



Lille Welcome Book

U.S. Army Element,
Rapid Reaction Corps-
France



This welcome book provides information for inbound personnel and their family members to services within the RRC-FR HQ.

As of March 2021

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Welcome.

Congratulations on your assignment to the Rapid Reaction Corps – France (RRC-FR). You are joining a NATO Rapid Deployable Corps (NRDC) headquarters that is garrisoned inside the historic Citadel of beautiful downtown Lille (French pronunciation – LEEL), which was built from 1667-1670 by Louis XIV's famous chief engineer, Sebastian Vauban. This assignment brings with it a very rewarding experience where both the service member and their families are immersed in French culture.

A multinational headquarters, RRC-FR significantly benefits from the experience and diversity of its Allied personnel and leadership. English is the working language within this French-led, NATO organization. However, English proficiency varies across the headquarters and frequently you will be called upon to assist your international colleagues in efforts to capture the best phrases to match a situation. As such, your fluent English will be greatly appreciated by RRC-FR members and often your greatest advantage, but any foreign language skills you bring will facilitate your experience as well. Most of your transactions done on the local economy will involve some level of French and it is strongly recommended that you learn a basic level prior to arrival. Although it is not required, the more French you know the easier your life will be. During your tenure you will have many opportunities to contribute to the organization while simultaneously enjoying many perks of a broadening assignment.

As you know, changing duty stations is an exciting and often hectic time for service members and their families. Transitioning to Lille brings extraordinary challenges and will be different from any of your previous moves. The goal of this handbook is to provide newly assigned personnel and their family members with useful information that helps their inbound transition to living and working with the French-framework systems. Early and frequent interaction with your sponsor is critical to achieving smooth integration. Though at times the process may seem daunting, don't worry—there is nothing that we can't figure out and resolve collectively. Over the past 15 years we have gained a great deal of institutional knowledge, much of which is highlighted in the pages to follow.

Your duty chain of command will be your respective international branch chief and Assistant Chief of Staff (ACOS) regardless of their nationality. The U.S. Senior National Representative (SNR) oversees national interests of the American contingent and their families. U.S. Army personnel are administratively controlled by Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Allied Forces North (AFNORTH) Battalion, located at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Casteau, Belgium near Mons. The battalion's mission is to provide human resources, finance, legal, religious and logistical service support; maintain the combat readiness of soldiers in order to support NATO missions; and to ensure the well-being of soldiers, civilians and their family members. The battalion supports personnel assigned to NATO commands throughout Europe. It will be your main conduit for life support and personnel administration during your tour. This battalion falls under the U.S. NATO Brigade

located at Sembach, Germany. The brigade's webpage is <http://www.usanato.army.mil/index.html>, from which you can further understand its organizational structure and associated functions. Additional garrison support information (PX, Commissary etc.) can be found at the following link: <http://www.usagbenelux.eur.army.mil/>.

Again, welcome to what will be a wonderful experience for both you and your family. Please do not hesitate to contact your sponsor at any time during your transition process. If you are not contacted by your sponsor, please reach out to our administrative support specialist at +32 470 21 23 67.

Introduction to the Rapid Reaction Corps, France.

Created on 1 July 2005, RRC-FR is a NATO-certified High Readiness Force Headquarters which is able to command a multinational force as a theater-level Land Component Command (LCC), Multi-Corps Land Component Command (MC-LCC), or Joint Task Force (JTF).

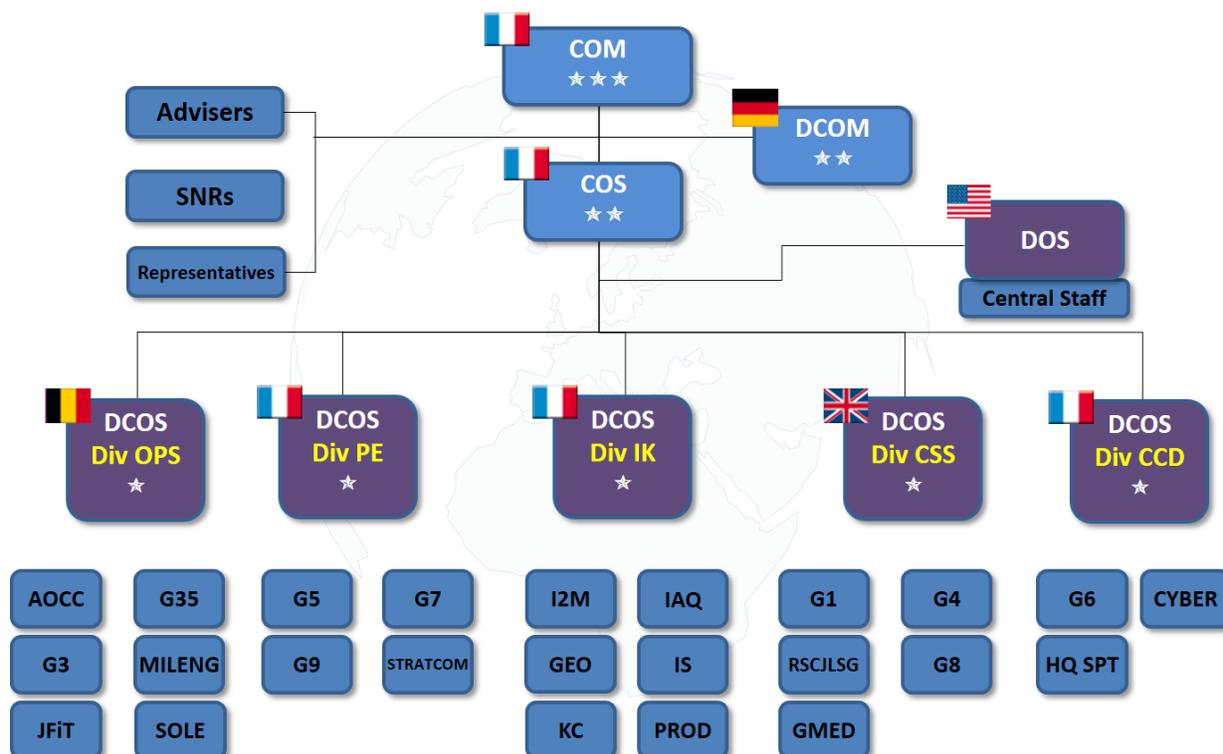
Our mission is to be prepared to deploy for contingency operations, conduct campaign-planning, and command and control operational-level and tactical combat operations across the spectrum of conflict. RRC-FR has earned a strong reputation within NATO and the NRDC community for maintaining high readiness over the past 10 years. The HQ maintains its readiness through a training program consisting of periodic command post exercises as well as individual-level soldier skill refresher training. Currently, the focus of RRC-FR is to build the capability to command a theater-level Land Component Command.

RRC-FR was assigned its first operational role in 2008 when it served as the deployable LCC for the NATO Response Force (NRF). Next, RRC-FR deployed more than 70 personnel to the European Union (EUFOR) Headquarters in Chad in 2009. Then, from 2010-2011, RRC-FR deployed to augment the ISAF Joint Command in Kabul, Afghanistan. RRC-FR prepared, certified and then assumed NRF responsibilities once again in 2014. The following diagram outlines the progression of the headquarters over time:



It is important to note that while being a NATO organization, at its core, RRC-FR is a French Army corps headquarters that contains a significant amount of multinational

personnel. The headquarters is organized into five staff Divisions, each of which contains Branches that accomplish their functional tasks. Although it is commanded by a French Lieutenant General, approximately 50 percent of its senior leadership is multinational, with a German Deputy Commander, a British DCOS for Combat Service Support (CSS), a Belgian DCOS for Operations and an American Director of Staff (DOS).



More than one-third of the Colonels are multinational as well as one-fifth of the field-grade officers. Junior officer and enlisted ranks are almost entirely French although there are a small number of multinational senior NCOs. Most officers have effective English speaking ability, while many of the French NCO's and junior enlisted soldiers possess limited English skills. Therefore, it is beneficial to possess and increase your French language proficiency during your tenure. Fourteen nations are represented in the Headquarters and 80 of the 450 assigned are multinational. It is a goal of the headquarters to increase this percentage over the next few years. There are eleven U.S. Army personnel authorized and it is not likely that this number will increase in the near term. The United States Senior National Representative (SNR) is a U.S. Army Colonel who serves as the RRC-FR Director of Staff.

The typical duty day begins at 0800 and ends at 1700 hours. French personnel conduct physical training on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 0800-1000 hours (no meetings or formal events are typically scheduled during this time). The duty week formally ends at 1200 hours each Friday. Overall this schedule is flexible and is ultimately managed by each of the branch leaders, Assistant Chief of Staffs (ACOSs) according to the work load. The headquarters maintains a near term and long range

calendar that can be accessed upon your arrival. As noted within the welcome section, programed exercises create the outline for priorities of focus for many staff branches. RRC-FR typically conducts one command post exercise (spring timeframe) and one Major Command Post Exercise (fall timeframe) per year. Other French National priorities and RRC-FR events fill in the rest of the calendar.

Your sponsor and first line supervisor will provide further information throughout the transition process. The RRC-FR official web site can be assessed at: <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/terre/actu-terre/crr-fr-crr-e>. This page is in French, but can be translated to English.

Preparation Prior to Arrival

Sponsorship is critical to all phases of your transition. The SNR will assign you a sponsor when your assignment to RRC-FR is confirmed. Next, your sponsor will establish contact with you to discuss your transition. With the assistance of select subject matter experts throughout the HQ (e.g. U.S. Contingent Contractor, Citadel Community Support personnel, School liaison officer, etc.), your sponsor will then facilitate your integration with housing, vehicle registration, and the usual in-processing tasks.

Upon receiving your Request for Orders (RFO) ensure you understand the special instructions listed (i.e. all the 'small print'). Due to Lille's unique location, your losing installation may not understand what needs to be included on your orders. If possible, review these instructions with your sponsor before your installation cuts your orders. Consider the following issues:

Security Clearance:

Ensure your security clearance is current and will not expire during your transition. It's a small thing but will cause problems if not addressed. Your orders should prompt you to review your status.

Passports:

Begin coordinating for passports as soon as practical. Your RFO and PCS orders should state the requirement to obtain U.S. Special Issuance Passports: Official (maroon). Immediately contact your assignments officer if this is not the case. Regardless of age, you and each family member must possess an official passport and you are strongly encouraged to procure a (blue) tourist passport for each family member if you do not already have one. The out-processing section at your losing installation should have a representative that will facilitate this process for you. You should not have to pay for an official passport, but you will have to pay for tourist passports. You should try to procure extra passport photos because you will need them for a variety of IDs once you arrive. Five extra photos per person in addition to the two required for

each new passport should be enough. Be advised that many out-processing sections will not issue your port call departure airline tickets until you have passports in-hand.

For PCS travel to RRC-FR, you will need your official passport, military ID card, PCS orders listing each command-sponsored family member, signed PCS leave form, and installation-issued NATO travel orders. Procuring a tourist passport enables cross-border vacationing in Europe. For recreational travel throughout Europe while you are here, you will need your tourist passport, official passport, Lille Prefecture status certificate, military ID, PCS orders, a copy of your leave form, and your Citadel ID (issued during in-processing). For TDY travel during the course of your official duties, you should only need your official passport, Lille Prefecture status certificate, and RRC-produced NATO Travel Orders.

