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# **Holland & Belgium in Springtime**

**RIVER CRUISE**

*Plus optional extensions in:*

**Bruges, Belgium  
Amsterdam, Netherlands  
Berlin, Germany**

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**2015**

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# Holland & Belgium in Springtime

## Table of Contents

<b>1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Passport Required .....	3
Visas Not Required.....	3
<b>2. YOUR HEALTH.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Keep Your Abilities In Mind .....	5
Health Check.....	6
Vaccinations.....	6
Prescription Medications .....	6
<b>3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS &amp; AIR TRAVEL .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Luggage Limits .....	7
Airport Security/TSA.....	8
Air Inclusive Travelers .....	9
Airport Transfers.....	9
<b>4. MONEY MATTERS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Local Currency .....	10
ATMs .....	11
Debit Cards .....	11
Credit Cards .....	12
Chip-and-PIN Cards .....	12
Onboard Ship .....	13
Exchange Services Onboard .....	13
Shopping.....	14
U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges .....	15
Problem with a Purchase?.....	15
Tipping Guidelines .....	16
<b>5. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP.....</b>	<b>17</b>
In General .....	17
For This Trip.....	17
Packing Your Carry-On .....	18
Travel Gear Suggestions.....	18
<b>6. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Climate Charts .....	21
<b>7. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY .....</b>	<b>22</b>
In General .....	22
Regional Electricity .....	22
Onboard Ship .....	23
Phones and Calling .....	23
Cell Phones .....	23
Phone Calling Cards .....	24
Photo Gear .....	24
<b>8. GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE'S EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISES .....</b>	<b>25</b>

Ship Specifications .....	29
Your GCCL Program Directors .....	29
<b>9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
Amsterdam in Brief .....	30
Bruges in Brief—Optional Extension .....	32
Berlin in Brief — Optional Extension .....	34
<b>10. DEMOGRAPHICS &amp; GEOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>11. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>39</b>
Books, Maps, and Movies.....	39
Suggested Movies .....	41
Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites .....	43



# 1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

## **Passport Required**

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

### **Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:**

- It should be in good condition
- 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:**

This recommendation is based on a “worst case” scenario. On this trip you might use fewer pages, depending on the whims of the Immigration officials you meet. 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, and recommend these guidelines:

- **Main trip only:** You will need 2 blank “Visa” pages in your passport.
- **Pre- and/or post-trip extension:** No additional blank pages are needed for any of the extensions.

### **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](http://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 and passport 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.*

## **Visas Not Required**

For U.S. citizens, a visa is not required for entry into the Netherlands, Belgium, or Germany. If you are staying longer than 90 days in any of these countries, you should check with their embassy or consulate for the applicable regulations.

## **Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?**

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

## **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, and your credit cards. Store them separate from the originals. Bring along extra passport-sized photos. Add phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, for your travel protection plan company if you have purchased one and for your medical emergency network. 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 (if/when Internet service is available.)



## 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**

- 11 days, with 10 nights aboard a private Grand Circle river ship

#### **Physical Requirements**

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

#### **Climate**

- Spring daytime temperatures range from 48-70°F
- March weather can be unpredictable and change quickly within a short period of time
- Brisk breezes and rain should be anticipated in Holland

#### **Terrain**

- Travel over uneven walking surfaces, including unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestones

#### **Transportation**

- Travel by 47-passenger coach, canal boat, 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

#### **Cuisine**

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

*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**

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential if you want to fully enjoy your trip abroad. If you have ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least 6 weeks in advance of your departure date.

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your international itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. (You can use the “Keep Your Abilities in Mind” on the previous page as a guideline to discuss with him or her.)
- You may want to have a dental exam before your trip. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling.
- 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.

## **Vaccinations**

**At time of writing, there were no required vaccinations for Belgium, the Netherlands, or Germany.** (That is, none of those countries require proof a specific vaccination in order to enter.) However, your doctor might feel that there are some basic vaccinations that you should have updated before you travel. Or there may be vaccinations that he or she recommends for you because of your personal medical history. We suggest you consult with your own physician at least 6 weeks prior to departure, and ask about vaccinations at that time.

If you'd like to know more about possible vaccinations for this trip—or just about health in general while traveling—the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a great resource. You can contact them online or by phone.

- Online:** We suggest you visit the CDC's website at [wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel](http://wwwnc.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.

But please keep in mind that the CDC's suggestions may not apply to you! For example, you might already have some of the vaccinations they routinely recommend. So be sure to ask your own doctor.

## **Prescription Medications**

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



### 3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS & AIR TRAVEL

#### Luggage Limits

<b>MAIN TRIP LIMITS</b>	
<b>Pieces per person</b>	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
<b>Weight restrictions</b>	Varies by airline. The current <b>standard</b> is <b>50lbs for checked bags</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-on bags</b> .
<b>Size restrictions</b>	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches ( <i>length+width+depth</i> ). Generally, <b>62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches</b> .
<b>Luggage Type</b>	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
<b>TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS</b>	
The extensions have the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
<b>REMARKS / SUGGESTIONS</b>	
<p><b>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person:</b> Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 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: <i>Do I feel lucky?</i> And, even if you answer yes, you should make sure that you have the ability to pay the fine.</p>	

**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 than 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.

## **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. Portage 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](http://www.tsa.gov), which keeps a current list of restricted items.

