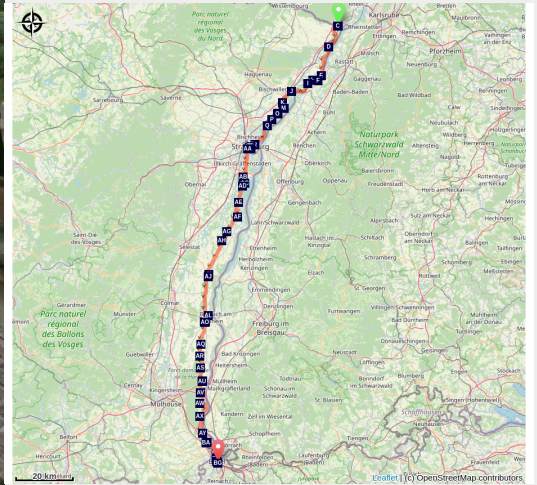# 14. 610 France (8/8)
France - Grand Est

Strasbourg (Amis saint Colomban)

2720km long in France, the route of Columban's exile in 610 is divided into 8 parts, which can be followed successively or indistinctly. This last part of a particularly winding route crosses Alsace along the Rhine towards the south.

Around 610, expelled from Luxeuil, Saint Colomban and the Irish monks were taken to Nantes under the guard of armed soldiers who were in charge of taking them on a ship to Ireland. But, barely on board, they managed to escape and, fearing they would be caught, began an incredible journey through many countries. Most of the journey into exile takes place in France from East to West and then back again after Nantes. The itinerary mainly follows the great rivers and the vineyards often planted on their banks while crossing the historic cities that mark them out.

Useful information

Practice : Pedestrian

Length : 203.0 km

Trek ascent : 1217 m
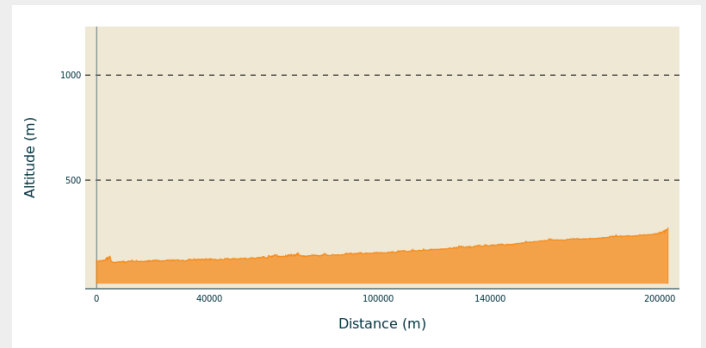
Difficulty : Easy

Type : Multi-day trek

Trek

Departure : 67261 Lauterbourg (France)
Arrival : 4000 Basel (Switzerland)
Cities : 1. Grand Est
2. Basel-Stadt

