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# **Christmas along the Elbe**

RIVER CRUISE

*Plus optional extensions in*

**Hamburg; Warsaw and Wroclaw;  
Prague**

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**ELX/EXP/EXB 2014**

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# Christmas along the Elbe River Cruise

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# 1. PASSPORT, VISA AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

## **Passport Required**

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

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

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

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

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

**If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages:**

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

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

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

## **Visas Not Required**

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

## **No U.S. Passport?**

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

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

## **Requirements for travel to the Czech Republic**

**You will need to bring along very specific documentation, so please read carefully.**

The Czech Republic requires that all travelers be able to provide proof of medical coverage, *if asked*. Not all travelers will be asked—in fact, most travelers *aren't* asked (and some local officials aren't aware of the regulation.) If you are asked, however, you must be able to show proof of coverage that meets these requirements:

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

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

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

Please disregard this notice if your itinerary does not travel to the Czech Republic.

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

## **Backup Photocopies**

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

## 2. YOUR HEALTH

### **Keep Your Abilities In Mind**

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

#### **Pacing**

- 11 days, with 7 nights aboard the M/S River Allegro, and 1 hotel stay
- Return flights to U.S. often require departing from hotel in early morning hours

#### **Physical Requirements**

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

#### **Climate**

- Daytime temperatures range from 35-45°F during cruising season
- Rain, ice, snow, and wind are possible during the holiday season

#### **Terrain**

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

#### **Transportation**

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

#### **River Cruising**

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

#### **Cuisine**

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

#### **Program Directors**

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

## **Health Check and Inoculations**

Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential if you want to fully enjoy your trip abroad. Please be aware that this program features a fair amount of walking up and down inclines in towns with uneven or cobblestone streets and at river ports with old-style wooden piers without modern ramps. For your comfort and safety, we recommend this program only to individuals in good physical condition. If you have any doubts, please discuss them with your doctor, and follow his or her advice. If you have difficulty walking or are wheelchair-bound, please consider a different Grand Circle Cruise Line vacation.

If you have a condition that requires special equipment or treatment, you must bring and be responsible for all necessary items related to your condition. If you take medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip, as obtaining refills of your medication can be difficult during your cruise. Pack these medications in your carry-on bag, and keep them in their original, labeled containers. To be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications, you should also bring copies of the prescriptions, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name.

## **Vaccinations**

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

- On-line** — if you have access to the Internet, we suggest you visit the CDC's Web site at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel), where you will find comprehensive information about preventing illness while traveling.
- By phone**—at the CDC's Hotline toll-free at **1-800-232-4636** 24 hours a day. Please note that automated information may be arranged topically by disease, rather than by country or region.

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

### 3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS

#### Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

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

#### Should I confirm luggage restrictions with my U.S./international airline(s) before departure?

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

**You should also check with the airlines on luggage fees—many airlines charge to check luggage,** sometimes even on international flights. Others will charge a fee if you bring a second carry-on item, like a purse or a laptop. **These fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines. If you are making a connecting flight, you should also confirm if your luggage can be checked through to your final destination. For more information about air travel, see the “Air Travel” section of your Important Information booklet.

## **Luggage Suggestions**

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

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

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

## **Airport Security/TSA**

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

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

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

## 4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE

### GCCL Air Travelers

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

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

**Arrival:** A GCCL Representative will meet you at the airport after you exit the luggage claims area and escort you to a private motor coach for your transfer to the pier or hotel.

**Important note:** *Airport porters are NOT allowed in the customs hall area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a complimentary cart, which you then will move through the luggage claim area and into the arrival hall. When you exit the airport building, your motor coach driver will load your luggage onto your motor coach.*

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

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

### **Flying with a Travel Companion**

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

## 5. MONEY MATTERS

### How to Carry Your Money

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

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

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

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director can advise you of the exchange rate upon arrival. For current exchange rates, visit our website's currency converter.

**Traveler's checks—NOT recommended:** Due to security and value issues, Traveler's checks have generally been superseded by the flexibility of credit, debit & ATM cards. Traveler's checks are sometimes impossible to exchange. Many stores and restaurants simply don't accept them, and, if accepted, fees are astronomical. If you must have them, consider them a last, desperation "cash" resort.

