**Welcome to France! / Bienvenue à la France!**

(Updated: Summer 2018)

This document has been created by some non-permanent foreign researchers of the LMD (*Laboratoire de Météorologie Dynamique*, that is part of the 6 laboratories forming the *Institut Pierre-Simon Laplace*, IPSL) with the intention of helping new arrivals. The information is based on best understanding of procedures and may not be entirely accurate. Things change, often without being officially announced anywhere, so make your own checks before relying on it. Please feel free to correct, clarify or make additions. But keep it shorter than 10 pages, we want people to read it!

Key words in French that you should start memorizing, are in italics.

**General Tip:** keep every official document that you receive (for example, payslip, health authority letter, bank statement, visa documentation,…) They may be asked for by the French administration at some point. Always keep the original and send copy of the documents, unless the original is requested. In this case, ask for the procedure to get your original document back. Bureaucracy is adored in France, so at some point even the most irrelevant looking document will be demanded. Keep a photocopy (or better the original) of anything submitted to the administration (*ordre de mission*, travel receipts, flight tickets,...). Things often get lost!

**1. HOUSING (better read it before coming to Paris)**

- Housing in Paris is very expensive. Get it into your head from now.

- Paris is divided into districts or *arrondissements*, numbered up to 20 in a spiral from the center. Jussieu, for example, is in the 5th. Full of life, popular and cheap(er) ones are: 10, 11 and 20. The districts 13, 14, and 15 are also popular. In the 13th there is a huge Asian community.

- Outside Paris, outside the so-called “*Peripherique*” (the Paris ring road), it is cheaper and more quiet, but then you will depend mainly on suburban trains (called the RER) to get to the centre. Look for somewhere along the RER B or C lines. The closest stations to Jussieu on each line are Saint Michel-Notre Dame (B line), Paris Austerlitz (C line), and Gare de Lyon (D line). However, the RER is quite unreliable and delays are common... living outside the Peripherique will require at least half an hour to get to Jussieu, usually longer.

**1.1 Living by yourself**

- Finding a flat by yourself is not the easiest option. So, good luck!

- A typical Parisian apartment (with our salaries) would not usually be larger than 25m2, below the roof, no lift, old building...

- There is an unwritten (but applied) rule in France that you cannot rent something above one third of your salary.

- Usually they will ask for a garant (someone that will pay the bill if you don’t), or for a deposit that covers 1-2 \*years\* rent.

- You have to prepare in advance the so-called “*Dossier de location*”. It is mandatory but people say most of them are partially false, since it is the only way to get a good flat/studio in the city… This is more or less explained in several blog/web pages online. Examples:

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/lauren-elkin/in-paris-youre-only-as-go_b_50664.html>

<http://howtoliveinparis.com/the-dossier-2/>

To be included in your “*Dossier de location*”:

· identity card copy

· copy of your last three paychecks (or a photocopy of your work contract, if you don’t have yet the paychecks)

· your previous two tax declarations (if you have done it in France or in your home country)

· a guarantor (someone, preferably French, who will pay the bill in case you don’t.). He/she has to submit the same documents listed above. It is not uncommon for your boss or supervisor of the lab to be the guarantor, so if you do not know anyone else in the country, ask them.

- Make sure, once you are in place, to change the name of the electricity bills! Electricity will almost always be provided by EDF.

- You must take out home insurance, for public liability, etc. You can obtain this from insurance companies, but also from your bank. An example of a basic one:

<https://www.maif.fr/associationsetcollectivites/autres-structures/solutions-autres-structures/autres-structures-raqvam.html>. This is a legal requirement, so estate agents will remind you, but private rentals may forget to. The public liability insurance (*assurance de responsabilité civile*) is needed for the lab too!

- Social networks such as Facebook or various “your own country people in Paris webpage” also may be very useful… A sort of ‘solidarity’ between expatriated countrymen… Nice! And the best of all is… word of mouth! So as soon as possible, start spreading the word!

- There are different web pages to look for apartment rentals that don’t require visiting estate agencies:

<http://www.seloger.com/>

[https://www.leboncoin.fr](https://www.leboncoin.fr/)

<http://www.pap.fr/>

The last one is only between private individuals, with no agency involvement, so adverts may be outdated. You may also find that people do not reply to enquiries (forget it if you don’t write your enquiry in french).

- Estate agencies:

The other option is to go directly to an estate agent (*agence immobilier*, they are everywhere!) in the area where you want to live (do not forget to bring always your complete dossier!!). And stay calm... they can be very kind or very rude, depending on whom you have the chance to meet... or how much of a hypocrite they are... if they are rude, just go to the next one, there are plenty. With estate agents you may find more options for ‘decent flats’, and it might be less ‘tricky’ than contacting the owner directly, but it will always be more expensive. The first month you will have to pay at least 3 (or 4 times) the price of the rent:

∗ security deposit (1-2 months)

∗ 1 month rent

∗ *Frais de dossier* (agency fees, can vary considerably 200-1000€).

