

# Germany, Luxembourg & France Bike & Boat: Mosel River Valley

## Bike Vacation + Air Package

Cycle three stunning countries on one unforgettable journey! If you want to experience Europe in the most rewarding way, you'll love this popular Mosel bike tour! Embark a luxurious barge and follow the winding Mosel River into the heart of Riesling country, alighting each day for exhilarating reels through enchanting forests, past lush vineyards, and into charming half-timbered villages. Along the way, explore the Roman remains of Trier, the wine-producing village of Berncastel-Kues, the low mountains of scenic Eifel, and the ducal city of Luxembourg. Join us!

## Cultural Highlights

Coast into charming villages, past lush vineyards, and along tranquil river banks

Experience the low mountains of German Eifel by bike, blanketed with ancient volcanic landscapes and lakes

Visit a bell foundry to learn the ancient and alchemical craft of bell forging Uncover the scenic and cultural wonders of Germany, Luxembourg, and France on one trip

Follow the winding Mosel River to Trier, the former imperial city steeped in ancient art and architecture

Sip Germany's finest Rieslings and beers while relaxing on your barge deck

Explore Cochem's imposing hilltop Reichsburg Castle with a local guide

## What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain on bike paths and roads through both urban and rural areas. There will be a quarter mile section on packed dirt as well as a quarter mile section on cobblestone. Our VBT support shuttle is available every day at designated points for those who would like assistance.

**Tour Duration:** 11 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 6 - 38

## Climate Information

### Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Jun 67°/52°, Jul 72°/56°, Aug 69°/54°, Sep 63°/49°, Oct 54°/43°

### Average Rainfall (in.)

Jun 3.17, Jul 4.87, Aug 4.37, Sep 2.23, Oct 1.85

## DAY 1: Depart from home / Fly overnight to Frankfurt

Depart home for Frankfurt, Germany. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

## DAY 2: Arrive in Frankfurt and transfer to Koblenz

Upon arrival at the Frankfurt airport, claim your luggage and clear customs. If your luggage is lost, fill out a PIR form before leaving the customs area—VBT representatives are not allowed in the customs area. Make certain your VBT luggage tags are affixed to your bag so your VBT representative can identify you as you enter the arrival hall. Your VBT representative will be holding a VBT sign and will help you transfer via taxi or minibus (approximately 90 minutes) to your hotel in Koblenz. If you cannot find the VBT representative, or have been delayed in customs because of lost luggage or another reason, please go to the airport Meeting Point and wait there for a few minutes. If nobody arrives, you may wish to telephone our transportation company, Garske Touristik, at 0261 92 24 727.

Your hotel room may not be available until 2:00 p.m. You may store your luggage with the front desk if you arrive before that time. At 4:00 p.m., meet our local guide in the hotel lobby for a 1½-hour walking tour around the historic Old Town of Koblenz. It's a 15-minute walk to the starting point of the tour, so we recommend you leave the hotel with everything you'll need to have dinner on your own in the Old Town at tour's end.

Hotel: Hotel Brenner

## DAY 3: Cochem / Embark barge / VBT Bicycle Vacation begins

At 9:00 a.m., meet a VBT representative in the hotel lobby for your transfer by coach (approximately 1 hour 40 minutes) to the city of Cochem. Please ensure that all luggage you will not need during the day today is loaded onto the luggage minibus. It will be taken directly to the barge and delivered to your cabin.

On arrival, meet one of your VBT trip leaders, who will acquaint you with this characteristic Mosel town beloved for its wooded hills, medieval buildings and a picturesque center with beautiful, timber-framed houses. Hike or shuttle with a local guide to Reichsburg Castle, where you enjoy a tour and spectacular views of the Mosel Valley and its vineyards. The fairy-tale castle includes seven rooms of fine furniture and objects from different periods and styles.

