

## 2024 - 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	DÜSSELDORF	Scenic cruising Cologne walking tour and Christmas Markets OR Düsseldorf Walking Tour with Altbier tasting and Christmas Markets OR Düsseldorf 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 Instrument Cabinet 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	Strasbourg City Tour and Christmas Markets OR Strasbourg bike tour Gengenbach Christmas Markets Tour
7	BREISACH	Colmar 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, DÜSSELDORF - COLOGNE. Enjoy a scenic cruise into Düsseldorf. In the afternoon, take a brief trip to the nearby city of Cologne on a guided tour of its enchanting Old Town, where you will see sites such as the Cologne Rathaus, Germany's oldest town hall; the Fishmarkt, which dates back to the 12th century and the Great St. Martin Church. Then visit one of Europe's largest and most renowned Christmas Markets. Or explore historic Düsseldorf on foot with a knowledgeable local tour guide. Then, be treated to a tasting of Altbier, a clean and crisp beer developed in Düsseldorf that is crafted using traditional brewing techniques. Conclude the tour with a visit to the local Christmas Market. Alternatively, cover more ground with an active bike tour of the city. (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 Instrument Cabinet, 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 Republique. 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. Journey into medieval Colmar, located in the enchanting Alsace region of France. Delight in the half-timbered houses lining the cobblestone streets as you take in the whimsical blend of French and German culture and the town's wonderful 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)