Cruise Details

Name:	Christmas Markets of Europe
Reference:	EMERALDEWXS221127-1
Operator:	Emerald Cruises
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	Emerald Astra
Regions:	Rhine, Danube and Main
Departs On:	22 Nov 27
Departs From:	Amsterdam
Arrives On:	06 Dec 27
Arrives At:	Budapest
Cruise Nights:	14
Total Vacation Days:	15

Itinerary

Day 1: Amsterdam (Netherlands)

Fly from the UK for the start of your cruise. Welcome to Amsterdam, a postcard-worthy destination of picturesque canals, cafés, and art galleries. When you arrive, you'll be met at the airport and transferred to your contemporary Emerald Star-Ship.

Arrives On: 22 Nov 27

Day 2: Amsterdam (Netherlands)

Amsterdam is a wonderful destination all year-round, but during the Christmas period, the entire city sparkles with fairy lights and Christmas cheer. Snow may blanket the narrow-cobbled streets, and the Dutch like to indulge in oliebollen and appelbeignets, deep-fried sweets that can be purchased from stalls that look like the traditional alpine huts in one of Amsterdam's many Christmas markets. Included Excursion
Visit to Festive Amsterdam
Amsterdam's Christmas markets are a magical blend of festive lights, cosy stalls,

and Dutch winter charm, accented with the scent of warm treats like stroopwafels and oliebollen. Popular spots like Museumplein's Ice Village and the Funky Xmas Market in Westergas offer everything from handmade gifts to mulled wine and live music. Set against the backdrop of Amsterdam's iconic canals, the markets create a warm, joyful atmosphere perfect for holiday shopping and seasonal cheer. DiscoverMORE
Private hidden Gems Tour of Amsterdam (extra expense)
Explore a quieter, more authentic side of Amsterdam on this relaxed and personal tour. Travel to the historic Jordaan area to walk with your local guide to a charming chocolate shop. Continue through some of the city's most beautiful streets to Our Lord in the Attic, a unique 17th-century house that hides a secret: a fully preserved Catholic church in its attic. Enjoy a local beer and some traditional Dutch snacks at a cosy brewery before you return to the ship.
Activity level: Moderate, Duration: 2.5 hour

Arrives On: 23 Nov 27

Day 3: Cologne (Germany)

The wafting aroma of freshly roasted chestnuts and mulled wine welcomes you to the 2,000-year-old city of Cologne, where the largest Christmas tree in the Rhineland can be found during the holiday season.

In Cologne's many Christmas markets, you'll find glittering ornaments, artisans creating handcrafted goods and freshly baked produce, including lebkuchen, a beloved round or heart-shaped type of gingerbread that usually includes honey, cardamom, or candied fruit. Enjoy drinking mulled wine from a festive mug as you soak in the views of what is arguably one of the best Christmas markets in Europe. Included Excursion
Quest for Cologne's treasures
Uncover local delicacies and cultural gems at your own pace while seeking the treasures of Cologne. You'll be given a map with locations to find the 'treasures', which are unique to the city of Cologne. Guides are on standby at these checkpoints to assist. DiscoverMORE
German beer experience (extra expense)
Discover the spirited beer culture of Cologne on this lively and flavourful guided tour through the city's legendary brewhouses. Cologne is the proud home of Kölsch - a crisp, golden beer brewed only in this region - and no visit is complete without experiencing it as a local.
Activity level: Easy, Duration: 2 hour

Arrives On: 24 Nov 27

Day 4: Rüdesheim (Germany)

This morning will be a highlight of your trip, as you meander through the fairy tale-like surrounds of the World Heritage-listed Rhine Gorge. Hilltop castles and fortresses that have stood for more than 1,000 years will be yours to admire as we traverse this legendary stretch of river.

Later, dock in Rüdesheim, where the half-timbered houses will be covered in fairy lights. Rüdesheim hosts the 'Christmas Market of Nations', where more than 100 stalls represent over a

dozen nations, each showcasing their own Christmas specialities, customs and celebrations. Included Excursion
A visit to Siegfried’s Mechanical Music Cabinet Museum
Catch the small Winzerexpress train through the narrow city streets to Siegfried's Mechanical Music Cabinet Museum. Inside, discover a vast selection of more than 350 automatic mechanical music instruments ranging from the tiniest music box to the giant Concert-Piano-Orchestrion.

