

# Strasbourg

**Strasbourg** (German: *Straßburg*, Alsatian: *Strossburi*.) is the capital of the Alsace region of France and is most widely known for hosting a number of important European institutions. It is also famous for its beautiful historical centre - the Grande Île -, which was the first city centre to be classified entirely as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. <http://www.otstrasbourg.fr/>

## Understand

Strasbourg is one of the 9 largest cities in France with nearly half a million inhabitants in a metropolitan area spanning across the river into the German city of Kehl, on the eastern bank of the Rhine.

The city itself is the seat of the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, the European Ombudsman, the Eurocorps, the European Audiovisual Observatory and, most famously, the European Parliament, which also holds sessions in Brussels.

## Talk

While it may be possible to find people who will engage in a conversation with you in German, the lingua franca of Strasbourg (and all of Alsace) is indeed French. You will rarely hear German spoken on the street (except perhaps by German tourists), and Alsatian (the historical local language, more similar to German than to French) is a declining language, spoken mostly by the province's older residents or in rural areas. Fret not if your French is sub par as almost everywhere in Strasbourg in restaurants and hotels English is commonplace. If you speak German AND English and not French, most Strasbourgers will almost certainly prefer to converse in English with you. That being said, as with anywhere in the world you visit, knowing a few basics in French will certainly give you a much more pleasant stay.

## Get in

### By plane

**Strasbourg International Airport** (SXB) <http://www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr/index.php> is located south-west of the city at Entzheim, with domestic as well as international flights. Air France is the principal operator. There are several flights a day to and from Paris. A shuttle bus takes travellers to Baggersee tram and bus station, which is on the A-line tramline to the town center. A tram-train line running directly from the airport to the town center is a quick way to get into town.

**Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden Airport** (FKB) <http://www.badenairpark.de/> is located about 60km away in Germany. Ryanair, operates from Karlsruhe following a court ruling that declared its subsidy arrangements at Strasbourg Airport a contravention of European legislation. The best way to get to Strasbourg is to get a bus from the airport to Baden-Baden *Hauptbahnhof* (Main Station) from here trains run to Strasbourg, normally with one change. From station to station the journey is about 45m-1hr.

**Frankfurt International Airport** (FRA) <http://www.airportcity-frankfurt.de/cms/default/rubrik/9/9347.htm> is about three hours away from Strasbourg, and is one of the nearest inter-continental airports to Strasbourg. Lufthansa, operates a shuttle bus between Strasbourg and Frankfurt, Germany (but an indirect connection by train can be cheaper if booked online in advance). <http://www.bahn.de/p/view/index.shtml> The bus takes 2.5 hours and costs €55 (one way). See for more information. Reservation is necessary for the Lufthansa Airport Buses from/to Strasbourg. [http://www.lufthansa-airportbus.com/strecken\\_strasbourg.html](http://www.lufthansa-airportbus.com/strecken_strasbourg.html)

## By train

Strasbourg is well served by regional, national and international train services, predominantly by SNCF (French Railways), but also by Deutsche Bahn (German Railways).

With the opening of the new TGV Est Européen on 9 June 2007, journey times from Strasbourg to many destinations, including Paris, will be significantly reduced. TGV trains will replace all existing slower services (currently served by Corail or Corail TéoZ), and the Orient Express to Vienna will start its overnight journey in Strasbourg instead of Paris.

Major destinations include the following major towns and cities with multiple daily departures. Journey times are approximate and journey times in (brackets) indicate the predicted journey time.