Altimetric profile

Min elevation 107 m   Max elevation 273 m

These two successive crossings of France are not the most direct way to reach the Swiss border to the east of Luxeuil, only 110km away. But they do reflect the strong image of a determined Columban who had left Ireland for good, with no desire to return.
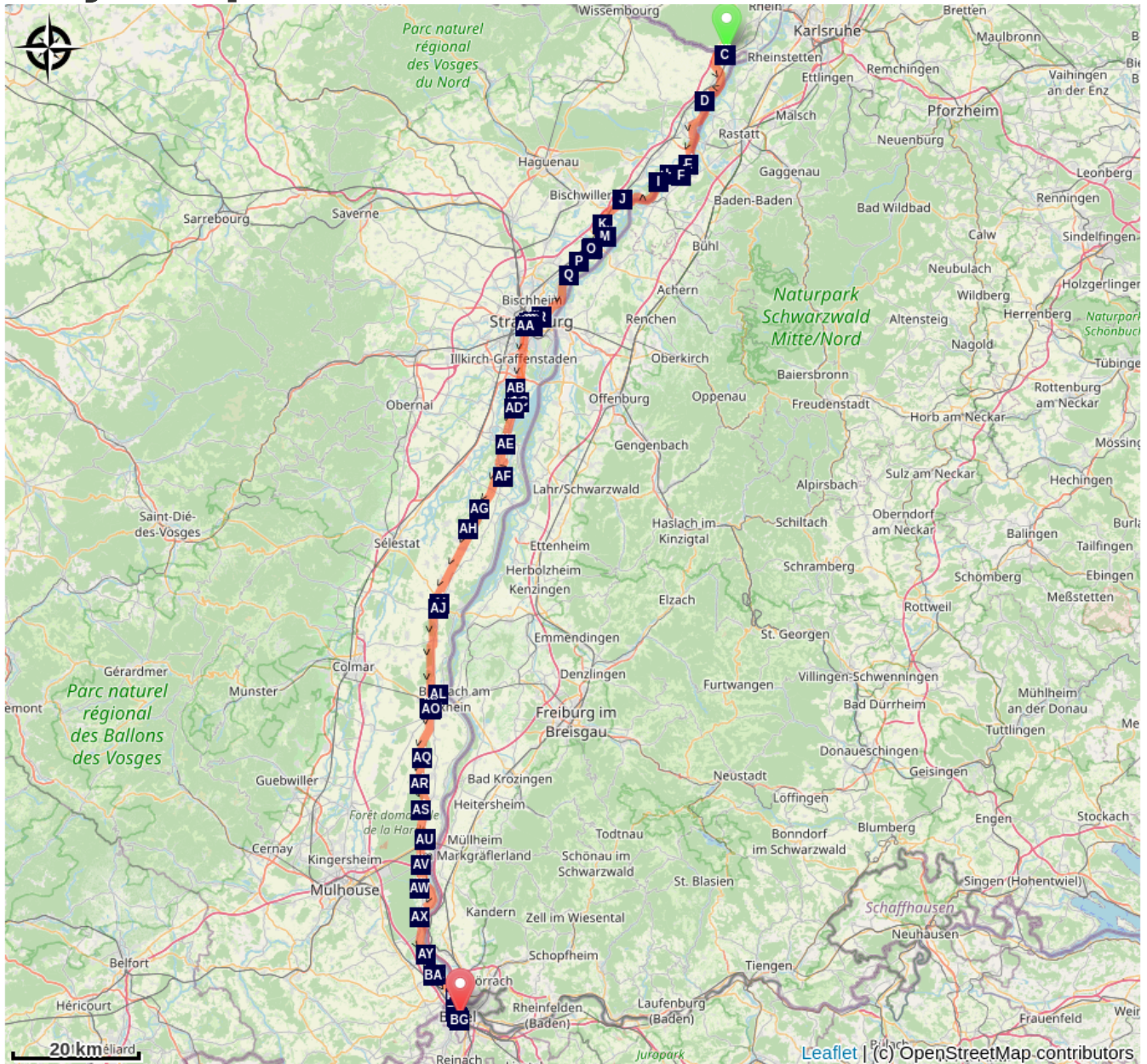
The eighth part (8/8) is divided into 8 stages of an average daily distance of 24km:

1. Lauterbourg - Fort-Louis
2. Fort-Louis - Gambsheim
3. Gambsheim - Strasbourg
4. Strasbourg - Obenheim
5. Obenheim - Marckolsheim
6. Marckolsheim - Neuf-Brisach
7. Neuf-Brisach - Ottmarsheim
8. Ottmarsheim - Basel

Stages :

1. Lauterbourg to Fort-Louis
   30.3 km / 225 m D+ / 7 h 30
2. Fort-Louis to Gambsheim
   21.7 km / 138 m D+ / 5 h 30
3. Gambsheim to Strasbourg
   19.6 km / 166 m D+ / 5 h
4. Strasbourg to Obenheim
   27.9 km / 147 m D+ / 7 h 30
5. Obenheim to Marckolsheim
   26.0 km / 130 m D+ / 6 h 18
6. Marckolsheim to Neuf Brisach
   17.9 km / 104 m D+ / 4 h 30
7. Neuf Brisach to Ottmarsheim
   28.4 km / 122 m D+ / 7 h
8. Ottmarsheim to Basel
   31.2 km / 185 m D+ / 8 h

On your path...

📷 Trinity Church in Lauterbourg (A)

🏰 Ancient Episcopal castle in Lauterbourg (B)

🗼 Butcher's Tower in Lauterbourg (C)

🦆 Natural reservoir of the Sauer delta (D)

🦆 The confluence of La Moder with the Rhine (E)

🦆 Polder of the Moder (F)

📷 Saint-Louis Church at Fort-Louis du Rhin (G)

🏰 Fort-Louis du Rhin (H)

🦆 Port of Fort-Louis (I)

📷 St. Matthew's Church in Drusenheim (J)

📷 Saint-Arbogast Church in Herrlisheim (K)

📷 Inland shipping museum in Offendorf (L)

📷 Church of St. Peter, St. Paul and St. Brigid in Offendorf (M)

📷 St. Mary's Chapel in Gambsheim (N)

All useful information

How to come ?

