

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

## Bike Vacation + Air Package

Cycle along Europe's most scenic river and experience three very different cultures—Luxembourg, France, and Germany—on one exhilarating journey. You won't just bike Europe. You'll also drift along the waterway aboard a luxurious barge, admiring shifting landscapes from the comfort of a deck chair and enjoying sumptuous meals and a spirit of camaraderie all along the way. On our carefully curated routes, you'll pedal past vineyards and forests, castles, and half-timbered villages ... explore cosmopolitan Luxembourg City, the picturesque French village of Rodemack, the Roman ruins of Trier, the dual city of Berncastel-Kues, and the beautiful Eifel Valley ... and enjoy exclusive events like a private wine tasting at a family-owned estate. Don't miss this chance to explore this charming pocket of Europe!

## Cultural Highlights

- Experience three countries—Luxembourg, France, and Germany—up close, by bike
- View quaint villages, lush vineyards and forests, and fairytale castles as you roll along a scenic river
- Explore the ancient Roman and medieval treasures of Trier
- Enjoy a private wine tasting in a century-old cellar
- Relax on your barge and sip Germany's finest Rieslings and beers

## What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain on bike paths and roads through both urban and rural areas. Our VBT support vehicle is available every day at designated points for those who would like assistance.

**Average Daily Mileage:** 8 - 40 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 01:00 - 03:30

## 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

## **FLIGHT DAY: Depart from the United States or Canada**

All you have to do is get to the airport. On our Air Packages, we'll take care of the rest, handling all the logistics, so you can travel with peace of mind. Spend your first night aloft and arrive refreshed for an unforgettable trip.

## **ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Luxembourg City**

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

## **DAY 1: Travel to Metz / Embark barge**

After an included breakfast meet in the hotel lobby at 9:00 a.m. sharp for our travel by coach (approximately one hour) to the French city of Metz, nestled at the confluence of the Mosel and Seille rivers. En route, there will be a short 15-minute stop at the Luxembourg American Cemetery so you can honor those who fell here during World War II. Upon arrival in Metz, meet your local city guide and enjoy a pleasant walk into the charming city center, 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. After lunch on your own, rejoin your local city guide and walk to your barge's mooring point.

After meeting the crew and your VBT trip leaders, settle in before participating in a bike safety session while cruising to Richemont. Here, you disembark for a bike-fitting and a short warm-up ride. Reunite with the barge at its new mooring point and have time to change before gathering for a welcome drink, the perfect opportunity to raise a glass to the most rewarding way to bike Europe! Enjoy dinner on board. Tonight, the barge moors in the quiet countryside, just outside the city of Thionville.

## Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Richemont to Thionville Warm-up — 13 km (8 miles)

### What to Expect:

The warm-up ride from Richemont locks to the Bar “La Marina” is easy. Ride along the Mosel River through the French countryside and rejoin your barge. For a few more miles, continue from “La Marina” to Thionville and return along the river.

Cumulative Distance Range: 13 km (8 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 2: Bike to Rodemack / Picnic lunch / Remich, Luxembourg**

After breakfast, cycle along the Mosel River on a quiet bike path. Then turn inland and cycle along a pleasant rolling route through small villages. Pause to explore 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.

After a picnic lunch at the fountain, there'll be free time to explore on your own.

You may ride or cruise this afternoon. Dinner tonight is on the barge. Afterward, the captain speaks about navigation and our planned route.

The barge moors in Remich, Luxembourg.

## Today's Ride Choices

Morning – Afternoon Thionville to Remich with two Shuttles — 34 km (20 miles) | Thionville to Remich with one Shuttle — 42 km (26 miles) | Thionville to Remich — 53 km (32 miles)

### What to Expect:

Enjoy easy biking along the scenic Mosel River from Thionville to the Bar Le Bar Bac near Cattenom. Cycle from here to Rodemack, or join the shuttle if you wish to avoid the long hill into the village. After lunch, continue cycling through French farmlands, on a mix of quiet country roads and bike lanes and along the Mosel through very pretty wetlands and villages, crossing the international border into Germany and meeting the barge in Remich, Luxembourg. The support vehicle will be available to assist you, or you can ride the entire day.

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 - 53 km (20 - 32 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

### **DAY 3: Cycle Remich / Nennig / Wasserbillig / Saarburg**

Pedal this morning to Nennig and its local museum, where you can admire Europe's largest Roman mosaic; remarkably, 90% of it is original and perfectly restored. Continue riding along the Mosel on an easy bike path. The river forms a natural border between Germany and Luxembourg. On the German side, you will follow the renowned Route du Vin, famous for its outstanding Riesling and Cremant. Sweeping views of vineyards' sloping hillsides accompany your ride.

Meet the barge in Nittel for a cruising lunch to Wasserbillig, Luxembourg. From here, you may cruise or continue cycling. If you choose our longer option, you ride past Konz, a small city at the confluence of the Mosel and Saar rivers, then continue 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, arrive in Saarburg, a medieval riverside jewel at the foot of a castle. The town center boasts a roaring 65-foot (19.8-meter) waterfall. Spend the rest of the day exploring this lovely town, or continue cycling a loop south of Saarburg along the Saar River.

The barge moors in Saarburg this evening with dinner included onboard.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning Remich to Nittel — 21 km (13 miles)

Afternoon Wasserbillig to Saarburg — 20 km (13 miles) | Saarburg Loop — 35 km (22 miles)

What To Expect:

Directions to enjoy free time in Saarburg: — 21 km (13 miles)

Cross the bridge over the waterfall and turn right toward “Galerie am Wasserfall.” Take a left and follow the street to the castle, passing a church on your left. The castle keep offers a great view. This shorter but steeper walk starts at the stairs behind the white building. Look for the sign that reads “Schörgenhummer.” At the top of the stairs, you can join the path to the castle.