This last one goes directly to the estate agent, no return at the end of your stay…

A typical price for a modest 20-25m2 studio in the centre of Paris is about 800€ per month (+ extras)... Make your calculations. This map (from 2016) shows average prices by metro station for a 35m2 apartment:

<https://www.streetpress.com/sites/default/files/carte-loyers-paris-2000px_0.png>

**1.2 Living in the “campus” way:**

- Jussieu campus has a housing service on site. Nice, new, 1 room apartments. Around 800€/month. Details at:

<http://sciences.sorbonne-universite.fr/fr/international/venir-etudier-a-sorbonne-universite/accueil_d_etudiants_etrangers/logement.html>

<https://sorbonne-universite.studapart.com/fr/>

- There is also *Cité Universitaire (CiteU)*. It is an area in the South of Paris (*14ème arrondissement*, close to Port d’Orleans) with housing services for university students, postdocs and artists. Houses are from different countries. They usually offer a room with common areas for cooking, sports,... Prices vary a lot from house to house (average is around 800€/month). Take a look: <http://www.ciup.fr/>

· It’s a very good first-base to start your life in Paris. You can always cancel if you find a better solution (with a forewarning) after your application. However, you may find that they do not reply to inquiries for a very long time. It happened to several of us. This is the link to apply: <http://workflow.ciup.fr/citeu/site/login.php?langue=en>

· In addition, at the information desk of *Acc&ss Paris* center (at the main building of the CiteU), they are very competent and helpful, for any piece of information you need, including administrative steps, health, sport/cultural activities, french courses, etc. I do recommend to make a visit there, they speak English.

<http://www.ciup.fr/en/access-en/>

**1.3 AirBnB:**

- This would be by far the most expensive way (1 month price for 1 week): [https://www.airbnb.fr](https://www.airbnb.fr/), but could be good as a base camp to start to search for something more permanent, and to experience a bit of ‘real’ Parisian life.

- It would help to ask for the RIB before (see section 2).

**1.4 Sharing flats / *Colocation***

- It can be cheaper than finding a single studio apartment, but sometimes there is heavy competition. Useful links:

[www.colocation.fr](http://www.colocation.fr/)

[www.appartager.com](http://www.appartager.com/)

**NOTE: Permit of residence (Carte de Sejour):**

Non-European citizens must apply for a residence permit at the *Préfecture de Police* of your residency within the first 2 months of your arrival in France. The following documents are required to apply:

1. Valid Passport (you should make a copy of the passport pages relating to civil status, validity dates, entry fees and visas)
2. Birth certificate, this should be translated to French by official translator
3. Rental contract or residence certificate
4. Contract of employment

**2. BANK ACCOUNT (first thing to do just after your arrival)**

- The so called “*Releve d’Identite Bancaire*” (RIB), a paper with your bank details, will be required for almost EVERYTHING. In other words, you will not be able to do anything else in this list, without a RIB. So open a bank account as soon as you arrive to Paris.

- It may not be easy to open a bank account. They will ask you for an address, residential contract, and maybe more... so be patient. The documents needed for a resident’s bank account are:

· your ID card (for EU citizen) or “*Carte de Sejour*” for non-EU citizen,

· your contract of employment,

· your rental contract or residence certificate.

- The last document is the most tricky: without a RIB it is hard to rent a flat, and without a rental contract you cannot have a RIB... But, in most banks they also accept “Proof of a French address”: gas/electricity bills of some of your friends living in France with a kind of hosting declaration (“*Declaration d’hebergement*”), a signed document where you declare you are hosted at that particular address in France. This is not trivial if you do not know anybody in the city... For this reason it is recommended, if possible, to apply for an accommodation at the *Cité Universitaire* (CiteU, see section 1.2), at least for the first few months of your stay. It helps a lot. Another option is to ask the owner of your AirBnB for this documentation (if you are in one, see section 1.3).

- For short stays, a bank account may not be necessary.

**3. HEALTH CARE (second thing to do just after your arrival)**

- Once you have a roof in Paris, even if it is not the « definitive » one, we suggest that you start all the administrative steps to obtain your health care card (*Carte Vitale*). The application process takes a long time, at least three months but can be several more. So don’t wait!!