After your visit, walk back into town, where you may shop and eat lunch on your own before boarding the

barge at 2:00 p.m. Meet the crew and your second VBT trip leader, then settle in before a bike-safety session and a short warm-up ride to Beilstein on quiet bike paths along the Mosel River. Reunite with your barge in Beilstein, where it will moor for the night. Gather with your travel mates for a welcome drink and toast this most rewarding way to bike Europe! Enjoy dinner on board.

Please note regarding WiFi on board the barge: Due to the nature of the barge movements, internet access is not always available. If stable internet access is critical to you, VBT recommends that you purchase your own bundle before traveling overseas.

Please note regarding Ride with GPS: There is limited WiFi on board. If you wish to use Ride with GPS on your smartphone, VBT also recommends that you download your VBT Maps & Route Notes from a WiFi zone prior to arrival on the boat. During your vacation, you will be able to follow these route notes on your smartphone with turn-by-turn voice navigation as you ride. As always, VBT also provides our traditional printed maps and route notes during the tour.

Hotel: Barge *Iris*

Alternative: Barge *Quo Vadis*

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choice:

Cumulative Distance Range: 10 km (6 miles)

Afternoon

Beilstein Warm-Up: 10 km (6 miles)

What to Expect: The ride to Beilstein is easy along the river. Get acquainted with your route notes and bicycle. Check your brakes and play with shifting your full range of gears.

## **DAY 4: Bike to Zell / Traben-Trarbach / Cruise to Bernkastel-Kues**

Today, cruise the Mosel upstream and disembark for a reel on an easy cycling path to Zell and Traben-Trarbach. Beautifully situated on the Mosel where the river twists and turns through the hills, Zell is one of the largest wine-producing communities on the river. The beloved wine Zeller Schwarze Katze (Black Cat) is produced here with grapes from 16 different locations. Be sure to notice the sculpture on the market-square fountain depicting a snarling cat atop a wine barrel.

Next, cycle to the village of Traben-Trarbach, an architectural jewel of the German Art Nouveau movement known as *Jugendstil*. The surrounding woodlands and extensive vineyards add to its

irresistible charm. Traben-Trarbach was once the world's second-largest wine-trading center. At the height of its prosperity at the turn of the 20th century, the city's wine merchants built a number of fine Art Nouveau buildings, many of which are carefully preserved and continue to operate as wineries. There'll be time to admire a wide range of Belle Époque splendor during your visit; you'll quickly see why the city is a favorite destination for lovers of baroque and classical architecture, too.

Rejoin your barge in Traben-Trarbach, then cruise into Bernkastel-Kues, once two small wine-making towns on either side of the Mosel before they were united in 1905. The pride of today's dual city is the market square, with its picturesque timber-framed houses and decorative sculpted fountains, some dating to the 17th century.

Dinner is on board tonight. Afterward, the captain speaks about navigation and your planned route.

Hotel: Barge *Iris*

Alternative: Barge *Quo Vadis*

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 28 - 48 km (17 - 30 miles)

Morning

Beilstein to Zell: 28 km (17 miles)

Afternoon

Zell to Traben-Trarbach: 20 km (13 miles)

What to Expect: The Mosel meanders in scenic hairpin turns through the steepest vineyards in Europe. The scenery is breathtaking, and many interesting sights can be explored along the way. We cross the river a few times, but continue to follow it upstream to the mooring point in Traben-Trarbach. You will find great places for lunch in charming villages. Short option riders join the barge here. Enjoy beautiful riding through quaint half-timbered wine villages and vineyards along the river to the Art Nouveau town of Traben-Trarbach where we meet the barge and cruise to Bernkastel-Kues.

## DAY 5: Shuttle to Daun / Eifel Region / Bernkastel-Kues

This morning, shuttle (approximately 45 minutes) through the scenic Eifel Valley to the town of Daun, a spa town fed by mineral springs. Return to your bicycle here and enjoy an exhilarating ride, climbing a slight incline at first and then coasting downhill along a former railway converted into a cycling path. This

exciting reel includes stretches through tunnels, over bridges, and past small lakes formed from volcanic craters known as maars. Pass stately castles, lush vineyards, green forests, and quiet villages that invite you to pause and explore.

