

*Full Itinerary*

## ENCHANTING CHRISTMAS MARKETS - AMSTERDAM & FESTIVE RHINE RIVER CRUISE



TALK TO OUR WELL  
TRAVELLED TEAM OF  
EXPERTS

0844 3350 197

Monday - Thursday 9:00am -  
8:00pm, Friday 9:00am - 5:30pm  
(London time)



### JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:**

Level 2

**DESTINATION:**

Enchanting Christmas Markets - Amsterdam &  
Festive Rhine River Cruise

**DURATION:**

11 days / 10 nights

**FLIGHT INFORMATION:**

Please arrange your flights into Amsterdam  
Schiphol Airport [AMS] Netherlands on Day 1  
and to depart from Cologne International Airport  
[CGN], Germany on Day 11

**PICKUP LOCATION:**

Amsterdam Schiphol Airport [AMS]

## OVERVIEW

04 - 14 Dec, 2024

Get in the festive spirit on this fabulous journey and visit some of Europe's best Christmas markets in Germany and France. Sail the mighty River Rhine, discover scenic landscapes and quaint towns this Advent.

Join us on this special Christmas trip and discover Europe at its festive best. Starting in the Netherlands, we spend some time to explore the canals of Amsterdam; visit interesting museums including the Anne Frank House; tour the Gothic-style Binnenhof which houses the seat of the Dutch parliament in The Hague, and discover some old, typically Dutch traditions at the Zaanse Schans.

We then head over the border to Germany to begin our cruise on the Rhine, which stops at numerous places on the way, and finish in Cologne for a final night. There is no doubt that the Christmas markets in Strasbourg, Mainz and Cologne are some of the best places to pick up some unique gifts, so make sure you have plenty of room in your suitcase.

From the hustle and bustle of the Netherlands to a more tranquil setting aboard the wonderful A-ROSA SILVA cruise. This magical 5-night all-inclusive journey along the Rhine, will truly get you in the festive spirit!

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

**DAY 1** - Welcome to Amsterdam

**DAY 2** - Discovering Amsterdam

**DAY 3** - Windmills, Clogs & Cheese

**DAY 4** - The Historic Hague

**DAY 5** - Transfer to Cologne & Rhine Cruise Embarkation

**DAY 6** - Romantic Rudesheim

**DAY 7** - Exploring the Upper Rhine

**DAY 8** - Strasbourg, France's Oldest Christmas Market

**DAY 9** - Magical Mainz & Koblenz

**DAY 10** - Christmassy Cologne

**DAY 11** - Auf Wiedersehen, Germany

## FULL ITINERARY

### DAY 1 - WELCOME TO AMSTERDAM

Welcome to Amsterdam! You will be met at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport and transferred to your hotel, where you can meet up with your Tour Director.

Depending on your time of arrival you could go for a stroll in the vicinity of your hotel. In the evening you have the opportunity to get to know your fellow travellers with a welcome drink and enjoy your first dinner together at a nearby restaurant.

**Included meals:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** NH City Centre Amsterdam (or similar)

### DAY 2 - DISCOVERING AMSTERDAM

After breakfast, your guide will take you on a full day tour of Amsterdam, the unofficial capital of the Netherlands - the official seat of the government is in The Hague. Blessed with great infrastructure this easy-going city is east to navigate and an excellent place to discover on foot, by bike, by tram or via the intricate and interesting canal network.

Our first stop is a well known monument, Anne Frank Huis. Although she only spent 25 months of her short life hidden in the secret annex, during the Second World War, her diary became one of the world's most read books in the world. A visit to the house will leave you with mixed emotions, and it's an experience you will never forget.

Afterwards, sail the canals of Amsterdam as we travel to lunch - it is by far the best way to discover the city.

After lunch, we travel on foot and by tram to Het Rijksmuseum. The famous art museum's collection offers an impressive overview of Dutch art and history, including works by 17th- century Dutch masters such as Rembrandt, Vermeer and Hals.

Our last stop of the day will be The Diamond Museum. Let yourself be enchanted by glittering gemstones, admire the wonderful collection and learn about 400 years of diamond history in the only diamond museum in Europe.

After the rest of the afternoon at leisure, we head for dinner together.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** NH City Centre Amsterdam (or similar)

### DAY 3 - WINDMILLS, CLOGS & CHEESE

Today we'll visit De Zaanse Schans, an authentic village not far from Amsterdam, an open-air cultural heritage museum where people still live and work.

