SOFTWARE & TECH

How To Join Foreign Legion

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Introduction: The Call of the Legion

For centuries, the French Foreign Legion has held a unique mystique. It is a military corps unlike any other, offering a fresh start to men from all over the world, regardless of their past. The idea of shedding your old identity, donning the iconic white kepi, and serving in the elite ranks of the Legion has captivated the imagination of adventurers, fugitives, and those simply seeking purpose. But the path to becoming a Légionnaire is not a romantic adventure; it is a grueling, physically demanding, and psychologically challenging process. If you are serious about learning **how to join the Foreign Legion**, you must understand that the Legion is not a refuge for cowards but a crucible for the determined. This comprehensive guide will walk you through every step of the recruitment process, from the initial decision to the final assignment, helping you understand what it truly takes to earn the coveted képi blanc.

Understanding **how to join the French Foreign Legion**begins with dispelling myths. You have seen the movies: a man with a broken heart walks into a fortress, signs away his past, and emerges as a deadly soldier. The reality is far more structured, but no less transformative. The Legion accepts men from nearly every nationality, offering them a contract of five years in exchange for French citizenship and a new identity. However, the selection is brutal. Only a fraction of those who arrive at the recruitment centers will ever see a basic training parade ground. This article will provide a realistic, step-by-step roadmap, covering eligibility, the application process, the psychological and physical tests, and the harsh reality of life inside one of the world's most storied fighting forces.

What Is the French Foreign Legion?

Before discussing **how to join the Foreign Legion**, it is vital to understand exactly what you are signing up for. The Légion Étrangère was established in 1831 by King Louis-Philippe to allow foreign nationals to serve in the French Army. Today, it is an integral part of the French military, known for its rigorous discipline, exceptional combat capabilities, and unwavering loyalty to France. The Legion is not a mercenary group; it is a regular unit of the French Army, deployed in hotspots around the world, including Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific.

The Legion offers a complete break from the past. Recruits are allowed to enlist under a declared identity, and their previous life is not investigated (though serious crimes often surface during vetting). The Legion provides a new home, rigorous training, and a path to French nationality after three years of honorable service. However, the price is absolute obedience, harsh conditions, and a total commitment to the Legion's ethos: "Legio Patria Nostra" – The Legion is Our Fatherland. If you are looking for an easy escape, look elsewhere. If you are seeking a hard, meaningful life with purpose, keep reading.

Eligibility Criteria: Can You Join?

The first question anyone asking **how to join the Foreign Legion** must answer is: **Am I eligible?**The

requirements are strict but straightforward.

- Gender: The French Foreign Legion is currently open only to men. Women are not accepted in any role.
- Age: You must be between 17 and 39 years old. However, recruits under 18 need parental consent, which is rarely used in practice. The ideal age is between 18 and 25 for physical resilience.
- Physical Condition: You must be in excellent health, with no chronic conditions, missing limbs, or serious injuries. Perfect vision (20/20) is preferred, though corrected vision up to 20/40 is sometimes allowed. Hearing, cardiovascular fitness, and joint flexibility are all tested during the medical examination.
- Legal Status: You cannot be currently wanted by Interpol or have an active extradition request. The Legion does not accept known war criminals or terrorists. Minor criminal records may be overlooked, but the Legion conducts a basic background check via French authorities.
- Identity: You must possess a valid passport from your country of origin. You can enlist under a "declared identity" (a pseudonym), but your real identity will eventually be required for administrative purposes, especially for citizenship.
- Motivation: This is unquantifiable but essential. The Legion looks for men who are resilient, adaptable, and willing to obey without question. If you cannot handle harsh words or physical stress, you will not last.

What Disqualifies You?

- Serious criminal record involving extradition.
- Severe medical conditions (diabetes, heart conditions, missing digits, scoliosis, etc.).
- Psychological instability or history of severe mental illness.
- Inability to pass basic fitness tests.
- Refusal to cut all ties with your previous life (phone, family, personal possessions).

Step 1: Making the Decision and Gathering Information

Knowing **how to join the Foreign Legion** starts long before you arrive at the gates. Do not rely on online forums or YouTube videos alone. The official information is scarce, but unofficial channels abound. However, the best preparation is mental. Ask yourself: *Why do I want to join?*If the answer is escapism from a broken relationship, financial ruin, or a vague desire for adventure, you will likely fail. The Legion demands total commitment. Read books like "The French Foreign Legion: A Complete Guide" or historical accounts like "Gone to the French Foreign Legion" by John Philip Koehler. Understand the hardships: the anonymity, the physical suffering, the strict hierarchy, and the loneliness.

