



ADVENTURE TRAVEL
VOLUNTEER-LED EXCURSIONS WORLDWIDE

Trekking France's Alsace region: a cultural hiking adventure

May 5, 2018 – May 19, 2018 (trip# 1808)



The medieval wine growing village of Riquewihr

OVERVIEW: Join us for a wonderful fourteen day journey hiking past vineyards, into historic medieval towns, and along the crest of mountains dotted with impressive castles and churches. The Alsace region is nestled between the France's beautiful Vosges Mountains and the border with Germany. This charming area, which is a combination of both cultures, is known for its fine wine and gourmet cuisine. We will walk primarily on well-maintained long distance trails and ascend to ridges with fortresses and panoramic views of the Rhine Basin and the Black Forest.

In the evenings we will stay in quaint villages with traditional architecture featuring “half timbered” houses decked with brilliantly colored flowers. We will sleep in two and three star hotels of local character and enjoy traditional Alsatian cuisine. Our luggage will be transported from hotel to hotel so we can hike comfortably with just day packs.



A typical street scene in an Alsatian village

We start our trip in the historic city of Strasbourg, where the city center was the world’s first location to be classified as a UNESCO world heritage site. Today the seat of many pan-European institutions, Strasbourg has many areas of historical interest including the highest cathedral tower in France and districts where ancient houses lean over narrow cobbled streets. Late in the afternoon we will take a short train ride to Saverne where we will start our ten day trek. Highlights of our journey include Mont Saint-Odile, a stunning convent perched on the side of a mountain, the Chateau du haut Koenigsbourg, a 12th century mountain fortress castle, the medieval villages of Obernai and Riquewihr, and wine tasting in Kayserberg, a leading wine growing town.

In addition to all the wonderful scenery and culture, we may see storks and their huge nests. They migrate from Africa and come to Alsace in the late spring, often building nests on church towers. Near the end of our trek we will visit a center devoted to the return of storks to this area.

Our traveling arrangements will facilitate a unique exposure to this remarkable area:

- Extensive exploration on foot to fully explore the sites and to immerse ourselves in the region's splendor. We will be walking/hiking 7 to 14 miles each day at a moderate pace. Daily elevation gains go from under 1,000' to ~2,700'.
- Small group travel - this allows us to fully experience the landscape and its treasures, enjoy hassle-free travel arrangements, stay in small, local hotels and dine in intimate village restaurants.

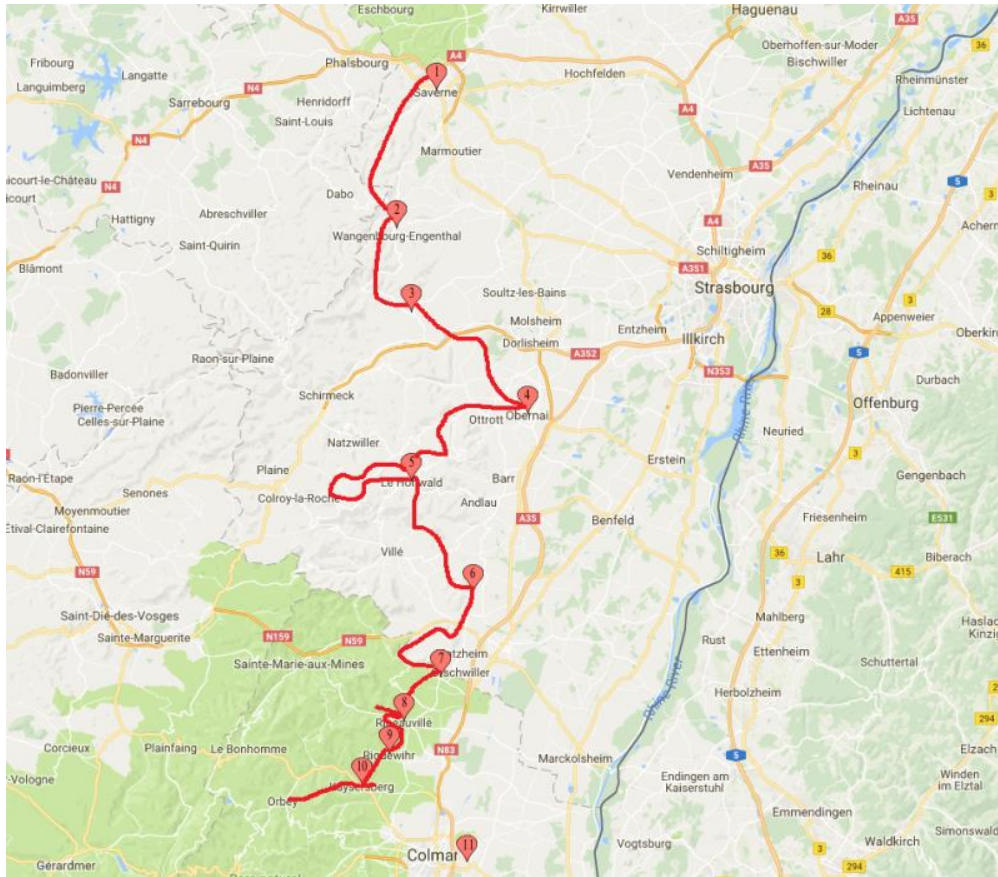
PHOTOGRAPHY: For those interested, this excursion can involve more than a splendid hiking trip. The co-leader Dan Stone is a talented, semi-professional photographer whose photographs have been exhibited and published many places (see links at the end of this document). Among other honors, he won the AMC photo contest three times.

