



A one-hour boat cruise on the River Ill glides past La Petite France, a popular area in Strasbourg.



The Château de St-Ulrich is one of three grand castles in storybook Ribeauvillé, Alsace, France.

Alsace: Strasbourg to Colmar, and Places Between

BY MARK CHESTER

Strasbourg, in eastern France, is a fitting place for a wedding, for the province of Alsace itself is a marriage of two cultures, French and German. Oh, throw in a little Roman, too.

I went there to witness the vows of Samuel, a nice Jewish doctoral candidate in Middle Eastern studies and his bride, M'Brouka, a beautiful Muslim accounting specialist born to Tunisian Bedouins. The couple met in Yemen. Each speaks English, French, and Arabic. They did a lot of translating for their out-of-town guests.

There are many words to describe Strasbourg and points south to Colmar, about an hour's drive away. It is a showcase of centuries-old sites amidst a protected estuary for the endangered Alsatian stork. Here, too, is a fertile land to grow grapes to make world-class Alsatian wines, cabbage for sauerkraut, and barley and hops for beer. Duck farmers tend precious flocks to produce foie gras (liver pate), and dairy farmers make their Munster cheese.

Alsace for Inspiration

Alsace inspires a fertile imagination for marquetry artist, Jean-Charles Spindler and Master Chef Emil Jung. And also remember the early architects of the Gothic cathedrals, Romanesque chapels and feu-

dal castles. There are ancient walled cities, once fortified by the Romans, named Obernai, Kayserberg, Riquewhir and others.

The region combines a fairytale air with business-as-usual routines. Whether it is in Strasbourg center or a village square, people line up at the bakery, or they sip a café and down a croissant on the way to the office.

The three-mile River Ill circles Strasbourg, the capital city of Alsace. Since 1949, Strasbourg is also home to the European Parliament (Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights), with its 46 member-countries that confer on global issues, including human rights and social, business, educational, environmental, and cultural decisions.

The one-hour boat excursion circumventing the Ill, passes the parliament's ultra-modern complex that contrasts with the city's architectural antiquities of its Notre Dame Cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic art completed in 1240.

The boat glides under 14th century bridges and skirts chateaus dating back to the 15th century, as an electric-powered, sleek, silver tram snakes through squares and clean pedestrian streets.

Bronze sculptures honor noteworthy citizens with a namesake plaza, such as Place Gutenberg for the inventor of

“It is often said that the Alsatian character is Germanic in mind, but French in spirit...”

the moveable printing press, or Place Kleber, named for a French Revolution general, which marked the start of the premier 2006 Tour de France, cycling race.

One of Strasbourg's most popular sections is “La Petite France,” the oldest part of this medieval city, with winding, bending cobblestone streets and half-timber buildings. Originally an area that housed working fishermen, tanners and millers, it had become a bit seedy. However, out-of-work tradesmen no longer loiter there.

Extensive gentrification began 50 years ago, converting the run-down area into an international, tourist-friendly attraction. Tanning factories along the river and locks were converted into retail shops, galleries, and fine restaurants, and

were painted in striking blues, reds, and yellows. With red-tiled roofs, and equally colorful shutters, the place is now a picture postcard for strolling musicians playing to the café crowd.

Sitting by the only pedestrian bridge, Pont du Faisan, at the river's narrowest gap, Christoph strikes up Edith Piaf tunes on his accordion during the busy weekends to a captive audience waiting to cross. A professional jazz musician who plays piano and bassoon at night, Christoph chooses the accordion for his bridge gig because “it is romantic and more in harmony with French life.”

Nearby, in tune with the new Strasbourg, is the Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. The terrace of this steel, concrete, and glass structure literally stands out from the surrounding Renaissance period architecture that overlooks the River Ill.

Among its collection of venerable French artists such as Gauguin, Monet, and Renoir, are the works of early 20th century Alsatian sculptor, painter, glass, and furniture designer, Charles Spindler (1865-1938), known more for his marquetry, inlaid veneers of wood fitted together as an ornamental furniture, of which several pieces are in the collection.

