

Definition: **Picardy** from *Collins English Dictionary*

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1 a region of N France: mostly low-lying; scene of heavy fighting in World War I French name: **Picardie** (pikardi)

Summary Article: **Picardy**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Region of northern France, bordered by the English Channel to the west and Champagne to the south, including the Aisne, Oise, and Somme *départements*; area 19,399 sq km/7,490 sq mi; population (2007 est) 1,890,000. Most of Picardy is occupied by a chalky limestone plateau, while its central Somme River valley is marshy in many areas. Industries include chemicals and metals. Principal towns include Abbeville and Amiens; the latter is the administrative centre and was capital of the old province. Boulogne-sur-Mer and Calais are major fishing and commercial seaports; Le Touquet and Le Crotoy are tourist resorts, particularly for the British.

History In the 13th century the name Picardy was used to describe the feudal smallholdings north of Paris added to the French crown by Philip II. The historic province of Picardy, which lacked precise borders, occupied a somewhat smaller area than the present-day region, and extended farther north along the channel coast. During the Hundred Years' War the area was hotly contested by France and England, but was eventually occupied by Louis XI in 1477. Picardy once more became a major battlefield in World War I.

Features There are 2,000 ha/4,942 acres of champagne vineyards in the south of the region. Marquenterre bird sanctuary is situated on the Somme Bay. There are many important examples of Gothic architecture in the region, notably the Cathedral of Notre Dame (1220–70) in Amiens, which is the largest Gothic cathedral in France. Famous people from the area include the French Reformation leader John Calvin, who was born in the town of Noyon. The writers Jean Racine, Alexandre Dumas, and Jules Verne all lived in the region.

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