—usually \$300--and your home bank will charge a fee for each transaction, typically somewhere between \$1 and \$3. It is important to keep close track of your bank balance back home. The receipts from the ATM in Europe will not show your checking account balance in the U.S.

Since you could lose your ATM card or have it stolen, it is important to have a back-up financial plan for emergencies. The most sensible one is to take a few hundred dollars with you in traveler's checks.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

Traveler's checks are easily replaced if lost or stolen. They are the best back-up for your ATM card. You will pay a commission each time you cash traveler's checks. You may only exchange them in limited places. In Angers, the bureau de tourisme will exchange them and charge you a commission for doing so.

CREDIT CARDS

You can get cash advances on credit cards while in Europe. You will need to get a PIN number from the credit card company well in advance of your departure. The bank card company will charge a transaction fee and the interest charges on cash advances start the day of the advance. Therefore, using credit cards to get cash is an expensive option. The interest charges are, in general, much higher than you expect.

TAKING SOME LOCAL CURRENCY WITH YOU

Many European airports have automated teller machines and currency exchange offices. There is always, however, the possibility of long lines, computers being down, and scheduling pressures, and higher exchange rates. So, it is more sensible to take enough money with you in the local currency to get through a day or two. You can change money at any major bank.

PROGRAM CHARGES

You will receive a bill for tuition and other program costs prior to your departure.

FINANCIAL AID

Students currently receiving Belmont financial aid are eligible for support while participating in Belmont-sponsored study abroad programs. Check with the Office of Financial Aid to make sure that all is in order. If you are spending the entire academic year abroad, be sure to notify the Financial Aid office to arrange for applications for the following year.

WHAT TO BRING??

Hints on Packing

WHAT YOU SHOULD TAKE

You can't take as much as you'd like to. You'll probably take too much. After you've dragged your luggage across airports, train stations, up and down stairs, over cobbled streets, and broken, uneven sidewalks, you'll wish you had left half of it at home. Before you even begin to think about packing, analyze your travel plans. How often will you have to change means of transportation? Are you traveling alone? Will you be able to watch all of your luggage all of the time while you travel (go to public restrooms, snack-bars, etc.)?

Travel as lightly as possible. Baggage carts are sometimes scarce in airports. Buy inexpensive, light, and durable luggage. You might use a backpack or duffel as your carry-on. You'll want to leave room for stuff you buy in France. In short, **ONLY TAKE WHAT YOU CAN YOURSELF CARRY A MILE!**

...up and down stairs. ☺ ("You are not exaggerating one inch."—Jeff Williams / student's comment)

Mix and match your clothing. Pick basic colors which look good on you and match all of your wardrobe.

Take comfortable shoes. It is difficult to feel chic with aching, blistered feet. Your feet are your transportation. Remember that.

Stay away from high maintenance clothes. Laundromats and dry cleaners are expensive and inconvenient.

French people wear clothes over and over again. You will see your teachers wear the same outfit more than once a week. Keep this in mind. Don't bring too much.

****Pack all of your luggage. Try to carry it around the block. If you can't, start sorting again.** You might consider bringing one bag and one carry-on or one internal frame backpack and one carry-on. (*"Big backpacks are more convenient and will be useful for travel instead of big suitcases, if possible."*—Valerie Bruinsma / Student's comment)

Laundry facilities may be available in your dormitory. Check with the concierge for procedure on using them. You will probably need to buy a token (jeton) from your concierge to use in the washing machine. You will probably need to sign up for a time to use the machines, since there will most likely only be one

washing machine in your dorm.

BRING ONLY AS MUCH AS YOU CAN CARRY FOR ONE MILE!

You will find that doing laundry in Europe is an inconvenience. They don't have the large washers and the large and powerful dryers that we have. So, laundry takes longer and it is more expensive to do. You'll probably wear the same five or six things over and over and over and over again. It is possible to study abroad for an entire academic year with the contents of one internal frame backpack and a carry-on bag.

Whatever you decide to take, plan on having only two bags to check. Check with the airline you'll be taking for specific size limitations. You may also take a carry-on bag that is no larger than 8" x 16" x 21". Space overhead is limited on overseas flights and may already be full when you get to your seat. Check with your airline before deciding on your luggage. Stricter limitations are imposed on overseas travel.

Keep a detailed list of the contents of each of your bags. Put labels inside and outside your bags showing your address in the United States and abroad. Choose a bright recognizable sticker or marker for your bag. You'll be amazed at the number of bags that look just like your bag that ride around on the baggage carousel.

