Essence of the Elbe

RIVER CRUISE

Plus optional extensions in

Hamburg; Warsaw and Krakow; Munich

ELB/ELP 2014

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1. PASSPORT, VISA AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Passport Required

U.S. citizens need a passport for this itinerary. Please take a moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If it you are refused entry, you may be required by that country to return to the U.S. immediately, **which would be at your own expense**.

Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:

- It should be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- It should have the recommended number of blank pages (see below for details).
- The blank pages must be labeled "Visas" at the top. Pages labeled "Amendments and Endorsements" are not acceptable.

Recommended number of blank pages

Since the consequence of having too few pages can be severe—you could be denied entry into a country—we opt for *a better safe than sorry* policy. We recommend these guidelines.

- **Main trip and extensions**: Under the terms of the Schengen Treaty, the countries on this tour no longer require border guards to stamp your passport when traveling from one country to another. The entry stamp you receive at the airport when you first land serves for all the countries on this itinerary. However, because the U.S. authorities may stamp your passport when you re-enter the United States, and because they may refuse to do so on a page that already has a stamp on it, you should have at least 2 blank passport pages available.

To renew your passport by mail, or get extra pages, you can get a form at your local post office. For information on obtaining your first passport, contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**. Allow several weeks for processing.

Visas Not Required

U.S. citizens do NOT need a visa for entry into any of the countries on your itinerary.

Traveling without a U.S. passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about possible visa requirements. For your convenience, we recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at 1-800-556-9990 or www.pvsinternational.org.

Requirements for the Czech Republic

You will need to bring along very specific documentation, so please read carefully.
The Czech Republic requires that all travelers be able to provide proof of medical coverage, *if asked*. Not all travelers will be asked—in fact, most travelers *aren't* asked. If you are asked, however, you must be able to show proof of coverage that meets these requirements:

- Be for a minimum of 30,000 Euros (about $40,000 US dollars).
- Cover possible medical expenses and hospitalization charges as a result of accidents or unexpected illness while traveling.
- Be valid while traveling in Schengen countries like the Czech Republic. Schengen countries are the European Union countries that have signed the Schengen Agreement—for example, Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, etc.
- Include repatriation to the country of your legal residence or the country that issued your passport. In other words, it must cover the cost of getting you back home if you need to return for medical reasons.

I**f you purchased Grand Circle Travel's comprehensive Travel Protection Plan,** all you'll need to bring is a copy of the coverage from Trip Mate (the plan provider) and a paid *Grand Circle* invoice. A copy of the coverage was provided in your Important Information booklet when you first reserved. (It's the blue and white booklet with the tabs.)

Or if you prefer, you can print out a loose-leaf copy of your coverage. Simply go to our website, www.gct.com, and follow the link at the bottom of the page to Trip Mate. This will direct you to the Grand Circle section of their website, where you can print a copy of your coverage. You can also print a copy of your invoice from our website by logging into your my Account.

If you did *not* purchase Travel Protection with Grand Circle you will need to bring some other form of proof of coverage. If your own health insurance meets the requirements above, contact your insurer for a letter stating that you are covered. A certificate of coverage and proof of purchase from a private insurer or another Travel Protection Plan will also suffice, as long as the requirements listed above are met. *Please note that **Medicare cards are not acceptable**, since Medicare does not cover medical expenses abroad.*

Backup Photocopies

The smartest security precaution you can take is to make photocopies of your passport's personal information pages, your air tickets, your traveler's check serial numbers (if you're using them), and your credit cards. Also, bring extra passport-sized photos. Make a list of the phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, your travel protection plan company (if you have an optional travel protection plan) and medical emergency network. Keep these documents separate from the originals, and they can save you immeasurable time, money, and trouble if your originals are lost or stolen as you travel. In addition, scan these photocopies and email them to your email address; you can then print out replacement copies if necessary.

2. YOUR HEALTH

Keep Your Abilities In Mind

We've worked closely with our local Program Directors and regional associates to identify the aspects of this adventure that you should be aware of, from physical requirements to cultural factors. **Please carefully review the information below prior to departing on this trip.**

Pacing

- 12 days, with 7 nights aboard a private Grand Circle river ship, and 2 hotel stays
- Return flights to U.S. often require departing from hotel in early morning hours

Physical Requirements

- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- You must be able to walk 1-3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 40-77°F during cruising season; rain can be expected at any time of year
- June-August are the warmest months
- March and November weather can be unpredictable and change quickly within a short period of time

Terrain

- Travel over diverse terrain and uneven walking surfaces, including steep and unpaved paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones, which can be slippery in wet or colder conditions

Transportation

- Travel by 45-passenger coach and 90-passenger river ship

River Cruising

- Throughout the River Cruise season, weather conditions and tides affect European river depths; water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary

Cuisine

- Meals will be a mix of local specialties and familiar American standards
- Meals onboard feature a variety of entrée options, including vegetarian

Program Directors

- We reserve the right for our Program Directors to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home if their limitations are impacting the group's experience

Health Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on your adventure, there are at least four health-related things you should do. We'll outline some of these steps in more detail in the following pages, but for now, here's the short list:

- **Step 1:** Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- **Step 2:** Have a medical checkup with your doctor.
- **Step 3:** Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- **Step 4:** Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less important than steps 1-3.)

Step 1 - CDC on Germany, Czech Republic, and Poland

There are NO legally required vaccinations for any of these countries. At time of writing, the CDC's suggestions for Germany, the Czech Republic, and Poland were for routine vaccinations that you probably already have (mumps, rubella, etc.) and Hepatitis A. They also had suggestions on Hepatitis B and rabies that would not apply to most Grand Circle travelers. *Note that any information from the CDC is subject to change without notice.*

Step 2 – Heath Check

We recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date. You'll want to discuss the following points with your doctor:

- **The CDC recommendations.** The CDC is a great resource, but their suggestions are based on the destination, so that doesn't automatically mean the suggestions are right for you. Your doctor will be able to advise you on what is best considering your unique medical history.
- **Advice on what medicines (if any) to bring.** For our suggestions of what types of medications to ask your doctor about, see the section titled "Medications" that follows. Remember to get a copy of any prescriptions—written as a generic drug name—so you can replace your medications if they are lost during the trip.
- **Your fitness for this trip.** This is a must if you have any medical conditions or physical limitations. Use the "Keep Your Abilities in Mind" section on previous pages as a guideline. Make certain to review any medical condition you have, particularly cardiac or respiratory disease or diabetes, and discuss the details of the trip itinerary as it pertains to your health. Remember, your trip may take you into remote areas, with no nearby medical facilities.

Please notify us in writing about any medical condition that may require special attention. If your report is normal, you don't need to send it to us. If you send us a medical report, we don't use it to determine if you should take this trip, or if you are likely to enjoy it. Those decisions are up to you and your doctor. If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition

Step 3 - Medications

If you take prescription medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip. Pack these medications in your carry-on bag, and keep them in their original, labeled containers. To be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications, you should also bring copies of the prescriptions, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name.

Our local Program Directors have mentioned that many medications are not as readily available on this itinerary as they are in the U.S. There is no local equivalent of CVS or Walgreens for daily medications and you may require a doctor's prescription for the same medications that are sold over-the-counter in the U.S. Therefore, you may wish to stock up before you leave home.

3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS & AIR TRAVEL

Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current **standard** is **50lbs for checked bags** and **15 lbs for carry-on bags**.
Size restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (*length+width+depth*). **Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit.** On the plane, you can usually bring a carry-on bag of up to 45 linear inches. However, **our Program Directors suggest bringing a smaller carry-on if possible**—something like a backpack or a tote bag—because the overhead compartments on your motorcoach will not accommodate an airplane-sized carry-on.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
The extensions have the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
REMARKS / SUGGESTIONS	
One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights. **Note**: Enforcement of published restrictions by countries and airlines is a matter of governmental and corporate policy. Enforcement may include spot checks and may be inconsistently applied. Expect penalties and fines to be imposed immediately, however, when and if enforced. Before you choose to ignore the published restrictions you should ask: *Do I feel lucky?* And, even if you answer yes, you should make sure that you have the ability to pay the fine.	

Remember, these limits can change. If the airline(s) notifies us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet. **You should also confirm both luggage restrictions and luggage fees directly with your U.S./international airline a week or so before your departure**. Doing so will keep you up-to-date on any last-minute changes, new security measures, or new fees.

Most airlines are now charging fees for checked luggage, even on some international flights. These fees are not included in your trip price; they are payable directly to the airlines. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website under the FAQ section.

Luggage Suggestions

Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase for your checked luggage. Due to space limitations on our motor coaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

Consider a daypack or small backpack as your carry-on bag. It will do double duty during excursions and walking trips. A daypack leaves your hands free and distributes its weight onto your back. Packed with daily travel needs (sweater, camera, rain/wind jacket, water bottle, etc.), it will compress to fit the storage space of foreign motorcoaches, and yet still have room for an impulse buy at a local street market.