**Follow the TSA's 3-1-1 rule for liquids:** 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.

## **Air Inclusive Travelers**

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Cruise Line, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **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, it is our goal to have a GCCL Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, 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.
- **Overseas Arrival:** Once you arrive overseas, you'll need to collect your luggage and clear customs. A Grand Circle representative will meet you outside of customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel or ship. **Important note on porters:** *Airport porters are NOT allowed in the baggage claim 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 transfer vehicle. Your driver will load your luggage into the transfer vehicle.*
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more GCCL travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCCL Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our GCCL Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.
- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

## **Airport Transfers**

If you have purchased international air with Grand Circle Cruise Line and have not customized your dates of travel, then airport transfers are included in your program price.

If you will be booking your own international flights or will be customizing your travel dates with our air department, then 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**. You can also find more information online at [www.gct.com/airporttransfers](http://www.gct.com/airporttransfers). **Please note:** *You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as Grand Circle travelers who purchased included airfare, and transfers are only available the same day that the group arrives or departs.*



## 4. MONEY MATTERS

### How to Carry Your Money

**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. Most banks, post offices, or exchange offices will want to see your passport at the time of exchange. It's more practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last resort in the event of a special situation.

**U.S. dollars not accepted for payment:** You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars in the Netherlands, Belgium, or Germany; you will need euros instead. While there is no need to obtain euros before your trip, many travelers do exchange \$50 to \$100 or so before they arrive. This can smooth your arrival should you run into closed banks/exchange offices or broken ATMs. Once you are on the trip, you can withdraw euros from an ATM. You can also exchange money at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange money, you'll usually need your passport, bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty); new bills (post 2004) are best. You can also exchange a small amount of money onboard your river cruise ship; see the "Onboard Ship" section of this chapter for details.

**Carry a mix of local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card:** You'll be well prepared if you plan on this combination for payments on your trip.

### Local Currency

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director will advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to our website, or the financial section of your newspaper.

### **Euro Countries**

The countries on this itinerary—the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany—use the euro. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

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

## **Banking Hours**

Many banks in Europe won't exchange money unless you have an account with them, but some still provide this service for everyone. If you can't find a bank, then a post office, hotel, or exchange office (bureau de change) is a good bet.

- **Netherlands:** In general, banking hours are 1 pm to 4 pm Monday, and 9 am to 4 pm Tuesday through Friday. The GWK is the national organization in the Netherlands for exchanging money; the commissions it charges are somewhat lower than at private exchange offices. You can change money at GWK offices 7 days a week.
- **Belgium:** Belgian 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 noon and 1:30 pm. On Saturday, certain branches are also open 9 am to noon (except during July and August).
- **Germany:** German banks are normally open 8 am to 4 or 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

## **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.

## **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.

## **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.

## **Chip-and-PIN Cards**

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.

## **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**

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

## **Shopping**

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

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

## **Belgium**

Local shops in traditional Belgian products, like chocolate and porcelains, but Belgium's lace is famous the world over and should not be overlooked. The most famous laces to look for are *bloemenwek*, *rozenkant*, and *toveresseteek*.

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

## **Netherlands**

With its floating flower market and over 10,000 shops of various kinds, Amsterdam offers an unsurpassed range of shopping and browsing experiences. The Albert Cuypmarket is the city's biggest and liveliest market square, with offerings ranging from exotic fruits to clothing bargains and other textiles. Nieuwe Spiegelstraat, not far from the Rijksmuseum with its famous Dutch Masters, is a center for fine art and antiques. Fashion boutiques line the bustling Kalverstraat, and in addition to stylish shopping, the Metz & Company department store offers a fine view of the canal district from an upper-level café.

**Store Hours:** Shopping hours are generally 1 pm to 6:00 pm Monday, 9 am to 6:00 pm Tuesday through Friday (with some stores open until 9 pm Thursday and Friday), and 9 am to 4 pm Saturday. On Sunday everything is closed except museums; on Monday everything is open except museums.

## **Berlin, Germany**

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

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

The Ku'Damm (Kurfürstendamm) is Berlin's Fifth Avenue with many name brand stores and outlets selling cheap souvenirs. Many locals prefer to shop the side streets such as Breitscheidplatz for specialty items.

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

**VAT:** Inquire locally about rebates on Germany's 19% VAT sales tax. Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson about the VAT at time of purchase, or talk to your Program Director about it before you shop. Be sure to save all receipts and VAT forms for Customs.

## **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](http://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.

## **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.

## Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines. To make it easy for you to budget, we have quoted the amounts in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars.

