

Academic Program
in
Aix-en-Provence

**HOUSING
GUIDE**

General Notes about Housing to APA Students

Dear APA Student:

Upon arrival in Aix, you will be housed at the Adagio Aparthotel until you move into your housing for the year or the semester.

For your lodging in Aix, you can choose either a rented room in someone's apartment or your own apartment from a list of choices that the APA office will send before you arrive in Aix. As explained further below, you will be asked to rank your top choices. The APA staff try to make sure that everyone gets the kind of housing they desire, but this is not guaranteed. Choosing the kind of housing you wish to have for the semester or year is a process; please read the following information carefully, talk it over with your friends and family, and ask the program staff if you have any questions before committing yourself! You are not obligated to choose a room or an apartment through the program, but we very strongly suggest that you do so, as the process of renting in France is far more complicated than it is in the U.S.

Looking at the city map as you make your housing choice will be a great introduction to the city. The city center, dating from the Middle Ages and called *Aix-intra-muros* (i.e., Aix inside the walls) includes old apartments that are close to stores, businesses and entertainment locales. A more recent development around the city center offers more modern apartments but is farther away from the city attractions, requiring longer walks or bus rides. You should be aware that most buses do not run after 9:00pm or on Sundays.

The APA staff is here to help you! Don't hesitate to ask questions.

Rented Rooms

Renting a room in someone else's apartment allows you to be in an environment where you are in contact with French-speaking persons and provides you with the opportunity to experience the daily life of the new culture you want to discover. Living with French hosts can be one of the most rewarding aspects of your time abroad. The level of integration students experience with their hosts will vary—some families will really integrate the students as part of their family; others may have a more detached approach. Living in a French environment will require that you adjust to French habits and constraints you may not be used to, and it can be a challenge to adapt to these new attitudes or customs. For example, electricity in France (and Europe) is expensive and people are careful to use much less of it than is the case in U.S. households. People usually turn off the lights when they leave a room. In addition, most French houses do not have an unlimited supply of hot water (which is expensive to heat with gas or electricity). Taking a long shower is thus inappropriate; in addition to its high cost, it means that nobody else in the family will get a shower until the water heater has had a chance to heat more water. So you will have to pay particular attention to issues your hosts mention to you.

You may also dislike some aspects of your hosts' habits or lifestyle; rather than rejecting them, you should keep an open mind and see this as a cultural and learning experience as well as an invaluable opportunity that is offered to you to practice your French on a regular basis.

Your hosts will typically be retired people, single parents with children, parents or single parents whose children have left to study elsewhere. Due to the city's high cost of living, there are very few traditional families (parents and children) living in the center of Aix.

You have access to the owners' kitchen, toilet and bathroom, but meals are not provided. Sometimes linens are not supplied and you will have to buy them in Aix.

For most of the rented room options, it is not possible to host friends/family who may visit you in Aix.

Apartments

For Fall students : Please note that it is difficult to find an apartment for the fall semester only. Landlords prefer to rent their apartment for a longer period, the academic year, instead of just the fall.

Most apartments available in Aix are one-room apartments (studios) or two-room apartments (a bedroom and a living room). **It is highly unlikely that you will be given an option for a large furnished apartment in the center of Aix**, so do not plan on living with a large group of people. It is a challenge to find places for 3 people.

If you want to share an apartment with somebody else from the program, you have to find a roommate before your arrival, and you will need to notify the APA staff about your preference.

Studios accommodate one person, or can be furnished to accommodate two people. Two-room apartments have a living room and a bedroom for two people. Three-room apartments have a living room and two bedrooms.

All apartments have a bathroom and a kitchen. The kitchen usually includes a small refrigerator, a small electric hot plate (sometimes a stove) and kitchenware. You may bring your own linens or buy them in Aix, and you are advised to bring a sleeping bag which will be useful in your apartment (Aix can be cold in the winter!) or for travel. Some apartments may also furnish comforters. Students choosing to live in an apartment should be aware that, in France, landlords take little responsibility for daily housekeeping. Please keep in mind that apartments in downtown Aix are older and will not have the same amenities that you are accustomed to.

