

ASA

Location-Specific

GUIDE:

Avignon, France

For parents and students

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Student Visa

All students must have a passport that does not expire for at least 3 months after their proposed return date from France.

◆ **IMPORTANT: You will need your valid passport in hand NO LATER THAN 60 days prior to departure, in order to apply for your Student Visa!**

If you're going to France for a period greater than 90 days (i.e. a semester or academic year) you must obtain a Student Visa for France by applying for one at your nearest Consulate General of France. If you'll be studying in France for less than 90 days (i.e. a Summer program) you do NOT have to get a student visa.

Semester/academic year students will have to apply for their visas in person at the Consulate that represents your state's jurisdiction, after completing the CampusFrance portion of the application. Please plan ahead, because you need to apply for your visa 60 days before departure, to allow time for processing.

◆ **Please read the document "Student Visa Information for France" for full details on how to apply for your visa.**

Applying for a VISA can be difficult and frustrating. You must apply in person at the Consulate that covers your state's jurisdiction after making an appointment with the Consulate weeks or months ahead of time. For some students, this will mean having to travel to the Consulate, even if that Consulate is far away. (For example, the Chicago jurisdiction is quite large, as is the Los Angeles jurisdiction.) The French Consulate is strict with its VISA application policies, so make sure you have all the necessary documents before your appointment. One of the required documents is an official enrollment letter from IAU, written in French. ASA will provide you with this enrollment letter, but **it is ultimately the student's responsibility to submit all of the required visa paperwork to the Consulate on time for processing.**

◆ **SEMESTER/ACADEMIC YEAR STUDENTS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ATTEND THE ASA FRANCE PROGRAM WITHOUT A STUDENT VISA.**

Helpful Local Information

Recommended Hotels in Avignon:

Hôtel Bristol Terminus
44, cours Jean Jaurès
Tel: (+33) (0) 4 90.82.21.21

Host Institution & Housing

ASA students in Avignon will attend:

Institute for American Universities (IAU)
Le Centre d'Avignon
5, rue Figuière
84000 Avignon
France
Office Tel: (+33) (0) 4 90.82.58.50
Fax: (+33) (0) 4 90.85.42.47
Email: avignon@iaufrance.org
Office hours: 8:30 am – 6 pm, Mon-Thurs; 8:30 am – 4 pm on Fridays, local time
Emergency Telephone (outside of office hours): (+33) (0) 6 82.59.64.53

IAU Administrative Office
27, place de l'Université
13265 Aix-en-Provence Cédex 1
France
Tel: (+33) (0) 42.23.39.35
Fax: (+33) (0) 442.21.11.38

Contacts at Le Centre d'Avignon:

Dr. Sylvie Rockmore (Director of Le Centre d'Avignon): avignon@iaufrance.org; Office tel: (+33) (0) 4 90.82.58.50

Emergency tel: (+33) (0) 6 82.59.64.53

Gisèle et Barbara (Assistants to Sylvie):

adminavi@iaufrance.org

♦ *SEE "CELL PHONES" SECTION FOR TELEPHONE DIALING INSTRUCTIONS FOR FRANCE.*

Where will the students live?

Students will live with a French host family in Avignon. All of the host families are carefully screened by the IAU staff, and the majority of the hosts have been working with IAU for years. The hosts' residences are located as close to school as possible, in safe areas of the city; however, some hosts are located further from the school than others. Living in a French home is considered the best form of housing because it provides an immediate introduction to life in France.

Students find that speaking French at home is the single greatest factor in increasing their facility with the language.

Living arrangements and the composition of families vary. The term "host family" should not be interpreted too narrowly. Increasingly, about 50% of the hosts are childless couples or divorced women with children who enjoy having a student living with them. IAU's hosts come from a cross-section of society; they belong to no particular professional or social milieu.

The host will provide students with **daily continental breakfast, dinner 6 days per week**, one load of laundry per week, a reasonably comfortable bed, clean surroundings, good light and desk for studying, and most importantly, endless opportunities to learn and practice French. Living arrangements and the composition of families vary. Keep in mind homes in France are not as large as most homes here, so space, especially storage space, can be limited. **The vast majority of students love living with a host family and report that it was one of the best aspects of their study abroad experience.**

Students usually have their own room. Some hosts take only one student at a time, and others more. So, you may be the only student with your host, or you may have a housemate from IAU. If you have a particular preference, please note this on your Housing Questionnaire.

How are the host families selected?

The IAU on-site staff in France is responsible for interviewing, selecting, and matching host families with students. All the hosts must complete a detailed questionnaire and interview in their home. Each host is asked a variety of questions about their background, occupations, family composition, previous experience with students, habits, living arrangements, pets, and more.

