

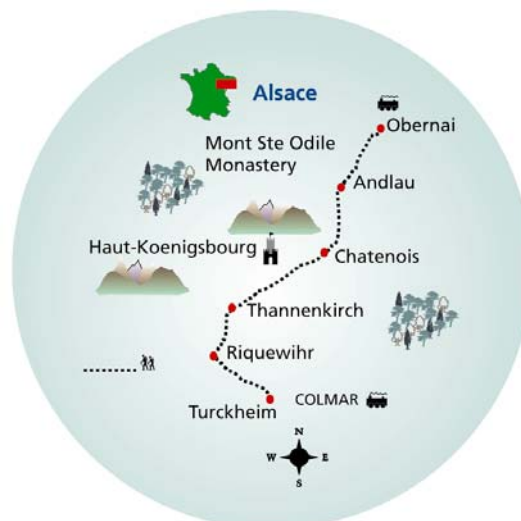
France: Alsace

Tour code: JVO

Revised: October 08

Attractive mediaeval walled villages await, as you walk through the vineyards and rolling hills of Alsace, with their ornate houses-coloured by flower filled wooden balconies, old fortifications and lots of charming landscapes and sites of historic interest. There are a number of castles (Haut Koenigsbourg, Ribeaupierre, Ramstein and Ortembourg) and old abbeys (Mont Odile) along the trail. A good area for lovers of food and wine: Sylvaner, Riesling, Gewurztraminer, and Pinot Blanc are all produced in this region and there are many opportunities to sample them at caves along the route. The walking occurs at altitudes of between 400m and 760m.

This route is unquestionably the finest available on the flanks of the Vosges Massif. Between the mediaeval village of Turckheim (where you can still find the last nightwatchmen in France), the fortified villages of Dambach, with its mediaeval centre and Obernai: you will visit the villages of Niedermorschwihr, Ammerschwihir, Kaysersberg with its castle overlooking the plain of Alsace and the village which retains most traces of its rich history, Thannenkirch. Riquewihir has a mediaeval centre and a perfectly preserved double city wall. There are fortifications dating from the 13th and 14th centuries at Ribeauville and Ottrott. You will climb to the summits of Steinkoepfel, Schaentzel, Odilienberg or Mont Saint Odile (an ancient monastery perched proudly on a rocky spur). You can explore the 12th century fortresses of Haut Koenigsbourg, Haut Ribeaupierre (overlooking the village of Ribeauville), Ramstein and Ortembourg.



Travel Information

Season: Any date April to end of October.

Arrival: Between 4p.m and 6pm on first day.

First hotel: At Turckheim 5 km from Colmar (car parking available free of charge).

Travel: Flights to Strasbourg, from London City with Air France; or self-drive with Le Shuttle to Calais then a 623km drive to Strasbourg; or taking the train via Paris to Strasbourg.

The starting point of the tour is at Turckheim. This is a train and bus journey of about 1 to 1.5 hours from Strasbourg.

Alternatively, Strasbourg can be reached by TGV train from Paris. There are about 4 services per day and the journey time is 4 to 5 hours.

The onward journey by train, from Strasbourg to Colmar takes around 30 minutes and from Colmar to Turckheim another 12 minutes. You can visit Rail's Europe website at www.sncf.com

There is no train service between Colmar and Turckheim on Sundays, but there is a limited SNCF bus service. There is also a more frequent urban bus service between Colmar and Turckheim.

Nearest Airport: Strasbourg. Then airport bus to Strasbourg rail station (30min) and train to Colmar (45

mins) then bus to Turckheim (10mins); Colmar is about 5 to 6 hours by train from Paris Gare de l'Est or Brussels.

End of Tour: Obernai after breakfast. Direct train dep Obernai to Strasbourg throughout the day, journey time approx. 30-40 minutes. Please check times of trains locally.

Level of Difficulty

Fitness: This moderately graded walk should present no difficulties for anyone in reasonable condition and accustomed to walking in hilly terrain.

Day Stages: In the region of 15km/9.3 miles to 20km/16 miles per day with average altitude gains of 550m. 4 to 6 hours walking per day.

Waymarks: The trails are well waymarked.

General Information

Baths: it is not normal for your room to have a bath, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels/guesthouses may have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests, but in the main it is showers.

