

FRENCH PROGRAM

UCO-CIDEF/ Angers (France)

Summer 2019

FAQ

Everything you need to know about the Angers Program

1. What is the faculty-led French program in Angers?

- The faculty-led French program has been located in the city of Angers for many years. Angers is a medium-size university town near the Loire valley, only 90 minutes from Paris by TGV train.
- Students enroll in UH language or culture courses designed only for our students as intensive “total immersion” courses. Students receive UH credit upon satisfactory completion of the program. Classes are held in the Centre International d’Études Françaises (CIDEF), at the Université Catholique de l’Ouest (UCO), a well-established private university located in the heart of the old city.
- For more information about the CIDEF go to <http://www.cidef.uco.fr/>
- For more information about UCO go to <https://www.uco.fr/fr>
- All upper-level courses offered through the Angers program will count toward the major/minor in French.
- The program includes several excursions that are part of the total learning experience.

2. What is the advantage of “homestay”? What if I don’t like the idea of staying with a family?

If you are worried about the lack of privacy or the constraints of family life, please rest assured that host families will give you as much independence as you want. Most families host students year-round, and are used to giving students full autonomy. Your only obligation is to take your meals (usually dinner) with your host family. Some students prefer a more inclusive “family life” and families will gladly include them in their activities and events. Students should express their preference on the “family placement form”.

Living with a French family is one of the most rewarding experiences of a study program in France, as it is a unique opportunity to see French culture from the “inside”. The

isolation and “English-only” environment of a campus dorm is not the proper way to explore French culture or to progress in French verbal skills on short-term programs.

3. Will I know about my family prior to departure?

Yes, you will, about 3 or 4 weeks before departure. You will get you family’s address, email and phone number and we encourage you to contact them prior to departure.

4. How will I know that this is the “right” family for me?

Selection of families is based on the questionnaire you fill out. Please be very thorough in your answers, to insure proper placement. We accommodate all reasonable requests.

5. If I don’t like my family, can I be moved to another?

All families are selected with great care and many have hosted our UH students for several years. However, there are sometimes unexpected problems or issues that make it preferable to move a student to another family. Remember that families make plans long in advance to welcome you into their homes, and the decision to withdraw a student must be reasonable and fair to both parties.

6. How far will my family live from campus?

Some families live very close, some a bit further out and most likely, you will need to travel to school by bus, a very safe and common mode of transportation in French cities. The average bus ride to and from campus is about 10 to 15 minutes. Bus passes to and from school will be provided to you at no extra cost. However, if your family lives within a 15-minute walk to school, they will probably not be near a bus route to UCO.

7. How much money should I bring for my personal expenses?

That depends entirely on your personal budget. This is an all-expense paid program. You should plan to bring the same amount you would spend in Houston for your outings and entertainment.

8. Should I bring euros?

- You should bring some (limited) cash. We suggest about 200 euros. You can change your currency in Houston or wait until you are in France. You can get cash at any ATM machine in France using a US credit card. French banks are not allowed by law to charge a commission for the use of their ATMs. However, your US bank will usually charge you a transaction fee each time you withdraw cash.
- If you bring a credit card, be sure it is one from a major bank, which allows you to make purchases or withdraw cash worldwide. Please inform your bank that you will be traveling abroad, as “unusual” places of purchase will be “flagged” and you may not be able to complete your purchase.

9. Should I carry my passport with me at all times?

Only when you travel outside of France or plan to change money will you need your passport. You will have a CIDEF ID card, which is accepted everywhere and can be used for discounts in museums, movie theaters, etc. Please leave your passport in a safe place at your family's home.

10. What is the exchange rate between the Euro and the dollar?

There are many websites that can give you the prime exchange rate for the day, such as <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>. The exchange rate you will get will include other charges and may not be exactly the same.

Students can also buy currency online, you can check out various sites such as <http://www.travelex.com/currency-exchange-locations/houston-galleria-houston-tx/>

11. Do all European countries also use the Euro?

Yes, most of the EU countries do.

12. Is Angers a "safe" place?

Angers, like any other city in France or Europe is only unsafe if you allow it to be. Although there is far less crime in France (where there is a total ban on guns) than in the US, "petty crimes" are not uncommon, especially in Paris, and being a foreigner, you may be more of a target than a French person, simply because you tend to "stick out" more. My only advice: be aware of your surroundings!

