



## Tour Itinerary – Heart of Europe Circle Tour - 2024

### **DAY 1 - Overnight Flight to Europe.**

Today brings the beginning of a new adventure . . . anticipation heightens as you realize that your trip of a lifetime is about to unfold. The Trip Documents will provide guidance for airport check-in and for your arrival in Europe. Relax on your transatlantic flight with the assurance that Image Tours has taken care of all the details.

### **DAY 2 - GERMANY...Arrival at Frankfurt Airport - Schriesheim.**

As morning dawns, the European coastline comes into view, and your airplane will soon arrive at Frankfurt's Rhein-Main Airport. Disembark, clear passport control, claim your luggage, and pass through customs. Communicating is no problem as English is widely spoken. Refer to the "Arrival Instructions" in the Trip Documents for directions on where and when to meet your tour manager, who will accompany you to your deluxe motor coach. Settle in for a pleasant drive, through the enchanting countryside of central Germany, to your hotel in the village of Schriesheim. This evening, get acquainted with your fellow tour members during a "Welcome to Europe" dinner at the hotel. (Dinner)

### **DAY 3 - GERMANY .. Medieval Rothenburg - Romantic Road - Adelsried.**

This morning, travel to Rothenburg, a beautifully preserved medieval village, surrounded by the original town walls. The cobblestone streets are lined with historic inns and charming store fronts, including the famous "Käthe Wohlfahrt's Weihnachtsdorf," a sprawling, year-round Christmas shop. Take a walk on the city walls for a bird's-eye view of the town and the lovely surrounding landscapes. Your afternoon journey, to your hotel in Adelsried, leads south along the "Romantic Road," past unspoiled countryside, ancient castles and storybook villages. (Breakfast, Dinner)

### **DAY 4 - GERMANY .. Munich & AUSTRIA .. Tyrolean Village.**

The drive into Munich reveals many of the Bavarian capital's interesting landmarks. There will be time to explore the central square (Marienplatz) with its unique Glockenspiel clock. For a taste of Oktoberfest, consider beer, sausages and sauerkraut at the famous Hofbräuhaus. After lunch, head south to the Austrian border. While motoring through the majestic Austrian mountains, you may feel like humming "Sound of Music" tunes. Enter Tyrol, one of the friendliest and most scenic regions in Austria, and continue to your chalet-style hotel in a typical Tyrolean Village. (Breakfast, Dinner)

### **DAY 5 - AUSTRIA .. Tyrolean Village.**

This day is devoted to the boundless splendor of the Austrian Alps. Awe-inspiring mountain landscapes surround you as you walk through your Tyrolean Village admiring the flower-adorned and frescoed chalets. Consider taking a chair lift up the mountain to behold the magnificent Alpine vistas. Another choice is to join your tour manager for a full day optional Salzburg & Dinner excursion, which includes a guided tour of Salzburg (Mozart's birthplace and setting for the "Sound of Music") and a traditional Austrian meal. (Breakfast)

**DAY 6 - AUSTRIA .. Innsbruck & ITALY .. Lake Garda - Verona.**

The Hapsburg dynasty is responsible for much of the architectural beauty you will see during your morning stop in Innsbruck. Most notably, Maximilian I, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire from 1493 to 1519, contributed the iconic Golden Roof balcony. Innsbruck is the capital of Tyrol and has twice hosted the Winter Olympics. Enter Italy via the Europa Bruecke (Bridge), a remarkable feat of highway engineering through the Dolomite Mountains. Descend to "Lago di Garda" (Lake Garda), whose steep mountain shores give it a subtropical climate with rich vegetation, including colorful oleander bushes, olive and citrus trees, and grape vines which produce some of the famous Italian wines. During an afternoon stop, stroll along the lakefront, browse the quaint markets, and enjoy a gelato (Italian ice cream). From here, it's a short drive to the legendary city of Verona, made famous by Shakespeare's tragic love story of "Romeo and Juliet." Before transferring to your hotel, experience an authentic Italian meal during an independent dinner in Verona. (Breakfast)

