

Cultural differences between Canada and France

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From the tender age of 10 years old, I dreamed of leaving my Canadian homeland to venture to the mystical dreamland that is France. At the age of 18, I finally set foot on French soil for the first time with a quick visit to Paris. From 2015 to 2017, I returned to live in France, first as an international exchange student and then as an English language assistant in the city of Lyon.

While many of the stereotypes I'd initially held of accordion-playing Frenchmen wearing stylish "*marinières*" and berets were laid to rest, there are still many surprising differences I've discovered throughout my stay in France.

The first and most remarkable of these differences is definitely the culinary divide between Canada and France. I was (pleasantly) surprised to find that frog legs are indeed a delicacy enjoyed in France, whereas one would be hard-pressed to find a grocer selling frog legs on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. However, in Canada we do enjoy the occasional beaver tail – a sugary pastry, rather than the physical tails of our national icon!



Another culinary difference is the wide variety of cheese available in France, compared to the relatively modest selection offered in Canada. A quick look at the cheese aisle in a typical Canadian supermarket –boasting mostly cheese of the processed and bagged variety – would likely be quite disappointing to the average French person accustomed to a much more refined selection of Roquefort, gouda, camembert, reblochon, and more.



I have also been delightfully surprised to see several French adults zooming by in scooters. In Canada, scooters are seen as a children's toy, and thus are most commonly used by people under the age of 12. However, in France, I have noticed that the general population uses scooters as an efficient mode of transportation to accompany their daily commute. Hilarious!



Finally, the scheduling difference in France was one major difference to which I had difficulties adapting as a Canadian. In Canada, the average shopping center or supermarket closes at 10 pm; many pharmacies even remain open 24 hours. Banks are open every day of the week, including Sundays, and don't close during lunch breaks. It's becoming increasingly common for shopping centers to open on major holidays such as New Year's Day. In comparison, in France, many shops and banks take lunch breaks from 12 to 2 pm, close around 8 pm, and are closed on Sundays and sometimes Mondays. '*Fermeture exceptionnelle*' is one phrase that I've definitely become used to seeing during my time in France. For a Canadian, that definitely a cultural shock!

