

Rhine Bike & River Cruise: Basel to Amsterdam

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Travel in style along the storied Rhine River on this indulgent Bike & Boat vacation. During your cruise, you'll wrap yourself in luxury—enjoying the five-star amenities of your Emerald cruise ship. Discover a different country each day as you pedal a well-maintained, fitted VBT bike—joining your VBT trip leaders on carefully curated routes through the Rhine's picturesque villages. You'll find ample time for relaxation on board as you splash in the ship's pool, lounge on the sundeck, and enjoy your comfortable stateroom—or upgrade to a luxurious balcony suite and watch the scenic banks of the Rhine drift by from the privacy of your own cabin. Along the way, you'll stop to taste exquisite vintages, explore local wineries, and tour charming medieval cities. In the evening, enjoy a full menu of locally-inspired cuisine prepared by your ship's onboard chef.

Cultural Highlights

- Enjoy the best of both worlds: an all-inclusive river cruise and VBT Bicycling Vacation.
- Touch the shores of four countries—Switzerland, France, Germany, and the Netherlands—but unpack your bags only once.
- Delve into the wine culture of Alsace as you cycle France's famous Route des Vins.
- Explore the historic cities of Heidelberg, Koblenz, and Cologne.
- Cruise the charming canals of Amsterdam.

What to Expect

On Shore: This tour offers easy, rolling terrain along rivers, with a few climbs to reach riverside towns. Riding is primarily on paved or packed gravel bike paths, with some road riding, through both urban and rural areas. Our VBT support vehicle is available every day at designated points for those who need assistance.

On Board Ship: Our group of up to 24 VBT guests will be part of a larger assembly on board our 182-passenger river cruise ship. Every day will include your choice of exclusive VBT activities and opportunities to join others. Our boat may be docked adjacent to other ships, which might lead to some views being obstructed while in port.

Tour Duration: 11 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 13-45 miles

Average Cycling Time: 1-5 hours

Group size: 14-24 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

April 58°/42°, May 67°/51°, June 72°/57°, July 77°/60°, August 76°/59°, September 69°/53°, October 58°/46°

Average Rainfall (in.)

April 1.5, May 2.9, June 2.6, July 2.4, August 2.0, September 1.8, October 1.5

FLIGHT DAY: Depart for Your Vacation

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Zürich / Pre-Tour Hotel Night: Zürich

Start off your first day in Zürich right by having a VBT representative greet you at the airport. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your hotel. From your centrally located hotel, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Embark Ship

After an included breakfast, meet your VBT representative in the hotel lobby at 11:15 a.m. for your transfer to Basel, Switzerland (approximately 1.5 hours). Arrive at the dock around 1:00 p.m. and board your Emerald Cruises ship.

Your cabin may not be ready until 3:00 p.m., but you're welcome to enjoy lunch on board between 12:30 and 3:30 p.m. In the meantime, feel free to relax in the ship's common areas, stretch your legs, or explore Basel.

At 2:30 p.m., meet your trip leaders and fellow travelers on board for introductions, followed by a safety briefing and bike fitting session, culminating in a short test ride. Later, enjoy dinner on board as the ship sets sail for Breisach this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

What to Expect:

Non-Biking Day

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2: Breisach / Kaiserstuhl Cycling Path

Wake up in Breisach and start your day with a relaxing breakfast on board. Then, disembark to start your ride, departing and returning directly from the ship's dock. Today's ride features the Kaiserstuhl-Radweg, a loop through the vineyard terraces of the sunniest corner of Germany. Riding on well-developed cycling paths and agricultural roads, you'll pass through riverside forests, orchards, and vineyards. Stop at one of the villages to sample the local cheese with wine and meet some of VBT's local friends. The Kaiserstuhl sits between Germany's Black Forest and the Vosges in France, and it may be possible to catch glimpses of both during your ride.

Rejoin the ship in Breisach for a late lunch on board. In the afternoon there is time to explore this charming town and learn about its medieval past.

There will be time to relax on board before the Captain's Welcome Cocktail and Gala. Tonight, the boat will set sail for Kehl.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Breisach to Endingen — 30 km (19 miles)

Afternoon: Endingen to Breisach — 24 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride options are on the Kaiserstuhl Cycle Route, which is a combination of dedicated bike paths and quiet roads. There are no significant elevation gains. The short option ends with a winery visit, followed by a shuttle back to Breisach to meet the ship. The longer option is a scenic ride across the vineyards back to the ship, including some minor elevation gains.

