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MONDIAL
WORLD HERITAGE

STRASBOURG, CAPITAL OF CHRISTMAS

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PRESS RELEASE

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THE STRASBOURG CHRISTMAS MARKET: FROM ITS ORIGINS TO OUR TIMES

The oldest Christmas market in France



In the Middle Ages, around 6th December, the "*St. Klausenmarkt*" (St Nicholas Market) was held around the Cathedral, during which presents were handed out to the children.

In the 16th century, Strasbourg became Protestant. In 1570, from the Cathedral pulpit, a preacher denounced the St Nicholas Market as "papist", seeing it as an expression of saint veneration that he deemed extravagant. Swayed by his influence, the city decided to abolish the market.

The market was replaced, the same year, by the "*Christkindelsmärik*" (Market of the Christ Child), which was held a few days before Christmas at the foot of the Cathedral.

In 1830, the market was moved to Place Kléber, and then to Place Broglie in 1870, where it is still held to this day.

In the 1990s, the market expanded throughout the entire city. At present, approximately 300 chalets are set up across various squares at the heart of the city.

This year, the Strasbourg Christmas Market is celebrating its 449th year! With its 4 centuries of tradition, it is the oldest Christmas market in France, and one of the oldest in Europe!



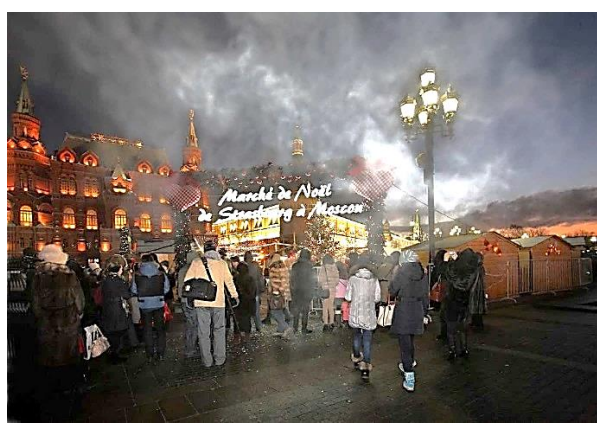
"Strasbourg, Capital of Christmas"

Through its Christmas Market, Strasbourg upholds its centuries-old status as a market town, but it also strives to promote the city's **humanist** values.

And that is what the concept of "**Strasbourg, Capital of Christmas**" – created in 1992 – is all about: proposing, in addition to the traditional markets in the city's streets, **hundreds of events** aiming to carry on the tradition and a spirit of openness, sharing and generosity (concerts in the churches, exhibitions, meetings, actions of solidarity and more).

Internet users all over the world certainly made the right choice by electing, in 2014 and 2015, Strasbourg Christmas Market the "best Christmas Market" in Europe on the E-tourism platform "European Best Destinations". In 2018 it was even listed **1st best Christmas Market in the world** by CNN Travel.

"Strasbourg, Capital of Christmas" takes to the road!



In 2017, thanks to the initiative of the Strasbourg Tourist Office, "Strasbourg, Capital of Christmas" was promoted for the 7th time far away from Alsace, in the Korean capital of Seoul. 275,000 Koreans rushed to get there to discover traditional Alsatian crafts and gastronomic specialities.

Since 2009, it has been successfully featured in Tokyo, Moscow, Beijing and Taipei.

This year, the city of **New-York** will host the famous Strasbourg Christmas Market (6 to 22 Dec.): a clear indication that its reputation is firmly established!



Exceptional illuminations



The atmosphere that prevails in Strasbourg as Christmas approaches is unique.

The city is adorned in its most beautiful finery, the houses are richly decorated... At nightfall, **the magic comes alive**. The windows light up and the streets and squares, all connected by a network of light, give off their different scents amid sparkling decors.

And at the heart of this latticework of light, the Cathedral stands proud, shining like a jewel.

Throughout December, Strasbourg is **one of the most illuminated cities in Europe**. The streets, houses, windows and balconies twinkle with lights and decorations each year more original than the last. This **fairy-tale atmosphere** enchants every visitor.

Three universes, a unique ambiance

Amidst the scents of spices, cinnamon, mulled wine and *bredle*, a profusion of garlands, Christmas decorations, cribs, nativity scene figures, Advent wreaths, traditional pottery, tablecloths, decorations and handmade toys fill the rows of the colourful markets. **Three different universes provide a unique ambiance.**

- **Magical Christmas:**

At the heart of Christmas, discover the great Christmas tree and the Village of Sharing, on place Kléber.

Whether around the remarkable cathedral, with its spire in the clouds and charmingly decorated cabins at its feet, at the historical "Christkindelsmärik" on place Broglie, where Christmas decorations can be purchased, or on the picturesque place Benjamin-Zix, at the heart of Petite France, the Christmas markets, here, convey a particularly magical atmosphere.

Gourmets won't miss the Market of Christmas delicacies of Alsace, where delicious Christmas biscuits called *bredle*, can be found, along with foie gras, beer, white mulled wine... (place du Marché-aux-Poissons and terrasse du Palais Rohan).

