

# UPPER RHINE valley

ALSACE ( ) REGION BASEL ( ) BLACK FOREST ( ) PALATINATE ( )



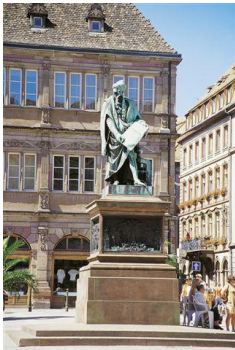
## European Strasbourg

*Council of Europe, European Parliament, European Court of Human Rights, the Eurocorps* and other institutions all have their seat in Strasbourg. But this is no coincidence: after World War II the Council of Europe was encouraged to settle specifically in this border town which had for centuries suffered considerably under the so-called “traditional Franco-German enmities”. Now it was to become a place of reconciliation and friendship and at the same time the symbol of a unified Europe. The largest city in the Alsace region (280,000 inhabitants) can by rights be called a *Capital of Europe*. Already during a first walk around the city one cannot help but notice it: here, in the northern and left-bank part of the Upper Rhine Valley the animosity is definitely a thing of the past, the cross-border park *Le Jardin des deux Rives*, which stretches between Strasbourg on the French side of the Rhine and Kehl on the German side, is not only a welcome photo opportunity for politicians but also a place where the French and Germans encounter one another on a daily basis and in a relaxed atmosphere. A tale of peaceful coexistence is also told by the *European quarter*, the former building of the *Court of Human Rights* and the *European Parliament*.



## Roman outpost, centre of the Frankish Empire, French and German province

Strasbourg was European already some two thousand years ago - it was the Roman military outpost *Argentoratum*, or silver fort, and lay between two branches of the river Ill. In 842 the grandchildren of



Charlemagne signed the first bilingual document here, deep within the heart of the Frankish Empire, the Oaths of Strasbourg *Les serments de Strasbourg* which was written in Old High French as well as Old High German. The old centre *Grand Ile* is nowadays a listed and protected UNESCO world heritage site. With its timber-framed houses, protruding dormers, colourful window shutters and multi-storey steeply angled gables it offers the most beautiful examples of the local Allemanic-South German architectural style. Strasbourg has always been a wealthy city, during its time as a Free Imperial City of the

Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, with the help of Gutenberg's invention of letterpress printing and through its prospering publishing industry and driven by a thriving centre of university erudition. And the generated wealth was readily put on display: the elegant facades in the sumptuous French style - Strasbourg belonged to the Kingdom of France since 1681 - that can, for example, be seen at the *Palais Rohan* which is nowadays home to three museums, convey the prosperity of the inhabitants of Strasbourg. An urban quality of life also manifests itself in the quarters that were erected in 1871 (after the Alsace was annexed by the German Empire) and follow the historicist architectural style that was so very popular at the time in all parts of Europe. In 1919 the city once again became French. Today, following the ominous interlude of the German occupation during World War II, the streets and marketplaces are busy and lively, the *Winstubs* are crowded and the sunny spots are taken - an ideal place for just strolling about but also for doing some avid shopping. During the run-up to Christmas the Christmas markets entice the visitors with gingerbread, *Etoiles*, *Männle*, foie gras and other delicacies; a gigantic Christmas tree is put up, illuminating the *Place Kléber* with its sparkling lights. Everything is so beautiful that they even attempted to copy it - in Tokyo!

