

## Contents

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| <b>Acknowledgements</b> .....               | <b>ii</b>                |
| <b>Foreward</b> .....                       | <b>v</b>                 |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....                   | <b>vii</b>               |
| <b>Editors' Preface</b> .....               | <b>viii</b>              |
| <br>  |                          |
| <b>Activities</b> .....                     | <b>1</b>                 |
| <b>Administration</b> .....                 | <b>43</b>                |
| <b>Childcare</b> .....                      | <b>67</b>                |
| <b>Education</b> .....                      | <b>83</b>                |
| <b>Health &amp; Medicine</b> .....          | <b>103</b>               |
| <b>Living</b> .....                         | <b>139</b>               |
| <b>Organisations &amp; Charities</b> .....  | <b>173</b>               |
| <b>Pregnancy, Birth &amp; Newborn</b> ..... | <b>187</b>               |
| <b>Shopping</b> .....                       | <b>227</b>               |
| <b>Travel</b> .....                         | <b>265</b>               |
| <b>Work</b> .....                           | <b>285</b>               |
| <br>  |                          |
| <b>Index</b> .....                          | <b>305</b>               |
| <b>Helpful Services</b> .....               | <b>311</b>               |
| <b>Emergency Numbers</b> .....              | <b>Inside back cover</b> |

---

**Foreword to 5th Edition of “ABCs of Parenting in Paris”  
by Polly Platt**

I'm sitting here with the 5th edition of “ABCs of Parenting in Paris” open on my lap, in an ecstasy of envy just looking at in the index: Baby Sitters! Bilingualism! Dentists! Driving in France! and imagining the thrill of moving to Paris with this treasure. No desperation! No staggering around in a bewildered fog!

This book is packed full of everything a foreign mother in Paris needs to know or even possibly might need to know, whether it's prenatal or postnatal, up through the French school system and French bureaucracy. Furthermore, it is clearly, appealingly presented, clearly, concisely written, sensible and sensitive. Bravo to Kay Roudaut, the founder of MESSAGE and Lynne Chaillat, the editor of the first guide in 1984, and the team who put this new 5th edition together.

There was no MESSAGE, no book like this -- other mothers had a husband with a company or an embassy to help -- when I arrived in Paris from Vienna in 1967 with my three half-Austrian, German-speaking daughters, ages 7, 9 and 11. Before rushing back to Vienna, Ande, my new Serbian husband, presented us to his two little French sons, Pierre and Stéphane, ages 3 and 5. Since the Caesarian death of their mother they had been living in Paris with their Roumanian grandparents.

Now, except for the grandparents, we would all be living together. Without Ande. He couldn't give up his job there with a UNESCO branch until he figured out what he might do in Paris to pay the rent.

What language he expected us to communicate in he didn't say. My daughters didn't speak French or even English, though they understood it, sort of. The little French boys spoke only French. In fact, Pierre, the 3 year old, didn't speak anything. For that matter, he could hardly walk. He was autistic, but we didn't know that then. The grandparents said he was a little slow.

The first thing I needed to do was find an au pair, or at least a baby sitter. How should I do that? I'd be driving a lot, what were the things I should know in France -- with its reputation for competing with Spain for the most road accidents in Europe? I needed to find a doctor for Pierre. After a few days it was clear that he wasn't just “a little slow” but practically comatose. He just lay there all day. What kind of a doctor?

I had assumed that the Roumanian grandparents would be helpful. But they had no answers for any of this. It wouldn't have helped much if they did, for my schoolgirl French was Greek to them and their French (they had no other language but Roumanian) was a waterfall for me.

This was the beautiful romantic city everyone raved about? Being stranded alone in the Gobi desert couldn't have been much worse. Besides, my daughters were miserable. They wanted their garden in Vienna.

I finally made my way to the American Cathedral. The then Dean had no time to see anyone who proposed giving less than one million dollars to the Cathedral, but a member of the Junior Guild took pity on me and got me started until Ande got back. She initiated me to the fine points of driving in France (otherwise known as horrors). I found an au pair -- an American who spoke French -- and a dentist for the children who spoke English. I didn't find a doctor for Pierre, that would have to wait until I could convince Ande that this was serious. Meanwhile, the G.P. I did find weighed him, measured his height, and said he was a little slow.

