
14 DAY THE LOIRE VALLEY AND ROMANTIC RHINE RIVER CRUISE

Trip Code: TWTNSN_BCA21

Duration: 15

Destination: France, Switzerland, Germany & Netherlands

Travel Dates: 2022 / 2023

DAY 1 NANTES -MS LOIRE PRINCESSE (D)

On arrival you will be met at the Nantes airport and transferred to the cruise ship. Boarding is at 6:00 p.m. After comfortably settling into your cabins, we will introduce our crew at a welcome cocktail before dinner.

After dinner, join us on an excursion and board a local boat for a cruise on the Erdre River, one of the most beautiful in France. King Francis I called this river “the most beautiful river in France”: As the scenery rolls by, discover the history of the river and its numerous châteaux.

DAY 2 NANTES - SAINT-NAZAIRE- MS LOIRE PRINCESSE (B,L,D)

After breakfast this morning, we depart for a guided tour of Nantes and the Castle of the Dukes of Brittany. You will discover the small streets of the medieval Bouffay quarter and the beautiful Flamboyant-style Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul. We will visit the île Feydeau and its exceptional buildings dating back to the 18th century, and then on to the quays. After, you will discover the shopping districts created in the 18th century around the Théâtre Graslin and the Passage Pommeraye. We will continue our tour to the Castle of the Dukes of Brittany. The last castle before the river reaches the ocean, this Breton monument with its outstanding 15th to 17th century buildings will transport you back in time.

In the afternoon, we take a guided tour of Saint Nazaire, a town on the sea. We will visit Escal'Atlantic, a museum that explores the historic ocean liner experience, and the Saint-Nazaire shipyard, one of the largest shipyards in Europe. Each passenger will be asked to produce a valid passport to gain access to the shipyard. We will return on board in Saint-Nazaire.

Enjoy an evening of dancing.

DAY 3 SAINT-NAZAIRE – ANCENIS -MS LOIRE PRINCESSE (B,L,D)

We will spend this morning cruising towards Ancenis.

In the afternoon, join us for an excursion along The Muscadet Wine Route. We will pass through several villages that are testimony to the strong wine growing identity in the region. We arrive to Clisson, a charming medieval city with 15th century vestiges and a slight Italian feel. We will continue toward La Chapelle Heulin

and stop at the Château Cassemichère (or similar site). This exceptional site invites you to discover its history-filled vineyards, visit its cellars and taste the dry, light, fruity and aromatic wine. Afterwards we return on board.

**DAY 4 ANCENIS - BOUCHEMAINE – ANGERS- MS LOIRE PRINCESSE
(B,L,D)**

Today we cruise towards Bouchemaine.

Join us for a guided tour of Angers. Angers was the capital of the historical Anjou province and is distinguished not only by its legacy, but also by its modern nature. Angers, particularly rich during the Renaissance, was home to the House of Plantagenet. The immense walls of the famous Château d'Angers contain the extraordinary Apocalypse Tapestry. We will visit the 13th century castle and discover the Apocalypse Tapestry, part of one of the most important collections of medieval tapestries in the world.

Enjoy an evening of entertainment.

**DAY 5 BOUCHEMAINE - THE CHÂTEAUX OF THE LOIRE VALLEY –
ANCENIS- MS LOIRE PRINCESSE (B,L,D)**

After breakfast we depart for a full-day excursion to discover the Castles of the Loire Valley. We will leave by coach for the Château d'Azay-le-Rideau. Built on a small island in the middle of the Indre River, the château as it is seen today was built under Francis I by Gilles Berthelot, a wealthy financier who wanted to incorporate its medieval past alongside the latest architectural styles of the Italian renaissance. The chateau is a French national monument and possesses all the refinement found in the French Renaissance. We will continue to Villandry for lunch. After lunch, enjoy a walk through the lovely gardens surrounding the Château de Villandry. Spread out over an impressive area, the gardens bring together aestheticism, diversity, and harmony. Afterward, we will continue our tour and visit the Château d'Ussé. Rebuilt in the 15th and 16th centuries, this stronghold with fortified towers, turrets and steeples looks like something out of a fairytale. The castle is still inhabited today and takes visitors back to a time of legends and fairytales. It is thought to have inspired Charles Perrault when writing "Sleeping Beauty".

We will return on board in Ancenis.

Tonight's our gala dinner and evening. Our ship will start sailing towards Nantes.

DAY 6 NANTES- BASEL -MS DOUCE FRANCE (B,D)

After breakfast, check out of cabin at 10 am. We then we transfer you to the Nantes Airport for your flight to Basel.

You will be welcomed at Basel Airport and transferred to cruise ship. Passengers are welcome to board our ship at 6:00 p.m. After comfortably settling into your cabins, we will introduce our crew at a welcome cocktail before dinner.

