

# Le Tour De France 2003

## *A Geographic Tour of the Beautiful Country of France*



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As seen in map #1, France is located in Western Europe, bordering the Bay of Biscay and English Channel, between Belgium and Spain southeast of the UK; bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Italy and Spain. The terrain of France is mostly flat plains or gently rolling hills in north and west; remainder is mountainous, especially Pyrenees in south, Alps in east. In this tour of France you will be discovering the many treasures that its land has to offer. Your first destination will be the “light-city” of Paris. Here, you will experience the many breath taking architectural structures, such as the Eiffel Tower. Then you’re off to Limoges, the city of harmony with its surrounding countryside. Here, you will be exposed to their many natural resources, with a major focus on their porcelain production. After your visit, you will experience the exciting city life of Toulouse. Then you will be exposed to the country of creation, innovation, research and cultural exchange of Nice. Here, your jaws will drop as you engage in their mouth watering environment. After your experience, you will enjoy the ancient city of Strasbourg and learn how they were settled as an important part of France. At the completion of this breath taking tour, you will return back to Paris.



MAP #1:  
France: *Line of Travel*  
(Source: AngloINFO)

- 1) Paris
- 2) Limoges
- 3) Toulouse
- 4) Nice
- 5) Strasbourg
- 6) Return to Paris

Legend  
 → : Route to follow  
 • : Site Location

**Site One ~ Location: Paris, France ~ Geographic Theme: Architecture (Cultural Landscape)**

Picture (I) Source: <http://www.endex.com/gf/buildings/eiffel/etgallery/et1/etgallery1.htm>

*The Eiffel Tower*



In architecture, Paris is the birthplace of the Gothic style and has also given us Beaux-arts, art nouveau, art deco, and many contributions to modernism. The city is an amazingly harmonious collection of beautiful and inventive buildings; all arranged in an urban plan that combines the best aspects of rationality and of residual medieval chaos. At first glance, much of the architecture of Paris may appear to be the same, six or seven-story apartment blocks in the Deuxième Empire style lining grand boulevards and interspersed with leafy squares. That is in effect what Baron Haussmann had in mind when, in the middle of the 19th century, he oversaw the construction of a new city. But Paris is a treasure trove of architectural styles, from Roman arenas and bathhouses to postmodernist cubes and glass pyramids which not only look great but serve a function. A structure, as you can see in Picture (1), The Eiffel Tower, was built for the International Exhibition of Paris of 1889 commemorating the centenary of the French Revolution. The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII of England, opened the tower. Of the 700 proposals submitted in a design competition, Gustave Eiffel's was unanimously chosen. At 300 metres, 320.75m including antenna, and 7000 tons, it was the world's tallest building until 1930.

References: <http://www.a2zlanguages.com/France/Paris>  
<http://www.paris.org/Monuments/Eiffel/>

**Site Two ~ Location: Limoges, France ~ Geographic Theme: Natural Resources**

Picture (II) Source: <http://www.ville-limoges.fr/Limoges/WebLimog.nsf>

*Table Art of Fine Limoges Porcelain*

Limoges porcelain was born in 1771 thanks to the presence of natural resources necessary for its manufacture, water, minerals, granites, kaolin, wood for combustible and the will of Quartermaster Turgot. Its industrial "golden age" and incredible artistic development occurred during the XIXth century, which saw the beginning of prestigious factories: Haviland, Guérin, Pouyat, Bernadaud, Thauraud, etc. Although the profession underwent the consequences of two world wars, economic crises and international competition, it adapted by modernising its production tools. The reputation of Limoges porcelain, an alliance of tradition and progress, remains unequalled. It has remained the choice of state leaders,



kings, princes, and ambassadors, as well as the symbol of gracious art of living for both opulent and simple tables throughout the entire world. Other sectors besides table arts use, as seen in Picture (II), Limoges porcelain is also used for electrical construction, laboratory instruments, sanitary equipment, home decoration, funerary art, and architecture. For example the covered market and Town Hall fountain include porcelain elements. Rare, high-quality raw materials and high temperature firing (1,400 °C) characterize porcelain, a material which combines the exceptional qualities of hardness, translucence, and whiteness.