Visas:

You do not need a visa for your assignment to France. The NATO Status of Forces Agreement and letters from France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs clearly establish that both soldiers and command sponsored family members can enter and live in France using a combination of three documents: official passports, official orders that list command-sponsored dependents by name, and the requisite military ID cards. Article 1.c. defines family members as the spouse and children. Article III.1. dispenses with the requirement for soldiers and command sponsored family members to procure a visa while on an official NATO assignment. Article III.2. specifies that the only required documents for entry are the official passport and by-name assignment order for each soldier and family member. To be clear, Article III.3. reemphasizes the need for something like an official passport (but not a visa) to demonstrate the status of the soldier and his or her family members.

Shipment of Unaccompanied Baggage and Household Goods:

Timely delivery of unaccompanied baggage (UB) and household goods (HHG) shipments to Lille, France, has proven for some to be problematic. Transportation offices tend not to be familiar with this location. Therefore, it is useful to emphasize to your servicing transportation office that Lille, France, is a ONE TIME ONLY (OTO) rate area with its own APO zip code, which is 09746 and different than that of your SHAPE mailbox in Belgium (don't mention your mailbox zip code to the Transportation Office before your shipments have arrived as this may cause confusion). Lille also has its own Unit Identification Code (UIC), which is W2HW41. For the process to work right, your PCS orders must read "Assigned to NRDC-FR (W2HW41) APO AE 09746 LILLE, FRANCE." There have been instances in which household goods have been sent to another U.S. base in Europe, simply because the outbound transportation department was not precise in shipping instructions.

Items to Bring and Items to Leave Behind:



Through the Centralized Furniture Management Office (CFMO) on Chièvres Air Base, Belgium (approximately 8 miles from SHAPE and 42 miles from Lille), you will have temporary access to the following items after you have signed your lease: beds, couch, table, chairs, refrigerator, washer & dryer wardrobes and table lamps. CFMO allows you to keep a washer, dryer, refrigerator, and one wardrobe per family member or bedroom (the latter requires an exception to policy) on a permanent basis. You can coordinate delivery of these items prior to moving into your new residence by explaining you are assigned to Lille. It can take up to a week to ten days to schedule a delivery, so it may be helpful to coordinate delivery during the final stages of obtaining your new lease. If you no longer need certain items after your household goods arrive, simply make an appointment and CFMO will come to collect them.

You can borrow a set of pots, pans, and dishes suitable for your family needs through Army Community Service (ACS), but no sheets or towels. If you cannot carry a set with you in your luggage, you should prioritize these items in your UB and/or procure them upon arrival. As with CFMO furniture, once your household goods come in, simply return the items to ACS.

CFMO: +32 68 27 5477, USARMY.BENELUX.ID-EUROPE.LIST.DPW-CFMO

Remember that your orders should provide the opportunity to place many of your items into non-temporary storage (NTS) if you would like. Many 110-volt appliances will be unusable in France, since Europe operates on 220V. You can, however, use small 110V items with the help of a commercially-purchased transformer and most electronic devices built within the past 10 years are dual-compatible between either type of power source. You will need to obtain the correct adapters to be able to plug them in; these are available at the PX and in local stores. Smaller appliances such as a mixer, juicer, or Cuisinart system can be used with a transformer but leave your U.S. specification fans, toaster, coffee pot, TV (if not compatible with 220V) at home. Bring all of your computer equipment. Almost every laptop computer and plenty of small electronics, such as printers and scanners, switch automatically between 110 /220 using simple plug adaptors – this will be written on the back of the device typically annotated with ‘CE’. Desktops, even if they have such a label, typically possess a manual switch underneath the power supply – you must flip that switch before connecting the power cord in order to avoid immediate, catastrophic damage.



Purchasing a new multi-system TV upon arrival is an option if you do not already own one. Keep in mind that while the United States uses NTSC, most of European countries use PAL, and France uses SECAM. Multi-system TVs are compatible with all 3 signals. Local big box stores, such as Boulanger in the Englos shopping center south of Lille, carry plenty of TVs as well, but typically at higher prices. If you don't already have a multi-system, wait until you sign a lease and then buy one at the Chièvres PX – they cycle through their inventory often, but usually have plenty on hand (most if not all can be used in the US).

Shipment of Pets.

Europe is pet-friendly and Lille is particularly so, but there are a number of rules to respect. Please look into this process early. Since Brussels, Belgium will be your Port of Entry for personnel arriving from outside of Europe, you must follow U.S. Army Garrison BENELUX procedures, Belgian rules, and French rules concerning the importation and transportation of pets. These rules vary by country and by type and number of pets. The Belgian Embassy says, "Please respect the following procedures to avoid your animal being shipped back to the U.S...." You can find the Belgian rules at this link: <https://www.pettravel.com/immigration/belgium.cfm> As a European Union member state, France has a similar approach to pet shipments, but lists its own rules here: <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?article783>

Airline policies vary, adding more layers of regulation, so be sure to work with your servicing travel office well in advance to arrange the successful transport of your pets. Most airlines require pet ticket reservations. Your sponsor can help you make a kennel reservation at Chièvres Air Base. <https://chievres.armymwr.com/programs/kennel> Remember that whenever pets travel between European Union countries, they must have a valid EU pet passport.

Driver's License.



In accordance with the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), your U.S. driver's license will be recognized as valid for the duration of your assignment in France. There is no requirement to obtain an International Driving Permit, however it is not a bad idea to have one initially.¹ It is prudent to ensure that your driver's license will not expire during your tour. Separately, upon arrival you will apply for the Prefecture's Status Attestation.

¹ If visiting France before your assignment it is recommended to have an IDP. Also, it is more easily recognized by rental car agencies and authorities and may make your transition easier upon arrival and while settling in. Any AAA office will be able to issue you a license for about 20 dollars plus tax. The process is relatively simple and these can be renewed annually. AAA information can be found at <https://www.aaa.com/vacation/idpf.html>

Initial Steps upon Arrival.

Inprocessing.

Prior to getting settled, it is important to complete key inprocessing points within both the AFNORTH BN and the Citadel. Please be deliberate in efforts to complete inprocessing. Upon arrival, sponsors will help incoming personnel find interim accommodations within the Lille area and take them to accomplish initial inprocessing tasks. Most sponsors will send administrative forms to you prior to your arrival in order to lean forward on inprocessing.

After your arrival in Brussels, a representative from AFNORTH BN will bring you directly to SHAPE where you will sign off of leave. If time is available you can also inprocess the housing office, finance, and AFNORTH BN S1 shop. These points are important and should come as soon as practical upon your arrival in Europe, as they set conditions for other important functions to occur—for example finance, which drives overseas pay and allowances enabling your new residence. A few of the agencies are located at Chièvres, such as CIF, U.S. MIL ID cards, and CFMO, as noted previously. Beyond the housing office, finance, and AFNORTH BN S1, inprocessing tasks can be accomplished on a later visit in coordination with HHC. The biggest priority will be for you to begin house hunting as soon as possible.

Inprocessing during COVID-19

PCSing and inprocessing during a global pandemic adds another layer of complexity, but it is not insurmountable. Processes and procedures will change based on a variety of factors such as DOD and HQDA travel guidance, CDC Traveler Health Notice level, host country conditions and constraints, NATO Brigade restrictions, and/or other factors. You may be required to spend 14-days of Restriction of Movement (ROM) and/or be tested for COVID-19 before you or your family can do anything else.² Most of all, remain patient and remain flexible. We have learned excellent lessons in coordination with HCC which enable you to complete your inprocessing within an optimal time frame.

Citadel Inprocessing

At the Citadel, your sponsor will coordinate the actions necessary for your security entrance badge and, along with our language and admin support contractor Ms. Billon, take you to the Community Support Center (CSC) within the Citadel. The CSC exists to help multinational personnel serving at the Citadel to make the adjustment to

² You may be required to spend your two-week ROM at the Army Lodging on Chievres Air Base. During this time, HHC will ensure your needs are met.

living in France. The personnel within this office are members of the French Army who speak English to some degree. They specialize in all formal French processes: Vehicle Registration, French National taxes, housing, utilities and all other French specific administrative actions. Ms. Billon and the CSC will help you work through these processes and serves as the link between you and the local municipality. It is highly recommended that you receive assistance from Ms. Billon and the CSC instead of trying to figure things on your own—which in the end may take longer and incur additional problems.

Community Support Center (Citadel)

Base de Défense de Lille
Quartier Boufflers
QG CRR-FR
Community Support Center
BP 90156
59001 LILLE CEDEX

+33328144853 / 4818 / 4817

Your sponsor will also arrange some area orientation with you and your family so that you get an initial feel of Lille, the Citadel and our local supporting functions at Chièvres and Mons. Though initial contact with your sponsor you may already have an idea of what type of accommodations you seek in addition to school options. Your sponsor can facilitate the initial meetings to these and other points. Of note, your sponsor will ensure that you and your family meet with the U.S. SNR and other Citadel leadership early in the process.

U.S. National Support Element (NSE) Contractor Support

The U.S. Contingent has hired a French national to assist us with a variety of issues that would primarily involve navigating the language barrier. Ms. Billon works daily hours in the NSE is invaluable to us as most U.S. members do not arrive with a working level of French language ability. She works Monday through Thursday from 0830 – 1630 and Fridays from 0830 – 1130. Many of her duties include assisting U.S. members with:

- In/Out Processing
- Liaison Support with French Government (CSC has lead)
- Initial House hunting
- CMFO/HHG arrangements
- Local Vehicle administration tasks
- Local School support
- Community Services and facilities in Lille
- General Translation (bills, contracts, medical documents, registrations, etc.)

You will receive training on the specific “do’s” and “don’ts” of Ms. Billon’s responsibilities as well as the limitations of her contract.

Getting Settled

This section includes the primary aspects of living within the Lille. Much of the coordination for these points begins through interaction with your sponsor and is facilitated by Ms. Billon and the CSC. It is a good idea to have at least \$15,000 in liquid assets (more if you are purchasing a car) available before you arrive in order to be prepared to initiate your basic housing services. Although finance will be one of your first in-processing points, additional overseas allowances can take a few weeks to process and arrive into your bank account.

Banking

Before you can sign a lease or do other business in France, you will need to open a French bank account. French bank accounts are required for leases, cell phone plans, utility setup, car insurance, etc.

Upon your arrival in Lille, your sponsor will provide you a letter of financial confirmation signed by the U.S. SNR (prepared routine memo). This letter is a French requirement and must be presented to establish a bank account. Our contractor Ms. Billon will



help you find a bank, make an appointment on your behalf, and accompany you to the initial set up. Within about 5 days you will have the checkbook with which you can draw upon your funds. Your debit card, called a Carte Bancaire or Carte Bleue, will arrive a couple weeks later. Like the French, we use the Carte Bleue for just about anything, from local school supplies and groceries to tourist passes and dining out. **It is highly recommended that you establish a French bank account via international online banks such as HSBC in order to save time and energy.**



With your French checking account, you should expect to pay approximately three months’ rent up front – one for the first month in advance, one for a security deposit, and the equivalent of about one month’s rent for an Agency Fee to the immobilier that manages the rental. The latter is reimbursable through the MIHA provision. The Housing Office at SHAPE is familiar with this process and can walk you through getting reimbursed (what receipts they need, paperwork etc.).

