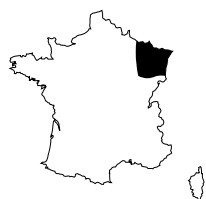


Alsace & Lorraine



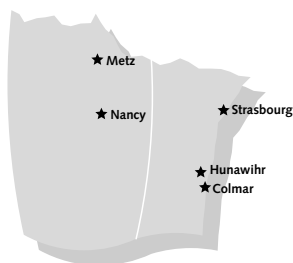
Though often spoken of as if they were one, Alsace and Lorraine, neighbouring *régions* in France's northeastern corner, are linked by little more than the Massif des Vosges (Vosges Mountains) and the imperialism of 19th-century Germany. In 1871, after the Franco-Prussian War, the German Reich annexed Alsace and the northern part of Lorraine (the Moselle *département*), making the *régions'* return to rule from Paris a rallying cry of French nationalism.

Charming and beautiful Alsace, long a meeting place of Europe's Latin and Germanic cultures, is nestled between the Vosges and the River Rhine – along which the long-disputed Franco-German border has at last found a final resting place. Popularly known as a land of storks' nests and colourful half-timbered houses sprouting geraniums, Alsace also offers a wide variety of outdoor activities – including hiking, cycling and skiing – in and around its vineyards and gentle, forested mountains. Strasbourg, the region's main city, is the seat of the European Parliament. Throughout France, the people of Alsace have a reputation for being well organised, hard-working and tax-paying.

Lorraine, a land of prairies and forests popularly associated with quiche and de Gaulle's double-barred cross (*croix de Lorraine*), has little of the picturesque quaintness of Alsace. However, it is home to two particularly handsome cities, both former capitals. Nancy, one of France's most refined and attractive urban centres, is famed for its neoclassical architecture and art-nouveau museums, while Metz, 54km to the north, is known for its Germanic neighbourhoods, the stunning stained glass of its marvellous cathedral, and the new Centre Pompidou–Metz, set to open in late 2009. Verdun bears silent testimony to the destruction and insanity of WWI.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Crane (or should that be stork) your neck to see the rose-coloured spires and stained glass of Strasbourg's splendid **cathedral** (p375)
- Watch storks glide majestically above their rooftop nests in **Hunawihr** (p392) and around the other towns of the Route du Vin d'Alsace
- Marvel at Colmar's medieval **Issenheim Altarpiece** (p395)
- Take in Nancy's refined **place Stanislas** (p402) and **art nouveau museums** (p403)
- Be dazzled by the curtains of stained glass in Metz' **Gothic cathedral** (p407)



■ ALSACE POPULATION: 1.7 MILLION
 ■ LORRAINE POPULATION: 2.3 MILLION

■ ALSACE AREA: 8280 SQ KM
 ■ LORRAINE AREA: 23,547 SQ KM

humiliating episode in French history, ended with the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871), by which an embittered France was forced to cede Alsace to the Kaiser. Following Germany's defeat in WWI, the region was returned to France but it was reannexed by Nazi Germany in 1940.

After WWII, Alsace was once again returned to France. Intra-Alsatian tensions ran high, however, as those who had fled came back and confronted neighbours whom they suspected of having collaborated with the Germans: 140,000 Alsatians, as annexed citizens of the Third Reich, had been conscripted into Hitler's armies. These conscripts were known as the 'Malgré-Nous' (literally 'despite ourselves') because the vast majority had gone off to war against their will; over half never returned from the Russian front and post-war Soviet prison camps. To make Alsace a symbol of hope for future Franco-German (and pan-European) coexistence and cooperation, Strasbourg was chosen as the seat of the Council of Europe (in 1949) and, later, of the European Parliament.

Opened in 2005, the impressive **Mémorial de l'Alsace-Moselle** (☎ 03 88 47 45 50; www.memorial-alsace-moselle.org, in French & German; adult/under 21yr, student & over 65yr/family incl audioguide €10/7/20; ☎ 10am-6pm or 7pm Tue-Sun, closed early Jan-early Feb, last entry

1hr before closing), 53km southwest of Strasbourg in Schirmeck (not far from the Natzweiler-Struthof Concentration Camp, p387), takes an unblinking but reconciliatory look at the region's traumatic modern history, which saw residents change nationality four times in 75 years.

Getting There & Around

Alsace is *almost* in central Europe. Situated 456km east of Paris, it's midway between Calais and Prague (about 630km from each) and is slightly closer to Berlin (801km) than to Marseille (814km).

From Strasbourg, the A4 heads northwest towards Metz and Paris, while from Mulhouse the A36 goes southwest towards the Jura and Dijon. The Massif des Vosges gets very snowy in winter so winter tyres and/or chains may be required, eg to cross Col de la Schlucht or Col du Bonhomme.

Thanks to the new TGV Est Européen, inaugurated in June 2007, the train ride from Paris to Strasbourg now takes just two hours and 20 minutes.

Special discount rail fares are available for travel within Alsace. The Pass Evasion, available on Saturday, Sunday and holidays, costs €8.50 for unlimited all-day travel within either the Bas-Rhin or Haut-Rhin *département*, or €13.50

THE LOCAL LINGO

The roots of Alsatian (Elsässisch; www.heimetsproch.org, in French and German), the language of Alsace, go back to the 4th century, when the Alemanni, a group of Germanic tribes, arrived here and assimilated the local Celts (Gauls) and Romans. Similar to the dialects spoken in nearby parts of Germany and Switzerland, it has no official written form (spelling – including on menus – is something of a free-for-all), and pronunciation varies considerably from one area to another (especially between the north and south).

Despite a series of heavy-handed attempts by both the French and the Germans to impose their language on the region, in part by restricting (or even banning) the use of Alsatian, it is still used in everyday life by people of all ages, especially in rural areas (particularly in the north). You're likely to hear its singsongy cadences whenever you happen upon locals who are just being themselves – for instance, in a *bäkerlààda* (*boulangerie*; bakery) and at Strasbourg's La Choucrouterie (p385).

Three other minority languages are still in use in Alsace. Francique, the language of the Franks, is spoken in areas north of Haguenau. Welsche, a Latin-based dialect that dates from the Gallo-Roman period, can still be heard in the Vosges valleys. And the local version of Yiddish, similar to Alsatian but with its own peculiarities, is central to Alsatian Jewish identity.

In mid-2008 France's National Assembly voted to add a line to the French constitution recognising regional languages such as Alsatian as 'part of France's heritage', but after a scathing broadside from the Académie Française, which declared the amendment no less than 'an attack on French national unity', the Senate scuttled the bill.

for travel anywhere in Alsace. A 'Mini-Groupe' version valid for two/five people travelling together costs €16.50/26 – perfect for day trips to the wine towns! You can get 25% off on all regional rail travel if you're aged 12 to 25, over 60 or – with an 'Escapade en TER Alsace' ticket – travelling in a group of three to nine people.

Alsace has *lots* of bike trails (see p388). Bicycles can be brought along on virtually all regional TER trains and autorails (but not SNCF buses).

STRASBOURG

pop 427,000

Prosperous, cosmopolitan Strasbourg (City of the Roads) is France's great northeastern metropolis and the intellectual and cultural capital of Alsace. Situated only a few kilometres west of the Rhine, the city is aptly named, for it is on the vital transport arteries that have linked northern Europe with the Mediterranean since Celtic times.

Strasbourg continues to serve as an important European crossroads thanks to the presence of the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, the Eurocorps (www.eurocorps.org), the Franco-German TV network Arte (www.arte-tv.com, in French and German) and a student population of some 53,000 (more than any other French city except Paris), 22% from outside France. Strasbourg is one of Europe's most cycle-friendly cities.

Towering above the restaurants, *winstubs* (traditional Alsatian eateries) and pubs of the lively old city – a wonderful area to explore on foot – is the cathedral, a medieval marvel in pink sandstone. Nearby you'll find one of the finest ensembles of museums anywhere in France.

History

Before it was attached to France in 1681, Strasbourg was effectively ruled for several

centuries by a guild of citizens whose tenure accorded the city a certain democratic character.

Johannes Gutenberg worked in Strasbourg from about 1434 to 1444, perfecting his printing press and the movable metal type that made it so revolutionary. A university was founded in 1566 and several leaders of the Reformation took up residence here.

Orientation

The train station is 400m west of the Grande Île (Big Island), the core of ancient and modern Strasbourg, whose main squares are place Kléber, place Broglie (*broag-lee*), place Gutenberg and place du Château. The quaint Petite France area, on the Grande Île's south-western corner, is subdivided by canals. The Krutenau District is southeast across the river from the cathedral.

The European Parliament building and Palais de l'Europe are about 2.5km northeast of the cathedral.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Bookworm (☎ 03 88 32 26 99; www.bookworm.fr; 3 rue de Pâques; ☒ Ancienne Synagogue; ☎ 9.30am–6.30pm Tue–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat) A well-stocked English bookshop where you can find Lonely Planet guides and *Images of Alsace*, the only English-language coffee-table book on Alsace, written by the owners. A good source of information on goings-on in Strasbourg.

Géorama (☎ 03 88 75 01 95; 20–22 rue du Fossé des Tanneurs; ☒ Homme de Fer; ☎ 2–7pm Mon, 9.30am–7pm Tue–Sat) Has a huge selection of hiking maps and topoguides.

INTERNET ACCESS

A number of phonocard shops near the train station offer internet access, eg at Nos 2 and 8 on rue du Maire Kuss.

Bibliothèque (public library; ☎ 03 88 43 64 77; 3 rue Kuhn; ☒ Ancienne Synagogue; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue, Wed

VISITING THE MAGINOT LINE

Parts of the Maginot Line (p39) are open to visitors thanks to local volunteer organisations (the French government considers the Maginot Line an embarrassing failure that's best forgotten and so provides no funding or publicity). In Lorraine, visitors can tour more than a dozen sites, including Fort du Hackenberg (p412). Maginot sites in Alsace include **Schoenenbourg** (☎ Hunsbach tourist office 03 88 80 59 39; www.lignemaginot.com; adult/6–18yr €6/4; ☎ self-guided tours begin 2–4pm Sat & 9.30–11am & 2–4pm Sun Apr–early Nov, 2–4pm Mon–Fri mid-Apr–early Oct), a concrete behemoth about 45km north of Strasbourg. The self-guided tour follows a 3km route that takes two hours; signs are in English.

& Fri, 1-7pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sat) Access is free but you may have to reserve a bit ahead.

L'Utopie (☎ 03 88 23 89 21; 21-23 rue du Fossé des Tanneurs; ☑ Homme de Fer; per 1/20hr €3/20; ☎ 7am-11.30pm) A proper café with free wi-fi; the computers are downstairs.

Milk (☎ 03 88 32 06 02; 32-34 rue du Vieux Marché aux Vins; ☑ Homme de Fer; per hr €4, discounts available; ☎ 24hr) Has about 100 computers.

NeT SuR CouR (☎ 03 88 35 66 76; 18 quai des Pêcheurs; ☑ Gallia; per hr €2; ☎ 9.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 1.30-7.30pm Sun & holidays) Hidden at the end of a narrow courtyard.

Tele SM (☎ 03 90 23 53 70; 3 quai St-Jean; ☑ Faubourg National; per hr €2; ☎ 8am or 9am-midnight)

LAUNDRY

Laundrettes 29 Grand' Rue (☑ Alt Winmärik; ☎ 7.30am-8pm); 8 rue de la Nuée Bleue (☑ Broglie; ☎ 7am-9pm); 15 rue des Veaux (☎ 7am-9pm)

Laverie Net (☎ 03 88 75 11 78; 4 rue Déserte; ☑ Faubourg National; per 7kg €9, incl drying & folding; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 1.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-7pm Fri & Sat) Full-service laundry.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Nouvel Hôpital Civil (☎ 03 88 11 67 68; www.chru-strasbourg.fr, in French; rue Koeberlé; ☎ 24hrs) The *urgences* (casualty ward/emergency room), opened in 2008, is served by bus 15 (get off at Lycée Pasteur) and the Navette Hôpital Civil shuttle, which links the Porte de l'Hôpital and Musée d'Art Moderne tram stops.

MONEY

Société Générale (☎ 03 88 23 46 50; 8 place de la Gare; ☑ Gare Centrale; ☎ 2-6pm Mon, 8.30am-noon & 1.45-6pm Tue-Fri)

POST

Branch Post Office (place de la Cathédrale; ☑ Langstross Grand' Rue; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat) Has extended Saturday hours and currency exchange.

Main Post Office (5 av de la Marseillaise; ☑ République) In a neo-Gothic structure built by the Germans in 1899. Has exchange services.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Agence de Développement Touristique en Bas-Rhin (ADT; ☎ 03 88 15 45 88; www.tourisme67.com, in French; 9 rue du Dôme; ☑ Broglie; ☎ 9.30am or 10am-6pm Mon-Fri Jun-Aug, 9am-noon & 1-5pm Sat Jul & Aug, 9.30am or 10am-6pm Mon-Sat late Nov-Dec, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri rest of year) The *départemental* tourist board has excellent English-language brochures – some downloadable (on the website go to

'Obtenez nos brochures') – on hiking, cycling, skiing, Jewish sites and activities for families with young children.

Main Tourist Office (☎ 03 88 52 28 28; www.otstrasbourg.fr; 17 place de la Cathédrale; ☑ Langstross Grand' Rue; ☎ 9am-7pm) Next door to the ornately carved, 16th-century Maison Kammerzell. A city-centre walking map with English text costs €1; bus/tram and cycling maps are free. *Strolling in Strasbourg* (€4.50) details six architectural walking tours. The Strasbourg Pass (adult/child €11.40/5.70), a coupon book valid for three consecutive days, may save you some cash.

Tourist Office Annexe (☎ 03 88 32 51 49; ☑ Gare Centrale; ☎ 9am-7pm) In the train station's southern wing.

Sights

GRANDE ÎLE

With its bustling public squares, busy pedestrianised precincts and upmarket shopping streets, the Grande Île – a Unesco World Heritage Site since 1988 – is a paradise for the aimless ambler. The narrow streets of the **old city** are especially enchanting at night, particularly right around the cathedral (eg rue du Sanglier). Also worth a look is **place Gutenberg**, with its Renaissance-style **Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie** (Chamber of Commerce) building. There are watery views from the paths along the **River Ill** and its canalised branch, the **Fossé du Faux Rempart**; the grassy quays, frequented by swans, are great venues for a picnic or a romantic stroll.

Criss-crossed by narrow lanes, canals and locks, **Petite France** is the stuff of fairy tales. The half-timbered houses, meticulously maintained and sprouting veritable thickets of geraniums, and the riverside parks attract multitudes of tourists. However, the area still manages to retain its Alsatian atmosphere and charm, especially in the early morning and late evening.

The romantic **Terrasse Panoramique** (admission free; ☎ 9am-7.30pm) on top of **Barrage Vauban** (☎ 7.30am-7.30pm), a dam built to prevent river-borne attacks on the city (and now used to store bits and pieces of stone statuary), affords panoramas of the River Ill.

CATHÉDRALE NOTRE DAME

Strasbourg's lacy, almost fragile-looking Gothic **cathedral** (☑ Langstross Grand' Rue; ☎ 7am-7pm) is one of the marvels of European architecture. The west facade, most impressive if approached from rue Mercière, was completed in 1284, but the 142m spire – the tallest

INFORMATION		
Agence de Développement Touristique en Bas-Rhin.....	1 F4	
Bibliothèque.....	2 C3	
Bookworm.....	3 D3	
Branch Post Office.....	4 F4	
Géorama.....	5 D4	
Laundrette.....	6 E3	
Laundrette.....	7 D4	
Laundrette.....	8 G4	
Laverie Net.....	9 C3	
L'Utopie.....	10 D4	
Main Post Office.....	11 G3	
Main Tourist Office.....	12 F4	
Milk.....	13 D3	
NeT SuR Cour.....	14 H3	
Nouvel Hôpital Civil.....	15 C6	
Société Générale.....	16 C3	
Tele SM.....	17 C4	
Tourist Office Annexe.....	18 B3	
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		
Barrage Vauban & Terrasse		
Panoramique.....	19 C5	
Batorama Boat Excursions.....	20 F5	
Cathedral's South		
Entrance.....	21 F4	
Cathédrale Notre Dame.....	22 F4	
Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie.....	23 E4	
Club Vosgien.....	24 E1	
Musée Alsacien.....	25 F5	
Musée Archéologique.....	(see 29)	
Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain.....	26 C5	
Musée de l'Œuvre Notre Dame.....	27 F4	
Musée des Arts Décoratifs.....	(see 29)	
Musée des Beaux-Arts.....	(see 29)	
Musée Historique.....	28 F5	
Palais Rohan.....	29 F4	
SLEEPING		
CIARUS.....	30 E2	
Hôtel Au Cerf d'Or.....	31 F5	
Hôtel Gutenberg.....	32 E4	
Hôtel Le Colmar.....	33 C3	
Hôtel Patricia.....	34 E5	
Hôtel Régent Petite France.....	35 D4	
Hôtel Suisse.....	36 F4	
Le Kléber Hôtel.....	37 E3	
EATING		
Au Coin des Pucelles.....	38 G3	
Au Crocodile.....	39 E4	
Casher Price Naouri Kosher		
Supermarket.....	40 E1	
Food Market.....	41 F3	
Galleries Lafayette Gourmet		
Supermarket.....	42 E4	
La Bourse.....	43 F6	
La Cloche à Fromage Boutique.....	44 E4	
L'Assiette du Vin.....	45 E4	
Le Michel.....	46 G3	
Monoprix Supermarket.....	47 E3	
Moozé.....	48 E4	
Petit Casino Grocery.....	49 B3	
Restaurant Autre Part.....	50 F1	
Restaurant King.....	51 F1	
Restaurant La Victoire.....	52 H3	
Tiger Wok.....	53 F3	
Winstub Le Clou.....	54 F4	
DRINKING		
Irish Times.....	55 E4	
La Taverne Française.....	56 G3	
ENTERTAINMENT		
Boutique Culture.....	57 F4	
Fnac Billeterie.....	58 E4	
La Laiterie.....	59 A6	
La Salamandre.....	60 H5	
Le Star Cinema.....	61 D3	
Odyssée Cinema.....	62 E4	
Star St-Exupéry Cinema.....	63 D4	
Virgin Megastore.....	64 D4	
TRANSPORT		
Avis.....	65 B3	
CTS Information Bureau.....	(see 71)	
CTS Information Bureau.....	66 D3	
Eurolines Office.....	67 C5	
Europcar.....	(see 65)	
National-Citer.....	(see 65)	
Rotonde P+R Relais Tram.....	68 A1	
Sixt.....	(see 65)	
SNCF Boutique.....	69 E4	
Vélocation.....	70 F5	
Vélocation.....	71 B3	

of its time – was not in place until 1439; its southern companion was never built. The cathedral served as a Protestant church from 1521 to 1681.

On a sunny day, the 12th- to 14th-century **stained-glass windows** – especially the rose window over the western portal – shine like jewels. The colourful, gilded **organ case** on the northern side dates from the 14th century, while the 30m-high Gothic and Renaissance contraption just inside the southern entrance is the **astronomical clock**, a late-16th-century clock (the mechanism dates from 1842) that strikes solar noon every day at 12.30pm. There's a charge of €2 (€1.50 for students) to see the carved wooden figures whirl through their paces, which is why only the cathedral's **south entrance** is open from 11.30am until the end of the show. Tickets are sold until 12.05pm, when a 22-minute film (in French, English and German) about the clock begins.

The 66m-high **platform** (03 88 43 60 40; adult/student & 5-18yr €4.60/2.30; 9am or 10am–btwn 5.45pm & 7.15pm, to 9.45pm Fri & Sat in summer) above the facade – from which the **tower** and its Gothic openwork **spire** soar another 76m – affords a spectacular stork's-eye view of Strasbourg.

The 330 spiral steps begin at the base of a second spire that was never finished.

MUSÉE DE L'ŒUVRE NOTRE DAME

Occupying a group of magnificent 14th- and 16th-century buildings, the renowned **Musée de l'Œuvre Notre Dame** (03 88 32 88 17; 3 place du Château; Langstross Grand' Rue; adult/student under 25yr & senior/under 18yr incl audioguide €4/2/free; noon-6pm Tue-Sun) houses one of Europe's premier collections of Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance sculptures (including many originals from the cathedral), 15th-century paintings, and stained glass. *Christ de Wissembourg* (c 1060; room two) is the oldest work of stained glass in France. The celebrated figures of a blind-folded and downcast *Synagogue* (representing Judaism) and a serenely victorious *Église* (the Church), which date from approximately 1230 and had once flanked the southern entrance to the cathedral (the statues there now are copies), are in room Seven.

Hollywood gore seems pretty Milquetoasty compared to what they came up with back when Hell really was hell. *Les Amants Trépassés* (the Deceased Lovers; room 23), painted in 1470, shows a remarkably ugly

couple being punished for their illicit lust: both of their entrails are being devoured by dragon-headed snakes while a toad feasts on her pudenda. If this work isn't enough to scare you into a life of chastity, nothing will!

MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE ET CONTEMPORAIN

The outstanding **Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain** (MAMC, Museum of Modern & Contemporary Art; ☎ 03 88 23 31 31; place Hans Jean Arp; 📍 Musée d'Art Moderne; adult/student under 25yr & senior/under 18yr €5/2.50/free; 🕒 noon-7pm Tue, Wed & Fri, noon-9pm Thu, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) displays a permanent collection of 'modern' (pre-WWII) art representing all the major movements (including Impressionism, symbolism, fauvism, cubism, Dadaism and surrealism) and hosts temporary exhibits of contemporary works as well as contemporary exhibits of temporary works.

PALAIS ROHAN

The majestic **Palais Rohan** (☎ 03 88 52 50 00; 2 place du Château; for whole complex adult/student under 25yr & senior/under 18yr €6/3/free, for each museum €4/2/free; 🕒 noon-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) was built between 1732 and 1742 as a residence for the city's princely bishops. In the basement, the **Musée Archéologique** (audioguide included in ticket price) takes you from the Palaeolithic period to AD 800. On the ground floor is the **Musée des Arts Décoratifs**, which has a series of lavish rooms featuring the lifestyle of the rich and powerful during the 18th century. Louis XV and Marie-Antoinette once slept here – in 1744 and 1770, respectively. On the 1st floor the **Musée des Beaux-Arts** has a rather staid collection of French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and Flemish masters from the 14th to the 19th centuries.

MUSÉE HISTORIQUE

The excellent, trilingual (French, German and English) **Musée Historique** (Historical Museum; ☎ 03 88 52 50 00; 3 place de la Grande Boucherie; 📍 Porte de l'Hôpital; adult/student under 25yr & senior/under 18yr incl audioguide €4/2/free; 🕒 noon-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun), reopened in 2007 after a complete redesign, traces the city's history from its beginnings as a 1st-century AD Roman military camp called Argentoratum. Highlights include a famous painting of the first-ever performance of *La Marseillaise*, France's stirring national anthem, which – despite its name – was written in Strasbourg in 1792; a 1:600-scale model

of the city, created in the 1720s to help Louis XV visualise the city's fortifications; and a Gutenberg Bible from 1485. There's lots for kids to do – they can try on medieval-style knights' helmets, and many objects, including ancient pots and tiles and 18th-century cannons, can be touched.

MUSÉE ALSACIEN

Tucked away in three typical houses from the 1500s and 1600s, the **Musée Alsacien** (☎ 03 88 52 50 01; 23 quai St-Nicolas; 📍 Porte de l'Hôpital; adult/student under 25yr & senior/under 18yr €4/2/free; 🕒 noon-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun), affords a fascinating glimpse into Alsatian life over the centuries. Displays in the museum's two dozen rooms include kitchen equipment (stoves, ceramics, biscuit cutters), children's toys, colourful furniture and even a tiny 18th-century synagogue.

EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

The home of the rather toothless, 730-member **European Parliament** (Parlement Européen; ☎ 03 88 17 20 07; www.europarl.eu.int; rue Lucien Febvre; 📍 Parlement Européen), used just 12 times a year for four-day 'part-sessions' (plenary sessions), is 2.5km northeast of the cathedral. When it's in session (dates are available from the tourist office or on the website – click 'Activities', then 'Parliament's Calendar'), you can sit in on **debates** (🕒 5-6pm Mon, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Tue & Wed, 10am-noon & 3-5pm Thu) for up to one hour. Reservations are possible only for groups,

STRASBOURG'S MUSEUMS

The **Pass Musées** (1-day/3-day/annual €6/8/20, 1-day version for students under 26yr & seniors €3) gets you into all of Strasbourg's museums (where it's sold), including temporary exhibitions.

Admission to all of Strasbourg's **museums** (www.musees-strasbourg.org, in French) and the cathedral's platform is free on the first Sunday of the month. On other days tickets are valid all day long, so you can enter and re-enter as you please.

The following are closed on Monday: Musée de l'Œuvre Notre Dame, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Musée Historique, Le Vaisseau.

Closed on Tuesday: Palais Rohan museums, Musée Alsacien.

JEWISH ALSACE

Interest in Alsace's rich Jewish heritage (<http://judaisme.sdv.fr/histoire/historiq/anglais/history.htm>, in English, <http://judaisme.sdv.fr>, in French), spanning 1000 years, has grown tremendously in recent years. Indeed, the **European Day of Jewish Culture** (www.jewishheritage.org), marked on the first Sunday of September in 30 countries, grew out of a local initiative in northern Alsace. Famous people of Alsatian-Jewish origin include Captain Alfred Dreyfus (of the Dreyfus Affair), Léon Blum (thrice prime minister of France in the 1930s and 1940s), the Marx Brothers (of *Duck Soup*), Marcel Marceau (the mime artist) and Julia Louis-Dreyfus (Elaine Benes on *Seinfeld*).

Today most Alsatian Jews live in Strasbourg, whose vibrant Jewish community – proud of its unique liturgical and musical traditions – numbers about 15,000. Alsace is the only region in France in which the majority of the Jews are Ashkenazim, ie spoke Yiddish in centuries past (nationwide, some 70% of French Jews immigrated from North Africa in the mid-20th century).

Towns all over the region, including many along the Route du Vin d'Alsace (p387), have historic **synagogues**. Museums with exhibits related to Alsatian Judaism include Strasbourg's Musée de l'Œuvre Notre Dame (p378) and Musée Alsacien (p379); Colmar's Musée Bartholdi (p395); and the **Musée Judéo-Alsacien** (☎ 03 88 70 97 17; <http://judaisme.sdv.fr/today/musee>, in French; 62 Grand' Rue; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 2-5pm Tue-Fri, 2-6pm Sun, closed Sat Easter–mid-Sep) in Bouxwiller, 40km northeast of Strasbourg. In Lorraine, displays related to that region's Jewish history can be found at Nancy's Musée Lorrain (p403) and Metz' Musée La Cour d'Or (p407).

The Agence de Développement Touristique en Bas-Rhin (p375) publishes an excellent brochure, *Discovering Alsatian Judaism*, downloadable from its website (click on 'Obtenez nos brochures').

Theso for individuals it's first-come first-served (bring ID). The rest of the time the building is inaccessible (except to groups) because of strict post-9/11 security measures.

Across the Ill, the Council of Europe's **Palais de l'Europe** (Palace of Europe; ☎ 03 88 41 20 29; www.coe.int; ☎ Droits de l'Homme), once used by the European Parliament, can be visited on free one-hour weekday tours; phone ahead for times and reservations. During the four annual Monday-to-midday-Friday sessions of the council's 47-country *assemblée parlementaire*, you can sit in on debates (no reservations required; dates are on the website).

Just across Canal de la Marne, the striking **Palais des Droits de l'Homme** (Human Rights Law Courts; ☎ 03 90 21 52 17; www.echr.coe.int; ☎ Droits de l'Homme), home of the European Court of Human Rights, completes the city's ensemble of major European institutions. If there's space it's possible to sit in on one of the two to five monthly court sessions (in French and/or English with simultaneous translation), which generally begin at 9am on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and last 90 minutes – check the website under 'Pending Cases' for dates and get there with ID a half-hour ahead. Three or more people should reserve by email.

OTHER SIGHTS

Many of Strasbourg's most impressive public buildings, built when the city was ruled by the German Reich, are just northeast of the Grande Île around **place de la République** (☎ République). The neighbourhood that stretches from there eastwards to Parc de l'Orangerie is dominated by solid, stone buildings inspired by late-19th-century Prussian tastes. Most are some sort of 'neo' – romantic, Gothic or Renaissance – and you can see that some had the initials RF (for 'République Française') hastily added after 1918 to replace the original German insignia.

Across av de l'Europe from Palais de l'Europe, the flowerbeds, playgrounds, shaded paths and swan-dotted lake of **Parc de l'Orangerie** (☎ Droits de l'Homme) are hugely popular with local families, especially on sunny Sundays. In the warm months you can rent **row boats** on Lac de l'Orangerie.

Le Vaisseau (☎ 03 88 44 44 00; www.levaisseau.com; 1bis rue Philippe Dollinger; ☎ Winston Churchill; adult/3-17yr €8/7; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, last entry 5pm, closed 1st 3 weeks of Sep), 2.5km southeast of the cathedral, is an interactive, hands-on science and technology museum aimed at kids aged three to 15. Everything is trilingual (English, French and German).

As a concrete (but very green) expression of Franco-German friendship, Strasbourg and its German neighbour Kehl have turned areas once used by customs posts and military installations into the 60-hectare **Jardin des Deux Rives** (Two-Shores Garden), whose play areas, promenades and parkland stretch along both banks of the Rhine just south of Pont de l'Europe. The centrepiece is a sleek (and hugely expensive) **suspension bridge**, designed by Marc Mimram, that's proved a big hit with pedestrians and cyclists; one of the walkways is 275m long, the other 387m long. To get to the park, take tram D to Aristide Briand, and from there walk east or take bus 21 for three stops.

Tours

CITY TOURS

The main tourist office has 1½-hour **audio-guides** (adult/student/under 12yr €5.50/3.50/free) of the cathedral and the old city in five languages.

Scenic boat excursions (70 minutes) in nine languages that take in Petite France and the European institutions are run by **Batorama** (☎ 03 88 84 13 13; www.batorama.fr, in French; 9 rue de Nantes; 🚢 Porte de l'Hôpital; adult/student 25yr & under €7.60/3.80; 🗓️ excursions begin at 10.30am, 1pm, 2.30pm & 4pm Nov & Jan-Mar, more frequently rest of year, to 9pm or 10pm Apr-Oct).

BREWERIES

Brasseries Heineken (☎ 03 88 19 57 55; annabelle.ferry@exirys.com; 4 rue St-Charles; admission free; 🗓️ tours Mon-Fri) is 2.5km north of the Grande Île in Schiltigheim, near the intersection of rue St-Charles and rte de Bischwiller. Tours last two hours and are sometimes in English; phone or email for reservations. Take bus 4 (north-bound) to the Schiltigheim Mairie stop.

Brasseries Kronenbourg (☎ 03 88 27 41 59; siege.visites@kronenbourg-fr.com; 68 rte d'Oberhausbergen; 🚢 Ducs d'Alsace; adult/12-18yr/family €5/3/14; 🗓️ tours approx hourly Mon-Sat, closed Jan) sells 800 million litres of beer in France every year – enough beer to fill about 250 Olympic swimming

pools! The two-hour tours (some in English) of its brewing facilities, 2.5km northwest of the Grande Île in the suburb of Cronenbourg, are both interesting and thirst-quenching. Call or email for reservations.

Festivals & Events

Strasbourg's beloved **Marché de Noël** (Christmas Market; place Broglie, place Gutenberg, place d'Austerlitz, place de la Cathédrale, place Kléber, Petite France), known as Christkindelsmärik in Alsatian and a tradition since at least 1570, runs from the last Saturday in November until 5pm on 24 December (till 31 December at place de la Cathédrale and place d'Austerlitz).

Sleeping

It is *extremely* difficult to find last-minute accommodation from Monday to Thursday when the European Parliament is in plenary session (generally for one week each month; see www.europarl.eu.int and click 'Activities', then 'Parliament's Calendar' for dates). Because of the Christmas Market, weekends in December are also tight so reserve ahead if at all possible.

The tourist office and its website (www.otstrasbourg.fr; click 'Your Stay', then 'Accommodation' to opt for a French-language search engine) can provide details about same-night room availability; if you drop by, staff are happy to help reserve a room. Reservations can also be made via www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels.

Many hotels apply high-season rates during European Parliament sessions and in May, June, September, October and December. Since Strasbourg is far from any sea coast, July and August are low season.

BUDGET

CIARUS (☎ 03 88 15 27 88; www.ciarus.com; 7 rue Finkmarkt; dm in 8-/4-/2-bed room incl breakfast €21.50/25.50/28, s€44.50; 🚗 📺 📞 📧 📧 📞 📧 📞) Hostels don't get much more

HIKING, CYCLING & SNOWSHOEING

The Strasbourg section of the **Club Vosgien** (☎ 03 88 35 30 76; www.club-vosgien-strasbourg.net, in French; 71 av des Vosges; 🗓️ staffed 4-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat), a regional walking organisation founded in 1872, offers walks, cycling excursions and snowshoe trips for its members (guests welcome) in the Vosges and other parts of Alsace; there are trips bright and early each Sunday and often on other days too – the website has details (in French). No reservations are needed for trips by private car (passengers pay a small sum per kilometre) or train; reserve a few days ahead for bus trips (about €12, depending on the distance). Insurance costs €4.

stylish than this welcoming, 295-bed hostel, nominally Protestant-affiliated. Dorm rooms have industrial-strength furniture, toilets and showers. Parking is also available. Often accommodates rambunctious school groups. By bus, take bus 2, 4 or 10 to the place de Pierre stop.

Hôtel Le Colmar (☎ 03 88 32 16 89; hotel.le.colmar@wanadoo.fr; 1 rue du Maire Kuss; ☑ Alt Winnmärk; s/d €42/45, with washbasin €27/34, hall shower €1.50) This one-star cheapie offers a unique mix of light and linoleum – stylish it ain't but it's convenient and good value. Some rooms have great river views. Payment is in cash only.

Hôtel Patricia (☎ 03 88 32 14 60; www.hotelpatricia.fr; 1a rue du Puits; ☑ Langstross Grand' Rue; d €43-45, s with washbasin €28; ☎ reception 8-11am & 2-8pm Mon-Sat, 8-11am Sun) The dark, rustic interior and Vosges sandstone floors – the 16th-century structure was once a convent – fit in well with the local ambience. The 22 rooms are simply furnished but immaculate and spacious; some (eg rooms 3 and 6) have great views. The best budget bet on the island.

MIDRANGE

Two- and three-star hotels, many of them chain-affiliated, line place de la Gare.

Hôtel Suisse (☎ 03 88 35 22 11; www.hotel-suisse.com; 2-4 rue de la Râpe; s/q €59/99, d €75-85, €10 less on weekends in Jan, Feb, Jul & Aug; ☑ ☎) Just two short blocks from the cathedral, this charming hostelry has two stars, 26 comfortable rooms and the cosy ambience of a half-timbered Alsatian cottage. Often full.

Hôtel Au Cerf d'Or (☎ 03 88 36 20 05; www.cerf-dor.com, in French; 6 place de l'Hôpital; ☑ Porte de l'Hôpital; r €61-110; ☎) A jacuzzi, 5m swimming pool and sauna (half-hour €8) are the cherry on the icing of this 43-room, Logis de France hotel, which has a golden *cerf* (stag) hanging proudly out front. On the ground floor there's a traditional French restaurant and a homey sitting area.

Le Kléber Hôtel (☎ 03 88 32 09 53; www.hotel-kléber.com; 29 place Kléber; ☑ Homme de Fer; d €65-78; ☎) The 30 rooms (see website for photos) are named after fruits, spices, pastries and other high-calorie treats and are decorated accordingly – Meringue is all white, of course, while Noisette is light brown and, being smallish, makes you feel like you're inside a giant hazelnut. Dieters might want to avoid staying in Pavlova or Kougelopf. Very central.

Hôtel Gutenberg (☎ 03 88 32 17 15; www.hotel-gutenberg.com; 31 rue des Serruriers; ☑ Langstross Grand' Rue; d €74-98; ☎ ☎) Built in 1745, this is one of the city's best-value two-star hotels – and it's just two blocks from the cathedral. The 42 tasteful rooms have antique touches and sparkling, all-tile bathrooms.

TOP END

Hôtel Régent Petite France (☎ 03 88 76 43 43; www.regent-hotels.com; 5 rue des Moulins; ☑ Alt Winnmärk; d from €276, ste €401-526; ☎ ☎) Guests of this opulent four-star hotel enjoy sleekly modern public spaces, romantic watery views and marble bathrooms worthy of a Roman emperor. The 1970s-style breakfast room is decorated with brazen shades of orange not seen since mood rings went out of style. Bringing along Fido or Mitzi will set you back €20. parking is available.

Eating

Strasbourg is a gastronomer's dream. Just south of place Gutenberg, pedestrianised rue des Tonneliers and nearby streets (eg rue de l'Écurie) are lined with midrange restaurants of all sorts. Petite France has quite a few Alsatian places, while several more modest places are situated a bit south along quai Finkwiller. Inexpensive eateries catering to students can be found northeast of the cathedral along rue des Frères, especially towards place St-Étienne.

WINSTUBS & FRENCH

Restaurant La Victoire (☎ 03 88 35 39 35; 24 quai des Pêcheurs; ☑ Gallia; menu €8.70; ☎ 11.30am-2pm & 6.30pm-1am, closed Sat & Sun) A great place for a hearty French or Alsatian meal, especially late at night. Vegetarians can order *bibeleskaes* (€8.50). Excellent value.

Le Michel (☎ 03 88 35 45 40; 20 av de la Marseillaise; ☑ Gallia; menus €9.50-15; ☎ 6am-9pm Mon-Fri, 6am-7pm Sat) Hugely popular with locals, this Paris-style café-brasserie – known by Strasbourgeois cognoscenti as Snack Michel – serves solid French mains, pastries made fresh all day, and breakfast any time you want it. Founded just before the strikes of May 1968, it's now run by the sons of the founders.

Winstub Le Clou (☎ 03 88 32 11 67; 3 rue du Chaudron; ☑ Broglie; lunch menu €15; ☎ 11.45am-2.15pm & 5.30pm-midnight except Sun, holidays & lunch Wed) Diners sit together at long tables so come here for an evening in the company of fellow diners, not an intimate tête-à-tête. Specialities include *wüdele braisé au pinot noir* (€16.40) and

WINSTUBS

A *winstub* (literally 'wine room') is a traditional Alsatian restaurant renowned for its warm, homey atmosphere. Most dishes are based on pork and veal; specialities include *baeckeoffe* (meat stew; also spelled 'baeckoefe'), *jambonneau* (knuckle of ham), *wädele braisé au pinot noir* (ham knuckles in wine) and *jambon en croûte* (ham wrapped in a crust). Vegetarians can usually order *bibeleskas* (*fromage blanc*; soft white cheese mixed with fresh cream; also spelled 'bibeleskäs' and 'bibeleskaes') and *pommes sautées* (sautéed potatoes). Few *winstubs* offer *menus* (fixed-price multicourse meals); many have nonstandard opening hours.

bibeleskäs (€12.20). A dozen Alsatian wines are available by the glass.

L'Assiette du Vin (☎ 03 88 32 00 92; 5 rue de la Chaîne; ☞ Langstross Grand' Rue; lunch menus incl wine €15-25, other menus €25-30; ☹ closed lunch Mon, Sat & Sun) Inspired by what's available fresh in the marketplace, this chic-rustic French restaurant changes its menu monthly. The summer flowers come from the chef's mother's garden. The award-winning wine list encompasses 400 vintages (with 10,000 more cellared), 19 of which can be sampled by the glass (€3 to €9).

Au Coin des Pucelles (☎ 03 88 35 35 14; 12 rue des Pucelles; ☞ Broglie; ☹ 6.30pm-1am, closed Sun, Mon & holidays) A *winstub* with just six tables, a red-checked tablecloth on each, and solid Alsatian fare such as *choucroute au canard* (sauerkraut with six kinds of duck meat; €22.10). Perfect for a late dinner.

La Bourse (☎ 03 88 36 40 53; 1 place du Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny; ☞ Étoile; menus €24-32; ☹ 11.45am-2.30pm & 6.30-11pm, to 11.30pm Fri, Sat & Sun) Under a trompe l'œil sky and grouchy putti, this art-deco brasserie serves excellent *tartes flambées* (Alsatian pizzas made with crème fraîche, €8 to €10; vegetarian options available) and *baeckeoffe* (€18) as well as meat specialities such as *fleischschnäcke* (minced meat rolls) and *lwerknepfle* (ground liver balls with cream sauce). Sam tickles the ivories nightly from 7.30pm to 11.30pm.

ourpick Au Crocodile (☎ 03 88 32 13 02; www.au-crocodile.com; 10 rue de l'Outre; ☞ Broglie; 2-/3-course lunch menus €58/80, incl wine €87/114, other menus €88-127; ☹ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Named after a stuffed toothy critter (now suspended over the foyer)

brought back from Egypt by an Alsatian aide-de-camp of one of Napoléon's generals, this hushed temple of French gastronomy serves up all-out *gastronomique* indulgence in impeccable surroundings. Specialities include *foie de canard cuit en croûte de sel* (duck liver cooked in a crust of salt crystals; €56). Reservations are a good idea in the evening, especially on Friday and Saturday.

ASIAN

Moozé (☎ 03 88 22 68 46; cnr 1 rue de la Demi-Lune & rue Ste-Barbe; ☞ Langstross Grand' Rue; dishes €2.50-6; ☹ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A hip and hugely popular Japanese fusion place where colour-coded plates go round on a dual-carriageway conveyor belt. The bathrooms are integrated into a Zen rock garden, so those who come seeking physical relief will find spiritual repose as well.

