

PRESS RELEASE

COLMAR

**COLMAR, A CULTURAL, TOURISTIC
AND GASTRONOMIC TOWN**



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PRESENTATION OF THE CITY



"The most beautiful city in the world." This superlative, uttered by George Duhamel in 1931, is echoed by visitors to the thousand-year-old city today. This multi-colored and faceted city, nestled amongst the vineyard-dotted foothills at the crossroads of major European routes, has such a rich cultural and architectural heritage that it delights newcomers.



The city center is a veritable mosaic of half-timbered houses, stairwells, statues, finely crafted shop signs, impressive churches, refreshing canals and fountains, all of which miraculously survived the vagaries of history. Declared a world heritage site by UNESCO, the city has a picturesque, magical air that dazzles the visitor, who is suddenly immersed in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance.



"People say that Colmar is a condensed version of Alsace in all that is most typically Alsatian... Colmar is also, par excellence, a city for pleasure and fine dining. Prestigious restaurants and "winstubs", taverns that offer hearty typically Alsatian food, vie for visitors' attention". (Lilianne Lacroix. *Cyber presse.ca*)

DID YOU KNOW?

The city of Colmar has been replicated in Malaysia. It is called "Tropical Colmar" and it is located in the heart of the tropics, 40 km from Kuala Lumpur. Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir, after visiting the original in France, decided to have a replica city built, which has become a big tourist attraction.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Colmar is the capital of middle Alsace, halfway between Strasbourg and Mulhouse, located near major European cities like Freiburg (45 km) in Germany and Basel (68 km) in Switzerland. Its prime location in the heart of Alsatian vineyards, at the foothills of the Vosges mountains, near the Rhine River, offers a multitude of outdoor activities, including skiing in winter, hiking and hanggliding in summer.

Because of their geographic location and tumultuous history, Alsace and Colmar are infused with a strong Rhenish influence that can be seen in the forms of its architecture, traditions, food and dialect, which is still spoken today.



Colmar, in the heart of Europe

Motorway and air links

Colmar is linked to the European motorway network. Rapid North/South and East/West access to all European capitals. Colmar is at equal distance from two international airports. Strasbourg-Entzheim airport: 70 km from Colmar. Basel – Mulhouse – Freiburg airport: 70 km from Colmar

Rail Links

Colmar is linked to the largest French and European cities, either directly or with a change of train. Since June 2007, the East-European TGV offers a direct link between Colmar and Paris (2 hours 50 minutes).

COLMAR IN NUMBERS

Region: Alsace - the smallest region of France

Prefecture and department: Upper-Rhine

Population: 67,000 inhabitants

- 3rd city of Alsace and 2nd of the department

Climate: semi-continental with cold winters and hot summers.

Ranked as a "flower-decked" city: 4 flowers (since 1996)

DID YOU KNOW?

Colmar is the driest city in France. A microclimate exists here due to the natural barrier formed by the Vosges mountains which block precipitation. This is called the "foehn" effect.

HISTORY

Colmar through the years



Colmar took its place in history in 823, when Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne, gave part of the forest located within the Columbarium to the abbey of Munster. The name Colmar is of Roman origin and means dovecote.

Destroyed by fire in 1106, the town developed in the Middle Ages and became an imperial town in the 13th century. Between 1212 and 1214, Colmar's bourgeois citizens erected fortifications

and created a Council which was made up of ten knights and eight members of the bourgeoisie and acted as an essential cog in the government of the borough. In 1337, Colmar's first port, the Ladhof, was built where the rivers Thur and Lauch meet. At this time it was a prosperous and independent town with a constitution and its own currency. 1234 marked the beginning of the construction of Saint-Martin church for which, in 1473, the well-known painter and engraver, Martin Schongauer, created the, 'Virgin of the Rose Bush'.