The Alsatian marquetry, or “painting with wood,” art form still continues with third-generation grandson, Jean-Charles



Two-Star Michelin Chef Emil Jung at his Au Crocodile Restaurant in Strasbourg.

Spindler in Boersch village not far from Strasbourg, where his grandfather and father, with loyal assistants, worked in their studio complex and in the former abbey of Saint-Leonard.

Jean-Charles, 48, often sits in the private gallery filled with prized artworks of his forebears, seeking “blessings and direction” (approval) from his famous artist relatives. “I'm taking marquetry to other dimensions than my grandfather and father,” said the relaxed, though somewhat pre-occupied Spindler. Unlike their creations of pictorial, pastoral, and architectural Alsatian scenes, Jean-Charles creates modern and abstract designs.

Spindler's one-of-a-kind creations are in museum collections including London's Victoria and Albert, and in Vienna and the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. among public spaces and the corporate headquarters.

Growing up in the foothills of the Voges Mountains and forests, Spindler became fascinated with trees, and their

growth and grain patterns. He still observes and absorbs their differences and unique individuality.

He said he feels an inner energy with trees, sees their organic nature. A man with a good sense of self-effacing humor, he is the first to say that many think that he's “out of his tree.”

According to Spindler, marquetry is like chemistry; it is fusing the right grains, combining their light and dark characteristics to create a piece that works visually and intellectually. And for this spiritual “painter of wood” artist, the right formula is reached when all the woods complement each other that way. This gives him an inner, Zen-type fulfillment.

“For me, wood has an inner force, a life unlike a painting,” explained Spindler. “Each type of tree is a distinct being. Their grains are like brain scans. They reveal a journey over time and show a unique personality and pattern.”

PLEASE SEE ALSACE ON B2

SCHOLTEN
Japanese ART

Scholten Japanese Art
145 West 58th Street, suite 6D
New York, NY 10019
tel. 212.585.0474
fax. 212.585.0475
info@scholten-japanese-art.com
www.scholten-japanese-art.com

STUNNING HOME IN THE SKY

corcoran
corcoran group real estate

455 CPW #21A • Mint 3 BR/3.5 bath 2,083 SF condo features 10' ceilings, custom finishes throughout & floor-to-ceiling windows with Park/city views to GW Bridge. Full service building with pool, parking, gym & more. \$2.995M WEB# 2242768

John Gasdaska | SVP, Associate Broker | 212.821.9138
Jonathan Conlon | VP, Associate Broker | 212.508.7162

The Corcoran Group is a licensed real estate broker. Owned and operated by NRT LLC.

Alsace: Strasbourg to Colmar, and Places Between

ALSACE CONTINUED FROM B1

An Artistic Kind of Life

Design is an integral aspect of Alsatian life. And it is literally reflected, in its registered, trademarked, flute wine bottle. The same bottle is used by all 101 wineries along the 100-mile Alsatian wine route (from its northern gateway at Marlenheim near Strasbourg to Thann south of Colmar).

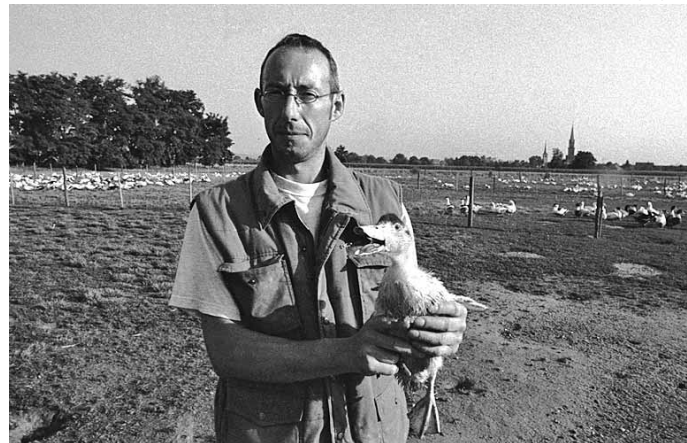
"Our problem is that we never know if we're working or having a good time," jokes Martine Becker-Beck, who is the genie-out-of-the-bottle at Jean Becker Wineries in Zellenberg. Her official title is "Directeur General" of the 400-year-old family business, and Martine is full of energy and fluent in seven languages.

