

# CHRISTMAS CRUISE LEADS TO SUMMER SAILING

● John Hayden

Christmas came early to 100 South Floridians who trekked to Europe for a very special cruise. A riverboat trip up the Rhine took them to the best Christmas markets Germany has to offer.

Floatarema, along with SunServe, organized the trip which gave many travelers their first visit to authentic, old-style markets. The eight-city tour included stops in Frankfurt, Cologne, and Ramstein.

However, long after the pics are posted, and cute gifts start collecting dust, the collective good of the trip will go on. The trip was a fundraiser for the two organizations. SunServe is a nonprofit focusing on mental health issues in the community and helps address the underlying causes. Floatarema runs the annual flotilla through Fort Lauderdale to kick off Pride, as well as other events throughout the year. They use the money for grants to organizations that help



Photo by Alex Bell.



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LGBTQ youth.

While the stops were nice, the real parties were held on the ship. Transcend Cruises ran the trip and guests say it felt like every detail was flawless.

Transcend chefs curated a menu for all on-board meals. Entertainment was provided by some of Germany and Europe's finest drag queens. They were also joined by South Florida's own Varla Jean Merman. The wine was flowing and Wilton Manors Vice Mayor Chris Caputo celebrated his birthday with a special cake.

"The cruise was great," passenger Charles Horton said. "[I enjoyed] touring small towns all with colorful Christmas markets. My favorite part was floating down the river in bed, watching the beautiful countryside and castles go by."

One of the highlights was when they

stopped in Ramstein. The group visited with American LGBTQ service members and their loved ones. Staying true to their mission no matter where they are in the world, SunServe hosted a discussion with the servicemen and women serving in the U.S. armed forces.

SunServe CEO Tony Lima also reflected on the trip.

"Our Holiday Markets Cruise was a magical journey where our supporters combined the joy of travel with the impact of social philanthropy. Exploring Europe's Christmas markets while supporting SunServe's mission made this more than a vacation. It was truly meaningful."

Up next: back to Europe. They're planning another cruise with Transcend, this one for August. This trip will also traverse the Rhine, but will stop in five countries over seven days. [OUTSFL](#)