

2023 - Christmas Markets on the Rhine

7-NIGHT CRUISE

Experience the deep-rooted holiday traditions of Europe at its most festive time of year and get caught up in the magic of the holidays with visits to some of the world's most timeless Christmas Markets. Warm up with a mug of steamy glühwein while at the Cologne Christmas Market located in front of its UNESCO-designated Gothic cathedral. Let the "Capital of Noël," Strasbourg, the oldest and largest Christmas Market in France, captivate you the way it has for so many others for centuries. Meander through Heidelberg's majestic Christmas Market nestled idyllically amongst the historic squares of the Old Town. And while in Gengenbach, marvel at the world's largest Advent calendar, where every evening at 6:00 PM, the brightly lit windows of the neo-classical town hall open and behind each one is a picture by a famous artist, such as Andy Warhol. Cherish all the glory of the season in grand European style as you cruise along the Rhine.

OVERVIEW:

<u>DAY</u>	<u>DESTINATION</u>	<u>ACTIVITIES</u>
1	AMSTERDAM	EMBARKATION
2	AMSTERDAM	Canal cruise Scenic cruising out of Amsterdam
3	COLOGNE	Cologne Walking Tour, Cathedral Visit and Christmas Markets OR Kölsch beer tasting OR Cologne bike tour
4	RHINE GORGE	Castles along the Rhine scenic cruising Wine Tasting and Christmas Markets OR Gondola Ride and Christmas Market OR Vineyards Hike OR Guided Bike Tour of the Rheingau and Christmas Markets Siegfried's Mechanical Music Museum OR Rudesheimer coffee
5	LUDWIGSHAFEN	Heidelberg Tour and Christmas Markets OR Medieval Speyer and Christmas Markets OR Heidelberg Philosopher's Path Hike and Christmas Markets OR Ladenburg Bike Tour
6	STRASBOURG	"The Gem of the Alsace" tour and Christmas Market OR Strasbourg bike tour
7	BREISACH	Riquewihr Excursion and Christmas Markets OR Freiburg Excursion and Christmas Markets OR Breisach Wine Country Bike Tour
8	BASEL	DISEMBARKATION

ITINERARY DETAILS:

Day 1, AMSTERDAM. Board the ship in Amsterdam for your Christmas Markets on the Rhine cruise. (D)

Day 2, AMSTERDAM. There are 165 canals in Amsterdam, and you'll get to enjoy some of them on your canal cruise. Later in the day, set sail out of Amsterdam. (B,L,D)

Day 3, COLOGNE. Enjoy cruising to Cologne, home to one of Germany's most revered Gothic masterpieces, the Cologne Cathedral. Join a guided tour through the enchanting Old Town. Explore the UNESCO-designated cathedral and then visit one of Europe's largest and most renowned Christmas Markets located in front of the cathedral. Alternatively, ride a bike along the Rhine or visit a local tavern to taste Cologne's traditional Kölsch beer and reibekuchen mit apfelsauce—potato pancakes served with applesauce. (B,L,D)

Day 4, RHINE GORGE - RÜDESHEIM. Cruise through the castle-laden Rhine River Gorge before reaching the winemaking town of Rüdesheim. Once in Rüdesheim, you will have four choices of morning excursions. Wine connoisseurs will want to go to a wine cellar for a wine tasting followed by a Christmas Market visit to enjoy holiday traditions from around the world. Or go on a hike through the vineyards. Alternatively, you can take a peaceful ride over the vineyards on Rüdesheim's gondola followed by a visit to the Christmas Market. You may also opt to join a guided bike tour through the town and along the Rhine River before visiting the Christmas Market. Later in the day, you can visit Siegfried's Mechanical Musical Instrument Museum, or taste one of the town's special delights, Rüdesheimer coffee. (B,L,D)

Day 5, LUDWIGSHAFEN. You have the choice to explore two of Germany's historically rich cities, along with their festive Christmas Markets. Visit Heidelberg, a city that will capture your heart with its mighty castle and historic university. While here, wander along one of Europe's longest pedestrian shopping streets, the Hauptstrasse, soaking up the Yuletide celebrations at the town's Christmas Markets. Or hike along the Neckar River on the historic Philosopher's Path followed by free time to enjoy the Christmas Markets. Alternatively, you can bike along the Neckar River to the medieval town of Ladenburg and visit its Marktplatz, or explore one of Germany's oldest cities, Speyer, known for the largest Romanesque cathedral in Europe—a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You'll also have time to visit its Christmas Market in front of the "Old Mint" (Alten Münze) in the famous Maximilianstrasse, with a view of the romantic Imperial cathedral (Kaiserdom). (B,L,D)

Day 6, STRASBOURG. Strasbourg is even more alluring during the season of Advent. The Christkindelsmärik dates back to 1570, making it the oldest Christmas Market in France. Enjoy a panoramic bus tour that takes you past the Parc de l'Orangerie, the European Parliament and the Place de la République. Afterwards, walk through the historic town center on the Grande Île, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and through the lovely "La Petite France" district, where you will see the Cathédrale de Notre Dame with its famous astronomical clock and then visit the town's famous Christmas Market. You can also choose to explore Strasbourg's different districts by bicycle. Later in the day, opt to visit Gengenbach's Christmas Markets and the town's famous illuminated town hall Advent calendar. (B,L,D)

Day 7, BREISACH. Breisach is your gateway to several different excursions. Step back in time with a visit to the enchanting Alsatian town of Riquewihr, which looks almost the same as it did in the 16th century. On your walking tour, admire historic architecture and famous sights, such as the Dolder Gate, followed by a visit to its charming Christmas Markets. Alternatively, head to Freiburg, founded in 1120 and home to the Freiburg's Münster, a Gothic cathedral said to have "the most beautiful spire on earth." Then enjoy free time at the Freiburg Christmas Markets. Those wishing a more active excursion can cycle through Breisach's countryside. (B,L,D)

Day 8, BASEL. Disembark the ship and bid farewell to Basel as you prepare for your return flight home. (B)