

Rhine Bike & River Cruise: Basel to Amsterdam

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Four countries and two modes of travel are entwined in one discovery-packed vacation. You'll cruise through the heart of Europe, touching the shores of France, Germany, Switzerland, and The Netherlands, viewing terraced vineyards, quaint riverside towns, and lofty castles, then disembark to bicycle for an up close and personal view. Listen to the echoes of history—and perhaps the call of the Lorelei—as you follow the meandering Rhine River. Delve into the wine culture of Alsace, taste the region's exquisite cheeses, explore medieval cities on guided tours, and admire the view from aboard your comfortable ship. All-inclusive pricing ensures the best value you can find in a Rhine cycle river cruise!

Cultural Highlights

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

What to Expect

On Shore: This tour offers easy riverside terrain, with a few climbs. Riding is primarily on bike paths of both pavement and packed gravel, with some road riding through urban and rural areas. Our VBT support shuttle is available every day at designated points. **Onboard Ship:** Our group of up to 24 VBT guests will be part of a larger group on board our 182-passenger river cruise ship. Every day will include your choice of exclusive VBT activities, as well as opportunities to join other ship-wide activities. While in port, the ship may be docked adjacent to other ships, which may require walking through other ships while boarding or disembarking. Additionally, some views may be obstructed while in port.

Tour Duration: 11 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 9 - 42 miles

Average Cycling Time: 01:00 - 03:30

Group size: 24 max

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Apr 58°/42°, May 67°/51°, Jun 72°/57°, Jul 77°/60°, Aug 76°/59°, Sep 69°/53°, Oct 58°/46°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Apr 1.5, May 2.9, Jun 2.6, Jul 2.4, Aug 2.0, Sep 1.8, Oct 1.5

DAY 1: 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.

DAY 2: Arrive in Zurich

Start off your first day in Zurich 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 3: Basel, Switzerland / Embark ship

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

Your cabin may not be ready for you until 3:00 p.m., but you are welcome to enjoy lunch on board between 12:30 and 3:30 p.m., and 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 and a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a warm-up ride on local bike paths, providing your first glimpse of life along the Rhine. Later, enjoy dinner on board as the ship sets sail for Breisach this evening.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Basel Warm-up Loop — 9

What to Expect: The ride from our ship is on paved bike paths through Basel and will provide you with the opportunity to get acquainted with your bicycle, the route notes, and Ride with GPS, and to mingle with some of the locals.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 km (9 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 4: 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 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. The Museum of City History, housed in an ornate Baroque building, is a great first stop, as it traces the city's history back to a few thousand years B.C.

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 Eendingen — 30 km (19 miles)

Afternoon Eendingen to Breisach — 23 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 ship-to-ship ride.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 5: Kehl / Strasbourg / 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 Strasbourg. Here you'll enjoy a guided walking tour of the city, including La Petit France, the city's historic center. In the late morning, you start pedaling from Strasbourg into wine country. The most famous wine route in France, La Route des Vins, is a series of roadways and bike paths connecting one charming village to another. As you ride through these fertile valleys, you'll stop to enjoy a picnic of local specialties prepared by your trip leaders. The early part of your ride is alongside the picturesque Canal de la Bruche. The canal's towpath has been converted into a bike path, which forms part of the 2,400-mile (3,862-km) EuroVelo 5 route. You are deep in wine country and you'll have an opportunity to taste the local vintage and be tutored on Pinot Gris, Rieslings, and Gewürztraminers. Your ride finishes in charming Obernai, where you'll have free time to enjoy the town's cafés, wine houses, and shops. A short shuttle returns you to your ship, which is waiting across the river in Kehl.

There will be time to relax before dinner and the evening activities on board. The ship sails for Mannheim just as your small group is sitting down to dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Strasbourg to Obernai – 34 km (21 miles)

Afternoon Obernai to Strasbourg – 30 km (19 miles)

What to Expect: Ride on bike paths, dedicated bike lanes, and country roads on your choice of routes though the charming wine villages lined with flower boxes south of Strasbourg. The short option includes a shuttle from Obernai back to the ship. The long option includes a shuttle from the center of Strasbourg back to the ship.

Cumulative Distance Range: 34 - 64 km (21 - 40 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6: Mannheim / Heidelberg / Cycle along the Neckar River

You'll awaken on board your ship in Mannheim. After breakfast, you'll take a 45-minute shuttle to Heidelberg. The town is famous for its university and its castle, perched on a hill overlooking the town and the Neckar River. A local guide will provide information on the town's highlights and you'll view the castle from its courtyard.

Your bike will be waiting for you in Heidelberg. Grab a snack from your trip leaders, and then you're off on

a scenic ride back to the ship in Mannheim, partly paralleling the Neckar River. Enjoy a late lunch on board as your ship sets course for Rüdesheim.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Heidelberg to Mannheim – 28 km (18 miles)

What to Expect: Today's ride options are on a mix of bike paths and town roads featuring slow-moving traffic. There are no significant elevation gains today.

Cumulative Distance Range: 28 km (18 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7: The Rhine Gorge / Koblenz / The Mosel River

Your ship leaves its mooring this morning, just as breakfast is being served as you head toward Koblenz which is at the confluence of the Rhine and Mosel rivers. You'll want to make sure you're on deck for the Rhine Gorge which is one of the highlights of the river. This dramatic stretch of water passes the famed Lorelei – maybe you'll hear her call – and you will see castle after castle, interspersed with southern-facing vineyards.

Arrive in Koblenz in the late morning and join a guided walking tour of this ancient city. For an entirely different view of the river, you can ride the cable car up to Ehrenbreitstein Fortress.

