

WELLESLEY-IN-AIX

STUDENT GUIDE



SPRING 2025

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MESSAGE FROM WIA ON-SITE STAFF

We look forward to welcoming you to Aix soon and helping you to make the most of your experience in Provence! Start by reading this manual carefully and highlighting salient points or noting questions to bring up during orientation sessions in Aix. You will receive a paper copy in your welcome packet upon arrival in Aix.

WIA is an **immersion** program, as reflected in the philosophy and goals cited in your application essay: experiencing French culture and daily life firsthand, studying alongside French peers, improving your language skills. Achieving these goals implies *a daily personal commitment* to communicate in French as much as possible, engage locally, and explore France. There is no shortage of beautiful places in Provence or within train or bus distance from Aix, and WIA staff and homestays hosts will be delighted to recommend destinations in France!

Like previous WIA participants, you will find that a semester passes *very* quickly, and language acquisition is a **process** that requires time, effort and daily practice. This is also a unique opportunity to be more than a tourist, to gain insights and intercultural skills rarely available to short-term travelers. Take advantage of all opportunities to explore Provence and speak French!

The WIA staff are committed to helping you achieve your goals while ensuring a positive experience for all who contribute to the program's and students' success. In sum, we are all in this together and eager to assist you in any way we can.

Bienvenue dans l'équipe!

Stéphanie et Célia

WHO'S WHO AT WIA

I am Stéphanie Ponsavady, the new **Resident Director for the Wellesley-in-Aix program**. As an Associate Professor of French Studies at Wesleyan University and former Resident Director of the Vassar-Wesleyan Program in Paris, I bring extensive experience and a deep commitment to intercultural learning and student development. My journey in higher education began at Wellesley College, where I worked as a French assistant and tutor for Wellesley-in-Aix.

Born and raised in Provence, I have a profound connection to the region. My career has been dedicated to supporting students in their personal and academic growth, ensuring they have a transformative experience abroad. Please come to me with any questions about **your academic experience, including course registration and selection, transcripts, and housing concerns such as homestays and meal plans**. I am also happy to chat about any aspects of your study-abroad experience.

I live in Encagnane, a working-class neighborhood of Aix, and love its energy and diversity. On weekends, I enjoy hiking all over Provence with my husband and our dog. I try to mix my research interests in mobility with my daily practices and love being able to access everything by foot in Aix. I enjoy promoting sustainable ways of traveling through rail and public transport.

In the coming year, I am particularly excited about the opportunities to build strong connections within the community and to create new projects that will further enrich the student experience. To me, the “traits d’union” in Wellesley-in-Aix materialize the bridge between cultures, languages, and people. I look forward to embodying this spirit, building a community where you can explore France, Provence, Aix, and yourselves in meaningful ways.

Stéphanie

My name is Célia Bourcy and I serve as the **Student Life Coordinator, Assistant and French Tutor** here at Wellesley-in-Aix. I was born in Aix, completed my Master’s Degree at Aix-Marseille University, and specialized in English Linguistics. After a year in an exchange program in Brighton, England, I had the opportunity to be a Teaching Assistant at Wellesley College in 2015-2016, where I lived at the French House. Since then, I have continued working for Wellesley-in-Aix, and I am grateful for every student I have met over the years!

I am the person you turn to for any questions related to **extracurricular activities, student life, course content, and French grammar**. I can’t wait to welcome you and I will always be happy to help you through your Aixperience!

Célia

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR EXPERIENCE FROM THE START

A few general tips and observations from WIA alumni and staff based on their experiences:

Take advantage of every opportunity to meet someone and speak French! Talk to other students in your classes, your professors and neighbors, shopkeepers and market vendors, etc. Communication is key!

Join an activity or club at the university or elsewhere as soon as possible. The best way to meet people is through a shared interest or passion: a sports team, musical group, hiking club, cooking, volunteering, yoga class, etc. Do this early on!

Monitor your time on social media. You are going abroad to have new experiences and encounters. This entails a willingness to interact with locals face-to face and in *their* spaces. Spending excessive time in your room, online or with other English-speakers may impede your ability to meet locals and improve your French.

Try to overcome your shyness. Ask questions. It is often a great way to get the conversational ball rolling and shows that you are curious and open. Invite a classmate for coffee or to a movie. Take the first step! And if someone invites you, say “oui”!

Work on your French skills *daily*. Language acquisition doesn’t happen by osmosis; it requires personal effort. Review and rewrite your class notes. Read the front page of *Le Monde* or a weekly magazine or even a comic book for pleasure. Watch the evening news, especially if your French hosts do. Go to a French movie, lecture, or other event once a week. Capitalize on all resources at your fingertips in France!

Speak French with other WIA participants, especially in public. Speaking English will likely discourage classmates or locals from approaching or addressing you in French; they may simply assume you are a tourist. The more you speak French, the more natural it will seem. You will be glad you did so at the end of the semester. *Jouez le jeu!*

Adopt a student lifestyle as much as possible. From movie and museum discounts to eating lunch regularly in student cafeterias in Aix, try to live like a local student. Avoid creating a “U.S. bubble” by hanging out exclusively with WIA friends or at the Tavan center. Ask French students in your classes about their favorite cafés or pubs, student hangouts and activities in Aix and check them out. In sum, be proactive!

Ask for assistance and tips. The WIA staff, members of host families or your neighbors at the Rossini are valuable resource people. Seek them out! This guide also contains great advice and suggestions from previous participants. Highlight tips that you think would work best for you and make a plan!

I. PRE-DEPARTURE INFO & ARRIVAL

1. PASSPORT, VISA & OTHER DOCUMENTS

Be sure to check the expiration date of your passport upon acceptance into the program and renew it as soon as possible if necessary. ***All non-European citizens who plan to stay more than three months in France must have a student visa.*** The Office of International Study (OIS) at Wellesley provides all the necessary information and documentation.

Note: If you have a European passport, you must upload a copy of it on the WIA portal.

All visa-related questions should be addressed to Jennifer Thomas-Starck at OIS:
jthomass@wellesley.edu

Note: No late arrivals in France will be allowed due to failure to secure a consular appointment and obtain the necessary student visa prior to the program start date.

Campus France and visa fees will be reimbursed to your U.S. bank accounts by Wellesley.

1. You will receive a long-stay visa (VLS-TS), as your stay will exceed 90 days.

This visa must be validated *once in France*. WIA staff will handle this online formality and pay the mandatory fee. This type of visa allows you to work part-time in France.

2. You will receive a student card from Aix-Marseille Université after two weeks or so in Aix.

It is a “universal card” and it is also valid for Sciences Po if you take classes there.

2. INSURANCE

All WIA participants will be subscribed to a supplemental travel insurance policy through Cigna, providing 24-hour emergency medical, evacuation and repatriation assistance. Coverage is valid for the duration of the student’s study abroad program. Login to <https://customer.cignaenvoy.com/traveler> to find a provider, access country guides, and to generate your own individualized certificate of coverage. The website also provides a full listing of program benefits.

Username: 08932VMBA

Password: Cigna1

Travelers are strongly encouraged to download the Teladoc Global Health Complete from the Apple or Google Play stores to have easy access to services on the go.

As for your regular health plan (e.g., parental or personal insurance), we advise you to verify whether or not it covers the following and how to go about being reimbursed:

- Prescription medication, dental costs or conditions requiring regular check-ups.
- Mental health counseling services. (Note: Not all policies fully cover this abroad.)
- Loss or theft of jewelry and other expensive personal valuables.

Note: In the event of loss or theft of valuables such as jewelry, cameras, laptops or other electronic devices, you may be asked to produce original receipts in order to be reimbursed by your insurance company. ***The WIA program does not handle insurance claims of any kind.***

3. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

The travel stipend you receive from Wellesley's Office of International Study for travel to France from the U.S. and vice versa covers the following costs:

- A round-trip ticket to and from France from your city of departure.
- Transportation from the airport to your accommodations upon arrival in Aix.
- Transportation to the train station or airport on your departure day from Aix.

Note: Departure dates may vary at the end of the semester due to final exams. The program officially ends two days after the last date of final exams, and you are expected to vacate WIA housing on that date. Be sure to check all academic calendars.

Advice: When booking a flight, be sure to inquire about the change fee if you are uncertain of your departure date from France or wish to extend your stay after the program ends. This is a personal expense.

Luggage limits: In general, one checked suitcase weighing 23 kilos (50 lbs) and 2 carry-ons (e.g., purse or backpack and a computer) are allowed. Double check size and weight limits for specific airlines. A second checked suitcase can be quite costly depending on the airline.

Advice: If you take medication daily, be sure to pack it in your carry-on luggage.

4. WHAT TO PACK: SOME TIPS

Weather & clothing

Don't overpack! The weather can be chilly and damp from November to February, but snow is quite rare in Aix. When ***le mistral*** (northern wind) blows, it can get quite cold, so bring sweaters and clothing that you can layer. You can easily buy gloves, a scarf, and a warm hat at the market!

Good walking shoes are a must! You will walk considerably more in France than in the U.S. A rain jacket or light raincoat will also come in handy.

Bring a swimsuit and outdoor clothing, especially sneakers with good treads for hikes to the Sainte-Victoire Mountain and elsewhere in Provence.

French students tend to dress quite casually: jeans, t-shirts, etc. They generally do *not* go to class wearing shorts, gym clothes, or anything resembling beachwear or pajamas, however. Especially in the south, women often wear dresses and skirts and tend to be a bit more fashion-conscious than students on a typical U.S. campus.

In France, you'll find stores such as Monoprix, Zara, or H&M where you can buy reasonably-priced clothing. Chains like Decathlon specialize in athletic wear and gear.

If you are a fan of second-hand or vintage clothing stores, they are called *dépôts-vente* in France and there are several in Aix.

There is no need to bring towels or linens which are provided with all housing.

Other items to bring:

- ✓ ***All prescription medication you are taking, ideally for the entire semester.*** A note from a medical practitioner regarding regular follow-up or treatment while abroad may also be useful if you wish to consult a doctor or therapist in Aix.
- ✓ Proof of vaccination and any other key health-related documents.
- ✓ An electrical adaptor plug for your laptop, camera, etc. ***Electrical outlets are not the same in the U.S. and France.*** Adaptors are easily found in the U.S. and airport shops.
- ✓ If you come with an iPhone or other U.S. smartphone, ***it must be “unlocked” prior to your arrival in order to insert a French SIM card for use in France and Europe.***
- ✓ Student ID card from your home university.
- ✓ Insurance cards and information. (Claim forms are usually available online.)
- ✓ U.S. bank debit card to withdraw cash. Advice: Inquire about any ATM fees abroad.
- ✓ If you have a preferred and not-too-heavy grammar book, it might come in handy, as will a pocket-size phrase book. We have numerous dictionaries and grammar books at the WIA center.
- ✓ If you like to cook or bake, a few favorite recipes to share with French friends.
- ✓ If you opted for a homestay, a book of photos, a calendar of your city or region or a tote bag from your school is always a nice gift and makes for conversation topics in the early days as well.
- ✓ Contact lens solution or any other health or beauty product that you use on a regular basis. You'll find these products in France, but brands may not be identical.
- ✓ Above all, an open mind, sense of humor and a positive attitude!

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS DURING THE FIRST WEEK

During the first week or so in Aix, students not housed at the Rossini residence hall will have individual rooms at the *Séjours & Affaires Apparthôtel – Mirabeau*, a residence-hotel located close to the Rotonde (hub of Aix) and opposite the Rossini. All rooms have a double bed, a small kitchenette with a fridge and microwave and en-suite bathroom.

You will receive a food allowance for this week and, aside from a group meal or two organized by WIA, you will be responsible for your own meals. There are a couple of supermarkets in the neighborhood, and staff can suggest reasonably-priced restaurants, cafés and take-out places.

There will be a practical walking tour of Aix within the first two days and you will receive a final schedule of all orientation sessions and events in your welcome packet in Aix. A tentative one is included in this guide.

You will be within a 30-minute walking distance of most places you need to go during the first week, and you will find that it is often faster to walk than wait for buses in Aix!

Note: You will receive an email with detailed instructions on getting to Aix from the Marseille airport (or Aix-TGV station) about a week before the program start date.

5. ORIENTATION

The orientation session will take place in Aix and is mandatory. Here is a preliminary schedule:

Semaine d'orientation à Aix : du 5 au 13 janvier 2025 (sujet à modifications)		
Dimanche 5 janvier	Horaires variables	Arrivée à Aix : Apparthôtel Séjours & Affaires-Mirabeau (615 av. Mozart en face du Rossini). Lisez bien ce planning présent dans vos pochettes de bienvenue !
Lundi 6 janvier	RdV 11h Mirabeau	Célia Bourcy viendra à 11h pour vous accompagner au Centre Tavan et vous montrer quelques endroits sur le chemin. Déjeuner de groupe. Venez avec vos pochettes de bienvenue et vos passeports !
	14h30 - 16h Tavan	Session 1 avec Stéphanie : <i>Intro à Aix et WIA</i> .
Mardi 7 janvier	10h - 13h Tavan	Réunion à 10h à Tavan : Jeu de piste ! Faire quatre équipes. Visite du marché en plein air et déjeuner de groupe à Tavan.
	14h - 18h30 Tavan	Session 2 avec Stéphanie : <i>Questions académiques et choix de cours</i> puis <u>RDV individuels de 15h30 à 18h30</u> à Tavan Passez à la <u>boutique Free</u> si vous voulez une carte SIM ou e-SIM (téléphone portable) !
Mercredi 8 janvier	9h - 10h Tavan	<u>RDV individuels avec Stéphanie</u>
	10h - 11h30 Tavan	Session 1 avec Célia : Registres de langue et communication avec les professeurs. Déjeuner libre.
	14h - 16h30 Tavan	Session 3 avec Stéphanie : <i>Le vivre-ensemble et infos hôtes d'accueil</i> .
	17h - 18h Rossini	Goûter au Rossini à confirmer.
Jeudi 9 janvier	10h - 12h30 Tavan	Session 2 avec Célia : La dissertation à la française et le commentaire composé.
	18h - 19h30 Tavan	Rencontre avec les hôtes d'accueil à Tavan.
Vendredi 10 janvier	12h30 - 16h30 Mirabeau puis IS	Rendez-vous à 12h10 devant le Mirabeau pour le groupe 1 Passage du TCF à 13h pour le groupe 1. Rendez-vous à 14h10 devant le Mirabeau pour le groupe 2 Passage du TCF à 15h pour le groupe 2.
Samedi 11 janvier	Mirabeau	Descendre vos bagages au Mirabeau. Rendre vos clés à la réception. Installation chez hôtes d'accueil.
Dimanche 12 janvier		Journée libre.
Lundi 13 janvier	10h - 12h Tavan	Session 3 avec Célia : La vie étudiante puis visite de Sciences Po. Début des cours WIA.

6. SAFETY & SECURITY – GENERAL ADVICE

We strongly advise you to enroll in the **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** on the U.S. State Department web site. <https://step.state.gov>. This will enable you to receive alerts and travel advisories directly.

Another excellent resource is Country Information sheets on the US State Dept website <https://travel.state.gov> which also includes specific advice for students and women travelers.

