

I believe the answer is yes if .... and there is an if or two. First, as it also happens in American big cities, Paris visitors often experience impatience and rudeness. Hotel service employees, waiters, cabbies and other harried people must work long hours to make a living in a highly competitive metropolis and tough economy. However, In my travels throughout France, I've seen very few incidents of intentional rudeness. Maybe my positive feelings about French hospitality are because I approach people there differently than most American tourists. I speak the language, not perfectly, but adequately. I studied two years of high school French, and was considered such a good student I was chosen to escort a group of visiting French Navy officers around our city for a week. At first I had a surprise awakening, and it wasn't because of the manners of the visitors. They were all great guys.



I discovered quickly that American schoolbook French was a laughably poor example of how the language is spoken by natives. After a few days with the officers, I was practicing total immersion. We spoke French only, and I quickly picked up the idiomatic phrases and pronunciations until I was conversing well in the language. If not speaking like a native, at least I was doing it without the irritatingly stilted American high school French.

I continued my French studies in college, and often visited French Canada to keep up my conversation skills. When I had the money, at least once every two or three years, I traveled to France. I know most American tourists can't have that experience with the language. However, if they plan to spend any time in the country, they should prepare themselves in advance with at least a basic working knowledge of everyday French.

There are many study courses available, and one I'd recommend first is enrollment in a free or modestly-priced local school or college course in basic French. Rather than trying to learn alone from books, online or tapes, in a live classroom you'll be able to practice conversational language with a teacher and other students.

There are hundreds of computer sites that offer French language learning, some involving online study, and others with CDs or DVDs. Many falsely promise that you'll be speaking like a native in a couple of days. The best I've found is Rosetta Stone, but I still strongly recommend that you do your French studies in a live classroom with a live teacher and face-to-face sessions with other students. That's the best way to immerse yourself into the language.

The very best way, of course, is if you were plopped down in the middle of the Montmartre and held captive there among the native residents and shopkeepers. Then, you'd be forced to talk your way out ... in French, of course.

It's important to realize, if you speak the language. when you travel to France or just about any other country, you will find the native people much more hospitable, and just maybe more willing to negotiate for better prices. Bon chance!