



# News From France

A free monthly review of French news & trends

Vol. 17.01 - January 2017

NEWS FROM FRANCE  
IS ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE

franceintheus.org  
FranceInTheUS  
@franceintheus  
franceintheus

## French astronaut Thomas Pesquet launches into Space for Proxima mission



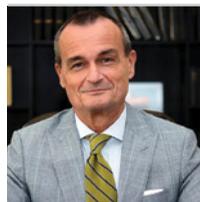
©ESA/NASA

### THOMAS PESQUET,

a native of Rouen, joins the 50th expedition to the International Space Station.

### ● In this issue...

- 2 Current Events**  
Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian in D.C.  
4 French top Global Thinkers named
- 3 Interview**  
Maud Arnold, tap dancer
- 4 In Depth**  
French holiday traditions
- 6 Business & Technology**  
Astronaut Thomas Pesquet in space  
Earth-like planet may be habitable
- 7 Culture & Society**  
Artisanal coffee in France  
The "Nuit des idées"
- 8 Destination of the Month**  
Lille



## A message from Ambassador Gérard Araud

Dear Friends,

in the world, hosting many Americans including tourists, students, and investors.

A year ago, we made history by welcoming more than 150 heads of state and government to Paris for what is now known as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Less than a year later, it has entered into force thanks to its ratification by many countries, including the U.S. Needless to say, the ambitious goals set forth by nearly 200 nations will require constant efforts, but as we look back on 2016, let us celebrate what has been achieved for our children and grandchildren.

We have seen hundreds of examples of important French-American collaboration this year, both nationwide and around the world. Festival Albertine brought French and American intellectuals together to address important societal questions, including diversity in the film industry. In the sciences, France and the U.S. worked together as part of the LIGO Scientific Collaboration, which observed the collision of two black holes for the first time, proving Einstein's theory of relativity.

2016 was all-around an important year for the advancement of French-American relations. Both nations unfortunately faced terrorist attacks this year, and we have strengthened our cooperation to face and fight terrorism side by side. France has been incredibly touched by American solidarity, and I am confident that together, we will overcome ISIS, and other perpetrators of cowardly attacks.

In 2017, we look forward to continuing cooperation in all realms. France will also go through its own election cycle, with presidential elections in May and parliamentary elections in June. Our new administrations will, as always, look forward to working together to advance our common goals.

Despite these challenges, France hosted the Euro 2016 soccer championship, a success on and off the field. We remained the number-one tourist destination

2017 is the centennial of the United States' engagement in WWI, a milestone in the long and enduring friendship between France and the U.S. The Embassy will be hosting events marking this anniversary, and we hope to see many of you here.



News From France  
A free monthly review of French news & trends

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
Emmanuelle Lachaussée

EDITORS  
Benoît Cormier, Vincent Talbot

MANAGING EDITOR, GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
Kamilla Hassen

STAFF WRITERS  
Andrew Frank, Rebecca Hinkhouse,  
Alexander Riabov



## French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian meets with Defense Secretary Ashton Carter



**ON NOVEMBER 28**, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter came together for their last meeting in Washington, D.C., before Carter leaves office in January.

The two leaders met at the Daughters of the American Revolution Concert Hall in the capital to sign two documents strengthening bilateral military cooperation.

"The United States and France have built, over two centuries, the oldest alliance between two nations on the European and American continents," said Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook. "Today, military cooperation between the countries is stronger than ever, and both are engaged side-by-side in the fight against terrorism."

The first document signed at the event identifies several areas in which the U.S. and France will continue bilateral cooperation. The second is a military arrangement that identifies areas for bilateral cooperation in space.

Minister Le Drian and Secretary Carter discussed progress on other mutual security issues, including the counter-ISIS operations in Iraq and Syria. They acknowledged the significant results that Iraqi forces trained and supported by France, the United States, and the global coalition have had in fighting ISIS on the ground.

