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Romantic Rhine River Cruise – 9 Days (7 Nights from Zurich to Amsterdam)

Highlights & Sightseeing

CRUISE:

Deluxe 7-night cruise from Basel to Amsterdam in an outside stateroom with hotel-style beds

BASEL:

Welcome reception

STRASBOURG:

Guided sightseeing, visit La Petite France district and the gothic cathedral

HEIDELBERG:

Take pictures of the castle

MAINZ:

Visit the Gutenberg Museum

RÜDESHEIM:

Visit Siegfried's Mechanical Musical Instrument Museum; special treat

RHINE GORGE:

Cruise through the gorge

KOBLENZ:

Guided sightseeing

COLOGNE:

Guided sightseeing

AMSTERDAM:

Canal cruiss

From \$2168 net per person - Outside Cabin
Cabin upgrades available from only \$84
1 Free sharing a room/cabin with every 20

Cruise Overview

One of Europe's most legendary rivers awaits on this mesmerizing journey along the Rhine. Enjoy guided sightseeing in Strasbourg, Koblenz, and Cologne, as well as an excursion to Heidelberg, Germany's oldest university town. Sail through the dramatic Rhine Gorge, the most beautiful stretch of river dotted every mile with castles. Enjoy a canal cruise in splendid Amsterdam, see the legendary Lorelei rock, and visit the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz. Be sure to pack your camera so you can capture the romance and splendor of this magical journey.



DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 Arrive in Zürich, Switzerland. Transfer to Basel (Embarkation)

Flights into Zürich must arrive before 3 pm. Your river cruise vessel is docked on the Rhine River in Basel, where France, Germany, and Switzerland meet. Before dinner, meet your crew at a welcome reception. (Dinner)



Zurich

Day 2 Strasbourg, France



Strasbourg

Situated on the border of France and Germany, Strasbourg is influenced by the culture of both countries and is the capital of the Alsace region. It is the seat of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. A Local Guide shows you the noteworthy sights: the GOTHIC CATHEDRAL, the lovely LA PETITE FRANCE district, Place Kléber, and Place Gutenberg with the statue of the inventor of the printing press. Strasbourg is also home to the Kronenbourg Brewery. An optional excursion into the Alsace wine region is available. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 3 Excursion to Heidelberg, Germany

Heidelberg is Germany's oldest university town of Student Prince fame, a world-famous love musical. Take pictures of the ruins of the imposing Heidelberg Castle, built of red sandstone and towering above the city, and enjoy free time to explore. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



Heidelberg

Day 4 Mainz–Rüdesheim



Situated on the left bank of the Rhine, opposite the mouth of the Main River, Mainz is Germany's largest and most important wine market. The Old Town has many interesting shops, tea rooms, and restaurants, and a fountain on the Schillerplatz is decorated with scenes of the famous carnival held here every year. Gutenberg, the father of modern printing, was born here and you'll visit the GUTENBERG MUSEUM. The pretty little town of Rudesheim is the perfect example of a Rhine Valley wine town. SIEGFRIED'S MECHANICAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MUSEUM is a real surprise! Enjoy a SPECIAL TREAT, then there's free time to explore the Drosselgasse and pick up some souvenirs. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 5 Rhine Gorge–Koblenz

Downstream from Rudesheim is the dramatic RHINE GORGE, the most beautiful stretch of river and dotted every mile with castles. Pass the legendary rock of the Lorelei, where sweet songs of local beauties lured enchanted sailors to their doom. Situated at the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle Rivers, 2,000-year-old Koblenz is the cultural and business center of the Middle Rhine region. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



Koblenz

Day 6 Cologne

Cologne is the capital of the Rhineland and one of Germany's largest cities. The soaring twin steeples of Cologne's magnificent gothic cathedral—which took more than 600 years to build—dominate the river skyline. The Germano-Roman Museum next to the cathedral is a must for history buffs! The Old Town abounds with taverns, cafés, and shops. The favorite local beer here is Kölsch. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



Cologne



Day 7 Amsterdam, Holland

Holland's capital is sophisticated and modern, with a rich and fascinating history. This delightful 700-year-old city with its elegant and classic architecture, cafés and restaurants, and lively marketplace has a distinct ambience. The works of famous Dutch masters can be seen in

world-renowned museums such as the Rijksmuseum or the Van Gogh. There is no better way to see Amsterdam than by CANAL BOAT, cruising through the elegant grachten lined with stately homes dating back to Amsterdam's "Golden Age." (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)



