The Great Rivers of Europe

RIVER CRUISE

Plus optional extensions in

Vienna; Bruges; Prague

SGE/SGB/SGV/SGX/FGE/SGH 2014

The Great Rivers of Europe
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1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Passport Required

You need a passport for this itinerary.

Note

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.

Please take a moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If it does not, you may be required by that country to return to the U.S. immediately, **which would be at your own expense**.

If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages:
Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778,** or visit their website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

NOTE: When updating your passport, it is worthwhile to check the prices on all the different services that might apply to you. For example, it might be less expensive to renew your passport than to have pages added, depending on the number of pages you need.

For your safety and convenience your passport will be taken and held by the hotel manager after embarkation and returned to you on disembarkation day. This is standard ship's procedure when crossing borders and during potential controls in our ports of call.

Visas Not Required

For U.S. citizens, visas are not required for entry into any of the countries on your itinerary.

No U.S. Passport?

Non-U.S. citizens or non-U.S. passport holders: If you are **not** a U.S. citizen or if you possess a passport from a country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate or embassy about possible visa requirements. You can also contact PVS International directly, as they can also assist non-U.S. citizens:

PVS International
Passport & Visa Services
1700 N Moore Street
Rosslyn Center, suite 310
Arlington, VA 22209
Telephone: 1-800-556-9990
Website: www.pvsinternational.org

Requirements for travel to the Czech Republic

If you are taking the Prague extension, 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.* Enforcement of this requirement is erratic, and *most* travelers are not asked. (It is a regulation that even some Czech officials are unaware of.) If 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 and easiest security precaution you can take is to carry photocopies of the personal information pages of your passport, your air ticket, your traveler's check serial numbers, and your credit cards. Bring along extra passport-sized photos. Bring the phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, and for your travel protection plan company (if you have purchased one) and your medical emergency network. Store the copies in your duffel bag, separate from the originals. This can save you immeasurable time, money, and bother if your documents are lost or stolen during your trip. In addition, you can scan these photocopies and email them to your personal email address so that a replacement can be printed out if needed.

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

- 15 days, with 14 nights aboard a private Grand Circle river ship
- Return flights to U.S. often require departing from ship in early morning hours

Physical Requirements

- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility 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 40-73°F during cruising season
- 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 140- to 164-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, including your Amsterdam canal cruise

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 Check and Inoculations

If you have any doubts about your abilities, please discuss them with your doctor, and follow his or her advice. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling. You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. If you have difficulty walking or are wheelchair-bound, please consider a different vacation.

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. If you take medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip, as obtaining refills of your medication can be difficult during your cruise. 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.

Vaccinations

Check with the CDC: To ensure that you receive any needed vaccinations we suggest that you check the current recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for your destination. You can contact them:

On-line — if you have access to the Internet, we suggest you visit the CDC's website at **www.cdc.gov/travel**, where you will find comprehensive information about preventing illness while traveling.

By phone—at the CDC's Hotline toll-free at **1-800-232-4636** 24 hours a day. Please note that automated information may be arranged topically by disease, rather than by country or region.

Consult your doctor: After checking the CDC's recommendations we strongly suggest that you consult your family physician concerning any vaccinations or medications that you may need on this trip. At the time of print there were no specific vaccinations required for entry into any of the countries on your itinerary.

3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS

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**; **carry-on limit is 45 linear inches**.
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 and your river ship, 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 on bus transfers and that you have enough room for luggage in your cabin. 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.	

Should I confirm luggage restrictions with my U.S./international airline(s) before departure?
Absolutely, confirm current restrictions about a week or so before your departure. You should take this step no matter if your vacation has a lower limit then the average international flight or not, because there may be recent changes, such as new security regulations, or an update to the standard weight/size allowances. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our webpage in the *FAQ* section.

You should also check with the airlines on luggage fees—many airlines charge to check luggage, even on international flights. Others may charge a fee if you bring a second carry-on item, like a purse or a laptop. **These fees are not included in your trip price**; they are payable directly to the airlines. If you are making a connecting flight, you should also confirm if your luggage can be checked through to your final destination. For more information about air travel, see the "Air Travel" section of your *Important Information* booklet. Note that when you are returning to the USA and have a connecting flight in the USA, you must collect your luggage after passport control and check it back in again for your connecting flight.

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**:** *Bring 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/public, 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*.

Liquids and your carry on: Follow the **TSA's 3-1-1 rule**: 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.

Locking your luggage:
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.

4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE

GCCL Air Travelers

U.S. Departure: If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, a GCCL Airport Representative will assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. The Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.

Arrival: A GCCL Representative will meet you at the airport after you exit customs and escort you to a private motorcoach for your transfer to the pier or hotel. (Due to airport security measures your GCCL Representative cannot have access to the Immigration or Customs areas, so you will need to clear both on your own).The bus transfer from the Airport to your ship may take anywhere from 30-45 minutes, or a bit longer, depending upon traffic. Please be advised that there may also be some waiting time at the airport before the bus transfer takes you to the ship – depending on the time between incoming flights.

Please note*: Airport porters are NOT allowed in the customs hall area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart, which you will then move through customs. When you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your motor coach. Your motor coach driver will load your luggage onto your motor coach.*

Delays *Do* Happen – Despite the Best of Plans. In the event your flight is delayed or you miss a connection and must be re-booked, please remember to let Grand Circle know by calling the emergency number provided in your final documents so that we can make appropriate arrangements for your arrival.

U.S. Return: At the end of your cruise or post-cruise extension, you'll be transferred to the airport for your return flight to the U.S. If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCCL Airport Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. (Note, however, that you are responsible for your luggage handling to the check in counter.)

Please note: *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. For more information, please see your Important Information booklet.*

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.

5. 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.

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.

Traveler's checks—not recommended: We urge you not to rely on traveler's checks for your personal expenses. They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's most practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last "cash" resort in the event of a special situation.

U.S. dollars have an advantage over traveler's checks. Cash is more readily exchanged and accepted, and sometimes commands a better exchange rate.