- **A Family Christmas:**

In an intimate, calm atmosphere, away from the hustle and bustle, families will find shows and entertainment for children, craft workshops and other events (place Saint-Etienne, place Mathias-Mérian, place du Marché-Gayot).

- **Different Christmas:**

A new kind of Christmas, focusing on the social and solidarity-based economy, with off-the-wall decorations ("Off" Christmas Market, place Grimmeissen) and supporting local producers (Marché des "Irréductibles petits Producteurs d'Alsace", place des Meuniers).

Three different Christmas trees symbolize these three universes: the Great Christmas Tree, place Kléber, a participative Christmas tree, place du Marché Gayot, and an alternative one place Grimmeissen. Every night, at 5, they come to life together.

The great Christmas tree, heart of Christmas

Strasbourg has boasted its traditional Christmas tree for centuries: a manuscript from 1605 describes decorated fir trees placed in Strasbourg's guild houses during Advent.

Every year, a thirty-metre tall Christmas tree is brought to Place Kléber and decorated with colourful ornaments and shimmering lights. This essential symbol of "Strasbourg, Capital of Christmas" is also the [highest decorated Christmas tree in Europe](#).

This year, its decorations will honour the Christmas toys.

Every day at 5 pm, visitors will experience its majestic lights come ablaze and see the wonder. As night falls, the Great Christmas Tree gently awakens with a lights and music scenography, and with it, the entire Place Kléber lights up and comes to life.

The Village of Sharing

Tradition holds that, in Strasbourg, the inhabitants would leave presents for the poor underneath the Great Christmas Tree. So it is only natural that the Village of Sharing, carrying on this tradition, has come to the Great Christmas Tree. Many [charities and humanitarian organisations](#) invite visitors to participate in this joint effort of generosity, bringing a sense of sharing to this wonderful festive time.

Highlight: [The Starry Soup: when culinary art, commitment to quality and solidarity are brought together](#)

The Starry Soup is an initiative run by Humanis (a collective of international associations), offering visitors an original soup created by one of Alsace's leading chefs. Each week in Advent a new chef and a new recipe will allow visitors to indulge and support the solidarity project implemented by the collective.

→ *From 22 November to 24 December*



The Ice-Skating Rink

In a magical setting, next to the Christmas tree, the ice-skating rink offers every year a lot of fun to people whatever their age.

→ *Place Kléber*

The guest country



“Strasbourg, Capital of Christmas” is also an occasion to discover other traditions: every year, a guest country joins in the celebrations and adds to the holiday cheer. This year, Lebanon will be presenting a traditional market with handmade products and culinary specialities, plus concerts and several events.
→ *Place Gutenberg.*

Opening hours:

The Christmas Markets will be open every day from 11 am to 8 pm (on Fridays until 9 pm and on Saturdays until 10 pm). 24 November: 2 pm to 9 pm, 24 December: 11 am to 6 pm, 25 December: Closed.

The markets located on Place de la Cathédrale, Place du Château, Rue de Rohan and Place du Vieux-Marché-aux-Poissons will continue from 26 December to 30 December, inclusive.



For more information on the events:
www.noel.strasbourg.eu



A CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC JOURNEY

Christmas concerts and exhibitions

Christmas concerts



In the streets, in all the chapels, neighbourhood churches and even at the Cathedral, Christmas carols and music ring out, adding a little bit of magic to the holiday season. With orchestras, traditional choirs, gospel choirs and more, in all, these concerts will regale visitors with the beauty of traditional Christmas carols.

→ ***Most of the concerts are free.***

The Nativity scene tour

A Nativity scene tour through the city will exhibit many different scenes.

Discover in particular the [giant nativity scene](#) (dating from 1907) in the cathedral. It depicts five scenes: the Annunciation, the Visit to Elisabeth, the Nativity, the Adoration of the three kings and the Presentation in the Temple.

→ ***Cathedral***



Every weekend, on Place du Château, a [living nativity scene](#) with animals and actors will recount the magic of the night of the Nativity through various performances.

→ ***Place du Château***

Beyond the Christmas Markets...

Strasbourg, a city with 2,000 years of history whose Grande-Ile are German imperial District are listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is particularly well worth a visit during the holiday season. In addition to the city's key sights and monuments, many exhibitions and guided tours organised during the holiday season make for a diverse and enriching stay.

The Cathedral's tapestries



All throughout Advent, the Cathedral, which is the jewel of Strasbourg, is exhibiting in its nave magnificent [17th-century tapestries](#), which it has owned since 1739.

These 14 pieces commissioned by Richelieu tell the story of the life of the Virgin Mary and were originally designed for the choir of Notre-Dame in Paris. They are some of the most prestigious tapestries in all of France.

→ ***From 16 November 2019 to 9 January 2020***

At the museum

- Christmas at the Alsatian Museum



Like every year, the Alsatian Museum will be decked out in all its finery, to present the traditions of Christmas in Alsace and recreate the magical atmosphere of old-fashioned Christmas.