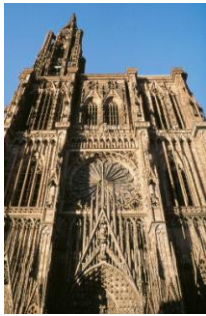


## Stonemasons, diplomats, free spirits and geniuses

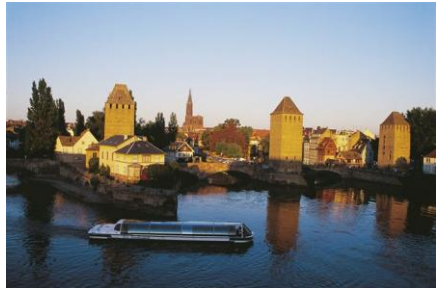
A Roman road connected the silver fort with wealthy Augsburg and Mainz. Later on pilgrims passed through on their way to Santiago de Compostela and Rome, prayed in front of the magnificent stone figures of the churches, stayed for the night and fed on beer and hearty meals such as the *Choucroute garnie*, a sauerkraut dish with pork that was as popular then as it is now. They were guided from afar by the richly decorated spire of the Gothic cathedral: with a height of 142 metres and its 636 steps it was the tallest building in the world right up until 1874! Goethe hailed the cathedral as *the* example for German architecture - an error that can be attributed to his youth, because the style and master



builders were, of course, French. Goethe came here to study law, but preferred reading Shakespeare and found inspiration for his first play *Götz von Berlichingen*. Strasbourg's university educated Europe's elite: in the political sciences Graf *Görtz* - Frederick the Great's master diplomat - or *Metternich*, who later on in his career chaired the Congress of Vienna, in medicine the later Nobel laureate *Wilhelm Röntgen*, and Alsace-born *Albert Schweitzer* - the founder of the famous hospital in Lambaréné - in theology, philosophy and medicine. The historians *Marc Bloch* and *Lucien Febvre* founded the influential *Annales* School of history here. Tomi Ungerer achieved world-wide fame without studying; the city even honours the gifted illustrator and author with his own museum.



The University of Strasbourg remained Lutheran - even though the Sun King Louis XIV favoured and encouraged the strengthening of Catholicism by increasing the number of Catholic immigrants to Strasbourg. The French culture, however, prevailed in everyday life. Naturally anyone who wanted to be someone spoke French - as in all of Europe at the time. During and after the French Revolution persecuted revolutionaries and critical minds from the small German states that had also attempted, but failed, to cause uprisings found refuge here. The dramatist Georg Büchner (who had studied medicine here) was one of them. On the other hand the *Marseillaise*, later to become the French national anthem, was written here as a battle song of the French Rhine Army.



As a tourist destination Strasbourg keeps breaking its own records regarding the number of visits. Where else can you visit the Middle Ages and Modernism so easily and comfortably? More than half a million guests arrive by river cruises, pleasure boats or the TGV bullet train which links the city with all of Europe's metropolises.

In the meantime France's only Grande Ecole which is not in the French capital itself has been opened here - the ENA *Ecole Normale d'Administration*. This is where the French state trains its elite. The one or the other student that one encounters biking to the university might one day become the Prime Minister or the leader of the European Central Bank - Strasbourg, truly European!





## The Upper Rhine Valley

The beautiful Upper Rhine Valley is located in the heart of Europe, where the Rhine connects France, Germany and Switzerland. With an area of more than 21.000 km<sup>2</sup> the region is almost as large as Tuscany, and has the same centuries-old tradition of attracting tourists who love art, culture and fine cuisine. The Upper Rhine Valley is a compact region of versatile scenery and culturally of extraordinary diversity with many charming towns and villages on both sides of the Rhine. The economically prosperous region with its six million inhabitants is within easy reach and offers its visitors a lot of everything.

It never takes more than ten minutes to get from one highlight to another. Famous for its short and mild winters and pleasing summer temperatures from April to October, the region is one of the most beautiful and fertile landscapes in Europe: The markets, vineyards and sophisticated restaurants as good as gold for gourmets; the Gothic cathedrals in Freiburg, Basel and Strasbourg, medieval castles and the countless museums with art collections ranging through history make it a MUST for art connoisseurs; the unique landscape is a paradise for golfers, hikers and ramblers, swimmers, bikers and outdoor fans. Some eighteen million overnight stays each year - of which many guests are returning visitors - confirm the region's outstanding appeal to tourism.

*For further detailed information:*

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