Cruise Details

Name:	Christmas Markets Along the Rhine - Northbound
Reference:	TAUCKRCX202715122027
Operator:	Tauck
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	MS Inspire
Regions:	Rhine
Departs On:	15 Dec 27
Departs From:	Basel
Arrives On:	22 Dec 27
Arrives At:	Cologne
Cruise Nights:	7
Total Vacation Days:	8

Itinerary

Day 1: Basel (Switzerland)

Tour begins: 5:30 PM, Basel. Transfers are included from EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg to the riverboat where embarkation begins at 4:00 PM; guests can also transfer from Zürich Airport or Zurich Hauptbahnhof (train station) to the riverboat in Basel. Guests enjoying a pre-stay in Basel will receive a transfer from the hotel to the ship. If you arrive earlier than 4:00 PM, you might want to go into the city to see the Weihnachtsmarkt – said to be the largest and most traditional in Switzerland – and perhaps have your first taste of the traditional glühwein that is so much a part of the Christmas Market scene. Back on board the riverboat, meet your Tauck Directors at a discovery/welcome briefing, and enjoy a casual captain's welcome reception followed by dinner – and your Christmas Market cruise begins!

Arrives On: 15 Dec 27

Day 2: Basel (Switzerland)

Awaken aboard the riverboat in Basel, then set off on an excursion to Switzerland's lakeside "city of lights," Lucerne. From town, you'll head out for the heights of Mt. Pilatus via gondola; after descending the mountain by gondola, go on an orientation tour of Lucerne with your Tauck Director. Highlights include the Kappelbrucke, a covered wooden footbridge crossing the Reuss River that dates back to the 1330s; an octagonal Water Tower once used as a prison; and lovely squares like the Kornmarkt, Weinmarkt and Hirschenplatz. In Altstadt Lucerne (Old Town), narrow cobblestone lanes lead to picturesque squares lined with houses painted with frescoes. Alternatively, you can choose to spend the day in Basel, embarking on a short walking tour of its old town followed by time to stroll through the city's Christmas market and enjoy lunch on your own. Catch up with the riverboat in late afternoon. Return to the riverboat in the afternoon; this evening, we invite you to join us to celebrate with your fellow travelers at our tree-trimming party as you help decorate the riverboat's Christmas tree!

Arrives On: 16 Dec 27

Day 3: Strasbourg (France)

Strasbourg - Steaming mulled wine... gingerbread... Advent wreaths... a towering Christmas tree, dwarfed by soaring Strasbourg Cathedral... nearly every street and building aglow with lights and decorations... bredle, the tiny, traditional holiday cakes of Alsace... the unmistakable sights, sounds, flavors and smells of the Alsatian holidays surround you at Strasbourg's Marchés de Noël, the oldest and largest in France. A dozen themed markets fan out from the cathedral along the Grand Rue - the original Christkindelsmärik... the Bredle Market... the Kingdom of the Wine Growers... the Children's Village... the Village of Sharing and others. Artisans show off their wares in stalls that stretch on as far as the eye can see... and the ancient heart of this canal-crossed city is bathed in gold! A lecture on local storytelling traditions is part of your unforgettable day in Strasbourg. Strasbourg would like you to think of it as the "Capital of Christmas" and it is, after all, the "Capital of Europe" in a sense – being the home of the European Union. Before a walking tour through this ancient French Alsatian city, whose entire center is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, gain some insights about storytelling traditions with an expert local guide during a lecture aboard the riverboat. The setting of Tauck's Christmas Market tours – around Strasbourg's Gothic Cathedral de Notre-Dame – is breathtaking. After a walking tour of the Christkindlmarkt, you'll have leisure time to explore on your own – and have lunch in town or return to the riverboat on one of the shuttles that will run between the city and the dock for most of the afternoon. Back aboard the riverboat, join your Tauck directors for a discovery briefing before a festive dinner tonight.Please Note: Operating dates for the Christmas Markets could be subject to change; every effort will be made to visit as scheduled.