Basic safety precautions during your time in France:

- ❖ In *all* hotels or youth hostels, always close and lock your door. Place any valuable items (e.g., jewelry, passport) in secure places or in a locked suitcase.
- ❖ Be careful when using an ATM (*DAB ou distributeur automatique de billets*) to withdraw cash, especially in tourist areas. Don't withdraw the maximum amount (usually 300- 400 euros) and never carry too much cash on you.
- ❖ Always be aware of your surroundings and people crowding you, especially in public spaces. In Paris or Marseille, you may be approached by groups of adolescents (usually female) asking you to sign a petition of some sort. This is a scam. Make it clear you're not interested. Pickpockets easily recognize and prey on tourists, especially if they speak English.
- ❖ If you have a backpack, always carry it in front of you on public transportation. Or use a bag with a strap that you can wear across your body. *Never* put a wallet or card holder in your back pocket. *Never* place a bag or backpack on the ground or a cell phone on a café table where they can be easily snatched.
- ❖ When checking a map or using a phone, step away from the middle of the sidewalk to be less conspicuous. Looking as if you know where you're going will make you less of a target, as will speaking in a low voice (especially in English).
- ❖ Note to women: Observe local women, their behaviors, facial expressions and body language especially in public. Seemingly innocent acts like saying hello or nodding, smiling, making eye contact with someone you don't know may be interpreted as an invitation and result in unwanted attention. In that case, it's often best to walk away.

The issue of women's safety and *le harcèlement de rue* has received a great deal of attention in recent years in France. 90% of French women and girls report some form of harassment (verbal, non-verbal) in public spaces, notably transportation. Videos are available on YouTube demonstrating strategies for extricating oneself from these situations or coming to someone's assistance without exacerbating the situation.

- ❖ While we want you to have a fantastic time in France, it's important to remain safe when enjoying the nightlife. As a general rule, stick with a group of friends, and if you ever feel unwell or disoriented, inform a trusted friend immediately. If you need to leave, have a friend accompany you. If you're going alone, take a taxi or Uber. Share your location with a trusted friend who can check on your arrival. Your safety is our priority, so please stay vigilant and look out for each other.

These issues and safety tips will be addressed in a health and safety session during orientation.

II. PRACTICAL INFORMATION – FRANCE

1. CALENDARS & HOLIDAYS

Keep in mind that school and university calendars, as well as holidays, differ in the U.S. and France. Note academic dates and encourage visitors to avoid coming during orientation, exam periods or at times when you will be busy adapting, attending classes or studying for exams.

Public holidays in France are often linked to a historical event or key date in the Catholic religion. French public holidays include the following:

- November 1 All Saints Day (la Toussaint)
- November 11 World War I Armistice
- December 25 Noël
- January 1 le Nouvel an
- April 6, 2026 lundi de Pâques (Easter Monday)
- May 1 Fête du Travail (Labor Day)
- May 8 World War II Armistice (Fête de la Victoire)

Restaurants and small shops or grocery stores may be open on these days, but larger businesses, schools and public buildings are closed.

If the actual holiday falls on a Tuesday or Thursday, many people take the Monday or Friday off in order to enjoy a long weekend. The French expression for this is *faire le pont*.

2. TELLING TIME

In France, time is usually indicated using the 24-hour « military system» as opposed to a.m. versus p.m., as in the U.S. In fact, these abbreviations don't exist in French.

- 1 a.m. = une heure (1h00) *ou* une heure du matin (less common)
- 1 p.m. = treize heures (13h00) *ou* une heure de l'après-midi (less common)
- 2 p.m. = quatorze heures (14h00)
- 3 p.m. = quinze heures (15h00)
- 4 p.m. = seize heures (16h00)
- 5:30 pm = dix-sept heures trente
- 9 p.m. = vingt-et-une heures

Watch your pronunciation and listen carefully, especially when making appointments!

- 16h (seize) vs. 6h (six) heures
- 10h (dix) vs. 2h (deux) heures

3. HEALTH MATTERS: GENERAL INFORMATION

The health care system in France is excellent and much more affordable than in the U.S. A visit to a general practitioner costs 26-36 euros. Specialists may charge 50 to 65 euros. It is also possible to call **SOS Médecins** at all hours if you are unable to get yourself to a doctor or hospital; a doctor will make an emergency house call.

Doctolib is a platform to make online appointments: www.doctolib.fr You don't need French insurance to do so, and it is also possible for a 3rd party (WIA staff, host...) to make an appointment for you. Zoom appointments may be possible but must be prepaid.

The WIA Director has access to the confidential medical forms you submitted to Wellesley via the OIS portal in case of an emergency. Staff can assist students in making appointments and accompany them to act as translators, but only with permission of the student and physician.

Information on hospitals and medical centers is provided in the Aix section.

Reminder: It is your responsibility to know what is or isn't covered in your (or your parents') health insurance plans. Any questions regarding Cigna StudyWell benefits should be addressed to the OIS director at Wellesley or directly to Cigna.

Advice: If you have any chronic conditions (e.g., allergies, asthma) that require prescription medication or regular shots or consultations, you should bring a medical file with you. ***If you are taking prescription medication, be sure to bring enough for your entire stay if possible.***

Note: French pharmacies will not fill a U.S. prescription. If you run out of medication, you will need to see a physician in France and obtain a new prescription. A doctor's note from the U.S. specifying the kind of medication you are taking will be useful in this case.

Keep in mind that brands of medication differ across countries, and you may not find the exact same medication in France. For example, Ritalin is available in France but not Adderall. Contraceptive brands may also differ, hence the advice to bring enough for the semester or year.

Advice: Do online research or ask your physician about availability of certain medications in Europe, especially if you plan to travel to different countries.

See <https://www.cdc.gov/travel/>. Enter France and click on Study Abroad

Note: Medication should never be mailed and may be confiscated by customs officials. It's best to have a visitor from the U.S. bring additional medication.

If you see a French doctor, he/she will automatically give you a form/bill (*une feuille de soins*) that you will then need to submit directly to your insurance company for reimbursement.

A word on French medical coverage or “la sécu”:

The term *sécurité sociale* in French refers to medical insurance, not retirement pensions! The first question one is asked in a doctor's office or medical center in France is “*Avez-vous la sécu?*” or its equivalent “*Avez-vous une Carte vitale?*” All French citizens and permanent residents in France have this national health insurance card.

Rest assured, you will not be turned away, but you should be prepared to pay for the consultation, and you will benefit from the same French medical fees and not be charged more.

Useful vocabulary:

- **un docteur/un médecin** doctor
- **une ordonnance** prescription
- **un médicament** medication
- **la pilule (du lendemain)** birth control pill (morning after)
- **un cachet (d'aspirine)** pill, tablet
- **un préservatif** condom (*familier : une capote*)

- **les règles** (menstrual) period
- **une consultation sans RDV** walk-in visit
- **une consultation à domicile** house call
- **consultation sur rendez-vous** by appointment
- **un certificat médical** a doctor's note to participate in a sport
- **un vaccin (contre la grippe)** vaccine / flu shot
- **un centre de vaccination** vaccination center

Public health update

There are currently no public health restrictions in France due to Covid-19. *Remember that health policies and regulations may differ across countries and can change suddenly. Do not assume the situation is the same in all European Union countries or comparable to the U.S. Prior to traveling, always check on the local health situation and travel advisories available on the State Department's website: www.travel.state.gov.*

Staying informed of international and national current events is an individual responsibility, as is personal health and safety. At the same time, our actions and behavior may have consequences for others, hence the importance of solidarity. It is our collective duty to remain attentive and sensitive to the well-being of all those who contribute to and participate in the WIA program: students, administrative and teaching staff, homestay hosts, classmates, etc. WIA reserves the right to reinstate a Health & Safety Pledge which all WIA students may be asked to sign if this becomes necessary.

4. PERSONAL SAFETY & WELL-BEING

Unpredictable terrorist acts aside, there is no reason to feel less safe in France or Europe than in the U.S. In fact, incidents of violent or handgun-related crime are less frequent than in the U.S. The main risks, especially in major cities, are generally petty theft and pickpocketing.

The national French anti-terrorist plan or ***Vigipirate*** was in effect before the terrorist attacks in 2015-16; it was reinforced and security tightened afterwards. Expect your bags to be systematically checked in museums and to see military-looking patrols in public sites, such as airports, train stations or major tourist areas. This is normal and not due to a specific threat.

While in France, stay informed of world events and consult the U.S. State Department's travel and worldwide alerts at <https://travel.state.gov>. WIA staff also send updates.

Note: Wellesley College and WIA strongly discourage students from renting motorized vehicles or driving in France. Car theft is particularly rampant in southern France, and students have sometimes been victims of scams. Individual WIA cultural allowances cannot be used for any activities deemed high-risk (e.g., extreme sports); no reimbursements will be given.

All WIA students must inform the WIA Director via weekend travel plans and provide key details (e.g., dates, destinations, accommodations) through a Google Form (link will be shared by e-mail and through WhatsApp). If anything occurs in France or elsewhere, you should contact the Director immediately to let her know you are okay.

As the two largest cities in France, Paris and Marseille combine the positive and negative traits of many world cities: sketchy neighborhoods, pickpockets, assorted trafficking, tourist scams, etc. ***The main precaution is to always to remain vigilant and aware of one's surroundings and to avoid taking unnecessary risks*** (e.g. walking home very late instead of taking a taxi).

Common-sense precautions to take no matter where you are in France and Europe:

- Tell someone where you're going if you travel or go out alone, especially at night.
- After 11 p.m. or the last bus, take a taxi or an Uber.
- Avoid walking home alone or in deserted streets and neighborhoods at night. Go with a group of friends.
- Don't rent a car or other motorized vehicles. Lack of familiarity with driving laws and behaviors, coupled with car theft in southern France, is a recipe for disaster.
- Never hitch-hike in France, even if you're with someone else or are told it's safe. Always hold your bag or backpack close to your body and don't set it on the ground if you are at a café or in a tourist area.
- Be aware of your belongings when taking photos.
- Always ask where you are going if someone offers to take you somewhere outside of town or to places you don't usually frequent (e.g., clubs), especially at night.
- Walk confidently and look straight ahead of you, as if you know where you're going. If you're lost, head to a store or bank to look up information on your phone discreetly.
- Be sure to know how to call the police if necessary and explain a problem in French. Number to call: **17** or **112** (EU-wide number).
- Don't get distracted by your cell phone (text messages, conversations) in public transportation or when walking on the street. It makes you an easier target.
- If you don't want to attract unwanted attention in public spaces or be mistaken for a tourist and spoken to in English, speak French even with other U.S. nationals.

Sexually-transmitted diseases : le SIDA et les IST

As in other countries, there are people living with HIV (*le VIH*) or AIDS (*le SIDA*) in France. Information is available at: <https://www.sida-info-service.org>

Sexually-transmitted diseases are called **IST** (*infection sexuellement transmissible*) in French.

You may be surprised to see vending machines selling condoms (*des préservatifs*) in public places, including restrooms, bars and restaurants, metro stations, cinemas, etc. In France, this is viewed as a *public health service*; it is not an incitement but rather a preventive measure.

Although it may be tempting to seek new experiences while abroad, it's important to avoid putting yourself in risky situations. As a rule, if you wouldn't do something in the U.S., it's not a good idea to do it abroad either.

5. DRUGS, ALCOHOL & FRENCH LAWS

As legal adults in France (age 18 or above), you are responsible for your actions and subject to national and local laws. WIA staff can assist you in medical or other emergencies but cannot make decisions, obtain or provide confidential information, or take any kind of medical or legal action on your behalf.

Wellesley College's Honor Code emphasizes individual responsibility as well as concern for all students' well-being. Moderation and personal safety go hand-in-hand, especially when

traveling abroad. ***It is crucial to exercise common sense and good judgment at all times.***

You are free to purchase and consume alcoholic beverages in Europe and you won't be asked for i.d. in a restaurant or bar. There is a French law against public drunkenness and rowdiness, however, and, in the event of complaints, the police may detain offenders in a police station until they are sober. Once again, this is a public health and safety issue in France.

Be aware that France has some of the toughest drug laws in Europe. You are subject to French laws, and neither the U.S. Consulate nor Wellesley College or the WIA program can provide or pay for legal counsel. ***Any willful violation of French laws or drug-related incidents will result in dismissal from the WIA program.***

Finally, if you are the victim of a crime while in France (e.g., theft, assault), you should immediately inform the WIA Director who can assist you in reporting it to local authorities and filing charges. In keeping with the U.S. Clery Act, all such incidents must also be reported to Wellesley College, but they are recorded anonymously, and confidentiality is respected.

6. ELECTRICAL OUTLETS & MISCELLANEOUS

Voltage in France is 220. This means ***you will need an adaptor plug (un adaptateur)*** for your laptop and any U.S. appliances or electrical or electronic devices (e.g., laptop, camera). You can buy one at the airport.

All homes and businesses in France must be equipped with smoke detectors. Whether you opt for a homestay or a single room at the Rossini residence hall there should be one in or very near your room. If there isn't, you should notify WIA staff immediately.

Smoking is prohibited inside restaurants and in public buildings and spaces, and restaurant patrons can only smoke outdoors. You will find that smoking is less "stigmatized" in France than in the U.S., however, and many young people smoke. If you're allergic to smoke, you should not hesitate to say so. ***Smoking is prohibited at the WIA Center, indoors or outdoors.***

7. MEDIA & NEWSPAPERS

We urge all students to adopt the French habit of watching the nightly news ("*le 20 heures*") and keeping up with current events, even if you only read the front page of a major French newspaper online, such as *Le Monde*. It's important to have a French perspective on events.

Ask your homestay hosts which magazines and newspapers they read ... and why!

8. TIPPING (le pourboire)

- Taxi: it is customary to give a tip of 1 or 2 euros for a short ride and a bit more for a larger fare or longer distance (for example, to go to an airport). No fixed percentage.
- Restaurant, bistro or café: a 15% tip is automatically included in France (and should be indicated on the menu), but many people leave small change or a few coins on the table or slightly more in a nice restaurant, especially if the service is especially attentive or friendly.

9. WORK & INTERNSHIPS

As in the U.S., internships are highly competitive in France and sometimes mandatory for French students enrolled in business or professional schools. French students usually have to find their

own internships, often via family friends or personal contacts. The WIA program does not have a list of pre-existing internships, but staff can provide assistance and advice with résumés, cover letters, and interviewing tips.

There are regulations and laws regarding student internships in France, notably the following:

- All internships require a signed contract (*une convention de stage*) which defines the terms and specifies the link with academic goals or course of study. This contract is signed by the organization or company offering the internship; the student's home institution (France or U.S.); the student; and, in some cases, an internship provider.
- By law, unpaid internships cannot exceed eight weeks. For longer periods, interns must receive some sort of compensation (*une gratification*), such as a meal or transportation stipend. No stipend is required if the duration is less than 8 weeks.
- To apply for an internship, you must submit a French-style résumé (*un curriculum vitae*) along with a cover letter (*une lettre de motivation*). The WIA tutor can assist you with this and provide model letters.

Tips on finding an internship in France:

Talk to everyone you know: homestay hosts, professors, French friends, WIA staff. The more people who are aware, the better your chances of finding something.

Seek feedback and advice on your CV and cover letter to someone familiar with internships in France. This is culture-specific, and U.S. tactics may not be effective.

Don't delay! If you want a summer internship, you need to start looking in February.

Take advantage of all available resources, starting with the web sites below. The *L'Etudiant* site allows you to search by type of internship, city, dates, etc.

