To commemorate the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, President Nicolas Sarkozy and U.S. Ambassador to France Charles Rivkin appeared side by side at the American Embassy in Paris on September 9 to affirm continued French-American unity 10 years on.

During his speech on the tragedy, Sarkozy emphasized common humanity and compassion for those killed, regardless of their national affiliation, while vilifying as “barbarians” those who conducted the attacks.

Sarkozy expressed his condolences, saying “the 3,000 children of the United States and of dozens of other nations whose lives were snatched away that day will also forever remain children of France,” adding that “[T]heir deaths have universal meaning and France is mindful of what she owes America.”

Both Rivkin and Sarkozy expressed hope for a future in which French and American citizens will continue to work together for peace and freedom around the world.

“We may hold discussions, we may not always agree on everything, but one thing is clear: as our close historical ties have shown, France will always be a friend of the United States,” Sarkozy said.
**Paris Meeting Signals Strong Start for Libya’s NTC**

On September 1, Libya’s National Transitional Council kicked off the first international dialogue to start the rebuilding of their country. Sixty-three nations and international organizations were in attendance, including NATO, the UN, the Arab League and the African Union. Co-hosted by Great Britain and France, the conference’s primary objectives were both to address urgent humanitarian needs and to allocate funds to secure and stabilize Libya’s interim government. Two major NTC victories came when the collective international body freed up $15 billion in Libyan assets and when Russia extended recognition to their council, only hours before the conference began. Nevertheless, the NTC remained adamant about their immediate concerns regarding the security of Libya. On Qaddafi’s ouster, Sarkozy stressed that he “must be arrested and the Libyans will freely decide whether he is judged in Libya or before international jurisdictions.” As Libya stabilizes, France is set to have an instrumental role in rebuilding infrastructure.

**Questions for Joanna Kohler, Director of Operations and Communications at CampusFrance USA**

The school year is back in session, which means students are thinking about studying abroad—perhaps in France.

**What is CampusFrance all about?**

CampusFrance is the gateway to the French higher education system. At CampusFrance USA, our mission is twofold: we promote study in France to students and institutions in the U.S., by offering information on the French higher education system and helping students complete their applications to an institution in France. CampusFrance has offices in 89 countries, including one in the U.S., which is located at the French Embassy in Washington, D.C.

American students typically think of going abroad for a semester or two. Can Americans complete their entire college education in France, and if so, how? Indeed, short-term mobility abroad is very popular among American students. Three-quarters of American students who go to France are undergraduate students who participate in an exchange program—a “study abroad”—between a French university and an American institution.

But longer-term mobility, i.e. pursuing an entire degree in France, is also taking off. Interestingly, American students seeking a degree in a French institution are often former “study abroad” students, which means that their first exposure to the French system was a successful one. These programs, which are featured on CampusFrance’s online course catalogue, usually require a working knowledge of French.

Speaking college-level French may intimidate some students. How can students prepare for success? One doesn’t have to be bilingual to study in France, but as everywhere else in the world, it is important that a lack of linguistic skill doesn’t get in the way. International students who wish to apply to a French institution usually have to take a language proficiency test, called the TCF, which can be taken abroad. To prepare for this test, students can get training at their home institutions if they offer French language classes, or in one of the “Alliance Française” centers, which operate throughout the U.S.

**What about cost?**

In France, the range of tuition fees depends on the type of institution you are studying in. However, even at the higher end of the spectrum, French institutions remain much more affordable than American colleges! It is important to note that if tuition fees range from 200 to 500 euros per year on average in a French public university, the “true cost” per student amounts to 10-14,000 euros per year. These expenses are partially covered by French public authorities, thereby reducing the student’s financial burden. This reflects a strong commitment to equal opportunity by the French government. Consistent with this commitment, France’s universities and other educational institutions do not distinguish between international students and French students. Both face identical tuition requirements; both receive the same degrees.

**Last question: what are the best reasons for studying in France?**

Aside from the high quality and affordability of its higher education system, France offers a quality of life that is hard to beat, from its highly efficient public transportation and healthcare systems, to its gastronomy, which plays a central role in French daily life. As for culture, we’ve got everything from castles and museums to night clubs and electronic music. For tourism, France is located at the heart of Western Europe, which means that wherever you live, you are just hours away from the UK, Italy and Switzerland, to name a few. Studying in France offers a wealth of opportunities that perhaps no other country can match.

