

# pocket card France

In France (surface 551695 km<sup>2</sup>), areas of speleological interest characterized by rocks that favour the formation of natural cavities represent about 40 % of the entire land. Not every region has notable areas in their territory. They are significant differences in numbers, extension and types of caves. This feature has spurred speleological explorations in the French territory for over a century. Over more than a century of explorations, more than 50000 caves have been discovered, explored and documented, mainly in carbonate rocks (limestones and dolomites). There are also few caves in gypsum and sandstone but this is not a common feature. Caves in volcanic rocks are more present overseas. All French regions include karstic areas with very significant differences in terms of size. For instance, in the Armorican massif (area of 65000 km<sup>2</sup>), only 20 small caves are known and in the Ain department (area of 5762 km<sup>2</sup>), there are more than 2700 karstic phenomena and there are new discoveries almost every year. The extensive karstic areas in France, and the proximity with notables cities have encouraged systematic explorations in various type of carbonated rocks for more than a century. The most known important karstic systems are developed in carbonated rocks (limestone and dolomite): the Réseau Felix Trombe (also known as Coume Ouarnède complex) is the largest french cave system explored with more than 117 km of development in the Central Pyrenees; the Gouffre de la Pierre-Saint-Martin (also known as Gouffre Lépineux – Lépineux Pit) in Western Pyrenees with more than 83 km of development; the Réseau de l'Alpe (Alpe's complex) in the Chartreuse mountain with more than 72 km of development; the Arresteliako Ziloa in West Pyrenees with ~61 km of development; the Gouffre de Padirac in the Causse de Gramat with ~59 km. Less extended, but yet really interesting, are also the gypsum caves in the Alps (Savoy and Maritime-Alps) and also in the Parisian Basin (near Paris). France offers an extremely complex speleological scenario, continuously updated thanks to the incessant activity of exploration and research throughout its territory.



**Caves total :** ~ 50.000

**Marine caves total:** ~ 1000

**Artificial caves total:** several thousand (Grand réseau sud (Paris) > 100 km)

**Number of speleologists:** ~ 15000 (6564 with a federal licence)

**Speleological groups and organizations:** 388

**Most important caves**

Name	Length
Réseau Felix Trombe	> 117 km
Gouffre de la Pierre-Saint-Martin	> 83 km
Réseau de l'Alpe	> 72 km
Arresteliako Ziloa	~ 61 km
Grotte de Saint Marcel	~ 60 km
Gouffre de Padirac	~ 59 km
Depth	
Réseau Lucien Bouclier or Gouffre Mirollda	1733 m
Réseau du gouffre Jean-Bernard	1602 m
Gouffre de la Pierre-Saint-Martin	1410 m



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