Tip**:** *a second, empty lockable bag folded into your main suitcase, with a luggage tag and small lock. Use this to carry souvenirs home – but remember that you may incur extra luggage fees. If you're traveling with a companion we recommend "cross-packing," i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion's luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*

Airport Security/TSA

Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage may change. To avoid inadvertently packing restricted items in your carry-on, we suggest that you consult the Transportation Security Administration website at **www.tsa.gov** which keeps a current list of restricted items. From the main website click on *Our Travelers*, then *Air Travel*, and then you will see a link for *Prohibited Items*.

Follow the TSA's 3-1-1 rule for liquids in your carry-on. Liquids must be in a 3.4 ounce or less (100ml) bottle (by volume); all bottles must be in a 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag; 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin. One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. The 3.4 ounce (100ml) container size is a security measure. Note that this rule is used increasingly throughout the world.

Consider TSA locks. To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, *either* do not lock your bags when checking in for flights that originate in the U.S. *or* use TSA-approved locks. (These are locks that TSA screeners can open and relock with a special tool, avoiding damage to your luggage or lock if a physical inspection is required. Look for the words "TSA" or "TSA-approved" on the lock's packaging.) Outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend that you lock your luggage as a preventative measure against theft.

GCCL Air Travelers

We'll be sending you a preliminary flight itinerary—and posting it online in My Account—no later than 100 days prior to your departure. (If you booked your trip inside 100 days, then expect it a week or two after booking.) Due to restrictions from the airlines, air itineraries cannot be confirmed more than 330 days before your travel dates. If you have booked your trip a year in advance, we cannot send you a preliminary itinerary or answer questions about your flights until you are inside this 330 days timeline.

Flying with a Travel Companion

If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

Airport Transfers

Airport transfers are included for travelers who purchased their international flights from Grand Circle without customizing the departure or return dates. A GCCL Representative will meet you at the airport in Europe after you exit the luggage claims area and escort you to a private motor coach for your transfer to the pier or hotel.

If you plan on booking your own international flights or arranging with our air department to arrive/depart on an earlier/later date than standard for your program, airport transfers will NOT be included in your program price. Transfers must be purchased separately, as an optional add-on, and are subject to availability. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Traveler Support team at 1-800-321-2835 or go online at www.gct.com/airporttransfers.

4. MONEY MATTERS

How to Carry Your Money

The European financial infrastructure is as developed and modern as America's – sometimes even better developed. Currencies vary and banks have different names, but most are allied with global institutions and offer the same services you use daily. You can expect to have ready access to ATMs (to get local currency from your account), to have major credit cards accepted at most popular tourist sites, restaurants, and major stores, and to exchange US dollars for local currencies. There will be localized exceptions and perhaps some limitations on availability and amounts, and don't forget the fees. However, a little forethought can make juggling currencies a fairly painless process. **Traveler's checks are NOT recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and are rarely accepted in shops and restaurants.

Getting Local Currency

While there is no need to obtain local currency before your trip, many travelers do exchange $50 to $100 or so into the currency of their first destination. This can smooth your arrival should you run into closed banks/exchanges or broken ATMs. Otherwise, rely on a mix of credit/debit cards and ATM use (for ready access to cash) as the best way to manage your money as you travel. U.S. cash should be mixed into the blend, but it's wise to minimize how much you carry. Just as at home, carrying large amounts of cash can be risky. It's generally wise to have spending money in the local currency rather than to rely on American dollars.

You can exchange money at banks, some hotels, and money exchange offices (to do so, you'll likely need your passport). Be aware, however, that torn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills will ***not*** be accepted for exchange. **New** (in terms of use *and* issue date – post 2004) and large bills ($100) will *usually* be accepted by banks and onboard ships; **old** $100 bills (again, in age and condition) will ***not*** be accepted. Money in smaller denominations is much more universally accepted, but even there, new bills are preferred. Note that U.S. currency is not an accepted form of currency in Europe.

Local Currency

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director will advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to our website, or the financial section of your newspaper. On our website select the region and then click on the country you'll be visiting. A link to the currency converter is included in the menu on the page of each individual country.

Germany

In Germany the official currency is the euro (€). Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500
- Coins**:** 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents; 1 and 2 euro

Banking Hours: Bank hours for Germany are usually Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 4 to 5 pm; banks are closed on Saturdays. To exchange cash and traveler's checks you will need to have your passport with you.

The Czech Republic

Czech legal tender is the Czech crown or koruna (CZK.), divided into 100 hellers or haler. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 50, 100, 200, 500, 1000, 2000, and 5000 CZK.
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 CZK.

Note that coinage below the crown (i.e. hellers) as well as the 50 CZK note are no longer in circulation. The Czech Republic is preparing to merge into the Eurozone (in 2020) and you'll find many places in the larger cities accept Euros with no problem. Prices given in CZK and hellers – i.e. Kr. 36.70 – will be rounded to the nearest crown.

Banking Hours: In the Czech Republic, banks are typically open 9 am – 4 pm, Monday through Friday. It is more economical to change your money at a bank rather than at your hotel, as the bank's exchange rate is better.

Poland

The Polish monetary unit is the zloty, which is divided into 100 groszy. Banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 10, 20, 50, 100, and 200 zloty
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 groszy; 1, 2, and 5 zloty

The best way to exchange money: You'll get a better exchange rate in Poland at one of the privately run Kantors, open 9 am to 6 pm. Kantors will also change your leftover zlotys back into U.S. dollars.

Banking Hours: Banking hours may vary between seasons, but generally they are open from 8 or 9 am to 5 or 6 pm, Monday through Friday.

Credit Cards

Though major American credit cards (American Express, Visa, and MasterCard) are accepted abroad, always inquire if your type of credit card is accepted before deciding on your purchase. It is also wise to notify your credit card company that you will be using your cards abroad so that they may remove any security block. When using a major credit card you may receive a different exchange rate than if you pay with cash; inquire about the rate first. Please be aware that credit cards might not be accepted for small purchases or in some restaurants or stores. Note that the Discover credit card is not widely accepted outside the U.S. Keep your receipts in case you have questions about the conversion or exchange rate. Also, keep your receipts as proof of purchase for items to be shipped home.

***TIP**: Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company or bank that you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure.*

You should also double-check what phone number you should call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1-800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

IMPORTANT NOTE: European countries have been phasing in a new type of credit card technology, called a "smartcard" or a "chip-and-PIN" card. These cards have an embedded computer chip instead of a magnetized strip, and the card owner authorizes a purchase by entering a four digit numerical PIN (Personal Identification Number) instead of signing a slip. Some businesses in Europe have already switched to the new system completely; some can process both smartcards and regular cards; and some haven't switched at all.

This new technology is not common in the U.S., so occasionally there may be machines that can't read U.S. cards. Or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. Although it is not common for U.S. credit cards to have PINs (and some providers will not even be able to provide one at all), requesting one prior to your departure is recommended. In some shops you will still be able to sign a slip as usual if you inform the vendor at the point of sale. And if the shop in question requires a smartcard, you can always try a different form of payment, like a debit card or cash. (U.S. debit cards usually have a PIN, so sometimes they work when credit cards don't.) Since there is no way to predict in advance what each shop will do, we recommend that you bring more than one type of payment when you go shopping. For example, a mix of a couple different credit cards, a debit or ATM card, and some cash is ideal—you'll be prepared for anything.

Debit Cards

Debit cards are very popular in Europe, and are widely accepted, but will *almost always* require a PIN. Many U.S. banks offer a combined ATM and debit card. Check your ATM card, and if it has a Visa or a MasterCard logo, ask your bank if it can be used as a debit card in Europe. (If there's no logo, then you probably can't use it as a debit card, but your bank will know for certain). If it can be used as a debit card, all you'll need is the same PIN you use at the ATM.

ATMs

ATMs are widely available in Germany, the Czech Republic, and Poland. Always notify your bank before you leave home that you are going abroad so that they may remove any blocks on your account, and also ask them about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad. For cash withdrawals, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's 4-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number), as many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their numeric keys, they only display digits.

Note on ATM use: Many banks have begun imposing a fee ranging from $1 to $5 every time you use an ATM in a foreign city. You may want to limit the number of withdrawals that you make. Your Program Director/Hospitality Desk Representative can advise you on locations, but when to exchange money is left to your discretion.

Onboard Ship

Two separate bills will be issued.

- **Shipboard account**: This bill is for onboard purchases (drinks at the bar, gift shop purchases, laundry, etc) and is calculated in Euros. You may pay for your shipboard account via credit/debit cards (American Express, MasterCard, and Visa are accepted,) **or** via cash. If you use cash, either Euros or U.S. dollars are accepted

  Note: If you pay with a credit or debit card, you will need to sign a receipt and/or supply a PIN number, depending on the card account requirements (onboard sales terminals accept both.) *Personal checks or Discover card are **NOT** accepted.*

- **Optional tour account**: This bill is for optional tours taken during the trip; it is calculated in U.S. dollars. You may only pay for your optional tour account using credit/debit cards (American Express, MasterCard, and Visa are accepted.)

