

## Settling in

## ↘ Week 1

## ↘ Keeping in touch

- Buy a French SIM card in order to have a French phone number where people can reach you.

## And/or

- Buy an international phone card (offering special rates for calls to certain countries).

## ↘ Get to know your institution

- Visit the international office, meet your contacts, gather information on the institution and its services.
- Visit the registrar to complete your registration, pay your tuition, and get your student ID card.
- Enroll in the national health-care plan (*Sécurité Sociale*). This is mandatory and is done at the time of your registration. You will receive an insurance card (*Carte Vitale*) attesting to your enrollment and making possible the automatic submission of claims for reimbursement of your medical expenses by the French health insurance fund (CPAM). Make sure you have CPAM's address.
- Supplemental insurance: Enrolling in the national health-care plan enables you to choose a supplemental insurance plan to reimburse the portion of medical expenses not covered by the national plan. Optional supplemental insurance is available from the following organizations: *La Mutuelle des Étudiants*: [www.lmde.fr](http://www.lmde.fr); *Smerep*: [www.smerep.fr](http://www.smerep.fr); and *Emevia*, a consortium of regional student supplemental plans: [www.emevia.com](http://www.emevia.com)
- Visit your academic department (known as a UFR in the universities) to get the details of your course load and schedule.
- Visit the institution's library to check that your library card works. (Usually your student ID card doubles as your library card.)
- Find out whether your institution has a one-stop shop for international student services (housing assistance, police registration, banking, insurance, public transportation, and so on). If one is available, it could save you a considerable amount of time.
- Sign up for new-student orientation, if one is offered. Orientations are a great way to get to know other students, explore the city and surrounding region, and practice speaking French.
- Locate the CROUS office and the student restaurant. At the CROUS office, buy restaurant tickets and a pass that will offer you discounts on cultural events.
- Investigate the student clubs that operate within the institution. Join those that interest you and begin to meet people!

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## ●●● TIP

Don't try to do everything in the first week. Make a list of must-dos and deadlines, then take your time getting settled. ●●

## ↘ First steps

 Banking

You'll have to open a bank account in France. To do that you'll need to provide proof of residence (such as a lease or electric bill). If you haven't yet found a permanent residence, it is sometimes possible to give the address of the international office at your institution along with a copy of your passport and proof of residence in your home country. As soon as you find a permanent place to live, you can update your address with the bank.

## ↘ Good to know

- ✓ Ask for several copies of your banking information, a document known as a RIB. The RIB allows you to effect transactions on your account (such as paying rent, bills, and insurance premiums) without writing a check. If you work, it will also enable your employer to deposit your pay directly into your account. You will be asked for your RIB in the course of various procedures (renting property, applying for social benefits, enrolling in insurance, getting a telephone, and so on).
- ✓ There is a charge for issuance of a bankcard.
- ✓ There is no charge for checks, but you won't have them until a few days after you open your account. They will be sent to you by mail or held at the bank for you to pick up. Checks are still widely used in France

## Settling in Looking for a place to live

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- **Inquire at your university or school**, which may be able to help you in your search (for example, through a dedicated housing website or through student associations)
- **Visit the nearest CROUS office** and participate in one of its "housing days." If you're interested in a room in the Cité Universitaire, inquire regularly—rooms sometimes become available in mid-year.
- **Use website dedicated to student housing** and shared rentals, or visit the offices of real estate companies that handle rentals (see HOUSING, as soon as possible!).

#### ➤ Assemble your file

- A RIB (your banking information) for the payment of rent
- A photocopy of your student card
- A check for your security deposit (usually equivalent to 1 month's rent)
- A letter from your guarantors, a copy of their tax forms (avis d'imposition), and proof of their residence

#### ➤ Guarantors

To rent an apartment, you'll have to have a guarantor. The guarantor must be a physical person living in France.

- ✓ A guarantor agrees to pay any rent that you fail to pay. The guarantor's monthly income must be at least three times the amount of the rent.
- ✓ Some banks and student insurance schemes offer rental guarantees (a form of insurance) in return for a premium paid by the renter.

#### ➤ Security (or damage) deposit

- ✓ Property owners collect a damage deposit from the renter at the time the lease is signed.
- ✓ The deposit is cashed and held by the property owner for the term of the lease. It is returned at the end of the lease, after the premises have been inspected for damage.

#### ➤ NOTE

*LMDE, a student insurance company, and Banque Populaire have created a banking and security deposit guarantee that can benefit student customers of the two institutions. [www.labanquedesetudiants.com](http://www.labanquedesetudiants.com)*

#### ➤ Good to know

- ✓ *Keep several copies of key documents in case you have to make several rental applications.*
- ✓ *Do not hesitate to apply for multiple properties, to telephone rental agencies or property owners, or to visit them in person. Such initiatives can speed the process of finding housing.*
- ✓ *Joint guarantee arrangements, which allow one party to act as guarantor in case of nonpayment of rent (that is, to pay the rent on behalf of the renter), already exist in several regions (Aquitaine and Midi-Pyrénées) and should be generalized throughout France by the end of 2013. Inquire at the student life office of the regional council in your area.*

#### NOTES

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## Settling in

## After finding a place to live

## ↘ Week 1

## ↘ Purchase renter's insurance

**Renter's insurance**, which is mandatory, protects against risks that may arise in a residential dwelling:

- ✓ Emergencies (keys and locks, plumbing, heating, gas, electricity), with a telephone contact to coordinate the response.
- ✓ Hazards (fire, storms, natural catastrophes), with back-up services (such as temporary lodging).