<https://www.letudiant.fr/jobsstages.html>

<https://fr.indeed.com/>

<https://www.jobaviz.fr/>

<https://www.topannonces.fr/annonces-offres-emploi-u299.html>

For Paris, you can also check the job ads in the FUSAC. www.fusac.fr

Students with a long-stay visa or dual nationals who hold an EU passport are allowed to work in France part-time without a work permit. Employers must declare student workers and produce a contract. A business that offers to hire and pay you in cash is engaging in illegal behavior and taking a major risk. So are you.

Any student may earn extra money by babysitting, picking up French children after school, or giving private English lessons. Rates vary from 10 to 15 euros per hour. In Aix, **Book-in-Bar**, the local English bookstore, has a bulletin board where people post ads. Check it out!

10. RECOMMENDED READING

This succinct guide cannot possibly cover every topic or address every question you may have. You will find many resources on France, including blogs, informative and fun YouTube and TikTok videos on everything from French slang to fashion tips to current events, etc. *A vos*

claviers!

Check out online resources related to French language learning and life in France as seen by expats, such as [Tokyo no Jo](#), [Oliver Gee](#), or [Roya](#).

The following oft-cited intercultural books or personal memoirs are readily available on amazon.com.

If you only have time to read one book on cultural differences, we recommend

Julie Fette, Jean-François Brière, & Laurence Wylie (2021) Les Français.

Other authors & titles:

- Julie Barlow & Jean-Benoît Nadeau (2016) The Bonjour Effect: The Secret Codes of French Conversation Revealed (2016)
- Geraldine Smith. (2018) Vu en Amérique, bientôt en France.
- Polly Platt. French or Foe? Getting the Most out of Living & Working in France
Savoir Flair: 211 Tips For Enjoying France & the French. Polly Platt was a Wellesley alumna and well-known among U.S. expats in France.
- Pamela Druckerman (2012). Bringing Up Bébé. www.pameladruckerman.com ▪ Pamela Druckerman (2013). French Children Don't Throw Food.
- Gilles Assoulin & Ruth Mastron. (2010). Au Contraire: Figuring Out the French!
- J-B Nadeau & Julie Barlow. (2008). Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong. French title: Ils sont fous, ces Français!
- Raymonde Carroll. Évidences invisibles : Américains et Français au quotidien. English title: Cultural Misunderstandings: French-American Experience
- Adam Gopnick. (2001) Paris to the Moon
- Sarah Turnbull. (2005) Almost French: A New Life in Paris

More recent books on contemporary France and social issues that may interest you:

- [Maboula Soumahoro's *Le triangle et l'hexagone*](#). Ed: La Découverte, 2020. Maboula Soumahoro is an Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Tours. Her work focuses on Africana studies and she is actively involved in raising awareness of and addressing racial issues in France. She will be our guest on March 20, 2025, and will present the new paperback edition of her book.
- **Caroline Fourest's *Génération offensée. De la police de la culture à la police de la pensée***. Ed: Grasset, 2020. A philosopher, editorialist, filmmaker and former Sciences Po professor who has focused extensively on multiculturalism, universalism and cross cultural comparisons of contemporary social issues.
- **Rokhaya Diallo's *La France tu l'aimes ou tu la fermes?*** Collection "Petite encyclopédie critique", 2019. A black feminist journalist, filmmaker and social activist who has published articles in major U.S. newspapers and is a frequent guest commentator in French media. She also has a podcast *Kiffe ta race*.

11. MOST FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS ... AND RESPONSES!

How can I best prepare myself for my experience in France and Aix?

Read! Start with this guide, note key vocabulary in French and work on your French as much

as possible prior to your arrival to boost your confidence! Read, watch or listen to something in French 2-3 times a week if possible, e.g., front page of *Le Monde*, TV5 online or podcasts, so that you'll be informed of current events in France and have things to talk about with French locals and your hosts. The more you practice your French before arriving, the more confident and comfortable you will feel engaging with French speakers.

How much money should I bring?

Have about 100 euros in cash upon arrival for expenses in the first couple of days. You can use an ATM thereafter to withdraw money. Check with your U.S. bank about ATM fees.

During the semester, Wellesley College will deposit in your U.S. bank account a monthly stipend, mainly for lunches and any meals not included in the homestay option. A wifi connection and laundry are included. Students living at the Rossini receive additional funds to pay for food, cleaning products and laundry costs. The program provides *all* students with a local bus pass for the semester/year. (See *Finances*).

Cost not included and your main personal expenses will be books and school supplies, cell phone plan (about 20 euros/month), weekend and vacation travel, and entertainment.

Note: No reimbursements are given if you miss meals in a homestay on account of weekend travel or choose to stay elsewhere with visitors. ***All personal travel is a student expense.***

What can I expect from my homestay hosts? What will they expect of me?

See *Housing* section. An orientation session will be devoted to this in Aix. Remember that adapting to a different lifestyle in another language is a *process*; don't expect to feel completely "at home" on Day 1. Your relationship with your hosts will evolve as you get to know one another; this takes time, effort and openness on everyone's part. Be patient! And be yourself!

All WIA hosts are carefully selected and genuinely interested in ***exchange and communication***. This is not a mere "business arrangement" and you are not a customer. The key to a positive experience is willingness to interact with host family members, respect for their homes and a genuine interest in their lives and in France. It's a 2-way street!

During our orientation week, you will receive a "checklist" of practical topics, e.g., meal times, key, laundry, etc, to go over with your hosts in the first few days. Hosts also receive it, and the aim is to facilitate the conversation about daily routines and make sure everything is clear from the get-go. Don't be afraid to say you don't understand something; no one expects you to know the word for every household appliance or kitchen utensil!

As a rule, don't expect to be treated like an "adopted child", at least not right away. If you offer to help by setting the table or doing chores, and if you enjoy cooking or baking and offer to prepare a special dish, you are more likely to feel at home. *Ne soyez pas timide!*

Nearly all WIA hosts have had prior experience with WIA or international students and understand their desire to go out, spend time with friends, travel on weekends, etc. As the semester progresses and you become more familiar with the city and more independent, try to maintain a balance between spending time with your hosts and your other social activities. Don't neglect this relationship or treat their home like a hotel, i.e., a place to sleep, have meals and do laundry. Continue to spend time and engage with them. That is why they are hosts!

Is it possible to change housing once in Aix ?

It depends on available housing. In any case, it won't happen immediately, and ***no changes will occur in the first two weeks***. Student housing is very competitive in Aix, and we do not have an

unlimited supply of homestays or rooms at the Rossini. You must speak to the director about possible options. Changes are made only if something cannot be resolved after efforts to work it out.

We cannot overstate that it takes time to adapt and feel comfortable in a new environment, especially in another language. Miscommunication with hosts is perfectly normal and often linked to language issues or cultural differences that you may need help analyzing and interpreting accurately. Look at it as a learning opportunity and seek advice and coaching.

Note: All housing is arranged by WIA and included in the program cost. Students are not permitted to make their own arrangements once in Aix or change housing without the WIA Director's knowledge or approval. No reimbursements will be given.

What kind of assistance is available in Aix?

All kinds! On-site staff are readily available, but it is up to students to take advantage of available resources and ask for assistance. The Director oversees all staff and program operations and activities, acts as liaison with WIA's partner institutions and is the on-site academic advisor. The assistant is responsible for Student Life/Tutoring and knows Aix and AMU very well. She spent a year at Wellesley as a language assistant.

Another valuable resource person is a U.S.-trained bilingual therapist who has worked with many U.S. students and programs in Aix. Her contact information is provided in this guide. She does a group session in English on cultural adaptation during the first month in Aix.

In the event of a medical or other crisis, confidentiality is respected, in keeping with the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA) in the U.S. Your parents or guardians are only contacted in medical or safety emergencies or in the unlikely event of a legal problem.

What's the best way to meet people and make French friends?

Join a club or group of some kind: sports, music, volunteering, etc. Check out student groups and clubs at AMU and Sciences Po. ***Make this effort within your first month in Aix.***

This guide contains numerous tips from previous WIA students. Highlight the ones that appeal to you and places or groups that you'd like to check out. It's important to have a strategy!

A final word: The more you travel on weekends, the harder it will be to make French friends. French students generally don't travel outside of vacation periods and tend to socialize with friends or spend time with family on weekends. When in France...

12. LE « SAVOIR-VIVRE » IN FRANCE

This term is difficult to translate in English and combines notions of courtesy and politeness, cultural practices, and implicit "codes" familiar to the French, as well as a certain "art of living" of which the French are proud. Certain aspects are also part of child-rearing practices in France.

You will no doubt notice that many French people are quite proud of their history, traditions, culture and *patrimoine* or cultural heritage. Conversation is also considered an "art" in France and remains an essential value and habit despite the proliferation of social media. Awareness of behaviors that characterize le savoir-vivre and *une bonne éducation* will be discussed in Aix.

A few examples and useful tips:

- When invited to dinner in someone else's home (other than a homestay), it's customary to

bring a gift such as flowers or nice chocolates. This gesture will be much appreciated.

- Make it a habit to say « *Bonjour, Monsieur* » or « *Merci, Madame* » when speaking to a professor, employee, office worker or any adult, especially *before* making a request. This is one of the first “lessons” taught to French children, and it can make a huge difference in how the person reacts and how helpful he/she is.
- In a restaurant or café, one attracts a waiter’s attention by trying to make eye contact or raising one’s hand and waving slightly. If necessary, the appropriate verbal cue is *Madame* or *Monsieur* or *S’il vous plaît*.
- Service in the U.S. is known for being quick, efficient, and friendly. This is not always the case in France where speed and efficiency may matter less than conversational exchange, talking about the quality of products, making suggestions, allowing a customer to taste something, etc. Remember, patience is a virtue! Moreover, you may come to appreciate such exchanges when you are on the receiving end.
- When encountering a situation or behavior that you don’t understand, try to keep a sense of humor and avoid being defensive, judgmental or critical. It’s normal to feel unsettled by attitudes or reactions that seem « bizarre ». Ask someone who knows French culture well to help you interpret or understand an incident that may have baffled or upset you.
- Male-female relations differ around the world, and gender identity is not discussed as much as in the U.S. Many North American women describe French and southern European men as “sexist” or “macho” and are surprised when approached or spoken to in public spaces (e.g., *Vous êtes très jolie, Mademoiselle*.). Women of color sometimes report receiving even more attention, especially in smaller, less diverse cities.

In most cases, the best tactic to ward off such attention is to avoid eye contact, ignore comments and walk away. Responding verbally (especially in English) may only encourage the behavior. If it persists, a very firm and loud *Ça suffit!* or *Laissez-moi tranquille!* often does the trick and attracts attention of others who may intervene to help.

- “Political correctness” is often characterized as a “U.S. phenomenon” or a form of *pensée unique* in France where heated debate and discussions are considered normal. Attitudes toward diversity and difference may also be expressed more openly and explicitly in France, sometimes in ways that might be deemed inappropriate or offensive, especially to students from the U.S. accustomed to more progressive or liberal views. How will you react?

The French do not necessarily seek consensus or agreement when conversing – au contraire! Don’t be afraid to express your opinion or disagree. How you react to a perceived offensive or inappropriate remark is a personal choice and will also depend on the context and individuals involved. If you feel strongly about an issue, don’t hesitate to express your views. If you need some “language coaching”, we will be more than happy to help you!

- Be aware that French people tend to be curious about people’s origins, especially when they detect an accent from another country or region. Asking a person where he/she comes from is not *necessarily* rude or offensive. Context and tone matter. There are strong regional identities in France; French nationals may see themselves first and foremost as Breton, Corsican, Parisian, etc. Many Aix residents don’t come from Provence originally and enjoy talking about their family roots and history.

In sum, don’t be surprised if you are asked: “Where do you come from?” or “Where is your family from originally?” It may be asked out of interest or curiosity. In turn, you can ask them the same question and learn about *their* identity!

Keep in mind that your perspective will likely evolve over time. What may seem strange or difficult to understand at first could end up being a learning experience and source of personal enrichment and pleasure. Stay open!

13. ON THE ROLE OF FOOD & MEALS IN FRANCE

Food, cooking and meals are central to life in France and a major conversation topic! If you're living with French hosts or are invited to someone's home, the following may be useful:

- Evening meals are generally a key part of family life and a time to exchange about the day's events. In some cases, hosts may watch the evening news. It might take time to feel comfortable participating in conversations but that usually evolves over time as your confidence increases. Asking questions is often an effective strategy.
- Differences in eating habits – mealtimes, number of courses, ways of using utensils or serving and eating certain foods may be a source of puzzlement but also amusement! Observe what your hosts or others at the table do and follow their lead.
- Mealtimes are generally later than in the U.S. Dinner may be between 7:30 and 9:00 pm, and many restaurants open at 8 pm. If you are invited to dinner at someone's house, arriving more than 15 minutes late without letting the hosts know is considered rude.
- If you are in a homestay, be aware of dinner hours and *be on time*. Unless you have a class that ends late or have said you won't be home for dinner, your hosts will no doubt wait for you before starting to eat. Let them know if you're delayed.
- Offer to help set or clear the table. *Je peux vous aider à mettre le couvert ? / à débarrasser ?* Complimenting the cook is also always appreciated!
- During meals with family or friends, the French love to converse, interrupt each other, joke or tease, etc. The livelier the conversation, the better!
- The French don't eat or leave food in their bedrooms. Eat in the kitchen, and don't leave dirty dishes anywhere. It will *not* be appreciated and may create tension.

14. POLITENESS, VERBAL & NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Politeness is expressed differently depending on the language and culture. In France, it's important to pay attention to *register* - formal, colloquial or informal (i.e., slang or *argot*) - when talking to people. Factors like age, status, and length of relationship matter. One does *not* use slang with professors; it's considered impolite. Social norms in France may seem formal to you, especially at the start, but this will become easier and more natural with time and practice.

- In the U.S. it is common to say "Thank you very much.", whereas in France people more likely will say "*Je vous remercie*" or, less formally, "*Merci mille fois*", "*C'est gentil*" or "*C'est très aimable à vous*". A simple « *merci* » might seem discourteous to some people.
- The French don't systematically respond "You're welcome" (*Je vous en prie*. ou *Il n'y a pas de quoi.*) but may instead smile or nod in thanks (non-verbal cue). People also tend to respond *Je vous en prie* / *Je t'en prie* more often than *De rien*. (informal register).

- Prior to making a request or when entering an office, one generally opens with “*Bonjour Madame/ Monsieur*” before asking a question or seeking assistance. If you already know the person somewhat or have had previous contact, you might add: *Vous allez bien?*

- Never say « *Salut!* » or « *Ouais* » to a professor, office or store employee, official, etc. It is *not* “cool” and excessive familiarity may be viewed as disrespectful. Pay attention to such cues and try to use the appropriate language register in more formal or official contexts.

- Likewise, be mindful of language in emails to professors. You should address them as *Monsieur* or *Madame*, be excessively polite, refrain from asking for an immediate reply, and sign *Cordialement* or *Respectueusement*. Ask a French person to read your email before sending it.

- People don’t smile as much in France as in the U.S., especially to strangers. A smile implies familiarity and may be interpreted as an invitation or sign of interest (especially between men and women). Don’t be surprised if a smile or direct eye contact leads to an invitation.

- The French readily correct children and young people – and non-French speakers communicating in French! Waiters, storekeepers or others may correct your French or even respond in English, especially if they hear *you* speak English and assume you’re a tourist. ***Don’t hesitate to say that you are a student or prefer to speak French.*** Most people will be pleased and switch to French if you ask them to.

- In general, the *tu* form is used to address people your own age and younger and *vous* with adults unless they suggest using *tu*, i.e., *Tu peux me dire tu.* or *On se tutoie.* In the south of France, people tend to be less formal and often suggest using *tu* more quickly.