- **Paris** 4hrs (2hrs 20m)
- **Metz** 1hr 15m
- **Nancy** 1hr 15m
- **Lyon** 5hr
- **Mulhouse** 50m
- **Basel/Bâle** 1hr
- **Frankfurt** 2hrs 30m (2hrs)
- **Stuttgart** 2hrs (1hr 20m)
- **Munich** 5hrs 20m
- **Zurich** 3hrs 15m (2hrs 5m)

A number of overnight trains with sleeper and couchette accommodations also serve:

- **Marseille** 9hrs and Nice 12hrs 15m

- **Montpellier** 10hrs 10m and Portbou 13hrs 10m
- **Vienna** 11hrs

From summer 2007, the TGV Est Européen will create new direct services to:

- **Paris Charles-de-Gaulle Airport** 2hrs 25m
- **Lille** 3hrs 20m (for same-station connections via Eurostar to London)
- **Rennes** 5hrs 15m
- **Nantes** 5hrs 10m
- **Bordeaux** 6hrs 45m

The railway station is located a short walk west of the town center on Place de la Gare. There are connections to the tram system and buses, with many taxis waiting outside (to the left of the station forecourt).

For details of all services, and to make reservations, contact SNCF. [http://www.lufthansa-airportbus.com/strecken\\_strasbourg.html](http://www.lufthansa-airportbus.com/strecken_strasbourg.html) For regional travel, contact SNCF TER Alsace <http://www.ter-sncf.com/alsace/index.asp> who co-ordinate the efficient and well served regional train network. When planning trips east of Strasbourg into Germany or countries beyond, you could save money by comparing the fares offered by Deutsche Bahn <http://www.ter-sncf.com/alsace/index.asp> to those of the SNCF. <http://www.voyages-sncf.com/leisure/fr/launch/home/>

## By car

You can reach Strasbourg by various highways:

- from the west (Paris, Benelux) taking the A4 highway (E25). About 4 hours from Paris
- from the south (Switzerland, Lyon), taking the A35 highway (E25). About 5 hours from Lyon
- from the north and east (Germany), taking the A5 highway (E35).

Driving into Strasbourg's old city is relatively easy although there are a few streets off limits to cars. There are many large garages surrounding the old city if your hotel does not have its own parking facility.

## By bus

- Eurolines provides bus services to the city, but is not permitted to actually stop in the city centre. Services call at the Stade de la Meinau, close to the Lycée Couffignal tram stop. <http://www.eurolines.fr/>

## Get around

Strasbourg is most easily explored on foot, and the historic city centre can easily be explored in a day or two. To be able to cover more ground, you should consider hiring a bike or using the public transport network.

## By bike

Strasbourg is ideal for cycling - the city center is flat and there are plenty of bike lanes and bike paths. You can rent bikes at:

- *rue du Maire Kuss*, in front of the train station
- *rue des Bouchers*, on the south bank of the Ill river, near the rue d'Austerlitz and the *Porte de l'Hôpital* tramway station.

Bikes are allowed on trams except during peak hours.

More information on cycling in Strasbourg: <http://www.strasbourg.fr/accueil>

## By bus and tram

Buses and trams in Strasbourg are operated by the Compagnie des Transports Strasbourgeois (CTS). <http://www.cts-strasbourg.fr/> A few dozen numbered bus lines and four tram lines (named A to D) serve the city. A single ticketing system covers both bus and tram. Tickets are sold in 'tabacs' (newsagents), tourist offices, and CTS boutiques or from vending machines at tram stops. The driver should validate tickets before use, either in the machines on tram station platforms or in the machine when you board the bus.

If using the buses and/or trams a lot, Europass tickets are available from all automatic ticket machines and are valid on all local tram and bus services (including those that cross the border to Kehl) for either 24 hours or seven days.

## See

Strasbourg is a popular tourist destination primarily thanks to the beautifully preserved and pedestrian friendly city centre, which can be explored on foot or bicycle in a few days. Don't forget that Strasbourg's appeal now brings tourists to the city throughout the year, with large tour groups especially frequent during the summer months and during the annual winter market. Staying for a few days will allow you to see the city when it's calmest, first thing in the morning and during the evening.

The main **Tourist Office** is located on Place de la Cathédrale, with a smaller office in the concourse level of the railway station. Both are open 09h00 to 19h00.

<http://www.otstrasbourg.fr/>

## Tours

The tourist office sells a variety of self-guided walking tours through the town (Middle Ages, Renaissance, Modern and Contemporary) and also arranges bike tours through the Faubourgs (the suburbs of Neudorf and Neuhof). Maps, brochures and last minute accommodation are also available.