DAY 7 BASEL - SCHAFFHAUSEN – BASEL- MS DOUCE FRANCE (B,L,D)

This morning after breakfast we depart for a guided tour of Basel. We will travel by coach to the city centre for a guided foot tour of Basel. While strolling, you'll discover the longstanding Grossbasel section and its numerous passages and medieval monuments: the protestant cathedral (Basler Münster), viewed as one of the city's top landmarks; the market place dominated by the dark-red, ornate Town Hall; and the famous Freie Strasse - one of the main transit routes in the Middle Ages which has become the most trendy shopping area in the city.

This afternoon join us for an excursion to discover the Rhine Falls, among the most spectacular sites to visit in Switzerland. The Rhine Falls are among the most spectacular sites to visit in Switzerland. You will also discover the Laufen Castle, and its impressive view overlooking the rumbling falls.

Enjoy an evening of dancing before our ship departs towards Breisach.

DAY 8 BREISACH- MS DOUCE FRANCE (B,L,D)

After breakfast we depart for a guided tour of Breisach and wine tasting. On foot discover the old town of Breisach, a city along the Rhine. The romanesque St Stephansmünster cathedral overlooks this lovely German town with a European feel, characterized by its Romanesque and Gothic elements from the late 12th and 15th centuries. Our tour will end with a tasting of local wine. We will return on board.

This afternoon depart on a guided tour of Colmar and the Unterlinden Museum. Colmar will charm you with its authenticity and typically Alsatian architecture composed of brightly painted half-timbered facades dating from the Middle Ages. You will discover the quintessential neighbourhood of "Little Venice" and visit the Unterlinden Museum, featuring a large collection of local and international artworks and manufactured artifacts from prehistorical to contemporary times. The museum is housed in a 13th-century Dominican convent and 1906 former public baths building and was renovated by Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron in 2015 to incorporate more of the vast collection. Inarguably, the most important work in the collection is the Isenheim Altarpiece.

Enjoy an evening of entertainment.

DAY 9 BREISACH – STRASBOURG -MS DOUCE FRANCE (B,L,D)

We arrive in Strasbourg early this afternoon. Join us for a guided tour of the European capital. We will start off with a panoramic tour of the town, which will take us through many of the town's districts, particularly the "German Quarter" (around the Place de La République) and the European district (passing the Palace of Europe, the Human Rights Building and the European Parliament Building). We continue with a guided walking tour around the Cathedral where you will see the famous Kammerzell house, before ambling down the Petite France District, a famous district in Strasbourg much loved by the local citizens and listed as a UNESCO World

Heritage Site. Return to the ship in Strasbourg at the end of the afternoon.

Enjoy an evening of dancing as our ship starts sailing towards Mainz.

DAY 10 MAINZ – KOBLENZ -MS DOUCE FRANCE (B,L,D)

This morning after breakfast we depart for a guided tour of Mainz and the Gutenberg Museum. You will set off on foot from accompanied by your guides and visit the town of Mainz. Capital of the Rhine Palatinate, Mainz was founded more than 2000 years ago by the Romans. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the top architects and sculptors created the basic shape of the town, with fine palaces and churches. Here you can admire the magnificent historic houses which have been outstandingly well-restored. Located on the banks of the Rhine opposite the confluence of the Rhine with the Main, Mainz will captivate you with its quite incomparable lifestyle, its unique charm, and its openness to the world. In the company of your guide, you will be able to enter the magnificent Cathedral, whose construction began in 975 and which has left a deep mark on the history of the town. The interior of the cathedral houses some wonderful historic treasures, including tombs and funerary monuments from the 13th to the 18th centuries. You will also have the opportunity to wander up and down the colourful streets in the old town. Finally, you will visit the Gutenberg Museum, the world's finest museum for printing equipment, materials, and books. Born in Mainz around 1400, Johannes Gensfleisch Gutenberg himself prepared the copy of the Bible referred to as "the 42-line Bible" which was published in 1455 - the oldest printed book in the world. Out of the 46 copies still in existence, the museum has just one, along with a "Mainz Psalter", the first ever document printed using three different colours of ink. The museum extends over five floors and provides a quite remarkable exhibition on the history of the book and written word in both Europe and the world. Return on board on foot.

We will return on board and cruise up the most beautiful part of the Rhine River towards Koblenz, passing numerous castles as well as the infamous Lorelei Rock along the way. This evening join our hostess for a tour of the city.

DAY 11 KOBLENZ - COLOGNE – DÜSSELDORF -MS DOUCE FRANCE (B,L,D)

Today we depart for Cologne, reaching it later this morning.