SOME ESSENTIALS

Good walking shoes already well broken in before you depart
Small wind-up or battery-powered alarm clock
Compact and bright Flashlight
Small sewing kit
Small first-aid kit

WHAT CLOTHES TO TAKE

Lay out all the clothes you plan to take. Then, put half of them back in your closet. Take items that are flexible. Temperatures can change dramatically overnight or even in the course of a single day. So, choose items that can be layered and interchanged as you need more or less warmth or a dressier or a more casual look.

Winter coat/jacket (with zip-out lining)
A few clothes for each season
One nice outfit that can be worn in any season
Slippers or flip-flops (bare-feet are offensive within residences)
Raincoat or rainjacket with hood
Dark-colored sweaters with some light-weight shirts to go underneath
A sweatshirt
Gloves and scarf
Two or three (maximum) pairs of shoes (all very comfortable and suitable for walking at least a mile)
Underwear and socks (enough to prolong doing laundry)
Clothesline (a sort of bungee cord with clips found at Target or Walgreen's)
Converter/adaptor plugs**

The electrical current in France is 220 volts. The U.S. runs on 110 volt current. Unlike wall outlets in the U.S. which accept plugs with two flat prongs, outlets in France take plugs with two round prongs.

Robe/Cover-up to wear to the shower
Camera and film
Grammar books and dictionary
Purse that zips

Passport (required for travel and for money exchange)

International Student I.D. card

CIRRUS card (ATM Banking Card)

**Verify with your bank before departure that your PIN (Personal Identification Number) will be valid in France. For specific foreign CIRRUS locations, call 1-800-4-CIRRUS.

Visa credit card

Traveler's checks in euros or dollars (*"ATMs are easier and more convenient. Travelers checks are not accepted everywhere, and minimum purchases are usually required. They are most useful if setting up a bank account- it's safe transport, but I wouldn't expect to pay with them".— Valerie Bruinsma / student's comment*)

hangers (hangers are not always to be found in dorm rooms)

"If pressed for space packing, clotheslines and hangers are in the supermarchés for pretty cheap."— Valerie Bruinsma / student's comment (*"Don't bring. Buy."*—Jeff Williams / student's comment)

converter/adaptor plugs **

**The electrical current in France is 220 volts. The US runs on 110 volt current. Unlike wall outlets in the US which accept plugs with two flat prongs, outlets in France take plugs with two round prongs.

hairdryer (Dual voltage is handy. Depending on your location, your hair dryer may only run on low speed without blowing a fuse in the building. Or, you could just buy a hair dryer in France.)

flipflops for shower and dorm

"Everyone has robes, as the showers are coed and down a long hall, without many hooks for clothes, etc. Flip flops are essential."—Valerie Bruinsma / student's comment

camera and film (Inexpensive camera is best since it is less likely to be stolen.)

comfortable shoes (no new shoes/ Tennis shoes are highly recommended)

shorts/pants/jeans

tee-shirts and sweatshirt

"A couple good sweaters are invaluable- They go dressier, which is appropriate there, and they're great for mild rainy winters and evenings out". —Valerie Bruinsma /student's commentt)

dark-colored low maintenance clothes / mix and match clothes

Woolite for in-sink washing

one nice outfit

short and long sleeve shirts

rain parka or compact umbrella

dark-colored washable sweaters or a jacket (nights can be quite chilly and windy)

towel (sheets are furnished but towels are not)

camping utensils (cup, fork, knife, spoon, bottle opener for snacks in room)

Prescription drugs needed in original, labelled containers

Purse that zips or money belt. (*"I was mugged for my camera, and someone took my wallet right out of my zipped purse strapped across my chest in a thick crowd. The only safe way to carry credit cards and all is in a waist money belt. It's irritating and can be bulky in the summer, but I thought it was worth it. Make sure to take credit card cancellation numbers (separately), and leave copies of these numbers with parents for quick cancellation. On the topic, if travelling in Southern France especially, apparently, car-muggings happen all the time. So if you rent a car, lock your doors as you'll be a targeted tourist. Everyone knows tourists have money, so you have to be careful. I cant remember how many times people tried to pickpocket me or people I was with. Never store anything you want to keep in your pockets. Watch the metro."*—Valerie Bruinsma/ student's comment) (*"Under the clothes is best for security. Pickpockets love waist/fanny packs."*—Jeff Williams / student's comment)

sun glasses

extra glasses or contacts

small calculator

Walkman

Travel Diary** (required journal of your experience)

Your college French book (for grammar explanations in English)

A small French/English dictionary (Harraps pocket mini is good)

France Guide books that have a really good section on Paris

DON'T BRING:

valuables, breakables, or white clothes

anything that can't be replaced

HINTS WHILE TRAVELING

Women should be as cautious as they would be at home. Beware of any stranger whether or not he seems harmless. If you do not wish to be bothered, use discretion in choosing your dress (short shorts, for

example, or very tight-fitting clothing might be left at home).