Since French students do not return to Aix until mid-September, it is difficult to find French roommates. So APA students usually share apartments with other students from the program. Whatever type of lodging you find, be prepared to spend money for additional pots and pans and dishes. Only minimum equipment is supplied.

Choice of Housing

Before your arrival in Aix, you will receive a presentation of currently available housing options (descriptions of specific places, photos, rent amounts, location in Aix, whether independent apartments or rooms in French households). We ask that after looking at these you send us your TOP FIVE CHOICES of place to live ranked in order of preference (1. = first choice, etc.).

If you are alone in your first choice, you will get this option; if several students want the same option, we will draw names out of a hat to choose who gets it. Those remaining will typically still get their second, third, fourth or fifth choice. After your arrival, after an informational housing meeting, you will go to see your housing, meet your landlord/host, and sign a lease. Note again that you are NOT required to live in any of the housing options provided by APA, and that you are welcome to look for housing on your own. We provide these options just for your convenience.

Please note that during the semester or the year, if you decide to change your accommodation, you must inform your landlord one month in advance and that it will be your responsibility to find another accommodation. The program will be able to help you in this process, but it is not its responsibility to find you an alternative accommodation.

When considering where you want to live, you should ask yourself the following questions:

Where do I want to live?

- In the city center, near the shops, restaurants, theaters.
- Near the University, 10 - 15 minutes on foot from the city center. Living near the university will mean living outside of the city center. It is important to consider that the bus does not run after 9:00 pm. However, rents tend to be less expensive near the university compared to living in the city center.
- Are you a night owl or a morning person? Do you like to go out?
- The building: its location, what floor the apartment is on, if there is an elevator or not, etc.
- The neighborhood: if there are shops, buses, etc.
- Is the electrical heating system, gas or central heating system? Central heating is preferred but most apartments tend to have electrical heating. Electrical heating can be expensive, depending on your personal usage habits.

Link for a map of Aix city center:

<http://www.aixenprovencetourism.com/wp-content/ressources/maps/plan-aix-cv.pdf>

Map of Aix-en-Provence – outskirts:

<http://www.aixenprovencetourism.com/wp-content/ressources/maps/plan-aix-periph-hd.pdf>



In yellow : limit of Aix intra-muros



Aix-en-Provence - outskirts

What should I check during my visit to the apartment?

- In the apartment:
 - Verify the state of the furniture, open the cupboards.
 - Run the water, flush the toilet.
 - Open the windows to test the noise.
 - Ask if the heating system is electrical, gas or central heating system. Central heating is preferred but most apartments tend to have electrical heating. Electrical heating can be expensive, depending on your personal usage habits.
 - Verify that the doorbell works.
 - Check the electrical box and wiring to make sure it is in good shape.

Security Deposit (“Caution”)

Usually one of the first things you do when you move into your lodging is pay a security deposit (or damage deposit, called *caution* in French), equal to a maximum of two months’ rent. Many landlords, however, will accept a one-month security deposit. Those who request a two-month security deposit may ask that the first-month security deposit be paid upon arrival and the second-month security deposit with the second-month rent. The security deposit is reimbursed at the end of the rental period if no damages are found and if your lodging is thoroughly cleaned. In order to get your full deposit back, you must carefully clean and repair or replace any broken objects (light bulbs, dishes, etc) and the household linen must be dry-cleaned. It is strongly recommended that you take photos of your accommodations when you first move in to have as a reference when you leave at the end of your program.

Legally, the landlord has three months to give you back the deposit so as to assess and repair any damage you may have caused. However, some landlords are willing to give your money back when you move out of the apartment.

When signing the lease, be sure to do the following:

- Make sure you clearly agree with the landlord on the date that you will move out of the apartment.
- Ask if you have to give **verbal or written notice** (through registered mail) a month or two in advance of your departure.

Paying Rent

- Rented rooms will cost approximately **450 - 550 Euros per person per month**
- The average rent for a studio is approximately **500-700 Euros per month, plus utilities.**
- The average rent for a two-room apartment is approximately **900-1100 Euros per month; i.e. 450-550 Euros per person per month, plus utilities.**

Rent is paid directly to your landlord at the beginning of each month. Payment can be made in cash or by local bank transfer in Euros.