All of this is beautifully indicated and explained in "ABCs of Parenting in Paris". Even facilities for a child like Pierre are tactfully suggested in the Health and Medicine, Childcare and Education chapters. Everything else imaginable is also indicated, even an alert about lead poisoning and advice about breast pumps.

The only thing missing is Trilingualism. Not that this is a pressing concern for anyone else. I didn't realize it was for me, either, until a luncheon one Sunday at a country auberge. Ande was visiting from Vienna, and we had mostly gotten through lunch with our usual language mix: Ande speaking French to the boys, German to the girls and English to me, the girls speaking German to him and to me and trying hard to get a few words in French out to the boys. Stéphane, a great talker, rattled along in fast-forward French I didn't understand a word of.

Towards dessert, the father at the table next to us leaned over to me and said in careful, slow French:

"*Madame*, I think I have understood that you are speaking three languages in your family?"

"*Oui, Monsieur*," I said.

"*Eh bien, Madame*, I'm a doctor, and I must tell you that this is very bad for the children."

To which I longed to say, "Very bad for me too, *Monsieur*!"

*Polly Platt is the author of "French or Foe?: Getting the Most Out of Visiting, Living and Working in France" (Distribooks) and "Savoir-Flair: 211 tips for Enjoying France and the French" (Culture Crossings Limited).*

---

## Introduction to the 5th Edition of “ABCs of Parenting in Paris” By *Petite Anglaise*

Living in Paris as an expat is one thing, living in Paris as an expat mother, or mother-to-be, is another kettle of fish entirely.

There I was, feeling as Parisian as the next person, having lived in the city of light for eight long years, when I became pregnant. The little I knew about pregnancy, childbirth and parenthood came from observing friends and their experiences in the UK. At the end of the day, I thought, naïvely, how different could things really be in France? Aside, of course, from the fact that I would obviously need to familiarise myself with a whole new area of vocabulary, so as to be able to hold forth at length about the status of my cervix, as pregnant women have a tendency to do.

A birth plan? “Never heard of one of those!” the French midwife replied, dismissively. “Anyhow, the only say you are likely to get in the matter is at what stage in the proceedings you would like to have an epidural.”

Gas and air? “If you are having problems with flatulence, we can have a chat about making some changes to your diet,” the gynaecologist said, sympathetically.

This was going to be more complicated than I had thought.

With the benefit of hindsight, I wonder if it might not be a good idea to set up a master class for expat expectant mothers. Modules on surviving Paris: which pushchairs fit through metro turnstiles when tipped backwards at a 60° angle, the (few) *métro* stations without (many) stairs, the handful of restaurants with genuine no-smoking sections, high chairs and/or changing facilities. Also featuring the “Pushchair Proficiency Test”, a diploma designed to teach new mums the skills needed to negotiate the pavements of Paris without any mishaps.

Other optional subjects might include how to speak assertively and obtain that precious “reserved” seat on the bus/*métro*, and how to embark on salary negotiations with a North African nanny who is an expert in the art of bartering.

And of course, last but not least, how to work the system in your favour via judicious use of your offspring. Did you know, for example, that having an under 4 with you entitles you to jump to the front of the queue at the taxi ranks at Paris railway stations? Or that a *carte enfant+* entitles up to four people accompanying the child to a 50% discount on trains? Or that supermarkets will deliver your shopping for free if you are visibly pregnant??

In the absence of such a master class, the “ABCs of Parenting in Paris” makes indispensable reading.

*Petite Anglaise* is the author of a blog about life in Paris, which can be found at [www.petiteanglaise.com](http://www.petiteanglaise.com)

