

## Letter from Genny in France

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France is one of those places we've all wanted to travel to, but never really thought was possible. The plane ride here was an interesting one. The airline that brought me here was huge. With four seats in the middle, and three seats on either side of you, it was rather spacious for an overseas flight. When I stepped foot out of the plane into France, my first steps were in great excitement, but an almost fear of what I was about to encounter. As I have never traveled anywhere so far, or by myself, I neither knew what to expect, nor what I was about to encounter. Charles De Gaulle Airport is one of the largest airports I've ever seen! As soon as I stepped foot off the plane, it was apparent to me that I wasn't in the United States anymore! Although everyone tells you that "Everyone in France speaks English!" the fact is that "Everyone here speaks French!" If you don't know the language, you truly have a hard time getting around.

When I finally got my baggage, as tired as I was, I ventured out into the open French air. Outside, I quickly found the steward for the bus and asked him, with my

American-French "Où est la guerre?" instead of "Où est la Gare?" He looked at me so strangely, and I realized that I had asked "Where is the war" instead of "Where is the train station" (the French take the pronunciation of their language very seriously, and for good reason). When I made it to the train station of Montparnasse in the center of Paris, (That's right, the capital of France!) I had just seen the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, and several other parts of the city that we've all seen in movies, pictures, or in postcards. It's really one of the most wondrous places I have ever seen. I could have cried from joy if I wasn't so terrified to be so far from home on my own the first day. I caught the train from Paris to Angers, and was met immediately by the teaching assistants of the school. The very same people who would be teaching me phonetics, pronunciation, idiomatic phrases, and the culture of their country. The woman with whom I was to live, picked me up at the bus station and drove me to the place I would call my home for three and a half months. The cars here are much smaller than in the U.S. They are much more fuel efficient, but are as long as you are tall.

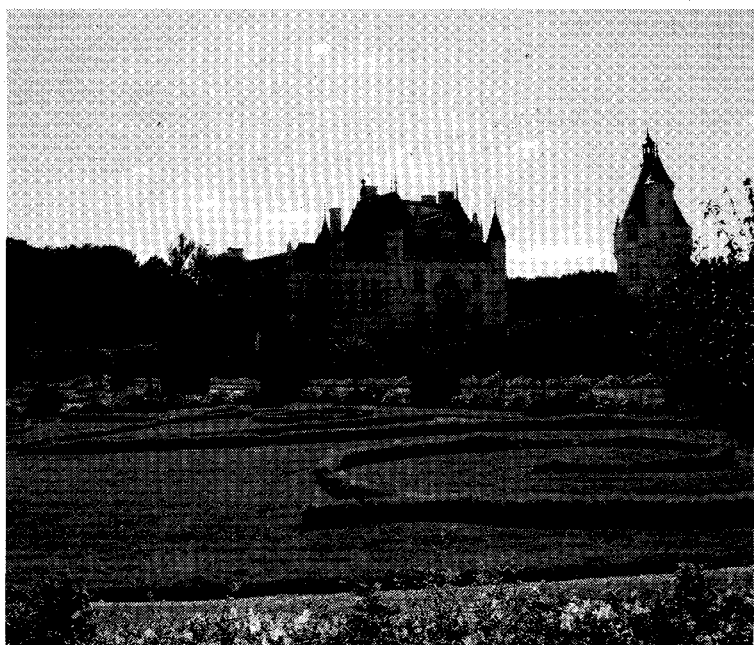


Photo courtesy of: Genevieve Boisvert

Scenic picture of the Castle Chenonceau in France.

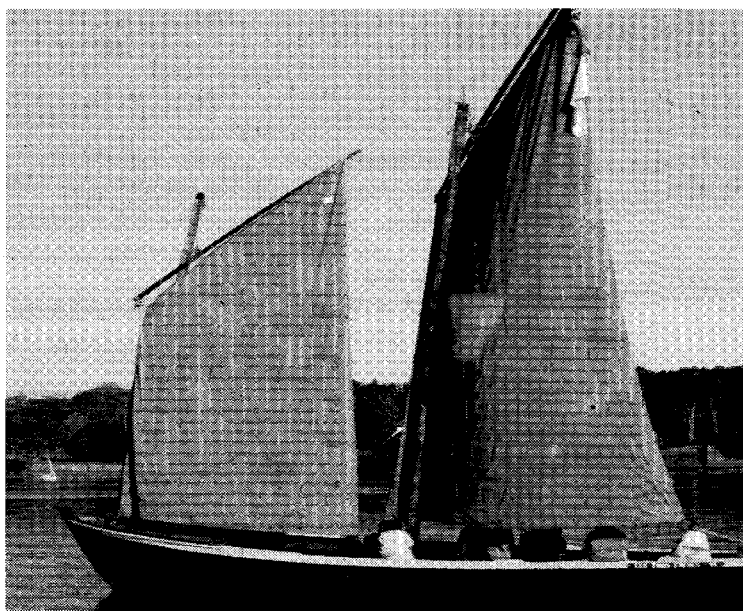


Photo courtesy of: Genevieve Boisvert

On an adventure across a river, Genny takes a picture of a boat similar to the one she was on.

The food here is one of the best things I can tell anyone about. Breakfast is very sugary, but good. Often the French breakfast consists of bread with butter, a crepe with jam, or chocolate (yeah, that's what I said, chocolate for breakfast!), and tea with a type of mini-cake called a Madeline. At first it was a lot to get used to; chocolate for breakfast, but as much walking as you do here, the sugar really comes in handy to give you those bursts of energy when you're running to catch the last bus of the hour! Lunches are very nice, usually. Both lunch and dinner have several courses. For lunch, you first have a salad, like stuffed tomatoes over lettuce with rice, then some vegetables, and the main course, followed by cheese, and a dessert. All lunches here have either Merlot, or Bordeaux, water, and OJ to drink. Dinners here can last anywhere from one hour to three! No kidding! It's very important to do as much homework before dinner, because you won't get back to your room before 9:00pm most nights (as the French eat later than Americans do). The French, from what I've experienced use meals more for conversation and conservation of their culture rather than the primary source of sustenance. Dinners at my

hostel (a place with an indigenous family that provides you with room and board) consist of a soup, salad, a course of vegetables, meat, a pasta or casserole. Then cheese and a dessert, and of course, all French meals come with bread! Lots and lots of bread! Yum!

The classes here are great! You learn a lot, and you learn it quick. It's amazing what you learn when you have to talk to people. You can't try to revert to your English for backup here, they want you to use your French (after-all that's why you're here!) no matter how poor you speak it to explain what's in your head!

Computers? French keyboards are quite different form American keyboards.



Photo courtesy of: Genevieve Boisvert

The letters are placed in a different order from what we are used to. The internet is not something that is come by regularly in French house holds. There are however internet café's with free wireless, computer labs, and the post office for sending handwritten letters. There is so much to do here, and not enough time to do it all. If you travel, you must come with an eager, open mind and the predisposition to talk as much as you can, no matter how bad you sound. I've had my home-sick days, but the world abroad is so interesting and fun, you can't help but be excited for yourself. There are castles on the side of the road, vineyards everywhere, old buildings, and a beauty unmatched by anywhere else in the world.

Wish you were here!