Arrives On: 17 Dec 27

Day 4: Baden-Baden (Germany)

Baden-Baden - The Black Forest's special magic casts its spell over the Christmas Market of this famous spa town, set adjacent to its sumptuous Belle Époque casino complex – the Kurhaus – which screen icon Marlene Dietrich called "the most beautiful casino in the world." Cheered by the strains of local choirs and bands performing holiday music – or perhaps by the baaaas of bleating sheep from the market's "living Nativity" – wind your way to booth upon booth of carved wooden toys and ornaments, silver jewelry, decorative candles and goodies galore. Join us for a guided visit inside the 19th-century Kurhaus, and explore more of Baden-Baden's holiday charms as you wish. A favorite destination of our Christmas Market tours along the Rhine. The riverboat docks for an excursion to Baden-Baden; this famous Black Forest spa town is the ideal setting for a winter fairy tale at Christmastime. The tempting aromas of glühwein and gingerbread linger among the labyrinth of stalls in the Weihnachtsmarkt. With its natural springs reputed to have healing powers, Baden-Baden has long attracted the wealthy elite, who come to take the waters and play in the magnificent Belle Époque casino, the Kurhaus, adjacent to the Christmas Market; get a taste of what being one of "the in-crowd" feels like as you visit the complex. Discover more of Baden-Baden on your own, perhaps indulging in more gingerbread and glühwein. Continue cruising this evening; you'll visit Heidelberg tomorrow.

Arrives On: 18 Dec 27

Day 5: Heidelberg (Germany)

Heidelberg –With thousands of stars twinkling in the trees... hundreds of booths sprawling across five city squares... and an ice rink glistening in the shadow of Heidelberger Schlöss... you'll think you've stepped inside a snowglobe at this shining Weihnachtsmarkt! Festooned with figures from the city's history, the glowing Christmas Pyramid dominates the Marktplatz. On the Universitätsplatz, a carousel turns, and the scent of almonds and glühwein fills the air. Watch skaters whirl to holiday tunes at the rink on the Karlsplatz... hunt for crafts at the Anatomiegarten... or stroll past the crèche on the Kornmarkt. Explore iconic Heidelberger Schlöss (Heidelberg Castle), ride a funicular to the medieval Old Town for a walking tour, and enjoy a traditional German lunch at a local restaurant. A day in Heidelberg promises both holiday cheer at its Weihnachtsmarkt and insights about life here past and present. Your morning begins with a choice of excursions; one brings you on a tour of Heidelberger Schlöss high above the city reveals theruins of this mighty medieval castle and a sense of what it might have beenlike to live there so long ago. Alternatively, visit Mannheim Palace for a guided tour followed by a private concert by members of the Mannheim School of Music. A funicular ride leads to a walking tour of the city's Old Town and Heidelberg's Christmas Markets, winding up with a traditional German lunch – featuring award-winning local beer – in the heart of the city. Spend some free time in the hometown of Germany's oldest university before catching up with the riverboat for tonight's cruise; enjoy live jazz onboard this evening.

Arrives On: 19 Dec 27

Day 6: Rüdesheim (Germany)

Travel back in time as you make your way from Rüdesheim to Köln and Düsseldorf on a historic cruise along the River Rhine… Glide past rolling green hillsides and see the magnificent castles of centuries past… each with its own unique story to tell… Your Tauck Director will give you insights into that history, before sharing the tale of the enchantress Lorelei, who lured lovelorn sailors to their demise with her beauty and song… See lasting remnants of the Altstädte, or Old Towns, of German cities, many restored to their former glory after World War II… Experience what the river has to offer… from the comfort of your riverboat.There's more Weihnachtsmarkt fun waiting for you in the romantic town of Rüdesheim in the Rhine Valley this morning. After a stroll through the Christmas market near the pier, walk or ride a mini-train (weather permitting) to Siegfried's Mechanisches Musikkabinett, a museum featuring an impressive collection of mechanical musical instruments, some dating back centuries, housed in the Bromserhof, a 16th-century castle. Enjoy a demonstration into how to make the special Rüdesheim coffee – with a touch of local brandy mixed in – and a tasting. After some free time, return to your riverboat for an afternoon of cruising through the Middle Rhine Valley with commentary provided by your Tauck director.

Arrives On: 20 Dec 27

Day 7: Cologne (Germany)

Arrive early morning in Köln (Cologne). Enjoy a guided tour of this historic cultural center of the Rhineland in Köln – with its Christmas Market adjacent to the Gothic, twin-spired Kölner Dom. Spend time in Köln this afternoon as you please, then join us for the captain's farewell reception followed by dinner tonight as your riverboat spends the evening cruising to Düsseldorf. You may want to raise one last cup of glühwein and toast the wonderful time you've had discovering Christmastime along the Rhine.

Arrives On: 21 Dec 27

Day 8: Cologne (Germany)

Tour ends: Düsseldorf. Fly home anytime. Transfers are included from the riverboat to Düsseldorf Airport or train station. Guests enjoying a post-stay in Düsseldorf will receive a transfer from the hotel to the airport. Please allow three hours for airport check-in.

Arrives On: 22 Dec 27

For more information on this cruise, please call +44 (0)1202 767926.

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