- **GCCL Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your GCCL Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$4-\$6 per traveler for each day their Program Director is with them. *Please note that tips for your Program Director can only be in the form of cash, and local currency is appreciated. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Program Director during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Shipboard Crew:** We recommend a flat tip of \$10-\$12 U.S. per traveler, per day. You’ll give this tip once—at the end of your cruise—and it will be pooled among the entire crew. For your convenience tips for the crew can be paid by credit card.
- **Housekeeping Staff at Hotels:** We recommend \$1 per traveler, per day. (This is for hotels only; on the ship Housekeeping are part of crew, so you don’t need to tip them separately.)
- **Included in Your Trip Price:** Gratuities are included for local guides and motorcoach drivers on your main trip, extensions, and all optional tours.

## **Time at Leisure**

When you are exploring on your own, it’s useful to know when to tip and how much, because local customs often differ from the U.S. Here are a few helpful guidelines for the most common services a traveler might use:

- **Taxis:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change. If the driver helps you with heavy luggage, then 10% is a nice gesture.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** Throughout Europe, the tip for the waiter or bartender is usually included in the prices or added on as a service fee. Look for a statement on the menu like *servicekosten zijn inclusief* or *service compris*—which mean “service is included”, or for a service charge on the bill. If you would like to leave a tip on top of the service fee (or in the rare case when the service is not included) then 10% would be considered generous.
- **Public Restrooms:** It is very common to be charged a small use fee (not a tip) for restroom access. Typical amounts are about 0.50-0.70 euros. U.S. dollars are not accepted for this fee, so bring small change in the local currency with you. You might pay the fee to the attendant on duty, or there might be a turnstile to drop the coins into.



## 5. 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 panic—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.

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 online 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.

**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.

### For This Trip

**Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions.** 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 lightweight hooded waterproof jacket is ideal.

**Check the weather before you depart, but also 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, are common in spring. In March, 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.

**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**

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.

## **Travel Gear Suggestions**

To travel wisely these days you must juggle your personal needs and preferences against the physical limits of your transportation—whether it's an international airplane, a motorcoach, or a river ship. You'll have to distinguish between what you must have, what you'd like to have—the question isn't "Can I close my suitcase?" but "Can I carry all of this through an airport?" 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 and may even charge to check one suitcase.

**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.

**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 prefer brands you use for your cruise.

### **Consider ...**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription  | <i>These can be brought or purchased locally:</i>                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunglasses with a strap  | <input type="checkbox"/> Moisturizer, lip balm   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Travel money bag or money belt   | <input type="checkbox"/> Wide-brim sun hat or visor                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compact umbrella   | <input type="checkbox"/> Pocket-size tissues   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extra passport-sized photos  | <input type="checkbox"/> Packets of moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion |

## 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
- Hand-wash laundry soap, and maybe clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer & plug adapter—see “Regional Electricity” section
- Reading materials
- Travel journal/note pad
- Swimsuit: Useful if your ship/hotel has a pool or a whirlpool
- Home address book
- Photos, & small gifts for Home-Hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Collapsible walking staff
- Pocket calculator for exchange rates



## 6. 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](http://www.gct.com) for a current 10-day forecast of temperatures and conditions at your destinations. Or check Internet weather sites ([www.wunderground.com](http://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.

**The Netherlands & Belgium:** The Netherlands is so compact in size that any difference in temperature between regions is usually within two degrees Fahrenheit. Weather systems affect the entire country in a similar manner, too. 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. Showers are common—Bruges, in particular, gets a lot of rain—but the sprinkles rarely turn into heavy downpours. Overall, spring can be a wet time of year, especially early on in the season, when stints of inclement weather may pass through. Later in the season, a fine, warm spell may last for weeks—but then again, a stretch of cool, unsettled weather may prevail. Daytime temperatures, even during rains, tend to be mild—in the 50s and low 60s—though you should also be prepared for cooler weather.

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. No matter what the weather brings, though, spring is always a favorite time for tulip enthusiasts. If you are traveling in March, do be aware that not all blooms will be visible, as the height of the season runs from mid-April to late May.

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

**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.

## Climate Charts

The following charts reflect the average *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. As your departure approaches you may wish to monitor current weather conditions online. Here is the official data from the weather observation stations closest to our destinations:

MONTH	AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS			ANTWERP, BELGIUM		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of days with rain	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of days with rain
JAN	41-34	91-86	8	42-33	89-81	22
FEB	42-32	91-79	11	43-33	89-73	16
MAR	48-37	92-74	9	49-37	89-70	20
APR	53-40	90-66	12	55-40	89-62	19
MAY	61-46	87-62	12	63-47	89-62	19
JUN	66-52	89-66	9	68-53	90-63	18
JUL	69-55	90-68	12	71-56	90-64	18
AUG	70-55	91-65	11	72-55	92-61	16
SEP	64-51	93-72	10	66-51	93-68	17
OCT	57-46	93-78	9	58-45	92-73	18
NOV	48-39	92-85	7	49-39	90-79	20
DEC	44-36	92-88	7	44-36	90-82	21

