

Strasbourg a French city of bicultural streets



Rick Steves

Nestled on the Rhine across the border from Germany, Strasbourg offers your best chance to experience the urban side of France's Alsace region. Each time I walk its people-friendly streets, I'm struck by how progressive and livable the city feels, with generous space devoted to pedestrians and bikes, sleek trams and meandering waterways. With delightful big-city energy and a name that means "city of streets," Strasbourg is the ultimate crossroads.

While the city dodged serious damage in both world wars, Strasbourg has a dizzying history. It was hit hard during the Franco-Prussian War, becoming part of Germany in 1870. After that, there was a period of harsh Germanization, followed by extreme Frenchification after World War I, a brutal period under Nazi rule during World War II, and then the strong need to purge all things German after 1945.

Now, while probably more definitively French than it's ever been, the city exudes a bicultural gentleness: Street signs are commonly bilingual — in the Alsatian dialect as well as French — and you'll find unique blends of Franco-Germanic culture, architecture and ambiance all over.

After World War II, Winston Churchill called for a union of European nations, with the goal of winning an enduring peace by weaving the economies of France and Germany together. Given that Strasbourg had changed hands between Germany and France so many times, it seemed logical that it be a capital of what would eventually become the European



Strasbourg's Petite France quarter was slated for redevelopment but was saved by a progressive French minister of culture in the 1970s. **RICK STEVES**

Union. And today, Strasbourg shares administrative responsibilities of the European Parliament, along with Brussels (the EU's main capital) and Luxembourg City (where the Parliament's secretariat is housed).

Most visitors come to Strasbourg to see its massive Notre-Dame cathedral — and for good reason. I've stood in front, craned my neck way back ... and still failed to fit it into my camera's viewfinder. The delicate Gothic style of the cathedral (begun in 1176, not finished until 1439) is the work of a succession of about 50 master builders. The cathedral somehow survived the French Revolution, the Franco-Prussian War, World War I, and World War II. When today's travelers see its vast edifice, their jaws drop. Imagine the

impact it had on medieval pilgrims.

An earlier church burned down in the 12th century, and Strasbourg was so wealthy that it rebuilt très fancy — with a lacy, innovative design — and tall (at 466 feet, its spire was the world's tallest until the mid-1800s). A matching second tower was planned but was never built due to concern over stress on the foundations. You'll see the famous spire from all over town.

Inside, visitors can enjoy marvelous stained glass — 80% is original, surviving from the 12th to 15th centuries. The cathedral's windows traveled a lot during World War II: hidden by the French in southwestern France first; then carted to northern Germany by the Nazis; and finally saved and returned

by the Monuments Men (British and American troops dedicated to returning art to its rightful place after 1945).

Nearby is the wonderful Strasbourg Historical Museum, which sweeps through the city's complex and compelling history. Here, you'll learn how Strasbourg was once fortified with concentric walls and 80 towers, which were then destroyed by French King Louis XIV in the 1680s.

The museum also has an exhibit about Johannes Gutenberg, who worked here from 1434 to 1444; a section about the French Revolution; and a description of how the Prussians rebuilt the city after destroying parts of it in 1870, ushering in its glory days (1880-1914). The saddest section details life here in the Nazi years, and

the happy finale explains Strasbourg's leadership role in the EU.

All that EU action takes place in a modern complex northeast of the city center. While a handful of institutions are housed here, the most important is the European Parliament — where elected representatives from all 27 EU countries gather regularly in a vast semicircular room called the Hemicycle. The complex is free to visit, and if Parliament is in session, it's a great way to watch European democracy in action.

End your day in Strasbourg's popular Petite France quarter. It's here where the river splits into several canals with weirs, a lock and a swing bridge — all reminders of a time when trade came by river and watermills powered

local industry. The district was once slated for redevelopment, but was saved by a progressive French minister of culture in the 1970s. Today, these fine half-timbered buildings are protected and give us a sense of this pre-electricity world.

The history of Strasbourg — the capital city of the political pawn zone between France and Germany — is fascinating to contemplate. With its high-powered and trendy bustle and hybrid culture, it's one of France's most intriguing cities.

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CELEBRITY TRAVEL

Star often roams far from home in Texas

By **Jae-Ha Kim**
Tribune Content Agency

Born and raised in Texas, filmmaker-actor Tanner Beard lives in Fort Worth, where he films many of his projects.

"It's proven to be such a film-friendly spot," said Beard, 41. "My family has a ranch just outside of Fort Worth close to the Mineral Wells area and it's become like a back lot to explore ideas and stories for my company, Silver Sail Entertainment."

Beard appears in "Landman," which just wrapped Season 2 on Paramount+.

This interview with Beard has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: Where do you film "Landman"?

