

8 DAYS CHRISTMAS MARKETS ALONG THE RHINENORTHBOUND



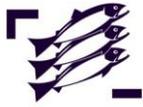
US\$2,940+



Departure Date	Ship
Nov 2017: 26	ms Inspire / ms Grace
Dec 2017: 3, 10	

Itinerary

Day 1	<p>Your Rhine Christmas Market cruise begins</p> <p>Your cruise begins 4:00 PM in Basel. Transfers are included from EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg to the riverboat where embarkation begins at 4:00 PM. Guests enjoying a pre-stay in Basel will receive a transfer from the hotel to the ship. If you arrive earlier than 4:00 PM, you might want to go into the city to see the Christkindlmarkt – said to be the largest and most traditional in Switzerland – and perhaps have your first taste of the traditional <i>glühwein</i> that is so much a part of the Christmas market scene. Back on board the riverboat, meet your Tauck Directors at a discovery/welcome briefing, and enjoy a casual captain's welcome reception followed by dinner – and one of the best Christmas market tours begins!</p> <p>Meals: Dinner Accommodation: ms Inspire / ms Grace</p>
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Day 2

A day of Christmas festivity in the Alsace

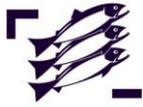
Riquewihr - *Aside from the electricity that lights up its intimate Christmas Market every December, this Alsatian village hasn't changed much since its days as a Winzerdorf (wine village) in the 16th century. Fortified by glühwein, you'll stroll among stalls laden with crafts and local delicacies, set among historic half-timbered houses and shops dressed in yuletide finery... it's like a fairy tale come to life!*

Colmar - *A little piece of holiday heaven... that's Colmar at Christmas time! Le Marché de Noël's five main venues spread merriment throughout this beautifully preserved medieval city on the Alsatian Wine Route, its 14th- and 15th-century façades draped in greenery and twinkling lights. Tiny faces beam with delight amid the toys, gingerbread, merry-go-round and animated Nativity scene of the Children's Market in Petite Venise. Crêpes, sausages, baguettes, chocolates and other local favorites - and of course Alsatian wine - make the mouth water at Place Jeanne d'Arc. Master glaziers, sculptors, jewelers and other artisans display their work in the Covered Market in the historic Koifhus (customs house)... and you'll find everything from candles to roast chestnuts at Place de l'Ancienne Douane and Place des Dominicains, warmed by the stained glass windows of the Gothic Dominican church.*

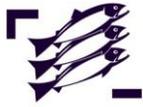
Tauck's Christmas Market tours northbound along the Rhine begin with an excursion to the romantic village of Riquewihr, France, set between the Vosges Mountains and the vineyards in the Alsace near the German border, where not much has changed since its early days as a *winzerdorf* (wine village). This little medieval town still looks much as it did in the 16th century and it's easy to feel like you're in the middle of a fairy tale; while you're here, you might want to buy a special Christmas ornament to add to the riverboat's on-board Christmas tree. Have lunch in Riquewihr, known for its fine, locally produced Riesling and other Alsatian wines. With its ancient buildings, half-timbered houses, Renaissance structures and crooked houses on crooked lanes, being in the city center of Colmar is almost like walking through a wonderful living museum; seeing Christmas traditions unfold in such a setting as you browse Colmar's Christmas market is unforgettable. Back aboard the riverboat, join us for dinner, then celebrate with your fellow travelers at our tree-trimming party as you help decorate the riverboat's Christmas tree, a highlight of all Tauck Christmas Market tours!

