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A Sampling of France’s Regional Languages

Though on the decline, dozens of regional languages in France are still spoken. Central to regional culture, these tongues tell us stories of migration and conquest, of cultural assimilation and language prohibition.

When Britons from Wales settled in northwestern France after the fall of the Roman Empire, they gave rise to Breton, a Celtic language related to Welsh. We see this relationship in words such as glas, Breton for “rain” — it’s almost identical to the Welsh word gwas.

Breton
A Celtic language closely related to Welsh, Breton is in decline (200,000 speakers). Still, some 15,000 children were schooled in Breton in 2013.

Basque
A language of Basque Country, the area in France where Basque is spoken, approximately 50% of adults are full bilinguals (Basque and French).

Corsican
Closely related to Italian, Corsican is mandatory for primary school students but optional for secondary school students. Like many regional languages in France, its use has been waning.

Alsatian
Spoken by more people (960,000) than any other regional language in France, Alsatian is closely related to German.

Provençal
While there is debate over whether Provençal is a bona fide language or merely a dialect of Occitan, a Romance language, it is spoken in homes and rural communities in southeastern France.

BRETON
Breton
Provençal
Basque
Corsican

Catalan
Because Catalan is a Romance language, there may be word roots with Spanish and French. Only a minority of people in France Catalan-speaking areas actually speak Catalan, the result of language shift.

Sources: celticbreton.org; Film des fous - langues régionales - 400,000 francophones déchirés d’aujourd’hui; France 1 Réveil, Jan. 30, 2013; R. Scott Smith, University of Connecticut, Department of Classics in French Language; geology.com; photos.com; discoverRegion.org; wikipedia.org; wiredfor6.com; The World Factbook, CIA.
French Tourist Regions
French Administrative Regions and Departments
Maps of Brittany
Maps of Normandy
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- Explore France. [https://www.france.fr/en](https://www.france.fr/en)
- France Tourisme. [https://www.francetourisme.fr/index_en.html](https://www.francetourisme.fr/index_en.html)
- Michelin Green Guides in English:
  - *Alsace-Lorraine-Champagne*
  - *Brittany*
  - *France*
  - *French Riviera*
  - *Normandy*
  - *Provence.*