A: "Landman" films mostly in and around Fort Worth, with many establishing shots in Midland and other parts of west Texas where the story takes place. It was really incredible filming because we were on an actual oil rig just outside of Granbury. I grew up in Snyder and worked in oil for my dad while I was in high school, so this was really awesome to go and portray this character that hit so close to home. But the Fort Worth area has been great.

Q: What else have you filmed in Fort Worth?

A: The last four movies I've done have been filmed in and around this area — "Daisy," a rodeo movie, is due out (this year). "Once Upon a Time in Texas," which is a western I wrote and directed. And a movie we've made over the course of eight years and, sadly, but with the honor of being Michael Madsen's last film,



"Landman" actor Tanner Beard said he would love to explore filming in Alaska. **SILVER SAIL ENTERTAINMENT**

"Blood Behind Us." And "One in a Million," which we (recently) wrapped. So thank you, Fort Worth.

Q: You travel so much for work. What makes you still want to travel during your free time?

A: Ah, I love to travel and have been on the go since I turned 21. I think we're so lucky to be able to jump on an airplane and go anywhere so quickly. Also, my sweetheart, Rachel, and our daughter, Harley, all love to take spontaneous trips. Being a storyteller, you need to live a lot of life to do that, so I love it.

Q: If you could pick a location to film a project that's not Fort Worth, where would it be?

A: Oh man, I've always wanted to shoot something in Alaska ... for its beauty and vast expansion. Maybe go shoot a new (version of) "White Fang" or something that I grew up watching.

Q: What locations did you shoot in for "Egypte IV: Double Agenda"?

A: That was such a fun experimental shoot. We went to Egypt and shot around the pyramids, which was epic. Also, places like Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Canada, France and so many others. But Egypt really just knocked our socks off. The amount of history and mystique was just a cut above anywhere else we went filming. And also, this

being a small, silly comedy series, it just made every second of what we were doing that much more fun and adventurous.

Q: Do you have any upcoming trips planned?

A: I have a trip to Japan coming up soon in the spring to go see my brother-in-law. Rachel and I plan on taking our daughter with us and that's something I'm really looking forward to. I wish I had something to shoot there, but it'll also be nice to kick back, be a tourist and enjoy time with my family.

Q: Have you visited places for work that were so nice that you went back there?

A: Spain. We shot a movie called "6 Bullets to Hell" in the Almeria area and have gone back many times.

Q: What untapped destination should people know about?

A: Ketchikan, Alaska, is a really special spot. That's my secret favorite place.

Q: If you've ever gone away for the holidays, which was the best trip?

A: Ah, New Year's 2024 was so epic. A few of us traveled to Banff, Canada, and that may have taken the cake for best trip ever. My good friend, Alix Van Aernam, and I even shot some scenes on snowmobiles and dog sleds for "Egypte" when we were up there.

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Austrian ticket change request seems to get lost in translation

By **Christopher Elliott** | King Features Syndicate

My wife and I booked business-class tickets to Cairo through Austrian Airlines and Lufthansa for a tour of Egypt. The tour operator canceled the trip after the conflict in the Middle East.

When I called Austrian to rebook, the agent misunderstood that the tour was canceled, and they canceled our booking.

The airline only refunded \$108 instead of rebooking my \$4,352 ticket, but they handled my wife's identical ticket perfectly.

Austrian insists that the refund is "irreversible." Can you help?

— *Randal Marchessault, Maple Grove, Minnesota*

A: This sounds like a real "lost in translation" moment, and it's one reason why you should always handle ticket changes online, where there's less chance that someone will misunderstand you. But still, there's no such thing as "irreversible" — even in the airline industry.

Here's what should have happened: When you called Austrian Airlines to explain that your tour was canceled because of a regional conflict, the agent should have confirmed your intent. (Did you want to cancel for a refund or rebook for future travel?) Then the agent should have rebooked you as requested. Airlines are supposed to have consistent policies, especially for flexible, changeable tickets like the one that you had.

I'm shocked that the agent rebooked one of your tickets properly but

not the other. Based on this alone, your request should have prompted a review of your call to see what went wrong. The email correspondence you provided — and my subsequent communication with Austrian — suggests that there was no high-level review of your case.

If Austrian canceled your flight against your wishes, it owes you a full refund under Department of Transportation rules.

You might have been able to prevent this by asking for an immediate written confirmation of your ticket change. A quick review and escalation to one of Austrian's executives might have turned this around for you.

I contacted Austrian Airlines on your behalf, and I have to confess — I quickly concluded that this was more than just a "lost in translation" issue. The airline continued to ask

for your documentation, which you had already sent them. This appeared to be an airline that had made a mistake, then doubled down on it. The representatives understood what you were saying.

After you made several attempts to send Austrian the information about the improperly canceled flight, it finally credited you the full \$4,352.

There's a lesson for all of us here. The next time you have to make a ticket change, stay off the phone if you can. Because if a mistake happens, chances are, you will be the one to pay for it.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.