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

## Credit Cards

Major American credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, and American Express) are accepted abroad, but you should always inquire if your card is accepted before committing to purchase. ***Notify your credit card company in advance that you will be using your cards abroad so that they don't institute a security block.*** When using a major credit card you may receive a different exchange rate than if you pay with cash; inquire about the rate first. Credit cards may ***not*** be accepted for small purchases, in local markets, or by artisans. Note that the *Discover* credit card is not widely accepted outside the U.S. Keep your receipts in case of questions about conversion/exchange rates, and as proof of purchase for items shipped home.

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

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

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

## ATMs

When traveling, typically PLUS, Cirrus, and other bank networks are available throughout large cities and small towns. Always notify your bank before you leave home that you are going abroad so that they may remove any blocks on your account and also ask them about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad. For cash withdrawals, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's 4-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number), as many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their numeric keys, they only display digits.

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

## Onboard Ship

Two separate bills will be issued:

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Currency

### **Germany**

Germany's official currency is the euro. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

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

There is no need to obtain local currency before your trip, although we do suggest that you exchange some money at the airport upon arrival, as we cannot guarantee that your first hotel will offer money exchange services. Later, you can change money at most banks, most hotels, and money exchange offices. Please note that torn, dirty, or taped bills may not be accepted.

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

## **Banking Hours, Germany**

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

## **The Czech Republic**

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

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

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

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

## **Poland**

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

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

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

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

## **Shopping**

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

## **In General**

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

## **Berlin**

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

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

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

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

## Dresden

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

## Prague

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

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

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

## Wroclaw

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

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

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

## **U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges**

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

The top three points to know are:

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

## **Problem with a Purchase?**

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

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

## **To Tip or Not to Tip**

Sometimes *that* is the question. The good news is twofold: we're fresh out of Shakespearean soliloquies, so no thesauri will get hurt here; and the answer to the question "**to tip or not to tip** (and how much to tip if you so choose)" is *always* a personal decision. Tipping is a common practice both at home and abroad and we offer these guidelines to answer requests for appropriate tipping amounts. It can be useful to have this information on site – when the question *must* be answered – and ahead of time for travel budgeting purposes. Tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars (personal/traveler's checks should *never* be used for tips).

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

### In General

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

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

**Plan to dress in layers on shore excursions** Be prepared for a variety of weather conditions: rain, snow, sun, and clouds. Temperatures are likely to range from the 30s to the 40s. If you're lucky, you may get a day or two in the low 50s. 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 silk long underwear will provide an extra layer of insulation and is lightweight to pack. Your best bet is to dress in layers. You can then easily remove or add on layers according to any temperature shifts.

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

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

### Packing Your Carry-On

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

## Clothing Options

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

## Travel Gear Suggestions

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

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

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

## Consider ...

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

## Medicines

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

## Other Gear

- Travel alarm
- Compact binoculars
- Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- Hair dryer
- Wash cloth
- Handkerchiefs
- Basic sewing kit
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer & plug adapters—see “Regional Electricity” below
- Reading materials
- Travel journal/note pad
- Swimsuit, if your ship or hotel has a pool or a whirlpool
- Home address book
- Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Water bottle for land excursions
- Collapsible walking staff
- Pocket calculator for exchange rates
- Packets of decaffeinated coffee/sweetener

## 7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION

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

**Germany:** Germany has a central European climate: weather is variable, and rain and drizzle are common occurrences year-round, and it can be breezy. Winter is chilly in Berlin. Temperatures fall to around 36°F during this season with around 27°F and frequent frosts. Most areas on the country's North Sea coast have midwinter temperatures about 35°F or higher. Farther inland, the climate is continental, marked by greater seasonal variations in temperature, with warmer summers and colder winters. Temperature extremes between night and day and summer and winter are considerably less in the north than in the south.

**Czech Republic:** Winter, from December till February, is really cold in Prague. Snow is common and temperatures can often be freezing at night. Temperatures usually fluctuate between 25°F and 36°F. Moreover, the city receives less than two hours of sunshine. January is the coldest month with daytime temperatures usually around 32 degrees, but in some cases winter months can be very cold with temperatures far lower and strong, cold winds. Heavy snowfall or even snowstorms are also possible on some days; the yearly average number of days with snow is less than 40 in the low-land regions and up to 120 days in the mountainous areas of the Czech Republic.

