

Welcome / Student Testimonials

Welcome to the Saint Francis University *Semester in France* program. From your base in the monastery of Ambialet, where the University operates its study abroad program, you will have an opportunity to see, taste, feel and marvel at the wonders of the region - castles, chateaux, ruins, quaint medieval hilltop villages, stunning views, and awe-inspiring cathedrals.

The University's facility, located in southwestern France, is perched on a hilltop overlooking the village of Ambialet and the Tarn River. Ambialet is located 25 minutes from Albi (population 50,000), the largest city in the Tarn region of southwestern France. In Ambialet/Albi the early focus of the program is on the language/culture course to ensure students have basic communication skills in French. We also embark intensively on the religious pilgrimages and the fascinating period in southwestern France that involved the Cathars (a heretical religious sect that was prominent in the region in the 11th – 14th centuries). This is the primary historical foundation of the region, and we will take every advantage of the region's hilltop towns, fortified castles, and cities as well as spectacular cathedrals and shrines.

The *Semester in France* program is based in Ambialet but includes weekly excursions, an extended trip to Barcelona and Paris (and Amsterdam during the Fall semester). Students also travel independently during their semester break. The schedule is designed to give students a month of preparation work in the language, culture and history of France, so they can more confidently pursue independent travel and communicate with locals. While in Barcelona and Paris, the academic focus is on art history, language and culture. From their centrally-located dormitories in Barcelona and Paris, students will visit working artists in their studios, museums, landmarks, architectural wonders (even the department stores are works of art!) – indeed, everything that makes Barcelona and Paris magical.

Details on the core academic program may be found on the *Course / Textbooks / Excursions* tab. All students are expected to participate in the core academic program, which gives the semester its academic context.

The experience of studying abroad and living in a foreign country for several months will be of immense value to you in every way. You will have the opportunity to become acquainted with the culture and people of France, thus allowing you to experience intellectual, linguistic, personal and spiritual growth.

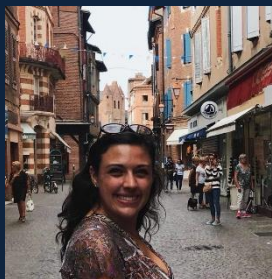
The information contained in this folder is intended to prepare you for your travels during your *Semester in France*. The Office for Study Abroad (located in room 2015, Scotus Hall) will assist you with any questions or concerns you encounter as they arise. Please do not hesitate to contact the Office at studyabroad@francis.edu or 814-472-3245.



The best aspect of the program is being able to experience a new culture. I've learned to appreciate things that we have that they don't; and to appreciate the things in their culture that we don't have or that are different than ours. It makes you realize that there is a world outside of the U.S. If anyone is thinking about studying in this program, they need to. It will be one of the best experiences of their life. – Kiersten Jay, Healthcare Major



The Semester in France program was an amazing experience to have as an SFU undergrad. You get to see and do things that many people never get the chance to. I'm very lucky to have had the opportunity to participate in this program.
- Desmond Phillips
Petroleum Engineering Major.



Experiencing the French culture was one of the best experiences of my life, it felt like it was my second home. It was life changing and I will have memories to cherish for a lifetime.

- LeAndra Feight, Occupational Therapy



Studying abroad in France gave me the opportunity to discover the world in the most unique way; I was able to see and do things I never thought possible. I was hoping this trip would fulfill my desire to travel the world, but instead it made me eager to experience more.
- Maria Ridilla, Occupational Therapy Major

Office for Study Abroad
Scotus Hall, room 205 / studyabroad@francis.edu / 814-472-3245

Culture / Culture Shock

The knowledge you will gain by experiencing and living in a different culture will serve you well as you begin to encounter various people and situations in the work force.

Culture can be defined as a set of beliefs and learned behavioral patterns passed down from one generation to the next that describe members of any given society. These patterns are as individual as the members that make up each society, as a result, culture can never be fully defined. Furthermore, there is no ideal way to live, just different solutions to situations as a means of meeting basic needs. It is usually best to approach new situations with an open mind and a non-judgmental attitude. With such an approach you will be able to see another's logic rather than just accepting or condemning cultural differences.

Living and studying in another culture for an extended period of time will give you the chance to develop a deeper understanding of another culture, different customs, and ways of thinking. The adjustment period will vary from person to person and culture to culture. Through this transition, your beliefs, values, sense of self and nationality may be challenged.



Lauren Hutt and her host sister; Adeline, connecting through music.

Just as you are carrying with you clothing and personal items, you are also carrying cultural baggage. Although not as obvious, it will play an important role in your ability to adapt to new cultures. This type of baggage pertains to your morals, values, attitudes and belief system. Although your behavior has been accepted in your culture the same behavior may be seen as inappropriate in your new setting. This may leave you feeling uncomfortable. However, the more you know about your personal values the better prepared you will be to see and understand the cultural differences that you will encounter while abroad. The concept of adjustment implies changes. These changes will challenge both your mental constructs and your behavior. On the other hand, just as the people of France will have an impact on you, you too will have an impact on them.

Culture Shock: Culture shock feels similar to frustration, but is not a result of a specific event. Its causes have been associated with new ways of doing things that challenge the basic, ethnocentric belief that your way of doing things is the correct way. This usually builds gradually as the result of a series of strange events occurs in your host country.

You will go through several stages while abroad, with the first being described as the honeymoon phase. This phase is defined as feelings of excitement in the people, sights and a desire to learn about your foreign environment. But as you become more accustomed to the setting and your daily routine, you may begin to feel homesick or depressed. This is simply a reaction to cultural differences and with patience will subside as time passes. You will feel more liberated after having experienced culture shock because you have learned new approaches to doing things in your host country that have been adopted as part of daily life. By getting to know your host country and looking for the logic that lies behind its style of living, you will foster more effective interaction within the new culture and increase your abilities to manage and understand the new social system.