In the 16th century, Colmar experienced intellectual, social and religious upheaval. In 1548, the writer Georges Wickram, considered as the creator of the popular novel in the German language, founded a highly acclaimed school for singers (Meistersingerschule) in Colmar. In the 17th century, Colmar became a 'French royal town' as well as the seat for the judiciary in the province of Alsace. In 1635, in the midst of the Thirty Years' War, Colmar placed itself under the protection of the King of France without giving up its status as an Imperial town, nor its privileges, rights and customs. Although a French garrison was built in Colmar, it did not become part of France until much later, under Louis XIV, in 1679.

Between 1871 and 1945 the city of Colmar, like the whole of Alsace, changed hands between Germany and France during the territorial divisions and successive annexations which followed the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and the Frankfurt Treaty. Following this treaty, Colmar became the seat of Upper Alsace in the German Reichland of Alsace-Lorraine. It was only after the Versailles Treaty was signed on 28 June 1919 that it became French once again. But that period was short-lived because it was once again annexed by the Third Reich in 1940. At the end of the Second World War, it was finally liberated after violent battles at the "Poche de Colmar".

DID YOU KNOW?

Colmar was annexed by Germany from 1871 to 1918 and 1940 to 1945.

FAMOUS COLMARIANS

Many artists were born in Colmar...

Martin Schongauer



Martin Schongauer (ca.1450-1491) is the best-known of the Colmar artists. His Virgin of the Rose Bush (1473), housed in the Dominican church, is considered his masterpiece. He made his name, however, as an engraver and was well-known throughout medieval Europe, influencing major artists such as Dürer. Schongauer was at his peak at the same time as the printing press was invented and it was the sudden and widespread availability of printed material that spread his fame.

Auguste Bartholdi

Father of the Statue of Liberty



Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904) is the best known of all 19th-century Alsatian artists. Although he achieved worldwide celebrity for his Statue of Liberty at the entrance to New York (1886), Bartholdi also designed the Terreaux fountain in Lyons, the Lion of Belfort and the statue of Vercingetorix in Clermont-Ferrand. It should be said that nowadays, the fame of the Statue of Liberty has far outgrown that of its sculptor.

Hansi



Jean-Jacques Waltz (1873 - 1951) established a solid reputation under the name of Hansi, author and illustrator of books about Alsace. As a caricaturist and pamphleteer, he created a particular image of the Alsatian people. Because of this early reputation, Jean-Jacques Waltz was unable to make a name for himself as an artist. The exhibition shown in Colmar in March 2004 attempts to do justice to Hansi's aquarelles and engravings (etchings and aquatints). The exhibit shows

Waltz's centers of interests, starting from his first decorative works to his naturalistic landscapes, which were influenced by Henri Martin and Rivière.

HERITAGE

"Colmar can be visited by going down history's lane, where the centuries co-exist."
(Maison Côté Est June/July 2008)

Below are some of the best examples:

MIDDLE AGES

Saint- Martin Collegiate Church



St. Martin's Collegiate church was built between 1235 and 1365 and is a major example of Gothic architecture in Alsace. The south tower was burnt down in a fire in 1572 that also destroyed its framework and ridge. It was replaced 3 years later by the bulb-shaped dome that gives the building its characteristic appearance. The church has been restored several times, the latest restoration ending in 1982. The foundations of a church dating back to the end of the first millennium were found.

Dominican Church



The great nave, with its wooden ceiling, supported by slender columns without capitals, is reminiscent of the hall churches of the time and is one of the finest examples of the architecture of the Holy Roman Empire's Mendicant orders. Completed in 1346, the church belonged to the Dominicans of Colmar, who achieved fame in the 14th century when they initiated the reform of the Dominican order, intended to bring members of the order back to stricter observance of the original rules. The reform was then applied to the whole Empire.

