



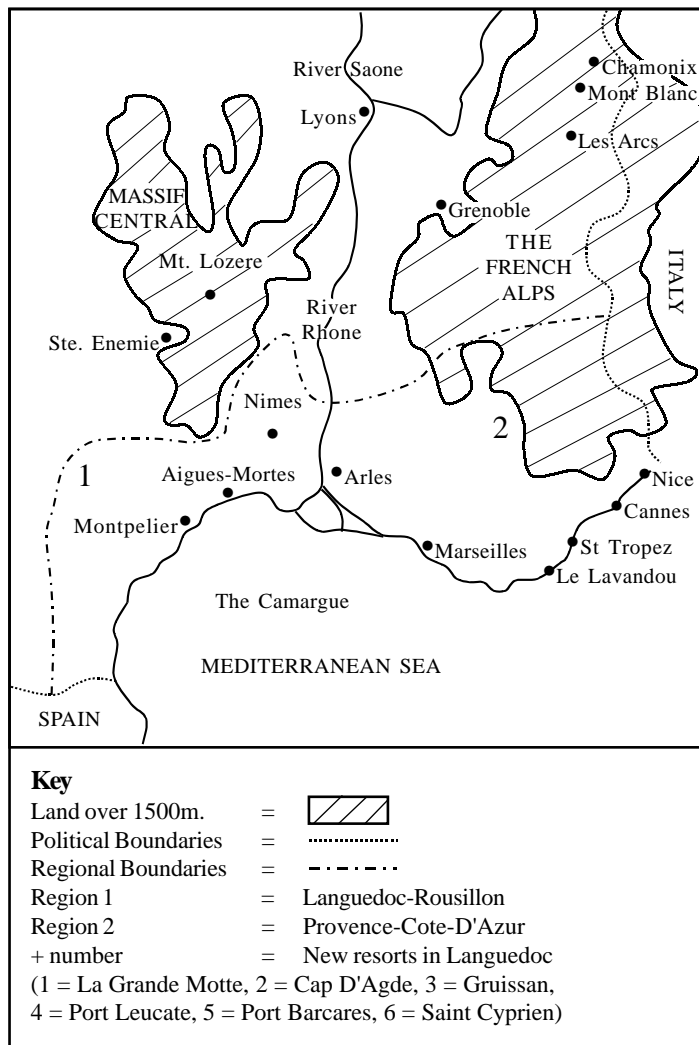
Tourism in Southern France

Within this area it is possible to study several types of tourism and also to consider many of the problems and current issues that face the present-day tourist industry. This Factsheet focuses on:

1. Sun, sand and sea holidays on the French Riviera in the south-east.
2. Sun, sand and sea holidays on the coast of Languedoc in the south-west
3. Winter sports holidays in the French Alps
4. Holidays for lovers of the countryside in two National Parks- The Camargue and the Cévennes

The area included in this study stretches from Languedoc in the west to France's border with Italy in the east, and from the Mediterranean coast in the south to the area around France's tallest mountain, Mont Blanc, in the French Alps 200 km to the north (Fig 1).

Fig 1. Map to show the main features of Southern France



The central physical feature of the area is the River Rhone, which flows southwards between the Massif Central to the west and the Alps to the east. The valley of this great river opens out in the south to form a vast delta area flanked by coastal lowlands.

Climate varies within the area. The southern coastal areas have a typical Mediterranean climate with hot, dry, summers and winters with little rainfall. In the Alps the climate is generally wetter and cooler (Table 1).

Table 1. Climate Figures for the main tourist areas

	Temperature °C		Precipitation mm		
	Jan	July	Jan	July	Total
Riviera: Nice (on the coast)	8	23	62	15	768
Languedoc area: Montpellier (13 metres)	6	22	109	8	504
Alpine area: Passy (1655 metres)	-3	16	66	103	1052
Rhone Delta area: Marseille (23 metres)	7	23	47	14	565

Southern France is divided into two major planning regions. Table 2 contains some socio-economic statistics for these two regions, as well as the Ile De France (the prosperous region around Paris) and the whole of France, for comparison.

