

Grand Circle Cruise Line[®]

THE LEADER IN VALUE AND WORLDWIDE DISCOVERY SINCE 1958

Your Grand Circle Travel Planning Guide



Christmas Markets Along the Danube 2026

Grand Circle Cruise Line®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with Grand Circle Cruise Line. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you cruise with us, you can expect an award-winning experience aboard our privately owned river ship. In addition to the convenience of unpacking just once, you will also enjoy the warm hospitality provided by our friendly, English-speaking crew, coupled with camaraderie of your fellow American travelers.

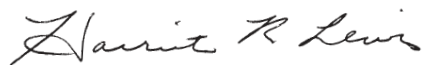
In addition, up to four **expert, local Program Directors** will accompany you from the beginning of your trip to the end. Assigned to a group of 38 travelers on average, these passionate leaders are ready and eager to share their homeland and insights as only a local can. Whether it is recommending their favorite restaurant, connecting travelers with people and culture, or providing the best ways to enhance your leisure time, your Program Director will be available to take care of all the details and ensure that you have a fun and carefree travel experience. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Throughout your journey, you will experience Exclusive Discovery Series events designed to connect you with local people and culture. From sharing traditional fare and lively conversation during Home-Hosted Visits, to discussing Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, you will gain an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our low-cost Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who customize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-2610**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Grand Circle Cruise Line

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Vienna, Austria

Christmas Markets Along the Danube

Germany: Nuremberg, Regensburg, Passau | **Austria:**
Linz, Melk, Vienna

9 days starting from \$3,595

including airfare

Single Supplement: \$795

For departure dates & prices, visit

www.gct.com/xms2026pricing

Christmas trees aglow with candles, the strains of “Silent Night,” spicy gingerbread. The spirit of the season is all around as you cruise the storied Danube for **7 nights aboard the privately owned 162-passenger M/S River Aria or M/S River Adagio**. Explore the most beloved ports of Austria and Germany, visiting Christmas markets and medieval towns dressed for the holidays.

IT'S INCLUDED

- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges, unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- **Accommodations** for 7 nights aboard a private river ship with wireless Internet access in all common areas and cabins
- **20 meals:** 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, and 7 dinners—plus all onboard house beer & wine, as well as soft drinks
- **5 included tours** with personal headsets, **up to 5 Christmas markets**, and **6 Exclusive Discovery Series events**—Main-Danube Canal conversation • German language lesson • Regensburg choral concert • *Stollen* baking demonstration • *Christmas Traditions* conversation • Wachau Valley conversation
- **Local Program Directors, a Grand Circle Cruise Line exclusive:** These dedicated experts are with you and your group of 38-45 travelers from beginning to end to provide insider's knowledge and a local perspective
- **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- **All port charges**
- **Baggage handling** for 1 piece of luggage per person, including tips
- **5% Frequent Traveler Credit** toward your next trip

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.



ITINERARY SUMMARY

1 • Depart U.S.

2-3 • Nuremberg, Germany

Embark ship

Port Nuremberg

4-5 • Regensburg

Port Regensburg

6 • Passau

Port Passau

7 • Linz, Austria

Port Linz

8 • Melk • Vienna

Port Melk

9 • Vienna • Return to U.S.

Disembark ship

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 2 3 4 5 Easy

Group Size

- This trip has a maximum group size of 38-45 travelers with a local Program Director exclusive to Grand Circle

Pacing

- 9 days, with 7 nights aboard a private river ship
- Return flights to U.S. often require departing from ship in early morning hours

Physical Requirements

- Walk 1-3 miles unassisted over a period of 1-2 hours, including stairs and cobblestones, and participate in 3-4 hours of physical activities each day
- Optional activities and walks may be offered in addition to the above mentioned activity level
- 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

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

Terrain & Transportation

- Diverse terrain and uneven walking surfaces, including steep paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-60 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones
- Travel by 162-passenger river ship and 49-seat coach
- Changes in water-level depths may require adjustments to your itinerary

Climate

- Daytime temperatures range from 38-45°F during cruising season
- Rain, ice, snow, and wind are possible during the holiday season

MAXIMIZE YOUR DISCOVERIES & VALUE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

all with FREE Single Supplements

Munich, Germany

PRE-TRIP: 3 nights from \$895

Vienna, Austria

POST-TRIP: 3 nights from \$845

Christmas Markets Along the Danube

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Munich, Germany*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Munich, Germany

Day 3 Munich

Day 4 Munich • Optional Neuschwanstein Castle tour

Day 5 Munich • Rothenberg • Embark ship

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart the U.S. today on your flight to Nuremberg, Germany.

Day 2 Nuremberg, Germany • Embark ship

- Destination: Nuremberg
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S River Aria or M/S River Adagio

Morning/Afternoon: Arrive in Nuremberg this morning, where a Grand Circle representative meets you at the airport and helps you transfer to the pier to embark your waiting river ship. Upon arrival, get settled into your cabin and explore the ship—your home for the next 7 nights.

Enjoy some free time to relax and familiarize yourself with your ship. Then gather early this evening for a ship briefing about your River Cruise, and to get better acquainted with your Program Director and fellow travelers.

Dinner: Afterward, settle in for your first dinner onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 3 Nuremberg

- Destination: Nuremberg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S River Aria or M/S River Adagio

Activity Note: Christmas markets typically open one week before, or at the start of Advent observances in mid- to late-November. Hours of operation for the holiday markets vary depending on region, and may be limited or closed between December 22 and December 26, as well as on New Year's Day. If necessary, your trip itinerary may be adjusted as a result. The ship is docked outside of the city center; it will take around 30 minutes to reach the city by bus.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: After breakfast, disembark for a tour of Nuremberg, one of the most important cities of the Franconia region.

This medieval city surrounded by 13th-century walls is the second-largest city in Bavaria. Today the city's name evokes the notorious post-World War II war trials. But throughout its history, Nuremberg has been known for its wonderful creativity and handcrafts—its toys and fancy metalwork are particularly famous.

Lunch: Return to the ship for lunch in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Set off for a visit to Nuremberg's famous *Christkindlmarkt* (Christmas market), where you have free time to browse on your own. This is Germany's most well-known traditional Christmas market, and it is open throughout the holiday season, with myriad colorful stalls offering handmade Christmas decorations, toys, ceramics, glasswork, and candles. Food stalls tempt you with *Bratwurst*, mulled wines, sweets, and pastries—including the famous Nuremberg gingerbread. Various programs regale visitors with chorale offerings, concerts, and a live Nativity scene.

Dinner: Tonight, enjoy a Welcome Drink and the Captain's Welcome Dinner onboard.

Evening: The ship lifts anchor and heads out on the Main-Danube Canal as we cruise overnight on our way to our next port of call. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 4 Regensburg • Main-Danube Canal discussion • German language lesson • Choral concert

- Destination: Regensburg
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Aria* or M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: During the Main-Danube Canal transit, it may be necessary for the Captain to close the Sun Deck because of low-standing bridges.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: This morning, cruise Europe's highest canal, the Main-Danube. En route, learn about the engineering techniques and innovations—from locks to water pumps—that have allowed travelers to navigate Europe's rivers during an **Exclusive Discovery Series** lecture.

You are also invited to an **Exclusive Discovery Series** German language lesson, where you can learn some German phrases—such as, *Schöne Feiertage* (Happy Holidays)—commonly used during the Christmas season.

Lunch: You'll have lunch onboard in the ship's dining room just as we're arriving in Regensburg, a hidden treasure with elements dating back to medieval times.

Afternoon: After your meal, go ashore for a walking tour. Since the city suffered no damage during World War II, it remains beautifully preserved. Your tour features the Old Town Hall and the famous Stone Bridge, Germany's oldest, which was constructed during the twelfth century. You'll also visit the Regensburg *Christkindlmarkt* in Neupfarrplatz, which lights up in December with seasonal cheer.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: Join us for an **Exclusive Discovery Series** event as we walk to a local church to hear a choral concert featuring festive holiday music. Afterwards, return to the ship, which remains docked in Regensburg overnight.

Day 5 Regensburg • Passau • Stollen baking demonstration

- Destination: Passau
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Aria* or M/S *River Adagio*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: Enjoy a leisurely morning onboard today, or spend the more exploring Regensburg at your own pace. Ask your Program Director for suggested places to visit.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: The afternoon is free for more of your own discoveries. Your cruise toward Passau begins shortly before dinner. You may choose to stay onboard this afternoon, where you might go on deck and take in the scenes of life along the banks of the noble Danube, or spend some time with fellow travelers over coffee or cards. Later on, you'll learn how to bake *Stollen*, a traditional German bread made with fruit and nuts, and topped with powdered sugar, during an **Exclusive Discovery Series** demonstration.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: In late evening we arrive in Passau, where we dock overnight. You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 6 Passau • Christmas Traditions conversation

- Destination: Passau
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Aria* or M/S *River Adagio*

Activity Note: The ship may be required to dock outside of the city center today; if so, we will drive for 30 minutes by bus into the city to begin the day's activities.

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: This morning, learn about local holiday lore during an **Exclusive Discovery Series** conversation about local Christmas traditions. Then disembark for a tour of the lovely medieval town of Passau.

Situated at the confluence of the Danube, the Ilz, and the Inn rivers, Passau has been called the *Dreiflüssestadt* (City on Three Rivers). The city was significantly developed by the prince bishops of Passau, who made it their royal residence and capital of the largest Danube diocese.

You'll enjoy a short walking tour of this elegant town that has served as a German cultural and intellectual hub for centuries. See the impressive Bishop's Residenz, the 13th-century Town Hall, and the town's magnificent St. Stephen's Cathedral, which boasts the world's largest church organ, with 17,774 pipes and 231 resounding stops. The cathedral's original Gothic plan is still evident through the 17th-century reconstruction it received in the grand Baroque style. One of its most striking features is the gorgeous octagonal dome that hovers over the intersection of the nave, where the congregation sits, and the transept, which runs perpendicular to it.

Passau's colorful Christmas market is located in front of the cathedral. You have some free time to do some shopping or simply browse the wide assortment of handcrafts and Christmas creations.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: Head back into Passau to explore this charming town further on your own. Perhaps you will discover its famous Glass Museum, home to an extensive collection of Bohemian glass, dating from 1650 till 1950.