The association The French Will Never Forget was founded by Paul Bensabat, Jean-Pierre Heim, Christian Millet and Patrick du Tertre, who came together in a common desire to emphasize the gratitude of the French people toward the United States. The group has organized numerous events and high-level commemorations and other events observing Franco-American ties. The message of the project is: “Never forget about the catastrophe in 2001 and the sacrifices of Americans made in World War II to help the liberation of France.”

The position of the Eiffel Tower behind the World Trade Center Towers emphasizes the friendship between France and the United States. One of the towers lists all the names of the victims, while the other tower lists sympathetic messages posted on Facebook by those demonstrating their support.

French planes have missions since the Libyan conflict began.

The world’s first solo transatlantic flight to Le Bourget Field in 1927 by Charles Lindbergh, a Little Falls, Minnesota, native, sparked a biennial tradition that still continues. Since 1987 the sister cities of Little Falls, Minnesota and Le Bourget, France, have met for a week of stories and cultural exchange. This year the Americans surprised their French friends by building a memorial to honor Bernard Pinet, the longtime President of the Le Bourget Sister City Committee.

The July issue of News From France cited William Cohen as former U.S. Treasury Secretary. Mr. Cohen served as a U.S. Representative, U.S. Senator and Secretary of Defense during the Clinton administration, but never as Treasury Secretary.
La Rentrée : Back to School, Books and Politics

La Rentrée Scolaire

Another school year in France began on September 5, and the rentrée scolaire brought a number of comprehensive reforms to the country’s secondary education system.

The main goal of the changes is to enhance the skills of students at all levels, which will have particularly important ramifications for high school students. They will benefit from new programs for mastering the French language, and practice of a foreign language through self-reliance and personal motivation.

Internships are encouraged as students begin to specialize and prepare for university-level work. Personalized assistance, not limited to high-schoolers, is provided at all levels as the education system emphasizes a personalized path for each student.

Overall, the French education reforms affect 12 million students. Among them are 13,000 disabled students supported by two thousand qualified assistants, giving them an equal opportunity to learn. The Ministry of Education also is offering between 284 and 311 euros in aid for students from low-income families, a slight increase from last year.

La Rentrée Littéraire

Autumn in France heralds a unique outpouring of literary creativity known as la rentrée littéraire. From late August until early November, hundreds of emerging and established authors release their latest work.

The releases are often accompanied by extravagant promotional campaigns as authors vie for the admiration of the public and the consideration of literary prize committees, many of which make their nominations during this period. September 2011, the height of this year’s literary season, saw the release of 654 new books ranging from wild science fiction to contemplative novels.

Highlights of the season reflect this diversity. Les Bois de Sawgamet, a trans-generational adventure story, unfolds in the North American woodlands. Les Savants is a lyrical portrayal of ambitious modern India hampered by the ancient caste system. Des Vies d’Oiseaux tells the mysterious tale of a wealthy couple returning home from holiday to find that someone else has taken up residence in their house.

This fall’s literary season will also be the most technologically savvy rentrée to date, with the addition of e-books and a complementary website celebrating Une autre rentrée littéraire with a catalogue of new online books, along with interviews with authors and other multimedia.

La Rentrée des Affaires Politiques

Politics Domestic and International...

Along with the back-to-school season, this fall also ushers in la rentrée politique, as public officials return to work after the summer recess. This period of increased political activity has already begun with the September 25 election for 125 of the 348 total seats in the Senate of France. President Nicolas Sarkozy has also been busy, presenting the new budget domestically, and conducting a number of official visits abroad. On September 22, Sarkozy went to New York City to address the UN on nuclear energy and the need for a global skills development center to educate countries about safe nuclear technology. The political season also took on a global dimension when Minister of Economy, Finance and Industry François Baroin and Minister for Cooperation Henri de Raincourt held the G20 ministerial meeting on development in Washington. At the meeting they discussed “innovative financing,” a new method of taxing financial markets to sustain developing countries.

...With a Presidential Visit to the Statue of Liberty

While in New York, Sarkozy also met with Mayor Michael Bloomberg to celebrate the 125-year anniversary of the Statue of Liberty. Speaking to a crowd of officials on Liberty Island with the Statue rising behind him, Sarkozy discussed the greater meaning of the celebrated landmark.

