



KEY FEATURES

In addition to being a unique, cosmopolitan city, Strasbourg also features key sights not to be missed: Grande Île, the Cathedral, Petite France and the Neustadt district.

Grande Ile

Enclosed by the boundary of the River Ill, the Grande Ile Island, the historic town centre, is connected to the rest of the city by 21 bridges and footbridges.

It has seen Strasbourg develop, enabling it in **1988 to become the first historic city centre listed in its entirety as a UNESCO World Heritage site**. On the main squares and little pedestrian streets, many buildings are worth a look:

- **The Kammerzell House**

This Renaissance building, the foundations of which date to 1427, is a former merchant's house. Its steep roof, beams sculpted with secular subjects, crown glass windows and stone ground floor inspire admiration. 👁 16 place de la Cathédrale

- **Palais Rohan (Rohan Palace)**

First the place of residence of the four cardinals of Rohan, then city hall and then an imperial and royal palace, it is a testament to the princely art of living of the 18th century. Its classical architecture is inspired by fine Parisian townhouses. It now

houses several museums. 👁 2 place du Château

- **Ancienne Grande Boucherie (former slaughterhouse)**

Built in 1587 to replace the old slaughterhouse that had been in use since the 13th century, this exceptional example of Renaissance architecture has been home since 1919 to the Historical Museum of the City of Strasbourg.

👁 2 rue du Vieux-Marché-aux-Poissons

- **Ancienne Douane**

This building, with its gable roof, located on the banks of the River Ill, was used for centuries for storing and taxing goods transiting on the Rhine. Now it houses a restaurant and a farmer's market. 👁 6 rue de la Douane

- **The Neubau**

Dating to the late 16th century, this remarkable, extremely rigorously symmetrical building was constructed in cut stone, a daring choice at the time because it was in sharp contrast with the local architectural style, which traditionally used half-timbering. 👁 10 place Gutenberg

The cathedral

The Strasbourg Cathedral stands on a wide cobblestone square as in the Middle Ages. It rests on foundations of an old roman basilica of the Rhine constructed in 1015 by Bishop Wernher, of the Hapsburg family. Destroyed by fire, it was gradually replaced by a new cathedral. Nearly three centuries passed between the reconstruction of the choir in 1176 and the completion of the steeple in 1439. Its height of **142 m.** classified Notre-Dame of Strasbourg as **the tallest edifice in Christendom up until the 19th century.**



• A little history about a big construction project

The foundations and a few stones in the crypt are the only remains of the old basilica. Around 1225, the arrival of an architect and craftsmen from Chartres revolutionised the course of the construction.

A project manager whose name remains unknown to us introduced the local artisans to the splendours of Gothic art ignored so far. This anonymous individual left behind unrivalled masterpieces, such as the **Pillar of Angels** and the statues of the

Church and Synagogue.

At the end of the 13th Century, work began on the main façade, the most richly ornate. The tympana of its three portals are dedicated to the **life and Passion of Christ** and to the **Last Judgment**. The famous group of the Tempter, surrounded by **the Wise and Foolish Virgins**, which decorate the right portal, served as a model for the cathedrals of Fribourg and Basle. On the left portal, the **Virtues** are stabbing the **Vices** with their lances.

• "A prodigy of the gigantic and of the delicate" (Victor Hugo)

A strikingly delicate double gable crowns the portals. In a frame of stone, delicately ornamented with openwork, blooms a magnificent rose window, attributed to Erwin of Steinbach, in charge of the cathedral project from 1284 to 1318. Above it, two towers connected by the belfry, constructed only at the end of the 14th century, compose the platform. From this height, after having climbed the 329 stairs, one can enjoy a magnificent view of the city and its surroundings. The tower, octagonal in shape and crowned by an ornate steeple credited to John Hültz, is found on the north side of the platform.

On the south side of the Cathedral, the beautiful **Romanesque portal**, the oldest of the building, is flanked by copies of the famous **Church and Synagogue statues** whose originals are preserved at the Œuvre Notre-Dame Museum. The tympanum of the left door is decorated with a magnificent Death of the Virgin, one which filled Delacroix with admiration. On the tympanum of the left door appears the Coronation of the Virgin. The portal on the left side, dating from the end of the 15th century, is dedicated to Saint Lawrence, whose martyrdom -a modern copy- is represented above the door.

The **nave**, whose harmonious proportions fill one with wonder, was inspired by that of St. Denis, and constructed in two stages between 1240 and 1275. Most of its original stained-glass windows, whose golden brilliance is due to the use of lighter colours which the master glassworkers of Strasbourg have always favoured, have been preserved. The **oldest windows** of the nave date back to the beginning of the 13th century and are located on the north side-aisle. They picture the succession of Germanic kings and emperors. The Virgin of the choir is modern. In the nave, the stained-glass windows with the saints which face each other are also impressive.

In the 14th century, the **Chapel of Saint Catherine**, with remarkable windows from the same century featuring Jesus' life, and the **Chapel of Saint Lawrence** whose stained glass windows are those of the old Dominican church, were added to the nave. In the north transept, a Mount of Olives (1498) and baptismal fonts in the late-Gothic style

(1453). The oldest windows of the cathedral originate from the primitive sanctuary and represent the two Saint Johns and the Judgment of Solomon.