When not welcoming walk-ins in the wine-tasting cellar, Martine takes visitors on walking tours through the family's 1,600 acres of vineyards that overlook the storybook areas of Riquewihr, Beblenheim, Ribeauvillé, and Hunawir.

Of the seven varietal groups in Alsace, six are white (Sylvaner, Pinot Blanc, Riesling, Muscat, Pinot Gris, Gewurztraminer) and the lone red is Pinot Noir. In this valley, the Alsace Plain, with perfect rain, sun and soil, grapes and wine are its heritage and legacy.

Historical Character

Despite so much wine pouring



A duck farmer whose effort provides foie gras in the village of Meistratzheim near Colmar.

A special meal of local sausages is prepared with care.

in the hundreds of tasting cellars throughout these villages, there is a sense of soberness here. "We Alsatians are hardworking, detailed, and disciplined people," Martine said. "We like things to be neat and tidy."

It is often said that the Alsatian character is Germanic in mind, but French in spirit with 60 percent of residents speaking the German-inflected dialect. To understand this concept and the history of Alsace, the Memorial de l'Alsace-Moselle gives a visceral overview, with a state-of-the-art sight and sound display experience.



Set high on a hill in Schirmeck in the Voges Mountains region of Alsace, the memorial is actually a four-story complex that opened to the public in 2005. It recounts the story of tens of thousands of displaced residents from this region, "torn between two cultures and shunted between two countries."

In the space of a single lifetime, from 1870 to 1939, the territory and population of Alsace changed nationalities and mind-set four times—annexed by France, then Germany, back to France, then back to Germany. Today, Alsace is the smallest province of France, with many family names of German origin.

The Alsace drama is told with historic film footage, oversized still photographs, audiotapes of actual events with sounds and speech, documents, memorabilia, staged reproductions of a bunker war room or train depot, and other depictions. People immigrated inland and to southern French regions, or left the country, leaving behind possessions, businesses and family unity to avoid Nazi rule.

It was a strange time for Alsatians. The memorial is emotionally evocative similar to that of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. And its location is thought-provoking, too. Across a valley, visible in the distance, is "le Struthof" Memorial, a German-run labor camp that once housed political prisoners and Jews, many of whom were executed there.



The River Ill skirts chateaus dating back to the 15th century in Strasbourg.



A bucolic view of a vineyard near Colmar in Alsace's wine region.

Colmar, the last French city liberated at the end of WWII, is located just southeast and is the capital of the Alsace wine region.

A smaller version of Strasbourg with one of the largest pedestrian areas in Europe, Colmar is a collection of architecture from the Middle Ages and museums.

This includes the Unterlinden's world art religious painting "Retable d'Issenheim" (by Matthias Grunewald, 1510). Of particular interest is the Auguste Bartholdi

museum, once the family residence, with Bartholdi's to-scale sculptures and drawings of his "Statue of Liberty."

Bartholdi's spirit of freedom pervades throughout Colmar and Strasbourg, the two largest centers of Alsace. They are a microcosm of international culture and regional cuisine, as well as mixed marriages. Alsace is a romantic place for a wedding. It is also the right place to just think about one.

For more information, go to: www.franceguide.com

Mark Chester of Woods Hole, MA, is a freelance photographer/writer. Photographs from his newly published book "Twosomes" are on display at OK Harris, 383 West Broadway, New York, NY, from Jan. 28 through Mar. 3, 2012. For additional exhibitions /book signings: www.markchester-photography.com



A model of the Statue of Liberty in the sculptor's former home, now the Auguste Bartholdi Museum, in Colmar.

