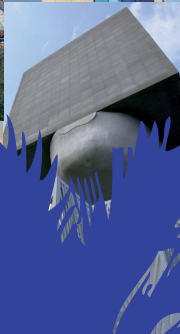
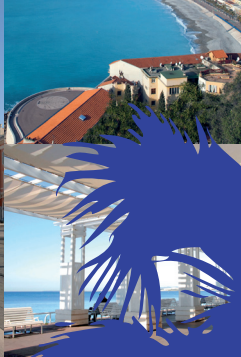


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# Pardon my French

-Veronica Sexton

*French is known as the language of love, but learning French can be a labour of love. With English as our first language, it has made us lazy when it comes to learning foreign languages. The English language is everywhere (music, film, TV shows), so why bother learning another language?*



Learning a little French can certainly benefit your time in France, and it can also add a bit of class to your persona. Many Pebbles guests are bitten by the French bug during their stay on the Riviera, and return here again and again. Many want to learn some basic French or to salvage the little French they may have learnt at school in order to enjoy the experience even more.

In our hectic daily routines, it can be difficult to find the energy and time to learn a language. So many people wind down by combining their holiday with an activity of interest, and one of the most popular is learning a language. And what more enjoyable way to learn French than on the French Riviera?

Here are a few tips to get you started.

## 1. Take a French course

There are many language schools in Nice and the surrounding areas. There are courses specifically for students preparing for exams, people who need to learn quickly for business or pleasure, and more leisurely courses that concentrate on conversation. Many of the intensive courses offer a four-hour group class in the morning with a choice of one-on-one tutoring in the afternoon. Many courses combine language instruction with cooking, skiing and even salsa. Most courses offer activities outside of the classroom to help you practice French, for example, sightseeing in the area and enjoying local cuisine.

## 2. Immerse yourself in French and the local culture

Nothing can accelerate your French more than being totally immersed in the language and culture. Going to cafés and restaurants gives you the opportunity to eavesdrop on fellow French speaking diners and to practice your skills by ordering a meal. Strolling the markets buying fresh produce allows you to converse with native speakers; many will be patient and impressed that you are trying. For the more advanced speaker, there is nothing like pretending you are a local and installing yourself in a local café armed with a French newspaper and espresso.

## 3. Join a group

To complement your French classes, find a French social group. These groups are great for meeting new people and practicing your French in a relaxed convivial atmosphere.

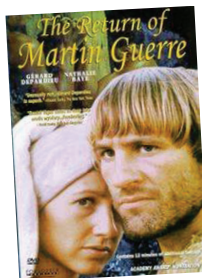
## 4. Bring French into your home

Watch your favourite DVD in French with subtitles. Most DVDs come with multiple language options including French. Watching French news on television, or listening to the news on French radio, is another way to hone your skills. Language software programs can be purchased on the Internet or in bookshops. You can also find websites for learning French. Here you can also find chat partners where you help someone improve their English whilst they help you improve your French.

*Bon courage!*

French films give you an excuse to curl up on the sofa  
all under the guise of language learning.

### **Le Retour de Martin Guerre (1982)**



The popular French actor Gérard Depardieu plays a 16<sup>th</sup> century French soldier who returns home after nine years serving his country. Whilst the soldier looks and sounds like the man who left, he's a much nicer person. Rather than accepting good fortune,

the villagers won't let sleeping dogs lie and set out to reveal him as an impostor. Things come to a dramatic conclusion when the so-called impostor is accused of murdering the real Martin Guerre. You may recognise this theme by the 1993 Hollywood remake *Sommersby* with Richard Gere and Jodie Foster.

### **Cyrano de Bergerac (1990)**

Gérard Depardieu also stars in this humorous love story set in 17<sup>th</sup> century France. Cyrano is madly in love with the beautiful Roxanne but doesn't tell her his feelings because he thinks she won't be able to see past his huge nose. The handsome Christian, who is all brawn and no brains, also loves Roxanne. Cyrano agrees to help Christian win Roxanne by wooing by secret proxy. Can you guess the ending? You may have some help if you have seen the 1987 Hollywood remake, *Roxanne*, with Steve Martin.



### **La Cage aux Folles (1978)**

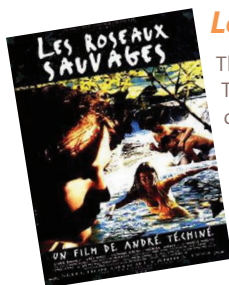
One of the most popular and funniest French farces, this 1978 film gained critical acclaim for questioning the serious notions of conventional family and moral values and sympathetically explored homosexuality. It is also based around

a nightclub in St-Tropez. Many may know the story of the film by the 1996 Hollywood remake, *The Birdcage*, starring Robin Williams, but critics say the remake just doesn't get the side splitting laughs the original delivers.



### **Ronin (1998)**

OK—we cheated. Unless you choose subtitles, this is mainly an English language film with Robert De Niro and Jean Reno. But we couldn't resist including it for the frantic car chase scene around Villefranche and Nice. See if you can recognise Nice's Old Town, Place St-François, Rue Droite, and Place Rossetti.



### **Les Roseaux Sauvages (1994)**

This coming of age film won four César awards in 1995. The plot centres around four teenagers in the Southwest of France during the Algerian war that grapple with communism, sexuality, racism and feminism with angst and uncertainty. It is not a fast moving plot, but one where you believe in all the characters and their intense interaction with each other. The film also has a great soundtrack of classical and 60's pop tunes.



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