Arrives On: 25 Nov 27

Day 5: Miltenberg (Germany)

Welcome to Miltenberg, a postcard-worthy town set against the lush backdrop of the Odenwald forest. Christmastime swathes the area with festive cheer, with decorations and colourful window displays illuminated at dusk by twinkling fairy lights. Miltenberg is home to one of the oldest pubs in Germany, and its delightful boutique market features stalls full of local arts, crafts, and delightful treats. Perhaps try an apple streusel kuchen during your time here, a type of apple crumb cake that the area is famous for. Included Excursion
A guided tour of Miltenberg
Join your local guide to stroll down the cobblestone streets lined with colourful houses and view the Gothic Merchant Hall, an impressive symbol of past affluence. You’ll see the oldest inn in Germany, dating back to at least 1411, Miltenberg Castle, and the unique red sandstone church and bridge. EmeraldPLUS
Bronnbach Abbey with concert and tasting
Experience the rich history and serene beauty of Bronnbach Abbey in nearby Wertheim. This well-preserved Cistercian monastery is known for its stunning Romanesque and Gothic architecture, peaceful cloisters, and impressive Baroque interiors. Enjoy a private concert and wine tasting.

Arrives On: 26 Nov 27

Day 5: Wertheim (Germany)

Arrives On: 26 Nov 27

Day 6: Würzburg (Germany)

Known as the ‘Pearl of the Romantic Road’, Würzburg is the wine capital of Franconia, a position it has held since the Middle Ages. It is surrounded by sloping vineyards famous for their white wines, particularly the unique silvaner variety and the distinctive bocksbeuter rounded bottles. Nestled in the heart of the Old Town, you’ll find an enchanting Christmas market. Steeped in 19th-century beginnings, more than 100 wooden stalls showcase seasonal decorations and delectable treats, all coated by the soft glow of Christmas lights. A traditional mug of glühwein, a hot red wine infused with spices, is the best way to fight off the chill of a cold

day. Included Excursion
A walking tour of Würzburg and visit to the Bishops Residence
The architects behind the World Heritage-listed Würzburg Residence drew inspiration from a range of different styles, including Viennese Baroque and secular features from Italy, which was heavily damaged during World War II. Enjoy learning about how this impressive building was restored to its former glory on a guided tour. DiscoverMORE
Excursion to Rothenburg (extra expense)
Explore the best-preserved medieval town in Germany, which is even more magical when decorated for Christmas. Walk its medieval walls and climb to the top of the Town Hall Tower for a panoramic view of the town and countryside. Rothenburg offers a selection of Gothic churches, museums, art exhibitions and historic restaurants where you'll enjoy a special tasting of local sausages.
Activity level: Moderate, Duration: 6.5 hours

Arrives On: 27 Nov 27

Day 7: Bamberg (Germany)

The World Heritage-listed town of Bamberg is home to not just one, but four delightful Christmas markets, each acting as sparkling gems set amongst half-timbered surrounds. Here, you'll be able to find some of the loveliest Baroque nativity scenes that Germany has to offer.

Make sure to stop and try a glass of Bamberg's famous beer. Nine breweries call the town home, and several of their world-famous products are still made using traditional Franconian brewing methods. Included Excursion
A guided tour of Bamberg
Feel the magic of the past as you explore the city with your local guide, marvelling at the opulence of the New Residence, once inhabited by the prince bishops and now home to a plethora of old German and Baroque paintings from the Bavarian State collection. Enjoy a tranquil stroll around the Rose Garden to round your day off peacefully.

Arrives On: 28 Nov 27

Day 8: Nuremberg (Germany)

Welcome to Nuremberg. The second-largest city in Bavaria, it has a storied and complex history, from its position of power in the Middle Ages to its key role during the Nazi Party rallies. You'll also be able to explore the wonderful Christmas market located in the city centre. Included Excursion
A guided tour of Nuremberg
Embark on a sightseeing tour of this historic city, including the architectural wonders that have inspired famous artists for centuries and explore the effects that the war years had. After your tour, enjoy time to explore Nuremberg at leisure, passing half-timbered houses that were beautifully reconstructed following the war.