Knowing where you are and where you are going will make your travel more meaningful and simpler. Read about your destination before you arrive. Consult maps and information provided.

If you travel by train or by bus in France, remember to "composter votre billet." Place your ticket in the orange machine located right outside the entrance to the train platforms or just inside the bus door. This places a time and date on your ticket so that it appears used. Not doing this causes you to run the risk of fines or ejection from the train or bus. On the train a "contrôleur" will come by to verify that you did "composter" your ticket.

If you should need medical attention, you will be expected to pay for it in cash. This also applies for prescriptions or tests. You will have to pay in France and submit the receipt of payment to your insurance company upon your return. You will be given a form to submit to your insurance company which may or may not pay your claim according to your policy. Be warned that neither the nurse nor the doctor is likely to speak English. Prepare yourself to discuss your ailment in French before going to the doctor. Women may want another woman to accompany them to the doctor because in France nurses are not present during examinations. There are no gowns or sheets given to cover up with either.

To Call Home:

You will need to buy a **télécarte** in order to use the phone in France. These are purchased at a **bureau de tabac** or a **post office**. They come in two forms une télécarte de 120 unités or 50 unités. These are smart cards which contain a microchip. Place the card in the phone. The screen will say Patientez, s'il vous plaît (Wait, please). Then, the screen will say Numérotez (Dial your number). To make a direct call to the U.S. dial 19 +1 + (area code) + number. To go through an operator, dial 19 33 11. Téléphoner en PCV means that you want to call collect. **If you have calling cards, verify before you leave that they will work overseas and know how to use it.**

Because of your living situation in France, it will be easier for you to call home than for someone to call you. You might call them and give them the number of the public phone where you are and have them call you back. (*"Everyone seems to have a cell phone, and cell phone offers are everywhere. With most deals, you can receive calls for free for a year, so it might be worth your money. Dorm phones don't always get picked up, and students who do answer won't always speak English, which could make it hard for family to get a hold of you."*—Valerie Bruinsma /student's comment)

Food

A word concerning dining in France . . . Meals are eaten in courses. These courses are in a slightly different order than in the U.S. There is usually an *entrée* which might be *paté* or a vegetable salad. Then comes the *plat principal* or main course. After the *plat principal* there is salad (usually lettuce only with a vinaigrette dressing), then cheese, and then dessert. Bread is part of every meal and is rarely eaten with butter except at breakfast.

Silverware is managed a bit differently in Europe also. The fork is used prongs down and pointed towards you and held in your left hand. Your right hand cuts with the knife. The left hand is then used to bring the food to your mouth. In other words, Europeans do not move the fork between hands as Americans do. You will also notice that Europeans place both hands on the table at meals. This is not considered impolite. In fact, the reverse is true. A man may rest his wrists and a woman her forearms on the edge of the table.

Speaking with food in your mouth is impolite. It is improper to help yourself twice to cheese. Lettuce is folded into small pieces with the fork and never cut. Fruit is peeled with a knife and eaten with a fork. Bread is broken with the fingers and used to wipe the plate. *Most people put their bread on the table, not the plate.* Place the knife and fork parallel across the plate when finished. When eating out, the person who invites pays.

In France a 15% gratuity is added (by law) to every food and drink order in a public establishment. Tipping is done for exceptional service only.

Housing

Dormitory rooms are single-occupancy. You will have a sink in your room. Showers and toilets will be located on every hall. Dorms are usually co-ed in France. Dormitories will have a concierge on duty at all times. The concierge can be asked about mail and laundry room reservations. Keys should be picked up and dropped off with the concierge. When you check into your dorm, you may be given an inventory checklist to return and you will be given a list of dorm regulations. **Read the dorm regulations and obey them.**

Times and place for sheet exchange (dirty for clean) will be posted. This usually takes place every two weeks or so.

Toilet paper may or may not be left in the dormitory bathrooms. If it is not the dorm's policy to leave toilet paper in the bathroom, you should have some in your room when you check in. You may ask the maid or concierge for more. Or, of course, you may buy your own.