In his remarks, Minister Le Drian emphasized the importance of the intelligence sharing agreement adopted by France and the United States in the wake of the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris. He expressed the necessity of supporting and strengthening the work of the Lafayette committee, set up to facilitate this intelligence cooperation.

## Four French honorees named in Foreign Policy's top 100 Global Thinkers

**ON DECEMBER 12, FOUR FRENCH** honorees were included among Foreign Policy magazine's 100 leading Global Thinkers of 2016. For several years, the Washington, D.C.- based publication has recognized thought leaders from around the world in its most-read annual issue, "100 Leading Global Thinkers."

The Global Thinkers come from a range of fields, with the list including everyone from artists and activists to doctors and public servants who have made important contributions. This diversity is reflected in the French honorees for 2016.

The first, Géraldine Blin, is Project Director for the French Penitentiary Administration; her prison de-radicalization program was launched recently to offer counseling and education to potential extremists.

The LIGO Scientific Collaboration, which includes French researchers & technology, was recognized for recording the collision between two black holes, finally confirming Einstein's theory of gravitational waves.

"Les Cuisstots Migrateurs" (the migratory cooks), a catering company founded by Louis Jacquot and Sébastien Prunier, was recognized for its work to hire migrant chefs to share their culture through food. Another socially minded honoree, Arash Derambarsh, is a councilman from Courbevoie; he led a successful campaign that resulted in a February 2016 law banning supermarkets from throwing away nearly expired food.

On December 12, a dinner reception was held at the Four Seasons in Georgetown, where leaders and journalists were invited to learn about the honorees and the changes they are making throughout the world.



The French Leading Global Thinkers **Top to bottom**: Géraldine Blin (© APCARS), Louis Jacquot and Sébastien Prunier (©NYT / C. Fohlen), Arash Derambarsh (©A. Derambarsh), the LIGO team (©LIGO).

# Maud Arnold, tap dancer and French immersion alumna



Maud Arnold is a professional tap dancer, and member of Syncopated Ladies who performs, choreographs and teaches around the world. She is a graduate of the Montgomery County Public Schools French Immersion Program. Maud and her sister Chloe Arnold have been recognized by the U.S. House of Representatives as arts preservers and ambassadors. They are partners in Chloe & Maud Productions, a production company that creates events and films to elevate the art of tap introduce new audiences to the vibrant international tap community. Their recent feature-length documentary "Tap World," can currently be streamed on Netflix.

### What made you decide to pursue dance?

I'm really thankful that I am able to have a career as a dancer. I teach all around the world and one of the most frequent questions my students ask is: "What's your other job?" This is my only job.

My sister Chloe, who is my business and dance partner, and I both studied film at Columbia. Our dream was always to put tap dance on film. After I graduated from college, we started producing events and then decided to use our film degrees to

produce high quality content of us dancing. With the company she formed, Syncopated Ladies, we started producing videos, several of which have gone viral. Beyoncé herself has shared two of them on her website and on her Facebook, which has been extremely exciting. It brought our work not just to an audience of dancers, but to the whole world.

### How did growing up with a bilingual French education impact your life?

The French immersion was one of the greatest decisions my mom made for me as a child. The quality of the teachers, the curriculum, the education, were all incredible. For that to be offered in a public school, where, coming from a low-income family, we could still be afforded these opportunities, was amazing.

The French immersion was a very inclusive program. In 6th grade, we went on a class trip to France. Our class was very diverse socio-economically as well as racially, and everyone came together to fundraise to make sure that every single child could go on the trip to France.

It was also one of the most effective ways to learn another language. As an adult, I have been teaching myself Portuguese, and I'm very good at it because I think I unlocked the language of learning a language at such a young age.

I tell everyone "you need to send your kids to an immersion program." It really changes the way you look at the world, because you look at it through another lens, and you have to be outside yourself.

