

If you are planning on staying in France for more than three months, then you will need to obtain a formal residence approval - a carte de séjour.

To apply for a carte de séjour you should contact the nearest appropriate authority in France in under three months after your arrival, and they will supply the necessary forms. You should either go the local police station (préfecture de police) or town hall (mairie). All applications for a carte de séjour have to be accompanied by a valid passport, four passport photos, a full birth certificate and marriage certificate (if applicable). You may also be asked for your birth certificate or marriage certificate to be translated. Additionally you will need to present proof of accommodation and employment or financial resources. If you are studying in France you will need to show proof of your inscription in an educational establishment. Very often, your place of study will supply you with a student card or a letter which is sufficient. You may also be asked for a medical certificate following a medical examination from a local doctor in France or even an affidavit, obtained from a Commissioner of Oaths in the UK, to the effect that you don't have a criminal record. It is advisable to register as soon as possible as the French administration system can be very slow.

The time limit on your carte de séjour will depend on whether you're a student, in full time employment with an unlimited contract (CDI) or short term employment (CDD). Generally, the time limit on a carte de séjour will correspond with the length of your contract or your studies (for example: you have a job contract lasting 6 months, then your carte de séjour will last 6 months). If you have a CDI then generally your carte de séjour will last 10 years, and hopefully by the time it has expired the system would have been abolished!

If you change your residence within France, you'll have to inform the town hall at your new place of residence within eight days of arrival. This is so that your new address can be entered on to the carte de séjour. The carte de séjour should be carried at all times. Until you have received it (which may take some time) you should instead carry a passport at all times.