

WELCOME TO FRANCE!

Dubbed the *Marché de Noël*, Strasbourg is the Capital of Christmas in this part of France. The *Riv-er Îll* surrounds the historic



old town, creating a mostly traffic-free pedestrian zone. With a population of 484,000 in the metro area, it is a large city with lots of commerce, trade, and political ties. Strasbourg is the home to the European Parliament and the European Council, sharing administrative duties with the European Union in Brussels, Belgium. Additionally, the European Court of Human Rights has resided here since 1998.

Sitting on the banks of the Rhine River, Strasbourg has taken on influences from France and Germany. From ancient times,

it has witnessed significant events and transformations. The Romans first made it famous when they settled here and named it *Argentoratum*. The Romans established a military outpost here in the 1st century AD, and the city grew into a bustling trading center along the Rhine River. It remained a part of the Roman Empire for several centuries.

Strasbourg was a hub of economic and political activity in the Middle Ages. The city was a key member of the Hanseatic League, a medieval trade alliance that further boosted its prosperity.



The Strasbourg Cathedral (*Cathédrale de Notre-Dame*) dominates the skyline from all directions. Work began in 1176 and continued for several hundred years. Construction finally wrapped up in 1429, but it was

used for worship long before completion. It survived the French Revolution, the Franco-Prussian War, and World Wars I and II, and today, it stands as a symbol of the city's rich heritage and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In the 16th century, during the Reformation, Strasbourg played a pivotal role in the religious and political conflicts of the time. The city became a center of the Protestant movement, and its religious tolerance attracted thinkers and theologians. Reformers posted Martin Luther's theses on its doors, and the Cathedral was Protestant for about 100 years. Louis XIV returned it to Catholicism in 1621.

In the 17th century, Strasbourg fell under French control and remained part of France for much of its subsequent history. The city's university, founded in the 16th century, is a prominent institution of higher learning, attracting many noted students.

During the 19th and 20th centuries, Strasbourg witnessed turbulent times due to its location near the border between France and Germany. The city alternated between French and German rule following various conflicts, including the Franco-Prussian War and World Wars I and II. Its shifting national identity and cultural influences created a unique blend of French and Germanic elements still present in the city's culture and architecture.



CHRISTMAS MARKETS

The historic Old Town's cobblestone streets and half-timbered houses transform into a winter wonderland from late November through Christmas Eve. Each year, the city's Christmas markets open, infusing the air with the aromas of spiced mulled wine, roasted chestnuts, festive music, and a slew

of vendors. In the Alsatian dialect, they are collectively known as *Christkindelmärk*, the market of the Christ Child.

Strasbourg's first Christmas Market was in 1870 on the *Place Broglie*. It opened three days before Christmas Eve. Its vendors sold provisions for the upcoming holiday, such as small fir and



spruce trees, bread, baking goods, spices, and herbs. Hundreds of years earlier, in the Middle Ages, the *Saint Nicholas* market ran from about December 6th until Christmas Eve.

The *Saint Nicholas* market was banned during the Reformation, but in 1570, a new concept for a seasonal market dedicated to the Christ Child was conceived. Through the years, the *Christkindelsmärk* evolved, gradually adding more diverse stalls and expanding the dates. Eventually, Strasbourg became the **Capital of Christmas** as we know it today. So, like in the past, patrons

can find toys, sweet and savory delights, handmade crafts, and Christmas trees at one of the oldest Christmas markets in Europe.

Thirteen markets are spread across the *Grand Îll*, the old town, this season.

As you'll see, Strasbourg's *Grand Îll* is not very large. Walking from our hotel to the far side of the island only takes 15 minutes. It is 800 meters, two times around the track at your local high school. But no matter what market you visit, you'll surely find the scent of freshly baked *bredele*, Alsatian Christmas cookies. Their aroma fills the air, drawing visitors to taste other culinary delights. Savory *flammekueche*, a thin-crust pizza-like dish topped with onions, bacon, and cream, competes with the sweeter offerings of *kouglof*, a traditional Alsatian bundt cake. The aroma of *vin chaud* (warm mulled wine) or spiced hot chocolate invites patrons to savor the festive spirit.