Be Open Minded: It is important to target culture in a way that makes it easier to see how behavior fits together, both logically and systematically. The tendency of people to impose their own values and assumptions onto people in a new culture usually inhibits cross-cultural understanding. Moreover, if you attempt to do something based on your own assumption of efficiency, you will be frustrated and feel that people are deliberately making things hard for you. Try to be open minded rather than resort to becoming defensive and fitting to your preconceived stereotype. Stereotypes will only prevent you from getting to the richer reality which lies beyond them. They may also evoke hostile relations between in-group and out-group members and prevent a person to be receptive to other people's ideas. The goal here is to empathize with the bearer of the other culture. William F. Marquardt, a polyglot professional of English linguistics, describes empathy as "the habit of trying in time of conflict to see things the other person's way, as the most relevant magic in our day."

For more information about culture's influence on behavior and communication, anthropologist Edward T. Hall has written several highly regarded books: *The Silent Language*, 1973. *The Hidden Dimension*, 1990. *Beyond Culture*, 1977. Dr. L. Robert Kohls's *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, 1996, provides sound guidance in preparing for a rewarding experience abroad.

Courses / Textbook / Excursions

Courses offered each semester in France include: FREN: French Language, FNAR: Culture and Values, RLST: Early & Medieval Church History & Architecture, CORE 407: Keystone Seminar, and BIOL: Human Anatomy and Physiology. Additional courses are offered, each semester, by visiting faculty. Students may also take on-line courses to help maintain their progress toward graduation.

Ambialet is located 25 minutes from Albi (population 50,000), the largest city in the Tarn region of southwestern France. In Ambialet/Albi the focus is on the language/culture course to ensure everyone has basic communication skills in French. The course work covers intensively the religious pilgrimages and the fascinating period in southwestern France that involved the Cathars. This is the primary historical foundation of the region, and every advantage is taken to include the region's hilltop towns, fortified castles, cities, splendid cathedrals and shrines.

While in Paris and Barcelona, the academic focus is on art, history, language and culture. From their centrally-located dormitories, students will visit working artists in their studios, museums, landmarks and architectural wonders.



Students visiting Barcelona

Textbooks: You will be responsible for the cost of the textbooks for the program. However, the textbooks for the program's core courses will be shipped to France, and will be ready for you when you arrive. The only textbooks you will need to bring with you are those pertaining to online classes or independent study. Check to see if the texts of the "flex-courses" will be shipped to France or if you need to acquire them beforehand. Notebooks and school supplies are also your responsibility. You should either pack your supplies or be prepared to buy them when you arrive in France.

Excursions: There will be weekly excursions, as part of your course work. You will visit castles in Carcassonne (walled medieval city), churches in Conques, museums and city tour in Toulouse. In appropriate locations there may be free time after the tours to explore the locations on your own and to enjoy a cappuccino at a street café or to hang out with locals.

As part of your Fine Arts and Cultures course, there will be an extended stay in Barcelona, Spain. There you will see the work of Antoni Gaudi in the architecture of the entire city. Casa Milà (*La Pedrera*) and the Sagrada Familia will blow you away! You will also visit the Picasso and Miro Museums. On the way back from Barcelona, you will visit the Salvador Dali museum. Besides these set excursions, there are tons to explore in Barcelona - the infamous Las Ramblas, the beaches and harbor, Flamenco performances, and the vibrant nightlife. You will learn to love eating tapas and paella as well!

There will also be an extended trip to Paris. You will be living in student apartments and quickly get to know the Metro system, which lets you access pretty much all of Paris. Aside from the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, there is so much to see in Paris that you will be divided up into small groups, and will report to each other what you have seen and learned. You will also have enough free time to pursue your personal interests.



Cell Phones / SKYPE / Mail

Some cell phones do work overseas, but often at a rather high price. Check with your current provider to add international access to your current plan. It is usually available for an additional monthly fee. Remember, however, that each phone call is charged; your free minutes do not apply for international calls and you will be paying roaming charges. Certain smartphones enable you to send and receive text messages via Wi-Fi so you can stay connected for free at the monastery. A good alternative is to purchase a phone and pre-paid SIM card bundle at a local French provider (Orange, SFR or Bouygues). You can then charge up your phone with pre-paid cards. To avoid your phone from roaming keep your phone on “Airplane Mode.” Once you go into a café, hotel, or our site in Ambialet, you will be able to sign into the Wi-Fi network and will stay signed in.

It is not absolutely necessary to have a cell phone when you are in France. Many students go without. However, cell phones can be advantageous when you are traveling independently. (In which case, adding international service to your American plan would make the most sense).

You, your family, and friends may want to download SKYPE, Whats App, Facetime, or VIBER (both are free) to talk with each other. You may also want to invest in a headset. Your laptop has a microphone built into it, but having a headset allows you to hear the conversation and not everyone in the hall.



SKYPE gave me the opportunity to be connected with my family and friends even though I was in a different country. One of my biggest worries before studying abroad was that I was going to be homesick, but SKYPE allowed me to feel close to home.

- Meg Carroll, Occupational Therapy Major

French Cell Phone: You can purchase a French cell phone + pre-paid SIM card bundle at a local French provider. Look for stores with the following signs: Orange, SFR or Bouygues. As it is a pre-paid option, you will not be signing a contract.