“It is not simply a statue,” he stated. “It is a notion, an idea, an emblem. It is for all the people of the world.”
Southern France Promotes Solar Power

The famously idyllic sun on the French Côte d’Azur is not just for tanning anymore. French power company Akuo recently purchased 75,000 solar panels from California manufacturer SunPower to promote renewable energy in southern France. Akuo is a private firm that develops power plants run from renewable resources such as wind, water and biomass as well as solar power.

The SunPower panels, which Akuo Energy COO Brice Yharrassarry said were selected for their extremely high efficiency, will be used in two Southern French power plants. Yharrassarry noted that though there will be little “direct impact” on the local community due to the remote location of the panels, the community will benefit from the local taxes levied on the installations.

Though the company works mainly in France, Akuo also pursues projects internationally. Yharrassarry stressed his outfit’s intention to promote sustainable power abroad, especially in the United States. “We intend to continue our development worldwide and in particular in the U.S. with the same philosophy, producing green energy using [the] best available technologies while taking great care” of the environment, he stated.

French Astronaut Among Participants in Mars Simulation

Selected by the European Space Agency (ESA), French astronaut Romain Charles is a member of the team currently completing the “Mars-500” experiment organized by the Institute of Biomedical Problems (IBMP), a division within Russia’s public operations for science. The experiment simulates a 520-day mission to Mars.

The six-man crew consists of one Frenchman, three Russians, one Chinese and one Italian-Colombian. The experiment started in June of 2010, and will conclude this November.

The Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow is hosting the experiment, which aims to investigate the psychological effects of confinement and the possible behavioral change associated with it. The health conditions of the crew members are monitored to prevent medical problems.

The facility consists of different modules, each with its own functions. One of the main modules for the study is the living space of the crew, which includes their bedrooms, a kitchen, a game room and the control room.

In order to fully simulate the environment on Mars, the facility also includes a module with no oxygen and a constant temperature of -60 degrees Celsius (−76 degrees Fahrenheit).

Tech Innovator Builds Battling Quadricopters for Kids

“Are you good at video games? Try real life,” challenges a promo for Paris-based tech company Parrot. The company’s latest innovation, a hovercraft known as the AR Drone, blurs the border between the real world and the virtual world of games using “augmented reality” technology. Gamers can remotely pilot the colorful, two-foot quadricopters using a smartphone, while two built-in cameras use a wi-fi transmitter to send aerial views back to the gamer’s phone, with added graphics depicting missiles, obstacle courses and other additions to the video feed. Two or more players can also face off in a special game called AR Flying Ace.

The device, which retails at $299.99, has been a top seller for the Brookstone chain. It is equipped to fly both indoors and out, with special equipment to protect it during “wild” inter-drone battles, according to the Parrot website.

In addition to recreational use, the AR Drone has been recently put to work testing motion-tracking software for a startup that constructs lunar explorers, according to Bloomberg Businessweek.

Parrot’s founder and CEO, Henri Seydoux, is known for his work ethic and sharp business sense, but also for his connection to his employees and products. Seydoux was recently photographed relaxing in his office, phone in hand, as an AR. Drone zoomed around him.
"Heritage Days" Open Doors Throughout France

On September 17 and 18 over 12 million people across France participated in the 28th year of European "Heritage Days." Known in France as Les Journées du Patrimoine, the EHP was launched in 1984 by the French Ministry of Culture in order to give citizens access to areas of cultural importance not usually open to the public. Since 1991, the Council of Europe and the European Commission have expanded the festival throughout Europe to commemorate European heritage. Every year, the celebration takes place in the third week of September. France's participating sites included the Élysée Palace, the French president's residence, the Senate and the National Assembly.

Ex-Legionnaires Rally Around Provence Vineyard

The renowned Légion Étrangère, or the French Foreign Legion, enjoys a fabled history of military service around the world. Lesser known is the elite service’s connection to wine production: Since 1954, former Legionnaires needing a place to stay and a job to do have gone to the Foreign Legion Invalids’ Home in the village of Puyloubier, Provence.

Bordeaux’s Wine Growers to Run Marathon for Cause

"Self-transcendence, a good cause and wine: things that leave no one indifferent," reads the motto of a very unique group of athletes in this year's New York Marathon.

The Bordeaux Grands Crus Runners, with representatives from 15 top French wine estates, will join approximately 45,000 other marathoners from around the globe in the race later this fall.