There is absolutely no requirement that you be interested in photography, or even bring a camera, and this is not a class or workshop. First, and foremost, it is a hiking trip through beautiful countryside. However, if you are a seasoned photographer or a budding novice, or just curious, Dan will share his perspective on any of your photographic interests. Often Dan will head out before breakfast with the early risers who want to join him for picture-taking in the flattering morning light. In addition, we may set aside a few evenings to share photos and exchange tips and critiques over a glass of wine. The goal in these discussions is to learn from each other, and hopefully improve our ability to see with a "photographer's eye".

TRIP DETAILS



Map of France with our starting location



Map of the Alsace showing our trekking route and overnight lodging locations

ITINERARY

Day 1 (Saturday May 5) - Depart US

Day 2 (May 6) - Arrive Strasbourg. Travel to Strasbourg on your own. We will meet in the late afternoon and then have a welcome dinner.

Day 3 (May 7) – Tour of Strasbourg then take a train to Saverne. In the morning we will explore Strasbourg with a local guide. We will visit the Notre-Dame Cathedral and climb its massive tower for sweeping views of the Rhine River. We will also walk through the historic center with its winding maze of canals and old streets lined by perfectly maintained half-timbered houses with flower-bedecked balconies. Along the river we will see landscaped tree-lined banks and beautiful covered bridges. In the late afternoon we will take a 20 minute train ride to Saverne where we will have dinner together. Saverne is the capital of the Northern Vosges, a pretty little town in its own right dominated by a huge and elegant red sandstone chateau. (overnight in Saverne)



Strasbourg, France

Day 4 (May 8) - Hike from Saverne to Wangenbourg. From Saverne, we will walk to fortress Haut-Barr. These ruins sit on sandstone cliffs and are connected by a wooden bridge reachable by a steep and high steel staircase. It is an intriguing site with a great view of the surrounding countryside and other castles in the distance. We will then follow the ridge from fortress to fortress until we reach Wangenbourg. From the ridge there are unsurpassed views of the Rhine basin and Strasbourg, and when the weather is clear, the Black Forest. Approximately 6 hours walking, 11.7 miles, ascent 2693 feet, descent 1834 feet. (overnight in Wangenbourg)

Day 5 (May 9) – Hike from Wangenbourg to Oberhaslach. Today we climb Schneeberg to about 3000 feet. We will see the ruins of the 13th century Chateau du Niedeck castle and the waterfall below before heading down the Valley of Oberhaslach. Approximately 4 ½ hours walking, 8.2 miles, ascent 1813 feet, descent 2397 feet. (overnight in Oberhaslach)

Day 6 (May 10) – Hike from Oberhaslach to Obernai We follow the GR5 long distance hiking trail to Urmatt, where we cross the valley of Bruch and continue walking to Grendelbruch. Then we go over the Heidenkopf (2300 feet) and continue into Obernai. Obernai is a Michelin two star town that has a picturesque old section with narrow streets and gabled houses partly surrounded by 12th century ramparts. Approximately 6 hours walking, 11.8 miles, ascent 795 feet, descent 1089 feet. (overnight in Obernai, dinner not included)