- abortion . . . . . 109
- activities for rainy days . . . . . 13
- Activities** . . . . . 1
- Administration** . . . . . 43
- adoption . . . . . 50
- adoption leave . . . . . 293
- air travel . . . . . 275
- allergies . . . . . 122
- alternative birth options . . . . . 200
- ambulance service . . . . . 167
- American food . . . . . 243
- American sports . . . . . 38
- amniocentesis . . . . . 192
- animals . . . . . 3
- antenatal classes . . . . . 193
- antenatal physiotherapy . . . . . 128
- antenatal singing groups/classes . . . . . 194
- antenatal testing . . . . . 192
- aquariums . . . . . 4
- art museums . . . . . 18
- arts and crafts . . . . . 6
- arts . . . . . 6
- aspirin . . . . . 121
- assistante maternelle liberale . . . . . 75
- associations
- social . . . . . 179
- women's . . . . . 179
- ateliers . . . . . 6
- attorneys . . . . . 65
- au pairs . . . . . 76
- advertisement . . . . . 79
- agencies . . . . . 79
- baby blues . . . . . 207
- baby equipment (shopping directory) . . . . . 245
- baby equipment . . . . . 229
- baby food
- additive-free . . . . . 147
- home made . . . . . 148
- organic . . . . . 147
- baby gym . . . . . 34
- baby milk . . . . . 212
- baby swimming . . . . . 34
- babysitters
- advertising . . . . . 70
- agencies . . . . . 69
- student babysitters . . . . . 69
- emergency babysitters . . . . . 70
- barristers . . . . . 65
- bases de plein air et de loisirs . . . . . 22
- BCG vaccine . . . . . 131
- bed and breakfast . . . . . 279
- benefits during pregnancy . . . . . 54
- bereavement . . . . . 62
- bicycle hire . . . . . 36
- bilingualism . . . . . 96
- birth
- preparation classes . . . . . 193
- registration of . . . . . 49
- where to give birth . . . . . 195
- books . . . . . 10
- books for children (shopping directory) . . . . . 255
- bookshop activities in English . . . . . 12
- bookshops . . . . . 241
- bookshops (shopping directory) . . . . . 253
- bottlefeeding . . . . . 211
- breastfeeding . . . . . 209
- at work . . . . . 293
- twins and multiples . . . . . 216
- British food . . . . . 243
- broadband . . . . . 164
- bronchiolitis . . . . . 106
- bruises . . . . . 122
- bureaucracy . . . . . 45
- burial . . . . . 63
- buses . . . . . 157
- business etiquette . . . . . 298
- butterflies . . . . . 4
- buying a home . . . . . 60
- cæsarian section . . . . . 205
- camping . . . . . 282
- car seats . . . . . 230, 271
- car travel . . . . . 270
- caravanning . . . . . 282
- carte de santé . . . . . 112
- carte de séjour . . . . . 48
- carte famille nombreuse . . . . . 55
- carte grise . . . . . 145
- carte vitale . . . . . 52
- CDD . . . . . 287
- CDI . . . . . 287
- chambre d'hôtes . . . . . 279
- charities . . . . . 176
- chemists (see pharmacies) . . . . . 124
- chicken pox . . . . . 106
- vaccine . . . . . 131
- child abuse . . . . . 105