Cash (*Espèces*)

In order to have the amount you need on hand to pay the first month's rent or the security deposit, you can start withdrawing money a few days in advance of the move-in date.

ATM machines (*distributeurs de billets*) usually have a limit as to how much money you can withdraw in a day. For ATM withdrawals from U.S. accounts the daily limit may vary between 250 – 500 Euros, depending upon the bank. It is usually advisable to withdraw the maximum amount each time in order to incur fewer ATM withdrawal commission costs.

Bank Transfer (*Virement bancaire*)

The landlord must provide his/her bank details: full name of account holder, the name of the receiving bank, the BIC code and the IBAN code. (= *RIB : Relevé d'identité bancaire*)

Lease (“Bail”)

We suggest that you bring any lease to the APA office before signing it, so that you can review it with the staff and clarify any parts that you may have trouble translating. *You should know who the landlord is and have his/her phone number.*

Things to consider:

- You and your landlord will have to agree upon occupancy dates.
- Is the contract “collective”, signed by all the roommates, sharing the same responsibilities? (This could imply some risks should there be damages to the apartment or if someone moves out. If you decide to break your lease, it is your responsibility to find other tenants to replace you.)
- For the rented room, there is not really a contract but you and your landlord must agree on the policy for vacating the room. If you decide to break your agreement, you are responsible for finding another student to replace you, and you must inform your landlord one month before your departure.

Cost of Living

Rented room	450-550€ per month
Apartment :	

Studio (one person) Two-room apartment	500-700€ per month 450-550€ per month per person.
Shopping in a supermarket one week /one person	60€
Breakfast in a bar (coffee and croissant)	5€
Coffee in a bar (small espresso)	2€
Meal in a <i>restaurant universitaire</i> = “resto U”	5€
Meal in an inexpensive restaurant	12€ -20€
Bus ticket Monthly student bus ticket	1€20 29€
Movie ticket (studentdiscounts are available in some theaters)	10€70

Utilities (“Charges”)

Usually you do not have to pay utilities when you rent a room. But if the landlord informs you that you will be responsible for utility costs (gas and electricity), it may cost you about **45 Euros per month**.

If you rent an apartment, ask if the utilities are **included** or **excluded** from your rent. They are usually excluded. If not included, you will be responsible for utility costs (gas and electricity which run about 45 Euros per month per person) and for putting the **utility** account in your name.

For your information only, an estimated cost of your water consumption is often included in the **utility bill**.

As soon as you move into your apartment, APA will provide you with instructions for how to deal with the electricity, gas, and internet connection. Usually the utility bills are estimates based on the previous year’s consumption. Once a year, the utility company may compare what was really consumed with what was spent. You pay your bill through an automatic withdrawal from your French bank account or by cash at the post office (cost 5 Euros).

- Electricity: 1st bill = fees to put the account in your name 26 Euros + subscription (from **6 to 18 Euros per month** depending on your type of housing).
- Gas: 1st bill = fees to put the account in your name 16 Euros + 2 months of subscription (from **10 to 20 Euros per month** depending on your type of housing).
- Internet is still much less common in France than it is in America. Your lodging will most likely not have access to the internet, but you will have the possibility of ordering internet for approximately **40 Euros per month**.

It is also advisable to ask your landlord if you will have other utilities or other costs related to your lodging.

In addition to the three main bills: **electricity, gas, and internet**, you may come across **building fees**. These are expenses shared by all those who live in your building to cover staircase cleaning and electrical power in common areas such as hallways/foyers. Ask if the building fees are included in the rent.

Do ask the landlord if the rent includes all the taxes due by a tenant (the housing tax = *taxe d’habitation*, equals approximately one month’s rent); sometimes landlords do not include these taxes, which makes the rent seem cheaper. Make sure you receive the correct information from your landlord as to what taxes are included in the rent. If your rent does not include the housing tax,

you will be required to pay it to the appropriate *Centre du Trésor Public* the following year in the United States.

Renter's Insurance

All participants must purchase "renter's insurance" as required by landlords in France. APA works with an insurance company which can provide you with insurance for about **60 Euros per person per semester**. Insurance companies provide renter's insurance that includes personal liability required for registration in the universities. The APA staff will provide you with details on this process after you arrive in Aix.