(This option is not available anyway without a French government ID card) You can charge up your account with pre-paid cards; (5, 10, 20, and 50 euro denominations at phone stores, grocery stores, gas stations and newspaper kiosks) or sometimes you will be given a printout with an access number to enter. It is a very simple process. You can purchase one of these packages for as low as 20 euros. Ask for a “carte SIM prépayée et sans engagement.” If you happen to already own an unlocked phone, you need only to acquire a SIM card for 2-3 euros. Unlocked phones can be purchased through various online retailers. Amazon is a good place to start. Having an unlocked phone is

particularly useful if you would like the option of buying a SIM card from other countries as well, depending on your extended travel plans. The phone you purchase from the French retailer accepts only SIM cards of that provider. You will need your passport in order to purchase your initial SIM card. You will also need to provide them with your local address (use the monastery).

Mail: Your address in France is:

Saint Francis University
57 Route du Prieuré
81430 Ambialet
France

Before your departure, you need to go to the post office on campus (lower level JFK, next to the bookstore) and let them know whether you want your campus mail held or sent to your home address.



Notice the students taking selfies!

The address above is where your parents should send mail and packages to you. Have them send the packages via USPS, rather than FedEx or UPS, as the delivery will be quicker. They will need to fill out a green customs declaration form, and list all items including the dollar value. If the value is above 45 euros, YOU, as the recipient are responsible for the customs fee. You can also use this address to shop online. Besides websites of major stores, there are the popular *amazon.fr*, and *ebay.fr*. You can use your U.S. credit card on Amazon, and PayPal on EBay, just as you would back home.

If you are sending packages from France, you will need to go to a post office, “La Poste.” Check out www.laposte.com for information in English. There is a section titled “Already living in France.” There are several post offices in Albi. The bigger post offices also sell boxes and packaging materials. To ship a medium-sized package to the States costs about 50 euros; mailing a postcard will cost about 1.25 euros. Also, many of the employees at post offices have limited English ability.

Ambialet Staff



Eric Sepich is the leader the program. As an alumnus and a member of one of the earliest student groups to travel to the University's facility in Ambialet, Eric brings a unique set of skills and perspective to the program. He has a contagious joy for both the University and the study abroad spirit.



Nathalie Désilles has been teaching French for over 20 years to students of all ages - some who have moved to France permanently and others who are university students from all across the world. Her interactive courses will be the stepping stone for you to go out and practice French from ordering a croissant to meeting new people.



Eric Crema (pointing up) is your fearless guide to the mysteries of SW France, Eric loves medieval architecture, history and art. Students love

his tours because he's fun and he makes sense out of things students didn't even know they didn't know!



Tiffany Black comes to us from Oxford Brookes University in England. No stranger to Southern France she grew up nearby and considers France a second home. As both artist and professor she'll help you to explore ideas ranging from "identity" to "why a Picasso looks like a Picasso".



Krzysztof Blaszkiewicz is originally from Poland and our own 007. This former trooper with a background in mechanics and construction has spent 19 years living in France. Krzysztof has been involved in many renovations at the priory, where he likes to practice his English with students and can often be spotted wearing former students' t-shirts while working on construction projects.

House Buddies: Jay-Z, Shaq, Bella, Bobo & Nemo



Marie Perez (right): Since opening day of the building, Marie has been our 'femme de ménage', fearlessly and tirelessly tidying up after us -- all with incredibly good spirits and Sylvie Fonvielle (left): You might pick up a Toulouse accent from our cheerful chef, Sylvie, who delights in making everyone happy with her diverse culinary repertoire. Often heard singing and whistling in the kitchen, she will greet you for meals with great joy and check to make sure that you eat your vegetables!



Legal Issues / School Policies

All students traveling abroad must submit a signed copy of the Waiver to the Office for Study Abroad. The Waiver and other travel forms are online. A link will be given to students when they apply to the program.

Students abroad are subject to the laws of the country in which they study and the rules of the institution in which they are enrolled, as well as those of Saint Francis University. Students who violate the law might have to face legal proceedings in the local judicial system, which might not provide the same safeguards for those accused of crime in the U.S. system. If convicted of a crime, a student will face punishment according to local practices. Many countries have laws regarding the use and distribution of illicit drugs, which are more severe than in the U.S. For their own protection, all students are cautioned to obey the laws of the country in which they study. In particular, any student who expects to use illicit drugs should seriously reconsider the decision to study abroad.

While abroad, students are subject to the disciplinary regulations of their host university or program and bear responsibility, as well, to the Saint Francis University Behavioral Expectations (outlined in the Student Handbook). In general, disciplinary action under the Campus Discipline Policy may be taken for one year after the alleged misconduct occurs. Records of any disciplinary actions overseas become a part of a student's file at Saint Francis University and are communicated to the Saint Francis University Judicial Administrator.

All students are expected to respect national and local ordinances, even though these may sometimes be very different from those in the U.S. The program does not tolerate abuse of alcohol, the use of illicit drugs, or other behaviors disruptive to the well-being of others. Students who do not adhere to appropriate standards of conduct will be dismissed by Saint Francis University. No fees will be refunded under such circumstances.

Students studying abroad are guests of a foreign government. They can be (and some have been) expelled from the host country, even when no legal proof exists that they have broken a law. Students who are jailed will receive the following assistance from the Program Director and the United States Government:

1. Your family will be advised of your situation.
2. You will be assisted in getting a lawyer at your own or your family's expense.

We cannot get you out of jail or provide you with bail money. You must avoid illegal activity at all times.

Statement of Conduct (taken from the Student Handbook): Students at Saint Francis University are expected to conduct themselves according to Judeo-Christian values that reflect their commitment to the University community and to develop the personal character and social attributes that reflect maturity. The values of a Franciscan education are reflected in the established Franciscan Goals for Higher Education. These goals reflect the values of the intellectual ministry of Saint Francis University. All members of the Saint Francis University community have an obligation to share in the intellectual, social and spiritual development of students.