The most popular Christmas markets are at *Place de la Cathédrale*, *Place Kléber*, *Place Gutenberg*, *Place Broglie*, and *Place du Château*. In addition, you'll find several smaller ones, all of which are located on the *Grande Île*.

Place de la Cathédrale - The Cathedral



Square is not a square at all. It is simply the cobble streets in front of and flanking the church. Ever since Roman times, this was THE everyday market. Vendors from all parts of Europe alighted here to sell their wares from all corners of the

world. During Christmas, visitors can visit the craft huts, sip *vin chaud*, and gaze up at the towers soaring 466 feet into the sky. Be sure to go inside the Cathedral to look at the 18-foot-long Nativity Scene dating from 1907.

Place Kléber - The large Christmas Tree (*Grand Sapin*) dominates this large square.

The French National Forestry Service chooses each year in March. Under a watchful eye, it is nurtured and cared for until it



is cut in early November. The tree must be beautifully shaped and at least 80 meters in height. Then, it is decorated with seven kilometers of twinkling lights, baubles, angels, and stars. Surrounding the tree are more than 60 charity stalls selling souvenirs and food for a good cause. This market is called the Village of Sharing.

Place Gutenberg - The Christmas Village here is dedicated yearly to a different country. You'll find local produce and traditional items representing the featured country.

Place Broglie - This is the city's largest and oldest Christmas Market. The original

Christkindesmärk took place here in 1871. One hundred stalls offer festive decorations, ornaments, pottery,

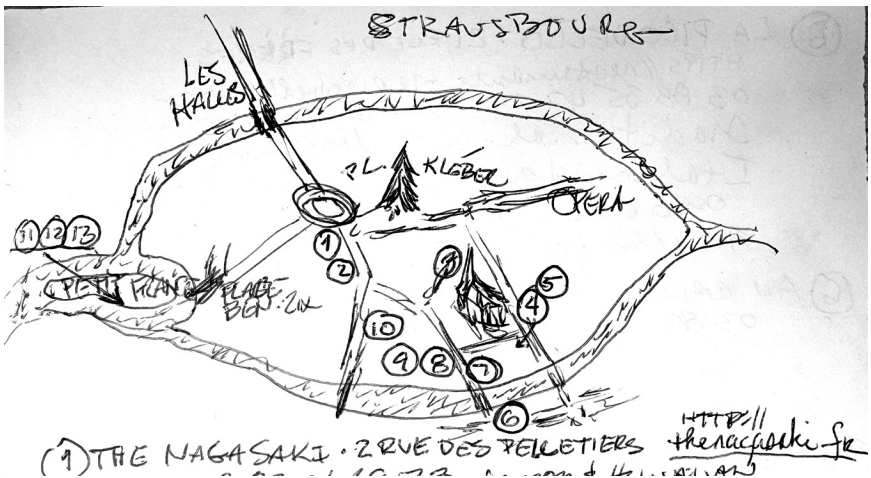


glass jewelry, handmade toys, and many more items. The food is excellent, with tasty options such as sausages, fresh pretzels, flammkuchen, crepes, and gingerbread. Of course, an extensive selection of vin chaud, liqueurs, and beer are available to wash down the food!

Place du Château - This market is in the quaintest square, located on the south side of the Cathedral, next to the palace. The stalls are surrounded by half-timbered houses decorated with bears and festive garlands.

WHERE TO EAT?

I walked around Strasbourg a few years ago on a cold and rainy afternoon. I often mention that I've spent years poking around Europe's nooks and crannies in search of excellent food, good wine, better beer, and sparkling water. Some are small, hole-in-wall places seating just a few diners. Others are a bit larger. All offer excellent food, traditional service, and good value. Well, here's my dining recommendations. They are all good; check them out for lunch or dinner.