Along the way, stop in Gillenfeld to enjoy a simple lunch hosted by Sigrid and Leo Lenerz. At their simple cozy café idyllically located in an old barn, they specialize in regional products from local producers. Later, ride back to Bernkastel, where you can relax before dinner on board.

After dinner, stroll to the fascinating wine cellar of Josef Zimmermann via an elegant district of fine Art Nouveau villas, many of which display signs proclaiming their status as a weingut, or winery estate. The simple, fourth-generation Zimmermann operation boasts a century-old cellar full of wine barrels and an inviting tasting hall. Your welcoming host will guide you through a tasting of four different wines during your visit.

Hotel: Barge *Iris*

Alternative: Barge *Quo Vadis*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 – 64 km (18 – 40 miles)

Morning

Daun to Gillenfeld: 16 km (10 miles)

Afternoon

Gillenfeld to Laufeld: 12 km (8 miles)

Laufeld to Wittlich: 15 km (9 miles)

Wittlich to Bernkastel-Kues: 21 km (13 miles)

What to Expect: Bike an invigorating rails-to-trails route known locally as the MMR, a mainly flat or downhill bike path with a few gradual climbs at the beginning. Meet up at a cozy café in Gillenfeld for lunch. Take our shuttle after lunch if you wish to avoid hills, then continue on the MMR bike path coasting through illuminated tunnels and a viaduct before a thrilling, gradual descent into Wittlich town. From Wittlich you may shuttle back to the barge or ride flat and easy bike paths along a small river through gorgeous forest and farmlands to the Mosel River, where your barge awaits.

## **DAY 6: Ride to Piesport / Trittenheim / Trier**

After breakfast, you cycle toward Trier, the oldest town in Germany, passing Piesport and Trittenheim along the way. Both of these winemaking villages lie on scenic hairpin turns of the Mosel. In Piesport, you will see a reconstructed Roman winepress. Stop for lunch in one of the small villages along your route, such as Neumagen-Dhron, where you witness more signs of ancient Rome. Rejoin the barge in Schweich for a leisurely cruise to Trier.

The people of Trier might tell you that it is possible to see “2,000 years of history in 2,000 paces” in their city. The Romans established their local capital here. In the Middle Ages, Frankish kings and the archbishops of Trier reigned. Here you can learn about the Porta Nigra (“Black Gate”), a city landmark and the largest city gate of the ancient world; the amphitheater; the medieval Market Square, Germany’s oldest cathedral next to the Church of Our Lady, and Constantine’s Imperial Throne Hall. Then there’s the rococo Electoral Palace and the ruins of the Imperial Baths with their extensive subterranean passages. It is an astounding repository of history that leaves little doubt why all of Trier’s monuments have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Tonight, your barge moors here, so you can try one of the local restaurants for dinner on your own.

Hotel: Barge *Iris*

Alternative: Barge *Quo Vadis*

Meals: Breakfast

Today’s Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 56 km (16 – 34 miles)

Morning

Bernkastel-Kues to Neumagen: 27 km (16 miles)

Afternoon

Neumagen to Schweich: 29 km (18 miles)

What to Expect: Ride to Neumagen, where you can rejoin the barge. Or spend the morning on board and start biking from Neumagen. There are a few short ascents and descents along the river and through the vineyards; as you ride, you might witness the barge passing through the locks in Detzem. Then it’s all aboard in Schweich as we all barge into Trier, the former Imperial city of Rome’s late Classical period.

## DAY 7: Short train ride and cycle to Saarburg

This morning, you have time to explore Trier, with its shops and Roman history, before taking a local train

to Konz, scenically situated where the Saar River flows into the Mosel. Here, you meet the barge for lunch, then set off on an afternoon reel into the Saarland along the more intimate Saar River. Wooded mountains, wide meadows, farmsteads, and villages mark your progress as you ride. Later this afternoon, you reach Saarburg, a medieval riverside jewel at the foot of a castle. The town center boasts a roaring 65-foot (19.8 meters) waterfall. Choose between a scenic reel along the Saar River or free time in Saarburg.

