

Travelling in France:

Essential Communication for the Smart Tourist

A Languages at Home Publication



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12. Shopping in France

THE FRENCH LOVE TO SHOP. Surveys indicate that the French devote an average of about 30 minutes to shopping a day, more than any other developed country. At the same time, it is the country where people work the least, thus they have more time for shopping. France still has the reputation to be the country of fashion, luxury, beauty products, even though many other countries excel in these industries. Shopping is an important activity in France, and the French like to encourage the open air markets and the independent boutiques, even if more and more chains are trying to take over.

Contrary to the US where you can enjoy sales almost all year around, they only happen twice a year in France: the winter sales start in January, the summer sales at the end of June, by governmental decree. Sometimes, you can find other *promotions* (special discounts) all throughout the year...

Faire les soldes (sales shopping) is always a fun activity in France, and many French people wait for the sales to do their "real" shopping.

When you plan your shopping days while vacationing, don't forget to note that stores are closed on Sundays and are usually open until 7:00 pm during the week. If you wish to practice your French, you should go to the boutiques instead of chain stores, or go to open air markets to buy some produce instead of going to supermarkets. If you're shopping for presents, you can ask the shop clerk if she can gift wrap your item; most places offer to do it and they do a beautiful job of it.

The vocabulary of shopping and sales

Faire du shopping/faire des achats = to go clothes, furniture, gift shopping, etc... (not food)

Faire des courses = to go food shopping

Le marché = the open air market

Un magasin = a shop

Un grand magasin = a department store

Le supermarché = the supermarket

Les rayons = the departments or aisles (in a supermarket or department store)

Le centre commercial = the mall

Une (bonne) affaire = a (good) deal

Une boutique = a small shop (for clothing or decoration usually)

Une cabine d'essayage = a fitting room

Essayer = to try on

Faire du lèche-vitrines (lit.: window licking) = to go window shopping

Une promotion/Une promo = a special discount

La taille = the size

La pointure = size for shoes

Passer à la caisse = go to the cashier

Un vendeur (masc.)/*une vendeuse* (fem.) = a sales clerk

Faire la queue = to wait in line

Faire les soldes = shopping during the sales

En liquide/en espèces/cash = 3 ways to say "cash"

La carte bleue/la carte de crédit/la carte bancaire = debit or credit card

Les heures d'ouverture = opening hours

La caisse = the check-out stand



AUDIO

Read, listen and repeat out loud:

1) Questions that the sales clerk might ask you

Quelle taille ? = Which size?

Vous voulez essayer... ? = Do you want to try it on...?

Est-ce que ça vous plaît ? = Do you like it?

Vous voulez un sac ? = Do you want a bag?

Vous payez/réglez comment ? = How are you paying?

2) What you might ask or say to the sales clerk

Avez-vous la taille "small" ? = Do you have size "small"? (many shops will carry small, medium or large but also they'll size from 34 to 52, being 40 or 42 medium, but most sales clerk will help you find the right size; idem for shoe sizes).

Avez-vous une autre couleur ? = Do you have another color?

Où est la cabine d'essayage ? = Where is the fitting room?

C'est combien ? = How much is it?

C'est en solde ? = It's on sale?

On peut l'échanger ? = Can we exchange it?

Je peux payer avec une carte de crédit ? = Can I pay with a credit card?

Pouvez-vous faire un paquet cadeau ? = Can you gift wrap it?

Je regarde seulement, merci ! = I'm only looking, thanks!

Je cherche un t-shirt avec la tour Eiffel. = I'm looking for a t-shirt with the Eiffel tower.

J'aimerais l'essayer, s'il vous plaît. = I would like to try it on, please.

J'aimerais essayer une taille plus grande, s'il vous plaît. = I would like to try a bigger size, please.



Je vais réfléchir, merci ! = I'm going to think (about the item), thank you!

Je reviens plus tard. = I'm coming back later.

3) What you might ask or say when you go food shopping

Où est le marché le plus proche ? = Where is the closest open air market?

Bonjour, est-ce que je peux me servir ? = Hello, can I help myself?

J'aimerais un melon bien mûr pour ce soir, s'il vous plaît. = I'd like a really ripe melon for tonight, please.

Je voudrais un petit morceau de gruyère, s'il vous plaît. = I'd like a little piece of gruyere, please.

Où est le rayon des chocolats ? = Where is the chocolate aisle?

Est-ce que vous avez du champagne au frais ? = Do you have any cold champagne?

Je voudrais un kilo de cerises et une barquette de fraises, s'il vous plaît. = I'd like a kilo of cherries and a basket of strawberries, please.

C'est au poids ou à la pièce ? = Is it by weight or each one?

Une botte de carottes = a bunch of carrots.



--- TIP ---

**If you wish to go to an "open air market,"
you need to use the word *marché*.
If you wish to go a "supermarket,"
then use the word *supermarché*.**

<http://www.frenchaccentmagazine.com/trav/book.html>