Some French hosts may invite students to call them by their first names right away, others not. Keep in mind that individual differences and preferences also exist. Rather than make assumptions, ask if you’re unsure; it may not occur to the other person to specify it.

15. HOUSING IN AIX

The initial questionnaire you completed included general information about homestays and the Rossini residence hall in Aix. In recent years, the evolving housing situation has led to more flexible options that increasingly appeal to many students and hosts as it turns out.

Specifically, the number of evening meals taken with hosts now may range from three to seven per week depending on hosts’ preferences and schedules. Students whose hosts offer fewer than seven dinners per week will have access to the kitchen (or their own kitchen in a few cases). All students receive a monthly stipend deposited to their U.S. accounts by Wellesley, and the amount varies according to the number of evening meals taken with ho

During the first two days in Aix, you will meet individually with the director to receive information about your hosts, their homes, meal plan, etc. There may be some flexibility during the semester; if you join a club or have a regular activity that involves a weekly dinner elsewhere, for example, arrangements can be made with hosts.

Homestay placement process

Hosts may include a couple whose adult children visit regularly, a single hostess, a family with children at home, etc. All are eager to welcome you and cite communication and exchange as their primary reason for hosting a WIA student. In short, they are not doing this primarily for financial reasons, and the feedback from previous WIA participants confirms this.

WIA staff have visited their homes and hosts are aware of program goals and expectations as

well as key dates and events. They also fill out a questionnaire and may have preferences, e.g., non-smokers, common interests, minimal dietary restrictions. If you are a vegetarian or have a minor food allergy, rest assured that you will be placed with accommodating hosts.

We cannot guarantee homestays for students with multiple or severe food allergies or highly specific needs, e.g., gluten-free, vegan, kosher diets. A single room at the Rossini where you can make your own meals and have full control of your living space and meals is a better option.

Flexibility is key. When determining placements, highest priority is given to health- and food related issues. Thus, if you are allergic to cats or dogs or smoke, for example, you will not be placed in a home with pets or smokers, and that will supersede all other requests.

The majority of WIA hosts do not live in the heart of Aix where space is generally limited and apartments are the norm. You may live in an apartment or a house; in either case, you will have your own room and likely share a bathroom. You will receive a bus pass for the entire semester/year, and most students prefer to walk which is often faster than taking multiple buses.

As stated in the FAQ, housing changes are not automatic and depend upon available alternatives. If you are having difficulty communicating with your hosts or if there is a misunderstanding of some kind, you should speak to the WIA Director first and see if the issue can be resolved. A simple clarification may do the trick, and most incidents tend to be minor and can be remedied via communication.

Tips for a positive homestay experience

The following suggestions are intended to facilitate the adjustment process and help you to maximize and enjoy the homestay experience - for both you and your hosts.

- ✓ A small gift or specialty from your hometown or region, e.g., photo calendar, food item, is a nice gesture and conversation-starter when you arrive. They'll appreciate it!
- ✓ Try to avoid having preconceived ideas and comparing your hosts to your own family, other students' hosts or people who may have hosted you in the past in a different context. Each "family" has its own history, routine and interests, and while there may be some similarities, individual differences also come into play.
- ✓ Use the WIA "checklist" that you will receive during orientation in Aix to clarify expectations with your hosts in the first few days, especially with respect to daily routines, use of appliances and communication. What may seem "obvious" or "normal" may not be to the other party. That's why the list was created. When in doubt, ask!
- ✓ Utilities (i.e., gas, electricity) are costly in France, hence "reflexes" like not leaving the TV on or turning off lights when no one is in the room; lowering the heat when leaving in the morning; not taking long showers or doing laundry more than once a week. French homes tend to be less heated than in the U.S., so have a sweater or sweatshirt handy. In sum, try to be as "*écolo*" as possible.

Note: Due to skyrocketing energy costs, the French government recently launched a *sobriété énergétique* campaign with recommendations for reducing fuel and electric consumption as well as water use, especially in the south. Be mindful of this.

- ✓ Where food is concerned and, if necessary, remind your hosts as politely as possible of any allergies or food restrictions. They may forget. You will find that the French don't like to waste food. It's always best if you address these issues directly with hosts.
- ✓ Expect to eat breakfast on your own most days due to different schedules. Your hosts will likely ask you what you eat in the morning. In France, it's usually bread with butter and jam or maybe cereal. Don't expect a big breakfast or croissants every day.
- ✓ As for lunch, French students usually go to university cafeterias. You receive a monthly stipend for lunches, and your hosts are not obligated to invite you. The main meal is dinner, and hosts are expected to provide a balanced meal although there may be an occasional "pizza night", for example.
- ✓ Try not to take offense if your hosts correct your French; they're trying to help you progress. If they don't and you'd like them to, say so. Similarly, asking questions about your life or family is an attempt to get to know you, not to pry into your personal life.
- ✓ When in doubt, politely ask if you can use the kitchen to bake something or invite a friend over, for example. ***Don't expect to invite weekend or overnight guests in your room.*** If your hosts tell you that you can have occasional guests, consider it a privilege and offer a small gift for their hospitality.
- ✓ Don't let "minor issues" accumulate; if you feel uncomfortable or are puzzled by a reaction or incident that may have caused tension, you should discuss it with the WIA Director. Misunderstandings are normal; addressing them when they occur is part of intercultural learning. Moreover, they often become amusing anecdotes later!

Rossini Residence Hall

This private student residence for students is ideally located in the center, near the *gare routière* (bus station) and operates like an apartment building, albeit with staff. The building is secure, and all residents must use a badge to enter and codes for their building and elevator. Two staff members live there, and WIA staff have duplicate keys in case of a problem or emergency.

The single rooms or "studios" consist of a twin bed, desk, small table, and a private bathroom and kitchen alcove with a small fridge, micro-wave and two burners for cooking simple meals. The WIA program pays for a wifi connection and provides all linens (sheets, towels ...), dishes and cooking utensils, and small appliances, e.g., coffee maker. There are supermarkets and a laundromat around the corner from the Rossini as well as a couple of washing machines on the first floor for which you can purchase tokens to do laundry.

The 125 or so residents of the Rossini are mostly French students enrolled in various institutions in Aix; many come from other cities or regions. There is an advantage to living alongside French peers, but keep in mind that this is not a U.S.-style dorm where students leave their doors open and friends wander in and out or socialize and party in their rooms. The Rossini has "house rules" that WIA staff will go over with you. **Sign up for the Rossini Facebook group for communications and updates from the staff.**

If you're interested in meeting fellow residents, it's up to you to make an effort. Say "*Bonjour*" to **Delphine, the Residence Manager (*Intendante*)**, when you see her. Offer to help, stop by to talk about your day and ask questions. Occasional activities or events are organized in the common room downstairs. Join in or help organize something. It will be appreciated!

Students housed at the Rossini are entirely responsible for their living space. Initial supplies (e.g., toilet paper, laundry & cleaning products) are provided by WIA, but you must replenish them yourself using your monthly allowance.

In the event of a problem or emergency, such as a damaged lock, electrical malfunction, plumbing problem, etc., students must notify the Rossini and WIA staff immediately.

If you need anything, such as additional towels, cooking utensils, light bulbs, hangers, etc. be sure to ask WIA staff first. We have a supply of certain household items at Tavan and will replace pots and pans, broken appliances or desk lamps, etc.

Note: A WIA staff member does monthly inspections of Rossini studios for health and safety reasons and in keeping with an agreement with landlords.

If accommodations are not deemed sufficiently clean after an initial visit and follow-up visit, WIA reserves the right to send in a cleaning person and deduct a 30-euro fee from students' monthly allowance.

III. ACADEMICS: GENERAL INFORMATION

As you know, WIA's partner institutions in Aix are Aix-Marseille University, specifically the humanities division or *Faculté ALLSH (Arts, Lettres, Langues et Sciences Humaines)*, also informally known as the *Fac de Lettres* and the *Institut d'études politiques (IEP)* or Sciences Po Aix. The main AMU campus in Aix is on avenue Robert Schuman and known as *Schuman*.

Around 40,000 students are enrolled at AMU-Schuman when one takes into account the various *facultés* or undergraduate and graduate divisions (law school, management, science & technology, etc.). The original *Université de Provence* dates back to the 15th century! In 2012, three separate institutions merged to form AMU, the largest public university in France.

Sciences Po-Aix, created in 1956, is one of nine independent IEP in France. A selective *grande école*, it has an enrollment of approximately 2,000 undergraduates and specializes in the social sciences, notably political science, economics, international relations, and history.

1. ACADEMIC CALENDARS: SPRING 2025

Note that start dates, spring vacation and final exam dates differ between Sciences Po and AMU.

	SCIENCES PO	AMU	WIA
Start date	Mon, Jan 20	Mon, Jan 27	Mon, Jan 13
Winter break	15 - 23 Feb	15 - 23 Feb	15 - 23 Feb
Spring break	5 - 13 Apr	5 - 13 Apr	5 - 13 Apr
Final exams	May 12 - 28	May 12 - 28	Week of Apr 21

IMPORTANT! Final exam schedules are not available until 2-3 weeks before dates indicated above; these are determined by AMU and Sc Po administrations, not faculty (unless it is a take-home exam). You must complete all exams in order to receive credit.

Do not make travel plans during exam periods. Missing an exam without notifying anyone or providing a medical excuse will result in an automatic grade of *Défaillant* which translates into a course grade of F on the WIA transcript.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION & CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Higher education varies across countries and reflects different approaches to teaching and learning, different notions of the roles and responsibilities of faculty and students. Adapting to a different university system and academic standards is interesting - and challenging! Like previous WIA participants, you are likely to be disconcerted or frustrated at times, this is normal. Remember that you have many resource people to help you navigate and understand the French system. Ultimately, however, the onus will be on *you* to adapt.

Below are some cultural realities and differences for which you should be prepared:

- Tuition costs (*frais de scolarité*) are much lower in France than in the U.S. and higher education may seem nearly free. In fact, it is heavily subsidized by the French Ministry of Education and taxpayers, thereby keeping costs to students reasonably low.
- As a result, French universities are not wealthy and offer fewer facilities and services than in the U.S. Don't expect state-of-the-art gyms or dining halls, libraries and computer facilities open 24/7, for example. ***In general, leave your U.S. expectations behind!*** The point of direct enrollment is to experience a different educational approach. Think of it first and foremost as a *cultural* learning opportunity.
- The mission of universities in France is primarily intellectual: teaching and research. In general, French students do not rely on a university for a social life; this happens outside university walls. Student groups, activities and intramural sports exist but are often managed by a *Bureau des Eleves* (BDE) or student volunteers. Click on *Vie étudiante* on AMU's or Sciences Po's web sites for lists of extracurricular activities and clubs.
- Teaching methods and relations with professors in France may seem very formal and "foreign" to students from small liberal arts colleges: lectures (*cours magistraux*), with students taking notes and little or no discussion, especially in first- and second-year classes are standard. Even in section classes (*travaux dirigés* or *TD*), there may be limited interaction, and the session may consist entirely of student oral presentations.
- Many AMU classes meet only once a week for 3 to 4 hours. At Sciences Po, 2nd year lecture classes usually meet once a week for 2 hours, with no break. This may be the most difficult adjustment and will likely be tiring, especially at the outset. At the same time, lectures allow you to measure your listening comprehension and note-taking skills in French – and especially your progress! You will get used to it.
- In France, undergraduates at all levels are expected to be autonomous learners; they do not rely on faculty for detailed instructions, a reading schedule, and assistance. Do not expect a detailed syllabus, weekly quizzes or make-up assignments. At most, you may receive an outline of weekly topics and a bibliography. It will be up to *you* to fill gaps if you lack basic knowledge and to set up your own reading schedule, review your notes and complete them, if necessary. The WIA assistant/tutor can suggest strategies.
- University professors may post readings and PowerPoint presentations on a platform, but they won't check on your progress or comprehension of the material outside of exams or major assignments. ***You must take charge of your own learning and organize your study time accordingly.*** Just because the professor doesn't assign a reading or other task, it

doesn't mean there is "nothing to do" for the following week.

- Few professors in France have an office or office hours (*heures de permanence*) and some may not provide an email address. This doesn't mean you can't approach them, however; it's often best to speak to them *in person before or after class*. In fact, many enjoy meeting and interacting with their international students. Don't be afraid to introduce yourself and speak to them once you are certain you want to take the course!
- Ongoing assessment (*le contrôle continu*) does not refer to frequent graded assignments, as might be the case in the U.S. Rather, it usually consists of two or three grades during the semester in AMU classes, e.g., an oral presentation and two in-class exams. Moreover, these may occur after the mid-semester point or later which means you may not have an idea of how you're doing, hence the importance of keeping up with the material, devoting time every week to reading and reviewing class notes, organizing study groups, weekly tutorials, etc.
- *Writing skills are crucial in France* and written assignments are more common than oral presentations. French academic writing may seem quite "technical" or overly structured and leave little room for creativity or original ideas. You will find that *la forme* (structure) is as important - if not more so - as *le fond* (content). Subjective opinions are not rewarded as they might be in the U.S. and professors at the undergraduate level tend to expect objective arguments based on facts, data and examples gleaned from lectures, readings and outside research. Moreover, they grade the *product*, not the student.

During orientation, a few sessions will be devoted to basic definitions, characteristics, and examples of French-style academic writing. More in-depth instruction will occur in the WIA literature and cinema course which aims to reinforce writing skills and via weekly tutorials with the WIA tutor. Rest assured, these techniques can be learned!

- All WIA students must schedule a weekly individual tutorial with the WIA assistant/tutor for language and methodology support. Initial length will be 45 min per week and may be reduced to a half-hour after the first month. These sessions will focus on individual questions and grammar review, exam strategies, advice on academic methodology or practice for oral presentations in university classes, i.e., non-WIA courses. Additional sessions are by appointment throughout the semester.

We urge you to take advantage of all possible resources and opportunities: the WIA tutor, individual professors who can recommend key reference works, your *French classmates* for class notes, WIA staff, etc. At the same time, the onus will be on *you* to put in the necessary time and effort to ensure your academic success and transfer credit.

Don't wait until the end of the semester to ask for help!

If you receive a disappointing grade or don't understand a professor's comments on a paper, talk to the Director about it and make an appointment with the WIA tutor. They can help you interpret professors' feedback and expectations and suggest effective strategies for improving or avoiding certain pitfalls.

ACADEMIC POLICIES & GUIDELINES

The following list reflects both Wellesley and French norms. Failure to comply with these policies may result in not receiving academic credit for courses in Aix.

