

Research in France

Contributors: Denise Baxter, Rita Keane, Professor Laurie Monahan, Vibeke Olson,
Sarah Thompson

Before you leave

1. Obtain letters of introduction from your advisor and the chair of the department (best to have the letter in French). The letter should indicate that you are a *boursier*, and that you are a 'historian of art' (this letter will allow you to have free admission to all government-owned museums- show it to the guard when you enter).
2. Take many passport sized photos for your Metro card, library cards, etc. (some black & white also, some libraries/agencies require them- including for the Carte de séjour).
3. Make sure your passport will not expire while you are there. You may have trouble at Customs also if your passport expires within a few months of your expected departure from France- they don't want you to cut it close.
4. Mentally prepare yourself for the French bureaucracy- procedures will change, the procedures in place will be wildly irrational, bureaucrats will be stubborn, and your French will escape you when you need it, but if you hold your ground and/or are flexible (i.e. you go back the next day) you can get work done.

The Carte de Séjour

5. If you are going to be there for an extended period, you need to obtain a 'Carte de séjour.' Well before you leave, contact the French consulate and find out what the procedure is. Ask if there is a cultural attaché, who can write a letter for you. The consulate may designate a doctor in the U.S. for a physical.
6. Once you arrive in France, you have to prove that you have enough money to live there (take your American bank statement), and prove that you have health insurance.
7. You should also get a letter from your own doctor declaring that you are in good health.
8. Take the letter from the department describing your financial aid.
9. Go to the Prefecture du Police (in the 19th) to fill out the forms; you will get a temporary card. You need to carry the card with you at all times. It expires every year; it must be renewed at least three months in advance.
10. The more documentation, the better!! Letters on official letterhead help a lot!

Once you arrive

1. Possibilities from the airport: the Air France bus (it goes to Étoile- take a cab from there to your apartment, less expensive than a cab from the airport). Also a possibility is Airport Shuttle tel #: 01.45.38.55.72 (120FF for one person; they speak English which is a relief when you've just arrived and you're trying to give directions to your apartment, which you've never been to before. Reserve a couple of days in advance).
2. Buy a copy of *Paris pas cher*. Inexpensive options for everything you will need.
3. Open a bank account. You need to have the carte de séjour and cash to open the account. Or you can use American Express, because you can write a personal check

without charge at the AmEx office in Paris. The ATM card is most convenient, but you pay a service charge for every withdrawal.

4. Get library cards at as many places as you can. Find out what holdings the libraries have - then if the B.N. doesn't have something you need you can check elsewhere.

Libraries:

- Fourney: art history library in the Marais. Metro Sully-Morland. Fairly easy to use and has standard art history texts.
- Bib. de l'histoire de la ville de Paris (BHVP): has journals. In the Marais. Metro Saint-Paul.
- Bibliothèque des documentations d'internationale contemporaine for modernists, in Nanterre. Take RER. Has archives, journals.
- Also for modernists there is a library at the Hotel des Invalides (Musée d'histoire contemporaine). They have posters, photographs. Contact person: Laurent Gervereau. tel: 45.51.93.02.
- For women's history, the Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand, 79 rue Nationale, 75013 Paris.
- The Police Prefecture also has an archive.
- The American University in Paris also has a library with American journals, but getting card is a tad expensive.

Navigating the Bibliothèque nationale

Tolbiac site

1. Don't worry if it takes a few weeks to figure out the system...
2. Getting out there: Take Metro line 14 to Bibliothèque Nationale. Take the elevator up to the street level, turn right. The four towers in the distance are the library. Enter at either the Est or Ouest entrance (both have an "Orientation" office- where you get your library card). If you are on the Left Bank, take bus 89. It drops you off at the steps of the library.
3. Getting a library card (and now not to de-magnetize it...). Go into "Orientation" and ask for a library card; the person at the desk will ask why you need it, and what kind you want (you need a card that has access to both the Haut-de-jardin and Rez-de-jardin- if you say you are a doctoral candidate they should assume this. He/she will give you a number (a two digit number). Your number will be called, and you sit at a desk with an interviewer, to whom you show your letters of introduction, your passport, and your student i.d. Tell the interviewer what you will need access to (manuscripts, maps and plans, medals, etc. You should try to get access to all of the departments, because you never know what you will need). A *boursier* (grant-holder- this is you, no matter how big or small your grant that year!) gets a discount. Make sure your advisor has included in your letter of introduction that you are a *boursier*. Then you are shown back out to the waiting area, and you have to ask the person at the front desk for another number, this one for the photograph. They will call this second number (it has three digits) and you go back to another desk, where they will ask you the same questions that the first interviewer asked you. Then they take your

