

The History of France

The History of France – Concise Study Notes

1. Pre-Roman and Roman Gaul (c. 800 BC – 5th c. AD)

Period	Key Developments
Celtic Gaul (c. 800 BC – 121 BC)	• Inhabited by Celtic tribes (e.g., Arverni, Sequani). • Rich in iron, agriculture, and trade routes.
Roman Conquest (121 BC – 51 BC)	• Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars (58–50 BC) bring most of Gaul under Roman rule. • Integration into the Roman Empire as Provincia Gallia.
Roman Gaul (1st–5th c.)	• Urbanization: cities such as Lugdunum (Lyon) and Lutetia (Paris). • Spread of Latin language, Roman law, and Christianity.

2. Early Medieval Kingdom (5th – 10th c.)

Century	Milestones
5th	• Collapse of Roman authority; Germanic Franks under Clovis I (c. 481–511) unite most of Gaul. • 496 AD – Clovis converts to Catholicism, aligning the kingdom with the Roman Church. • Merovingian dynasty (Clovis's descendants) sees internal fragmentation.
6th–8th	• Rise of the Mayors of the Palace; Charles Martel (c. 718–741) halts Muslim expansion at the Battle of Tours (732).
8th	• Carolingian dynasty founded by Pepin the Short (751) and expanded by Charlemagne (c. 768–814). • 800 AD – Charlemagne crowned <i>Emperor of the Romans</i> (Rome's revival). • Carolingian empire fragments after the Treaty of Verdun (843).
9th–10th	• Viking raids lead to the establishment of the <i>*Norman</i> duchy (Normandy). • Capetian dynasty begins with Hugh Capet (987), laying the basis for the modern French state.

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3. High & Late Middle Ages (11th – 15th?c.)

Era	Highlights
12th? c.	• Feudalism solidifies; growth of towns and trade. • Construction of Gothic cathedrals (e.g., Notre?Dame, Chartres).
13th? c.	• Louis IX (Saint Louis) (1226?1270) strengthens royal administration, crusades, and legal reforms. • Expansion of royal domain; Parlement of Paris emerges as a judicial body.
14th? c.	• Hundred Years' War (1337?1453) with England: major battles (Crécy, Agincourt). • Black Death (1347?1351) devastates population. • Rise of Joan of Arc (1429) – pivotal in lifting the siege of Orléans.
15th? c.	• End of Hundred Years' War (1453) – France regains most territories. • Louis XI (1461?1483) centralizes authority, diminishes feudal power