



Know  
Before  
You  
Go

## FRANCE

# A Guide to Keep You Safe Abroad

Provided by Sexual Assault Support and  
Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA)

*Updated June 2017*



**SASHAA**  
Sexual Assault Support &  
Help for Americans Abroad

Let's be perfectly clear, the number one way to prevent sexual assault is to **not rape**. While the responsibility of ending sexual gender-based violence is on the perpetrators, this guide will offer general safety tips, country-specific information, and resources to help prevent and prepare travelers for the possibility of sexual assault abroad.

## GENERAL SAFETY TIPS:

1. Use the **buddy system** and travel with friends!
2. Be aware of **social and cultural norms**. For example, looking at someone in the eyes when you speak to them is perfectly normal in the U.S., but in another country that could signify you're interested in the person.
3. **Recognize controlling behavior** when entering a relationship. Most rape survivors recall feeling "uncomfortable" about some of their partner's behaviors such as degrading jokes/language or refusal to accept "no" as an answer, whether in a sexual context or otherwise.<sup>2</sup>
4. **Avoid secluded places** where you could be more vulnerable. Meet new people in public spaces and let a trusted friend know where you'll be beforehand.
5. **Trust your gut**. Many victims have a "bad feeling" right before an assault takes place.



## ALCOHOL AND DRUG AWARENESS:

- Always be sure to watch your drink being poured and carry it yourself, even to the bathroom.
- Be aware of "drug-facilitated sexual assault drugs," also referred to as 'roofies' or 'club drugs,' which may turn your drink bright blue, cloudy, or slightly salty. Effects such as impaired judgment, lost sense of sight, sound, or consciousness can be felt within 15 minutes and up to 4 hours.<sup>3</sup>
- France has no explicitly stated consumption age, but selling alcohol to a minor is illegal. It is offensive to be seen drunk in public as France has no tradition of drinking for the sake of getting drunk.<sup>4</sup>

## CULTURAL INFORMATION:

**Major Religions:** Roman Catholic 83-88%, Muslim 5-10%, Unaffiliated 4%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 1%.<sup>5</sup>

**Legal System:** The judicial system is based on Roman Law with codified penal laws. The civil code was established under Napoleon in 1801. Judges have the right and duty to interpret both the laws and the decisions of higher courts.<sup>6</sup>

**Social/Cultural Norms:** The French are generally very private people, except with their closest friends and family members. Handshakes are common for greetings, but kisses on the cheek among friends are not uncommon. Unless invited to do so, never use first names with any people who are not close friends, as the French expect a certain level of politeness and formality.<sup>7</sup>

**Gender Equality:** A 2015 survey by the World Economic Forum ranked France 15th out of 142 countries in terms of gender equality. Men dominate French politics, but women have equal access to healthcare and education. France has also been cracking down on sexual discrimination and harassment in the workplace.<sup>8</sup>



## Sexual Assault and the Law: French Context

Article 222-23 of the French Code Pénal defines rape as: “Any act of sexual penetration, whatever its nature, committed against another person by violence, constraint, threat or surprise” and is “punished by fifteen years [sic] criminal imprisonment.” Punishments increase in number of years for such crimes as statutory rape, rape that causes injury or death, or rape preceded by or followed by torture. Sexual assaults other than rape are punishable with a minimum of five years imprisonment and a fine of €75,000. Sexual assault and marital rape are thus illegal under French law.<sup>9</sup>

### If You Experience Sexual Assault...

Don't blame yourself! **Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.** You may be unsure of how to proceed, and that's okay. First, consider taking the following actions:

1. If you are in a safe place, **call someone you trust** to be with you. If you are not safe, call someone you trust to come and get you.
2. Do **self-collection of evidence**. Put all of the clothes you were wearing, bed sheets, and so on in a paper bag. If you have any injuries, **take pictures**. If there is semen present, collect what you can in a hotel glass or cup and put it in the paper bag.
3. **Call a SASHAA advocate** internationally toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you through the ordeal, honoring your decisions. (See Resources)

### Medical Care and Reporting Sexual Assault in France

Medical Examinations are available for victims of sexual assault with or without a police report. The examination includes a gynecological exam, clinical exam, biological samplings, and an evaluation of physical or psychological shock. Reporting a sexual assault to the police will require the victim giving a full interview and statement, followed by identification of the suspect. If the perpetrator is not easily identifiable, the victim will have to choose the attacker from a line up. The attacker and the victim will have to talk to the police officer while hearing the responses of the other. This experience has been described as difficult for victims, and thus the victims are permitted to have another person in the room with them.<sup>10</sup>