Arrives On: 29 Nov 27

Day 9: Regensburg (Germany)

One of Germany’s best-preserved medieval cities welcomes you with two millennia of history. Despite its ancient past, modern-day Regensburg has a relaxed atmosphere, with its streets made lively by the high population of university students. Included Excursion
A guided tour of Regensburg
Set out on foot to discover the highlights of Regensburg. Wander the streets with your guide, as the romantic narrow alleys of the World Heritage-listed Old Town and 13th-century Town Hall invite you to live through the city’s history. The highlight of your tour will be the 12th-century Stone Bridge, a medieval structure crossing the Danube. Enjoy time to explore Regensburg at leisure EmeraldPLUS
A visit to the Christmas market in the Thurn and Taxis Palace grounds
Walk to the grounds of Thurn & Taxis Castle with the guide. Learn about the historical importance of the castle and the family who lived there for hundreds of years. After, explore on your own and visit the Christmas market. You’ll also get a voucher for a cup of glühwein to be redeemed in one of the stalls. EmeraldPLUS
A traditional Bavarian band on board
Make your way to the Horizon Bar & Lounge for a special performance from a Bavarian band, who will play traditional music and wear their authentic Lederhosen.

Arrives On: 30 Nov 27

Day 10: Passau (Germany)

Welcome to Passau, a town where three of Europe’s main rivers converge underneath the castle. This memorable destination is dominated by large squares, magical promenades and romantic lanes. In front of the green-domed façade of St. Stephen’s Cathedral, Passau’s annual Christkindlmarkt can be found. Here, you can sample some delicious warm Glühwein and freshly baked goods. Included Excursion
A guided tour of Passau
On this morning’s walking tour, stroll through streets lined by Baroque buildings dating back to the 17th century and look at the Gothic Town Hall, Bishop’s Residence and St. Stephen’s Cathedral, a wonderful example of Baroque architecture and home to the largest church organ in Europe. DiscoverMORE
Excursion to Salzburg (extra expense)
The birthplace of Mozart and the picturesque setting for the theatrical masterpiece, The Sound of Music, Salzburg has a unique charm and is surrounded by the breathtaking Alps. Spend a full day exploring this Austrian city, wandering its historic downtown district, exploring the Linzer Gasse shopping street and visiting the home of Mozart.
Activity level: Easy, Duration: 10 hours DiscoverMORE
Excursion to Ceský Krumlov (extra expense)
Tucked away in the Czech region of South Bohemia is the World Heritage-listed medieval town of Ceský Krumlov, renowned for its Renaissance and Baroque architecture. Your expert local guide will take you along the cobblestone streets of Ceský Krumlov’s fairytale-like Old Town, which wind their way past old townhouses, hideaway bars, and buildings dating back hundreds of years.
Activity level: Difficult/Active, Duration: 8.5 hours

Arrives On: 01 Dec 27

Day 10: Linz (Austria)

Arrives On: 01 Dec 27

Day 11: Melk (Austria)

The quaint village of Melk offers a wonderful introduction to some of the historic architecture that can be found on the continent. Melk sparkles over Christmas, from the beautifully decorated buildings to the lively festive market.

Cruise to Dürnstein in the afternoon, arriving with enough time to explore at leisure for the rest of the day and take advantage of your overnight stay. Included Excursion
A tour of Melk Abbey
Explore this ancient abbey today on an included tour. Your guide will take you through a series of opulent rooms, each adorned with the finest Italian Baroque architecture and ornate gold leaf walls, including the ancient monastic library, renowned for its extensive collection of medieval manuscripts.

Arrives On: 02 Dec 27

Day 11: Dürnstein (Austria)

Arrives On: 02 Dec 27

Day 12: Vienna (Austria)

Welcome to the ‘City of Music’, Vienna. This ornate cityscape was home to famous musicians and composers like Mozart and Beethoven, and the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. It has a magical atmosphere over Christmas, with elaborate decorations and more than 20 festive markets. Included Excursion
A guided tour of Vienna
Explore the famous sights of the Ringstrasse and Vienna’s city centre by coach and on foot, or join a guided bike tour. Marvel at the Renaissance-style arches that adorn the façades of the Opera House, the Baroque Burgtheater and the Flemish Gothic Parliament. Afterwards, enjoy some time to explore at leisure, perhaps sampling some delicious hot chocolate and baked goods at a Christmas market DiscoverMORE
Visit to Schönbrunn Palace (extra expense)
Schönbrunn Palace, the former summer residence of the Habsburg Empire, is considered one of the most beautiful Baroque palaces in Europe. Today, it is a recognised World Heritage site for its historic importance, unique grounds and splendid furnishings. Follow a local expert to hear the fascinating tales of the intriguing former residents.
Activity level: Easy, Duration: 5 hours DiscoverMORE
Viennese evening concert (extra expense)
With Mozart, Beethoven, Strauss and Schubert among its historical repertoire, Vienna is the world capital of opera and classical music.

