

Christmas Markets Along the Danube

PRELIMINARY TRIP INFORMATION

Editor's Note: A full trip information kit, including photos, larger maps and additional details will be available in the next week or so. Thank you for your patience as we compile the final color version for your enjoyment.

Tour: Christmas Markets Along the Danube

Dates: Early December 2020

Main Trip, Prelude Deck: **\$2,695** per person

Main Trip, Cantata Deck: **\$2,795** per person

Main Trip, Sonata Deck: **\$2,845** per person

Main Trip, Serenade Deck: **\$2,945** per person

Airfare from Detroit (DTW): **\$1,400** per person

Travel Protection: **\$499** per person

TRIP OVERVIEW:

Christmas trees aglow with white candles...the wafting harmonies of Handel, Bach, and the strains of “Silent Night”... sumptuous gingerbread cakes...handmade wood carvings ...and the warm, happy spirit of the season all around you. Experience this popular holiday getaway, and cruise along the Danube River through the most beloved ports of Austria and Germany.

You'll explore the region's craft-filled Christmas markets in the company of like-minded American travelers, and behold storybook medieval towns in all their holiday finery. Along with spending convivial moments with others who share the holiday spirit. Only Grand Circle brings you this unique and comprehensive holiday River Cruise package at such an unbeatable value! Space is on a first-come, first-serve basis and is truly limited. To reserve your spot, call Southern Exposure at (269) 962-1255.



TEXT-ONLY ITINERARY:

DAY 1

Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today on your flight to Nuremberg, Germany.

DAY 2

Nuremberg, Germany • Embark ship

Arrive in Nuremberg this morning, where a Grand Circle representative meets you at the airport and helps you transfer to the pier to embark your waiting river ship. Upon arrival, enjoy some free time to relax and familiarize yourself with your ship.

Gather this evening for a ship briefing about your River Cruise, and get better acquainted with your Program Director and fellow travelers during dinner. Afterward, settle in for your first night onboard.

DAY 3

Nuremberg

After breakfast, disembark for a tour of Nuremberg, one of the most important cities of the Franconia region.

This medieval city surrounded by 13th-century walls is the second-largest city in Bavaria. Today the city's name evokes the notorious post-World War II war trials. But throughout its history, Nuremberg has been known for its wonderful creativity and handcrafts—its toys and fancy metalwork are particularly famous.

Return to the ship for lunch before an afternoon visit to Nuremberg's famous Christkindlmarkt (Christmas market), where you have free time to browse on your own. This is Germany's most well-known traditional Christmas market, and it is open throughout the holiday season, with a myriad of colorful stalls offering handmade Christmas decorations, toys, ceramics, glasswork, and candles. Food stalls tempt you with Bratwurst, mulled wines, sweets, and pastries—including the famous Nuremberg gingerbread. Various programs regale visitors with chorale offerings, concerts, and a live Nativity scene.

Tonight, after a Welcome Drink and as you enjoy the Captain's Welcome Dinner onboard, the ship quietly slips anchor and heads out on the Main-Danube Canal. We cruise overnight on our way to our next port-of-call.

Please note: Christmas markets typically open one week before, or at the start of Advent observances in mid- to late-November. Hours of operation for the holiday markets vary depending on region, and may be limited or closed between December 22 and December 26, as well as on New Year's Day. When possible, your trip itinerary may be adjusted as a result.

DAY 4

Regensburg • Canal lecture • German language lesson • Choral concert

This morning, cruise Europe's highest canal, the Main-Danube. En route, learn about the engineering techniques and innovations—from locks to water pumps—that have allowed travelers to navigate Europe's rivers during an exclusive Discovery Series lecture. Please note: During the Main-Danube Canal transit, it may be necessary for the Captain to close the Sun Deck because of low-standing bridges.

You are also invited to an exclusive Discovery Series German language lesson, where you can learn some German phrases—such as, *Schöne Feiertage* (Happy Holidays)—commonly used during the Christmas season.