Tiger Wok (☎ 03 88 36 44 87; 8 rue du Faisan; ☞ Broglie; lunch menus €13.60-16.60, dinner menus €14.60-24.90, all-you-can-eat lunch/dinner €20.95/22.92; ☹ noon-2.15pm & 7-10.30pm Sun-Tue, to 11pm Wed & Thu, to 11.30pm Fri & Sat) At this popular wokkery you choose your ingredients (veggies, fish, meat) and then tell your personal *wokeur* (wok guy) – muscular and short-sleeved – how to prepare them and with which sauces. The result: a quick, crunchy meal you can down with Thai Singha beer.

VEGETARIAN & KOSHER

Restaurant Autre Part (☎ 03 88 37 10 02; 60 bd Clemenceau; ☹ Sun-Thu) Informal, lively and a wee bit brusque, this kosher-dairy restaurant has plenty of tasty 100% vegetarian options, including pizzas (€6.50 to €9.50), *tartes flambées* (€7 to €9.70) and pasta, as well as fish (€13 to €17).

Restaurant King (☎ 03 88 52 17 71; 28 rue Sellénick; ☞ Parc du Contades; meat mains €8-17; ☹ closed Sat & dinner Fri) In the heart of Strasbourg's Jewish neighbourhood, this strictly kosher place specialises in steaks, grilled meats and chicken.

SELF-CATERING

For picnic supplies:

Casher Price Naouri (22 rue Finkmatt; ☹ 8.30am-7.30pm Sun-Thu, to btwn 2.30pm & 4pm Fri) An all-casher (kosher) supermarket serving Strasbourg's large Jewish community.

Food market (place Broglie; ☞ Broglie; ☹ 7am-5pm or 5.30pm, to 6pm Wed & Fri, closes earlier in winter)

Galeries Lafayette Gourmet supermarket (4 rue Ste-Barbe; ☞ Langstross Grand' Rue; ☹ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat) On the ground floor of the department store.

La Cloche à Fromage boutique (☎ 03 88 52 04 03; 32 rue des Tonneliers; ☒ Langstross Grand' Rue; ☹ 9.15am or 10am–12.15pm & 2.30–7pm Mon-Fri, 8.15am–6.30pm Sat) First-rate cheeses.

Monoprix supermarket (5 rue des Grandes Arcades; ☒ Homme de Fer; ☹ 8.30am–8.30pm Mon-Sat)

Petit Casino grocery (inside the train station; ☒ Gare Centrale; ☹ 7am–8pm, 365 days a year)

Drinking

Strasbourg's legions of pubs and bars include a number of student-oriented places on the small streets east of the cathedral.

Irish Times (☎ 03 88 32 04 02; 19 rue St-Barbe; ☒ Langstross Grand' Rue; ☹ 4pm–1am daily, opens at 2pm Fri, Sat & Sun year-round & Mon-Thu May-Sep) A congenial and genuinely Irish pub that attracts a very international crowd, including English-speaking students. Sunday features a general knowledge quiz with prizes (9pm). Major sports events are shown on two wide screens.

La Taverne Française (☎ 03 88 24 57 89; 12 av de la Marseillaise; ☒ République or Gallia; ☹ 8.30am–2am Mon-Thu, 8.30am–3am Fri, 2pm–3am Sat) A mellow café favoured by actors from the national theatre, musicians from the opera house, and students. A mixture of the old-fashioned and the endearingly tacky creates the ideal atmosphere for stimulating conversation.

Entertainment

The Strasbourg's may head to bed earlier than their urban counterparts elsewhere in France but the city's entertainment options are legion. Details on cultural events appear in the free monthly *Spectacles* (www.spectacles-publications.com, in French), available at the tourist office.

Ticket outlets:

Boutique Culture (☎ 03 88 23 84 65; place de la Cathédrale cnr rue Mercière; ☒ Langstross Grand' Rue; ☹ noon–7pm Tue-Sat)

Fnac billetterie (☎ 08 92 68 36 22; www.fnacspec-tades.com, in French; 2nd fl, 22 place Kléber; ☒ Homme de Fer; ☹ 10am–7pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am–7.30pm Sat)

Virgin Megastore (☎ 08 92 39 28 00; www.ticketnet.fr; 30 rue du 22 Novembre; ☒ Homme de Fer; ☹ 9am or 9.30am–7pm Mon-Sat)

CINEMAS

Cinemas with nondubbed films, some in English:

Le Star (☎ 03 88 32 44 97/67 77, 08 92 68 72 12; www.cinema-star.com, in French; 27 rue du Jeu des Enfants; ☒ Homme de Fer)

Odysée (☎ 03 88 75 10 47; www.cinemaodyssee.com, in French; 3 rue des Francs-Bourgeois; ☒ Langstross Grand' Rue) An art-house cinema.

Star St-Exupéry (☎ 03 88 22 28 79/32 67 77, 08 92 68 72 12; www.cinema-star.com, in French; 18 rue du 22 Novembre; ☒ Alt Winnärik)

LIVE MUSIC

La Laiterie (☎ 03 88 23 72 37; www.artefact.org, in French; 11-13 rue du Hohwald; ☒ Laiterie; ☹ closed Jul–mid-Sep & last week of Dec) Strasbourg's most vibrant venue for live music puts on about 200 concerts a year. Tickets (€10 to €28) are available at the door (but cannot be reserved by phone), via the website, at the Boutique Culture or, for a surcharge, at Virgin Megastore and Fnac. On Friday nights from midnight to 5am, La Laiterie turns into a laid-back disco featuring *musique électronique* (€5). Situated about 1km southwest of the train station.

NIGHTCLUBS

La Salamandre (☎ 03 88 25 79 42; www.lasalamandre-strasbourg.fr, in French; 3 rue Paul Janet; admission Fri & Sat €5, other nights €3–5, major concerts up to €25; ☹ 10pm–4am Thu-Sat & night before holidays Sep-Jul, 10pm–4am Fri & Sat Aug, sometimes also open Mon-Wed) Billed as a *bar-club-spectacles*, this discotheque – warmly lit, friendly and with a marble fountain in the middle – has a theme night each Friday (salsa, 1980s etc). Events on Thursday (and sometimes other nights – see website) are often sponsored by student groups (open to all). Another attraction is the **bal musette** (adult/student €10/5; ☹ 5–10pm 1 or 2 Sun a month mid-Sep–May), where you can dance to live French accordion music, salsa, tango and 1950s rock and roll. At the **apéritif linguistique** (admission free; ☹ 7–10pm or later 1st Tue of each month except Jul & Aug) language fans gather at about 20 tables – one for each language – to converse and meet people from around the world.

Shopping

The city's fanciest shopping can be found on and around rue des Hallebardes, a block north of the cathedral, whose superelegant window displays are real eye candy (Baccarat is at No 44). Somewhat less exclusive shops line rue des Grandes Arcades and, to the west, the Grand' Rue.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Strasbourg's international **airport** (☎ 03 88 64 67 67; www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr) is 12km southwest of

ON-STAGE & OFF, ALSATIAN IS ALIVE & LAUGHING

Alsace's language, Alsatian (p373), has a tireless and appropriately irreverent advocate in **Roger Siffer** (<http://rogersiffer.choucrouterie.com>, in French), director of Strasbourg's **La Choucrouterie** ('The Sauerkraut Factory'; www.choucrouterie.com, in French and German), a trilingual (Alsatian, French and German) theatre he founded in 1984. Siffer is also a singer, comedian, actor and producer known for his biting satire. His office at 'La Chouc' is – as you'd expect – a well-lived-in mess, with overloaded bookshelves, posters from his old cabaret revues, wooden guitars piled on top of each other, an accordion, superannuated costumes and a vest and hat worn by 'Professor Knatschke', a satirical character created by the Alsatian illustrator Hansi (p391).

Siffer's career in music and cabaret – and as a hirsute poster boy for Alsatian – began almost by accident. 'I was going to become a philosophy teacher', he explains. 'During my university studies – this was in 1968, when I was 20 – I used to sing Buddy Holly, Little Richard, that sort of stuff, but when I'd drink too much I'd sing in Alsatian – and everybody loved it! So I started performing Alsatian children's songs, which are filled with scatology to shock the bourgeoisie. It reminded people of their childhood' – not so surprising, then, that Siffer achieved success almost overnight.

'When I arrived in Strasbourg at the age of 16 to attend high school, I told everyone that I didn't know Alsatian, that I was born in Blida in North Africa, that I was a *piéd-noir* – the *piéd-noirs* were the toughest kids in the neighbourhood. Like lots of people of my generation, I was ashamed of speaking Alsatian, considered a language for peasants, and of having an Alsatian accent. French was the language of success. "If you want to be something you had better master French" – that's what parents told children of my generation', Siffer remembers.

'I started learning French at age four, when I began school. Before that, with my family, I spoke only Alsatian. In elementary school, when I was eight or nine years old, I was punished for speaking Alsatian. At school there was a rule – French only. But during breaks, when we'd play football, Alsatian would come back spontaneously. A teacher heard me and made me copy out the school regulations by hand. The thing is, that teacher was himself Alsatian and' – Siffer shakes his head – 'when he left the school grounds, he too spoke Alsatian.'

the city centre (towards Molsheim), near the village of Entzheim.

Ryanair, forced to halt flights to Strasbourg because of legal action by Air France, now links Dublin and London Stansted with **Karlsruhe/Baden Baden airport** (www.badenairpark.de), across the Rhine in Germany, 40km northeast of Strasbourg.

BUS

The **Euroloines office** (☎ 03 90 22 14 60; 6D place d'Austerlitz; 📍 Porte de l'Hôpital; 🕒 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–12.30pm Sat) is just a few blocks southeast of the Grande Île, but because of governmental strictures intended to hinder private-sector competition with the state-owned SNCF, their buses must use a **bus stop** (📍 Lycée Couffignal) 2.5km south of there on rue du Maréchal Lefèvre, at Parking Couffignal (facing the Citroën garage).

Strasbourg city bus 21 (€1.30) links the Aristide Briand tram terminus with Kehl, the German town just across the Rhine.

CAR

Rental companies with offices in the south wing of the **train station** (📍 Gare Centrale) include **Avis** (☎ 03 88 32 30 44), **Europcar** (☎ 03 88 22 96 48), **National-Citer** (☎ 03 88 23 60 76) and **Sixt** (☎ 03 88 23 09 31).

TRAIN

The train station, built in 1883, was given a 120m-long, 23m-high glass facade and underground galleries in order to welcome the new TGV Est Européen in grand style.

Domestic destinations include Paris' Gare de l'Est (€63.70 to €19.80, two hours and 20 minutes, 13 to 17 daily), Lille (Gare Lille-Europe; €52, 3½ hours, three daily), Lyon (€48.30, five hours, five daily), Marseille (€80.50 to €100, 6½ hours, one TGV daily), Metz (€21.50, 1¼ to 1¾ hours, seven to 11 daily) and Nancy (€20.70, 1½ hours, seven to 12 daily).

Internationally, destinations with direct services include Basel SNCF (Bâle; €19.30, 1¼

hours, 16 to 25 daily), Brussels-Nord (€61.70, five hours, two or three daily), Karlsruhe (€22, 40 minutes, four daily) and Stuttgart (€39, 1¼ hours, four TGVs daily). If you take the Eurostar via Lille, London is just five hours away, city centre to city centre.

Route du Vin destinations include Colmar (€10.20, 31 to 65 minutes, 20 to 30 daily), Dambach-la-Ville (€7.40, one hour, 12 daily on weekdays, four to six daily on weekends), Obernai (€5.20, 30 minutes, 20 daily weekdays, five to nine daily on weekends) and Sélestat (€7.30, 20 minutes, 24 to 46 daily).

On the Grande Île, tickets are available at the **SNCF Boutique** (5 rue des Francs-Bourgeois; ☎ Lang-stross Grand' Rue; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The Navette Aéroport (airport shuttle), run by CTS (right), links the Baggersee tram stop, southwest of the city, with Strasbourg's airport (€5.20 including tram ticket from Baggersee to anywhere in the city, 15 minutes, three times an hour until at least 10.20pm). Tickets are sold at all tram stops.

Flight Liner buses (www.flightliner.de) link Strasbourg with Karlsruhe/Baden Baden airport (€17, one hour), across the Rhine. Bus times are coordinated with Ryanair's London services.

BICYCLE

Strasbourg, a world leader in bicycle-friendly planning, has an extensive and ever-expanding *réseau cyclable* (network of cycling paths and lanes; www.strasbourg.fr/deplacement, in French). Free maps are available at the tourist office.

The city government's **Vélocation** (www.velocation.net) system can supply you with a well-maintained one-speed bike (per half/full day €5/8, Monday to Friday €12), kid's bike (per day €5) or child seat (€2). Helmets are not available. A €100 to €200 deposit is required. Outlets:

City Centre (☎ 03 88 24 05 61; 10 rue des Bouchers;

📍 Porte de l'Hôpital; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-7pm Easter-mid-Oct, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1-5pm mid-Oct-Easter)

Train Station (☎ 03 88 23 56 75; 📍 Gare Centrale;

☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-7pm Sat, Sun & holidays Easter-mid-Oct, 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Sat mid-Oct-Easter) Situated on Level -1, at the southern end of the glass-topped underground gallery. Adjacent is an 820-place bicycle park-

ing lot (€2 for 24 hours) that's open from 6am to 10pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 6pm Saturday.

BUS & TRAM

Five highly civilised tram lines, known as A through E, form the centrepiece of Strasbourg's outstanding public transport network, run by **CTS** (☎ 03 88 77 70 70; www.cts-strasbourg.fr; information bureaux in train station, 📍 Gare Centrale, & 56 rue du Jeu des Enfants, 📍 Homme de Fer; 📍 Mon-Sat). The main tram hub is Homme de Fer. Trams generally operate until midnight or 12.30am; buses – few of which pass through the Grande Île – run until about 11pm, though just once an hour after 9pm. This being earnest, hard-working Strasbourg, there are no night buses.

Tickets, valid on both buses and trams, are sold by bus drivers and ticket machines at tram stops (English instructions available) and cost €1.30 (€2.50 return). The Ticket 24H00 (for one/three people €3.50/4.80), valid for 24 hours from the moment you time-stamp it, is sold at tourist offices and tram stop ticket machines. The weekly Hebdomas, good for seven days from when it's time-stamped, costs €17, plus €3 for a magnetic Carte Badgeo (photo required), issued at CTS offices.

In this section, tram stops less than 400m from sights, hotels, restaurants etc are mentioned right after the street address and indicated with a tram icon (📍).

PARKING

Virtually the whole city centre is either pedestrianised or a hopeless maze of one-ways, so don't even think of getting around the Grande Île by car – or parking there for more than a couple of hours. For details on city centre parking garages see www.par.cus.com.

At Strasbourg's nine P+R (park-and-ride) car parks, all on tram routes, the €2.70 all-day fee, payable from 7am to 8pm, gets the driver and each passenger a free return tram ride into the city centre. If you'd like to visit the city without parking hassles, this is the way to do it. From the autoroute, follow the signs marked 'P+R Relais Tram'. Locals figure that your vehicle is least likely to be burnt to a crisp by bored youths if you park north of the city centre at **Rives de l'Aar** (📍 Rives de l'Aar), northwest of the centre at **Rotonde** (📍 Rotonde) or south of the centre at **Baggersee** (📍 Baggersee). Elsau is said to be potentially dicey.

NATZWEILER-STRUTHOF CONCENTRATION CAMP

About 60km southwest of Strasbourg stands Natzweiler-Struthof, the only Nazi concentration camp on French territory. (There were also a number of transit camps, such as the notorious Camp de Drancy, 22km northeast of Paris.) The site was chosen by Himmler because of the nearby deposits of valuable pink granite, in whose extraction – in the **Grande Carrière** (Large Quarry) – many inmates were worked to death. In all, some 22,000 (40% of the total) of the prisoners interned here and at nearby annexe camps died; many were shot or hanged. In early September 1944, as US Army forces approached, the 5517 surviving inmates were sent to Dachau.

The camp provided the Reichsuniversität (Reich University) in Strasbourg with inmates for use in often lethal pseudomedical experiments involving chemical warfare agents (mustard gas, phosgene) and infectious diseases (hepatitis, typhus). In April 1943, 86 Jews – 56 men and 30 women – specially brought from Auschwitz were gassed here to supply the university's Anatomy Institute (on the grounds of the Strasbourg's Hôpital Civil) with skulls and bones for its anthropological and racial skeleton collection. After liberation, their bodies, preserved in alcohol, were found by Allied troops.

Today, the remains of the **camp** (☎ 03 88 47 44 57; www.struthof.fr; adult/student & under 18yr €5/2.50; ☎ 10am–6pm May–mid-Sep, 10am–5pm Mar, Apr & mid-Sep–24 Dec, last entry 1hr before closing, closed Christmas–Feb) are still surrounded by guard towers and concentric, once electrified barbed-wire fences. The **four crématoire** (crematorium oven), the **salle d'autopsie** (autopsy room) and the **chambre à gaz** (gas chamber), an ordinary-looking building 1.7km down the D130 from the camp gate, bear grim witness to the atrocities committed here. The nearby **Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté** (☎ same as camp), opened in 2005, pays homage to Europe's Resistance fighters.

To get to Natzweiler-Struthof from Obernai, take the D426, D214 and D130; follow the signs to 'Le Struthof' or 'Camp du Struthof'.

TAXI

Round-the-clock companies:

Alsace France Taxi (☎ 03 88 22 19 19)

Taxi Treize (☎ 03 88 36 13 13)

ROUTE DU VIN D'ALSACE

Meandering for some 120km along the eastern foothills of the Vosges, the **Route du Vin d'Alsace** (Alsace Wine Route) passes through villages guarded by ruined hilltop castles, surrounded by vine-clad slopes and joyously coloured by half-timbered houses in lurid pastels. Combine such charms with numerous roadside *caves* (wine cellars), where you can sample Alsace's crisp white varietal wines (in particular riesling, pinot blanc and gewürtztraminer), and you have one of France's busiest tourist tracks.

The Route du Vin, at places twee and commercial, stretches from Marlenheim, about 20km west of Strasbourg, southwards to Thann, about 35km southwest of Colmar. En route are some of Alsace's most picturesque villages (and some very ordinary ones, too), many extensively rebuilt after being flattened in WWII. Ramblers can take advantage of the area's *sentiers viticoles* (signposted vineyard trails) and

the paths leading up the eastern slopes of the Vosges to the remains of medieval bastions.

Local tourist offices can supply you with an English-language map/brochure, *The Alsace Wine Route* (free), and *Alsace Grand Cru Wines*, which details Alsace's 50 most prestigious AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée; system of French wine classification) wine-growing micro-regions. Lots more information is available online from the Alsace Wine Committee (www.vinsal.sace.com).

The villages mentioned in the following section – listed from north to south – all have plenty of hotels and restaurants and some have campsites. *Chambres d'hôtes* (B&Bs) generally cost €35 to €55 for a double – tourist offices can provide details on local options.

TOURS

For minibus tours of the Route du Vin (reservations can be made via Colmar's tourist office) try these agencies:

LCA Top Tour (☎ 03 89 41 90 88, 06 72 37 17 11; www.alsace-travel.com; 3rd fl, 8 place de la Gare, Colmar; half-day €53)

Regioscope (☎ 03 89 44 38 21, 06 88 21 27 15; www.regioscope.com; morning/afternoon tour €44/52)

PEDALLING THROUGH THE VINES

Perhaps the most rewarding way to experience the Route du Vin is by bicycle, taking back roads and field access tracks to avoid the heavily trafficked main roads, which tend to have narrow shoulders. An excellent network of bike paths also runs along both the French and the German banks of the Rhine (www.2rives3ponts.eu, in French and German). Bicycles can be rented in towns such as Colmar, Sélestat and Munster.

Maps and guides you may want to pick up (eg at the Colmar tourist office):

- **Escapades à Bicyclettes** (€2.50) – a map indicating the bike paths that run along both banks of the Rhine, and the bike paths and cyclable tertiary roads that link Colmar with the German university town of Freiburg.
- **L'Alsace à Vélo** (€5.95) – a pocket guide in French that's not all that detailed but does show quite a few cycling circuits around Alsace.
- **Le Haut-Rhin à Vélo** (€5.50) – a trilingual (French, German and English) 1:105,000-scale IGN Découvertes Régionales map detailing bike paths (in blue) and low-traffic tertiary roads and agricultural tracks (in red) between Sélestat and Basel, including many that take you right through the vineyards. Also shows cycling options in the Munster Valley and on the French bank of the Rhine.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

The Route du Vin is not just one road but a composite of several roads (D422, D35, D1B and so on). It is signposted but you might want to pick up a copy of Blay's colour-coded map, *Alsace Touristique* (€5.30). Cyclists have a wide variety of on- and off-road options (see the boxed text, above).

Parking can be a nightmare in the high season, especially in Ribeauvillé and Riquewihr, so your best bet is to park a bit out of the town centre and walk for a few minutes. As elsewhere in France, *never* leave valuables in a parked car.

It's entirely possible, if a bit cumbersome, to get around the Route du Vin by public transport, since almost all the towns and villages mentioned here are served by train from Strasbourg (p385) or by train and/or bus from Colmar (p397). Bicycles can be brought along on virtually all trains.