Enjoy an exclusive evening concert at one of Vienna’s most beautiful concert halls, with favourites such as the ‘Blue Danube Waltz’ and the ‘Radetzky March’. A complimentary glass of sparkling wine on arrival adds to the unforgettable occasion.
Activity level: Easy, Duration: 2.5 hours

Arrives On: 03 Dec 27

Day 13: Bratislava (Slovakia)

Gothic architecture and fascinating tales of a Communist past welcome you to Bratislava, a capital that has seen much turbulence over the past century. Set at the crossroads of ancient trade routes, this is a place where Baroque palaces, boutiques and cafés adorn medieval cobblestone streets. The Christmas season adds an extra layer to the city, where a blend of distinctive cultures comes together to showcase their handcrafted ornaments and delicious treats. Included Excursion
A walking tour of Bratislava
Enjoy a sightseeing tour including the enchanting Old City. Your local guide will take you through the heart of the city. Pass by the botanical gardens of the Episcopal Summer Palace, the Old Town Hall and its delightful Renaissance courtyard and the Slovak National Theatre, where busts of famous composers adorn the façade. After your tour, enjoy free time to explore at leisure. EmeraldPLUS
Home-hosted coffee and cake with a local Slovakian family
Be invited into the home of a local Slovakian family to learn about their culture over coffee and cake. Get an insight into their history, culture and traditions as they show you how they live every day. DiscoverMORE
Explore the viticultural towns of the Small Carpathian Wine Route, including the vineyards of Vinosady and a family-run winery in Senkvice. You’ll learn about the proud heritage of winemaking and sample some local wines in a historic wine cellar.
Activity level: Moderate, Duration 4hr 40min

Arrives On: 04 Dec 27

Day 14: Budapest (Hungary)

Budapest is a place of striking contrasts, with Buda on one side housing a generous scattering of the city’s elegant landmarks, and Pest on the other encapsulating its fascinating past. Separated by the mighty Danube, you can explore them both by crossing the Chain Bridge, one of the most symbolic structures in the capital. At Christmas, it becomes a magical winter wonderland of decorations, lights and festive cheer.

This evening, relax on board as you enjoy an authentic Hungarian folklore show. Included Excursion
A guided coach tour of Budapest
Enjoy a guided tour of the city with your local guide this morning. Explore the World Heritage-listed centre, travelling through the chapters of architecture through the ages from Romanesque to Baroque and classical façades. See the Liberty Statue, Heroes’ Square and the Buda Castle district, before a walking tour showcases Matthias

Church and the Fisherman’s Bastion. Afterwards, explore the Christmas market. EmeraldPLUS
A traditional Hungarian folklore show
Enjoy a traditional Hungarian dinner, then a Hungarian folk dancing and music performance on board. DiscoverMORE
Excursion to Szentendre (extra expense)
Visit the picturesque village of Szentendre, where cobblestone streets evoke a Mediterranean atmosphere that has inspired many artists. Take a walking tour through the pedestrian city centre to admire the Baroque architecture, churches, colourful houses and narrow, cobbled streets. The main square, Fo Tér, and the alleyways around it are lined with art galleries, museums and shops.
Activity level: Moderate, Duration: 4 hours DiscoverMORE
Jewish heritage tour (extra expense)
During this thoughtful tour, your local guide will introduce you to some of the most significant Jewish events that have shaped Budapest's culture. See the buildings that once played important roles in the flourishing Jewish trade that existed prior to World War II. In Pest, the 'Shoes on the Danube' memorial stands as a striking reminder of what happened to the Jewish communities in Budapest during wartime.
Activity level: Moderate, Duration: 4 hours

Arrives On: 05 Dec 27

Day 15: Budapest (Hungary)

After breakfast, it’s time to say farewell to your fellow guests and disembark your Emerald Star-Ship for your transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK, taking memories of historic squares adorned with Christmas stalls and crisp winter mornings with you. This itinerary is a guide only and may be amended for operational reasons such as high and low water. As such, the cruise may operate altered from that stated above. Please refer to our terms and conditions for further information. Due to new restrictions on cruise ships at Amsterdam’s city docks, your cruise is now likely to embark and/or disembark at a port outside central Amsterdam. If your ship does not have a central Amsterdam docking, Emerald Cruises will provide a central Amsterdam meeting point and transfers to your ship as required. These changes are required by local authorities and are in line with our booking terms which allow changes to berthing or dock locations and ports where operationally necessary. You will be advised of the confirmed docking location prior to departure.

Arrives On: 06 Dec 27

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