

French roots: how to prepare for your trip in France

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The video emphasizes that genealogical research in France is like an adventure game with levels to unlock. It encourages researchers to overcome challenges like language barriers and complex archives, reminding them that the journey is about connecting with ancestors on a deeper level. The speaker, Marine, a French professional genealogist, provides these insights to help English-speaking researchers prepare for and make the most of their genealogical trip to France.

Level 1 - Gathering preliminary information

- Start with concrete evidence of French ancestry.
- Collect official documents mentioning French people or places.
- Gather information from death records, marriage records, and census data in the ancestor's new country.
- Use this information to search databases like FamilySearch, but verify all information with official records.

Level 2 - Finding records in France

- Identify the department where the ancestor's hometown is located.
- Use departmental archive websites to search for digitized civil records (after 1792) or parish registers (before 1792).
- Understand the difference between parish records (pre-1792) and civil state records (post-1792).
- Search for census records ("Recensements" or "Dénombrements de population") for additional information.
- Plan your trip based on the locations you've identified.

Level 3 - Identifying key places to visit on site

- Visit the church where your ancestors likely married.
- Stop by the city hall, especially for post-1792 records.
- Explore the local cemetery for family names.
- Try to locate ancestors' homes if addresses are known.
- Experience the local atmosphere in pubs or cafes.
- Combine genealogy research with tourist attractions.

Finding people to help on site

- Contact local historians through the city hall.
- Reach out to local genealogy associations.
- Consider hiring a French genealogist for assistance.

Bonus level - Visiting departmental archives

- Access records not available online, especially notarial archives.
- Prepare thoroughly by researching document references in advance.
- Understand that this level requires more effort but can yield significant insights.

Your genealogical journey to France is not just about uncovering names and dates—it's about connecting with your ancestors in a deep and personal way. From gathering initial clues to visiting the towns they once called home, and even exploring the archives that hold their stories, each step brings you closer to them.

I hope this video has inspired and equipped you to embark on your own genealogical quest in France. Bon voyage, and happy ancestor hunting!

Marine



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