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

When traveling, typically PLUS, Cirrus, and other bank networks are available throughout large cities and small towns. 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.

Currency
The euro is the official currency of the countries you visit during your cruise. 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

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.

Austria's cost of living is higher than that of the other countries you'll visit on this program. If you're taking this optional Vienna extension, expect to pay a hefty amount for your personal expenses.

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.*

Please note: 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.

By Destination

Bruges

Banking hours vary from bank to bank. In general, hours are 9 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday. Some banks close for lunch between 12 noon and 1:30 pm. On Saturday, certain branches are also open 9 am to 12 noon (except during July and August).

Bureaux de change: There are many *bureaux de change* offices in Bruges where you can exchange money.

Germany

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

Prague

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 to 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. However, you can exchange currency at the hotel for a small fee. **Never exchange on the streets.**

Vienna

Generally banks are open 8 am to 12 noon and 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

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.

By Destination

Bruges

Best Buys: Bruges is not a city for bargain shopping, but you will get top quality for the price you pay. Lace, of both antique and recent manufacture, is the product of choice. Excellent European antiques may be found in shops and street markets. Leather goods are of very high quality, and edibles like chocolates, pralines, and the thin, spicy biscuits called *speculoos* are very popular Belgian souvenirs.

Hours: Shopping hours are generally 10 am to 6 pm, Monday through Saturday; some stores observe these same hours on Sunday. Department stores stay open later on Friday, until 8 or 9 pm.

Tip on a Shopper's Guide: An excellent magazine devoted almost entirely to Belgian shopping, *Belgian Promenade,* is published by the Chamber of Commerce for Art, Quality Goods, and Services. Your hotel may provide free copies; if not, look for it at newsstands.

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 shops 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.

Long store hours facilitate shopping. Shops are open Monday through 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.

Vienna

Best buys: Popular buys include glassware, crystal, porcelain, petit point, musical instruments and scores, fur hats, ski wear, and, of course, lederhosen (leather pants), loden-cloth coats, and *sachertorte* (chocolate cake). But be forewarned: the quality of Austrian wares is exceptionally high, and so are the prices! The main shopping area in Vienna is around Kaernter Strasse, Graben, and Kohlmarkt; most department stores are on Mariahilferstrasse.

Store hours: Major department stores do business from 8 am to 6 pm, Monday through Saturday. Small shops and boutiques often close on Saturday afternoon.

VAT: In Austria, a Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals, and ranges from 10% to 30%. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods in specially marked *Tax Free Shopping* stores, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper, salesperson, or your Program Director for details. Be sure to save all receipts and the special *Global Tax Refund* forms for Customs, as receipts alone are not enough.

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. Tipping is a common practice both at home and abroad and we offer these guidelines to answer requests for appropriate tipping amounts. It can be useful to have this information on site – when the question *must* be answered – and ahead of time for travel budgeting purposes. Tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars (personal/traveler's checks should ***never*** be used for tips).

Shipboard: Shipboard gratuities to the cruise personnel are not included in the cost of your cruise. 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.

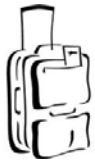
GCCL Program Director: It is customary at the end of your trip to express a personal "Thank You" to the Grand Circle Cruise Line Program Director assigned to your group, especially if he/she has provided you with individual assistance. We recommend $4-$6 per person, per day. Please note that tips for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

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.

Port Stops & Land Stays: During your port stops and land stays, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. A service charge is usually included in restaurant and bar bills, but it is customary to leave an additional tip of around 10% of the bill for your waiter or bartender. As for taxis, in many cities the tip is included in the fare, and will be announced on a sign inside the cab; otherwise a 10% tip is appropriate.

Restrooms: It is very common to be charged a small use fee (not a tip) for restroom access. Typical amounts are about 10 Crowns in the Czech Republic, or about 50-70 Euro cents elsewhere in Europe. US dollars are not accepted for this fee. Bring small change in the local currency with you or change some upon your arrival just in case as there isn't an attendant on duty (in some cases you will use a turnstile.)

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 non-slip shoes with rubber soles.

Packing Your Carry-On Bag

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 and excursions.

Clothing Suggestions

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.

Travel Gear Suggestions

Though it's often fun to do things as the locals do, it can be frustrating when daily necessities or conveniences from home aren't available. 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.

What not to pack: 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 **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.

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
- ❑ Wide-brim sun hat or visor
- ❑ Compact umbrella
- ❑ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ❑ Extra passport-sized photos
- ❑ Insect repellent with DEET
- ❑ Travel money bag or money belt

Medicines

- ❑ 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

- ❑ Travel alarm
- ❑ Compact binoculars
- ❑ Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- ❑ Washcloth
- ❑ Handkerchiefs
- ❑ Basic sewing kit
- ❑ Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- ❑ Electrical transformer and plug adapter–see "Regional Electricity" below.
- ❑ Sunscreen
- ❑ Reading materials
- ❑ Travel journal/note pad
- ❑ Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or whirlpool
- ❑ Home address book
- ❑ Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- ❑ Phrase book
- ❑ Collapsible walking staff
- ❑ Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates
- ❑ Insect repellant with DEET

PLEASE NOTE:
In Europe, the only way to obtain antibiotics is with a doctor's prescription. Some doctors prefer not to prescribe them at all. Extra batteries and photo memory cards, adaptors for European electrical sockets, and over the counter medicines are ***not*** sold or available onboard the ship.

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.

Austria: This country has a central European climate: variable weather reigns, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round. Afternoons average about 60°F during early spring, and about 70°F 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.

Belgium & the Netherlands: The northern part of Belgium is low-lying, with a climate that is almost identical to that of the Netherlands, its adjoining neighbor. As in most areas of northwest Europe, the weather in these two small countries is frequently rainy and can be very changeable from day to day all through the year. During spring, a fine, warm spell may last for weeks—or a stretch of cool, unsettled weather may prevail. Showers are common—Bruges, in particular, gets a lot of rain—but the sprinkles rarely turn into heavy downpours. Daytime temperatures are generally mild, averaging in the upper 50s and low 60s, but weather shifts do occur on a regular basis. In summer, fine warm periods may last for weeks on occasions; but then again, the weather could also be cool and unsettled. By autumn, overcast skies occur more frequently, and the overall weather pattern consists of longer, heavier rains and colder temperatures.