### How did this perspective affect your career?

I'm very privileged to have had this global perspective, which has affected my way I live my life on a daily basis. Having an international outlook at such a young age made me more open. Now in my career, I go to many different countries, where often nobody looks like me. I went to Croatia and Russia recently, for example. I am more comfortable and definitely more confident putting myself into spaces where I don't know the language or the culture.

I also research before I travel, because I understand that I must respect another person's space;

you learn that perspective at a very young age in French immersion. Not only were we learning the language, we were learning how to respect another culture and the way people speak and relate to each other, at seven years old.

### What role has French culture played in your life?

My mother is from France, my grandmother is from France and I have about 25 cousins in France, so French culture has always been around me in my home life.

One thing about French culture that has influenced me a lot is the importance of family. Having family dinners, where you cook for your family, hang out with your family, talk to your family; that has affected my life a lot. I'm very close to my family and I've also created a circle of friends that feel like family. We spend time together in ways that feel very French, like eating and traveling.

### Do you have any advice for young people studying French?

My advice for young people studying French is to keep it up, study hard and speak as much as you can. When you meet someone in the street that sounds French, ask "do you speak French?" and start speaking to them. Practice, don't give it up, and be proud that you speak another language. Don't be discouraged by other people, practice as much as you can, because it literally opens the door to the world.

### What is your experience with the French tap community, and who are some artists to look out for?

A good friend of mine, Arthur Benhamou, is an amazing tap dancer; he's featured in our documentary. He's very philosophical about his tap dancing, it's about feeling to him and expressing himself through improvisation.

The French tap community is very nice, welcoming and open, and excited about tap dancing. Last year I went to Paris and taught an impromptu class organized on Facebook the night before, and 17 people came! After the class, Arthur said "let's go for a drink." I don't drink alcohol, but we went to eat and drink and have fun after we danced together, which was a very French moment. 

## En chiffres...

3,000

The number of pages, in 13 volumes, of Marcel Proust's "A La Recherche du Temps Perdu," the world's longest novel.

6.11 Million

The number of Americans who speak French fluently as a second language.

20,000

The number of new words created in the French language every year, which has more than a million words.



# The holidays, French style



**WHILE HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS IN FRANCE AND THE U.S.** are often very similar, there are a few traditions that are unique to the French. The holiday season is one of the most festive times of year, with events from traditional Christmas markets lining the streets to light shows illuminating the dark winter's sky. As many readers return from the holiday break, we explore how the season was celebrated in France.

## Lyon's Festival of Lights

In Lyon, residents have been putting on a festival of lights every year since 1852. The tradition dates to 1643, when town leaders paid tribute to the Virgin Mary with a candlelight procession to the Basilica of Fourvière as a plea to avoid the plague. The festival was then fortified as a tradition on December 8, 1852, when the statue of the Virgin Mary was erected near the Basilica, and has continued ever since.

The Lyonnais used to decorate their windows with candles behind multicolored glass, lighting up city neighborhoods with a rainbow of colors. To this day on December 8, Lyon is illuminated by locals as well as artists from around the world. The entire city becomes an art exhibit, with local monuments serving as canvases for artists who bring the city to life with light.

## Santons de Provence

One unique aspect of French holiday decor is the *crèche*, or nativity scene. While it is common in the U.S. and around the world for families to display a replica of the nativity crib, many French families go above-

and-beyond, featuring figures such as bakers, produce sellers, and other characters typical to French towns.

These small figurines are called *santons* and originated in Provence. Today they are produced and sold by family businesses, who pass the craft of molding and painting the figures down from generation to generation. There is even an annual *santon* fair dating back to 1803 that takes place in Marseille every year around Christmas.

## Le Père Noël

Christmas time is full of anticipation for young French children as they await the arrival of *Père Noël*, or Santa Claus. It is a common practice around the world for young children to write letters to Santa. Lucky for those who live in France, in 1962 a law was passed that requires a postcard response to any letter written to Santa. This tradition has no doubt kept the belief in Santa Claus alive in the buildup to Christmas.