MONTH	BRUGES, BELGIUM (optional extension)			BERLIN, GERMANY (optional extension)		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of days with rain	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of days with rain
JAN	39-35	87	21	35-26	89-83	17
FEB	39-34	88	18	39-27	90-76	13
MAR	45-38	86	19	47-33	88-64	17
APR	51-44	82	18	54-37	84-54	15
MAY	58-49	79	16	65-45	78-50	15
JUN	63-54	81	16	70-53	79-55	19
JUL	66-58	82	16	73-56	80-53	18
AUG	68-59	81	17	73-55	84-54	17
SEP	64-55	78	18	66-50	89-59	17
OCT	58-51	82	21	56-42	90-71	17
NOV	48-43	86	22	45-35	89-81	21
DEC	45-41	89	21	38-30	89-86	19

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



## 7. 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.

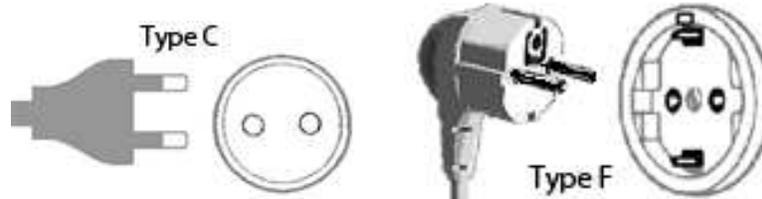
### **Regional Electricity**

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/adaptor 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.

The Netherlands and Belgium use 230V, 50Hz current and Type C “Europlug” and Type F receptacles that accommodate it.



## **Onboard Ship**

### ***River Adagio, Harmony, Melody, Aria***

Cabin bathrooms are equipped with a 110V outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with Type C “Europlug” outlets.

**Please note:** 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.

Even though you'll only need a Type C and Type F plug adapter on this trip, 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 handy to have a travel power strip, perhaps with a surge suppressor and USB-style port for charging cell phones, MP3 players or e-readers without the use of device-specific plugs.

## **Phones and Calling**

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 the apps via available Wi-Fi. With an Internet VOIP app (like Skype) you can make inexpensive calls. If necessary, turn international roaming back on and your phone will work as usual – albeit at some cost. If your phone doesn't support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

### **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](http://www.verizon.com), [www.t-mobile.com](http://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](http://www.travelcell.com) and [www.globalcellularrental.com](http://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 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.

## 8. GRAND CIRCLE CRUISE LINE'S EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISES



### *M/S River Aria, M/S River Adagio, M/S River Harmony, and M/S River Melody*

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 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.

#### **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 a daytime couch
- 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.

## Cabin Assignments

You will receive confirmation of your deck and/or cabin category upfront in writing; it will be on your invoice and online in My Account at [www.gct.com/myaccount](http://www.gct.com/myaccount). However, your cabin number may not be assigned until you arrive onboard the ship. (This is normal procedure for ships in many parts of the world, including Europe.) If there's no cabin number on your invoice or online, you can presume it will be assigned later and communicated to you when you board.

## 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, international cuisine, and American standards. Included with dinner are two complimentary drinks (choose from house wine, draft beer, or soft drink) per traveler, per meal. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase. Travelers 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 (Euros) per bottle, charged to your shipboard 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 bird 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 ship interior is non-smoking at all times.

## **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.

## **Drinking Water**

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

## **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.

## **Embarkation/Disembarkation**

On the day you board ship, your cabin will be available at around noon. 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 8:00am. You may sit in the ship's lounge or on the sun deck until disembarkation.

## **Headsets**

During the cruise portion of your trip, complimentary headsets will be provided on some of your included and optional tours so that you can better hear your Program Director or local guide. Bring your own earbuds or headphones if you'd like (or if you wear hearing aids.) A standard 3.5 mm ("mini", iPod/MP3 compatible) earphone plug is required for use.

## **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.

## **Onboard Activities**

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

## **Recreational Facilities**

These include a fitness center, sun deck with lounge, library, and lounge with bar and dance floor. The bar is open from 9:30 am to 1 am, with soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquors for sale. Prices are in Euros. The fitness center has an exercise bike and walking/running treadmill. A massage therapist is available as well.

## **Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy**

Smoking is not allowed anywhere inside our Grand Circle Cruise Line European River Ships, including in individual cabins or balconies. The only area on the ship where smoking is permitted is outside on the sun deck.

## **Shore Excursions**

Many sightseeing tours are included on your cruise. Other optional tours, offering broader and deeper insight into Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium, are available for an added fee during your trip. 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.

## **Wi-Fi Access**

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

## **Ship Specifications**

<i>Entered service</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Passenger capacity</i>	<i>Crew members</i>	<i>Decks</i>	<i>Cabins</i>	<i>Elevator</i>	<i>Chairlift to sun deck</i>
<b>M/S River Aria</b> 2001	418	38	164	38	4	82	yes	yes
<b>M/S River Adagio</b> 2003	418	38	164	38	4	82	yes	yes
<b>M/S River Harmony</b> 1999	361	38	140	32	4	70	yes	yes
<b>M/S River Melody</b> 1999	361	38	140	32	4	70	yes	yes

## **Your GCCL Program Directors**

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

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



## 9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

### **Amsterdam in Brief**

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.

