USASK ALUMNI



Duration
8 days

Activity Level
Moderate

Journey Type
River
Solo-Friendly

Holiday Markets Cruise ~ The Festive Rhine River

December 9-17, 2026

Between Basel and Düsseldorf | Starting from $4,245/pp

Embrace the joyous Old-World holiday spirit in Germany and France on a seven-night, first-class Rhine River cruise! Explore enchanting, festive markets decked out for the holidays, complete with twinkling lights, and shop for handmade treasures. Stroll through charming medieval towns , enjoy a special musical performance in Heidelberg's romantic old town and taste delicious seasonal treats. Plus, customize your journey with a choice of excursions , such as wine tastings, culinary tours or cultural experiences, in the ports of Breisach, Strasbourg, Rüdesheim and Düsseldorf.





Day-by-Day Itinerary

Holiday Markets Cruise

The Festive Rhine River

Air Program: 9 days/8 nights (includes 1 air night)

Cruise Program: 8 days/7 nights

Breakfasts: 7 | Lunches: 6 | Dinners: 7

B | L | D denotes included breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

- This itinerary is subject to change due to operational conditions.
- A special note about air: If you have purchased only the Cruise Program, please book flights that arrive on Day 2, the first day of the Cruise Program. The date is listed at the top of your Reservation Confirmation.
- Activity Level ratings indicate each excursion's physical expectations. To make the best personal choice, please evaluate each excursion's rating and your ability to meet the tour's physical demands. Please note, excursions on this program require: walking on cobblestones, unpaved paths or uneven surfaces; and getting on/off motor coaches and boats.

Mild: Walk under 1 mile on mainly flat terrain; navigate under 50 stairs; stand under 1 hour

Moderate: Walk 1-3 miles on flat/uneven terrain; navigate 50-100 stairs; stand 1-2 hours

Active: Walk 2+ miles on flat/uneven terrain, including up and down inclines; navigate 100+ stairs; stand 3+ hours

- Depending on the excursion, more leisurely alternatives may be available.

Day 1 | Depart gateway city

AHI FlexAir passengers depart for Düsseldorf, Germany. Please check your luggage from your gateway city to your arrival city. Your claim checks should have the following airport code: DUS.

Day 2 | Düsseldorf, Germany

MS Symphonie

D

Arrive at Düsseldorf International Airport. Proceed through immigration to the baggage claim area and retrieve your luggage. After completing customs, AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for the group arrival transfer and Cruise Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer should exit the baggage claim area and proceed to the Arrivals Hall, where an AHI Travel representative will meet you.

Transfer to the pier in Düsseldorf and embark the MS Symphonie. Please note, if you arrive before check-in time, your cabin may not be immediately available.

Tonight, get to know your fellow cruisers at the Welcome Reception and Dinner.

Day 3 | Düsseldorf

MS Symphonie

B | L | D

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

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Düsseldorf Tour. Admire the impressive modern architecture that defines this dynamic city, including the bustling Medienhafen riverfront district, on a panoramic tour. Then, on a guided walk, explore the old town, where everyone can find their favorite drink of choice, thanks to a famous half-mile stretch of more than 250 bars, cafés and breweries. Pop into one of the establishments for a taste of the local dark brew, Altbier. (Moderate)

– Aachen, City of Emperor Charlemagne . After becoming king of the Franks in the eighth century, Charlemagne sought to unite all Germanic people and convert them to Christianity. Aachen later became his capital and favorite royal residence, where he also enjoyed the therapeutic hot springs. In 800, he was crowned emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III. During his reign, he instituted many reforms in his vast domain and promoted the ideals of the Carolingian Renaissance, centered on culture and scholarly learning. On a guided tour, visit the Aachen Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage site, featuring Charlemagne's richly decorated imperial chapel and his original throne. Walk through the historic city center and spa area before finishing at the city's festive Christmas market. (Moderate)

Return to the ship for lunch.

Free Time: The afternoon is at leisure to explore Düsseldorf's seven delightful Christkindlmarkts with themes such as handicrafts, angels and German fairy tales, among others.

Day 4 | Cologne

MS Symphonie

B | L | D

Enrichment: German Holiday Traditions. From Advent wreaths to Christmas baking, cherished seasonal customs have been handed down from one generation to the next. Discover some of the favorite traditions in German households.

Cologne. Germany's oldest major city, Cologne takes pride in its vibrant cultural scene and its awe-inspiring Gothic cathedral. Topped by two ornately decorated spires, the Dom was under construction for more than 630 years. During a guided walking tour in the old town, see its highlights and marvel at the cathedral's impressive exterior, then step inside to see the stone columns soaring upward toward the vaulted ceiling. (Moderate)

Enjoy lunch on board the ship.

Free Time: The afternoon is at leisure to explore Cologne on your own. The ship departs for Rüdesheim late this evening.