- There is no Add/Drop option in French universities. Per Wellesley and WIA policy, however, you may withdraw from a course within the first six weeks without a transcript notation. Thereafter, a notation of W (withdrawal) will be recorded. **No course withdrawals are allowed after the course has ended or just before or during final exams. All withdrawal requests and approval from your home institution must be in writing and submitted (via email) to the WIA Director.**
- All WIA students are required to maintain **4 units per semester**. This means four 1-unit courses (i.e., 36 contact hours/semester) at WIA or AMU or a combination of 1-unit and ½-credit classes (20-hour courses) at Sciences Po.
- **You must submit written authorization from an advisor or dean at your home institution for a reduced course load (i.e., fewer than 4 credits) in Aix.**
- You are required to take all exams in all courses to receive credit. **All work must be in French.** If you miss an exam at AMU or Sciences Po without an official excuse (e.g., medical or personal emergency), you will be marked absent and receive a zero. AMU does not allow international students a second chance for failed exams; the grade is a *Défaillant* (or F). Sciences Po does allow this, but make-up exams (*rattrapages*) are always scheduled in July regardless of the semester during which you took courses.
- Do not make plans to leave Aix before the end of official exam periods. ***Exam dates and conditions are generally set by the university administration, not faculty.*** In theory, professors are not allowed to administer exams in advance or make “special arrangements” and most are unwilling to make exceptions. In the event of a scheduling conflict between two exams, the WIA Director will intervene on your behalf.
- **Students who wish to request accommodations for medical reasons must arrive with documentation from a medical practitioner and make an appointment with the relevant office at AMU to obtain 1/3 additional time for exams, for example.**
- Always have your French student i.d. card with you on exam day. You may not be allowed to take an exam if you have forgotten your card or have no i.d. If you lose your AMU student card, go to the *Scolarité* office to request a replacement card.
- Final exam and program dates take precedence over an internship or job opportunity in the U.S., personal travel, etc. ***No early departures from France are allowed other than for emergencies.*** The WIA Director must be informed of any emergency and will notify AMU or Sciences Po administrators and students’ home institutions.
- WIA courses are taught by AMU faculty. Although they are tailored to WIA students, include detailed syllabi, multiple grades and in-class discussion, you will nevertheless receive French grades and be expected to review course material outside of class. ***There is a strict attendance policy in WIA classes and unexcused absences will result in point deductions from the final grade.***

VOCABULARY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN FRANCE

- un amphi** : *amphithéâtre* or lecture hall (large classes)
l'assiduité : attendance
la B.U. (fam.) : la bibliothèque universitaire (library)
un collège : junior high or middle school in France
un commentaire composé : literary textual analysis/paper of 5-7 pages
un commentaire de texte : analysis of a historical doc or *non-literary* text
un contrat pédagogique : official course registration at AMU
le contrôle continu : grade based on 2-3 assignments (vs. a single comprehensive exam)
un cours magistral (CM) : lecture class
crédits ECTS European credit system: 6 credits = 1 full course in US
le C.R.O.U.S. : student services (cafeterias, dorms, etc.)
un cursus : set curriculum culminating in a degree
un cycle d'études (1er, 2e, 3e) : 1er cycle = B.A.; 2^e cycle = M.A.; 3^e = Ph.D
un devoir en temps limité (ou sur table = DST) : in-class test; timed exam
une dissertation : writing assignment of 6-8 pages (on specific topic)
un dossier : research paper (usually 10-15 pages in length)
un exposé oral : oral presentation
la "fac" : *faculté* = *université* (usually public)
une fiche de lecture : paper on an assigned book (summary/analysis)
une inscription administrative : university registration (to receive student i.d.)
une inscription pédagogique : course registration in a specific class
une Licence : undergraduate degree (3 years); *1er cycle*
un mémoire : Master's thesis (or honor's thesis)
Parcoursup : online platform for French students to indicate university choices and degree preferences
un partiel : an exam (not necessarily a mid-term)
une plaquette / un polycopié : course pack or booklet (readings)
un relevé de notes : transcript
un « Resto U » ou RU : *Restaurant Universitaire* ; student cafeteria
une thèse (de doctorat) : doctoral dissertation ; culmination of 3^e cycle
un T.D. Travaux dirigés; smaller group (linked to a CM)
un T.P. Travaux pratiques (mainly in the sciences)
une U.E. Unité d'Enseignement : (course unit)

NOTE ! un cours ≠ une course. Do not pronounce the final « s » in *cours*.

En français, on ...

- ... fait des études de (sciences politiques ou économiques, d'informatique ...) ...
- ... suit un cours (v. *suivre*) de (biologie, littérature, sociologie...) = take a class
- ... passe un examen = to take an exam
- ... réussit à un examen = to pass vs. échoue = to fail
- ... obtient un diplôme = to get a degree

3. AIX-MARSEILLE UNIVERSITÉ (AMU)

Over 10,000 international students representing more than 60 nationalities are enrolled at AMU, which has 14 satellite campuses in the PACA region. The main ones for WIA students are:

- **Schuman:** Aix campus and home of the Faculté des Arts, Lettres, Langues et Sciences Humaines (ALLSH). Informally called the “Fac de Lettres” by most people.
- **MMSH :** *Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l’Homme*, located on the west side of Aix and accessible by bus. Site of some Anthropology and Ancient History courses.

These are the only AMU divisions with which Wellesley has an agreement and where you may take classes and earn credit from Wellesley.

Note: A tour of the Schuman campus will take place prior to the start of classes at AMU.

Prescribed curriculum vs. Taking courses « à la carte »

Unlike in the U.S., students in France choose their major in the first year and generally follow a set curriculum with numerous required courses. There are no “distribution” or “general education” requirements in France at the college level. This happens in high schools; in theory, the *baccalauréat* exam at the end of the *lycée* ensures general knowledge in many areas. In sum, university is synonymous with a specialization in France.

Contrary to degree-seeking French students, you will be able to choose courses in different disciplines and at different levels (1st, 2nd and 3rd year), that is, “à la carte”. Your choices will depend on your major(s), your previous knowledge of the subject, and your level of French. ***Final course choices will be made in Aix with advice and guidance from the WIA Director.***

AMU faculty are not necessarily aware of the terms of international exchange agreements or different registration procedures for non-French students. If they ask why you are not on a class list on the first day or turn you away because the class is full, speak to the WIA Director.

Undergraduate degree in France : la « Licence »

The undergraduate degree or *la licence* in France is generally obtained in three years. Course levels are similar to Grades I, II and III at Wellesley, or 100-, 200- and 300-level courses in many U.S. universities and colleges.

L1 = introductory courses

L2 = courses that assume some previous knowledge (basic prerequisites)

L3 = advanced or more specialized courses that assume some prior background knowledge

Many previous WIA participants have taken L3 classes at AMU and done well. They are more specialized and demanding in terms of workload but also have fewer students than L1 classes.

Note: If you have never taken a course in English in a specific discipline and do not have a B2 level in French, it is not advisable to take L3 courses.

Structure of « Licence » courses at AMU

Depending on the discipline or level, there may be either a single weekly class lasting 3 to 4 hours or two separate mandatory sessions divided as follows:

- **Un cours magistral ou CM:** usually held in an *amphithéâtre* (lecture hall)
- **Travaux dirigés ou TD:** smaller group, may consist of student oral presentations related to course topics or analyses of documents, group size from 20 to 30 students.

Courses may be co-taught by two different professors. In courses including a CM and TD, you must complete all work in both in order to receive credit.

Note: Certain psychology courses at AMU are taught by a “team” of guest lecturers that change frequently. This can prove problematic in terms of evaluation. It is best to avoid these classes.

Credits: “ECTS” and U.S. equivalents

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) enables students from different European countries to transfer credits to their home institutions from another EU university. The number of ECTS granted is essentially based on the number of hours per course.

For courses at AMU: 6 ECTS = 1 Wellesley unit
3 ECTS = 1/2 Wellesley unit

For courses at Sciences Po: a 2-hour *cours magistral* (CM) = 1/2 Wellesley unit

Courses that do not earn academic or transfer credit for Wellesley College students

- **Studio arts** (*arts plastiques*): Non-credit courses in painting, drawing, pottery, etc. are available outside the university. These are generally considered an extracurricular activity.
- **Economics or Management courses** offered at AMU’s *Faculté d’économie et gestion*.
- **English or American studies**, i.e., courses taught in English. Students may take Comparative Literature courses offered in *Lettres Modernes*, taught in French.
- **Foreign languages (other than French)**, *unless* this is a second major. Levels, classes and pedagogical approaches differ in France, which can lead to difficulties in transferring credits.

Course selection and registration at AMU

In Aix you will meet individually with the WIA Director to pre-select courses and build a schedule that enables you to attend 5-6 classes in the first two weeks (including WIA classes). By process of elimination, you will reduce the choices to four or five.

Step 1: Administrative registration (*une inscription administrative*)

All students must pre-register at AMU prior to arrival in France via the MoveOn platform. This is an administrative formality. Instructions are sent via email and students must send the PDF confirmation form to the WIA Director. There is a final administrative registration in Aix.

Step 2: Course registration (*une inscription contrat pédagogique*)

This occurs once you have finalized your AMU course choices with the WIA Director. ***This step is essential in order to be officially enrolled for exams and obtain grades in AMU classes.***

Post-registration course changes / Adding & Dropping / Exams

- Course registration procedures are not the same as for degree-seeking French students. When in doubt, always ask the WIA Director who acts as the intermediary with administrative services and international programs staff at AMU and Sciences Po Aix.
- French students are not allowed to make changes once registration is final. In this instance, WIA policy prevails, and you may withdraw from a course up until the final week of classes if you have a 5-unit course load or have received written approval for a reduced course load from a dean or academic advisor in your home institution.
- ***All communication with AMU administration must go through the WIA Director.*** Failure to keep the WIA Director informed or to comply with academic policies may result in grades of F on your transcript and no transfer credit.
- Per AMU policy, unless you have a medical certificate, you will receive a zero if you miss a scheduled exam. ***It is your responsibility to check the final exam schedule online and note all dates and times.*** Late arrivals are not allowed for final exams.

Transcripts & Credit Transfer

Wellesley students: All courses related to language, French or Francophone literature or cultures and French linguistics generally fulfill requirements for the French major at Wellesley and transfer as **200-level courses**. You will still need to take two 300-level classes upon your return to Wellesley in order to complete requirements for the French major.

Non-Wellesley students: Check with your academic advisors to find out which specific courses may apply to a French major or minor or fulfill other requirements.

Note: You should avoid taking courses similar to classes already taken in the U.S.

If you need to submit an English translation of a course description to seek approval for credit transfer, speak to the WIA Director who will translate the document. If you are asked for this documentation upon your return to the U.S. but did not receive or provide the necessary information, you will have to create the syllabus yourself from your class notes.

Transfer Credit Policy & Transcripts

The Wellesley College Registrar's Office handles credit earned in the WIA program and issues a transcript indicating credits or units but no other details. A separate WIA transcript indicating course titles in English and grades (converted to U.S. letter grades) is sent to Wellesley and forwarded to students' home institutions. Wellesley students receive credit for a grade of "C" or better and courses are recorded on their transcript with a notation of "TR" or transfer credit. At Wellesley, units count toward the degree but have no effect on the GPA. Other U.S. partner institutions may record credit earned in the WIA program according to their own policies. External students should check with their home schools about courses taken abroad.

4. FRENCH GRADING SYSTEM & CONVERSION SCALE

You will receive numerical French grades in all courses based on a system of 1 to 20. Grades of 17 and above are rare in the French system, which is essentially Pass/Fail. The minimum passing grade for French students is 10 which translates into a C+ per the conversion scale below, approved by Wellesley College.

A C is the minimum grade required for credit transfer at Wellesley. Other U.S. colleges and universities may award credit for a grade below C. A WIA transcript will be sent to your home institution with course titles in English and the French grade converted into a U.S. grade.

WIA grade equivalencies

<u>France</u>	<u>United States</u>
18 à 20	A+
15 à 17	A
14	A-
13	B+
12	B
11	B-
10	C+
9	C Wellesley credit awarded
8	C- No Wellesley credit awarded
7	D+
6	D

Final grades & credit Transfer

You will not receive your final grades before leaving France. It generally takes four weeks or so after final exams to receive official grade reports from AMU and Sciences Po Aix.

The WIA Director converts all grades and sends WIA transcripts to the Office of International Study at Wellesley. OIS then forwards them to non-Wellesley students' home institutions.

Any questions about transcripts after your return to the U.S. should be addressed to Jennifer Thomas-Starck at OIS.

5. SCIENCES PO-AIX / INSTITUT D'ETUDES POLITIQUES (IEP)

International students who wish to enroll at Sciences Po-Aix have several options:

- Full-time, year-long certificate program (CEP) consisting of 7-8 courses per semester.
- Full-time year-long program (PEPA), more flexible but with no certificate awarded.
- Full-time, single-semester program (PEPS) of 7-8 courses.
- **Part-time option that allows enrollment in two courses per semester per a special exchange agreement between Sciences Po and partner institutions such as WIA.**

WIA students are considered part-time students and are all officially enrolled at AMU which issues a “universal” student i.d. card recognized by Sciences Po. The 4-unit course load may consist of a mix of Sciences Po, AMU and WIA classes.

The five-year curriculum for French and degree-seeking students at Sciences Po culminates in a Master’s degree. All French students at Sciences Po are expected to go abroad during their third year, either to study or do an internship. Consequently, there are no 3rd-year classes at Sciences Po. You will be able to choose among 2nd and 4th year courses depending on your French skills, prior knowledge of the topic and academic interests.

The Sciences Po curriculum, like the student body, has become more diversified over the years. There are courses in English and even in other languages. ***All WIA students are required to take all courses and do all work in French in Sciences Po and AMU classes.***

Nearly all lecture classes (CM) meet 20 hours per semester, either twice a week over five weeks (4th year classes) or two hours per week over 10 weeks (2nd year classes). Five-week classes are scheduled over three two-month periods each semester. This enables students to avoid a 5-course load all semester, but the risk is that if a 3rd-period class is canceled or problematic, there may not be an alternative. ***It is preferable to choose 10-week courses or courses offered during the first and second periods at Sciences Po.***

Two or three courses in French are offered each semester exclusively for international students, including European or “Erasmus” students. You may sign up for these. Other courses are open to both French and international students and a bit more challenging but also offer a great opportunity to meet French peers. Don’t be afraid to take classes with French students!

Course offerings and registration at Sciences Po Aix

A preliminary list of spring course offerings and schedules are generally not available until December and subject to last-minute changes. *Pas de panique!* Information and updates will be sent via email as they become available.

A representative list of past courses can be found at: www.sciencespo-aix.fr. Click on *International* (top of page), then *Etudier à Sciences Po* and *Enseignements* to see a list of 1st and 2nd semester classes. Click on titles in red to see a course description and outline. Sometimes these are older versions and instructors have changed, but they will give you an idea of content. The WIA Director will also share a list of courses frequently taken by WIA students to help you plan your course selection.

All course registration will occur in Aix, with the Director’s assistance. You will fill out a pre-registration form and these will be sent to Sciences Po by the WIA Director.

Instruction, evaluation and grading methods at Sciences-Po Aix

By definition, a *cours magistral* or lecture class consists largely of note-taking, with little or no discussion unless there are few students enrolled in the class or it is a course designed for international students. Much depends on class size and, of course, the instructor. In any case, all students at Sciences Po are expected to do a significant amount of outside research and independent reading and to essentially master course content on their own.

Traditionally, final exams at Sciences Po consist of an individual oral exam on a randomly chosen course-related topic and administered by the professor at the end of the semester. These may last 15 to 20 minutes after students have had 30 minutes or so to prepare without using class notes or materials. Although evaluation methods have become more varied in recent years and may consist of a timed written exam or a short paper instead of an oral, the final grade remains based on a single exam or assignment at the end of the semester.

In other words, whether oral or written, ***this grade is generally the only one*** and will therefore determine your course grade. The WIA conversion scale applies to all courses, whether at AMU or Sciences Po: the minimum passing grade for Wellesley students is a 9 or C. Students from other institutions should check with their home schools about grades for courses taken abroad.