Many of us have an allotment from our military pay to our French bank. For example: calculate the costs of rent, utilities, phone, (monthly French bills) add extra spending money and through the allotment pay these expenditures from their French bank account. You can establish an allotment through the same finance section you in-processed at (they can provide you all the necessary forms and explain the process). In addition, many services to include most residential rental agencies work through a direct

electronic billing arrangement (facilitated through using your French bank account information using your IBAN or RIB number).

HOUSING:

Costs and Allowances.

Housing allowances work differently overseas. The Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA) reimburses rent up to a set limit based on rank, dependents, and geographic region. It is unlike Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) in that OHA will only reimburse actual lease expenses and will not simply provide you the maximum amount to which you are entitled. Lille has its own location code, FR016. The local renting market varies between 1500 euros and the limit, with the higher end more likely for a reasonable family apartment. Provisions for parking places may be written into a lease and reimbursed if the total cost remains below the OHA cap. Apartments sometimes offer parking and sometimes do not. Make sure you know what you are agreeing to before accepting an apartment and involve Ms. Billon from the beginning. You must specifically search for a parking space if you intend to own a vehicle. Utilities, if stripped out of an itemized lease, are reimbursable through a standard Utility/Maintenance allowance at a flat rate, approximately 500 euros per month. There is also a one-time Move-In Housing Allowance, or MIHA, of over 400 euros and, as mentioned above, the one-time Agency Fee that everyone pays to the *immobilier* (approximately one month's rent) is reimbursable as well. To start, stop, or change your OHA, simply take a copy of your lease to the Finance Office at SHAPE. You can see your current OHA, Utility/Recurring Maintenance Allowance, Move-In-Housing Allowance (MIHA), and even Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) rates at this link: <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/ohaCalc.cfm>

Like all other French residents, we pay a reimbursable annual occupancy tax, or Tax d'Habitation, to the city in which we live. This is what funds garbage collection, utility repair, etc., much like property taxes do in the U.S. Whereas a landlord's property tax payment naturally comprises part of the lease amount in the U.S., the French do not view it this way. Those who occupy dwellings on 1 January of each year incur an obligation to be paid by the close of that year based on location, size of dwelling, and other factors. Amounts paid often approximate one month's rent but can vary wildly, from 1000 euros to nearly 3400.

Tax d'Habitation is fully reimbursed in a similar manner as the *immobilier* fee mentioned above. You will owe no Tax d'Habitation if you sign your lease during mid-year, but it is important to complete the necessary paperwork (approximately April) the following year in order to pay the tax. If you depart during mid-year – again, occupancy as of 1 January each year determines the obligation to pay. Regardless of the final calculations that are tabulated in October and November, it is our practice to pay an estimated amount plus 10 percent before moving away from Lille. Speak with Ms. Billon and the CSC to learn more about how to pay the tax for where you live.

Neighborhoods.

We are immersed in a foreign culture unlike other personnel stationed in Europe. Some of us choose to take advantage of living within the urban apartments close to the Citadel and walk or bike to work or school. Within the city center, it is harder to find townhouses with small yards or attached garages which motivates some to look outside Lille for suburban settings. Reasonable neighborhoods within walking or driving distance to both work and area schools exist within the Lille area. You are not limited to living within the city proper.

Families who choose to enroll their children in the American school at SHAPE (see the non-DoD Schools Program discussion), those whose children are accepted by EABJM in the northern suburb of Marcq-en-Baroeul, and those who prefer the quiet or isolation of country living may be interested in finding accommodations outside of Lille. Commuting by car from the village of Marcq-en-Baroeul takes only 15-20 minutes each way.

House Hunting.

Finding a suitable apartment or house to rent is much like going through the process in the U.S—except it is done in French. Depending on your preferences it will naturally involve some tradeoffs. Some have chosen to maximize their proximity to school or work, others have looked for places with more indoor or outdoor space, often gaining a small terrace, yard, and/or garage. Some spots may be nice during the day, but bars and/or student housing may make them unbearable on certain nights. It is possible to find a home with all of the nice qualities.³ The peak season of availability is during the months of June and July. Searches in Lille have typically taken 2 or 3 weeks, sometimes more, but have occasionally finished in only a few days during the summer months. Otherwise, arriving in August or later could make finding living accommodations much more difficult due to reduced availability and annual vacations.

³ Be aware that sizes are advertised in square meters. For reference, 100m² is slightly greater than 1,000 ft².

To find your optimal place in Lille, we recommend you seek a real estate agent to help. There are countless real estate agencies, known as *immobiliers*, particularly along Rue Nationale, each with a staff of 2 or 3 folks and their own lists of available properties. You will occasionally find the same property on multiple lists, but each little agency typically has its own slice of the decentralized Lille market.



You should view city apartment options and surrounding area houses before making your final decision. You should discuss your housing preferences with your sponsor beforehand to get a feel what is doable and unlikely. The *immobiliers* can assist. In some cases, it is possible to connect with English speaking rental agents prior to your move. Please do not consider this an official endorsement, but several newcomers recommend using real estate services provided by Frederique DiNallo. She can be contacted at Frederique.di-nallo@orange.fr, +33(0)686539686. She is more proficient in English than most, willing to go the extra mile, has proven trustworthy, and continues to help long after contracts are signed. Again, involve our contractor Ms. Billon early and often in this process.

Here are a few particulars to keep in mind when searching for a place to live. “*Location*” means rent and “*maison*” means house. A “*cave*” is a locked storage area in the basement, traditionally used to store wine but they normally have space to store just about anything. Some *caves* are easy to access and others require descending drafty stone stairways – this, too, may be part of your tradeoff calculus. *Garages* are garages and *apartments* are apartments. If “parking” or “garage” is not prominently displayed in the advertisement, you can safely assume that none is included. Lille is zip code 59000 and 59800, the suburbs across the canal to the northwest is 59130 Lambersart; another nearby suburb is 59160 Lomme. The zip code for more distant Marcq-en-Baroeul is 59700. Two useful immobilier websites are: <http://seloger.com> and <http://paruvendu.com>. Se’Loger has a very useful app that is available to download. It is all in French, but it is user friendly. This can help you determine the types of accommodation that are available. You should not enter into a contract for a place to live without visiting it and getting advice from your sponsor.

There could be delays even after finding a place. In France, landlords will typically interview you and your family to see if they accept you as tenants. French law gives tenants a lot of protection – tenants cannot be evicted during winter months (mid-October to mid-March) even if they have not paid their rent; a fact that is further complicated by complex eviction procedures and rights of appeal. Therefore landlords

want to make sure that their new tenants will be reputable customers. You may be asked about your nationality, status in France, profession, job and type of employment contract (employees in a probation period, with a temporary contract and freelance professions are often not welcome), your income (which should be about 3 times higher than the rent and charges), information about your family members, etc. Remember our SNR provides an official letter that vouches for your military income and employment within the Citadel. Accompanied by photocopies of your identification documents, this will answer many of the basic questions that your *immobilier* will have concerning your ability to pay. In almost all cases, once the landlord understands who you are and why you are here, they are very eager to retain your family as tenants.

You will be reimbursed for your temporary lodging and, if needed, you can apply for an extension. Some members have had some difficulty getting reimbursed for Air B&Bs. Although this is a great way to get some extra room while searching for your house, **contact the housing office prior to renting one to ensure you will be reimbursed.** Do not feel overly 'rushed' into making your decision—ultimately it is better to find the best option for your family. Do not feel pressured by your *immobilier*—just like in the U.S., they only get paid when you find what you are looking for. Spend enough time learning where your family will be able to feel the most comfortable. The Housing Office at SHAPE can provide you up to 30 days of Temporary Living Allowance as long as you document every 10 days that you are actively looking at a few potential homes each week. Beyond 30 days, you will need to request approval of an exception to policy memorandum. From the start, use the Housing Office form to record the addresses and dates visited, along with the any reasons for non-acceptance. Remember that you may have one Agency Fee reimbursed with proof of payment.

Utilities.

Apartments and other buildings that share common space usually involve itemized charges for one or more utility items as part of each lease, typically at a forecasted amount rather than a flat rate, with accounts to be settled yearly or upon departure. If not, then you will need to set up the following items once you have signed your lease:

Electricity and gas is usually provided by a national company named GDF-Suez. If your landlord or *immobilier* does not facilitate transferring electricity into your name, the CSC can assist you in this process. If electricity is not already on, you have to provide the serial number of the electric meter, the consumption rate, and the name of the previous tenant. Otherwise, you must wait to re-open the line. It is common to set up automatic payments through your French bank account.

Water is provided by a number of different companies, depending on location and type of housing. Speak with your owner if you are in an apartment, otherwise enlist the help of Ms. Billon and the CSC to call Societe des eaux du nord.

Mail.

During in-processing, you will be assigned an APO mailbox for a mailroom that is physically located at SHAPE. With a copy of your orders sent in advance, your sponsor can arrange your APO address for you. AFNORTH personnel deliver mail once a week to the Citadel, normally on Thursdays. Mailing letters and packages will cost the same as sending them anywhere within the United States through the U.S. Postal Service. Priority Mail items will normally arrive at SHAPE within 7-10 days. A simple customs form is required for all packages and, effective October 1, 2015, the customs form and shipping label must be pre-printed online and affixed to the package prior to handing to the mail clerks. It can be helpful to mail yourself a few items to yourself in advance so they are waiting for you upon your arrival at SHAPE. During the holiday season you should mail items well in advance in order to ensure they arrive at their destination in time.

US Army Support and Training.

HHC, AFNORTH BN, USANATO BDE provides US Army Support and Training. They will facilitate AR 350-1 training requirements and Weapons training from SHAPE, Belgium, approximately 1 hour from Lille, France. HHC, AFNORTH Supply Section provides supply support and will hand receipt supply items as needed. AFNORTH BN S6 provides connectivity and IT support for NIPR issued computers in the US office at the Citadel.

HHC Company Commander: (+32) 65 44 3157

HHC First Sergeant: (+32) 65 44 3656

HHC Supply Section: (+32) 65 44 8191

AFNORTH S6 Section: (+32) 65 44 8167

Equal Opportunity Related Issues can be directed to: (+32) 65 44 8172

SHARP Related Issues:

Non-emergency: (+32) 65 44 6381

24/7 Hot Line: (+32) 476 76 2264

UCMJ Authority: The HHC Company Commander has Summarized and Company Grade Article 15 Authority, the AFNORTH BN CDR has Field Grade Article 15 Authority, the USANATO BDE CDR has Summary Court Martial Convening Authority, and the Commanding General 21st Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) has General Court Martial Convening Authority.

Communications: Phone, Internet, and TV.

There are many options to provide phone, internet, and TV services in Lille, and most are proficient with English. Speak with Ms. Billon, the CSC, or your sponsor to discuss which providers may suit your needs best. It can take a few weeks for the internet at your house to be turned on, keep that in mind when selecting the data plan on your phone.