Laundry

A few student apartments have a washing machine in the bathroom or kitchen, but most apartments do not. It is almost impossible to find a student apartment with a dryer. However, the apartment will most probably have a drying rack.

If your apartment doesn't have a washing machine, see where the closest laundromat is. There are very few laundromats in the city center.



Sample apartment rented by an APA student



Sample apartment rented by an APA student



Sample apartment rented by an APA student



Sample apartment rented by an APA student

Useful Phrases

Pouvez-vous me confirmer le montant du loyer par mois / mensuel?	Could you please confirm the amount of the rent per month?
Est-ce que les charges sont comprises ou non dans le loyer? Si oui, quelles sont les charges qui sont comprises?	Are the utilities included in the rent? If yes, what utilities are included?
Puis-je avoir une quittance de loyer / reçu, par écrit, de tous les paiements que je fais?	Could I have a receipt for all the payments I submit?
Quel est le montant du dépôt de garantie/ de la caution?	What is the amount of the deposit?
Dois-je laisser un ou deux mois de caution?	Should I pay a one or two month deposit?
La caution me sera-t-elle restituée à la fin de l'année / semestre? Quelles sont les conditions de restitution de ma caution?	Will the deposit be given back to me at the end of year / semester?
Quelle est la durée du préavis de départ?	What is the length of the notice period – or how early in advance do I have to notify you I am moving out?
Est-ce que je dois vous donner mon préavis par lettre recommandée avec accusé de réception?	Do I have to give you my notice through registered mail?
Quelle est le montant des factures d'eau, d'électricité, de gaz, d'internet,... par mois?	How much can I anticipate paying for water, electricity, gas, internet per month?
Est-ce que le chauffage est électrique, au gaz ou collectif?	Is the heating system electrical, gas or central heating?
J'aime beaucoup cet appartement et je voudrais le louer / prendre la chambre.	I like this apartment a lot and I would like to rent it.
Puis-je avoir un peu de temps pour réfléchir?	Can I have a little time to think about it?

Glossary

...of words you may see in a housing context

French Word	English Translation
A	
Agence immobilière	Real estate agency
Appart.	Abbreviation for “apartment”
Ascenseur	Lift, elevator
B	
Bail	Lease
Balcon	Balcony
Bureau	Study room
C	
Caution	Deposit
Centre ville	City center
Chambres d’hôtes	Guest House
Chambre simple	Single bedroom
Chambre double	Double bedroom
Charges comprises (CC)	Included utilities
Chauffage collectif	Central heating system
Contrat de location	Rent contract
Cuisine américaine	Connected kitchen
Cuis. Ind. Equip : cuisine indépendante équipée	Equipped independent kitchen
Coin cuisine	Gallery kitchen, kitchenette
D	
Déménager / un déménagement	To move
Dépôt de caution	Security Deposit
Douche	Shower
E	
Entrée	Entrance way
Etage	Floor
Expulsion	Eviction
F	
Facture	Bills (electricity, water, gas, telephone, etc.)
Frais d’agence	Real estate agency commission
Fumeur / Non-fumeur	Smoker/non-smoker
H	
Honoraires	Fees
I	
Immeuble	Building
Intra-muros	The area in the city center, inside the walls
L	
Lit 1 personne	Single bed
Lit 2 personnes	Double bed
Lit d’appoint	Extra bed
Louer (la location) A louer	To rent (the rent) for rent
Libre de suite	Immediately available
M	
Meublé / non meublé	Fully furnished / not furnished

Mobilier	Furniture
P	
Préavis de départ	Departure notice
Propriétaire	Landlord
R	
Récent	recently constructed building
Résiliation du bail/contrat	Contract termination
Rez-de-chaussée	First floor
S	
Salle de bain	Bathroom
Studio (meublé)	(furnished) studio
Sur cour	Overlooking a yard
Sur jardin	Overlooking a garden
T	
T1	One roomed flat
T2	One bedroom flat
T3	Two bedroom flat
T4	Three bedroom flat
Tout confort	Very comfortable
V	
Villa	House
Voisin	Neighbor
W	
WC	Restroom, toilets