

ANNUAL FESTIVITIES IN FRANCE



The annual festivities in France have their origins in the Catholic Church's calendar, blending military parades, firework displays, street festivals, and various other celebrations. However, there are also lots of local festivals to celebrate other traditions across the country.

JANUARY

La Fête des Rois 6th January: Christians celebrate Epiphany, the arrival of the three kings after the birth of Jesus. French people traditionally go to a bakery to have 'la Galette des Rois' (Kings cake) or make it themselves. The cake usually contains une fève (porcelain figurine) and whoever finds it is named king or queen for the day with a paper crown.

FEBRUARY

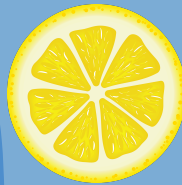
La Chandeleur (Candlemas), 2nd February:

Marks the final phase of the Christmas festivities. This Christian feast day honours the presentation of Jesus at the Temple by Joseph and Mary. It is also known as the day of crêpes because their golden colour symbolises the imminent arrival of spring after the winter season.

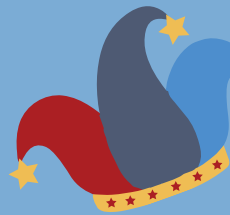


Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday), 47 days before Easter: Signifies the tradition of indulging in rich, fatty foods on the last night before Lent begins. Lent is a period of fasting for Christians, during which the consumption of such foods is avoided.

Fête du Citron (Lemon Festival) in Menton, mid-February for a fortnight: Celebrates the annual production of specialist lemons and other citrus fruit in Menton. It started with residents suggesting to do something uplifting after a long dark winter. The celebration includes parades and shows for everyone to engage in.



Nice Carnival, February/March for 2 weeks: Each year, a special theme is chosen, and artists create 18 floats and other figurines in traditional papier-mâché for the colourful parade. The parades take place day and night on the Promenade des Anglais, where "flower battles" occur.



MARCH

Journée Internationale de la Francophonie (International Francophonie Day), 20th March: Celebrates the French language and Francophone culture. The celebration takes form in the presentation of plays, poetry readings, film festivals, food festivals and art exhibitions.

APRIL

Poisson d'avril (April Fish, April Fools day), 1st April: A day full of pranks and chocolate. One of the favourite jokes among children is to tape a paper fish on someone's back without them knowing!

Pâques (Easter), the first Sunday after the full moon that occurs on or after the spring equinox, March or April: commemorates the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Like many countries, Easter is celebrated with chocolate. Families come together and make very special meals that consist of many courses, accompanied by wine, and finish with a cheese plate and dessert.



MAY

La Fête du Travail (Labour Day), 1st May: Demonstrations and marches are a Labour Day tradition, where trade unions organise parades in major cities to defend workers' rights.



La Fête des Mères (Mother's Day), Last Sunday in May: Originally dates back to the Napoleonic Wars and was then brought back post-WW1 as an aim to honour the widows who lost husbands in the war. Like most countries, people offer presents to their mothers and spend a lot of time with them on this day.

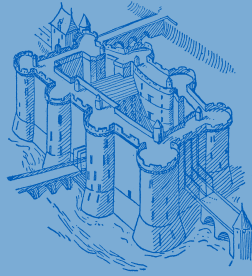
JULY

Tour de France, 3 weeks: One of the greatest sporting events of all time, that unites the French people across the entire country. This long cycling race brings towns, villages and mountains into the limelight as crowds form, eager to see the cyclists pass by. Villages compete to be a part of the route with 2 months of organising a village festival with decorations. As soon as the riders have gone through, the celebrations start.

La Fête Nationale (Bastille Day), 14th July: In Paris, there is a traditional military parade on the Champs-Élysées. All over the country, there are fireworks and special illuminations to celebrate as well as family barbecues, picnics in the park with traditional food and games of pétanque.

Festival d'Avignon: An annual arts festival held in Avignon every summer in July in the courtyard of the Palais des Papes as well as in other locations of the city. The festival's program includes debates, panels, screenings, and workshops with artists, researchers, philosophers, and activists.

Nice Jazz Festival: An annual music festival featuring a mix of jazz and contemporary music. Bands perform on multiple stages at once and there are a total of 6 stages open every night for 5 days.



OCTOBER

La Nuit Blanche (White Night, Cultural Festival), 1st Saturday in October: An all-night arts festival in cities. This festival typically has museums, private and public art galleries, and other cultural institutions open and free of charge, with the centre of a city itself turning into a de facto art gallery, providing space for art installations performances, themed social gatherings, and other activities.

NOVEMBER

Toussaint (All Saints), 1st November:

Commemorates the public figures who have died. The next day, **2nd November, All Souls' Day** which is for people to honour close friends and relatives who have died. People usually take flowers, often chrysanthemums, to the graves of loved ones.

L'Armistice (The Armistice), 11th November:

Commemorates the end of World War 1. There are services of Remembrance in every commune and in every city there is a military gun salute at 11am.



JUNE

La Fête de la Musique (Festival of Music), 21st June: on this day, citizens and residents all over France are urged to play music outside in their neighbourhoods or public spaces and parks. Free concerts are also organised where musicians offer their services for free.

La Fête des Pères (Father's day), 3rd Sunday in June: Just like Mother's day, people buy their dad presents on this day.

AUGUST

Chorégies d'Orange, in July and August: An opera and classical music festival originally created in 1869. It takes place at the Ancient Theatre of Orange in Provence. Two popular operas are given, twice each, in front of audiences of nearly nine thousand people and broadcasted on TV.

SEPTEMBER

Braderie de Lille, usually on the first weekend of the first Sunday in Sept: An annual street/flea market that takes place in Lille. It dates back to the 12th century and attracts nearly three million visitors each year. It is one of the largest gatherings in France and the largest flea market in Europe. During the braderie the city hosts a music festival. The traditional food eaten during the festival, moules-frites, typically results in huge heaps of mussel shells around the city outside cafes and restaurants.

DECEMBER

Fête des Lumières (Festival of Lights) in Lyon, 8th December: This is aimed at expressing gratitude towards Mary, mother of Jesus. The tradition dictates that every house place candles along the outsides of all the windows to produce a spectacular effect throughout the streets. This festival usually lasts four days with other activities based on light.

Noël (Christmas), 25th December: Like many places where Christmas is celebrated, Christmas cheer is usually around for many days. Traditions include: putting up a Christmas tree, visit a special church service, eat an elaborate meal, however, presents are opened on Christmas Eve.