

Grand European Tour Viking River Cruises

By

Hank Schrader

Europe River Cruise Expert

Overview

- Admire Rhine Valley vistas from a 900-year-old castle.
- Sample the food and wine of Austria's Wachau Valley. Learn the Viennese waltz and linger in Budapest's Café Gerbeaud.
- Indulge all your senses on this 15-day journey spanning the best of Europe.
- Our most iconic itinerary traces the Rhine, Main and Danube Rivers between the windmill-dotted waterways of Holland and the stunning landscapes of Hungary, with engaging encounters at every bend

Trip Map



Grand European Tour

- Your Viking Cruise includes one shore excursion in each port of call (excluding embarkation and disembarkation ports), and there are many optional excursions in most ports that will allow you to customize your journey.
- A full list of available shore excursions is provided to each guest well in advance of each cruise.

Day 1 Amsterdam

- Arrive in Amsterdam, then transfer to your ship.*
- After boarding, the afternoon is yours to relax or explore the city on your own.
- If your arrival schedule permits, you may wish to visit the Rijksmuseum, or the van Gogh Museum next door. (Dinner)
- * Ground transfers are included with Viking Air purchase.

Rijksmuseum

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Day 2 Kinderdijk, The Netherlands

- This morning we sail to Kinderdijk, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, for a tour of this ingenious network of windmills and other flood management devices.
- You learn why the windmills were built and see how they work, plus you enter a working windmill for a tour of its mechanisms and living quarters.
- Return on board for lunch and an enjoyable afternoon of Dutch diversions: sample handcrafted Dutch cheeses and *jenever*, a distilled juniper liquor, and take in a culturally enriching presentation on the Dutch Golden Age.
- We cruise through the night. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 2 Shore Excursions

- Kinderdijk Windmills—included
- Kinderdijk Windmills by Bicycle--Cycle through the grasslands of Kinderdijk and see the 19 historic windmills, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Kinderdijk by Vintage Barge--Go beyond the usual visitor experience on a Viking exclusive boat tour and visit the oldest Kinderdijk windmill.
- Kinderdijk Windmills & Dutch Cheese Making--See the picturesque Dutch countryside as you explore The Netherlands' world-famous cheeses and windmills.
- Historic Gorinchem-on Foot-Learn about Holland's water defense system during a walking tour of Gorinchem.

Kinderdijk

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Day 3 Cologne, Germany

- Begin your day with a morning tour of Cologne, Germany's fourth-largest city.
- Stroll through Old Town past St. Martin's Church and see the Dom, Germany's largest cathedral and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Spend your free time enjoying Cologne's atmospheric waterfront, or perhaps join an optional excursion on which you ascend to the Dom's roof for up-close views of the cathedral's architecture and bird's-eye vistas of Cologne.
- Afterward, return on board for dinner.
- Alternately, you may set off on an optional excursion to explore Cologne's spirited beer culture, sampling *Kölsch*, a light, crisp beer brewed only in Cologne, and enjoying a *brauhaus* dinner.
- After, return to your ship for a late-evening departure.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 3 Shore Excursions