  Note: Debit cards with MasterCard or Visa logos are accepted for optional tour payments, however the card must allow you to sign for purchases—you will not be able to enter a PIN. You will need to sign an optional tour form as proof of payment. *Cash, Personal checks, PIN-only debit cards, or Discover card are **NOT** accepted.*

Shipboard and optional tour account payments made by credit card may take up to 3 months to process. We ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months after your trip ends. Because our headquarters are in Boston, you will not need a PIN for this payment, but the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "**OPT Boston**" (depending on your credit card company).

Exchange Services

Onboard ship we will break down or change larger U.S. bills into smaller ones (for example, one U.S. $50 bill into U.S. $20, $10, $5, and $1 bills), and change U.S. currency into Euros (for example U.S. $20 into Euro €*XX* — depending on exchange rate). This service is available only for the Euro & U.S. dollar currencies. The daily exchange is **limited to a maximum of U.S. $50 per person**. You can exchange larger amounts at local banks in port towns.

Shopping

There is **no** requirement to make a purchase during stops at local shops or markets, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. **Grand Circle Cruise Line cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.**

If you plan a major purchase, we strongly recommend that you research the prices and quality available at home before your trip. Just one visit to an import shop or gold dealer will put you way ahead when you go shopping. This is the only way to know if you are getting a good price.

Berlin

Berlin is a cosmopolitan city filled with a wide variety of alluring shops, specialty boutiques, elegant malls, and major department stores, including the KaDeWe at Wittenbergplatz, one of the biggest department stores in Europe. Whatever you wish to buy, you can find it here. You may wish to visit the famous Ku'damm shopping area. Here the city's most upscale fashion boutiques and art galleries make for some pleasurable browsing and window-shopping.

Special to Berlin are handmade porcelain items, ranging from exquisite Staaliche Porzellan Manufactur china to kitsch souvenir pieces like freedom bells fashioned after the Freedom Bell hanging in Schöneberg Rathaus. Other popular German buys are high-quality cutlery, cameras, binoculars, and watches; goose-down comforters; glassware; and all kinds of delicious chocolates.

Store hours: Standard hours for department stores and stores in the major shopping areas are Monday-Friday 9:30 am to 8 pm, and Saturday 9:30 am to 4 pm. Smaller neighborhood shops may close at 6 pm.

VAT: Inquire locally about rebates on Germany's 16% VAT sales tax. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson about the VAT at time of purchase, or talk to your Program Director about it before you shop. Be sure to save all receipts and VAT forms for Customs.

Dresden

The best shopping in Dresden can be found near the historic *Altstadt* (old town). A stroll down Pragerstrasse toward the Elbe will take you through the *Altmarkt* (old market), which marks the intersection of Pragerstrasse and Wilsdrufferstrasse, where you can find high-quality retail outlets. Crossing the Elbe on the Augustusbrücke, Pragerstrasse becomes Hauptstrasse, a tree-lined boulevard that has hosted Dresden's oldest covered market for centuries. Hauptstrasse terminates at Albertplatz, a center for commerce and fashion. From Albertplatz, you can sortie back toward the Elbe along Königstrasse for more high-end designer boutiques or venture further north to the cutting edge stores of Outer Neustadt.

Prague

Antiques are a lure, and the small shops in Prague delight the collector and window-shopper alike. Basically all antiquities are available for sale except for religious items and items protected by the state (legally listed as cultural monuments). The shop should provide you with accurate information concerning those specific items.

Many stores sell a wide range of crafts and tourist goods, such as Bohemian glass, porcelain, fine quality records, crystal, peasant pottery, wooden toys, and folk carvings; as well as imported goods from the West, including liquor, cigarettes, and everything from tools to transistor radios. Modern arts and crafts are sold at private art galleries.

Hours: Long store hours facilitate shopping. Shops are open Monday - Friday, from 8 or 9 am to 6 pm; Saturdays, from 9 am to 1 pm. Shopping malls, shopping centers, and galleries are open Monday through Sunday from 9 am to 8 pm. The majority of supermarkets are also open seven days a week, from 7 am to 7 pm. TESCO stores are open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Warsaw/Krakow

Polish folk objects make good mementos and are an excellent value. Some interesting possibilities include embroidery, lace, dolls in folk costumes, prints and engravings, amber, pottery, and woodcarvings. The wide range of chain stores specializing in different local wares makes shopping in Poland relatively easy. *Desa* stores carry tapestries, painting, sculptures, and porcelain. Most stores accept local currency and major credit cards.

Store hours: Department stores are open from 10 or 11 am until 6, 7, or 8 pm. On Saturday and Sunday, stores are normally open as well.

VAT: There is a 22% VAT (Value Added Tax) build into the price of most items. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson about the VAT at time of purchase, or talk to your Program Director about it before you shop. Be sure to save all receipts and VAT forms for Customs.

U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, **www.cbp.gov** has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511.**

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is $800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than $800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S**. Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the *export* duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the *import* duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20229
Tel. **1-877-227-5511**
www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/

Problem with a Purchase?

The best way to address a problem with a purchase is to not have one in the first place! So don't forget to examine merchandise before paying for it, check contracts or agreements before signing, and review your receipt before leaving the shop. For major purchases, don't hesitate to ask in advance about the return policy—local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up.

But what if you do discover an issue with an item later on? In that case, your best recourse is to contact the vendor directly. For this reason we recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. due to delays in communication, the complexities of international shipping/customs duties, and even cultural differences in how business is conducted.

To Tip or Not to Tip

Sometimes *that* is the question. Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. For those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

- **Shipboard:** Shipboard gratuities to the cruise personnel are not included in the cost of your Cruise Tour. The ships' tipping guidelines recommend a flat tip of $10-$12 U.S. per person, per day, which will be pooled among all cruise staff. For your convenience tips for the crew can be paid with a credit card.

- **GCCL Program Director:** It is customary at the end of your trip to express a personal "Thank You" to the Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Director assigned to your group, especially if he/she has provided you with individual assistance. We recommend $4-$6 per person, per day. Please note that tips for our Program Directors can only be in the form of cash, in local currency or dollars.

- **Tours & Excursions:** During your vacation, you have the opportunity to participate in included and optional tours. A tip to your motorcoach driver (and local tour guide, if one accompanies the tour) is customary, and the following are the suggested amounts: $2 per person for each half-day tour, $3 per person for each full-day tour.

- **Time at Leisure:** During the times that you explore independently, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. The following are suggestions for your areas of travel:

    - **Germany:** Typically diners tip waiters 8% to 10% of the food bill; you can tip taxi drivers 10% of the fare, and barbers/hairdressers 10% to 15%. <u>In this country, tips in local currency are preferred.</u>
    - **Poland & Czech Republic:** Unless service charges are included in your bill, we suggest you leave bartenders and waiters about 10% of the check in cash. It is also customary to tip taxi drivers about 10% of the fare.

- **Restrooms**: It is very common to be charged a small fee (not a tip) to use the restroom. Typical amounts are about 1 Zloty in Poland, 10 Crowns in the Czech Republic, or 50 Euro cents elsewhere. Restroom attendants are usually prepared to give you change if you don't have exact amount. US dollars are not usually accepted for this fee, so **bring small change in the local currency with you to the restroom just in case.**

6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

In General

Travel light. A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. To have a varied travel wardrobe—yet keep your luggage light—we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated pants and shirts, skirts and blouses, or pantsuits that can be mixed to create different outfits.

Pack casual clothes. Comfortable, low-key apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations and aboard ship. Basic pants, shirts, walking shorts, sportswear, everyday dresses and skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes are recommended. At dinner, you will not need to don "dressy" clothing; men do not need a tie or jacket. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it’s completely up to you.

Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions. Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, depending on your travel season. In March or November, evenings may even fall into the 30s. For warmer conditions, a mixture of cotton sweaters, sweatshirts, long-sleeved shirts, summery tops, pants, skirts, and walking shorts is recommended. Evenings call for a warm outfit and a heavy sweater or jacket. A sturdy windproof shell over a heavy sweatshirt, sweater, or fleece top is ideal for being out on deck at night. On land excursions, dress in layers. You can then easily adjust to any temperature shifts by removing or adding a layer. For possible showers, take a folding travel umbrella and/or rain hat. A waterproof jacket with a hood is ideal.

Good walking shoes are critical. This program features many included tours that follow steep, unpaved or cobbled routes; and even an average day of light sightseeing or shopping can put great demands on your feet. Supportive, waterproof sports shoes are ideal for daytime shore excursions. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. Bring five to seven pairs of socks. In case you get caught in the rain, we suggest you bring an extra pair of walking shoes, and rain boots or galoshes. **Aboard ship, you'll want flat, non-slip shoes with rubber soles.**

Day excursions: On days that include full or half-day bus excursions, please remember to bring drinking water and any needed medications with you.

Packing Your Carry-On

Using a daypack as a carry-on bag for your flights is a smart solution. We **strongly urge** you to pack your carry-on with at least one full change of clothes, your camera gear, medications, changes of socks and underwear, your important travel documents, and other irreplaceable items, in case your checked bags go astray. Store camera gear and important papers in plastic bags to protect them from dirt and moisture. With a daypack you can then remove these items on arrival and load your bag with the gear you’ll need on walking tours.