### **City Layout and Details**

At the center of Amsterdam, Dam Square is the best place to begin exploring the oldest part of the city, which lies between the Singel and Kloveniersburgwal canals. Dam Square is also next to two of the city's main shopping streets (both of which are pedestrian malls). Amsterdam's 17<sup>th</sup>-century canal belt extends in concentric rings outward from the city center, lined with narrow canal houses that reflect the prosperity that Dutch merchants enjoyed in past centuries. This entire historic area of the city is compact enough to be explored on foot.

### **Cultural Insight**

Apart from being the largest renaissance city with lots of great architecture from the last 400 years, world class museums and fantastic sights along the canals, contemporary Amsterdam offers an insight in how a modern Dutch society deals with issues like gay communities, drug abuse and prostitution. Based on a 400 year old tradition of openness and tolerance towards different religious denominations and life choices, the Dutch government took a leading role in legalizing cannabis to a certain extent, legalizing window prostitution and recognizing gay marriage. Understanding the pragmatic Dutch approach to controversial issues in their society will form a part of a learning and discovery experience during your stay in Amsterdam.

### **Museums & Anne Frank House**

Many of Amsterdam's museums—the Anne Frank House, the Van Gogh Museum, and the Rijksmuseum—allow you to purchase tickets online and in advance. **Of these, the key one to pay attention to is the Anne Frank House.** The house is extremely popular, but small, so the number of visitors that can tour each day are limited. As a result, the line for tickets usually involves a long wait and you are not guaranteed entry. In order to avoid disappointment, our regional staff recommend that you purchase your tickets online at [www.annefrank.org/en/](http://www.annefrank.org/en/). Please note that tickets must be purchased for a specific date and time; they cannot be rescheduled or transferred and they are non-refundable.

## Cuisine

Dutch food is usually traditional, hearty, and simple, but in addition to the regional fare, you should know that the city is known for its openness to multi-cultural cooking influences and offers a very wide range of ethnic restaurants. Amsterdam is probably best-known for its excellent Indonesian cuisine, as the influence of the characteristic spices was a direct result of the Dutch colonization of the East Indies. You can also easily find Chinese, Japanese, Italian, French, German, Spanish, and Indian dining in the city.

Among the Dutch dishes that are renowned are cheeses, including Gouda and Edam, and of course the herring. These delicate fishes are frequently served with raw onions, and make a delightful treat on a thick slice of rye bread or on a *bolletje* (a soft roll). The truly traditional way to eat a herring is to hold it by its tail and just slip the headless young fish into your mouth. Some soups are typically Dutch—*erwtensoep*, the hearty pea soup simmered with pork sausage or bacon, thick enough so your spoon stands up on its own in the savory stew; and *hutsepot*, made with potatoes, carrots, and onions.

Some of the popular dishes you may encounter in your travels in Amsterdam include pancakes with sweet fillings, potatoes mashed with carrots (or kale or sauerkraut), many types of hearty breads, *hachee* (beef and onion stew), cabbage, flavorful sausages, and omelets. Seafood is good in Amsterdam, and restaurants offer whiting, sole, mussels, shrimp, and oysters. For a lighter snack, you might try smoked eel, deep-fried croquettes accompanied by mustard, or *belegde broodjes* (sandwiches or rolls with a variety of fillings). Sweets that satisfy for dessert are waffles with whipped cream and fruit, apple tarts and fruit pies, pastries with almond-flavored filling, and *poffertjes* (small fried balls of dough dusted with sugar). Milk—both white and chocolate—is a fairly popular beverage in the Netherlands, and many drinks are dairy-based, such as drinkable yogurts and buttermilk. You can linger in a café over sips of strong coffee, and be sure to take time to enjoy at least one of their excellent regional beers.

## Local Transportation

**On foot:** Amsterdam lends itself to walking, just be sure to wear your sturdy walking shoes.

**Public Transportation:** Amsterdam's GVB operates a comprehensive public transportation system for which pre-paid fare cards are readily available.

## Safety

Amsterdam attracts visitors for different purposes. These visitors attract pick pockets, as in any other grand city. Please be cautious and leave your valuables in the hotels' or ship cabins' safe. Generally it is safe to stroll around in Amsterdam—the biggest danger is the possibility of being overrun by a Dutch cyclist.

## **Bruges in Brief—Optional Extension**

### **City Layout and Details**

The heart of Bruges (Brugge in Dutch) is encircled by a broad circular canal that opens at its southern end to become the Minnewater (Lake of Love). This lake served as the town's busy port in the Middle Ages, before the demise of the Zwin. Today, a lovely green park lines its shores. To one side of the lake is the railway station. Bruges's narrow streets fan out from Grote Market, the vast central square, and the network of canals weaves its way to every corner of this small town.