Water-bus tours are available near the Palais des Rohans (south of the cathedral). Those tours (about 45 min.) run around the town center and the European district.

## Districts

### Grand Île

- **Cathédrale Notre Dame.** Built between 1176 and 1439 and with a 142 meter tower (the highest cathedral tower in France), the cathedral is undoubtedly Strasbourg's finest architectural highlight. Just near-by on place du Château is the Musée de l'Oeuvre Notre Dame - a splendid museum of medieval religious art related to the cathedral.
- **Astrometric Clock** in the cathedral
- **Maison Kammerzell** (XVth century) (to the left of the front of the cathedral)
- **Palais des Rohan**, French style palace, built after the acquisition of the town by the French (1681). Home to the Museum of Fine Arts, the Archaeological Museum and the Museum of Applied Arts.
- Musée Alsacien, 23-25, quai Saint-Nicolas (just across the river from the Ancienne Douane), +33 03 88 52 50 01, 9h00 to 18h00. This museum features articles from the daily lives of Alsatian peoples from the 13th to 19th centuries: clothing, furniture, toys, tools of artisans and farmers, and religious objects used in Christian, Jewish, and even pagan rites. The exhibits are in rooms connected by wooden staircases and balconies in adjacent multistory Renaissance-era houses around a central courtyard. The museum was renovated in 2007.

### Petite France

Petite France is the name given to the small area between the rivers, just south of the Grande Île. It's home to some of Strasbourg's prettiest and most photogenic streets and buildings, with half timbered townhouses leaning out over the narrow cobbled streets. Petite France resembles Colmar (a city an hour south), with picturesque canal and half-timber houses.

### Elsewhere in Strasbourg

- **Orangerie** - a beautiful classical park. It has a small free zoo featuring birds and a few other animals. Also has an excellent playground for young children.
- **Stockfeld**, garden city built in the early XXth century in the south-east of the Neuhof (southern part of the town) (*bus line 24*)
- **European district** (*bus lines 6, 30, 72*) :

- Council of Europe's seat (*Le Palais de l'Europe*) (1977), built by Henry Bernard
  - European Court of Human Rights (1995), built by Richard Rogers
  - European Parliament (1999), built by Architecture Studio
- **ARTE Television headquarters.** 4, quai du Chanoine Winterer, near the European district.
- **B-line tramway terminus at Hoenheim** (northern conurbation) (2001), built by the contemporary architect Zaha Hadid.
- **Republique Square** - A central crossroad encircled by neoclassical public buildings
- **Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art** - recommended also because of the interesting building
- **Historical Museum** - museum of Strasbourg's history
- **Zoological Museum**

## Do

**Christmas markets** can be found in many places, but the most important and beautiful are place Broglie and place de la Cathédrale, although they are crowded. They are the best places to drink hot wine (*vin chaud*) and to eat Christmas cookies (*Brédalas*).

Even when there are no special events on in Strasbourg, walking around the old town is a very nice way to pass a day. And there are lots of good cafes to stop and rest in as you make your tour.

## Buy

From time to time, the city organizes a general market in vast parts of the center, where many street vendors offer various products and the shops join in with special discounts. Then, the city center on the island is partly closed for parking or driving and the trams don't go on the rue des Francs Bourgeois. The 29th July 2006 (a Saturday) was such a day, information about regular market dates is hard to find on the net. If you manage to track down the date of this market, write it here and don't miss it.

There is a marché aux Puces (flea market) on rue de Vieil-Hôpital on Wednesday and Saturdays. The Place des Halles, 24, place des Halles, is a shopping center with over 100 shops and restaurants north of the city center, but within walking distance. Open Mon-Fri 09:00 to 20:00, and Saturdays until 20:00.