Some have found that it is helpful to buy an internet phone, such as magicJack (<http://www.magicJack.com>), before leaving the US so that friends and family can call you without paying international rates. You will likely have access to the internet through your hotel or temporary lodging when you first arrive. This and other similar methods are helpful in the event that U.S. companies/organizations do not accept foreign numbers. In addition there are multiple Apps you can download that allow you to use Data/Wifi to make phone calls within the U.S. This can be very helpful when calling back to your bank to set up wire transfers and the like.



Upon your arrival, it is possible to purchase a simple prepaid phone from a provider such as Orange, Numericable or SFR using your passport as documentation. Additional minutes can be purchased at almost any of the numerous local *Tabac* shops – much like convenience stores print and dispense lotto tickets on demand, these *Tabac* shops print and dispense mobile phone refill codes in 5 euro increments. Basic flip phones can be purchased for about 35 euros including 5 euros of calling time. It is helpful for your sponsor to provide you a cheap phone upon your arrival so that you can maintain communications early on.

Once you have signed a lease, one of the best options may be to purchase a combined TV/Phone/Internet/Mobile plan. Most internet plans include a home phone number by default. Be prepared to pay about 50 euros for an internet and/or cable decoder box. Self-setup is easy if possible but otherwise, setup times can range anywhere from 2 to 6 weeks and will probably be on the longer end. Monthly costs can range from 60 to 100 euros depending on the type of phone plan chosen. TV plans typically include only a few English channels, such as CNN International, BBC, and Bloomberg.

Most phone plans include free calling of landline phones from Eurozone fixed lines and to U.S. numbers. The country code in France is 33. Phone numbers in the area begin with a 3 for Nord-Pas-de-Calais (for landlines), 6 or 7 (for mobile numbers) and then finish with eight more digits. All phone numbers begin with a 0 if calling without the country code (domestic calls). The French give phone numbers in groups of 2; be prepared to recite your 10-digit number to various businesses when you first arrive.



Calls from France to the States and many countries in Europe are included in most plans and the recipients of those calls are not charged, which means that your loved ones can receive your calls on their cell phones without incurring charges. When calling the States from France, dial 001 and then the area code and number. Text messages using iMessage are free between France and U.S., but SMS rates are pricey. Many of us encourage families and friends back home to download WhatsApp, which allows anyone with the app to SMS message and call free of charge.

Mobile phone data plans are available and very convenient, with all of the familiar features, but data usage tends to be more expensive in Europe, and your usage may be throttled at certain limits and coverage areas. Devices built to U.S. data specifications, such as some Blackberries, tend to have glitches that prevent realizing the full range of data services, even if they are GSMR capable. It is best to pay a few extra euros to buy your data phone here, such as an iPhone, since it will be built for the French data network – the provider will ensure that you have the best access.

Apple TV is an option to keep up with American programming. Videos can be rented or purchased, as can seasons of TV shows, with the most recent episodes automatically downloading to your computer. Apple TV interfaces with your iTunes account to optimize the content for display in your living room. The box costs about 100 dollars and is small enough to bring with you even after you ship your HHG.

Some families, due to their location, elect not to get French cable through a service provider. Using a VPN service through your computer connection is an inexpensive option. In addition, Netflix has expanded to France, giving our families additional opportunities. If you think that you will use these any of these options, you should consider purchasing the highest data-bandwidth package available.

Vehicle Registration

Overview.

Personnel living very close to the Citadel sometimes choose not to use a car. The public transportation within Lille is excellent and also a convenient way to get around France. Most have at least one vehicle, though, and some families with school age children have two cars. **Be forewarned that the French Government will not accept most American vehicles due to vehicle specification policies. Even if you have been stationed in Germany or Belgium before, understand that the same comfort and ease of transition does not apply to France.**

The preferred method by U.S. personnel is to purchase a car here. Purchasing a car in Europe makes registering a car easier because the car should already be EU compliant. Purchasing a car in France further simplifies the process because the car is already in the French registration system. There are many places to pick up a reasonably priced used car. The CSC can assist finding dealers which you may purchase vehicles tax-free.

European Conformity.

In August 2010, French law tightened the rules regarding non-EU specification POVs. France will no longer allow the registration of vehicles and motorcycles that do not conform to European Union specifications. Foreign vehicles require a "Certificate of Conformity". U.S. manufactured vehicles, to include foreign vehicles such as BMW or Volvo which are built to U.S. specifications, may no longer be registered unless they go through a costly conversion process to conform to European standards. To emphasize again, **only cars that conform to European Union (EU) specifications may be registered in France.** In addition, personnel assigned to Lille are not authorized to register cars at SHAPE.

If your RFO states that you are authorized to ship a car—then your orders will have you ship a vehicle to France that you will not be able to drive. Whereas this is technically correct, it is not practical, and the **RFO should be changed to read that the shipment of privately owned vehicles is not authorized. This will in turn allow you to store your vehicle at the government's expense for the duration of your tour if you so choose.** If you decide to bring your vehicle anyway, contact your sponsor and learn what must be done to your vehicle beforehand. Also, consider that you may have to pay to change it back if you bring the same vehicle back with you to the U.S. We strongly recommend you do not bring your U.S. spec vehicle to France.

It is possible to have your vehicle modified to meet EU specifications, however, and have the car certified for use in France. This process is time consuming and can be very expensive. Although it is difficult to find a comprehensive list of what the requisite conversions are, they may include emission systems, display controls, wipers, lights, among other things. In 2009, a service member in Lille paid 150 Euros to Chrysler France to obtain a "Certificate of Conformity" for a Jeep Grand Cherokee which was manufactured in the U.S. Jeep Grand Cherokees are also sold in France, but these vehicles are built to European standards. Chrysler France provided a "Certificate of Partial-Conformity" to the service member, and listed approximately 20 items that could not be verified and/or needed to be converted. This effectively negated the effort to seek the certificate. The conversion process takes up to one year because it is done at only one place in France and the estimated costs are several thousand dollars. Any converted car would, of course, have to be re-converted to U.S. standards prior to a PCS back to CONUS. Again, we strongly recommend you do not bring your U.S.-spec vehicle to France.



Auto Control Technique Inspection.

Whatever the specifications of your car, if it is more than 4 years old, you will need to visit a Control Technique garage for an auto safety and reliability technical inspection. This requirement recurs every two years and the cost per inspection is about 50 Euros. The valid inspection sticker must be mounted on the lower right corner of the front windshield at all times.



Miscellaneous Auto Requirements.

You are required to carry a reflective vest, fire extinguisher, warning triangle and first aid kit in your car. Ensure you work closely with CSC personnel to fully understand your obligations. If you choose to ship a POV, you can track its progress and arrival at <https://www.pcsmypov.com/>

USAA does not finance vehicles built to European specifications. If you wish to finance your vehicle through an American bank, Andrews Federal Credit Union is a convenient solution for military personnel due to their availability near military installations in the U.S.

Speed limits are posted along the highways and are typically visible within updated Garmin GPS software, but keep in mind the following rules of thumb: 1) auto-route, or interstate, speed limits are typically 130 kmh (80 mph) in good conditions, reduced to 110 kmh (70 mph) in bad weather / rain; 2) speed limits on most other motorways are 110 kmh, reducible to 100 kmh in bad weather; 3) speed limits along the remainder of the road network are 90 kmh, reducible to 80 kmh; 4) if visibility is less than 50 meters, then the speed limit will be 50 kmh on any road; 5) the speed limit inside the Citadel is 15 kmh unless otherwise posted. Wherever you are, the fine for violations up to 19 kmh over the limit is 135 euros. Violations of more than 19 kmh above the limit can involve disqualification from driving.

You should either bring a GPS (such as a Garmin Nuvi 730) with a European map set loaded, perhaps on a removable SD card, or purchase a GPS system here. Many of us use Google Maps on our cell phones or apps such as Waze for navigation assistance. Keep in mind that mapping or displaying radar zones is not permitted in France.

Auto and Housing/Renter's Insurance.

While some U.S. auto insurance companies may cover collision insurance in France, liability insurance must be purchased from a French company. For our vehicles that are registered in France, we are able to get insurance through a French insurance company for the military, AGPM, which is much like USAA back home (AGPM also provides the housing or renter's insurance that is required in France). The CSC can assist you in contacting AGPM and an agent will come to the Citadel to accomplish the process. AGPM offers an electronic autopay system if you choose. The agent can issue you proof of insurance on site at time of your transaction. Costs vary, but typically run around 600 euros a year per vehicle and about 175 euros for an apartment. We recommend you include the "legal insurance" option which is very low cost.⁴



Tax Exempt Fuel Cards.

The French customs will issue tax-free fuel cards to us, but only for our vehicles that are registered in France. French tax-free fuel cards are good at any Total gas station in France, from Lille to Strasbourg to Marseille, but not a few kilometers north inside Belgium. The card operates like a credit card, with its own PIN and monthly payment due in person to the Economat office inside the Citadel (hours are 0800-0900 and 1300-1400 Monday-Thursday and 0800-0900 on Fridays). We are authorized 300 liters of tax free fuel per family at a discounted rate that is about half price, or roughly 0.75 euro per liter. This 300 liter authorization can be split between two cards (one per vehicle) and even by type of fuel, whether diesel or gasoline.



Once established, anyone in your family can use a tax free fuel card to fill up at that station that accepts the card. Stations are easy to find in and around the France/Belgium area.

Medical/Dental Care.

U.S. personnel assigned to RRC-FR are required to be TRICARE Overseas Prime Remote. This means that given our location, we must use the local economy for our medical and dental needs. Upon arrival you will receive TRICARE information from your sponsor or the contingent TRICARE Rep.

⁴ In 2019, one U.S. member purchased a car from a local national citizen. Shortly thereafter the car broke down and needed a very costly repair. In the U.S., "lemon laws" would have protected him but without the legal insurance, he had no recourse.

Leaves and Passes.

With a central position in Western Europe, living in Lille can offer incredible travel opportunities. Discount carrier Ryanair flies out of Charleroi, Belgium, just east of SHAPE, to countless points in Europe, sometimes for only a few euros per person per way. The fee structure heavily penalizes checked baggage, upgrades, and flight changes, but it is great if each family member can survive for a few days on a single Brookstone-size carry-on suitcase or small travel pack. Ryanair even flies to two destinations from Lille itself – to Porto, Portugal, and to Marseille, France. Whether on a non-chargeable “mileage pass” of less than 4 days (valid, if approved by both your multinational branch and our Senior National Representative, for weekends or long weekends as defined by the RRC’s long-range training calendar or “Compendium”), or on chargeable trips, we use a DA31 when traveling more than 200 miles, when being away from home for more than 24 hours, or when leaving France and Belgium.

We take our leaves and passes with the approval of both our multinational chain of command and our Senior National Representative, but there are plenty of opportunities. As a multinational headquarters within a French framework, we take each French holiday that our headquarters designates along with seven training holidays per year and some French Compensation Days earned by participating in extended exercises. Each nation also gets to add to the long range training calendar (the “Compendium”) for the use of its own personnel, two “national days” off per year. U.S. personnel usually observe 4 July and Thanksgiving but this can change from year to year. Note that France and the U.S. share some holidays, such as 11 November and Christmas. Bastille Day, 14 July, traditionally inaugurates a month-long “minimum manning” period or leave opportunity. The weeks before and after Christmas typically offer a chance for time-off as well.