Later, return to your ship for some warming *gluhwein* and gingerbread before setting sail to Linz, Austria in the late afternoon.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 7 Linz, Austria • Optional Salzburg tour • Captain's Farewell Dinner

- Destination: Linz
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Aria* or M/S *River Adagio*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: This morning the ship calls at the port of Linz. You have the day free to explore this Old World city. Linz, one of the largest ports on the Danube and the second-most populous city in Austria, was initially settled by Romans in the first century AD, and today is one of the country's cultural centers. It offers a wealth of discoveries—from its Hauptplatz, one of the loveliest squares in Europe, to the 17th-century Abbey of St. Florian, where Linz's

native son, Anton Bruckner, was the organist and composed many of his famed masterpieces of church music. His burial site is at the abbey.

You could also consider a visit to Linz's historic Landhaus, a complex of structures currently used as government headquarters. These buildings served as the city's university in the 17th century, and it was here that the well-known mathematician and astronomer Johann Kepler formulated his theory of planetary motion. A short walk takes you to the *Linzer Schloss* (Linz Castle), where you can browse its Provincial Museum of Upper Austria, containing artwork from medieval to modern times. Linz is also a center for trade in antiques, so you might wish to stop in at a few of its shops to see what treasures you can find.

Or, journey into the heart of the Alps with an optional full-day Salzburg excursion which includes lunch.

Your optional tour of this beautiful city—birthplace of Mozart—includes a visit to the *Getreidegasse*, the renowned center for Austrian shopping. The vaulted passageways offer delightful pathways to artisans' workshops and arcaded courtyards. You'll also get another taste of Alpine Christmas traditions as you visit the fabulous Salzburg Christmas market.

Lunch: Return to the ship for lunch.

Or, if you have chosen the optional tour, enjoy a traditional Austrian lunch at a local restaurant.

Afternoon: Spend the rest of your day relaxing or continue exploring Linz's charming Christmas market and abundance of museums on your own.

Or, for those on our optional tour, take advantage of some free time to explore Salzburg on your own before boarding your ship again in the late afternoon in Linz.

Dinner: This evening, as you cruise the river again, celebrate your discoveries and new Christmas memories at the Captain's Farewell Dinner onboard.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish. Perhaps you'll enjoy a nightcap at the bar or relax in the lounge.

Day 8 Melk • Wachau Valley discussion • Optional *Musical Vienna* tour

- Destination: Melk
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: M/S *River Aria* or M/S *River Adagio*

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: After breakfast, disembark in Melk for an excursion to the dramatic 900-year-old Baroque Melk Abbey.

This magnificently ornate structure has a long and storied history. Strategically situated on a steep, cliffside perch, Melk Abbey's earliest incarnation was as a Roman border post. Later, it served as a tenth-century Babenberg fortress. It became a Benedictine monastery in 1089 and earned a distinguished reputation for medieval scholarship. Its library includes more than 70,000 books and 2,000 manuscripts, chiefly from the ninth through the 15th centuries. The Abbey also houses a remarkable cherub-filled library of thousands of books and manuscripts, and 365 windows—one for every day of the year. The interior of the Abbey's church is a kaleidoscope of red, orange, and gold—with a magnificent carved pulpit and shimmering ceiling frescoes. You'll also enjoy free time to explore Melk at leisure before returning to your ship.

Lunch: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Afternoon: After setting sail again, enjoy a hot seasonal beverage and relax onboard as your ship cruises along one of the most beautiful parts of the Danube—the Wachau Valley. Your Program Director will provide enlightening commentary about this UNESCO World Heritage Site consisting of sculpted hills and medieval towns built along the river during an **Exclusive Discovery Series** discussion.

You arrive in Vienna before dinnertime.

Dinner: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Evening: After dinner, you can accompany your Program Director for a peek into this elegant city.

Vienna without music wouldn't be Vienna. So, subject to availability of tickets, you may want to join us this evening on an optional *Musical Vienna* outing for a performance in one of Vienna's famed concert halls. This optional excursion is an excellent opportunity to hear classical Viennese music in a setting where Johann Strauss himself performed.

Day 9 Disembark ship • Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: Onboard in the ship's dining room.

Morning: After breakfast, disembark and transfer to the airport for your flight home.

END YOUR TRIP WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

3 nights in *Vienna, Austria*

Day 1 Vienna, Austria

Day 2 Vienna • Optional *Christmas Across Borders* tour

Day 3 Vienna • Optional *Best of Vienna* tour

Day 4 Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with us. You will be asked to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.

Salzburg

(Day 7 \$145 per person)

Discover Salzburg—birthplace of Mozart—including a visit to the *Getreidegasse*, the renowned center for Austrian shopping. Note the intricate architectural details of this lane of shops and galleries, nestled under their skillfully crafted wrought-iron signs and offering jewelry, antiques, leather goods, and regional foods. The vaulted passageways offer delightful pathways to artisans' workshops and arcaded courtyards.

You'll get another taste of Alpine Christmas traditions as you visit the fabulous Salzburg Christmas market. Handmade seasonal crafts of all sorts are available, and the aromas of traditional holiday foods add magic to the colorful setting. Lunch is included in this beautiful city, as well as free time to explore on your own before boarding your ship again in the late afternoon in Linz.

Musical Vienna

(Day 8 \$110 per person)

Enjoy an unforgettable performance in one of Vienna's famed concert halls. You'll hear classical Viennese music in a setting where Johann Strauss himself performed, and be enchanted by the timeless melodies.

Please note: Tickets are subject to availability.

PRE-TRIP

Munich, Germany

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » **Accommodations** for 3 nights
- » **4 meals:** 3 breakfasts and 1 dinner
- » Included tours with personal headsets:
Munich • Rothenberg
- » Dedicated services of a **local Program Director**
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Join us on an optional extension to explore one of Europe's most culturally rich cities, with more museums than any other city in Germany. The Alte Pinakothek (Old Picture Gallery) alone has nearly 900 paintings on display, with major works by Durer, Rubens, and da Vinci. The largest university community in Germany, Munich offers enchanting contrasts, from sidewalk cafes serving mouth-watering sausages and locally brewed beers to public squares graced with historic churches, monuments, and statuary.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Depart today on your flight to Munich.

Director and fellow travelers for a Welcome Drink before enjoying dinner on your own this evening.

Day 2 Arrive Munich, Germany

- Destination: Munich
- Accommodations: Maritim Hotel Munich

Morning: Arrive in Munich this morning, where a Grand Circle representative meets you at the airport and helps you transfer to your hotel. Enjoy a brief walk with your Program Director to get acquainted with the area around your hotel.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: The rest of the day is at leisure to relax after your overseas flight, or venture out to explore on your own. Join your Program

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations. Munich offers a wide variety of cuisines. And, you'll certainly want to sample some of the traditional Bavarian specialties such as *Bratwurst*, *Sauerkraut*, and potato or bread dumplings. Perhaps you'll wash down your meal with good local beer or Franconian wine, or keep a time-honored tradition by having an after-dinner schnapps.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 3 Munich

- Destination: Munich
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Maritim Hotel Munich

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today enjoy a tour highlighting the major sights of this exciting city. See St. Peter's, the Romanesque basilica that was Munich's first parish church, and the Church of Our Lady: With its twin onion domes, it is the city's symbol and one of the largest churches in Europe.

You'll also visit the city's main square, Marienplatz (with its magnificent Christmas tree), the center and heart of Munich since its founding in 1138. Where jousting tournaments were held during the Middle Ages, street performers and musicians now hold court, eager to entertain you. The main feature of the square is the New Town Hall with its beautiful Glockenspiel. The carillon's bells play folk tunes every day, year-round, while its nearly life-size figures perform scenes from Munich's history, including a jousting match (celebrating the 1568 wedding of Duke Wilhelm V) and a Schächlerstanz (coppers' guild dance commemorating the end of the Black Death plague). Performers bring the figurines' movements to life in a special presentation every seven years.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: The balance of your day is free. You can remain in Marienplatz, to peruse the stalls of Munich's oldest Christmas market, or explore the city's Old Town pedestrian zone. You may also choose to get better acquainted with Munich's culture and history with a visit to one of its many fine museums. The New Picture Gallery houses an extensive collection

of works by Monet, Cezanne, and Degas—and the Old Picture Gallery offers a collection of works by old German and Flemish masters.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 4 Munich • Optional Neuschwanstein Castle tour

- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Maritim Hotel Munich

Activity Note: Today's optional tours, Hohenschwangau Castle and Neuschwanstein Castle, may not be possible due to local COVID-19 restrictions and capacity limits in order to maintain safe social distancing.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Enjoy your final day in Munich exploring on your own, perhaps exploring the city's Old Town pedestrian zone. Or, join an optional excursion to Neuschwanstein Castle.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

During your optional excursion, you have free time to have lunch on your own and do a little exploring at your own pace. You return to Munich in the late afternoon.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 5 Munich • Rothenburg • Embark ship

- Destination: Rothenburg
- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today you transfer from Munich to Nuremberg, stopping en route in Rothenburg, a charming town still protected by its medieval walls and strategically situated on the Tauber River. On arrival, you stroll through the town's Christmas market as your Program Director

provides helpful commentary along the way. You have time for making discoveries on your own.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Depart Rothenburg for Nuremberg mid-afternoon, arriving before dinner. You'll embark your waiting cruise ship and join your fellow travelers on your main trip.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Neuschwanstein Castle

(Day 4 \$150 per person)

Explore lovely Neuschwanstein Castle. The Sleeping Beauty Castle at Disney World is modeled after this fanciful and fantastic structure, decorated with towers and spires, full of elaborate and richly embellished rooms, and set spectacularly on a high point over the Pollat River Gorge. Begun in 1869 and left unfinished at Ludwig's death in 1886, the castle is like a fairy tale come to life. A classic example of 19th-century romanticism, the castle was built with many technological innovations that were revolutionary at the time—including automatic flush toilets on every floor, hot air heating and hot running water systems, and an elaborate room service system in the king's bedroom. During your excursion, you have free time to have lunch on your own and do a little exploring at your own pace. You leave for Munich in mid afternoon.

If tickets to Neuschwanstein Castle are not available, you can instead enjoy an optional tour to Ludwig II's Hohenschwangau Castle.

