



## Top 10 Things I Really Like About France

by Bob Koczor

David LETTERMAN and his late night TV guests aren't the only ones in the world who have their "Top 10" lists. You may have yours when it comes to action movies, super models, or monthly golf magazines. And I definitely have mine, especially when it comes to France. The top 10 things I really like about France are : (Please roll the drums)

### #10) RIGHT-SIDE FOR DRIVING

French motorists drive on the 'right' side of the road, unlike their Euro neighbors to the northwest. Vehicles in France also, for most part, have it right when it comes to having the steering wheel located on the left side. No nightmares over this one, as in Ireland. In France, you get to drive just like you're driving along Highway #5 in California, or along Interstate #80 when you're driving cross country. Driving is dangerous enough without having dyslexic car designs and freeway flows.

### #9) JUST SPEED SAFELY

Though speed limits are posted along the highways and byways throughout France, police (gendarme) have more important things' to do than sit and fondle their radar guns as they watch traffic go by. Nabbing a 'speeding' driver every so often in order to bolster the local town's tax base is not a high priority with the gendarmes. Fact is, French motorists drive fast, like they all have only two laps left at the Indianapolis 500, but they are safe, very safe drivers. How safe ? Like, they always use their turn signals when they switch lanes, even if the following vehicle is two miles behind. I remember looking at the speedometer several times as François was driving our car south along the A10 super highway from Paris to the Loire region. Though pressing the needle on the speedometer at 190 km, it was a smooth ride on a perfectly maintained major highway. One time, the traffic slowed down to 150 km because a police vehicle was driving slower in the same direction on the right-lane of the highway. Slowing down seemed similar to a salute, a courtesy in recognition of the gendarme because as soon as our car (as the others) passed the police vehicle, François resumes the 190 km speed. Had this happened along a highway in the U.S., the traffic would have piled up in procession-line fashion and continued at the same speed limit behind the Highway Patrol car for as long as a helicopter chopping through the sky above might also be timing your speed to report to a Highway Patrol vehicle miles ahead of you. Not so in France.

### #8) CHEESE, IT'S THE REAL THING !

Cheeses in France are not required to be pasteurized, which means that cheeses are a national treasure as well as a way of life for French people and visitors to their country. In the U.S., the FDA demands that all the cheeses be pasteurized, a process which dilutes or eliminates the true taste of the cow, goat or sheep cheese, all in the name of public safety. There's no FDA in France telling its citizens what kinds of cheese they're allowed to eat. The difference between the two kinds of cheese, pasteurized and non pasteurized, is akin to plastic being used for clothing as compared to cotton apparel. When it comes to safety concerns with food, I agree, there is no debate. The same, however, is to be stated for taste. - Maybe people should have a choice between pasteurized and non pasteurized, keeping in mind that the buyer ought always beware.

### #6) SIZE COUNTS

France, as with most countries in Europe, are small by comparison with the United States. This means that you can travel from one part of France to another (N-S or E-W) in short order and more quickly than you can drive, say, from Northern California to San Diego.



*Total population of France is 60 million, 28 million more than California, which makes it big enough to offer a cornucopia of castles, châteaux and historical sites, but yet small enough for one to see and enjoy the major areas of France during one's lifetime.*

#### **#5) BIG BROTHER WATCHING ?**

*Noticeably missing from the golf course scene in France are marshals, primarily because there's no need for them. Tee times in France are not packaged eight minutes apart from sunrise to sunset. The fact is that there are 350 golf courses in France, with only 350,000 golfers in the country. Lots of room for golfers. This means there are selection-rights when it comes to preferred tee times. Marshall Dillons need not to apply on these courses, unless they're interested in a maintenance job.*

#### **#4) NO DIETING HERE !**

*You'll never go hungry for a lack of bread and pastries in France since there seems to be a Boulangerie (Bread) and Patisserie (Bakery) shop along every single block in every city and town in France. Sometimes two or three of these shops. Save your Jenny Craig dieting for when you return home.*

#### **#3) CASTLES, CASTLES, & MORE CASTLES !**

*These are not toy castle-hotel resorts erected one after another such as by Disney Inc. in Orlando, FL. I'm talking about castles whose histories and foundations date back 400 to 800 to 1200 years ago when chivalry, dukes, and duchesses, and the Holy Wars consisted of more than stone-throwing teenagers on CNN. Folklore made these castles more famous, mostly because of the kings and queens who once lived within their walls. The castles were made even more historic than ever by infamous people who dared do anything and break every commandment a hundred times over to get to live within those same walls. You can satisfy your childhood dreams, at least, by driving and staying at castle after castle after castle throughout France.*

#### **#2) IT'S NOT THAT FAR AWAY !**

*Communication is key to the 21st century. Yes, even while traveling on a golf trip to France. So I suggest, subscribe to the right telephone service and bring your phone along and dial back home as though you are communicating on a walkie-talkie with someone in the other room. I highly recommend the Voice Stream System when visiting Europe. You can subscribe to this very dependable telephone service, or just rent one of its phones and get plug into its system for the duration of your trip to France. I heard my companion make a hundred or more phone calls across the Atlantic during the week-long golf trip with the greatest of ease and with no snafus in regard to reception. "Hi, honey! You got the kids to school already? Me? Oh, we're just driving along the A10 at 190 km on our way to the Cherbourg Castle. - Talk to you later!"*

#### **#1) WANT MILK ?**

*Drinking wine in France is as socially acceptable as drinking wholesome, healthy milk. Need I say anything more on this?*