

## 2023 - Rhine Castles & Swiss Alps

### 7-NIGHT CRUISE WITH 2-NIGHTS AMSTERDAM PRE-CRUISE AND 3 NIGHTS LAKE COMO POST-CRUISE

Discover fairytale castles and historic vineyards as part of this spectacular Rhine River cruise fantasy. Start by exploring the canal-laden city of Amsterdam, with its neat rows of buildings and rich history. Then it's off to Germany, where you'll discover not only the grand city of Cologne but charming villages like the winemaking hamlet of Rudesheim and the university town of Heidelberg. Enjoy cruising through the UNESCO-designated Rhine Gorge, where 40 castles are strung like pearls along the riverbanks. Cross the border into France's Alsace region in enchanting Strasbourg and take in spectacular panoramas of the Swiss Alps. Encompassing the Netherlands, Germany, France and Switzerland, as well as iconic landmarks and majestic mountain landscapes, this distinctive itinerary is truly a dream come true.

#### OVERVIEW:

<u>DAY</u>	<u>DESTINATION</u>	<u>ACTIVITIES</u>
1	AMSTERDAM	Hotel check-in
2	AMSTERDAM	Walking tour
3	AMSTERDAM	Zaanse Schans visit EMBARKATION
4	AMSTERDAM	Canal cruise Scenic cruising
5	COLOGNE	"Holy City" walking tour and cathedral visit OR Kölsch beer OR Cologne bike tour
6	RHINE GORGE	Castles along the Rhine scenic cruising Wine tasting OR Gondola ride OR Vineyard hike OR Guided bike tour of the Rheingau Siegfried's Mechanical Musical Instrument Museum OR Rudesheimer Coffee
7	LUDWIGSHAFEN	"Romantic Heidelberg" excursion OR Heidelberg Philosopher's hike OR "Secrets of Speyer" tour OR Ladenburg bike tour
8	STRASBOURG	"The Gem of Alsace" tour OR Strasbourg bike tour
9	BASEL	Lucerne Full-Day Tour* OR "City of Art" tour OR "Three Countries" bike tour Lucerne Half-Day Tour
10	BASEL	DISEMBARKATION Transfer to Lake Como Hotel check-in

11	LAKE COMO	Walking tour
12	LAKE COMO	Lake Como boat excursion to the “Pearl of Lake Como,” Bellagio
13	LAKE COMO	Return flight home

#### ITINERARY DETAILS:

Day 1, AMSTERDAM. Arrive in Amsterdam and check into your hotel.

Day 2, AMSTERDAM. Follow your guide through the charming capital of the Netherlands, with its iconic meandering canals, bridges and distinctive architecture. (B)

Day 3, AMSTERDAM - EMBARKATION. Check out of your hotel and, before transferring to your ship, visit Zaanse Schans, observing life as it used to be lived in the Netherlands. Authentic windmills, houses and shops were relocated to this picturesque area, creating a typical 17th- to 18th-century village. (B,D)

Day 4, AMSTERDAM. There are 165 canals in Amsterdam, and you'll get enjoy some of them on your canal cruise. Later in the day, set sail out of Amsterdam. (B,L,D)

Day 5, COLOGNE. Enjoy cruising to Cologne. Join a guided tour through the Old Town and explore the UNESCO-designated Cologne Cathedral, one of Germany's most revered Gothic masterpieces. Continue to the Cologne Rathaus, Germany's oldest town hall, plus see other local sights. For a different view, visit a local tavern to taste its famous Kölsch beer, only made in Cologne. Active adventurers will want to join a guided bike ride along the Rhine and through the historic Stadtgarten. (B,L,D)

Day 6, RHINE GORGE - RÜDESHEIM. Cruise through the captivating UNESCO-designated Rhine Gorge, the most stunningly beautiful stretch of the river before reaching the winemaking town of Rudesheim. Join a wine tasting to discover the flavors of the town's iconic vineyards. Or drink up the stunning views by soaring high above the vineyards with a gondola ride to the Niederwalddenkmal. For a more active adventure, hike through the town's beautiful vineyards or join a guided bike tour along the scenic Rhine River. Later in the day, let Siegfried's Mechanical Musical Instrument Museum charm you with its remarkable collection of self-playing musical instruments; or taste one of the town's special delights, Rudesheimer coffee, ceremoniously made with brandy, coffee and whipped cream. (B,L,D)

Day 7, LUDWIGSHAFEN. Ludwigshafen is your gateway to a choice of four excursions. Visit Heidelberg, the perfectly preserved medieval city nestled in the Neckar River Valley along Germany's Castle Road. Discover the iconic red sandstone Heidelberg Castle and Great Vat, an 18th-century, 49,000-gallon wine cask. For a more active adventure while in Heidelberg, join a guided hike up the Philosopher's Path, aptly named during the Romantic Period, and enjoy panoramic views of the city. Alternatively, you can visit one of Germany's oldest cities, Speyer, known for the largest Romanesque cathedral in Europe—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—and the medieval Old Gate, Altpörtel. Or pedal along the river Neckar to the picturesque medieval city center of Ladenburg and enjoy some free time to explore the shops. (B,L,D)

Day 8, STRASBOURG. Strasbourg offers flavors of both France and Germany because of its borderline location. Enjoy a panoramic tour past the stunning Parc de l'Orangerie, the European Parliament and the Place de la République before walking through its iconic “La Petite France” district, lifted straight from the pages of a fairytale. Wander through charming streets past the Cathédrale de Notre Dame with its famous astronomical clock. Alternatively, take a guided bike ride through the city and Parc de l'Orangerie. (B,L,D)

Day 9, BASEL. Enjoy getting to know Basel, Switzerland's third largest city. Long an important university, banking and trade center, Basel's glorious past is still evident in its medieval town hall, richly decorated market square and exquisite 18th-century patrician homes. Tour the city by foot or on a guided bike tour that takes you through three countries: Switzerland, France and Germany. Alternatively, go on a full-day excursion to Lucerne, or opt for one of the morning excursions and visit Lucerne in the afternoon. With either Lucerne excursion, you'll have the opportunity to see its Lion Monument – the figure of a dying lion carved into a hillside in memory of the Swiss Guards massacred during the French Revolution in 1792 – which Mark Twain described as “the most mournful and moving piece of stone in the world.” You'll also see Lucerne's spectacular medieval walls and towers, dating back to the 13th century. (B,L,D)

*\*Not combinable with other tours on this day.*

Day 10, BASEL - LAKE COMO - DISEMBARKATION. Disembark the ship and transfer to Lake Como, Italy, stopping in Bellinzona, Switzerland along the way, where you will enjoy a brief tour and free time for lunch. Once in breathtaking Lake Como, nestled at the foot of the Alps, check into your hotel for the evening. (B)

Day 11, LAKE COMO. Be treated to a walking tour of Lake Como, a former glacial lake and popular resort area for the rich and famous since Roman times. Gaze at the azure waters and impressive villas that line the lakeside from the hills above and perhaps recognize the scenery from such Hollywood blockbusters as *Ocean's Twelve* and *Casino Royale*. (B)

Day 12, LAKE COMO. Let the wind tousle your hair as you board your boat for a scenic ride along Lake Como to its stunning pearl, Bellagio. This intimate village offers postcard-perfect views whether you choose to stroll along the lakeside or venture up hill to its cobbled streets. Browse the shops or sample the local fare at Bellagio's restaurants before returning to the boat. (B)

Day 13, DEPART LAKE COMO. Bid farewell to Lake Como and prepare for your flight home. (B)