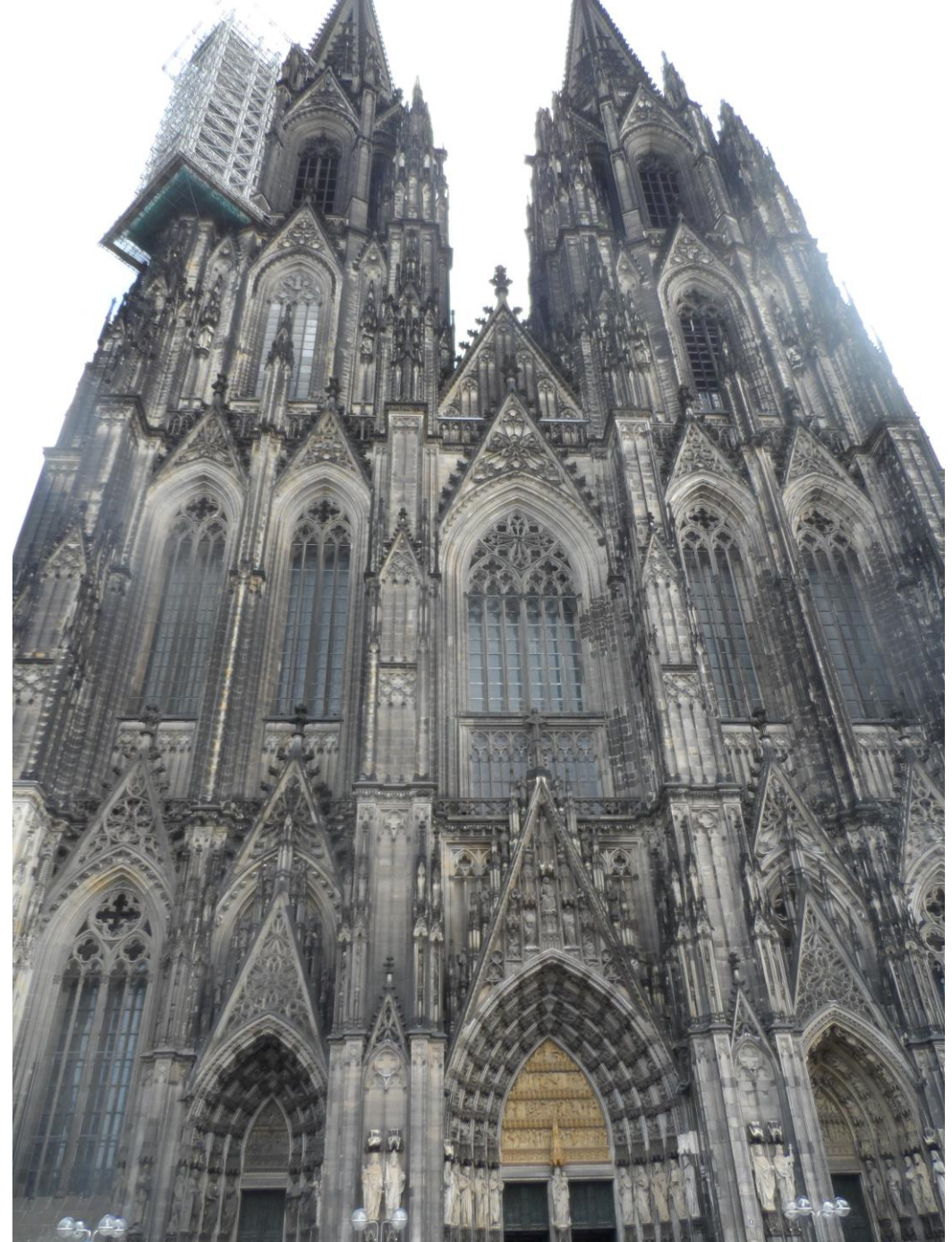
- Cologne Walking Tour—included
- Top of Cologne—privileged access—head up to the roof of Cologne's astonishing cathedral and learn about ongoing excavation and restoration efforts.
- Cologne's Beer Culture & Dinner—immerse yourself in Cologne's lively brauhaus culture and sample the pride of the city.
- Cologne by Bicycle--venture through the historic city of Cologne and see its sights on a bicycle tour.
- Bruhl UNESCO Palaces—peer into the life of royalty at an estate built for the prince-archbishops of Cologne, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Cologne Cathedral

Photo Anne Schrader
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Cologne Cathedral



German-Roman Museum Cologne

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Hohenzollern Bridge Cologne



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Christmas Markets in Old Market Square Cologne



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Day 4 Koblenz, Germany

- Cruise past hilltop castles along the Rhine, stopping in Koblenz to visit Marksburg Castle, the only Rhine fortress never destroyed.
- After your tour, continue cruising this stunning stretch of the Rhine, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Be sure to keep an eye out for the Lorelei Rock, which marks the river's narrowest point and is named after the legendary Rhine maiden who lured sailors to their demise.
- Lunch and dinner are served on board your ship.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 4 Shore Excursions

- Medieval Marksburg Castle—included--visit Marksburg Castle, the only medieval-era stronghold in the Rhine Valley to have never been destroyed.
- Historic Koblenz--View the highlights of Koblenz and discover the rich cultural heritage of this 2,000-year-old treasure.
- The Fortress of Ehrenbreitstein--Ascend to the mighty fortress of Ehrenbreitstein, set high on a hill with magnificent views of Koblenz, the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle Rivers and the Eifel Hills