POST-TRIP

Vienna, Austria

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » **Accommodations** for 3 nights
- » **4 meals:** 3 breakfasts and 1 dinner
- » Included tour with personal headsets: Vienna
- » Dedicated services of a **local Program Director**
- » **Gratuities** for local guides and motorcoach drivers
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Join us as we explore Vienna, a magnificent Old-World city of museums and music, art and architecture, and famous people from its storied past, that has lost nothing of the grace and charm that has for centuries helped it stand out even in the dazzling company of other great European cultural capitals.

Day 1 Vienna, Austria

- Destination: Vienna
- Accommodations: Regina Hotel Vienna or similar

Morning: After disembarking from your main trip, enjoy a tour of Vienna en route to your hotel. Your tour showcases the *Ringstrasse*, probably the greatest achievement of the Emperor Franz Joseph. In 1857, the Emperor ordered the demolition of the ancient city walls, which were no longer needed as fortifications and which were actually impeding the growth of the city. In their place was constructed an elegant 2.5-mile-long boulevard, encircling the *Innere Stadt*. The neoclassical buildings along the *Ringstrasse* bring together all the greatest architectural styles in an exuberant celebration of all that seemed possible during the Industrial Revolution. Your stroll continues along the city sidewalks, passing by the well-known Hofburg Spanish Riding School.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: The balance of the day is free to relax or do some more exploring on your own. You'll certainly want to visit Vienna's *Christkindlmarkt*, the largest and most famous in Austria. Get a final taste of the Christmas market tradition you've explored throughout your cruise as you browse through stall after stall offering unique handcrafts and traditional holiday foods. You may also consider a stroll through the old Jewish Quarter to see the only Viennese synagogue to have survived the 1938 *Kristallnacht*.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 2 Vienna • Optional *Christmas Across Borders* tour

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Regina Hotel Vienna or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: You have the day at leisure to relax, do some shopping, or explore this unique city on your own.

Vienna has served as home and inspiration to some of the world's greatest artists, thinkers, and musicians. You'll notice statues of Strauss, Mozart, Beethoven, and Mahler throughout the city, and see how music is such an integral part of Viennese life. The strains of waltz music emanate from the many cafes, and these harmonious melodies move outdoors to the sidewalks in good weather.

Or, join us for an optional *Christmas Across Borders* excursion to Bratislava, Slovakia, where you'll meet with a local family to find out what the holidays were like for people under Communist rule.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Your afternoon is free to pursue your own interests in the city.

Dinner: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 3 Vienna • Optional *Best of Vienna* tour

- Destination: Vienna
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Regina Hotel Vienna or similar

Activity Note: When the Vienna State Opera is unavailable, *Haus der Musik* (House of Music) is included instead.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: You have a day at leisure to further sample the delights of Vienna. On your day of discovery, you may want to browse through one of the city's many museums, or visit the famous Hofburg Spanish Riding School, which you passed during your walking tour at the beginning of your stay, known as much for its architecture as for the renowned Lipizzaner horses.

Or, perhaps you'll join an optional *Best of Vienna* tour to discover two of Vienna's most beloved and beautiful sites: the Vienna Opera House and Hofburg Palace.

Lunch: On your own—ask your Program Director for local restaurant recommendations.

Afternoon: Free for your own discoveries—you might consider strolling the gardens of Maria Theresa's Schoenbrunn Palace.

Gather early this evening with your fellow travelers to toast your memories over a Farewell Drink at your hotel.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: You have the freedom to spend the rest of your evening as you wish—ask your Program Director for recommendations.

Day 4 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight home.

OPTIONAL TOURS

Christmas Across Borders

(Day 2 \$145 per person)

Get a glimpse into what the holidays were like under communism as you head across the border to Bratislava—Slovakia’s burgeoning capital city and former Eastern Bloc territory. You’ll go beyond the “New Bridge” to the Petržalka neighborhood—one of the largest concentrations of communist-era high-rise apartment complexes in the world—to meet with a local family, and experience what life is like for the people of Bratislava. Afterwards, you’ll travel back in time from the Soviet Era to the 13th century while exploring the city’s Old Town with its collection of medieval buildings, squares, and unexpectedly vibrant public art scene. Enjoy the spirit of the season while strolling through the city’s Christmas market and take the opportunity to taste a holiday staple—*lokša*. These thin, potato dough pancakes, reminiscent of a crepe, are traditionally served with sauerkraut during Christmas dinner. Enjoy free time here before returning to Vienna.

Best of Vienna

(Day 3 \$125 per person)

Discover two of Vienna’s most beloved and beautiful sites: the Vienna Opera House and Hofburg Palace.

The first performance at the opening of the Vienna Opera House in May 1869 was Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, and since then the company and its orchestra have been at the forefront of

international musicianship, vocal expertise, and production values, with long associations with some of the greatest names in music, including Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss. Designed in a neoromantic style that was not well received at the time, the stage and the company’s set and costume collections were severely damaged by Allied bombing in World War II. It reopened in 1955 and has been a destination of opera lovers ever since. It now presents 50 operas and 20 ballets annually. You’ll tour the house and learn about its illustrious history.

Then take a break and enjoy hot drinks at a local cafe before continuing on to the palace. The Imperial Apartments and the Sisi Museum at the Vienna Hofburg are among the most frequently visited historic sites in Austria. Formerly the residence of the Habsburg rulers, the Hofburg contains the 19-room state and residential apartments of Emperor Franz Joseph and Empress Elisabeth, which are open to the public. In an impressively staged exhibition, the Sisi Museum seeks to give the visitor an understanding of the myths and reality surrounding the figure of Empress Elisabeth.

When the Vienna State opera is not available, a visit to another musical venue will be included.

YOUR RHINE, MOSEL, MAIN, AND DANUBE RIVER SHIPS

Sail aboard our privately owned 140- to 162-passenger vessels

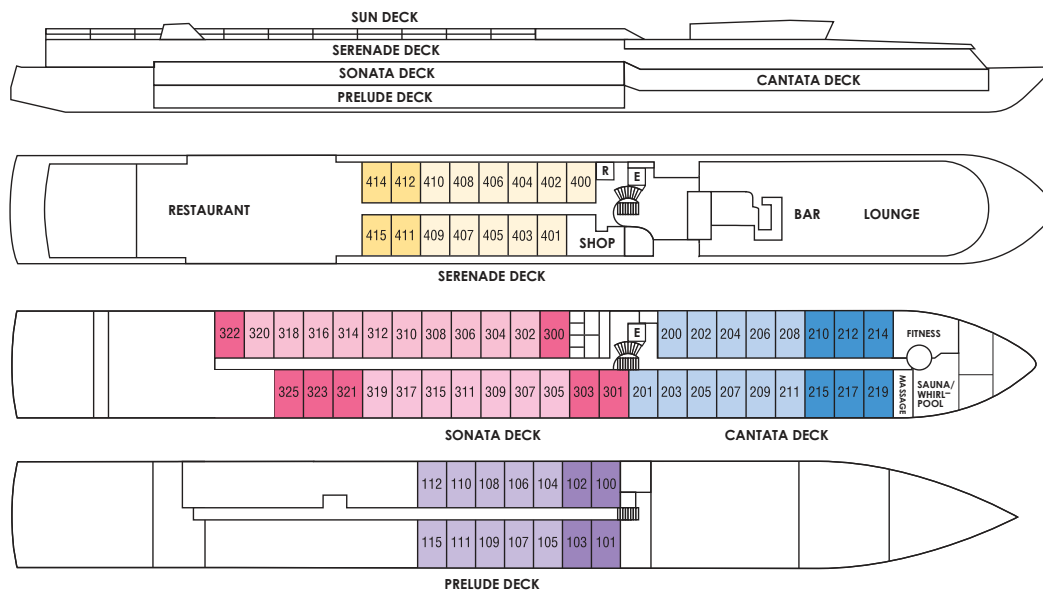
Grand Circle Cruise Line's Rhine, Mosel, Main, and Danube ships were designed specifically to create an unforgettable European river cruise experience for American travelers. Explore storybook landscapes with up to four groups of no more than 38-45 travelers, each with one of our dedicated, local Grand Circle Program Directors, and enjoy the attentive onboard service of our top-notch English-speaking ship crew.



SHIPBOARD FEATURES

- **Dining room with single, open seating:** Enjoy regionally-inspired cuisine in your ship's dining room.
- **Bar & lounge:** Relax with friends old and new.
- **Complimentary beverages:** Enjoy house beer and house wine—as well as soft drinks—at any time of day while onboard.
- **Complimentary wireless Internet access:** Connect online in cabins and common areas.
Please note: Wireless Internet access may be limited at certain points throughout your River Cruise.
- **Sun Deck:** Sit outside and enjoy the view as your ship glides past the European countryside.
- **English-speaking crew:** Our staff is dedicated to your comfort, and all shipboard announcements are made in English.
- **Smoking/non-smoking:** Smoking is not permitted indoors, but is permitted on the Sun Deck.
- **Shipboard security:** State-of-the-art shipboard radar ensures safe navigation at night and in low visibility; safe docking space; onboard security staff; state-of-the-art fire safety system; and secured entryway doors.

M/S RIVER HARMONY



Registry: Malta

Width: 38 ft.

Length: 366 ft.