You have lunch onboard just as we're arriving in Regensburg, a hidden treasure with elements dating back to medieval times. After your meal, go ashore for a walking tour. Since the city suffered no damage during World War II, it remains beautifully preserved.

Your tour features the Old Town Hall and the famous Stone Bridge, Germany's oldest, which was constructed during the twelfth century. You also visit the Regensberg Christkindlmarkt in Neupfarrplatz, which lights up in December with seasonal cheer. You have time here to explore on your own, strolling among the stalls and shopping for unique handmade Christmas gifts.

After an early dinner on the ship, join us for an exclusive Discovery Series event as we walk to a local church to hear a choral concert featuring festive holiday music.

Later in the evening, return to the ship, which remains docked in Regensburg overnight.

DAY 5

Regensburg • Passau • Stollen baking demonstration

Enjoy a leisurely morning onboard today, as the ship prepares to set off for its next destination. Your cruise toward Passau begins shortly before lunch.

If the weather obliges, you might go on deck and take in the scenes of life along the banks of this noble river, or spend some time with fellow travelers over coffee or cards.

This afternoon, you'll learn how to bake Stollen, a traditional German bread made with fruit and nuts, and topped with powdered sugar, during an exclusive Discovery Series demonstration.

In late evening we arrive in Passau, where we dock overnight.

DAY 6

Passau • German Christmas Traditions discussion

This morning, learn about local holiday lore during an exclusive Discovery Series discussion about German Christmas Traditions. Then disembark for a tour of the lovely medieval town of Passau.

Situated at the confluence of the Danube, the Ilz, and the Inn rivers, Passau has been called the Dreiflüssestadt (City on Three Rivers). The city was significantly developed by the prince bishops of Passau, who made it their royal residence and capital of the largest Danube diocese.

You'll enjoy a short walking tour of this elegant town that has served as a German cultural and intellectual hub for centuries. See the impressive Bishop's Residenz, the 13th-century Town Hall, and the town's magnificent St. Stephen's Cathedral, which boasts the world's largest church organ, with 17,774 pipes and 231 resounding stops. The cathedral's original Gothic plan is still evident through the 17th-century reconstruction it received in the grand Baroque style. One of its most striking features is the gorgeous octagonal dome that hovers over the intersection of the nave, where the congregation sits, and the transept, which runs perpendicular to it.

Passau's colorful Christmas market is located in front of the cathedral. You have some free time to do some shopping or simply browse the wide assortment of handcrafts and Christmas creations.

Lunch and dinner will be onboard. The ship sets sail to Linz, Austria in late afternoon.

DAY 7

Linz, Austria • Optional Salzburg tour • Captain's Farewell Dinner

This morning the ship calls at the port of Linz. You have the day free to explore this Old-World city. Linz, one of the largest ports on the Danube and the second-most populous city in Austria, was initially settled by Romans in the first century AD, and today is one of the country's cultural centers. It offers a wealth of discoveries—from its Hauptplatz, one of the loveliest squares in Europe, to the 17th-century Abbey of St. Florian, where Linz's native son, Anton Bruckner, was the organist and composed many of his famed masterpieces of church music. His burial site is at the abbey.

You could also consider a visit to Linz's historic Landhaus, a complex of structures currently used as government headquarters. These buildings served as the city's university in the 17th century, and it was here that the well-known mathematician and astronomer Johann Kepler formulated his theory of planetary motion. A short walk takes you to the Linzer Schloss (Linz Castle), where you can browse its Provincial Museum of Upper Austria, containing artwork from medieval to modern times. Linz is also a center for trade in antiques, so you might wish to stop in at a few of its shops to see what treasures you can find.

Return to the ship for lunch where you can spend the rest of your day relaxing or continue exploring Linz's charming Christmas market and abundance of museums on your own.