The Koifhus - Former Customs House



The Koifhus was the old commercial and economic focal point of Colmar and was completed in 1480. It is the oldest local public building in the city. The old balustrade, removed 20 years ago, has now been rebuilt, thus bringing the Koifhus back to its original appearance. The ground floor was used as a warehouse and for levying taxes on imported and exported merchandise. The first floor was a meeting room for the representatives of the Décapole, a federation of the ten imperial towns of Alsace, which was created in 1354.

RENAISSANCE

Pfister House (1537)



One of the symbols of old Colmar, The 'Maison Pfister' bears the name of a 19th century owner of the house. Built in 1537 by Ludwig Scherer, a hatmaker, the house is made of stone and wood and its medieval design includes a long wooden gallery and an angular oriel window rising over 2 floors. The house is decorated in the Renaissance style, while the paintings on the facade represent the Germanic emperors of the 16th century, the evangelists, the fathers of the church and allegorical figures along with Biblical figures and scenes.

House of Heads (1609)



Built in 1609 for a local merchant, Anton Burger, the House of Heads is a fine example of the German Renaissance and owes its name to the grotesque masks or heads that decorate the rich façade. A superb oriel window rises over 3 floors of the house and the gable is topped with a statue of a cooper, sculpted by Bartholdi (1902).

COLMAR DISTRICTS



Strolling along the streets, the visitor can admire the many beautiful signs and brightly colored roofs or relax on the Quai de la Poissonnerie. In times gone by, this was an important fishing port and fish market. Today, this picturesque neighborhood is called 'Little Venice', the most romantic district in Colmar. It owes its name to the way the houses are lined up on either side of the canal. Rowboat rides are possible here.

NIGHTTIME ENHANCEMENT OF PATRIMONY

The project to use light to enhance the town's architectural heritage was initiated by the Town of Colmar, the Tourist Office and the Régie Municipale de Colmar (Colmar municipal association, which is now called Vialis) and achieved by lighting specialists. Colmar was the first town in France to implement a project of such amplitude and, in 1997, was awarded the special prize of the Académie des Arts de la Rue (Academy for Road Arts) for this truly exceptional achievement.



ALL YEAR ROUND, AN ORIGINAL LIGHTING CONCEPT

1,100 computer-driven light sources using fiber optics cable networks are skillfully distributed through the town, enabling it to put on a unique light show, which varies in intensity and color, throughout the year.

Like a magic paintbrush, it redraws the town, applying fresh contours and new reliefs, enhancing a thousand and one architectural details.

The town is illuminated from nightfall on Fridays and Saturdays throughout the whole year, and every evening during major events in Colmar: the International Music Festival, the Regional Alsace Wine Fair and Christmas in Colmar.

Four themes were chosen for these illuminations: water, air, earth and fire.

Blue, which corresponds to the air and the sky, brushes the rooftops; sea green, very evident on the riverbanks, accentuates the reflections of buildings and trees in the water; white symbolizes the fire of faith when it shines on church towers. As for the color golden amber, it represents the earth of Alsace, a land of transition and exchange.

MUSEUMS

UNTERLINDEN MUSEUM (which means "under the lime trees")



Opening hours:

- May to October, every day from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- November to April, every day (except Tuesdays) from 9:00 to 12:00 p.m. and from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Closed on 1st January, 1st May, 1st November and 25th December.

Located in a former 13th-century convent, the Unterlinden museum enjoys tremendous prestige.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of visitors come to admire the important collection of Rhenish paintings and sculptures, as well as the famous Issenheim Altarpiece by Matthias Grünewald, considered as a masterpiece in World Art history.

Works displayed: more than 3,000

Date the museum was created: 1853

A Museum of France since 2003

Managed by the Schongauer Company

The Issenheim Altarpiece, masterpiece of Western Art

Presented in the chapel, the monumental Issenheim Altarpiece is the striking creation of Grünewald (the painted panels) and Nikolaus Haguenauer (the carved parts).