Another difference between French and American children is their traditional Christmas Eve offering to Santa and his reindeer. Instead of placing carrots or cookies near the fireplace as is common in the U.S., French children leave their shoes, hoping to wake up with a shoe-full of presents and sweets on Christmas morning. In Northeast France, children put out their shoes for gifts not on Christmas Eve, but on December 6, the feast day of Saint Nicholas.

## Le Reveillon

Finally, Christmas feasts are a widespread tradition. "*Le Reveillon*," as it is called, is served late on Christmas Eve or even in the early morning after Midnight Mass.

Traditional French dishes include turkey stuffed with chestnuts, goose, oysters, and foie gras. A typical dessert is the *Bûche de Noël*, or yule log.

The tradition is rooted in a southern French custom of families burning a log from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day. Another French treat served around Christmas is the *galette des rois*, or king's cake. Inside the cake is a hidden charm called the *fève*. The lucky recipient of the *fève* is crowned king or queen for the day and receives a golden paper crown.



### Christmas market in Strasbourg

Strasbourg, a French city in the Alsace region near the German border, is known as the capital of Christmas. Tourists from around Europe flock to Strasbourg for the annual Christmas market, the *Christkindelsmärik*. The Strasbourg Christmas market dates back to 1570 and is deeply rooted in the history and culture of the region.

Today, the heart of the market is located at the Place Broglie where craftsmen sell their goods and give demonstrations of their techniques. Each year in Place Gutenberg, Strasbourg invites a foreign country to present their holiday traditions and products as part of the market, 2016's honoree was Portugal. Christmas time in Strasbourg is also a time for charity, especially at the Place Kléber where over 100 charities have opportunities to help those in need. At the center of the square there is a large Christmas tree, where visitors are welcome to leave gifts for the poor.

### New Year's Eve

New Year's in France is celebrated in a way that is similar to the U.S., as a time to be spent with family and friends and a celebration of new beginnings. Like at Christmas, the French kick off their celebration with a special feast called the *Réveillon de Saint-Sylvestre*, the Saint whose day is celebrated December 31. Dishes include foie gras and oysters, like at Christmas, with the addition of a champagne toast. This dinner is said to bring luck and prosperity in the new year to all in attendance.

Many towns throw balls on New Year's Eve to ring in the new year as a community, often organized by the local fire department. Party-



goers dress up in fancy attire and kiss at the stroke of midnight, just as in the U.S. On New Year's Day, parades line the streets. This year in Paris, the parade kicked off at the Place de la Concorde, proceeded along the Champs-Élysées, and then circled back. Beginning at 2pm, hundreds of artists marched and performed, representing ten nationalities, including the marching bands of a few American universities. This was only the third year that the parade has taken place, but *la Grande Parade* de Paris is on its way to becoming a Parisian New Year's tradition.

**Left top:** King's cake pastries; **Bottom:** a resident of Lyon places lights in their windowsill; **Above:** the Champs Elysees on New Year's Eve; **Below:** revelers and shoppers at the Strasbourg Christmas market.



## French astronaut Thomas Pesquet arrives at International Space Station



**ON THE EVENING OF NOVEMBER 17**, French astronaut Thomas Pesquet boarded the Soyuz MS-03 spacecraft in Baikonur, Kazakhstan, along with astronauts Oleg Novitskiy from Russia and Peggy Whitson from the US to embark on mission Proxima, the 50th expedition to the International Space Station (ISS). Upon reaching space, the crew spent two days completing 34 orbital revolutions of the Earth and then safely docked with the ISS.

According to a European Space Agency (ESA) press statement, Pesquet "will perform more



than 50 scientific experiments for ESA and France's CNES space agency, as well as take part in many research activities for the other Station partners."

