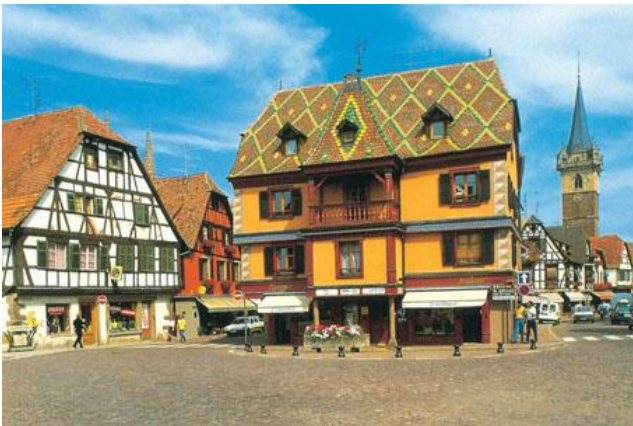


Tour
Information



Christmas in Alsace





Travel

Passports

Please ensure your 10-year British Passport is not out of date and is valid for a full three months beyond the duration of your visit. EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino or Switzerland valid national identification cards are also acceptable for travel to France.

Visas

British and EU passport holders are not required to have a visa.

For all other passport holders please check the visa requirements with the appropriate embassy.

French Consulate: PO Box 57, 6A Cromwell Place, London SW7 2EW; Tel (020) 7838 2000/1. Information Service: Tel (0891) 887 733, Fax: (020) 7838 2046. Opening hours: 0900-1130 (and 1600-1630 for visa collection only) Mon-Fri (except British and French national holidays).



Tickets

You will be issued with return train tickets. Please take care not to lose your tickets and please check that the details on your tickets are accurate. Your ticket is non-transferable and non-refundable. No refund can be given for non-used portions.

Standard Premier on Eurostar tickets is indicated by two asterisks in the class type section in the top right-hand corner. A light meal will be served to passengers travelling Standard Premier on Eurostar. Standard class Eurostar tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although there is a buffet car serving drinks and snacks.

TGV tickets do not include any food or drink on board, although a buffet car is available.

Train Seats

On all legs of the journey you have reserved seat and carriage numbers which are shown clearly on your ticket.



Baggage

As with most trains, passengers are responsible for carrying baggage onto and off the train. Baggage can be stored on overhead shelves or at the entrance to the carriages. Trolleys are available at St Pancras and Paris, but bags do need to be carried on to the platform. Porters are sometimes but not always available at St Pancras.

Travel Editions recommends a luggage delivery service called **thebaggageman**, where your suitcase can be picked up from your home before departure and delivered straight to your hotel; therefore removing the worry about carrying your cases onto and off the trains.

For further information:

<http://www.thebaggageman.com>

Labels

Please use the luggage labels provided. It is useful to have your home address located inside your suitcase should the label go astray.

Transfers

On arrival in Strasbourg, transfer by coach to the Hotel Beaucour (approx. 10 minutes).

Special Requests

If you haven't already, please notify Travel Editions of any special requests as soon as possible to allow sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.



Accommodation

Hotel Beaucour, Strasbourg

Comfortable four-star hotel located in the centre of beautiful Strasbourg. The hotel has a traditional, cosy feel, and rooms all have private bathroom facilities, air-conditioning, TV, telephone, free wi-fi, minibar and hairdryer.

For more information please visit the hotel's website:
<http://www.hotel-beaucour.com/fr/index.php>



Food

If you are a gourmet, this tour is made for you. Alsace offers more Michelin star restaurants than any other region of France! Marked by its use of pork in various forms, Alsatian cuisine is strongly influenced by neighbouring Germany. Traditional dishes include *baeckeoffe* (casserole with potatoes, onions, mutton, beef and pork which have been marinated in Alsatian white wine and juniper berries), *flammekueche* (thin bread dough garnished with crème fraîche, lardons and onions), *choucroute* (sauerkraut) served with Strasbourg sausage, frankfurter, or smoked pork, *fleischnacka* (cooked meat, egg and onion stuffing, rolled in a fresh egg pasta), and *coq au Riesling*.