A unique collection of paintings, engravings and sculptures from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

The collection of paintings by early Rhenish masters is one of the most relevant in France. The Crucifixions, including that of Jost Haller, the Orlier Altarpiece by Martin Schongauer, the Melancholy by Lucas Cranach the Elder are the main highlights of the collection.

Modern Art collection

The Department of Modern Art has revolving exhibitions that illustrate some major avant-garde trends (Monet, Bonnard, Renoir, Rouault, Delaunay, Léger, Picasso, etc.) as well as many other art currents. An extension to the Municipal Baths, a protected building that dates from 1900 and which is a pure example of "Jugendstil", is set for 2012. Across from the museum, this building will present collections of Modern Art ... in the former swimming pool bed!

For more information, see: www.musee-unterlinden.com

BARTHOLDI MUSEUM



Opening hours:

- Every day (except Tuesdays) from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Closed during January and February, 1st May, 1st November and 25th December.

In the heart of the old city of Colmar, the Bartholdi museum is housed in a vast residence, the ancestral home of the New York Statue of Liberty's creator.

Its rooms contain the most important collection of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's works, thanks to the artist's widow, who donated them to the city.

Statues, busts, drafts, original models as well as the furniture and souvenirs of the family are exhibited.

On the second floor of the museum, an entire room is dedicated to his masterpiece: "Liberty enlightening the world". Unique documents (rough sketches, drawings, models) give a step-by-step account of the genesis of one of the world's most famous monuments.

For more information about Bartholdi, see: www.musee-bartholdi.com

TOY AND MINIATURE TRAIN MUSEUM

Opening hours:



- From October to June: every day (except Tuesdays) from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
From July to September: every day from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Closed on 1st January, 1st May, 1st November and 25th December.

More than just an exhibition hall, the toy museum is a magical place where one may discover a collection that is unique, varied and exciting.

Enthusiasts and collectors of all ages will be captivated by exhibits such as Cinderella's Coach, the amazing collection of dolls and the locomotive, Britannia, a wonderful train network that extends more than 1,000 meters and has animated displays. A puppet theater, designed by Christian Prevost and operated by 35 computer-controlled motors, presents Jean de la Fontaine's fable *The Fox and the Stork* in an Alsatian setting. Many temporary exhibits complement the permanent collection.

For more information, see: www.museejouet.com

NATURAL AND ETHNOGRAPHY MUSEUM



Opening hours:

- Every day (except Tuesdays) from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. On Sundays from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Closed from 22nd December to 21st January and on 1st May, 1st November
- A science library with 30,000 volumes (including 120 live periodicals). Open Thursdays 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and by appointment.

The Natural and Ethnography Museum, founded in 1860, is a rare Alsatian museum with extra-European collections that possesses more than 1,500 ethnographic objects from Oceania, Africa, America, Australia and Asia. The museum presents collections of zoology, mineralogy, ethnology and Egyptology in 10 rooms, with 2 reserved for temporary exhibitions.

More details can be found at: www.museumcolmar.org

ESPACE ANDRÉ MALRAUX OF CONTEMPORARY ART



Opening hours are variable depending on the exhibit

The Espace André Malraux, dedicated to contemporary art, is one of the most acclaimed art galleries in Alsace.

Here, with a high-quality calendar, contemporary art is accessible for a wide audience.

Visitors to museums in 2007

Unterlinden	192,380 visitors per year
Bartholdi	12,090 visitors per year
Natural History	12,885 visitors per year
Toy Museum	45,945 visitors per year

A GOURMET CITY

Beyond its wonderful setting, Colmar titillates the palate and bewitches the senses. Aptly nicknamed "capital of Alsatian wines," it has been an unmissable gastronomic stop for centuries, with its plethora of inviting wine cellars, restaurants, shops and "winstubs".