Reference: <http://www.ville-limoges.fr/Limoges/WebLimog.nsf>

### **Site Three ~ Location: Toulouse, France ~ Geographic Theme: Urban Geography**

Picture (III) Source: <http://www.mairie-toulouse.fr>

*Commercial Structures of the City of Toulouse*



Toulouse is the Uncontested Metropolis of the Midi-Pyrénées Region. Located in the eastern part of the Aquitain Basin, the greater Toulouse agglomeration consists of 650,000 inhabitants. It constitutes as the primary demographic and economic pole of the Midi-Pyrénées Region. Its regional transportation infrastructures form a hub-and-spoke network with

Toulouse at the center such that each city in the region is connected to the metropolis via an expressway and a rail line. The increase in population throughout the urban area Toulouse, in fact hides a situation of stark contrast: between 1975 and 1990, while the population of Toulouse was stagnant, the population of outlying communities grew by 65 %. In 15 years, the urban area doubled in size. This development has as consequences the fact that rural areas are becoming more fragile. An urban influence on space exerted by large commercial distribution, as seen in Picture (III), interests and an evolving social landscape for youth and elderly populations in the downtown area, families on the outskirts. At the same time, employment zones remain concentrated in the central sector, bringing on ever-increasing and ever-harder-to-manage rush-hour traffic over the primary expressways of the agglomeration. These past years, Toulouse has built a significant amount of transportation infrastructure, including a rapid beltway around Toulouse, expressways within the urban area as well as to neighboring urban centers, providing for regional connections and much more.

References: [www.inro.tno.nl/transland/cases\\_prio/toulouse.pdf](http://www.inro.tno.nl/transland/cases_prio/toulouse.pdf)

### **Site Four ~ Location: Nice, France ~ Geographic Theme: Environmental Geography**

Picture (IV) Source: <http://www.nice-coteazur.org/american>

*Waterfalls of Nice*

The Côte d'Azur, of Nice, has always been appreciated for its landscapes and gentle way of life, such as the breath taking waterfall seen in Picture (IV). Particular climatic conditions have allowed the blooming of rich and rare fauna and flora, along the coast and in the hinterland. Quickly, protective measures have been taken, away from the economic, demographic or tourist considerations, in order to preserve the vegetable and animal heritage. National parks have been created. Species have been protected. Green areas, gardens, protected zones, and paths have planned been laid out. The coast has been given many cares. The artificial reef implementation offers new nesting sites to fishes. The cleaning up of the seabed and the waters at the surface, the disinfection of the beaches are making up for the carelessness of the "sea users". Regular bacteriologic measurements help to avoid further problems. The situation is good, the "Great Blue", along the coast, is unpolluted. The construction of "Haliotis", the purification plant, in 1988, and the constant modernization of its equipment are guaranteeing it. Nice is constantly improving in terms of cleaning up and cleanness. The creation of a fourth incineration furnace for household refuse has been decided in order to meet the growing needs for waste elimination and the closing of the open dumps. This initiative is accompanied with the updating and intensifying of the air quality checks, which are, already today, analyzed through the daily results of five observation stations.



References: <http://www.nice-coteazur.org/american>

### **Site Five ~ Location: Strasbourg, France ~ Geographic Theme: Settlement Patterns**

Picture (V) Source: <http://www.strasbourg.com/>

*Overlooking the City of Strasbourg*



A settlement at the current site of the city of Strasbourg, as seen in Picture (5), has existed since the Bronze Age due to its excellent geographical position at the crossroads of waterways and overland routes. In 12 BC, this settlement became the main outpost of the Roman Empire in its defense against the Germanic tribes of Northern Europe and it was named Argentoratum. Following the fall of the Roman Empire the town began a resurgence under the new name of Stratisburgum and its political and economic growth started in earnest. In 1262, the town broke free from the ruling bishops and the citizens of Strasbourg gained it the status of free imperial city. During the Middle Ages Strasbourg continued to grow in prosperity

and importance due not in part to the building of a large bridge over the river Rhine which placed Strasbourg at the heart of northern European trade routes. Duties levied on numerous commodities enabled the city to develop in strategic importance, and in order to gain support from the city the emperor granted it tax exemptions and privileges giving the city further independence and power. In the 15th century, when Strasbourg became a free republic, it attracted free thinkers and reformists who took asylum in the city and helped the city to grow culturally. The period during the 18th and 19th century brought further turmoil to the city and ended with the defeat of Napoleon III. After a six week siege on the city destroying many buildings and monuments it became part of the German empire only to return to France shortly after World War I in 1918. After the end of World War II Strasbourg regained its status as the crossroads of Europe when in 1949 it was chosen as the headquarters of the Council of Europe. Since 1979 it has been the seat of the 15-member European Parliament and the European Court of Human Rights since 1994.

Reference: [http://www.strasbourg.co.uk/strasbourg\\_history.php](http://www.strasbourg.co.uk/strasbourg_history.php)