The team has taken advantage of their visit to draw American attention to the celebrated culture of French wine as well as a humanitarian cause: they will be offering samples and auctioning off their signature wines to benefit Lysistrata, an organization that combats violence against women.
Reims Cathedral Fêtes 800 Years with Lightshow, Events

The year 2011 marks the 800th anniversary of the internationally renowned Reims Cathedral, located in the Champagne region in the town of the same name. Now through October 23, Reims will host a multitude of cultural events related to the structure, which has recently undergone three years of intensive renovation as part of a larger project, Reims 2020, launched by the local government.

The main attraction of the events program is undoubtedly the lightshow Rêve de Couleurs (“The Dream of Colors”) by the artist Skertzo, which mixes Gothic aesthetics with cutting-edge technology by accentuating the edifice’s stone and glass features through high-definition lighting.

Historically, Reims Cathedral is known as the site of numerous important ceremonies during the Middle Ages, including the baptism of Clovis, and the coronation place of no less than 25 kings of France. Its construction period spanned four centuries, beginning in 1211 and ultimately completed in 1516. The cathedral also features some of the finest Gothic architecture still in existence, not to mention the famous Smiling Angel, a cherub statue in the entrance façade whose stone turns to the color of ochre when lit by the setting sun.

Paris Remembers Filmmaker and Adopted Son

Cinephiles around the world mourned the death of visionary Franco-Chilean filmmaker Raoul Ruiz at 70 in Paris on August 19. The French capital had been his adopted home since he fled the regime of Augusto Pinochet in Chile 38 years before. The director of over 100 films in French, Spanish and English, Ruiz cited influences as diverse as Parisian Surrealism, British Modernist literature and Chilean paperback dramas.

He began writing plays as a teenager and rose to international renown with his striking film adaptations of literary classics like Marcel Proust’s Time Regained. Despite deteriorating health, Ruiz continued directing until several weeks before his death. He told the New York Times in July that his diagnosis with liver cancer only made him more determined to keep working. “I was in the hospital for three months, and I came out wanting to make movies,” he said at the time. His latest film, La Noche de enfrente, was still in post-production when he died of a lung infection.

French politicians and culture buffs remembered the creativity and skill of the quietly passionate artist who had made their country his home. President Nicolas Sarkozy lauded Ruiz’s “immense erudition and infinite curiosity,” calling him a “worthy son of the Enlightenment.”

Hollywood Pays Tribute to Serge Gainsbourg, Pop Icon

A French joke goes, “What’s dirty, smells bad and hasn’t been taken out in a week?” The answer is Serge Gainsbourg, the scruffy Parisian musician and icon honored in a tribute concert August 28 at the Hollywood Bowl. One of France’s most celebrated cultural figures, he once recorded a reggae version of the French national anthem and created a provocative and public alter-ego, “Gainsbarre.”

A national sensation since the 1960s, Serge Gainsbourg is as famous as he is unclassifiable. Performing jazz, pop, funk, reggae and electronica within his lifetime, Gainsbourg’s music and audacious lyrics were an inspiration to generations of musicians, in France and worldwide. Artists paying tribute to him at the event included John Lennon’s son Sean, Russian-American singer-stress Zola Jesus, Gainsbourg’s son Lulu and American indie-rocker Beck, who also produced the event.

Besides singing such famous hits as “Je t’aime moi non plus” and “The History of Melody Nelson” in imitations of Gainsbourg’s distinctive grainy voice, the musicians also tried to pay homage to his many faces. Notable on-stage performances included Beck’s snappy rendition of Gainsbourg’s audacious “Les Sucettes,” the 1966 smash he wrote for teen sensation France Gall.
Embassy Goes “Vert” with Aromatic Herb Garden

The Embassy of France in the United States is on track to sustainability thanks to its new Green Embassy project (Ambassade Verte). Its first objective is to modify areas of transport and reduce waste throughout the compound. By 2015 the Embassy of France hopes to have improved energy efficiency by 40 percent. The embassy has also begun an ambitious project to renovate the entire building. To date, a new air conditioning unit, heating unit and carbon-free electricity have been installed. Among the numerous other projects created by Ambassade Verte are an electric bicycle rental scheme, recycling improvements and a newly planted aromatic garden (jardin d’herbes aromatiques). Thanks to the labor of a few embassy employees and help from the local Love & Carrots gardening business, the newly constructed aromatic garden offers to staff free herbs from four regions: India, Italy, South America and Thailand.

The Embassy’s garden marks another small step toward a more environmentally friendly facility and greener grounds management.

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