Kugelhopf (Bundt cake made with soft yeast dough containing raisins, almonds and Kirschwasser), *Kaeskueche* (fromage blanc tart) and *Gâteau au vin* (white or red wine cake) are popular sweets.

Coffee is served after the meal and will be black, in small cups, unless a *café au lait* (or *crème*) is requested.

Almost all restaurants offer two types of meals: *à la carte* (extensive choice for each course, generally more expensive) and *le menu* (a set meal at a fixed price). The bill (*l'addition*) will not be presented until it is asked for, even if clients sit and talk for half an hour after finishing their meal. Usually, a discretionary service charge is added to your bill in restaurants and bars, and no further tipping is required.



Drink

Wine is by far the most popular alcoholic beverage in France, and the choice will vary according to region. Alsace is a world-renowned wine region and its famous "Route du Vin" (wine road) encompasses more than 100 wine producing villages between Strasbourg and Thann. Forget any preconceived ideas about Rieslings being sweet and nasty (perhaps you recall Black Tower or Blue Nun), as Alsace produces an excellent range of sophisticated white wines and some great champagne styles (*Crémant*) too. Don't miss the delicious sweet dessert wine made with, *Gewürtztraminer* grapes. In elegant restaurants the wine list will be separate from the main menu, but in less opulent establishments will be printed on the back or along the side of the *carte*. The waiter will usually be glad to advise an appropriate choice. If in doubt, try the house wine; this will usually be less expensive and will always be the owner's pride.

As well as producing fantastic wines, Alsace is also France's main beer brewing region, thanks primarily to breweries in and near Strasbourg, which include the international *Fischer*, *Karlsbräu Kroenenbourg* and *Heineken*, as well as plenty of artisanal microbreweries.

This tour is on a bed and breakfast basis and also includes:

- Christmas Eve dinner at a local restaurant
- Christmas Day dinner at a local restaurant



Destination

Nestled on the borders of Switzerland and Germany and separated from the rest of France by the Vosges Mountains, Alsace is one of France's best kept secrets. Its beauty is all timber-clad houses, medieval cobbled streets, picturesque flower decked wine villages, vast stretches of green vineyards and forest cloaked mountains. The fascinating and turbulent history of border wars has only added to the region's charms, leaving a unique and quirky blend of French and German culture in which to immerse yourself.

Strasbourg

The city of Strasbourg offers a stark contrast of old and new. At its heart you'll find a medieval town of atmospheric narrow streets, half-timbered houses and the awe-inspiring pink-sandstone Gothic cathedral, known as "the great pink angel" with its 19th century astronomical clock that draws the crowds for its midday performance. Surrounding this is a thoroughly modern and progressive city including the headquarters of the European Parliament. A boat ride on the Ill River is an excellent way to see both sides. The charming 'Petite France' district, the oldest part of the city dating from the 1100's, is a must see, as are the baroque *Palais Rohan*, that houses archaeology and fine and decorative arts museums, *the Rhine Palace*, and the *Palais de l'Europe*, seat of the Council of Europe.

For more information about Strasbourg:
<http://www.otstrasbourg.fr/en/>

Freiburg

One of Germany's most beautiful and historic cities, *Freiburg* is a vibrant university town based around a magnificent Gothic *Münster* (cathedral) built in red sandstone. With its lovely compact historic centre, fanning out from the cathedral, other sights include the *university quarter*, *Rathausplatz* and the old town *market square* and morning market.

For more information about Freiburg:
<http://www.freiburg.de/pb/Len/226394.html>

Obernai

Set amongst the vineyards on the eastern slopes of the Vosges Mountains, Obernai is the birthplace of Alsace's patron saint Odile. With its crumbling walls and ancient, narrow streets lined with timber-framed houses, Obernai is the epitome of the Alsace wine village. In the Place du Marché stand the 15th century *town hall*, 16th century *corn hall* and *Tour de la Chapelle*. A stroll around the medieval ramparts offers an excellent overview of the town.