In French dormitories and in residential areas, in general, in France, the **loi de silence** is enforced. In other words, all loud noise that would disrupt sleep is to cease after 10 p.m. The concierge will enforce this policy in the dormitories. Be considerate and take your socializing after 10 p.m. away from the dormitory! *This includes talking on the phone.*

Depending on your dorm's regulations, you may be asked not to turn on any water during certain hours (10 p.m. to 7 a.m. for example) so sleep will not be disturbed. Again, **please be respectful** of these regulations.

Student Life at Belle Beille and at the Université d'Angers (according to Belmont students)

Food

For the students living in any of the student dorms (résidences universitaires Belle Beille I, Beille II or LAKANAL): two main "shopping centers" are close to you.

Centre Beaussier—which includes a super market (Super-U), a hair stylist, a boulanger, a tabac, a pâtisserie, a laundromat, a medical office, and several eating/drinking establishments geared to student needs, will be only a 5 minute walk from any of the three student residences.

Centre Commercial du Lac de Maine—which includes a huge supermarket called Carrefour (imagine a K-mart and a Krogers put together under one roof) and several other mall-type stores (i.e. sports/outdoors store, tabac, vegetable stands, charcuterie, restaurants, coffee/bean shops, hair dressers, etc.), is about a 15 to 20 minute walk away from the university dorms. (*"It's worth the walk, especially*

when you arrive for all the little things you'll need. (Pans, shampoo, and food in one stop,) but remember you have to carry everything you buy back home. You can bring a small backpack to load at the checkout." --Valerie Bruinsma / student's comment)

Note: Le Centre Beaussier is more convenient (5 minutes instead of 20 minutes away). Prices, variety, and quality of products at this Centre suffer when compared to the superior Centre commercial du Lac de Maine.

Le RU (Restaurant universitaire)—Cafeteria

You can buy a 10 meal ticket set (less than \$2 per meal)

The tickets are to be bought between the hours of 11H30 and 13H00. The tickets are sold right next to the RU's entrance. **Only cash is accepted.**

In Angers there are 3 RU—one called Beaux Arts (in downtown), the other called Belle Beille (on the Université d'Angers campus), and a third RU on Blvd Carnot, not far from Foch, on the Saint-Serge Campus. During the weekends, one of the two will be closed. The weekend schedules are posted in obvious places.

Note: Due to the time-consuming task of cooking for oneself, you might consider eating at the RU during the school week. During the weekends, you could cook for yourself. Be careful, everything is closed on Sundays except the boulangerie. If you watch your budget, you should be able to eat for around \$150 per month. *("While cooking may be time consuming, it is an excellent way to meet the people you're living with, and get out of your room. Most people are really friendly, and it's an easy place to start a conversation with people your own age who you will see again. If you make something like pancakes, rice crispie treats, or something "American," it's fun to share.")—Valerie Bruinsma / student's comment)*

Housing

LAKANAL—

It is equipped with two dryers and two washing machines.

At Lakanal there is a microwave, two hot plates and a fridge on every floor (about 30 students per floor), while at the other two residences, one enjoys neither the microwave nor the 6,50 FF washing loads

At Belle Beille II the hot water is not really hot. During the winter a hot shower at Belle-Beille II is simply an impossibility.

Extras—a T.V. room, a Ping-Pong table, a sous-sol (garage à vélos) at LAKANAL only

Notes: "Les femmes de ménage' do a good job of keeping the residences clean and at times even spotless. The state of your room, however, is up to you. Since the kitchens close at 22H30 and open at 7H00, it is recommended that you bring a kettle (and converter) to boil water in your room for coffee, tea, etc. The communal fridge is often prey to petty theft. Take care to wrap your products in plastic bags before leaving them in the fridge.

"Belle Beille has caught up to Lakanal. You can do laundry at Belle-Beille now for the same price, they have TV rooms, and I think one of them has ping pong now, too. BB still doesn't have microwaves or steamy showers. But they do have fridges. I liked Lakanal the facility better, but I liked Belle Beille the personality better. In BB there are more university students and more of a social atmosphere. Lakanal had more agriculture students (still friendly, but not as social.) Both Places had their advantages. Belle Beille is a safer location." --Valerie Bruinsma /student's comment) (Belle-Beille I has a T.V. room too. Jeff Williams /student's comment)

Transportation

A semester bus pass is recommended. Go to the main bus station (COTRA at Place Lorraine) on

Boulevard Foch to purchase it. You will find yourself travelling from Belle Beille to Centre Ville a lot more often during the first semester than you probably will the second. Bus tickets will cost you less at tabacs than if you buy them from the bus driver. If buying individual tickets, get a carnet of 10 for a reduced price.

