

CJN_SE001_Viking Rhine & Danube Grand European Tour 26 27



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Rhine & Danube River**Grand European Tour: >>Budapest to Amsterdam****15 Days | 12 Guided Tours | 4 Countries****GRAND EUROPEAN TOUR MAP****Itinerary****Day 1 Budapest, Hungary**

Embark your ship and settle into your stateroom. Riverside beauty and a vibrant cultural scene blend together in Budapest to form one of Europe's most rewarding cities. Hungary's enchanting capital straddles the banks of the Danube, with traditional hillside Buda on one side and modern Pest on the other. By day, stunning art nouveau buildings, stalwart castles and grand palaces set the stage for inspiring strolls and long soaks in thermal spas. By night, the shimmering lights of the Parliament building dance across the waters of the Danube, the Chain Bridge uniting it all as a dramatic centerpiece.

* Ground transfers are included with Viking Air purchase.

Day 2 Budapest, Hungary

Budapest's old town is a fascinating medieval patchwork of narrow streets and colorful houses. In the Castle District, the Matthias Church soars in Gothic glory. Adjacent, the expansive wall and seven turrets of Fisherman's Bastion overlook the Danube, the graceful Chain Bridge and the Pest side of the river. The centerpiece of the district is the sprawling Buda Castle. Constructed in the 13th century and expanded to its current baroque splendor during the 18th century, this edifice was home to Hungary's kings for almost 700 years.

Day 3 Vienna, Austria

Renowned as the "City of Waltzes," Austria's capital city of Vienna is Europe's center of classical music. Strauss and Mozart composed many of their finest pieces here. Vienna's musical history is matched by the elegant, graceful architecture that lines the Ringstrasse, the wide boulevard encircling the Inner City. Baroque, neo-Renaissance, Gothic-Romanesque and other splendidly styled structures, from the Hofburg Palace to the Vienna State Opera, take the breath away with their grand facades. Vienna has a more intimate side too: inviting footpaths lead through green parks and its famed Viennese cafés sweeten any stay with coffee and the city's delectable Sachertorte.

Day 4 Vienna, Austria

Vienna is considered one of Europe's greatest cultural hubs. Its art scene has long been established with the Hapsburg's collection of fine art, now housed at the Kunsthistorisches Museum. Today, Vienna's modern side showcases street art murals that don the side of buildings along the banks of the Danube. Ingrained in local life is the long-embraced tradition of coffeehouses; UNESCO includes Viennese coffeehouse culture on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritages. It is considered one of life's pleasures to while away an afternoon over an Einspänner coffee and a pastry.

Day 5 DaScenic Sailing: Wachau Valley

Sail through a serene tapestry of terraced vineyards, forested slopes, charming towns and castle ruins in Austria's Wachau Valley, celebrated as perhaps the most scenic stretch of the Danube. Journey 18 miles through this vast UNESCO World Heritage Site, where the river courses through picturesque hillsides. Gaze upon the prolific grapevines and quaint wine-producing villages hugging the shores—the legacy of vintners that stretch as far back as Celtic and Roman times and an echo of the more than 30 monasteries that served as vineyards in Renaissance days.

Melk, Austria

Set amid an important wine-growing region of picturesque villages and fairy-tale castles, the charming city of Melk lies at the base of the Wachau Valley. An imposing 900-year-old Benedictine abbey, a stunning example of baroque architecture, overlooks the town from its dramatic hilltop location. This architectural treasure has 365 windows, one for each day of the year, and the views from its expansive balcony are stunning. Its beautiful library houses priceless medieval manuscripts and marvelous frescoes by Paul Troger, and its meticulously kept grounds are inviting and picturesque.

Day 6 Passau, Germany

Founded by the Celts over 2,000 years ago, Passau is one of Bavaria's oldest cities. Known as the "City of Three Rivers," it rests at the confluence of the Inn, Ilz and Danube rivers. The city has long enjoyed its strategic position and grew to great economic and political power because of it. The legacy of its past prosperity lives on in graceful arcades, colorful houses with rococo facades and the glorious baroque St. Stephen's Cathedral, home to one of Europe's largest pipe organs. Passau is also where two nations meet; it is here that the German-Austrian border begins.

Day 7 Regensburg, Germany

Having escaped major damage during World War II, the picturesque town of Regensburg is one of Europe's best-preserved medieval cities, the oldest city along the Danube and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Old Stone Bridge, constructed in the 12th century, is a masterpiece of medieval engineering with its 16 arches. St. Peter's Cathedral is widely considered Bavaria's best Gothic architectural work. The old town's Neupfarplatz square is a cross section of history—it was once a thriving Jewish quarter, a bustling marketplace and the site of Nazi book burnings.

Day 8 Scenic Sailing: Main-Danube Canal, Germany

As far back as 1,200 years ago, visionary Frankish Emperor Charlemagne contemplated connecting the Rhine, Main and Danube Rivers so ships could travel the length of Europe. Today, his dream dramatically comes to life. The Main-Danube Canal employs 16 stair-step river locks that allow vessels to travel 2,200 miles through 10 countries, from the North Sea coast of Holland to the Black Sea shores of Romania.