Generally, the flat countryside of the Netherlands makes it a rather windy place in all seasons. In the past, the Dutch relied on this weather element to run the windmills that pumped the seawater from the low-lying lands.

Czech Republic (optional extension): The climate of the Czech Republic is similar to that of Austria and Germany, but is perhaps a bit cooler in all seasons. In spring, weather is inconsistent: 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. In general, you can expect spring temperatures to average in the low 60s, summer in the low 70s, and fall in the 50s.

Germany: Germany has a central European climate. The weather is unpredictable, but rain is rather common year-round. The hill slopes along the Rhine and Mosel valleys have a climate particularly suitable to the cultivation of vineyards. Though summer weather is often volatile, it is generally sufficiently warm and sunny to make this a notable area for wine. Spring and fall weather is moderate with intermittent sun; cloudy, wet days are common. On the Rhine and Mosel Rivers, fog and mist appear frequently, especially in the early mornings. Evenings on the water can be quite chilly. The farther south you head, the milder the climate tends to become.

In the upper Rhine valley of southwest Germany, site of Baden-Baden and the Black Forest, the spring and summer temperatures are the warmest in the country, allowing for a variety of crops to grow, including vines and tobacco. Autumn can be noticeably cooler, and winter quite cold, due to the area's proximity to the Alps and distance from the ocean.

Here is the data from the weather observation stations 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	DEC
Amsterdam, Netherlands										
High	48	53	61	66	64	71	64	57	48	44
Low	37	40	46	52	55	55	51	46	39	36
Regensburg, Germany										
High	46	54	64	68	73	73	66	55	42	35
Low	30	36	45	51	54	53	47	40	33	28
Vienna, Austria (base program & optional extension)										
High	50	61	70	75	80	80	70	60	47	40
Low	38	46	55	59	63	64	57	48	39	33
Bruges, Belgium (optional extension)										
High	45	51	58	63	66	68	64	58	48	45
Low	38	44	49	54	58	59	55	51	43	41
Prague, Czech Republic (optional extension)										
High	46	54	64	69	72	73	65	54	41	36
Low	32	36	45	51	54	53	48	39	32	28

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 a 50 to 70 degree range.

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. Therefore the sequence of ports visited and the days on which included features and optional tours occur may vary.

8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY

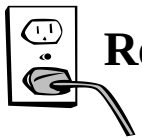
In General

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 polarized plug system — 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 (widely available) that work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. Dual voltage appliances are inexpensive and need only plug adapters.

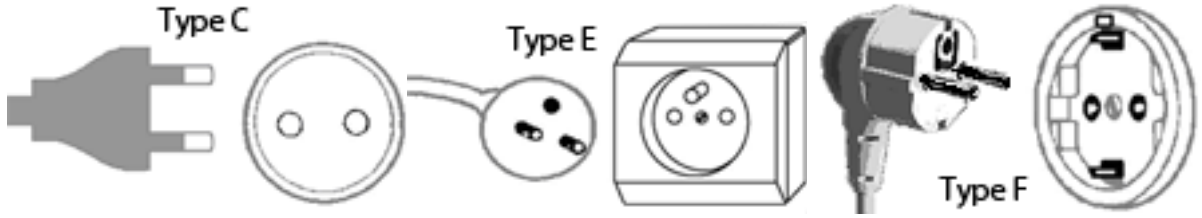
If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) in addition to plug adapters. Regional transformer/adapter kits can often be found at hardware or online stores but transformers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

Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands use the Type C "*Europlug*" and receptacles (Types C, E & F) that accommodate it, and 230 V AC/50 Hz current.

Electricity Onboard

River Aria, Adagio, Concerto, Harmony, Melody, Rhapsody
Cabin bathrooms are equipped with a 110-volt outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220 volts, with European-style outlets: you will need a transformer to operate 110V appliances as well, as plug adapters.
On the ***River Symphony*** the current onboard is 220V only. You will need a transformer to operate 110V appliances throughout the ship, as well as plug adapters.

On all ships, 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.



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.

Smartphones

It will require some effort to get the most out of your smartphone when you travel. Even with an international roaming plan, costs can add up quickly – those handy apps often pile up download fees. The simplest solution is to shut down all cell phone functions, automatic data feeds and roaming options, and take advantage of your 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.

Cell Phones

If you want to use a standard cell phone while traveling overseas, be sure to check with your service provider (www.verizon.com, www.t-mobile.com etc.) to see if your phone will work outside the U.S. or whether you're better off renting an international phone. The websites www.travelcell.com and www.globalcellularrental.com have good information on rentals. Or, consider buying an inexpensive local phone for your stay.

Phone Calling Cards

If you don't carry a phone, you can use a prepaid calling card to call the U.S. with minimal additional charges. Besides the prepaid long distance charges, you might have a local fee of a few cents and possibly a connection fee if you are using your card at a hotel. Check with the reception desk prior to using it to avoid unexpected charges.

Calling cards purchased locally are usually less expensive than those purchased in the U.S. and are more likely to work with the local system. Note that dialing a U.S. 1-800 number outside the continental United States will incur costly long distance fees, since 1-800 does not work outside the U.S.

Photo Gear

For many people, capturing the highlights of their travel experiences in photographs or movies and sharing them is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the journey. Remember, however: some individuals and cultures and are less tolerant of photography than others. It's always best to respect local customs. And in some places you may be charged for photography at specific sites, or restricted from any photography at all.

Digital cameras and camcorders are excellent travel companions—and many do dual duty by recording movies *and* still images. Fist sized camcorders can capture HD movies and high quality still photos; cameras the size of a deck of cards are great for snapshots and casual movie clips. With an ample supply of high-capacity memory cards you can record your whole trip with a small, lightweight package.