Entertainment

Recommended by one student: Sunset (large with pool tables)

Donald's Pub (good music)

Du Pon (during September) (tiny underground dance hole/frequently by Catho's foreign students)

Another student's comment: *"DuPon is the main foreign student hangout b/c everyone speaks english. There are lots of fun places, but tons of students never leave Dupon, and if they do, it's just to sunset. ☺ One of my favorites was L'abbaye, a classy cozy fun place on blvd Carnot. There are plenty of good places. The Carpe Diem is an older crowd, but one of few places to hear Jazz, swing, etc. They also have philosophical discussions and things."*—Valerie Bruinsma

Movie theaters

3 of them on Boulevard Foch

1 of them off Place du Ralliement called 400 Coups—shows movies in V.O. (version originale) –English, French, Spanish, Russian, etc.)

Reduced cost with student I.D.

Student's comment: *"Newest and best theatre is on campus at Saint-serge. It just opened last year. I think it's the new Gaumont."*

Théâtre—very accessible to students through great student season deals

Théâtre Municipale

Nouveau Théâtre d'Angers

Ice Skating Ask for le Patinoire located at the intersection of Roi René et Boulevard Foch (centre ville)

2nd Division soccer –Le SCO d'Angers play their matches at the Stade Jean Bouin

Note: Do not get stuck in a rut by only frequenting the popular places where most international students hang out. Look for alternatives early—picnics to the Lac du Maine, rent a bike, visit surrounding communities, spend an afternoon chatting away in one of the many gardens, etc. The gardens are beautiful.

CLASSES

In France, a university student is expected to be extremely independent and self-disciplined. An entire course grade can be based on one exam at the end of the year. *"Most classes require no homework, but the French students spend hours recopying their notes, doing research, studying throughout the semester, then study a lot at the end."*—Valerie Bruinsma /student's comment)

GRADES

France gives grades on a 20 point scale. The equivalency of individual grades between the two systems is approximately 16-20 is an A+ (hardly anyone gets grades this high), 14-15 is an A, 12-13 is an A-/B+, an 11 is a B, a 10 at B-, a 9 a C+, an 8 a C, a 7 a C-, a 6 a D+, a 5 a D, a 4 a D- and a 3 or below an F. This information is given on the Ambassade de France website. Grading varies greatly from subject to subject. In mathematics, a 20/20 would indicate that the problem was all done correctly. A 12/20 is a very acceptable grade on a literature essay. *"20s" seem harder to come by than our "A's." Lower grades are more acceptable, French students seemed pleased with a 12 or 13, while the American students would get upset, translating that to a 60% or so."*—Valerie Bruinsma/ student's comment)

REGISTRATION AND DROP/ADD

Student's comment: "Basically, you just look at some sheets listing classes, pick ones you want to go to, and go. The sheets are pretty much just the complete schedules of the different programs their students follow. Ex: Take a class from Deug 2 allemagne, one from deug 1 anglais, another from the Licence FLE sheet. Sheets are posted, and french students generally take all the classes on one sheet, according to major and year of study. Seems really unorganized at first, but they let you take anything, so it just takes the motivation to make sense of it all, and find interesting classes at good times. Catherine Barreteau or whoever is in charge will give foreign students sheets to be signed by the profs and so on, once the student has decided what they want to take. My hint: In classes like version and other translation classes, visit a couple classes, and go back to the teacher you like. The nice thing about the system is that if you don't like a class, don't go back, or if you hear about a good class early on, just start going to it. For the first week of classes, go to lots of classes, then stay in the ones you liked and understood, and don't return to anything dull or not worth your time. There were plenty of interesting classes."—Valerie Bruinsma

PROFESSORS

A French professor does not deal with individual students. You must direct your own study and seek out help from other students. Don't expect office hours or easy access to professors.

CARTE DE SEJOUR

Student's comment: To get the refund on room payments from CAF Centre d'allocations familiales (behind the conservatory), you need the "carte de séjour". Pick up an application from the CAF. You get a check not just a credit. It will take a while to arrive but it will come. Saint-Serge is new campus in town. You turn in a form at Saint-Serge for a medical appointment. Ask Prof. Michel Darmon to help you acquire the carte de séjour.

YOUR SECURITY

There is no way to guarantee that you won't be involved in an unpleasant incident at home or abroad. Remember that awareness is always your best defense. Know the dangers and avoid them.