On arrival we depart for a guided tour of Cologne on foot. Crossroads of Europe since the Middle Ages, Köln has kept its importance as a vibrant commercial and industrial city as well as a cultural and religious center. You will be able to admire the exterior façades of the huge Gothic Köln Cathedral which took five centuries to complete. Indeed, although construction started in 1247, it was interrupted due to a lack of financing in 1560 and only started again in 1842 upon request of Emperor Frederick Wilhelm IV, who had fallen in love with the building. Construction was finally completed in 1863 and the Gothic Cathedral was the highest building in the world from 1880 to 1884. Around the Cathedral, 12 other Romanesque style churches are set in a circle, representing the 12 holy apostles. We will then move on to the Old Town and stop to admire the outside of the neo-Gothic building, home of the famous "Eau de Cologne".

Before returning on board, we will have some free time to stroll through the streets of Köln or try the famous local beer, the Kölsch. Return on board by coach in Königswinter.

Tonight, is our gala dinner and evening.

DAY 12 DÜSSELDORF - XANTEN - NIJMEGEN – AMSTERDAM -MS

DOUCE FRANCE (B,L,D)

After breakfast we depart for a guided tour of the open-air museum in Arnhem. Departure from Wesel by coach in the company of your hostess for the Dutch Open-Air Museum in Arnhem, which is located in a beautiful wooded park (44 ha). Some 80 authentic farms, windmills, workshops, houses, barns, a church, and a school provide an insight on the everyday life and architecture of yesteryear.

Inside every building, you will be intrigued by the typical furniture and the displays of various trades and crafts. Some of the buildings are grouped together, such as the beautiful Limburg timber-framed buildings or the Gelderland farms, but the most charming spot is without a doubt the area dedicated to the Zaan region, with its green painted wooden houses and tastefully decorated gables. Our visit will start with the renovated entrance pavilion and its good vantage point over the park and its many windmills. There are farming implements on display in many areas, like the collections centre. The lower level gives access to the spectacular panoramic theatre HollandRama. In this mobile capsule, films, sounds, lights, smells, and temperatures evoke different scenes, from cityscapes to the confines of houses. Return on board by coach. Meanwhile, our ship cruises towards Nijmegen where we will board it again after our tour.

Enjoy an evening of entertainment.

DAY 13 AMSTERDAM - MS DOUCE FRANCE (B,L,D)

After breakfast we depart for a guided panoramic tour of Amsterdam and visit to a diamond merchant. We will leave by coach for a guided tour of the city. Amsterdam is one of the most unique and extraordinary cities in the world. From its romantic canals to its world-renowned museums and historical significance, it is a city that never ceases to surprise. Our first stop will be the Riecker Windmill, a windmill located on the riverbanks of the Amstel River, south of the city. This mill was built in 1636 in the village of Sloten and was used as a polder mill for the polder of the same name (Riekerpolder). The pumping of the polder water was taken over by an electric pumping station in 1932 and, when the polder was dug, the mill was then dismantled to create, among other things, Lake Het Nieuw Meer. The mill was rebuilt in 1961 on the riverbanks of the Amstel, around 8 km (approx. 5 miles) away, between the roads leading to Kalfjeslaan and Borch. This part of the Amstel banks, extremely popular with tourists and walkers, is a prime location for an old Dutch windmill. A statue of Rembrandt was erected close to this mill to remind us that the painter made many drawings on the banks of this river. Afterwards, we will head to the Diamond District to observe how the talented cutters facet the raw diamonds into the jewels we buy. Our guide will explain in detail how a diamond is valued. After our tour, you will be able to spend some time browsing the shop. We will hop back on our coach and continue towards the Bloemenmarkt, the famous floating flower market. One of the most fragrant places in Amsterdam in any seasons thanks to its thousands of flowers and multitude of varieties, this unique market will make your head spin! At the end of our visit, we will return to the ship by coach.

In the afternoon, Departure by coach in the company of your guides towards Haarlem. Known as the "City of Tulips", Haarlem has for centuries been the main production and export center for tulip bulbs. This charming town has been an inspiration for generations of painters throughout the centuries. We'll discover the Amsterdamse Poort (Amsterdam Gate) built in 1400 and the only vestige from the city's fortifications, the Grote Markt (Main Square), the Corrie Ten Boom House, used as a hiding place during World War II and the impressive Gothic Cathedral of St Bavo dating from the 14th and 15th centuries. In Haarlem, you will get the chance to see a great number of "beguinages", with the oldest dating back to 1395. Before heading back to Amsterdam, you will have some free time.

Return on board in Amsterdam by coach.

DAY 14 AMSTERDAM (B)

Enjoy one last buffet breakfast and then check out at 9:00 a.m. We will transfer you to the airport for your onward flight. End of our services.

DAY

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