



The French Republic, better known as France, is a major European country situated to the south of the United Kingdom. At its closest point it is only twelve miles away from Kent, across the English Channel. It has borders with several countries: Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, Andorra and Spain.

France is the largest country in western Europe, with a total land area of 674,843 square kilometres, occupied by a population of about 66 million people. In comparison, our country, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, has a population of approximately 62 million people living in an area of just 243,610 square kilometres.

France is a very popular country for tourists to visit: over 82 million people visit the French Republic every year. Many people enjoy visiting Paris, the capital city, where there are famous art galleries. The Eiffel Tower can be seen from many miles away and visitors can climb to its first and second level by steps then take lifts to the third level, from which they can gain wonderful views right across the whole city. Just to the south of Paris is the very popular Disneyland Paris theme park and to the north is the Parc Asterix.

In the summer, French beaches are great attractions for visitors. The sandy beaches of Brittany in the north-west of France and of the Cote d'Azur in the south are particularly popular with tourists. In the winter, many people head for the French Alps where they can enjoy skiing in the wonderful mountain scenery.

Most tourists from the United Kingdom reach France by ferry from English ports such as Plymouth, Poole, Portsmouth and Dover, or by travelling through the Channel Tunnel. The Channel Tunnel first opened in 1994 and links Folkestone in Kent with a place called Coquelles, which is near Calais in France. Passengers can travel through the tunnel on the Eurostar train or they can take their cars on the Eurotunnel car shuttle train.