COLMAR, THE ALSATIAN WINE CAPITAL



- A production of Alsace and Alsace Grand Cru wines, typically dry and aromatic, 91% of which are white.
- 100% bottled in the region where the wine is produced.
- An exclusive bottle shape, protected by law: the "flûte d'Alsace".
- 119 wine-producing towns.
- 15,500 hectares of A.O.C. vines in production.
- 1.15 million hectoliters of average annual production of A.O.C. wines (more than 150 million bottles).
- 18% of French A.O.C. white wine production (not incl. sparkling).
- A Wine Road that is 170 km long.

For more information, see: vinsalsace.com





The Alsace wine route

Where to go wine tasting in the capital of Alsatian wine?

In the wine cellars: wine tastings are generally free and possible nearly year-round, often 7 days a week. Visitors are warmly welcomed. In the historic center of Colmar, there are 2 wine growers' cellars but also 2 cooperatives located near the vineyards. Many nearby cellars are also members of Colmar's Tourist Office.

In restaurants: and especially in "Winstubs" ("Win" means wine and "Stub": the warmest room in traditional farmhouses). Simple, traditional Alsatian cuisine and local wine is served here!

7 GRAPE VARIETIES, 7 WINES :



Sylvaner,
light, thirst-quenching, a little fruity.



Pinot Blanc, tender and delicate, blending freshness and suppleness.



Riesling,
dry, racy, with a very fine bouquet.



Muscat d'Alsace, dry, with a fresh grape aroma.



Pinot Gris, powerful and round, with a complex bouquet.



Gewurztraminer,
robust, full-bodied, with a rich array of aromas.



Pinot Noir,
red or rosé, with a typical fruitiness that evokes cherries

GASTRONOMY



Colmar delights visitors as much for its architectural treasures as for its age-old tradition of hospitality and gourmet dishes.

Alsace seduces visitors with its copious cuisine, whether they choose traditional or more sophisticated dishes:

- for traditional cuisine, a "Winstub" is the place to go.
- for more sophisticated dining, there are two restaurants with stars in Colmar. The Alsatian chefs will surprise you by their creativity, drawing their inspiration from the wealth of the land.

We will mention just a few classic specialities: foie gras (invented in Strasbourg in 1780), baeckaoffe, the inevitable sauerkraut, the matelote du Rhin fish dish, le coq au Riesling (chicken in wine), pain d'épices (similar to ginger bread) and Kougelhopf and, of course, Munster cheese.

Alsace is a true cultural, historic and gastronomic capital, making this region a favored destination. And Colmar continues to live up to its reputation...

Food lovers' mini-glossary

- Baeckoffe (ou baekeoffe):** boiled meat and potatoes marinated in white wine.
- Bibeleskäs:** soft white cheese with shallots and fried potatoes.
- Choucroute:** (sauerkraut) refers to both the dish and the vegetable which can be garnished with grilled saveloy sausage or fish.
- Fleischkiechle:** spicy meatballs.
- Fleischnecke:** ("meat snails") boiled beef rolled up in lasagna-type bands of pasta.
- Grumbeerekiechle:** potato flat cakes.
- Kassler:** smoked pork fillets.
- Knepfle:** dumplings, made of mashed potatoes, egg yolks and flour.
- Kougelhopf:** tall, sweet pastry for breakfast or afternoon tea. Non-sweet variety also available.
- Lewerknepfle:** pig's liver dumplings.
- Presskopf:** parsleyed pork headcheese.
- Rustcherla:** (or "Rustchala") traditional little, flat-bottomed glass.
- Mixed Salad:** Swiss cheese and finely sliced saveloy sausage salad.
- Saumagen** (or Saumawe): stuffed pork stomach.
- Schiffala:** Shoulder of pork marinated in white wine.
- Spätzle:** Alsatian noodles.
- Stammtisch:** table d'hôte. The regulars' table in a winstub (Alsatian tavern).
- Sueri Nierli:** Veal or pork kidneys cooked in vinegar.
- Wädele:** Small pork knuckle.
- Wasserstriwala:** word for "spätzle" in the Upper Rhine region.
- Winstub:** wine cellar. Called "wistub" in the Upper Rhine region.