- **VERY IMPORTANT**: Do not forget to get in your own country your birth certificate translated into French! You may ask for an ‘international’ certificate, it works! However, this may not be necessary at all. Often it’s up to the whim of the individual processing the application whether they accept the documents you have provided, if they are not in the standard format (i.e. as they would be created in France). You may find that you are asked for something missing but that particular document doesn’t exist in that form in your home country; on re-submitting the application saying this you may find it then goes through OK.

- France has a public medical service: <http://www.ameli.fr/>. In general it covers 70% of treatment costs, and 30-60% of prescription costs (both increasing up to 100% depending on severity). A significant fraction of people supplement it by paying into a scheme called a “*mutuelle*” (see section 3.1). However, only the doctors labelled ‘*conventionné secteur 1*’ stick to low prices; other doctors might ask for more than the double price, which then has to be covered by oneself even if one has a mutuelle with '100% coverage'. So be sure you go to a ‘*conventionné secteur 1’* doctor.

- To obtain your social security number and Carte Vitale, you have to fill in a form (see attached files) and attach some documents (specified in the form). Do not forget any documents, because it will take longer, and if you think they might need documents it doesn’t ask for then include them anyway (e.g. a marriage certificate if you no longer have your birth name on your passport, even though it may not ask for it)… You can send the papers by post or go to the health administrative service (called *Caisse Primaire d’Assurance Maladie*, CPAM) closest to your flat in Paris.

**- For non-EU citizens:**

· “*Carte/Titre de sejour*”

· Form and documents specified in it (see attached files)

- If you change your address for a time longer than 6 months, you should contact again the CPAM closest to your flat. One should always communicate any change of situations (work, marriage, domicile, etc). It will help to avoid any possible inconvenience associated with refunding of medical costs.

- Once you receive your *Carte Vitale* (congratulations!), you will be also provided with instructions to select a doctor (*médicin traitant*). If you really need to see a doctor before you get the card, you can select a doctor from their list (look in the web page) and go. But, you will not be refunded until you get the insured number and you send the doctor’s forms to the CPAM. Unlike some other countries, appointments are usually booked directly with the doctor (rather than e.g. a clinic’s secretary).

- There are two ways to get reimbursed for your visits to the doctor. Some doctors can process the refund at the time of your appointment, using your *Carte Vitale* and you will get reimbursed automatically by the social security at a later date. Sometimes, you have to fill in a medical receipt form (*feuille de soin*) and send it to your CPAM office with social security number from you card written in the space at the top right.

- For more details visit: <http://howtoliveinparis.com/carte-vitale/>

**NOTE:** Although in the street (restaurant, museums, ...) there are many people who speak English, this is not the case for the French administration. In the offices of the public health service or in the police prefecture, they only speak French. If you do not know the language, be sure to go with someone (a friend, lab colleague, or your boss) who knows French.

This list of English speaking doctors and medical specialists can help:

<https://photos.state.gov/libraries/france/5/acs/paris-doctors.pdf>

**3.1 Supplementary health insurance - *mutuelles*:**

- As mentioned, in France the public health care system does not cover the 100% of medical expenses (except for severe conditions), so it is highly recommended to have complementary medical cover (*mutuelle*). There are many different ones available; some are fully private and others are hybrid public-private.

- Interesting information about mutuelles in general, can be found here:

 <http://howtoliveinparis.com/insurance-mutuelle-2/>

- But you’ve a lot of possibilities... just ask your colleagues in the lab. There is a mutuelle for workers in the public sector, called MGEN ([https://www.mgen.fr](https://www.mgen.fr/)).

- For short stays, the European Health Insurance Card is more than enough:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=559>. Additionally, the institution granting the short stay usually provides health insurance. So if you have a grant for coming here, ask your institution. Once you have the Carte Vitale, the french version of the EHIC card is trivial to request via your ameli.fr account.

**- NOTE:** if you have a CNES postdoc grant, do not have to worry about a mutuelle at all, as CNES pays for a mutuelle with very good conditions. You only have to fill in the documents provided by CNES, and provide your social security number once you get it (see point 2).

**- NOTE 2 :** Apparently for non-permanent people paid by CNRS, there is no organized or paid mutuelle.

**4. TAXES**

- The annual tax declaration, “*Declaration d’Impots*”, is done in May/June, with payment in August/September, or by monthly instalments. Be ready to pay about a month of salary. The tax year runs from 1 January to 31 December.

- You must make a tax declaration! In 2018 the deadline for paper declarations was 17 May. The deadline for online applications depends on départment; in 2018 for Paris (75) it was 5 June.

- There are several deductions from gross income before you are paid, called *cotisations*; these are mostly contributions to social security, national health insurance, and pensions, and are typically 25% of gross income. Income tax is charged on top of this, and is not deducted from pay.