**Poland:** Poland has a long border with the Czech and Slovak Republics in the south and a coastline on the Baltic Sea in the north. Most of Poland has a very similar climate and the same sequence of weather throughout the year. In winter you'll often experience cold, frosty weather with temperatures far below 32°F and sometimes heavy snowfall. Winter cold increases towards the east and in the southern mountains, while the coastlands of the Baltic Sea have slightly milder winters and cooler summers. Precipitation is well distributed around the year with a summer maximum of rain, while much of the winter precipitation is snow.

### **Weather Conditions and River Depths**

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

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

<b>WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?</b>			
<i>Average highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.</i>			
	<b>OCT</b>	<b>NOV</b>	<b>DEC</b>
<b>Berlin</b>			
High	56	45	38
Low	42	35	30
<b>Dresden, Germany</b>			
High	56	43	38
Low	44	36	32
<b>Prague, Czech Republic—Optional Extension</b>			
High	54	41	36
Low	39	32	28
<b>Hamburg, Germany—Optional Extension</b>			
High	55	45	40
Low	43	37	32
<b>Warsaw, Poland—Optional Extension</b>			
High	54	42	36
Low	40	32	27
<b>Wroclaw, Poland—Optional Extension</b>			
High	56	44	38
Low	41	33	29

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

## 8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY

### In General

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

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

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

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

### Regional Electricity

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

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

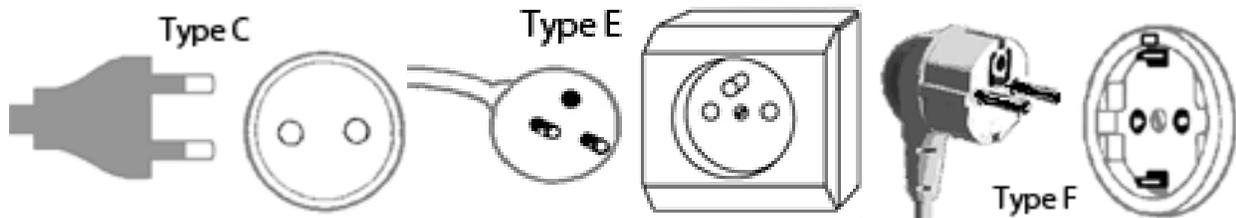
If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) in addition to plug adapters. Regional transformer/adaptor kits can often be found at hardware or online stores but transformers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

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

## **Electricity Onboard**

*M/S Allegro* cabin bathrooms are equipped with an 110V outlet for electric shavers. The rest of the cabin has 220V, with European-style outlets.

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



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

## **Smartphones**

It will require some effort to get the most out of your smartphone when you travel. Even with an international roaming plan, costs can add up quickly – those handy apps often pile up download fees. The simplest solution is to shut down all cell phone functions, automatic data feeds and roaming options, and take advantage of the apps via available Wi-Fi. With an Internet VOIP app (like Skype) you can make inexpensive calls. If necessary, turn international roaming back on and your phone will work as usual – albeit at some cost. If your phone doesn't support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

App quality, availability and costs vary – as do platforms (iPhone, Android, Blackberry ...), so again you'll need to do some legwork. Apps come in all forms: packing lists, currency converters, language translators, maps, journals, Wi-Fi hotspot finders ... one problem is going to be searching through the vast array of available apps to uncover what works best and what you're likely to use most. Smartphones have a lot to offer, but their small size can be a drawback for some uses (maps, extended reading, etc.)

## **Cell Phones**

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

## Phone Calling Cards

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

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

## Photo Gear

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 9. GRAND CIRCLE'S EUROPEAN RIVER SHIPS

### ***M/S River Allegro***

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

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

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

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

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

## **Shore Excursions**

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

## **Your GCCL Program Directors**

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

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

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

## **Onboard Activities**

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

### **Dining**

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

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

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

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

**Early riser breakfast:** 6:00-7:00 am

**Breakfast:** 7:00-9:00 am

**Lunch:** 1:00-2:00 pm

**Dinner:** 7:00-9:00 pm

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

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

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

## **Embarkation/Disembarkation**

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

## **Dock and Landing Etiquette**

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

## **Onboard Facilities**

### **Elevator/Chairlift**

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

### **Laundry Service**

Laundry service is available for a fee. Please note that neither self-service laundry facilities nor dry cleaning services are available.