Unlike at AMU where international students are not permitted to re-do exams during a “second session” if they fail, as is the case for full-time, degree-seeking French students, Sciences Po ***does*** allow international students to retake a failed exam to earn a passing grade. This occurs *in July for all courses*, whether taken in fall or spring. Students must sign up in advance to do so and may take them remotely.

Note: Exam dates and conditions are not negotiable in France (outside of a medical or personal emergency) and make-up assignments to try to improve one’s grade do not exist.

6. WIA COURSES

In Spring 2025, WIA will offer three courses that meet 3 hours per week (i.e., two 90-minute sessions or a single one). Students may take up to three. All are taught at the Tavan center.

All students are expected to take *at least one unit* in the French system, i.e., two half-credit Sciences Po classes or one full-credit, 36-hour AMU course. Courses in three different places can be challenging to juggle, but many past students have managed to do so.

Advanced-level students (i.e., C1 or C2 level on the TCF) may take all of their courses in the French system, i.e, combining AMU and Sciences Po classes, but scheduling conflicts must be avoided from the start, as decisions need to be made after the first session for half-credit courses.

Spring 2025 WIA courses:

1) La Provence à travers la littérature et le cinéma

Professor: Monsieur Ollivier Errecade
Schedule: Tuesday, 9 am-12 pm

Focuses on Provençal authors and well-known novels or plays (by Daudet, Giono, Pagnol...) that have been adapted into films. Assignments will concentrate on French academic writing skills methodology and include French-style oral presentations and typical writing assignments, specifically the *dissertation* and *commentaire composé*.

This course is required for students who score below a B2 level on the French test (TCF) administered during the first week. It is optional but highly recommended to other students who wish to reinforce their writing and oral presentations skills

2) Traduction (anglais-français)

Professor: Madame Christelle Klein-Scholz
Schedule: Wednesday, 9 am-12 pm

Focuses on translation from English to French of various kinds of texts, common idiomatic expressions and cultural concepts. It aims to reinforce stylistic and grammatical knowledge and enhance vocabulary. Translation strategies, techniques and challenges are also addressed. Careful weekly preparation and active participation are essential and factored into the final grade. A course packet containing detailed information and all texts and exercises will be distributed at the first session.

3) Histoire de l'immigration en France de la Révolution à nos jours

Professor: Monsieur Stéphane Mourlane
Schedule: Monday & Wednesday, 4:30– 6 pm

See course outline below. Two mandatory site visits – to the Camp des Milles (WWII internment camp outside Aix) and another place – will take place outside of class time.

Semaine 1

Présentation du cours et de la méthode de travail - Intro : la France un pays d'immigration

Semaine 2

L'immigration de la Révolution française à 1848 (2 séances)

Semaine 3

A partir des années 1870 : les débuts de l'immigration de masse en France

Semaine 4

Marseille, ville d'immigration jusqu'aux années 1910 (2 séances)

Semaine 5

La fin du XIXe siècle : nationalisme, antisémitisme, loi de 1905 (laïcité) (2 séances)

Semaine 6

L'immigration pendant la Première Guerre mondiale

Semaine 7

Artistes immigrés à Paris 1900-1930

Semaine 8

L'entre-deux-guerres : l'immigration entre renouvellement et tensions

Semaine 9

Vichy et la Seconde Guerre mondiale (2 séances)

Visite du Camp des Milles à Aix (date à confirmer)

Semaine 10

L'immigration européenne en France depuis 1945 (2 séances)

Semaine 11

L'immigration coloniale et post-coloniale en France

Semaine 12

Enjeux et questions d'aujourd'hui et examen final

A detailed syllabus will be provided at the beginning of the semester.

7. OTHER ACADEMIC RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Tutoring and academic support

French universities and specific academic departments increasingly offer support in the form of peer tutors, especially for first-year French students who also need assistance or advice.

The WIA Assistant, Célia Bourcy, also serves as an academic tutor and is available to help students with French methodology, oral presentations, exam strategies, grammar trouble-shooting, etc. All students will benefit from a mandatory weekly tutorial with her throughout the semester.

Documenting your coursework in AMU classes

Academic departments or advisors in the U.S. may request more detailed information about your classes in France. If you do not receive a course outline or description, especially in AMU courses, you will have to create one using your class notes. You should update it weekly; it's also a good way to review and keep up with the work. Ask the WIA Director for a template in Aix.

If you need a translation to get approval or request transfer credit once back in the U.S., you must contact the WIA Director who can translate the syllabus you created. If you haven't submitted any documentation of course content, transfer credit may be denied.

WIA transcript

Final grades will not be available or communicated prior to your departure from Aix, as grade reports from Sciences Po and AMU are generally received 5-6 weeks after exams. The WIA Director converts all French grades into U.S. letter grades for the WIA transcript which indicates course titles in English and grades earned. Originals are sent to Wellesley College which sends one to students' home institutions which have the final word on transfer credit. If you apply to graduate school, you may be asked to submit a more detailed transcript of courses taken abroad. The WIA transcript serves this purpose.

Librairies in Aix ➤ The « BU » (*Bibliothèque Universitaire*)

This library on AMU's Schuman campus is very popular with French students. Check it out!

➤ « BS » (*Bibliothèque de Section*)

Each academic department has its own library. You can consult books on site or borrow them.

➤ MMSH Library

The Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme has a wide selection of works in anthropology, history, sociology, Mediterranean studies. It is also a nice place to study.

➤ Méjanes Library

We highly recommend visiting and using *La Méjanes*, the largest public library in Aix and part

of the [Cité du Livre](#), located behind the main bus station and cultural area of Aix, near where you will be staying during orientation. It is a cultural complex that includes a cinema for independent films and festivals and also a café with good food at reasonable prices. A *Méjanes* membership provides online access to national and local periodicals, recent books, films, and documentaries.

➤ **Sciences Po Library** and salle de presse (periodicals)

➤ **WIA library at Tavan**. Includes books recommended by past professors. If several students are taking the same course at AMU or Sciences Po, the program may purchase key reference books upon request. *Otherwise, books are considered a personal expense.*

8. ENSURING YOUR ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN AIX

The advice below is intended to help you succeed and avoid unpleasant surprises at the end of the semester or after your return to the U.S. Most of it comes from past students!

- Review and rewrite or complete your class notes *after each class*. This will help you progress in French and force you to check facts and fill in any blanks (e.g., dates, names) that you didn't catch in lectures and are expected to know.
- Set up your own reading schedule from the outset, especially in the absence of a detailed syllabus, and **stick to it**. This is a *student* responsibility in France.
- Read at least two books cited in the bibliography or recommended by the professor. If you're not sure which ones are most useful, ask – at the start of the semester!
- Check the library at Tavan for books, especially if a class was taken by previous WIA students. There are also neighborhood libraries in addition to the AMU and IEP (Sciences Po) ones. You can also order books on [amazon.fr](#) and have them sent to the Tavan center or at [fnac.com](#) and pick them up at the FNAC store in the Allées Provençales shopping center.
- Organize study groups with classmates and invite French students to join. This is a great way to get to know your French peers as well.
- Students often assume that classes in France are “easy” because of the lack of weekly assignments and instructions or feedback from instructors than in the U.S. Beware of false assumptions! Professors in France will expect *you* to learn the material and do readings and research on your own, and you may be held accountable at exam time.
- Be prepared to show you have mastered basic facts. You may find that some French university professors are very keen on factual knowledge, i.e., dates, theories, events, names of key figures, etc. that you might consider secondary but are viewed as essential, foundational knowledge in first- and second-year classes in particular.
- If you are having trouble with classes or feeling frustrated or discouraged, make an appointment to talk to the WIA Director. Don't wait until the end of the semester!

ACADEMIC ADVICE FROM PREVIOUS WIA STUDENTS

General

- *Forget all your expectations and start over with an open mind. It'll save you a lot of frustration.*
- *It's okay to be confused and not understand everything.*
- *Don't feel defeated because getting used to French classes will be difficult.*
- *Erase any expectations you have from your U.S. experiences and take really good notes.*
- *Don't be afraid to approach the teachers – they are really quite nice.*
- *Talk to students in your classes!*
- *It's less about the academic experience and more about the cultural one. Try not to stress too much.*
- *As long as you work hard and take advantage of all the resources WIA has to offer, you will be fine.*

On selecting courses:

- *Choose classes based on the books you'll read. Do all your reading.*
- *Be proactive. If you don't like a class at the beginning, try others until you find one that works.*
- *Take classes that actually interest you.*
- *Test upper-level classes and take them; first-year classes are at a very low level sometimes.*
- *Start with five classes so you can drop one.*
- *Don't be afraid to take classes with no other Americans; it really forces you to reach out and make French friends or at least friendly acquaintances.*
- *Don't take classes because they seem easy because they WILL be too easy & uninteresting.*

On study strategies:

- *Rewrite or go through your notes each week. Take notes on your computer!*
- *To get the most out of your classes, you need to make a reading schedule and stick to it to feel purposeful.*
- *Make a list of key topics from each class and read more about them to acquire more info that would be very useful on exams.*
- *Figure out Amétice (AMU platform) ASAP and make sure you're following in class.*
- *Start studying early. It takes so much longer to read notes/books in French.*
- *See if your classes have Facebook pages; those were so helpful!*
- *Be present in the class and talk to your professor if you didn't understand something.*
- *Don't stress out too much and try to find study partners, especially non-Americans!*
- *If you have to do an exposé with a French student, have confidence in yourself.*
- *Be active in class. Try your best to participate. If you can't, actively listen & take good notes.*

- *Talk to other students in your class!! They often have a better idea of what's going on or, if they don't, know what to read, what's on the exam, if there's a class next week – at least you're in the same boat! Plus, they might become a friend!*
- *Invest time in your classes. It's easy not to, but the classes I cared the most about were the ones I did the most work for, and the ones I ended up liking the most.*

9. EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & STUDENT LIFE IN AIX

Athletics

AMU's *Service universitaire d'activités physiques et sportives* or SUAPS offers numerous and free classes and activities: tennis, swimming, fitness classes, hiking, climbing. There is a *Bureau des sports* at AMU and Sciences Po which also has many student associations and organizes outings and events. If you're looking to meet French students, start there! A list of student activities is available on both AMU and Sciences Po web sites.

How to sign up

Be proactive! Registration occurs at the start of the academic year and it's possible you won't have your student i.d.card yet, but go anyway – especially spring students! - and explain that you are a newly-arrived exchange student and your student card is pending. (You can use your AMU acceptance letter.) Even if the class is allegedly full, go back! If you're tenacious and enthusiastic, chances are you'll get in.

You can be asked to provide a *certificat médical* before the first class depending on the sport. This requires a doctor's visit, but you can be reimbursed for this (outside of your individual allowance). Talk to WIA staff about it.

Student Groups & Organizations

Look under *Vie étudiante* on the web sites and go in person to the *Bureau de la Vie Etudiante* or *Bureau des Elèves* and make inquiries. Talk to the WIA tutor and French students in your classes to find out more. Your efforts will be rewarded!

Remember that French students don't rely exclusively or even mainly on the university to provide them with a social life. Many are involved in activities and socialize with friends in the city and in public spaces like cafés and pubs rather than on campus.

Most frequent student advice on meeting locals & French students:

“You have to make the first move and really put yourself out there.”

IV. AIX-EN-PROVENCE

1. WELLESLEY-IN-AIX CENTER: TAVAN

WIA Center hours: Monday - Thursday, 10am to 6pm; Friday, 10 am to 1pm, closed on weekends and holidays.

Le Centre Tavan

The WIA Center includes staff offices, a large classroom/meeting space, a computer room and small library. A kitchen with a fridge and microwave is available to students, and you may also eat on the patio in nice weather.

In keeping with the immersion philosophy, *Tavan is a French-speaking environment* and the use of French is strictly enforced. Tavan is not a recreational space for watching videos or U.S. series in English. Students who violate the language pledge will be asked to leave Tavan.

You will receive one key for the outside gate of the Tavan Center. If you lose it, notify WIA staff who will assist you in replacing them (15 euros).

Uses of Tavan:

- You may keep food in the fridge but you must clean up and do the dishes. We ask that you eat in the kitchen or on the patio as much as possible, not in the classroom space.
- You may receive mail and packages at the Center, using the address below.
- One computer and three printers are available as well as wifi indoors and on the patio.
- There is a small DVD collection of French films that you may watch or borrow.

If your parents or friends send you packages, tell them to write on the package, tell them to write on the package

« EFFETS PERSONNELS USAGÉS SANS VALEUR COMMERCIALE »
(= Used personal items of no commercial value)

Otherwise you may have to pay a hefty customs tax.

Your name
Wellesley in Aix
16 rue Emile Tavan
13100 Aix-en-Provence

What is not allowed at Tavan:

- **speaking English!** We take the language pledge seriously. It exists for your benefit and that of other WIA students. Repeated violations may result in your being asked to leave the center.
- taking naps or using the center as you would your private space at home.

- consuming alcohol except when there is a reception or event organized by the program.
- smoking on the property.

2. THE CITY

Aix has a population of about 145,000, including 40,000 students, mainly enrolled at AMU.

It is located inland, 30 minutes north of Marseille and the Mediterranean coast. The population is less diverse than in Marseille which has drawn many immigrants throughout history, especially from North Africa.

Aix consists of many small streets in the city center, boutiques and shops, outdoor caf  s and restaurants, a “cultural quarter”, and a few museums. It is also known for its colorful markets that attract many tourists, especially in the summer. It is a city rich in history and architecture and was the original capital of Provence, now known as the PACA (Provence, Alpes, C  te d’Azur) region.

Climate and weather in Aix

Provence has a temperate climate and is generally sunny in the fall and spring and very hot in summer. It can be cold between November and February, albeit not as frigid as Boston or New England!

3. SAFETY & SECURITY

Aix is a safe city and students feel comfortable walking everywhere although you should always be aware of your surroundings late at night and avoid deserted areas or parks, for example. It’s always best to walk with someone or in groups at night and, after midnight, to take a taxi. There’s a taxi stand at the Rotonde or you can call one.

- WIA is one of several U.S. programs in Aix and during the tourist season, it also attracts many English speakers. Speaking English (or another language) in public draws attention and can make you a target. The more you speak French, the less likely you will be hassled or targeted – and the more likely you are to meet locals!
- Neighborhoods to avoid at night include public parks which may be deserted or attract unsavory characters, e.g., the *parc Jourdan*, *la Torse* and certain neighborhoods west and north of the city center. We will talk about this upon your arrival in Aix.

Important reminder: If you are a victim of theft, assault or have any concerns, you should contact the WIA Director and make an appointment to discuss the incident. Crimes should be reported to the local police and must also be reported to Wellesley College. It is also important to warn others of at-risk areas, incidents, possible scams, etc.

Your safety and the safety of others is *everyone’s* concern, and Wellesley College and the WIA program take this matter seriously. Assistance and counseling are available in Aix.

Commissariat de police / Main Police Station 04 42 93 97 00

U.S. Consulate in Marseille 04 91 54 92 00

4. HEALTH & MEDICAL MATTERS

French universities don't provide free health services of the kind found on U.S. campuses. This is why students are required to have health insurance with overseas coverage.

All residents in France have a primary care physician or *médecin traitant* for routine care. A consultation with a *médecin généraliste* (GP) costs 26.50 to 31.50 euros, and a specialist at least 50 euros. *SOS Médecins*, for emergency "house calls" (i.e., late at night or on weekends when doctors' offices may be closed) costs approximately 100 euros.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS IN AIX

From a cell phone: 112 for any kind of emergency

SAMU (911 equivalent): 15

Firemen / EMT 18

SOS Médecins in Aix 04 42 26 24 00 (24/7)

HOSPITALS & MEDICAL CENTERS IN AIX

Centre Médical d'Aix-en-Provence: Open 9am-9:30 pm daily, including weekends. 14, rue de la Fourane (near AMU). Walk-in hours, 4 generalists, emergencies.