Here are some tips:

- do not walk around with your valuables in obvious reach of another person (in your open shoulder bag, back pack, or back pocket).
- When walking in public, hold your purse or bag tightly. When sitting at a café, do not leave your purse on the table or on the floor, or on the back of your chair.
- In public transportation, have your money or tickets ready before you get on the bus or train.
- Only bring one credit card at a time when you go out.
- Do not get distracted by a stranger addressing you, this is the most commonly used trick of pickpockets. Don't be afraid to appear rude.
- If you feel unsafe in any given situation, you probably are, and need to seek immediate assistance. ALWAYS carry the Director's cell phone number and your French family's phone number.
- If you are lost, find a good, well-lit spot to stop and use your phone. Don't be afraid to ask people for help. They will gladly come to your rescue!
- Be discreet. No need to call attention to yourself by speaking loudly in English.
- Report any occurrence of what you might consider "harassment" to the Director.
- NEVER VENTURE OUT BY YOURSELF IN PLACES YOU DON'T KNOW.
- Always use the "buddy system" when you go out, especially at night.

13. Are activities planned for weekends?

If you look at the “Class schedule and itinerary” (online), you will notice that weekends are free. This is to allow students time to travel on their own, if they wish to do so. There are many things to do around Angers, and many students in the past have chosen to stay in town and enjoy the beautiful surrounding region and the city itself. If you want to travel, you should plan your trips in advance. It is always more fun to travel in small groups. If you need help planning your own excursions, please contact me at giacchetti@uh.edu

Optional Paris excursion. Based on student demand.

Students who would like to go as a group on a weekend Paris excursion must reserve their own accommodations in advance. The program director will accompany them and help them with the organization of their activities, places to visit, and will give them a special orientation session. However, this is not an excursion that is included in our program fee, and students may plan activities in Paris as they wish.

14. What is the best way to travel within France?

Trains will take you anywhere you wish to go in France or Europe. The SNCF (train company) also offers bus fares on the OUIBUS that are much cheaper than the train. Go to:

<https://en.oui.sncf/en/ouibus>

15. Where do I go to get information about train fares?

The national railroad company (SNCF) has a website where you can purchase your tickets, <https://www.sncf.com/sncv1/en/services/tickets-bookings>

The French website is:

<https://www.sncf.com/fr>

16. What about traveling outside of France?

Although I do not recommend spending so much time and money traveling to other countries when there is so much to see in France, I understand that some students want to see as much as they can of Europe. Sometimes, the cheapest way to travel is by air. There are “low cost” airlines, such as Easy Jet which will take you to London, Amsterdam, etc. for cheaper than the train. Make sure that the airline has flights from CDG or Orly airports. Any airline departing from the Beauvais airport should be avoided. Also check with Air France, if you are under 25. They have “youth fares”.

17. What is the weather like in France in June?

France has a very moderate climate; temperatures rarely fall below 40 degrees in the winter or rise above 90 in the summer (although we are experiencing more “heat waves” than in the past). However, the weather is very unpredictable. In that late spring season, it is usually cool at night (in the 60s), and pleasantly warm during the day (in the high 70s or low 80’s).

18. What should I never forget to pack?

Bring a light raincoat and a couple of light sweaters. Comfortable walking shoes are a MUST! French people dress very casually. Jeans or casual pants are best. Shorts are not as common as in the US but are fine. Avoid wearing “flip-flops” to school.

19. How about electronics and electric items?

In Europe, not only the electric current is different, but the wall plugs are too. You will need an adapter for all electric and electronic devices. All phones, laptop computers, cameras, video cameras, come already equipped for both US and European standards. All you need is a small inexpensive adapter (to be found in hardware stores, computer stores, or the airport). Hair dryers, even the dual standard ones, are notoriously poorly designed to withstand the electric current in France. Some get too hot, some not enough. At your own risk!

20. What about baggage on transatlantic flights?

Regulations concerning number, weight and size limits for baggage vary from one airline to another. Please go to your chosen airline’s website and find their luggage requirements.

However, I urge you to **travel light**.

Laundry is washed every week (see program rules), so you do not need more than 3 pairs of pants and 4 or 5 tops.

21. What about toiletry and medication?

All toiletry articles can be purchased in France, but are a bit more expensive than in the US.

All “over-the-counter” medication (aspirin etc.) can only be purchased in pharmacies in France. They are usually cheaper than in the US because of government regulations.

Only prescriptions by a French doctor will be filled in French pharmacies.

Please remember to fill your prescriptions before you go. Many prescription drugs available in the US are not sold in France.

22. How about using my cell phone in France?

US phones can be used in France. You should find out about international plans from your phone company.

You can also purchase a French prepaid SIM card (available at the CDG airport), but they only work on unlocked phones.

Keep in mind that there are many public places in Angers that have free Wi-Fi access.

There are many websites where you can find advice on the most economical ways to use your phone in Europe. Here is one:

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/go-ahead-tours/tips-for-using-your-cell-phones_b_5484242.html

My advice: turn off your data usage, and go Wi-Fi.

Also, when calling home or getting calls from home, remember that France is 7 hours ahead of the US (central time).