GEOGRAPHY GURU

Growing Your Geography Knowledge

Quiz 353

BUSY AIRPORTS:

Atlanta's airport is the busiest in the world, with 89.3 million passengers passing through in 2010. The rest of the top ten list includes three European airports, two Asian airports, and four U.S. airports. How many of these can you name? HINT: New York's three major airports collectively serve more than 100 million passengers annually, but neither JFK nor Newark nor LaGuardia are individually among the top ten.

Answer for Quiz 352:

GREAT LAKE SHOREFRONT:

Only one Canadian province and one American state have shorefront property on four Great Lakes: ONTARIO and MICHIGAN.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA
Getaway

the beach is just the beginning...

call toll free
888.268.4227
www.antigua-barbuda.org



Alsace: Strasbourg to Colmar, and Places Between

BY MARK CHESTER

Strasbourg, in eastern France, is a fitting place for a wedding, for the province of Alsace itself is a marriage of two cultures, French and German. Oh, throw in a little Roman, too.

I went there to witness the vows of Samuel, a nice Jewish doctoral candidate in Middle Eastern studies and his bride, M'Brouka, a beautiful Muslim accounting specialist born to Tunisian Bedouins. The couple met in Yemen. Each speaks English, French, and Arabic. They did a lot of translating for their out-of-town guests.

There are many words to describe Strasbourg and points south to Colmar, about an hour's drive away. It is a showcase of centuries-old sites amidst a protected estuary for the endangered Alsatian stork. Here, too, is a fertile land to grow grapes to make world-class Alsatian wines, cabbage for sauerkraut, and barley and hops for beer. Duck farmers tend precious flocks to produce foie gras (liver pate), and dairy farmers make their Munster cheese.

Alsace for Inspiration

Alsace inspires a fertile imagination for marquetry artist, Jean-Charles Spindler and Master Chef Emil Jung. And also remember the early architects of the Gothic cathedrals, Romanesque chapels and feudal castles. There are ancient walled cities, once fortified by the Romans, named Obernai, Kayserberg, Riquewihir and others.

The region combines a fairytale air with business-as-usual routines. Whether it is in Strasbourg center or a village square, people line up at the bakery, or they sip a café and down a croissant on the way to the office.

The three-mile River Ill circles Strasbourg, the capital city of Alsace. Since 1949, Strasbourg is also home to the European Parliament (Council of Europe, European Court of Human Rights), with its 46 member-countries that confer on global issues, including human rights and social, business, educational, environmental, and cultural decisions.

The one-hour boat excursion circumventing the Ill, passes the parliament's ultra-modern complex that contrasts with the city's architectural antiquities of its Notre Dame Cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic art completed in 1240.

The boat glides under 14th century bridges and skirts chateaus dating back to the 15th century, as an electric-powered, sleek, silver tram snakes through squares and clean pedestrian streets.

Bronze sculptures honor noteworthy citizens with a namesake plaza, such as Place Gutenberg for the inventor of the moveable printing press, or Place Kleber, named for a French Revolution general, which marked the start of the premier 2006 Tour de France, cycling race.

One of Strasbourg's most popular sections is "La Petite France," the oldest part of this



A bucolic view of a vineyard near Colmar in Alsace's wine region.



A model of the Statue of Liberty in the sculptor's former home, now the Auguste Bartholdi Museum in Colmar.

medieval city, with winding, bending cobblestone streets and half-timber buildings. Originally an area that housed working fishermen, tanners and millers, it had become a bit seedy. However, out-of-work tradesmen no longer loiter there.

Extensive gentrification began 50 years ago, converting the run-down area into an international, tourist-friendly attraction. Tanning factories along the river and locks were converted into retail shops, galleries, and fine restaurants, and were painted in striking blues, reds, and yellows. With red-tiled roofs, and equally colorful shutters, the place is now a picture postcard for strolling musicians playing to the café crowd.