Clothing Options

The luggage weight and size restrictions imposed by travel realities today have made traveling light an absolute necessity. With modern fabrics – Gore-Tex, Polarfleece, polypropylene, etc. – lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy. A visit to any on-line or local sporting goods/outdoor stores (L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, etc.) will yield a treasure trove of lightweight, specialized, and fashionable clothing and gear that is readily adaptable to your itinerary.

Packing Suggestions

To travel wisely these days you must juggle your personal needs and preferences against the physical constraints of your transportation—whether it's an international airplane, a transfer motorcoach, a small ship or a day-long trek on a camel. You'll have to distinguish between what you **must** have, what you'd *like* to have, whether you can zip your suitcase closed, and what you can reasonably expect to wrestle through airport hallways and security checkpoints. Consult the following items to create your personal checklist – ignoring what you don't need and making the tough decisions over borderline cases. Remember that many airlines today will charge you extra for added luggage.

Do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. Also avoid packing glass bottles; use plastic containers instead. Leave at home checkbooks and any credit cards not essential for your trip, valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose. For more packing and luggage tips, you might want to visit the web site: **www.travelite.org**.

Cabin amenities include: shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer, liquid soap, body lotion, shower cap, washcloth, and towels. We have still mentioned some of these items in the checklists below in case you have preferred brands you want to bring with you on your cruise.

General Clothing Recommendations

- ❑ Causal shirts or blouses, plus trousers and/or jeans: Comfortable and loose-fitting so you can easily participate in the tours or be active.
- ❑ Shoes and socks: Comfortable, sturdy, highly supportive walking shoes or sneakers are recommended. Many of the places you visit have cobblestone streets. Also recommended is a pair of water-tolerant footwear in case of rain or snow.
- ❑ Underwear and sleepwear
- ❑ Light sweater. During colder times of year, this is useful for layering. During hotter times of year this can still be useful because the air-conditioning on the bus can be cold.
- ❑ Some sort of rain gear—a raincoat, a waterproof jacket, an umbrella, etc. Rain can be expected any time of year.
- ❑ A warm jacket or coat. This is a year-round item for this itinerary due to unpredictable weather patterns.

Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

For winter (December-February)

- ❑ You'll mostly want long-sleeved shirts.
- ❑ Snow is common this time of year, so factor that into your footwear choice.
- ❑ Warm outer gear is a must. This means a winter coat, hat, and gloves.
- ❑ Bring clothing you can layer (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.); thermal or long underwear adds warmth without bulk and doesn't take up much room in your luggage.

For spring (March-May)

- ❑ Spring is especially tricky to define. March is a shoulder month that can have both winter and spring weather; May is a transitional month from spring to summer.
- ❑ You'll want a mix of long jeans/trousers and walking shorts, plus a mix of long- and short-sleeved shirts.
- ❑ Snow can occur as late as April, so factor that into your footwear choice.
- ❑ Some warm clothing is still a must, but it doesn't need to be as heavy-duty as for winter.
- ❑ Layers (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.) are key for this season, so you can adjust to the varied weather.
- ❑ A windbreaker and/or lightweight waterproof jacket and an umbrella.

For summer (June-September)

- ❑ Mostly lightweight summer clothes: T-shirts, polo shirts, walking shorts, light trousers, etc.
- ❑ However, the weather throughout summer is still unpredictable so you'll still want a pair or two of long jeans/trousers and a layering piece like a sweater/fleece/jacket.
- ❑ A swimsuit if you plan to swim (some hotels have pools).
- ❑ Sunhat or visor and sunglasses.
- ❑ Late September may be closer to fall than summer.

For fall (October-November)

- ❑ As the season progresses, you'll want to lean more towards long sleeves and long trousers.
- ❑ Snow can occur as early as late October, so factor that into your footwear choice.
- ❑ Like spring, layers (sweater, fleece, jacket, etc.) are key for this season, so you can adjust to the varied weather. As the season progresses, the more warm layers become useful.

Consider …

- ❑ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc.
- ❑ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ❑ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ❑ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ❑ Insect repellent with DEET
- ❑ Travel money bag or money belt
- ❑ Moisturizer, lip balm
- ❑ Pocket-size tissues
- ❑ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion
- ❑ Flashlight, extra batteries/bulb
- ❑ Compact umbrella
- ❑ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards (and the originals)
- ❑ Extra passport-sized photos

Medicines

Many medications are not as readily available on this itinerary as they are in the U.S. There is no local equivalent of CVS or Walgreens for daily medications and you may require a doctor's prescription for the same medications that are sold over-the-counter in the U.S. Therefore, you may wish to stock up before you leave home.

- ❑ Your own prescription medicines
- ❑ Vitamins
- ❑ Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- ❑ Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- ❑ Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- ❑ Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- ❑ Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- ❑ Band-Aids
- ❑ Moleskin foot pads
- ❑ Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

Other Gear

- ❑ Compact binoculars
- ❑ Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- ❑ Wash cloth
- ❑ Handkerchiefs
- ❑ Basic sewing kit
- ❑ Hand-wash laundry soap, clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- ❑ Electrical transformer & plug adapters—see the "Regional Electricity" section
- ❑ Reading materials
- ❑ Travel journal/note pad
- ❑ Home address book
- ❑ Photos, small gift for Home-Hosted visit
- ❑ Phrase book
- ❑ Water bottle for land excursions
- ❑ Collapsible walking staff
- ❑ Pocket calculator for exchange rates
- ❑ Packets of decaffeinated coffee/sweetener

7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION

We can't predict the weather you'll have on your travels – our local weathermen are lucky to get tomorrow right! So, as your departure nears, it's a great idea to visit the *My Account* feature of **www.gct.com** for a current 10-day forecast of temperatures and conditions at your destinations. Or check Internet weather sites (www.wunderground.com is very comprehensive) for those forecasts and tweak your wardrobe accordingly. You'll find historical averages and general information on local climates below – but, given recent weather extremes, it's even more important to consult up-to-the-minute resources.

Climate By Location

- **Germany:** Germany has a central European climate: weather is variable, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round, and it can be breezy. Afternoons average about 60° F. during early later in the season. Summers are typically sunny and warm, though you should be prepared for a few cloudy and wet days. Evenings, too, can get quite chilly. Autumn weather comes early to this region of the world, so by November it can be on the brisk side, with daytime temperatures in the mid to high 40s, and evenings that dip into the 30s.

- **Czech Republic:** In spring, variable weather reigns: some years it's warm, in others it's cool. Summer days can still be brisk, though there are spells of very warm weather. Temperatures start to fall in early autumn, and winter weather begins settling in by early November.

- **Poland:** Poland has a long border with the Czech and Slovak Republics in the south and a coastline on the Baltic Sea in the north. Most of Poland has a very similar climate and the same sequence of weather throughout the year. Winter cold increases towards the east and in the southern mountains, while the coastlands of the Baltic Sea have slightly milder winters and cooler summers. Precipitation is well distributed around the year with a summer maximum of rain, often heavy and accompanied by thunder. Much of the winter precipitation is snow. Summer temperatures do not differ very much over the country. It rarely gets excessively hot but fine, sunny spells of weather and occasional droughts occur. Winters are distinctly cold and the length of really cold spells varies considerably from year to year.

Weather Conditions and River Depths

Throughout the river cruise season, weather conditions affect river depths, and water levels may require adjustments to your itinerary. When river depths rise or fall during your River Cruise, Grand Circle Cruise Line will be required to adjust your itinerary for your safety and to adhere to the current governmental and nautical requirements. Though we strive to adhere to our planned itinerary, we may not always be able to follow it exactly as planned. The sequence of ports visited and the days on which included features and optional tours occur may vary.

Here are the data from the weather observation stations at or closest to our destinations:

WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE? *Average* highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV
Berlin (main trip & optional extension)									
High	47	54	65	70	73	73	66	56	45
Low	33	37	45	53	56	55	50	42	35
Dresden, Germany									
High	45	54	64	70	73	72	66	56	43
Low	32	39	47	53	57	56	50	44	36
Prague, Czech Republic									
High	46	54	64	69	72	73	65	54	41
Low	32	36	45	51	54	53	48	39	32
Hamburg, Germany—Optional Extension									
High	45	52	62	67	70	71	64	55	45
Low	34	37	45	51	55	54	49	43	37
Krakow, Poland—Optional Extension									
High	45	54	64	69	71	71	64	55	42
Low	31	38	46	52	55	54	48	40	32
Warsaw, Poland—Optional Extension									
High	44	54	65	70	73	73	64	54	42
Low	31	37	47	52	55	54	47	40	33
Munich, Germany—Optional Extension									
High	48	53	63	68	72	73	66	55	44
Low	32	36	44	50	54	54	48	40	32

Please note: The data cited here reflect *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions, and serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. A 60 degree ***average*** high temperature means that days may be as warm as 80 or as cool as 40 – but it's most likely you'll encounter temperatures in the 50 to 70 degree range.

