



Life in France

Despite the fact that France is “just over the Channel”, you do need to remember that it is a different country. This may seem completely obvious, but you’d be surprised at just how many people who come to live here hold the belief that everything will be the same as in the UK. It is really important to remember that France has its own unique culture, and the people have their own philosophy, which can be very different to British ideas. We may look fondly at TV programs or books like “A Year in Provence” and believe that things can’t really be as challenging as depicted. The difficulties portrayed in fact can be uncannily accurate. What is more, other even more “alarming” differences exist between our two nations. Below is a quick résumé of differences that you may encounter in France, together with suggestions for coping with some of them.

Major differences:

People in France speak French, they do not speak English. People in Britain speak English, they do not speak French. Sounds obvious, so why mention it here? Simple: If you go into a village shop in France and try to speak to the owner in English, not only is it rude, but he or she will more than likely not understand you. If a Frenchman goes into a village shop in Britain and tries to speak to the owner in French, he or she will more than likely not understand him either.



Don’t expect people in France to speak your language, and don’t say things like, “do you know, I went into the supermarket yesterday and nobody there spoke English”. Why would they? How many supermarket workers in the UK speak French?

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