picture, and you take your card out to the Caisse (there are large signs for it), where you pay for it. The card functions like a Metro card- you put it through the slots at the entrances to various areas. This would be so the librarians can keep track of the Americans. Careful not to put it next to any credit cards, etc. so it does not get demagnetized (you know it is demagnetized if the machine won't accept it. The guards at the entrance will try to put it through for you also, and if it still doesn't work, you have to get a new one). Purses that have magnets in their snap-closures will also de-magnetize the card. If it is de-magnetized take it back into Orientation and they will replace it for free, although much remonstrance is involved. (If you can't think of a French word for demagnetization: 'La machine n'aime pas ma carte' worked for me. Words like 'demagnetisée' are useful, when in doubt. They might be annoyed at the use of an alleged cognate but you get your point across).

4. The Haut-de-jardin is the street level of the library. Periodicals (including American newspapers- although a week behind), general interest stuff is all there. Anyone can have access to it. Your research will be in the Rez-de-jardin, the lower level, where the scholars work. For the Rez-de-jardin, you have to reserve a seat, which does not have to be done in advance (you can do it when you get there) but it is best to reserve seats for the next week or so to save yourself the hassle (and to make it easier to get books delivered).
5. Requesting a seat. Go to a kiosk, and insert your card. Request a date and a room. The computer will tell you there are no spaces. There always are. Keep doing it until it works. If it never works (after 10 tries, for example), go downstairs (through the doors for Rez-de-jardin and down the big escalators) anyway (you need not have a seat assignment to get into the Rez-de-jardin information area) and ask them at the desk to assign you a place.
6. Requesting books (the vast majority of books you need will not be on shelves that you can access). Go to a computer terminal in one of the Rez-de-jardin rooms. Insert your card. Follow the on-screen instructions. You can reserve books for other days (provided you have already reserved your seat for that day)-that's the best and most efficient way to do it. A green light will blink at your seat when your books are ready. Go to the desk in the room where your seat is to pick up your books (bring your card with you). Return your books to the same desk when you are finished.
7. Photocopying. Go to the photocopy room, to the machine where you buy your card. Pay for the card, plus the money for photocopies. Leave your books and your card with one of the photocopiers (this would be a person- did you think that you could make your own copies??) They will tell you when to come back and pick it up.
8. When you first come into the library you have to check your coat and your bag. The attendant will give you a hard plastic case into which you put your computer, pens, notebook, etc. Don't forget the plug converter for your laptop. When you leave you turn in the case and retrieve your belongings. I don't think you are allowed to put food in this case, but I have seen people carrying their lunches around in it. There is a café in the B.N., and areas to sit and eat a lunch from home too.

Richelieu site

1. Obtain your library card at Tolbiac (you use the same one at Richelieu- as long as you have approval on your card for manuscripts, or whatever you want to use at Richelieu). It is possible to get a card at Richelieu to use at both sites but the registration staff is much less intimidating (and more used to foreigners) at Tolbiac. Laurie Monahan prefers Richelieu, because there won't be a line.
2. The manuscripts room is on the second floor, up the red-carpeted stairs. You go into the room to the person seated at the desk at the door and turn in your library card. He/she will ask you if you have a computer (some of the seats are wired for laptops) and will give you a blue plastic placard with a number on it, and a key. Go back outside to the lockers and find the number that your key matches, and put your bags, pens, etc. in the locker. Once you are back in the room, find your seat number (which matches the number on your placard). Sometimes the room is full- the door person will tell you to wait outside. The wait is usually not too long- twenty minutes or so.
3. To request manuscripts, fill out a request form (which can be obtained at the desk in the center of the room). You will need the manuscript acquisition number (B.N. something.... M.s. latin, or m.s. francais, etc. and a number) and take it to the desk and the far end of the room (opposite the entrance) where you turn it in, and trade in your blue placard for an orange placard that has your seat number on it. The manuscript will eventually be brought to your seat.
4. When you are ready to leave, take your orange placard back to the desk at the far end of the room, where they will give you a green placard that has your seat number on it. Go to the desk at the center of the room and tell them that you are leaving (you are 'asking permission to leave') and they will sign a slip of paper giving you permission. Go to the desk at the door, turn in your placard, then go outside, get your stuff out of your locker, come back in with the key, and the door person will give you back your library card.
5. Go out and have a drink.
6. For Grand Réserve manuscripts the process is different- turn in your request at the center desk for approval. Once it is approved, they will either give the request to you to take to the end of the room for retrieval or they will do it themselves. The days are restricted for G.R. manuscripts- they can be seen only on Wednesdays and Fridays. The best way to do it is to come on Monday and tell them that you will come back on Wednesday, because the request to see the manuscript has to be approved by François Avril and he is not there every day. Also it helps to have your face seen there by them a couple of times before you demand to see a valuable manuscript. There are binders with photographs of the B.N. manuscripts along the wall which you can look at to make your trip worthwhile. If you are looking at a G.R. manuscript you have to sit at a special table, so tell the door person when you first come in that you are there to see a G.R. manuscript. Wait for a younger person to be working at the center desk to make your request for a G.R. manuscript- they are nicer than the older librarians!

