

Christmas on the Rhine

'Tis the season to be joyful

Immerse yourself in the spirit of Christmas as you journey through storybook villages. Sample tasty yuletide treats and regional delicacies as you browse colorful stalls for handcrafted ornaments and unique gifts. Admire the twinkling lights of Cologne and revel in the merry atmosphere of the Rhine Valley, as storefront displays, wine cellars and markets embrace the holiday season. This eight-day voyage is a joyful celebration of festive cheer.



Day 1 — Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Embark your ship and settle into your stateroom. A city of charming canals, elegant gabled houses, splendid museums and abundant bicycles, the Dutch capital of Amsterdam is a delight to explore. Its patchwork of waterways forms about 90 islands connected by 1,500 bridges. The legacy of the Dutch Golden Age lives on in gilded manses and in the lush paintings of Rembrandt and other Dutch masters that adorn the Rijksmuseum, The Netherlands' grand repository of art and cultural history. Discovering Amsterdam is a pleasure best pursued on foot; visitors line the tranquil canals and linger over Dutch pancakes, or take a *stroopwafel* to go.

Day 2 — Scenic Sailing: Waal & Merwede

Sail the bucolic waters of the Rhine, deep into the Rhine–Meuse–Scheldt Delta, as classic Dutch landscapes unfurl all around. Flat farmland, charming windmills and svelte poplar trees line the shores, and vast tracts of land stretch in all directions, growing all manner of bounty, from tomatoes to tulips. Gaze upon Friesian cows and tidy villages with their neatly laid farmhouses and marvel at how much of this land was reclaimed from the sea, with the aid of traditional windmills and the construction of dikes.

Day 3 — Cologne, Germany

Themed winter markets feature across Cologne during the holiday season, inviting visitors to browse colorful market stalls for handmade gifts, beautiful artwork and colorful crafts. The towering Gothic Cologne Cathedral provides a stunning backdrop to the city's festivities and array of offerings from its red wooden stalls. Beneath the pointed roofs of Cologne harbor's tented

market, unique crafted goods are displayed amid the twinkling lights of boats bobbing in the marina.

Day 4 — Koblenz, Germany

Koblenz is a traditional German country town with a wine heritage that spans centuries; a key ingredient for the warming *glühwein* that is served from taverns and market stalls during the holiday season. The scent of cinnamon, cloves and spices waft from steaming mugs as the sounds of festivities fill the air from one of the many musical performances, creating a toe-tapping atmosphere. Centered around the Schängel fountain, the Koblenz Christmas market offers all the flavors of the yuletide season from its famous Christmas bakery.

Day 5 — Mannheim, Germany

Mannheim's Christmas market is a holiday season shopping extravaganza, centered around the city's iconic water tower. One of Germany's oldest and largest markets, more than 160 booths host vendors from around the world, offering handicrafts and handmade items. Beautiful glassware, and carved wooden toys and games, sit alongside Christmas lanterns, colorful baubles and ornaments, all of which are presented in quaint wooden houses. Luxurious cashmere scarves, sheepskin mittens and felt hats are the ideal purchase to take home as gifts for friends and family.

Day 6 — Strasbourg, France

Strasbourg is said to be the capital of Christmas in France, with the city's cathedral square taking center stage as it is transformed into a winter wonderland. The city's Christkindelsmärik is the oldest in France, dating back to 1570. Hundreds of stalls are brimming with colorful wares, fine food and mulled wine, bringing festive cheer in abundance. Alsatian specialties feature an array of hearty classics, from *bretzels* (soft, bread-like pretzels) to *bredele* (star-shaped spiced cookies), and *knacks* (sausages) to *pain d'épices* (gingerbread).

Day 7 — Breisach, Germany

In the heart of Breisach's old town with a backdrop of the Romanesque-Gothic St. Stephen's cathedral, the Weinachtsmarkt is a highlight of the season. Steaming aromatic *glühwein* served in decorated mugs, alongside tasty yuletide treats, is sold from festive wooden huts and taverns, keeping visitors warm as they browse market stalls for gifts and handicrafts. The nearby Black Forest provides a fairy-tale atmosphere; its towering, snow-covered spruce trees resemble a winter wonderland.

Day 8 — Basel, Switzerland

A delightful blend of old and new, Basel is Switzerland's best-kept secret. During the holiday season, the medieval Old Town is transformed into a magical yuletide affair. Cobblestone streets are lined with wooden chalet-style huts selling all manner of festive treats and gifts. Visitors to the Christmas market can enjoy a warming cup of aromatic *glühwein* in a decorated boot-shaped mug. Hand-carved tree decorations, cheerfully painted ceramics and delicious food are sold from stalls throughout the city. Bid farewell to your fellow guests and journey home. Or spend more time exploring, perhaps joining one of our extensions.

** One shore excursion included per port; all others available at an extra charge.*

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