Table 2. Socio-Economic Data for Southern France

Characteristic	Languedoc-Rousillon	Provence-Alpes-Cotes D'Azur	Ile De France	France Average
Birth rate (/000)	12.0	12.8	16.0	13.0
Death rate (/000)	10.4	10.1	7.5	6.4
% of Population below 14	17	18	20	20
% of Population over 65	17.8	16.8	10.8	13
% Population Change (1980-90)	12.4	9.9	6.6	5.3
Migration Rate	10.2	5.9	-0.8	-3.9
% Rate of Unemployment				
Male	11.5	12.0	8.8	8.7
Female	16.4	15.5	9.5	12.4
GDP per inhabitant (European average = 100)	86	99	162	109

(The two main regions of the area are Languedoc-Rousillon in the West and Provence-Alpes-Cotes D'Azur in the east. Ile De France (including Paris) and France as a whole are included for comparison).

Typical Exam Question

Comment on: (a) population characteristics, (b) unemployment and GDP, of Southern France compared to the Ile De France and France as a whole?

Answer to Typical Exam Question (page 1)

(a) Birth rates are lower and death rates are higher which suggests an older population in Southern France. This is supported by the data for the percentage of young people which is lower in the two regions of southern France and the much higher percentage of old people.

Southern France also seems to have undergone a greater amount of population change and a higher migration rate than the Paris area and France as a whole.

(b) Southern France does not seem to be as economically prosperous as the Paris area or France as a whole. It has a much higher rate of unemployment and a lower GDP.

In 1994 more than 3 million tourists visited Southern France. About 60% of them came from France itself, and about 25% from other European countries (predominantly Germany, the UK and Scandinavia). The remainder came from many other parts of the world including some wealthier people from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, former French colonies in nearby Northern Africa.

1. The French Riviera:

This extends from Marseilles in the west to the Italian border in the east. The area in the east near Cannes and Nice is also referred to as the Cote D'Azur.

Wealthy people first visited this area in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, either during their 'Grand Tours' of Europe, or to enjoy the warm climate for health reasons. These wealthy Europeans, many of them English, stayed at places such as Cannes and Nice. Soon people began to have private villas and apartments built where they could stay to enjoy the mild, warm winters and by the 1820s a small English community was established at Nice. The visitors were also attracted by the beautiful scenery and as sea-bathing became more popular, enjoyed the clear, blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. In 1865, the Paris-Lyons railway line reached Nice bringing with it thousands of extra visitors per year and this resulted in further expansion of tourist facilities. Queen Victoria and the Tsar of Russia visited the area and it became very fashionable for the wealthy classes.

After the First World War wealthy American visitors started to visit the area, which started to become increasingly popular in summer.

At the present day, the French Riviera is still very much the playground of the rich and famous but also the holiday destination for an increasing number of 'ordinary folk'. It caters for all sections of the sun, sea and sand market, and in 1987 received 1/3 of all France's camping bed-nights (domestic and foreign) and about 14% of the hotel bed-nights. There is little land now available for new development in the Cote D'Azur, especially as the highland areas immediately inland restrict the amount of available building land to a narrow coastal strip. It is regarded by many to be operating at its tourist capacity. The resorts of Nice, (the regional capital and France's

fifth largest town,) and Cannes, are still very stylish and exclusive with luxurious grand hotels, nightlife and casinos and cater mainly for the richer end of the market. The Cannes film festival is held annually. Recently conference facilities have been added e.g. at Nice.

Further west the area has been developed recently for the mass-market e.g. self-catering and camping resorts between St.Tropez and St.Raphael. Le Lavandou is a new resort with a casino and the usual tourist facilities.

2. Languedoc-Rousillon Coast (Nimes to Spanish Border)

To the west of the Rhone delta, on the coastal plain of Languedoc-Rousillon, with its huge beaches and spit-enclosed etangs or lagoons, six new tourist complexes were established in the 1960s by the French Government. The main reasons for this tourist development were:

- This part of southern France was very much an economic backwater and needed revitalising. It had:
 - poor communications
 - mosquito -infested marshes
 - little fresh water
 - limited access to the coast
 - lack of planning, either local, regional or national
 - farming dominated by the production of large quantities of cheap wine
 - very little industry.
- The overall increase in tourism within Europe as a whole in the 1950s had found France rather lacking in tourist facilities compared to its Mediterranean rivals, Spain and Italy. This was a threat to France's traditional surplus of foreign exchange from tourism.
- It was thought that these six sites would help France compete with other Mediterranean countries by providing cheap, self-catering holidays, which could not be found elsewhere in southern France.
- Other tourist areas such as the Cote D'azur were becoming increasingly congested and costly whilst this stretch of coastline lay virtually empty.

