

2016 EUROPEAN SPLENDOR RIVER CRUISE

Itinerary & Excursion Guide



Day 1 & 2 – July 24 & 25 (for those who purchase our optional pre-cruise extension) Prague, Czech Republic

Your RSVP European Splendor River Cruise starts off with nearly 2 full days in Prague. You'll stay at the 5-star Boscolo Carlo IV Hotel. Your Avalon Cruise Director and teamRSVP will be on-hand to point the way to adventure! Transfers from Prague's Václav Havel Airport to the Boscolo Hotel and from the Boscolo Hotel to the ship July 26 are included.

Included Excursion:

Prague Sightseeing

A local guide will show you Prague's best-known treasures, such as the Old Town's Astronomical Clock, built in 1410 and once the envy of all of Europe; Hradčany Castle Grounds; St. Vitus Cathedral; and the Charles Bridge, the oldest bridge in Prague. Browse the shops for hand-cut crystal or art books. Mix with the locals in Wenceslaus Square, an important meeting point and where people demonstrated against the communist regime; watch performers and shop at the market stalls on Charles Bridge; sample the local plum dumplings and Pilsner; stroll along the Vltava River; or wander around Prague's medieval Old Town, dating from the 10th century.

Optional Excursions:

Dinner and Folklore Show

The Czech have their way of fun where food, drinks, and traditions come together. On long rows of tables, you will be served the traditional hearty Czech cuisine where the drinks and the laughter flow. On the small stage, musicians will play on the hammer-dulcimer, the fujara (shepherd's flute), and the bag-pipe, all part of their musical heritage. The performers in their traditional costumes will treat you to local dances and their folk songs from Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia, which will impress you. Experience excellent dancers, vibrant music and collect wonderful memories of your trip to Prague. Join in for an evening of food and fun in one of Prague's typical restaurants, a Czech traditional 3-course dinner with drinks. Guide services and transportation are all included.

Grand Masters Concert in Old Prague

Enjoy a great classical concert in the beautiful setting of the baroque Mirror Chapel of Clementinum. The large complex of the Clementinum was founded by the Jesuits after their arrival in Bohemia in 1556. With more than 2 hectares, it is also one of the largest building complexes in Europe. The Mirror Chapel, built in 1725 and originally dedicated to the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, is a unique sanctuary and one of the churches of the former Jesuit college, Prague Clementinum. Classical concerts in Clementinum are among the most popular concert events. The impressive installations of Baroque mirrors on the ceiling make the chapel unparalleled worldwide. Together with gilded stuccos of Bernardo Spinetti, marble paneling and ceiling frescoes by Jan Hiebl, these mirrors create great artistic value of the interior. The chapel had been repeatedly desecrated and consecrated until it became a Prague classical concert hall in 1936. Join our local guides who will take you to this gem of downtown Prague for an unforgettable experience with the music of Bach, Vivaldi, Mozart, Dvorak, Puccini, and Verdi performed by leading soloists, members of Czech Opera Houses, and top orchestras. (Baroque organ, violin, flute, soprano and baritone soloists)

Prague's Secrets Revealed

This tour will add to the included city tour as it is quite possible to escape the touristy side of Prague and just as before, it requires knowing just which street to turn down or even which unsigned walkway to pass. Knowing where to turn from the Old Town Square, you can leave all the crowds behind and find yourself shockingly alone on a twisting Medieval street, quiet as can be – with only the sound of your shoes clicking against the cobblestones or a tram swooshing by a few streets away. And in this street, it's also still possible to find the most interesting places when you least expect them. The houses and doors often look the same from the outside. To the naked eye, the street may even seem residential. There are no big flashing lights pointing out the history that lies behind these facades of Prague. You need a local expert, who can show you these secrets and tell you the stories of what happened here and there. Prague's Secrets tour leads us to the Charles Bridge and Mala Strana, which according to the locals is Prague's most romantic and picturesque part of the protected city center.

Tasting Bohemian Wines

Venture into the beautiful Bohemian countryside this morning and discover Castle Melnik, a genuine Jewel of Bohemia. The Castle was the residence of the queen widows of Bohemia and Melnik. In 1542 the castle was transformed to a Renaissance Jewel. This is a unique opportunity to visit a medieval castle inside and see how the aristocracy lived in previous centuries. The surrounding vineyards of Melnik form part of the Czech wine region, one of the northern-most viticultural areas of Europe, and are the largest in Bohemia. The castle is still a partly lived-in property and you are invited for a special Bohemian wine tasting with local cheese. This tour gives you wonderful insight into the traditional values of the Bohemian upper class.



