

**NIU**  
**ALUMNI**  
**ASSOCIATION**



**Christmas Markets Along the Rhine**  
**Amsterdam to Basel Aboard *AmaVenita***

**December 7 – 15, 2025**



**Each December**, towns along the Rhine display their holiday splendor. The Christmas market tradition began in medieval German towns, growing into dazzling holiday celebrations that draw the region's leading artisans, bakers, and toymakers.

**Feel the magic of this seasonal wonderland** on a spectacular Rhine cruise from **December 7 to 15, 2025**, joining fellow NIU alumni aboard the luxurious *AmaVenita* from Amsterdam to Basel. Arrive in Germany and France's most enchanting riverside cities, all festively decorated and filled with the aromas of mulled wine and other delicacies.

**Reconnect with old friends aboard *AmaVenita***, with its refined twin-balcony staterooms, marble bathrooms, and superb amenities such as a heated pool. **To reserve a place**, please contact our tour operator Arrangements Abroad at 212-514-8921 or [trips@arrangementsabroad.com](mailto:trips@arrangementsabroad.com).

## CRUISE HIGHLIGHTS

**CRUISE** with fellow NIU alumni aboard the luxurious *AmaVenita* riverboat from **Amsterdam** to Basel, experiencing the history, seasonal cheer, and sumptuous culinary delights of Christmas markets through Germany and France

**JOIN** local experts on comprehensive guided adventures, hiking and biking tours, and several optional excursions in beautiful towns such as **Düsseldorf, Rudesheim, Cologne, Freiburg, and Speyer**

**DELIGHT** in a **private sunset canal cruise in Amsterdam** while enjoying a unique perspective on the city's famous Light Festival featuring installations from notable artists

**SAMPLE** wines in 700-year-old cellars open only nine days per year during a visit to the **Historical Cellars of Strasbourg** on a special "Open Doors Day"

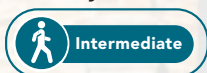
**ENJOY** regional specialties showcasing central Europe's gastronomical diversity, from Düsseldorf's traditional **Altbier and roasted pork knuckles** to Alsace's **fine wines and foie gras**

**VISIT** the French town of **Colmar**, the real-life inspiration for Disney's fairytale village in *Beauty and the Beast*, accompanying experts through its Christmas market and medieval streets lined with half-timbered houses

**SAVOR** the beauty of cruising the UNESCO-listed **Rhine Gorge** and navigate castle-strewn lands as you sail through the historic heart of the medieval Holy Roman Empire to Rudesheim

**TASTE** celebrated Riesling wines during **private experiences** with expert vintners or soar over the world-renowned vineyards on a gondola while visiting Rudesheim

Activity Level:



Pace Level:



Visit Arrangements Abroad's website for more information about Activity and Pace Levels at [www.arrangementsabroad.com/faqs](http://www.arrangementsabroad.com/faqs).

# Christmas Markets Along the Rhine

## Amsterdam to Basel Aboard AmaVenita

December 7 – 15, 2025



Walk along the Prinsengracht and Brouwersgracht canals, lined with tilting 17th-century merchant houses. Stop at **Café 't Papeneiland**, first built in 1642 and containing a secret tunnel utilized by the Catholic Church. Browse vintage treasures at the **Noordmarkt** flea market.

Return to *AmaVenita* and set sail from Amsterdam to begin your journey down the Rhine. B,L,D

### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10: DÜSSELDORF, GERMANY / COLOGNE

On a scenic cruise into **Düsseldorf**, view the Frank Gehry-designed **Neuer Zollhof** among acclaimed modern buildings along the city waterfront. Gaze upon the soaring, 787-foot **Rhine Tower** and cruise beneath the **Theodor Heuss Bridge**, Germany's first cable-stayed bridge, completed in 1957. Follow the Rheinuferpromenade from the Parliament down to the harbor.

For your afternoon, choose between guided Christmas market tours in two cities: Düsseldorf or **Cologne**, a culturally rich university city with ancient roots.

**Option 1:** In Düsseldorf, explore the city on foot with a knowledgeable local guide or by bike on an active tour. Amble through the **Altstadt** (Old Town), known as "the longest bar in the world," and sample *Altbier*—a crisp, clean beer crafted using traditional brewing techniques. Beer will be paired with roasted pork knuckles, a classic Düsseldorf combination.

### SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7: DEPARTURE

Depart on an overnight flight to Amsterdam.

### MONDAY, DECEMBER 8: AMSTERDAM, HOLLAND

Arrive in **Amsterdam** and board *AmaVenita* for lunch. As dusk falls, experience the **Amsterdam Light Festival** on an exclusive canal cruise featuring illuminated art installations by global artists. The festival's light sculptures and projections line the waterways for a few prized weeks each winter. Later, gather for a festive welcome reception and dinner on board. L,R,D

### TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9: AMSTERDAM

This morning, relax on board or join your guide for a comprehensive scenic walking tour of central Amsterdam. Along elm-shaded canals, walk the maze of 17th-century stone streets in the **Jordaan** quarter. At **Galerie Ron Mandos**, explore rotating shows by leading Dutch artists and global creators.



Amsterdam Light Festival, Amsterdam

Christmas Market, Heidelberg, Germany



Savor the scents of roasted almonds as you browse among the illuminated Christmas trees at the Christmas market beneath the Dome of Lights. Enjoy expansive city views from the heights of the Burgplatz Ferris wheel. Skaters may choose to glide across the Kö ice rink.

**Option 2:** In Cologne, admire medieval Romanesque churches and the striking **Romano-Germanic Museum** before embarking on a guided tour of its Old Town. Highlights include the **Cologne Rathaus**, Germany's oldest town hall; the **Fishmarkt**, which dates to the 12th century, and the **Great St. Martin Church**.

Indulge in treats at one of Europe's most acclaimed Christmas markets in Cologne's **Newmarkt**, established in 1820. Browse chalet-style huts for artisan-crafted Nativity scenes, sip spiced *Glühwein* (German mulled wine), and savor *Lebkuchen* (gingerbread) and Cathedral-shaped waffles inspired by the Cologne Cathedral. Take the Christmas Market Express past twinkling Heinzel's Winter Fairytale displays. B,L,D

#### THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11: RHINE GORGE / RÜDESHEIM

Sail through the **Rhine Gorge**, where 50 medieval castles and fortresses dot the cliffs of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Ancient Romans began planting grapevines here in 50 A.D., recognizing the perfect growing conditions created by sun-soaked slate hillsides.

Today, these same steep slopes produce acclaimed Riesling wines. Arrive in **Rüdesheim** to sample these vintages in historic cellars. The vineyards receive 1,640 hours of sunlight yearly, creating ideal conditions for winemaking that have endured for two millennia.

Alternatively, go hiking through the vineyards or float above them in a gondola to see the mighty Rhine River and the **Niederwald Monument**, a 125-foot copper statue erected in 1883. Cyclists can pedal through cobblestone lanes and along the riverbank past Roman ruins.

Experience a culinary journey around the globe: At Rüdesheim's **Christmas Market of Nations**, sample specialties from 20 nations across four continents. Enjoy these dishes with the backdrop of the medieval Brömserburg Castle. Conclude the festive evening with a special group event featuring drinks and live music. B,L,D

#### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12: HEIDELBERG / LADENBURG / SPEYER

Choose between two of Germany's historically rich cities and their festive Christmas markets for another day of exploration.

**Option 1:** In **Heidelberg**, marvel at the red-sandstone ruins of the 13th-century hilltop **Schloss Heidelberg**. Stroll Europe's longest pedestrian shopping avenue, the mile-long **Hauptstrasse**, and enjoy music and mulled wine at Germany's oldest Christmas market, dating to 1693.

For sweeping views of both the city and the castle, follow the 1.25-mile **Philosopher's Path** along the northern bank of the Neckar River.

**Option 2:** Bike along the Neckar River to the medieval town of **Ladenburg** and visit its **Marktplatz**, or explore the Christmas market in one of Germany's oldest cities, **Speyer**, home to Europe's largest Romanesque cathedral—a UNESCO World Heritage Site. B,L,D

Christmas Market, Germany



## SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13: STRASBOURG, FRANCE

The capital of east France's Alsace region, **Strasbourg** greets you with its 1570 **Christkindelsmärik**, France's first Christmas market. As you explore the city, visit the UNESCO-listed **Grande Île**, the island in the city's historic center. You will encounter the towering 100-foot Christmas tree beside the Gothic **Cathédrale de Notre Dame**, famous for its 16th-century astronomical clock.