- child health clinic . . . . .107  
 childbirth (see birth) . . . . .195  
**Childcare** . . . . .**67**  
 collective . . . . .72  
 officially recognised . . . . .72  
 part-time . . . . .71  
 individual . . . . .75  
 child-friendly restaurants . . . . .149  
 childhood illnesses . . . . .106  
 childproofing the home . . . . .159  
 children travelling unaccompanied . . . . .273  
 children travelling without parents . . . . .269  
 children's clothes . . . . .233  
 children's libraries with books in English . . . . .10  
 children's medicine . . . . .121  
 children's theatre in French . . . . .9  
 Chinese food . . . . .242  
 chorionic villus sampling (CVS) . . . . .192  
 churches . . . . .181  
 circumcision . . . . .108  
 circuses . . . . .7  
 clinics (see maternity facilities) . . . . .195  
 cloth nappies . . . . .141  
 clothes . . . . .233  
   bargain hunting . . . . .234  
   baby and children's (shopping directory) . . . . .247  
   department stores (shopping directory) . . . . .247  
   mail order (shopping directory) . . . . .250  
   maternity/nursing wear  
   (shopping directory) . . . . .251  
   second-hand maternity wear  
   (shopping directory) . . . . .252  
   seconds shops (shopping directory) . . . . .251  
   sportswear and sporting goods  
   (shopping directory) . . . . .251  
 colds . . . . .121  
 company structures . . . . .295  
 contraception . . . . .108  
 contrat d'expatriation . . . . .287  
 contrat de durée déterminée . . . . .287  
 contrat de durée indéterminée . . . . .287  
 copie certifiée conforme . . . . .46  
 cot death . . . . .214  
 coughs . . . . .121  
 craft supplies – purchase . . . . .240  
 crafts (shopping directory) . . . . .255  
 creating a company . . . . .294  
 crèches . . . . .72  
 cremation . . . . .64  
 cuts . . . . .122  
 cybercafés . . . . .165  
 cycling tours . . . . .36  
 cycling . . . . .35  
 death formalities . . . . .62  
 dentists . . . . .110  
 détachement . . . . .287  
 diaper rash . . . . .122  
 diapers . . . . .230  
 diarrhoea . . . . .122  
 disability benefits . . . . .130  
 disabled children (see special needs) . . . . .129  
 Disneyland . . . . .30  
 divorce . . . . .56  
 doctors . . . . .111  
   check-up – mandatory . . . . .112  
   for children . . . . .112  
 donations to charity . . . . .176  
 doula . . . . .200  
 driving  
   drinking and driving . . . . .146  
   insurance and tax . . . . .145  
   lessons . . . . .144  
   licence . . . . .144  
   vehicle registration . . . . .145  
 drugstore . . . . .124  
 dry skin . . . . .122  
 due date . . . . .189  
 DVDs . . . . .164  
 eco family . . . . .141  
 eczema . . . . .122  
**Education** . . . . .**83**  
 embassies . . . . .170  
 emergency services . . . . .166  
 employment contracts . . . . .287  
 employment legislation . . . . .288  
 English  
   books for children . . . . .10  
   film . . . . .7  
   playgroups . . . . .17  
   social activities for older children . . . . .16  
   English speaking nannies . . . . .76  
   hospitals/medical centres . . . . .112  
   pharmacies in Paris . . . . .127  
 entrepreneurs . . . . .294  
 environmental labelling . . . . .141  
 environmentally friendly cleaning products . . . . .142

- equipment rental .....232  
Eurostar ..... 273  
exhibitions ..... 31  
extrait de casier judiciaire ..... 46  
eye doctor ..... 123  
factory shopping centres (shopping directory) . 260  
family benefits  
    aide au logement de familles nombreuses . 54  
    allocation de base ..... 54  
    allocation de rentrée scolaire ..... 54  
    allocation pour naissances multiples ..... 55  
    allocations familiales ..... 54  
    avantages EDF ..... 55  
    bon de vacances ..... 54  
    complément de libre choix d'activité ..... 54  
    complément de libre choix  
    de mode de garde ..... 54  
    complément familial ..... 54  
    prestation d'accueil pour jeune enfant . . . 54  
    prime à la naissance ..... 54  
    prime de démenagement ..... 54  
farms ..... 4  
ferry travel ..... 277  
fertility ..... 117  
feuille de soins ..... 52  
film in English ..... 7  
fire service ..... 166  
fluoride ..... 110  
fœtal doppler ..... 191  
echo-doppler ..... 191  
food  
    international ..... 242  
    international stores (shopping directory) . 258  
    takeaway food ..... 242  
forfait familles ..... 55  
formula ..... 212  
French curriculum ..... 87  
funeral ..... 64  
garde partagée ..... 77  
gîtes ..... 27  
hairdressers for children (shopping directory) . 253  
hairdressers for children ..... 238  
halte-garderie ..... 71  
handicapped children (see special needs)  
haptonomy ..... 194  
head lice ..... 122  
health - reimbursement of treatment  
    and medicines ..... 52  
**Health & Medicine** ..... **103**  
holiday homes ..... 278  
home (shopping directory) ..... 257  
home birth ..... 201  
home schooling ..... 95  
homeopathy ..... 115  
hors-contrat ..... 93  
horse riding ..... 37  
hospitals for children ..... 115  
hospitals with neonatal units ..... 212  
hotels ..... 279  
house calls ..... 112  
household waste ..... 142  
ibuprofen ..... 121  
ice rinks ..... 37  
Indian food ..... 242  
indoor play ..... 13  
indoor play areas ..... 13  
infertility ..... 117  
inheritance ..... 64  
internal ultrasound scans ..... 191  
internet  
    broadband ..... 164  
    public access ..... 165  
    shopping ..... 239  
itching ..... 122  
Japanese food ..... 242  
jardins d'enfants ..... 74  
job-hunting ..... 297  
laboratories ..... 118  
labour laws ..... 288  
Lamaze method ..... 194  
lawyers ..... 65  
lead poisoning ..... 119  
leasing a home (see renting a home)  
legal aid ..... 66  
lettre de mission ..... 287  
libraries ..... 10  
listeriosis ..... 193  
**Living** ..... **139**  
ludothèques ..... 13  
mail order ..... 239  
mairies ..... 47  
maison verte ..... 15  
maisons d'hôtes ..... 279  
markets (shopping directory) ..... 259  
marriage counselling ..... 56