Day 8 Amsterdam (Disembarkation)

Your vacation ends with breakfast this morning. (Breakfast)

About the Rhine River

As it winds through castle-dotted hillsides, dramatic rocky gorges and picturesque Old World villages, the Rhine River is the essence of romance. Born as an untamed river in the Swiss Alps, the Rhine takes the scenic route to the North Sea, illuminating some of Europe's most fascinating sights and customs. Historically and culturally, the Rhine has been a crucial source of sustenance, pride and inspiration. Fortresses and castles along the Rhine's embankments highlight the value ancient empires placed on these waters. While ancient times saw the Rhine as a dividing force, today the cities along its shores are an intriguing blend of cultures. Vineyards along the Rhine produce world-renowned vintages and riverside cafés and restaurants celebrate the region by pairing local wines with delectably fresh fare. With scenic splendor and enriching surprises around every bend, the waters of the Rhine set the stage for the very finest moments to be had in Europe.

Fast Facts

Countries: Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, Germany, France, Netherlands

Source: The Swiss Alps. Mouth: North Sea. Length: 766 miles

Geography

The Rhine originates at the confluence of the Vorderrhein and Hinterrhein rivers in the Swiss Alps near Reichenau, Switzerland. From Reichenau, it flows north to form the border between Switzerland and Liechtenstein and then Switzerland and Austria.

Turning west, the Rhine empties into picturesque Lake Constance. From there, it creates the boundary between Germany and Switzerland. At Basel, the river, now navigable, turns due north at the so-called "Rhine knee" to line the border between Germany and France.

In Germany, between Bingen and Bonn, the Middle Rhine flows through the Rhine Gorge. This dramatic formation was created as erosion and geological uplift happened concurrently. This stretch of the river is known as "the Romantic Rhine," a UNESCO World Heritage Site with more than 40 castles and fortresses dating back to the Middle Ages.

Leaving Germany, the Rhine turns west and enters The Netherlands, where, together with the rivers Meuse and Scheldt, it forms one of the largest river deltas in western Europe. The Rhine is at its widest as it enters The Netherlands, but then splits into three main distributaries and countless minor ones. These smaller waterways then flow through the Dutch Lowlands and into the North Sea.

History

The written record of the human history of the Rhine dates back to the Roman Republic. The Rhine appears as a key geographic figure in classical records, known as the "Rhenus" in Latin and "Rheonis" in Greek. The Romans viewed the Rhine as the outermost border of civilization, beyond which were mythical creatures and "wild" Germanic tribesmen.

The first urban settlement along the river, called Oppidum Ubiorum, was located on the grounds of what is today the center of Cologne, Germany. It was founded in 38 B.C. by the Ubii, a Germanic tribe. As civilizations developed along the river, the Rhine would become a pivotal political and linguistic figure in European history.

Establishing "natural borders" on the Rhine was a long term goal of French foreign policy dating back to the Middle Ages. French leaders, such as Louis XIV and Napoleon Bonaparte, tried with varying degrees of success to occupy lands west of the Rhine. In 1840, the French interest in expansion across the Rhine intensified. In response, the German poem and song, "Die Wacht am Rhein" ("The Watch on the Rhine"), was composed, calling for the defense of the western bank of the Rhine against France. During the Franco-Prussian War, it earned de facto status of a national anthem in Germany.

At the end of World War I, the Rhineland was subject to the Treaty of Versailles. This decreed that it would be occupied by the Allies until 1935 and after that, it would be a demilitarized zone, with the German army forbidden to enter. The Treaty of Versailles, especially this particular provision, caused much resentment in Germany and is often cited as one of the factors that precipitated World War II. During the war, the Rhine presented a formidable natural obstacle to the invasion of Germany by the western

Allies. The Rhine bridges at Arnhem, Nijmegen and Remagen, immortalized in many wartime books and films, were the scenes for many pivotal battles and turning points.

In more recent history, a 1986 chemical fire near Basel, Switzerland dumped more than 30 tons of pollutants into the waters of the Rhine. This environmental tragedy spurred unparalleled international cooperation and commercial regulation, resulting in a massive clean-up of the river. Those protections are still in place today, ensuring that the Rhine River will continue to be a thriving ecosystem for centuries to come.