The Vosges mountains landscape

Day 7 (May 11) – Hike from Obernai – Le Hohwald. Today we visit the famous Abbey Sainte Odile, protected since the 12th century by many fortresses. The convent has a spectacular setting and great views, with pink cliffs rising out of the forest. We start the day with a short bus ride to the town of Ottrott then hike to the Abbey. We will then continue on a long distance hiking trail to Le Hohwald. Approximately 5 hours hiking, 9.3 miles, ascent 2172 feet, descent 1223 feet. (overnight in Le Hohwald)



Chapel ceiling at Mont Sainte Odile

Day 8 (May 12) Rest day and optional hike to Champ du Feu. We stay in Le Hohwald a second night. There are optional hikes to either Neuntelstein, an interesting rock promontory with a panoramic view of the surrounding forests, or Champ du Feu with a vast panorama that includes the Vosges Mountains, the Plaine d'Alsace, the Black Forest and the Swiss Alps. There are local walks available as well. The Champ du Feu hike is approximately 5 hours walking, 8.3 miles, ascent 1732 feet, descent 1739 feet. (overnight in Le Hohwald)

Day 9 (May 13) Hike from Le Hohwald to Dieffenthal. Departing Le Hohwald, we reach the Ungersberg pass, site of the 1493 peasants' rebellion. After then summiting Mt. Ungersberg itself we pass by the Chateaux of Bernstein and Ortenbourg, both ancient defensive structures built ~1000 years ago. Approximately 7 hours walking, 13.5 miles, ascent 2273 feet, descent 3368 feet. (overnight in Dieffenthal)

Day 10 (May 14) Hike from Dieffenthal to St. Hippolyte. We visit Chateau du Haut Koenigsburg, a 12th century mountain fortress castle with great views overlooking the Plaine d'Alsace. Approximately 6 hours walking, 11.5 miles, ascent 1778 feet, descent 1667 feet. (overnight in St. Hippolyte)



Chateau du Haut Koenigsburg

Day 11 (May 15) Hike from St. Hippolyte to Ribeauville. We hike to Ribeauville, then have an optional hike leading from the top of the town into the Vosges Mountains to the ruins of the Saint-Ulrich castle and to Chateau du Girsberg both with sweeping views. This is a round trip of about 3 hours over 3 miles with 1000 feet of climbing. Ribeauville is a picturesque village at the foot of the Vosges Mountains, and is renowned for its Alsatian white wines. A semi-pedestrian street lined with half-timbered houses runs through the entire town. Approximately 4 hours

walking, 4.8 miles, ascent 631 feet, descent 623 feet. (not including optional hike). (overnight in Ribeauville, dinner not included)

Day 12 (May 16) Hike from

Ribeauville to Riquewihr.

We take a short walk to the charming village of Hunawihr with its beautiful church surrounded by a 14th century wall. Near Hunawihr we will visit a center devoted to the return of storks to this area. Then we proceed to Riquewihr, a three star Michelin village, considered by many to be the prettiest of the many small towns that dot the countryside. It is a great place to walk and explore. After we arrive we will have some free time to fully appreciate this gem, or



Nesting storks

visit one or two local vineyards to sample their wines. Approximately 2 hours walking, 3 miles, ascent 370 feet, 260 descent feet. (overnight in Riquewihr)



Day 13 (May 17) Riquewihr to

Kaysersberg via the Val d'Orbey -

As we have seen from our previous explorations together, the Vosges Mountains have been a French/German frontier for over a thousand years. Today we will see a 20th century manifestation of their importance by visiting the Val d'Orbey, the site of this region's most important engagements between the French and Germans during World War I. We begin the day with a walk (3.3 miles + 803', -931') from Riquewihr to Kaysersberg. From there we take a public bus to the Val d'Orbey. We will visit the World War I museum and then take a guided tour of the nearby well-preserved trench works. After lunch we will traverse the Vosges mountains

(5.9 miles +1,137', -1828') to arrive back in Kaysersberg. (overnight Kaysersberg)



