European Christmas Markets Cruise Itinerary

December 1-5, 2026



Tuesday, December 1: STRASBOURG, FRANCE
After a day of touring Strasbourg and the Christmas markets, we will board the MS Layfayette at approx. 6 p.m. We will be introduced to the crew with a welcome cocktail followed by dinner and entertainment.

Wednesday, December 2: SPEYER (HEIDELBERG), GERMANY
This morning we will enjoy a relaxing morning cruising to Speyer, Germany. After lunch, we will take a short bus ride to visit Heidelberg, one of the most beautiful cities in Germany with a picturesque ensemble of the castle, the Old Town, and the river Neckar surrounded by hills. After a guided tour of the old town and Castle, there will be free time to explore the enchanting Christmas markets with a majestic backdrop of Heidelberg Castle before returning the ship at approx. 8:00PM. Dinner will be served onboard.

Thursday, December 3: SPEYER - RÜDESHEIM, GERMANY
We'll spend the morning cruising to Rüdesheim. This afternoon, we will tour the city by tourist train and visit Siegfried's Mechanical Music Cabinet Museum. The museum holds approximately 350 exhibits of mechanical instruments dating from the 18th to the 20th centuries – from delicate musical boxes to a gigantic piano-orchestrion. Afterwards, spend some time strolling through the Christmas Market of Nations made up of 20 nations across three continents. The 120 wooden chalets set the stage for an authentic German Christmas market displaying artisan objects, great gift ideas, and delicious food. You'll return to the ship by walking down the famous Drosselgasse, the heart of the city known for its lively atmosphere. The ship will be docked near city center and you will be free to return to the ship at anytime.

Friday, December 4: RÜDESHEIM – KOBLENZ, GERMANY
This morning, we'll pass through the beautiful and romantic Rhine Valley, renowned for its picturesque landscapes, historic castles, vineyards and charming towns – this is storybook Germany! Each twist and turn of the river reveal another castle atop a peak above the sprawling vineyards. In the afternoon, we'll enjoy a guided tour of Koblenz, a rich mosaic of culture and history that is located at the crossroads of the Rhine and Moselle rivers and surrounded by several mountain peaks. At the end of the tour, you will have the option to explore the Ehrenbreitstein Fortress Christmas Garden (extra charge applies) or continue to explore the seven Christmas Markets located in Koblenz. Tonight, we'll enjoy the gala dinner on board the ship. Our ship will cruise to Cologne overnight.

Saturday, December 5: COLOGNE - Strasbourg
This morning we will enjoy breakfast on board this morning before disembarking at 9:00 a.m. We will enjoy a guided walking tour of Cologne's historic center to see the colorful houses along the Rhine, historic city hall and charming squares. The highlight is the Cologne Cathedral, the tallest twin-spired church in the world that took 6 centuries to build! Afterward there will be free time to explore Cologne and it sparkling array of Christmas markets. We will transfer to the Steigenberger hotel around 4:00PM and the evening will be free to continue exploring the city and buying those last-minute souvenirs!

Sunday, December 6: Depart Cologne Airport
We will depart from the hotel at approximately 6:00am for our 9:20am flight. Everyone is welcome to ride the motorcoach to the airport or you are welcome to stay at the hotel and arrange your own transportation.

We will be cruising the beautiful Rhine River aboard the MS Lafayette, owned and operated by CroisiEurope. With more than 40 years of experience, CroisiEurope is one of Europes leading river cruise companies.
Regarding the recent low water levels on the Rhine River, The MS Lafayette has successfully operated Rhine cruises during previous periods of unusually low water. Its shallow-draft design means the ship sits less deeply in the water than many larger vessels, allowing it to navigate shallower sections of the river. While river conditions can change, CroisiEurope has extensive experience managing fluctuating water levels and adjusting operations when necessary. The MS Lafayette is an intimate river cruise ship accommodating approximately 80 passengers, providing a comfortable and relaxed cruising experience.

Your cruise includes:
- All meals
- Beverages throughout the cruise (excluding beverages on the special lists).
- Onboard entertainment.
- Excursions as planned by Prelude Tours.
- Port fees and gratuities.

We look forward to a wonderful journey along the Rhine, enjoying the beautiful scenery, charming European towns, and festive Christmas markets!