You may choose to cycle past architectural gems or take a panoramic bus tour. In the half-timbered **La Petite France** quarter, warm yourself up with steaming cups of *vin chaud* (spiced wine).

Later in the day, discover the rich wine-growing tradition in Alsace during a visit to the **Historical Cellars of Strasbourg** on a special "Open Doors Day." Only open nine days per year, meet with the winemakers and taste incredible local vintages in cellars dating back to 1345, housed under Strasbourg's historic hospital. B,L,D

## SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14: BREISACH, GERMANY / FREIBURG / COLMAR, FRANCE / BASEL, SWITZERLAND

From **Breisach**, you have two options for excursions:

**Option 1:** Head to the medieval university city of **Freiburg**, founded in 1120 A.D. near the Black Forest's edge. See the crowning attraction: **Freiburg Minster**, a Gothic cathedral praised by art critic Nikolaus Pevsner for having "the most beautiful spire on Earth." Active travelers can opt for a guided countryside bicycle ride.

During free time at Freiburg's Christmas market, learn candlemaking or traditional cookie-baking methods, and taste three varieties of regional Ratcliffe cheese. You may



Colmar, France

also sample local specialties like smoky Black Forest ham, crispy *Flammkuchen* (a thin-crust regional pizza), and the classic *Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte*, featuring layers of chocolate, cherries, and cream that define Black Forest cake.

**Option 2:** Visit **Colmar's** Old Town, lined with pointed-roof, half-timbered houses painted in yellow, pink, and blue. Known for inspiring the design of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, this preserved medieval district merges French and German styles through its architecture and food.

At Colmar's Christmas markets, peruse wooden stalls displaying hand-painted glass ornaments and traditional German Christmas pyramids, while light projections dance across centuries-old buildings. Sample local specialties: buttery *Kugelhopf* cake, paper-thin *crêpes*, or steaming bowls of *spaetzle* noodles paired with Alsatian Riesling. *AmaVenita* docks in Basel overnight. B,L,D

## MONDAY, DECEMBER 15: BASEL, SWITZERLAND / RETURN

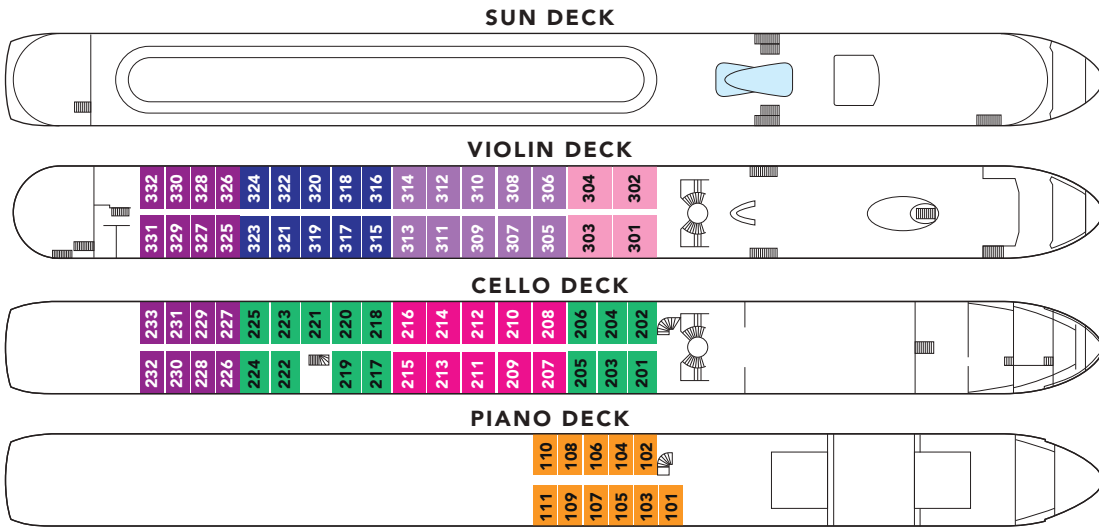
Disembark the ship in Basel and transfer to the airport for your flights home. B



Historical Cellars of Strasbourg, Strasbourg, France

**DISCLAIMER:** The itinerary is subject to change at the discretion of Northern Illinois University and Arrangements Abroad. For complete details, please carefully read the terms and conditions at [www.arrangementsabroad.com/terms](http://www.arrangementsabroad.com/terms).