All ASA students will complete a Housing Questionnaire after being accepted, which collects information that help us match the student with a compatible host family. *Students must be sure to indicate any allergies, dietary restrictions, or other special needs on the Housing Questionnaire.*

Students will receive their host family assignment by email, about 1-2 weeks prior to departure. If you have any concerns about your living arrangements after you arrive, please don't hesitate to bring it to our attention. Many times a concern can be a cultural misunderstanding or a communication problem that is easily resolved. If, for any reason, we are unable to settle an issue between a host family and a student, we will move the student to a new family as soon as possible. The welfare of our students is always our highest priority.

I have pet allergies/special dietary needs/other special needs. Can this be accommodated?

In most cases, yes. We will make every effort to accommodate each student's needs! It is extremely important that students indicate any allergies, dietary restrictions, or other special needs on their Housing Questionnaire.

How will I get to class from my residence?

Students can usually walk to and from class. Most of the hosts are located within a 15-30 minute walk from the school. In addition, students can take the bus if need be. Avignon has good public transportation; it is frequent and reliable. Although Avignon is a safe city, we recommend that our students take taxis after 10 pm.

Do I need to bring sheets, pillows, blankets, towels, etc.?

Pillows, sheets, and blankets are provided by the host families. All students will need to bring their own towels or buy them upon arrival.

♦ You may **not** move in early to your program housing or stay after the program ends. Students who choose to arrive early or stay late must make their own lodging arrangements for any extra days. **OVERNIGHT GUESTS ARE NOT ALLOWED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE.**

Medical Care

What happens if I get sick while I'm in France?

Our students' health and safety is always our number-one priority. The first and most important step to take is for the student to notify an IAU staff member immediately if they are ill. They will help the student in any way possible – by locating medical care, translating, accompanying him/her to the doctor, etc. Modern medical facilities and medications are widely available in France.

Cell Phones

What is the time difference between France and where I live?

The following times are the number of hours BEHIND France each region is:

Pacific	Mountain	Central	Eastern
9 hours	8 hours	7 hours	6 hours

So, if it is 6pm in France, then it is 12 noon Eastern, 11am Central, and 9am Pacific.

Dialing Instructions for France

011-INTERNATIONAL CODE 33-COUNTRY CODE FOR FRANCE + PHONE NUMBER**

**WHEN CALLING FRANCE FROM THE U.S., OMIT THE "0" FOLLOWING "33." WHEN DIALING INSIDE FRANCE, BEGIN DIALING WITH "0." For example, say the number you want to call is (+33) 0/4 42.23.02.82. In this case, from the U.S. you would dial 011-33-442-230-282. Inside France, you would dial 0442-230-282.

For more information on calling abroad, go to <http://www.howtocallabroad.com/>

How do the cell phones work?

Each student receives a cell phone from Piccell Wireless. ASA provides the phone, while students are responsible for the cost of all calls. Students will receive email instructions from ASA on how to order the phone about a month prior to departure. (*Please do not order your phone until you receive instructions from ASA.*) Students will get their cell phone number when the phone arrives in the mail. The rates for calls and text messages can be found at <https://www.piccellwireless.com/latest/ratesandinfo.php> (click on France). Piccell offers fairly reasonable call rates to the U.S. Piccell will bill the student's credit card monthly for their phone calls, text messages, etc

INCOMING CALLS TO THE INTERNATIONAL (FRENCH) PHONE NUMBER ARE FREE. INCOMING CALLS TO THE U.S. VIRTUAL NUMBER ARE **NOT** FREE. Piccell assigns each student an international (French) phone number and a U.S. Virtual Number (USVN for short). Be sure to call their international number, since students are charged for calls receive on their USVN. As long as you dial their international number and they are in France at the time, the student will NOT be charged for the call.

The U.S. Virtual Number is basically a way for someone in the U.S. to call the student "collect." The USVN is a U.S. phone number that connects you to the student's phone abroad. The caller pays only for the local or long distance call. However, while it's cheaper for the caller, the student is charged for the incoming call at the rate given by Piccell. Check the link above for current rates. The USVN is automatically assigned, but students aren't obligated to use it. If you don't use the USVN for 45 days, it is automatically deactivated.

ROAMING CHARGES: When you're outside your home service area of France, all phone usage, including calls/text messages received or placed, is considered ROAMING and is therefore, subject to high roaming charges.

To avoid roaming charges, students should NOT use their French cell phone outside of France.

Students can order a SIM card online from Piccell for any country they're going to travel to, in which case you would just swap out your SIM card.

What is the best way to call to/from France?

Many students use **SKYPE** which gives you **free international calls** over the Internet. For details, go to www.skype.com.

You can also contact your long distance provider about their international calling plan. Or, use an international pre-paid calling card. To use an international pre-paid calling card, you dial the access number, enter your PIN number/calling card number, then enter the number you want to call.

Try www.nobel.com or www.tel3advantage.com for international pre-paid calling cards for calling U.S. – abroad. Try www.enjoyprepaid.com for international pre-paid calling cards that parents or students can use to call each other, anywhere in the world.

