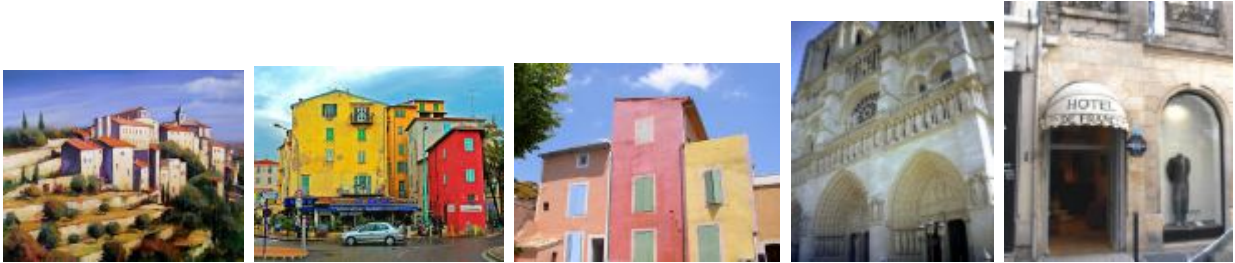


# French colour & design

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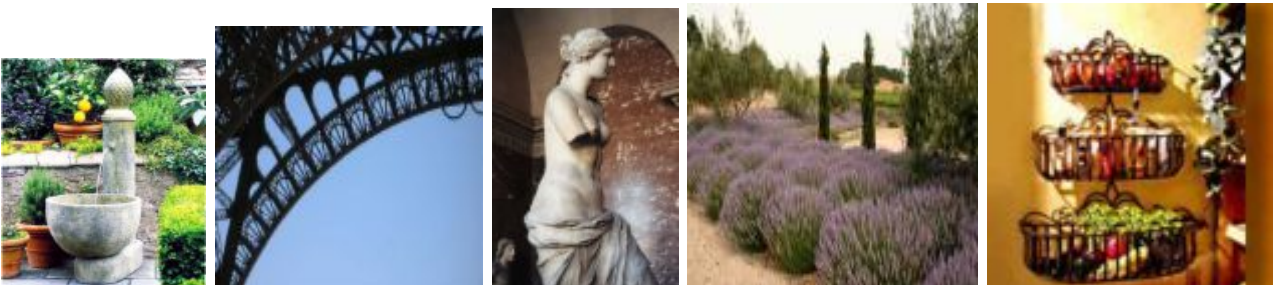
## exterior colours

The distinctive style known as French Provencal takes its name from the region of Provence in the south of France and has become more widely interpreted as the French Provincial style. The secret of its success is the combining of furniture, furnishings and accessories from previous centuries with those of today.

This style can be applied to a simple country home, a grand city residence or a modern townhouse. However it looks its best in the cottages in Southern France that are colour washed in warm shades of terracotta, pink or yellow with their wooden shutters boldly painted in contrasting colours.

In France this unpretentious style is influenced by its countryside and climate - clay soils and sundrenched landscape, tiled floors that are cool in summer and shutters to provide protection from the sun and mistral wind.

In terms of exterior decoration, the plaster walls are often colour-washed in earthy shades of reddish-pink or yellow and the windows and doors outlined in white or bordered in stone blocks set into the plaster. The window shutters and doors are usually painted in strong greens and blues, and decorated with studs or large-headed nails to give a rugged look. In the cities, French buildings are more ornate and often coloured in off-white or grey.



## gardens and exterior ornaments

Garden ornaments are simple earthenware pots, overflowing with geraniums or lavender, and wall-mounted gargoyles or cherubs positioned beside pathway or front door. Other ornamentation often used is cast iron gates, balustrades and balconies,

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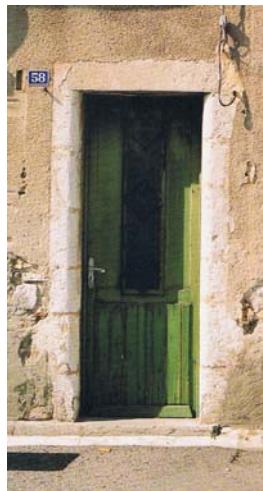
**Resene**

the paint the professionals use

garden furniture and ornate garden lights. Popular items to set the French scene are fragrant herbs, fig or olive trees and lots of vines growing over patios and courtyards that have been paved in worn stone.

There are garden and outdoor furniture stores that supply French style pieces so the look can be recreated here, and as our natural light is similar to that in France the colours of foliage and flowers look similar. Terracotta pots, Medici vases and urns, metal planters, wire artefacts and zinc containers all contribute to a French garden design.

Outdoor furniture is available in stone, concrete and cast iron, wrought iron, aged wood, bamboo and rattan to provide for outdoor dining. To complete the scene, add outdoor accessories such as lamps and lanterns, birdcages and bird baths, baskets and outdoor games such as boules, skittles and croquet.



### aged surface treatments

The weathered green door on left is typical of France, the layers of peeling paint reflect the age of the building. This look can be achieved with Resene Paint Effects - Limewash or Colourwash.



gates and shutters



### kitchens and dining spaces

The selection of accessories such as enamel jugs, earthenware bowls, terracotta pots, rattan furniture, oak tables, old bottles, cooking utensils, copper pots and pans on meat hooks, wooden spoons and cookery books give the kitchen a feeling of cheerful clutter.

