

# How to keep in touch while studying abroad in France

**A comprehensive guide to saving money on broadband deals and mobile phone costs while you're studying abroad.**

**Researched and compiled by Ofcom accredited broadband, TV and phone comparison site [www.cable.co.uk](http://www.cable.co.uk)**

France has some dramatic differences between cities and the rural provinces, both in culture and the availability of broadband and other services. Depending on where you choose to study, broadband and mobile services will vary, so what's the best way to stay in touch with those at home and online? Read our guide to find out.

## Broadband providers in France

Metropolitan and urban areas such as Paris or Bordeaux have the highest broadband speeds and the greatest degree of fibre optic coverage, while rural areas have to rely on wireless networks, dial-up, and satellite connections.

The country's average download speed is 26.64Mbps, but you'll only be able to get close to or beat that speed if you're staying in a densely populated area. Numericable is the leading fibre supplier, providing internet, TV, and telephone services to residences. The fastest speed that Numericable provides is 200Mbps, which will allow you to download a standard definition movie in around two minutes. Alternatives include Orange, which also includes an optional subscription TV service, and the company Free, which provides a wireless router that also functions as a Blu-ray player, TV subscription box, and videogame console.

For rural areas, your choices will be more conservative, with heavy reliance upon wireless and satellite networks. Tooway offer satellite services up to 20Mbps and is an English speaking company, though high latency rates can be an issue. WiMax is a popular alternative, providing high-speed internet through wireless microwave communication. You can only access WiMax if there's a transmitter in your area, however, so be sure to ask locals for information.

## Mobile providers in France

If you don't want to use your UK mobile, you can purchase a replacement handset from a French provider. UK citizens can take out both SIM-only and handset contracts, while prepaid cards (known as Pay-As-You-Go in the UK) can provide you with a flexible service without signing up for a minimum term.

Orange has a good prepay SIM option for students; it can be topped up with refills as you use your allowance. It also comes with an extra: Orange Cinéday, which gives you 2 for 1 on cinema tickets purchased on a Tuesday. Other mobile providers include Virgin Mobile, SFR, Free, and Bouygues Telecom.

## Getting a broadband or phone contract in France

Before you try to get a broadband or mobile contract, your first step should be arranging a bank account in the country – which in turn will provide you with an RIB number (Relevé d'Identité Bancaire). Take a copy of your passport and proof of your student status, and you should find the process straightforward and simple.

## International roaming: what you need to know

When you make a phone call on your UK mobile in a foreign country, you'll be charged roaming rates. Outside of the European Union, your provider sets these rates, and they can be fairly expensive, but in an EU nation like France rates are dictated and controlled by the European Union Roaming Regulations law.

While this keeps rates low, it can still be more affordable to sign up to a local provider.

## English speaking broadband and phone providers

If you don't want to sign up for your internet and telephone services from a French-speaking company, there are a range of English-speaking alternatives.

You don't have to be an expat to sign up to these providers: British students can sign up too. UKtelecom and Teleconnect both present alternatives to French broadband suppliers, with ADSL speeds of 20Mbps and unlimited data allowances, along with telephone services designed for cheap calls to UK numbers.

## Local information

Here's some common French terms and useful information for when you're looking to sign up to a mobile or broadband contract.

**00 44:** The prefix for calling the UK from France. Replaces the first zero of any UK number called (for example, to call the University of Leeds from France, dial 00 44 113 243 1751)

**Carte Prépayée:** Pay-as-You-Go card for mobiles

**Engagement:** Used to refer to contract periods for mobile and broadband

**Fibre Optique:** Fibre optic broadband. Provides high speed internet access, mainly located within urban areas

**Illimités:** Unlimited, with regard to data allowance. An unlimited allowance means your browsing won't be artificially limited

**Refills:** Top-ups for Pay-As-You-Go cards

## Manage your data

Here's some advice to avoid high data bills overseas:

### Wi-Fi hotspots

You'll find plenty of Wi-Fi hotspots around France – so connect to free wireless broadband to save on your 3G or 4G data bill.

### Download before you go

Think ahead and try to anticipate what apps, downloads or files you're going to need on your laptop, smartphone or tablet. By grabbing them before you leave the country, you'll avoid potentially expensive data bills while you're overseas.

### Check your email settings

Unsure if your email automatically checks for new messages or downloads attachments? Check your settings to make sure these options are off.

### Turn off roaming

Check the settings on your phone or 3G/4G tablet to ensure that auto-roaming is switched off.

## Know what it's costing you

Currency exchange rates can fluctuate during any journey and it's important that you know what you are spending. Use a reputable currency exchange service to check the latest rates. Popular exchange rate services include Oanda, Reuters, XE.

### Useful Links

Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/finance/currencies>

XE: <http://www.xe.com>

Oanda: <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

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