- Index
- martial arts .....37
  - maternal serum screening .....192
  - maternity bras .....235
  - maternity facilities .....195
  - maternity leave .....289
  - maternity wear .....235
  - medecin traitant .....111
  - medical
    - care during pregnancy .....190
    - check-up .....113
    - laboratories .....118
    - records .....112
    - system .....111
  - medical fees
    - conventionné .....112
    - conventionné honoraires libres .....112
    - non-conventionné .....112
    - payment and reimbursement .....111
    - medecin traitant .....52
    - medicines available over the
      - counter at the pharmacy .....121
      - medicines for children .....121
  - meeting places .....15
  - MESSAGE
    - English language events .....13
    - English language playgroups .....17
    - library .....11
    - women's and social associations .....180
    - support groups .....185
  - métro .....156
  - midwife .....201
  - milk for babies .....212
  - miscarriage .....190
  - moving house .....154
    - moving companies .....154
    - change of address .....154
    - relocation agencies .....154
  - multiple births .....215
  - municipal libraries .....11
  - museums .....18
  - music .....8
  - nanny agencies .....75
  - nappies .....230
  - nappy rash .....122
  - networking .....299
  - newborn
    - medical examinations .....209
    - weighing .....209
  - noisy neighbours .....59
  - North African food .....243
  - notaries .....65
  - nursery furniture .....229
  - nursing bras .....235
  - OPAC .....74
  - opticians .....123
  - organ donation .....63
  - organic food .....242
  - organic produce .....141
  - Organisations & Charities .....173**
  - outdoor activities .....22
  - overnight sleepers .....273
  - pædiatric
    - check-up – free .....114
    - check-up – mandatory .....112
    - dentists .....110
    - hospitals .....116
  - pædiatricians .....112
  - pain relief .....202
  - paracetamol .....121
  - parcs interdépartementaux des sports .....22
  - parent and child drop-in centres .....15
  - parental leave .....293
  - parking in Paris .....146
  - parks
    - in Paris .....24
    - outside Paris .....27
  - part-time status .....293
  - pass familles .....55
  - paternity leave .....293
  - pedestrian crossings .....145
  - pharmacies .....124
    - 24 hour .....126
    - baby milks .....125
    - baby, health and beauty products .....125
    - diapers .....125
    - equipment hire .....125
    - late night .....126
    - medicines .....124
    - nappies .....125
    - opening and emergency hours .....126
    - reimbursement of medicines .....125
    - repeat prescriptions .....125
    - returning unused or unfinished medicines .....125
    - tiers payant .....125
    - vaccinations .....124
  - physiotherapy