Day 3 – July 26 Nuremberg, Germany

Your RSVP adventure aboard the *Avalon Expression* begins! We'll leave Prague around 1pm and board *Expression* around 4pm, with our Compulsory Lifeboat Drill at 5:30pm. We set sail for Bamberg at 6pm sharp!



Day 4 – July 27 Bamberg, Germany

Today we'll explore this UNESCO World Heritage Site. You'll want to wander the town's serpentine streets with their charming houses and 18th-century mansions.

Included Excursion:

Bamberg Sightseeing

Bamberg is the former residence of one of Germany's most powerful imperial dynasties and today a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The guided walk takes in its historic center, including the great 13th century Romanesque cathedral and the fascinating Altes Rathaus (Old Town Hall) - built on an island in the middle of Regnitz river when the bishop refused to give the townspeople land for a town hall.



Day 5 – July 28 Würzburg, Germany

Würzburg is known as the "Pearl of the Romantic Road." This city is surrounded by sloping hills covered with vineyards and makes an immediate impression with the imposing Fortress Marienberg perched above town and its 15th-century Alte Mainbrücke (Old Main Bridge).

Included Excursion:

Würzburg Sightseeing

Surrounded by verdant hillside vineyards, Würzburg, the "Pearl of the Romantic Road," makes an immediate impression with imposing Fortress Marienberg perched above town and the 15th-century Alte Mainbrücke (Old Main Bridge). On your included guided sightseeing tour, visit the magnificent baroque Bishop's Residenz, home to the largest ceiling fresco ever painted. This afternoon you are free to explore on your own, or perhaps join an optional excursion to medieval Rothenburg.

Optional Excursion:

Rothenburg

If you had to pick only one place to visit in the whole of Germany, it should be Rothenburg. The best-preserved medieval town in Germany, Rothenburg ob der Tauber fits the word "romantic" perfectly. The entire walled town of Rothenburg is a living museum. The town wall connects five medieval gates complete with guard towers that date from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. Just walk along Rothenburg's narrow cobblestone streets and admire the gothic, renaissance, and baroque houses and fountains. You may wish that you had lived in these prettier, quieter, slower times. Climb to the top of the Rothenburg Town Hall Tower (circa 1250-1400) for a wide-angle view of Rothenburg and take pictures of the surrounding, mostly pastoral countryside. Walking in Rothenburg is like taking a step back into medieval times where one can feel the old roots of the continent. Not to be missed!



Day 6 – July 29 Miltenberg, Germany

Marvel at the gothic splendor of the Merchant Hall on your guided walking tour of this lovely Bavarian village filled with fountains, half-timbered buildings, and endless charm.

Included Excursion:

Miltenberg Walking Tour

Tucked away behind medieval defensive walls and towered gates, the picturesque Bavarian village of Miltenberg is a cultural gem on the banks of the Main River. This afternoon's guided walk will acquaint you with the town's delightful Marktplatz (market square), which centers around a Renaissance-era fountain and features striking half-timbered buildings, cobblestone lanes, one of the oldest inns in Germany, Haus zum Riesen (the giant's house), and the gothic splendor of the Merchant Hall.



Day 7 – July 30

Rüdesheim, Germany / Rhine Gorge / Cologne, Germany

Today is all about beauty. After the town of Rüdesheim, we'll make our way through the Rhine Gorge. This 40-mile stretch of the Rhine is quite possibly the most beautiful in all of Europe. Have your camera at the ready and head up to the *Expression's* Sky Deck where you'll see castle after castle lining the banks. We'll get into Cologne just in time for a Saturday night on the town!

Included Excursion:

Rüdesheim Sightseeing – Music Museum

Visit Siegfried's Mechanical Musical Instrument Museum, where you'll see and hear a large collection of self-playing calliopes and music boxes from the 18th to the early 20th centuries.

Optional Excursion:

Rüdesheim Cable Car

Following your included visit to Siegfried's Museum, you will have the option of purchasing an extension that includes a round-trip cable car ride to visit the Germania and Niederwald Monuments high above the town.



Day 8 – July 31

Cologne, Germany

One of Germany's largest cities and capital of the Rhineland, Cologne straddles both sides of the Rhine, and is known for its soaring, twin-steepled gothic cathedral. Choose between an included Guided City Walk or Jewish Heritage Walk. The Old Town abounds with cafés, shops, and taverns. Be sure to try a Kölsch pale lager, locally brewed in Cologne for over a hundred years!