But you must remember the batteries. Recharging batteries is sometimes impossible, cameras can drain batteries *very* quickly, and replacements may be unavailable. Whether you need standard or proprietary batteries, it's good to have spares. Be sure your charger will work with the local electrical system, and bring more than enough memory cards—they may be hard or impossible to find. Memory cards are small, thin and light: you can never have too much storage.

Compact cameras are impractical for distant subjects. Some models have a zoom lens of up to 120mm, which is good for middle distances. For distant subjects a *megazoom* (with a zoom lens of at least 300mm) or a single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with up to a 300mm telephoto lens are good choices. With a DSLR you can use multiple lenses, though your gear can quickly get complex, weighty and cumbersome. Cameras or lenses that need a tripod are impractical for travel photography. A single mid-range telephoto lens coupled with a small, fast prime lens (for low light/no flash situations) is an effective, flexible and compact kit. Consider mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras (MILC), which combine small bodies and multiple, small lenses with high quality for both still and HD movie images.

If you use a DSLR or MILC camera, protect the lenses with a UV filter and bring lens caps, covers, cleaning paper and a waterproof bag (a heavy duty Ziploc-style bag is good) to protect your gear. Be sure your camera has a flash that you can turn off, and if it's detachable, remember to pack it. (At many sites and museums, flashes are ***not*** permitted.)

Consider disposable cameras, as well. They are inexpensive and capable of acceptable photos as long as the light is not too dim *or* bright. X-rays do not damage the data of digital cameras (in any media format), and so pose no problems for travelers using digital cameras.

9. GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE'S EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISES

M/S *River Adagio, M/S River Aria,* M/S *River Concerto,* M/S *River Harmony,* M/S *River Melody,* M/S *River Rhapsody*

Our private fleet of custom-built river ships—with designs incorporating suggestions from Grand Circle Cruise Line travelers—offers a host of amenities to make you feel right at home. Each ship is designed to carry a moderate number of passengers, ensuring an intimate shipboard atmosphere, plus the ease of maneuverability that's so important when entering small river ports. Amenities on each ship include a restaurant with panoramic windows and wraparound promenade, sun deck with lounge chairs, a whirlpool, library, sauna, bar, lounge, dance floor, and small souvenir shop.

By owning our ships, we can assure you 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. We'll all be together for the joint celebrations, such as the Welcome Cocktail Party, where you'll experience the gala ambiance of a larger group. At other times, such as when we venture ashore, we'll break into smaller groups with individual Program Directors to allow for more intimate and personal discoveries.

A river cruise experience differs greatly from a traditional bus tour or high-sea cruise. Since our ships are small, and designed especially for river travel, you'll have the opportunity to get to really know your fellow travelers and crew while onboard. You will be traveling with up to 150 passengers together. However, to allow you to explore your destinations up close, you will have a Program Director who leads your smaller group (approximately 45) during city tours and optional excursions.

Included features of all Grand Circle Cruise Line European river ship cabins:

- A layout of at least 150 square feet
- All outside cabins
- Individual climate control (heat and air conditioning)
- Twin beds that ship staff convert into daytime couches
- Storage space under beds of 57 inches x 22.8 inches x 11.8 inches (length x width x height)
- Sufficient closet and dresser space
- Color TV, including CNN programming and a bow camera for ship-front views
- Direct-dial international telephone
- Hair dryer
- Desk
- Private bath with shower

Cabins on the Serenade deck have small balconies with sliding doors; those on the Sonata deck have large picture windows; cabins on the Cantata deck have two picture windows, and Prelude Deck cabins have a square window, placed high in the cabin. For safety reasons, cabin windows do not open.

An important word: While our fleet features larger-than-usual riverboat cabins, 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.

Your GCCL Program Directors

During your exclusive Grand Circle Cruise Line River Cruise, you'll have reliable assistance available at all times from your 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 Cruise Line, 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 personalized walking tours, assist you with 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 Vienna, Bruges, or Prague land extensions if you take them).

Shore Excursions

Many sightseeing tours are included on your cruise. Other optional tours are available for purchase. Your Program Director will provide information on these optional excursions on your arrival. Please note that all optional tours can only be purchased with a credit card.

Onboard Activities

During your cruise you'll enjoy exclusive Discovery Series events, such as folklore and local music entertainment, theme dinners, organized discussions, 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 decor of dark woods, rich carpeting, floor-to-ceiling windows, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes a breakfast buffet, lunch, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Included with dinner are two complimentary drinks (choose from house wine, draft beer, or soft drink) 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: 1:00-2:00 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 at around 1:00 pm. The restaurant will open at 12:30 pm and serve a light lunch. 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

Headsets

During the cruise portion of your trip, complimentary headsets, or *Whispers* receivers, are provided on our guided tours through the cities we visit. These receivers and headsets allow you to hear your Program Director and our local guides better. Many travelers prefer to use their own headsets or ear buds, as opposed to the ones supplied with the *Whispers* receivers (especially if you use hearing aids). You are encouraged to bring your own headsets/ear buds with you, as the plug size is usually the same as that used by iPods, computer jacks, etc. Note that these receivers are not available for use during your Pre or Post Trip excursions to Vienna, Prague, or Bruges.

Internet Access and Email

Limited Wi-Fi service is available for free in the lounge, library, reception and bar areas on board these Grand Circle Cruise Line ships: *Concerto, Harmony, Melody, Rhapsody, Adagio, Aria,* and the *Bizet*. 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.

Internet cafés are available in many of the cities you visit on your cruise, though they are becoming less common. Prices for use vary. Internet access will be most consistently available when the ship is docked in larger cities or when exploring cities by land on trip extensions.

Elevator/Chairlift

Each ship has an elevator and chairlift service to the sun deck from the deck below (or you can use the staircase to the sun deck, which has one flight of ten to twelve steps). The elevator does not provide service to or from the Prelude Deck. The staircase to/from the Prelude Deck features about six stairs, with a banister to hold on to. The chairlift is a single-seat transport that slides up the staircase banister.

