

Holiday Markets

NO SINGLE
SUPPLEMENT
for Solo
Travelers

Cruise on the Festive Rhine River



2024

SPONSORED BY



VCU Alumni

December 10-18, 2024



VCU Alumni

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Embrace the joyous, Old-World holiday spirit on this seven-night Rhine River cruise that transports you to captivating holiday markets in Germany and France. A feast for the senses, these heartwarming fairs delight with twinkling lights and the uplifting sounds of carolers and bells. Explore festive aisles brimming with wooden nutcrackers and delicate glass ornaments and filled with the tantalizing aromas of treats like gingerbread, roasted chestnuts and sizzling sausages. New adventures await daily!

Aboard your first-class ship, you'll unpack once and enjoy an intimate view of European history as we glide along this ancient trading route studded with medieval sites. In Heidelberg, visit the stately castle over the Neckar Valley and enjoy a special musical performance. Sail through the scenic Rhine Gorge, admire Cologne's spectacular cathedral and stroll within vibrant Freiburg. In the ports of Düsseldorf, Rudesheim, Strasbourg and Breisach, customize your cruise with engaging excursions that fit your interests, such as wine tastings, culinary tours or cultural experiences.

Space on this popular trip is always in high demand, so ensure your spot on this exceptional journey by reserving today!

Cordially,

Elizabeth Bass
Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations
Virginia Commonwealth University

UNESCO World Heritage

1. Strasbourg, Grande-Île
2. Upper Middle Rhine Valley
3. Cologne Cathedral
4. Aachen Cathedral



Glühwein



Upper Middle Rhine Valley



A World of Discovery



Treat yourself to a merry holiday adventure on this seven-night cruise in Germany and France! Celebrate centuries-old traditions of the Advent season within European holiday markets aglow with sparkling lights and good cheer. On this carefree, first-class voyage, you'll also marvel at Cologne Cathedral, visit Heidelberg Castle and savor a stirring musical experience. Plus, choose from included excursions in Düsseldorf, Rudesheim, Strasbourg and Breisach!

Top: Holiday market, Strasbourg

Above: MS Symphonie

Cover: Holiday market at Cologne Cathedral

Mail panel: Grand Île, Strasbourg

Inspiring Moments



- Watch **lovely riverside scenery unfold around you**, vistas of clifftop castles, medieval villages and forested hills.
- Be immersed in the **joyful spirit of the holiday markets** amid festive music, fragrant aromas and colorful pageantry.
- Enjoy an **exclusive musical treat** in Heidelberg's romantic old town.
- Delight in the charming timbered houses and cobblestone streets of **Grande Île, the historic heart of Strasbourg**.
- Gaze upward in awe at the soaring spires of **Cologne Cathedral**.
- Experience four **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**.



ALUMNI CAMPUS
ABROAD®



Day 1 | In Transit

Depart your gateway city for Düsseldorf, Germany. 🌐

Day 2 | Düsseldorf, Germany

Upon arrival, transfer 🚢 to the pier and embark the MS Symphonie.

This evening, meet your fellow travelers at a Welcome Reception and Dinner.

Day 3 | Düsseldorf

🌐 **PYJ | Choose one of these excursions:**

- **Düsseldorf Tour.** Admire this dynamic city's modern architecture, including the bustling Medienhafen riverfront area, on a scenic tour. Later, take a guided walk in the old town, which boasts a half-mile stretch of more than 250 bars, breweries and cafés. Along your route, try some Altbier, the local dark beer.

- **Aachen, City of Emperor Charlemagne.** Aachen was the imperial capital and favorite royal residence of Charlemagne (747–814), who also enjoyed its therapeutic hot springs. Visit breathtaking Aachen Cathedral, notable for Charlemagne's richly decorated imperial chapel and his original throne. Next, walk in the historic center and spa area, then finish at the city's cheery Christmas market.