23. Will I have free Internet access in France?

Yes you will! The CIDEF will provide wireless access during business hours. Angers is equipped with free internet access in many public areas and commercial venues.

Your family will also provide free Wi-Fi connection.

24. Will I need my laptop computer in France?

You will need Internet access for class in upper-level courses, so you will need your laptop. It is not required in second-year classes. However, we ask that you limit your time on the internet. After all, your time in France is best spent.....in France!

25. How do I get in touch with the rest of the group before departure?

All names and addresses of participants will be disclosed to the group (with your permission), to allow students to communicate among themselves.

26. How do I get in touch with the rest of the group in Angers?

A list of the families' phone numbers/emails/street addresses will be given to all participants. The director's cell phone number will also be given to you, so that you can be "in touch" at all times.

27. How do I get my airline ticket? Which airline do you recommend?

You can contact a travel agent or purchase your ticket directly from the airline. You can purchase your ticket through "discounters" as well. **Air France (or their partner airline, Delta)** is the only carrier with direct flights to Paris. However, you can find much cheaper flights if you are willing to make stops.

STA is a student travel agency, and they usually have better deals and more service than the typical discounters. They can be reached at <http://www.statravel.com/>

28. WHAT ABOUT GETTING TO ANGERS?

- You must book a ticket departing on **JUNE 1** at the latest, as all flights to Europe from the US have a **next day arrival**.
- ARRIVAL IN PARIS: We will be departing for Angers by bus from CDG-Roissy airport in Paris on **JUNE 2. THE BUS WILL DEPART AT 2:00 PM**. This means that **you MUST have a landing time in Paris no later than 12:30 PM** (expect long lines at the passport control).
- RETURN TO THE US: For our return to Paris CDG from Angers on June 30, our bus will leave from Angers at **7:30 AM**. We will arrive at CDG airport no earlier than **12:30 PM**. Please be sure to **book your flight back to the US no earlier than 3:30 PM on June 30**, or arrange for separate transportation on the day before, or hotel stay in Paris on June 30 (inexpensive hotel rooms can be booked at the CDG airport). Ask the director for help.

29. How much is UH tuition (and fees) for this program?

This information is listed online. Please go to <http://www.uh.edu/sfs/> And click on “tuition and fees”.

30. What is included in the program fee?

All living expenses for the duration of the program are included, i.e. room and board (private room, 3 meals per day), all class material, all excursions including lectures and orientation tour, admission to museums and monuments, all ground transportation (transfer to and from airport, bus for excursions, bus to and from school if applicable), all UCO fees (including use of facilities, library, internet access, health clinic with attending nurse, 24/7 staff assistance), farewell dinner.

NOT INCLUDED: airfare, UH tuition and fees, required medical insurance:

(<http://www.uh.edu/learningabroad/health/cisi/>)

As part of your \$3,600 program fee, we will collect a \$75 non-refundable application fee (pending approval).

31. What is the UH “fee waiver”?

Since the summer of 2009, students who have participated in the faculty-led study abroad programs have received a fee waiver of \$500 for 6 credit hours. However, this waiver is not “automatic” and may not apply.

32. Are there scholarships available?

Yes, scholarships are available through Learning Abroad. Please go to <http://www.uh.edu/learningabroad/>

The French program will provide a few scholarships.

The Alliance Française offers a \$3500 scholarship for study in France. It may be used for study in any program, including the CIDEF (mandatory six week stay).

33. How do I register with LEARNING ABROAD?

Please go to https://uh.via-trm.com/traveler/users/sign_in

You must enroll with Learning Abroad after admission into the Angers Program.

34. Who are the program leaders/administrators?

At UH:

Program Director: Dr. Claudine Giacchetti: Giacchetti@uh.edu

Business Administrator: Ms. Devianee Vasanjee: dcvasanj@Central.UH.EDU

At UCO/CIDEF (Angers)

CIDEF director: Ms. Florence Plessis

UCO director of student housing: Ms. Dominique LeGal

35. What is the application deadline?

The application deadline is 2/15/2019. After the deadline, only “emergency” requests may be approved (such as graduating seniors needing the courses), based on availability.

IMPORTANT: the program will be closed when the maximum quota of 25 students is reached, even if it is earlier than the deadline.

If you are enrolled in the Angers Program but do not make the first payment on or before the deadline (TBA), you will be dropped and will lose your application fee. Re-instatement will not be guaranteed.

It is the student’s responsibility to check deadlines. Reminders will be sent via email.

Note on email: all correspondence with the students will be done via email. It is the students’ responsibility to keep track of their incoming email messages and provide the director with a working email address. Make sure that your email account is set to accept “multiple recipient” emails from giacchetti@uh.edu or giacchet@central.uh.edu