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

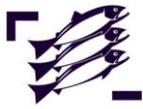
Accommodation: ms Inspire / ms Grace



<p>Day 3</p>	<p>Strasbourg & the Christkindlmarkt</p> <p>Strasbourg - <i>Steaming mulled wine... gingerbread... Advent wreaths... a towering Christmas tree, dwarfed by soaring Strasbourg Cathedral... nearly every street and building aglow with lights and decorations... bredle, the tiny, traditional holiday cakes of Alsace... the unmistakable sights, sounds, flavors and smells of the Alsatian holidays surround you at Strasbourg's Marchés de Noël, the oldest and largest in France. A dozen themed markets fan out from the cathedral along the Grand Rue - the original Christkindelsmärik... the Bredle Market... the Kingdom of the Wine Growers... the Children's Village... the Village of Sharing and others. Artisans show off their wares in stalls that stretch on as far as the eye can see... and the ancient heart of this canal-crossed city is bathed in gold! A lecture on local storytelling traditions is part of your unforgettable day in Strasbourg.</i></p> <p>Strasbourg would like you to think of it as the "Capital of Christmas" and it is, after all, the "Capital of Europe" in a sense – being the home of the European Union. Before a walking tour through this ancient French Alsatian city, whose entire center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, gain some insights about storytelling traditions with an expert local guide during a lecture aboard the riverboat. The setting of Tauck's Christmas market tours – around Strasbourg's Gothic Cathedral de Notre-Dame – is breathtaking. After a walking tour of the Christkindlmarkt, you'll have leisure time to explore on your own – and have lunch in town or return to the riverboat on one of the shuttles that will run between the city and the dock for most of the afternoon. Back aboard the riverboat, join your Tauck directors for a discovery briefing before dinner, and enjoy a live musical performance aboard ship tonight.</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner Accommodation: ms Inspire / ms Grace</p>
<p>Day 4</p>	<p>A Black Forest Christmas in Baden-Baden</p> <p>Baden-Baden - <i>The Black Forest's special magic casts its spell over the Christmas Market of this famous spa town, set adjacent to its sumptuous Belle Époque casino complex – the Kurhaus – which screen icon Marlene Dietrich called "the most beautiful casino in the world." Cheered by the strains of local choirs and bands performing holiday music – or perhaps by the baaas of bleating sheep from the market's "living Nativity" – wind your way to booth upon booth of carved wooden toys and ornaments, silver jewelry, decorative candles and goodies galore. Join us for a guided visit inside the 19th-century Kurhaus, and explore more of Baden-Baden's holiday charms as you wish. A favorite destination of our Christmas Market tours along the Rhine.</i></p> <p>The riverboat docks for an excursion to Baden-Baden; this famous Black Forest spa town is the ideal setting for a winter fairy tale at Christmastime. The tempting aromas of glühwein and gingerbread linger among the labyrinth of stalls in the Weihnachtsmarkt. With its natural springs reputed to have healing powers, Baden-Baden has long attracted the wealthy elite, who come to take the waters and play in the magnificent Belle Epoque casino, the Kurhaus, adjacent to the Christmas Market; get a taste of what being one of “the in-crowd” feels like as you visit the complex. Discover more of Baden-Baden on your own, perhaps indulging in more gingerbread and glühwein. This evening, your riverboat sets off for Speyer, from which you'll travel to Heidelberg tomorrow.</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner Accommodation: ms Inspire / ms Grace</p>