Marksburg Castle



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Marksburg



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Marksburg



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Marksburg



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Marksburg



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Marksburg



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Marksburg

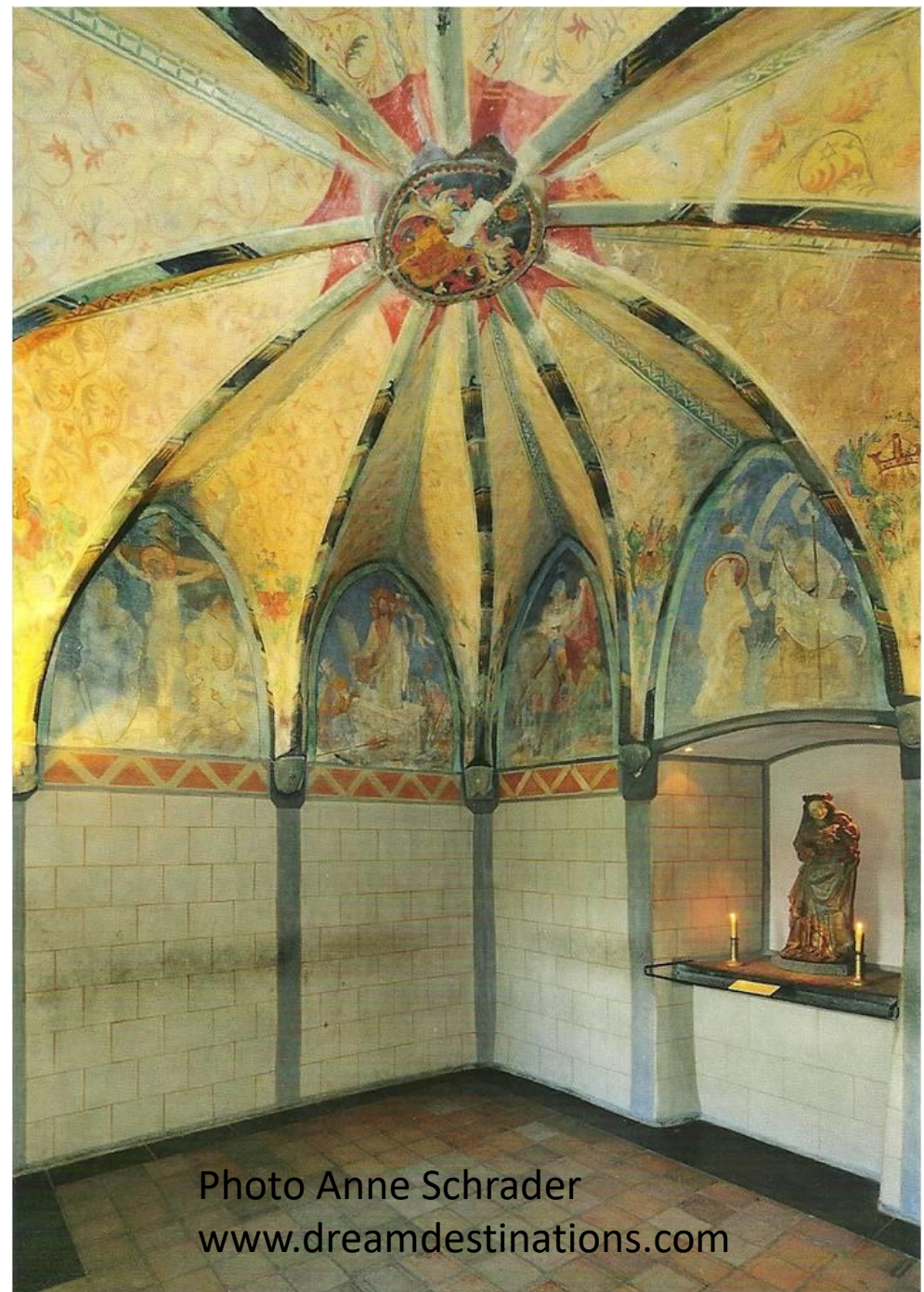


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Maus (Mouse) Castle

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Katz (Cat) Castle

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Lorelei—this tree-covered cliff inspired the legend of a love forsaken siren who lures sailors to their death by her enchanting song in this swift flowing, narrow part of the Rhine.