Free Time: After lunch on the ship, explore Düsseldorf's six wonderful *Christkindlmarkts*, featuring themes such as fairy tales and angels.

Day 4 | Cologne

The ship moors in Cologne today.

Cologne Walking Tour. Kölner Dom, the city's majestic cathedral, is northern Europe's largest Gothic church and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Topped by two filigreed spires, it was built over a period of more than 630 years. On a guided stroll, see the highlights of Cologne's old town. Afterward, take in the cathedral's awe-inspiring façade before heading inside to admire the details of the splendid interior.

Free Time: This afternoon, complimentary shuttles will run between the ship and the city center. Shop for handcrafted mementos at the Christmas market outside the cathedral. The ship departs Cologne tonight.

Day 5 | Rhine Gorge | Rüdesheim

On the way to Rüdesheim this morning, sail through a stunning section of the river known as the Rhine Gorge. This picturesque, gently curving 40-mile stretch was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site for its historical, cultural and geological significance.

🌐 **PYJ | Choose one of these excursions:**

- **Rüdesheim Tour.** Take a tram ride along the town's main avenue, Drosselgasse, and stop at the "Christmas Market of the Nations" with holiday items from around the world. At a captivating museum, be amazed by the incredible ingenuity and melodies of music boxes, player pianos and other restored mechanical musical instruments.

- **Rhine Wine Tasting.** Visit the tranquil Abbey of St. Hildegard and learn about St. Hildegard of Bingen, a prominent and multitalented



Heidelberg

woman in the medieval church. Later, sample the region's fine wines at a family-run winery.

Enrichment: German Holiday Traditions.

From Advent wreaths to Christmas baking, learn about cherished family customs at home.

Day 6 | Mannheim | Heidelberg

The ship arrives early in the port of Mannheim.

Heidelberg Castle and Town. Step inside Heidelberg Castle overlooking the Neckar Valley and see the immense wine barrel built in 1591, which once contained 34,342 gallons of wine! Continue with a pleasant guided walk in the old town and along the banks of the Neckar River. Relax over lunch at a German restaurant, where you'll feel the comfortable, friendly ambience known as *gemütlichkeit*.

Free Time: Spend some time on your own in Heidelberg's historic center.

AHI Connects | Musical Trio. Settle in for an exclusive performance by a talented trio in Heidelberg who will entertain you with holiday songs, arias and contemporary pieces.

Day 7 | Strasbourg, France

This morning, the ship arrives in Strasbourg, capital of the French region of Alsace.

🌐PYJ | Choose one of these excursions:

- **Strasbourg Panorama.** During a panoramic tour, see Strasbourg's German and French heritage on display in landmarks such as Palais Rohan and St. Thomas Church. Next, take a guided walk in the historic center and behold the impressive Notre Dame Cathedral.
- **Culinary Strasbourg.** Savor the celebrated Alsatian food scene on a guided walk that takes you to the city's *winstubs*, cozy wine pubs, and other local cafés and shops. Taste delicious cheeses, wines, meats and sweets.

Free Time: Catch a complimentary shuttle from the ship to the city center this afternoon and meander in Strasbourg's luminous *marketé de Noël*. First established in the 16th century, it's one of France's oldest holiday markets.

Before dinner tonight, gather for a Glühwein party with your fellow cruisers. If you haven't already tried it at one of the holiday markets,

Abbey of St. Hildegard



Kougelhopf, a famous Alsatian specialty, is a yeasted sweet cake filled with raisins and almonds. The decorative molds used to bake them are often handed down within families.



Included Features



Accommodations (with baggage handling)

– Unpack once and cruise for **7 nights** aboard the **exclusively chartered**, first-class MS *Symphonie*.

Extensive Meal Program

– 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 7 dinners, including Welcome and Farewell Dinners; all drinks included on board except special wines and spirits.

Your One-of-a-Kind Journey

– **AHI Travel Assurance plan** covers Accident and Sickness Medical Expense, Trip Delay and Emergency Evacuation for U.S. residents.