PRIMARY SAFETY GUIDELINES

Be alert and keep a low profile. It is, admittedly, impossible to blend in entirely. You will always look and sound and act like an American. You are, therefore, a target. Here are a few ways to make yourself less conspicuous:

Speak French! Do not speak loudly. Students often ask why French people are staring at them. It's usually because they are speaking loudly enough for others to hear them. Speak only loudly enough to be heard by the person you are speaking to.

Don't carry all your money (or traveler's checks) in one place and avoid carrying large amounts of cash.

Keep your wallet in your front pocket. In crowds, keep your hand in that pocket. Keep your purse looped over your neck and hold it tightly in front of you. Put your feet through one strap of your pack, if you place your backpack on the floor.

Check your luggage before crossing borders to make sure that no one has added anything to it without your knowledge. Don't keep anything valuable in the outside pockets of your pack. Use them to store guidebooks, maps, and toilet paper. Tuck your camera, film, and all valuables at the bottom of your pack.

When traveling by train, especially at night, have a member of your group stay awake as a look-out. Always take turns sleeping on trains. Sleep with your belongings strapped to you. Check under beds. Lock your couchette doors.

Be prepared to show that any electronic device you have is actually a functioning piece of equipment.

Don't take anything that couldn't be replaced.

Make sure someone else knows your itinerary.

When you're distracted, you are an easy target. Always keep your eyes and your hands on your belongings at all times.

Be especially alert in crowds and, particularly, in tourist areas. These are the places that thieves like to operate. *"If you do 'lose' a wallet in this type of area, be sure to check trashcans and bathroom trashes and toilets before moving on. I was told that much of the time, the pickpockets just want the cash, then throw out the rest."*—Valerie Bruinsma /student's comment)

Never entrust your belongings to a stranger.

Avoid large groups of Americans or other foreigners. Smaller groups speaking French quietly attract less attention.

Two people together are safer than one.

Trust your instincts. If you are uncomfortable in a situation, get out of the situation. Don't stay anywhere you feel unsafe.

Remember that when you are abroad that you are subject to the laws of the country you are visiting. Learn the local regulations and obey them. There are no exceptions. You may be declared "guilty by association." It is wise to avoid people who are in possession of illegal goods of any sort.

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

GETTING THERE and HOME AGAIN

Fill out an airline ticket request form in the International Education Office. Belmont will purchase your airline tickets to insure reduced rates and easy traveling.

Be sure to confirm your ticket at least 48 hours before departure.

TRAINS

Train travel is the most accessible, fastest, and most economical way of getting around Europe. There are always a variety of discounts and rail passes available. Many of these passes must be purchased in the U.S. Consult your travel agent or one of the many guidebooks available. One good one is Rick Steves' Europe Through the Back Door. To order a free copy of this booklet, call or write:

Europe Through the Back Door
120 Fourth Avenue North
P.O. Box 2009
Edmonds, WA 98020-2009
Phone: 206 771 8303
Fax: 206 771 0833

"The carte 12-25 is available for travelers between ages 12 and 25, and gives 50% discount on within France travel, and 25% off France to another country. It pays for itself quickly. (I think maybe even in a trip to Paris.)"—Valerie Bruinsma /student's comment)

GUIDEBOOKS

Some suggestions:

Rick Steves' Europe Through the Backdoor. Call 206 771 8303 or e-mail at ricksteves@aol.com

Handbook for Women Travelers

Let's Go Europe

Let's Go France

Michelin's guidebooks (green editions)

Fodor's guide

Darling Kindersky's Travel Guide ("excellent pictures, diagrams, maps, info, history" –Jeff Williams /student's comment)

SOME OTHER THINGS TO READ BEFORE YOU GO

Culture Shock! A guide to Customs and Etiquette by Mary Louise Graff

Evidences invisibles by Raymonde Carroll

French or Foe? By Polly Platt

Les Français by Laurence Wylie and Jean-François Brière

ADAPTING TO LIFE ABROAD

Research the U.S. before you go. You'll be asked questions about politics, economics, demographics, different cities. You'll need to be informed to present yourself well as an American citizen and to defend, if compelled, the American perspective.

Learn as much as you can about France. If you know basic historical, political, economic and cultural information, it's easier to relate to the French people. Videos, historical texts, media, and native informants are all excellent resources.

Be mindful of your behavior!

Never mimic anyone's behavior.

Never mimic gestures.

Don't put your hands in your pockets while speaking to someone.

Gum-chewing is generally considered rude behavior.

Cover your mouth when you yawn.