Obernai

pop 10,800

The walled town of Obernai ('nai' rhymes with 'day'), 31km south of Strasbourg, is centred on the picturesque **place du Marché**, an ancient market square that's still put to use each Thursday morning. Around the square you'll find the mainly 16th-century **hôtel de ville** (town hall), decorated with baroque trompe l'œil; the Renaissance **Puits aux Six Seaux** (Well of the Six Buckets), just across rue du Général Gouraud (the main street); and the bell-topped **Halle aux Blés** (Corn Exchange;

1554), from whose flanks pedestrianised rue du Marché and tiny parallel ruelle du Canal de l'Ehn – just a hand's breadth wide – lead to the Vosges-sandstone **synagogue** (1876). The cool, flower-bedecked courtyards and alleyways (such as little ruelle des Juifs, next to the tourist office) are fun to explore, as are the 1.75km-long, 13th-century **ramparts**, accessible from the lot in front of double-spired **Église St-Pierre et St-Paul** (19th century).

A number of wine growers have cellars a short walk from town (the tourist office has a map). The 1.5km **Sentier Viticole du Schenkenberg**, which wends its way through vineyards, begins at the hilltop cross north of town – to get there, follow the yellow signs from the cemetery behind Église St-Pierre et St-Paul.

The **tourist office** (☎ 03 88 95 64 13; www.obernai.fr; place du Beffroi; ☎ 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–7pm daily Jul & Aug, 9am–noon & 2–6pm daily Easter–Jun, Sep & Oct, 9am–noon & 2–5pm except Sun & holidays Nov–Easter, 9am–noon & 2–6pm Sun Dec) is behind the **hôtel de ville**, across the car park from the 59m **Kapellturm** (Belfry; 1280).

La Cloche (☎ 03 88 95 52 89; www.la-cloche.com; 90 rue du Général Gouraud; d/q €55/75; 🍷), a two-star Logis de France-affiliated hotel facing the **hôtel de ville**, has 20 spacious, wood-furnished rooms, some with classic views of the ancient town centre. The rustic ground-floor **restaurant** (menus €15.50–28.50; ☎ closed dinner Sun Jan–Mar) serves delicious Alsatian cuisine, including *spatzle* (an egg-based noodle dish).

The train station is about 300m east of the old town.

Mittelbergheim

pop 620

A solid hillside village with no real centre, Mittelbergheim sits amid a sea of sylvan grapevines and seasonal wild tulips, its tiny streets lined with ancient houses in subdued tones of tan, mauve and terracotta. From **Parking du Zotenberg** (on the D362 at the upper edge of the village next to the cemetery), named after the local *grand cru* (Alsace's top AOC wine designation), a paved *sentier viticole* (vineyard trail) heads across the slopes towards the two towers of the **Château du Haut Andlau** and the Vosges. A stroll along rue Principale (the main street, perpendicular to the D362) takes you past the red-sandstone, Catholic **Église St-Martin** (next to No 17), built in 1893, and a block down is the Protestant **Église St-Étienne** (next to No 30), dating from the 12th to 17th centuries. Each of Mittelbergheim's *caves* has an old-fashioned, wrought-iron sign hanging out front.

Private accommodation is easy to come by – you'll see *Chambres/Zimmer* signs in windows all over town. For information, see www.pays-de-barr.com.

ourpick **Hôtel Gilg** (☎ 03 88 08 91 37; www.hotel-gilg.com; 1 rte du Vin, D362; d €57-87; 📞 reception closed Tue & Wed, hotel closed Jan & late Jun–mid-Jul), built in 1614 (the trompe l'œil dates from 2001), is a two-star establishment with wood-panelled rooms (reached via a spiral stone staircase) that are almost as romantic as the village. Reserve well in advance for May, September and October. If you'll be arriving on Tuesday or Wednesday call ahead. The rustically elegant **restaurant** (menus €28-66; 📞 closed Tue & Wed) serves classic French and Alsatian cuisine.

Dambach-la-Ville

pop 2000

Surrounded by vines, this village has plenty of *caves* but manages to avoid touristic overload. The 14th-century, pink-granite **ramparts** are pierced by four **portes** (gates), three holding aloft ancient watchtowers and bearing quintessentially Alsatian names: Ebersheim, Blienschwiller and Dieffenthal. Some of the superb half-timbered houses date from before 1500.

Neo-Romanesque **Église St-Étienne** (place de l'Église) and the **synagogue** (rue de la Paix) – the latter unused since WWII – both date from the 1860s.

The **tourist office** (☎ 03 88 92 61 00; www.pays-de-barr.com; place du Marché; 📞 9am-noon & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun & holidays Jul & Aug, 10am-noon & 2pm-5pm or 6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat Sep-Jun), in the mid-16th-century Renaissance-style **hôtel de ville**, can supply you with a brochure for a walking tour of Dambach and has details on cycling to Itterwiller.

The renowned Frankstein *grand cru* vineyards cover the southern and southeastern slopes of four granitic hills west and southwest of Dambach. The 1½-hour **Sentier Viticole du Frankstein**, which begins 70m up the hill from the tourist office on rue du Général de Gaulle, meanders among the hallowed vines, passing by hillside **Chapelle St-Sébastien** (📞 9am-7pm May-Oct, also open Sat, Sun & holidays Nov-Apr), known for its Romanesque tower, Gothic choir, Renaissance windows and baroque high altar.

The train station is about 1km east of the old town.

Sélestat

pop 19,200

Sélestat is the largest town between Strasbourg, 50km to the north, and Colmar, 23km to the south. Its claim to cultural fame is the 15th- and 16th-century **Bibliothèque Humaniste** (Humanist Library; ☎ 03 88 58 07 20; 1 rue de la Bibliothèque; adult/student & senior €3.80/2.30, audioguide €1.80; 📞 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri year-round, 9am-noon Sat year-round, also open 2-5pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug), whose displays include a 7th-century book of Merovingian liturgy, a 10th-century treatise on Roman architecture and a copy of *Cosmographiae Introductio* (printed in 1507 in the Vosges town of St-Dié), in which the New World was referred to as 'America' for the very first time. Explanatory sheets are available in six languages.

The 13th- to 15th-century **Église St-Georges**, one of Alsace's loveliest Gothic churches, has curtains of stained glass – some from the 1300s and 1400s – in the choir. Nearby, 12th-century Romanesque **Église St-Foy** was heavily restored in the 19th century.

Vieux Sélestat, the old town area south and southwest of the churches, is a mainly post-war commercial precinct dotted with half-timbered and trompe-l'œil shop buildings. A huge **outdoor market**, held since 1435, takes over the streets all around Église St-Foy from 8am to noon every Tuesday. Locally grown fruits and vegies are sold at the **marché du terroir**

(local-produce market), held on Saturday morning at place Vanolles, on the southern edge of the old town.

The turn-off to the **Cimetière Israélite** (Jewish Cemetery; ☎ 8am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Mar, closed Sat & Jewish holidays), one of many around Alsace, is 1.8km north of Sélestat's yellow-brick water tower on the west side of N83; look for the black-on-white sign. The half-hidden key is attached to the upper hinge of the cemetery's right-hand door.

The **tourist office** (☎ 03 88 58 87 20; www.selestat-tourisme.com; bd du Général Lederc; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5.45pm Mon-Sat, closed Sun & holidays Sep-Jun, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-3pm Sun & holidays Jul & Aug) is on the edge of the town centre, two short blocks from the Bibliothèque Humaniste. Well signposted, it rents out bicycles (two hours/half-day/full day €5.50/8/12.50) in summer.

The train station is 1km west of the Bibliothèque Humaniste.

Bergheim

pop 1830

The delightful walled town of Bergheim – overflowing with geraniums, dotted with flowerbeds and enlivened by half-timbered houses in shocking pastels – is more spacious than its neighbours. But things have not always been so cheerful: over the centuries the town has passed from one overlord to another, having been sold, ceded or captured some 20 times; and between 1582 and 1630, 35 women and one man were burnt at the stake here for witchcraft.

The centre, spared from the ravages of WWII, is dominated by an early Gothic **church** (14th century), significantly modified in the early 1700s. The wall-mounted **sundial** at 44 Grand' Rue has its origins in 1711. The 14th-century, Gothic **Porte Haute**, square and imposingly medieval, is the only one of the village's original three main gates that's still extant. Outside across the grassy park, the **Herrengarten linden tree**, planted around 1300, is hanging in there – a sort of steel bra is providing support – but looks like it could use a hug. A map of the town stands nearby. A 2km path, marked 'Remparts XIVème Siècle', circumnavigates the town's ramparts. Bergheim's *grands crus* labels are Kanzlerberg and Altenberg de Bergheim.

The tiny **tourist office** (point info; ☎ 03 89 73 31 98; www.ribeauvillé-riquevillier.com; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm

NAH-NAH!

At eye-level on the exterior of Bergheim's 14th-century **Porte Haute** (left), a bas-relief sandstone figure exposes his posterior and thumbs his nose at his pursuers, recalling the time, from the 14th to 17th centuries, when Bergheim granted asylum to people guilty of unpremeditated crimes.

Mon-Sat, closed Sun & holidays early Oct–Easter, 9.30-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sunday & holidays Easter–early Oct) is between the well-proportioned **hôtel de ville** (1767), which can supply you with a brochure on the town (€1), and the deconsecrated **Ancienne Synagogue** (rue des Juifs/Judagass), built in 1863 on the site of an early-14th-century synagogue and now a cultural centre.

Just inside the **Porte Haute**, the **Cour du Bailli** (☎ 03 89 73 73 46; www.cour-bailli.com; 57 Grand' Rue; r €78-145 mid-Jul–Oct & Dec, r €62-132 rest of year; ☎ reception 9am-7pm; 🍽️), a three-star hotel and apartment hotel centred on a flowery 16th-century courtyard, has 38 spacious, rustic rooms and kitchenette-equipped studios and, in the cellar, an **Alsatian restaurant** (menus €19.50-27; ☎ lunch & dinner daily Easter–Oct, lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Fri-Sun in winter). There are several more **restaurants** between here and the *hôtel de ville*.

Haut Koenigsbourg

Perched on a lushly forested promontory offering superb vistas, the imposing red-sandstone **Château du Haut Koenigsbourg** (☎ 03 88 82 50 60; www.haut-koenigsbourg.fr; adult/student/under 18yr €7.50/5.70/free; ☎ 9.30am-6.30pm Jun-Aug, 9.30am-5.30pm Apr, May & Sep, 9.45am-5pm Mar & Oct, 9.45am-noon & 1-5pm Nov-Feb, last entry 30min before closure) makes a very medieval impression despite having been reconstructed in 1908 – with German imperial pomposity – by Kaiser Wilhelm II (r 1888–1918). Audioguides are available.

Ribeauvillé

pop 4900

Ribeauvillé, some 19km northwest of Colmar, is arguably the most heavily toured of all the villages on the Route du Vin. It's easy to see why: this little village, nestled in a valley and brimming with 18th-century overhanging houses and narrow alleys, is picture-perfect. The local *grands crus* are Kirchberg de Ribeauvillé, Osterberg and Geisberg.

Along the main street, don't miss the 17th-century **Pfifferhüs** (Fifers' House; 14 Grand' Rue), which once housed the town's fife-playing minstrels and is now home to a friendly *wistub* (*winstub*); the **hôtel de ville** (across from 64 Grand' Rue) and its Renaissance fountain; or the nearby clock-equipped **Tour des Bouchers** (Butchers' Bell Tower; 13th and 16th centuries).

Just across two traffic roundabouts from the tourist office, the lemon-coloured **Cave de Ribeauvillé** (☎ 03 89 73 61 80; www.cave-ribeauville.com; 2rte de Colmar; admission & tasting free; ♿ 8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, longer hours Jul & Aug, 10am-12.30pm & 2.30-7pm Sat & Sun, slightly shorter hours Jan-Easter), France's oldest wine growers' cooperative (founded in 1895), has a small viniculture museum, informative brochures and excellent wines (including 10 *grands crus*) made with all seven of the grape varieties grown in Alsace. On weekends it's staffed by local wine growers.

West and northwest of Ribeauvillé, the ruins of three 12th- and 13th-century hilltop castles – **St-Ulrich** (530m), **Giersberg** (530m) and **Haut Ribeaupierre** (642m) – can be reached on a hike (three hours return) beginning at place de la République (at the northern tip of the Grand' Rue).

The **tourist office** (☎ 03 89 73 23 23; www.ribeauville-riqewihr.com; 1 Grand' Rue; ♿ 9.30am or 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun & holidays Easter-early Oct & Dec, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri & 2nd & 4th Sat of month rest of year), the area's best equipped, is at the southern end of the main street, the one-way (south-to-north) Grand' Rue.

Hunawihr

pop 500

You're absolutely guaranteed to see storks in the quiet hamlet of Hunawihr, about 1km south of Ribeauvillé, which is surrounded by a 14th-century wall and feels more solid and serious than its neighbours. On a hillside just outside the centre, the 16th-century fortified **church**, surrounded by a hexagonal wall, has been a *simultaneum* – that is, it has served both the Catholic and Protestant communities – since 1687.

About 500m east of Hunawihr, the delightful **Centre de Réintroduction des Cigognes** (Stork Reintroduction Centre; ☎ 03 89 73 28 48; www.cigogne-lou tre.com, in French; adult/5-12yr €8/5.50; ♿ 10am-12.30pm & 2pm-btwn 5.30pm & 7pm Apr-Oct, no midday closure weekends & Jun-Aug, 10am-noon & 2-4.30pm Wed, Sat, Sun & holidays late Mar & 1-11 Nov) is home base for 200 free-flying storks (p392). Cormorants, penguins,

otters and a sea lion show off their fishing prowess several times each afternoon.

At the nearby **Jardins des Papillons** (Butterfly Gardens; ☎ 03 89 73 33 33; www.jardinsdespapillons.fr; adult/5-14yr €7/4.50; ♿ 10am-5pm or 6pm Easter-1 Nov) you can stroll among exotic free-flying butterflies.

Riquewihr

pop 1200

About 5km south of Ribeauvillé, heavily touristed Riquewihr is the most medieval stop along the Route du Vin, with 13th- and 16th-century **ramparts** and a maze of alleyways and courtyards that are great for exploring. Several shops sell *macarons* (macaroons), a tradition since coconuts were first brought up the Rhine in the 1700s.

The **Sentier Viticole des Grands Crus** (2km; yellow signage) takes you away from the souvenir shops and out to the most prestigious local vineyards, Schœnenbourg (north of town) and Sporen (southeast of town), while a 15km trail with red trail markers takes you to five nearby villages. Both can be picked up next to Auberge du Schœnenbourg, 100m to the right of the *hôtel de ville* (through which the road passes) as you approach the old town from the Route du Vin.

The late-13th-century **Dolder** (admission €2.50, incl Tour des Voleurs €4; ♿ 1.45-6.30pm daily Jul & Aug, 1.45-6.30pm Sat, Sun & holidays Easter-Jun & Sep-1 Nov) is a stone and half-timbered gate – topped by a 25m bell tower – with panoramic views and a small local-history museum. From there, rue des Juifs (site of the medieval Jewish quarter) leads down the hill to the **Tour des Voleurs** (Thieves' Tower; admission €2.50; ♿ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6.30pm Easter-1 Nov). Tucked inside the town's medieval stone fortifications, this fascinating place features a gruesome torture chamber with English commentary and an old-style wine grower's kitchen.

The **Maison de Hansi** (☎ 03 89 47 97 00; 16 rue du Général de Gaulle; adult/under 16yr €2/free; ♿ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Apr-Dec) presents delightful posters, children's books, engravings and even wine labels created by the celebrated Colmar-born illustrator Jean-Jacques Waltz (1873-1951), aka Hansi, whose idealised images of Alsace are known around the world.

The Château des Princes de Wurtemberg-Montbéliard (1540) now houses the **Musée de la Communauté** (☎ 03 89 47 93 80; adult/student & senior €4/3.50; ♿ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun Easter-1 Nov & 2 weeks in

STORKS

White storks (*cigognes*), long a feature of Alsatian folklore, are one of the region's most beloved symbols. Believed to bring luck (as well as babies), they winter in Africa and then spend the warmer months in Europe, feeding in the marshes (their favourite delicacies include worms, insects, small rodents and frogs) and building their nests of twigs and sticks on church steeples and rooftops.

When mid-August arrives, instinct tells young storks – at the age of just a few months – to fly south for a two- or three-year, 12,000km trek to sub-Saharan Africa (Alsatian storks are particularly fond of Mali and Mauritania), from where they return to Alsace ready to breed – if they return at all. Research has shown that something like 90% die en route because of electrocution, pesticides (eg those used to combat locusts), hunting, exhaustion and dehydration. In subsequent years, the adult storks – 1m long, with a 2m wingspan and weighing 3.5kg – make only a short trek south for the winter, returning to Alsace to breed after a few months in Africa.

In the mid-20th century, environmental changes, including the draining of the marshes along the Rhine, and high-tension lines reduced stork numbers catastrophically. By the early 1980s there were only two pairs left in the wild in all of Alsace.

Research and breeding centres were set up with the goal of establishing a permanent, year-round Alsatian stork population. The young birds spend the first three years of their lives confined to large cages, which causes them to lose their migratory instinct and thus avoid the rigours and dangers of migration. The program has been a huge success, and today Alsace is home to more than 400 pairs.

See p391 and p398 for details on stork-breeding centres.

Dec), whose exhibits trace the history of written and voice communications in Alsace.

The **tourist office** (☎ 03 89 73 23 23; www.ribeauville-riqewihr.com; 2 rue de la Première Armée; ☎ 9.30am or 10am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–1pm Sun & holidays Easter–early Oct & Dec, 10am–noon & 2–5pm Mon–Fri & 1st & 3rd Sat of month rest of year) is smack in the centre of the old town.

Kaysersberg

pop 2700

In the postcard-perfect centre of Kaysersberg, 10km northwest of Colmar, stand the ornate Renaissance **hôtel de ville** (1605) and, next door, the red-sandstone **Église Ste Croix** (☎ 9am–4pm), a 12th- to 15th-century Catholic church whose **altar** (1518) has 18 painted haut-relief panels of the Passion and the Resurrection. Out front, a Renaissance **fountain**, in red sandstone, holds aloft a statue of Emperor Constantine. Up the main street, av du Général de Gaulle (one-way going west to east, ie downhill), you'll find lots of colourful old houses, many half-timbered, others showing baroque influences; further along is a squat, **fortified bridge** (next to No 84) built to span the River Weiss in 1514.

You can see master glass-blowers practising their magic at **Verrerie d'Art** (☎ 03 89 47 14 97; 30 rue du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 10am–12.15pm & 2–5.45pm, closed Sun, Mon, holidays & sometimes Thu afternoon).

The house where the musicologist, medical doctor and 1952 Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) was born is now the **Musée Albert Schweitzer** (☎ 03 89 47 36 55; 126 rue du Général de Gaulle; adult/student €2/1; ☎ 9am–noon & 2–6pm daily Apr–11 Nov, Fri afternoon, Sat & Sun late Nov–late Dec), with exhibits on the good doctor's life in Alsace and Gabon.

Footpaths lead in all directions through glen and vineyard. A 10-minute walk above town, the remains of the massive, crenulated **Château de Kaysersberg** stand surrounded by vines; other destinations include Riquewihr (two hours one-way via the château and over the hill, 1½ hours via the vineyards). These paths begin through the arch to the right as you face the entrance to the *hôtel de ville*.

The **tourist office** (☎ 03 89 78 22 78; www.kaysersberg.com; 37 rue du Général de Gaulle; ☎ 9.30am–noon & 2–5.30pm Mon–Sat mid-Sep–mid-Jun, 9am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–12.30pm Sun & holidays mid-Jun–mid-Sep), inside the *hôtel de ville*, can supply you with a walking-tour brochure as well as hiking and cycling maps, and helps with *chambres d'hôtes* reservations. Internet and wi-fi are free. Audioguides of town (1½ to two hours) cost €5.

Hôtel Constantin (☎ 03 89 47 19 90; www.hotel-constantin.com; 10 rue du Père Kohlmann; d €56–72), a three-star place in the heart of the old town (half a block from 38 rue du Général de Gaulle), has

20 modern rooms whose wood furnishings fit in well with the local vibe.

COLMAR

pop 65,300

Capital of the Haut-Rhin *département*, harmonious – and very conservative – Colmar is a maze of cobbled pedestrian malls and centuries-old Alsatian-style buildings, many painted in surprising tones of blue, orange, red or green. The Musée d'Unterlinden is renowned worldwide for the profoundly moving *Issenheim Altarpiece*.

Colmar is an excellent base for exploring the Route du Vin by car, bike, train or bus. And for something a bit different, it's easy to take day trips to the German university city of Freiburg (by bus) and the Swiss city of Basel (by train), each about an hour away (see www.tourismtrirhena.com).

Orientation

Av de la République links the train station and the adjacent bus terminal with the Musée d'Unterlinden and the nearby tourist office, a distance of about 1km. The old city, much of it pedestrianised, is southeast of the Musée d'Unterlinden. The Petite Venise (Little Venice) quarter runs along the River Lauch, at the southern edge of the old city.

Information

Cyber Didim (☎ 03 89 23 20 44; 9 rue du Rempart; per hr €2.50; 🕒 10am–10pm or later Mon–Sat, 2–10pm Sun) Upstairs at the doner kebab place.