Pfalzgrafenstein Castle (foreground) & Gutenfels Castle on the Hill

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Schönburg Castle on the rock massif above Oberwesel

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Reichenstein Castle



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Day 5 Miltenberg, Germany

- The morning is spent sailing along the beautiful Main River as it winds its way through the Spessart region, home of the actual Snow White.
- During our sail, be sure to take advantage of the opportunity to learn about the region's glassblowing traditions during a live demonstration.
- After lunch, we stop in Miltenberg, known for its half-timbered houses and Germany's oldest inn.
- Join our walking tour that concludes with free time for you to explore.
- We sail through the night.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 5 Shore Excursion

- Miltenberg Walking Tour—included--Take in the fairy-tale charms of Miltenberg by foot, the most intimate way to get to know one of Germany's most delightful riverside towns.

Alter Markt Platz Miltenberg



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St. Jacobus Church. In the background on the right is Miltenberg Castle

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Miltenberg



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Day 6 Würzburg, Germany

- This morning, you may choose to join an optional full-day excursion along Germany's picturesque "Romantic Road" to Rothenburg, with its turreted city wall and impressive Gothic and baroque architecture.
- Upon returning to Würzburg, enjoy a tour of the Bishops' Residenz, one of Germany's largest and most ornate baroque palaces and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Rejoin your ship for dinner.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 6 Shore Excursions

- Würzburg Residenz & Walk—included-Tour Würzburg's Bishops' Residenz, one of Germany's largest and most ornate palaces and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Rothenberg ob der Tauber--Follow the "Romantic Road" to one of Germany's last remaining walled medieval towns, lovingly preserved.
- Hike the Würzburg Hills--Climb the Würzburg Hills to Marienberg Fortress, rising above the Main River, for impressive city views.

Marienberg Fortress Würzburg



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Old Stone Bridge Würzburg

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Residenz Palace Würzburg



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Garden statue Residenz Palace



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Rothenburg ob der Tauber (Extra Cost)

- Rothenburg ob der Tauber—, ob means above the Tauber River), is one of the most visited towns in Germany
- This walled city has all its ramparts intact, has massive gates, and many folks walk the walls or part of the walls as I did during our previous visit.
- Its medieval past is everywhere—the impressive town hall, half-timbered buildings, a criminal museum, a carved wooden altarpiece masterpiece in St. Jacobs Church--all are surrounded by massive fortifications.

Translated from German, Plönlein is the small square at a fountain". This is probably the most famous picture of Rothenburg.



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Market Square Rothenburg.



Burger Gate
(Castle Gate)
Rothenburg. This
gate was built
around 1460 and
is the western gate
entrance. It is the
highest gate tower
of the town
fortifications.



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Day 7 Bamberg, Germany

- Continue along the Main–Danube Canal this morning, arriving in Bamberg in early afternoon.
- Enjoy a tour of Bamberg, with its medieval city center, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Your walking tour includes a visit to the magnificent 11th-century cathedral, reworked in late Romanesque style in the 13th century, and the picturesque city hall built on a tiny island in the middle of a river.
- Take some free time to enjoy Bamberg and sample some of the town’s distinctive smoke-flavored beer before returning on board.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 7 Shore Excursions

- Bamberg Walking tour—included--See the burial place of emperors and the home of smoked beer on this included excursion.
- Franconian Countryside--Witness the breathtaking architecture of German Franconia and sample beer from one of its 300 breweries.

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Bamberg
Rathaus
(town hall)

Bamberg Cathedral



New Residence Rose Garden, Bamberg, Germany

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Day 8 Nuremberg, Germany

- After breakfast, disembark in Nuremberg and visit the ruins of Zeppelin Field, the Nazi parade grounds of the 1930s; then see the Palace of Justice, site of the infamous Nuremberg Trials.
- Alternately, you may take an optional World War II tour that includes the illuminating Documentation Center Museum.
- After lunch, spend free time exploring Nuremberg's Old Town.
- Or, join an optional tour to discover the secret network of underground bunkers where priceless art was hidden in wartime.
- We depart just before dinner.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 8 Shore Excursions

- Nuremberg Through History—included--Tour one of Germany's most renowned and intriguing cities on this included excursion.
- Nuremberg & World War II--Glimpse the dramatic stage on which the Third Reich rose and fell as you immerse yourself in Nuremberg's World War II history.
- Surviving the War: Art in Nuremberg--See Nuremberg's remarkable underground chambers where priceless art was hidden from harm during World War II.