### **Wi-Fi Access**

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

### **Linen Service**

Bed linens are changed once a week; towels are changed daily.

### **Lounge/Bar**

The bar is open from 9:30 am to 1 am, with soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquors for sale. Prices are in Euros.

## Medical Care

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

## Recreational Facilities

These include a sun deck with lounge, and lounge with bar and dance floor.

## Drinking Water

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

## Shipboard Security

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

## Smoking/Non-Smoking Policy

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

## Ship Specifications

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

## **10. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS**

### **During Your Land Excursions and Optional Extensions**

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

### **Drinking Water**

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

### **Internet Access and Email**

Internet cafés are available in many of the cities you visit on your Cruise Tour; however its 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.

## **Wroclaw & Warsaw in Brief**

### **City Layout: Warsaw**

Bisected by the Vistula River Warsaw – the modern capital of Poland – is a very different animal from Wroclaw. World War II dealt Warsaw an equally devastating hand – only 15% of the city emerged still standing after being razed by the German occupiers and nearly 60% of the population was either dead or missing. The Postwar years saw Soviet-style city planners, with a blank slate, design and build to their Socialist-Realist palette. Warsaw's central area, the Centrum, includes the Old Town and six surrounding districts. *Śródmieście* (roughly, "Inner City") contains many of the most significant sites you'll want to visit.

### **City Layout: Wroclaw**

Wroclaw is located in southwestern Poland on the River Oder. It has a complex history, but is best known in recent world events as the site of the Siege of Breslau (at the time, this was the German name today's Wroclaw) in World War II, during which the city was essentially destroyed. Restored after the war, it now reflects its unique heritage through architecture influenced by Bohemian, Austrian, Prussian and German modernist designs. Wroclaw's center is easily navigable by foot, and if you start from the Rynek (Central Square), you can amble for hours and discover the city's many charms. With 60 bus and 25 tram lines, the outskirts can also be visited efficiently.

## Cuisine

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

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

## Local Transportation

The public transportation systems in both Warsaw and Wrocław offer similar convenience and value, despite the differences in the cities. Trams are most convenient for distance travel, and they run from early morning to around 11:00 pm, though it's best to avoid the trams at rush hour. Buses and taxis are economical, efficient, and simple to use and though more expensive than the trams, are still not expensive. Warsaw's center is mostly closed to traffic, and is quite compact: with many attractions centrally located, walking in Warsaw is both easy and a pleasure. Wrocław is similar – the center is highly foot friendly. The outskirts are easily reachable by bus or tram if you have the time and chose to explore further out.

## Hamburg in Brief—Optional Extension

### City Layout

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

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

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

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

## Cuisine

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

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

## Drinking Water

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

## Local Transportation

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

## **Prague in Brief—Optional Extension**

### **City Layout and Details**

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

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

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

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

### **Cuisine**

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

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

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

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

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

## Drinking Water

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

## Local Transportation

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

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

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

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

# 11. DEMOGRAPHICS & GEOGRAPHY

## The Elbe River

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

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

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

## Germany—Base and Optional Extension

**Area:** 137,846 square miles

**Capital:** Berlin

**Languages:** German is the official language; Turkish is also spoken in Berlin.

**Ethnicities:** German 91.5%, Turkish 2.4%, other 6.1% (made up largely of Greek, Italian, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish)

**Location:** Germany is bordered by Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Switzerland, the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea.

**Geography:** Located in central Europe, Germany is bordered on the west by the Benelux countries and France, and on the east by Poland and the Czech Republic. Switzerland and Austria are to the south. Germany's northern coastline is met by the North Sea and the Baltic.

**Population:** 81,147,265

**Religions:** Protestant 38%, Roman Catholic 34%, unaffiliated or other 26.3%

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

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

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

### **Czech Republic—Optional Extension**

**Area:** 30,451 square miles

**Capital:** Prague

**Language:** Czech is the official language.

**Location:** Landlocked in Eastern Europe, the Czech Republic comprises the ancient provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, with a mountainous rim on the German border to the west. Other countries that share borders with the Czech Republic are Austria and Slovakia to the south and Poland to the northeast.