B.N. Photographs

To order, go to the Photographs and Reproductions dept at Richelieu. When you walk in the courtyard, turn left and go up the short flight of steps. (opposite the main entrance).

Navigating the Archives nationales

1. Take same documentation as you did to the B.N. Best to go with someone who has already used it. They will give you card similar to the one used at the B.N.
2. Go early, as there are not that many places.
3. Be creative when you use the catalogue- the categories might be different from what you might expect. Brainstorm as many categories as you think your material might possibly fall into.

Fax/Fedex

- You can fax from the Louvre post office, and also receive faxes there (they will call you when it comes in). The Louvre post office fax # 42.33.63.54. You can also fax from FUSAC.
- DHL is preferable to Fedex in Paris. The office is on Rue Richelieu near the old B.N. tel# 42.96.14.55. FedEx tel # 05.33.33.55

Apartments

- One way to find one is on H-France. Send an e-mail to the editor asking to be added to the list. The mail volume is annoying, but there are four or five listings a week of available apartments. If you are looking for the academic year, start in May.
- The Internet is also a possibility- a great website with many links is www.france-apartment.com
- Professors who want to sublet apartments to other professors (neglect to mention that you are still a graduate student for this service) Bureau d'accueil des professeurs d'université étrangère. 39, ave Georges Bernanos, 75231 Paris Cedex 5. tel #: 40.51.37.16.
- Also check the Fondation des Etats-Unis, 15 bd Jourdan, 75690 Paris Cedex 14. They have rooms.
- Check also with the French dept at UCSB. Sometimes they have ads up on their dept bulletin board.
- FUSAC (a newsletter) is another possibility. It is available in France, or you can call the office in New York and request a copy.
- Agencies are also useful: Vibeke used Ma Maison (expensive but the places are nice); also a possibility is NYHabitat.com.
- Rooms are available also at Cité Universitaire (a dorm room). Call them directly.

Food/Restaurants (good and not too expensive)

- Crêpe stand on Rue Mouffetard (6th).
- Thai: L'Elephant Bleu.
- Gandhi (Indian). Near Opéra (corner of Rue Ste-Anne and Rue St-Augustine). M: Quatre-Septembre.
- L'Epi d'Or (French). Near the Louvre on Rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau (a little street).
- If you are at the Louvre and you don't want to eat there, the café Thermidor on Rue Saint-Honoré (where it intersects with Rue Marengo) is good.
- You can buy food also in the basement of Marks and Spencer if you are looking for English things.
- Le Vieux Chêne. Rue du Dahomey 11th.
- Café de la Plage. Rue de Charonne. Metro: Bastille.
- La Palette, near École des Beaux Arts on rue Bonaparte.

Networking

- Find out if there are lectures, or a lecture series where you might meet other scholars. (the Louvre has a lecture series).
- Write to professors at the universities in Paris whom you would like to meet (it is okay to write in English if you need to- better to get your point across than to fumble along in French).
- Check American universities in Paris to see what kinds of academic events are going on.

Computers

- You have to have a laptop (for research and for e-mail)!
- Every seat at the B.N. is wired for laptops. You do not need a power transformer (almost all laptops can convert the voltage already) but you do need the plug converter to plug in your computer at the B.N.
- You can check e-mail from home. AOL and Compuserve have French access numbers. The AOL access number is toll-free. They charge for the hour (3.95 last time I checked) prorated for however many minutes you are logged on. You can log on, download your mail, log off, and then log back on to send mail. You can also use the Internet at the B.N.
- To print out, you can find an Internet café that has a printer, or buy a printer if you are going to be there long enough to make it worthwhile.

Photography

- A great variety of kinds of film can be purchased at FNAC (major department store).
- It is very expensive to develop film in France!! Wait until you can get back to the U.S. if possible. If you have to develop there, join the Photoservice (a club). You have to go to their 1-hour places for developing, but they give you a discount and also

one roll of film free when you have one developed (except they don't give free rolls of slide film).