The Walled City of Nuremberg. There are 4 km of walls and 67 defensive towers that ring the old town

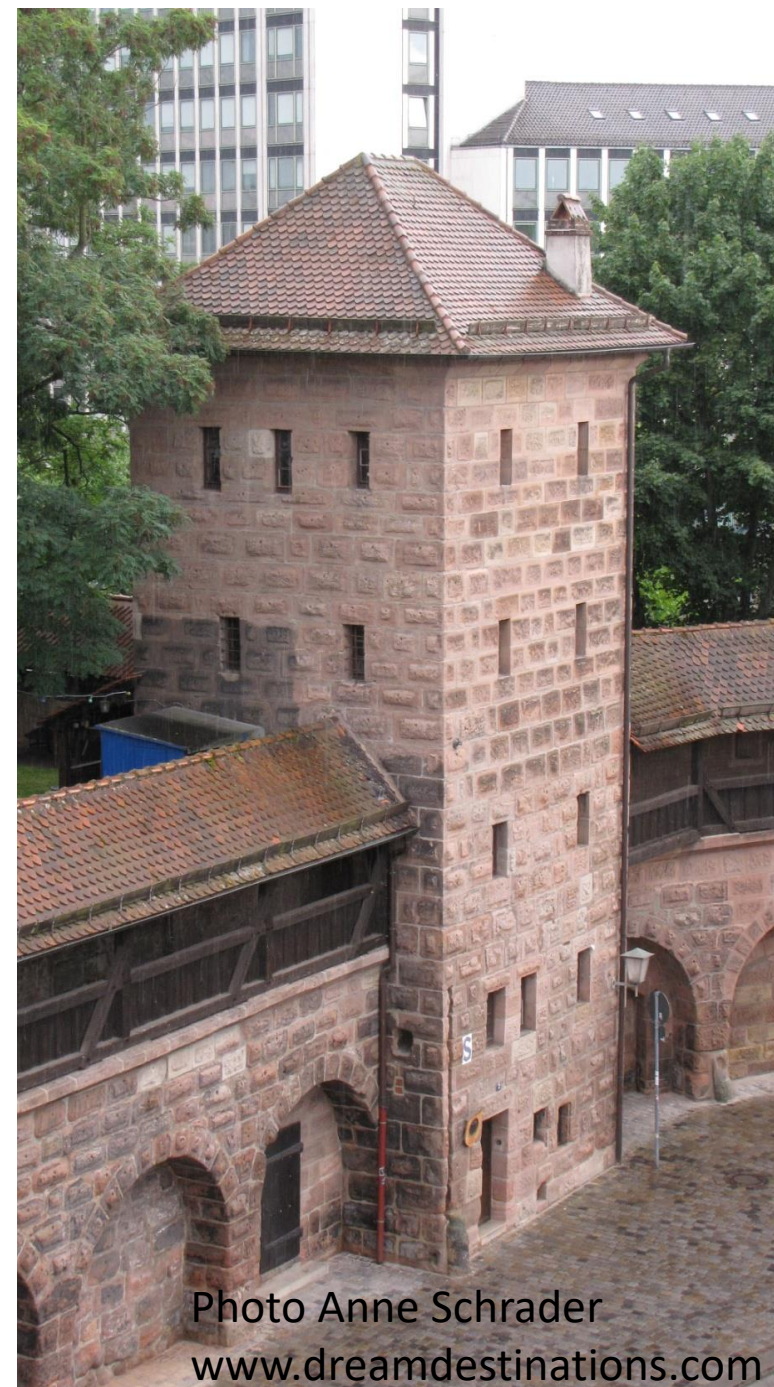


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Maxbrücke (also called Hangman's Bridge) at the Pegnitz River—Nuremberg's oldest stone bridge

Photo Anne Schrader www.dreamdestinations.com



Day 9 Regensburg, Germany

- Arrive in Regensburg midday.
- After lunch, tour this wonderfully preserved medieval city, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, including structures dating back to Roman times.
- Discover many 13th- and 14th-century patrician houses and see the splendid St. Peter's Cathedral.
- During free time, visit the Alte Würstküche (Old Sausage Kitchen), Germany's oldest restaurant.
- Alternately, you may choose to disembark this morning and drive with your guide to Munich for an optional full-day tour of this cultural and historic city, rejoining your ship in time to enjoy dinner on board before our evening departure.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 9 Shore Excursions