Here discover life in the 17th -18th century Holland. You can visit authentic wooden houses, take pictures of a colourful collection of lovingly restored windmills, pass by the bakery museum with its enticing freshly baked bread and biscuits. You could also visit the dairy farm and try to discover what makes Dutch cheese so special.

You'll also pass by one of the last existing clog factories in The Netherlands. At the end of the 19th century, special machines were built to manufacture clogs and they are still in use today. Enjoy the demonstration and maybe buy yourself pair of clogs! De Zaanse Schans is a perfect place to pick up some Christmas gifts or souvenirs.

After lunch, the afternoon is at leisure for you to discover Amsterdam at leisure, before re-joining for dinner this evening.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** NH City Centre Amsterdam (or similar)

### DAY 4 - THE HISTORIC HAGUE

Today we will visit The Hague, the third largest city in the Netherlands, seat of the Dutch government and the official capital city.

We start our guided tour at Het Binnenhof. This centuries-old complex includes the parliament and government buildings and originated from

the hunting lodge of the Counts of Holland, dating back to the 13th century. Since then, the Binnenhof has been the residence of monarchs and governments up to the present day.

We'll enjoy lunch and continue on to the Mauritshuis, one of the most beautiful museums in the Netherlands. It hosts a magnificent collection of Dutch Golden Age paintings including works by Vermeer.

In the afternoon we head back to Amsterdam, where you have the rest of the afternoon off, until we meet up again for dinner in the evening.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** NH City Centre Amsterdam (or similar)

## DAY 5 - TRANSFER TO COLOGNE & RHINE CRUISE EMBARKATION

Today we say Tot Ziens (Goodbye) to Amsterdam and accompanied by our guide we make our way to Germany. For the journey you will be given a small packed lunch with some typically Dutch foods to enjoy en-route.

Upon arrival in Cologne, it is time to say goodbye to your local Dutch guide as you pass into the capable hands of the river cruise crew and board your vessel.

The A-ROSA SILVA is a small vessel, offering many modern amenities such as sauna, fitness area, pool, and spa.

The dress code aboard is casual, even when dining. The whole atmosphere on board is relaxed and above all, festive!

Throughout the day, hot and cold drinks, as well as soft drinks, beers, cocktails, and a wide selection of excellent German wines are included, and the on-board Chefs create dishes that reflect the area through which you are sailing.

In the evenings, enjoy nightly entertainment in the onboard lounge.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Packed Lunch, Dinner

**Accommodation:** A-ROSA SILVA

## DAY 6 - ROMANTIC RÜDESHEIM

Our cruise has sailed south along the mighty River Rhine to the quaint town of Rudesheim. The bustling riverside town is well-known for its vineyards, which produce the famous Riesling wines, as well as its "Christmas Market of the Nations".

Rudesheim is also the centre of Rhine Romanticism, and inspired many poets and musicians, such as Brahms who composed his 3rd Symphony there. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the town of Rudesheim marks the end of several old merchants' routes and was protected by four castles.

Enjoy time to explore the town and its markets at leisure or join one of the optional organised excursions. Make sure you take a walk through the charming little streets of the old town. Drosselgasse, an alleyway with half-timbered facades, is known as "The World's Longest Wine Bar" and is reputed to be the most-visited tourist attraction in Germany after Cologne Cathedral!

Whilst in Rudesheim, you should also try a Rudesheimer Kaffee, a coffee which also contains Asbach Uralt brandy and sugar cubes. First made in 1957 by the German television chef, Hans Karl Adam, it is still popular today and will definitely warm you up!

Later it is time to re-board your cruise as it sails to the next destination.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** A-ROSA SILVA

## DAY 7 - EXPLORING THE UPPER RHINE

Today, your cruise will be sailing along the Upper Rhine. Depending on the port availability, we will discover Germersheim or nearby Speyer.

The German king Rudolph von Habsburg gave the historic town of Germersheim its city rights back in 1276. According to legend, the King, when he was sick, rode from Germersheim to Speyer, just 20km away to die there instead.

Nearby Speyer is Germany's oldest planned medieval town - over 2,000 years old! Speyer's most prominent monument is its cathedral. As one of the country's most important High Romanesque cathedrals, it is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Here, the natural surrounds are some of the most picture-perfect you'll see on your river cruise, with terraced vineyards, expansive forests, high peaks, and nature trails just waiting to be explored.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** A-ROSA SILVA

## DAY 8 - STRASBOURG, FRANCE'S OLDEST CHRISTMAS MARKET

Today's port, Kehl, lies on the border with France and the historic town of Strasbourg, in France's Alsace region. The border here has passed many times between the two countries, hence a grand affinity between both sides.