Hôpital Pasteur (☎ 03 89 12 40 94; 39 av de la Liberté; 🕒 24hr) Situated 700m west of the train station and served by bus lines 1, 3, 10, A, C and S. The casualty ward is in Building 39.

Laundrette (1bis rue Ruest; 🕒 7am–9pm)

Main Post Office (36 av de la République) Has exchange services.

Tourist Office (☎ 03 89 20 68 92; www.ot-colmar.fr; 4 rue d'Unterlinden; 🕒 9am–noon & 2–6pm Mon–Sat, to 7pm Jul & Aug, no midday closure Apr–Sep & Dec, 10am–1pm Sun & holidays) Can help find accommodation and supply you with information on hiking, cycling and bus travel (including schedules) along the Route du Vin and in the Massif des Vosges. Exchanges US dollars, pounds sterling and Swiss francs.

Sights

OLD CITY

The medieval streets of the old city, including **rue des Clefs**, the **Grand' Rue** and **rue des**

Marchands, are lined with dozens of restored, half-timbered houses – and lots of attractive shops – and are great for an aimless stroll. **Maison Pfister** (1537), opposite 36 rue des Marchands, is remarkable for its exterior decoration, including delicately painted panels, an elaborate oriel window and a carved wooden balcony.

The house next door at 9 rue des Marchands, which dates from 1419, has a wooden sculpture of an uptight-looking *marchand* (merchant) – has his tulip portfolio just tanked? – on the corner. **Maison des Têtes** (Kopfhüs in Alsatian; House of the Heads; 19 rue des Têtes), built in 1609, has a fantastic facade crowded with 106 grimacing stone faces and animal heads.

Colmar has a number of small *quartiers* (quarters) – often not much more than a single street – which preserve the ambience that reigned back when each was home to a specific guild. **Rue des Tanneurs**, with its tall houses and rooftop verandahs for drying hides, intersects **quai de la Poissonnerie**, the former fishers' quarter, which runs along the Lauch. The river provides the delightful **Petite Venise** area – also known as Quartier de la Krutenau – with its rather fanciful appellation. It is best appreciated from the **rue de Turenne bridge**.

At the southeastern end of rue des Marchands is the **Ancienne Douane** (Koifhus in Alsatian; Old Customs House), built in 1480 and topped with a variegated tile roof. Now used for temporary exhibitions and concerts,

LADY LIBERTY IN COLMAR

Colmar celebrated the centenary of the death of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi (1834–1904) by erecting a 12m-high replica of his most famous work, the Statue of Liberty. Made of stratified resin supported by an Eiffellesque internal metal frame, Lady Liberty – given a convincing copper-green patina – bears her torch aloft 3km north of the old city on route de Strasbourg (N83), in the middle of a traffic roundabout near Colmar-Houssen airfield. Around her base congregate the huddled masses, yearning to shop at the nearby American-style strip malls... By the way, the copper-skinned New York original (www.nps.gov/stli), dedicated in 1886, is four times as tall (eight times as tall including the pedestal).

it is the town's best example of late-medieval civil architecture.

MUSEUMS

The outstanding **Musée d'Unterlinden** (☎ 03 89 20 15 50; www.musee-unterlinden.com; 1 rue d'Unterlinden; adult/student under 30yr/over 65yr/under 12yr €7.5/6/free; ☎ 9am–6pm daily May–Oct, 9am–noon & 2–5pm Wed–Mon Nov–Apr), whose pride and joy is the Issenheim Altarpiece (see below), is set around a Gothic-style Dominican cloister in which several dwarf-mutant hazelnut trees grow. Medieval stone statues, prints by Martin Schongauer (late 1400s) and an exceptional ensemble of 15th-century Upper Rhine Primitives let visitors peer into the medieval European mind. The entry price includes an excellent audio-guide, available in six languages.

Dedicated to the Colmar native who created New York's Statue of Liberty (see the boxed text, p393), the **Musée Bartholdi** (☎ 03 89 41 90 60; 30 rue des Marchands; adult/student/under 12yr €4.50/2.90/free; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–6pm Wed–Mon Mar–Dec) displays the works (including models) and memorabilia of Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi in the house where he was born. Highlights include a full-size plaster model of the Lady Liberty's left ear (the lobe is watermelon-sized!) and the Bartholdi family's sparkingly bourgeois apartment. A ground-floor room is dedicated to 18th- and 19th-century Jewish ritual objects.

At the **Musée du Jouet** (Toy Museum; ☎ 03 89 41 93 10; www.museejouet.com; 40 rue Vauban; adult/8–17yr €4.50/3.50, groups of 4 or more adult/8–17yr €3.50/1.70; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–6pm, to 7pm Jul & Aug, no midday closure Jul, Aug & Dec, closed Tue Oct, Nov & Jan–Jun), kids of every age will delight at the sight of toys, dolls and trains from generations past, including a whole miniature French village complete with working trams and trains.

THE ISSENHEIM ALTARPIECE

The late-Gothic **Rétable d'Issenheim** (c1500), acclaimed as one of the most dramatic and moving works of art ever created, illustrates with unrelenting realism scenes from the New Testament, including the Nativity, the Crucifixion, the Entombment and the Resurrection. Ascribed to the painter Mathias Grünewald and the sculptor Nicolas of Hagenau, it is a work of profound faith whose emotion, imagination and layers of symbolism have engaged and captivated spectators for five centuries. The work originally opened up on hinges to form three different configurations.

The gruesome *Temptation of St Anthony* shows the unfortunate saint being set upon by a mob of hideous monsters far more grotesque than anything in the bar scene of *Star Wars*. In the *Concert of Angels*, a figure lurks at the back – Lucifer! – but why is he covered in feathers? *The Issenheim Altar* (€4), an excellent booklet on sale at Colmar's Musée d'Unterlinden (above), where the altarpiece is the star attraction, helps decipher many of its mysteries.

HOUSES OF WORSHIP

The 13th- and 14th-century Gothic **Collégiale St-Martin** (place de la Cathédrale; ☎ 8am–6.30pm or 7pm except Sun morning) has a sombre ambulatory and a peculiar, Mongol-style copper spire (1572).

The celebrated triptych *La Vierge au Buisson de Roses* (The Virgin in the Rose Bush), painted by Martin Schongauer in 1473, can be seen inside the desanctified Gothic **Église des Dominicains** (place des Dominicains; adult/student €1.50/1; ☎ 10am–1pm & 3–6pm mid-Mar–Dec). In 1972 the work made world headlines when it was stolen, not to be recovered for 18 months. The stained glass dates from the 14th and 15th centuries.

Temple St-Matthieu (Grand' Rue; ☎ 10am–noon & 3–5pm late Apr–mid-Jun & late Jul–mid-Oct), quintessentially Protestant in its austerity, has something of a split personality. From 1715 to 1987, a wall cut off the soaring 14th-century Gothic choir – a Catholic hospital chapel until 1937 – from the nave, long a Protestant church. This arrangement allowed the 14th-century *jubé* (rood screen) to survive the counter-Reformation. The elaborate Silbermann organ is used for concerts.

God only knows why Colmar's classical **synagogue** (☎ 03 89 41 38 29; office at 3 rue de la Gigogne), built from 1839 to 1842, has its very own tiny belfry (Jews have no tradition of ringing bells), but if 19th-century neo-Moorish synagogues (eg the Great Synagogue of Budapest) can have faux-minarets, why not? Call ahead to visit the interior.

Festivals & Events

From mid-May to mid-September, **Soirées Folkloriques** (free performances of Alsatian music and dancing) are held at 8.30pm (or a bit later) on Tuesday at place de l'Ancienne Douane.

During summer, villages all over Alsace hold **Fêtes du Vin** (Wine Festivals) featuring wine and song; the tourist office has details.

Colmar's magical **Marché de Noël** (Christmas Market; www.noel-colmar.com) runs from the last Saturday in November to 31 December.

Sleeping

In December (during the Christmas Market), around Easter and from mid-July to mid-August hotels are booked up well in advance.

BUDGET

Auberge de Jeunesse Mittelhart (☎ 03 89 80 57 39; fax 03 89 80 76 16; 2 rue Pasteur; dm/s/d incl breakfast €13/18/35, sheets €4; ☎ reception 7-10am & 5-11pm, to midnight during daylight-saving time, closed late Dec-mid-Jan) This one-time orphanage isn't cheery (it's not hard to imagine lonely children crying themselves to sleep) but the management does its best. An old-style place with 110 beds, hall showers and kitchen facilities, it's situated 1.2km northwest of the tourist office, around the corner from 76 rte d'Ingersheim. By bus, take bus 4, 5 or 15 to the Pont Rouge stop.

Hôtel Primo (☎ 03 89 24 22 24; www.villes-et-vignoble.com/hotel-primo.html; 5 rue des Ancêtres; d €39-55, with washbasin €29) Best described as 'cheap and horrible', this centrally located 84-room prefab place is most notable for the cigarette burns on its linoleum tile floors, is the only bottom-end hotel left in Colmar.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Chez Leslie (☎ 03 89 79 98 99; www.chezleslie.com; 31 rue de Mulhouse; d incl breakfast €68, 4-person apt per week €400; ☎) Run by an expat from San Francisco, this superfriendly, four-room *chambre d'hôte* (B&B) occupies a private home of the sort that made bourgeois Germans of a century ago pat their paunches with satisfaction. Each spacious room is unique.

Hôtel Le Rapp (☎ 03 89 41 62 10; www.rapp-hotel.com; 1-5 rue Weinemer; d €88-138; ☎ ☎ ☎) Right at the edge of the old city, this three-star, Logis de France hotel has 38 comfortable rooms with classic decor as well as a pool, sauna, hammam and fitness room.

Hôtel Beausejour (☎ 03 89 20 66 66; www.beausejour.fr; 25 rue du Ladhof; d high season €90-140, low season €70-110; ☎) This venerable three-star hostelry, run by the Keller family for five generations, has 40 rooms, some with Provençal or Louis XV decor, others merely modern and comfortable, with garden-view balconies. Has an

elegant restaurant. Situated 600m northeast of the Musée du Jouet.

Grand Hôtel Bristol (☎ 03 89 23 59 59; www.grand-hotel-bristol.fr; 7 place de la Gare; d €93-149; ☎) At this Best Western-affiliated, three-star place, built in 1925, a marble stairway leads from the Persian-carpeted lobby to grand hallways and 91 comfortable rooms. Has a sauna, fitness room and good wheelchair access.

Hôtel des Têtes (☎ 03 89 24 43 43; www.maisondestetes.com; 19 rue des Têtes; d €115-239, low season from €98; ☎ ☎) This impeccable four-star hostelry, luxurious but never flashy, occupies the magnificent Maison des Têtes (p393). Each of its 21 rooms offers rich wood paneling, an elegant sitting area, a mostly marble bathroom and romantic views – definitely honeymoon material.

Eating

Restaurants are sprinkled around Colmar's old city, especially around place de l'Ancienne Douane (eg Grand' Rue, rue St-Jean).

ALSATIAN & FRENCH

Jadis et Gourmande (☎ 03 89 41 73 76; 8 place du Marché aux Fruits; plats du jour €8.50-10.50; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat) A wood-paneled *salon de thé* (tearoom) that serves breakfast (€5.20 to €6.90), light lunches (eg quiche, salad; from noon to 3pm), Alsatian wines by the glass (€2.20 to €3.30) and luscious homemade desserts, including apple strudel with vanilla ice cream (€5.50).

Winstub Le Cygne (☎ 03 89 23 76 26; 17 rue Édouard Richard; ☎) noon-2pm & 7pm-midnight, closed Sun, lunch Sat & dinner Mon) Hidden in an untouristed side street, this is where locals come when they want to 'eat Alsatian' – and eat well – but are tired of sauerkraut, mild though the Alsatian version may be. Authentic specialties include *fleischschnacka* (literally 'meat snails'; dough filled with chopped beef and baked with beef broth; €13.50) and *lawerknaepfa* (grilled heifer liver dumplings; €13.50).

Aux Trois Poissons (☎ 03 89 41 25 21; 15 quai de la Poissonnerie; menus €21-45; ☎ closed Wed, dinner Sun & dinner Tue) Oil paintings on the walls and Persian carpets on the floor give this mainly fish restaurant a hushed atmosphere of civilised elegance. The chef's speciality is *sandre dur lit de choucroute* (pike-perch on a bed of sauerkraut; €18). Provençal frogs' legs will hop onto your plate for €15.

La Maison des Têtes (☎ 03 89 24 43 43; 19 rue des Têtes; menus €29.90-60; ☎ closed Mon, lunch Tue & dinner

Sun) Behind the leaded windows of the spectacular Maison des Têtes awaits a truly grand dining room, built in 1898 and decorated with grape bunches in wood, wrought iron and stained glass. The chef's *cuisine française actuelle* (contemporary French cuisine) includes *caille farcie à la choucroute et foie d'oie* (quail stuffed with sauerkraut and goose liver) and, in season, fish and game. Known for its superb wine list.

SELF-CATERING

Coco LM Biscuitier (☎ 03 89 41 79 02; www.coco-lm.com; 16 rue des Boulangers; ☎ 9am-7pm) Bakes scrumptious Alsatian cookies (*lekerli*, *brünsli*), cakes (*kougelhoppf*), sweet and salty *bretzels* and a type of startlingly spicy ginger biscuit dubbed a *gingerli*. The website has recipes.

Fromagerie St-Nicolas (☎ 03 89 24 90 45; 18 rue St-Nicolas; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-7pm Tue-Fri, 2-7pm Mon, 9am-6.30pm Sat) Prepare yourself to be overcome by the heady odours of unrepentantly unpasteurised cheese. BYOB (bring your own baguette) and they'll make you a sandwich.

Other places to buy edibles:

Food market (rue des Écoles; ☎ 8am-1pm Thu) Market gardeners once unloaded their produce directly from boats at this handsome sandstone 1865 *marché couvert* (covered market).

Monoprix supermarket (across the square from the Musée d'Unterlinden; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat)

Entertainment

Colmar's main performance venues, hosting concerts, ballet, theatre and even the occasional opera, are **La Manufacture** (☎ 03 89 24 31 78; www.atelierdurhin.com, in French; 6 rte d'Ingersheim), housed in a former factory 400m northwest of the tourist office, and the **Théâtre Municipal** (☎ 03 89 20 29 02), next to the Musée d'Unterlinden.

Tickets are available at the **Fnac billet-terie** (☎ 08 92 68 36 22; www.fnacspectacles.com, in French; 1 Grand' Rue; ☎ 2-7pm Mon, 10am-7pm Tue-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat).

Getting There & Away

AIR

The trinalational **Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg airport** (EuroAirport; www.euroairport.com) is 60km south of Colmar.

BUS

Public buses are not the quickest way to explore Alsace's Route du Vin but they are a viable option; destinations served include

Riquewihr, Hunawihr, Ribeauvillé, Kaysersberg and Eguisheim. In the Vosges you can bus it to Munster, Col de la Schlucht and Col du Bonhomme.

The open-air bus terminal is to the right as you exit the train station. Timetables are posted and are also available at the tourist office or online (www.l-k.fr, in French). Services are very limited on Sunday and holidays.

Line 1076 goes to the German city of Freiburg (€7.40, 1¼ hours, seven daily Monday to Friday, four daily weekends and holidays), sometimes with a change to a train at Breisach.

CAR

Cars can be hired from **ADA** (☎ 03 89 23 90 30; 22bis rue Stanislas). Avis has an agency in the train station.

TRAIN

Colmar has train connections to Basel SNCF (Bâle; €11.40, 44 minutes, 16 to 25 direct daily), Mulhouse (€7, 20 minutes, 28 to 38 daily), Paris' Gare de l'Est (€65.70 to €86.80, 2¾ hours by direct TGV, two daily) and Strasbourg (€10.20, 31 to 65 minutes, 20 to 30 daily).

Route du Vin destinations from Colmar include Dambach-la-Ville (€5.30) and Obernai (€7.50), both of which require a change of trains at Sélestat (€4.10, 13 minutes, 23 to 30 daily). About 20 daily autorails or SNCF buses (seven to 10 daily on weekends) link Colmar with the Vallée de Munster towns of Munster (€3.40, 35 minutes) and Metzeral (€4.30, 50 minutes); the last run back, by bus, begins a bit after 9pm (7pm on Saturday, Sunday and holidays).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

To get to the Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg airport (EuroAirport), take one of the frequent trains to St-Louis and catch an airport shuttle bus (€1, eight minutes, every 20 or 30 minutes).

BICYCLE

Colmarvélo (☎ 03 89 41 37 90; place Rapp; per half-/full day €5/6; ☎ 8.30am-12.15pm & 1.15-7.15pm Apr-Oct), run by the municipality, rents city bikes (deposit €50).

Hybrid bikes for Route du Vin touring can be rented from **Cycles Geiswiler** (☎ 03 89 41 30 59; 4-6 bd du Champ de Mars; per half-/full day €6/11;

THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

The Massif des Vosges serves as a *ligne de partage des eaux* (continental divide): a raindrop that falls on the range's eastern slopes will flow to the Rhine and eventually make its way to the icy waters of the North Sea, while a drop of rain that lands on the southern slopes of the Ballon d'Alsace – perhaps only a few metres from its Rhine-bound counterpart – will eventually end up in the Rhône before merging with the warm waters of the Mediterranean. The Vosges' western slopes feed the Moselle, which joins the Rhine at Koblenz.

The Danube, which meanders through Vienna and Budapest on its way to the Black Sea, rises just 100km east of the Vosges in the mountains of the Black Forest, visible on clear days from the area's *ballons* (peaks).

☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sat), which has free helmets and cycling maps.

PARKING

Free parking can be found in the Scheurer-Kestner car park just north of the Hôtel Primo; a few blocks east of the train station around the German-era, brick-built water tower; and in *part* of the car park at place de la Montagne Verte.

TAXI

For a taxi call **Radios Taxis** (☎ 03 89 80 71 71) or **Taxi Gare** (☎ 03 89 41 40 19).

MASSIF DES VOSGES

The sublime **Parc Naturel Régional des Ballons des Vosges** covers about 3000 sq km in the southern part of the Vosges range. In the warm months, the gentle, rounded mountains, deep forests, glacial lakes and rolling pastureland are a walker's paradise, with an astounding 10,000km of marked trails, including GRs (*grandes randonnées*; long-distance hiking trails) and their variants. Cyclists have hundreds of kilometres of idyllic trails and hang-gliding enthusiasts have plenty of places for launching. In winter three dozen inexpensive skiing areas offer modest downhill pistes and cross-country options.

For details on outings sponsored by the Strasbourg section of the Club Vosgien, see p381.

For information on bus and train connections to the Vosges area, see p397.

Vallée de Munster

This lush river valley – its pastureland dotted with 16 villages, its upper slopes thickly forested – is one of the loveliest in the Vosges. From the town of Metzeral, hiking destinations include Schnepfenried, Hohnneck, the Petit

Ballon and Vallée de la Wormsa, which has a section of the GR5 and three small lakes.

MUNSTER

pop 4900

This streamside town (the name means 'monastery'), famed for its notoriously smelly eponymous cheese, is a good base for exploring the valley (the GR531 passes by here). At **place du Marché** (food market on Tuesday and Saturday mornings), it's easy to spot several storks' nests. About eight young storks live in the **Enclos Cigogne** (Stork Enclosure) – and more hang out on top of it – 250m behind the Renaissance **hôtel de ville**; on foot, cross the creek and turn left.

Information

Maison du Parc Naturel Régional des Ballons des Vosges (☎ 03 89 77 90 34; www.parc-ballons-vosges

.fr, in French; 1 cour de l'Abbaye; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Tue-Sun mid-Jun-Sep, 2-6pm Mon-Fri Oct-mid-Jun, also 2-6pm Sat & Sun Dec) The regional park's visitors centre has ample printed information in English, including a translation of the exhibits. To get there walk through the arch from place du Marché.

Tourist Office (☎ 03 89 77 31 80; www.la-vallee-de-munster.com; 1 rue du Couvent; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm or 6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-4pm Sat Sep-Jun) Has information, some in English, on the Munster Valley, including visits to cheesemakers. Sells hiking maps and topoguides in French. In the same building as the Maison du Parc but downstairs (or around the other side).

Activities

Cimes et Sentiers (☎ 06 74 32 12 59; www.sentiersrando.com, in French) is one of several outfits offering guided walking and cycling tours of the Vosges year-round and, in winter, snowshoe hikes. The Munster tourist office can provide details.

Cycle Hop Evasion (☎ 06 07 16 56 35; stephane.aylies@cegetel.net; 5 rue de la République; per day €16; 🕒 8.30am–noon & 1.30pm or 2–7pm mid-Apr–Oct, by reservation rest of year), based 200m east of Munster’s tourist office, rents mountain bikes, arranges professional cycling guides and can supply you with details on cycling routes.

Sleeping & Eating

Hôtel des Vosges (☎ 03 89 77 31 41; www.hotelbardesvosges.fr; 58 Grand’ Rue; d/q €48/66; 🕒 reception closes at 1pm Sun except Jun–Sep) This family-run, two-star hotel, on the main commercial street, has 15 simply outfitted but well-tended rooms with spacious bathrooms.