Cumulative Distance Range: 30 – 53 km (19 – 33 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3: La Route des Vins d'Alsace / Obernai

You'll arrive in Kehl in time for breakfast, after which you'll cross the river and say "bonjour" to France.

In the morning, you begin pedaling from the outskirts of Strasbourg into the heart of wine country. The renowned La Route des Vins, France's most famous wine route, winds through a network of scenic roadways and bike paths, connecting one charming village to another. Your ride begins alongside the picturesque Canal de la Bruche, where the former towpath has been transformed into a dedicated bike path, forming part of the 2,400-mile (3,862-km) EuroVelo 5 route. Continuing deeper into wine country, you finish your morning in the medieval city of Obernai, where you'll enjoy lunch and have free time to explore the town's inviting cafés, wine houses, and shops.

After lunch, a private shuttle returns you to the ship as it sails toward the next port of call. In the evening, after another delicious dinner onboard, you are invited to experience an unforgettable classical concert at the magnificent Bruchsal Palace. The ship then sets sail for Mannheim just as the concert guests return on board.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Strasbourg to Dorlisheim — 26 km (16 miles) | Dorlisheim to Obernai — 17 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

The first part of today's ride follows the scenic, car-free Canal de la Bruche. Later, you will cycle along bike paths, dedicated bike lanes, and quiet country roads, passing through charming wine villages adorned with colorful flower boxes in the French Alsace.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 43 km (16 – 27 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: Mannheim / Heidelberg / Cycle Along the Neckar River

You'll wake up on board your ship in Mannheim and enjoy breakfast before taking a 45-minute shuttle to Heidelberg, a city renowned for its prestigious university and its historic castle perched on a hill overlooking the town and the Neckar River. A local guide will introduce you to Heidelberg's highlights, followed by a guided walk through the charming city center.

Your bike will be ready for you in Heidelberg, where you can grab a snack from your trip leaders before setting off on a scenic ride back to the ship in Mannheim, partly following the Neckar River. Once onboard, enjoy a late lunch as the ship sets course for Rüdesheim.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Heidelberg to Mannheim — 28 km (18 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride follows a mix of bike paths and low-traffic town roads, offering a relaxed cycling experience. The route is mostly flat, with no significant elevation gains.

Cumulative Distance Range: 28 km (18 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: The Rhine Gorge / Koblenz / The Mosel River

Your ship departs its mooring this morning as breakfast is served—making its way toward Koblenz, where the Rhine and Mosel rivers converge. Be sure to spend time on deck as you pass through the Rhine Gorge, one of the most breathtaking stretches of the river. This dramatic passage features the legendary Lorelei Rock—perhaps you'll hear her mythical call—along with a stunning succession of castles perched above southern-facing vineyards.

Arriving in Koblenz by late morning, hop on your bike for a scenic ride along the Mosel Cycle Route toward Müden. The route follows a dedicated, car-free bike path along the river, beneath steep valley walls, and past the impressive Deutsches Eck (German Corner), a striking monument marking the confluence of the Mosel and Rhine. Along the way, enjoy a delicious lunch before reaching Müden

(Mosel), a charming riverside town. Here, you'll visit a family-owned winery for a tasting of the region's renowned wines before taking a 30-minute shuttle back to the ship.

For those preferring to skip today's ride, an optional excursion (available at an additional cost) offers a visit to Cochem, including round-trip transportation, a walking tour of the town, and a guided visit to Reichsburg Castle. This excursion can be booked directly on board upon embarkation.

Your ship remains docked in Koblenz until after midnight, allowing time for a post-dinner stroll along the city's wide, tree-lined promenade.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Koblenz to Müden (Mosel) — 37 km (23 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride is a relaxing and easy journey along the car-free Mosel Cycle Route, with a few short stretches on roadways as you leave Koblenz.

