

# FRANCE:

## Old World, Not Old Fashioned



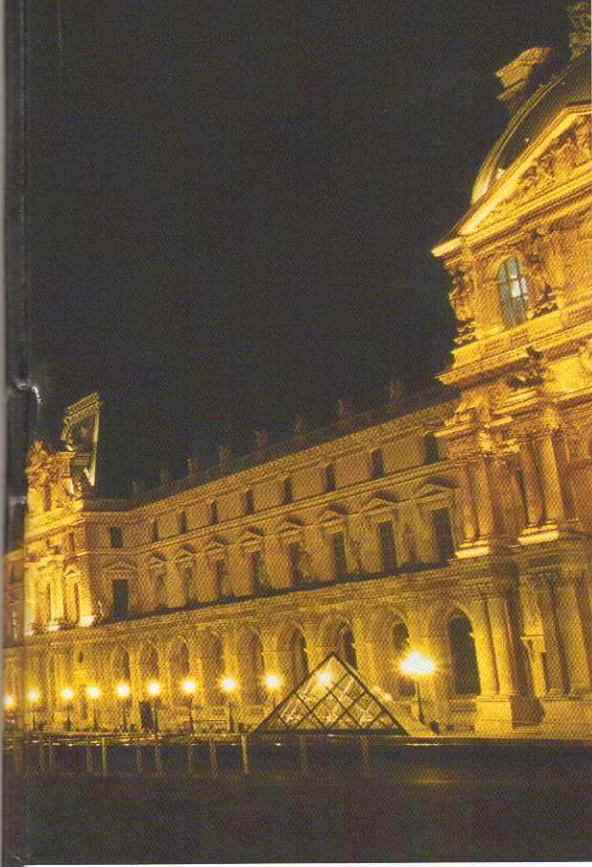
France is an established destination for international travellers seeking refined cuisine, an Old World overtone, and trendsetting fashions

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**F**rance has a certain something, *je ne sais quoi* as they say here, which still draws and mesmerises foreign visitors. Waiters often exude a haughtiness that would be intolerable elsewhere, but in the restaurants of Paris, their attitude adds to the glorious Frenchness of dining. The French revel in the certainty that whatever they do, they do it best. Though the economy of France is still lumbering, its high-end hotels are flourishing, and luxury products still find plenty of willing buyers.

### Paris

The City of Light has long drawn thinkers and romantics, and, despite the emergence of new global destinations, Paris remains one of those places that



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**Above:** The Louvre Museum, Paris, is one of the world's largest and most-visited museums. It exhibits nearly 35,000 objects from pre-history to the 19th century.

**Below:** The Moulin Rouge club in Paris is best known as the birthplace of the Can-Can dance form. It is a major tourist attraction with romantic décor from the turn-of-the-20th-century France.



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must be seen and experienced. The nightlife here is legendary, and not to have experienced the Pigalle district after dark, or sipped champagne while watching the dancers of the Moulin Rouge is, Parisians will argue, a gap in one's existence.

Visiting Paris is just as much about sipping a *petit noir* coffee in one of the many cafés, and listening to the passionate debate of locals, as it is about climbing the Eiffel Tower, or viewing exhibitions in the Pompidou Centre, or world-renowned Louvre art gallery.

Walking up towards the white marble of the Sacré-Cœur Basilica, and looking down from its steps, means experiencing the sights and sounds of Paris.

**Above:** Flemish buildings in the Grand Place – one of the main squares in central Arras.

### Arras

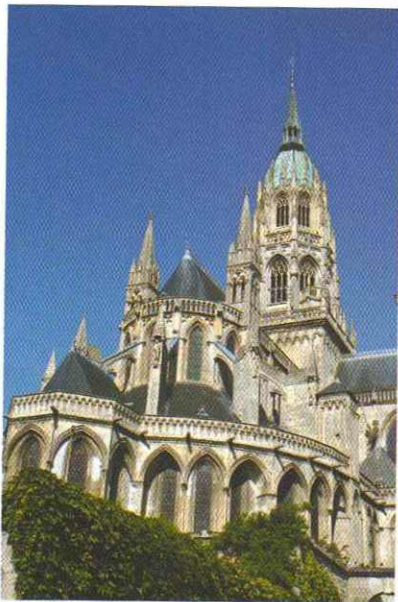
This cultured city in the Artois region of northeastern France, lay on the front line during the tumultuous days of World War One. Many of the medieval buildings of Arras were destroyed by shelling, but the city was

**Right:** The Pompidou Centre in Paris houses a vast public library, the largest museum of art in Europe, and a centre for music and acoustic research.



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**Below:** One of the finest examples of French Gothic architecture, the Notre Dame Cathedral is the church that contains the *cathedra* – the official chair – of the Archbishop of France.



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carefully restored once peace returned. Today, anyone looking up at the grand Gothic style facade of the town hall and belfry, would find it difficult to spot evidence that it is, in fact, less than a century old. The quality of the restoration is such that it was accorded the UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2005.

The two large cobbled squares of Arras, the *Grand Place* and *Place des Héros*, are home to 155 Flemish Baroque buildings, a number of which house boutique cheese and wine stores that delight visiting foodies. Heading inside the town hall provides access to a series of caves and chambers known as *Les Boves*, some almost a thousand years old. As the centenary of the 1914-1918 war approaches, interest in Arras looks set to grow.

**France, in its grand demeanour, continues to exude charm, and attract visitors of all ages. 🇫🇷**

## AT A GLANCE

### Getting there

Qatar Airways connects several Indian cities to Paris via Doha

### Best time to visit

June to September

### Where to stay

Four Seasons Hotel George V, Paris  
Best Western Hotel L'Univers, Arras

### Eat at

Epicure, Paris  
Le Carpe Diem, Arras

### Shop for

Designer fashion items, Bordeaux wines

### Language

French

### Clothing

The climate is changeable, be prepared for all eventualities

### Currency

1 Euro = 70 INR