This evening, you may dine on your own in a restaurant on the Leuk River. Savor the hearty food and sip a crisp Saar River Riesling, or try *viez*, an apple cider typical of this region. The barge moors in Saarburg.

Hotel: Barge *Iris*

Alternative: Barge *Quo Vadis*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 19 – 34 km (11 – 20 miles)

Afternoon

Konz to Saarburg: 19 km (11 miles) OR

Include Saarburg Loop: 34 km (20 miles)

What to Expect: After lunch on board, your afternoon reel begins by crossing over a bridge at the confluence of the Mosel and Saar rivers. The riverside ride to lovely medieval Saarburg is easy, passing fruit orchards and vineyard-clad slopes. While you wait for the barge to arrive, take the opportunity to explore the town, perhaps climbing the steps to the castle ruins. For more miles along the Saar bike path, ride up the right bank, navigate a narrow unpaved path through the forest, and cross over the big locks and bridge down the other side back to Saarburg.

## DAY 8: Konz / Wasserbillig / Nittel / Remich

This morning, walk to the nearby former bell foundry and museum, Mabilon, which produced bells until 2002. Later, cycle along the banks of the Saar River to Konz, at the confluence of the Mosel and Saar rivers. Then follow the Mosel River, the natural border between Luxembourg and Germany, along an easy biking path. Soon you'll arrive in Wasserbillig and cross the border into Luxembourg.

In Nittel, Germany, rejoin the barge for lunch. This afternoon, you can opt to continue cycling with our longer option or cruise into Remich, Luxembourg.

Our longer option follows the renowned Route du Vin, famous for its vineyards and outstanding wines, including Riesling and Cremant. Approaching Remich, take a short detour to Nennig and admire Europe's largest Roman mosaic; remarkably, 90% of it is original and perfectly restored. Dinner tonight is on the barge, moored in Remich.

Hotel: Barge *Iris*

Alternative: Barge *Quo Vadis*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 – 44 km (14 – 27 miles)

Morning

Saargemünd to Wasserbillig: 23 km (14 miles)

Afternoon

Nittel to Remich: 21 km (13 miles)

What to Expect: Ride along the Saar River back to its confluence with the Mosel, crossing a few bridges. Ride along the Luxembourg side to meet the barge in Wasserbillig for a cruising lunch to Nittel, Germany. An easy reel along the Mosel River through vineyards and small villages ends at the Roman mosaic for a film and tour of the ruins.

## DAY 9: Picnic at Rodemack, France

Ride a tranquil bike path along the Mosel River this morning, crossing from Luxembourg into Germany and France. Then, turn inland and follow a pleasant rolling route through small villages to Rodemack, known as "Little Carcassonne Lorraine" and ranked one of the most beautiful villages in France. In this charming hamlet, admire marvels of construction that span the ages, including fortifications erected over many centuries. Impressive ramparts and walls encircle the village and cobbled alleys lead to a labyrinth of back streets and an impressive fortress.

Enjoy a picnic lunch with free time to explore on your own.

Today's longer option leads to Thionville, where you board your barge and cruise into Metz, France. This evening, enjoy your final onboard dinner.

Hotel: Barge *Iris*



Alternative: Barge *Quo Vadis*

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today's Ride Choices:

Cumulative Distance Range: 30 – 53 km (18 – 40 miles)

Morning

Remich to Rodemack: 30 km (18 miles)

Afternoon

Rodemack to Thionville with Shuttles: 11 km (7 miles)

Rodemack to Thionville: 23 km (15 miles)

What to Expect: Enjoy flat, easy cycling along the Mosel River to the three-country border zone, crossing from Luxembourg into Germany and France. Cycle through French farmlands, on a mix of quiet country roads and bike lanes. Finish the day biking through France along the Mosel, riding through breathtaking French countryside through the Lorraine region into Thionville, where the barge waits. Shuttles are available to assist you if required during the day.