For more information about Obernai:
<http://www.tourisme-obernai.fr>

Colmar

Colmar is the town that quintessentially captures the character of Alsace with its immaculately preserved town centre that boasts charming streets, squares and small canals lined with crooked and colourful half-timbered houses – a wanderer's paradise. Outstanding are the galleried *Old Customs House*, the *Maison Pfister* adorned with frescos and medallions and Colmar's own "Little Venice", the picturesque *Krutenau district*. Other highlights include the *Musée d'Unterlinden* that houses Grünewald's masterpiece, the 500 year old Issenheim Altarpiece; the *Dominican Church* and *Collegiate Church of St. Martin*.

For more information about Colmar:
<http://www.ot-colmar.fr/en/>

Riquewihr

One of "Les Plus Beaux Villages de France", *Riquewihr* owes its considerable prosperity to the wine industry – Riesling in particular is produced here. Full of lovely historical architecture, Riquewihr looks much as it did in the 16th century and is one of the few towns in the area to escape being badly damaged in WWII. Highlights include the *Gothic Church of Our Lady*, the *Dolder Tower* and *Porte Supérieure*.

For more information about Riquewihr:
<http://www.ribeauville-riquewihr.com/en/>

Christmas

It is traditional in France for families to have their main Christmas dinner on Christmas Eve. Most shops will be closed on Christmas Day although there will be a limited selection of bars and restaurants open. Your tour manager will have details of opening times and Christmas services.

Tour manager

Your tour manager will be on hand throughout the tour to ensure that everything operated according to plan. If you have any problems or questions please see him or her immediately – it is often possible to resolve complaints or problems very quickly on the spot, and do everything to help you enjoy your holiday.

Reading Suggestions

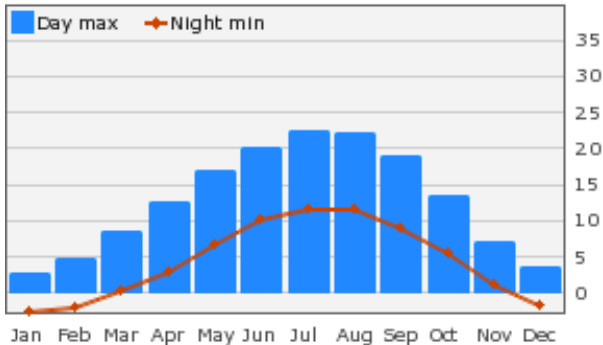
Graham Robb, *The Discovery of France*.

A general introduction to French culture, landscape and history, it also features an excellent insight into the distinctive character of France's regions.



The Basics

Climate – The weather in Alsace at this time of year will be cold, with a chance of rain. Our best advice is to come prepared.



Time – GMT +2 hours (Summer time Apr-Oct); GMT + 1 (Standard time Nov-Mar).

Language – French.

Religion – Roman Catholic.

National holidays – New Year's Day (01 Jan); Easter Monday; Labour day (01 May); Victory in Europe day (08 May); Ascension Day; Whit Sunday; Whit Monday; National day (14 Jul); Assumption of Mary (15 Aug); All Saints' day (01 Nov); Armistice day (11 Nov); Christmas day (25 Dec); St Stephens Day (26 Dec).

Currency – Euro. €1 = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

Banks – Cashpoints compatible with international banking networks are located in all towns and cities, as well as airports, major train stations and other spots. They usually offer an attractive exchange rate. Those banks that still exchange foreign currencies into local money will always charge a transaction fee, so withdrawing money from an ATM usually represents the most logical means of obtaining euros.

Credit cards – American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted across the

country. If you're eating at a restaurant, check prior to the meal that your card will be an acceptable form of payment. It is advisable to carry a supply of cash with you at all times, as restaurants and shops in small villages may not accept credit cards.