<p>Day 5</p>	<p>The spirit of the season in Heidelberg</p> <p>Heidelberg – <i>With thousands of stars twinkling in the trees... hundreds of booths sprawling across five city squares... and an ice rink glistening in the shadow of Heidelberger Schlöss... you'll think you've stepped inside a snowglobe at this shining Weihnachtsmarkt! Festooned with figures from the city's history, the glowing Christmas Pyramid dominates the Marktplatz. On the Universitätsplatz, a carousel turns, and the scent of almonds and glühwein fills the air. Watch skaters whirl to holiday tunes at the rink on the Karlsplatz... hunt for crafts at the Anatomiegarten... or stroll past the crèche on the Kornmarkt. Explore iconic Heidelberger Schlöss (Heidelberg Castle), ride a funicular to the medieval Old Town for a walking tour, and enjoy a traditional German lunch at a local restaurant.</i></p> <p>A day in Heidelberg promises both holiday cheer at its Weihnachtsmarkt and insights about life here past and present. A tour of Heidelberger Schloss high above the city reveals the ruins of this mighty medieval castle and a sense of what it might have been like to live there so long ago. A funicular ride leads to a walking tour of the city's Old Town and Heidelberg's Christmas Markets, winding up with a traditional German lunch – featuring award-winning local beer – in the heart of the city. Spend some free time in the hometown of Germany's oldest university before catching up with the riverboat for tonight's cruise.</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner Accommodation: ms Inspire / ms Grace</p>
<p>Day 6</p>	<p>Music, sweet treats & more in Rudesheim</p> <p>Rudesheim - <i>Holiday carols, children's laughter, carousels... the season's joyful noises reverberate across this little town on the Rhine as you browse the shops and stalls of its Weihnachtsmarkt, winding their way through its quaint cobblestone streets; the largest nativity scene in Europe adorns the market square. Even the Drosselgasse, a narrow lane famed for its wine bars, is all done up in yuletide green and gold. Heart-shaped lebkuchen, local favorites like schweinebraten and jagerschnitzel – and especially Rudesheim Coffee, laced with locally produced brandy – tempt your taste buds. While in Rudesheim, visit the whimsical Siegfried's Mechanisches Musikkabinett, housed in a castle – a unique inclusion on Christmas Market tours and cruises!</i></p> <p>After a leisurely morning spent cruising along the Rhine and enjoying your riverboat's amenities as you please, there's more Weihnachtsmarkt fun waiting for you in the romantic town of Rudesheim in the Rhine Valley. After a stroll through the Christmas market near the pier, walk or ride a mini-train (weather permitting) to <i>Siegfried's Mechanisches Musikkabinett</i>, a museum featuring an impressive collection of mechanical musical instruments, some dating back centuries, housed in the Bromserhof, a 16th-century castle. A cookie-baking demonstration shares secrets of traditional treats like lebkuchen and stollen, which are very tasty when accompanied by special Rudesheim coffee laced with local brandy. After some free time, return to the riverboat for dinner; maybe you'll want to take a stroll ashore later.</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner Accommodation: ms Inspire / ms Grace</p>



<p>Day 7</p>	<p>Aachener Printen or Köln (Cologne)</p> <p>Aachen - <i>Smell that cinnamon... oh, and is that coriander? The exact ingredients are a well-kept secret of each local bakery that produces it, but Aacheners have been making Aachener Printen – their own engraved take on traditional lebkuchen – for 600 years! Its seductive scent... mingled with glühwein and other holiday treats... welcomes you to this ancient German city's Weihnachtsmarkt. Aachen's incredible Gothic cathedral overlooks a brightly lit holiday wonderland of festive greenery, gingerbread houses and handmade crafts; steam rises from food stalls, releasing the most delicious aromas. Be sure to sample local favorites like potato fritters, spekulatius biscuits, marzipan, and of course printen; although the city's bakeries ship these goodies all over the world, there's nothing like enjoying them here... fresh and hot!</i></p> <p>Spend the morning cruising, arriving in Köln (Cologne) in the early afternoon. You can choose to stay in Köln for a guided tour of this historic cultural center of the Rhineland – with its Christmas Market adjacent to the Gothic, twin-spired Kölner Dom – or head out on an excursion to Aachen. As you explore Aachen's Weihnachtsmarkt, follow the seductive smells of cinnamon, coriander and ginger to the town's unique holiday pastry, Aachener Printen; it tastes as good as it looks! Join us for the captain's farewell reception followed by dinner tonight... and you may want to raise one last cup of <i>glühwein</i> and toast the wonderful time you've had discovering Christmastime along the Rhine.</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner Accommodation: ms Inspire / ms Grace</p>
<p>Day 8</p>	<p>Homeward bound</p> <p>Tauck's northbound Rhine Christmas market tours end in Köln (Cologne). Fly home anytime. Transfers are included from the riverboat to Cologne / Bonn Airport. Guests enjoying a post-stay in Köln will receive a transfer from the hotel to the airport. Please allow three hours for airport check-in. We wish you a safe and pleasant journey home.</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast</p>