Cumulative Distance Range: 37 km (23 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Cologne / City Ride / Sailing the Rhine to Amsterdam

Arrive in Cologne in the morning and enjoy breakfast on board while taking in views of the city's iconic spires from the water. After disembarking, set off on an urban bike loop, discovering both well-known landmarks and hidden gems of this vibrant metropolis. Return to the ship in the early afternoon for lunch, then bid farewell to Cologne as the journey continues on the final and longest leg to Amsterdam. This is the perfect time to unwind—catch up on reading, reflect on your travels in a journal, or simply relax as the ship makes its way to the Dutch capital. In the evening, enjoy a festive cocktail reception followed by the captain's gala dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Cologne City Loop — 20 km (13 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride follows a mix of bike paths and town streets, winding through parks and tracing the waterfront for a scenic and varied journey.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 km (13 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: Amsterdam / Monnickendam

This morning, experience Amsterdam as its early residents once did with a guided boat excursion through the city's iconic canals.

By midday, set off on Amsterdam's excellent bike path network, heading north to the charming fishing village of Monnickendam. As you leave the city behind, pedal through picturesque countryside, passing quintessential Dutch landscapes and glimpses of daily life. Your route takes you through Broek in Waterland, a storybook village that invites you to pause for photos. We've selected an idyllic spot for lunch, featuring local specialties, followed by a classic Dutch experience—a clog-making demonstration.

On your leisurely return ride to the ship, take in a fresh perspective of the serene countryside.

Back on board, celebrate your week on the Rhine with fellow travelers and trip leaders, enjoying a lively evening of entertainment and dining.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Ship to Monnickendam — 26 km (16 miles)

Afternoon: Monnickendam to Ship — 18 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's routes feature flat, easy cycling on well-maintained bike paths. For a shorter ride, a shuttle is available from Monnickendam back to the ship.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 44 km (16 – 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8: Disembark Barge / Your VBT Vacation Ends / Post-Tour Hotel Night: Den Haag

After an included breakfast, bid farewell to your ship crew and trip leaders. At 9:00 a.m., board a private coach with your fellow travelers for the journey to your hotel in Den Haag (approximately 60 minutes).

After check-in, enjoy a short guided walking tour followed by free time for independent exploration. Please note that your room may not be ready upon arrival; if needed, the hotel will store your luggage.

This evening, enjoy dinner on your own at one of the city's many excellent restaurants. VBT provides city information, including recommendations on what to see and do in Den Haag.

Note: If you prefer to spend more time exploring Amsterdam, you may send your luggage to the hotel in Den Haag with the group transportation and travel there at your leisure by train.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DEPARTURE DAY: Departure

After an included breakfast this morning, enjoy complimentary transportation to Amsterdam Schiphol Airport—a journey of approximately 30 to 40 minutes, depending on traffic—for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Opera (Arrival Day)

This private boutique hotel has been exquisitely decorated by the well-known Swiss interior designer

Roland Schön. It is ideally situated in Zurich's city center next to the famous Opera House. The nearby lakeside promenade makes for a lovely morning jog or a leisurely stroll. Just a five-minute walk away, the glamour of the world-renowned Bahnhofstrasse unfolds, the most attractive and exclusive shopping mile in Zurich. The Old Town is also nearby, with its pastel-hued guild houses and historic buildings. For an unforgettable meal, indulge in the gourmet Restaurant Opera, awarded the "golden fish" for its exquisite seafood specialties. Elegant paintings from the young Baroque artist Tatjana Tiziana adorn its walls, inviting you into Zurich's opera world. Free WiFi is available throughout this air-conditioned hotel.

Emerald Star-Ships (Days 1-7)

Cruise Europe's rivers on one of Emerald Cruises' "Star-Ships," each designed for luxury river cruising. Enjoy full-service hospitality, comfortable social spaces, a golf putting green, walking tracks on the sun deck, pool, and cinema. Watch the European landscape drift past over coffee or a drink in the Horizon Bar & Lounge. At mealtime, savor an endless array of delicious cuisine. The Sun Deck boasts a retractable glass roof so you can swim in the pool, enjoy a movie, or have a drink in the Riverview Lounge no matter the weather. Each ship's 72 generously proportioned suites and 20 staterooms feature all the amenities you need. VBT offers two cabin types spread across five cabin categories: Emerald Stateroom (Categories D+E), or Emerald Panorama Balcony Suite (Categories A+B+C). VBT can also request additional cabin types, based on availability.

Movenpick Hotel The Hague (Day 8)

Conveniently located in the heart of The Hague, the Movenpick Hotel is a stylish 72-room, 4-star boutique hotel featuring tastefully decorated rooms with spacious bathrooms, a restaurant, Coffee & Wine Lounge, fitness area, air conditioning, and complimentary WiFi throughout.