

The nations the French love to make fun of the most



Photo: Romain Seignovert

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Germans love to poke fun at the Polish, Americans and Canadians are always trading jibes, the Finns and the Swedes love teasing each other... but who do the French love to make fun of the most?

It's no coincidence that these friendly rivalries are all between neighboring nations.

"We all have a target country, and it's not by chance we often do jokes on our neighboring countries," French author Romain Seignovert told The Local. "It's those we are culturally and linguistically closest to. We have a saying in France: 'Those we like the most, we tease the most'".

Seignovert, author of the new book *De Qui Se Moque-t-On* ("Who do we make fun of?"), says that despite "a rather sad moment in Europe right now, with the Brexit, the crises in Greece, the migrant crisis, etc... When two Europeans meet, they don't talk about these serious topics."

Instead, "they share what they have in common, they compare themselves... 'In my country when we have a party, we have these drinking songs, these jokes, etc'," he said.

So who do the French love to joke about the most?

Here are some of the nationalities that the French just can't get enough of teasing.

The Belgians



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If you've spent much time around the French, you'll know there's no one they love to poke fun at more than the Belgians.

Seignovert says it all started when some Belgians came to northern France to work in the mines. On strike days, instead of going on strike with the French, the Belgians just kept working.

We all know that strikes are an inalienable right of the French, so naturally that didn't go down too well. The French mocked the Belgians for being "strike-breakers", and ever since then the jibes have continued, although now the majority of them poke fun at the Belgians for being simple minded.

For example: "Why do the Belgians have their fries, and the Arab world has petrol? Because on the day of the world's creation, the Belgians chose first."
"Why don't the Belgians eat pretzels? Because they can't untangle the knots."
"And why don't they eat M&Ms? Too hard to peel."

You get the idea.

The Swiss

After the poor Belgians, it's the Swiss that the French love to make fun of the most. They're also perceived as being rather slow, both physically and mentally. "Two Swiss are walking in the woods. Suddenly one turns around and squishes a snail. 'It was irritating me! It's been following us for half an hour,'" goes the joke. This perception of the Swiss being slow mainly comes from their pronunciation of the French language, Seignovert says. The way they elongate the vowels sounds very silly to the French.

The French also love to jab at the Swiss for being wealthy: "What's the difference between a poor Swiss and a rich Swiss? The poor Swiss has to wash his Mercedes himself."

The British



Photo:

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The Brits love to make fun of the French, but funnily enough the French don't seem too bothered about reciprocating. There are indeed some jokes about the British, but their main target remains the Belgians.

"People would expect to have jokes on the Brits because the UK and France have a long relationship of friendship/adversity, but actually I have not found many jokes on Britain. It's always the countries that are more culturally and linguistically similar," said Seignovert.

That being said, the French do have a few jokes about their anglo neighbors to the north. generally focusing on the Brits being reserved. having bad teeth. being

One of their favorite jokes is about British food. (To fully appreciate it you should know that the French word for the Channel Tunnel, *la manche*, also translates as “sleeve”.)

"If a Frenchman wants a good meal he rolls up his *manches*, while the Briton must cross La Manche (to come to France)."

The Americans

It might not come as a surprise that the French, a people fiercely proud of their cultural enlightenment and good taste, tease the Americans for lacking sophistication.

"What's the difference between an American and a pot of yoghurt? After a period of time, the yoghurt begins to develop cultures."

The French also enjoy calling into question the notion that the US is the center of the universe.

One joke goes: "A group of Americans were asked to give their honest opinion on solutions to a possible world food shortage. However the survey was a failure because no one knew that the 'rest of the world' existed."

[Click here for more French jokes about the Brits and the Yankees.](#)

But the French get their own fair share of heat from...

The Belgians

Instead of letting the French get away with their mocking, the Belgians fire right back at them.

"It's always about the French being either arrogant or lacking in hygiene," said Seignovert. "This goes back to the monarchy when Louis XIV was known to not take baths (because he feared baths) and used perfume instead."

One jibe goes: "How does a Frenchman commit suicide? By shooting 15cm above his head, right in the middle of his superiority complex."

Another takes aim at the overall unpleasant nature of the French: "After God created France, he thought it was the most beautiful country in the world. People were going to get jealous, so to make things fair he decided to create the French." Here the Belgians take a shot at French cleanliness (or lack thereof): "Why do we say 'going to the toilets' in France and 'going to the toilet' in Belgium? Because in France, you have to visit many of them before finding one clean enough."

The Swiss



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The French might look down their noses at the Swiss for being slow-moving "sticks in the mud" but the Swiss don't take the French jibes lying down.

They too target the French for having poor hygiene.

One joke goes: "A French man goes to take a piss. Does he wash his hands before or after? Neither... During."

That one might make you think twice before shaking hands with a French man.

The British

The British love scoffing at the French sense of humour and what the Brits see as their tendency to **take themselves too seriously**.

French author Stephen Clarke told The Local last month that the French have a hard time making fun of themselves.

"They have to show they're more intelligent, cooler, sexier than you..."
And like other nations, the Brits love railing on the French for apparently being smelly.

"How do you get a Frenchman out of a bathtub? Throw in a bar of soap."
Other common themes the Brits love to tease about include the French's weird eating habits (snails, frogs, and *foie gras*, oh my!) and their military's reputation for

The Americans



Photo:

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The Americans also love picking on the French military and its history of having to call on American help in times of trouble.

"What's the motto of the US Marine Corps? Semper Fi (Always Faithful). And what's the motto of the French Army? Stop, drop, and run!"

"What's the shortest book ever written? French War Heroes."

And like everyone else, they also take aim at the French reputation for not having the most stellar hygiene.

"What's the difference between a French woman and a werewolf? The French woman is not as hairy but the werewolf smells better."

Seignovert says that these jokes, rather than being taken as insults, are all in good fun.

"It's important to see Europe in a lighter and more compassionate way," he said. "I like to say 'Europe in conviviality': living together in good spirits and friendly mindset."

By Katie Warren