### **Cultural Insight: the Languages of Belgium**

Belgium is known worldwide for its language issues. In the Northern part of the country (Flanders) about 58% of the people speak Dutch; in the Southern part of the country (Wallonia) 32% speak French. 10% of Belgian populace live in bilingual Belgium, Brussels—the only bilingual area in the country. In Brussels you will notice that all street names are in French and Dutch. In the capital, more than 80% of the inhabitants speak French and only less than 10% Dutch although Brussels is located in the centre of the country surrounded by Flemish territory. Most people visiting Belgium *only* visit Brussels and thus mistakenly think it is a uniquely French speaking country. Language related problems go to the foundations of the state of Belgium in such a way that a further split between the North and the South is inevitable. Understanding this underlying issue during your stay in Brussels enhances your learning and discovery experience.

You will get around with English more easily in Flanders (Antwerp, Bruges) than in Brussels and Wallonia. Most visited places in Brussels do cater for English speakers as well since there is a large influx of European Union administrators in the Capital of Europe.

### **Cuisine**

**Belgian specialties:** Brussels's pride in good food is evident in its 1,500-plus restaurants, which range in cuisine, size, ambience, and price. 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 difference); *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'll rarely find outside Belgium are those still brewed by Trappist monks; Orval, Westmalle, Achel, Chimay, Westvleteren and Rochefort. Only brewed in the valley of the Zenne (the tiny little river running through Brussels) and a more fruity taste; Geuze, Faro, Kriek and Lambiek. If you want to taste a typical Belgian lager, try the original Stella Artois, brewed in the university city of Leuven. The local beer – *Bruges zot* – is a favorite and gold medal winner here, well worth sampling.

**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.

## **Local Transportation**

**On foot:** The best way to see Bruges properly is to stroll through its charming little cobblestone streets at leisure. Just be sure to wear your sturdy walking shoes. After dark, when the day visitors are gone, the small canals and medieval streets are lit up and create a unique atmosphere. It is perfectly safe to walk the streets at night – though, as in Amsterdam, pickpockets are drawn to Bruges.

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

## **Laundry Service**

Laundry service and dry cleaning are available through your hotel for an additional fee.

## **Drinking Water**

Tap water in Belgium and the Netherlands is safe for drinking.

## **Internet Access**

Belgium and The Netherlands are densely cabled and most homes have their own Internet connection. You'll find, as we stop in small towns, that the Internet is not available; and even in some bigger cities there are a limited number of Internet cafes—and those sometimes inconveniently located.

## **Berlin in Brief — Optional Extension**

### **City Layout and Details**

**West Berlin:** Most of the downtown was laid out in the late 19th century, and the streets form a sensible grid. Running from east to west, the major avenues are Kurfurstendamm (the closest thing to Main Street in West Berlin), Hardenberstrasse, Kantstrasse, and Strasse des 17 Juni. The chief north to south connections are Potsdamer Strasse, Joachimstaler Strasse, and Wilmersdorfer Strasse. The Kurfurstendamm, nicknamed Ku'damm, is lined with shops, department stores, art galleries, theaters, movie theaters, hotels, and some 100 restaurants, bars, clubs, and sidewalk cafés. It bustles with shoppers and strollers most of the day and fairly far into the night.

Just steps away from Ku'Damm's Memorial Church, on the east side of the Brietscheidplatz, is the Europa Center, a vast shopping and business complex. It houses more than 100 shops, restaurants and cafés, an ice rink, two cinemas, a theater, casino, and the Tourist Information Center (Verkehrsamt). The city's aquarium and zoo complex are just across from the entrance to the Tourist Information Center (on Budapesterstrasse).

Diagonally across from the zoo is the Tiergarten, a beautifully laid-out park with some 14 miles of footpaths, 6.5 acres of lakes and ponds, and the Strasse des 17 Juni which leads to Brandenburg Gate. Other city attractions include the Bellevue Palace, built on Spree River in 1775, and Reichstag, Germany's former parliament building.

**East Berlin:** Much of East Berlin has been renovated and restored in recent years and is laid out in somewhat of a grid pattern. The city center—the 4-square-mile “Berlin Mitte” district—has received a complete facelift. The shop-lined Friedrichstrasse is a major thoroughfare; it runs north to south, and leads to Johann-Dieckmann-Strasse, which in turn takes you to the large square called Platz der Akademie, still one of Europe's finest piazzas. Berlin's concert hall is here, and so are the rebuilt German and French cathedrals.

Unter den Linden is the main thoroughfare of old Berlin, along with Karl-Marx-Allee, which run east to west. On the north side of elegant Unter den Linden is Humboldt University, built in 1766. The Palais Unter den Linden is also on this street. The street leads to *Museumsinsel (Museum Island)*, where eastern Berlin's best museums are located.

The focal point for shopping is the Kaufhof department store, which took over the former East German Centrum Warenhaus, located on the Alexanderplatz Square, the former hub of Berlin city life. Just past the Red Town Hall, around St. Nicholas's Church, is the Nikolai Quarter, filled with stores, cafés, and restaurants. Just past the area of Breite Strasse, where there's an array of fine old buildings, is the Fischerinsel area—it was the heart of Berlin 750 years ago. Today, it retains some of its medieval character, and provides a refreshing change from the postwar architecture.