8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY

In General

Smartphone, tablet, digital camera/camcorder, MP3 player: travel today can involve technology that didn't exist even five years ago. The usefulness of digital devices is enormous: smartphones can keep you connected and offer up-to-the-minute information via your cell plan or a local Wi-Fi connection. With a tablet (or smartphone) you can store multiple country guidebooks, access maps and connect to the internet in a small, lightweight device. (***Tip****: you can download* ***this*** *document from the Grand Circle Travel website and import it into your tablet or e-reader, many of which can display PDF files.)*

Compact and lightweight, digital camcorders and cameras take high definition movies and still images of the people you meet and places you visit. For robust use a laptop may be effective; for occasional use it's wiser to rely on Internet cafes or a tablet and hotel Internet access rather than shoulder the heft and size of a laptop.

To use these devices you should first consider the services available at your destinations. You'll encounter a range of electrical standards, varied plug configurations to access the local current, erratic availability (electricity and internet access), and differing technological standards.

You'll need to assess your power and data storage needs, and the accessories required to recharge/connect/use these devices. Finally, it's smart to read the owner's manual *before* you depart. Pay particular attention to electrical, power and storage requirements to ensure that you understand exactly what you need. Thorough preparation is the best guarantee that your devices will work up to their potential.

Regional Electricity

The standard U.S. electrical system—110V 60Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged plugs—is rare elsewhere. The overwhelming choice for the rest of the world is 220-240V and 50/60Hz current with a variety of plug shapes, sizes, and configurations. Some plugs will work with multiple receptacles, while others won't. Europe is largely standardized to the Type C "Europlug."

Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. We suggest that you bring *dual* voltage appliances that work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. Dual voltage appliances are widely available, inexpensive, and only need plug adapters.

If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) in addition to plug adapters. Regional transformer/adapter kits can often be found at hardware or online stores but transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave those larger items at home.

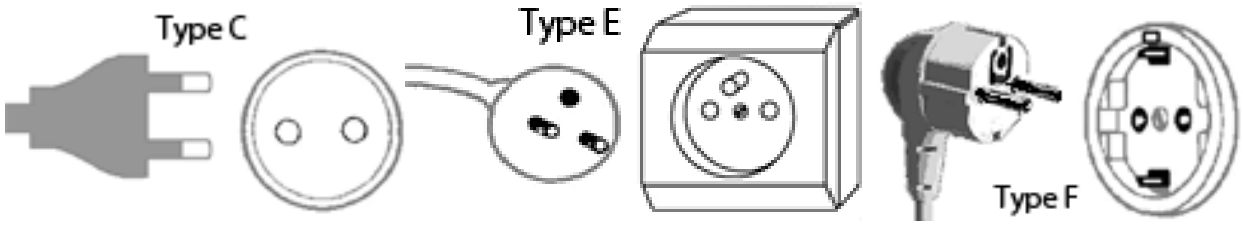
Electricity Onboard

Your cabin's bathroom is equipped with an 110V outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with European-style outlets (Type C).

A limited number of transformers and adapter plugs are available at the ship's reception desk for occasional use. If you need these items for the duration of the cruise, we recommend you bring your own.

Electricity on Land

Poland uses the Type C "Europlug" and the Type E plug. The Czech Republic uses the Type E plug. Germany uses the Type C "Europlug" and Type F receptacles that accommodate it. All countries on this itinerary use 230 V and 50 Hz current.



Because you'll find various plug typed in the countries on this itinerary, it may be a good idea to invest in an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, this item will ensure that you are prepared for your current trip as well as future vacations. If you use multiple digital devices—cell phone, digital camera, and MP3 player for instance – it's also handy to have a travel power strip, perhaps with a surge suppressor and USB-style port for charging cell phones, MP3 players or e-readers without the use of device-specific plugs.

Phones & Calling

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your final documents package. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

How to Dial

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country's code, then and the number. The country code is indicated by a plus sign (+). On this trips they are: +49 for Germany, +420 for the Czech Republic, and +48 for Poland. When calling from the U.S., you may need to drop the first digit of the area code.

When calling the U.S. from abroad, generally you dial 00 for international exchange, then the US country code +1, and then the number with area code.

Bringing Your Own Phone

If you want to bring your own cell phone on the trip, be sure to check with your phone company to see if your phone will work overseas. You should also ask about fees—which can add up quickly and can apply even if you don't make any calls (roaming fees). The simplest solution is to shut down all cell phone functions, automatic data feeds and roaming options, and take advantage of the apps via available Wi-Fi. With an Internet VOIP app (like Skype) you can make inexpensive calls. If necessary, turn international roaming back on and your phone will work as usual—albeit at some cost. If your phone doesn't support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

Leaving the Phone at Home

If you don't want to bring your phone, but you do want to stay in touch, there are other options. For example, you can purchase a local pre-paid phone card after you arrive and use that to call home from the hotel or a public phone. (Local cards are usually better than U.S. ones because 1-800 numbers are usually only free inside the U.S.) E-mail is another good option, and many hotels will have a computer for guests to use. Plus there's always the phone in your hotel room. You can even rent an international phone—you can arrange this online before you depart.

9. GRAND CIRCLE'S EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISES

M/S *River Allegro*

Formerly the M/S *Dresden*, originally built in 1991 for Peter Deilmann Cruises, the M/S *Allegro* was the newest vessel in the Grand Circle Cruise Line European fleet when she set sail on the Elbe in April of 2011. Grand Circle Cruise Line invested $3 million in major renovations with an emphasis on comfort. Among other improvements, she will have fewer berths (from 108 down to 90), expanded bar and lounge areas, a redecorated dining room and will ultimately achieve the high standards of Grand Circle's award winning fleet of European river ships.

By owning our ships, we can assure that you'll be sharing this unique travel experience with only like-minded Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers. You'll find your ship to be an intimate haven that's especially conducive to camaraderie. You'll all be together for the joint celebrations, such as the Welcome cocktail party, where you'll experience the ambiance of a larger group. When we venture ashore, we'll break into smaller groups of no more than 45 with individual Program Directors to allow for more intimate and personal discoveries.

Included features of Grand Circle's M/S *Allegro*:

- Cabin size is approximately 120 square feet.
- Each cabin has twin beds that convert to sofas. During the day, you can sit and relax on the sofa. When you arrive back at your cabin in the evening, you'll find that the couches have been converted to comfortable beds with approximately two feet of space between them.
- Cabins feature a large picture window and river views.
- All cabins have a wardrobe, a drawer, and luggage storage space under the beds.
- Each cabin has a private bath with shower, hair dryer, shampoo and soap.
- Individual heating and air-conditioning controls.
- Flat screen color TV, including CNN, movies, music selections, and a "view from the bow" camera that looks out from the front of your ship.
- Direct-dial telephone with emergency call buttons.
- An in-room safe.
- All cabins are non-smoking.

A Word about the Cabins

Cabins aboard the M/S *Allegro*, though smaller than the cabins onboard the rest of the vessels in our fleet, will be quite comfortable. At 120 square feet, each cabin will feature a large picture windows and twin beds that convert into daytime couches. Please keep in mind that these ships are river vessels, not large ocean cruise ships. Riverboat cabins, in comparison, are relatively small, and ship amenities, in general, are comfortable but not lavish.

Shore Excursions

Included on your Cruise Tour are many sightseeing tours. Other optional tours are available for purchase. Your Program Director will provide information on these optional excursions on your arrival. Please note that most optional tours can only be purchased with a credit card.

Onboard Activities

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, theme dinners, group activities that relate to the region (may include a language lesson), and talks on upcoming ports of call.

Dining

You'll enjoy fine cuisine and excellent views in your ship's dining room, featuring a warm décor, floor to ceiling windows, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes a breakfast buffet, lunch, and a casual dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Included with dinner are two glasses of complimentary house wine per guest, per meal. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase. Passengers may also bring a bottle of their own favorite wine to dinner to enjoy at their table. Should you care to avail yourself of this service, there will be a corkage fee of approximately €10 (Euro) per bottle, charged to your passenger account.

Please note that if you bring your own alcohol aboard, it can only be consumed in the dining room as described above, or in your cabin. Consumption of alcohol purchased outside the ship is not permitted in the lounge or public areas. We also offer complimentary coffee and tea throughout the day, available at meals and from the machine in the reception area.

Open-table, single seating for all meals: Each meal is open seating—reservations of any kind are not accepted. Dinner has only one designated time for its open seating, announced each day aboard ship.

Dining times: Dining times for all meals may vary depending on the day's sightseeing and sailing schedule, but in general, meal times are as follows:

Early riser breakfast: 6:00-7:00 am
Breakfast: 7:00-9:00 am
Lunch: 12:30-1:30 pm
Dinner: 7:00-9:00 pm

Special diets & celebrations: Special diets, such as low-cholesterol or vegetarian, can be accommodated, as well as the recognition of an anniversary or birthday. Please call Grand Circle Cruise Line to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure. Religious dietary regimens, such as kosher or halal meals, cannot be prepared aboard ship.

Dress code: The dining-room dress code is casual, though most travelers dress nicely for the Captain's Welcome Reception and Farewell Dinner.

Non-smoking policy: The entire dining room is non-smoking at all times.