Sitting by the only pedestrian bridge, Pont du Faisan, at the river's narrowest gap, Christoph strikes up Edith Piaf tunes on

his accordion during the busy weekends to a captive audience waiting to cross. A professional jazz musician who plays piano and bassoon at night, Christoph chooses the accordion for his bridge gig because "it is romantic and more in harmony with French life."

Nearby, in tune with the new Strasbourg, is the Strasbourg Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art. The terrace of this steel, concrete, and glass structure literally stands out from the surrounding Renaissance period architecture that overlooks the River Ill.

Among its collection of venerable French artists such as Gauguin, Monet, and Renoir, are the works of early 20th century Alsatian sculptor, painter, glass, and furniture designer, Charles Spindler (1865 -1938), known more for his marquetry, inlaid veneers of wood fitted together as an ornamental furniture, of which several pieces are in the collection.

The Alsatian marquetry, or "painting with wood," art form still continues with third-generation grandson, Jean-Charles Spindler in Boersch village not far from Strasbourg, where his grandfather and father, with loyal assistants, worked in their studio complex and in the former abbey of Saint-Leonard.

Jean-Charles, 48, often sits in the private gallery filled with prized artworks of his forebears, seeking "blessings and direction" (approval) from his famous artist relatives.

"I'm taking marquetry to other dimensions than my grandfather and father," said the relaxed, though somewhat pre-occupied Spindler. Unlike their creations of pictorial, pastoral, and architectural Alsatian scenes, Jean-Charles creates modern and abstract designs.

Spindler's one-of-a-kind creations are in museum collections including London's Victoria and Albert, and in Vienna and the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. among public spaces and the corporate headquarters.

Growing up in the foothills of the Voges Mountains and forests,



A one-hour boat cruise on the River Ill glides past La Petite France, a popular area in Strasbourg.

Spindler became fascinated with trees, and their growth and grain patterns. He still observes and absorbs their differences and unique individuality.

He said he feels an inner energy with trees, sees their organic nature. A man with a good sense of self-effacing humor, he is the first to say that many think that he's "out of his tree."

According to Spindler, marquetry is like chemistry; it is fusing the right grains, combining their light and dark characteristics to create a piece that works visually and intellectually. And for this spiritual "painter of wood" artist, the right formula is reached when all the woods complement each other that way. This gives him an inner, Zen-type fulfillment.

"For me, wood has an inner force, a life unlike a painting," explained Spindler. "Each type of tree is a distinct being. Their grains are like brain scans. They reveal a journey over time and show a unique personality and pattern."

An Artistic Kind of Life

Design is an integral aspect of Alsatian life. And it is literally reflected, in its registered, trademarked, flute wine bottle. The same bottle is used by all 101 wineries along the 100-mile Alsatian wine route (from its northern gateway at Marlenheim near Strasbourg to Thann south of Colmar).

"Our problem is that we never know if we're working or having a good time," jokes Martine Beck-



Two-Star Michelin Chef Emil Jung at his Au Crocodile Restaurant in Strasbourg.



A special meal of local sausages is prepared with care.



A duck farmer whose effort provides foie gras in the village of Meistratzheim near Colmar.

er-Beck, who is the genie-out-of-the bottle at Jean Becker Wineries in Zellenberg. Her official title is "Directeur General" of the 400-year-old family business, and Martine is full of energy and fluent in seven languages.

When not welcoming walkers in the wine-tasting cellar, Martine takes visitors on walking tours through the family's 1,600 acres of vineyards that overlook the storybook areas of Riquewihir, Beblenheim, Ribeauville, and Hunawhir.

Of the seven varietal groups in Alsace, six are white (Sylvaner, Pinot Blanc, Riesling, Muscat, Pinot Gris, Gewurztraminer) and the lone red is Pinot Noir. In this valley, the Alsace Plain, with perfect rain, sun and soil, grapes and wine are its heritage and legacy.