Since 1949, Strasbourg has been the official seat of many European institutions, such as the European Parliament or the European Court of Human Rights. It also played an important part in the Protestant Reformation, and it was one of the first centres of the printing industry.

A visit to Strasbourg is not to be missed during the Christmas season - it is home to France's oldest Christmas Market. Strolling through the Old Town, with its interesting Franco-German architecture, you will pass timber-framed houses, and of course, the world-famous Strasbourg Cathedral. Started in 1015 and finally finished in 1439, it was the world's tallest building for many years and as of today it's still the sixth tallest church in the world!

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** A-ROSA SILVA

## DAY 9 - MAGICAL MAINZ & KOBLENZ

Today we visit Mainz, one of the oldest cities in Germany. Located on the left-bank of the Rhine, it lies opposite another great river, the Main, from which it gets its name. Founded by the Romans in the 1st century BC, Mainz is full of history and the birthplace of Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of the movable printing press.

Due to its waterfront location, the climate in Mainz is fairly mild, creating an ideal location to cultivate wine. It is surrounded by Germany's largest wine-growing region 'Rheinhessen'. On an optional excursion, discover the heart of Mainz's old town, the historic Christmas Market on the Domplatz, towered over by the illuminated and imposing Mainz Cathedral, and have the chance to try regional wines during a wine tasting session.

Our next place to visit is Koblenz. The city dates back over 2,000 years, making it one of Germany's oldest. It is also one of its most picturesque, with a wealth of sights and cultural attractions. Marvel at Koblenz's palaces, stately homes, grand townhouses, narrow lanes, and romantic corners.

Tonight, it is sadly our final evening aboard the river cruise, as we dine together and enjoy the onboard festivities.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** A-ROSA SILVA

## DAY 10 - CHRISTMASSY COLOGNE

Sadly, this morning it is time to disembark our river cruise after breakfast and you will be transferred back to land and to our hotel in Cologne.

Upon arrival at the hotel, after check-in, we will enjoy a walking tour of the historic centre. The rest of the day is at leisure for a final trip to the city's famous Christmas Markets. If you are still looking for souvenirs, next to the cathedral you can find over a hundred Christmas stalls!

We round off our festive adventure along the Rhine with a final farewell meal this evening.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Cologne

## DAY 11 - AUF WIEDERSEHEN, GERMANY

Sadly, this morning it is time to disembark our river cruise after breakfast and you will be transferred to your hotel to Cologne.

Upon arrival at the hotel, after a brief time to freshen up, you will enjoy a guided tour of Cologne's Old Town. The city is known for its famous fragrance, Eau de Cologne 4711, produced since around 1709. Not to be overlooked is Cologne's imposing Gothic Cathedral, the third tallest church and tallest cathedral in the world. Next to the cathedral at the Roncalliplatz you can find over a hundred Christmas stalls.

This afternoon and evening, enjoy time at leisure to explore Cologne further. You might like to visit some of Cologne's many museums, such as the Museum Ludwig or Chocolate museum, or galleries, and purchase some final souvenirs at the end of your festive adventure.

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** none

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Meet & Greet at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport on arrival
- Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary
- Transportation throughout in an air-conditioned deluxe vehicle and cruise ship
- All activities, visits and excursions as detailed in the itinerary
- English speaking tour guides where applicable
- Services of a Big Journey Company Tour Director throughout (subject to minimum numbers)

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- ATOL Protection
- Flights to Amsterdam Schiphol Airport [AMS] and from Cologne International Airport [CGN] - please contact us for a flight quotation
- Transfers on arrival or departure, to/from the airport(s), outside of the tour dates
- Cruise shore excursions
- Additional food/beverage unless otherwise included in the programme
- Personal expenses
- Personal Travel & Medical Insurance
- Visas (if required)
- Optional excursions
- Gratuities
- Any COVID tests or related entry & exit requirements

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Please let The Big Journey Company know prior to travelling if you have any medical needs or take any medication that we need to be made aware of to ensure that you have a safe and pleasant tour
- Visas are not currently required for entry to The Netherlands, Germany and France for US, UK & Canadian citizens. For other passport holders please check before travel if you require a visa.
- Check in is after 2-3pm and check out is before 10am unless otherwise specified in the itinerary.
- Cancellation 90 – 0 days prior to departure cancellation fee is 100%. It is your responsibility to ensure the correct travel insurance in place to protect you against the need to cancel your holiday. Deposits are non-refundable and final payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure.
- Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation request. This does not affect your statutory rights. This offer is subject to availability and space is limited.



## BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

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