FRANCE

HISTORY

France grew from the land of the Gauls into a kingdom and then a republic. Its ideas, art and inventions spread around the world.



The First Peoples

Cave artists painted animals at Lascaux about 17,000 years ago. Later, farmers in Brittany set up thousands of standing stones at Carnac. By about 2,500 years ago, Celtic peoples lived here in farm villages. They were skilled ironworkers. The Romans called them Gauls and their land Gaul.



Roman Gaul

In 58 BC, the Roman general Julius Caesar marched into Gaul. A Gallic chief named Vercingetorix (ver-sin-JET-or-ix) united many tribes to fight back. In 52 BC, he surrendered at Alesia, and Rome ruled Gaul for about 500 years. The Romans built roads, towns and arenas. The Pont du Gard is part of an **aqueduct** that carried water to the city of Nîmes.



Franks and Kings

As Rome grew weak, a people called the Franks took over Gaul. France is named after them. In the year 800, the Frankish king Charlemagne (SHAR-luh-main) was crowned emperor in Rome. Later kings and lords built castles, and towns built great churches such as Notre-Dame in Paris. From 1337 to 1453, France and England fought the Hundred Years' War. In 1429, a farm girl named Joan of Arc led a French army that freed the city of Orléans (or-lay-AHN). France won back almost all of its land.

A Kingdom Reaching Out

King Louis XIV, called the Sun King, built the Palace of Versailles. French explorers sailed to North America. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec, the start of a **colony** called New France. French traders and Native nations traded furs and made alliances. In France's Caribbean colonies, enslaved Africans were forced to work on sugar farms. France ended slavery for good in 1848.

Revolution and Napoleon

In 1789, many French people were angry about high taxes and the price of bread. On July 14, a crowd in Paris stormed a prison called the Bastille, and the French **Revolution** began. In 1792, France became a **republic**, with no king. Napoleon Bonaparte, an army general, became emperor in 1804 and conquered much of Europe. He lost the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.



Modern France

In the 1800s, railroads and factories spread across France. During World War I, much of the fighting was in northern France. In World War II, Germany's army defeated France in 1940. On June 6, 1944, Allied soldiers landed on the beaches of Normandy, and France was freed that year. After the war, France helped start the group of countries that became the European Union.

FRANCE THROUGH TIME

52 BC	800	1429	1608	1789	1804	1889	1944	2002
Vercingetorix surrenders to Rome	Charlemagne is crowned emperor	Joan of Arc frees Orléans	Champlain founds Quebec	The French Revolution begins	Napoleon becomes emperor	The Eiffel Tower opens	Allied soldiers land in Normandy	Euro coins and bills arrive

PEOPLE TO KNOW

Joan of Arc	Farm girl who led a French army
Napoleon Bonaparte	General who became emperor
Louis Braille	Made a reading code of raised dots
Louis Pasteur	Scientist who made a rabies vaccine
Marie Curie	First person to win two Nobel Prizes

WORDS TO KNOW

aqueduct	a long channel or bridge that carries water
colony	land ruled by a faraway country
revolution	a fight to change who runs a country
republic	a country where people choose their leaders