Try Galleries Lafayettes at rue du 22 Novembre and Printemps at 1-5 rue de la Haute Montée. Rue Hellebardes and Gutenberg offer designer clothes and men's clothes. Bruno Saint Hilaire has designer clothes for men and a shop in 8, rue Gutenberg. There is a low-budget, secondhand clothing shop in 6, rue de la Lanterne, and various gadget shops can be found in rue des Juifs.

For cheap groceries, including local wines and beers, try one of the three outlets of NORMA, a German discount chain whose three outlets are conveniently located at the corner of rue St Michel and rue Ste Marguerite near the central train station; at 79, Grand'Rue near the center of Grand Île; and at 27, rue des Frères near the Cathedral. Open Mon-Fri 10 am to 8 pm, Sat 9:30 am to 7 pm.

## Eat

Alsatian specialties are numerous and can be eaten in many traditional restaurants, in the city or in the neighborhood. Particularly you shouldn't visit Alsace without having the **sauerkraut** (*choucroute* in French). Choucroute seems to have a standard price throughout Alsace of 14 Euros. Don't be too dismayed by this seemingly high price as what is brought to you is heaping plate of Sauerkraut (big enough for 2 people) as well as sausages and other meats. This is usually translated as "garnished sauerkraut" on English menus, when in doubt ask your server. Other specialties include the Alsatian pork-butcher's meat, **Flammeküche** or *flams* (*tartes flambées* in French) which is a sort of wafer thin pizza made with onion-cream sauce, **Baeckeoffe**, beef and pork stew cooked, with potatoes and carrots, usually served for two or more persons and **Fleischnackas**, mixed beef meat presented like spirals and served with salads.

### Traditional restaurants

- **A l'ancienne douane** ('To the old customs house') on rue de la Douane, near the cathedral, next to the Ill river. A big restaurant for tourist groups. You are almost sure to find a place here even if you have no reservation. Mid-range prices.
- **Au petit bois vert**, 1, Quai de la Bruche, in the Petite France district, serves well-prepared *flams* and Alsatian specialties in a small room with smiling waiters. The chef usually comes by at the end of the evening. Great terrace during the summer under a big tree on the bank of the river. No reservation, mid-range prices.
- **Kirn** (le restaurant), 17-19, rue du 22 novembre (at the intersection of Fossé des Tanneurs west of Place Kleber), +33 03 88 321610 ([traiteur@kirn.fr](mailto:traiteur@kirn.fr), fax: +33 03 88 320865), The restaurant is above a fine Alsatian specialty food shop on the ground floor.
- **Au Dauphin**, 13, place de la Cathédrale (on the corner of cathedral square next to Hotel de la Cathédrale; look for a red awning and walk through the inner courtyard to get to it), +33 0388 21 01 46 ([au-dauphin@wanadoo.fr](mailto:au-dauphin@wanadoo.fr), fax: +33 0388 21 03 87). Try the choucroute aux trois poissons; it is very fresh and a wonderful take on the traditional sauerkraut dish. They also serve the traditional choucroute garnie, with up to seven types of meat, including headcheese.
- **Le Sanglier** ('The boar'), on rue du Sanglier in the Carré d'Or district, near the cathedral. A small restaurant with a traditional setting. If you want a Baeckoffe, you must inform the restaurant 24h before. Mid-range prices.

- **Winstub La Vigne**, 14, rue de Sébastopol (across the street from the MacDonald's at Les Halles shopping center), +33 03 88 220109. This charming and friendly winstub has more moderate prices than its counterparts in La Petite France or near the cathedral, with choucroute garnie and baeckoffe under €15 and bottles of Alsatian wine for about €20.

## Modern restaurants

- **Kim Youn** (Fooding Coréen), 5, rue Gustave Doré (toward western end of Grand Ile between rue de Jeu des Enfants and rue du 27 novembre), +33 03 88 321554. Mon-Sat 12h-14h30, 19h-22h.
- **Mooze**, on rue de la Demi-lune near Place Kleber: sushi restaurant. Sushi moves on a conveyor belt in front of you.
- **Tiger wok** on rue du Faisan. Asian food. They cook your dish in front of you.
- **Une Fleur des Champs** Organic and vegetarian food and beverage, a delicious and varied menu concocted daily from fresh produce and meat sellers in the area. They also offer bulk goods and produce for sale. Prices are modest and portions are large in a quiet, family style atmosphere.