Students at Saint Francis University are expected to actively participate in the endeavors of the University community to reach beyond themselves in the care and concern for others through education and service. Students are expected to design, implement, and to participate in educational opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom. It is to be clearly understood that the educational process at the University is not limited to or confined by classroom activity as the out of the classroom experience is designed to enhance the university life. As a student, you are expected to clearly understand that while enrolled at Saint Francis University, you bear its name. As such your behavior must reflect this reality. Students are expected to abide by all regulations described in other University publications including but not limited to the Housing and Food Service Contract, the Saint Francis University Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog, The Saint Francis University website and Your Car on Campus.



*Students represent the University at the National Ceremony
at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris*

In order to fulfill its functions as an educational institution and to protect the rights of all members of the University community, Saint Francis University has the right to protect and the duty to maintain order within the University and to exclude persons who disrupt the educational process. If an individual is unable to function within the University community, demonstrates behavior which is deemed to be physically or emotionally harmful to others or one's self, violates standards of conduct,

interferes with the academic progress of other students and/or is otherwise disruptive to the University community, the University reserves the right to respond accordingly. These actions may include, but are not limited to any of the following actions: disciplinary action, suspension or separation from the University, contact of student's parent or guardian, counseling or psychiatric referral off campus.

In a community of learners, individual or group conduct that is unlawful, that disrupts or interferes with the educational process, that causes destruction of property, or that otherwise infringes on the rights of other members of the University community or of the University itself, cannot and will not be tolerated. Prohibited conduct at University sponsored events, or elsewhere, for which students or their guests are subject to legal or disciplinary action can be found in the Saint Francis University Student Handbook.

Ambialet and Practical Information

Ambialet is located in southwestern France, approximately an hour north of Toulouse. The border to Spain is approximately 4 hours away by bus.

Weather: The weather in France varies significantly as you move from region to region. The French Riviera enjoys a Mediterranean climate, central France has more extreme conditions as it nears the Alps; Paris and northern and western France have warm summers and cool winters. Ambialet is in southwestern France, so it is well away from the wintery Alps. Come April, you will be able to go swimming in the Tarn River. Here are some of the average temperatures:

Jan. – 43 / Feb. – 47 / Mar. – 51 / Apr. – 55 / Sept. – 69 / Oct. – 60 / Nov. – 49 / Dec. – 44

Language: The official language of France is, obviously, French, however there are various dialects. The French you hear in northern France is different than that of the south, and people can usually identify a Parisian. Historically, the language in the area around Ambialet is called Occitan or d’Oc, but nowadays you will hear formal French. Occitan is a romance language like French with influences from Vulgar Latin, Spanish and Catalan. (Similarly, the official language of Spain is Castilian, but that of Barcelona is Catalan). You will quickly see that English has become a world language, and you won’t have much difficulty communicating with anyone in the big cities. If need be, the French that you learn in class combined with sign and body language usually suffice.

Food: If you desire to, you may buy groceries at the Géant Supermarché, which is a Walmart type superstore on the outskirts of Albi about 20 minutes away from the monastery. You can purchase snack foods, beverages, fresh cheese and produce - pretty much everything you might want. In addition to euros, they also accept Visa and MasterCard.

In every French city, you’ll find little street stands selling fresh crêpes and *gaufre* (waffles). Students with a sweet tooth often fall in love with crêpes made with Nutella and bananas. As a tip, the stand at the corner next to the church in Albi is a favorite. Also popular are the kebab localities. These are very popular in countries like France and Germany where there are many Turkish immigrants. If you find you’re really missing Pittsburgh, they will even put French fries on them for you. The kebabs usually cost around 3-4 euros, so it’s an inexpensive way to eat. Some of these places also make hamburgers and cheeseburgers. Aside from these, there are always restaurants to serve any taste - Chinese, Italian, seafood... even French! You can pay anywhere from 7 euros upward to 30 euros for a good meal. Be careful when you order beverages, as they are smaller in size and never include refills - this is pretty much true throughout Europe. The key to success is to find the places where the locals, go to avoid tourist prices, and to get the most authentic cuisine. In case you have a craving, you will also find McDonalds (known as “McDo”) all over France, including one in Albi.

Cafés: The French (and almost all Europeans) are big on going to cafés, as a place to simply hang out and chat with friends. Cafés range in size from small urban coffee houses to more elaborate, restaurant-style establishments. It’s okay to go into a restaurant and just order coffee. In the larger cafés the waiters (who are always dressed the same no matter where you go) come and wait on you. For your enjoyment, you will find wine, beer, even ice cream. But note, if you order ice-cream at a kiosk, you will not be allowed to sit down; that requires that you order from the menu. During the

summer all cafés have tables outside, so you can enjoy the sun, and do a bit of people watching (a cultural experience in itself). When you go to a café, you really must try a cappuccino-espresso with steamed milk, whipped cream and a dash of coca.

Locally, about half a mile from the monastery is Café de la Presqu'île, commonly known as Nadine's, named after its owner. Students will eat an occasional lunch at Nadine's.



Students at the local Café, Nadine's

ATMs: ATMs are everywhere in cities, just as you would find them in the States. There is an ATM at the Geánt Supermarché in Albi. They are usually programmed so that when the machine recognizes the American card, all the on-screen instructions come up in English. It is a good idea to withdraw money during bank hours whenever possible, just in case you have the unfortunate incident of the machine swallowing your card. ATMs are the best way of withdrawing foreign currency, as they usually give you the best exchange rates. Try to take as much money as possible each time you withdraw, since you will pay a small transaction fee every time you use the ATM. Also, check with your U.S. bank to see if there's a limit on how much cash you may withdraw per day.