- Regensburg Walking Tour—included-Witness a true medieval city untouched by World War II bombing and rich in architectural splendor.
- Regensburg Jewish Walking Tour--Discover the Jewish heritage of Regensburg during a walking tour of this historic city.
- Munich Highlights--See the cultural and historic highlights of one of Germany's most relaxed cities, beautifully set near the foothills of the Alps during a panoramic tour.

Regensburg, Germany

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Porta Praetoria

Roman ruins used in a new building



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Old Town Hall Regensburg

Photo Anne Schrader
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Regensburg St. Peter's Cathedral



Photo Anne Schrader
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Day 10 Passau, Germany

- Arrive this morning in Passau, at the confluence of the Inn, Ilz and Danube Rivers.
- Your guided walk along the town's narrow streets takes you through Old Town and past traditional patrician houses.
- Admire the New Bishop's Residence and see the impressive baroque St. Stephen's Cathedral; its ornate interior is home to one of Europe's largest church organs.
- Enjoy lunch on board your ship and return to the city for further exploration on your own before departing.
- Alternately, set out this morning with your guide to enjoy a full-day optional tour of picturesque Salzburg, the birthplace of Mozart and setting of *The Sound of Music*.
- We cruise through the night.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 10 Shore Excursions

- Passau Walking Tour—included--Explore the Italianate-style streets of Passau, where three European rivers have converged to shape a distinctive city.
- Salzburg Highlights--Spend the day in picturesque Salzburg, setting of the beloved film *The Sound of Music* and the birthplace of Mozart.
- Bavarian Cruise & Baroque Town of Schärding--Board a smaller boat to explore the waters of the Inn River as the rolling hills of Upper Austria and Lower Bavaria unfold around you.
- Bavaria by E-Bike--Escape Passau as you pedal along the Inn River, enjoying unspoiled nature and pastoral landscapes along the water.
- Hike the Passau Hills--Take in Passau's sublime setting at the confluence of three rivers from the best vantage points in the city.
- Fairy-Tale Neuschwanstein Castle by Plane--See the famous fairy-tale castle that inspired Walt Disney and enjoy a flight over the surrounding countryside.

The Veste Oberhaus Passau

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Passau

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St. Stephen's Cathedral Passau

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St. Stephen's
Cathedral. Its organ
has 17,947 pipes.
Passau, Germany

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Passau, where three rivers meet—the Inn, the Ilz and the Danube



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Day 11 Melk, Austria

- After breakfast, visit the abbey at Melk, a 900-year-old Benedictine monastery featuring Austria's finest Italian baroque architecture.
- Rejoin your ship; cruise through the spectacular Wachau Valley this afternoon.
- Before dinner, you have time to explore the time-honored town of Krems and see the Steiner Tor, the last remaining city gate, or take an optional excursion to a local winery to sample some local vintages from this famous wine-producing region.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 11 Shore Excursions

- Melk Abbey--Tour the renowned Melk Abbey, a masterwork of baroque brilliance. Perched on dramatic cliffs high above the Danube, this ochre-colored confection is perhaps the most graceful landmark of the Wachau Valley.
- Göttweig Abbey & Travelers Blessing—Privileged Access--Experience a Benedictine abbey overlooking the splendid Wachau Valley and enjoy dinner with a wine tasting.
- Wachau Valley Winery--Sample fine vintages during a tour and tasting at a local winery.