Electricity – 220 volt, two-pin continental plug.

Drinking water – Tap water is safe to drink. (Although you'll find a huge amount of bottled water for sale too)

Shops and museums – Department stores are open 0900-1830 Monday to Saturday. Most shops are closed between 1200-1430. Some food shops (particularly bakers) are open Sunday mornings, in which case they will probably close Monday. Many shops close all day or half-day Monday.

Please note that most museums are closed on Mondays.

Camera – bring plenty of memory cards/film and any spare camera batteries as these are not always available. Please check with your guide before photographing people.

Bath plugs – The hotel has plugs for basins, but it is useful to carry a 'universal' one with you.

Telephones/mobiles – You should be able to use your mobile phone in France, depending on your operator and contract.

Tipping –To keep our tours affordable, we do not increase the tour price by adding in tips. However, in the tourism industry, there is a certain level of expectation that when receiving a good service, one does award with a tip. Tour Managers, Representatives, Guides and Drivers appreciate a tip at the end of their involvement with the tour, but this is entirely at your discretion. We believe in allowing you to tip according to your level of satisfaction with their services, but for your guidance about £2-3 per person per day for the tour manager is the norm. We would like to reiterate that tipping is an entirely optional payment and this information is given purely to answer any questions you may have about it.



Health

Doctor/Dentist/Chemist

Please talk to your tour manager if you are feeling unwell and they will organise for you to see a doctor.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.



Hospital

Your tour manager/hotel reception will arrange hospital transport.

Keep receipts for insurance claims.

General Health Advice

We suggest you take a good supply of your own individual medicines with you and always keep some in your hand luggage in case you get delayed or your luggage goes astray. General-purpose supplies for bites, stings, or scratches, and your usual medication for headaches, or stomach upsets are always recommended. Oral re-hydration sachets are excellent for topping up salt and glucose levels.

Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website for more generally information specific to the country you are visiting – www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Inoculations

You should check with your own doctor and take their advice as to which inoculations are required for the country you are visiting, as only they know your medical history and recommendations are liable to change at short notice.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

The EHIC replaced the old E111 in 2006. Valid in all EEA countries, the card lets you get state healthcare at a reduced cost or sometimes for free. It will cover you for treatment that is needed to allow you to continue your stay until your planned return. It also covers the treatment of pre-existing medical conditions.

Please note that the EHIC **is not** an alternative to travel insurance. It will not cover any private medical healthcare or costs such as being flown back to the UK, or lost or stolen property. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. It is also important to note that each country's healthcare system is slightly different, so the EHIC might not cover everything that would be generally free on the NHS.

We strongly recommend that you take out an appropriate travel insurance policy when you travel abroad.

For more information about the EHIC please visit:

<https://www.ehic.org.uk>



Insurance

To be covered under your Travel Insurance Policy, if you become ill, it is essential that you contact a local doctor and also telephone the emergency number of your insurance company. You will **NOT** be covered for any claim unless this procedure is carried out. Your insurance company will then decide on the best course of medical attention.



Emergencies

Should an emergency arise, please call our offices on:

00 44 20 7251 0045

Outside office hours (Mon-Fri 0900-1700), telephone our emergency staff on:

00 44 20 7431 8201 or

00 44 7899 796542 or

00 44 7831 133079 or

00 44 1235 850720

PLEASE USE THESE NUMBERS ONLY IN THE EVENT OF A GENUINE EMERGENCY.

If you find that you are in need of consular assistance during your holiday:

Consular services Paris

16 rue d'Anjou

75008 Paris

France

Tel: +33 (0)1 44 51 31 00

Fax: +33 (0)1 44 51 31 27

Open Mon-Fri 0930-1230. Outside these hours a consular Emergency Service is in operation and can be contacted on +33 (0)1 44 51 31 00.

Travel Editions

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Email: tours@traveleditions.co.uk www.traveleditions.co.uk

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