Museum of Dr. Albert Schweitzer

Day 14 (May 18) Explore Kayserberg and transfer to Colmar. In the morning we individually reconnoiter Kayserberg, one of the finest wine growing regions in Alsace. Among the points of specific interest is Dr. Albert Schweitzer's residence, now a museum. He is most known for his medical missionary work in Africa and theological and philosophical writings. He was also an accomplished musician. After lunch we walk to the nearby village of Kientzheim for a winery tour and wine museum located in a castle. Later we take a bus to Colmar, the

third largest city in Alsace, one that still retains its quaint medieval charm. (overnight Colmar)

Day 15 (Saturday May 19) In the morning we will take a private guided tour of Colmar. After a final lunch together (not included) we will reluctantly conclude our Alsatian adventure. Good train connections are available to Strasbourg and from there to major airports such as Paris' Charles de Gaulle, Basel, Zurich, and Munich.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE AND EXPECTATIONS

You should have a keen interest in cultural explorations and enjoy moderate - strenuous hiking. On an average day we will walk for 5-8 hours and cover 7-14 miles. Daily elevation gain ranges from 800' – to 2,700'. You should recognize that you may find yourself in closer quarters or be less comfortable than you are used to at home. You should make it a priority to help others on the trip and contribute to their having a great time. If you do that, you will have a great time.



Relaxing together after a great day on the trail

When you participate in this activity, you should be in proper condition for the challenges outlined in this prospectus and equipped with appropriate gear. You should always be aware of the risks involved and conduct yourself accordingly. You are ultimately responsible for your own safety. Prior to your acceptance as a participant in this trip, you will be asked to discuss your capabilities and experience with us. We may also request references to confirm your fitness level and suitability for participating in trip activities.

While the itinerary in this prospectus is what the leaders have planned at the time of writing, various factors may require changes for reasons of safety, transportation or lodging availability, and unforeseeable circumstances (such as weather considerations, natural disasters in areas to be visited, or recommendations of governmental agencies). The leaders reserve the right to make such changes as necessary, both before and during the trip.

It may happen on any trip that a trip member is or becomes unable to participate in one or more of the planned activities. Leaders in their sole judgment have the right and obligation to refuse participation in any activity to any group member for reasons of safety, whether it be of the group or of the individual. Illness, injury or lack of proper gear or fitness for a particular activity are examples of some conditions that might result in a participant's being unable to perform one or more activity. Leaders may try to find a substitute activity for the trip member, but this may not always be possible.

ACCOMMODATIONS

We will spend 12 nights in hotels, two persons/room. The hotels will provide twin-bedded (i.e. two separate mattresses) rooms. In Europe twin beds are sometimes immediately side-by-side in a single bed-frame, while in the US twin beds are in separate bed-frames and are separated by a few inches.

SAFETY AND RISKS

Participant safety is a high priority for all AMC-sponsored events. Participants should be aware that there are risks associated with outdoor adventure activities, including but not limited to adverse weather and environmental conditions, remote locations of our trips, and transportation in vehicles or on foot. Aside from any personal medical problems, participants should be aware of the possibilities of bug bites, dehydration, sun burn and other heat or cold related problems. You should regularly use sun screen, take care to be adequately hydrated and bring water on all day trips. Please carefully read and sign the AMC Participant Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks and Release and Indemnity Agreement.

PRICE

The trip price is \$2,725 for AMC members. Non-members can join for \$50, and get the same price. This will cover the following items:

- Lodging, breakfasts and dinners (with the exception of two dinners on your own on days six and nine) from the welcome dinner in Strasbourg through breakfast on the last day of the trip
- All transportation between Strasbourg and Colmar
- Entrance fees to all sites

- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage

All lunches, trail snacks, beverages (e.g. coffee/tea, mineral water, alcohol, etc) and other personal expenses are NOT included except for the wine tasting on the last day. Your transportation to Strasbourg and return from Kaysersberg is your responsibility. The trip leaders will advise you as much as you need and will facilitate group travel. The most affordable way to get to Strasbourg is to fly to Paris then take a train. At this time, we estimate that the price for a round trip between the east coast and Strasbourg, France will be ~ \$700. With transfer time it takes about four hours to get from the Paris airport to Strasbourg via the train.

The final trip cost may be adjusted in accordance with the best final arrangements we can make and currency fluctuations. Any savings we achieve, as well as any cost increases, will be passed back to you. Our cost estimates are conservative, and so a refund is considerably more likely than a price increase.

