



Holiday Markets Cruise - The Festive Rhine River

Air Program: 9 days/8 nights (includes 1 air night)

Cruise Program: 8 days/7 nights

Breakfasts: 7 | Lunches: 6 | Dinners: 7

B | L | D denotes included breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

- This itinerary is subject to change due to operational conditions.
- **A special note about air:** If you have purchased only the Cruise Program, please book flights that arrive on Day 2, the first day of the Cruise Program. The date is listed at the top of your Reservation Confirmation.
- Activity Level ratings indicate each excursion's physical expectations. To make the best personal choice, please evaluate each excursion's rating and your ability to meet the tour's physical demands. Please note, excursions on this program require: walking on cobblestones, unpaved paths or uneven surfaces; and getting on/off motor coaches and boats.
 - **Mild:** Walk under 1 mile on mainly flat terrain; navigate under 50 stairs; stand under 1 hour
 - **Moderate:** Walk 1-3 miles on flat/uneven terrain; navigate 50-100 stairs; stand 1-2 hours
 - **Active:** Walk 2+ miles on flat/uneven terrain, including up and down inclines; navigate 100+ stairs; stand 3+ hours
- Depending on the excursion, more leisurely alternatives may be available.

Day 1 | Depart gateway city

AHI FlexAir passengers depart for Düsseldorf, Germany. Please check your luggage from your gateway city to your arrival city. Your claim checks should have the following airport code: DUS.

Day 2 | Düsseldorf, Germany

MS Amadeus Cara

D

Arrive at Düsseldorf International Airport. Proceed through immigration to the baggage claim area and retrieve your luggage. After completing customs, AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for the group arrival transfer and Cruise Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer should exit the baggage claim area and proceed to the Arrivals Hall, where an AHI Travel representative will meet you.

Transfer to the pier in Düsseldorf and embark the MS Amadeus Cara. Please note, if you arrive before check-in time, your cabin may not be immediately available.

Tonight, get to know your fellow cruisers at the Welcome Reception and Dinner.

Day 3 | Düsseldorf

MS Amadeus Cara

B | L | D

Personalize Your Journey

- **Aachen, City of Emperor Charlemagne.** After becoming king of the Franks in the eighth century, Charlemagne sought to unite all Germanic people and convert them to Christianity. Aachen later became his capital and favorite royal residence, where he also enjoyed the therapeutic hot springs. In 800, he was crowned emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III. During his reign, he instituted many reforms in his vast domain and promoted the ideals of the Carolingian Renaissance, centered on culture and scholarly learning. On a guided tour, visit the Aachen Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage site, featuring Charlemagne's richly decorated imperial chapel and his original throne. Walk through the historic city center and spa area before finishing at the city's festive Christmas market. **(Moderate)**

Return to the ship for lunch.

Free Time: The afternoon is at leisure to explore Düsseldorf's seven delightful *Christkindlmarkts* with themes such as handicrafts, angels and German fairy tales, among others.

Day 4 | Cologne

MS Amadeus Cara

B | L | D

Enrichment: *German Holiday Traditions.* From Advent wreaths to Christmas baking, cherished seasonal customs have been handed down from one generation to the next. Discover some of the favorite traditions in German households.

Cologne. Germany's oldest major city, Cologne takes pride in its vibrant cultural scene and its awe-inspiring Gothic cathedral. Topped by two ornately decorated spires, the Dom was under construction for more than 630 years. During a guided walking tour in the old town, see its highlights and marvel at the cathedral's impressive exterior, then step inside to see the stone columns soaring upward toward the vaulted ceiling. **(Moderate)**

Enjoy lunch on board the ship.

Free Time: The afternoon is at leisure to explore Cologne on your own. Complimentary shuttles between the ship and the city center will be available. The ship departs for Rudesheim late this evening.

Day 5 | Rhine Gorge | Rudesheim

MS Amadeus Cara

B | L | D

This morning, sail through the Upper Middle Rhine Valley and pass Loreley Rock. This scenic gorge is the most famous stretch of the Rhine River, adorned with the vines that produce the area's famous Riesling grapes. Some 40 castles built during the Holy Roman Empire stand imposingly on the terraced hills, and fortified towns and villages once doubled as toll stations for passing ships.

Folk tales have developed around the Loreley Rock for centuries; the one most associated with it stems from a 19th-century German Romantic poem involving a beautiful, but spurned, sorceress, who upon being convicted of luring men to their deaths, jumped to her own death from the rock. Poet Heinrich Heine later elaborated on the theme in his 1823 poem, "Die Lorelei," depicting a siren whose bewitching song caused passing sailors to crash their ships on the rocks. Learn more from a cruise expert as you sail.