Choice of Included Excursions:

Cologne Walking Tour

Cologne is not a metropolis like any other; it is a center of multicultural spirit and lifestyle. During the guided walking tour explore the cobblestoned streets of the Old City, which are shadowed by Cologne Cathedral. After the tour you can visit the Cathedral on your own or relax in one of the breweries and sip a Kölsch.

Jewish Cologne

Cologne is home to the oldest known Jewish community north of the Alps, probably dating back to around 300 A.D., when the town was named Colonia by the Romans. During your guided walk you will see all highlights, which were important for Jewish life, including an outside stop at the excavation of the Mikwe. The Jewish community built their bathhouse deep into the ground in order to reach the water table and thus the freshest water.

Optional Excursion:

Cologne Beer Houses Visit

This is the tasty way to get to know the city with its typical Cologne beer "Kölsch" and its local delicacies! Join in our guided walking tour through the Old Town, including several breweries which produce this "fluid of life." You will also be introduced to the ambiguous meaning of "Kölsch," which refers primarily to the beer, but also to the local dialect. Although being currently revived, very few locals actually know how to speak "Kölsch" correctly. You will get to know the "patron saint" of Cologne's brewers, as well as the local characters of Tünnes and Schäl, or the Kallendresser.



Day 9 – August 1

Düsseldorf, Germany

Today, you'll have three choices – the optional Duisberg (DKM) or Lehbruck Museum tours or SHOPPING on your own! You'll have around four hours to explore this thriving metropolis.

Optional Excursions:

DKM Museum

The Museum DKM shows art pieces from five very different movements: Contemporary art since the 1960s, over 2000-year-old pieces of art from the Far East, as well as contemporary art from China, Korea, and Japan, art from Ancient Egypt, classical and contemporary photography and ceramics, and glass from 5000 years of cultural history.

Lehbruck Museum

The Lehbruck Museum is well known throughout Europe for its outstanding collection of modern art and international sculpture. It offers an interesting combination of exceptional architecture placed in a sculpture park. The collection commences with the life work of Wilhelm Lehbruck and his contemporaries. To round off the variety, the museum offers sections on paintings, graphics, photography, and new media.



Day 10 – August 2 Amsterdam, Netherlands

We arrive in Amsterdam around 2:30am Monday night/Tuesday morning. For those guests heading home or onto further adventures on their own, you'll disembark *Expression* by 9:30am Tuesday morning. For those continuing on to our optional post-cruise program, August 2nd provides us with the perfect disembarkation as we view this stunning city by canal boat, cruising through the elegant grachten lined with stately homes dating back to Amsterdam's "Golden Age." Following your canal cruise, you'll be transferred to our host hotel – the 5-star Grand Amrâth Hotel.

As Amsterdam gears up for this weekend's Pride Festival, you'll have nearly two full days to explore Holland's sophisticated, modern capital, with its rich and fascinating history. This delightful 700-year-old city with its elegant and classic architecture, cafés, and restaurants has a distinct ambiance. The streets, squares, and canals – not to mention the bike paths throughout the city – make for a vibrant atmosphere. With over 60 museums, Amsterdam has the highest museum density in the world. The works of famous Dutch masters can be seen in world-renowned museums such as the Rijksmuseum or the Van Gogh.

Included Excursion (for those extending in Amsterdam):

Amsterdam Canal Cruise

Get a unique perspective of Amsterdam on a canal cruise, floating along the elegant grachten lined with stately homes dating back to Amsterdam's Golden Age.

Optional Excursions:

Zaanse Schans

If you are in the Netherlands only for a short time, then this is a great excursion to see the typical Dutch sights in just one afternoon. Join our local expert for a journey through times when Dutch sailing ships crossed the seven seas and goods from all corners of the world traded in Holland. A short coach ride gives you picturesque views of the Dutch "polder" landscape, reclaimed land with the endless horizons and cattle grazing on the green grasslands. The open-air village of Zaanse Schans is a collection of typical Dutch houses, windmills, & craft stores, which all have preserved their original character. We will have an inside visit of a working windmill showing you how they function. Highly interesting is the clog making demonstration and the cheese factory. In the little stores you can easily find all the Dutch souvenirs you want to take home. Zaanse Schans is a pleasant half-day excursion which includes an array of typical sights for which Holland is famous.