Passenger capacity: 140

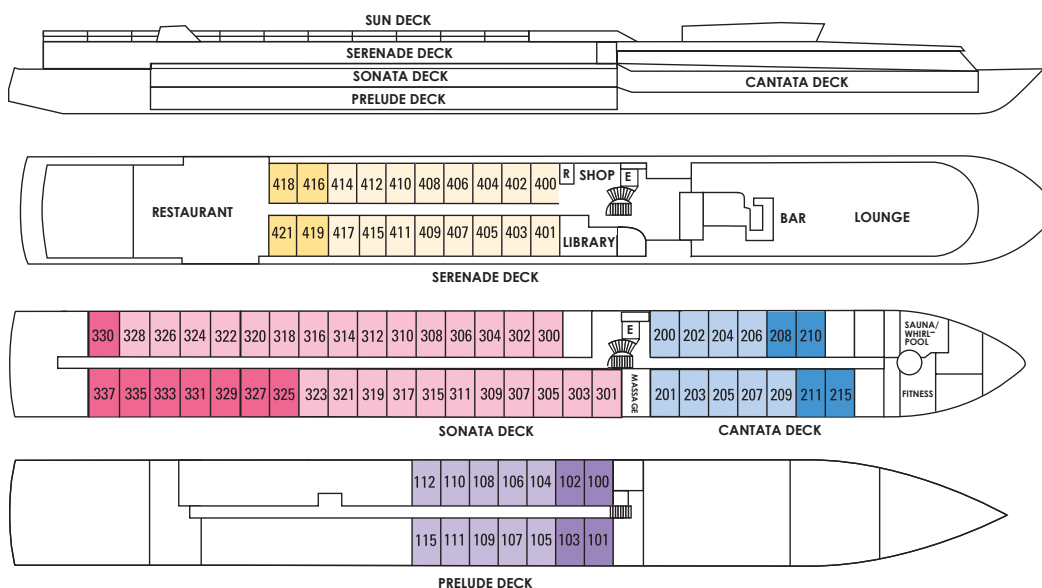
International crew: 34

Decks: 4

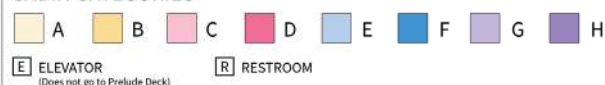
Number of cabins: 70—all outside

Elevator: Yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

M/S RIVER ARIA & M/S RIVER ADAGIO



CABIN CATEGORIES



Registry: Malta

Width: 38 ft.

Length: 418 ft.

Passenger capacity: 162

International crew: 38

Decks: 4

Number of cabins: 82—all outside

Elevator: Yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

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

Visa Required

We’ll be sending you information with detailed instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This info is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Austria, Germany):** Starting in 2025, U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

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 visa requirements. 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**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency).

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Keep Your Abilities in Mind

Please review the information below prior to departing on this vacation. *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.*

GROUP SIZE

- This trip has a group size of 38-45 travelers (with approximately 3-4 groups onboard) each with a local Program Director exclusive to Grand Circle

PACING

- 9 days, with 7 nights aboard a private river ship
- Return flights to U.S. often require departing from ship in early morning hours

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Included features on your trip may consist of 3-4 hours of physical activity each day. Travelers should be able to walk 1-3 miles unassisted within a time frame of 1-2 hours, and walk on uneven surfaces, including steep and unpaved paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-50 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones, which can be slick in wet, colder or frozen conditions
- Optional activities and walks may be offered in addition to the above mentioned activity level
- 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
- We reserve the right for Program Directors to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Diverse terrain and uneven walking surfaces, including steep paths, hills, riverbanks, 25-60 stairs without handrails, and cobblestones
- Travel by 162-passenger river ship and 49-seat coach
- Changes in water-level depths may require adjustments to your itinerary
- Docking for the following locations may be up to 1 hour outside of the city center, with transportation to and from the ship by motorcoach: Regensburg, Germany; Nuremberg, Germany; Passau, Germany

CLIMATE

- Daytime temperatures range from 38–45°F during cruising season
- Rain, ice, snow, and wind are possible during the holiday season

Health Check

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential 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 six weeks in advance of your departure date.

- Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your 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.

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: travel.state.gov (Select “Find International Travel Information” then select “Country Information”; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Your Health Abroad” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don't push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water aboard ship and in the countries you visit is perfectly safe for drinking.
- Bottled water is usually for sale in hotels, food shops, and restaurants.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card.
- **Traveler's checks are not recommended.** They can be difficult to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's more practical to view them as a last resort in the event of a special situation.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip;** you will need euros instead.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card. Many banks will charge a set fee or a percentage fee each time you use a foreign ATM. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart. Don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM. If you are visiting a country that has different expectation for ATMs, they will be listed below.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. We suggest that you bring one or two, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, as not all are accepted around the world.. If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Austria: Credit and debit cards are widely accepted in Austria. For small purchases or markets, you may need cash instead.

Using Your Credit Card in Europe

Most of us are used to credit cards with the embedded computer chip (the ones you insert instead of swiping). In Europe—where they’ve had this type of card longer than us—these credit cards usually require a PIN (personal identification number) to make a purchase. And in contrast, most U.S. credit cards either do not require a PIN or don’t have one. So what do you do if you want make a purchase with your credit card in Europe?

Don’t worry. 90% of the time you won’t need to do anything special. You’ll insert your card and the purchase will go through as normal. Often you won’t even be asked to sign anything.

But bring more than one form of payment with you. For those rare cases when your credit card doesn’t work, the best plan is to already have a backup form of payment with you. Debit cards are a good alternative as they have a PIN. And there’s always cash.

Consider asking your credit card company. You can try contacting your credit card company before you leave to see if they will issue you a PIN. Many won’t—but at least you’ll know. You could also try looking at their website to see if they have guidance about getting a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

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

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

Onboard Ship

Two Separate Bills Will be Issued

- **Shipboard account:** This bill is for any on board purchases (drinks, souvenirs, etc.) and is calculated in Euros. The bill is payable at the ship's front desk; we accept cash or credit/debit card only. For cash we accept Euros. For credit/debit cards, we accept MasterCard and Visa. Other forms of payment, such as checks, American Express, and Discover Card are not accepted for this bill.
- **Optional tour account:** This bill is for any optional tours taken during the trip and is calculated in U.S. dollars. The bill is paid at the ship's front desk (they will have you fill out a form) by credit/debit card only; other forms of payments such as cash and checks are not accepted. For more information on optional tours—including which cards we accept for payment—see the “Preparing for Your Trip” chapter.

Please note: Payments made by credit card may take up to three 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, the charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as “OPT Boston” (depending on your credit card company).

Exchange Services: Policy Update

Due to international banking laws, we are not able to exchange money onboard the ship. If you need to obtain local currency, please see the “How to Exchange Money” section for helpful tips and information.

Tipping Guidelines

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

- **GCCL Program Director:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Grand Circle Program Director at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$7–\$10 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person 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. 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 cruise staff. **Policy Update:** *Due to international banking laws, we are no longer able to process crew tips on a credit card; crew tips can only be in the form of cash.*
- **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:** In many cities the tip is included in the fare, and will be announced on a sign inside the cab; otherwise a 10% tip is appropriate.
- **Restaurants, cafes, and bars:** A service charge is usually included in restaurant and bar bills. If not, it is customary to leave a tip of around 10% of the bill for your waiter or bartender.
- **Public restrooms:** Most public restrooms in Europe have attendants that take care of cleaning and supplies. It is customary to leave a small tip for them—usually half a euro—so hold on to those coins! Some restrooms are pay-toilets; you pay the staff at the entrance to the restroom or drop the appropriate coin into the slot on the stall door. In this case, the fee is set and no tip is needed.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Customized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Customized Air:** You booked international air with us, and have customized it in some way. If you have customized your trip's dates to arrive early, stay longer, or stop on your own in a connecting city, airport transfers will NOT be included. You must also arrange your own accommodations for any additional nights. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.gct.com/myplanner under "My Reservations".

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.

- **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.
- **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.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45-30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Arrival Time

If you are booking your own international airfare or have personalized your flights, we recommend that you choose flights that arrive by 2pm on Day 2 of your trip (or pre-trip extension, if you are taking one) if you are interested in joining your Program Director for an orientation walk in the vicinity of your hotel.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as GCCL travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-321-2835**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: **www.rome2rio.com**

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your vacation by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved onsite can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard and Visa on all trips, and Discover on all trips except river cruises in France. We can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.) We do not take Amex, cash, or checks for optional tours.
- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as "OPT Boston".
- We will give you details on the optional tours while you're on the trip. But if you'd like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at **www.gct.com/myplanner**).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone is “unlocked”, meaning it can accept a local SIM card. If your cell is “unlocked” then you will be able to purchase a local SIM for it and then buy minutes with “Pay as You Go” cards, so that you have a local contact number for your friends and family.

Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Program Director while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards & 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.). One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet Access and Email

Internet cafés are available in many of the cities you visit on your cruise; however, prices for use may vary. While sailing Internet access may be unavailable, depending on locks, bridges, and regional remoteness. Internet access will be most consistently available when the ship is docked in larger cities.

Receiving Calls from Home

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

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Austria: +43

Germany: +49

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current standard is 50 lbs for checked bags and 15 lbs for carry-on bags.
Size Restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches (length+width+depth). Generally, 62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person: Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights. Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.

- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Due to space limitations on our motorcoaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.
- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

- **Travel light:** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.
- **Pack casual clothes:** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. At dinner, you will not need to wear “dressy” clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two “smart casual” outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you.
- **Consider clothing designed for travel, sports, or camping:** With modern fabrics, lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy.
- **Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions.** Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: warm days with sun, chilly temperatures with showers, and evenings that could dip into the 40s or 50s, depending on your travel season.
- **Be prepared for winter weather.** Pack for wintry conditions: a warm jacket, hat, and gloves; one or two fleece tops or heavy sweaters; turtlenecks and a few woolens or thick knits; warm pants; wool or fleece socks; folding umbrella; and waterproof warm shoes with good tread for walking on snow-covered ground. A top-and-bottom set of long underwear will provide an extra layer of insulation and is lightweight to pack. Snow is a possibility, even in late November.

- **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. If you prefer more ankle support, take light hiking boots. 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.

What to Bring

We have included suggestions from former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

Your cabin already has: Shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer, soap, body lotion, shower cap, and towels. **And don't forget a reusable water bottle**—you'll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts to layer
- ☐ Trousers, jeans, or skirts
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes and/or water resistant shoes
- ☐ Warm winter coat
- ☐ Rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Sleepwear
- ☐ Socks and undergarments
- ☐ A jacket or sweater for layering
- ☐ Gloves, scarf, and a warm hat

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- ☐ Sunglasses with a neck strap
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger

- ☐ Travel money bag or money belt
- ☐ Moisturizer, lip balm
- ☐ Pocket-size tissues
- ☐ Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- ☐ Camera, spare batteries, and memory cards

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

Optional Gear

- ☐ Travel alarm
- ☐ Compact binoculars
- ☐ Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- ☐ Washcloth
- ☐ Travel-size tissues
- ☐ Basic sewing kit

- ☐ Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- ☐ Electrical transformer and plug adapter—see “Regional Electricity” section.
- ☐ Reading materials
- ☐ Travel journal/note pad
- ☐ Swimsuit, if your ship/hotel has a pool or whirlpool
- ☐ Addresses for postcards
- ☐ Photos, small gift for Home-Hosted visit
- ☐ Phrase book
- ☐ Pocket-size calculator for exchange rates
- ☐ For hotel stays: Many hotels will provide hair dryers, but not all. If a hair dryer is essential to you consider a travel-size version. Hair dryers are provided on your ship.