Operational Security, Force Protection, and Uniform Policy.

France has had several prominent terrorist attacks in recent years and indications are that the threat will continue for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, it is important that you and your dependents exercise passive operational security (OPSEC) and force protection measures in order to keep the probability of an attack on US personnel as low as possible. It is an issue that you should consider and discuss with your family. One of the best force protection advantages we have is the lack of public awareness for our contingent in Lille. Immersing yourself in the local culture and using French to the maximum extent will improve your OPSEC.

Avoid brazenly broadcasting your status as an American serviceperson in Europe. Family members should not haphazardly discuss that they are American citizens. Remove identifiable decals and markings from your vehicle and consider OPSEC when deciding what to wear in public. Although personnel need not go as far as deceiving others or causing awkward social situations to avoid being identified as American, each person should make a conscious decision of who they tell, whether a person needs to know, or how many people will overhear in order to minimize the

spread of this information. Casual release and disclosure in public settings may be unavoidable in certain circumstances, but is discouraged.

The uniform policy reflects these considerations. Personnel are prohibited from wearing uniform off-post as part of normal duty unless given exception by the SNR, even when commuting to and from work or transiting between military installations. Personnel may not wear uniforms in civilian or TMP vehicles unless approved by the SNR on a case-by-case basis. Uniforms are worn on-post, when travelling in a marked military vehicle/aircraft, or in field environments as part of duty. In garrison, personnel typically pack their uniforms in a bag and store them in a locker at their office in order to change into and out of them each day.

Schools.

For families with school-age and pre-school children, this part of the transition process can be the most challenging. There are many variables to consider (age, language proficiencies, learning/developmental needs etc.) Discuss with your sponsor and start the process early. Children

have an incredible opportunity to be immersed in the French language, becoming quickly fluent, while older children must more carefully consider their ultimate reintegration into the American system. There is an American school at SHAPE (DoDDS) but transportation from Lille to the school is not provided. Like other DoDDS students, our children in Lille can attend either public or private French school at minimal cost if they are enrolled in the non-DoD program.



Non-DoD will pay for many things, starting with tuition, but it will not pay for school lunches and some other items. Your sponsor will connect you with our assigned School Liaison Officer to begin the process.

No matter what schooling options you choose, all families must apply directly to the Non-DOD Schools Program (NDSP). Applications for enrollment are on-line at <https://registration.dodea.edu/NDSP/privacy-act.cfm>. The application can be submitted at any time, but earlier is generally better. Once you have received approval for each child (generally a 2-3-weekturn-around) you will be eligible for reimbursement up to \$23,000 per child per school year. This amount includes tuition, application fees, textbooks, mileage and/or public transportation costs, and lunchtime supervision fees, but not cafeteria food or after-school activity fees. After receiving a letter of authorization for each child, families claim expenses by using a reimbursement form found on the NDSP website and submitting all relevant documentation (that must be translated into English). One other educational fee that is reimbursable up to \$4100 per academic year

is tutoring in French; however, these services must be pre-authorized by emailing ndsp.administration@hq.dodea.edu directly. Approval will not be authorized unless you provide letters from school administrators stating that these services are warranted for the student's academic success.

Some children in Lille have attended Thérèse d'Avila (124 boulevard Vauban, Lille), a private Catholic school that follows the French national curriculum and is only a 12 or 15 minute walk from the Citadel. Those attending Thérèse d'Avila have tended to become fluent in French several months into their first year. If you are looking to fully immerse your children this school is worth investigating. Thérèse d'Avila has an excellent reputation among the Lillois and has made an effort to serve our English speaking students. It offers English oriented lessons and help with French homework, pulling some foreign language students aside for hour-long one on one sessions about twice per week. The official deadline for applications is in July of each year, but the school has typically been flexible with U.S. applications. Find Thérèse d'Avila here: <http://www.theresedavila.eu/>

Other options include the École Active Bilingue Jeannine Manuel (EJM), an international school located in a suburb north of Lille, Marcq-en-Baroeul, but with an excellent international representation due to its parent program in Paris. With significant amounts of both French and English language instruction, it is comparably expensive to Thérèse d'Avila. Non-DoDs will still pay most of the bill, but our children are currently attending EABJM on a pay-and-claim basis, whereas those in the longer-established Thérèse d'Avila program benefit from direct billing. EABJM application deadlines and requirements have been stringent in the past, including Weschler intelligence examinations and applications due in March, but the school may be discretely flexible with students that belong to new American military families. Driving to EABJM can take 15-20 minutes each way from near the Citadel, but a Tram and bus combination can take up to 50 minutes. Find EJM here:



<https://www.ecolejeanninemanuel.org/en/public.html>

A somewhat more difficult option for students is to commute 75 minutes each way to the SHAPE school in Belgium. This makes sense for some families -- a main reason for commuting to SHAPE has been concern about the eventual reintegration of older children back into the American system. It is something to carefully consider. Depending on traffic and where you reside, the trip (one way) takes approximately one hour and 15 minutes.

Some families have successfully homeschooled their children and there are resources available through the non-DoD system to support this option. There are French homeschool groups that are always looking for English speakers to help their

kids practice speaking. There are also several alternative private schools in the surrounding area, such as Montessori Schools that incorporate bilingual classes.

A final option, is placing children in the French public school system proper. Students who are enrolled in the French public school system must attend their neighborhood school – there are no vouchers. Nevertheless, some, like Carnot, have excellent reputations.

For pre-school children beginning at age 3, the French system is called Maternelle and is free of charge (except for lunch which is about 5 Euro per day). If your children attend Maternelle it will be in the neighborhood school closest to you house, most likely within walking distance if you live in town. This is a great way to immerse your children in French early in their education and they are likely to be fluent in French well before their first year is over. It is typically a full day school from about 0830-1645. You have the option to pick up your child for lunch and some schools offer flexible options for the youngest students not to return your child after lunch. This allows you to ease your child into schooling if you wish.

If your children arrive during the summer and are enrolled in the non-DoD program, <https://www.dodea.edu/nonDoD/ndspFAQs.cfm> they can request reimbursable French language tutoring, typically up to 4 or 5 hours per week per student destined to be immersed in a French language educational environment. This requires an approved exception to policy memorandum, not yet denied for our newly arriving children. It will also require an approved DoDEA Form 610. Our School Liaison Officer (SLO) will want to discuss your education intentions and to develop as many details as possible during the weeks before your arrival – again, your sponsor will put you in contact.

The recent introduction of the seven skills helps to ensure a systematic approach to teaching and provides a window onto French educational philosophy. Introduced in 2005 by the Minister of National Education, the seven skills are: 1) mastery of the French language, 2) practical knowledge of a living, modern language, 3) the basic elements of math, science and technology, 4) familiarity with the common techniques of communication and obtaining information, 5) the humanities, 6) social and civic responsibility, and 7) autonomy and initiative. Students who acquire these skills are assessed to have the potential to succeed in continued schooling and, later, to cope well in professional life, being able to fulfill their true potential.



French reforms of 1989 and 1990 divided nursery and primary schooling into cycles (cycles pedagogique). There are three cycles, each of three years duration, designed to allow students to improve at their own speed and to reduce the number of repeat years. The first cycle is Cycles des Apprentissages Premier -- this relates to the

first three years spent in Nursery School (Maternelle), from ages three to six. The second cycle is Cycles des Apprentissages Fondamentaux, consisting of the final year at Nursery School and the first 2 years of primary school, including CP (Cours Préparatoire) and CE1 (Cours Elémentaire1). The third cycle is Cycles des Approfondissements and consists the balance of time spent at Primary School, including CE2 (Cours Elémentaire2), CM1 (Cours Moyen1) and CM2 (Cours Moyen2). The French system is flexible enough to allow children to advance to the next cycle even before a typical three year period has elapsed. Your children will have a lot of options and room to grow in the French system.

Here is how the American educational system aligns with the French:

Age 3 : U.S. Grade – Pre-K, French Grade – Petite Section (PS), French Level – Maternelle
Age 4 : U.S. Grade – Pre-K, French Grade – Moyen Section (MS), French Level – Maternelle
Age 5 : U.S. Grade – Kinder, French Grade – Grand Section (GS), French Level – Maternelle
Age 6 : U.S. Grade – 1st, French Grade – Course Préparatoire (CP), French Level – École
Age 7 : U.S. Grade – 2nd, French Grade – Course Elémentaire 1 (CE1), French Level – École
Age 8 : U.S. Grade – 3rd, French Grade – Course Elémentaire 2 (CE2), French Level – École
Age 9 : U.S. Grade – 4th, French Grade – Course Moyen 1 (CM1), French Level – École
Age 10 : U.S. Grade – 5th, French Grade – Course Moyen 2 (CM2), French Level – École
Age 11 : U.S. Grade – 6th, French Grade – 6eme (Sixième), French Level – Collège
Age 12 : U.S. Grade – 7th, French Grade – 5eme (Cinquième), French Level – Collège
Age 13 : U.S. Grade – 8th, French Grade – 4eme (Quatrième), French Level – Collège
Age 14 : U.S. Grade – 9th, French Grade – 3eme (Troisième), French Level – Collège
Age 15 : U.S. Grade – 10th, French Grade – 2eme (Deuxième), French Level – Lycée
Age 16 : U.S. Grade – 11th, French Grade – 1er (Première), French Level – Lycée
Age 17 : U.S. Grade – 12th, French Grade – Terminal, French Level – Lycée

Note that the French use 31 December as an educational cutoff date. Children must, for example, be 3 years or older by 31 December in order to enter Petite Section (PS). Also note that non-DoDs uses 1 September as a cutoff date – non-DoDs will not pay educational expenses for children who are less than 5 years old as of 1 September. Finally, note that most French schools hold their Maternelle and École levels in separate buildings, but Thérèse d'Avila uses the same establishment – this is convenient.

To learn more about schooling options in advance here is a re-cap of relevant websites:

- Non-DoD schools is: <https://registration.dodea.edu/NDSP/privacy-act.cfm>

- Thérèse d'Avila is: <http://www.theresedavila.eu/>
- EABJM is <https://www.ecolejeanninemanuel.org/en/public.html>
- SHAPE American High School is <https://www.dodea.edu/SHAPEHS/>
- SHAPE American Elementary School is <https://www.dodea.edu/SHAPEES/>

Remember -- it is not possible nor practical to make your school arrangements alone! As soon as you know that you will move to France, contact our School Liaison Officer.

Quality of Life.

Living in or around the Lille (French pronunciation: leel) area can be a very rewarding experience. Lille is a city in north France with a rich history. It is the principal city of the Lille Métropole, the fourth-largest metropolitan area in France after Paris, Lyon and Marseille. Lille is situated in French Flanders, on the Deûle River, near France's border with Belgium. It is the capital of the Nord-Pas de Calais region and the prefecture of the Nord department.