## ↘ Good to know

*Depending on the company you choose, your supplemental health insurance plan may offer reductions with certain insurers. Ask when you sign up. Many websites allow you to compare insurance plans based on your type of residence, city, age, and so on.*

*Here are two examples:*

*<http://www.lesfurets.com/assurance-habitation> - <http://www.lelyn.fr/assurance-habitation.aspx>*

## ↘ Open gas and electricity accounts

To start electrical and gas service (you may or may not have gas service in your building), you need only register with EDF by visiting <http://particuliers.edf.com> > *Je déménage* or calling 09 69 32 15 15.

- Be sure you have the number from the electric meter and the name of the former tenant.
- Have your banking information handy in order to arrange for automatic bill payment.
- Copy down the figures on the meter in your unit so you can provide them to EDF when you start your service.

## Settling in

## After finding a place to live

## ↘ Week 1

## ↘ Sign up for Internet, telephone, and mobile phone service

Many Internet service providers offer combined Internet and telephone plans (limited and unlimited packages, with various international calling options). Some even include mobile telephone plans (with a SIM card). Such bundles allow you combine several services on one monthly bill.

You can research these plans on the Web and in specialized retail stores. You may have to wait a few days for your Internet and telephone service to be activated.

Depending on your needs and the city in which you'll be living, there may be websites that help you compare plans and make contact with providers:

<http://www.ariase.com/fr/comparatifs/>

<http://www.dslvalley.com/adsl/comparatifadsl.php>

<http://www.zoneadsl.com/comparatif/offres-internet-telephonie-illimitee.html>

To activate service, you'll need:

- Your banking information (RIB)
- A photocopy of your passport (with visa)
- Photocopied proof of residence (EDF bill, lease)

## Settling in

### Exploring your surroundings

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#### ↘ Week 1

##### MY DISTRICT

###### ↘ Municipal library

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Getting there:

Bus, metro, train: \_\_\_\_\_ N°: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

###### ↘ Bookstore

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Getting there:

Bus, metro, train: \_\_\_\_\_ N°: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

###### ↘ The nearest movie theater

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Getting there:

Bus, metro, train: \_\_\_\_\_ N°: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

###### ↘ Gym, park, theater, etc.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Getting there:

Bus, metro, train: \_\_\_\_\_ N°: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of trip: \_\_\_\_\_

#### ↘ Week 1

##### MY DISTRICT

###### ↘ Bank

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Getting there:

Bus, metro, train: \_\_\_\_\_ N°: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

###### ↘ Post office

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Getting there:

Bus, metro, train: \_\_\_\_\_ N°: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

###### ↘ City hall

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Getting there:

Bus, metro, train: \_\_\_\_\_ N°: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

###### ↘ Préfecture/Immigration office (OFII)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Getting there:

Bus, metro, train: \_\_\_\_\_ N°: \_\_\_\_\_

Frequency: \_\_\_\_\_

## Settling in

Taking care of important administrative and regulatory tasks

## ↘ Week 1

## ●●● TIP

Have your residency permit validated, get a receipt, and make an appointment with OFII. Doing this allows you to apply for housing assistance (through CAF). Your extended-stay visa functions as a residency permit only after it has been validated by OFII. ●●

## ↘ Good to know

**One-stop shop for international student services:** designed for students and staffed by specialists, the one-stop shop allows you to accomplish a variety of tasks, all at once and in one place.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. : +33 (0) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

## ↘ OFII (immigration) certification

If OFII services are not among those offered at the one-stop shop at your institution, you will have to send the following to the OFII office responsible for your area (preferably by registered mail with acknowledgment of receipt, a service available at the local post office):

- The form entitled "demande d'attestation OFII" (request for OFII certification) that you received with your visa. Fill in your visa number, the date you entered France or the Schengen area, and your address in France. If you lost this form, you can download it from the OFII website: [www.ofii.fr](http://www.ofii.fr)
- A copy of the pages of your passport containing the information on your identity, the visa you were granted, and the stamp entered by the French immigration authorities at the border (or those of the transit nation) showing the date you crossed the border.

After you submit the form, you will receive an acknowledgment in the mail that will serve temporarily as proof of your legal presence in France until your visa can be validated by OFII.

Within 3 months of your arrival in France, OFII will set an appointment for you to complete your file, undergo a medical examination, and/or undergo an intake interview.

Address of OFII office in your area:

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. : +33 (0) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

[www.ofii.fr](http://www.ofii.fr)>Venir à l'OFII

## Settling in

Taking care of important administrative and regulatory tasks

## ↘ Week 1

## ↘ Applying for housing assistance (APL, ALS)

In order to apply for housing assistance, you will need a lease or a statement from your landlord, plus a bank account and your residency permit validated by OFII.

CAF allows you to apply for assistance online: [www.caf.fr](http://www.caf.fr)

Address of CAF office in your area:

\_\_\_\_\_

Days and hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. : +33 (0) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

When you make your application, be sure you have the following documents handy:

- Form CERFA 10840, "Demande d'aide au logement" (request for housing assistance), downloadable from the CAF website ([www.caf.fr](http://www.caf.fr))
- A copy of your lease or rental contract
- A photocopy of your student ID card
- A photocopy of your passport
- A receipt from your landlord for rent paid