Electricity

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Aboard the ship, cabins are equipped with 220-volt outlets. In your bathroom you will find a 110-volt outlet; this outlet is only for low-voltage appliances, like electric shavers. (Your bathroom also comes equipped with a hair dryer).

Electricity in Germany and Austria is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B; standard European plugs are Type C, E, and F. **Of the three, a Type C adapter is the most useful as it fits into Type E and F sockets.** Type C is usually what is sold in stores as a European adapter.

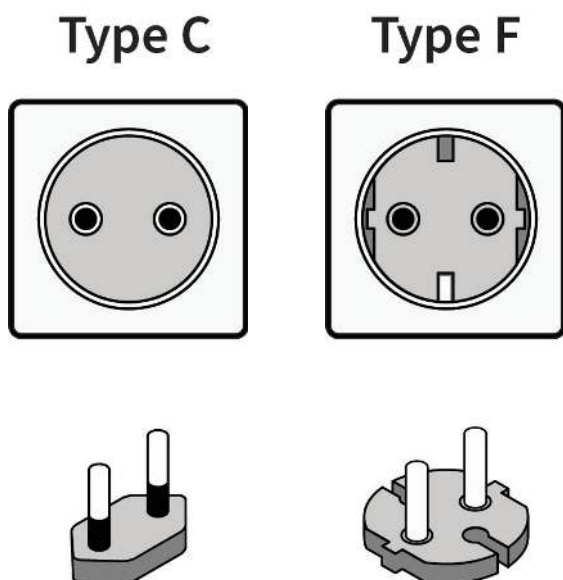
Aboard ship, the plugs in your cabin bedroom are Type F. The 110V socket in your cabin bathroom takes U.S. plugs, but not polarized ones (where one prong is bigger than the other). *Previous travelers have mentioned this because some small appliances, like Waterpiks, have polarized plugs.*

Note that even though you'll only need the European plug adapter on this trip, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

For your reference, here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Austria: C and/or F

Germany: C and/or F



CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Austria: Austria has a central European climate: variable weather reigns, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round. Spring weather is moderate, with intermittent sun and showers; afternoons in early spring average about 60° F 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 with some drizzle 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.

Munich, Germany: Munich's climate can go to extremes—from bitter cold in the winter to hot and muggy in the summer. By late spring, the weather is typically sunny and pleasant, but days of cloudy, wet weather should not be ruled out. Summer is generally warm, though evenings can be cool. Light showers are a common occurrence. Autumn comes early: by mid-September the weather has usually started to cool off and skies have become volatile, sometimes alternating from bright sun to a dark overcast several times a day.

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 comply with governmental and maritime 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 Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	NUREMBERG, GERMANY			PASSAU, GERMANY		
	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High- Low	% Relative Humidity (avg)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	35 to 26	86	5	34 to 23	--	10
FEB	39 to 27	82	4	38 to 25	--	10
MAR	47 to 32	76	4	47 to 32	--	10
APR	56 to 38	69	5	56 to 38	--	10
MAY	65 to 46	67	6	65 to 46	--	11
JUN	71 to 52	67	7	71 to 52	--	8
JUL	74 to 55	68	8	74 to 55	--	12
AUG	72 to 54	71	8	72 to 54	--	12
SEP	66 to 48	77	6	66 to 49	--	14
OCT	55 to 41	82	6	55 to 41	--	16
NOV	44 to 34	85	6	44 to 33	--	11
DEC	37 to 29	87	6	35 to 27	--	12

MONTH	VIENNA, AUSTRIA			MUNICH, GERMANY		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall
JAN	39 to 31	84 to 75	1	36 to 24	88 to 80	13
FEB	43 to 33	82 to 68	2	38 to 25	90 to 74	12
MAR	52 to 38	81 to 62	4	48 to 32	87 to 62	16
APR	63 to 46	76 to 54	2	53 to 36	86 to 57	17
MAY	73 to 55	76 to 54	7	63 to 44	84 to 55	16
JUN	79 to 59	76 to 57	4	68 to 50	85 to 58	18
JUL	84 to 63	76 to 54	7	72 to 54	84 to 55	18
AUG	88 to 64	78 to 54	5	73 to 54	89 to 55	16
SEP	75 to 57	84 to 61	5	66 to 48	91 to 61	15
OCT	63 to 48	86 to 65	2	55 to 40	92 to 71	17
NOV	50 to 39	86 to 75	3	44 to 32	90 to 80	16
DEC	40 to 33	85 to 78	2	38 to 27	89 to 81	15

ABOARD YOUR SHIP: CABIN FEATURES, DINING & SERVICES ON BOARD

Our River Ships

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 travelers, 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 + width + 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 Planner at **www.gct.com/myplanner**. 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, and white-linen and china table settings. Your ship's daily service includes breakfast and lunch buffets, and a more formal dinner. Our professional chefs will create unique menus for you that feature regional specialties. Complimentary house wine, draft beer, and a selection of soft drinks are included with both lunch and dinner. In addition, a selection of other fine wines and beer is available for purchase, starting at approximately \$20–35 per bottle (prices vary according to vintage). 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 per bottle, charged to your cabin 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.

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

Celebrations: Recognition of an anniversary or birthday can be accommodated. Please call Grand Circle Cruise Line to submit your request no later than 45 days prior to departure.

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

Electricity

Cabin bathrooms are equipped with a 110V outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with Type C/F “Europlug” outlets. See the electricity section of the packing chapter for more details.

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.

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, other boats may occasionally obstruct views, and you may have to step across other ships when you want to go ashore. On some rivers influenced by the tide, the ship might get below the level of the shore. It might be more difficult to see the ship from the riverbank, and the view from the cabins might be obstructed by the docking wall.

Docking Accessibility

For certain cities along your trip, your ship may be docked up to 1 hour outside the city center. Transportation to and from the city proper will be done via motorcoach.

Headsets

During your trip, complimentary headsets, or *Whispers* receivers, are provided on our guided tours through the cities we visit. These receivers and headsets allow you to hear your Program Director and our local guides better. If you use a hearing aid or have strong preferences for headphones, we highly encourage you to bring your own headsets/ear buds with you. The plug size is usually the same as that used by iPods, computer jacks, etc.

Wireless Internet Access

Limited Wireless Internet service is available for free in the cabins and common areas on board your Grand Circle Cruise Line ship. If you want to use the WiFi connection you’ll need to bring your own device (laptop/tablet/netbook) — ships do not rent or loan these devices. To use the WiFi, 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.

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 at the start of your cruise and then once a week (i.e. twice during a 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, and features both complimentary drinks (soft drinks, house beer, house wine, and non-alcoholic cocktails/beer) and drinks for purchase (spirits, alcoholic cocktails, bottled beers, and a selection of wines). Prices are in Euros. The fitness center has an exercise bike and walking/running treadmill. A massage therapist is available as well (prices listed on board).

Bicycles

We're pleased to offer complimentary bicycle rentals onboard your ship for use during free time, including all of the necessary safety gear, such as a helmet, brightly-colored safety vest, and a lock. Because there is a limited supply of bicycles available, they will be offered on a first-come first-served basis. For more information or if you are interested in using one of the bicycles, please speak to the Front Desk staff or Hotel Manager onboard your ship.

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.

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.

Passport Procedures

For your convenience, your passport will be held by the hotel manager after embarkation and returned to you on disembarkation day. This is standard ship's procedure, and is designed to speed up border crossings and to ensure the crew has all the necessary documents on hand during potential controls in our ports of call.

Lost & Found

Any lost or forgotten items found on board the ship will be held for 90 days from disembarkation. After 90 days, all unclaimed items will be discarded or donated.

Ship Specifications

M/S River Adagio

- **History:** Built in 2003
- **Size:** 410x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 163 passengers, 38 crew members
- **Layout:** 82 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

M/S River Aria

- **History:** Built in 2001
- **Size:** 410x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 163 passengers, 40 crew members
- **Layout:** 82 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

M/S River Harmony

- **History:** Built in 1999
- **Size:** 361x38 ft
- **Capacity:** 140 passengers, 32 crew members
- **Layout:** 70 cabins, 4 decks; Elevator-yes (no elevator access to Prelude Deck)

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

Your Program Director

Grand Circle Cruise Line is committed to showing you a destination through the perspective of those who live, work, and play there. How better to do that than to have a resident with you every step of the way? We are proud to be the only cruise line to provide you the dedicated services of an expert Program Director, a resident or native of the country who is delighted to share their in-depth knowledge of local history, culture, and hidden gems.

Fluent in English and skilled in fostering camaraderie among travelers, our Program Directors are constantly cited by our travelers as the main reason they continue to travel with us. During your cruise, you'll enjoy multiple Program Directors aboard your ship, who will each be with you and your group of 25-47 travelers throughout your journey—both on ship and on land. And with personal headsets on every included and optional tour, you'll be able to enjoy their perspective and enthusiasm as you explore at a level deeper than most Americans go.

German and Austrian Culture

You may be familiar with the persistent stereotypes about Germans being no-nonsense, workaholic, logic-driven rule-followers. But your preconceptions may be challenged in more urban areas, where the old, staunch stereotypes are defied by a more multicultural, liberal, free-thinking, and party-loving lifestyle. The fact is, the aftermath of Germany's role in two world wars has prompted many here to reassess traditional attitudes.

But a few of the generalizations have some basis. . . . For instance, Germans are typically very direct, and very honest. So when they deliver an opinion it won't be ambiguous or sugar coated. For this reason, some people may mistake them for being blunt. But to a German, speaking frankly is not considered rude, it is considered truthful, and helpful. The opinion being delivered is likely to be well thought out, as Germans place a great value on logic and critical thinking. How this manifests itself in daily life is evident in how efficient and punctual everything is—be it public trains, the national health service, or the vaunted trash recycling program.