## Budget

- **Au Brasseur**, 22, rue des Veaux. This a restaurant and microbrewery. Try one of their beers and a tarte flambé. Has a small children's menu.
- **Al Boustane** on rue de la Krutenau. This Lebanese restaurant features sandwiches and kebabs.
- **Flams** on rue des Frères near the Cathédrale. Serves a great variety of flams (tartes flambés) and has an amazing wine list for a budget joint.
- **L'Épicerie**, 6, rue du Vieux Seigle, off the rue des Francs Bourgeois. Features sandwiches "tartines". Food from noon to night. Tables on street and inside.
- **La Gallia**, on quai du Maire Dietrich near the Gallia tramway station (C-line). The oldest university restaurant in France, in a 19th-century building, built by the Germans (which explains the ceiling decorations). It is the last French university restaurant that is managed by students. Not a culinary triumph, but very affordable.
- **Saladin City**, 41, Grand'Rue. Tunisian/Algerian couscous and kebabs. No alcohol.
- **Zorba** on rue de Zurich. This little Greek restaurant in the Krutenau area features sandwiches, souvlaki, and kebabs.

## Mid range

- **Chez Tante Lisele** on the Grand'Rue. Very friendly.
- **Chez Yvonne**, in the Carré d'Or district, near the cathedral. Usually frequented by Jacques Chirac, when he comes to Strasbourg, because of its well-known *tête de veau* (cooked veal head). More expensive.

- **La Boucherie**, 4, Rue du Vieux Marché aux Vins. This chain restaurant is kid-friendly, with a small children's menu, highchairs, and a toy and coloring book for young children, and will satisfy a craving for red meat at a reasonable price.
- **La Stub**, 4, rue du Saumon, just one block from the Vox cinema on rue des Francs Bourgeois in the center of Grand Ile. This local Alsatian favorite features Fischer brews for €2-3 and tartes flambés.
- **Restaurant Avanos**, 20 Grand'Rue, 03 88 226257. Spécialités orientales: couscous, döner, grilled meats, fish. 3 plats du jour choices every lunchtime. 10% off takeaway meals every evening.

## Drink

- Beer : Alsace is the first beer-producing region of France and Strasbourg has many breweries. Best known are *Kronenbourg* and *Fischer*, whose factories can be visited for free, with free drinks at the end of the tour.
- Alsatian white wine : usually drunk with Alsatian food, but also with fish. The main varieties are Gewürtztraminer, Riesling and Pinot Gris. They have a particularly floral flavours and are well worth investigating.

## Contact

### Phone

Orange, SFR and Bouygues Télécoms provide local mobile phone services. Payphone kiosks are plentiful and international calling cards can be purchased in post offices and 'tabacs' (corner shops). Most of the internet cafés listed below are also equipped for making online telephony calls (Skype etc).

### Internet

- Cyber Café L'Utopie. 21 rue du Fossé des Tanneurs. 15 PCs with high speed ADSL internet access charged by the hour, accommodation also available. Tel : (+33)388238921.
- Net.Sur.Cour 18 quai des Pêcheurs. High speed ADSL internet access with scanners, laser and inkjet printing up to A3. Tel : (+33)388356676.
- Ultima. 11 rue du 22 Novembre 3 games rooms and 20 computers with high speed internet. Tel-Fax : (+33)388520352.

## Get out

- Haut-Koenigsbourg castle
- Alsatian Vineyard Route
- Colmar

- Kaysersberg
- Riquewihr
- Obernai
- Kehl, Germany is a short ride or walk across the river.

## Stay Safe

Strasbourg is one of the safest large cities in France and the tourist has little to fear. Of course the standard precautions apply and watch out for pick-pockets in the area of the Cathedral (and even inside according to the signs) during high tourist season.

For more info see: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

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