

MOVING TO FRANCE



Documents

Visa • Healthcare • Administration • First steps

STARTER GUIDE

A clear, practical introduction to preparing your move, understanding the main administrative steps and settling into life in France with greater confidence.

Created by HumaForm

Personalised administrative support for English-speaking expats in France.

Free resource • 2026 edition

Welcome to France

Moving to France can be exciting, but the administrative side of the move can sometimes feel overwhelming. There are visas, accommodation, healthcare, banking, taxes and a number of different administrations to deal with.

The good news is that you do not need to understand everything at once. This guide gives you a practical overview of the main administrative stages so you can understand what may need to be done, when it may need to be done and where to begin.

The guide is deliberately introductory. It is not intended to replace the official information that applies to your individual situation. Instead, it gives you a framework for preparing your move and asking the right questions.

“You don't need to know everything about French administration. You need to know what applies to you and what to do next.”



A simple approach

Identify your situation → understand the relevant procedure → prepare your documents → keep track of deadlines → follow up when necessary.

HumaForm Tip ■

Start with your own situation rather than someone else's experience. Expatriate groups can be useful, but an administrative procedure that worked for one person may not apply to you.

01 Before You Leave

Your first step should be to identify the reason for your stay and determine which visa or residence procedure applies to you. Someone moving to France to work will not necessarily follow the same process as a retiree, a student, an entrepreneur or the spouse of a French citizen.

Once you know which route applies, start gathering the documents you are likely to need. Some documents are much easier to obtain in your home country than after you have moved. Civil-status documents, official certificates and supporting paperwork can take time to obtain, translate or legalise where necessary.

HumaForm Tip ■

Start your paperwork earlier than you think you need to. Give yourself enough time to request official documents, translations and other supporting paperwork before your departure.

02 Understanding Your Visa

For many non-EU nationals, the visa is the first major administrative step towards living in France. However, there is no single “French visa”. The appropriate procedure depends on the purpose and length of your stay.

A person coming to France to work may follow a completely different process from someone coming to retire or join their French spouse. This is why France-Visas should be your starting point when identifying the procedure that applies to you. Once your visa has been issued, read the information printed on it carefully.

HumaForm Tip ■

Don't rely on the word “visa” alone. Two people moving to France can have completely different obligations depending on the type of visa they hold. Always check the exact wording on your visa and the procedure that applies to it.

Check the exact procedure associated with your visa before travelling.

03 Your First Steps After Arrival

Arriving in France is only the beginning of the administrative process. Depending on your situation, you may have to complete additional formalities after arrival. These can include validating a visa, applying for a residence permit, registering with healthcare services or completing procedures connected with your professional or family situation.

France has different administrations dealing with different aspects of your life. There is therefore rarely one single place where you can “sort out everything”. A useful approach is to identify the relevant organisation for each procedure and keep a record of what you have already completed.

HumaForm Tip ■

Put your deadlines in your calendar immediately. A simple reminder system can prevent an important administrative date from disappearing among everything else you have to organise after moving.

04 Healthcare in France

Healthcare is one of the first subjects most expatriates want to understand. The French healthcare system is based on several different rules and registration routes. Your access depends on your personal circumstances, including your work situation, residence status and other factors.

For many people, the process eventually involves Assurance Maladie / CPAM and, once registration has progressed, a French social-security number and potentially a Carte Vitale. The documents requested can vary depending on your situation, so it is important to check the route that applies to you rather than relying on a generic checklist.

HumaForm Tip ■

Keep every document you send to CPAM. Save your application, supporting documents, proof of submission and any correspondence you receive. If your registration takes longer than expected, having a complete record makes follow-up much easier.

Keep your healthcare documents together from the beginning.

05 Finding Your Way Through French Administration

One of the biggest challenges for English-speaking expatriates is knowing who to contact. A letter may come from a prefecture, CPAM, CAF, tax administration, mairie or another public organisation. Each has its own procedures and communication methods.

When you receive an official letter, identify the organisation, reference number, date and any deadline. Even if you do not understand everything immediately, do not ignore it. Understanding what the administration is asking you to do is usually the first step towards solving the problem.

HumaForm Tip ■

The first question isn't always "What form do I need?" — it's "Which administration is responsible?" Identifying the right organisation before starting a procedure can save you a lot of time and frustration.

06 Organising Your Documents

A good administrative organisation system can save you an enormous amount of time. Rather than keeping documents scattered between emails, downloads and paper folders, create one central administrative folder.

You could organise it around identity, residence, healthcare, housing, banking, taxes, employment or business and family documents. Keep both the documents you submitted and the evidence showing that you submitted them. This becomes particularly useful when an administration asks you to provide something again several months later.

HumaForm Tip ■

Create one central administrative folder from day one. It doesn't have to be complicated. A simple digital folder divided into key areas can make future procedures much easier.

A clear filing system saves time every time an administration asks for a document.

07 Common Problems for New Arrivals

Many administrative problems come from relatively simple mistakes. A document may be missing, a deadline may have been overlooked, an outdated form may have been used or an application may have been sent to the

wrong organisation.

Another common problem is assuming that someone else's experience will necessarily apply to your situation. French procedures can depend on nationality, residence status, family circumstances, employment and many other factors.

HumaForm Tip ■

Use other expats' experiences as useful information, but always check what applies to your own situation. When in doubt, go back to the current official source.

08 Your First Month in France

Your first few weeks are about getting organised rather than trying to solve everything simultaneously. Once your immediate accommodation and immigration formalities are under control, you can progressively deal with healthcare, banking, taxes, employment or business matters and the other administrative steps relevant to your situation.

The most useful habit is to keep a simple record of what you have already done and what remains to be done. That way, French administration becomes a series of manageable steps rather than one enormous task.

HumaForm Tip ■

Don't try to do everything at once. Identify which procedures are urgent, deal with those first and work through the remaining tasks gradually.

A simple timeline is often more useful than a long to-do list.

Your Moving-to-France Checklist

Use this final page as a quick review before and shortly after your move. The detailed explanation is in the guide; this page helps you turn it into action.

- I know which immigration or visa route applies to my situation.
- I have checked the current official requirements.
- My passport and key civil-status documents are ready.
- I have prepared accommodation and financial evidence where required.
- I know what post-arrival formalities apply to my visa or residence status.
- I have identified my healthcare registration route.
- I have created a secure administrative folder.
- I have saved copies of documents and proof of submission.
- I have recorded important deadlines in a calendar.
- I know where to ask for help if I become stuck.

HumaForm Tip ■

Think of your administrative journey as a timeline rather than a pile of paperwork. If you can see what you have done, what is waiting and what comes next, the whole process becomes much easier to manage.

Useful Official Sources

France-Visas — Official French visa information and procedures.

Service-Public.fr — Official public information on French administrative procedures.

ameli.fr — Official Assurance Maladie information on healthcare and social security.

Need personalised guidance?

Sometimes a guide is enough. Sometimes your situation needs a closer look. HumaForm helps English-speaking expats understand French administrative procedures, organise their documents and identify practical next steps.

Book a Free Discovery Call

www.huma-form.fr

This guide provides general administrative information and is not legal, tax or immigration advice. Requirements can change and may depend on your individual circumstances. Always verify current requirements with the relevant official authority.