Perhaps the capacity for honesty and critical thinking has helped Germany in its long process of "*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*." It's a word that describes the nation's struggle to come to terms with the Nazi era and the Holocaust. Many cities boast monuments, museums, and centers dedicated to the study of anti-Semitism; while there are no monuments to war heroes of the Third Reich. All school curricula include frank sections on the Nazi era. Reparations have been paid to Holocaust survivors; and overall, German institutions have been willing to engage in thoughtful, albeit painful conversations about past complicity and present responsibility.

Many have linked Germany's work to confront past guilt to its current welcome of refugees. Though the migrant crisis is not without controversy, most Germans support the government's policies. Another impact of WWII has been the breakdown of class barriers. Most Germans had to rebuild everything from scratch, but since many necessities were covered by social welfare programs, today's Germans enjoy a comfortable, middle class existence. Privacy is highly valued,

so people tend not to divulge a lot of personal information about themselves at first. But Germans usually become very open and warm once they get better acquainted with you. Their sentimental streak comes out when they share *gemütlichkeit*, a feeling of warmth, affection, coziness, nostalgia and celebration. If you are invited to join in, please enjoy. Resistance is futile.

Austria has much to be proud of when it comes to cultural milestones: the music of Mozart, the philosophy of Wittgenstein, the psychoanalysis of Freud, the art of Klimt, and more. As the home of the Hapsburg dynasty, Austria exerted unprecedented influence over European history, from the Middle Ages up until the first World War. Today, Austria enjoys an enviable standard of living; is home to many international agencies; and has maintained its neutrality, even during the height of the Cold War. Yet with all that, outsiders often confuse Austrian culture with that of Germany, which causes understandable resentment among many Austrians.

Austrians tend to think of themselves as more easygoing than most Germans. This comes across in what is called *Schmäh*. This is a uniquely Austrian sense of humor that originated among Viennese cabaret performers, and is now prevalent all over Austria. Where Germans are said to be direct, proper, and literal, *Schmäh* relies on a subversive sense of irony, sly wit, and innuendo. It is all in good fun, so don't take offense if an Austrian seems to be teasing you.

Austrians love to socialize and place a high value on good conversation. It's very traditional for friends and family to gather at the local *Gasthaus* (pub), *Heuriger* (wine pub), or coffeehouse to relax and socialize for hours. This is an important aspect of *gemütlichkeit*, which is a state of friendliness, warmth, nostalgia, and happiness.

The Main and Danube Rivers

The Main River

Formed near the German town of Kulmbach, by the confluence of the rivers Roter Main and Weisser Main, the Main River flows for some 310 miles. It winds through the rich farmland of central Germany and past the industrial areas of Schweinfurt, Würzburg, Aschaffenburg, and Frankfurt to the Rhine River at Mainz. The feisty Main River calms down and widens at its junction with the Regnitz River, its chief tributary, and from that point on is an important east-west route. Indeed, the Main serves as a "water bridge" between the Rhine River and the Danube River. The Main-Danube Canal connects the Main with the Danube, stretching 106 miles from Bamberg to Kelheim.

The Danube River

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

The power of its strategic location was recognized centuries ago by Roman Emperors who sought to control it. Ruins from that period now perch on banks above the river, reminding you of the Danube's multi-faceted past. Even today, the Danube continues to be one of Europe's greatest assets, in part because it provides a water link between the four national capitals on its banks:

Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, and Belgrade. Back in the heyday of river transport, other great cities grew up along the Danube's banks, too, serving as ports for the various cargo being carried on the river, namely salt, wood, and ores. These same products now are transferred on the railroad and highways, which run alongside the Danube's course.

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

Austrian Cuisine

Austria has quite a bit of culinary overlap with neighboring Germany. But you have only to consider the scope of the Hapsburg Empire to understand the many influences that have also shaped the national cuisine: the empire once ruled over Switzerland, Holland, Alsace, Burgundy, Spain, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Italy, and happily appropriated many of their ingredients and cooking techniques. This is to say nothing of the Turkish influence that wafted westwards across the Austro-Hungarian empire.

- One constant on Austrian menus is the national dish, **wiener schnitzel**, the classic Viennese veal cutlet which is pounded till thin, breaded, fried and served with wedges of lemon and greens. It can also be made with chicken or pork.
- **Tafelspitz**: A filet of beef (or veal) that is gently simmered with vegetables, and served with applesauce and horseradish. Late spring brings spargel, or asparagus, which are particularly tender and flavorful here. It'll appear as a special on many menus, often served with a delicate hollandaise or just butter, lemon, and toasted bread crumbs.
- **Kasspätzln**: A Tyrolean casserole of chewy, hand-made egg noodles that are mixed with sauteed onions, covered with *bergkäse*, a strong local cheese, and baked till browned. Before serving, it is topped with crispy fried onions and parsley.
- **Speckknödeln**: A bacon dumpling that is often served as an appetizer or in stews or clear soups. It is just one of the dozens of different dumplings that grace the Austrian table.
- **Frittatensuppe**: Or "pancake soup" is a Styrian specialty that is popular all over Austria. It's a bowl of clear beef consommé with strips of cooked crepes or pancakes.
- **Würstelstande**: Or sausage booths. These street stalls are the go-tos for snackers on the go, and the sausage of choice will usually be a wiener sausage, which Austrians will only ever call a "*Frankfurter*." You can also ask for a *bratwurst*, a *Käsekrainer* (which is studded with cheese), or a *Debreziner*, which is a lightly-smoked, reddish sausage spiced with paprika.
- **Sachertorte**: A classic chocolate sponge cake layered with apricot jam, and covered in chocolate ganache. It's available all over, but for the quintessential Viennese experience, try it where it originated, at the Sacher Hotel, or at the famed Demel bakery.

- **Mozartkugel:** Small, round candies are balls of pistachio marzipan and nougat, covered with dark chocolate.

One thing Austria can thank the Turks for is coffee. Legend has it that when Hapsburg troops chased the Turks out in 1683, the retreating invaders left behind bags of coffee beans. Within two years the first Viennese coffee house opened, and the rest is history. In 2011, UNESCO designated Viennese coffee house culture as part of humanity's intangible cultural heritage, saying that the coffee houses have a "very specific atmosphere" and are places "where time and space are consumed, but only the coffee is found on the bill."

German 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. But the region that is often viewed as having the most classic German cuisine is Saxony.

- **Sauerbraten:** A tangy pot roast that is eaten all over Germany. *Sächsischer Sauerbraten* uses beer instead of wine to marinate the beef before its long, slow braising. *Rheinischer Sauerbraten* is made with raisins and crumbled *lebkuchen* (gingersnaps) to give the tangy gravy a touch of sweetness
- **Dresdner Wiegebraten:** A Dresden meat loaf made with minced pork, veal and beef bound with eggs, breadcrumbs, anchovies, bacon and herbs that gets slathered with butter before roasting.
- **Sächsische Kartoffelsuppe:** (Saxon potato soup), a rich, creamy puree of potatoes and broth studded with onions fried in bacon fat, finely chopped greens, and bacon and sausage bits—all seasoned with ginger, nutmeg, salt and pepper. A special version is made with succulent shrimps and shrimp broth.
- **Leipziger Allerlei:** A casserole of shrimp or crayfish mixed with cauliflower, carrots, peas, asparagus, and mushrooms, baked with a creamy sauce topped with bread crumbs.
- **Buchweizenpfannkuchen:** A buckwheat pancake that may be served with syrup and cranberries, or with salmon and a salad.
- **Dresdner Eierschecke:** A three-layered cake filled with custard and cream.
- **Currywurst:** A bratwurst flavored with curry, ketchup and Worcestershire sauce. It was invented in 1946 by Herta Heuwer, a Berlin housewife who decided to spice up her family's diet by trading some booze for seasonings from some British soldiers. *Currywurst* is a classic example of post-war, East German cuisine—a style that arose during a time of severe shortages, when the people of the former German Democratic Republic (East Germany) had to get inventive with very economical ingredients.

- **Westfälischer Schinken:** Or Westphalian ham is made from pigs raised solely on acorns. The meat is dry cured and smoked over beechwood and juniper.
- **Dampfnudeln:** A yeasty steamed dumpling with vanilla sauce. If they are topped with *powidl* (a plum jam) and sprinkled with poppy seeds, they are called *germknödeln*. If you prefer your dumplings savory, *dampfnudeln* can be enjoyed with mushrooms and béchamel sauce; or with gravy and rolls of beef stuffed with bacon and pickles called *Rouladen*.
- **Badische Schaeufele:** Smoked pork shoulder simmered in wine with garlic, leeks, juniper berries, and other spices.
- **Maultaschen:** In this dish, pockets of dough are stuffed with spinach, meat or cheese; and eaten as a main course or in a beef broth.
- **Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte:** Or Black Forest Cake. It's a chocolate layer cake filled and frosted with fresh cream and cherries soaked in *Kirschwasser* (cherry schnapps), and decorated with chocolate shavings.
- **Nürnberger bratwurst:** These were the first sausage to receive the European Union's Protected Geographic Indication (PGI) status. To be labeled as *Nürnberger bratwurst*, these small, coarsely-ground pork sausages must be 2 ¾–3 ½ inches long; contain mace and marjoram; and be made within the metropolitan Nuremberg limits. The most popular way to eat them is *Drei im Weggla* or “three in a bun.

Vienna in Brief

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

Local Transportation

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

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

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

Viennese Specialties

Like the rest of Austria, Viennese cuisine is the culmination of various ethnic influences, including Bohemian, Hungarian, Croatian, Slovenian, German, and Italian. But the city has a few local specialties you may wish to try:

- **Soups:** *Griessnockerlsuppe* (clear soup with semolina dumplings), *rindsuppe* (beef broth), and *gulaschsuppe* (Hungarian-style goulash soup).
- **Main courses:** Familiar dishes are *bauernschmaus* (a combination of many varied sausages and pork items with sauerkraut and dumplings), *tafelspitz* (boiled beef with vegetables), *wiener schnitzel* (breaded veal or pork cutlet), *schweinebraten* (roast pork), *backhendl* (fried and breaded chicken), and *gulasch* (stew). *Nockerl* are little dumplings, usually served with sauce.
- **Desserts:** Vienna’s *apfelstrudel* (apple strudel) is probably the best in the world. *Palatschinken* are light, sugared pancakes; *klaishschmarren* is a diced omelet, served with jam and sprinkled with sugar. And of course, don’t miss the famous *sachertorte* (chocolate cake with layers of apricot jam)!
- **Coffee:** Austrian coffee, of which there are at least 20 varieties, is delicious and not to be missed. Introduced 300 years ago by the Turks during their unsuccessful attempt to conquer Vienna, coffee has become an art form, served in veritable institutions known as the Viennese coffeehouses. Among the many kinds of coffee are *kleiner schwarzer*, a small cup without milk; the *melange*, a large cup with foamy milk; *mokka*, strong black Viennese coffee; *kapuziner*, which is the same as *melange* but topped with whipped cream; and *tuerkischer*, Turkish coffee boiled in a small copper pot and served in tiny cups.