**Population (2013 estimate):** 10,609,762

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 10.4%, Protestant 1.1%, other and unspecified 54%, none 34.5% (2011 estimate)

**Time zone:** The Czech Republic is six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in New York, it is 6 pm in Prague.

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

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

## Poland—Optional Extension

**Area:** 120,728 square miles

**Capital:** Warsaw

**Government:** Republic

**Language:** Polish is the official language. It is a Slavonic language. Unlike Russian, it uses the familiar Roman alphabet, but with many additional accents. German, Russian, English, and French are spoken by most members of the travel industry and in hotels.

**Location:** Situated in the heart of Europe, Poland's low-lying plains extend from the Baltic shore in the north to the Tatra Mountains on its southern border with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. To the east of the Polish border are Lithuania, Belarus, and the Ukraine; to the west is Germany.

**Population (2013 estimate):** 38,383,809

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 90%, Eastern Orthodox 1.3%, Protestant 0.3%, other 8.4%

**Time zone:** The time in Poland is six hours ahead of Eastern Time in North America: when it is 12 noon in New York, it is 6 pm in Warsaw and Krakow.

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

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

## 12. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Books, Maps, and Movies**

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

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

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

*Central Europe: Enemies, Neighbors, Friends* by Lonnie R. Johnson (History)

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

*Woman from Hamburg And Other True Stories* by Hana Krall

A journalist from Warsaw born in 1937, Krall reveals the lives and strange trajectories of her compatriots in these stories, profiles and interviews of survivors of WWII.

*Hastening Toward Prague* by Lisa Wolverton (History)

Published in September 2001, this book examines the power and society in the medieval Czech Lands, where kings and rulers set the stage for conflicts that would still raise issues centuries later.

*The Austrians: A Thousand-Year Odyssey* by Gordon Brook-Shepard (History)

The author, a noted historian, draws upon his long-standing associations with Austrian leaders and his special access to the private Habsburg family archives to trace the identity of Austria as it developed over a millennium.

*A Nervous Splendor-Vienna 1888/9* by Frederic Morton (History)

Morton's popular history brings to life Freud, Mahler, Archduke Rudolph and other famous Viennese.

*The Power of the Powerless* by Vaclav Havel (Political Science)

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

*Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* by Otto Friedrich

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

### ***Another Beauty* by Adam Zagajewski (Memoir)**

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

### **Guidebooks:**

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

***Culture Smart!*** – Focuses on local customs and etiquette instead of sights, dining, etc.

***DK Eyewitness*** – Innovative visuals make these books easy to use and a nice souvenir once the trip is over. The focus is primarily on the sights and activities.

***Fodor's*** – A classic guidebook with strong information on activities, shopping, and dining. Good mix of upscale recommendations and budget suggestions.

***Frommer's*** – A comprehensive guide series that is known for its restaurant recommendations.

***Insight*** – Offers more information on history and culture than usual, nice visuals, good maps.

***Lonely Planet*** – Practical guides geared towards a more adventurous traveler on a budget.

***National Geographic*** – From the same company that publishes the magazine. Excellent photographs, good information on history, nature, and culture.

***Rough Guides*** –For the independent traveler on a budget. Particularly known for their maps.

### **Maps:**

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

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

### **Suggested Movies**

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

## **GERMANY**

### ***Goodbye Lenin!***

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

### ***Das Boot***

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

### ***The Lives of Others***

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

## **CZECH REPUBLIC**

### ***Divided We Fall***

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

### ***Closely Watched Trains***

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

## **POLAND**

### ***Night Train***

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

### ***The Pianist***

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

# **Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites**

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

**Visit the Grand Circle Community** website for a world of travel news and information:

[www.gct.com/community](http://www.gct.com/community)

## **Government websites:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **General travel information websites:**

### **Travel books**

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

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

### **World weather**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Electric current and plug types**

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

**Foreign exchange rates**

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

### **ATM locators**

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

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

## **Country information:**

[www.czechtourism.com](http://www.czechtourism.com) **Czech Republic**

[www.welcome-vienna.com](http://www.welcome-vienna.com) **Vienna**

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

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

[www.dresden.de/dmg/en/index.php](http://www.dresden.de/dmg/en/index.php) **Dresden**

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

<http://www.poland.travel/en-us>