Embarkation/Disembarkation

On the day you board ship, your cabin will be available upon embarkation. The first meal available on board will be dinner. On the day of disembarkation, your cabin will no longer be available after breakfast. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the Sun Deck until disembarkation.

Dock and Landing Etiquette

River waterways are simply not big enough to support large landing docks such as those built on ocean shorelines. It is common for river ships to tie up alongside each other at some piers—particularly in ports where docking area is restricted. While we try to arrange the most convenient mooring available in each port of call, outboard boats may occasionally obstruct views, and you may have to step across other ships when you want to go ashore.

Onboard Facilities

Electricity

Your cabin's bathroom is equipped with an 110V outlet for low-power appliances like electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with European-style outlets.

A limited number of transformers and adapter plugs are available at the ship's reception desk for occasional use. If you need these items for the duration of the cruise, we recommend you bring your own. See the "Travel and Technology" chapter for more information.

Elevator/Chairlift

The M/S *Allegro* **does not** have elevators or chairlifts.

Laundry and Linen Services

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available. Bed linens are changed once a week; towels are changed daily.

Wi-Fi Access

Limited Wi-Fi service is available for free in the lounge, library, reception and bar areas on board the *Allegro*. Wi-Fi service is not available in individual cabins, restaurants or other common areas. If you want to use the Wi-Fi connection you'll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do **not** rent or loan these devices. To use the Wi-Fi service, please visit Reception after you board for access information. Shipboard access is subject to the challenges of travel: ship location, signal availability, and usage volume on board will affect connectivity and speed. The ship's Internet connection demands a strong 3G-cell phone signal, which is unavailable in many of the areas we visit. You can expect disruptions of both long and short duration.

Medical Care

Our entire fleet adheres to stringent European safety standards. In addition to an emergency call button in all cabins, ships also feature fully staffed reception desks, 24 hours a day.

Recreational Facilities

These include a sun deck with lounge, and lounge with bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9:30 am to 1 am, with soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquors for sale. Prices are in Euros.

Drinking Water

Tap water aboard ship is safe for drinking. Bottled water is also available. There is an ice machine onboard.

Shipboard Security

All Grand Circle Cruise Line vessels feature state-of-the-art shipboard radar to ensure safe navigation at night and during limited visibility situations. Safe docking spaces, onboard security staff; state-of-the-art fire safety systems, and secured entryway doors onboard all contribute to a safe and comfortable experience.

Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

Smoking is not allowed anywhere inside the M/S *Allegro*, including in individual cabins. The only area on the ship where smoking is permitted is outside on the sun deck.

Ship Specifications

	Entered service	*Length*	*Width*	*Passenger capacity*	*Crew members*	*Decks*	*Cabins*	*Elevator*	*Chairlift*
M/S *River Allegro*	2011	320	36	90	29	3	48	no	no

Your GCCL Program Directors

During your exclusive Grand Circle Cruise Line Cruise Tour, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from up to four on-site Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Directors. Your Program Directors are fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. They are supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities.

Many Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Directors are graduates of professional education programs for travel guides. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable.

Your Program Directors will provide sightseeing trips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need. You will be in the company of a Program Director throughout your cruise (and during the optional land extensions if you choose to take them).

10. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your Cruise Tour. If you expect to explore in depth on your own, we recommend that you consult one of the many available book-length guides to your destinations. If you have one or two specific sites, museums or features that you're interested in, an Internet search is the ideal way to get-up-to-date information and details. And of course your Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Director or Hospitality Desk Representative will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.

Drinking Water

Tap water in the countries you visit is perfectly safe for drinking, although the water in Poland and the Czech Republic may not always be tasty. Bottled water is usually for sale in hotels, food shops, and restaurants.

Internet Access and Email

While sailing Internet access may be unavailable, depending on locks, bridges, and regional remoteness. Internet access will be most consistently available when the ship is docked in larger cities.

Krakow & Warsaw in Brief

City Layout: Krakow

Krakow, for centuries the capital of royal Poland, is today recognized as a valid competitor to the historic charms you'll discover in Vienna, Budapest and Prague. Having escaped serious damage in World War II, and come through the Communist years with minimal impact. The beautifully restored Old Town, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, retains its original Medieval form, and serves as a lovely setting for Wawel Castle. Surrounded by charming streets, a plethora of Catholic churches, and classic examples of historic architecture the formal Rynek Glowny is the huge central square. The Old Town bustles constantly, vibrant with visitors and locals admiring the square, picking up flowers at one of the many florists, stopping for a snack at the bagel cart or perhaps sitting in one of the restaurants.

City Layout: Warsaw

Bisected by the Vistula River Warsaw – the modern capital of Poland – is a very different animal from Krakow. World War II dealt Warsaw a particularly devastating hand – only 15% of the city emerged still standing after being razed by the German occupiers and nearly 60% of the population was either dead of missing. The Postwar years saw Soviet-style city planners, with a blank slate, design and build to their Socialist-Realist palette

Cuisine

As with many European counties, Polish cuisine feels the influence of many cultures: Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Hungarian, German, etc., as well as a pinch of Russian, Italian, and Turkish. The focus is on meat, especially chicken and pork, and winter vegetables (cabbage in the dish *bigos*), and spices, as well as different kinds of noodles – particularly the *pierogi*. Traditionally, Poles take their festive meals seriously, and feast days — like Christmas Eve or Easter Breakfast — can involve days of preparation.

Normally the main meal is eaten in mid-afternoon or later, and involves three courses, starting with a soup, such as bouillon or tomato or more festive *barszcz* (beet) followed sometimes by an appetizer. The main course is usually meaty — a roast or breaded pork cutlet. Vegetables, though now replaced by leaf salad, were traditionally served as *'surówka'* - shredded root vegetables with lemon and sugar (carrot, celeriac, beetroot) or fermented cabbage. Popular side dishes are now boiled potatoes, and, less commonly the traditional **kasha** (cereals). Meals often conclude with a dessert such as *makowiec*, a poppy seed pastry, or *drożdżówka*, a type of yeast cake.

Local Transportation

The public transportation systems in both Krakow and Warsaw offer similar convenience and value, despite the differences in the cities. Trams are most convenient for distance travel, and they run from early morning to around 11:00 pm, though it's best to avoid the trams at rush hour. Buses and taxis are economical, efficient, and simple to use and though more expensive than the trams, are relatively economical. Krakow's center is mostly closed to traffic, and is quite compact: with many attractions centrally located, walking in Krakow is both easy and a pleasure. Warsaw, on the other hand, is quite large, so you can expect to become more familiar with the transportation system. It's complex, and you should probably seek destination specifics before you set out.

Hamburg in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout

Sitting beside the Elbe at its junction with the Alster River, Hamburg is Germany's second largest city and the world's fifth largest harbor. The Alster forms two lakes in the heart of the city, and the city center is largely situated there. Traveling further out (if you're here for a while, you'll want to see city features that are further afield) is easy via the metro system (U-Bahn and S-Bahn).

Hamburg won't ever be confused with a small town. However, the commercial and shopping district, centered on the Binnenalster (the Inner Alster, separated from the Outer Alster by the Lombard and John F. Kennedy bridges) and the Rathaus (city hall), includes a high density of historic buildings, restaurants and shops, and makes the city center a perfect start for an extended stay or an concise one-day tour of the best of the old city's highlights. Mönkberstrasse and Spitalerstrasse (pedestrian access only), south of the Binnenalster, are two fashionable streets; and the Jungfernstieg, at the foot of the Binnenalster, is the center of Hamburg's shopping district. Throughout the area you'll find stores, restaurants, and cafes. Much of Hamburg's center was destroyed during WW II, but many historic structures have been rebuilt.

In addition to the Rathaus you'll find St. Petri church, the restored St. Jacobi church, St. Michaelis church, the Kunsthalle art gallery, and the Hamburgische Staatsoper – Hamburg's modern opera house.

Venturing further afield, you'll find the harbor area – which stretches 25 miles along the Elbe, and has been a central port for the European continent since 1198. A harbor tour offers up an interesting view of the city and the part the river has played in making it what it is today. The St. Pauli district is famed for its nightlife and racy entertainment. Split by the Reeperbahn, the district, while toned down from its peak, is still in the business of nighttime diversions, including cafes, sex shows and music halls (this is, after all, where the Beatles honed their hard-edged early version of rock and roll.) Once a stand-alone city, the Altona district has been absorbed by Hamburg and is, on Sundays at dawn, home to Hamburg's famous Fischmarkt.

Cuisine

German cuisine brings to mind the aroma of sausages (it is thought there are more than 1500 kinds of German sausage), dumplings in a hearty stew, herbed meatloaf, and delectable roasts of pork. These hearty dishes are still found throughout Germany, but restaurants are also offering lighter fare along with regional meals. Along with the international selections a seaport like Hamburg is bound to offer, you'll find some distinctly regional taste treats.