Keep your voice low and be respectful of others' right to quiet privacy.

Sitting with legs spread apart is impolite for men and women. One should sit straight with knees together or legs crossed at the ankles. Feet are not placed on tables or chairs.

Don't comb or brush your hair in public. Be discreet with personal habits.

Be polite. Remember the use of "Excusez-moi, monsieur/madame de vous déranger, mais"

Use the conditional and use s'il vous plaît, merci, and excusez-moi. Use the vous form of the verb with all strangers. The French expect all Americans to be rude. Prove them wrong!

VISITING AND GIFT-GIVING

The French are more formal with their visiting customs. When invited to someone's home, you are

expected to bring a gift for the hostess. Flowers or chocolates are the most frequent gifts. Chrysanthemums are the flower of death and red roses mean romantic love. So, stay away from those. Guests remain in the public part of the house where they are welcomed. It is impolite to be in a hurry to leave. Avoid personal questions and sensitive topics of conversation at dinner. Compliment and thank repeatedly your host and hostess. A written thank-you note may be sent the next day.

PUBLIC TOILETS

You must always pay to use a public toilet. If there is an attendant, he/she should be tipped. Stores do not have public toilets. Bars and restaurants will have toilet facilities for their customers.

METRIC SYSTEM

2.54 centimeters = 1 inch

1 kilo = 2.2 lbs.

1.7 kilometers = 1 mile

To change Centigrade to Fahrenheit temperature, multiply by 9/5 and add 32. 0 degrees C. = 32 degrees F

CLOTHING SIZES

Sizes are not uniform but here are some general guidelines. For women, add 30 to your American size. For example, if you're a size 6, your French size is a 36. For men, add 10 or 12 to your coat or sweater size. Clothing is usually dark in color and never "oversized."

CULTURE SHOCK

One of the hardest parts of living abroad is the initial feeling of helplessness. The following description is taken from the Handbook for Women Travelers but applies equally to men.

It is not surprising we feel so confused, most of us haven't felt this uncertain about everyday procedures since childhood. Getting a meal, catching a bus, visiting a house Simple, practical, everyday procedures have to be learnt afresh, and often in a foreign language in which we may hardly be competent. Suddenly we have to be a lot more observant, take more time, working out whatever the local systems are, and be much more prepared to ask people for help. The latter in itself may be enough to unnerve some travelers. It may be a long time since you had to rely on other people for such a simple thing as how to go about ordering a drink for example. (p. 197).

Robert Kohl's book, Survival for Overseas Living suggests the following symptoms of culture shock:

Homesickness

Boredom

Withdrawal (reading alone, seeing only Americans, staying in your room)

Excessive sleeping

Compulsive eating

Compulsive drinking or partying

Irritability

Exaggerated cleanliness

Chauvinistic excesses

Stereotyping of host nationals.

Hostility toward host nationals

Loss of ability to work effectively

Unexplainable tears or periods of crying

Physical ailments (psychosomatic illnesses)

The phenomenon of Culture Shock has been experienced to various degrees by almost every traveler who spends an extended period outside his/her own country, including the student studying abroad. Immunity to culture shock doesn't come from being open-minded and full of good will. These characteristics do help and may aid in recovery, but they don't provide immunity from the "illness". Individuals differ greatly in the degree to which culture shock affects them, and a few people will be unable to make the necessary adjustments. Other people get by with only a light touch of the affliction. However, most of us go through a series of stages which represent a good, stiff attack of culture shock. But, the good news is, recovery is possible.

During the first stage, the victim usually feels euphoric. At this point, the group is visiting places of interest. The sights are intriguing; the local people are courteous and helpful; and it is clear that a wonderful experience lies ahead. The students are full of enthusiasm.

Then, suddenly there are language troubles, classroom troubles, shopping troubles, perhaps housing, troubles. All the things about everyday living that were taken for granted at home now become insurmountable problems. The student is probably also annoyed because the attention he/she expects from the local people is strangely lacking. This attitude is interpreted as indifference, or perhaps as an indication that these people aren't as friendly after all.

At this stage the students band together as fellow sufferers to exchange symptoms and to criticize the host country and its citizens. Their complaints are based on simple stereotypes which offer an easy rationalization for one's troubles: "these people have no manners", "they're rude here", "they ought to be taught how to get things done in a hurry," and so on. The gripe session becomes a convenient crutch, an easy and uninhibiting atmosphere in which to get a load off the chest. But, it also serves to alienate the students even more from the local people and an understanding of the culture they are there to experience.