Near the Hôtel des Vosges are several restaurants and the delightful **Salon de Thé Gilg** (☎ 03 89 77 37 56; 11 Grand’ Rue; 🕒 closed Sun afternoon except Dec, closed Mon year-round).

The **Super U supermarket** (🕒 8am–7pm Mon–Thu, to 8pm Fri, to 6.30pm Sat) is 1.7km south of the tourist office on the D417 (towards Colmar).

Getting Around

Cycle Hop Evasion (opposite) rents out mountain bikes.

ROUTE DES CRÊTES

Partly built during WWI to supply French frontline troops, the **Route des Crêtes** (Route of the Crests) takes you to (or near) the Vosges’ highest *ballons* (bald, rounded mountain peaks) as well as to several WWI sites. Mountaintop lookouts afford spectacular views of the Alsace plain, the Schwarzwald (Black Forest) across the Rhine in Germany, and – on clear days – the Swiss Alps and Mont Blanc.

The route links **Col du Bonhomme** (949m), about 20km west of Kaysersberg, with Cernay, 15km west of Mulhouse, along the D148, D61, D430 and D431. To minimise disruption to the lives of local fauna, sections north and south of Col de la Schlucht are left unploughed

and thus closed from the first big snow (usually around November) until about April.

At the dramatic, windblown summit of the **Grand Ballon** (1424m; accessible year-round), the highest point in the Vosges, a short trail takes you to an aircraft-radar ball and a weather station. If the unsurpassed panorama doesn’t blow you away, the howling wind just might.

From **Col de la Schlucht** (1139m), home to a small ski station, trails lead in various directions; walking north along the GR5 will take you to three lakes, **Lac Vert**, **Lac Noir** and **Lac Blanc** (Green, Black and White Lakes).

Ballon d’Alsace

This 1250m-high *ballon*, 20km southwest of the Grand Ballon as the crow flies (by road, take the D465 from St-Maurice), is the meeting point of four *départements* (Haut-Rhin, Territoire de Belfort, Haute-Saône and Vosges) and three *régions* (Alsace, Franche-Comté and Lorraine). Between 1871 and WWI, the frontier between France and Germany passed by here, attracting French tourists eager to catch a glimpse of France’s ‘lost province’ of Alsace from the heroic **equestrian statue of Joan of Arc** (1909) and the cast-iron **orientation table** (1888). During WWI the mountaintop was heavily fortified, but the trenches, whose shallow remains can still be seen, were never used in battle.

The Ballon d’Alsace is a good base for day walks. The GR5 passes by here, as do other trails; possible destinations include **Lac des Perches** (four hours).

MULHOUSE

pop 110,900

The multi-ethnic industrial city of Mulhouse (moo-looze), 43km south of Colmar, was allied with the cantons of nearby Switzerland before voting to join Revolutionary France in 1798. Largely rebuilt after the ravages of WWII, it has little of the quaint Alsatian charm that you

A ROOM AT THE TOP OF ALSACE

Built all in wood in 1922 and run by the Club Vosgien, the region’s veteran hiking organisation, the **Chalet Hôtel du Grand Ballon** (☎ 03 89 48 77 99; www.chalet-hotel-grandballon.com, in French; s/d €31/56, with washbasin from €24/43) sits atop the Grand Ballon in splendid isolation – amid a web of hiking and cycling trails. The rooms are spartan but with views this breathtaking you won’t be spending much time inside. The Alsatian restaurant (veggie *menu* €16, other *menus* €15 to €26.50) is perfect for hearty après-hike dining. By car, it’s 17km up the hill from Willer-sur-Thur (the road is kept open year-round), northwest of Mulhouse.

find further north – but the city's world-class industrial museums are well worth a stop.

About 700m northwest of the train station, the **tourist office** (☎ 03 89 66 93 13; www.tourism-mulhouse.com; place de la Réunion; ☒ République; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Sat, to 7pm Jul, Aug & Dec, 10am–noon & 2–6pm Sun & holidays Apr–Dec, 10am–1pm Sun & holidays Jan–Mar) is in the heart of the old city in the 16th-century, trompe-l'œil-covered former **hôtel de ville**, also home to the municipal **Musée Historique** (Historical Museum; ☎ 03 89 33 78 17; ☎ closed Tue).

The wonderful **Musée National de l'Automobile** (☎ 03 89 33 23 23; www.collection-schlumpf.com; 192 av de Colmar; ☒ Musée de l'Auto; adult/student incl audioguide in 6 languages €10.50/8.10; ☎ 10am–6pm, to 5pm early Nov–early Apr, from 1pm Mon–Fri early Jan–early Feb) displays 400 rare and beautiful European motorcars produced since 1878 by more than 100 different companies, including Bugatti, whose factory was in nearby Molsheim. By car, get off the A36 at the Mulhouse Centre exit.

A railway enthusiast's dream, the **Cité du Train** (French Railway Museum; ☎ 03 89 42 83 33; www.citedutrain.com; 2 rue Alfred de Glehn; adult/7–17yr & student incl audioguide €10/7.60, incl Musée National de l'Automobile €17.50/12.60, family discounts available), the largest rail museum in Europe, displays the SNCF's marvellous collection of locomotives and carriages. Situated about 4km northwest of the centre, it's served by bus 20 (bus 62 on Sunday and holidays) from the train station. By car, get off the A35 at Mulhouse Dornach.

Mulhouse was once known as the 'French Manchester', which is why it's home to the **Musée de l'Impression sur Étoffes** (Museum of Textile Printing; ☎ 03 89 46 83 00; www.musee-impresion.com; 14 rue Jean-Jacques Henner; ☒ Gare Centrale; adult/student €6/3; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–6pm Tue–Sun), whose unique and very colourful collection of more than six million printed fabric samples, assembled since 1833, make it a mecca for fabric designers. It's situated one long block northeast of the train station.

Has wallpaper always been something of a wallflower in your life? The delightful **Musée du Papier Peint** (Wallpaper Museum; ☎ 03 89 64 24 56; www.museepapierpeint.org; 28 rue Zuber, Rixheim; adult/student/under 12yr €6/4.50/free; ☎ 10am–noon & 2–6pm, closed Tue Oct–May), home to an unparalleled collection of the stuff and the machines used to make wallpaper since the 18th century, will change all that. Situated a couple of kilometres southeast of central Mulhouse on the D66, it's easy to get to: by car take the A36 and get off

at Rixheim; by bus take line 18 from the train station to the Temple stop.

Getting There & Around

France's second train line, linking Mulhouse with Thann, opened in 1839. Today, the **train station** (10 av du Général Lederc; ☒ Gare Centrale), just south of the city centre, has frequent direct services to Colmar (€7, 20 minutes, 28 to 38 daily), St-Louis (on the Swiss border near EuroAirport), Basel and Strasbourg (€15.10).

ÉCOMUSÉE D'ALSACE

In Ungersheim about 17km northwest of Mulhouse (off the A35 to Colmar), **Écomusée d'Alsace** (☎ 03 89 62 43 00; www.ecomusee-alsace.com, in French; adult/4–14yr/student €12/8.50/11, Jul & Aug €16/11/11, family discounts available; ☎ 10am–7pm Jul & Aug, 10am–5pm or 6pm Apr–Jun & Sep–11 Nov, closed Mon & Tue except during school holidays, also open 2–8pm Wed, Sat, Sun & holidays Dec–early Jan, last entry 1hr before closing, restaurant & park open till later) is a 'living museum' in which smiths, cartwrights and coopers do their thing in and among 70 centuries-old Alsatian buildings – a veritable village – brought here for preservation (and so storks can build nests on them). Sounds cheesy but many Alsatians really like the place. That towering industrial relic is the **Rodolphe Potassium Mine**, shut in 1976.

BIOSCOPE

The new **Bioscope** (☎ 03 89 62 43 00; www.lebioscope.com, in French & German; same prices as Écomusée, discounts if you visit both; ☎ 10am–7pm Jul & Aug, to 6pm May, Jun & Sep, to 5pm Apr & Oct–11 Nov) is an innovative, family-oriented theme park that's supposed to make it fun for kids aged from five to the early teens to learn about the relationship between human beings and the environment through *vulgarisation scientifique* – no, not scientifically turning your children into vulgarians (TV is probably taking care of that already) but rather the 'popularisation of science'. Signs are in French, English and German. Situated 5km by road from the Écomusée.

LORRAINE

Lorraine, between the plains and vines of Champagne and the Massif des Vosges, is fed by the Meurthe, Moselle and Meuse Rivers – hence the names of three of its four *départements* (the fourth is Vosges).

History

Lorraine (Lothringen in German) got its name – Lotharii regnum, ie Lothair's kingdom – in the 9th century when it came to be ruled by the Frankish king Lothair II, who got himself into hot water with Pope Nicholas I by seeking to have his marriage annulled in order to wed his mistress. The area became part of France in 1766 upon the death of Stanisław Leszczyński, the deposed king of Poland who ruled Lorraine as duke in the middle decades of the 18th century. In 1871 the Moselle *département* (along with Alsace) was annexed by Germany and remained part of the Second Reich until 1918, which is why much of Metz feels so stolid and serious while Nancy, which remained French, is so stylishly Gallic. The two cities are rivals to this day.

Getting There & Away

Metz is on the A4, which links Paris and Reims with Strasbourg. Both Nancy and Metz are on the A31 from Dijon to Luxembourg.

The new TGV Est Européen line has significantly reduced travel times from Paris – Metz and Nancy are now just 80 and 90 minutes from the capital, respectively.

NANCY

pop 331,000

Delightful Nancy has an air of refinement found nowhere else in Lorraine. With a magnificent central square, several fine museums and sparkling shop windows, the former capital of the dukes of Lorraine seems as opulent today as it did in the 16th to 18th centuries, when much of the city centre was built.

Nancy has long thrived on a combination of innovation and sophistication. The art-nouveau movement flourished here (as the Nancy School) thanks to the rebellious spirit of local artists, including Émile Gallé (1846–1904), who set out to prove that everyday objects could be drop-dead gorgeous. As you walk around, keep an eye out for the stained-glass windows and dreamlike, sinuous grillwork that grace the entrances to many offices, shops and private homes.

Orientation

Pedestrians-only place Stanislas, Nancy's focal point, connects the narrow, twisting streets of the medieval Vieille Ville (Old Town), centred on Grande Rue, with the rigid right angles of the 16th-century Ville Neuve (New Town) to

the south. The train station is 800m southwest of place Stanislas.

Information

Copycom (☎ 03 83 22 90 41; 3 rue Guerrier de Dumast; per hr €2; ☎ 9am–8pm Mon–Sat, 3–8pm Sun) Internet access.

E-café Cyber Café (☎ 03 83 35 47 34; 11 rue des Quatre Églises; per min/hr €0.09/5.40; ☎ 11am–9pm Mon & Sat, 9am–9pm Tue–Fri, 2–8pm Sun) A proper café whose computers have qwerty keyboards and webcams.

Laundrette (124 rue St-Dizier; ☎ 7.45am–9.30pm)

Métropolitain (☎ 03 83 33 14 71; 12 rue Mazagran; ☎ Nancy Gare; per hr €3; ☎ noon–2am daily) Internet access in a bar-cum-games arcade.

Post Office (10 rue St-Dizier; ☎ Point Central) Does currency exchange.

Tourist Office (☎ 03 83 35 22 41; www.ot-nancy.fr; place Stanislas; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Sat, 10am–5pm Sun & holidays Apr–Oct, 9am–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–1pm Sun & holidays Nov–Mar) Inside the *hôtel de ville*. Has free brochures detailing walking tours of the city centre and art-nouveau architecture.

Sights

Neoclassical **place Stanislas** (☎ Cathédrale), laid out in the 1750s, is one of the most dazzling public spaces in Europe. It is named after the enlightened, Polish-born Duke of Lorraine who commissioned it – and whose **statue** stands in the middle. With its opulent buildings (including the **hôtel de ville** and the **Opéra**), gilded wrought-iron **gateways** by Jean Lamour and rococo **fountains** by Guibal, the square – designed by Emmanuel Héré – has been recognised by Unesco as a World Heritage Site.

A block to the east, 90m-square **place de l'Alliance** – also World Heritage material – is graced by lime trees and a **baroque fountain** by Bruges-born Louis Cyfflé (1724–1806); it was inspired by Bernini's *Four Rivers* fountain in Rome's Piazza Navona.

Adjoining place Stanislas – on the other side of Nancy's own **Arc de Triomphe**, built in the mid-1750s to honour Louis XV – is the quieter **place de la Carrière**, once a riding and jousting arena and now graced by four rows of linden trees and stately rococo gates in gilded wrought iron. A bit to the northeast is **Parc de la Pépinière**, a lovely formal garden that boasts cafés, a rose garden and – for the kids – a small zoo.

North of the Vieille Ville, art-nouveau town houses include **Maison Weissenburger** (1 bd Charles

V), built in 1904, and **Maison Huot** (92 quai Claude de Lorraine), constructed a year earlier.

The interior of the domed, 18th-century **cathédrale** (pl Monseigneur Ruch; ☞ Cathédrale) is a sombre mixture of neoclassical and baroque. The organ loft and the ironwork, by Jean Lamour and his students, are from the end of the 1750s.

Just south of the train station is a bizarre **bronze sculpture** (av Foch; ☞ Nancy Gare), a square column with a pile of – no, it can't be! – on top. Clues about its meaning can be found on the nearby brass plaques.

MUSEUMS

A highlight of any visit to Nancy, the brilliant **Musée de l'École de Nancy** (School of Nancy Museum; ☎ 03 83 40 14 86; 36-38 rue du Sergent Blandan; adult/student & senior €6/4 incl audioguide, students free Wed; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Sun) brings together a heady collection of furnished rooms and curvaceous glass produced by the turn-of-the-20th-century art-nouveau (Jugendstil) movement. It's housed in a 19th-century villa about 2km southwest of the city centre – to get there take bus 123 to the Nancy Thermal stop or buses 122, 126, 134 or 135 to the Painlevé stop.

Star attractions at the excellent **Musée des Beaux-Arts** (Fine Arts Museum; ☎ 03 83 85 30 72; 3 place Stanislas; adult/student & senior incl audioguide €6/4; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon) include a superb collection of Daum-made art-nouveau glass and a rich and varied selection of paintings from the 14th to 18th centuries. Laminated information sheets are available in each room in French, English and German.

The mostly 16th-century Palais Ducal, the splendid former residence of the dukes of Lorraine, now houses the **Musée Lorrain** (Lorraine Museum; ☎ 03 83 32 18 74; 64 & 66 Grande Rue; adult/student & senior for both sections €5.50/3.50, student admission free Wed; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Wed-Mon). The part dedicated to **fine arts & history** (64 Grande Rue; €4/2.50) possesses rich collections of medieval statuary, engravings and *faïence* (pottery), as well as Judaica from before and after the Revolution; the section dedicated to **regional art & folklore** (66 Grande Rue; €3.50/2) is housed in the 15th-century **Couvent des Cordeliers**, a former Franciscan monastery. Inside, the late-15th-century Gothic **Église des Cordeliers** and the adjacent **Chapelle Ducale** (Ducal Chapel; 1607), modelled on the Medici Chapel in Florence, served as the burial place of the dukes of Lorraine.

MUSEUM PASSES

The discount **Pass Nancy Trois Musées** (€8), valid for three months, gets you into the Musée de l'École de Nancy, the Musée Lorrain and the Musée des Beaux-Arts and is sold at each museum.

The **City Pass Nancy Culture** (€9), available year-round at the tourist office, gets you reduced-price entry to six museums, a guided or MP3 tour of the city, bike rental, a bus and/or tram return trip and a cinema ticket. From May to October, the **City Pass Nancy Loisirs** (€13) bestows a few additional benefits.

Tours

The tourist office offers MP3 tours (€6) of the historic centre (two hours) and the art-nouveau quarters (up to three or four hours).

Sleeping

Hôtel de l'Académie (☎ 03 83 35 52 31; fax 03 83 32 55 78; <http://academie-hotel.com>; 7bis rue des Michottes; d €32-36, q €49, s/d with shower €25/30) This offbeat, 29-room, one-star place has a tacky fountain that tinkles like a broken urinal, and very simply furnished rooms with acoustic tile ceilings and plastic shower pods. Gallé would have been appalled but it's clean and you can't beat the price.

Hôtel des Portes d'Or (☎ 03 83 35 42 34; www.hotel-lesportesdor.com; 21 rue Stanislas; d €55-65) This two-star hostelry, superbly situated just metres from place Stanislas, has 20 comfortable but uninspiring rooms with upholstered doors. It's often full so call ahead. Breakfast (€6) is mandatory except from December to February. By car, take rue St-Dizier, turn right onto pedestrians-only rue Stanislas and press the intercom button.

Hôtel de Guise (☎ 03 83 32 24 68; www.hoteldeguise.com; 18 rue de Guise; d €64-100; ☎ ☒) A grand stone staircase leads to extra-wide hallways and 48 bright, spacious, two-star rooms. The bathrooms are as modern as the 18th-century hardwood floors are charmingly creaky. The building, in the heart of the old city, dates from 1680.

Hôtel des Prélats (☎ 03 83 30 20 20; www.hotel-desprelats.com; 56 place Monseigneur Ruch; ☞ Cathédrale; d €104; ☎ ☒) In a grand building that's been a hotel since 1906, this three-star place with good wheelchair access, completely renovated in 2005, has 41 rooms with parquet floors, antique-style furnishings and creative tile bathrooms.

INFORMATION	Opéra.....	17 D3	ENTERTAINMENT 📺	Blue Note Why Not Club.....(see 19)
Copycom.....	1 C3		Caméo Commanderie	
E-café Cyber Café.....	2 D4		Cinema.....	30 B5
Laundrette.....	3 D5	SLEEPING 🛏	Fnac Billetterie.....	31 C4
Métropolitain.....	4 B4	Hôtel de Guise.....		
Post Office.....	5 C3	Hôtel de l'Académie.....		
Tourist Office.....	6 D3	Hôtel des Portes d'Or.....		
		Hôtel des Prélats.....		
		21 D3		
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	EATING 🍴		SHOPPING 🛍	
Arc de Triomphe.....	7 D3	Au Vieux Gourmet.....	Baccarat Shops.....	32 D3
Bronze Sculpture.....	8 B4	Aux Croustillants.....	Daum.....	33 D3
Cathédrale.....	9 D3	Aux Délices du Palais.....	Lefèvre-Lemoine.....	34 B4
Hôtel de Ville.....	10 D3	Brasserie Excelsior.....		
Maison Huot.....	11 A1	Covered Market.....		
Maison Weissenburger.....	12 B2	Le Gastrolâtre.....		
Musée de l'École de Nancy.....	13 A6	Monoprix Supermarket.....		
Musée des Beaux-Arts.....	14 D3			
Musée Lorrain (Fine Arts & History Section).....	15 C2	DRINKING 🍷	TRANSPORT	
Musée Lorrain (Regional Art & Folklore Section).....	16 C2	Le Ch'timi.....	ADA.....	35 D5
		Le Varadero.....	Europcar.....	36 B3
		(see 27)	National-Citer.....	37 B4
			SNCF Office.....	(see 29)
			STAN Office.....	38 B4
			STAN Office.....	39 D4
			Vélostan.....	40 B4
			Vélostan (Espace Thermal).....	41 A6

Eating

No fewer than 20 moderately priced eateries of all sorts – including French, Italian, tapas, fish and seafood, South American, sushi and Indian (including vegetarian) – line rue des Maréchaux, just west of the Arc de Triomphe; lunch *menus* start at €10. North of there, intimate, midrange eateries can be found all along Grande Rue. There are lots of cheapies in the vicinity of the covered market along rue St-Dizier and rue des Quatre Églises.

Aux Délices du Palais (☎ 03 83 30 44 19; 69 Grande Rue; starters €5, mains €9, desserts €4; 🍷 Mon-Fri & dinner Sat) Billing itself as *bistronomique* (whatever that means), this informal place serves whatever the jovial chef's muse inspires him to make – everything from chicken *tajine* (North African-style stew) to beef *fajitas* to endive tarts. Great value, so it's no surprise it's got an enthusiastic local following.

Brasserie Excelsior (☎ 03 83 35 24 57; 50 rue Henri Poincaré; 🍷 Nancy Gare; after-10pm menu €18.90, other menus €30.50; 🍷 8am-12.30am Mon-Sat, 8am-11pm Sun, meals served noon-3pm & 7pm–closing time) Built in 1910, this sparkling brasserie's art-nouveau decor makes every glance at the ceiling memorable – and the food's excellent too. The sauerkraut options include *choucroute à trois poissons* (sauerkraut with salmon, haddock and monkfish).

Le Gastrolâtre (Chez Tanésy; ☎ 03 83 35 51 94; 23 Grande Rue; lunch menu €25, other menus €42; 🍷 Tue-Sat) A 16th- and 17th-century town house has been transformed into a homey, intimate bistro specialising in mouth-watering Lorraine- and Provence-inspired cuisine, including fowl.

SELF-CATERING

Aux Croustillants (10 rue des Maréchaux; 🍷 24hr except from 8pm Sun–5.30am Tue) An almost-24/7 *boulangerie-pâtisserie*.