A quick internet search will yield a wealth of information concerning Lille and the surrounding area. Here is the website of the tourist information office: <https://en.lilletourism.com/>. Lille's tourist information office is located in Palais Rihour, near the Grand Place (Place Charles de Gaulle), which is the city's main square. It is open Monday through Saturday 0930-1230 and 1330-1800 and on Sunday 1000-1230 and 1330-1630. A lot of useful documentation and maps are available there. It also has a shop that carries plenty of gift ideas, such as souvenirs and regional products.



Two other useful internet sites are: <http://www.france-pub.com/city/lille.php> and https://hellolille.eu/en/brochures_info/guide-des-nouveaux-arrivants/

TRANSPORTATION AND TRAVEL

Transportation in Lille

ILÉVIA



[Ilévia](#) is Lille's public transport operator. Their phone app is available in English and is very useful to plan journeys and look at schedules. There are also [several Ilévia stores in Lille](#), the main one is in the Lille Flandres metro station. Two bus lines pass right by the Citadel, at the **Champ de Mars** stop: the L1 and the L5. The nearest metro stations are **République Beaux-Arts** and **Cormontaigne**.

Ticket prices vary from year to year, but currently a one-way ticket originally costs 1.70 euros. It must be charged on a rechargeable ticket (20c) or on a rechargeable PassPass card (which is useful to have, as it can be used for a variety of ticket types). Each ticket must be validated at the start of the trip. The ticket will remain valid for an hour and the same ticket can be used when switching from bus to metro on a single leg of a trip. Random boarding by city officials ensures that free riders are kept to a minimum.

Due to Covid restrictions, it is currently not possible to buy/recharge tickets on board the buses. You have to use selling/recharging machines (available in every metro station), the app or go to one of the Ilévia stores.



For regular use, it is best to get nominative monthly passes (30 euros/month max for children and 60 euros/month max for adults).

V'LILLE

Ilévia also runs an automatic bike renting system called [V'Lille](#). It is cheap and there are [many stations throughout the city](#). The app is useful to locate them. A deposit of 200€ is required (not charged if you return the bike). The first 30min are always free. For occasional use, a credit card is enough. For regular use, it is best to get a subscription in one of the Ilévia agencies.

Travelling in and outside France

Remember that your official passport and by-name orders together with your Military ID document that the soldier and family members can live in France on an extended basis without a visa. You must, however, use a normal blue tourist passport to do cross-border traveling within Europe. When returning to the U.S. for visits, carry each of these documents with you. If you are cross-border traveling within Europe, carry your Tourist Passport, Military ID, Prefecture Status Attestation, and photocopies of other documents.

SNCF

[SNCF](#) is France's national rail company. Rail travel is fast and relatively inexpensive throughout France and much of Europe. The TGV (fast train) is a convenient way to travel everywhere in France. Tickets can be booked online (the SNCF website and the app exist in

English) or in train stations. There are two train stations in Lille, both near the Euralille shopping center: **Gare Lille Flandres** (for regional trains and some TGVs) on Place des Buisses and **Gare Lille Europe** (for TGV services and the Eurostar to London & Brussels) on Place François Mitterrand. From Lille, Paris is only 60 minutes away by train, while beautiful Lyon is 3 hours and impeccable Strasbourg is 3 hours and 20 minutes. Marseille, far to the south on the Mediterranean coast, is still only a four and a half hour journey by rail.

EUROSTAR

[Eurostar](#) runs fast trains to London and Brussels from Lille Europe Station. Going to London takes an hour and a half and going to Brussels takes 35min. It is fast and practical but can be expensive if you book at the last minute.

EUROTUNNEL

With [Eurotunnel](#), it is possible to travel to England with your vehicle, even on a DA31 weekend mileage pass (required for leaving France/Belgium, spending the night away from home, or traveling more than 200 miles), using this piggyback service. The Eurotunnel Shuttle links Calais (just over an hour away), near Dunkirk, to Folkestone in England, taking 35 minutes and putting London within a two hour drive of Lille. Driver's license and proof of insurance are required.

FERRY LINKS TO THE UK

If you find the Eurotunnel Shuttle to be too expensive and you still don't mind driving "on the wrong side of the road," then you can also consider taking the ferry from the port of Calais to Dover. The crossing takes an hour and a half and the two main ferry companies are [P&O](#) and [DFDS](#). DFDS also provides ferry links between Dunkirk and Dover, the crossing takes 2 hours. If you book a few weeks in advance, you will almost certainly pay less than 100 euros to take your vehicle and entire family across the channel and back again.

AIRPORTS

Lille has a small airport, **Lille Lesquin**, with national and international flights (Southern Europe and North Africa). It is 4 miles southeast of Lille and is easily accessible by car or by bus (departing from across Lille Flandres, in front of the CIC building). **Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport** is easily and quickly accessible from Lille, by car (2 hours) or by train (TGV) from Lille Europe (about 50min). **Brussels Zaventem Airport** is accessible by car (1hr30) or by train: Eurostar from Lille Europe to Brussels Midi station (35min) then train to Brussels Airport (about 20min).

VRBO

[Vrbo](#) (formerly Home Away). Europe's approach to hotel rooms differs from that of the U.S., so it is hard to find individual hotel rooms that are appropriate for two adults accompanied by two or more kids. Vrbo offers a potential solution, renting apartments and houses on a temporary basis, often conveniently located near city centers and major attractions.

NORTHERN FRANCE EXPERIENCES

If you like nature walks, want a deeper appreciation of the local area and find suggestions for weekend breaks nearby, check out [Northern France Experiences](#), the official website for tourism in Northern France.

Books

Here is a selection of useful books when living in Lille/France:

Bescherelle Complete Guide to Conjugating 12,000 French Verbs, English edition (Paris: Hatier, 1995), ISBN: 9782218065910. This little book is a must-have if you are serious about learning French.

Leclercq, Olivier, and Alain Etienne, *Lille métropole* (petit futé, beaux livres déclics), ISBN : 9782847682717. This small, but beautiful, hard bound book contains amazing photos of Lille, accompanied by a nice summary of Lille's history and culture. It may be available at the Tourist Office and makes a nice gift or reference to grace the living room of anyone who is familiar with Lille.

Phillips, Laurence. *Lille City Guide*, 4th edition. Bucks, England: Brant Travel Guides, Ltd, 2015 [2004]. This beautifully illustrated work is a nice reference and a great gift idea to encourage visits by family members back home. It was recognized as Best Guidebook of the Year by the British Guild of Travel Writers.

Strolls around Lille, available at the tourist information office. Presents the essentials of Lille and its metropolis (history, monuments and museums, parks and gardens) and suggest 5 walking trails to discover the city at your own pace.

Stack, Edward M. *Reading French in the Arts and Sciences*, 4th edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987), ISBN: 0935359686. This compact and powerful compilation of lessons, exercises, and references will guide you to basic competency in the reading domain.

Steves, Rick, and Steve Smith. *Rick Steves' France 2011*. Rick Steves, of PBS acclaim, publishes what are perhaps the best European guidebooks available today. Having spent decades absorbing the best of Europe, he delivers the highlights in an enjoyable, incredibly useful reference. His books are available in Amazon Kindle format, so it is possible to carry this and the rest of your Kindle library in your pocket on an iPod 4G as you hop around Europe or plan your trips at home or at the coffee shop.

Steves, Rick, and Steve Smith. *Rick Steves' Paris 2011*. We are so close that a DA31 is not required to visit Paris on the weekend daytrips, although one is required for overnight stays. More importantly, you will not be able to exhaust the opportunities of this magnificent city even if you spent an entire 3-year tour there. Use this book to prioritize and visit often; it is also available through Amazon Kindle.

GROCERY SHOPPING, FOOD AND RESTAURANTS

Markets and Supermarkets

There are many options for grocery shopping in Lille as. Some stores require that you weigh your own produce and put a computer generated label on it before taking it to the register, but others do not. In any case, you need to bring your own grocery bags, which you purchase in the store.

The outdoor markets in Lille are great places to buy flowers, produce, BBQ ribs, and rotisserie chicken, or to just people watch and browse a little of everything else including inexpensive kids toys and simple office supplies. The largest is the Wazemmes Market on the Place de la Nouvelle Aventure, just east of Thérèse d'Avila on Colbert and open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from 0700-1400, with a covered market hall that remains open every day except Monday. The Marché du Vieux-Lille on Place du Concert and Rue de la Monnaie is more up-scale than its counterparts and takes place Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays from 0830-1300, longer until 1400 on Sunday. You can find all the markets of Lille listed at: <https://en.lilletourism.com/markets-in-lille.html> .



center.

For bulk grocery shopping in Lille, we tend to use one of five major chains. Most of them have Click & Collect ('drive') and Delivery ('livraison') options. The largest chain, **Auchan**, sells everything from clothes and appliances to school supplies and groceries and employs nearly 200,000 in at least 12 countries. There are three big Auchan supermarkets in the Lille area: in [Englos](#), [Faches Thumesnil](#) and [Villeneuve d'Ascq](#). **Carrefour** (the name means crossroads in French) has a large store in [Englos](#) as well and one in the [Euralille](#) shopping mall in the town

Carrefour (and other chains like Match, Intermarché or Leclerc) also has several medium stores and numerous smaller ones scattered throughout Lille. **ALDI** (Albrecht Discount) also has several stores in Lille, but not in the town center. **Match** is a deep discount grocery store on Rue Solférino just west of Rue Nationale, also with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. The newer **Intermarché** is located on Rue Nationale, just north of the intersection with Boulevard de la Liberté – it has plenty of selection, but at higher prices. Most supermarkets are open from Monday through Saturday 0930-1930, with many also open on Sundays from 0900-1200. You can also find a variety of 100% organic ('bio') supermarkets in Lille, like **Bio c'Bon** or **Biocoop**.

Local Dishes

Each region in France has its own specialties, so here are the main ones from Northern France, if you want to try them out:

Carbonade flamande: Beef stew cooked with Flemish beer, served with fries and sometimes ginger bread.

Tarte au Maroilles: Pie made with the local cheese, "Maroilles", which is very smelly but also quite tasty.

Welsh: Bread, ham, cheddar (or Maroilles) cooked with beer. Originally from Wales but also typical from Northern France.

Potjevleesch: A sort of terrine made with 4 different meats, served with fries.

Moules-Frites: Mussels with fries. Lots of different recipes, "Moules Marinières" is the most common one: the mussels are cooked with white wine, butter, parsley and shallot.

For a true 'Ch'ti' (Northern French) experience, you can go and try these dishes in an 'estaminet'. Originally, an 'estaminet' is a Walloon/Northern French working-class café/brasserie. Now the term is mainly used to designate the restaurants/brasseries serving traditional dishes and beers from Northern France & Wallonia. The best ones in Lille are probably [Aux Vieux de la Vieille](#) rue des Vieux Murs, [Chez Raoul](#) and [Chez la Vieille](#) on rue de Gand.

Merveilleux: A dessert made of two light meringues welded with whipped cream and dusted with chocolate shavings. The best ones can be found at the cake shop called [Au Merveilleux de Fred](#) on rue de la Monnaie.

If you like beer, there are also countless local ones to discover and there is always a wide variety available in supermarkets, restaurants and bars.