→ *Alsatian Museum. From 23 November 2019 to 5 January 2020*
Every day except Tuesday: 10am-6pm.

- Käthe Kollwitz "I want to act in these times"



This first French retrospective devoted to German artist Käthe Kollwitz provides an opportunity to discover a body of work in all its facets (printmaking, drawing, sculpture) marked by pacifism. The 170 pieces in this exhibition, produced in partnership with the Kollwitz Museum in Cologne, constitute an overview of the artist's work that stretches from the autobiographical to the universal, taking in themes ranging from maternal love to social conflict, the Great War, death and grieving. The artist's best-known series of prints (The Weavers' Revolt, The Peasant War), the drawings, graphic works and self-portraits on display highlight the expressive, poignant quality of Käthe Kollwitz's technique.

→ *Museum of modern and contemporary art. From 4 October to 12 January 2020.*
Every day except Monday: 10am-6pm

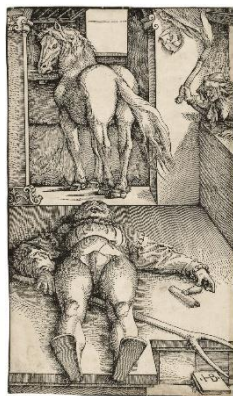
- Focus! Tomi Ungerer and photography



Tomi Ungerer maintained a close, but little known relationship with photography. He used the medium in different ways: as a documentary record, as an art form in its own right or by integrating it in his graphic work. The exhibition includes some 150 works by Tomi Ungerer, covering the period from the late 1950s to the last decade.

→ *Tomi Ungerer Museum. From 15 November to 15 March 2020*
Every day except Tuesday: 10am-6pm.

• Perspectives on Hans Baldung Grien



Following the major retrospective exhibition devoted to Baldung Grien at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, the Œuvre Notre Dame Museum, in collaboration with the Prints and Drawings Cabinet, presents a hanging of prints from the substantial collections in Strasbourg. This painter, with his singular style, spent the major part of his career working in Strasbourg and produced a varied body of work covering a vast range of themes. A themed exhibition entitled "Baldung Grien and his contemporaries, Art and the Reformation" completes the display.

→ *Oeuvre Notre-Dame Museum. From 30 November to 8 March 2020*
Every day except Monday: 10am-6pm

Arts and crafts

Visitors will also be able to enjoy [the best of arts and crafts](#) through an Arts and Crafts show and sale "OZ les métiers d'art". About 60 Alsatian craftsmen will offer their best creations to people looking for original presents or just curious to discover the variety of local talents: jewelry, photography, pottery, fashion design, porcelain painting, glasswork, illumination...

www.fremaa.com

→ *From 13 to 23 December. Every day: 10am-9pm. Free access.*

Discover Strasbourg unique architectural heritage

Discover the rich history and heritage of the city through a guided or audio-guided tour of the old town, with its beautiful cathedral and the picturesque district of *Petite France*.

→ Guided tours in English every Saturday until 14 December at 3 pm. (In German: Friday and Saturday until 14 December and on 28 December at 6 pm).

Departure : Tourist Office, 17 place de la Cathédrale.

Price: €8.50. Reduced price: €5 for youths from 12 to 18 and students. Free for accompanied children under 12.

→ Audio-guided tours: **5 languages available:** French, German, English, Italian and Spanish.

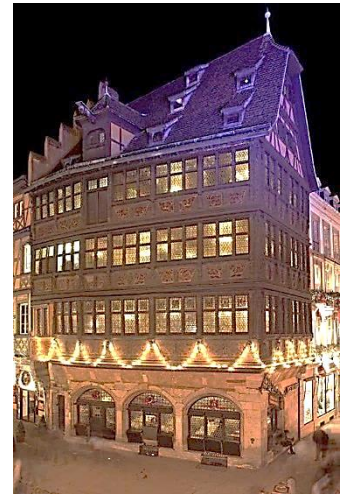
Available 365 days a year at the Tourist Office, 17 place de la Cathédrale, from 9am to 7pm.

Price: €5.50. ½ price: €2.75 for youths from 12 to 18 and students. Free for accompanied children under 12.



Information: +33 (0)3 88 52 28 28 / info@otstrasbourg.fr





Photos : Pascal Bastien, Ville et Eurométropole - Mathieu Bertola, Musées de Strasbourg - Romain Bornert, Paroisse de la Cathédrale - Jérôme Dorkel, Ville et Eurométropole - Christophe Hamm - Ernest Laemmel, Ville et Eurométropole - Bernard Naegelen - Philippe de Rexel - Daniel Schoenen, Upper Rhine Valley - Ville et Eurométropole.

Œuvres :

Käthe Kollwitz

Tomi Ungerer, Sans titre, Photo Mathieu Bertola, Musées de Strasbourg

Hans Baldung Grien, Le palfrenier ensorcelé. Photo : Mathieu Bertola, Musées de Strasbourg.