Amsterdam Biking

The Netherlands is known for being the perfect country to go for a bike ride. After a short bike ride from your ship, a ferry takes you out of the hectic city. Then continue your biking tour into the beautiful and green nature reserve called "Waterland." Your local guide will take you through centuries-old picturesque villages with typical wooden houses, past countless brooks and waterways, across old wooden bridges, along the IJsselmeer, and through green pastures. Designated bicycle paths connect the entire region. On a nice spring or summer day, the green fields are full of flowers, while sheep and cows are in the meadows. Comfortable bicycles, helmets, and refreshment in a typical Dutch Inn are provided and of course all these experiences are under the guidance of a local guide. A different way to experience Holland.

Anne Frank

A Museum with a Story. Visit the hiding place where Anne Frank wrote her diary during the Second World War. For more than two years, Anne Frank, her family, and four others lived secretly in the back part of her father's office building at #263 Prinsengracht, before being betrayed and turned in to the Nazis. If you have read the famous diary, much of this will be familiar to you, but even if you haven't, this can be a fascinating place to see. The Anne Frank House is probably the most famous attraction in town for new visitors. Take advantage of our tailor-made tour, with an introduction by our local escort, hassle free transport, and priority entrance.



Day 11 – August 3 (for those who purchase our optional post-cruise extension) Amsterdam, Netherlands

This day is yours to enjoy on your own or you can join us for one of our optional excursions.

Optional Excursions:

Muiderslot Castle

Take a traditional boat ride on the former Zuiderzee, where the Dutch East and West Indian Company ships sailed to and from Amsterdam for centuries. End your boat ride at the imposing Amsterdam Castle, the Muiderslot, which gives you a taste of real Dutch history. It is part of the Defence Line of Amsterdam and included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. During the guided tour through rooms full of authentic furniture and paintings from the Dutch Golden Age, you will imagine yourself in a painting by Rembrandt or Frans Hals. The guided tour through the museum's rooms, all refurbished in 17th-century style, evokes the period, when Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft, also known as the "Dutch Shakespeare," occupied the castle. In the beautiful herb and vegetable gardens, which still retain the atmosphere of the Dutch Renaissance, you will find many oft-forgotten flowers, herbs, and vegetable from times gone by. A walk along the ramparts offers fantastic

views of the water-rich environments and the Pampus island fortress. You should not miss a visit to the most beautiful and best-kept medieval castle in the Netherlands.

Volendam & Edam

Anyone who wants to see the real beauty of Holland should visit Edam and its neighbor, Volendam. Edam is the perfect picture of a Dutch city, which has kept its old-world atmosphere. Full of charm, it is a unique example of a Zuiderzee harbor city with its gabled, red brick houses and its cheese fame. Together with your local expert you are going to explore this town on a walking tour. Volendam is your typical Zuiderzee fishing village; as a result of its completely isolated location, this village preserved its character for six centuries, also because of the tough vitality of the fishermen. The characteristic small houses, which together with the canals and the drawbridges form the most picturesque spots, present the visitor an atmosphere of geniality and romance. Nowadays it is a shopping paradise for any tourist, and you will have free time to indulge.

Edam and Beemster Polder

This tour offers a scenic ride through the countryside to the town of Edam, famous for the cheese named after it. Take a guided stroll through the flat, narrow main street to the bell tower and enjoy browsing through the lanes of Edam. Afterwards, enjoy the scenic drive through the UNESCO World Heritage area "Beemster Polder." The Beemster Polder was born 400 years ago. About 7,200 hectares (about 17,800 acres) of land were drained to complete this massive work; more than 58 watermills were used. A rare, heroic and unique project in the beginning of the 17th century. In 1999 the UNESCO World Heritage Committee subscribed the Beemster Polder onto the list of World Heritage Monuments. It is not only a cultural landscape, it is also the living and working area for the community of Beemster and thus it is really unique. The polder also includes a part of the World Heritage monument "De Stellingvan Amsterdam," an historical system of fortresses around the city of Amsterdam.

Haarlem

Known as the City of Flowers, Haarlem is a place of historical architecture, culture, and outstanding modern facilities. While it is often overshadowed by its much larger and more famous neighbor Amsterdam about ten miles east, Haarlem's history actually goes back further, dating back to gothic times, and this is reflected in the architecture. Join our local guide for a walking tour and see all this charming town has to offer. A perfect afternoon in this charming little place.



Day 12 – August 4 (for those who purchase our optional post-cruise extension) Amsterdam, Netherlands

Today, we say farewell. Transfers to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport are included.