Born in Rouen, France, Pesquet is the 10th Frenchman to go to space, the fourth to stay aboard the ISS and the first to spend six months there. After receiving his master's degree in spacecraft design and control in 2001 from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure de l'Aéronautique et de l'Espace in Toulouse, France, Pesquet worked as a research engineer with the French space agency, on space station autonomy. An avid pilot, Pesquet also qualified for Air France's flight training program in 2004 and logged more than 2,300 flying hours on commercial airliners.

After being selected for the mission, Pesquet had to undergo intense technical and operational training. To prepare for living in the tight quarters of the ISS, Pesquet lived and worked underground as part of the European Space Agency's CAVES training course in 2011 and on NASA's underwater SEATEST-II mission.

The name for the astronaut's mission was chosen from over 1,300 entries. The winning name was provided by 13-year-old Samuel Planas, from Toulouse, who chose the name of the closest star to our sun, Proxima.

Six days after the launch, Pesquet called the European Astronaut Center from the ISS for a live video conference with media to discuss his first few days in space. Pesquet will conduct regular interviews while aboard the ISS until he returns in May 2017.

## Earth-like planet could be habitable

**FRENCH AND AMERICAN ASTROPHYSICISTS** recently published the results of a study in the *Astrophysical Journal Letters*, leading them to believe that the exoplanet Proxima-b could be habitable.

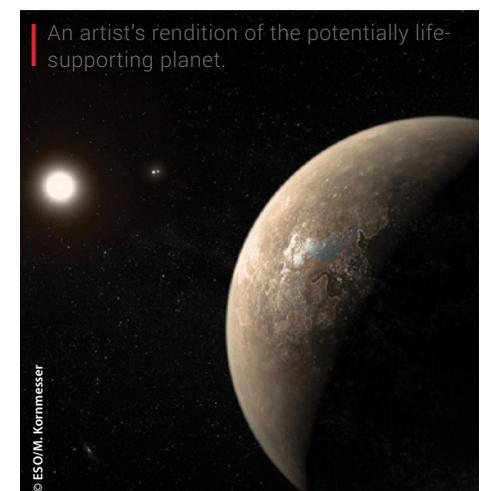
According to French astrophysicist Bastien Brugger, the planet could even be covered entirely by a single liquid-water ocean. This assumption is dependent on the actual radius of the planet, which could vary from 0.94 to 1.4 times that of Earth.

Making this discovery even more fascinating is the fact that the planet orbits the habitable zone of Proxima Centauri, the closest star to the Sun at approximately 4.22 light years away. The star, categorized as a red dwarf, is too dim to be easily visible from Earth, forcing astronomers to use clever techniques to uncover its secrets.

One of the tricks used by the team at the Marseille Astrophysics Laboratory was to try to estimate the mass of the planet. By comparing observations made from Earth and data from planets in our own solar system, astronomers were able to extrapolate a few different scenarios about the composition of our galactic neighbor.

Proxima-b may be as dry as Mercury, a rocky planet without an atmosphere, but it could also be larger, denser and, as we have seen, literally covered in water. The planet could also have an atmosphere.

More research and better technology is needed to confirm any of the scenarios at the moment. To put the discovery into perspective, it would take a space shuttle equipped with current propulsion technology 165,000 years to reach Proxima-b.



## Artisanal coffee in Paris

**BISTROS AND CAFES LINE THE** cobblestone streets of Paris, and one is guaranteed to find good coffee around any corner. Still, many coffee-lovers wanted spaces dedicated to the culture of their favorite bean, allowing for the artisanal coffee movement to gain significant traction in France.

Recently, newly infused flavors, coffee exports and redefined techniques have entered the coffee market in France. French producers have a profound interest in specialty coffee cultures that have long existed in France like in the United States. Now new shops are popping up that focus specifically on the drink, playing with temperatures, milk pouring techniques and single origin coffees – beans that originate from one country as opposed to a blend.

The drinks themselves come with a French twist. Hippolyte Coutry, who runs L'Arbre à Café, an importer and roastery supplying both boutiques and a handful of coffee shops around Paris, claims that French coffee is typically bitter. Coutry, who has previously researched French coffee culture, says the French have been drinking the black brew since the 1700s, and developed a taste for bitter coffee from the chicory flavor that came from West African coffee beans in the early 19th century.

