

LOCATION

Country: France

Town: Lille

Info to consider:

- Family (non-dependents) can visit and stay 90 days **without a visa** (Schengen Area).

POPULATION

Size: Located close to the French and Belgian border (The French Flanders), Lille is the capital of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region. It is the fourth-largest urban region in France with a population of just over one million.

Ethnicity: 80% French Nationals, 20% others.

LANGUAGE(S)

Official language: French

Prevalence of French or English speaking: The official language is French with pockets of areas where the Picard dialect, Dutch and Flemish are spoken. Official services are provided mainly in these three languages. English is also widely spoken by many locals.

COST OF LIVING

Exchange rate to consider: Euro

QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:

- Winter temperatures rarely drop below zero and average around 4 degrees Celsius. The average high summer temperatures are in the low 20s.

Laws and culture:

- Speed limits are 130 km/hr on motorways and 50 km/hr in cities/towns.
- Driving is faster than what we are used to, and driving lanes (as well as vehicles) are smaller than what we are used to.
- Parking spaces in Lille are mostly parallel parking spaces. All parking spaces are generally very tight.
- Most of the roads you will encounter are of the highest quality, and the motorways – though often tolled – are a very efficient way of travelling between cities.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.05%.
- It is illegal to completely cover your face in public places in France. However, the following are exceptions:
 - Clothing is required or authorized by law (e.g. a full helmet for a motorcycle)
 - The dress is justified by health reasons or professional reasons (e.g. protective mask)
 - The outfit is part of sports practices, festivals or artistic or traditional events.

This ban includes fully covering your face in the international arrivals area at airports. Failure to comply can lead to a heavy fine. There are no exemptions for tourists or religious reasons.

Safety and security:

- While it is a safe city, look out for pickpockets as in any European city.
- Crime is increasing due to high rates of youth unemployment. Use caution when riding the subway.
- There is a threat of terrorism in Europe. Terrorists have carried out attacks in several European cities. In France, separate attacks causing multiple deaths and injuries have taken place. The attacks, whether opportunistic or premeditated, targeted public spaces, including an entertainment venue, restaurants and tourist sites. Further attacks in Europe are likely.

Level of isolation:

- Language challenges can cause a high level of isolation, particularly among spouses.
- There are five Canadian families in this location.

HOUSING

- Member to rent housing in Lille. Furnished possible.
- Most homes and flats are much bigger than the average in Canada.
- Help for housing is available from a local French agent for Canadians.
- It is very highly recommended to AVOID going on your HHT during the first two weeks of May. There are three statutory holidays and the cultural norm in France is to bridge days (faire le pont). Therefore, business days will be largely reduced and selection and services will be very poor, possibly even closed.

EMPLOYMENT

Are there employment opportunities for spouses?

- Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment in France is not a realistic option.
- Language abilities in French would be a condition for employment.
- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, so families should plan to be a single-income family for the duration of the posting.

Op tempo: The op tempo will vary greatly depending on the position. TD is possible.

HEALTH CARE

Access: France ranks among the World Health Organization's top 10 countries for quality health services.

- Access to SHAPE medical facilities located in Mons, Belgium (90 km)
- The Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP.

Special needs:

- Yes, depending on the language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and/or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

Consideration for pregnancy/birthing:

- Health care for pregnancy and birthing is available in Lille.

Dental:

- Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay upfront, and you can then claim your expenses.

SCHOOLING

- Schooling is typically through École Jeannine Manue (EJM) International School Lille: This school is not yet accredited by Canada.
- There are no English language schools indicated for this posting.
- Compatible public schooling is offered in French.
- It is very strongly recommended that the member fully discuss school options with CEM to gain a better understanding of options, costs and benefits which can be reimbursed
- A university is available in Lille.

Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- Curriculum varies depending on the choice of school.
- Canadian history or geography is not offered at any school.

Resources for special needs children:

- Access to special needs services depends on the choice of school, language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, so it may be very limited.

CHILDCARE

- Largely available in Lille.

TRANSPORTATION

- Lille Airport (LIL) is located in Lesquin, 7 km (4 mi) south-southeast of Lille.

- You will need to get an international licence before leaving Canada.
- Very good train system. Good biking to work and walking everywhere. Excellent public transportation.

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

Is there a **Military Family Services centre** available in that location?

- No, but remote services are available from MFS(E) Casteau/SHAPE located in Mons, Belgium.

Psychosocial/mental health resources:

- Not at the post, and the MFS(E) SW is for dependents only, CAF SW/Mental Health Team for members and families is located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. The chaplain is located in Belgium.

Communications (e.g. quality of Internet connection):

- Good, reliable, and widely offered.

ACTIVITIES

Access to sports or other leisure activities:

- Depends on the area, but most do offer a wide variety. English might be limited.

Availability of playgrounds:

- Yes. Many parks in residential areas also have walking paths.

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are common-law relationships recognized? Yes

Are same sex-couples recognized? Yes

Medications that are illegal in the country:

- Cannabis is illegal in France.

Other considerations:

- Pharmacy has most medications. Sometimes language might be an issue.
- Difficult finding distilled water for CPAP machines.
- Animals entering France need to be microchipped and have a valid rabies vaccine.
- Some dog breeds are banned, such as Staffordshire Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier (Pit Bull Terrier), Japanese Tosa Inu, and Boerbul Mastiff, or will have restrictions imposed. The member must verify.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- European Commission Country Reports (2022)
https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en
- Canadian Travel Advisories
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- CIA World Factbooks (One pager from the US)
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/france/>
- Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-france>
- Consumer Price Index (CPI)
<https://data.imf.org/?sk=4FFB52B2-3653-409A-B471-D47B46D904B5>

For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below

- MFS(E) Social Worker Andrea Liss: liss.andrea@cfmws.com
- CAF Social Worker: GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca
- MFS(E) Shape: +32 (0) 44 65 5962, MFSE.Shape@cfmws.com
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, MFS.Europe@cfmws.com