TIPS ON CHOOSING A GOOD CALLING CARD:

- Make sure the rate you're looking at is for a mobile phone and not a landline. Usually the rate to call a mobile phone abroad is higher than the rate to call a landline.
- Check to see if the card has a connection fee or disconnection fee.
- Some cards charge a small weekly or monthly MAINTENANCE FEE that is deducted from your balance.
- Watch out for MINUTE ROUNDING. For example, if your card has 3-minute rounding and you make a 1-minute call, you will actually be charged for 3 minutes of talk time; if you make a 5-minute call, you will actually be charged for 6 minutes of talk time; if you make a 7-minute call, you will be charged for 9 minutes of talk time. So, 1-minute rounding is much more desirable than 5-minute rounding.
- Most cards will give you a toll-free OR local access number to use. Try to use their LOCAL ACCESS NUMBER, if possible, because some cards charge a per-minute or flat fee for using their toll-free access number.
- Normally, the fewer "fees" a card has, the higher the per-minute rate. Conversely, the more "fees" a card has, the lower the per-minute rate. If a card seems "too good to be true," with no fees AND a super low rate...then it probably is! Therefore, it's important to READ ALL OF THE FINE PRINT before purchasing any phone card, and don't be afraid to call the company to ask questions before purchasing anything.
- Don't forget that you may have to pay for the call you make to the access number. If you call the access number from your cell phone, that call uses your minutes (or in the case of students abroad, Piccell will bill you for the call to the access number).

Mail, Computers and Internet

Will students have Internet/email access while in France?

Yes, the computer lab at the Le Centre d'Avignon has high-speed wireless Internet, so **bring your laptop!** *Please note, students will NOT have Internet access at their French homes.* Students can also access Internet and email at Internet cafes, which are reasonably priced and easy to find throughout Avignon.

What kind of adaptor do students need in order to use their laptop in France?

In France, the power supply is 220 volts/50 cycles, while in the U.S. it is 120 volts/60 cycles. Most laptops have a power supply that supports both 110 and 220 volts and 60 and 50 cycles (dual voltage). If your computer meets these requirements, you will only need to buy a plug adaptor so that the U.S. plug will fit into the French wall socket. Voltage adaptors and converters can be purchased at most hardware stores or places like Target, Wal-Mart, etc.

Can students receive mail?

Yes. However,

- We do NOT recommend mailing packages to France unless it is absolutely necessary.
- All mail/packages must arrive AFTER the student has moved in.

What is the best way to ship packages/send mail to France?

In general, it is problematic to receive packages in France— the recipient is usually charged a customs tax to receive the package. Therefore, it is not advisable to mail anything— especially not items such as clothing, gifts, etc. that are of a non-urgent nature. The customs tax can be anywhere from €5 (approx. \$8) to €200 (approx. \$350), depending on the package's declared value and contents. It is difficult to predict what the tax will be when sending a package. If you declare a value, it is not uncommon to pay fees as high as US\$60-\$150 to pick up the package! Remember that all insured packages require a declared value.

If you do choose to send something, the following information will assist you. On the customs form, you should mark your items as "used" whenever possible (i.e. "used books" or "used clothing"), or "FOR PERSONAL USE ONLY – NO COMMERCIAL VALUE," as packages containing new items will be taxed exorbitantly. You will also have to declare a value on the customs form. The higher the declared value, the higher the tax will be on the receiving end. Declaring a value of less than €10/\$10 may help to keep the customs tax to a minimum.

For sending packages, we recommend FedEx, UPS, or DHL because they will give you a tracking number. Although FedEx, DHL, and UPS are not the cheapest ways to mail items abroad, they are the fastest and most secure. You may contact any of these companies for a price quote and estimated transit time by giving them the weight, dimensions and destination of your package. For sending mail (letters, cards, papers, photographs, etc.), we recommend the U.S. Postal Service. *Here is the address to use:*

Le Centre d'Avignon
c/o STUDENT'S NAME
5, rue Figuière
84000 Avignon
France
Office Tel: (+33) (0) 4 90.82.58.50
Fax: (+33) (0) 4 90.85.42.47

► **OVERNIGHT MAIL**

“Overnight” from the U.S. does NOT mean overnight to France! If someone in the U.S. sends an overnight document to France, it will arrive in France AFTER 2 DAYS OR MORE. For urgent documents, ATM cards, etc., use a reliable service such as FedEx or UPS. While the express or overnight USPS Global Priority service is reliable, it will actually take several EXTRA days to reach its destination because when the item enters France it is placed directly into the French postal system, which delays its delivery.

Example: If a FedEx letter classified as “overnight” leaves the U.S. on a Monday morning, the student will likely receive the item at the *earliest* on Wednesday or Thursday of the same week. Other couriers (UPS, USPS) may take longer.