At the back of the north transept, the **Chapel of Saint John the Baptist** houses the beautiful 14th century tomb of Bishop Conrad of Lichtenberg and an epitaph (1464) representing a canon in prayer before a moving Virgin with Child attributed to Nicolas Gerhaert de Leyde.

- **The pulpit, a sound example of the late gothic style**

In the nave, the pulpit by Hans Hammer is a superb example of the flamboyant Gothic style. The organ chest, ornamented with interesting automata, also dates from the end of the Middle Ages. Its statues, with their movable joints and endowed with speech, shamelessly ranted at the officiating priest and were a well-appreciated attraction.

- **The Astronomical Clock and the Pillar of Angels**



In the south transept, other figures, also engaged in activity, animate the **Astronomical Clock**. A Renaissance masterpiece, this clock was inherited from the Protestant Reformation. It was constructed around 1547 by a team of Swiss clockmakers. Inoperative since the Revolution of 1789, Jean-Baptiste Schwilgué gave it new life in 1842. Greatly enriched by the detailed movement of a Copernican planetary dial and an ecclesiastical computation, the Astronomical Clock is a particularly well-known attraction thanks to the daily performance given by its

automata at precisely 12.30 p.m., which file out in procession. At this moment, the apostles march in front of Christ. Their procession is punctuated by a cock beating its wings and crowing. Lower down, we see the four ages of life, which, personified by a child, an adolescent, an adult and an old man, pass every quarter of an hour before Death. Since 1987, it has been **listed as a historical monument object**.

Every day, the procession of the apostles can be admired after a film is shown about the astronomical clock. The ticket counter opens at 11:30 am.

In front of the clock stands the striking **Pillar of Angels** which, in a very original fashion, represents in fact a Last Judgment because it groups together Christ the Judge, the four Evangelists and the Angels of Judgment, sounding the trumpet. The **Saint-André Chapel**, dating from the late 12th century, can be found at the end of the south transept.

- **Platform of the Cathedral**

Visitors can climb up to the Cathedral's platform and guardhouse. The spiral staircase takes them deep into the building and up to the top, where they'll enjoy amazing views. After climbing up the 330 steps, visitors find themselves 66 metres above the square, with a stunning panoramic view of the city and the surrounding area. When the weather is fine, the view goes all the way to the Vosges and the Black Forest (in Germany).

👁 place du Château

📍 www.oeuvre-notre-dame.org/cathedrale-de-strasbourg/visiter-cathedrale



KEY FEATURES

The Petite France



The Petite France, formerly the millers' and tanners' district, is **the most picturesque part of the old town**, with its narrow roads and half-timbered houses which can be seen in the reflection of the canals.

Its name derives from a hospital from the 16th century which attended to venereal diseases brought over by Strasbourg mercenaries of the Kings of France from the wars in Italy, hence their name zum Französel ("the little French") used by the residents.

The **Place Benjamin Zix** is located at the heart of la Petite France, where the tanners' "ditch" was situated, and which wasn't covered until the 19th century. It later became the Tanner's ditch Street – "rue du Fossé-des-Tanneurs". Most of the houses date back to the 16th and 17th centuries and are generally all structured in the same way; above the ground floor are two half-timbered floors with large sloping roofs opening out onto lofts where animal hides were once dried. One of the most famous is the "**Maison des Tanneurs**", erected in 1572.

• Les Ponts Couverts (the Covered Bridges)

At the edge of the Petite France district are the "Ponts Couverts" (the Covered Bridges). They have kept this name despite the fact that their roofs disappeared during the 18th century. They are overlooked by four towers dating from the 14th century, **remnants of the town's former ramparts** which once guaranteed the independence of the Strasbourg Republic. Immediately after the incorporation of Strasbourg into France in 1681, a new defensive ring was built around the town by Vauban.

• The Vauban Dam

Just a few metres away from the Ponts Couverts, the "Barrage Vauban" (the Vauban Dam - also known as the Great Lock because it made it possible to flood the entire southern edge of the town when needed) was built around 1690 by **Tarade based on plans drawn up by the military engineer Vauban**. An **attractive panoramic terrace** has been created at the top of the building, from where visitors can enjoy an impressive view over the town and its canals.

The Neustadt District



The Neustadt (new city) district, was built from nothing **between 1871 and 1914** after the Prussian annexation, **tripling Strasbourg's surface area** at the time. The aim of this new quarter was to make the city into a showcase for the Reichsland in Alsace-Lorraine. The Neustadt was **designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in July 2017**.

• An unparalleled urban creation

It is a very interesting urban creation composed of large open squares and broad, tree embellished avenues, and of several sites where the monumental blends skilfully with the landscaping (for example the banks of the Ill river with **St. Paul's Church**). Both public buildings and private homes express that certain taste for historical eclecticism (Italian or German neo-Renaissance, neo-Baroque, etc.), among which some very surprising Art Nouveau constructions can be found such as the "**Egyptian house**".

The new residential quarters all have running water, sewage systems and gas - a very rare situation at the time. All around Place de la République, the new political and administrative centre of the city, is a remarkable collection of monuments, among which, in particular, the **Palais du Rhin** (the former residence of the Emperor) and the **National and University Library**. The square extends out towards two elegant, straight avenues, one stretching towards Avenue de la Paix to the north, and the other towards the **Palais Universitaire**, hence the square's nickname as the "**Axis of Power and Knowledge**".