Au Vieux Gourmet (26 rue St-Georges; 🍷 Cathédrale; 🍷 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7.30pm Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) A grocery since 1889, this place carries luxury products (Fauchon, Hédiard) as well as staples.

Covered market (place Henri Mengin; 🍷 Point Central; 🍷 7am-6pm Tue-Thu, 7am-6.30pm Fri & Sat)

Monoprix supermarket (rue des Ponts; 🍷 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat) Deep inside the St-Sébastien shopping mall.

Drinking

There are several bars along Grande Rue.

Le Ch'timi (☎ 03 83 32 82 76; 17 place St-Epvre; 🍷 9.30am-2am Mon-Sat, 9.30am-9pm Sun) On three brick-and-stone levels, Le Ch'timi is *the* place to go for beer. Popular with students, this unpretentious bar has 150 brewskies, 16 of them (including Guinness and Kilkenny) on tap.

Le Varadero (☎ 03 83 36 61 98; 27 Grande Rue; 🍷 6pm-2am Tue-Sat May-Oct, 9pm-2am Tue-Sat Nov-Apr) Named after a beach in Cuba, this trendy but laid-back bar, popular with the 25-to-35 demographic, has live Latin and jazz on the terrace from 7pm to 10pm on Friday and Saturday in the warm season. Year-round there's a DJ from 10pm to 2am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Entertainment

Details on cultural events appear in the free monthly *Spectacles* (www.spectacles-publications.com, in French). Tickets are available at the tourist office and the **Fnac billetterie** (☎ 08 92 68 36 22; www.fnacspectacles.com, in French; 2nd fl, 2 av Foch; 🍷 Nancy Gare; 🍷 10am-7pm Mon-Sat).

CINEMAS

Caméo Commanderie (☎ 08 92 68 00 29; www.cine-cameo.com, in French; 16 rue de la Commanderie; 🚶 Kennedy) Screens nondubbed films, including some in English.

LIVE MUSIC

Blue Note Why Not Club (☎ 03 83 30 31 18; www.blue-notenancy.com; 3 rue des Michottes; admission free except €10 Fri, Sat & theme nights; 🕒 11pm–4am Wed & Sun, 9pm–4am Thu, 11pm–5am Fri & Sat) This vaulted subterranean discotheque, at the far end of the courtyard, has jazz and blues concerts (€8 to €10) each Thursday (except during school holidays) from 9pm to 11pm or midnight; karaoke on Sunday from 11.30pm to 2am; and, from about 11pm (2am on Sunday), two dance floors, one Latin, the other disco.

Shopping

Nancy's main – and most sparkling – commercial thoroughfares are rue St-Dizier, rue St-Jean and rue St-Georges.

Baccarat shops (☎ 03 83 30 55 11; www.baccarat.fr; cnr rue des Dominicains & rue Gambetta; 🕒 closed Mon morning & Sun) Exquisite crystal of the sort enjoyed by royalty the world over, and jewellery, are on display at these shops, where the simplest wine glass – impossibly delicate – goes for €63.

Daum (☎ 03 83 32 21 65; 14 place Stanislas; 🕒 closed Sun & Mon morning) At this flagship shop, you can admire limited-edition crystal knick-knacks and watch a video showing crystal artisans at work.

Daum factory outlet (☎ 03 83 32 14 55; www.daum.fr; 17 rue des Cristalleries; 🚶 Cristalleries; 🕒 9.30am–12.30pm & 2–6pm Mon–Sat, closed Mon Jul & Aug) About 1km north-east of place Stanislas, this place sells discontinued Daum designs and unsigned seconds.

Bergamotes de Nancy, the local confectionery speciality, are hard candied made with bergamot, a citrus fruit (used to flavour Earl Grey tea) that grows on Mt Etna. Selling Bergamottes (with two *t's*) is **Lefèvre-Lemoine** (Au Duché de Lorraine; ☎ 03 83 30 13 83; 47 rue Henri Poincaré; 🚶 Nancy Gare; 🕒 8.30am–7pm Mon–Sat, 9.30am–12.30pm Sun), founded in 1840 and last redecorated – with Gilded Age panache – back in 1928. One of its old-fashioned red sweets tins made a cameo appearance in the film *Amélie*.

Getting There & Away

CAR

Rental options:

ADA (☎ 03 83 36 53 09; 138 rue St-Dizier)

Europcar (☎ 03 83 37 57 24; 18 rue de Serre)

National-Citer (☎ 03 83 37 38 59; train station departure hall; 🚶 Nancy Gare)

TRAIN

The **train station** (place Thiers; 🚶 Nancy Gare), spiffed up for the arrival of the TGV Est Européen in 2007, is on the line linking Paris' Gare de l'Est (€50.50 by TGV, 1½ hours, eight to 10 direct daily) with Strasbourg (€20.70, 1½ hours, seven to 12 daily). Other destinations include Baccarat (€5, 45 minutes, eight to 15 daily) and Metz (€5, 37 to 53 minutes, 22 to 48 daily).

Tickets can be purchased at the **SNCF office** (18 place St-Epvre; 🕒 12.30–6pm Mon, 9.30am–1pm & 2–6pm Tue–Fri).

Getting Around

There's free parking along the north and east sides of Parc de la Pépinière (rue Sigisbert Adam and rue du 26e RI) and on some side streets in the working-class neighbourhoods west of the train tracks.

The local public transport company, **STAN** (☎ 03 83 30 08 08; www.reseau-stan.com, in French; office 3 rue du Docteur Schmitt; 🕒 7am–7.30pm Mon–Sat), with offices next to the Nancy Gare tram stop, has its main transfer points at Nancy République and Point Central. One/10 tickets cost €1.20/8.70.

In this section, tram stops 200m or less from sights, hotels etc are mentioned right after the street address and indicated with a tram icon 🚶.

Vélostan (www.velostan.com, in French; per half-day/day/week €3/5/10) is not in Central Asia – it's STAN's bike-rental scheme, with rental sites inside the **train station** (☎ 03 83 32 50 85; 🕒 7.30am–7.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–6pm weekends & holidays) and, near the Musée de l'École de Nancy, in **Espace Thermal** (☎ 03 83 90 20 96; 43bis rue du Sergent Blandin; 🕒 10am–1pm & 3–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–6pm Sat).

A **taxi** (☎ 03 83 37 65 37) is just a telephone call away.

BACCARAT

pop 4750

The famous Baccarat *cristallerie* (crystal glass-works), founded in 1764, is 55km southeast of Nancy. The **Musée du Cristal** (Crystal Museum; ☎ 03 83 76 61 37; www.baccarat.fr; 2 rue des Cristalleries; adult/under 10yr €2.50/free; 🕒 9am–noon & 2–6pm), on the grounds of the factory, has 1100 exquisite pieces of lead crystal made by hand over the last two centuries. At the time of writing, the museum was expected to be closed for part of 2009. The **Baccarat boutique** out front is almost as

captivating as the museum; nearby **crystal shops** sell lesser, though more affordable brands.

On the other bank of the park-lined River Meurthe, the dark sanctuary of **Église St-Rémy** (☎ 8am-5pm), built in the mid-1950s to replace a church destroyed by Allied bombing in 1944, is lit by 20,000 Baccarat crystal panels set in brutalist-style concrete walls.

The **tourist office** (☎ 03 83 75 13 37; www.ot-baccarat.fr; 11 rue de la Division Leclerc; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.30-5.30pm Mon-Fri year-round, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Sat, 10am-noon Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep), a bit north of the Musée du Cristal, has hiking maps.

Baccarat's train station, a few hundred metres north of the Musée du Cristal, has trains to Nancy (€5, 45 minutes, eight to 15 daily). By car, Baccarat makes an easy stop on the way from Nancy to Colmar via the Vosges' Col du Bonhomme.

METZ

pop 323,000

Present-day capital of the Lorraine *région*, Metz (pronounced 'mess') is a dignified city with stately public squares, shaded riverside parks, and a lively, pedestrians-only commercial centre. Quite a few of the city's most impressive buildings date from the 48-year period when Metz was part of the German Reich.

The Gothic cathedral, with its stunning stained glass, is the most outstanding attraction. The city also has a first-rate museum of antiquities and art and, at the time of writing, it was expected to be home to a branch of Paris' Centre Pompidou from late 2009.

Orientation

The cathedral, on a hill above the River Moselle, is a bit over 1km north of the train station. The city centre's main public squares are place d'Armes, next to the cathedral; place St-Jacques, in the heart of the pedestrianised commercial precinct; place St-Louis; and, 400m to the west of the latter, place de la République.

Information

The tourist office charges a 5.5% commission to change money.

Bar St-Jacques (☎ 03 87 75 08 20; 10 place St-Jacques; per hr €2; ☎ 7am-midnight or later, from 9am Sun)

This road warriors' watering hole has free wi-fi and two internet computers.

Diacom Internet Café (☎ 03 87 63 08 85; 20 rue Gambetta; per hr €3; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 8.30pm Jun-Aug, 11.30am-8pm Sun)

Hospital (Notre Dame de Bonsecours CHR; ☎ 03 87 55 34 91/2; 1 place Philippe de Vigneulles; ☎ 24hr) The emergency room/casualty ward is in Building F.

Laundrettes 11 rue de la Fontaine (☎ 7am-8pm); 23 rue Taison (☎ 7am-8pm)

Main Post Office (9 rue Gambetta) Has currency exchange.

Office du Commerce et des Services (☎ 03 87 75 97 13; 9 rue des Clercs; per hr €3; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-7.30pm Tue-Sat) Internet access.

Police (Hôtel de Police; ☎ 03 87 16 17 17; 10 rue Belle Isle; ☎ 24hr)

Tourist Office (☎ 03 87 55 53 76; http://tourisme.mairie-metz.fr; 2 place d'Armes; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun, to 5pm Sun Apr-Sep) In a one-time guardroom built in the mid-1700s. Has free walking-tour and cycling maps, free wi-fi and an internet terminal that works with a phonedcard.

Tourist Office Annexe (Metz Métropole Découverte; ☎ 10am-1pm & 2-6pm Mon-Sat except holidays) Inside the train station at the far eastern end. Has free wi-fi.

Sights

CATHÉDRALE ST-ÉTIENNE

Metz' stupendous Gothic **Cathédrale St-Étienne** (place St-Étienne; ☎ 8am-7pm mid-Apr-Sep, to 6pm Oct-mid-Apr), built between 1220 and 1522, is famed for its veritable curtains of 13th- to 20th-century stained glass, among the finest in France. The superb **Flamboyant Gothic windows** (1504), on the main wall of the north transept arm, provide a remarkable stylistic contrast with the glorious **Renaissance windows** on the main wall of the south transept arm, created a mere two decades later. There are windows by **Chagall** on the western wall of the north transept arm (yellow predominates) and in the nearby section of the ambulatory (over the entrance to the Grande Sacristie; reds and blues set the tone), where you'll also find the **treasury** (adult/student €2/1; ☎ approx 10am-12.30pm & 2pm-5pm or 6pm, closed Jan). In the 15th-century **crypt** (below the altar; adult/student €2/1; ☎ approx 10am-12.30pm & 2pm-5pm or 6pm, closed Jan) you can see a 15th-century sculpture of the **Graouilly** ('grau-lee' or 'grau-ye'), a dragon that is said to have terrified pre-Christian Metz. Try to visit on a bright day. Beautifully illuminated at night.

MUSÉE LA COUR D'OR

The superb **Musée La Cour d'Or** (☎ 03 87 68 25 00; 2 rue du Haut Poirier; adult/over 65yr/student under 26yr/under 18yr €4.60/3.30/2.30/free; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) has a first-rate collection

INFORMATION		Palais de Justice.....18 B4	DRINKING ☑
Bar St-Jacques.....1 C3	Parc de la Seille.....19 D6	Café Jehanne d'Arc.....36 C2	L'Appart.....37 B4
Diacom Internet Café.....2 C5	Pedal Boat & Rowboat Hire.....20 A3		
Hospital (Notre Dame de Bonsecours CHR).....3 A6	Riverside Park.....21 A4	ENTERTAINMENT ☑	
Laundrette.....4 C3	Statue of Marshall Ney.....22 B4	Arsenal Cultural	Centre.....(see 11)
Laundrette.....5 C4	Temple Neuf.....23 B3	Fnac Billetterie.....(see 32)	Les Arènes.....(see 15)
Main Post Office.....6 B5	Théâtre.....24 B2	Le Tiffany.....38 B4	L'Endroit.....39 B3
Office du Commerce et des Services.....7 B3	SLEEPING ☑	Salle des Trinitaires.....40 C2	Virgin Megastore.....41 B4
Police.....8 B1	Auberge de Jeunesse Carrefour.....25 C2		
Tourist Office.....9 C3	Cécil Hôtel.....26 B6	TRANSPORT	
Tourist Office Annexe.....10 C6	Grand Hôtel de Metz.....27 B3	Avis.....42 C6	Budget.....43 B6
	Hôtel Bristol.....28 B6	Europcar.....(see 42)	Hertz.....(see 42)
	Hôtel de la Cathédrale.....29 B3	Mob Emploi.....44 B3	Mob Emploi (Train Station Bureau).....45 C5
	Hôtel Métropole.....30 C5	National-Citer.....(see 42)	
	La Citadelle.....31 A4		
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	EATING ☑		
Arsenal Cultural Centre.....11 B4	Atac Supermarket.....32 C3		
Cathédrale St-Étienne.....12 B3	Covered Market.....33 B3		
Centre Pompidou-Metz (2009).....13 D6	La Baraka.....(see 29)		
Église St Pierre-aux-Nonains.....14 A4	L'Étude.....34 B4		
Les Arènes.....15 D6	Restaurant Thierry.....35 B2		
Maison du Project.....16 C6			
Musée La Cour d'Or.....17 C2			

of Gallo-Roman antiquities, among them a statue of the Egyptian goddess Isis unearthed right here in Metz; art from the Middle Ages, including objects from around the year 1000 and several rare painted ceilings; paintings from the 15th century onwards, among them some fine works by lesser-known local artists; and objects that trace the history of Metz' ancient Jewish community. A room-by-room brochure in English is available.

CITY CENTRE

On the eastern edge of the city centre, triangular **place St-Louis** – renovated in 2008 – is surrounded by medieval arcades and merchants' houses dating from the 14th to 16th centuries.

Neoclassical **place de la Comédie**, bounded by one of the channels of the Moselle, is home to the city's **Théâtre** (1738–53), the oldest theatre building in France that's still in use. During the Revolution, place de l'Égalité (as it was then known) was the site of a guillotine that lopped the heads off 63 'enemies of the people'. The neo-Romanesque **Temple Neuf** (Protestant Church; ☑ only during services), sombre and looming, was constructed under the Germans in 1904.

The formal flowerbeds of the **Esplanade** – and its **statue** of a gallant-looking Marshall Ney, sword dangling at his side (1859) – are flanked by imposing public buildings, including the **Arsenal cultural centre** (1863; see p411) and the sober, neoclassical **Palais de Justice** (late 18th century). **Église St-Pierre-aux-Nonains** (admission free; ☑ 1-6pm Tue-Sat & 2-6pm Sun Jul-Sep, 1-6pm Sat & 2-6pm Sun Oct-Jun, closed holidays) was originally

built around 380 as part of a Gallo-Roman spa complex (the wall sections with horizontal red-brick stripes are Roman originals). For almost a thousand years – from the 7th to the 16th centuries – the structure served as the abbey church of a Benedictine women's monastery.

West and northwest of the Esplanade, on both sides of bd Poincaré, is a lovely **riverside park** graced with statues, ponds, swans and a fountain. In the warm months, **pedal boats** and **row boats** can be rented on quai des Régates.

QUARTIER IMPÉRIAL

The solid, bourgeois buildings and broad avenues of the **German Imperial Quarter**, including rue Gambetta and av Foch, were constructed in the decades before WWI. Built with the intention of Germanising the city by emphasising Metz' post-1871 status as an integral part of the Second Reich, the area's neo-Romanesque and neo-Renaissance buildings are made of dark-hued sandstone, granite and basalt, rather than the yellow-tan Jaumont limestone characteristic of French-built, neoclassical structures. Because of the area's unique ensemble of Wilhelmian architecture, it is a candidate for Unesco World Heritage status.

The massive, grey-sandstone **train station**, completed in 1908, was designed to detain 100,000 of the Kaiser's troops and their equipment in just 24 hours, should great power rivalries make this necessary. Built in a style known as Rhenish neo-Romanesque, it is decorated with Teutonic sculptures – some of them quite amusing – whose common theme is German imperial might.

The massive **main post office**, built in 1911 of red Vosges sandstone, is as solid and heavy as the cathedral is light and lacy.

QUARTIER DE L'AMPHITHÉÂTRE

Until recently a wasteland of abandoned hangars and depots, 'the wrong side of the tracks' is undergoing a transformation thanks to Metz' seemingly boundless cultural ambitions (and development budget). The Amphitheatre Quarter – named after a Gallo-Roman amphitheatre – boasts **Les Arènes** (Palais Omnisports), a vast steel-and-glass venue for sports events and concerts (see opposite), and the green riverside lawns of **Parc de la Seille**.

But you ain't seen nothin' yet: at the time of writing, the **Centre Pompidou-Metz** (www.centre.pompidou-metz.fr) – a branch of the inside-out original in Paris – was supposed to open its doors to aficionados of modern and contemporary art from the fall of 2009. The design, by Shigeru Ban (Tokyo) and Jean de Gastines (Paris), is like nothing else ever conceived by the human mind. Locals hope the museum, covered by an undulating, translucent membrane of teflon-coated fibreglass designed to trap rainwater for irrigation, will do for Metz what the Guggenheim did for Bilbao. Until the grand opening, you can learn about the project at the **Maison du Projet** (☎ 1-8pm May-Sep, 11am-5pm Oct-Apr), next to the construction site.

Tours

The tourist office's audioguides (€7), available in three languages (English, French and German), cover the city centre (1½ hours) and the Quartier Impérial (45 minutes).

Sleeping

Metz' hotels are great value. Except in summer, they're fullest Monday to Thursday.

BUDGET

Auberge de Jeunesse Carrefour (☎ 03 87 75 07 26; ascarrefour@wanadoo.fr; 6 rue Marchant; dm €15.70, s/d incl breakfast €19.15/38.30; ☎ 24hr; ♿) A hostel for young working women that also functions as a youth hostel. The rooms, accessible all day long, are spartan; some have a shower and toilet. From the train station, take bus 3 or 11 to the St-Georges stop.

Hôtel Bristol (☎ 03 87 66 74 22; www.hotel-bristol-57.com; 7 rue Lafayette; s/d from €30/35, larger d €44-49) Bring your bell-bottoms – at the Bristol it's still the 1970s, the period authenticity

enhanced by fusty furnishings virtually undisturbed since Elvis didn't die. The cheaper rooms can charitably be termed 'compact' but cash-strapped backpackers should do just fine at this family-run, 53-room place.

MIDRANGE

A number of two-star hotels can be found facing the train station and along nearby rue Lafayette.

Hôtel Métropole (☎ 03 87 66 26 22; www.hotel.metropole-metz.com; 5 place du Général de Gaulle; d €52-63; ♿) Built at the tail end of the German period (1912), this two-star place, facing the train station, has 72 spotless, orange-yellow rooms that are so bright and cheery they're almost uplifting. Excellent value.

our pick **Hôtel de la Cathédrale** (☎ 03 87 75 00 02; www.hotelcathedrale-metz.fr; 25 place de Chambre; d €58-105, ste €110) Ensnconced in a gorgeous 17th-century town house, this three-star place positively oozes romance! The 30 large rooms – 10 with spectacular views of the cathedral – are tastefully furnished with antiques and rugs that complement perfectly the ancient wooden beams overhead. The wrought iron is by Jean Lamour (1698–1771), creator of the gilded masterpieces that adorn Nancy's place Stanislas.

Grand Hôtel de Metz (☎ 03 87 36 16 33; www.hotel-metz.com; 3 rue des Clercs; d from €61-95; ♿) At this supercentral, 62-room place you can luxuriate in a giant bathtub looking out on a minisuite (€95) big enough for ballroom dancing (our advice to management: lose the plastic plants), and make your own poached eggs at the buffet breakfast (€7). Standard rooms are comfortable but not luxurious. By car, take rue Fabert from the cathedral, push the button on the intercom and explain you're going to the hotel.

Cécil Hôtel (☎ 03 87 66 66 13; www.cecilhotel-metz.com; 14 rue Pasteur; d/tr €64/69; ♿) Built right after Metz was returned to France (1920), this family-run, two-star hotel, mercifully devoid of pastels, is popular with value-minded business people. The 39 modern rooms have spacious tile bathrooms. If you stay Friday and Saturday, or Saturday and Sunday, the buffet breakfast (€7) is free. Parking available.

TOP END

La Citadelle (☎ 03 87 17 17 17; www.citadelle-metz.com; d €205-265; 5 av Ney; ♿) Opened in 2005 in a one-time military supplies depot built 4½ centuries ago, Metz' only four-star hotel has

good wheelchair access, parking and 79 huge, ultramodern rooms – in stark red, white and black – with more than a hint of Japanese sleekness and harmony.