Haircuts: It is actually rather easy to get a haircut, and usually if you can show them a picture of how you like your hair, or can point to a model in one of the modeling books you will be fine. There are 3 different salons at the Geánt Supermarché where you get your snacks - so just join the ride and get it done while everyone else shops.

A few words about the French: The French, in general, are easy-going people. They savor the moment and enjoy sharing times with friends and family, especially over a good meal or drink. Stores are often closed for lunch and siesta until the early afternoon.

The French are very proud of their heritage and culture, and part of being a good guest is to show respect and deference to the ways of your host country. The French are very passionate about politics and social equality, so it is not uncommon to see public protests and strikes.

French students are well-educated and knowledgeable of world news and events. A question about your views on American politics and foreign policy will inevitably come up. French students tend to be rather serious. Loud talking or loud laughter goes against the norm. They also dress rather fashionably, as there is a strong societal idea of what is and what is not appropriate to wear. They might gently chide you if you are underdressed. Do not take this personally; it is simply part of their culture. You can avoid stares and appearing as a tourist by avoiding bright colors, sweatpants and tennis shoes.

It's customary to greet people of your own age with a kiss on each cheek, so be prepared. It might otherwise be considered rude. Go first to your left, then to your right. Make sure the number of kisses is an even number (2 or 4), otherwise, "the other cheek will get jealous!"

Financial Aid / Money Matters

Financial Aid: If you are planning on financial aid for the trip, you need to make an appointment with the Financial Aid Office (472-3010) immediately. The Financial Aid Office will be happy to help you with additional loans. Also, you may apply for private/alternative loans listed on www.elmselect.com. Pell Grant recipients may also apply for a Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship (www.gilmanscholarship.org). The Gilman International Scholarship Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The Gilman Program provide scholarships of up to \$5000 to U.S. undergraduate students of limited financial means to participate in credit-bearing study abroad programs.

Spending Money: You may want to have a little cash on hand (\$20-\$50) when you leave the States. Avoid changing currencies in airports, they usually have higher fees and exchange rates. During your stay your ATM/debit card is the way to go. Visa and MasterCard are accepted pretty much everywhere, except in small restaurants. American Express is not widely accepted, and Discover does not work at all overseas. Ask your bank about ATM fees and foreign transaction fees. It may be worth opening a new credit card account which offers no foreign fees in order to minimize extra fees while abroad. A variety of options may be found at: <http://www.nerdwallet.com/blog/top-credit-cards/no-foreign-transaction-fee-credit-card>. Traveler's checks and exchanging dollars at a booth just aren't worth the hassle and should be avoided. It is very likely that you will spend whatever you bring! Your current spending habits are a big factor -- if you live cheaply now, you'll be able to do nearly the same abroad; if you have more expensive tastes and means, you'll spend at least at that level or higher while abroad. *It is recommended that you have approximately \$2-3,000 available to you for your entire time abroad.*

Plane Ticket: You are responsible for the cost of your plane ticket to France. However, these tickets will be booked for you by the Office for Study Abroad. If you later decide to opt-out of the program you must let us know as soon as possible. Once your ticket has been purchased, it cannot be refunded.

Travel Money (the true variable): The costs of independent travel vary depending on your lifestyle and taste. A short weekend trip can cost anywhere from \$150 to \$300 depending on the type of transportation, what you choose to buy, where you stay (hotel v. hostel) and what you eat. Long-term travel (fall/spring break) allows for more flexibility in price. As an example, it is possible to plan a 10 day trip - Paris-London-Rome - for as little as \$600 including all airfare and accommodations, if planned early enough. Most students spend anywhere around \$1200 to \$2000 on break, again, this depends on your tastes.



Students shopping in Toulouse

Purchases: You will be tempted all the time to buy things; how often you 'give in' will be the key. Raspberry tarts, cappuccinos, clothes, nice restaurants, clubs, concerts -- it's your call. This is where your current habits will most directly influence your spending.

Excursions: You will take several day and overnight trips as part of your course work, so you will not miss out if you do not have a lot of money to travel independently. Even if you don't take any outside trips, you will come back to the U.S. having seen and experienced a great deal. During these excursions, you will be responsible for the purchase of some of your own meals.

Withdrawing Money: ATMs are everywhere in cities, just as you would find them in the States. There is an ATM at the Geánt Supermarché in Albi. They are usually programmed so that when the machine recognizes the American card, all the on-screen instructions come up in English. It is a good idea to withdraw money during bank hours whenever possible, just in case you have the unfortunate incident of the machine swallowing your card. ATMs are the best way of withdrawing foreign currency, as they usually give you the best exchange rates. Try to take as much money as possible each time you withdraw, since you will pay a small transaction fee every time you use the ATM. Also, check with your U.S. bank to see if there's a limit on how much cash you may withdraw per day.



Shopping in Toulouse

Your Home in France

You will stay in the University's facility in Ambialet, located in southwestern France. The site is perched on a hilltop overlooking the Tarn River and the village of Ambialet.



Village signs to the monastery

Your address in France is: Saint Francis University, 57 Route du Prieuré, 81430 Ambialet, France. This is where you should have all mail and care packages sent.

Living Arrangements: The monastery has space for 30 students, with a combination of double rooms and spacious triples. The triples have their own bathrooms. The rest of the students share two large bathrooms (one for guys, one for girls) with multiple sinks, numerous toilets and spacious shower rooms. Each bedroom has a sink, mirror, desk, chair, closet and each person has a bed. You will have a bed freshly made for your arrival including a blanket, pillow and towel. Extra blankets are available if needed; however, the adjustable heaters in each room will keep you nice and toasty. Unless you are in a small group, plan on having a roommate. You may choose a roommate in your application.