In 1963, the Inter-Ministerial Mission was established, financed by the government, to build some new tourist complexes and develop other existing resorts. Land was bought and plans drawn up to cater for a target capacity of 400,000. The Mission, in collaboration with local authorities, was in charge of:

- building roads to join the resorts to the existing coastal motorway.
- eradicating mosquitoes and draining marshlands.
- planting woodlands
- building ports
- installing a fresh water supply.

Local Development Corporations, backed by government and local funds laid out the towns and provided all the basic urban facilities and services.

Private companies carried out the building of a whole range of types of accommodation- apartments, campsites, second homes and hotels. Some of these had very spectacular architecture, e.g. the pyramidal blocks at La Grande Motte. Shops, boat marinas and lidos, were also developed within the general guidelines of the plan.

Great care was taken to limit the extent of the new urban areas to preserve the surrounding countryside and also the use of the lagoons was to be carefully monitored and controlled.

Some problems have arisen with the developments:

- **EMPLOYMENT:** although jobs have been created, they tend to be seasonal as most visitors come within the 4 summer months, especially during the school holiday months of June and July. Attempts have been made to extend the season by attracting coaching courses and conferences in late spring and early autumn. Also the new jobs have not always been available to the locals e.g. some staff have been recruited from the Alpine tourist areas during their 'quiet' season.
- **INVESTMENT:** much of the land and many of the tourist facilities are owned by foreign investors and so profits do not benefit the local area and its population as a whole.
- **POLLUTION:** This is either visual from the resorts, some of which are made up of stark white concrete structures, water pollution from the tourist activities e.g. oil and petrol from boats, waste disposal etc., or air pollution from traffic fumes (e.g. nitrous oxides, hydrocarbons).

Exam Hint: When writing about pollution always make sure that you mention all of the different types and all the issues that are involved and not just pollution in general. The examiner will want you to be specific and to give examples.

However, the area does now attract a large number of visitors, many of whom are from France itself, which is a good thing as it limits the amount of tourist spending abroad.

3. The French Alps:

The French Alps are found at the western edge of the European Alps. With their high snowfall and spectacular glaciers they are very attractive to winter sports' enthusiasts and some 81% of all winter sports holidays in France are taken in the Alps. Also, in the summer months the spectacular scenery attracts many visitors who are interested in walking, photography, bird watching and painting. Many of these summer visitors are in the older age-groups and have professional occupations.

Tourism started here around the turn of the century and places such as **Chamonix** and **Grenoble** became tourist centres. However, it was in the 1960s that the area became increasingly popular and affordable to greater numbers of people. This coincided with the general increase in tourism at that time linked with:

- the general increase in the amount of paid holidays people were allowed.
- higher standards of living and increased affluence for people as a whole
- improved air transport facilities and the increased availability of package holidays

Purpose-built holiday centres were built containing accommodation and other attractions, at higher altitudes in the mountains between Mont Blanc and Grenoble. e.g. Les Arcs. Most of the accommodation is geared to the domestic market. The early 1980s were the 'boom years' when both national and local government encouraged the expansion of tourism, often with limited consideration for the local area itself and the long-term effects.

In 1986 Albertville, in the French Alps, was chosen as the site for the 1992 Winter Olympics. It was realised that this would bring publicity but this demanded upgrading of the infrastructure to cater for the million or so expected visitors. Poor roads were brought up to motorway standard, the airport was improved, the TGV was extended into the area, new hospitals and better power supplies created. The cost, estimated at around fifteen thousand million francs, was balanced against the 16% increase in local employment and the 300 new companies in the traditionally economically backward area. However, the costs to the local environment were considerable. Visual pollution, slope instability, destruction of rare plant and animal habitats resulted.

Since the mid-1980s tourism has declined somewhat due to the mild winters which have produced little snow and also due to the overall economic decline in the rest of Europe, which has meant that the numbers of people taking holidays has fallen. There has also been increased competition from other countries offering cheaper holidays.

