1. It's Christmastime in Köln (Cologne)
Cruise begins: 4:00 PM, Köln (Cologne), Germany. Transfers are included from Köln / Bonn Airport to ms Swiss Sapphire; embarkation begins at 4:00 PM. Guests pre-staying in Köln receive a transfer to the riverboat. Those arriving earlier may take a complimentary shuttle to the Weihnachtsmarkt at Kölner Dom. Meet your Tauck Directors at a welcome briefing. Meals D

2. Tasty Aachener Printen & More
After brunch in Köln, travel to Aachen, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visit its Weihnachtsmarkt unfolding around the Gothic / Baroque Town Hall; the aroma of cinnamon and coriander lead you to the town’s unique pastry, Aachener Printen. Enjoy the Captain’s Welcome Reception and Dinner tonight. Meals BLD

At-A-Glance
8 Days aboard ms Swiss Sapphire
1 Arrive Köln (Cologne), Germany / Embark ms Swiss Sapphire
2 Brunch aboard the riverboat in Köln / Excursion to Aachen Christmas Market / Cruise to Rüdesheim
3 Cruising on the Rhine / Visit Rüdesheim Christmas Market & Siegfried’s Musikkabinett / Cookie-baking demonstration & Rüdesheim Coffee
4 Excursion from Speyer to Heidelberg / Tour of historic Heidelberg Schloss (Heidelberg Castle) / Visit to Heidelberg Christmas Market / Christmas lunch at Hotel Zum Ritter St. Georg
5 Arrive Plittersdorf / Visit Baden-Baden Christmas Market & Kurhaus casino
6 Storytelling lecture and visit to Strasbourg Christmas Market
7 Visit Christmas Markets in Riquewihr & Colmar in Alsace / Cruise to Basel
8 Depart Basel, Switzerland
3. Romantic Rüdesheim & Mechanical Music
Cruise the Rhine from Koblenz to Rüdesheim; stroll through the Christmas Market near the pier, and visit Siegfried’s Mechanisches Musikkabinett, an impressive collection of mechanical musical instruments displayed in a 16th-century castle. A cookie-baking demonstration shares secrets of traditional treats like lebkuchen, accompanied by special Rüdesheim Coffee laced with local brandy. Before dinner aboard, you’ll have time in town for caroling or exploring. Meals BLD

4. Heidelberg’s Holiday Happenings
ms Swiss Sapphire arrives in Speyer for an excursion to Heidelberg, Germany’s oldest university town. A tour of partially restored Heidelberger Schloss reveals what castle life might have been like there long ago. A funicular ride leads to a walking tour of the old town square and Heidelberg’s Christmas Markets – sprawling across five city squares aglow with thousands of twinkling lights – winding up with lunch at the Hotel Zum Ritter St. Georg. Reboard the riverboat in Speyer. Meals BLD

5. A Black Forest Christmas in Baden-Baden
Christmastime in the Black Forest has a magic all its own, as you’ll see on an excursion from Plittersdorf to Baden-Baden. This famed spa town is an ideal setting for a wintertime fairy tale; the tempting aromas of glühwein and gingerbread linger as you browse the labyrinth of stalls in its Weihnachtsmarkt. Baden-Baden has long attracted the wealthy elite, who come to take its healing waters and play in its Belle Êpoque casino, the Kurhaus, adjacent to the Christmas Market; get a taste of what being one of “the in-crowd” feels like on a visit to the complex. Explore more on your own prior to returning to Plittersdorf to resume your cruise, bound for Strasbourg. Meals BLD

6. Old Traditions in Sparkling Strasbourg
Home to the European Union and in a sense the “Capital of Europe,” Strasbourg would also like you to think of it as the “Capital of Christmas.” Learn about storytelling traditions and local specialties with your guide aboard ms Swiss Sapphire before a walking tour of this French Alsatian city’s ancient center, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its dozen themed Marchés de Noël (as Christmas Markets are called in most cities in France), fanning out from the Cathedral de Notre-Dame, include the original Christkindelsmärik, the Breidel Market, the Kingdom of the Wine Growers and more. After your visit, you can explore more of Strasbourg on your own and have lunch in town, or return to the riverboat on one of the shuttles running most of the afternoon. Meals BLD
8. Homeward Bound

Your Christmas Market cruise ends in Basel, Switzerland. Transfers are provided from the riverboat to Basel-Mulhouse International Airport; guests enjoying a post-stay at Swissôtel Le Plaza Basel will receive a transfer from the hotel to the airport. Please allow three hours for airport check-in. Meals BLD

8 Days from $2,250 plus airfare
(7 Breakfasts, 6 Lunches & 7 Dinners)
Begins Köln (Cologne)
Southbound – Köln to Basel
Dec 2

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<th>Land / Cruise Price Per Person</th>
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Triples available in Category 6 only, priced from $3452 per person.

Land / cruise price per person includes cruise fare, most meals, port charges, wine and beer with lunch and dinner aboard ship, shore excursions, applicable fuel surcharges, and gratuities to Tauck Directors, Tauck Cruise Director, ship staff, local guides & drivers.

International Airfare is additional. Ask about special rates on international air from the U.S. and Canada.

Itinerary Changes – Although not expected, Tauck reserves the right to alter the sequence of ports or omit or substitute scheduled ports or attractions at any time without prior notice. Museums and attractions are subject to closure due to state, local or religious holidays.

Note: This cruise includes a fair amount of walking in each city.

Ask at time of booking about additional hotel nights or our Cruise Protection Product.