Life at the Monastery: You will be living as a community and everyone helps out. Students will be asked to help with dishes, take out the trash and help with events such as Thanksgiving or Easter dinner.

Internet Access: There is wireless internet access throughout the entire monastery. It is an open network, and your laptops will be able to connect without any problems.

Laundry: There are 4 washers and 4 dryers at the monastery, which are free of charge. Laundry detergent is provided. You will have enough laundry opportunities so that having 10-12 sets of clothing will be plenty; however, you might want to have more for your fall/spring break trip.

Meals: The Ambialet program has a resident chef who comes in a couple hours before lunch and dinner every day and prepares fresh meals. You will be treated to typical French cuisine with a variety of different meats and cheeses. Every meal comes with a fresh salad with her signature vinaigrette dressing. Meals are served buffet style. For smaller appetites, French bread with Nutella, butter, and jam are available throughout the day. You can also brew your own coffee and tea throughout the day.



Thanksgiving dinner at SFU's site in Ambialet

Mass: Mass is celebrated every Sunday in the church that is part of the monastery. It is conducted in French, but the priest often calls upon a student to read the Gospel reading in English. There is the opportunity to take part in the choir,

which is managed by Margaret, a British ex-patriot. She and her husband, Peter, live in Ambialet and are supporters of the program.

Medical Care: There are always doctors on duty in Albi, and you will have transportation to a doctor's office if needed. The primary doctor who works with the program speaks English. Doctors will write prescriptions if needed (i.e. if you have the flu or are having trouble sleeping). The hospital in Albi is modern and well equipped like you would find in any major city.

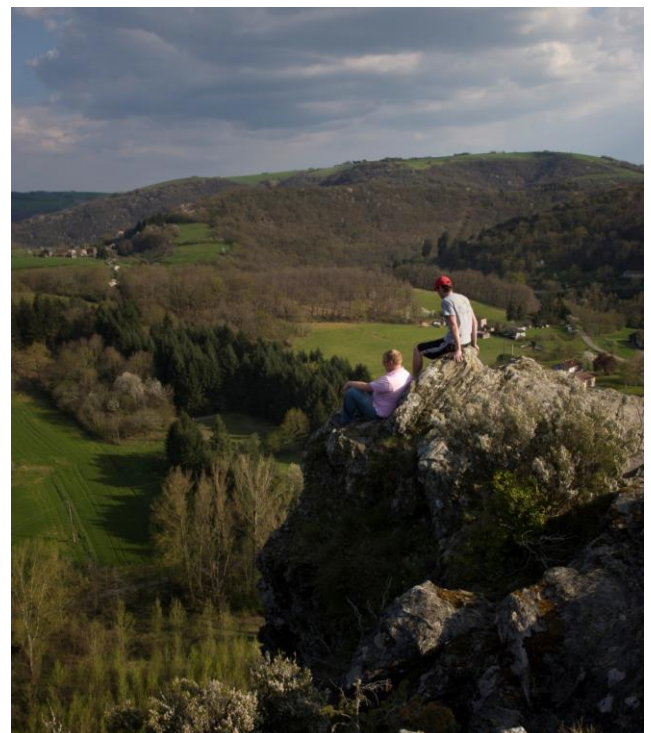
If you are taking prescription medication, make sure you have enough to last you the trip. Mail order pharmacies usually dispense a three month supply at a time. It may be helpful to get a doctor to write a letter specifying what medication you are taking (the generic name) as well as the dosage. This would make things easier should you need to get refills while abroad. If you wear contact lenses, contact solution is easily available in France. If you wear glasses, invest in an extra pair to take with you as well. It may also be helpful to know your prescription should you need emergency supplies made for you.

Care packages: Your parents may send you care packages. Keep in mind it will take about 8 days for your goodies to arrive. Sharing is always an appreciated gesture. We advise you to send packages through U.S. Postal Service; UPS and FedEx packages tend to take longer to arrive in Ambialet. If your parents declare the contents at a value higher than 45 euros you will be responsible for paying a customs fee to pick up the package.

Family Visits: Family is welcome; although they must keep in mind that you are taking courses for credit and cannot simply disappear for a week to travel with them without it having repercussions on your grades. We will be happy to help with finding accommodations in Albi since the space in the monastery will be occupied by students and staff. The best time to meet with family is during your semester break.



*Scavenger hunt in the village
SFU's site on the hilltop in the background*



Incredible views all around

Airline Tickets / Packing

Airline Tickets: Flight arrangements will be made for the entire group by the Office for Study Abroad. When the arrangements are made you will be contacted for payment of the ticket. Group flights are less expensive and traveling together in a group can be less stressful.

If you need to make special travel arrangements, let us know well in advance so we can remove your name from the list.



If you have intentions of staying longer in Europe in order to do some more traveling, please let us know ASAP and we will direct you to our travel agent. She can work to keep you on the same departure flight with the group.

Packing: Airline luggage allowances can change without notice. The most up-to-date information can be found on the airline's website. It is the responsibility of the individual traveler to reconfirm luggage allowances directly with the airline prior to departure. Luggage allowances usually include one checked bag at 50 pounds (23 kg) and are not to be more than the total linear dimension of 62" (please check the airline's website for accurate allowances). A second bag will cost you around \$100. In addition, you are permitted to bring one carry-on, which will fit in the overhead compartment, plus one personal item such as a purse or laptop bag. Bring with you a small duffel bag to use while you travel throughout Europe. You may use the small duffel bag as your carry-on or pack it in your check luggage. Carry-on sizes are more restricted in Europe which is why it's a good idea to have a small duffel bag. Airlines will charge for (and reserve the right to deny) overweight, excess or oversized luggage. While packing for your trip, do NOT maximize the weight. You will be coming home with more souvenirs than you realize. Many students come back with two suitcases.