- The Photoservice store in Les Halles processes slides in one hour (if you're pressed for time).
- If you want a really good print of an image, go to PICTO. 4 villa Entrepreneurs. 15th. Or rue Delambre in the 4th. Metro Edgar Quinet/Vavin.
- A great picture archive (you can buy pictures there- for example "a crowd scene from the 1930s") is Roger Viollet. 6 rue Seine, tel: 43.54.81.10.

Medical Issues

- Bring everything. Prescription stuff, obviously, but also anything you can obtain over the counter in the U.S. has to be negotiated at length with a French pharmacist in France (including Tums, aspirin, vitamins, etc.) On the upside, these pharmacists can give you the really good stuff like cough syrup with codeine without a prescription.
- Also bring contact lens solution (it is very expensive in France!) Aspirin is also very expensive in France.
- A dentist who speaks English and trained in a U.S. dental school (Laurie says very important!) Dr. Jacques Vettier. 52 rue Malesherbes, 45.22.31.83. escalier A, deuxième étage, à gauche. He is expensive, but does a good job.
- Gynecologist. Dr. Pierre Konopka. 150 ave de Wagram, 17th. 46.22.33.88.
- Women's clinic, no need for an appointment (useful for birth control). 10 rue Vivienne. 42.60.93.20. Mon. 12-16h, Tues 17-19h, Thurs. 12-15h. Another clinic is at 94 bd Massina. Porte d'Ivry. Friday 11-15h.

Laurie's Shopping Tips

- Sometimes when you purchase an item you have to have a ticket written up for it, which you then take to the Caisse.
- Usually you don't put money in the salesperson's hand- put it down on the counter.
- Stationery supplies can be obtained at Gibert Joseph on bd Saint-Michel (cheapest place for pens, notebooks, etc.)
- The BHV is also good for school supplies.
- Can get a transformer at Samaritaine.
- Flea markets: Porte de Vanves is best. Saturday and Sunday. Parc Georges Brassens in the 15th has a used/rare book fair Friday-Sunday mornings. Go by 10am at the latest.
- For prints, Arsène Bonafous-Murat. 15 rue de l'échaudé. 75006. Off bd Saint-Germain by Rue Jacob. 46.33.42.31. Tues-Sat 13h-19h. Also, Elbe, corner of rue Saint-Simon and bd. Saint-Germain.
- For great chocolate: La Charlotte de l'Ile. 24 rue St. Louis en l'Ile. 75004. 43.54.25.83.

Laurie's Bookstore Recommendations

- Feminist bookstore: Librairie d'art Formie Ailee, by Notre-Dame on Left Bank. 8 rue Fouarre (off Pont Double). It also has a cool tea room.
- For exhibition catalogues: Librairie Léon Aichelbaum. 12, rue d'Ulm. 75005.
- The best history bookstore, new and used books all periods: Pages d'Histoire. Rue Bréa. 14th, off bd. Montparnasse. Metro: Vavin.

Language training

- Langue Onze 15, rue Gamboy. 43.38.22.87. Near République.

Traveling

1. Buy the Guide Routard for the area- useful for hotels, restaurants, and sights.
2. To stay with a French family, Maison des Gites de France, 35 rue Godot de Mauroy, 75009. 47.42.25.43. M-Sat 10-18h30.
3. Travel agencies: Access. 6, rue Pierre Lescot. 42.21.46.94 or 40.13.02.02. Council Travel. 51 rue Dauphine, 6th. 43.25.09.86.
4. If you are flat broke, want to come home for a while, and are fairly flexible, do a courier flight. Halbar. 36 rue Broca. 5th. 45.87.32.30.

Renting a Car, by Sarah, or "Comment renverser la voiture?"

If you know when you will need a car, it may be easiest to make reservations from the U.S. before departure – it will generally be less expensive, will allow you to set the terms of your contract in advance, and will mean that any difficulties with billing can be taken care of in the States after your return. Cars available in France will usually be makes/models that are uncommon in the U.S. The major companies (Hertz, Europcar etc.) have websites with pictures of typical rental cars posted, so you can see what a Clio and a Laguna actually look like. Most French people drive relatively small cars, so a large car will make you stand out as a tourist. However, if you plan on doing much long-distance driving, you should avoid the smallest class of car – these are usually even smaller than the typical U.S. subcompact, and won't go very fast on the autoroute. Cars with an automatic transmission are usually available, but often only in larger cars; you will have fewer options and will pay more than you would for a manual. When you are returning a rental car to a busy location (especially at an airport), look for signs that say *véhicules à louer* to direct you to the return lots.