Day 5 | Rhine Gorge | Rüdesheim

MS Symphonie

B | L | D

This morning, sail through the Upper Middle Rhine Valley and pass Loreley Rock. This scenic gorge is the most famous stretch of the Rhine River, adorned with the vines that produce the area's famous Riesling grapes. Some 40 castles built during the Holy Roman Empire stand imposingly on the terraced hills, and fortified towns and villages once doubled as toll stations for passing ships.

Folk tales have developed around the Loreley Rock for centuries; the one most associated with it stems from a 19th-century German Romantic poem involving a beautiful, but spurned, sorceress, who upon being convicted of luring men to their deaths, jumped to her own death from the rock. Poet Heinrich Heine later elaborated on the theme in his 1823 poem, "Die Lorelei," depicting a siren whose bewitching song caused passing sailors to crash their ships on the rocks. Learn more from a cruise expert as you sail.

The ship arrives in Rüdesheim this afternoon and sails to Mannheim later tonight.

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

– Rüdesheim Tour. Explore Rüdesheim's charming Old Town. Board a tram that takes you along the Drosselgasse, the main street lined with the city's popular restaurants, bars and shops. See the "Christmas Market of the Nations," an international market with holiday items from around the world. Visit Siegfried's Mechanisches Musikkabinett, a museum dedicated to self-playing, mechanical musical instruments. This captivating museum's collection includes hundreds of items from handheld music boxes to calliopes. There is some time at leisure after the tour. Why not choose a café and sit down with a Rüdesheimer Kaffee, a flaming, brandy-spiked coffee drink, as you take in the town's holiday spirit? (Moderate)

– Rhine Wine Tasting . Travel to the beautiful Abbey of St. Hildegard, set amid a vineyard on a hillside overlooking the river. Enjoy the serene environment as you visit the Benedictine abbey and church, where you will learn about the remarkable St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). A prominent woman in the medieval church, the multitalented Hildegard of Bingen was an abbess, mystic, author, composer, poet, healer, theologian and preacher during her lifetime. Afterward, head to a local Rüdesheim winery and taste the region's renowned wines in an old wine cellar. (Moderate)

Day 6 | Mannheim | Heidelberg

MS Symphonie

B | L | D

The ship arrives in Mannheim this morning.

Heidelberg Castle and Town. Visit the nearby city of Heidelberg, and step inside the red sandstone walls of Heidelberg Castle, which stands watch over the Neckar Valley. Inside the Fassbau, the Barrel Building, see the immense wine barrel, which once held 34,342 gallons of wine. It was built in 1591 to store the wine collected as taxes. Then stroll through the city center, passing the Student Jail, Old University and the cathedral, and walk along the banks of the Neckar River. (Moderate)

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

Relax afterward at a restaurant in the area, where you'll savor traditional German dishes and delight in the comfortable, cozy atmosphere that Germans call gemütlichkeit .

Musical Trio. Enjoy a special musical performance in town. Listen to an entertaining mix of holiday songs, arias and contemporary pieces as you enjoy seasonal refreshments.

Return to the ship for dinner. The ship departs Mannheim this evening.

Day 7 | Strasbourg, France

MS Symphonie

B | L | D

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

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

– Strasbourg Panoramic Tour. Discover Strasbourg's unique blend of German and French influences on a scenic tour. Pass by the highlights, including Palais Rohan, an 18th-century building modeled after the noble mansions of Paris; St. Thomas Church, the main Protestant church; and the European Parliament buildings. Continue your exploration with a guided walking tour in the historic center and a visit to the splendid Notre Dame Cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic art. (Moderate)
– Culinary Strasbourg . Experience the Alsatian culinary scene on a guided tour that takes you to the city's winstubs , cozy wine pubs that typically have long communal tables, and other local cafés and shops. Along the way, taste delicious regional specialties and wines. (Moderate)

Return to the ship for lunch.

Free Time: This afternoon, take advantage of a complimentary shuttle from the ship to the Strasbourg city center. Stroll through the city on your own, and visit the holiday market. Established in 1570, it is touted as France's oldest marché de Noël , as the French holiday markets are known. Stay warm with a mug of mulled wine and immerse yourself in the festive holiday spirit!

Glühwein Party. Before dinner tonight, gather for a Glühwein party with your shipmates. If you haven't already tried it at one of the holiday markets, you'll delight in this warm concoction of cloves, cinnamon, citrus and red wine, a wintertime favorite!

The ship departs for Breisach, Germany, tonight.

Day 8 | Breisach, Germany | Freiburg

MS Symphonie

B | L | D

Freiburg. Delight in a guided stroll through the historic center of this vibrant university city. See the 13th-century cathedral, the bright-red, turreted Merchants' Hall and other landmarks. Then visit the colorful Christkindlmarkt and perhaps enjoy some marzipan and chestnuts, popular holiday treats. (Moderate)

Return to the ship for lunch.

Personalize Your Journey | Choose one of the following excursions.