AMC Adventure Travel trips are run on a non-profit basis. Leaders are volunteers who are not compensated except for their travel costs associated with the trip. The advertised trip cost includes a surcharge which goes toward the administrative expenses of the AMC Adventure Travel program.

The trip fee includes emergency medical and evacuation insurance coverage, which is required by the AMC. It does *not* include insurance for travel delay, interruption, or cancellation, or for baggage loss. If the possibility of such problems concerns you, individual travel insurance is suggested. The AMC has a recommended vendor whose material will be sent to you if your application is accepted.

Any unspent funds will be refunded to the participants. If the trip's financial position is strong enough at the start, the leaders may make partial refunds during the trip, in the form of payments toward some meals and/or free time activities which would otherwise not be included

REGISTRATION and CANCELLATION

To apply, you must complete and submit the application, confidential medical form, supplemental medical form (if appropriate) and acknowledgement and assumption of risk and release form. You can download them from this website: [Alsace 2018 Participant Documents](#) Mail the registration deposit of \$1,000 and all required forms to Steve Cohen at the address shown on the application form. You will not actually be accepted, and your check will not be deposited, until the leader has determined by telephone conversation with you that you and the trip are a good match. The final balance of \$1,725 is due February 1, 2018. Deposit checks from wait-listed applicants will not be cashed until they are accepted AND they confirm continued interest in joining the trip. All payments by check should be payable to the *Appalachian Mountain Club*.

Our cancellation policy is based on several considerations. Cancellation will not be allowed to raise the cost to the other participants or to the leaders. Minimum penalty schedule: \$200. If actual costs (expenses already incurred on your behalf, and any unavoidable future expenses that will be incurred as a result of your registration and cancellation) are higher, they will be assessed instead, unless they can be applied toward another acceptable participant.

This trip is likely to fill quickly. If you are interested, you should apply as soon as possible. When registration is complete, we will send all participants the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all those going on the trip.

In the unlikely event that the trip is cancelled because not enough acceptable participants apply, everything you have paid will be refunded in full.

QUESTIONS and REQUESTING APPLICATION MATERIALS

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Steve or Dan. Steve can be reached at 617 997-6861 before 9PM eastern time zone or at scohen1234@gmail.com. Dan can be reached at 617 750-0511 before 9PM eastern time zone or at danstone@rcn.com.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Places we will visit:

<http://www.francethisway.com/places/strasbourg.php>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saverne>

<http://www.francethisway.com/places/obernai.php>

<http://www.francethisway.com/places/mont-sainte-odile.php>

<http://www.haut-koenigsbourg.fr/en/>

<http://www.francethisway.com/places/riquewihr.php>

<http://www.cave-beblenheim.com/>

<http://ribeauville.ingenie.fr/documents/documentation/documentation-DECRIQ-UK.pdf>

Interesting story:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/may/24/internationaleducationnews.humanities>

Dan's Work:

Recent coffee table book celebrating the Appalachian Trail with 34 of his photos:

[The Appalachian Trail - Celebrating America's Hiking Trail](#)

AMC Interview discussing photography:

<https://www.outdoors.org/articles/amc-outdoors/meet-amcs-photo-contest-photographers/>

His website:

www.dan-stone.com

TRIP LEADER



Steve Cohen leads three season hikes for the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. Since 2012 Steve has planned and led twelve hiking/trekking-oriented Adventure Travel trips to such destinations the Haute Route (from Chamonix, France to Zermatt, Switzerland), the Alta Via II through the Italian Dolomites, the tour of the Jungfrau region (Switzerland), Patagonia, the high mountain huts of Austria, etc. He lived in Europe for four years and is fluent

in both French and German. Steve is currently chair of Adventure Travel.

CO-LEADER

Dan Stone is a three-season leader with the Hiking/Backpacking Committee of the AMC Boston Chapter. He has completed all the 48 NH 4,000 footers in winter as well as New England's 100 highest peaks. He has also hiked the entire Appalachian Trail mostly as a series of day hikes. He has traveled extensively, having visited 49 states and over 50 countries. With a few exceptions,



he has designed all his travel adventures himself, as well as coordinating many trips with friends to tackle the AT. Dan is an avid photographer, has had hiking photos published in calendars and books, and has won first place in the AMC photo contest three times. Dan has designed and led a series of AMC hiking weekends that incorporate photography. He enjoys sharing his photos and knowledge of photography with others.