– **Enrichment by expert speakers** enhances your insight into the region.

– **Engaging excursions** showcase the local culture, heritage and history.

– **PYJ | Personalize Your Journey |** A choice of excursions in selected locales.

– **Electives** and free time to pursue your individual interests.

– **AHI Sustainability Promise:** We strive to make a positive impact wherever we travel.

– **AHI Connects | Local immersion.**

– Welcome and Farewell Receptions to mingle with fellow travelers.

– A personal VOX headset to hear your English-speaking guide clearly.

– Tipping of guides and drivers.

– Complimentary travel mementos.



indulge in this warm concoction of cinnamon, cloves, citrus and wine, a wintertime classic!

Day 8 | Breisach, Germany | Freiburg

The ship docks in Breisach this morning.

Freiburg. Stroll in the historic center of this lively university city to admire its 13th-century cathedral, turreted Merchants' Hall and other highlights. Visit the *Christkindlmarkt*, where marzipan and chestnuts are popular treats.

PYJ | Choose one of these excursions:

• **Riquewihr and the Wines of the Alsace.**

Selected as one of “Les Plus Beaux Villages de France,” The Most Beautiful Villages of France, this tiny medieval town charms all who visit. Sample some tasty Alsace wines and relish its scenic lanes on a guided walk.

• **Colmar Markets.** Revel in Alsatian holiday traditions as you explore four markets, each with its own character, in this picture-perfect French town lined with half-timbered houses.

Celebrate your yuletide cruise with your fellow travelers at a Farewell Reception and Dinner.

Day 9 | Basel, Switzerland | In Transit

After breakfast, disembark the ship in Basel and transfer to the Zürich airport for the return flight to your gateway city.

Note: Itinerary may change due to local conditions.

✈ Flights and 🚗 transfers included for AHI FlexAir participants.

🌟 PYJ experiences are included.

👉 Elective experiences available at an additional cost.

Note About Activity Levels

We have designated activity levels for all excursions on this program. For more details, please call or visit our website.

Excursions on this itinerary require:

- walking on cobblestones, unpaved paths and/or uneven surfaces
- getting on/off motor coaches and boats

Düsseldorf



EXTEND YOUR STAY

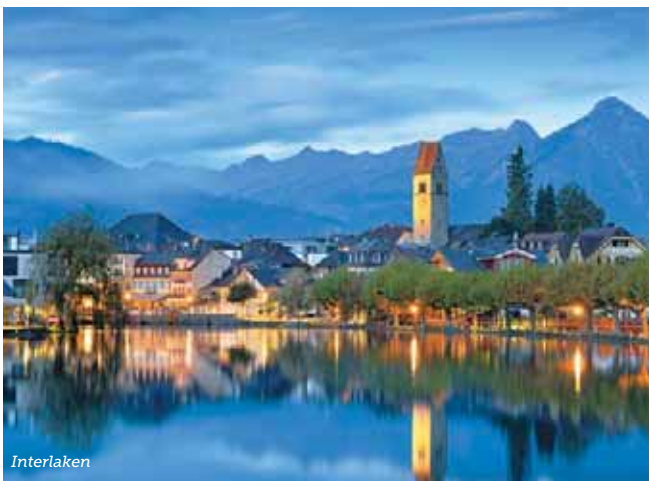


Berlin | 3 Nights

{ Elective PRE-Trip Extension at an additional cost }

Explore one of Europe's most exciting cities over three nights! See Berlin's renowned sites and enjoy free time to visit some of its 80 holiday markets. Includes three nights at the first-class InterContinental Berlin; daily breakfasts; the services of an AHI Travel Director and Hospitality desk; guided Berlin tour; guide and driver gratuities; high-speed train and baggage handling to Düsseldorf; and all taxes and service charges.

