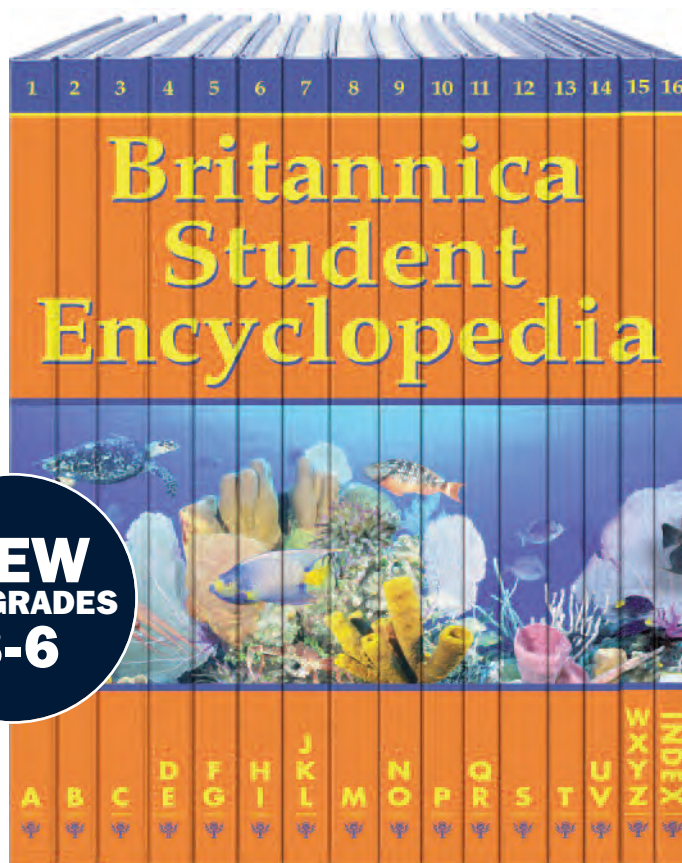


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BRITANNICA STUDENT ENCYCLOPEDIA



France

A large country in Western Europe, France is known worldwide for its rich history and culture. The capital is Paris.

Geography
France shares borders with Luxembourg, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Andorra. The Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean are to the south and west, respectively. The Loire river runs through the center, and the Pyrenees mountains are to the southwest.

History
People lived in what is now France more than 100,000 years ago. The Gauls, a Celtic people, migrated to the area in about 1200 BC. By about 50 BC, the ancient Romans had conquered the region, which they called Gaul.

Wars over Land and Religion
In 1066 the French duke of Normandy conquered England. Because of that connection to France, English kings later claimed parts of France for themselves. This led to many battles between the two countries.

One particularly difficult period was the Hundred Years' War, which began in 1337. France was close to defeat when a peasant girl named Joan of Arc led the French army to victory. By the end of the war in 1453, the English had lost nearly all of their land in France.

During the 1500s Protestantism spread across Roman Catholic France. Wars broke out between Protestants (known as Huguenots) and Roman Catholics.


Facts About FRANCE

Population (2005 estimate)	60,733,000
Capital	Paris
Area	210,026 sq mi (543,965 sq km)
Form of government	Republic
Major urban areas	Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Nice



BRITANNICA STUDENT ENCYCLOPEDIA

France | 25



The River Rance runs through the town of Dinan in northwestern France.

Though agriculture is a small part of the economy, France is a top producer of wheat, cattle, pigs, and chickens. It is also well known for its cheeses and wines.

After 843 the western section became known as the kingdom of France.

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Charts and tables organize information and recap important details.

Content is clearly divided into sections to help students locate information easily.

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BRITANNICA STUDENT ENCYCLOPEDIA



Falcon

Falcons are birds of prey, meaning that they hunt and eat animals for food. They are related to hawks and eagles. Falcons are swift, powerful fliers. A sport called falconry dates back to ancient times. It involves training falcons to hunt animals in cooperation with humans. Some common kinds of falcons include the peregrine falcon, the merlin, and several types of kestrels.

Where Falcons Live
Falcons are found nearly all over the world. They live in many habitats, including forests, deserts, grasslands, and even cities. Falcons commonly nest in holes in trees or on natural ledges on cliffs. In cities they may nest on the ledges of buildings.

Physical Features
Usually the female falcon is larger and bolder than the male. Falcons range in size from about 6 to 24 inches (15 to 61 centimeters). The falconers are the smallest of the falcons. The gyrfalcon is the largest. Falcons have sharp claws and a short hooked beak. The beak usually has a small notch called a tooth. These features help it catch and kill prey animals.

Behavior
A falcon's shape helps it fly quickly. Its body is shaped like a bullet, while its wings are long and pointed. Unlike hawks and eagles, falcons rarely soar and glide. They dive down fast to catch prey. Some falcons capture other birds in midair. Other falcons kill hares, mice, lizards, and insects on the ground.

How to explore
Bird of Prey; Eagle; Hawk

Farming
see Agriculture



A kestrel falcon sits on a fence post with a grasshopper in its beak.

Cross-references encourage children to learn more.

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