Historical Character

Despite so much wine pouring in the hundreds of tasting cellars throughout these villages, there is a sense of sobriety here. "We Alsatians are hardworking, detailed, and disciplined people," Martine said. "We like things to be neat and tidy."

It is often said that the Alsatian character is Germanic in mind, but French in spirit with 60 percent of residents speaking the German-inflected dialect. To understand this concept and the history of Alsace, the Memorial de l'Alsace-Moselle gives a visceral overview, with a state-of-the-art sight and sound display experience.

Set high on a hill in Schirmeck in the Voges Mountains region of Alsace, the memorial is actually a four-story complex that opened to the public in 2005. It recounts the story of tens of thousands of displaced residents from this region, "torn between two cultures and shunted between two countries."

In the space of a single lifetime, from 1870 to 1939, the territory and population of Alsace changed nationalities and mind-set four times—annexed by France, then Germany, back to France, then back to Germany. Today, Alsace is the smallest province of France, with many family names of German origin.

The Alsace drama is told with

historic film footage, oversized still photographs, audiotapes of actual events with sounds and speech, documents, memorabilia, staged reproductions of a bunker war room or train depot, and other depictions. People immigrated inland and to southern French regions, or left the country, leaving behind possessions, businesses and family unity to avoid Nazi rule.

It was a strange time for Alsatians. The memorial is emotionally evocative similar to that of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. And its location is thought-provoking, too. Across a valley, visible in the distance, is "le Struthof "Memorial, a German-run labor camp that once housed political prisoners and Jews, many of whom were executed there.

Colmar, the last French city liberated at the end of WWII, is located just southeast and is the capital of the Alsace wine region. A smaller version of Strasbourg with one of the largest pedestrian areas in Europe, Colmar is a collection of architecture from the Middle Ages and museums.

This includes the Unterlinden's world art religious painting "Retable d'Issenheim" (by Matthias Grunewald, 1510). Of particular interest is the Auguste Bartholdi museum, once the family residence, with Bartholdi's to-scale sculptures and drawings of his "Statue of Liberty."

Bartholdi's spirit of freedom pervades throughout Colmar and Strasbourg, the two largest centers of Alsace. They are a microcosm of international culture and regional cuisine, as well as mixed marriages. Alsace is a romantic place for a wedding. It is also the right place to just think about one.

For more information, go to: www.franceguide.com

Mark Chester of Woods Hole, MA, is a freelance photographer/writer. Photographs from his newly published book "Twosomes" are on display at OK Harris, 383 West Broadway, New York, NY, from Jan. 28 through Mar. 3, 2012. For additional exhibitions/book signings: www.markchesterphotography.com

Sudoku Sudoku Sudoku

2	8		3		1			
		5	7					2
	6			4				
				8	5			
	5	2		7		1	8	
			2	3				
				2			4	
1					6	5		
	2		8			6		3

Fill in the boxes using numbers between 1 and 9 so that each column, each row, and each 3x3 square contain all nine numbers only once.

5	6	9	1	5	8	4	7	2
2	2	5	9	6	4	8	8	1
1	4	8	2	2	9	6	5	5
9	5	4	4	8	2	6	1	8
4	8	1	6	2	9	2	5	8
6	8	2	5	8	1	2	4	9
8	2	8	2	4	5	1	9	6
2	9	6	8	1	2	5	8	4
5	1	4	8	9	6	8	2	2

This week's solution

GEOGRAPHY GURU

Growing Your Geography Knowledge

Quiz 353

BUSY AIRPORTS:

Atlanta's airport is the busiest in the world, with 89.3 million passengers passing through in 2010. The rest of the top ten list includes three European airports, two Asian airports, and four U.S. airports. How many of these can you name? HINT: New York's three major airports collectively serve more than 100 million passengers annually, but neither JFK nor Newark nor LaGuardia are individually among the top ten.

Answer for Quiz 352:

GREAT LAKE SHOREFRONT:

Only one Canadian province and one American state have shorefront property on four Great Lakes: ONTARIO and MICHIGAN.