Munich in Brief

City Layout and Details

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

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

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

Local Transportation

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

Cuisine

In Munich you will find a range of international foods, along with the city's renowned wine cellars and beer gardens where you can find traditional Bavarian dishes.

One of the city's prized menu items is the Weisswurst, a white sausage stuffed with veal, pork, parsley, and other flavorings. The Weisswurst is usually served before noon, and to enjoy its delectable filling, you first peel the sausage skin before eating its flavorful meat, possibly complemented by a sweet mustard. You can also feast on Scheinwurst mit Kraut (pork sausages with sauerkraut); chilled meat molds created with beef, pork, and liver; thick slices of a spicy meatloaf called Leberkase; and roasted chicken, ham hocks, or knuckle of pork. You might want to try a taste of Munich's Sauerbraten (a marinated beef pot roast) or the popular Muchener Schweinhaxe (a pork shank roasted until its skin is crisped). Many restaurants also serve seasonal game, such as boar, venison, rabbit, or duck. Seafood includes herring, tuna, mackerel, and salmon. If you favor freshwater fish, you might try the regional trout, carp, pike, or Rencke (similar to perch). Accompaniments may include potato soup, more sauerkraut, large pretzels (possibly coated with cheese), fresh horseradish, and boiled cabbage with bacon.

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

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your vacation. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. Grand Circle is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, 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 or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Austria

Popular buys include glassware, crystal, porcelain, petit point, musical instruments and scores, fur hats, ski wear, and, of course, lederhosen (leather pants), loden-cloth coats, and sachertorte (chocolate cake). But be forewarned: the quality of Austrian wares is exceptionally high, and so are the prices!

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

Germany

Popular German buys include Nymphenburg porcelain, cutlery, high-quality cameras and binoculars, loden clothing, goose-down comforters, Rosenthal china and glassware, and chocolate. Munich is Germany's fashion capital—there are plenty of chic boutiques, especially on Theatinerstrasse, Maximilianstrasse, and Schwabing's Leopoldstrasse.

Value Added Tax: Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of Germany's 16% Value Added Tax (VAT). You must obtain a special form for VAT from the store. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson for details, and be sure to save all receipts for Customs.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

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

The top three points to know are:

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

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Austria

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 32,382 square miles
- **Capital:** Vienna
- **Languages:** German is the official language. English is also spoken, particularly in all tourist areas and major cities.
- **Location:** Austria is bordered by Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.
- **Geography:** Landlocked in Central Europe, Austria features the mountainous Alps in the south and west, but also is home to flat plains and gentle slopes in the north and east.
- **Population:** 8,665,550 (estimate)
- **Religion:** Roman Catholic 73.8%, Protestant 4.9%, Muslim 4.2%, Orthodox 2.2%, other 0.8%, none 12%, unspecified 2%
- **Time Zone:** Austria is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of U.S. EST. When it is 6am in Washington D.C., it is noon in Vienna.

National Holidays: Austria

In addition to the holidays listed below, Austria celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/26 National Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/08 Feast of the Immaculate Conception

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 St. Stephen's Day

Austria: A Brief History

Austria has been populated since Neanderthal times, but its most significant early culture was the Hallstatt, which arose around 400 BC when Celtic people settled along the shores of the Hallstatter See. The Celts formed a confederation called Noricum, established a prosperous salt trade, and forged iron implements. When Romans arrived in 15 BC, they made the area a province. In exchange for their excellent Noric steel (which the Romans used for swords), the Celts received protection—and they needed it, as Germanic Teutons and other tribes invaded.

When Charlemagne arrived in the 8th century and created a zone in the Danube Valley called the East March. In 976, the Babenburg dynasty became the margraves of this “eastern realm” or Österreich, German for “Austria.” The Babenburgs extended the territory and made Vienna their capital. When they died, Rudolf I took over in 1278, ushering in the dynastic powerhouse that dominated Europe for 500 years. Consolidating power through strategic marriages, they built a network from Spain to the Netherlands to Germany. The Hapsburgs were all prince-electors of the Holy Roman Empire, and from 1452 they elected their kinsmen as its Emperors. But holding power was not easy. In 1618 Europe erupted into a Thirty Years War that caused nearly eight million deaths. It was largely a contest between Bourbon and Austro-Spanish Hapsburgs. Things further destabilized when the Turks advanced to Vienna. They remained a threat until 1699.

Austria bloomed during the Enlightenment reigns of Maria Theresa and her son, Joseph II. They instituted reforms, and were patrons of the arts (with Mozart as their court composer). Decades later, a result of the Napoleonic wars was that the Holy Roman Empire was dissolved in 1806. But the Hapsburgs survived, creating a German Alliance of hundreds of small states. In 1867, Austria and Hungary united as a dual monarchy—and reveled in the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s cultural flowering. Vienna, newly magnificent after a flurry of building, was its epicenter. The Empire prospered until Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in 1914, sparking World War I. The 1919 defeat of the Central Powers (Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey, and Bulgaria) ended the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which split into several nations per the Treaty of Versailles.

Austria became a republic, but suffered inflation, unemployment, and the loss of a national identity. Political tensions erupted into violent street fights, and in 1934, a Conservative government took legislative powers from the parliament, making Austria a fascist country. Though the Treaty of Versailles had expressly forbidden the reunification of Germany and Austria, Hitler (himself an Austrian) had other ideas about this Anschluss. When the Nazis goose-stepped into Austria in 1938, they were welcomed by cheering crowds. Austria’s military, economy, and political infrastructure were integrated into Germany’s war efforts; the execution of Jews and resistors stepped up; and many Austrians participated in the Nazi’s crimes.

Austria was liberated by Allied and Soviet troops in 1945, a second republic was established, and Austria remained under occupation. In 1955, Russia demanded that Austria declare its neutrality as a condition for ending Soviet occupation. This status enabled Austria to be a bridge between East and West during the Cold War. But the nation never came to terms with its war history. That started in 1986, when former U.N. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim ran for president. He won and served until 1992, and investigations into his wartime activities were inconclusive.

Austria joined the EU in 1995, adopted the euro in 1999, and is one of Europe’s most prosperous nations. It is considered a liberal democracy, and consistently ranks high for its quality of life.

Germany

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 137,846 square miles
- **Capital:** Berlin

- **Languages:** German is the official language; Turkish is also spoken in Berlin.
- **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:** 80,854,408 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Protestant 34%, Roman Catholic 34%, Muslim 3.7%, 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: Germany

In addition to the holidays listed below, Germany celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter. There are also some holidays that are not national holidays, but are widely observed. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

05/01 May Day

10/03 Day of German Unity

11/01 All Saints' Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Boxing Day

Germany: A Brief History

For many contemporary travelers, the history of Germany has been overshadowed by its role in the two World Wars of the past century. But that belies the two millennia of history and culture that is the legacy of Europe's Germanic people, and which awaits your discovery.

During the Bronze and Iron Ages, Germanic tribes from southern Scandinavia and Northern Germany expanded, mixing and clashing with Celtic, Baltic, Slavic, Gaul, and Indo-European people. Settling east of the Rhine and north of the Danube, in a region the Romans dubbed "Germania," they never unified. But they repulsed nearly all efforts of Rome to colonize them. The Romans were only ever able to subdue Germania's southern and western flanks.

With the 5th century fall of the Western Roman Empire, Germanic Franks rose as the largest tribal confederacy of the middle Rhine. They spread to Gaul, absorbing all of France; and as far west as Poland. There was no unified German nation but by 800 AD, there was a Holy Roman Empire with the Frankish king Charlemagne as Emperor. For 1,000 years, the Holy Roman Empire mostly controlled Europe, and German prince-electors mostly controlled the Empire.

The Holy Roman Empire became a collection of duchies, principalities, Free Imperial Cities, and ecclesiastical states that spread across the larger kingdoms of Germany, Italy, Bohemia, and Burgundy. In 1440, the Austrian Hapsburg dynasty took control of the Holy Roman Empire (and held it until 1806). But all the imperial states became embroiled in the Thirty Years War (1618–1648), which was sparked by a revolt of Bohemian Protestants, but grew into a deadly struggle between Bourbon and Hapsburg powers. Most of Central Europe was devastated by the conflict.

The prospect of a unified German nation began to coalesce during the Seven Weeks War in 1866, when the Prussian army under Otto von Bismarck defeated Austria. Prussia's superior firepower convinced other German states that Austria was no longer a force. Bismarck then formed a North German Confederation without Austria—the forerunner to the unified German Empire of Kaiser Wilhelm I. Bismarck fostered alliances and instituted universal health care, pension plans, and other social welfare programs. But after Wilhelm I died in 1888, his grandson Wilhelm II rejected liberal reforms in favor of imperialism, which led to Germany's involvement in World War I. Its defeat ended of the German Empire with the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.

The punitive provisions of the Versailles agreement opened the door for the Nazis. In 1933, a government was formed with Hitler as Chancellor. By 1934, Hitler took over as Fuhrer and established a totalitarian regime. German Jews were targeted by vicious propaganda and stripped of their rights. By 1939, half of Germany's 500,000 Jews had fled. The Final Solution was implemented in 1941, and the ensuing Holocaust killed 6 million Jews and 11 million others. Meanwhile, Germany began annexing territories and the world was drawn into war.

The Allies defeated the Axis powers in 1945, leaving a partitioned Germany with a decimated political, social, and economic infrastructure. Yet despite its ruin and enormous burden of shame, the Federal German Republic (West Germany) became a parliamentary democracy, a NATO member, a founding member of the European Union, and one of the world's richest countries. When the Iron Curtain fell in 1989, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) demanded reform. German reunification took place in 1990. Since then economic integration of East Germany has been difficult, but progressing. Angela Merkel, the Chancellor from 2005 to 2021, helped Germany retain its position as a leader of the EU, and indeed, of the free world.