Recreational Facilities

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

Laundry and Linen Service

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 (twice during the 14-night cruise); towels are changed daily.

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. However, there is no staff physician onboard. In the event that medical treatment is needed, your Program Director will assist you with coordinating a visit to a doctor in the port of visit.

Drinking Water

Tap water aboard ship is safe for drinking. Bottled water is also available. There are two ice machines onboard.

Ship Specifications

	Entered service	*Length*	*Width*	*Passenger capacity*	*Crew members*	*Decks*	*Cabins*	*Elevator*	*Chairlift to sun deck*
M/S *River Adagio*	2003	410	38	164	38	4	82	yes	yes
M/S *River Aria*	2001	410	38	164	40	4	82	yes	yes
M/S *River Concerto*	2000	361	38	140	32	4	70	yes	yes
M/S *River Harmony*	1999	361	38	140	32	4	70	yes	yes
M/S *River Melody*	1999	361	38	140	32	4	70	yes	yes
M/S *River Rhapsody*	1999	361	38	140	32	4	70	yes	yes

10. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

In General

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your River Cruise. 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.

Bruges in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout and Details

Bruges: The heart of Bruges is encircled by a broad circular canal that opens at its southern end to become the *Lac d'Amour* (Lake of Love). This lake served as the town's busy port in the Middle Ages, before the silting of the Zwinn. Today, a lovely green park lines its shores. Southwest of the lake is the railway station. Bruges's narrow streets fan out from Grote Market, the vast central square.

Cuisine

Belgian specialties: While French cooking prevails throughout Belgium, there are many distinctly Belgian specialties, too. These include the inevitable Brussels sprouts; asparagus from Malines; fresh seafood, especially *crevettes* (tiny shrimp from the cold waters of the North Sea); red cabbage prepared *a la flamande* (with apple); *frites* (twice-fried French fries with a Belgian twist); *carbonnades flamandes* (beef braised in beer); *moules* (mussels), a Belgian national dish; *jambon d'Ardenne* (smoked ham from the Ardennes); and, of course, *gaufres* (waffles, topped with sugar, fruit, and/or whipped cream). In addition to the wonderful Belgian waffles, there are excellent custard tarts and other pastries, as well as superb chocolate.

Beer and wine: Belgium is famous for its brewing tradition and there are more than 4,000 brands produced within its borders. Among names to look for that you won't find outside Belgium are those still brewed by Trappist monks, Orval and Westmalle; Faro, Krieklambiek, and Lambiek from the area around Brussels; and Leuven.

Hours: Most Belgian restaurants generally are open seven days a week from noon to 2:30 pm for lunch and from 7 to 10 pm for dinner. These hours may vary. While many restaurants accept credit cars, some may require a minimum purchase.

Drinking Water

Tap water in Bruges and Ghent is perfectly fine for drinking.

Local Transportation

On foot: The best way to see both Bruges and Ghent properly is to stroll through their charming little cobblestone streets at leisure. Just be sure to wear your sturdy walking shoes.

Bicycle: Biking is a favorite transport method of the locals, and it's a terrific way to see the towns at your own pace. Accommodating bikers are beautiful canal-side, tree-lined roads. Bikes can be rented at the Bruges train station. Discounts are given for rentals of three days or more.

Prague in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout and Details

Prague, an ancient and historic city, is the capital of the Czech Republic (made up of Bohemia, Moravia, and part of Silesia). The city, located at the crossroads of Europe, is both ancient and modern and possesses a palpable energy. Getting around Prague can be a bit tricky—many of the streets are small, narrow cobblestone paths that seem to wind about endlessly. But the "city of 1,000 spires" is one of the most beautiful you will ever see.

Prague is really a series of five historic towns welded together to form one great city. The river Vltava slices through Prague, giving the city its distinctive bridges. Hradcany, the castle district, is on the river's west bank with Prague Castle and St. Vitus cathedral nearby. Below this section lies Mala Strana (the Lesser Quarter) with buildings dating back to the 13th century. Petrin Hill to the south offers wonderful views out over the city. On the east bank of the river is *Stare Mesto* (Old Town) with its large central square. Nearby is Josefov, the former Jewish ghetto. *Nove Mesto* (New Town, though parts of it go back to the 14th century) stretches around parts of Stare Mesto and historic Wenceslas Square. The Charles Bridge, a city landmark, stretches over the Vltava and links much of the city.

Ruzyne airport is in the western suburbs of the city. The Prague Information Service offers good information about Prague and is located in Old Town Square. The Tourist Office (Cedok) at Na Prikope is also a good place for information and maps.

Prague is a lovely city for walking so be sure to stroll the Royal Way, which takes you by some of the city's architectural treasures, including Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral. In Hradcany stop to see the Strahov Monastery and the Summer Palace. If you are a fan of classical music you'll want to stop in at the Smetana Hall in Obecni Dum. The Museum of the City of Prague in northern Nove Mesto is an impressive and interesting stop. Wenceslas Square in Old Town and Josefov in Stare Mesto both offer excellent walking and sightseeing opportunities.

Cuisine

The foods of the Czech Republic are hearty and rich, its flavors influenced by German cooking, and they tend toward meaty dishes accompanied by sauces and gravies. The three items that are nation-wide favorites are pork, dumplings, and cabbage.

Thick soups offer some of the strongest flavors on a typical menu, with garlic, onion, and fish soup being among the tastiest. Pork as a main course is often a seasoned brisket that is breaded and fried. Another mainstay is *svickova*, slices of oven-braised beef served rich sauce of sour cream and cranberries. Restaurants also may offer baked chicken, smoked hams, and wild game, such as rabbit, duck, or venison. As the country is landlocked, fish usually comes from freshwater fish farms and includes perch, trout, and carp. Seafood such as shellfish or shark is sometimes offered at restaurants, but is usually fairly expensive.