Highlights

Located at the apex where Switzerland, France, and Germany meet, **Basel**, Switzerland is the first point of contact on the navigable portion of the Rhine River. With world-famous choirs, museums and theaters, Basel is one of the most important cultural centers in Central Europe.

Continuing along the waterway on the French-German border, **Breisach** is nestled at the foot of Kaiserstuhl Mountain and is the gateway to Germany's Black Forest region. The fairytale castles and countryside of the region are as delightful to the eyes as the Black Forest cherry cake is to the taste.

Another mesmerizing border town, **Strasbourg**, France, is influenced by the culture of both Germany and France. It's also the capital of the Alsace region known for its delectable wines. Admire the cobblestone streets, medieval architecture and winding canals of La Petite France in the heart of Strasbourg's Old Town.

Farther along the River Rhine sits **Speyer**, Germany, an old imperial city boasting a Romanesque cathedral with six imposing towers and the finest and largest crypt in Germany. Four Holy Roman Emperors and four German kings are buried in the impressive Royal Vault.

Mainz, Germany is situated on the left bank of the Rhine, opposite the mouth of the Main River. The Old Town has many interesting shops, tea rooms, and restaurants, and a fountain on the Schillerplatz is decorated with scenes of the famous carnival held here every year. Johannes Gutenberg, the father of modern printing, was born here, so it's fitting that a visit here would leave an indelible impression.

The pretty little town of **Rüdesheim** is the perfect example of a Rhine Valley wine town. Siegfried's Mechanical Musical Instrument Museum with its collection of self-playing instruments is the quirky highlight of this quaint riverside village. Downstream from Rüdesheim is the dramatic **Rhine Gorge**, the most beautiful stretch of river, dotted every mile with castles, vineyards and fortresses. Pass the legendary rock of the Lorelei, where sweet songs of local beauties lured enchanted sailors to their doom.

Situated at the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle Rivers, 2,000-year-old **Koblenz** is the cultural and business center of the Middle Rhine region. Fortified cities and storybook

castles surround the city, bathed in history and beauty. Sail on to Cologne, the capital of the Rhineland and one of Germany's largest cities. The soaring twin steeples of Cologne's magnificent Gothic cathedral – which took more than 600 years to build – dominate the river skyline. While the name Cologne has become synonymous with pleasing fragrances, this German jewel of a city is truly a delight for all the senses.

The Rhine continues into The Netherlands. It flows through **Arnhem** with its riveting Airborne Museum Hartenstein, built in the villa that served as the headquarters for the Allied forces during the Battle of Arnhem. **Schoonhoven**, nicknamed "Zilverstad," is renowned for its silver, and is the home of the International School of Silver.

Float along to charming **Dordrecht**, situated between two branches of the Rhine. This colorful town and nearby landscapes inspired many prolific Dutch painters in the 17th and 18th centuries. Next, the waters weave through fields of flowers and iconic windmills to reach **Rotterdam**. Although it was completely leveled by German bombs in WWII, Rotterdam is a bustling, dynamic city that boasts a hands-on maritime museum and the world's busiest port.

Cruiser Profile

A cruise on the Rhine River suits romantics, epicures, nature enthusiasts and wine lovers. While couples affectionately return to these waters time and again, there are plenty of multigenerational attractions that make a Rhineland excursion fun for the whole family. Its appeal to food and wine connoisseurs is clear, but anyone who appreciates scenic beauty combined with oom-pah bands and distinctive local fare will enjoy soaking in the sights along the Rhine.

Did You Know?

The Rhine River is a name which stems from a Celtic word meaning "raging flow." Between 1932 and 2010, official text books and publications listed the length of the Rhine as 1,320 kilometers (820 mi) rather than the correct number, 1,230 kilometers. In 2010, a University of Cologne researcher discovered that a typographical error had occurred in a 1932 encyclopedia and worked to have the figure updated. The Rhine is one of the settings for the first opera of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. The action of the epic opens and ends underneath the Rhine, where three Rheinmaidens swim and protect a hoard of gold. Roman remains can be found in Cologne even today, especially along the Rhine, where a discovery of a 1900-year-old Roman boat was made on the Rhine banks in late 2007. Strasbourg's historic city center, the Grande Île ("Grand Island"), was classified a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1988, the first time such an honor was placed on an entire city center.

The first bridge to cross the Rhine River was built by Julius Caesar during the Gallic War in 55 B.C.