

Squiz the World Goes to... France

Each fortnight, we give the world globe a spin, and see where we land. Then we take the kids of Australia on an audio excursion to visit that country and its people.

I'm Christie Kijurina, and today on Squiz the World we're visiting a country famous for eclairs, baguettes, and garlicky frogs' legs... you probably don't need another clue, do you? We're heading to France!

This European country welcomed more than 100 million visitors in 2023 and is expected to exceed this again in 2024. That's way more than its entire population of 64 million, and more visitors any other country in the world! Let's find out why. Strap yourselves into the Squiz Kids Super Fast Supersonic Jetliner as we take off and take a squiz at France ...

Just the Facts

France is the biggest country in the European Union, and the third-biggest in all of Europe, after Russia and Ukraine. It's known in French as "L'Hexagone", which means "The Hexagon." Hexa, as all you Greek speakers would know, means six, and if you look at a map of France, you'll see that it does look quite a lot like a shape with six equal sides. I mean, don't look too closely... and don't include the island of Corsica, or some of the French territories scattered around the world.

Maybe some of you have been to France, or seen pictures or videos from there.

Give a silent wave if you've seen the Eiffel Tower... the tallest structure in the capital, Paris, at 81 stories high. It's the most visited monument in the world that you have to pay to see, and one of the most recognised structures in the world.

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Or how about the most-visited art museum in the world, the Louvre, which is home to the famous Leonardo Da Vinci portrait of Mona Lisa? More than 10 million people walked through its doors in 2019—a record

that some people think Beyonce and Jay-Z helped to set, because a video they filmed there got more people to visit. I've popped a link in your episode notes to a virtual tour of the Louvre so you can visit too from the comfort of your classroom or your lounge room. "

Other top tourist destinations in France include the Palace of Versailles... Notre Dame cathedral, which was burned in a devastating fire in 2019 and is now being rebuilt... the countryside of Provence... the ski fields of Chamonix... the rugged coast of Brittany... the villages of Alsace... the glitzy beaches of Biarritz... France has something for everyone, and there's no way you can see it all in just one trip!

Whenever you travel, it's important to learn a few words in that country's language. It's a great way to show respect... So, let's....

Learn the Lingo

Today, we're very lucky to have Squiz Kids Alice with us. Alice grew up in Paris before moving to Australia. Alice is going to teach us how to say Good Day and Thank You Very Much

"In France the official language is French. And the French are VERY protective and proud of their language. The Académie Française is an organization which is actually in charge of the French language... it adds official words to French, updates the meaning of existing ones, and, because there's so much English in the world nowadays, the Academie spends a lot of time trying to prevent English words filtering into French by choosing or inventing French equivalents.

If you visit France, you are expected to at least try to speak the language. Today, we've got Squiz Kid Alice here, who was born in France and moved to Canberra when she was 8. Alice, how do you say hello in French?

Bonjour

Go on, you give it a try! It literally means good... that's bon... day... that's jour. Bonjour!

People are always really grateful when you just try to speak their language. They may even thank you for it. Hey, Alice, how do we say thank you?

Merci beaucoup

And merci beaucoup to you, too, Alice"

Now that we can communicate a little bit, it's....

Time for School

Believe it or not, kids in France must start school when they're just THREE! They start in what's called an 'école maternelle', which is sort of pre-school which introduces them to learning in groups, sharing, taking turns... so it's a lot like preschool here, it's just compulsory.

At the age of six, kids then move to an 'école élémentaire,' which is similar to primary school here - they focus on reading, writing, maths, science, and so on. In one week at school, kids receive 24 hours of teaching — which is a little less than in Australia — and they often have part or all of Wednesday off school. That gives the teachers time to plan and prepare... and of course the kids time to do other stuff.

But possibly the best thing about school in France is school lunch. Up until students are about 12, French schools are called "restaurant schools." They have cooks on-site, as well as servers who will even cut up kids' food if needed. Local food is used whenever possible, and menus are reviewed by a dietician.

Now here in Australia, you'll often see "kids menus" at restaurants, serving chicken nuggets, or plain pizza, or hamburgers without lettuce and tomato. No such thing in France, which is famous for its fancy and delicious food. Parents there don't believe in a difference between kids and adult food, so school lunch is... wait for it... THREE COURSES. You

start with a vegetable salad, then have a protein and another vegetable. There's bread and cheese on the side, and yes, there's dessert. Sometimes it's just fruit, but it can also be a tarte tartin (Apple tart) or some other fabulous pastry. I've popped a link to a video showing you what school lunches look like in France. But I'll warn you, don't watch it if you're feeling hungry, it's pretty mouthwatering.

Lunch is the biggest meal of a kid's day, and they're encouraged to take their time eating it... they sit at the table for a full half an hour and are encouraged to socialise as they munch. And the cost of those meals to parents varies, depending on how much families can afford, but the most you'll pay is about \$5. For three courses! Wow.

One of the best things about visiting another country is immersing yourself - that means surrounding yourself - in a different culture. So,
(Sting:LET'S GET CULTURAL)

Let's Get Cultural

France is known for its poets and novelists... its philosophers... its art... but as we've learned already, French cuisine—that means food—is one of the most important parts of the country's culture. In fact, French cuisine has United Nations World Heritage status—which basically means that it has been judged to have outstanding value to humanity. Pretty impressive for food! Then again, every day in France, TWO new cookbooks are published - so they are very serious about their food.

Food is so important in France that since 2016, it's actually illegal to throw away food! Supermarkets face a massive fine - more than \$100,000 and even jail time if they throw away or destroy unsold food that is still edible. Instead, they have to donate it to food banks and charities.

You've probably already heard about a lot of famous French dishes... the average French citizen eats 500 snails a year, served as an entree with garlic butter... there are more than 400 different kinds of cheese made in France, some of them quite stinky... and although the croissant was actually invented in Austria, there's no doubt the French have perfected that flaky, buttery piece of perfection.

There are so many French recipes to try, but I want something warm and hearty for these cool winter evenings so I've popped a fantastic old fashioned French Onion Soup recipe in your episode notes. Top it with cheesy baguette slices, and have some baguette on the side for good luck. If you've got extra time on your hands, there's also a recipe for home made baguette, too! The smell of bread baking in your oven? Mmmmm.

OK After I'll that eating, I really think I need some exercise. I think it's definitely ...

Sport Time

Unless you've been living under a rock, and if you have stand up and straighten yourself out, you'll know that France is playing host to the Olympics in 2024. But did you know that the country has already hosted the Olympic Games on five separate occasions, second only to the United States. They've held two summer Olympics and three winter Olympics and they were the second ever host of the modern Olympics in 1900 after the first one was held in its traditional home in Greece in 1896.

French is even the official language of the Olympic Games because the creator of the modern Olympics and founder of the International Olympic Committee, Baron Pierre de Coubertin was born, and lived, in France.

One traditional French game that you won't see at the Olympics is jeu de la barbichette, or Game of the Goatee. Essentially it involves holding your partner's chin while staring into their eyes and singing to them while trying not to laugh. It's hilarious and if you want to have a go, I've stuck a link to the rules in your episode notes. You're welcome!

The S'Quiz

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening.

Question 1 Which very famous portrait, painted by Leonardo Da Vinci is housed in the Louvre art museum? The Mona Lisa

Question 2 How old are French kids when they start school?

Question 3 After 2024, how many times will France have hosted the Olympic Games? 6

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for staying curious about the world, and joining me on this incredible trip to France.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day. Over and out.