

French Companies and Products in the United States

John Miles

Formerly of Wheaton College (IL), ACTFL, and ETS

With its annual GNP (gross national product) of 2.865 trillion dollars in 2008, the fifth largest in the world, France is a big player in the international market. Not only does it produce and sell large quantities of well-known food and drink items worldwide, but France is renowned for its chemical, pharmaceutical, aeronautical, and electronics industries, with plants and subsidiaries in many countries. There are about 24,000 French companies that export goods and services to the United States. French companies also own or have a major investment in more than 2,800 companies in this country, employing at least 550,000 people. One company, Sodexo, employs 120,000 people in North America in its food and facilities management services. Many of the French companies and their products are household names, and that doesn't just mean kitchen equipment (such as T-Fal, Krups, and Le Creuset) and yogurt (such as Yoplait and Dannon—in France, Danone—produced in the USA under franchise agreements).

In fact, it is hard to get away from French-made or French-inspired products. On your RCA television, you may watch the Sci-Fi Channel or USA Network or Canal+, or see ads for Sanofi-Aventis pharmaceuticals such as Nexium (“the purple pill”) and Allegra or for Maybelline by L'Oréal. In your driveway or perhaps your neighbors' there may be a car built by Nissan (more than 50% owned by French auto giant Renault), while going down the highway you might pass (or be passed by) a Mack truck, that quintessentially American carrier with the bulldog emblem actually owned by Volvo and Renault. You may stop at a Total service station to fill up your car or put air in your Michelin (also Uniroyal and Goodrich) tires. On vacation, you may travel to some interesting destination on Air France or in an Airbus plane possibly made in Toulouse, France, by the European consortium that includes a number of historically French companies. Perhaps you may go to a Club Med resort, take a ride in a Zodiac inflatable boat, or stop off at a Studio 6 or Motel 6, or a more upscale Sofitel or Novotel (all owned by Accor Hotels). Various members of the family might pick up a magazine such as *Car and Driver* or *ELLE, Road and Track* or *Woman's Day* (to mention a few owned by Hachette Filipacci) to read while sipping a Perrier or Evian water or one of the many alcoholic drinks (cognac, whisky, Absolut vodka, even Wild Turkey bourbon and California wines) owned and distributed by the Pernod-Ricard company.

It seems as though the commercial side of France is inextricably entwined with our daily lives. In fact, France has a strong investment in the United States, owning the sixth largest foreign investment in the US stock market, about 8% of the stocks (and US interests hold 10% of French stocks). French banks can be found in every major city. French restaurants are everywhere; some even have French chefs. French cheeses and wines are in every supermarket. Some stores sell baguettes that even taste like French bread (but that's another story!). In your area, you should be able to locate subsidiaries or partially French-owned businesses. In the major cities of all American regions, there is likely to be a French-American Chamber of Commerce, where you may be able to find further information about the French presence in your area.

In the meantime, see how many more names and specialties you can add to this select list of French companies or products in the United States.

• **Automotive:**

Michelin (Uniroyal-Goodrich): tires, online maps, tourism <http://www.michelin-us.com>

Renault-Nissan Alliance: cars, trucks <http://www.nissanglobal.com/EN/COMPANY/PROFILE/ALLIANCE/RENAULT01/index.html>

• **Aviation:**

EADS (European Aeronautics Defense and Space Company, (including **Dassault Aviation, Dassault Group, and Matra**): Airbus, satellites, arms, etc. <http://www.eads.com/1024/en/Homepage1024.html>

Air France-KLM: world's largest airline company http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_France-KLM

• **Beauty Products**

L'Oréal USA http://www.lorealusa.com/_en/_us/

Lancôme <http://www.lancome-usa.com/>

Phyto: hair products <http://www.phyto-usa.com/history.asp>

Yves Rocher <http://www.yvesrocherusa.com/>

• **Beverages**

Pernod Ricard: second largest distributor spirits and wine in USA <http://www.pernod-ricard-usa.com/about/>

Perrier: mineral water bottled at source in France, owned by Nestlé of Switzerland <http://www.usa.perrier.com/>

• **Business**

Capgemini: consulting, technology, outsourcing <http://www.us.capgemini.com>

• **Communications Technology**

Alcatel-Lucent: IP technologies solutions (includes Bell Labs) <http://www.alcatellucent.com/wps/portal/aboutus>

• **Consumer Products**

BiC: pens, shavers, lighters, etc. http://www.bicworld.com/index_en.asp

• **Entertainment**

Atari (Infogrames Entertainment SA): online computer games <http://www.atari.com/us/>

Vivendi Universal: media (Canal+), music (Universal Music), publishing, video games (Activision Blizzard), entertainment (20% of Universal Studios), advertising <http://www.vivendi.com/vivendi/Company-history>

Thomson: RCA consumer electronics, GE phones, in-store media, Technicolor, etc. <http://www.thomson.net/GlobalEnglish/Pages/default.aspx>

UbiSoft: computer games <http://www.ubisoftgroup.com/>

• **Hotels/Real Estate**

Accor: Sofitel, Novotel, Ibis, Motel-6, <http://www.accor-na.com/accor/ana.asp>

Louis Dreyfus Property Group:** e.g., Four Seasons, NYC <http://www.louisdreyfus.com/about/overview.html>

- **Household Goods**

Groupe SEB: T-Fal, Moulinex, Krups

<http://www.tfalusa.com/About/Groupe+SEB/Groupe+SEB.htm>

Le Creuset: cast-iron cookware

<http://www.lecreuset.com/en-us/About-Us/>

- **Industrial Products**

Air Liquide: gases for hospitals, industry, and environment

<http://www.us.airliquide.com>

Lafarge: building materials, concrete

<http://www.lafargenorthamerica.com/wps/portal/>

Total: natural gas, petroleum, chemicals, refining, distribution

http://www.total.com/en/group/presentation/home_group/group_presentation_2330.htm

- **Luxury Goods**

LVMH Group (Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy): over 60 prestigious brands (Moët et Chandon champagne, Dior perfumes, Louis Vuitton leather goods, etc.

<http://www.lvmh.com/>

- **Publishing**

Hachette Filipacchi Media: 18 magazines; books

<http://www.hfimus.com>

Hachette Book Group: books

<http://www.hachette-us.com>

*Note 1 – recent acquisitions and sales may affect the accuracy of this information; additional information (sometimes not up-to-date) can be found on BambooWeb Dictionary, which lists many French companies (<http://www.bamboo.com>)

** Note 2 – Louis Dreyfus SAS is a family-owned conglomerate also dealing in commodities (e.g., grain), energy, and electricity distribution worldwide.