There is a scale at the monastery to weigh your suitcases for the trip back to the U.S. Although the scale will give you a close to accurate weight, you can also purchase a small weighing device at Target or Walmart. The device has the measurement on top and a hook on the bottom to place your luggage on. These are around \$15. If you choose to purchase this, be sure to bring it with you. While traveling during break you will also have weight limits to follow.

Keep in mind that you will be living in a different culture in which the way you may be used to dressing might not always be appropriate. For instance, you will not go unnoticed if your attire is too sexy, too dressy, or too grungy. Shorts and tank tops are not acceptable attire when visiting churches and religious venues. Your French peers dress rather fashionably, as there is a strong societal idea of what is and what is not appropriate to wear. French people are stylish but mostly casual. Both men and women wear scarves when it gets chilly. Black and dark colors are currently the norm. When you are packing keep in mind that nice, casual clothes can be dressed up or down and are a safe bet. You'll also want clothes for hiking, biking, etc. Comfortable clothes (sweat pants and hoodies) are appropriate during your time at the monastery.

The electrical voltage in Europe is 220, as opposed to 110 here in the U.S. Your laptops are equipped to handle both, so all you need is an adapter. Most electrical items such as iPhones, iPods, and electric razors nowadays are compatible with both systems, but you can still bring a converter if you so desire. However, you definitely need at least 2 adapters. The best place to order adapters is eBay or Amazon (search Europe adapter). Local stores such as Walmart or Best Buy

usually charge up to four times as much. There are quite a few converters hanging around at the monastery left behind by previous students. Do not bring an alarm clock that needs to be plugged in because they never end up working correctly!

A recommended list of carry-on items:

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> passport and driver's license | <input type="checkbox"/> camera | <input type="checkbox"/> keys | <input type="checkbox"/> laptop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> credit cards and cash | <input type="checkbox"/> eye glasses | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment for the flight | <input type="checkbox"/> medication |
| <input type="checkbox"/> one change of clothes | <input type="checkbox"/> cell phone | <input type="checkbox"/> jewelry | <input type="checkbox"/> snacks* |

*You can buy water and other beverages airside, after you go through the security checkpoint.

These items should NOT be carried on board the aircraft: toiletries, pocket knives, nail clippers or sharp objects.

The following checklist should provide some **helpful suggestions**. There are plenty of washers and dryers, so all you need is enough clothing for 12 days. Items available for you at the monastery include: blow dryers, curling and straightening irons, bedding, clothes iron, and laundry detergent. Also, toiletries are readily available in France, no need to travel with extra supply. Pack any items that might leak in ziploc bags.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> notebook, pencils/pens, folder or binder | <input type="checkbox"/> jacket (carry-on) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> toothpaste, toothbrush, floss, mouthwash | <input type="checkbox"/> sweaters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shampoo/conditioner and hair products | <input type="checkbox"/> scarves, gloves, hat or cap, and umbrella |
| <input type="checkbox"/> body wash, washcloth or poufs | <input type="checkbox"/> walking shoes - wear them on the plane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> deodorant | <input type="checkbox"/> sunglasses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> contact lenses and necessary paraphernalia | <input type="checkbox"/> bathing suit, beach towel and sun screen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> razors and shaving cream | <input type="checkbox"/> sandals/flip-flops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> comb and brush/ pony tail holders | <input type="checkbox"/> shorts, t-shirts, tank tops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feminine products | <input type="checkbox"/> nice jeans (to dress up or down) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> travel size hand sanitizer | <input type="checkbox"/> capris and shorts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> small sewing kit, safety pins | <input type="checkbox"/> polo shirts/golf shirts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pocket dictionary | <input type="checkbox"/> dress clothes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> camera and charger | <input type="checkbox"/> t-shirts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> travel alarm clock | <input type="checkbox"/> socks and underwear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> headache and cold and allergy medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> slippers for the monastery (floors get cold) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prescription drugs in original containers (4month supply) | <input type="checkbox"/> gym clothes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> travel backpack/purse (pack it in your large suitcase) | <input type="checkbox"/> hoodies / sweat pants |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> sweaters |

Packing as though you don't care to see the clothes again is a good strategy to follow. Many students bring older clothes that they can still wear but intend to get rid of. They then give them to charity in France freeing up space in the suitcase for the trip home.

French people are stylish but mostly casual. When you are packing keep in mind that nice, casual clothes can be dressed up or down and are a safe bet. You'll also want clothes for hiking, biking, etc. Comfortable clothes (sweat pants and hoodies) are appropriate during your time at the monastery.

Personal Travel

During your semester break and long weekends, you will have an opportunity to do some personal travel. Travel within Europe is generally much cheaper than travel in the States. The availability of inexpensive one-way flights makes it easy to plan extensive travel throughout several countries within a short period of time for reasonable fares.

Your departure airport for your longer break will be either Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG) or Paris Orly (ORY). Budget airlines such as Easy Jet, Air Berlin and Ryan Air offer flights to popular destinations for fares as low as \$40 if booked early enough. Flights with the major airlines run around \$150 to \$200.

The closest airport to Ambialet is Toulouse (TLS), which is your arrival airport. This airport services all the major hubs in Europe. Easy Jet also runs flights out of Toulouse.