Access

Lauterbourg is accessible by bus and train.
Basel is accessible by all types of public transport: plane, bus and train.

On your path...

Trinity Church in Lauterbourg (A)

The church of Lauterbourg dates from the 14th and 15th centuries, the choir dates from this period and the nave was rebuilt in 1716. The bell tower was raised in 1845. The organ dates from 1777 and was restored in 1998.
In 2015, the church was renovated and the exterior lighting was re-lit to enhance the ensemble.

Attribution : Amis saint Colomban

Ancient Episcopal castle in Lauterbourg (B)

Lauterbourg, Haus des Landvogts Holzapfel, ehemaliges Bischofsschloss (1592-1716), dann Schule.

Attribution : © Ralph Hammann - Wikimedia Commons

Butcher's Tower in Lauterbourg (C)

The Butchers' Tower or Jewish Tower is part of the fortification of the medieval town with 15 fortified towers. This tower bears witness to the city walls. The tower was recently renovated.

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

Natural reservoir of the Sauer delta (D)

The Sauer Delta National Nature Reserve (RNN 135) is a national nature reserve in the Grand Est region. Created in 1997, it extends over 486 ha and protects a Rhine wetland with remarkable biodiversity.
Bringing together forests, wet meadows, mudflats and aquatic environments, this nature reserve is a remarkable vestige of the Rhine alluvial forest as it was known by the monk Colomban with his companions in 610. A multitude of meanders and dead arms favouring the development of fauna and flora.

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

The confluence of La Moder with the Rhine (E)

Moder has its source in the Vosges du Nord in Zittersheim. It reaches the left bank of the Rhine, south of Beinheim, after 82.1 km. This mouth is part of a protected natural area.
Take the time to observe the flora and fauna in the wetland landscape.

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

Polder of the Moder (F)

The creation of the Polder de la Moder was financed by the agreement of 6 December 1982, which is part of a major Franco-German programme. It is a perfect example of the type of ambitious actions that can be undertaken by these resolutely forward-looking nations. Nations capable of thinking of the river that was their border as the ideal place to meet to manage together a common natural capital.
The first flooding test of the Moder polder carried out by the Strasbourg Navigation Service demonstrated the effectiveness of the six siphons that form the heart of its water intake structure. Designed to be operated remotely from a command and control station, this device will also make it possible in the future to ensure the gradual restoration of the alluvial environment thanks to ecological flooding.
Intended to curb the exceptional flooding of the Rhine, the Moder polder was created in the communes of Fort-Louis and Neuhaeusel as part of a vast Franco-German programme implemented in 1992. Its surface area of 240 hectares enables it to constitute, for a maximum duration of 15 days in a row, a flood retention area with a capacity of 5.6 million m3. Situated on the site of the former Moder delta, it thus regains its original vocation as a flood plain to cope with any rise in the Rhine's flow rate in excess of 3,500 m3 /s.

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

Saint-Louis Church at Fort-Louis du Rhin (G)

The first church in Fort-Louis dates back to the 17th century. Built three years after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), the royal city of Fort-Louis is, by order of the king, populated exclusively by Catholics and has a parish church: the Saint-Louis church. In 1927, it was classified as a historical monument.
After its destruction on March 15, 1945, during the battles of the Liberation, a temporary church served the parish until the inauguration of the present church on October 10, 1971, by Mgr. Jean-Julien Weber, Archbishop of Strasbourg.
Source: City of Fort-Louis

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

Fort-Louis du Rhin (H)

In 1648, the Thirty Years' War ended with the Treaty of Westphalia and Alsace became French.
The enemies of France are on the other side of the Rhine.
Louis XIV asks Vauban to build forts on the eastern border of the royalty and Fort-Louis is part of these constructions.
It is from 1687 that the stronghold is built on an island in the Rhine by engineers Vauban and Tarade. The King granted the rights and privileges of Ville Royale to Fort-Louis.
After the fall of the Royalty, in 1789, Fort-Louis took the name "Fort Vauban", then "Fort Libre". In 1791, it became the chief town of the canton. The stronghold declined strategically and the fortifications were dismantled during the Revolutionary Wars, then definitively during the Napoleonic Wars (1813-1815). Remains of the square fort remain.
The population grew to nearly 4,000 inhabitants in the 18th century, more than half of whom were soldiers.
More informations : City of Fort-Louis du Rhin