The development of tourism as a whole in the area over the last century has thus necessitated many changes to the traditional landscape to cater for the 50 million or so visitors each year. These have included the building of ski-runs, ski lifts and new roads. These developments have resulted in many disadvantages or costs to the area and its people including:

ENVIRONMENTAL:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| pollution: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • air - from car fumes as several million cars cross the Alps each year • acid rain - has been blamed on the huge increase in traffic and is thought to have killed vegetation etc. • noise - from visitors, discos etc. • visual - unsightly buildings and ski lifts |
| erosion: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of fragile soils on mountain sides • of grassy slopes gives rise to gullyng and soil creep • of footpaths from over-use |
| habitats | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rare plants and animals are wiped out • forest is chopped down which can lead to slope instability and avalanches. |

Recently, in the 1990s, a more green approach has begun. This has included:

- limiting the number of new ski runs
- more management of the environment
- reducing numbers of visitors at peak times
- more control and education of visitors by building fences and signposts etc.

Tourism also brings benefits to the area such as:

- money from the tourists who buy clothes, souvenirs etc. and pay for accommodation and skiing facilities.
- local employment in an area with few jobs and limited economic potential.
- improved and often safer access and better facilities for the locals
- the area developing other activities such as new industry which is attracted here as a result of the multiplier effect.

Exam Hint: Candidates are frequently asked questions about environmental problems and conservation issues. Candidates are often expected to be able to give a balanced account of both sides of the argument. In this issue, candidates should be able to demonstrate that they are aware of the two 'sides' of tourist activities in an area i.e. both the costs and benefits of tourism to both the area and its people. Some exam boards also expect candidates to be aware of the 'attitudes' of different people to tourism.

4. National Parks:

The Cévennes:

This National Park is found in the south-east of the Massif Central. Thousands of visitors come in the summer months - walkers, writers, photographers and bird watchers, to see the scenery and wildlife there. Tourist development continues to be important in reversing the previous trend for out-migration from the area. There are now many second homes in the area and some of the traditional villages which were declining are being re-populated by holiday industry workers. Some skiing does take place but the relief is more suited to cross-country or nursery slopes. In 1994 the EU funded extensive investment on the eastern flanks of Mt. Lozère, providing equipment and building new runs and a ski centre. The limestone areas contain many water sports centres and caves.

Visitor pressure in the area has already created problems such as trampling of delicate habitats, soil erosion, footpath erosion, and litter problems. EU funding has been provided to erect signposts, fencing and gates and build information centres.

Within this area there are several honey-pot sites (a tourist site that attracts above average numbers of visitors). Some of these are near the caves and another one is the medieval village of Ste Enimie in the limestone area. This village has a permanent population of around 500 but in summer this is increased eightfold. This creates parking problems, and congestion in the narrow streets as all through traffic has to cross a 13th century arched bridge. The town has tried hard to maintain its medieval appearance (which is one of its main attractions) by keeping vehicles to the outskirts, preserving tiny cobbled streets and encouraging small craft and antiques shops to interest the tourists.

The Camargue:

This is an area of the Rhone delta 850 km² in size between the two main distributaries. It is one of the most important wetland areas in Europe and is inhabited by many rare birds e.g. flamingos. Over the last 50 years 40% of the area has been adversely affected by development. The whole area became classed as a regional park in 1972 which meant that the foundation who runs it (made up of many interested local groups such as local and regional government, property owners, people from the salt industry and the nature reserve trust) had two main aims:

1. To conserve its cultural and Natural Heritage

by: supporting activities which enhance the landscape
 assisting in wild life preservation
 supporting the traditional lifestyle
 setting up information centres and nature trails to channel tourist activities.

2. To attract and welcome visitors in order to strengthen the economic and social structure of the local population but also to control this influx.

Management is based on a zoning principle.

The Central Core is made up of two reserves strictly limited to scientific research. These are large areas of salt marshes and étangs maintained in their natural state as wildlife habitats for various species of birds, animals and plants.

The outer zones have either limited or unrestricted access. In the north an arc-shaped area, making up some 40% of the area is now farmed with the aid of irrigation for rice and also has some vines, orchards and pasture.