## **DAY 10: Metz / Luxembourg City / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends**

After a final breakfast on our barge, bid farewell to the crew and VBT trip leaders and say hello to your local guide as you disembark in Metz, France, nestled at the confluence of the Mosel and Seille rivers. Enjoy a pleasant walk into this charming city, a quaint tapestry of bridges and romantic corners. Pass the elegant 18th-century city theater and the Palais de la Prefecture in the Place de la Comedie. Visit the imposing Cathedral of St. Etienne, one of the most beautiful Gothic cathedrals of France, built around 1250. Here, admire the fine stained-glass windows, including a modern work by Marc Chagall.

Then, walk to the Saturday morning local market, to the lively Place St. Louis, and to Place Saint-Jacques, where there'll be time to shop or explore. Lunch is on your own.

After, take a private shuttle to Luxembourg City. En route, there will be a short 15-minute stop at the Luxembourg American Cemetery so you may honor those who fell here during World War II.

Check into the Hotel Le Royal, a stroll away from the main square and the Old City. The rest of your day is free to discover this fascinating capital of one of Europe's smallest countries. Explore cobblestone-arched narrow streets and small elegant palaces such as the Palais Grand-Ducal and the Chambre des Deputes. The beautiful Chemin de la Corniche is said to be Europe's most beautiful terrace, with a

pleasant promenade that passes restored ancient homes. You'll also bask in the beauty of the city's two major squares: the regal Place de la Constitution and the cozy Place du Marche, still used for weekly flower and vegetable markets.

Tonight, dine on your own. The city boasts more Michelin stars per square mile than any other and has a lively atmosphere in its many cafés, pubs, and pizzerias. The biggest ethnic community here is from Portugal, adding a Latin flair to its nightlife and menus.

Hotel: Hotel Le Royal

Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 11: After breakfast,\* meet in the hotel lobby and transfer to the Luxembourg City airport for your flight back home.\*\* Please be sure that you are waiting at the designated transfer time and location.**

\*Please note: For guests with early-morning departures, breakfast at the hotel may not be available.

Please check with the front desk to verify the times that breakfast is served.

\*\*VBT recommends that you check your transfer time in your "Transfer Reminder." The transfer is prearranged by VBT and is prepaid. VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

May vary depending on departure date.

### **Hotel Brenner (Day: 2)**

Located in the Koblenz city center, the family-run Hotel Brenner welcomes you with warm hospitality and understated elegance. Set in a traditional house, the property has been painstakingly restored with the skill of local craftspeople, artists, and interior designers. Admire the hand-painted flowers on the ceilings and walls and the many period furnishings. The air-conditioned rooms are comfortably sized and offer free WiFi. Most overlook a small, well-maintained garden where you may start your day with a delicious, generous breakfast.

### **Hotel Le Royal Luxembourg (Day: 10)**

This luxury property, one of the Leading Hotels of the World, is centrally located in Luxembourg City.

Sophisticated European hospitality and impeccable service are its calling cards. It boasts a beautiful garden and is only a few steps from the Old Town and shops. Close each day with a drink in the piano bar and a taste of French gastronomy at one of its two onsite restaurants. All rooms are spacious, elegant, and fully air conditioned. The hotel is part of Luxembourg's "Hot City," a citywide network of free WiFi.

### **Quo Vadis Barge (Days: 3,4,5,6,7,8,9)**

Sail in comfort aboard the intimate, 24-passenger Barge Quo Vadis, in service since April 2006 and ideally suited for cruising Europe's intimate waterways. Enjoy the attentive service of four bilingual crew members, including a chef, who will create delicious meals using fresh, local ingredients. Regional wines and cheeses are served at dinner. Admire the view from the sun deck, or mingle with new friends in the salon and bar. Explore at leisure from your barge's mooring. Retire in the evening to your air-conditioned cabin with a safe, twin beds, and a private bath with shower and hair dryer. Please note regarding WiFi on board the barge: Please be advised that the WiFi connection varies and is not guaranteed. If Internet access is critical during your travel, we recommend purchasing your own bundle before traveling overseas. Available on limited departures.