Today, new generation coffee shops, with their modern white-walled, wood and steel decors, aim to reach a greater number of people according to Aleaume Paturle, whose roastery, Lomi, has grown from a small workspace to a grand cafe

and producer. Despite continuing the French tradition of a morning espresso, the French are now adapting techniques from abroad. Many expatriates from the U.S. and elsewhere have found their own success opening shops in French cities. 

Artisanal coffee shops are becoming more common throughout France.



## Celebrate philosophy this January!



The Brooklyn Public Library, which will host a Night of Philosophy and Ideas on January 28 and 29.

**WHAT BETTER WAY** to start a new year than taking a step back to grapple with the larger questions that shape our lives? 2017 will kick off with the “Nuit des idées,” or Night of Philosophy and Ideas, a worldwide celebra-

tion of philosophy in over 30 cities, including New York and Los Angeles.

Since 2010, Night of Philosophy ‘happenings’ have taken place in cities around the world including Paris, Helsinki, London, Paris, Berlin, and Tel Aviv. New York City’s first Night of Philosophy was produced by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in New York in 2015. The event was wildly successful drawing an audience of more than 5000 people.

In January 2016, the Institut français hosted the first “Nuit des idées,” at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ main building, the Quai d’Orsay. Intellectuals, artists and architects gathered to imagine the world of tomorrow. “The basis of our diplomacy is culture,” explained the Minister of Foreign Affairs, “in French diplomacy, culture is a central element of our raison d’être.”

This year, two events will take place in the United States. The French Cultural Services in Los Angeles will host a night-long event from 7pm to 2am on January 26, which will feature debates and roundtables as well as artistic performances and readings.

In New York, the Cultural Services of the French Embassy and the Brooklyn Public Library will co-present A Night of Philosophy and Ideas, a 12-hour marathon from January 28 at 7pm to January 29 at 7am. The free all-night marathon will present philosophical debates, performances, screenings, readings, and music, featuring top philosophers from around the world.

**Los Angeles “Nuit des idées”:** January 26, 7pm to 2am, <http://frenchculture.org/visual-and-performing-arts/events/night-ideas-utopias>

**New York “A Night of Philosophy and Ideas”:** January 28 7pm to January 29 7am, <http://nightofphilosophyandideas.com> 



**LILLE IS THE CAPITAL** of the Hauts-de-France region in northern France, near the border with Belgium. According to legend, the city was founded in 640, when Lydéric, an orphaned prince, murdered the giant Phinaert as vengeance for the death of his parents. He then inherited Phinaert's land, where he founded Lille. Over the course of its long history, Lille was in turn under Flemish, Burgundian and Spanish rule before becoming French in 1667.

Today, Lille is a vibrant, young and dynamic city where the friendly "*esprit du nord*" or "spirit of the North" is very present; residents of Lille are exceptionally kind and welcoming. Visitors enjoy the flamboyant architecture of the old city, with its magnificent *vielle Bourse* building, historic town hall belfry and pedestrian zone.

Lille is known as a city of art and culture because of its many museums and cultural institutions. The famous La Piscine museum, a stunning swimming pool that has been turned into an art museum, is one of many landmarks of the city that you will want to visit.

One of the best times to visit Lille may be in fall, when the town celebrates its largest festival, the Grande Braderie de Lille. During this event, Lille turns into a giant flea market and welcomes 2 to 3 million visitors from around the world. Outdoor concerts abound and all are encouraged to partake of the city's best-known dish—*moules-frites* (mussels and fries). So many mussels are eaten during the festival that their shells pile many feet high outside of restaurants!



Presorted  
First Class  
Mail  
U.S. Postage  
Paid  
Washington, DC  
Permit No. 4620

A free monthly review of French news & trends  
**News From France**