Original dishes include green beans cooked with pears and bacon (*Birnen, Bohnen und Speck*), *Aalsuppe* (a soup containing whatever the cook wants to include), and a range of pan-fried delicacies including potato slices (*Bratkartoffeln*) and plaice (*Finkenwerder Scholle*). The typical American hamburger is said to have evolved from the local *Frikadelle* – a pan-fried patty of ground beef, egg, onion, and usually served with potatoes and vegetables – like a typical plated dinner. The addition of a bun – making it both highly portable and a one-handed meal – seems to be the American improvement. Due possibly to its northern exposure, Hamburg's cuisine shares some features you'll find in Copenhagen – particularly a liking for open-faced sandwiches of all types, often topped with cold-smoked or pickled fish. A summer pudding made of berries and served with cream (*Rote Grütze*) has a Danish counterpart. If you're thirsty after all that, try the local variant of the British shandy called *Alsterwasser* (after the river and lakes) that is 50/50 blend of beer and carbonated lemonade: it's refreshing without a high alcohol content.

Drinking Water

When ashore, tap water in Germany is perfectly safe to drink.

Local Transportation

An efficient network of buses and two railways serves Hamburg: the U-Bahn (inter-city underground line) and the S-Bahn (suburban above-ground line). The S-Bahn serves Hamburg's suburbs and outlying areas; the 60 miles of U-Bahn rail (some above and some below ground) serve the city proper. In addition you'll find about 600 bus routes, and ferries that cross the river Elbe. All public transport is under the control of the Hamburg Transit Authority (HVV), and tickets are valid on all types of transit. A one-day pass – *Tageskarte* – is an economical way of getting around the city on any given day, since it allows you to mix modes to meet your travel needs. The city center is the Nahbereich zone, stretching between St Pauli and the Hauptbahnhof. The Grossbereich (Greater Hamburg area) zone covers both the city center and communities like Blankenese, and offers the most flexible option for getting around. Taxis are an option as well.

Munich in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout

Munich is a wonderful city for walking, and the best way to tour the *Marienplatz,* Munich's vibrant heart in the historic *Altstadt* (Old Town), is on foot. You can stroll its grand squares and see the Old City Hall and the New City Hall, whose façade boasts the famed *Rathaus-Glockenspiel*, a clock bedecked with life-sized mechanical figures that move through their performance several times a day to the ringing of bells. Not far from the Old City Hall is the open-air food market, *Viktualienmarkt*, with its jumble of stalls offering fruits, vegetables, and some trinkets. The city center also includes the *Frauenkirche* (the Cathedral of Our Lady), topped with its onion domes of brass that have become the symbol of the city. If you head west along the pedestrian-only Neuhauserstrasse and Kaufingerstrasse, you'll reach another lively square, *Karlsplatz* (referred to as *Stachus* after a 19th-century beer garden), where tram lines head out to other sections of the city.

North of *Marienplatz* is *Max-Joseph-Platz*, home to the Residenz (the former royal palace) and the National Theater. If you are interested in browsing boutiques and upscale shops, you should continue your walking tour eastward from *Max-Joseph-Platz* along *Maximilianstrasse*. Fashionable shops can also be found on *Kaufingerstrasse* and *Neuhauserstrasse*, east-west avenues in the Old Town's large pedestrian zone. During your travels, you might want to ask for directions to the Platzl quarter's *Hofbräuhaus*, possibly Europe's best-known beer garden.

A little outside of the Old Town, to the north, is *Schwabing*, which used to be the city's haven for artists, poets, and authors (Thomas Mann and Herman Hesse among them). In the latter part of the 20th century, this part of Munich became too expensive for struggling artists, but *Schwabing* still retains some of its former cultural appeal.

Cuisine

In Munich you will find a range of international foods, along with the city's renowned wine cellars and beer gardens where you can find traditional Bavarian dishes. One of the city's prized menu items is the *Weisswurst*, a white sausage stuffed with veal, pork, parsley, and other flavorings. The *Weisswurst* is usually served before noon, and to enjoy its delectable filling, you first peal the sausage skin before eating its flavorful meat, possibly complemented by a sweet mustard. You can also feast on *Bratwurst mit Sauerkraut* (pork sausages with sauerkraut); chilled meat molds created with beef, pork, and liver; thick slices of a spicy meatloaf called *Leberkäse*; and roasted chicken, ham hocks, or knuckle of pork. You might want to try a taste of Munich's *Sauerbraten* (a marinated beef pot roast) or the popular *Müchener Schweinshaxe* (a pork shank roasted until its skin is crisped). Many restaurants also serve seasonal game, such as boar, venison, rabbit, or duck. Seafood includes herring, tuna, mackerel, and salmon – though these are not typically Bavarian. If you favor freshwater fish, you might try the regional trout, carp, pike, or *Rencke* (similar to perch). Accompaniments may include potato soup, more Sauerkraut, large pretzels (possibly coated with cheese), fresh horseradish, and boiled cabbage with bacon.

Rounding out the meal is a choice of sweets, some restaurants offering sweet pastries, apple strudel, or *Dampfnudln* (a type of dumpling served in a vanilla sauce and usually sprinkled with cinnamon). And of course, no trip to this region would be complete without sampling their renowned beers. There are a huge number of breweries (and associated beer halls), large and small, creating a tantalizing range of wheat beers (*Weissbier)* and lagers.

Drinking Water

When ashore, tap water in Germany is perfectly safe to drink.

Local Transportation

Munich is served by an efficient network of buses, trams, and two railways: the U-Bahn (inter-city underground line) and the S-Bahn (suburban above-ground line). The S-Bahn crosses Munich on an east-west axis and goes out to the surrounding countryside in all directions. All forms of public transport operate from about 5 am to 1 am daily. Tickets are interchangeable between U-Bahn, S-Bahn, buses, and trams. Free maps and information are available at the tourist offices.

11. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY

The Elbe River

At 680 miles long, the River Elbe is one of the major rivers of Central Europe. Starting in the Krkonoše Mountains of the northwestern Czech Republic it runs through much of Bohemia (Czech Republic), then Germany and finally flows into the North Sea at Cuxhaven, Hamburg. The Elbe's major tributaries include the Vltava, Mulde, and Ohre rivers, among others. The Elbe River basin, made up of over 57,000 square miles, is the Europe's fourth largest, and touches on four countries. The largest parts of the basin are in Germany and the Czech Republic, with significantly smaller parts in Austria and Poland. The basin is inhabited by 24.5 million people.

The Elbe rises in northwest borders of the Czech Republic in the Krkonose Mountains. At Mělník the river – already melding with several others – more than doubles in volume when the Vltava (or Moldau) joins it after itself winding northwards through Bohemia. The Elbe is joined by the Ohře (Eger) at Litoměřice. As it crosses the Czech-German frontier, it begins to run in a northwesterly direction and flows past Dresden and across the North German Plain to Hamburg. In Hamburg the Elbe has been engineered via dikes and canal connections to improve commerce and prevent flooding. Leaving Hamburg and now called the Lower Elbe, the river passes the entrance to the Kiel Canal and flows into the North Sea at Cuxhaven. The Elbe has been open to commercial vessels since 1842, and creates links as far inland as Prague. Numerous canals link it to industrial Germany and to Berlin, as well as to the Baltic Sea.

The Romans called the Elbe the *Albis*; but never managed to move the eastern edge of their empire past the Rhine. During the Middle Ages the Elbe was the eastern limit of the Empire of Charlemagne, and afterwards the river's navigable sections were essential to the commercial success of the Hanseatic League. In 1945, as was drawing to a close, Nazi Germany was caught between the armies of the western Allies advancing from the west and the Soviet Union advancing from the east. On 25 April 1945, these two forces linked up near Torgau, on the Elbe. The event was marked as Elbe Day. After World War II, the Elbe formed part of the border between East Germany and West Germany.

Germany—Base and Optional Extension

Area: 137,846 square miles
Capital: Berlin
Languages: German is the official language; Turkish is also spoken in Berlin.
Ethnicities: German 91.5%, Turkish 2.4%, other 6.1% (made up largely of Greek, Italian, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish)
Location: Germany is bordered by Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea.
Geography: Located in central Europe, Germany is bordered on the west by the Benelux countries and France, and on the east by Poland and the Czech Republic. Switzerland and Austria are to the south. Germany's northern coastline is met by the North Sea and the Baltic.
Population: 81,147,265
Religions: Protestant 38%, Roman Catholic 34%, unaffiliated or other 26.3%

Time Zone: Germany is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Berlin.

Holidays (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events)**:**

01/01	New Year's Day
04/18	Good Friday
04/21	Easter Monday
05/01	Labor Day
05/29	Ascension Day
06/09	Whit Monday
10/03	Day of German Unity
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	Second day of Christmas

Czech Republic

Area: 30,451 square miles
Capital: Prague
Language: Czech is the official language.
Location: Landlocked in Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic comprises the ancient provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, with a mountainous rim on the German border to the west. Other countries that share borders with the Czech Republic are Austria and Slovakia to the south and Poland to the northeast.
Population (2013 estimate): 10,609,762
Religion: Roman Catholic 10.4%, Protestant 1.1%, other and unspecified 54%, none 34.5% (2011 estimate)
Time zone: The Czech Republic is six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in New York, it is 6 pm in Prague.