Centre Médical - Espace Forbin: Several GPs and some specialists. 8, rue Condorcet (off cours Gambetta). By appointment only.

Hôpital Privé de Provence (HPP): 24-hour emergency services and specialists. 235 av. Nicolas de Staël. <https://www.hopital-prive-de-provence.com> (just outside city center). Directory of specialists on website.

Clinique Axiom: Multiple specialists and surgery. Appointments can be made via *Doctolib* 21, avenue Alfred Capus (near WIA) <https://www.cliniqueaxium.fr>

Hôpital d'Aix (public hospital): Emergencies, including psychiatric. Avenue des Tamaris (near WIA). Multiple specialists.

There are laboratories all over Aix if you need a blood test or some other kind of test.

VACCINATIONS

If you need a yellow fever, typhoid, hepatitis A, or other vaccination, make an appointment at the vaccination center:

6 av. Pasteur, Monument Joseph Sec. Tel: 04 42 91 94 87

COUNSELING & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Living and studying abroad constitutes a major transition and can prove stressful at times, especially for students leaving the U.S. for the first time or individuals prone to anxiety. Adjusting to a new culture, language and educational system is tiring, physically and mentally,

particularly during the initial weeks. This is perfectly normal.

Research on cultural adaptation suggests that most people experience highs and lows during an extended sojourn abroad; it is natural to feel homesick or frustrated at times. These feelings are usually short-lived, however. Remember that it's a *process*. Staying positive, exercising and using the relaxation strategies that work best for you will help you deal with the inevitable cultural challenges and misunderstandings.

If you feel overwhelmed or need additional support, professional counseling is available, but you may have to pay up front. Double-check your insurance policy.

You may have to wait a few days for an in-person session with the English-speaking therapists listed below, as emergency consultations are not always possible. Hourly rate: 90 to 120 euros.

If you have been seeing a therapist on a regular basis, you should discuss your needs with him/her and come up with a strategy for addressing them while abroad.

Advice: Ask your therapist to put something in writing in a sealed envelope that you can give to a professional in France; this will save time and allow a local therapist to better assist you.

Chantal ZEDET-SAUNDERS

Licensed Family Therapist (California) / Bilingual English-French
66, avenue Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny
Tél: 06 45 09 74 72
chantalzedet@msn.com

Valérie KHODARA

Member of French Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists
45, avenue Victor Hugo
Tél: 06 62 82 57 65
<https://www.psy-aix-en-provence.fr>

OTHER MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES:

SOS Help: English-speaking listening line (3 – 11 pm every day) 01 46 21 46 46

SOS Amitié: French-speaking line : 09 72 39 40 50 (24/7)

Aix-Marseille Université – Service Inter Universitaire de Médecine Préventive et de Promotion de la Santé (SIUMPPS)

Counseling, stress-reduction workshops, nutritional advice, students with disabilities. 29, av Robert Schuman – Bât. Le Cube (on campus). Tel : 04 13 94 22 80 <https://www.univ-amu.fr/fr/public/siumpps-service-inter-universitaire-de-medecine-prevention-et-de-promotion-de-la-sante>

CAP 48 – Emergency psychological unit at Hôpital d'Aix, avenue des Tamaris (central Aix, near the WIA center). Daily cost (for overnight stays): 800 - 850 euros per day, not including sessions with a psychologist.

Note: Students needing additional time to take exams on account of a medical condition must make this request early on at AMU and Sc Po. One-third additional time is the norm in France.

A final word on health matters:

We cannot overemphasize the importance of students' personal responsibility for their health and well-being while abroad.

Students' rights to privacy and confidentiality are respected, and no information shared with on-site staff is communicated to others without the express permission of students (outside of an emergency or hospitalization in which case parents are contacted).

WIA staff are obligated to report medical emergencies involving hospitalization to Wellesley College, and parents or legal guardians are also notified.

5. LGBTQ+ RESOURCES IN AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Aix-en-Provence offers a variety of resources to support LGBTQ+ students. The region is known for its inclusive environment, with active organizations such as LGBTQ+ PACA providing support and organizing events like Pride marches in nearby cities like Marseille and Arles. Aix-Marseille University and Sciences-Po also demonstrate their commitment to equality by hosting events and roundtables on LGBTQ+ issues and supporting student organizations. Additionally, students can find a welcoming community and engage in various LGBTQ+ activities and festivals throughout the year, ensuring a supportive and enriching experience. See for example

<https://www.lgbt-paca.org> and [Engagement en faveur de l'inclusion des personnes LGBTI+ | Aix-Marseille Université \(univ-amu.fr\)](#)

6. GROUP ACTIVITIES & TRIPS ORGANIZED BY WIA

The program organizes numerous one-day outings and one weekend trip outside Provence each semester. Destinations may vary from one semester to the next, and most are UNESCO World Heritage sites in France. These events are an integral part of the cultural program.

No refunds are given if you choose not to participate in WIA-organized group outings and cultural events. A detailed schedule is sent in advance and all participants follow it.

Note: For insurance-related reasons, visiting friends or family cannot participate.

Spring 2025 group outings and activities are indicated below. Other activities may be added, e.g. optional hike to the Sainte-Victoire. You will receive a schedule upon arrival in Aix. Homestay hosts receive it and may also propose outings in Provence.

Activités & excursions WIA – Spring 2025	
Samedi 18 janvier	Journée à Marseille
Samedi 8 et dimanche 9 mars	Weekend à Montpellier
Samedi 26 avril	Journée sur l'île de porquerolles
Tout au long du semestre	De nombreux spectacles de musique, de danse...

Il y aura également une visite du Camp des Milles en *Histoire de l'immigration en France*. La visite est obligatoire si vous suivez ce cours.

WIA ALUMNI SUGGESTIONS: PLACES TO VISIT IN FRANCE

Many of the places below are accessible by train, bus or coach tours. The Office de Tourisme in Aix offers day trips and tours for which you may be reimbursed from your cultural stipend as long as the activity is in French.

If you purchase a *Carte avantage Jeune* from the SNCF and book in advance, you can save up to 30% on train tickets.

In Provence On the Côte d'Azur

****Marseille**

**** Nice**

****Arles**

****Avignon & les Baux de Provence**

****Cassis (*les calanques*)**

Cannes

Toulon

Orange

Saint-Paul-de-Vence

Sanary-sur-Mer

Hyères

Bandol

Antibes

Nîmes

Saint-Tropez

Gordes

Menton

Le Pont du Gard

Monaco

Martigues – the « Venice » of Provence

Isle-sur-la-Sorgue

Other regions and cities to visit:

****Lyon** – France's third largest city located 90 minutes from Aix

Carcassonne

Les Gorges du Verdon

The Loire Valley with its many châteaux

Strasbourg & Colmar (in Alsace, near the German border)

Grenoble

Toulouse

Montpellier

Bordeaux

V. PRACTICAL INFORMATION - AIX

1. MONEY & FINANCES

How much money you spend will depend on your financial situation, habits and travel plans during the semester. The monthly allowance you receive from WIA/Wellesley in your US bank accounts is sufficient to cover your lunches and incidentals *if you try to live like a typical French student*, e.g., eating in student cafeterias, not traveling every weekend.

You can use your U.S. debit card anywhere in Europe to withdraw money. Make sure the Visa or Mastercard logo is shown on the ATM, called a DAB (*distributeur automatique de billets*) in France. Check with your bank about fees when using your debit card abroad.

If you lose your credit/bank card

- ✓ Call your bank's emergency number to stop payment immediately. *Only the card holder can do this*, so make sure you can access the bank's phone number quickly. For example, you can send yourself an email entitled ICE (in case of emergency), or use Google Drive.
- ✓ Go to the nearest police station to report the theft or loss. You may need an official police report in order to get another credit card.

WIA STIPENDS

- 1) Monthly stipend: mainly for lunches and deposited directly into your U.S. accounts by Wellesley College via OIS.

- **390€ per month** for homestays including 7 evening meals per week
- **475€ to 575€ per month** for homestays including 3 to 5 evening meals per week
- **720€ per month** for students living at the Rossini

- 2) Individual **cultural reimbursement** of up to **€ 300 per semester** for activities of your choosing: dance, yoga or cooking classes, museum visits in France, a sports club membership, etc. You must provide a receipt (*un reçu*). The principle is to encourage all students to engage in activities that involve meeting locals and interacting *in French*. Up to 100€ may be used for a train ticket and accommodations if you wish to spend a weekend in Paris.

***Note:** Personal travel on weekends and during vacation periods are a personal expense. No reimbursements are given for meals not taken with hosts who have agreed to provide a certain number of meals per week. Individual cultural reimbursements cannot be used for personal travel outside of France or activities in English, e.g. guided tours, U.S. films. See next page.*

ALLOCATION CULTURELLE INDIVIDUELLE
Mode d'emploi des remboursements
Maximum 300€ par semestre

Cette allocation sert à :

- Vous permettre de vous inscrire dans un club ou une association afin de partager vos centres d'intérêts et passions **avec des Français et en français.**
- Découvrir la vie culturelle d'Aix et d'autres villes que vous visiterez en France.

Comment ?

Pour être remboursé/e, il faut présenter **un reçu** (un billet, un ticket de caisse...) **ou** une facture avec le prix clairement indiqué pour chaque dépense.

Exemples d'activités régulières

- Ateliers de cuisine, de dessin, de musique, de poterie.
- Cours de yoga, de danse, de théâtre, de zumba.
- Inscription dans un club d'athlétisme, d'aviron, d'équitation.
- Club de randonnée, de tennis ou de natation.

Exemples d'activités ou de visites culturelles ponctuelles

- Visite guidée en français d'une ville ou d'un site culturel.
- Visite de musées et expositions.
- *Carte Cinétoile* (31€) : pour avoir des tarifs réduits et voir des films français ou francophones. Les films américains et/ou en anglais ne sont pas remboursés.
- Billets de théâtre ou de concert (groupes français ou francophones).
- Visite d'un domaine viticole et dégustation de vin (en français).
- Participation à des compétitions ou des courses (semi-marathon, course à pied ...).

Exemples de frais de voyage (suivant la situation sanitaire)

- Voyage organisé par AMU ou Sciences Po pour leurs étudiants **ou** par l'Office du Tourisme (en français).
- Voyage en train en France.

Ne sont pas remboursés :

- Sorties au restaurant ou en boîte de nuit.
- Activités et visites en anglais.
- Voyages hors de France.
- Billets d'avion.

Pour toute question et pour vous faire rembourser, adressez-vous à Célia BOURCY

MONEY-SAVING TIPS

Always carry your **student card** and ask for a student discount (*une réduction étudiant*).

FOOD	OUTINGS	SHOPPING
<p>A balanced meal in a university cafeteria le Resto U (RU) costs around 3€30.</p> <p>A great way to meet French students and save money!</p>	<p>Some museums are free for students (with a student i.d.).</p> <p>Make the most of your Cultural Allowance (see above) to visit monuments, exhibits, museums.</p>	<p>Look for good deals at outdoor markets for clothes & gifts.</p>
<p>Do as the locals: buy local fresh produce in the open air markets for your lunch.</p>	<p>Buy a Carte Cinétoile (see cultural allowance) and see films for under 8 euros.</p>	<p>Think second-hand shops for buying clothes and accessories.</p>
<p>Download the ‘Toogoodtogo’ application on your phone to buy fresh produce at reduced prices at the end of the day.</p>	<p>Check “The Fork” website for good deals on restaurants and specific cuisines.</p>	<p>Check ‘Groupon’ website for reduced prices of all kinds.</p>
<p>French students are often on a tight budget: ask them about their favorite eateries and cafés – and join them!</p>	<p>Remember that in restaurants, <i>menus</i> are cheaper at lunch time and on weekdays.</p>	<p>Check blogs and websites for ‘les bons plans’ (= good deals)</p>

WIA student tips: Where to eat or hang out in Aix		
Cafés / Tea rooms	Eateries in town or near Tavan	
Student-friendly / activities	Low budget (10€ or less)	
Book In Bar	Aux Petits Oignons	Bagelstein
Columbus Café	Crêpes à Gogo	Bigbrod
L'emporté	Falafel Alibaba	Chamas Tacos
Mana Espresso	Le Garde Manger	Fresh Box
Meow Cats Café	Le Moulin des Artistes	Istanbul Kebab
	La Maryse	L'antre de Caliopée
	Lumberjack	Manlio's
	Maison du Burger	Naya
	Maison Nosh	O' Tacos
	Nguyen Tanh	O' Thym
	Nooï	Okko Sushi
	Pittz Falafel	Pita Pit
	Pizza Capri	Simply Food
	Snack Eclipse	Toasty Poke
	Tita	

2. VOLUNTEER & COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteering (*le bénévolat*) on a regular basis is another great way to meet French people while feeling useful. If you're interested, talk to the program assistant and ask for help if necessary. Don't delay, for the longer you wait, the less likely you are to make it happen.

WIA has recently partnered with a private school in central Aix that offers bilingual tracks and seeks native English speakers to engage students in a conversation group or activities in English for one hour a week. This is a great opportunity to learn about the French school system and meet people, including local teachers.

There is no shortage of activities and opportunities to get involved in Aix, but you must be prepared to actively seek them out. The WIA assistant can help you. Students who do so tend to make greater progress in French, meet more people and have a more satisfying experience.

- **Secours Populaire** : www.secourspopulaire.fr/13-aix-en-provence/ Food and clothes distribution, tutoring, helping children with their school work.
- **Secours Catholique** : www.bdr-aixenprovence.secours-catholique.org Varied activities, including after-school tutoring, social activities.

3. LEISURE ACTIVITIES, CLUBS, ETC.

How to find a club or organization

- ✓ See suggestions from past WIA participants.
- ✓ Look into student associations and groups at Sciences Po & AMU. Do this early on!
- ✓ A directory of associations of all kinds in Aix is available at the WIA center.
- ✓ Consult the *Petit Futé* guides at Tavan for other suggestions and ideas.
- ✓ Talk to your French hosts and WIA assistant and ask for advice!
- ✓ Check out websites and Facebook pages. There is one for Aix & Erasmus students.
- ✓ Ask French students in your classes about their favorite hangouts!
- ✓ Check out the Meetup-Aix web site. **Meetup-Aix**: <https://www.meetup.com/fr-FR/>
- ✓ There is also a Café des Langues at AMU and a Polyglotte Club where people of different nationalities gather once a week to meet and converse in multiple languages.
- ✓ **Maisons des jeunes et de la culture** www.mjc-aixenprovence.fr/ 24, boulevard de la République (between the Rotonde and the WIA center) All sorts of activities: hiking, climbing, music, theatre workshops, photography, etc.

TIPS FROM PREVIOUS WIA STUDENTS: HOW TO MEET FRENCH STUDENTS

N° 1 TIP: Don't be afraid to start a conversation!