# AMAVENITA



Step aboard the luxurious AmaVenita and experience accommodations designed for ultimate comfort and style. Each spacious stateroom features elegant décor, twin balconies offering panoramic views, and modern amenities to make you feel at home. Relax in plush bedding, enjoy on-demand entertainment, and pamper yourself in spa-like bathrooms.

## CRUISE RATES (Per Person)

| Deck                                   | Cabin            | Double  | Single   |
|--|------------------|---------|----------|
| Piano Deck                             | 101-111          | \$4,999 | \$6,999  |
| Fixed Windows, 160 sq. ft.             |                  |         |          |
| Cello & Violin Decks                   | 226-233, 325-332 | \$5,999 | \$8,999  |
| French Balcony, 170 sq. ft.            |                  |         |          |
| Cello & Violin Decks                   | 201-206, 217-225 | \$6,999 | \$10,499 |
| French Balcony, 210 sq. ft.            |                  |         |          |
| Violin Deck                            | 315-324          | \$7,499 | Inquire  |
| French and outside Balcony 210 sq. ft. |                  |         |          |
| Violin Deck                            | 207-216          | \$7,999 | Inquire  |
| French and outside Balcony 235 sq. ft. |                  |         |          |
| Violin Deck                            | 305-314          | \$8,499 | Inquire  |
| French and outside Balcony 235 sq. ft. |                  |         |          |
| Violin Deck                            | 301-304          | Inquire | Inquire  |
| French and outside Balcony 300 sq. ft. |                  |         |          |

## RATES INCLUDE

- Seven nights cabin accommodations aboard AmaVenita
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, R=Reception, D=Dinner). Bottled water, house wine, soft drinks, juices, and coffee/tea with all meals
- Airport/pier/airport group transfers for all participants on suggested flights
- Escorted sightseeing, transportation, and entrance fees for all included visits
- Enrichment program of lectures and talks
- Taxes, service, and portage charges; gratuities to local guides and drivers, customary shipboard gratuities

**NOT INCLUDED IN RATES** International airfare; passport/visa fees; meals not specified; alcoholic beverages other than what is noted in inclusions; personal items and expenses; airport transfers other than for those on suggested flights; excess baggage; trip insurance; any other items not specifically mentioned as included.





Strasbourg, France

**NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**  
**CHRISTMAS MARKETS ALONG THE RHINE: AMSTERDAM TO BASEL ABOARD AMAVENITA**  
**DECEMBER 7 – 15, 2025**  
**RESERVATION FORM**

To reserve a place, please call Arrangements Abroad at 212-514-8921 or 800-221-1944; email: [trips@arrangementsabroad.com](mailto:trips@arrangementsabroad.com); fax: 212-344-7493; or complete and return this form with your deposit of \$1,000 per person (of which \$500 is non-refundable for administrative fees) payable to Arrangements Abroad. Mail to: Arrangements Abroad, 260 West 39th Street, 17th Floor, New York, NY 10018-4424.

Name(s) in full as on passport(s). Please print.

Address

City

State

Zip

Telephone (home)

(business)

Fax

E-mail

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

AmaVenita cabin preference (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to share a cabin with \_\_\_\_\_

**FORM OF PAYMENT**

Enclosed is my check (payable to Arrangements Abroad)       Debit card       Credit card

Name on debit/credit card

Debit/credit card number

3- or 4-digit security code

Expiration date

I/We confirm that I/we have carefully read and agree to the *Terms & Conditions* of this Program (see [www.arrangementsabroad.com/terms](http://www.arrangementsabroad.com/terms) to review or call for a copy). I/We agree to full payment 120 days prior to departure. Each participant must sign below.

Signature (required)

Date

Signature (required)

Date