To get beyond the city center, you can use the excellent network of buses, trains (the S-Bahn), and subways (the U-Bahn), described under “Local Transportation.”

## **Cuisine**

German Cuisine varies greatly from region to region. The southern regions of Bavaria and Swabia share many dishes among them and with their neighbors to the south, Switzerland and Austria. In the West, French influences are more pronounced, while the eastern parts of the country have much in common with Eastern European cuisine and there are marked Scandinavian influences in the northern coastal regions.

Traditionally, the main meal of the day is lunch, eaten around noon. Supper (*Abendessen* or *Abendbrot*) is a smaller meal, sometimes only consisting of a couple of sandwiches. However, changing working habits have forced this to be changed in recent decades; today, it is not uncommon for many Germans to eat their main meal in the evening.

Meat is usually pot-roasted; pan-fried dishes also exist, but these are usually imports from France. Throughout Germany, meat is very often eaten in sausage form. There are more than 1500 different types of sausage in Germany. Currywurst is a favorite sausage dish in and around Berlin which consists of steamed pork sausage cut into slices and steamed with warm curry ketchup.

Beer is very common throughout all parts of Germany. In most of the country, the originally Czech Pils is predominant nowadays, whereas people in the South (especially in Bavaria) seem to prefer Lager or wheat beer. Wine is also popular throughout the country. German wine comes predominantly from the areas along the upper and middle Rhine and its tributaries.

## **Local Transportation**

Berlin has one of the most efficient public transportation systems in Europe, a smoothly integrated network of subway (U-bahn) and elevated (S-bahn) train lines, buses, trams (in the former East Berlin only), and even a ferry (across the Wannsee Lake), making every part of the city accessible. There's also an all-night bus service, indicated by the letter "N" next to route numbers. In summer, there are excursion buses linking the downtown area with the most popular recreational areas. For visitors who plan to travel extensively around the city, there is a "Berlin Ticket," valid from the time of purchase until 3 am the next day and good for all trains and buses. Berlin is a large city that's extremely spread out, so using public transit is the best mode to discover the city.

## 10. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY

### Belgium

**Area:** 11,780 square miles

**Capital:** Brussels

**Language:** Dutch, French, and German are the official languages.

**Location:** Belgium is bordered by France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands

**Geography:** 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:** 10,392,226

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 75%

**Time Zone:** Belgium is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in New York, it is noon in Brussels. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

#### National Holidays:

01/01 New Year's Day

04/05 Easter Day

04/06 Easter Monday

05/01 Labor Day / May Day

05/14 Ascension Day

05/24 Whit Sunday

05/25 Whit Monday

07/21 Belgian National Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/11 Armistice Day

12/25 Christmas Day

### 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:** 16,877,351

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 28%, Protestant 19%, other 11% (includes about 5% Muslim and lesser numbers of Hindu, Buddhist, Jehovah's Witness, and Orthodox), 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 Washington D.C., it is noon in Amsterdam.

**National Holidays:**

01/01	New Year's Day
04/03	Good Friday
04/05	Easter Day
04/06	Easter Monday
04/27	King's Birthday
05/05	Liberation Day
05/14	Ascension Day
05/24	Whit Sunday
05/25	Whit Monday
12/25	Christmas Day
12/26	Second Day of Christmas

## Waterways of the Netherlands

Nearly half of this small country—it measures just over 16,000 square miles—is below sea level, making the famous Dutch dikes a requisite for the use of a lot of the land. As early as 100 years ago, as much as 1,000 square miles of the Netherlands were still under water. Over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, it was a never-ending Dutch pursuit to extract more and more land from the sea. With the completion of ingenious water-control designs like the Zeeland Delta Project—a massive system of dikes, storm-surge barriers, and sluice gates—the Netherlands now has working solutions to its centuries-old problem of recurrent flooding by the North Sea.

Even so, the country still contains a lot of water, at least 1,100 square miles of it. That water, however, due to Dutch ingenuity and modern technology, is now mostly channeled into manageable canals, lakes, and rerouted rivers that were once open sea. It is the Netherlands' waterways, which, despite being a hazard when flooded, have long enabled the commercial success of the country. Throughout history, the rivers' strategic positions have given the Netherlands a prominent role in world shipping and trading. Essentially, the Netherlands is Europe's delta. Here three of Europe's major waterways—the Rhine, the Maas, the Waal, and their tributaries (including the Kil and the Merwede Rivers)—come to empty into the North Sea. Since the earliest seafaring days, products from the rest of Europe have come to this point on their way to the Atlantic Ocean for shipment to markets around the world.

The rivers also serve as natural boundaries that dissect the country into several different topographical regions. The land to the north of the rivers is relatively low; south of the rivers, elevations are somewhat higher, but no spot in the Netherlands would ever be considered mountainous. There is just one modest hilltop peak—only 1,093 feet high—among the rolling hills in the southeast province of Limburg. The central provinces of Gelderland and Utrecht are forested; otherwise most of the countryside is flat green fields. In addition to natural geographical divisions, the rivers also designate religious boundaries. Above the rivers, the population is predominantly Calvinist; below the rivers, most of the people are Catholic.