Driving

In French cars with a manual transmission, putting the car in reverse often requires not only shifting into the reverse position, but lifting up an a ring below the grip of the stick

shift. Filling up the tank (*faire le plein*) will be very expensive – at least four dollars a gallon (although gas is actually sold by the liter), so make sure to rent a car that gets good mileage. Remember to include gas in your transportation budget – a week’s driving tour of France can cost two to three hundred dollars for the gas alone. Gas (*essence*) is cheapest at supermarket chains like Monoprix, and is most expensive on the autoroutes. Don’t let the tank get too low – finding a 24-hour station, particularly in the country, will be much more difficult than in the U.S., and some stations are closed Sundays. Unleaded gas is *sans plomb*, and diesel (the cheapest kind if you can rent a car that uses it) is *gazole*.

Yellow Michelin maps are one of the best ways to plan a driving route for specific regions. Plan your route in advance, and know what cities/towns the roads you will take pass through and where they terminate, as most French road signs are based not on general directions (i.e. the 101 North) but on locations (i.e. *N7 direction Rouen*). Driving will be confusing at first – road signs giving directions are often clustered together and right at an intersection rather than preceding it, and you will have to read them quickly. Plan on getting lost. There are plenty of turnouts on the highways where you can pull over and reorient yourself. On main roads, you usually have the right of way (*passage protégé*) – this is signaled by road signs with a big yellow diamond. A yellow diamond with a black slash means you must yield the right of way to traffic entering the road (*vous n’avez pas la priorité*) – you will usually see this sign before roundabouts. In the past, it was customary to give way to traffic entering the road from the right (*priorité à droite*) – in most areas you will have *passage protégé*, but in some older areas *priorité à droite* may still be in effect.

There are three different kinds of highway in France: autoroutes, national highways, and departmental highways. Autoroutes (shown on maps as red-and-yellow striped roads) cost money to use, but they are usually the fastest and most direct way from one place to another (also the most boring). They are the most like American freeways, with uninterrupted traffic and clear signage. They have designated entrances/exits which are numbered on the map – don’t count on being able to enter the autoroute anywhere it crosses a main road. The left lane is generally reserved for passing. The speed limit is 130km/h (110 in the rain), but less for trucks. Trucks are the only vehicles in France that actually obey the speed limit, so you will have to pass a lot of them. You get a ticket as you enter the autoroute and pay a toll when you exit (at the *gare de péage*), depending on how far you have traveled. Some places have tollbooth attendants, and others have automatic machines, but in either case you can pay with cash or a credit card.

National roads are shown on the map in red. These are usually two or more lane highways, well-traveled and maintained. Because they are free, they often get very crowded during peak traffic times. The limit here is 110 km/h (100 if raining, and less for trucks). Departmental roads are shown in yellow or white. These are one or two-lane highways, less direct (and with less traffic) than national roads. They can often be very scenic, but have a lower speed limit – 90 km/h (80 in the rain, and again less for trucks). Both national and departmental roads pass through towns rather than going around them – to stay on the highway you will literally be driving down Main Street. The speed limit in towns drops to 50 km/h, although the French rarely seem to obey this. Traveling

through the town can be a little confusing, particularly as the town often serves as a junction where different highways meet – keep your eyes open for signs telling you where to go.

The French tend to drive fairly aggressively, and will do things that may be nerve-racking to American drivers – they tailgate, drive far over the speed limit, and pass constantly, even on blind curves. This isn't meant to be insulting. You will also be expected to pass (especially trucks) on one-lane roads, or people will be annoyed at you for holding up traffic. You aren't supposed to pass on a solid line. The minimum speed in good weather is 80 km/h on highways.

Parking

In small towns, you can just park on the street for free. Many larger cities and towns have free lots in touristy areas (for example, near the cathedral), or easily accessible public lots – you will see a white P on a blue sign. In these lots, you usually pick up a ticket from a machine when you walk out to the street – keep it with you, and when you return, you'll get it stamped at the machine with your departure time. Sometimes you pay at the machine, and sometimes you show your stamped ticket to an attendant and pay as you drive out, but you have to get your ticket stamped before you get back in the car. If you park on the street in a blue area (either with a blue curb or the blue parking sign), you will have to pay at a nearby *horodateur* machine for your parking – you'll need change. The machine should be easily visible. In areas designated as paid parking but without *horodateurs*, you supposedly have to get a *disque de stationnement* at a market or newsagent, but I've never actually had to do this. Some hotels don't have parking lots. Of those that have parking, some have free lots, but more often you'll have to pay a surcharge for parking. Depending on how far you want to carry your bags, it may be cheaper to park at a public lot – you can usually leave your car there for at least 24 hours without a problem.

Most important to remember when doing research in France:

Always allow for a strike!! Don't leave anything to the last minute because you never know...