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Melk

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Schonbuhl Castle

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Aggstein Castle Ruins

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Hinterhaus Castle Ruins

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Weisskirchen Wachau Valley 2012

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Spitz Wachau Valley

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Wachau Valley

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Krems

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Day 12 Vienna, Austria

- Today we tour the Austrian capital of Vienna.
- Ride along the Ringstrasse, which replaced the city walls in the mid-19th century.
- See some of the city's baroque architecture, including the world-famous Opera House, St. Stephen's Cathedral and Hofburg Palace.
- Return to your ship for lunch. The rest of the day is yours to further explore. As always, your Program Director can help you plan your free time.
- Alternately, you may choose to join an optional excursion to see the famed Lipizzaner Stallions;
- or, express your creativity and create a lasting keepsake at an optional art workshop inspired by the work of Gustav Klimt.
- After dinner, relax or enjoy an optional classical concert.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 12 Shore Excursions

- Panoramic Vienna—included
- Klimt & Viennese Gold Workshop—privileged access--Visit the Belvedere Palace, home to artistic riches including works by Klimt, and create your own “Viennese Gold.”
- Behind the Scenes at the Lipizzaner Stallions--Step backstage at the elegant Spanish Riding School, home to the world-famous Lipizzaner stallions.
- Mozart & Strauss Concert—the classical music never stops in Vienna, as you will hear firsthand during this special concert.
- Alma Deutscher plays Mozart & Strauss—privileged access-- Delight in an enchanting evening of music with a privileged access performance led by the renowned Alma Deutscher.

Habsburg Palace Vienna

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St. Stephens Cathedral Vienna

Photo Anne Schrader
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Day 13 Vienna, Austria

- Enjoy a day at leisure in Vienna. Perhaps see an unrivaled collection of Old Masters at the Museum of Fine Arts,
- or visit the Albertina.
- Maybe ride the Riesenrad, the world's oldest Ferris wheel.
- Alternately, you may join an optional tour to Schönbrunn Palace, the "Versailles of Vienna," or enjoy a Viennese waltz lesson as well as visiting the palace during a full-day optional excursion.
- A cup of coffee or tea and a slice of exquisite Sachertorte are a must for any afternoon in Vienna.
- Later, rejoin your ship and sail for Budapest.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 13 Shore Excursions

- Schönbrunn Palace—tour the magnificent home of the Hapsburg Dynasty, built to rival the sprawling Chateau de Versailles.
- Vienna's Countryside by E-Bike—explore nature along the Danube River and pedal at ease by electric bike.
- Picturesque Bratislava--Get acquainted with the Slovakian capital, a vibrant and relaxed cultural center.

Schönbrunn Palace (extra cost)

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Schönbrunn Palace

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Sacher & Coffee

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Sacher & Coffee

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Sacher & Coffee



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Day 14 Budapest, Hungary

- The Danube River divides Hungary's capital city into the once separate towns of Buda and Pest.
- Explore both sides, starting with Pest's National Opera House and historic Heroes' Square.
- In Buda, walk along Castle Hill to Fisherman's Bastion and Matthias Church.
- Enjoy lunch on board your ship, with the rest of the day to explore on your own.
- Alternately, choose one of our optional excursions designed to allow you to delve deeper into the history, culture and cuisine of this fascinating city.
- Return to your ship for a traditional Hungarian dinner.
- (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Day 14 Shore Excursions

- Panoramic Budapest—included
- Budapest Castle Hill City Hike—explore both sides of Budapest—hilly Buda and cosmopolitan Pest—on a city hike to Castle Hill and admire stunning views of the Danube River.
- Hungarian Horsemen—travel to horse country to tour a farm and witness some exciting horsemanship by highly skilled riders.
- Budapest Thermal Bath—soak up the restorative powers of Budapest's nourishing thermal baths and join local in a century-old tradition.

Day 14 Shore Excursions (con't)

- Dohany Street Synagogue & Jewish Budapest—explore Budapest's Jewish history and heritage including the Jewish Quarter and the massive synagogue.
- Grand Market: Flavors of Hungary—browse the countless stalls of Budapest's Grand Market Hall and taste Hungarian delicacies.
- Life behind the Iron Curtain--Take a ride in a symbol of the Communist era as you learn about life behind the Iron Curtain in Hungary.
- Iconic Hungarian Chocolate & Spirits--Savor a taste of Hungary during visits to one of the country's oldest chocolate makers and a famed distillery

Buda Castle Budapest

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Fisherman's Bastion Budapest

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Gothic Matthias Church Budapest



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Gothic Matthias Church Budapest



Day 15 Budapest, Hungary

- After breakfast, disembark and proceed to the airport for your return flight.*
- Or extend your journey with 3 nights in Prague, Czech Republic, where you tour Old Town landmarks and Prague Castle.
- (Breakfast)
- * Ground transfers are included with Viking Air purchase.

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