- ① THE NAGASAKI - 2 RUE DES PELLETIERS ^{HTTP://thetachacki.fr}
 09 83 01 19 23 Japon & HAWAIIAN
 POKÉ, SUSHI, SALADE - EAT IN - TAKE AWAY
- ② STEAKHOUSE DISTRICT - 18 RUE DU VIEUX MARCHÉ ^{aux grains}
 HTTP://STEAKHOUSE-DISTRICT.FR
 09 72 85 08 53
 AMERICAN ADDITION ~~FR~~: CAMP/SAXA/CHEESE
 BURGERS €17.50 CHICK TENDERS
 STEAKS - FILET €29 FRIED ONION RINGS ETC.
 CAESAR SALAD
 7.000/10 €28-€31 - w/ potatoes & veg
- ③ MAISON KAMMERZELL - 16 PL. de la CATHÉDRALE
 HTTP://MAISONKAMMERZELL.COM
 TRADITIONAL FARE CARCUIFIE } ALSACE
 . ONION TARTE, LES CARROT } SOUR KURAT
 . PRICY BUT LOTS OF FOOD! } PORK PLATE
- ④ LA TABLE DU GAYOT - 03 88 36 30 27
 8 PL. DU MARCHÉ GAYOT - MY BEST RECOMMENDATION
 TRADITIONAL FRENCH & ALSACE FARE -
 CALL FOR RESERVATION

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Maison Kammerzell

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- ⑤ LA PICOBELLO . 21 RUE DES FRÈRES
[HTTPS://restaurant-lepicobello.com](https://restaurant-lepicobello.com)
03 88 35 47 25 closed sun/mon .
Traditional and beautiful
Italian fare Bauschetti, Risotto
OSSO BUCO, BEEF STEAK, Salsicchi etc.
Maino from €22 - Starters €12
- ⑥ AU CANON . 1 RUE ~~AND~~ D'AUSTERLITZ
03 88 37 06 39 - onion soup €12
Foie gras €18
Beef, Chicken, Veal €25 + potatoe/veg,
one more Alsacean traditional
- ⑦ ZWEM STRISSEL . 5 PL. DE LA GRANDE BOUCHERIE
[HTTPS://STRISSEL.FR](https://strissel.fr) 03 88 32 14 73
Traditional French - lots of cheese
onion soup €10 . bescingot €12
Salad €12 Foie gras €17.60
Jorta - Flambees €10-13
cheese & deserts €8-10
- ⑧ ~~RESTAURANT AU PIED DE LA CATHEDRALE~~
PFIFFERBRIADER WIENSTUOL RESTAURANTE
14 Pl. du marché-aux-cochons-de-Laito
03 88 24 46 86
Traditional French/Alsacien €8
soup, gallettes, fume €16
foie €24 - Charcutie €24,
Fret smorgas €39 + sides



Chez l'Oncle Freddy

⑨ L'ANCIENNE DOUANE. 6 RUE DE LA DOUANE

[HTTP://anciennedouane.fr](http://anciennedouane.fr) 03 88 15 78 78

Big wine/beer hall - lots of room
and lots of food.

soups, Tartes, Salads €9-14

meats ie filet, beef, chix, deer €20-26

fish - €23 Cherrie/Asenkromt €26

Pancakes - €11-13

⑩ IMAGINE LE RESTAURANT

12 RUE DES TONNELIERS (Band makers)

[HTTPS://restaurantimagine.fr](https://restaurantimagine.fr)

03 88 32 36 37

Innovative and my most impressive
find today. Avant garde tradition
for example traditional Mussels &

Vin rouge sauter €17-22

Entree from €22 - Steak, Chix, fish

⑪ CHEZ L'ONCLE FREDDY. 9 RUE DES MOULINS

[HTTPS://chezonclefreddy.com](https://chezonclefreddy.com) 03 88 22 88 14

Good chain - Tend menu.

⑫ RESTAURANT LA PETITE VENISE - Good food

20 RUE DES MOULINS 03 88 22 66 18 on river

⑬ LA BAECKEOFFE D'ALSACE - 14 RUE DES MOULINS

[HTTPS://baeckeoffe.com](https://baeckeoffe.com) 03 88 23 05 40

old world, wooden hne dining & red/white

checked table clothes & food from the bakers

oven, thus rich stews - beef, pork, lamb

also traditional french ale & beer 25%

€10-25 - Go Here!!



La Table Du Gayot