It is customary to eat and entertain as well as cook in the French style kitchen so there is always a good sized table (usually an old wooden one that tells stories of good times had sitting around it).

### French inspired kitchen design

While the functional and practical requirements of kitchens always dominate the design and layout, the theme can be achieved by incorporating architectural elements of the French buildings and furniture into the cabinetry and overall decoration of the space.

The general feeling for French inspired interiors is delicate detailing with curved lines and ornamentation. Cherry or oak timbers in natural, light finishes are common in refined kitchens while distressed paint finishes are popular in country-style kitchens. Cupboard doors may be decorated with stencilled motif designs to add to the theme. Stile and rail cabinet doors are usually used, sometimes with inserts of chicken wire to provide a link to the farmyard kitchen.

Benchtops are often cultured marble, natural stone or ceramic tiles with matching grout colour. Popular kitchen colours are earthy creams, pale green or blue, warm yellow and chalky white. Heavy, rustic materials are usually specified for floors - tiles, brick, stone or wood - all closely linked to the 'life on the land' such as an earthy terracotta floor.

Walls are traditionally painted plaster, or to achieve this look a 'distressed paint effect' can be used. Beaded baseboards look effective, and sometimes wallpaper with a small floral design is selected. Ceilings often have boxed beams to match or contrast with the cabinets.

While not always the most practical, fabric curtains in paisley or floral prints can offset a country kitchen/dining area. Open shelving and hanging rails makes cooking utensils

and ingredients easy to access, while also adding to the theme - pots and pans, well honed knives in butchers block, potted herbs on the windowsill.



welcoming kitchens



rustic finishes and cottage prints



## living rooms

The most characteristic French item of furniture is the armoire - various regions had their own motifs carved into the panel doors. In Provence it was often doves, hearts, angels and garlands while in Burgundy geometric designs were favoured and for Auvergne it was stars and diamond shapes. Traditional side buffets always accompanied

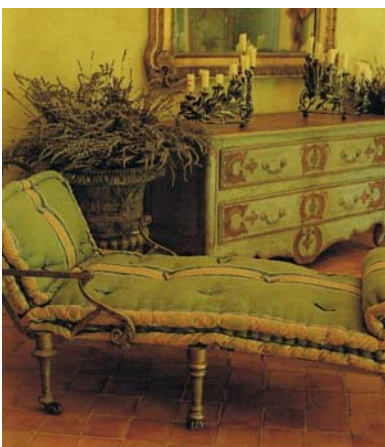
the dining suite in formal rooms. Popular woods for furniture construction in the 18th century were chestnut and walnut. Chairs were made from willow with rush seating or more formal seats were made from walnut and beech. Tables were usually simple and functional, and side table a little more elaborate.

Fabrics were originally hand-blocked cottons, often in colourways of red, blue, green and yellow. Sometimes fabrics are quilted for bedcovers, or hung on the wall. Lace is also popular as curtains, bedspreads and lampshades.



French style living room

ornate gracious elegant



comfortable shabby chic



**textiles lace cotton prints**

Bedroom linen in white cotton and lace provides a link to the past and it can be found in secondhand stores and antique shops. Equally as popular is ticking in blue and white or taupe and white, matched with small floral prints.

The stronger colours in the samples below are very typical of France, the colours of food and flowers seen at the markets, and stylised floral prints inspired by the French artists. These fabrics are used for drapes, cushions, upholstery and table linen.



**theme with accessories**

When theming a room or home, it is often the accessories and arrangements which really pull the desired look together. Here the old dresser has been colourwashed in a mustard yellow, and an arrangement of terracotta pots on an old pine side cabinet gives a rustic French look.

**bathrooms and accessories**



There are a number of ways to capture the French theme in the bathroom with accessories made from wrought iron such as the mirror and candle holders below, or white pottery and alabaster bathroomware and pot plants. The bathroom on the left

has a white wrought iron stool beside the bath with claw feet, and is offset with mirrors and art on the walls.

Cotton towels in blue and white, or even antique bath linen edged in lace, is a good selection for a French bathroom or powder room, complimented with beautiful hand-made soaps.



### mirrors and artwork

The French love to display their treasures on side tables, shelves and the walls. Basketry is a traditional craft and is often used for decorative as well as more functional use. Old fishing baskets, straw hats, sheaths of wheat, bunches of dried lavender are all seen adorning the walls and furniture in a French home.

Collections of coloured glass or pottery in assorted shapes and sizes are often placed on the windowsill to catch the light, or grouped on a side table under a lamp. Shells with their wonderful shapes and textures are arranged in a shallow basket or large pottery bowl. A row of terracotta pots filled with geraniums or lavender are placed on the window sill or on top of a low garden wall or steps.



### a quiet place to sit

French Art Deco chair above, light and airy garden room with French clock to the right.

## French culture



The local culture of a city or country has a large impact on the way they decorate their homes and buildings.

From the chateaus and castles to little boutique hotels and cafes, the French designers have a way of capturing their own style within these buildings.

Their love of good food and wine, and the way they shop at local markets for seasonal produce and flowers, also impacts on the way they live.

## colours to try



compiled by

- Colourwaves - Jill Carroll

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