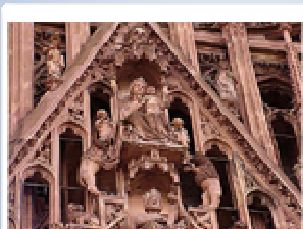


STRASBOURG

Strasbourg 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. Strasbourg is one of the nine largest cities in France, 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.

Strasbourg is situated on the Ill River, where it flows into the Rhine on the border with Germany, across from the German town Kehl. The city is situated in the **Rhine valley**, approximately 20 km (12 mi) east of the **Vosges Mountains** and 25 km (16 mi) west of the **Black Forest**.



Strasbourg Cathedral or the Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg is a Roman Catholic cathedral. Although considerable parts of it are still in Romanesque architecture, it is widely considered to be among the finest examples of high, or late, Gothic architecture. At 142 metres, it was the world's tallest building from 1647 to 1874. It remained the tallest church in the world until 1880, when it was surpassed firstly by **Cologne Cathedral** and then the 161 metre Ulm Münster. Today it is the sixth-tallest church in the world. Described by Victor Hugo as a "gigantic and delicate marvel", the cathedral is visible far across the plains of Alsace and can be seen from as far off as the **Vosges mountains** or the **Black Forest** on the other side of the **Rhine**.

Grande Île, the historic centre of **Strasbourg** is an island in the **Ill River**. Literally "Grand Island", Grand Île was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988. At the time, the International Council on Monuments and Sites noted that Grand Île is "an old quarter that exemplifies medieval cities". Aside from the **Strasbourg Cathedral**—the world's fourth-tallest church and an ornate example of 15-century gothic architecture—Grand Île is home to four other centuries-old churches: St. Thomas, St. Pierre-le-Vieux, St. Pierre-le-Jeune, and St. Étienne. To mark Grand Île's status as a World Heritage Site, 22 brass plates were placed on the bridges giving access to the island.

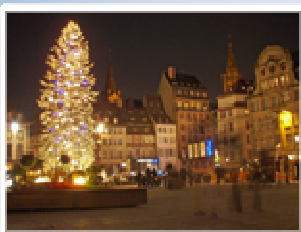
The Palais Rohan (Rohan Palace) is one of the most important buildings of **Strasbourg**. It represents not only the high point of local baroque architecture, but has also housed three of the most important museums in the city since the end of the 19th century: the Archaeological Museum (Musée archéologique, basement), the Museum of Decorative Arts (Musée des Arts décoratifs, ground floor) and the Museum of Fine Arts (Musée des Beaux-arts, first and second floor). The palace is built on a nearly square base which falls away toward the Ill River and is subdivided around a three-part inner court by a gallery.



The Kammerzell House is one of the most famous buildings of **Strasbourg** and one of the most ornate and well preserved medieval civil housing buildings in late Gothic architecture in the areas formerly belonging to the Holy Roman Empire. Built in 1427 but twice transformed in 1467 and 1589, the building as it is now historically belongs to the German Renaissance but is stylistically still attached to the Rhineland black and white timber-framed style of civil architecture. It is situated on the **Place de la Cathédrale**, north-west of the Strasbourg Cathedral, with whose rosy colour it contrasts in a picturesque way when seen from the opposite direction.

L'Opéra national du Rhin is an opera company which includes the Opéra in **Strasbourg**, the company's ballet in **Mulhouse** (a national centre for choreography since 1985), and the "Jeunes Voix du Rhin", a training centre for young singers, in **Colmar**. A reflection of its importance is the status of "national opera" which it has held since 1997. Performances of seven or eight operas per season are given in both Strasbourg and Mulhouse.

The Musée historique (Historical museum) is located in the Renaissance building of the former slaughterhouse (**Grande boucherie**) and is dedicated to the tumultuous history of the city from the early Middle Ages until the contemporary period.



The Place Kléber, the largest square at the center of the city of **Strasbourg** in the heart of the city's commercial area, was named after general Jean-Baptiste Kléber, born in Strasbourg in 1753. In the square is a statue of Kléber, under which is a vault containing his remains. On the north side of the square is the **Aubette** (Orderly Room). Located in the Strasbourg's historic center, the area was classified a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1988, the first time such an honor was placed on an entire city center. Most of the luxury brands have opened their shops in this prestigious and historical area of the city. Traditionally, a huge fir tree (30 m) coming from the **Vosges mountains** is erected every year on the south west of the Place Kléber and inhabitants deposited gifts for the poor.

The Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Strasbourg (MAMCS, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art) is an art museum which was founded in 1973 and opened in its own building in November 1998. One of the largest of its kind in **France**, the museum houses extensive collections of paintings, sculpture, graphic arts, multimedia and design from the period between 1870 (Impressionism) and today, as well as a wide range of pieces in its photographic library. Numerous exhibitions are organized annually, showing either the works of a particular artist or a retrospective of an artistic genre. The spacious roof terrace accommodates a museum cafe.

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.
- **Petite France** is the name given to the small area between the rivers, just south of the Grande Île. It is home to some of Strasbourg's prettiest and most photogenic streets and buildings.
- **The Jardin des deux Rives**, spread over Strasbourg and Kehl on both sides of the Rhine, is the most recent and most extended park of the agglomeration.

INFORMATION

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