The south east is a salt-pan area and is the largest salt producing area in Europe.

Around the nature reserves is the 'traditional' Camargue which is attractive to the tourists and people wanting second homes. Much of the area is farmed in a traditional way by grazing the famous wild white horses and black bulls who roam remote areas.

Activities include:

- trekking on horses
- watching the bulls fighting in the bull-rings or bull-running through the towns
- marsh trails to follow
- various exhibitions to visit
- trips to watch birds

The Camargue continues to be a popular tourist attraction and at the moment the million or so visitors can be accommodated without too large an impact on the area. This is largely due to the control which started over 25 years ago and which anticipated somewhat the scale of the development. Tourism has thus been able to provide a useful source of income to this depressed farming area with its 9000 permanent residents in recent years.

Some problems have arisen though:

1. Accommodation:

- Landowners are supplementing their incomes by renting out properties or selling them as second homes which raises the price of property when locals want to buy them.
- The sandy beaches have become strewn with illegal shacks and now some people are worried that the problem may grow especially now that a permanent water supply exists.
- More camping sites are growing up taking up valuable land

2. Roads:

In some parts of the area there are problems of congestion on what were designed as country roads. New road developments would take up valuable land.

3. Pollution:

- Air pollution: from the increasing numbers of cars.
- Visual pollution: from kiosks on the beaches etc.
- Water pollution: from increased effluent discharged into the sea and lagoons.
- Industrial pollution: there are also worries about pollution from activities at the nearby port complex at Fos.

The Future of Tourism in the Camargue:

Tourism continues to be encouraged in the area as it is an irreplaceable source of income. There are plans for further access roads to be built into the park and tourist centres developed round the park. However, this will be a 'soft' tourism approach' where the industry takes second place to other activities and no special facilities are likely to be built to encourage extra tourists and possible damage to the environment; a balance between the two uses needs to be established. The government aims to provide assistance to the area to help it develop in other ways. This allows for limited expansion of tourism within this fragile environment.

From the summit of Mont Blanc to the shores of the Mediterranean 'the tourist' has had a considerable impact on many parts of Southern France for over 100 years. Some areas have benefited from tourism, and recently several areas which were struggling economically have been revived by tourist interest in the surroundings and climate which the locals take so much for granted.

In other parts of the area the ever-present question is how to enable tourists to continue to visit, without harming or destroying the very features which attract them in the first place. Increased awareness in recent years of potential problems and a little careful planning and control, should hopefully allow people to continue to enjoy these areas for many years to come.

Practice Questions

1. What might the attitudes be of villagers in an Alpine area to the building of a new ski-resort nearby?
(6 marks)
2. To what extent and in what ways has the increase in tourism in Southern France over the last thirty years helped the economy of the country?
(6 marks)

Answers

Semicolons indicate marking points

1. Attitudes could be either FOR the development or AGAINST it.

FOR:

It could: bring jobs for the locals who would be grateful;
bring business to builders etc. during construction who would be pleased with the extra business;
increase trade for local shops which would please their owners;
discourage outwards migration of young people which would mean that the population of the area would be stabilised;
encourage new businesses to establish themselves in the area. etc.

AGAINST:

Local residents may foresee problems such as pollution, (water, air, visual etc.);
soil erosion of steep slopes/avalanches;
slope instability;
vegetation removal;
destruction of rare habitats;
these would all make the area less pleasant to live in. Conservation groups would feel very angry about these changes. Farmers may object to the disturbance of rural traditions, the way of life and the use of flat land in valleys for roads and building. Older people may object to the change in lifestyle. There are many examples you could use here.

2. Tourist developments in Southern France have encouraged tourists to holiday here rather than in other Mediterranean countries, which earns money for both the area and the country.

This money can be used within the area to help further development and reduce government spending within the area. Also in developing tourism, roads have been built, marshes drained etc. which may have otherwise been too expensive or considered to be not worthwhile for poor agricultural communities with only a few inhabitants.

Money brought into the French economy from Foreign Tourism is always useful in reducing the balance of trade.

If French people are encouraged to holiday within their own country, and at present 60% do, it means that they are effectively reinvesting it in their own country. Holidaying abroad means that this money would go out of the country.

Acknowledgements;

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