Holidays (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events)**:**

01/01	New Year's Day
04/21	Easter Monday
05/01	Labor Day / May Day
05/08	Victory in Europe Day
07/05	Saints Cyril and Methodius
07/06	Jan Hus Day
09/28	St. Wenceslas Day
10/28	Independent Czechoslovak State Day
11/17	Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day
12/24	Christmas Eve
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	St. Stephen's Day

Poland—Optional Extension

Area: 120,728 square miles
Capital: Warsaw
Government: Republic
Language: Polish is the official language. It is a Slavonic language. Unlike Russian, it uses the familiar Roman alphabet, but with many additional accents. German, Russian, English, and French are spoken by most members of the travel industry and in hotels.
Location: Situated in the heart of Europe, Poland's low-lying plains extend from the Baltic shore in the north to the Tatra Mountains on its southern border with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. To the east of the Polish border are Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine; to the west is Germany.
Population (2013 estimate): 38,383,809
Religion: Roman Catholic 90%, Eastern Orthodox 1.3%, Protestant 0.3%, other 8.4%
Time zone: The time in Poland is six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in New York, it is 6 pm in Warsaw and Krakow.

Holidays (nationally recognized; does not include religious, local or culturally based events)**:**

01/01	New Year's Day
04/20	Easter
04/21	Easter Monday
05/01	Labor Day
05/03	Constitution Day
06/08	Whit Sunday
06/19	Corpus Christi
08/15	Assumption of Mary
11/01	All Saints
11/11	Independence Day
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	St. Stephen's Day

12. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books, Maps, and Movies

If your local store or library doesn't stock the books or movies below, the Internet offers a wide variety of options for finding older or rare stock – try AbeBooks (abebooks.com), Alibris (albris.com), Amazon (amazon.com) or Barnes & Noble (bn.com) — or any of the smaller websites. Of course, this selection is not meant to be comprehensive, and is offered as a starting point for your research.

Germany and the Germans *by John Ardagh.* A contemporary study of the Germans, written by a noted British author and historian.

Twilight of the Habsburgs: The Life and Times of Emperor Francis Joseph *by Alan Warwick Palmer.* A fascinating history of the final decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends by Lonnie R. Johnson (History)
A panoramic history of Central Europe that provides a comparative analysis of the key events that have shaped Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, and Croatia. The author abandons the Cold War convention of defining Central Europe in the bipolar terms of East and West, and emphasizes the underlying continuities in the region's history.

Woman from Hamburg And Other True Stories by Hana Krall
A journalist from Warsaw born in 1937, Krall reveals the lives and strange trajectories of her compatriots in these stories, profiles and interviews of survivors of WWII.

Hastening Toward Prague by Lisa Wolverton (History)
Published in September 2001, this book examines the power and society in the medieval Czech Lands, where kings and rulers set the stage for conflicts that would still raise issues centuries later.

The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey by Gordon Brook-Shepard (History)
The author, a noted historian, draws upon his long-standing associations with Austrian leaders and his special access to the private Habsburg family archives to trace the identity of Austria as it developed over a millennium.

A Nervous Splendor-Vienna 1888/9 by Frederic Morton (History)
Morton's popular history brings to life Freud, Mahler, Archduke Rudolph and other famous Viennese.

The Power of the Powerless by Vaclav Havel (Political Science)
In his 1978 essay, Vaclav Havel (elected the first president of the Czech Republic in 1993) analyzes totalitarian oppression and the mechanisms used by the powerful to subdue the spirit and morality of the powerless citizenry. He speaks in searing terms of the meaning of citizenship, resistance, and the power of the moral and truthful individual.

Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s by Otto Friedrich
A noted historian describes this interesting and intriguing chapter in Berlin's history, a time when such well-known people as Marlene Dietrich, Albert Einstein, Greta Garbo, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Gropius, Kandinsky, and Klee all made their homes here.

Another Beauty by Adam Zagajewski (Memoir)
A quirky, lyrical memoir of coming of age in Poland in the 1960s and 1970s by the influential poet of the Polish New Wave. Zagajewski looks back on his life and particularly time in Krakow as a philosophy student, dissident and young writer. Susan Sontag, who provides the introduction, calls *Another Beauty* a wise and iridescent book, which dips in and out of many genres. It's many things: a coming-of-age-memoir, commonplace book, collection of vignettes and portraits, and a defense of poetry.

Guidebooks:

Your Program Director will be happy to provide recommendations and suggestions during the trip, so a guidebook is not a necessity. But a good one can be invaluable as a one-stop reference, so for those travelers who have asked for suggestions, we offer these guidelines. Since different guidebook series each have their own target audience and structure, it is well worth your time to browse your local library or bookstore to find the one(s) you like best. To get you started, here is some general information on the most popular series:

Culture Smart! – Focuses on local customs and etiquette instead of sights, dining, etc.
DK Eyewitness – Innovative visuals make these books easy to use and a nice souvenir once the trip is over. The focus is primarily on the sights and activities.
Fodor's – A classic guidebook with strong information on activities, shopping, and dining. Good mix of upscale recommendations and budget suggestions.
Frommer's – A comprehensive guide series that is known for its restaurant recommendations.
Insight – Offers more information on history and culture than usual, nice visuals, good maps.
Lonely Planet – Practical guides geared towards a more adventurous traveler on a budget.
National Geographic – From the same company that publishes the magazine. Excellent photographs, good information on history, nature, and culture.
Rough Guides –For the independent traveler on a budget. Particularly known for their maps.

Maps:

Most hotels will provide maps free of charge at the reception desk or in your room. These maps are usually sufficient for our travelers, but if you plan on any independent exploration, you may wish to consider purchasing a map before your departure. This can be especially useful in a country that doesn't use the Roman alphabet as the hotel maps may only be printed in the local language.

Some recommended map series include: Rand McNally international maps (especially the StreetWise series), Insight's FlexiMaps, and Rough Guide's destination maps. We suggest that you visit your local bookstore or library to get a better sense of which type of map is best for your needs before making a purchase.

Suggested Movies

Here are few of our favorite movies that are about, or set in, or from the region you'll be traveling. Most are available at movie rental stores and websites—or even your public library. Sometimes films produced outside of the US may be hard to find, but they are usually available online. Lists are highly subjective –if your favorites are missing, start a chat with fellow travelers and you'll likely find even more treasured movies to share.

Germany

Goodbye Lenin!

In this 2003 comedy drama from director Wolfgang Becker, a young German boy named Alex pulls off an elaborate scheme to prevent his fragile mother from experiencing fatal shock after waking from a long coma. Alex strives to keep the fall of the German Democratic Republic a secret from his socialist mother for as long as possible. This sophisticated satire offers a glimpse into a turbulent time of European history while revealing the great lengths one will go to when it comes to matters of the family.

Das Boot

One of the most authentic war films ever made *Das Boot* is a raw and compelling portrayal of a German Atlantic U-boat crew and captain as they struggle to survive during World War II. This 1981 gem from director Wolfgang Petersen revolves around the U-boat crew as battles break out, the submarine's claustrophobic interior comes to life, and the soldiers' ideals and professionalism are put to the test.

The Lives of Others

A 2006 drama that marked the feature film debut of German filmmaker Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. Set in East Berlin in 1984, an agent of the secret police conducts surveillance on a writer and his lover. As the story unfolds, he finds himself becoming increasingly absorbed by their lives. As intoxicating as it is chilling this film quietly depicts the secret world of German espionage.

Czech Republic

Divided We Fall

In this 2000 comedy drama from director Jan Hrebejk, a couple from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia agrees to hide a Jewish teenager in their home. During this time, Josef and Marie Cizek's marriage begins to show signs of strain as a result of the political tension and Marie's inability to become pregnant. The situation worsens when an acquaintance of theirs becomes a Nazi collaborator and asks them to house a Nazi clerk. *Divided We Fall* is a reminder of the kinds of choices made by millions of people during times of devastation.

Closely Watched Trains

Another entry is the 1966 film *Closely Watched Trains*, about a boy working at a train station in German-occupied Czechoslovakia during World War II. Oblivious to the war around him, the young boy embarks on a journey of sexual awakening and self-discovery—revealing just how the film's subtle comedic flair complements its dramatic underpinnings. Perhaps the pinnacle of all Czech New Wave films, the film offers great insights into the country's unique cultural identity.

Poland

Night Train

Night Train is a 1959 film by director Jerzy Kawalerowicz that brings together Jerzy and Marta—two strangers who both seem to be on the run from something. They accidently end up holding tickets for the same sleeping chamber on an overnight train to the Baltic Sea coast. The story takes a turn when the police enter the train in search of a murderer and rumors start brewing. This Polish thriller will leave you at the edge or your seat until the very end!

The Pianist

The 2002 film by director Roman Polanski focuses on the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto during World War II. *The Pianist* is based on the true story of a Polish Jewish pianist who spent five years struggling against the Nazi occupation of Warsaw. As his family is shipped off to the Nazi labor camps, he escapes deportation and lives in the ruins of Warsaw. The award-winning film tells the harrowing story of the brilliant pianist as he struggles to live through the extreme destruction and despair.