Merkal stepped down from her position following the COVID-19 pandemic and was succeeded by Olaf Scholz, who has since weathered the 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine. Scholz responded to the invasion by significantly increasing Germany's defense budget and supplying weapons to the Ukraine resistance.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

General

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

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

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

Austria

The Habsburgs: The History of a Dynasty by Benjamin Curtis (2013, History) Discover how this Austrian family gained power—and held it—for more than 500 years, shaping all the nations featured on this adventure.

When Nietzsche Wept: A Novel of Obsession by Irvin D. Yalom (2013, Fiction) Set in 19th-century Vienna, this novel is built upon a clever conceit: the psychoanalytic sessions between the impoverished and suicidal philosopher, Frederic Nietzsche; and distinguished physician Josef Breuer, who is undergoing his own existential crisis. The twist is that Nietzsche, too proud to seek help, does not know that he is Breuer's "patient." As the two meet in Vienna's salons and coffeehouses, we encounter the personalities of the day, including Sigmund Freud, and gain a sense of the healing power of connection.

The Age of Insight by Eric Kandel (2012, Art) This book takes us to Vienna in 1900, where leaders in science, medicine, and art began a revolution that changed forever how we think about the human mind—our conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions—and how mind and brain relate to art. Kandel traces the ideas and advances of Vienna, in rich and rewarding detail, and their enduring influence today.

The Painted Kiss by Elizabeth Hickey (2005, Historical Fiction) The author, an art historian, imagines the relationship between the artist Gustav Klimt, and his younger model-mistress, the couturier Emilie Flöge. She was the inspiration for his famous work, *The Kiss*, and it was her name that he uttered as his dying words.

The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey by Gordon Brook-Shepard (1996, History) A noted historian, draws upon his long-standing associations with Austrian leaders and his special access to the private Hapsburg family archives to trace the identity of Austria as it developed over a millennium.

Germany

Tschick by Wolfgang Herrndorf (2014, Fiction) Two unpopular teenagers—one German and one Russian—“borrow” a car and go on a joyride across Germany. Although the protagonists are young, the story seems to delight adults too—it was recommended by the ambassador of Germany has one of the best modern stories from his country.

In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin by Erik Larson (2011, History) Acclaimed historian and author Larson follows the experiences of the American ambassador to Germany in 1933 as he and his family slowly come to realize the menace and danger that is Hitler's Third Reich.

Martin Luther: A Life by Martin E. Marty (2004, Biography) A brief but engrossing biography of the fiery Protestant reformer who transformed western thinking, sending shock waves across Europe's political as well as religious landscape.

Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s by Otto Friedrich (1995, History) A noted historian describes the raucous social, cultural and political scene in this most vibrant city, when Christopher Isherwood, Marlene Dietrich, Albert Einstein, Greta Garbo, Berthold Brecht Walter Gropius, Vassily Kandinsky and so many others made their home here.

The Silent Angel by Heinrich Boll (1992, Fiction) A German WWII deserter returns to his home town of Cologne after it has been carpet bombed, and encounters a city filled with shell-shocked people trying to survive both physically and spiritually. Nobel Prize winner Boll, a Cologne native, drew from his own postwar experiences to create this moving portrait.

Suggested Films & Videos

Austria

The Woman in Gold (2015, Drama) Helen Mirren stars as Maria Altmann, an Austrian-Jewish Holocaust refugee who successfully sued the Austrian government for the return of a major artwork that was stolen from her family by the Nazis: Gustav Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bauer-Bloch*, who was her aunt. Based on a true story.

Museum Hours (2012, Drama) A lonely guard at Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Art Museum befriends an enigmatic American visitor, who has been called here due to a family emergency. Through conversations sparked by the art they both admire, the two begin sharing their lives, and the life of Vienna.

Before Sunrise (1995, Comedy/Drama) Two strangers meet on a rain and decide to get off in Vienna for just one evening. As they explore some of the city's most evocative landmarks, their conversations go from wryly philosophical to deeply personal, before they must decide to go their separate ways. Stars Julie Delpy and Ethan Hawke collaborated on writing the sparkling dialogue.

Amadeus (1984, Drama) The pious Italian composer Antonio Salieri is obsessed with his rival, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whom God has favored with divine talent and worldly success—despite Mozart's immaturity and vulgarity. The Oscar winner for Best Picture, this epic from director Milos Forman is gorgeously filmed, and lifted by its pitch-perfect performances by F. Murray Abraham (as Salieri) and Tom Hulce (as Mozart.)

Germany

Look Who's Back (2015, Comedy) Can Germany escape the specter of Nazism? Not according to this biting satire, in which der Fuehrer magically reawakens in 2014 in the square where his bunker once stood. He is horrified to learn that the country is led by a woman, Poland is a free state, and the Fatherland is full of immigrants. An out of work filmmaker thinks this eccentric character is just a comic Hitler impersonator, and he builds a reality show about him. As Hitler becomes a media sensation, others are shown to share his ideas about the future of Germany. Filmed *Borat*-style, many scenes feature real people reacting to this putschy provocateur.

The Lives of Others (2006, Drama) 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.

Schindler's List (1993, Drama) Spielberg's masterpiece about a callow industrialist, Oskar Schindler, whose life is transformed as he gradually, then unceasingly works to save his Jewish workforce during World War II.

Cabaret (1972, Musical/Drama) Directed by Bob Fosse, this movie has it all: a killer Broadway score, a perfect cast, Fosse's sultry choreography, pointed social commentary, and an electrifying portrait of lost souls struggling to survive in Weimar-era Berlin on the cusp of Nazism. It did not win Best Picture, but took eight other major categories including Best Actress (Liza Minelli), Best Supporting Actor (Joel Grey), and Best Director (Fosse).

Immortal Beloved (1994, Drama) After the death of Ludwig van Beethoven (Gary Oldman), the life and loves of the great composer are revealed in flashbacks as his friend and executor tries to solve the mystery of an unmailed letter to a mysterious lover.

Useful Websites

Grand Circle Forum (tips from previous travelers)

www.gct.com/forum

Grand Circle Frequently Asked Questions

www.gct.com/faq

**International Health Information/CDC
(Centers for Disease Control)**

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

[www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/
plugs-and-sockets](http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets)

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps or Maps.me

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber or Bolt or Grab

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App or Skype or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

TripWhistle

Maps your location and provides emergency numbers for police, medics, and more

GeoSure

Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

Tourlina

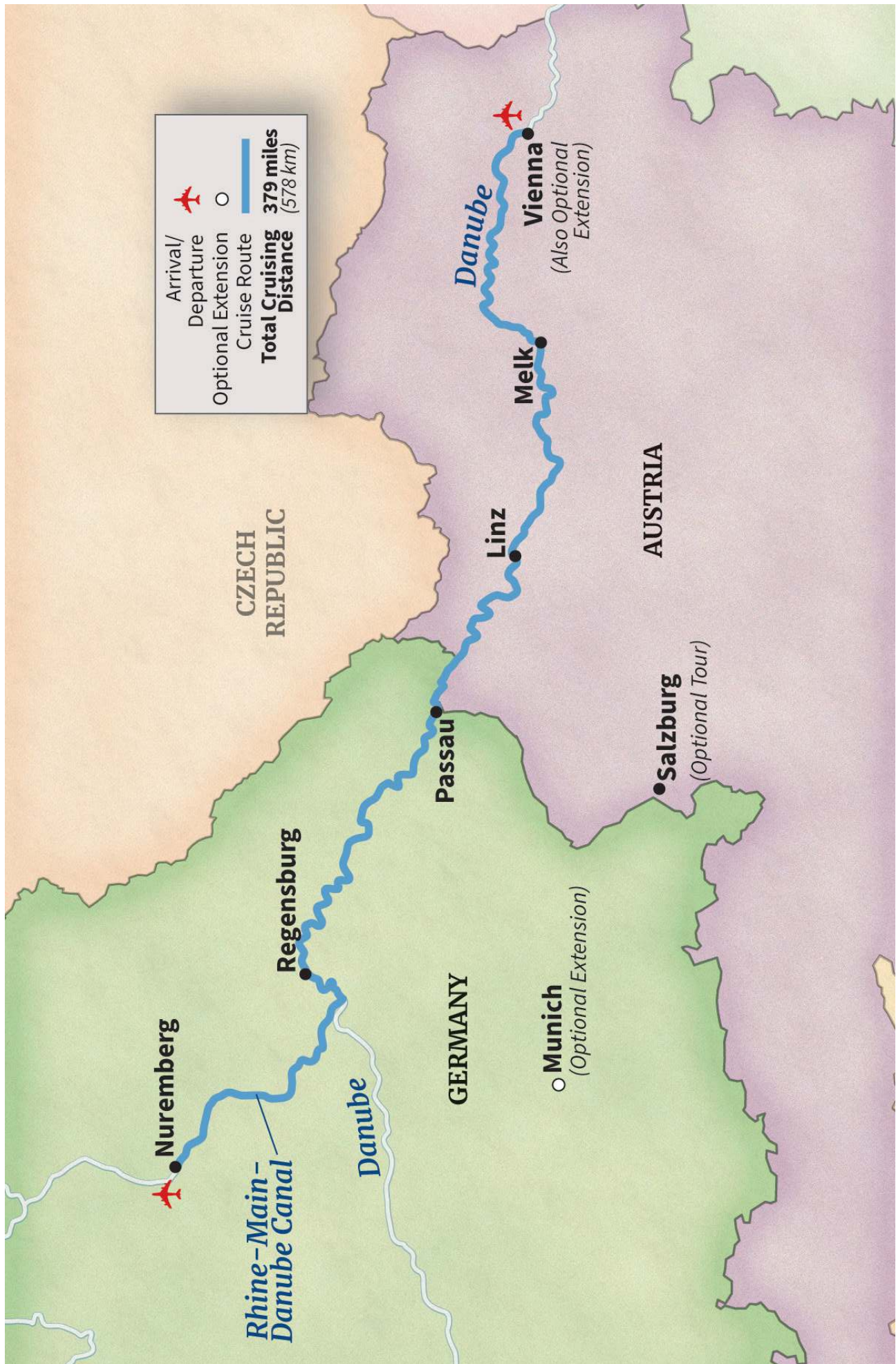
For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

Chirpey

For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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