Once you are psychologically prepared, plan your travel. Recruitment centers are located in mainland France: primarily in Aubagne (headquarters), Paris, Lille, Lyon, Marseille, Nice, and Toulouse. You do not need to speak French – the Legion teaches you. You also do not need any prior military experience; the Legion trains you from scratch. What you need is a valid passport, a change of clothes, and enough money for transportation to a recruitment center. Do not bring a cell phone or excessive luggage; you will likely surrender everything upon arrival.

Step 2: The Initial Interview and Selection Process

When you arrive at a recruitment office (called a "Bureau de Recrutement de la Légion Étrangère" or BRLE), you will be welcomed by a sergeant. This is your first test. The Legion evaluates your demeanor, physical appearance, and attitude from the moment you walk through the door. You will be asked basic questions: your name, nationality, age, and why you want to join. Be honest and direct. Do not lie about your past – the Legion will find out eventually, and lying is a sure way to be rejected.

The Initial Selection Phase

If you pass the initial interview, you will be kept in a holding area with other candidates. This can last from a few

days to several weeks. During this time, you will undergo:

- Basic Medical Check: Height, weight, vision, hearing, and a general health overview.
- Physical Fitness Test: A classic test includes:

  A minimum of 10 pull-ups (dead hang, chin over the bar).
- 50 push-ups in one minute.
- 50 sit-ups in one minute.
- A 2.5 km run in under 12 minutes (or equivalent in some centers).
- Rope climb (3 meters without using feet).

About 80% of candidates are eliminated during this initial phase. If you survive, you will be sent to the main selection center in Aubagne.

Step 3: Aubagne – The Central Selection Process

For those serious about **how to join the Foreign Legion**, Aubagne is the crucible. Located near Marseille, the Fort de la Légion is the heart of the Legion. Here, you will spend 7 to 10 days undergoing a comprehensive evaluation. You will be housed in barracks with other candidates, strictly supervised, and tested constantly.

The Gestapo: The Interview Board

The most feared part of selection is the "Gestapo" (from the German word, but it's the nickname for the Legion's selection board). This is a panel of experienced NCOs and officers who will grill you about your life, your reasons, and your psychological profile. They will try to catch you in lies, provoke emotional reactions, and assess your resilience. The key is to remain calm, consistent, and respectful. Do not show anger, fear, or desperation. The Legion wants men who can handle pressure without breaking.

Medical and Dental Examination

A thorough medical exam includes X-rays (chest and spine), blood tests, urine analysis, and a dental check. Even minor issues like cavities or flat feet can disqualify you. The Legion cannot afford soldiers who will fall ill or require extensive medical care during training. Your BMI must be normal; underweight or overweight candidates are rejected.

The Final Fitness Test

Before the final decision, you will run a "Luc Léger" test (a shuttle run beep test) or a 5 km run. You will also perform a combat fitness test: carrying a dummy, crawling under obstacles, and sprinting. This test simulates the demands of basic training.

Step 4: Signing the Contract and Beginning Basic Training

If you pass all evaluations, you will be called before the Colonel of the Legion. He will give you a final offer: a 5-year contract. You sign it immediately, and from that moment, you are a Legionnaire-in-training. You will be given a new identity (your "declared name") and a new uniform. Your passport and personal belongings are stored. You will not see the outside world for several months.

Basic training (the "Farm") takes place in Castelnaudary, near Toulouse. It lasts four months and is notorious for its brutality. You will learn:

- Basic military skills: rifle shooting, marching, camouflage, trench digging.
- French language: intensive classes daily.
- Physical conditioning: endless runs, obstacle courses, and forced marches with heavy packs.
- Discipline: absolute obedience, corporal punishment (push-ups, additional duties), and strict hierarchy.

The first two weeks are called the "blue period" (période bleue) where you are isolated, sleep little, and are constantly shouted at. Many candidates crack and quit. The Legion makes it difficult to leave – you must formally request to be "reformed" (discharged), which is a humiliating process. Only the strong remain.

Life After Basic Training

After basic training, you will receive the white kepi – a proud moment. You then undergo advanced specialist training (combat engineer, infantry, artillery, etc.) and are assigned to a regiment. Your new life begins: deployments to French Guiana, Chad, Djibouti, Afghanistan (historically), or other theaters. You will have minimal contact with your past. Pay is modest, but food, accommodation, and medical care are all provided. After three years of service, you can apply for French citizenship, but only if you have served with honor and have a clean disciplinary record.

Knowing **how to join the Foreign Legion**is only the first step. The real challenge is living as a Légionnaire. The Legion takes everything from you – your name, your past, your comfort – and in return, it gives you a new identity and a family. It is not for everyone. But for men who are ready to endure, it is a path unlike any other.

Common Questions About Joining the Legion

Do I need to speak French?

No. The Legion teaches you French during training. However, learning basic phrases beforehand will show motivation.

Can I quit after training?

You sign a 5-year contract

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