- Riquewihr and the Wines of the Alsace. Set in a small valley near the Vosges Mountains, Riquewihr, France, is an enchanting Alsatian village that looks much as it did in the 16th century. Its architecture, including half-timbered houses and medieval fortifications, adds to its storybook quality. Selected as one of "Les Plus Beaux Villages de France," The Most Beautiful Villages of France, it charms all who visit. Relish its romantic aura on a guided walk and sample some of its fabulous wines. (Moderate)
- Colmar Markets . Spend the afternoon in Colmar, France, and discover the Alsatian way of celebrating the holidays. Visit four of the markets in the city's picturesque Old Town. The main market occupies the Place des Dominicains, where the beautiful Dominican Church anchors the square. Continue to the Place Jeanne d'Arc market, which gives you a taste, figuratively and literally, of being in an Alsatian village. Here, local food products are the focus, and you just might give into the temptation to treat yourself to the area's specialties, including delicious charcuterie, liqueurs and sweets. The Place de l'Ancienne Douane market surrounds the fountain dedicated to local 16th-century hero Lazare de Schwendi. The final stop is the indoor market at the Koïfhus, where the work of local woodworkers, potters, jewelers and other artisans are for sale. (Moderate)

Tonight, gather for a festive Farewell Reception and Dinner to celebrate your Advent adventure on the Rhine. The ship departs for Basel, Switzerland.

Day 9 | Basel, Switzerland | Depart for gateway city

B

After breakfast, disembark the ship in Basel, Switzerland. AHI FlexAir passengers traveling on flights that qualify for a group transfer and Cruise Program passengers who have purchased seats on the group transfer depart for Zürich Airport for your return flights home. Your Travel Director will provide the details.





What's Included

Program Overview

- Unpack once and cruise for 7 nights aboard the exclusively chartered, first-class MS Symphonie.
- AHI Connects: Local immersion.
- AHI Sustainability Promise: We strive to make a positive, purposeful impact in the communities we visit.
- Complimentary travel mementos.

Meal Program

- 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 7 dinners.
- Welcome and Farewell Receptions and Dinners to mingle with fellow travelers.
- All drinks included on board except special wines and spirits.

On-site Features

- Enrichment by expert speakers enhances your insight into the region.
- Engaging excursions showcase the local culture, heritage and history.
- Personalize Your Journey | PYJ: A choice of excursions in selected locales.
- Elective activity and free time to pursue your individual interests.
- Tipping of guides and drivers.
- A personal VOX headset to hear your English-speaking guide clearly.





FlexAir Travel Program

Need assistance booking your travel arrangements? Our experts are here to help. Our air program offers the following benefits.

Trip Transportation

- Assistance in the event of schedule changes or delays
- Arrival and departure transfers on group dates

Price Guarantee

- Price guarantee to protect you from fuel surcharge increases after ticket purchase

Travel and Hotel Accommodations

MS Symphonie

The MS Symphonie shines among CroisiEurope's star-studded fleet of fine river and coastal ships. On board this intimate vessel outfitted with 55 cabins, enjoy outstanding, friendly service; bright, contemporary and comfortable cabins; and exceptional cuisine. Begin your day with a wonderful breakfast buffet, and delight in French and European specialties at lunch and dinner in the restaurant. All your drinks on board are included, except for special wines and spirits. With beds that face the water, the staterooms boast great views of the passing scenery, and each includes a private bathroom with shower. Wi-Fi is complimentary.



Pricing

Category/Deck	Base Price / You Pay
CA-Upper Mid	$5,745
CB-Main, Mid/Front (WAIT LIST)	$4,545
CC-Main Aft, Picture Window (WAIT LIST)	$4,245

Package rates are per person based on Double occupancy from Land Only. Prices include all service charges; port charges when applicable; US government taxes and fees. The minimum deposit is $750.00 per person. Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to check any baggage. Please contact your airline or refer to its website for detailed information regarding your airline's checked baggage policies. To view Program Terms and Conditions, close this window and scroll to the bottom of the page.

** Full Payment Discounts are only available at the time of booking with initial payment 120+ days prior to departure. This offer only applies to full payment at the time of reservation. Details on how to qualify for this savings will be included when your reservation request is confirmed.

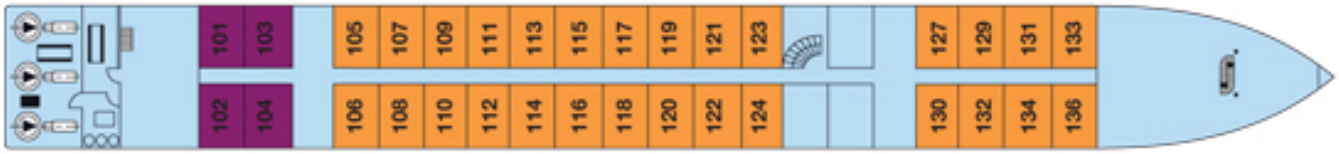
SUN DECK



UPPER DECK



MAIN DECK



CA CB CC


Düsseldorf
Cologne
GERMANY
Aachen
Rüdesheim
Mainz
Mannheim
Heidelberg
Strasbourg
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