Nuremberg, Germany

The second-largest city in Bavaria, Nuremberg is filled with traditional half-timbered houses and Gothic churches with intricate spires. Although nearly destroyed during World War II, the remaining medieval city walls stretch some three miles and feature original gateways and 80 original watchtowers. Nuremberg is well known historically for its metal and toy craftsmanship. But it is infamous for its role in World War II, first as the site of Zeppelin Field's Nazi rallies and later as the site of the war crimes trials at the Palace of Justice that captured the attention of a generation.

Day 9 Bamberg, Germany

Founded in 902, Bamberg remains a medieval-looking city known for its symphony orchestra and rauchbier, specialty smoked beer. The city's winding streets are filled with baroque patrician houses and are home to the stunning 11th-century Cathedral of Holy Roman Emperor Heinrich II, housing his tomb and that of Pope Clement II. Bamberg is especially noted for its Altes Rathaus, or Old Town Hall, situated on a twin-arched bridge over the Regnitz River, and for the old bishop's houses: the 16th-century Alte Hofhaltung (Old Court) and 17th-century Neue Residenz (New Residence).

Day 10 Würzburg, Germany

Surrounded by Franconian vineyards, Würzburg was heavily damaged during World War II, but has since been completely restored. This prestigious university city is a jewel of baroque architecture. Its most pristine example of pomp and glory is the great Bishops' Residenz palace, built in 1744 for the prince-bishop; his unwavering support of artists is evidenced by the sweeping staircase and magnificent ceiling frescoes by Tiepolo. Other landmarks include the medieval, statue-lined Old Main Bridge and Marienberg Fortress, originally a Celtic hill fort and later residence of the bishops. The city remains a major wine-making center, hosting Germany's oldest and largest vineyard.

Day 11 Wertheim, Germany

Situated at the confluence of the Main and Tauber Rivers, Wertheim is a charming town brimming with history. The dukes of Wertheim built a castle at this strategic spot in the 12th century. It was captured and destroyed during the Thirty Years' War, but it is still impressive today, peering down upon the medieval town center and half-timbered houses from its perch. Its Pointed Tower has guarded the junction of the Main and Tauber Rivers for 800 years. Known as a successful merchants' town during the Middle Ages, today Wertheim is famous for its Franconian wines.

Scenic Sailing: Main River, Spessart

Journey along one of Germany's most important waterways today, passing landscapes that embody the country's scenic beauty and storybook charm. You will sail by quaint riverside villages, undulating farm country and the sylvan forests of the Spessart woodlands. Along the way, you just may lose yourself in the dreamy canvases of half-timbered houses, historic castles and splendid palaces. This is the Germany once ruled by dukes and brought to magical life by the imagination of the Brothers Grimm, who grew up in the town of Hanau and wove fantastic tales from these banks.

Day 12 Scenic Sailing: Middle Rhine

The Rhine River flows through one of Germany's most scenic regions. As you sail its most picturesque stretch, the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Middle Rhine, you will pass vineyard-blanketed hills whose steep slopes require vintners to pick grapes by hand, keeping a centuries-old tradition alive. Splendid castles line the banks, all of which have stories to share, and the Lorelei Rock presides at a dramatic curve in the river. This infamous river maiden mesmerized sailors with her song and lured them to their demise at her feet.

Koblenz, Germany

Koblenz is a traditional German city, founded more than 2,000 years ago. This former trading settlement rests on a massif of the Middle Rhine Highlands. Its cobblestone streets, wood-beamed houses adorned with flowers, ancient market square and medieval churches recall the fairy-tale Germany of old. At the German Corner, a massive equestrian statue of Prince William I observes the lovely riverside scene. The famed Teutonic Knights set up their first base here in 1216. The Romanesque Basilica of St. Castor, Koblenz's oldest building, dates to 836.

Day 13 Cologne, Germany

Cologne reveals its Roman heritage in its city layout and the ancient ruins that lie scattered through the town. Cologne's modern plazas and Hohe Strasse host welcoming shops, enticing restaurants and cologne boutiques. Of note is the city's 13th-century cathedral, a stunning example of Gothic artistry and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Having survived Allied bombs during World War II, the cathedral's imposing twin spires are visible for miles and its stained glass windows fill the interior with brilliant colored light. Its steps lead to a platform with astounding views.

Day 14 Scenic Sailing: Waal & Merwede

Sail the bucolic waters of the Rhine, deep into the Rhine–Meuse–Scheldt Delta, as classic Dutch landscapes unfurl all around. Flat farmland, charming windmills and svelte poplar trees line the shores, and vast tracts of land stretch in all directions, growing all manner of bounty, from tomatoes to tulips. Gaze upon Friesian cows and tidy villages with their neatly laid farmhouses and marvel at how much of this land was reclaimed from the sea, with the aid of traditional windmills and the construction of dikes.

Kinderdijk, The Netherlands

Kinderdijk is a village community in the Alblasserwaard province. This corner of South Holland, part of the scenic Waal and Merwede regions, has long been shaped by Rhine Delta waters. Kinderdijk is most known for its 19 remarkably preserved 18th-century windmills. The charming hamlet is located amid low-lying polders, tracts of land reclaimed from the sea by the power of the windmills and enclosed by embankments, or dikes. This legendary place calls to mind the 1865 novel Hans Brinker, in which a heroic boy plugs his finger into a ruptured dike.

Day 15 Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Bid farewell to your fellow guests and journey home. Or spend more time exploring, perhaps joining one of our extensions.

* Ground transfers are included with Viking Air purchase.

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