Or, journey into the heart of the Alps with an optional full-day Salzburg excursion including lunch. This beautiful city—birthplace of Mozart—will seem familiar those individuals who are forever enchanted by *The Sound of Music*, and you'll visit the grounds where much of the film was shot.

Your tour includes a visit to the Getreidegasse, the renowned center for Austrian shopping. Note the intricate architectural details of this lane of shops and galleries, nestled under their skillfully crafted wrought-iron signs and offering jewelry, antiques, leather goods, and regional foods. The vaulted passageways offer delightful pathways to artisans' workshops and arcaded courtyards.

You'll get another taste of Alpine Christmas traditions as you visit the fabulous Salzburg Christmas market. Handmade seasonal crafts of all sorts are available, and the aromas of traditional holiday foods add magic to the colorful setting.

Have lunch in this beautiful city and free time to explore on your own before boarding your ship again in the late afternoon in Linz.

This evening, as you cruise the river again, celebrate your discoveries and new Christmas memories at the Captain's Farewell Dinner onboard.

Salzburg - \$110/person

This beautiful city—birthplace of Mozart—will seem familiar to most of us who are forever enchanted by *The Sound of Music*, and you'll visit the grounds where much of the film was shot.

Your tour includes a visit to the Getreidegasse, the renowned center for Austrian shopping. Note the intricate architectural details of this lane of shops and galleries, nestled under their skillfully crafted

wrought-iron signs and offering jewelry, antiques, leather goods, and regional foods. The vaulted passageways offer delightful pathways to artisans' workshops and arcaded courtyards.

You'll get another taste of Alpine Christmas traditions as you visit the fabulous Salzburg Christmas market. Handmade seasonal crafts of all sorts are available, and the aromas of traditional holiday foods add magic to the colorful setting. Lunch is included in this beautiful city, as well as free time to explore on your own before boarding your ship again in the late afternoon in Linz.

DAY 8

Melk • Wachau Valley • Optional Musical Vienna tour

After breakfast, disembark in Melk for an excursion to the dramatic 900-year-old Baroque Melk Abbey.

This magnificently ornate structure has a long and storied history. Strategically situated on a steep, cliffside perch, Melk Abbey's earliest incarnation was as a Roman border post. Later, it served as a tenth-century Babenberg fortress. It became a Benedictine monastery in 1089 and earned a distinguished reputation for medieval scholarship. Its library includes more than 70,000 books and 2,000 manuscripts, chiefly from the ninth through the 15th centuries. The Abbey also houses a remarkable cherub-filled library of thousands of books and manuscripts, and 365 windows—one for every day of the year. The interior of the Abbey's church is a kaleidoscope of red, orange, and gold—with a magnificent carved pulpit and shimmering ceiling frescoes. You'll also enjoy free time to explore Melk at leisure before returning to your ship.

After setting sail again near lunchtime, enjoy hot chocolate and relax onboard as your ship cruises along one of the most beautiful parts of the Danube—the Wachau Valley. Your Program Director will provide enlightening commentary about this UNESCO World Heritage Site consisting of sculpted hills and medieval towns built along the river.

You arrive in Vienna before dinnertime. After dinner, you can accompany your Program Director for a peek into this elegant city.

Vienna without music wouldn't be Vienna. So, subject to availability of tickets, you may want to join us this evening on an optional Musical Vienna outing for a performance in one of Vienna's famed concert halls. This optional excursion is an excellent opportunity to hear classical Viennese music in a setting where Johann Strauss himself performed.

Musical Vienna - \$90/person

Vienna without music wouldn't be Vienna. So, subject to availability of tickets, you may want to join us this evening on a Musical Vienna outing and enjoy an unforgettable performance in one of Vienna's famed concert halls. You'll hear classical Viennese music in a setting where Johann Strauss himself performed and be enchanted by the beautiful melodies.

Please note: This optional tour is offered on the Nuremberg to Vienna itinerary only.

DAY 9

Disembark ship • Return to U.S.