Restaurants, Bars and Coffee Places

With more than 400 bars, Lille is the second biggest city in France for number of bars/person and there is also a huge number of restaurants. Here is a small selection:

RESTAURANTS

[La Péniche Archimède](#) (avenue Cuvier, façade de l'Esplanade): popular restaurant/bar on a barge, just next to the Citadel.

[Les Compagnons de la Grappe](#) (26 rue Lepelletier): excellent food, great seasonal menu with a small terrasse ; inexpensive.

[La Bottega](#) (8 Bis Rue au Péterinck): the best pizza in Lille! Get the chocolate mousse for dessert.

[Hopen Source](#) (13 rue du Plat): restaurant and café. Mainly organic and 100% local products.

[Le Barbier qui Fume](#) (69 rue de la Monnaie): specialized in smoked meats.

For good burgers : [L'Adresse](#) on rue des Bouchers, [Big Fernand](#) on place de Béthune and rue Esquermoise or [Le Comptoir Volant](#) on place des Patiniers.

For gourmet restaurants : [La Terrasse des Remparts](#) on Logis de la Porte de Gand and [L'Arc](#) on rue des Bouchers offer excellent food and wine. [Bloempot](#), also on rue des Bouchers, specializes in Flemish cuisine and is a very popular address, so booking is strongly advised.

BARS

[La Capsule](#) (25 rue des Trois Mollettes): The best address for beer lovers. About 30 beers on tap (which change regularly) and more than 100 bottled ones from everywhere in the world.

[Joker Cocktails & Bar](#) (29 place Louise de Bettignies): A renowned cocktail bar. The menu changes every week and they also offer cocktails based on your own tastes.

[Dernier Bar avant la Fin du Monde](#) (12 rue de Pas): A fun bar dedicated to pop culture (Doctor Who, Lord of the Rings, comics, etc), with games, books and consoles available.

[Café Oz](#) (33 place Louise de Bettignies): usually popular with English speakers and a good place to watch sports (soccer, tennis, rugby). Very lively at night, with DJs and live concerts.

[Au Point Central](#) (1 place des Patiniers): bar and brasserie, cosy and casual.

Wine bars: [La Part des Anges](#) on rue de la Monnaie, [Monsieur Jacques](#) on rue de Gand, [Les Frères Pinard](#) on rue des Vieux Murs and [Le Jaja](#) on rue Saint-André.

The best terraces: [La Luck](#) on rue Princesse (they also have lots of games), [La Capucine](#) on avenue Mathias Delobel, [Au Boudin Bar](#) on place Maurice Schumann.

COFFEE PLACES

[Notting Hill Coffee](#): the local Starbucks. There are several ones in Lille, for instance on rue Esquermoise or on Grand Place.

[Cafés Méo](#) (place du Général de Gaulle): Coffee brand created in Lille in 1945. There is also a shop.

[Le Waf](#) (57 rue de la Barre): A dog café where you can have tea, coffee and cake while petting dogs, who are coming from animal rescue centers (some of them are for adoption).

[Elizabeth's](#) (71 rue Basse): A cute British-style tearoom.

Other nice addresses include [Sweet Flamingo](#) on rue Nicolas Leblanc, [Wally's Coffee](#) rue du Molinel, [Coffee Makers](#) on rue Pierre Mauroy or [It Coffee](#) on rue des 7 Agaches.

Cake Shops and Boulangeries

[Méert](#) (27 rue Esquermoise): Founded in 1677, one of the oldest cake shops in the world, in a beautiful building. Very renowned.

[Au Chat Bleu](#) (3 rue des Manneliers): Chocolates and confectionary.

[L'Ogre de Carrouselberg](#) (17 rue des Vieux Murs): A variety of individual cakes all made from local products and celebrating local traditions.

[Oxalis et Bergamote](#) (44 rue d'Angleterre): Reportedly the best cheesecake in Lille.

[L'Impertinente](#) (9 boulevard Papin): Variety of delicious cakes and popular tearoom.

[Maison B](#) (21 rue Nicolas Leblanc): Designer cakes.

Where to get the best bread and 'viennoiseries' (croissants, pains au chocolat, etc) : [Boulangerie Mathieu](#) on rue du Molinel, [Alex Croquet](#) on rue Esquermoise, [Boulangerie Vianney Degruson](#) on rue Saint-André, [Le Pain Quotiden](#) on place Rihour (also a restaurant), [Au Lion d'Or](#) on place du Lion d'Or, [Maison Doucet](#) on rue Gambetta and [Cœur d'Épis](#) on boulevard Vauban.

Wine and Beer

Wine stores: [Les Vins d'Aurélien](#) on rue Jean Sans Peur, [Les Vins Gourmands](#) on rue Esquermoise, [Nicolas](#) on rue de Solférino or place du Lion d'Or, [Caviste Curieux](#) on place Sébastopol, [La Cave du Parvis Saint Maurice](#) on rue Pierre Maurois, [Les Chais du Savour](#) on square du Ramponneau.

Beer stores : [L'Abbaye des Saveurs](#) on rue des Vieux Murs (they also have local food), [Bières des Halles](#) on Place de la Nouvelle Aventure, [Célestin](#) on rue Esquermoise.

OTHER SHOPPING AND POINTS OF INTEREST

There is plenty of commercial shopping in Lille and you can find most things that you want and need here, from gifts to furniture. Due to its strong commercial history and incredible selection, many people travel to Lille on the weekend, particularly from Great Britain, to shop for clothing and accessories. Lille's shopping opportunities lend class and character to the city in which we are living. Visitors should always have a look.

Shopping centers

Throughout the center of Lille you will find department stores and international chains, and two shopping centers: the main one, [Euralille](#), near the train stations, is a big, ultramodern mall filled with the best brands at reasonable prices; the other one is [Les Tanneurs](#), just east of the Grand Place. There are other shopping centers in the outskirts of Lille, like [V2](#) in Villeneuve d'Ascq (which is the biggest in the area) or [Englos les Géants](#). A new one, [Lillenum](#), has also just opened in the south of Lille.



Books

[Le Furet du Nord](#) on Grand Place is one of Europe's biggest bookstores and it has a great selection of English books (see [here](#)). It is also good for office supplies, DVDs, music, etc. [FNAC](#) on rue Saint Nicolas also has a selection of English books (see [here](#)) and is usually better for DVDs, music and video games. La [Nouvelle Librairie Internationale VO](#) on rue Gustave Delory offers a good selection of bilingual and English books (see [here](#)).

Clothes

For clothes, the biggest international and French brands are located on rue de Béthune (the main shopping street) and the surrounding area (between Grand Place and Place de la République), as well as in the Euralille shopping center. Just to the south on rue Nationale is [Printemps](#), a department store that carries the latest fashions. The more up-scale brands are usually located in the Vieux-Lille area.

Flowers and plants

[Les Compagnons des Saisons](#) on rue de Bondues in Wambrechies is a good garden center for small purchases whereas [Floralux](#) on Meensesteenweg in Dadizele, Belgium is better for large purchases. There is also [Jardiland](#) on rue du Cheval Blanc in Marcq en Baroeul.

Nice florists in Lille include [Les Fleurs de Fany](#) on rue des Bouchers, [Des Fleurs par Jean-Louis](#) on place des Patiniers or [Au Nom de la Rose](#) (specialized in roses) on place du Lion d'Or. [Lille's Flower Festival](#) ('Marché aux Fleurs') takes place every year on Grand Place, during the last weekend of April or the first weekend of May.

Furniture and homeware

For furniture and other home items, the [Ikea](#) in Lomme carries a great selection of furniture and other home items. Other stores selling furniture, decoration and tableware are [Conforama](#) in the Englos shopping center or [Maisons du Monde](#) on rue Faidherbe (more expensive). [Castorama](#) in Englos is like a European version of Home Depot (faucets, bathroom wares, etc). There are also many concept and trendy (but often very expensive) furniture and homeware stores in the Vieux Lille. For household appliances, the biggest stores are [Boulangier](#) in Faches Thumesnil or [Darty](#) in Englos. Keep in mind if you shop in Belgium for many large ticket items you can be reimbursed the Value added Tax.

Sporting goods

[Décathlon](#), the largest sporting goods retailer in the world, actually started in Lille in 1976. There are several Décathlon stores in the Lille area, including one in the city center on rue des Tanneurs. Décathlon's [BTWIN Village](#) on rue du Professeur Langevin is the biggest bike store in the area. There is a variety of other sporting goods stores, like [Go Sport](#) in Euralille or [Intersport](#) in Faches Thumesnil. For casual sportswear and accessories: [Adidas](#) in Euralille, [Nike](#) on rue Neuve, [JD Sports](#) (designer branded training shoes) on place Rihour and [le Coq Sportif](#) on rue de Béthune (items branded with the famous Gallic rooster).

Toys & Games

[King Jouet](#) in Les Tanneurs, [Picwic](#) in Lomme and [Joué Club](#) in Villeneuve d'Ascq have a good selection of toys and board games. For younger children, [Bonhomme de Bois](#) in Les

Tanneurs (authentic and traditional toys, the majority made of wood), [Oxybul](#) on rue Pierre Mauroy (early-learning games and creative activities) and [Le Petit Autre Chose-Moulin Roty](#) on rue Esquermoise (worker-owned French cooperative which designs a variety of very cute high-quality soft toys for babies and toddlers). You can find a good selection of videogames at [Micromania](#) on rue de Béthune or in Euralille or at [FNAC](#) on rue St Nicolas.

CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT

Cinemas

[Kinépolis Lomme](#) (rue du Château d'Isenghien): 23 screens

[UGC Ciné Cité](#) (40 Rue de Béthune) : 14 screens

[UGC Le Majestic](#) (54 Rue de Béthune) : 6 screens

[UGC Le Métropole](#) (26 Rue des ponts de Comines) : 4 screens

[Kinépolis Kortrijk/Courtrai](#), (President Kennedylaan 100, Courtrai, Belgium): 10 screens

Note: VO/VOSTF means that the movie is in its original language ('version originale') with French subtitles so if it's an American film, you can see it in English. All these movie theaters will have that option. VF ('version française') means that the film is dubbed in French.

Kinépolis Lomme and Kinépolis Courtrai are multiplex movie theaters, with stadium seats, original language and 3D movies. Both UGC and Kinépolis offer membership cards with interesting rates for regular moviegoers.

Museums

Museums in Lille are free on the 1st Sunday of each month for residents of Lille Métropole.

[Palais des Beaux-Arts \(PBA\)](#) (place de la République): the biggest art museum outside of Paris. It has a fantastic collection of paintings (Raphael, Rembrandt, Goya, Toulouse-Lautrec, Delacroix...) as well as antiquities, sculptures, ceramics and 18th century scale models of various Northern French towns.

[Lille Métropole Musée d'Art Moderne, Art Contemporain et Art Brut \(LaM\)](#) (1 allée du Musée, Villeneuve d'Ascq): it has a great collection of modern and contemporary art (Braque, Picasso, Modigliani...) and a sculpture park.