- From 2019 a system of *prélèvement à la source* is due to be introduced, which will deduct income tax directly from your payslip before you receive it, alongside cotisations, as is done in many other countries. In principle this will make it more straightforward, but the switch-over is unlikely to be completely smooth, particularly as in France taxes are calculated and paid on the basis of a complete household’s income, rather than by individuals...

- The main tax form (2042) is available from:

<https://www.impots.gouv.fr/portail/formulaire/2042/declaration-des-revenus>.

Other forms that may be relevant are 2042C (additional form for declaration of less-common items), 2047 (declaration of foreign income), 2042 RICI (to claim various deductions), and 3916 (declaration of foreign bank accounts).

- The first time you make a declaration you have to provide everything in paper format personally at the *centre d’impôts* in the *commune* where you live. From the second year, once you have a tax number, you can easily do it online. Instructions will be sent to you by mail. Your tax number will be assigned once you have made the first declaration - you do not need to obtain it beforehand.

- The details of whether and how income earned in your home country is taxed in France is country-specific. This is likely to be relevant for the first declaration. You will probably have to spend some time studying the relevant bilateral tax treaty to make sure you do it correctly.

- On the tax declaration all foreign bank accounts that were opened, used, or closed in the relevant tax year must be declared. The penalties for doing so are severe (1500€ per non-declared account). This includes Paypal accounts that are not backed by a French bank account.

- **NOTE** for ITALIAN or SPANISH people (details unknown for other countries...): there’s an agreement between the Governments that basically says that if you were resident in your own country before coming to France, and you move to France to do your research or to teach, you can pay your taxes in France or in your country (you choose) for a period no longer than 2 years. This is explained in the attached file (convention between Italy and France or between Spain and France), read the 20th Article. However, if you decide to pay them in your country, it is mandatory to present your tax declaration in France in May (just put a 0 for the taxable amount of money). Do not hesitate to ask for some help in a tax center or “*centre d’impots*” (choose the one closest to your flat): <http://impots.dispofi.fr/centres-des-impots/paris/d75>. Be aware that people working there may not know this agreement. So it is better to present your declaration with a copy of the “convention” in French, and a cover letter explaining that you’re benefiting from this agreement.

**5. TRANSPORT**

- As soon as you have your RIB, do not lose time, and get a Navigo card! You’ll have unlimited access to metro, tram, RER, and bus throughout the Ile de France (or just within Paris, if required). It’s great! You can do it online or in one of these Agencies (<http://www.ratp.fr/fr/ratp/r_29246/dans-le-reseau-ratp/>). Check here for the required documents: <http://www.ratp.fr/fr/ratp/c_21131/forfait-navigo-annuel>

- Consider that you may also be refunded up to 50% by your employer (refund is even higher if you have a CNES postdoctoral grant!)

- Another options is to get a ‘monthly’ Navigo. It has the same price than the the annual one (about 75€ per month). The advantages of the annual contract is that you do not have to renew it each month (it means no queue every month... ) and that you pay 11 months (august is for free...)

**6. INTERNET AND MOBILE SERVICES**

- There are 4 main operators for mobile phone in France; Orange, Free, SFR, and Bouyges. There are low-cost operators that work only via webpage (they have no offices). There are many contract options (offers that include phone, internet, and television) that are constantly changing, so it is impossible to recommend one versus the others. Free usually offers the best deal with an impact on the service quality.

**7. FRENCH COURSES, SPORTS, ...**

- French language courses (a must for ‘normal’ life in Paris, English will not get you very far) are given at Jussieu:

<http://www.upmc.fr/fr/international/strategie_internationale2/organisation/direction_des_relations_internationales.html>

by the *Bureau du Français Langue Étrangère* (FLE):

 <http://www.upmc.fr/en/international/international_applicants/knowledge_of_french.html>

- Other French courses:

· French course for ‘beginners’ at the CiteU (a lot of oral practice to start becoming fluent in the language): <http://www.ciup.fr/access/apprentissage-du-francais-18205/>

· Another affordable option are courses proposed by the Town Hall (*Mairie de Paris*), but they are in high demand and the waiting list is usually very large: <https://cma.paris.fr/>

· Alliance Française: <https://www.alliancefr.org/>

· Franglish (language exchange sessions): <http://www.franglish.eu/>

- UPMC offers sport services for free: there are a lot of sport activities you can do for free at the campus. Have a look at the link below in September, and if you are interested in some of the activities, consider to register as soon as possible: <http://sciences.sorbonne-universite.fr/fr/vie_des_campus/sport/daps/formation_personnelle_pour_tous2.html>

A sport certificate given by a doctor will be required.

**8. LAST WORD**

Even if after reading this it may not look like, we assure you that Paris is amazing. So enjoy your stay in this wonderful city!!