# Germany

## Facts & Figures

**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:** 80,996,685

**Religions:** Protestant 34%, Roman Catholic 34%, Muslim 3.7%, unaffiliated or other 28.3%

**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. Daylight Saving Time begins the last Sunday in March and ends the last Sunday in October.

## National Holidays

01/01 New Year's Day  
04/03 Good Friday    Silent Day  
04/06 Easter Monday  
05/01 May Day  
05/14 Ascension Day  
05/25 Whit Monday  
10/03 Day of German Unity  
12/25 Christmas Day  
12/26 Boxing Day

# 11. 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 (alibris.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.

### **Netherlands and Belgium**

*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.

*Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland* by Paul Zumthor (Culture)

A glimpse of life during the 17<sup>th</sup>-century "golden age" of the Dutch. This book covers a myriad of topics (theater, trading companies, fisheries, homes, childrearing, religion, and musicians to name just a few) during a time when Holland cultivated its arts and saw a great expansion of its empire overseas.

*The Factory of Facts* by Luc Sante (Memoir)

Born in Belgium in 1954 and transplanted to New Jersey at age five, Sante reminisces about his upbringing in evocative passages about his national past and glimpses of his American experiences. The cumulative effect is a portrait not only of himself, but also of his natal homeland.

*Historical Dictionary of Belgium* by Robert Stallaerts (History)

A wonderful reference work to all the events that have shaped Belgium's history.

### **Berlin, Germany**

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

*Berlin* by Giles MacDonogh (Culture) A 1998 study of the history, sociology, architecture, food, crime, and theater of one of Europe's most intriguing cities—on the eve of its return as the capital of the Unified Germany.

### **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.

### **Netherlands:**

***Soldier of Orange*** (Paul Verhoeven, 1977) Director 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 six students and their different roles in the World War II—either as collaborators or 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*** (Carice van Houten, Sebastian Koch, 2006) A 2006 war thriller about a young Jewish woman named Rachel 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 Rachel is forced to live in order to survive. A 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*** (Scarlett Johansson, Colin Firth, 2003) Director Peter Webber paints a mysterious masterpiece with his debut film *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. This 20gem 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*** (Christian Barbier, Georges Poujouly, 1970) 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 movie explores issues of prejudice and superstition in the Belgian countryside.

***In Bruges*** (Colin Farrell, Brendan Gleeson, Ralph Fiennes, 2008) In this 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.

### **Germany**

***Das Boot*** starring Jurgen Prochnow and Herbert Gronemeyer (1981, color) 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. In German with subtitles.

***Goodbye Lenin!*** Directed by Wolfgang Becker (2003, color) 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.

***Grand Hotel*** starring Greta Garbo, John Barrymore, Joan Crawford, and Lionel Barrymore (1932, B&W) As people come and go at Berlin's finest hotel, drama unfolds. Berlin is barely showcased—the drama is all indoors—but we couldn't resist adding this to the list because of the amazing cast.

***Run Lola Run*** starring Franka Potente and Moritz Bleibtreu (1998, color) When her boyfriend Manny loses a lot of money that belongs to a crime boss, Lola has only 20 minutes to run and replace the cash before he robs a store in desperation. The film actually shows three different outcomes; each time the story changes depending on minor events that happen as Lola runs. A cult classic in Germany and the U.S.; in German with subtitles.

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

***The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*** starring Richard Burton and Claire Bloom (1965, B&W) This classic spy thriller is all about the twists and turns of an undercover mission by a British agent in East Berlin. The standout performance by Richard Burton garnered him an Oscar nomination for Best Actor.

## **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](http://www.gct.com/community)

### **Government websites:**

**International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

**U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information**

[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel)

**Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency responsible for screening luggage in U.S.**

[www.tsa.gov/public](http://www.tsa.gov/public)

**National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### **General travel information websites:**

#### **Travel books**

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

[www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

#### **World weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)

[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

**Foreign languages for travelers: basic terms in more than 80 languages**

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

**Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

**Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe**

[www.cybercafes.com](http://www.cybercafes.com)

**Electric current and plug types**

[www.kropla.com/electric2.htm](http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm)

**Foreign exchange rates**

[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

#### **ATM locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm) for **Cirrus ATMs**

[www.visa.com/pd/atm](http://www.visa.com/pd/atm) for **PLUS ATMs**

### **Country and City information:**

[www.visitbelgium.com](http://www.visitbelgium.com) **Belgium**

[www.holland.com](http://www.holland.com) **Holland** (You can send email to: [information@holland.com](mailto:information@holland.com))

[www.amsterdam.info/tips/touristoffice](http://www.amsterdam.info/tips/touristoffice) **Amsterdam**

[www.visitberlin.de/en](http://www.visitberlin.de/en) **Berlin**

[www.germany-tourism.de](http://www.germany-tourism.de) **Germany**

[www.visiteurope.com](http://www.visiteurope.com) **Links to countries**

[www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html](http://www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html) **City guides**

#### **Travel books**

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

[www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)