Connect

Plan ahead to know how you will make calls and connect to the Internet.

Mobile

Connect your mobile phone

- Roaming using your own SIM card - might be expensive. Investigate before you leave for France.
- Buy a European SIM card before leaving. We have heard that Hola Fly is quite good.
- Buy a temporary French SIM card on arrival. See this review of Best Broadband Mobile Phone Plans in France. With a French SIM card you can roam throughout Europe with no charge for entering or leaving another European country.
- Rent a pre-paid mobile phone in France. You will probably have to pass by a Mobile Services store to rent the phone.
- Subscribe to French mobile services if you are staying over 3 months.

Note: as of Sept 2021, Nice has 5G from all French carriers.

Mobile Phone Apps

Although there are many apps that are similar and perform similar functions, the following are specific apps that we found excel at their function.

- **Text** - Paris Yank uses Signal for texting among friends. Texting is more succinct than sending eMail with messages such as “arriving in ten minutes”… “waiting at the metro station, exit 2.” Signal is fast, encrypted and they will not sell your data. No phone number is required to register.
- **Walking** - Google Map is the most accurate way to navigate walking directions. Public transportation and driving seem to be more viable than other apps.
- **Driving** Most taxi drivers use Waze app to navigate through cities. Waze gives accurate driving directions and gives current traffic.
- **Public Transportation** City Mapper is excellent. If your city is included, always use City Mapper. Note that Nice, France are merged so **when in Nice, select the City Mapper city as “Monaco”**.

WiFi

Wi-Fi is widely available in public places, transport, cafes, restaurants and so on. Be very careful with connecting to a public WiFi hot-spot. There is  **No WiFi Security**  and anyone could 'snoop' on your traffic including eMail, banking and other personal data.

There are very few free VPN providers that are secure. There are some low-cost providers. Try the Swiss free VPN provider Proton VPN.

Check this article Best Free VPN 2023 but know that we have not evaluated them.

Hotel & Apartments

- **Wired Network Connection** There are times when hotels and especially apartments have an Internet connection box that you can directly connect a laptop. Ask before arriving and bring an ethernet cable of 2 or 3 meters, long enough to reach from their multi-function box to a table or your bed.
- **Hotel Free WiFi** Using free WiFi is risky without a VPN. Choose a WiFi connection with a password at a minimum.

English News Services in France

English-language news services to stay informed while traveling in France:

- **American Embassy and Consulates in France** Excellent news source for Americans, especially for critical news that may be important for safety or logistics in France. Service for American traveler notifications using Smart Traveler Registration.
- **The Local France** An English-language news website offering national news, practical guides, and cultural insights about France. :!:Pay service.
- **France 24** A French state-owned international news television network and internet live-stream that broadcasts in English, providing global news with a focus on France.
- **Le Monde in English** The English-language edition of France's leading newspaper, offering coverage of major national and international news.
- **The Riviera Reporter** An English-language newspaper covering news and events in the French Riviera, including Nice
- **Reference: Irresistible Riviera**: French Riviera news sources

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Bring Physical Connections

Computer Cables

Best to bring your own cables. Don't forget to bring a strong security cable so you can leave your equipment in your room.

- USB cable & charger for your mobile phone and laptop
- Security cable

Important Documents and Tools to Bring on a USB Key

When traveling to France, it's wise to carry important documents and applications on a USB key. Ensure you create **duplicate USB keys** for backup and consider using tools like those found on Portable Apps for additional functionality.

Documents to Include

- **Passport Scan**: A scanned copy of your passport, including the identification and visa pages.
- **Travel Insurance**: Digital copies of your travel insurance policy and contact details for the insurer.
- **Flight Tickets**: Copies of your airline e-tickets or travel itineraries. Don't try to rely on an Internet connection to retrieve your itineraries because a connection may not be possible.
- **Accommodation Details**: Confirmations for hotels or rental properties, including addresses and contact information.
- **Scanned Credit Cards**: Copies make replacement much easier.
- **Health Information**: Copies of vaccination records, prescriptions, and important medical details.
- **Driver’s License**: Scan of your driver’s license or international driving permit (if applicable).
- **Emergency Contacts**: List of important phone numbers (e.g., family, embassy, credit card providers).
- **Itinerary**: A detailed travel itinerary, including key dates and activities.
- **Important Receipts**: Scans or PDFs of pre-paid bookings or tickets for events, tours, or activities.

Windows Applications to Install

- **PDF Reader**: For viewing your document files.
- **Password Manager**: Securely store your passwords (e.g., KeePass Portable).
- **Antivirus Software**: Portable antivirus to scan public or shared computers (e.g., ClamWin Portable).
- **Office Suite**: Editing tools (e.g., LibreOffice Portable or Notepad++).
- **Photo Viewer**: For viewing or sharing scanned documents or images (e.g., IrfanView Portable).
- **Browser**: Secure browsing on public computers (e.g., Firefox Portable or Chrome Portable).
- **File Recovery Tool**: Recover accidentally deleted files (e.g., Recuva Portable).

Advice

- **Encryption**: Encrypt your USB keys to protect sensitive information in case of loss or theft.
- **Duplicate USB Keys**: Carry two USB keys and keep them in separate locations (e.g., one in your luggage, one with you).
- **Update Regularly**: Ensure all documents and tools are updated before traveling.

By preparing this USB key, you'll have quick and secure access to critical information and tools during your trip.

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