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 – 56 km (13 – 35 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 4: Bike and cruise from Saarburg to Trier**

This morning, walk to the nearby former bell foundry and museum, Mabilon, which produced bells until 2002. After your tour, cycle along the Saar River to the confluence of the Mosel River, then continue riding to Trier, where you meet the barge. After lunch on board, you are free to explore this historic and fascinating town.

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”), the city’s landmark and the largest city gate of the ancient world; the amphitheater; the medieval Market Square; the High Cathedral of St. Peter, Germany’s oldest Cathedral; and Constantine’s 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 and 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.

Today’s Ride Choices

Morning Saarburg to Trier — 29 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

Today you follow the Saar River downstream through a nature preserve along the banks of this once free-flowing and wild river. Follow a flat bike path all the way into Trier to meet the barge. The ride is easy with a few bumps over tree roots. Please watch for these and gently lift off your seat to soften the impact.

Cumulative Distance Range: 29 km (17 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 5: Piesport / Trittenheim / Bernkastel-Kues**

This morning you cruise out of Trier during breakfast. Arriving in Schweich, you have the option to continue cruising to Neumagen or to start your day cycling toward Bernkastel-Kues. Your route winds along scenic hairpin turns along the Mosel, passing the wine-making villages of Trittenheim and Piesport. In Piesport, see a reconstructed Roman winepress and other evidence of a rich Roman past. Stop for lunch on your own in Neumagen, where you witness more signs of ancient Rome. From here, shuttle to Bernkastel-Kues, or continue biking among vineyards and orchards, watching for swans and other birds.

Meet the barge in Bernkastel-Kues, then rest or explore before dinner on board. Bernkastel and Kues, united in 1905, were once two small cities divided by the Mosel. 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.

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.

### **Today's Ride Choices**

Morning Schweich to Neumagen — 29 km (18 miles)

Afternoon Neumagen to Bernkastel-Kues — 27 km (17 miles)

### **What to Expect:**

Cruise or cycle this morning to Neumagen. From here, ride through the Middle Mosel, a stunning tapestry of breathtaking scenery, lush vineyards, and quaint wine villages. Today's ride is mainly on flat bike paths, with a few short hills. The route follows an old Roman road and passes replicas of Roman sculptures. You will find many good lunch spots along the way in some of the Mosel's famous wine villages. At ride's end, you arrive in Bernkastel-Kues.

Cumulative Distance Range: 29 – 56 km (18 – 35 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 6: Daun / The 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 spin, climbing a slight incline at first and then coasting downhill along a former railway converted into a cycling path. This exciting ride 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 try one of the local restaurants for dinner on your own.

### Today's Ride Choices

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 support vehicle 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.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 7: Traben-Trarbach / Zell / Bullay / Cochem

Today, cruise out of Bernkastel and follow the Mosel downstream. After breakfast, arrive in 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 the city's prosperity at the turn of the 20th century, local 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.

After, follow the river's bike path to Zell. 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. Continue to Bullay, another big name in wine. You can linger here a while and pause to enjoy lunch along the way. There are many picnic areas along the path. Rejoin the barge in Beilstein, and cruise to Cochem later this afternoon, giving you ample time to relax and freshen up for a festive farewell dinner on board.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning Traben-Trarbach to Bullay — 26 km (16 miles)

Afternoon Bullay to Beilstein — 22 km (14 miles)

### What to Expect:

Start riding from the Art Nouveau town of Traben-Trarbach, following the hairpins of the Mosel as it flows through the steepest vineyards in Europe. The scenery is breathtaking, and many interesting sights can be explored along the way. Board the barge in Bullay and cruise to Beilstein. If you instead cycle from Bullay, you ride a quiet road with a bit of traffic before returning to a river-hugging bike path past the steepest vineyards in Bremm and through campgrounds, passing families of swans and charming villages. Once you see the castle ruins, you have arrived in Beilstein, where you meet the barge and cruise on to Cochem.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 – 48 km (16 – 30 miles)



Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 8: Cochem / Koblenz**

After an included breakfast, say farewell to the crew and one VBT trip leader, then walk into Cochem with your fellow travelers. This characteristic Mosel town is beloved for its steep vineyards, 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, you may shop and eat lunch on your own before saying goodbye to your VBT trip leader. Then shuttle to Koblenz and settle into your centrally located hotel. At 4:00 p.m., meet your local guide in the hotel lobby for a 1.5-hour walking tour around the historic Old Town. 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.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DEPARTURE DAY: Departure**

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation to the Frankfurt airport will be provided (an approximately 1.25 drive, depending on traffic) for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

**May vary depending on departure date.**

### **Hotel Le Royal Luxembourg (Day: 2)**

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.

### **Barge Iris (Days: 1,2,3,4,5,6,7)**

A luxurious and spacious, two-deck, 24-passenger barge with a homelike atmosphere, the Iris was put into service in April 2005. Its 12 comfortable cabins have private bathrooms with showers, and the barge has central heating and air conditioning throughout. Common areas include a dining area, a lounge with a

bar and a sun deck at the bow. The barge moors each night. Drinks of all types are available for purchase at the bar on board the Iris. It is not customary for guests to bring their own wine and liquor on board; your understanding is appreciated. Onboard meal menus are set, though the chef is happy to accommodate vegetarians and those on restricted diets for health reasons. 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.

### **Hotel Brenner (Day: 8)**

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.