Train travel is available through the SNCF, which has a station in Albi and Paris. The extensive train network can take you to destinations throughout all of Europe. You can also take the Eurostar through the "Chunnel" to get over to England. Train travel is efficient, flexible, comfortable, and trains generally run on time. This is a good option for last-minute plans. Trains rarely have weight limits and let you catch your breath while looking at the European country side.

Students usually stay in youth hostels when they travel, which run about \$25-\$40 per night. You will share a room with other travelers, which is a good way to meet new people, as well as find people to explore the city with you if you are traveling alone. They are often equipped with kitchens, which allow you to keep food costs down. Students who have traveled in groups also have the inexpensive option of renting apartments.

One sample itinerary which students have used in the past is flying from Paris to London via Easy Jet, followed by a flight from London to Rome, and finally from Rome to Toulouse. If planned well, students have been able to book travel and lodging for around \$550 to \$700 for the entire break.



Application / Travel Forms / ID Cards / Special Needs

- ❑ **Application Form:** Fill this out completely. Attach a copy of your passport and your statement of purpose to your application. Also, make sure you complete your emergency contact information. This will be the person(s) we contact to let know you have safely reached your destination. We will contact via e-mail only.
- ❑ **Withdrawal Policy:** The withdrawal policy is included on the application form. Please read the policy carefully before signing the form.
- ❑ **Application Fee:** A \$300 non-refundable application fee is due at the time you turn in your application. Even if your financial aid will cover this amount, you still need to pay this application fee at the time of application. This fee is used to secure your spot in the program and will be credited back to your student account at the beginning of the semester.
- ❑ **Waiver Form:** This is a straight-forward, online form. Please read over it thoroughly and complete. The link to this form is <http://bit.ly/SAforms>.
- ❑ **Academic Recommendation Form:** This online form is completed by your advisor or one of your instructors. You will forward the link to your advisor or a faculty member. The link to this form is <http://bit.ly/SAforms>.
- ❑ **Medical History:** The online Medical History form is completed by you. You will make an appointment with the Student Health Center, (located in DiSepio / 814-472-3008) to discuss the information on your Medical History form as well as health issues and vaccines related to international travel. Following your appointment, a representative from the Student Health Center will approve the Medical History form found at <http://bit.ly/SAforms>.
- ❑ **Physicians Release** If you have an underlying condition (ex: asthma, heart condition, diabetes, etc.) the Student Health Center will give you a Physicians Release form to be signed by your doctor.
- ❑ **International Travel Health Insurance:** Every student traveling out of the country must have international travel/health insurance. You will be required to purchase this insurance through Saint Francis University. This insurance is supplemental to your existing coverage and is extremely valuable and functional. This policy includes coverage for paying for your plane ticket back home in case of an emergency. More information will be provided to you at a pre-departure meeting.
- ❑ **Passport:** U.S. citizens need a valid passport to travel abroad. You should apply for a passport well in advance to avoid any conflict that may delay your departure. Make sure it is valid for at least six months beyond the end of the program. New passports cost approximately \$100. Expedited service is also available for an additional cost. A passport application, for a first-time applicant, is included in the back of this packet. A different application is needed to renew a passport and may be found on the U.S. Department of State website (www.travel.state.gov).

Return the application to your nearest post office as soon as possible. If you choose to apply through a passport agency, you will find their locations on the State Department website. In addition to the application, you will need to provide proof of citizenship (e.g., a certified copy of your birth certificate or an expired passport), proof of identity (e.g., valid driver's license) and two (2) passport-ready (2 x 2 inches) photos taken within six months of submitting your application.

It is advised that you make four copies of your passport. One should be left at home with your parents. One copy must be turned in for your file at the Center for International Education and Outreach. The other two should be taken with you. One will need to be left in a secure area. The second should be carried with you but in a different location than your actual passport. It is also strongly recommended that at least one parent or family member have a valid passport for the period in which you are abroad. For more passport information, visit: www.travel.state.gov.

A photocopy of your passport must be on file in our office.

□ **CampusFrance and Visas:** During the Spring semester, you will be in France for longer than 90 days, therefore, you will need to obtain a visa. (The fall semester is 89 days thus students do not need a visa for the fall.) Before applying for a visa, you must secure a current and valid passport (see passport information). A visa is the official document issued by a foreign government granting you permission to visit or live in that country. The procedure for your visa begins with registering with CampusFrance. This must be done two weeks prior to applying for a visa. A CampusFrance application must be submitted online and a money order, to cover the application fee, must be mailed in order for you to receive confirmation to proceed with your visa. You will find complete instructions at: <http://usa.campusfrance.org/en/1.html>.

Once you have received confirmation from CampusFrance (via your CampusFrance e-mail account) you may then apply to the Consulate General of France for a Long-Stay Student visa. For details regarding your Visa application procedure visit: <http://www.consulfrance-washington.org/spip.php?rubrique=2>

□ **Course Registration:** Once you have your schedule set up with your advisor, you may register online for the appropriate courses. Classes offered in France will be coded "OF."

□ **Student Identification Cards:** You will be issued an identification card specifically for your travels. This card will help you get discounts at movies, plays, museums, and many other places. During one of the on-campus preparation meetings, photos will be taken for your ID cards.

Students with Disabilities or Special Needs: Students with disabilities or special needs should discuss these issues with the director of the Office for Study Abroad well in advance as accommodations to fit your needs may take time to facilitate. As always every attempt will be made to make the accommodations you need, provided the director is made aware of them in a timely manner. Be aware that not all disabilities can be readily accommodated when studying abroad and that the laws are different in other countries. The Americans with Disabilities Act does not extend beyond the boundaries of the United States.



The Carnival (a Mardi Gras celebration) in Albi