Eating

Place St-Jacques is taken over by cafés in the warmer months. The arcades of place St-Louis are home to a number of moderately priced restaurants. Quite a few small eateries can be found along the streets down the hill from the cathedral, along and near the river.

La Baraka (☎ 03 87 36 33 92; 25 pl de Chamber; ☏ closed Wed & mid-Jul–mid-Aug) Serves Metz' finest Algerian Berber couscous (€11.50 to €16.50), *tajines* (€12) and *brick* (a fried pastry filled with egg, capers and either chopped meat or tuna; €4).

ourpick **L'Étude** (☎ 03 87 36 35 32; www.l-etude.com, in French; 11 av Robert Schuman; 2-/3-course lunch menus €13/15, other menus €22/27, during concerts €29/35; ☏ Mon-Sat) Hugely popular with local cognoscenti, this eatery is a quintessentially French mixture of the intellectual (the walls are lined with weighty tomes) and the gastronomic (French, of course) – a coming together of the mind and the stomach, if you will. There's live music (jazz, *chansons*, Cuban, Roma – the website has the schedule) from about 8.30pm on Friday and Saturday, except in July and August; reservations are recommended.

Restaurant Thierry (☎ 03 87 74 01 23; www.restaurant-thierry.fr; 5 rue des Piques; weekday menu €21.50, Fri night & Sat €33.50; ☏ closed Wed & Sun) Brings culinary insights from the Caribbean Basin, Louisiana and Vietnam together with French gastronomic traditions to create avant-garde cuisine 'without taboos'. The bistro ambience is both chic and relaxed. Often full, so call ahead if possible.

SELF-CATERING

For picnic supplies:

Atac supermarket (near place St-Jacques; ☏ 8.30am–7.30pm Mon–Sat) On the lowest level of the Centre St-Jacques shopping mall.

Covered market (place de la Cathédrale; ☏ approx 7am–6pm Tue–Sat)

Drinking

Café Jeanne d'Arc (☎ 03 87 37 39 94; place Jeanne d'Arc; ☏ 11.30am–midnight Mon–Wed, 11.30am–2am Thu & Fri, 3pm–3am Sat) This bar bears its long history – the roof beams are from the 1500s, the faint frescos two or three centuries older – with

good humour and mellowness. The soundtrack ranges from Dizzie Gillespie to Brel and Gainsbourg to Western classical. There's a refreshing terrace when it's warm.

L'Appart (☎ 03 87 18 59 26; www.l-endroit.com, in French; 2 rue Haute Pierre; ☏ 8pm–2.30am Sun & Tue–Thu, 8pm–3.30am Fri & Sat) The house in which the poet Paul Verlaine – Arthur Rimbaud's lover and, almost, his assassin – was born in 1844 is now a lively, mixed (gay and hetero) bar with a retro 1950s ceiling, backlit bottles and a centuries-old carved wood panelling that's protected by law. There's a DJ on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, karaoke on Thursday and a drag show at midnight on Sunday.

Entertainment

Details on cultural events appear in *Spectacles* (www.spectacles-publications.com, in French) and *Ce Mois-Ci à Metz*, both in French, free, monthly and available at the tourist office.

Le Tiffany (☎ 03 87 75 23 32; www.letiffany.net, in French; 24 rue du Coëtlosquet; admission free except Thu/Fri & Sat €5/15; ☏ 11pm–5am Mon & Wed–Sat) The gyrating bodies here – most belonging to people aged 20 to 30 – would have knocked the socks off the medieval people who built the vaulted cellar this classic discotheque has occupied since 1972. The DJs tend towards house. Thursday is student night; Friday is often theme night.

L'Endroit (☎ 03 87 18 59 26; www.l-endroit.com, in French; 20 rue aux Ours; admission €10; ☏ 12.30am–5.30am Fri, Sat & Sun night & holiday eve) A gay disco open to all with industrial style interior design, including a stainless-steel dance floor, and house music on the turntable. Every other Friday or Saturday there's a theme night.

Events tickets are available at the **Fnac billetterie** (☎ 08 92 68 36 22; www.fnacspectacles.com, in French; near place St-Jacques; ☏ 10am–7.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–7.30pm Sat), on the ground level of the Centre St-Jacques shopping mall; and at **Virgin Megastore** (☎ 08 92 39 28 00; www.ticketnet.fr; 61–63 rue Serpenoise; ☏ 9am–8pm Mon–Sat).

The city's main concert venues are the **Arsenal cultural centre** (☎ 03 87 39 92 00; www.mairie-metz.fr/arsenal; 3 av Ney), **Les Arènes** (www.arenas-de-metz.com, in French; Quartier de L'Ampithéâtre) and the **Salle des Trinitaires** (☎ 03 87 20 03 03; www.lestrinitaires.com, in French; place Jeanne d'Arc).

Getting There & Away

CAR

Avis (☎ 03 87 50 60 30), **Europcar** (☎ 03 87 62 26 12), **Hertz** (☎ 03 87 66 63 33) and **National-Citer** (☎ 03 87

38 09 99) have rental offices in the train station's arrival hall. You can also try **Budget** (☎ 03 87 66 36 31; 5 rue Lafayette).

TRAIN

Metz' **train station** (pl du Général de Gaulle), fixed up to greet the TGV Est Européen in style, is on the line linking Paris' Gare de l'Est (€50.50 to €62.70 by TGV, 80 minutes, four to six daily) with Luxembourg (€12.80, 50 minutes, at least 15 daily). Direct trains also go to Nancy (€5, 37 to 53 minutes, 22 to 48 daily), Strasbourg (€21.50, 1¼ to 1¾ hours, seven to 11 daily) and Verdun (€6, 1½ hours, five daily each weekday, one daily weekends).

Getting Around

BICYCLE

Six-speed city bikes and mountain bikes can be rented from **Mob Emploi** (☎ 03 87 74 50 43; per half-/full day/week €5.50/8/18), a nonprofit place that's *not* affiliated with the mafia ('mob' is short for *mobilité*). Helmets and locks are free; rental options include kids' bikes, child carriers and even a tandem. The deposit is €100 per bike. There are two bureaus:

Rue d'Estrées (☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep or mid-Oct)

Train station (rue Vauban; ☎ 5.45am-8pm Mon-Fri) At the base of the water tower just east of the train station.

PARKING

Free parking can be found near the train station under the trees on av Foch; northeast of the train station along bd André Maginot; and east of Auberge de Jeunesse Carrefour along bd Paixhans.

TAXI

Radio Taxis de Metz (☎ 03 87 56 91 92) is on duty day or night.

FORT DU HACKENBERG

The largest single Maginot Line bastion (see p374) in the Metz area was the 1000-man **Fort du Hackenberg** (☎ 03 82 82 30 08; www.maginot-hackenberg.com; adult/under 16yr €8/4; ☎ tours begin every 15min 2-3.30pm Sat, Sun & holidays & 3pm Wed Apr-11 Nov, additional tours at 3pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 2pm Sat in winter), 30km northeast of Metz near the village of Veckring, whose 10km of galleries were designed to be self-sufficient for three months and, in battle, to fire four tonnes of shells a minute. An electric trolley takes visitors along 4km of underground tunnels –

always at 12°C – past a variety of subterranean installations (kitchen, hospital, electric plant etc). Tours last two hours.

Readers have been enthusiastic about the **tours** (www.maginot-line.com) of Fort du Hackenberg, other Maginot Line sites and Verdun led by Jean-Pascal Speck, an avid amateur historian and owner of the charming, three-star, 14-room **Hôtel L'Horizon** (☎ 03 82 88 53 65; www.lhorizon.fr; 5 rte du Crève Coeur; d €98-150; ☎ closed 2 or 3 weeks around New Year) in Thionville. If he's unavailable, he can put you in touch with other English-speaking guides.

VERDUN

pop 19,300

The horrific events that took place in and around Verdun between February 1916 and August 1917 – *l'enfer de Verdun* (the hell of Verdun; see p37) – have turned the town's name into a byword for wartime slaughter. These days, Verdun is an economically depressed and profoundly provincial backwater – some would say it's a throwback to the more insular France of 50 years ago – though the dispatch of French troops based nearby to missions abroad has made world politics a very local and, for some, personal affair.

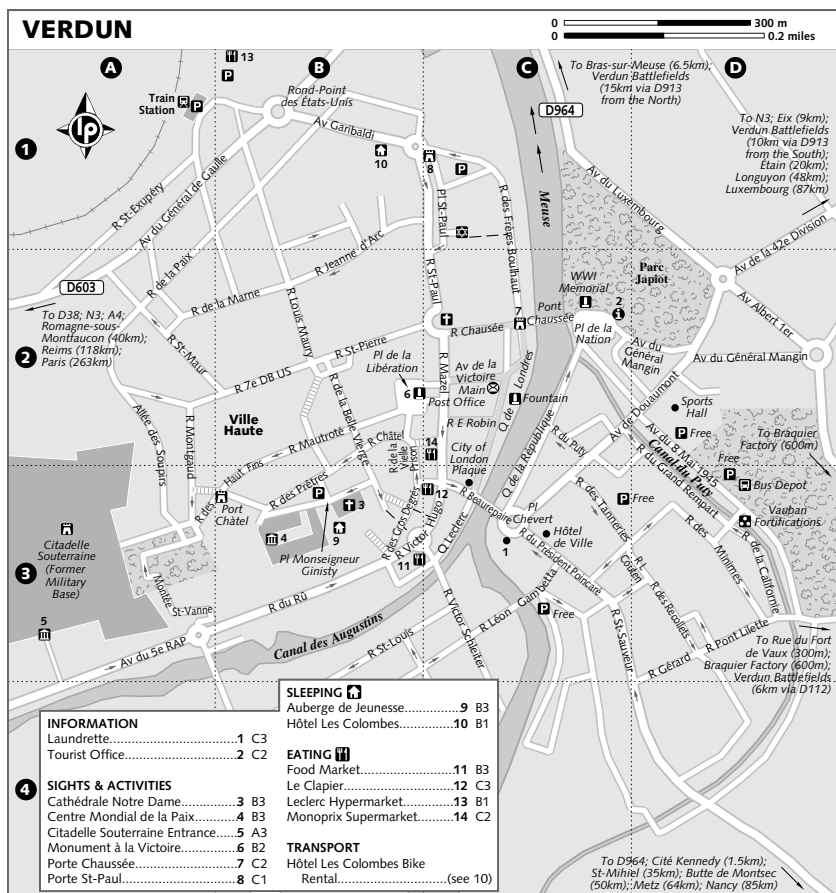
History

After the annexation of Lorraine's Moselle *département* and Alsace by Germany in 1871, Verdun became a frontline outpost. Over the next four decades, it was turned into the most important – and most heavily fortified – element in France's eastern defence line.

During WWI Verdun itself was never taken by the Germans, but the evacuated town was almost totally destroyed by artillery bombardments. In the hills to the north and east of Verdun, the brutal combat – carried out with artillery, flame-throwers and poison gas – completely wiped out nine villages. During the last two years of WWI, more than 800,000 soldiers (some 400,000 French and almost as many Germans, along with thousands of the Americans who arrived in 1918) lost their lives in this area.

Orientation

The main commercial street, known as rue St-Paul and rue Mazel, and the Ville Haute (Upper Town) are on the west bank of the River Meuse. The train station is 700m northwest of the cathedral.



Information

Laundrette (2 place Chevert; ☎ 6.30am-9pm)

Tourist Office (☎ 03 29 84 55 55; Pavillon Japiot, av du Général Mangin; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 9.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Sun Sep-Jun) A brand-new tourist office run by the city.

Sights

Verdun's huge **Citadelle Souterraine** (☎ 03 29 86 62 02; tourist entrance on av du 5e RAP; adult/5-15yr €6/2.50; ☎ 9am or 10am-noon or 12.30pm & 2pm-btwn 5pm & 7pm, no midday closure Apr-Sep, closed Jan, last tour begins 45min before closing), with its 7km of underground galleries, was designed by Vauban (p65) in the 17th century and completed in 1838. In 1916 it was turned into

an impregnable command centre in which 10,000 *poilus* (French WWI soldiers) lived, many waiting to be dispatched to the front. About 10% of the galleries have been converted into an imaginative audiovisual reenactment of the war, making this an excellent introduction to the WWI history of Verdun. Half-hour tours in battery-powered cars are available in six languages.

The **Centre Mondial de la Paix** (World Centre for Peace; ☎ 03 29 86 55 00; www.cmpaix.fr, in French; place Monseigneur Ginisty; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9.30am-noon & 2-6pm Sep-Jun, closed Christmas-Jan) has a new permanent exhibit that looks at wars, their causes and solutions; human rights; and the fragility of peace. It is housed in Verdun's handsomely classical (and classically handsome)

LA PETITE AMERIQUE

Verdun had a significant American military presence from the end of WWII until Charles de Gaulle pulled France out of NATO's integrated military command in 1966 (in 2008 Nicolas Sarkozy announced French plans to rejoin). In **Cité Kennedy**, a neighbourhood 2km southeast of the centre, which once housed American military families, the streets still bear names such as av d'Atlanta, av de Floride, av de Géorgie and impasse de Louisiane, and the almost-identical ranch-style houses look like an especially dull version of suburban America, circa Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). To get there by car, follow the signs to Lycée Freyssinet.

former bishop's palace, built in 1724 and worth a look just for the architecture.

Inside **Cathédrale Notre Dame** (place Monseigneur Ginisty; ☎ 8am-6pm Oct-Mar, till 7pm Apr-Sep), a gilded baroque **baldachin** and 18th-century furnishings add character to the Romanesque and Gothic structure, restored after WWI damage. Much of the stained glass is interwar.

The almost Fascist-looking **Monument à la Victoire** (Victory Monument; overlooking rue Mazel), built from 1920 to 1929, is softened somewhat by a cascading fountain.

Two of the city's gates are extant. **Porte Chaussée** (rue Chaussée), on the riverfront, was built in the 14th century and later used as a prison. **Porte St-Paul** (rue St-Paul), built in 1877 and rebuilt between 1919 and 1929, is adorned with a bombastic marble plaque that goes on about the 'victorious peace' that inspired a 'cry of joy'.

Sleeping

Auberge de Jeunesse (☎ 03 29 86 28 28; www.fuaj.org; place Monseigneur Ginisty; dm €12.10; ☎ reception 8am-12.30pm & 5-11pm Mon-Fri, 8-10am & 5-9pm Sat, Sun & holidays, hostel closed Christmas-Jan; 📺) This modern hostel, situated behind the cathedral, has 77 bunks of generous proportions in rooms for five to 12 people. Rooms are accessible all day long; a kitchenette is available.

Hôtel Les Colombes (☎ 03 29 86 05 46; www.hotel-a-verdun.com, in French; 9 av Garibaldi; d/q €35/45; ☎ closed Dec) Named to honour the dove of peace, this friendly, family-run hostelry, modest like Verdun itself, has 31 practical, well-lit rooms. Near the train station.

Eating

Along the river, you'll find brasseries and fast-food joints on pedestrianised quai de Londres (a plaque on the wall near rue Beaufort explains the origin of the name).

Le Clapier (☎ 03 29 86 20 14; 34 rue des Gros Degrés; menus €14-22; ☎ closed Sun & Mon) A real *restaurant du quartier* (neighbourhood restaurant) with a blackboard instead of printed menus. Serves up French home cooking in a cosy atmosphere.

SELF-CATERING

Picnic supplies options:

Food market (rue Victor Hugo; ☎ 7am-1pm Fri)

Lederc hypermarket (☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 8.30pm Fri) Across the car park from the train station.

Monoprix supermarket (3 rue Mazel; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-7pm Mon-Sat)

Getting There & Around

Verdun's poorly served, small train station, built by Eiffel in 1868, has direct services to Metz (€7, 1½ hours, five each weekday, one daily weekends). Four buses a day go to the Gare Meuse TGV station (30 minutes), from where TGVs whisk you to Paris' Gare de l'Est (€38.40 to €40.40, 80 minutes).

You can park for free in the car parks south and southeast of the tourist office on av du 8 Mai 1945, rue des Tanneries and rue Léon Gambetta.

Hôtel Les Colombes (left; per 4hr/day/weekend incl helmet €10/18/30) rents out mountain bikes, an excellent way to tour the Verdun battlefields.

For a taxi call **Taxis de Place** (☎ 03 29 86 05 22).

VERDUN BATTLEFIELDS

Much of the Battle of Verdun (p37) was fought 5km to 8km (as the crow flies) northeast of Verdun. Today, the area – still a jumble of trenches and artillery craters, now forested – are on and along the D913 and D112; by car follow the signs to 'Douamont', 'Vaux' or the 'Champ de Bataille 14-18'. Signposted paths lead to dozens of minor remnants of the war. Site interiors are closed in January.

Mémorial de Verdun

The village of Fleury, wiped off the face of the earth in the course of being captured and recaptured 16 times, is now the site of the **Mémorial de Verdun** (☎ 03 29 84 35 34; adult/11-16yr €7/3.50; ☎ 9am-6pm daily, closed noon-2pm 12 Nov-19 Jan & Feb-mid-Mar, totally closed 20 Dec-Jan), a museum –

renovated in 2008 – that tells the story of ‘300 days, 300,000 dead, 400,000 wounded’ with insightful displays, including both war matériel and personal items, in French, English and German. Downstairs is a recreation of the battlefield as it looked on the day the guns finally fell silent. Admission includes a 20-minute film, shown twice an hour.

In the grassy crater-pocked centre of what was once **Fleury**, a few hundred metres down the road from the memorial, signs among the low ruins indicate the village’s former layout.

Ossuaire de Douaumont

The sombre, 137m-long **Douaumont Ossuary** (☎ 03 29 84 54 81; www.verdun-douaumont.com; ☹ closed 24 Dec–mid-Feb), inaugurated in 1932, is one of France’s most important WWI memorials. It contains the remains of about 130,000 unidentified French and German soldiers collected from the Verdun battlefields and buried together in 52 mass graves according to where they fell. A ticket to the excellent, 20-minute **audiovisual presentation** (adult/8–12yr €4/3; ☹ no morning screenings in Dec or 2nd half of Feb) on the battle and its participants, in four languages, also lets you climb the 46m-high **bell tower**, which houses a museum re-outfitted in 2008.

Out front, the **French military cemetery** is flanked by **memorials to Muslim and Jewish soldiers** (to the east and west, respectively) who died fighting for France in WWI. The former, its architecture evocative of a North African mosque, was inaugurated in 2006.

Fort de Douaumont

About 2km northeast of the Douaumont Ossuary, on the highest of the area’s hills stands **Fort de Douaumont** (☎ 03 29 84 41 91; adult/8–15yr €3/1.50; ☹ 10am–6pm or 6.30pm Apr–Sep, 10am–5pm Oct–Dec, 10am–1pm & 2–5pm Feb & Mar, last entry 30min before closing), the strongest of the 38 fortresses and bastions built along a 45km front to protect Verdun. When the Battle of Verdun began, 400m-long Douaumont – whose 3km network of cold, dripping galleries was built between 1885 and 1913 – had only a skeleton crew. By the fourth day it had been captured easily, a serious blow to French morale; four months later it was retaken by colonial troops from Morocco. Panoramic views can be had from atop the fort’s crater-pocked roof. Signs are in French, English, Dutch and German; information sheets are available in 13 languages.

Charles de Gaulle, then a young captain, was wounded and taken prisoner near here in 1916.

Tranchée des Baïonnettes

On 12 June 1916 two companies of the 137th Infantry Regiment of the French army were sheltered in their *tranchées* (trenches), *baïonnettes* (bayonets) fixed, waiting for a ferocious artillery bombardment to end. It never did – the incoming shells covered their positions with mud and debris, burying them alive. They weren’t found until three years later, when someone spotted several hundred bayonet tips sticking out of the ground. The victims were left where they died, their bayonets still poking through the soil. The site is always open. The tree-filled valley across the D913 is known as the **Ravin de la Mort** (Ravine of Death).

AMERICAN MEMORIALS

More than one million American troops participated in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive of late 1918 (<http://us.offensives1918-meuse.com>), the last Western Front battle of WWI. The bitter fighting northwest of Verdun, in which more than 26,000 Americans died, convinced the Kaiser’s government to cable US President Woodrow Wilson with a request for an armistice. The film *Sergeant York* (1941) starring Gary Cooper is based on events that took place here. The website of the Meuse *département*’s tourism board is at www.tourism.e-meuse.com.

The largest US military cemetery in Europe, the WWI **Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery**, is at Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, 41km northwest of Verdun along the D38 and D123. Just east of Montfaucon d’Argonne (about 10km southeast of the cemetery), a 58m-high Doric column atop the 336m-high **Butte de Montfaucon** commemorates the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

About 40km southeast of Verdun, the WWI **St-Mihiel American Cemetery** is on the outskirts of Thiaucourt-Regniéville. From there, a 15km drive to the southwest takes you to the 375m-high **Butte de Montsec**, site of a US monument with a bronze relief map surrounded by a round, neoclassical colonnade.

The WWII **Lorraine American Cemetery** is about 45km east of Metz, just outside of St-Avold.

All these sites are managed by the **American Battle Monuments Commission** (www.abmc.gov).

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'