This second stage represents the crisis period in the "illness"; if it is successfully weathered, the "patient" will be restored to health, and move into the third stage: recovery. During recovery the student now begins to understand enough of the language so that his/her isolation is less severe. Little by little the problems of living are worked out, and it becomes apparent that the situation, although difficult, is not absolutely hopeless. He/she begins to look for the reasons behind the behavior he/she sees as different. By doing this the student has a better understanding of why these people act this way and a better understanding of the culture itself. When the patient can begin to joke about his/her plight, he/she is well on the road to recovery. By now, the student almost imagines himself/herself to be an authority on the host country, and can bolster his/her ego by explaining aspects of the culture in a knowing fashion.

The fourth stage represents full, or near full, recovery. By now, if ever, the student will have made a relatively good adjustment to the situation in which he/she finds himself/herself. He/she comes to accept the customs of the country for what they are. From time to time the student experiences strain in his/her relationships with the locals, but the basic anxiety of not being able to live is gone. The student realizes that he/she is actually enjoying a new experience and that there can be a real exhilaration in an experience in a foreign country. But however perceptive, no one realizes fully the nature of their illness until they return home to the United States. It is almost embarrassing to realize how many shortcomings the good old USA seems to have and how frustrating and annoying some of our habits can be. Culture shock in reverse is much less serious though, but it is surprising how many students upon returning home wish that they were back in the host country.

The difficulties that lead to culture shock are very real. Some of these may include the following: the climate change; the food, which is always different from that which we're used to; the business methods (the corner shopkeeper might be closed for lunch); and the different concept of time. Isolation due to language barriers is also a real problem. But eventually, the student adapts to the environment and has a changed attitude, which helps him/her accept and enjoy the experience.

What can be most frightening about the study abroad experience is that the student's self-esteem and security are threatened. But, with time, most students do adjust and see the experience as the great opportunity it is. It is important that the student realize that the feelings he/she is experiencing are normal, and will eventually subside. In doing this, the student will be better able to adjust and come away from this experience with a greater understanding of the culture in which he/she is immersed and, more importantly, of himself/herself. (adapted from the University of Texas' brochure on study in Mexico)

WAYS TO COPE WITH CULTURE SHOCK

Keep a journal. This is often very helpful in relieving stress. Be sure to record your successes and your failures, your good days and your bad ones. Looking back will allow you to see your progress. It will also help you to readapt to American life once you return.

Keep a scrapbook. Keep souvenirs and write down their significance.

Take a few familiar, comforting things with you – inspirational books, pictures of family, friends, and pets, your favorite music.

Improve your language skills and develop new friendships.

You will get through culture shock. You'll face it again, believe it or not, when you return to the U.S.

COMING HOME

This can be harder than the initial shock of living abroad. After all, you expected to have trouble then. You won't expect to feel like a stranger when you return. You will feel like a different person who has greatly changed. You will be more confident, more independent, more self-disciplined, and more world-minded. These changes may be difficult to accept for those used to the old you. You may find your life at home and at school very limiting after the demands of the year abroad. Try to be flexible. Remember that you can learn to adapt (and re-adapt).

Share your experiences a little at a time with your friends and family. Don't be disappointed that they don't want to hear everything in great detail. They want to tell you about their year spent without you too.

Find outlets for your new insights and perspectives. Make friends with international students. Join organizations interested in world affairs.

Talk to students who have had study abroad experiences. You'll find it easiest to talk with them.

Helpful Web Sites:

U.S. State Department travel advisories and warnings:

<http://travel.state.gov>

U.S. State Department background notes:

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/bgn/>

U.S. Customs Traveler Information:

<http://customs.ustras.gov/travel/travel.htm>

U.S. Federal Aviation Administration

<http://www.tc.faa.gov>

Centers for Disease Control:

<http://www.cdc.gov>

Eurorail information:

<http://ww.ricksteves.com>

Hostels:

<http://www.hostels.com>

Currency converter:

<http://www.olsen.ch>

Visa information:

<http://www.ambafrance-us.org/famerica.htm>

Information on France

http://consulfrance-chicago.org/main_links.htm

Information on Angers

<http://www.ville-angers.fr>

Information furnished by the Université d'Angers

Please mail your comments to add to future orientation booklets to Dr. Geer at geerc@mail.belmont.edu

Contact Dr. Geer regularly with news and your progress and discoveries.

Booklet prepared by Dr. Cheryl Geer with help from Belmont-in-France participants (Paulo Boero, Valerie Bruinsma, and Jeff Williams).