#### LGBTQ VICTIM CONCERNS



It is safe for LGBTQ community members to report assault in France. France recognizes same-sex marriages, offers state funding for sex reassignment surgeries, and has banned discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation. Social discrimination still exists, and public displays of affection is frowned upon more so for same-gender couples than for other couples.<sup>11</sup>

#### POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS, EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION, AND ABORTION

##### Q. Are post exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception available?

**A:** Yes; emergency contraceptive in the form of the “morning-after pill” is available at all hospitals and pharmacies behind-the-counter for around €7. PEP is also available. EC is also provided free of charge at family planning clinics. There is no charge for females under 18. A victim might need to ask and/or discuss both of these options with the medical examiner.<sup>12</sup>

##### Q: Is abortion legal in France?

**A:** As of 2014, abortion is legal and available without question until week 12 of pregnancy. However, a mandatory “week of reflection” is required before receiving the procedure, and minors must meet with a counselor during this week.<sup>13</sup>

## Resources

### SASHAA

#### SASHAA International Crisis Line:

To call our confidential, toll-free, International Crisis Line first dial the country specific AT&T access code for **France: (Hotels-Paris Only): 0-800-99-0111 (Tele-com): 0-800-99-0011**. Then, at the prompt, enter our phone number: **866-USWOMEN (866-879-6636)**.

#### Crisis Email:

To reach a SASHAA advocate, you can email us at [crisis@866uswomen.org](mailto:crisis@866uswomen.org). All crisis emails will be responded to within 24 hours. However, if you need to get in touch with us immediately, please call the international toll-free crisis line.

#### Live Chat:

SASHAA online chat services are available 24/7 at our website <https://sashaa.org>.

## ANTI-VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS

#### SOS Help (ALL OF FRANCE)

English-French help hotline  
Tel: 01 46 21 46 46

#### International Counseling Services

English speaking hotline  
Tel: +33 (0)1 45 50 26 49

#### MONTPELLIER:

##### SOS Femmes Battues

Helpline: +33 4 91246150  
Email: [sosfemmesmarseille@wanadoo.fr](mailto:sosfemmesmarseille@wanadoo.fr)

#### PARIS:

##### Paris Aide aux Victimes

12, rue Charles Fourier, 75013 Paris  
Helpline #: (0145) 881800 22

##### Viols Femmes Informations

9 Villa d'Este, Paris  
Tel: 0800 059595

##### Institut National d'Aide aux Victimes et de Mediation

14 rue Ferrus, 75014 Paris  
Tel: +33 01 45 88 19 00

## U.S. EMBASSIES/CONSULATES

#### Paris:

2 avenue Gabriel, 75008 Paris (Metro Concorde)  
Tel: (33) 1 43 12 22 22

#### Bordeaux:

89 Quai des Chartrons, 33300 Bordeaux  
Tel: (33) 1 43 12 48 65

#### Lyon:

1, quai Jules Courmont, 69002 Lyon  
Tel: (33) 1 43 12 48 60

#### Rennes:

30, quai Duguay-Trouin, 35000 Rennes  
Tel: (33) 1 43 12 48 70

#### Strasbourg:

15, avenue d'Alsace, 67082 Strasbourg  
Tel: (33) 1 43 12 48 80

## HOSPITALS

#### Paris:

American Hospital  
63 bd. Victor Hugo, 92202 Neuilly sur Seine  
Tel: 01 46 41 25 25

#### Bordeaux:

Hôpital du Groupe Pellegrin-Tripode  
Place Amélie Raba-Léon, 33076 Bordeaux  
Tel: 05 56 79 56 79

#### Lyon: Hôpital Edouard Herriot

5, place d'Arsonval, 69003  
Tel: 08 20 08 20 69

#### Rennes: CHU Hôpital Pontchaillou

2, rue Henri Le Guilloux, 35033 Rennes Cedex 9  
Tel: 02 99 28 43 21

#### Strasbourg: Hôpital Universitaire de Strasbourg

1, place de l'hôpital, 67000 Strasbourg  
Tel: 03 88 11 67 68

## POLICE

The local equivalent to "911" in France is **112** for general emergencies. The police specific number is 17, and the medical line is 15.

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