\$1,095 per person, double occupancy | \$1,390 single occupancy



Interlaken | 2 Nights

{ Elective POST-Trip Extension at an additional cost }

Soak up Switzerland's enchanting beauty over two nights in the Bernese Oberland, plus delight in Bern, the Swiss capital! Includes two nights at the deluxe Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa; a guided walk in Bern's old town; daily breakfasts; the services of an AHI Travel Director and Hospitality desk; guide and driver gratuities; deluxe motor coach transfer and baggage handling from ship to hotel; and all taxes and service charges.

\$1,195 per person, double occupancy | \$1,590 single occupancy

Reserve your trip today!

To book your journey,
please call our AHI Travel Experts
at **800-323-7373** or
visit **www.vcualumni.org**.

Program Dates

Travel dates †

December 10-18, 2024

† Travel dates include any overnights required for international travel. These dates may vary depending on air schedules.

Tour dates*

December 11-18, 2024

* Tour dates begin on the scheduled arrival date at your destination and end on the scheduled departure date from your destination.

Cruise Program

Category-Deck	Full Price	Special Price*
CA-Upper Deck (Midship/Forward)	\$4,645	\$4,395
CB-Main Deck	\$3,445	\$3,195
CC-Main Deck (Aft)	\$3,245	\$2,995

Categories CB & CC have picture windows and category CA has a french balcony with sliding panoramic windows.

***Special Price includes \$250 special savings.**

Special Price valid if booked by the date found on the address panel.

Receive Bonus Savings when you Pay in Full at booking.

Call for details.

VAT is an additional \$395 per person.

All prices quoted are in USD, per person, based on double occupancy and do not include air transportation costs (unless otherwise stated).

Special offers, promotions and discounts cannot be combined.

Single supplement waived for solo travelers! This offer is limited, capacity-controlled and tends to sell out quickly.

Please note: Program-specific terms and conditions are available at <https://vacom.ahitravel.com/destinations/1808A?schoolId=180>. You can also request a copy from our travel experts. Any payment to AHI Travel constitutes your acceptance of the terms and conditions set out therein, including but not limited to the cancellation terms.

Colmar



MS Symphonie



Aboard this intimate, 55-cabin ship, cruise in exceptional comfort and style while enjoying friendly hospitality and outstanding service from its professional crew. The ship's bright, contemporary public spaces feature large windows for expansive views of the unfolding scenery. Begin each day with a delectable breakfast buffet, and indulge in superb French and European cuisine at lunch and dinner. All drinks on board are included, except for special wines and spirits. Each evening, relax in your inviting, comfortable cabin, which features a private bathroom with a shower and complimentary Wi-Fi.

AHI FlexAir

Let us arrange your flights

Our experts are ready to assist you in booking flights. Our personalized air program offers the following advantages:

- **price guarantee** to protect you from fuel surcharge increases after ticket purchase
- arrival and departure **transfers** on group dates
- **flexibility** to change or cancel your reservation without penalty up to 60 days before departure on most flights
- **assistance** in the event of schedule changes or delays



Traditional crafts

AHI Travel Expertise

From your reservation to your return home, we are here to ensure you have the adventure of a lifetime.

Before you go:

Travel Consultants stand ready to answer your questions as they guide you through the reservation process.

Travel Coordinator offers personalized assistance with flights, electives and special requests.

Travel Information provides pre-departure details and enrichment about your destination.

Once you arrive:

Your Travel Director, a seasoned, multilingual professional, manages daily logistics so you enjoy a seamless experience.

Handpicked Expert Guides offer fascinating insights and share their passion for their country with you.

Knowledgeable Lecturers deepen your appreciation for the region and its history, culture and current events.



Cologne



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Feel the magic of the holidays in Germany and France!

AHI Travel's mission is to deliver inspirational, educational and cultural programs that delight travelers.

With AHI you can rely on:

- Experienced Travel Directors who attend to every detail of your journey.
- An exceptional travel value.
- Unique access to local sites.
- Flexibility and customization.
- Safety and security.



Please call or refer to our website for the most current program information, discounts and pricing.

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