Accompanying almost every meal is the ubiquitous dumpling, or *knedlik*. The lighter dumplings are made from wheat flour, while the hearty and denser version is created using potato flour. The rolled dough is boiled and served in slices with a gravy or sauce. The vegetable that graces most dinners is the *zeli*, or cabbage. The cabbage is often cooked in a lightly sweetened sauce. Condiments include fruit chutney, horseradish, mustard, and tartar sauce. Vegetarian main courses may be quite difficult to find, but dishes of root crops such as carrots, turnips, beets, and of course potatoes are plentiful. For cheese lovers, there's *smazeny syr*, a delectable breaded cheese, fried until its center is creamy.

You can top off your meal with sweet delights. Desserts offered are thin pancakes with fillings of chocolate, fruit, or marmalade. And in case you didn't have your fill of dumplings with the main course, you can savor one for dessert. The chefs fill them with apricots, cherries, or strawberries and sprinkle them festively with powdered sugar.

While in Prague, don't miss the opportunity to sample some of the delightful beers born of the region's fields of cultivated hops. Pubs are in integral part of the Czech neighborhood life, and the nation brews some of the best beer in the world. In the town of Plzen, the brewing of beer dates as far back as the founding of the town, in 1295. Plzen is internationally known for its award-winning Pilsener Urquell, and there are numerous other local beers that perfectly accompany the region's hearty dining. To conclude your culinary explorations, you might consider capping the night with a taste of *Becherovka*, a unique herbal liqueur from the Karlovy Vary area.

Drinking Water

Tap water in the Czech Republic is safe for drinking. You can also buy bottled water in hotels, restaurants, and food shops.

Local Transportation

Subway: Prague's modern subway system—the Metro—is easy to use and spotlessly clean. It provides the simplest and fastest means of transportation, and most new maps of Prague mark the routes. Subways run daily from 5 am to midnight with trains every two minutes during peak hours, slowing down to every ten to fifteen minutes by late in the evening. There are several lines, each a different color, which intersect at various points in the city center and the route plans are easy to follow. Once inside the Metro, acquaint yourself with these words: *vystup* means exit, and *prestup* means connection.

Tram/Bus: You'll probably stick to the Metro, but a bus ride can be a good way to see some of the city, especially if you want to venture farther out. You need to buy a new ticket every time you change vehicles.

Taxi: These are not recommended, as some drivers try to take advantage of tourists and inflate the price, possibly by driving miles out of the way. If you must take a taxi, it is best to use the hotel's taxi service—it is a little more expensive than taxis found at taxi stands but it is more reliable. Another choice is to ask the hotel to contact AAA Taxi for you (or call them at **233 113 311**)—AAA Taxi is also dependable and they speak English. If you choose instead to use a taxi at a taxi stand or one you hail on the street, *definitely agree on a price beforehand!*

Punch your ticket on the Metro, trams, and buses: For the Metro, punch the ticket in the station before getting on the escalators; for buses and trams, punch the ticket inside the vehicle.

Vienna in Brief—Optional Extension

City Layout and Details

Vienna's "Ring," once the location of the city walls and today a broad boulevard in the inner zone (the oldest part of the city), encircles most main sights. In the center is Stephansplatz, site of the city's famous St. Stephen's Cathedral. Just a short walk away is the Hofburg (the Habsburgs' official residence), the Kunsthistorisches Museum (Art History Museum), and the Staatsoper. The pedestrian thoroughfare, Kaernter Strasse, is the city's major shopping venue; it runs from Stephansplatz past the Staatsoper to Karlsplatz. The "Ring" itself is two and one half miles long and 187 feet wide. Constructed in the mid 19th century to protect Vienna from outside threats, the Ring encircles the Old City. All sites inside the Ring are part of the First *Bezirk* (or 1st precinct, designated by the #1010 in addresses). The remainder of the city is also sectioned into precincts.

Cuisine

Viennese cuisine is the culmination of various ethnic influences, including Bohemian, Hungarian, Croatian, Slovenian, German, and Italian. Wild game, fish, poultry, and beef dishes are popular. The following are some local specialties.

Soups: *Griessnockerlsuppe* (clear soup with semolina dumplings), *rindsuppe* (beef broth), and *gulaschsuppe* (Hungarian goulash soup).

Main courses: Familiar dishes are *Bauernschmaus* (a combination of many varied sausage~~s~~ and pork items with sauerkraut and dumplings), *Tafelspitz* (boiled beef with vegetables), *Wiener schnitzel* (breaded veal or pork cutlet), *Schweinebraten* (roast pork), *Backhendl* (fried and breaded chicken), and *Gulasch* (stew). *Nockerl* are little dumplings, usually served with sauce.

Desserts: Vienna's *apfelstrudel* (apple strudel) is probably the best in the world. *palatschinken* are light, sugared pancakes; *klaiserschmarren* is a diced omelet, served with jam and sprinkled with sugar. And of course, don't miss the famour *Sachertorte*!

Coffee: Austrian coffee, of which there are at least 20 varieties, is delicious and not to be missed. Introduced 300 years ago by the Turks during their unsuccessful attempt to conquer Vienna, coffee has become an art form, served in veritable institutions known as the Viennese coffeehouses. Among the many kinds of coffee are *kleiner schwarzer*, a small cup without milk; the *melange*, large cup with foamy milk; *mokka*, strong black Viennese coffee; *kapuziner*, same as *melange* but topped with whipped cream; and *tuerkischer*, Turkish coffee boiled in a small copper pot and served in tiny cups.

Drinking Water

Vienna's ice-cold water comes from a natural underground reservoir in the mountains and is famous for its clean taste and purity. It is very safe to drink. Bottled water is also sold in most restaurants and grocery shops.

Local Transportation

Vienna is divided into 23 numbered districts. Most sights are concentrated in the city center, the 1st District, which is largely a pedestrian zone and easily reached by public transportation. Many 1st District attractions are within walking distance of one another. You can walk from one end of the Old City to the other in about 30 minutes. Even the walk from the Ring to either train station is only a half hour or so. Beyond this central hub, districts proceed from the 2nd on up to the 23rd.

