Cruise Details

Name:	Christmas Markets Along the Rhine - Southbound
Reference:	TAUCKRCY202715122027
Operator:	Tauck
Cruise Type:	River
Cruise Rating:	Luxury
Ship:	MS Grace
Regions:	Rhine
Departs On:	15 Dec 27
Departs From:	Düsseldorf
Arrives On:	22 Dec 27
Arrives At:	Basel
Cruise Nights:	7
Total Vacation Days:	8

Itinerary

Day 1: Düsseldorf (Germany)

Tour begins: 6:00 PM, Düsseldorf. Transfers are included from the Düsseldorf Airport and Düsseldorf Train Station to the riverboat where embarkation begins at 4:00 PM. Guests enjoying a pre-stay in Düsseldorf at Tauck's selected hotel will receive a transfer from the hotel to the riverboat. If you arrive earlier, you might choose to go into the city to visit one of Düsseldorf's Christmas Markets – and perhaps have your first taste of the traditional glühwein that is so much a part of the holiday scene. Back onboard the riverboat, meet your Tauck Directors and cruise mates at the captain's welcome reception followed by dinner tonight.

Arrives On: 15 Dec 27

Day 2: Cologne (Germany)

Travel back in time as you make your way along the River Rhine… Glide past rolling 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. Spend the morning in Köln (Cologne) and enjoy a guided tour of this historic cultural center of the Rhineland – with its Christmas Market adjacent to the Gothic, twin-spired Kölner Dom. Back aboard ship, take part in our tree-trimming party after dinner tonight as the riverboat cruises to Koblenz overnight, then on to Rüdesheim.Please Note: Operating dates for the Christmas Markets could be subject to change; every effort will be made to visit as scheduled.

Arrives On: 16 Dec 27

Day 3: Rüdesheim (Germany)

Rüdesheim - Holiday carols, children's laughter, carousels... the season's joyful noises reverberate across this little town on the Rhine as you browse the shops and stalls of its Weihnachtsmarkt, another Christmas Market tour standout, winding your way through its quaint cobblestone streets; the largest nativity scene in Europe adorns the market square. Even the Drosselgasse, a narrow lane famed for its wine bars, is all done up in yuletide green and gold. Heart-shaped lebkuchen, local favorites like schweinebraten and jagerschnitzel - and especially Rüdesheim coffee, laced with locally produced brandy - tempt your taste buds. Enjoy a morning aboard the riverboat as you cruise along the Rhine to Rüdesheim. Do a bit of exploring at the city's Weihnachtsmarkt near the pier before walking or riding a mini-train (weather permitting) to Siegfried's Mechanisches Musikkabinett for an unexpected musical treat; here, housed in a 16th-century castle, you'll find one of the world's largest collections of whimsical mechanical musical instruments, some centuries old. It wouldn't be the holiday season without holiday cookies; a cookie-making demonstration may give you some ideas to take home – and the results you'll sample are especially good when accompanied by Rüdesheim coffee, infused with local brandy. Spend some free time on your own, then return to the riverboat to enjoy dinner aboard ship and continue your cruise.

Arrives On: 17 Dec 27

Day 4: 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. Dock this morning for a full-day trip to Heidelberg. Home to Germany's oldest university, Heidelberg has been a dynamic place since sometime in the

5th century… and a lot happens here, especially during the holiday season. Your morning begins with a choice of excursions; one brings you on a tour of Heidelberger Schlöss high above the city reveals the ruins of this mighty medieval castle and a sense of what it might have been like 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 medieval Old Town, and a visit to Heidelberg's Christmas Markets, sprawling across five city squares aglow with thousands of twinkling lights. Wind up your day with a traditional German lunch – with award-winning beer – at a local restaurant. Reboard the riverboat to continue your cruise; a jazz band entertains you onboard tonight.

Arrives On: 18 Dec 27

Day 5: 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 Èpoque 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. Christmastime in the Black Forest has a magic all its own, as you'll see today after docking for an excursion to Baden-Baden. This famous Black Forest spa town has welcomed people seeking its healing waters ("baden," in fact, means "to bathe") since Roman times... as well as the wealthy elite who have frequented its Belle Èpoque casino, the Kurhaus, for more than a century. Following a walk through Baden-Baden's delightful Christmas Market, visit the adjacent Kurhaus. This afternoon, enjoy lunch back aboard the riverboat or in town following time to explore on your own (Note: for those who wish to have lunch on the riverboat and then venture out into town, one of the shuttles will run between the city and the dock for most of the afternoon). Enjoy dinner aboard the riverboat this evening. Your ship charts a course for Strasbourg.

Arrives On: 19 Dec 27

Day 6: 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 local guide joins you aboard the riverboat to tell the story of storytelling in France's Alsace region, before heading out for a walking tour through ancient Strasbourg's Christmas Market, the biggest and oldest in all of France. Home to the European Union and in a sense the "Capital of Europe," Strasbourg would also like you to think of it as the "Capital of Christmas." The setting of its Marchés de Noël (as Christmas Markets are called in most cities in France), around the Gothic Cathedral de Notre-Dame, is breathtaking; after your visit, you can return to the riverboat or explore on your own and have lunch in Strasbourg, one of the best Christmas Market tour towns in France! Enjoy cocktails followed by the chef's signature dinner this evening.

Arrives On: 20 Dec 27

Day 7: Basel (Switzerland)

From the riverboat this morning, set off to Switzerland's lakeside "City of Lights," Lucerne. Head out for the heights of Mt. Pilatus via gondola to enjoy spectacular views of the city and Lake Lucerne; after descending the mountain by gondola, take an orientation tour 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. Following time in Lucerne, return to the riverboat in the afternoon. Alternatively, you have the option to stay aboard the riverboat for a leisurely day of sailing. You'll have the option this evening to visit Basel's Christmas Markets if you wish. Please join us this evening for the captain's farewell reception followed by dinner aboard the riverboat – sharing more memories of your Rhine holiday cruise over a mug of steaming glühwein with the new friends you've made – as the ship makes its way to Basel.

Arrives On: 21 Dec 27

Day 8: Basel (Switzerland)

Tour ends: Basel, Switzerland. Fly home anytime. Upon disembarking the riverboat (no later than 9:00 AM), transfers are included to EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg or Basel's SBB train station; guests can also transfer to Zürich Airport or Zurich Hauptbahnhof (train station). Please allow 3 hours for flight check-in.

Arrives On: 22 Dec 27

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

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