Optional morning church service on board.

The ship arrives in Rudesheim this afternoon and sails to Mannheim later tonight.

Personalize Your Journey

- **Rüdesheim Tour.** Explore Rüdesheim’s charming Old Town. Board a tram that takes you along the Drosselgasse, the main street lined with the city’s popular restaurants, bars and shops. See the “Christmas Market of the Nations,” an international market with holiday items from around the world. Visit Siegfried’s Mechanisches Musikkabinett, a museum dedicated to self-playing, mechanical musical instruments. This captivating museum’s collection includes hundreds of items from handheld music boxes to calliopes. There is some time at leisure after the tour. **(Moderate)**

Day 6 | Mannheim | Heidelberg

MS Amadeus Cara

B | L | D

The ship arrives in Mannheim this morning.

Lecture: Enjoy an enlightening lecture from Principia Trip Scholar Susie Ledbetter.

Heidelberg Castle and Town. Visit the nearby city of Heidelberg, and step inside the red sandstone walls of Heidelberg Castle, which stands watch over the Neckar Valley. Inside the Fassbau, the Barrel Building, see the immense wine barrel, which once held 34,342 gallons of wine. It was built in 1591 to store the wine collected as taxes. Then stroll through the city center, passing the Student Jail, Old University and the cathedral, and walk along the banks of the Neckar River. **(Moderate)**

Free Time: Spend some time exploring on your own in Heidelberg’s historic center.

Relax afterward at a restaurant in the area, where you’ll savor traditional German dishes and delight in the comfortable, cozy atmosphere that Germans call *gemütlichkeit*.

Musical Trio. Enjoy a special musical performance in town. Listen to an entertaining mix of holiday songs, arias and contemporary pieces as you enjoy seasonal refreshments.

Return to the ship for dinner. The ship departs Mannheim this evening.

Day 7 | Strasbourg, France

MS Amadeus Cara

B | L | D

This morning, the ship docks in Strasbourg, capital of the French region of Alsace.

Personalize Your Journey

- **Strasbourg Panoramic Tour.** Discover Strasbourg's unique blend of German and French influences on a scenic tour. Pass by the highlights, including Palais Rohan, an 18th-century building modeled after the noble mansions of Paris; St. Thomas Church, the main Protestant church; and the European Parliament buildings. Continue your exploration with a guided walking tour in the historic center and a visit to the splendid Notre Dame Cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic art. **(Moderate)**

Return to the ship for lunch.

Free Time: This afternoon, take advantage of a complimentary shuttle from the ship to the Strasbourg city center. Stroll through the city on your own, and visit the holiday market. Established in 1570, it is touted as France's oldest *marché de Noël*, as the French holiday markets are known.

Lecture: Enjoy an enlightening evening lecture from Principia Trip Scholar Susie Ledbetter.

The ship departs for Breisach, Germany, tonight.

Day 8 | Breisach, Germany | Freiburg

MS Amadeus Cara

B | L | D

Freiburg. Delight in a guided stroll through the historic center of this vibrant university city. See the 13th-century cathedral, the bright-red, turreted Merchants' Hall and other landmarks. Then visit the colorful *Christkindlmarkt* and perhaps enjoy some marzipan and chestnuts, popular holiday treats. **(Moderate)**

Return to the ship for lunch.

Personalize Your Journey

Colmar Markets. Spend the afternoon in Colmar, France, and discover the Alsatian way of celebrating the holidays. Visit four of the markets in the city's picturesque Old Town. The main market occupies the Place des Dominicains, where the beautiful Dominican Church anchors the square. Continue to the Place Jeanne d'Arc market, which gives you a taste, figuratively and literally, of being in an Alsatian village. Here, local food products are the focus. Treat yourself to the area's specialties, including delicious charcuterie and sweets. The Place de l'Ancienne Douane market surrounds the fountain dedicated to local 16th-century hero Lazare de Schwendi. The final stop is the indoor market at the Koïfhus, where

the work of local woodworkers, potters, jewelers and other artisans are for sale. **(Moderate)**

Tonight, gather for a festive Farewell Reception and Dinner to celebrate your Advent adventure on the Rhine. The ship departs for Basel, Switzerland.

Day 9 | Basel, Switzerland | Depart for gateway city

B

After breakfast, disembark the ship in Basel, Switzerland. AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for a group transfer and Cruise Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer depart for Zürich Airport for your return flights home. Your Travel Director will provide the details.