Vienna's transit network consists of five U-Bahn (subway) lines, trams, buses, and several rapid transit and commuter trains. Ask your Program Director or hotel concierge for more information about the best options available for obtaining tickets to your desired destination.

Note on Ticket Validation: You must validate all tickets yourself by inserting them into machines at the entryway of S-Bahn and U-Bahn platforms or on buses and trams. When entering streetcars, look for a blue box with a white "E," which is for validating tickets.

11. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY

Austria

Area: 32,382 square miles
Capital: Vienna
Languages: German is the official language. English is also spoken, particularly in all tourist areas and major cities.
Ethnicities: Austrians 91.1%, former Yugoslavs 4% (includes Croatians, Slovenes, Serbs, and Bosniaks), Turks 1.6%, German 0.9%, other or unspecified 2.4%
Location: Austria is bordered by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.
Geography: Landlocked in Central Europe, Austria features the mountainous Alps in the south and west, but also is home to flat plains and gentle slopes in the north and east.
Population: 8,221,646 (2013 estimate)
Religion: Roman Catholic 74%, Protestant 5%, Muslim 4%, none 12%, other 5%
Time Zone: Austria is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Vienna.

Holidays:

01/01	New Year's Day
01/06	Epiphany
04/21	Easter Monday
05/01	Labor Day / May Day
05/29	Ascension Day
06/09	Whit Monday
06/19	Corpus Christi
08/15	Assumption of Mary
10/26	National day
11/01	All Saints
12/08	Immaculate Conception
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	St. Stephen's Day

Germany

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

Holland (official name: the Netherlands)

Area: 16,034 square miles
Capital: Amsterdam
Language: Dutch is the official language. A large percentage of the Dutch are also fluent in English and German.
Location: Situated on the coast of the North Sea, the Netherlands borders Germany to the east and Belgium to the south.
Population (2013 estimate): 16,805,037
Religions: Roman Catholic 30%, Protestant 20%, Muslim 5.8%, other 2.2%, none 42%
Time zone: The Netherlands is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST: when it's 6 am in New York, it's noon in Amsterdam.

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

01/01 New Year's Day
04/18 Good Friday
04/20 Easter
04/21 Easter Monday
04/30 Queen's Birthday
05/29 Ascension Day
06/08 Whit Monday
12/25 Christmas Day
12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Belgium—optional extension

Area: 11,787 square miles
Capital: Brussels
Languages: Dutch (57%), French (32%), bilingual (Brussels) 10% German (1%)
Location: Belgium is located on the western edge of continental Europe. It has about 40 miles of seacoast on the North Sea, at the Dover Strait. France is south of Belgium, the Netherlands is directly north. The country measures only 150 miles across from the sea to the Ardennes.
Population (2013 estimate): 10,444,268
Religion: Roman Catholic 75%, other 25%
Time zone: Belgium is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST.

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

01/01 New Year's Day
04/20 Easter Monday
05/01 Labor Day / May Day
05/29 Ascension Day
06/09 Whit Monday
07/21 Belgian National Day
08/15 Assumption of Mary
11/01 All Saints
11/11 Armistice Day
12/25 Christmas Day

Czech Republic—optional extension

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

The Rhine, Main, and Danube Rivers

The Rhine River

The Rhine starts high in the Swiss Alps, runs a course of some 770 miles through six countries—Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, France, Germany, and the Netherlands—then empties into the North Sea at Rotterdam. Though the Danube is twice as long as the Rhine, it is the latter that, throughout history, has served as the most important route for river trade between the European continent and the North Sea.

Of particular significance is the segment of the Rhine that forms a natural geographical boundary between Germany and France; this stretch of the river was once Europe's major link between Basel and the Atlantic, before the onset of efficient land transportation. Prominent cities such as Strasbourg, Mainz, Cologne, and Düsseldorf cropped up along the Rhine's shores, and further established the river's commercial importance, not only to this region, but to all of Europe.

For the artistic community, too, the Rhine has been an endless source of inspiration—from Heinrich Heine's famous poem about the Lorelei legend to Wagner's epic operas, *der Ring des Nibelungen*, to William Turner's paintings of the Rhine's foggy sunsets. Indeed, to travel the Rhine by boat, and witness the rising mists enshrouding the castles perched above, is to comprehend why the river has so strongly stimulated the creative imaginations of Germany's greatest poets and composers.

Even though the Rhine flows through other countries besides Germany, it is in Germany—especially the stretch between Mainz and Cologne known as the Middle Rhine—that the riverside scenery is most spectacular. This is the "typical" Rhine: a land of steep and densely wooded hills, terraced vineyards, tiny villages hugging the banks, Gothic churches, and a succession of brooding castles. This portion of the river is the focal point of your cruise on the Rhine.

The Main River

Formed near the German town of Kulmbach, by the confluence of the rivers Roter Main and Weisser Main, the Main River flows for around 330 miles. It winds through the rich farmland of central Germany and past the industrial areas of Schweinfurt, Wurzburg, Aschaffenburg, and Frankfurt to the Rhine River at Mainz. The feisty Main River calms down and widens at its junction with the Regnitz River, its chief tributary, and from that point on is an important east-west route. Indeed, the Main serves as a "water bridge" between the Rhine River and the Danube River. It is the "Main/Danube Canal" that connects the Main with the Danube. It stretches 106 miles from Bamberg on the Main River to Kelheim on the Danube.

The Danube River

The 1,766-mile-long Danube originates in Germany's Black Forest, continues east through Bavaria, crosses Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria, and then empties into the Black Sea. This legendary river not only shaped the destinies of all the countries that line its banks, but influenced the whole continent as no other European river ever could.

The power of its strategic location was recognized centuries ago by Roman Emperors who sought to control it. Ruins from that period now perch on banks above the river, reminding you of the Danube's multi-faceted past. Even today, the Danube continues to be one of Europe's greatest assets, in part because it provides a water link between the four national capitals on its banks: Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, and Belgrade. Back in the heyday of river transport, other great cities grew up along the Danube's banks, too, serving as ports for the various cargo being carried on the river, namely salt, wood, and ores. These same products now are transferred on the railroad and highways, which run alongside the Danube's course.