Breakfast: in countries such as France/Italy/Spain/Greece etc are usually coffee and toast/croissant, if you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. It is important for you to tell us if you have any

dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

Single Supplements: are payable on most of our tours.

The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

Language: When travelling in less frequented areas you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. Remember you have left home to find things different. Buy a phrase book and try to learn a bit of French!

Luggage: When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage will have been taken to your room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take it up to your room.

Accommodation & Meals

This is on a half board basis (evening meal and breakfast) in hotels of 2 and 3 *** category with private facilities. One hotel is a listed historic monument, and another dates back to the Renaissance. All are hotels of distinctive character.

Please note that if the hotels on nights 1, 2 and 3 are full then a guesthouse located very close by will be used.

Picnic lunches: Are not included in the tour cost but are available from hotels at a cost of approx. 10 Euros. We indicate in our route notes where there are suitable restaurants or cafes for lunch stops, or recommend you carry food, if there are none convenient.

□ **Night 1:** Turckheim. This is one of the prettiest 2* inns in Alsace. It has typical Alsatian decor in the Renaissance style. The rooms are very comfortable and the atmosphere is friendly. The hotel offers traditional cooking with very good wines. The hotel bridges the present and past.

□ **Night 2:** Riquewihr. Extremely comfortable, modern 3* hotel with a sauna and terrace. It is situated at the gates of the village and has been chosen for its quietness and cleanliness. Evening meals are arranged in a typical restaurant in the village.

□ **Night 3:** Thannenkirch. A flower bedecked modern building in a mountain village, but built in the traditional style. 48 rooms with ensuite facilities and phone in room. 3*. The welcome is warm and there is a good restaurant. It boasts a cellar bar where you can sample excellent Alsatian wines.

□ **Night 4:** Chatenois. A very small, family-run 2* hotel. Comfortable rooms, traditional style. A beautiful dining room. A delightful small typical Alsace village.

□ **Night 5:** Andlau. One of two different 3* hotels in this large village, pleasantly situated at the mouth of a narrow valley with vineyards and forest on the slopes above.

□ **Night 6:** Obernai. Another typical 2* Alsatian hotel, all rooms are very comfortable with en suite facilities.

Outline Itinerary

□ **Day 1:** Arrive in Turckheim, a mountain village set above the vineyards. A ski resort in winter.

□ **Day 2:** 14kms/9 miles, 676m ascent/4 to 5 hours, via Katzenthal, Ammerschwir, and Kaysersberg. We descend at the end of the day through forest and vineyards to Riquewihr, a medieval museum of a town with fortifications dating back to the 13th century. Many of the old buildings have dovecots and are built round central courtyards.

□ **Day 3:** 11 kms/7 miles, 460m ascent/4 to 5 hours, via Hunawirh, Ribeauville, the 3 chateaux of Ribeaupierre and Dassenberg mountain. We enjoy wide views today over the plains of Alsace as we climb to 645 metres past the ruined chateaux of St. Ulrich and Gisberg to the small mountain village of Thannenkirch.

□ **Day 4:** 12.5 kms, 257m ascent/ 4 to 5 hours walking, via Haut Koenigsbourg, Vick (the monkey mountain). There is a wonderful chateau at Haut Koenigsbourg with panoramic views of the valleys below. There is also the chance to visit the Eagle Centre before descending through the vineyards to Chatenois.

□ **Day 5:** 19kms, 575m ascent/6 hours walking. Chatenois to Andlau, via Ortembourg Chateau and on to Dambach, a medieval town surrounded by ramparts. The route then goes on to Neue Matten, Bernardville, it takes us along wooded paths and through vineyards until you reach your overnight stop at Andlau.

□ **Day 6:** 20km, 693m ascent/6 hours. Andlau to Obernai. From Andlau we start by walking through Mittelbergheim, dominated by the ruins of the Chateau d'Andlau and Chateau Landsberg. From here it is hilly walking via Mont St. Odile. Some steepish climbs today offering fine views. You climb to St. Odile - a monastery situated on a rocky promontory. You descend to Ottrot before walking on to Obernai.

□ **Day 7:** Depart Obernai after breakfast. 40 minutes by train to Strasbourg.