After lunch on board the boat you'll join your fellow VBT guests taking your bike for a spin on the Mosel Cycle Route along the river and below the steep valley walls, towards Müden. Most of your riding will be on a dedicated car-free bike path and will include a view of the impressive Deutsches Eck (German Corner), rebuilt in 1993 to mark the headland where the Mosel and Rhine meet. Your final destination is the town of Müden (Mosel), nestled along the Mosel River. Here, you'll visit a family-owned winery and taste some of the well-known wines of the region, before taking a 30-minute shuttle back to the ship.

For those seeking a break from the saddle, join an optional excursion (at additional cost) to Cochem. This trip includes transportation from Koblenz to Cochem and back, a walking tour of Cochem, and a guided visit to Reichsburg Castle. Booking details will be provided with your final documents.

Your ship remains in town until after midnight, allowing for an after-dinner stroll along the wide, tree-lined promenade.

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Koblenz to Müden (Mosel) – 37 km (23 miles)

What to Expect: Today features a relaxing and easy ride on the car-free Mosel Cycle Route, with some stretches on roadways leaving Koblenz.

Cumulative Distance Range: 37 km (23 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8: Cologne / City ride / Sailing the Rhine to Amsterdam

Arrive in Cologne in the morning and watch the city's famous spires from the boat as you're sitting down for breakfast. Disembark for a guided walk through this 2,000-year-old city, well-known for its High Gothic architecture. This is the largest city on the Rhine, and Germany's fourth-most-populous.

After your walk, mount your bike for an urban adventure, exploring both the popular and little-known sites of this appealing metropolis. Return to the ship in the early afternoon for lunch and then it's time to say goodbye to Cologne as the ship sets off on the final and longest leg of the trip, to Amsterdam. This is a good time to catch up on your reading, record the week's events in your travel journal, or just relax as the ship heads to Amsterdam. Tonight you'll be treated to a cocktail reception and gala dinner.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Cologne City Loop – 20 km (13 miles)

What to Expect: Today's ride features a combination of bike paths and town streets, through parks, and along the waterfront.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 km (13 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 9: Amsterdam / Monnickendam

This morning, see Amsterdam as earlier residents would have viewed it, through a guided boat excursion along the canals.

Midday, set off on the city's excellent bike path network, heading north to the small fishing village of Monnickendam. As you pedal out of the city, you'll get a glimpse of everyday life in the countryside, as well as some of The Netherlands' iconic views. Your route is via Broek in Waterland, a particularly charming village that seemingly cries out for you to stop and take pictures. We've found an idyllic location to enjoy lunch, prepared with local specialties. Your Dutch meal is followed by probably the most typical Dutch discovery: a clog making demonstration. You'll get a different perspective of this beautiful

countryside during your leisurely return route to the ship.

Back on board, enjoy a full roster of entertainment and dining to celebrate your week on the Rhine with your fellow travelers.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Ship to Monnickendam – 26 km (16 miles)

Afternoon Monnickendam to Ship – 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect: Today's routes offer flat, easy cycling on well-maintained bike paths. The short option involves a shuttle back to the ship from Monnickendam.

Cumulative Distance Range: 26 - 52 km (16 - 32 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 10: Disembark / Travel to Den Haag

After an included breakfast, say goodbye to your ship crew and trip leaders. At 9:00 a.m. hop aboard our private coach, along with your fellow travelers and a local tour guide, for the journey to your hotel in Den Haag (approximately 60 minutes). After check in, enjoy a short guided walking tour and some free time for independent exploration. Please note that your room may not be ready upon your arrival, in which case the hotel will store your luggage. Enjoy dinner on your own tonight in one of the city's many fine restaurants. VBT provides you with city information that includes recommendations about what to see and do in Den Haag.

Note: Should you wish to spend time seeing more of Amsterdam, your luggage may be sent to the hotel in Den Haag with the group transportation, and you will then be responsible to travel to Den Haag at your leisure by train.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11: Departure

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation to the Amsterdam Schiphol Airport will be provided (an approximately 30 to 40-minute drive, depending on traffic) for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Opera (Day: 2)

This four-star boutique hotel is ideally situated in Zurich's city center, a short walk from Lake Zurich and the Zurich Opera House. Individually decorated rooms incorporate unique artwork alongside plush details. The nearby lakeside promenade makes for a lovely morning jog or a leisurely stroll. Just a five-minute walk away, 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. Free WiFi is available throughout this air-conditioned hotel.

MS Emerald Sky/Emerald Sun/Emerald Destiny/Emerald Dawn/Emerald Luna (Days: 3,4,5,6,7,8,9)

Emerald Cruises' 'Star-Ships' are designed to provide the most efficient and comfortable journey during your seven nights on board. The 54 generously-proportioned suites and 14 staterooms feature all the amenities you need to begin and end each rewarding day, including a private bath with shower, hairdryer, bathrobes, and slippers. A mini-bar and complimentary bottled water are restocked daily and a safe protects your valuables. Complimentary WiFi and a flat-screen TV with infotainment system keep you plugged in. Onboard power is 220 volts; North American guests may require a power adapter

Carlton Ambassador (Day: 10)

On a tree-lined street in the town center, this upscale hotel is a 7-minute walk from the Peace Palace and 1.2 miles (2 km) from the Mauritshuis museum. Elegant, air-conditioned rooms in two buildings have free WiFi, flat-screen TVs, minibars, and tea- and coffee-making facilities. Room service is available 24/7. Amenities include a sophisticated restaurant with a terrace, as well as a cozy bistro bar, and a relaxed lounge with a fireplace.