

Paris, France

When Cole Porter, the famous American song writer, wrote that he loved Paris, he spoke for many artists of his generation and other visitors who visit Paris from all over the world.

The capital of France, Paris is located in the north-central part of the country. It is situated on both sides of the Seine river, and is a 2,000 year old city founded by a Gallic tribe known as the *Parisii*. Conquered by Romans and then the Gaul, it was eventually established as the capital of France in 987.

Paris has become the political, commercial, industrial, cultural and social center of France. It is also one of the main tourist attractions in Europe based in part because of its beauty and intellectual life which has attracted writers and artists for centuries.

The population of Paris grew rapidly until the Second World War when it reached 1.2 million. While France grew relatively slowly, Paris continued to grow and reached 2.15 million in 1990. Like many large cosmopolitan cities, a survey in 1962 showed that two out of three residents of Paris had been born elsewhere, and came to the city later.

It is not only the center of the principle river basin of France and one of the most fertile agricultural regions, it is also the chief industrial and commercial city, the center of international trade as well as the bank and insurance headquarters of the country.

The central government contributes more than half of the city revenues, including financing for school, sewers and day care centers. The state also finances public hospitals and welfare costs and as much as 10% of the city budget is devoted to sanitation. Business and tourist streets are cleared twice daily.

Public transport is organized so well that one is rarely more than 600 meters from a Metro (Subway) Station but is now struggling to services suburbs as well. If this is done successfully it would help reduce traffic congestion in the city.

There is, like in many large cities, a lack of affordable housing and the city has its problems with the homeless. But the government does provide some shelter for the homeless: up to 15,000 homeless persons are permitted to live for up to six months in 60 government-run or private shelters where they receive medical care and job training.