Attribution : Ville de Fort-Louis

Port of Fort-Louis (I)

Der Autonome Hafen Straßburg verwaltet die verschiedenen Handelshäfen, die sich entlang des Rheins über fast 100 km von Marckolsheim im Süden bis Lauterbourg im Norden erstrecken, mit dem Haupthafen in Straßburg im Zentrum. Diese Häfen verfügen über Land, das die Entwicklung wirtschaftlicher Aktivitäten ermöglicht, aber auch über Hafeninfrastrukturen, die das Be- und Entladen von Massengütern oder containerisierten Produkten ermöglichen und einen echten Mehrwert für die Verwaltung des Warenflusses für Unternehmen darstellen.
Die beiden Häfen von Fort-Louis sind auf die Verladung von Materialien aus Kiesgruben spezialisiert.

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

St. Matthew's Church in Drusenheim (J)

The present religious building was built in 1835, in a neo-classical style, according to the plans of the architect Samain. The place of worship was consecrated in 1837. During the Second World War, the building suffered extensive damage and restoration work was undertaken.

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

Saint-Arbogast Church in Herrlisheim (K)

Several churches have been built on this site since the 14th century. Just before the Revolution a new building was completed. It was destroyed during the Second World War. A new church was built between 1965 and 1968, it is the present church which is well in the style of the 20th century.
Saint Arbogast was bishop of Strasbourg in the second half of the 7th century. He built Strasbourg's first cathedral, which he consecrated to Notre-Dame, on a site used by Christians since the 4th century after having been a Roman sanctuary.

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

Inland shipping museum in Offendorf (L)

The Offendorf Inland Navigation Museum pays homage to the Rhine boatmen of the 20th century. Families owned one or two barges and had a pied à terre like here in Offendorf. Their activity reached its peak around 1960 with 600 people, i.e. a third of the village's population, but then declined and became a virtually extinct profession.

From 72 B.C. to 453 B.C., the Rhine was a frequently used route for the enemy to enter Alsace. However, it was not until the 8th century that navigation on the Rhine underwent a major change. Trade on the water developed under Charlemagne, who granted the subjects of the Church of Strasbourg customs privileges, including exemptions from tolls.

One of the main ports was located at the confluence of the River Ill, which crosses Alsace from south to north, and the Rhine. Probably used as early as Roman times, the port acquired great importance in the Middle Ages, and no doubt explains the extraordinary wealth of Honau Abbey, founded by Irish monks, which seems to have controlled this passage of the Rhine and the mouth of the Ill.

The Treaties of Westphalia (1648) proclaimed the freedom of navigation on the Rhine. In 1729, the Strasbourg boatmen were granted the privilege of navigation between Strasbourg and Basel. The French Revolution abolished the corporation and proclaimed free movement on the Rhine.

Between 1930 and 1970, French inland waterway transport operated with Freycinet gauge barges (250 to 350 tonnes) and then the Rhine gauge barges, whose capacity was 10 times greater, took control of economic traffic on the Rhine.

[Cabro Offendorf Museum](#)

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

Church of St. Peter, St. Paul and St. Brigid in Offendorf (M)

The Offendorf church was rebuilt in 1962, replacing a 19th century building destroyed during the bombings of the Second World War.

All the furniture has been replaced and it is one of the first churches in Alsace to conform to the Second Vatican Council. The dedication to Saint Brigid of Kildare, abbess of the monastery of Kildare in Ireland, is probably very old. In the 8th century Irish monks founded a monastery north of Strasbourg, the monastery of Honau, on fertile but floodable land which caused the abandonment of the site. They had brought the cult of St. Brigid, who is one of the three Saints of Ireland along with St. Patrick and St. Colomba de Iona or Columkill.

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban

St. Mary's Chapel in Gambsheim (N)

Situated on the edge of Via Columbani, the chapel of Santa Maria is already mentioned in 1347.
Its legendary origin places it at the crossroads of important roads at the northern exit of the town.
After its abandonment during the Revolution the chapel was restored and given back to Catholic worship in 1806, it will be under the names of Saint-Quirin and Saint-Wendelin.
Wendelin is said to have been born in 554, son of King Scot Forchado and Queen Irelina. He lived with the Benedictines of Trier and, according to legend, became the abbot of Tholey in 597. Wendelin died in 617 and is buried in his cell.
His cult in Alsace was probably brought by Irish monks from the monastery of Honau a few kilometres away.

Attribution : Les Amis de saint Colomban