- *Join clubs and actually talk to people!*
- *The easiest way to do it is in class! I exchanged phone numbers with people sitting next to you with the excuse of sharing notes.*
- *Join the Erasmus Facebook group, ask a student for notes, become friends with your host siblings and they will introduce you to their friends.*
- *I met most of mine through my church. But you have to be PROACTIVE!*
- *At the very least, make sure you go to at least some kind of group meet-up per week. Speak French in public! French students are more likely to approach you.*
- *Take advantage of the Erasmus Buddy Program!*
- *Don't be afraid to talk to people and just be yourself!*
- *Check out student clubs & sports teams at Sciences Po: rugby team, rowing, hip-hop.*
- *Ultimate frisbee team – a great group of people! Everyone is so kind and welcoming.*
- *Mauvais Genre at Sciences Po : debating group (feminist and gender issues)*
- *Choramu – a choir with weekly rehearsals in Marseille. Great director, sweet people.*

SPORTS

Sports at the University	
Centre Sportif Universitaire (CSU) www.sport.univ-amu.fr	Bureau des sports Sciences Po www.sciencespo-aix.fr/contenu/bds/

<u>Fitness Centers & Gyms</u> Private gyms generally cost around 30€/month. Try to negotiate a 4-month membership at a student rate – it often works!		
Biofitness Club https://www.biofitnessclub.fr/	Life Club https://lifeclub.fr/tarifs/visiteux-port-13007/	Keep Cool www.keepcool.fr/salle-de-sport/aix-en-provence

Swimming Pools		
Piscine Yves Blanc http://www.agglo-paysdaix.fr/sports/piscines/etablissements/detail/p/piscine/detail/piscine_yves_blan.html#&panell1-1	Piscine Claude Bollet https://www.guide-piscine.fr/bouches-du-rhone/piscine-claude-bollet-quartier-sud-aix-en-provence-les-milles-464_P	Piscine du Centre Sportif Universitaire https://www.guide-piscine.fr/bouches-du-rhone/piscine-du-centre-sportif-universitaire-aix-en-provence-452_P

Track & Field	Frisbee
Aix Athlé Provence www.aix-athle.com/	AUC Ultimate Frisbee www.t-raix.com/

Squash	Fencing	Cycling
Squash du Pays d'Aix www.squashdupaysdaix.com	Club d'Escrime du Pays d'Aix www.escrime-paysdaix.fr/epa	Amicale Vélo Club www.acvcaix.com

Dance			
Swing, Hip Hop, flamenco, orientale	Zumba	Salsa	Salsa & Swing
<i>Espace Jeunesse</i> www.aixenprovence.fr/Guide-de-lEspace Jeunesse	<i>Shake-Up studio</i> shakeup-studio.fr	<i>Expresso Café</i> www.lexpressocafe.com	<i>Rock Caliente</i> www.rockcaliente.fr

<i>Ecole Solange Savine</i> www.danse-moderne-aix.fr	<i>Aix Studio Ballet</i> www.aixstudioballet.com
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Yoga	
<i>Abhy Yoga</i> www.yoga-aix.com	<i>L'Atelier de soi</i> www.atelierdesoi.fr

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Cooking classes	
<i>L'Atelier des Chefs</i> www.atelierdeschefs.fr/fr/cours/	<i>L'Atelier de cuisine de Mathilde</i> www.lateliercuisinedemathilde.com
<i>Puyricard Atelier Chocolat</i> www.puyricard.fr	

Drawing & Painting Classes	Choirs	Theater workshops
<i>Atelier Indigo</i> www.atelierindigo.fr <i>Lignes et Couleurs</i> www.lignesetcouleursaix.fr <i>L'Atelier libre</i> www.latelierlibre.fr	<i>Choramu</i> (AMU) www.missionculture.univ-amu.fr <i>Sing IEP</i> (Sciences Po) www.sciencespo-aix.fr	<i>Théâtre Ainsi de suite</i> www.ainsidesuite.com <i>Espace Jeunesse</i> www.aixenprovence.fr/Gui de de-l-Espace-Jeunesse <i>MJC Prévert</i> www.mjc-aixenprovence.fr

We urge all WIA students to sign up for at least one organized, regular activity involving weekly interaction with French students or locals. Start with AMU and Sciences Po groups!

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Check *l'Agenda Culturel*: monthly events guide available at the Office du Tourisme
www.aixenprovence.fr

VENUES Music, theater, dance 'Carte des Théâtres' (18-30 ans) : (15€) to get reduced-price theater, concert tickets		
Conservatoire d'Aix www.aixenprovence.fr/Conservatoire	Grand Théâtre de Provence www.lestheatres.net	Pavillon Noir www.preljocaj.org

MUSEUMS		
Musée Granet & Collection Planque www.museegranet.aixenprovence.fr	Centre d'Art Caumont www.caumont-centredart.com	Fondation Vasarely www.fondationvasarely.org

CINEMAS www.lescinemasaixois.com/ 'Cinétoile card' (31 euros) to get reduced-price movie tickets Buy online: www.lescinemasaixois.com/nos_offres#cinetoile			
Le Cézanne 9 screens, foreign films often dubbed in French	Le Renoir 3 screens, movies in original language with French subtitles	Le Mazarin 3 screens, movies with French subtitles	Institut de l'Image at the <i>Cité du Livre</i> shows classic films and holds festivals

4. MARKETS / CAFES / RESTAURANTS

Open air markets

<p><i>Every morning 8am - 1pm</i></p> <p><i>Place Richelme</i></p> <p>Fresh fruits and vegetables and other local/regional products</p>
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Every Tuesday / Thursday / Saturday morning
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<p><i>Place Richelme, Place des Prêcheurs, Place Verdun</i></p> <p><i>8am - 1 pm</i></p>	<p><i>Place de la Mairie</i></p> <p><i>8am - 1 pm</i></p>	<p><i>Cours Mirabeau</i></p> <p><i>8am - 2:30pm</i></p>
Fresh produce, cheese, breads, fish, etc.	Flower market	Clothing, fabrics, etc.

Cafés, bars, clubs

As a major university town, Aix offers an active nightlife, particularly in good weather. Ask your French classmates where they hang out and when you can join them!

Restaurants

Check out the *Petit Futé* and La fourchette.com (Renamed The Fork) for recommendations!

www.petitfute.com

<https://www.thefork.fr/restaurants/aix-en-provence-c8884>

5. RELIGIOUS SERVICES & GROUPS

Catholic

- **Cathédrale St-Sauveur**
34, Place des Martyrs de la Résistance
- **Église du St Esprit**
Student Mass every Sunday at 7 pm
40, rue Espariat
- **Église St Jean de Malte**
Place St Jean de Malte

Protestant

- **Église protestante unie de France**
4, rue Villers
- **Église réformée évangélique**
15, rue de la Masse
- **ICCP International Christian Community of Provence**
15, rue de la Masse - *Service for International students on Sunday evenings*
- **Église protestante évangélique Le Chemin**
Impasse Grassi
Sunday, 10 am

Other religious communities and groups

- **Synagogue** – very active community, including an elementary school & youth group 3, rue de Jérusalem (located near the Rossini & Mirabeau residence-hotel)
- **Mosques**
5, rue des Gondraux / 3, rue E.Henriot
- **GBU: Groupe Biblique Universitaire**
33, avenue J. Ferry - *Bible study group Tuesdays, 8pm*
- **FEU: Foyer Évangélique Universitaire**
2a, rue Montmajour - *Lieu d'accueil et de vie, café, animations (near AMU)*

6. SHOPS & SHOPPING HOURS, BOOKSTORES

In Aix, some small shops close between 12:30 and 2 or 3pm.

On Sundays and holidays, small grocery stores open in the town center (usually only in the mornings): Petit Casino, Vival, Cocci Market, Proxi Market, Daily Monop'.

Monoprix is a chain of supermarket/department stores throughout France.

Two locations in Aix: Cours Mirabeau and Allées Provençales. Open all day.
Monday-Saturday 8:30am to 9:00pm; Sunday 9 am to 1 pm.

Monop' (smaller version) several shops dotted around the town.
Monday-Saturday 8:30am to midnight; Sunday 9 am to 1 pm

Intermarché (near WIA)

Carrefour Market located near the Rossini residence hall.

Picard is a chain of high-quality frozen foods in France. Look for the blue snowflake!

Librairie Goulard is the main bookstore located on the Cours Mirabeau.

Librairie Hôtel Boyer d'Eguilles is a bookstore located in a 17th century *hôtel particulier*

Mon Chat Pitre is an independent bookstore located on rue Montigny, where shelter cats are free to roam the aisles and sleep on shelves.

Book-In-Bar is the local international bookstore with a café, free wifi and a bulletin board for anyone looking to tutor, babysit, exchange French-English conversation, etc.

See *Le Petit Futé* for addresses of used bookstores in Aix.

7. POST OFFICE

Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm and Saturday from 9am to 12pm.

- La Petite Poste, Place de la Mairie (closed between 12h -13h45)
- La Grande Poste, near the Rotonde just behind the Office de Tourisme

If you need to send a package or letter overnight:

FedEx: 0820 123 800

UPS: 0821 233 877

8. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

In Aix itself, the only form of public transportation is the **Aix-en-Bus** network, with many lines covering the city. WIA provides all students with a bus pass for the term.

Note: Some lines stop operating around 9 or 9:30 pm on weekdays and 6 pm on weekends and some may not operate on holidays or Sunday. If there is a WIA group activity scheduled in the evening, students who live outside the center may be reimbursed for taxis.

Intercity buses

From the bus station, la ***gare routière*** (av.de l'Europe) you can catch buses to numerous destinations, including the L40 to the TGV station and airport and the L50 to Marseille.

There are also buses to Cassis, Arles and other coastal or mountain towns in the Provence Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) region; this is a great way to explore the region!

Note: A city bus is called "un bus". The term for buses between cities is "un car".

LER (Ligne Express Régionales): www.info-ler.fr/465-3C-Horaires-de-bus-et-cars-de-la-Region-Sud-96-Provence-Alpes-Cote-dAzur-3E-LER.html

Cartreize : www.lepilote.com/fr/part10/le-reseau/80

The **L50 navettes** to Marseille leave every 10 minutes or so on weekdays. Travel time: 30-45 minutes. Cost: 2€ for a round-trip ticket valid for 24 hours with Aix-en-Bus pass.

www.navetteaixmarseille.com

By train

From the **Gare SNCF** (town-center), there are daily trains to Marseille and regional trains to towns north of Aix and in the Alps.

Note: It's not a good idea to take late-night trains to or from Marseille. The L50 bus is safer.

From the **Gare TGV** (also known as **Aix TGV** and located 18 km from the center of Aix) there are high-speed (TGV) trains to Lyon, Paris, Lille, Nice and other cities.

- Travel time from Aix TGV to Paris (Gare de Lyon) is 3 hours on the TGV (direct train). **TGV tickets are by reservation only and seats are assigned.** You must pre book.

The **L40 bus** to the TGV station leaves every 15 minutes from the *gare routière*. Travel time: 20-25 minutes. Discounted rates for students and young people under 25.

<https://www.lepilote.com/fr/part10/navettes-aeroport/1062/aix-en-provence-aix-tgv/1071>

Students may use their cultural stipend to purchase a **Carte Avantage Jeune** which costs 49 euros and enables you to buy discounted train tickets (as much as 30-40%). The farther in advance you purchase the ticket, the bigger the discount. A worthwhile investment!

Air travel

- Aéroport Marseille-Provence

The Marseille-Provence airport is 32 km from Aix, and accessible by taxi (app. 60 euros) or the L40 shuttle bus which leaves every 15-20 minutes between 5:30 am and 11:30. Cost of 1-way ticket: 8€20. If you buy a multi-trip ticket (10 rides), the cost can be as low as 6 euros per trip.

Marseille-Paris travel time by plane: around 1 hour

Regular airlines: www.marseille.aeroport.fr

Low cost airlines, such as EasyJet or RyanAir: www.mp2.aeroport.fr

Taxis in Aix and Marseille

Aix: 04 42 27 71 11 or go to the Rotonde where there is a taxi stand

Marseille: 04 91 02 20 20

Marseille also has a subway. You can purchase tickets in subway stations.

Warning! If you go to Marseille at night for a soccer game, concert or other event that ends

late, you may want to book a hotel and spend the night, especially if you are alone. ***The area near Saint-Charles train station is not safe at night and should be avoided.***

9. TRAVELING OUTSIDE AIX & COMMUNICATION

Wellesley College and the WIA program take student safety and health very seriously and expect all participants to do the same and act responsibly, including during their free time.

All students are required to inform the WIA Director via [email and Google form](#) when they leave Aix and provide details on departure and return dates, destinations, form of transportation, etc. This is not an attempt to monitor you or invade your privacy. Rather, it is a ***safety and security matter*** in the event of an emergency or unexpected event, e.g., terrorist incident, health crisis.

As the primary emergency contact person in Aix, the WIA Director is responsible for communicating with Wellesley College and/or students' home institutions in case of a crisis or emergency. She must account for students' safety and whereabouts during crises and communicate updates to people in the U.S.

The WIA Director also notifies the group via email when she will be away from Aix and indicates who the emergency contact person in Aix is in her absence.

We may need to contact you if you're away from Aix. We also may need to reassure both your home institutions and family or guardians that you're safe and all is well. It's normal for parents and loved ones to worry, especially if they hear or read disturbing news accounts. Remember that they may be hearing a different perspective and alarming media reports on their end.

Repeated failure to notify the WIA Director of your absences from Aix and whereabouts will result in a warning and notification to Wellesley College or your home university.



WELLESLEY-IN-AIX

CHARTRE DES ÉTUDIANT·E·S

The pledge below is intended to ensure compliance with important policies and, above all, a safe and rewarding experience for all. The guidelines are consistent with the WIA mission and individual goals as well as Wellesley's Honor Code: (<http://www.wellesley.edu/GeneralJudiciary/procedures.html>)

All participants will be expected to sign this document upon their arrival in France.

Your signature indicates you have read the Student Guide, understand the rules and expectations, and pledge to respect them. Repeated violations may result in a warning and home institutions in the U.S. being contacted. Students who repeatedly put themselves or others at serious risk may face dismissal.

I agree to

- 1) speak only French with other WIA participants during group activities, at the WIA Center, in class, with homestay hosts and at all WIA events or gatherings where WIA is represented.
- 2) read and respond to all email and WhatsApp requests from WIA staff, especially the Director, **within 48 hours** and confirm my participation in WIA group events and activities with the Assistant.
- 3) inform the WIA Director **by Google Form** of my absences from Aix (weekends, holidays ...) and provide relevant details in the event of a problem or emergency: departure and return dates, destination, type of accommodation, solo travel or with friends.
- 4) be respectful of my homestay hosts and their home and make a genuine effort to interact and converse with them at mealtimes, participate in household tasks and generally be considerate of their needs and occasional desire for privacy.
- 5) immediately report to WIA staff any problem related to my housing and accommodations in Aix, whether in a homestay or at the Rossini (e.g., theft, damages, malfunctioning equipment, etc.) and agree to pay for any damages or repairs due to my unintentional actions.
- 6) abide by the rules at the Tavan Center pertaining to the use of common areas and equipment, language of communication and respect for others' rights, including WIA staff.
- 7) take my studies seriously, attend all classes and comply with WIA academic policies as well as those of its partner institutions and meet with the WIA Director monthly to discuss my academic progress and provide the necessary information to ensure transfer credit.
- 8) be an excellent ambassador of the WIA program and a "good citizen", i.e., showing consideration and respect for French hosts, fellow students, WIA and other staff and acknowledging that my actions may impact others and the WIA program in general.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

CONTACT INFORMATION

WELLESLEY COLLEGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Wellesley College Office of International Study

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AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Centre Wellesley-in-Aix

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