

Things I love about the French #4: Their frankness.

Growing up, it was a tradition in my family to not talk about difficult subjects. The nice way to put it is that we like to avoid confrontation. The not so nice way to put it is that we are really, super passive-aggressive. One time my mom found my secret bikini (which, admittedly, was not hidden well). Instead of talking to me about it she draped it over my desk chair and never said a word. Which was maybe genius because it both terrified me and taught me that moms know *everything*.

I have a feeling that a French mother would never do such a thing. In this culture, if someone doesn't like what you're doing they tell you about it. If I've left a dish in the sink for a day too long, my roommate says "hey, would you mind washing your plate?" instead of stewing about it and getting overly worked up. I know it doesn't seem like a novel idea, but for me it's still an exercise in exertion. I've gotten a lot better at sticking up for myself and saying what's on my mind since moving here, instead of bottling it up. Living in France has taught me that I don't need to be anyone's doormat, and once you realize that it's pretty empowering.

Things I love about the French #5: The public transportation.

Lyon is roughly the same population as my home town in the USA, just a bit more concentrated. Portland has one of the best public transportation systems in the states, complete with the MAX and many bus lines. Even so, TriMet doesn't even begin to approach how great Lyon's (and most cities in Europe, really) public transportation is. For example, on Mondays I have to be at my school by 8:20. I leave at 8:00 and get there by 8:15 and that's taking not one but two metro lines, both of which come approximately every 2 minutes during high traffic hours. You can get just about anywhere that you want to go efficiently and inexpensively.



Don't even get me started on the train system and cheap airlines like Ryanair and easyJet. Living in Europe, it's superfluous to have a car. Hop on the nearest bus, tram, metro, train, or plane and you'll get where you need to be.

And the last thing that I love about the French: Sunday promenades

In France it is common to go for a short (or long) walk on Sunday afternoons. Sunday lunch is generally one of the biggest meals of the week (or at least it always was with my host family), so in lieu of taking a nap, which I feel most Americans are wont to do, you walk it off.

One such promenade in the Alps.