[La Piscine – Musée d'Art et d'Industrie](#) (23 rue de l'Espérance in Roubaix): beautiful building as it is installed on the site of a former Art Deco swimming pool. It features a textile collection, fashion and design collection, ceramics and fine arts.

Other interesting museums in Lille: [Musée d'Histoire Naturelle](#), [Musée de l'Hospice Comtesse](#) and [Charles de Gaulle's birthplace](#).

Swimming Pools

[Piscine Marx Dormoy](#) (36 avenue Marx Dormoy)
Olympic size public swimming pool with lessons available.

[Neptunia Centre Aquatique](#) (Rue Thieron et Ferron in Haubourdin)

[Tourcoing les Bains](#) (Rue Aristide Briand in Tourcoing)

Both are swimming pools with water slides, wading pool, geysers: good for a family day at the pool.

Be aware that loose-fitting swimming trunks are prohibited in swimming pools and swimming caps are often compulsory.

Other activities

INDOORS

[Virtual Room](#) (17 rue du Frenelêt in Villeneuve d'Ascq): team-based virtual reality games.

[Laser Game Evolution](#) (9 rue des Primeurs): laser tag center, with arcade games and mazes.

[Climb-Up](#) (110 rue Jean Jaurès in Lesquin): climbing and fun climbing.

[Weembi](#) (730 rue Maurice Herzog in Lesquin): free fall simulator.

[Mind Out](#) (10 rue du Priez): arcade and virtual reality experiences and games.

Bowling alleys: [Planet Bowling](#) (8 rue du Château d'Inseghien), [Bowling Van Gogh](#) (1 rue des Vétérans in Villeneuve d'Ascq)

OUTDOORS

There are many things available in the park around the Citadel:

[Zoo de Lille](#) (avenue Mathias Delobel): free with the Lille & Moi pass (available for residents of Lille, Lomme and Hellemmes. You can apply [here](#).)

[Marin d'Eau Douce](#) (2 avenue Mathias Delobel): rental of electric license-free boats to sail on the Deûle river.

[Le Grand Huit](#) (pont de la Citadelle): a variety of original activities (stand up paddle, penny-farthing bike lessons, etc) and bike tours of Lille.

[Accro Lille](#) (croisement de l'allée du Train de Loos et de l'allée Paul Vallon) : tree-climbing and ziplining.

[Cita-Parc](#) (avenue Mathias Delobel): small amusement park on the theme of nature and animals.

A bit further, the [Parc du Héron](#) in Villeneuve d'Ascq is a great place to go for a walk or to go jogging, cycling or birdwatching.

CONCERTS, SHOWS & SPORTS

For music and other performances, look at the programs of [Zénith Arena](#) or [L'Aéronef](#) (concerts) or [Orchestre National de Lille](#) and [Opéra de Lille](#) (classical music, opera and ballets).

For sports, the [Stade Pierre Mauroy](#) is the home of local soccer team [LOSC](#), competing in the top professional French league and in European competitions (tickets available [here](#)) and it is also used for other international sporting events, as well as concerts and shows. If you like volleyball, you can go to [Léo Lagrange](#) in Tourcoing and cheer for the [TLM team](#), who also plays in the top professional French league.

DISNEYLAND PARIS

[Disneyland Paris](#) was modeled after the original park in Anaheim, California, and is situated [on the eastern outskirts of Paris](#), this is too close – the kids will love it. It takes about two hours and a half to get there by car or an hour by TGV (fast train) from Lille-Europe station to Marne-la-Vallée-Chessy. There is a range of tickets and packages available, including annual passes (see [here](#)).

SERVICES

Alterations and Repairs

Clothing alteration services: [Gambetta Retouche](#), 14 rue Saint Pierre Saint Paul.

Shoe repairs and key cutting: [Nationale Express](#), 60 rue Nationale.

Computer repairs: [Dépannage Informatique 59](#), 22 rue Béranger ; [Mac Way](#), 70 rue Pierre Mauroy (specifically for Mac and Apple) ; [Alphatec](#), 68 rue Sainte Hélène in Saint-André-lez-Lille (call first).

Phone repairs: [Mobile House](#), 27 rue du Sec Arembault.

Lille's [Apple Store](#) is located on 1 rue Faidherbe (repairs need to be booked online in advance).

Beauty Parlors and Spas

Waxing, facial and body care and/or manicure: [Yves Rocher](#) is a franchise which has several stores in Lille (they don't offer manicure services); another one is [Esthetic Center](#), 28 rue des Fossés. Independent parlors include [Sonia B](#), 44 rue d'Angleterre, and [Atome](#), 34 avenue de Bretagne (more expensive but uses only organic products).

Spas and wellness: [Eau Zone](#), 206 rue Faidherbe; [Suite & Spa](#), 25 rue Edouard Delesalle. [Les Cent Ciels](#), 64 boulevard Jean-Baptiste Lebas, is the biggest hamman in Northern France (with complimentary mint tea and Roman baths). For a more original experience: [Les Bulles à Flotter](#).

Churches

[Christ Church of Lille](#), 14 Rue Lydéric Lille: Anglican Church, services and most activities are in English. No need to be a member of the Church of England to join for worship. There is naturally a host of Catholic and French language opportunities available. France is 5-10 percent Muslim, with roughly twice as many Muslims as Protestants.

Clubs

[American Club of Lille](#), 74 rue Royale: This French-American Club began in 1990 and fosters good relations, celebrating the American experience in a positive light. Gatherings for US national holidays, cultural events and help provided to American newcomers to adjust to French culture.

Centre Culturel Britannique, 2 rue Bernos: Provides a warm welcome to all English-speaking residents of Lille. The CCB Library stocks over 1,200 English language books + 400 DVDs. Story Time for children aged 4-7 every Wednesday 1400-1500. They also have a book club and a cinema club.

French Lessons

Centre de Pratique de Langues Etrangères (CPLE), 58 rue de l'Hôpital Militaire. Lessons mainly focusing on oral communication and listening comprehension. For more info: catherine.hennion@cple-langues.fr / +33 3 28 53 00 28

French as a Foreign Language (FLE) – Université de Lille, Service Formation Continue, Bureau 3-Bâtiment B8, Cité Scientifique, Rue Marconi in Villeneuve d'Ascq. Sessions of 30h available (morning or evening classes) from September to June. Development of all 4 skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) + cultural activities. Lessons on campus or remotely, in groups or individual. For more info: sfc-fle@univ-lille.fr / +33 3 20 58 11 21

Clarife - Université Catholique de Lille, 60 boulevard Vauban. Language and intercultural centre of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Lille Catholic University, specialized in teaching French as a foreign language. Intensive or non-intensive courses open to all. Very close to both the Citadel and the Thérèse d'Avila school. For more info: clarife@univ-catholille.fr / + 33 3 20 57 92 19

Olingua, 3 boulevard Montebello. French language classes for adults and children, alone or in small groups, with Mrs Olivia Ben Haim. For more info: contact@olingua.fr / +33 6 70 89 51 26

Union Française de la Jeunesse, Rue du Mal Assis. Adult education school. Offers French as a foreign language lessons for 140€ a year (one lesson/week). First lesson free. For more info: jessica.bro@ufj.asso.fr / + 33 3 20 57 27 11

SHAPE Language Center, located in Building 211 on SHAPE, near the Finance Office. They offer French lessons at a range of levels (beginning, intermediate, advanced). They host several sessions each year, usually one in the fall, one in the spring, and one in the summer. For more info: languagecentre@shapemwb.be / 065 44 4971

Transparent Language Online. There is apparently a language program newly available on our military Library website (which is open to families and soldiers). Be sure to set up online access when you in-process the main library at SHAPE. In addition to new language resource(s), you will be able to request delivery of books to Chièvres from the consolidated holdings of military libraries in Europe.

Smartphone applications such as **Duolingo** and **Rosetta Stone** can be very helpful.

Hairdressers

La Cle du Barbier, Men's military-style haircuts, 200m from front gate of citadel.

[Shampoo](#), in Euralille shopping center. By appointment or walk in. This chain of hairdressers is similar to an American Great Clips where you can get inexpensive children's haircuts. They also cut adult hair.

[Vog Coiffure](#), Galerie FNAC on Grand Place or 14 Rue Grande Chaussée. By appointment only. Some of the receptionists speak English.

[Tchip Coiffure](#), 14 rue Esquermoise or 117 rue Gambetta. The cheapest. By appointment or walk in.

Pets

VETS

[Clinique Vétérinaire d'Esquermes](#), 80 boulevard Montebello, +33 3 20 17 15 00. Six vets, Docteur Sergent speaks English.

[Centre Hospitalier Vétérinaire Nordvet](#), 1 rue Delesalle in La Madeleine, +33 3 20 51 00 66. The biggest veterinarian hospital in the Lille area.

[Chièvres Veterinary Clinic](#), Grand Rue 56, Building 20047 in Chièvres, Belgium, +32 65 32 53 90. Limited manpower and resources, most veterinary emergency cases are best served through a full service civilian veterinary hospital.

KENNELS

[Chièvres Boarding Kennel](#), Buiding 20030, Chièvres AB, +32 68 25 52 42.

[Relais Canin](#), 46 rue Delval in Fromelles, +33 3 20 50 39 26.

GROOMING & PET STORES

Grooming : [Delesalle Romain Toilettage Services](#), 89 rue d'Esquermes or [Tendance Chiens et Chats](#), 46 rue Jean Sans Peur.

Pet stores: [Pet Food](#), 83 rue Gambetta ; [Tom & Co](#), 7 rue des Fourmestraux in Faches Thumesnil.

Pharmacies

There are [many pharmacies everywhere in Lille](#), but only one is open 24/7: [Grande Pharmacie des Halles](#), 99 rue Solférino.

To find out which pharmacies near you are on duty off hours, go to <http://www.servigardes.fr/> and enter your ZIP code.

Locations (GPS Navigation).

Vauban and Rue Nationale, Lille – N50°37.740, E003°02.615

CHRU Emergency Room, Lille – N50°36.471, E003°01.977

Chièvres CIF – N50°34.766, E003°49.285

Chièvres PX and Commissary – N50°35.123, E003°50.709

Chièvres VPC – N50°35.223, E003°50.156

SHAPE Company Area – N50°29.929, E003°58.610

SHAPE Post Office – N50°29.976, E003°58.309

Ramstein Inn, Ramstein Air Base, Germany – N49°26.648, E007°35.293

Chièvres Airbase.

U.S. Army Garrison Benelux also known, due to its location, as Chièvres Airbase, has a standard commissary and PX. It is about 60 minutes travel by car from Lille. The link to their webpage is: <https://home.army.mil/benelux/>.

Due to our NATO SOFA status in France, the U.S. contingent is not authorized to shop at the PX and Commissary as we are given COLA to shop on the French economy. It is important that the contingent mindfully completes the periodic COLA survey (overseen by the Chief of Mission at the embassy) to ensure updated adjustments to the cost of living in Lille. Of course Chièvres offers previously mentioned services such as I.D. Cards, CFMO, CIF, and DA Photo studio.

In addition, this is the closest Army Lodging. Under some circumstances, inbound personnel may stay at the Army Lodging for a couple of days upon entry to complete in-process SHAPE/AFNORTH BN before or after house hunting.