- antenatal .....128
- postnatal .....128
- places of worship .....181
- playgroups .....17
- PMI centres .....15, 107
- police service .....167
- postnatal care .....206
- post-natal depression .....207
- postnatal physiotherapy .....128
- postpartum care .....206
- postpartum depression .....207
- pottery .....7
- pregnancy
  - administrative considerations .....189
  - anesthetist .....192
  - antenatal testing .....192
  - due date .....189
  - foetal dopplar .....191
  - gymnastics .....194
  - internal ultrasound scans .....191
  - maternal serum screening .....192
  - medical care .....190
  - monthly visits .....190
  - pelvic x-rays .....191
  - pregnancy test .....189
  - reimbursement of medical costs .....53
  - seeing a medical practitioner .....189
  - termination .....109
  - ultrasound scans .....191
  - vitamins .....132
- Pregnancy, Birth & Newborn .....187**
- premature babies .....212
- premature labour .....212
- prenatal classes .....193
- private sales .....234
- private schools .....93
- proof of residence .....49
- public schools .....87
- public transport .....156
  - buses .....157
  - lost property .....158
  - métro .....156
  - RATP .....156
  - RER .....157
- puppet shows .....8
- purchasing a home .....60
- rainy day activities .....13
- RATP .....156
- reconnaissance d'un enfant .....49
- recycling .....143
- reimbursement of medical costs during
  - pregnancy .....53
- reimbursement of treatment and medicines .....52
- renting a home .....58
- RER .....157
- residency permit .....48
- respiratory therapy .....128
- restaurants - child-friendly .....149
- reusable nappies .....141
- river trips .....23
- road safety .....145
- roller-blading .....37
- roller-skating .....37
- safety equipment .....230
- safety in the home .....159
- salons .....31
- schools .....83
  - bilingual .....85
  - choosing a school .....185
  - enrolment procedures .....89
  - French curriculum .....87
  - home schooling .....95
  - hors contrat .....93
  - private .....93
  - public .....87
  - sous contract .....93
  - special needs children .....95
- science museums .....19
- scrapbooking .....7
- seasonal activities .....31
- second hand
  - baby equipment .....233
  - clothes .....234
  - maternity wear .....235
- secondment agreement .....287
- separation .....56
- setting up a business .....294
- shoes for children (shopping directory) .....252
- shopping directory .....244
- Shopping .....227**
- SIDS .....214
- size charts
  - bras .....236
  - children's shoes .....237
  - women's clothes .....236
  - women's shoes .....237

- men's shoes ..... 238
- SNCF ..... 272
- social activities for older children ..... 16
- social associations ..... 179
- social security system ..... 51
- solicitors ..... 65
- sophrology ..... 194
- shopping centres/malls (shopping directory) ..... 259
- sous-contrat ..... 93
- special needs children
- childcare ..... 81
  - education ..... 95
  - health ..... 129
- sport ..... 34
- sterilisation ..... 109
- sudden infant death syndrome ..... 214
- supermarket chains (shopping directory) ..... 258
- supermarkets ..... 241
- support groups ..... 184
- swimming pools ..... 39
- synagogues ..... 181
- telephone ..... 161
- television ..... 162
- cable ..... 163
  - canal + ..... 162
  - digital terrestrial ..... 163
  - satellite ..... 163
  - standard channels ..... 162
- temperature chart ..... 120
- tenant ..... 58
- termination of pregnancy ..... 109
- TGV ..... 272
- Thai food ..... 242
- Thalys ..... 273
- theatre classes ..... 9
- theatre in English ..... 9
- theatre ..... 9
- theme parks ..... 28
- timbre fiscal ..... 45
- time management for working parents ..... 292
- toxoplasmosis ..... 193
- toys
- purchase ..... 240
  - safety standards and marks ..... 240
  - toys (shopping directory) ..... 255
- traffic rules ..... 146
- train stations and family facilities ..... 274
- train travel ..... 272
- translated documents ..... 45
- Travel** ..... **265**
- twins ..... 215
- twins and multiples – breastfeeding ..... 216
- ultrasound scans ..... 191
- vacation homes ..... 278
- vaccinations ..... 130
- vaginal labour ..... 204
- VBAC ..... 205
- vehicle testing ..... 145
- vente privée ..... 234
- videos ..... 164
- villages vacances ..... 280
- vitamins ..... 132
- volunteer organisations ..... 175
- vomiting ..... 122
- voter registration ..... 46
- walking in Paris ..... 25
- water
- bottled ..... 153
  - carbonated ..... 153
  - mineral ..... 153
  - spring ..... 153
  - tap ..... 153
  - for infants ..... 153
- water parks ..... 28
- water theme parks ..... 39
- weights and measures chart ..... 152
- whooping cough vaccine ..... 131
- wills ..... 64
- women's associations ..... 179
- work contracts ..... 287
- Work** ..... **285**
- workshops ..... 6
- worms ..... 122
- yoga ..... 195
- zebra crossings ..... 145
- zoos ..... 3