EVENTS

A few of the major events of the year...

DID YOU KNOW?

In Alsace, there are two extra holidays: **Easter Friday (before Easter)** and **St Stephen (26th December)**.

- **Easter market**

Place de Dominicains

The Easter and Traditions Market is organized by the Federation of Shopkeepers, Artisans and Services of Colmar and takes place in the Place des Dominicains. The little stalls set up during the Easter market present all sorts of products around the theme of Easter: chocolates, pastries, decorative objects, foie gras, jams, wines, toys, flowers, etc. An area that the City of Colmar bedecks in flowers welcomes rabbits that will delight children. Long live Easter and Traditions in Colmar!

For more information, see: www.ot-colmar.fr

- **Ecolo-organic Festival of Alsace**

Parc des expositions

During the month of May

This five-day festival is an opportunity to meet exhibitors who demonstrate their commitment to alternative ways of living, sell organic products, offer information and advice about agriculture, nutrition, health, the environment, habitats, energy, education, human relationships, culture, well-being, North-South relations, etc.

For more information, see: www.foireecobioalsace.fr

- **Festival of chamber music**

Théâtre municipal de Colmar

During the month of May

This event offers some of the best chamber music. The finest international soloists come to Colmar for a week to perform a rich and surprising program!

For more information, see: www.les-musicales.com

- **Colmar International Festival**

Each year in early July, the Colmar International classical music festival, under the artistic direction of Vladimir Spivakov, pays tribute to a great musician, which becomes the main thread of the festival's program. Orchestras, conductors, ensembles and soloists of international fame gather in Colmar. In 2010, the Colmar International Festival (2nd-13th July) paid tribute to two great musicians of the 20th century: Maurice Ravel and Sergueï Rachmaninov. 22 concerts were given in 4 historical venues: Saint Matthieu's church (14th century), Saint Pierre's Chapel (18th century), the Koifhus (14th-15th centuries), and in the Unterlinden museum (13th century).

For more information, see: www.festival-colmar.com

- **Regional Alsace Wine Fair**

Parc des expositions

During the month of August

Around 350 exhibitors representing different sectors (agricultural and winemaking equipment, homecraft, furnishings, arts and crafts, open-air and hobbies exhibition, food) come to the fair. Wine tastings of Alsatian wines accompany many of the events. As always, it is also the **main popular music event** of the year.

The most popular bands and singers come to perform live. Lasting 10 days, it is a great way to take advantage of the best of the national and international music scene. Even without a specific theme, the concerts performed during the Fair have become a festival in their own right, listed as such in most of the specialized magazines.

For more information, see: www.colmar-expo.fr

- **Colmar Jazz Festival**

Centre de rencontres et d'échanges et de formation (CREF) and Grillen

During the month of September

In September each year, the Colmar Jazz Festival, which both honors jazz roots and is open to all styles, offers an eclectic program, mixing **well-known American artists with talented regional musicians**. Its diverse program is acclaimed by a loyal audience and the press: "one of the best and most coherent European festival programs!" (Yves Sportis, editor in chief of *Jazz Hot*).

For more information, see: www.festivaljazzcolmar.fr

- **Film Festival "7 days for the 7th art"**

Cinémas Colisée + CGR

During the month of October

For 7 days, Colmar becomes the **capital of the 7th art**. The Colmar Film Festival, of regional notoriety and increasing national recognition, has been organized by the Municipality for 13 years.

50 to 70 people working in cinema or the television meet Alsatians each day to discuss previously unreleased films that are shown as sneak previews.

Added to these free "star" showings, training days, called "encouragement of young creators," and "young public" afternoons are held. Many actors, directors and films shown in Colmar go on to win acclaim and awards.

To see the full program of events, go to www.ot-colmar.fr

For more information, see: www.ville-colmar.fr