

FRANCE

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF COUNTRY

Geography

France the largest country in Europe (excluding USSR) is half way between the North Pole and the Equator. With its area of 551,500 square kilometres, the country is a little smaller than the province of Manitoba and is about half the size of Ontario. It is bounded on the north-west by the English Channel, the Strait of Dover and the North Sea; on the north-east by Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany; on the east by Switzerland; on the south-east by Italy; on the south by the Mediterranean and Spain; and on the west by the Atlantic.

France has a number of rivers, of which the most important are the Seine, the Rhone, the Loire, the Garonne, and the Rhine, which provides a natural border between France and West Germany for nearly two hundred kilometres on the east.

Plains and plateaux take up more than half the area of the country. The mountain regions include the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Vosges and the Massif Central.

Climate

In general, France is not as cold as Canada in winter, except in the mountainous regions. The temperature ranges between 4°C in winter and 32°C in summer in the Paris region. On the Cote d'Azur, this variation may be from 9 C in winter to 35 C in summer.

Population

With a population of 55,750,200 (January 1, 1988), France is, for Western Europe, a relatively under-populated country. This low population is the result of a long period of population stagnation from the mid 19th Century to the Second World War.