There is no question that few river voyages can match the romantic appeal of a journey down the Austrian segment of the Danube. Here is the heart of the lilting Strauss waltzes, of myth-laden castles, Old World villages, and rolling vineyards. As you sail along this twisting river, stopping at fascinating ports, you'll gain an understanding of the art, music, and culture of a fabled region with a history that stretches back more than 3,000 years.

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.

The Improbable Voyage by Tristan Jones (Travel Account)
In 1985, former Royal Navy skipper Tristan Jones embarked on a 2,307-mile voyage across Europe, traveling from the North Sea to the Black Sea via the Rhine and Danube rivers. Battling ice and cold, life-threatening rapids and narrow gorges, German bureaucrats and Romanian frontier police, Jones made his way through eight countries and emerged triumphant, albeit penniless, at the Black Sea. His spirited account of his adventures gives readers a vivid glimpse of the quality of life along Europe's oldest water routes—and of life on the Danube at the height of the Cold War era.

Danube by Claudio Magris (Travel Account)
This highly regarded descriptive travel book follows the river as it flows from its source in Germany to its mouth in the Black Sea, with wonderful descriptions of the scenery en route.

A Tramp Abroad by Mark Twain (Travel Account)
The American humorist details his travels through Germany in witty, highly entertaining prose.

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.

The Habsburg Monarchy 1618-1815 by Charles W. Ingrao (History)
This comprehensive history of the Habsburg empire reveals how the uniquely different personality traits of each Habsburg monarch often influenced the historical events of the time.

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.

Germany and the Germans by John Ardagh (History)
A noted British author and historian offers a contemporary study of the German culture.

Amsterdam by Geert Mak (History)
A Dutch journalist and native of Amsterdam offers a delightful 338-page survey of Amsterdam's past and present, incorporating elements of politics, economics, and art history.

The Bridge at Remagen by Ken Hechler (History)
A detailed, compelling description of how the Rhine was amazingly breached on March 7, 1945—an event which lives on in history as one of the great episodes of WWII.

Prague — Optional Extension

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.

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 marks 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.

Netherlands

Soldier of Orange
The 1977 Dutch film directed by Paul Verhoeven depicts World War II through the eyes of several Dutch students. *Soldier of Orange* is set during the German occupation of the Netherlands and revolves around a group of students and their different roles in the World War II—either as collaborators or as part of the resistance. Based on the book *Soldaat van Oranje* by Erik Hazelhoff Roelfzema—who lived the story himself—*Soldier of Orange* provides a powerful glimpse into the horrors of war.

Black Book
This 2006 war thriller is about a young Jewish woman who becomes a spy for the resistance during World War II after tragedy befalls her in an encounter with the Nazis. Based on a true story, *Black Book* is set in German-occupied Holland and revolves around the dangerous double life that she is forced to live in order to survive. Paul Verhoeven's WWII drama shows how an ordinary person is capable of doing extraordinary things when it's a matter of life and death.

Girl with a Pearl Earring
Director Peter Webber paints a mysterious masterpiece with his debut film *Girl with the Pearl Earring*. This 2003 gem tells a story about the events surrounding the creation of the painting "Girl with A Pearl Earring" by Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer. The story unfolds when Griet, a mysterious teenage girl, leaves her family to become a servant for the Vermeer household, soon becoming the subject of perhaps the most enduring portrait from Vermeer.

Belgium

Peace in the Fields
A French-language Belgian film directed by Jacques Boigelot, *Peace in the Fields* takes place around 1925, and revolves around the troubles of a middle-aged farmer whose mother has been accused of being a witch. Nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film, this 1970 gem explores issues of prejudice and superstition in the Belgian countryside.

In Bruges (2008)
In this 2008 dark comedy Ken and Ray, two Irish hit men seek shelter in the city of Bruges, Belgium after a job gone wrong in London. While in Bruges, Ken gains a new appreciation for life as he takes in the sights of the medieval city. Meanwhile, things start to change for Ray when he meets a woman named Chloe. Both attempt to carve a new life for themselves, but can't escape their past as they are obligated to take the next order from their boss.

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, *Closely Watched Trains* offers great insights into the country's unique cultural identity.

Austria

The Sound of Music
Rodgers and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music* is one of the most popular movie musicals of all time. Based on the true story of the Trapp Family Singers, this 1965 classic tells the heartwarming story of a woman who leaves an Austrian convent to become a governess to the children of a widowed naval officer. Filmed in the picturesque rolling hills of Salzburg, Austria, this melodic masterpiece has it all—spectacular scenery, old-fashioned family values, romance, comedy, and adventure.

Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites

If you have access to the Internet, the following sites offer a wealth of information:

Visit the Grand Circle Community website for a world of travel news and information:
www.gct.com/community

Government websites:
International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)
www.cdc.gov/travel
U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information
www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel
Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency responsible for screening luggage in U.S.
www.tsa.gov/public
National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information
www.travel.state.gov

General travel information websites:
Travel books
www.amazon.com
www.barnesandnoble.com
World weather
www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
Foreign languages for travelers: basic terms in more than 80 languages
www.travlang.com/languages
Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.
www.travelite.org
Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe
www.cybercafes.com
Electric current and plug types
www.kropla.com/electric2.htm
Foreign exchange rates
www.oanda.com/converter/classic
ATM locators
www.mastercard.com/atm for **Cirrus ATMs**
www.visa.com/pd/atm **for PLUS ATMs**

Country information:
www.welcome-vienna.com **Vienna**
www.germany-tourism.de **Germany**
www.holland.com **Holland** (You can send email to: information@holland.com)
www.visitbelgium.com **Belgium**
www.visiteurope.com/ **Links to countries**
www.danube-river.org **Danube River**
www.czechtourism.com **Czech Republic**
www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html
www.visiteurope.com/ **Links to countries**