**DAY 7 - ITALY .. Verona.**

Today is yours to absorb the Italian art, architecture, music and overall romantic atmosphere at your own pace. Explore Verona and its nearly 2,000-year-old Roman Arena that is still used today for performances of beloved Italian operas. Use your time to browse the fashionable shops or take a local bus back to turquoise-colored Lake Garda, where you can relax along its shore while sipping a Campari or Cappuccino. Another choice for today is to join the optional Venice excursion to see canals, gondolas, art, architecture and delicately-blown glass. This excursion includes dinner at a typical Venetian restaurant. However you choose to spend the day, Italy's uniquely captivating ambiance will surely leave an everlasting impression. At the end of the day, return to your Verona area hotel. (Breakfast)

**DAY 8 - SWITZERLAND .. Lake Lugano - Swiss Alps.**

Travel north towards the unsurpassed splendor of the Italian and Swiss Lake Districts. Switzerland greets you with snow-capped mountain peaks as a contrasting background to palm tree-lined subtropical Lake Lugano. Often referred to as the "Rio de Janeiro of the Old Continent," this is the perfect spot for a lunch break. In the afternoon, transfer from the Italian to the German speaking region of Switzerland by way of the 11-mile-long St. Gotthard Tunnel. Overnight in one of the cozy villages in the Swiss Alps. (Breakfast, Dinner)

**DAY 9 - SWITZERLAND .. Stans - Lucerne - Swiss Alps.**

A morning drive through William Tell country uncovers impressive Lake Lucerne. The soaring mountain peaks of Rigi and Pilatus standing guard over this vast water basin create one of the most imposing sights in Europe. Stop in the old mountain village of Stans for the optional Swiss Mountain excursion offering thrilling panoramic views by funicular and cable car. In the afternoon, visit Lucerne with its historic covered bridge. The rest of the day is yours to explore the Old Town. Browse displays of delicious chocolates and wood-carved music boxes. Take a photo at the famous Lion Monument commemorating the heroic deaths of Swiss soldiers who defended Louis XVI during the French Revolution. Relax on one of the lovely lakeshore promenades. Before returning to your hotel for dinner, consider joining your tour manager for an optional Swiss Lake Boat Ride excursion on beautiful Lake Lucerne. (Breakfast, Dinner)

**DAY 10 - FRANCE . . Champagne Region - Troyes.**

The church bells usher in another glorious day. Follow the Swiss Autobahn past Basel, where Switzerland, Germany and France meet. This is where the Rhine River becomes navigable before starting its approximate 700-mile run through Germany and on to the Atlantic seaport of Rotterdam, Holland. Crossing the border into France, the mountains give way to hilltop villages and rustic vineyards. Make a mid-day lunch stop before continuing through the Burgundy and Champagne wine regions to Troyes. Your tour manager will offer a walk to the picturesque medieval village square where you may wish to try the local champagne at one of the sidewalk cafés. (Breakfast, Dinner)

**DAY 11 - FRANCE . . Paris.**

After a midmorning arrival into the center of Paris, venture out on your own, or join the optional Seine River Cruise excursion, featuring some of the city's major landmarks. Before you start your independent exploration of Paris, the tour manager will direct you to the location of principal sights such as Place de la Concorde, Champs-Élysées, Notre Dame Cathedral, Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum (open every day except Tuesday), Arc de Triomphe and Galeries Lafayette department store. Tonight, join the optional Paris Evening excursion with dinner at a characteristic French bistro located in the heart of Paris. Or, choose your own location for an independent dinner. (Breakfast)

**DAY 12 - BELGIUM . . Antwerp & HOLLAND.**

Travel north to Belgium and proceed to the North Sea port of Antwerp, known for its convivial atmosphere and lace handicrafts. Explore the city center, with its historic buildings and quaint shops. Treat yourself to an irresistible Belgian waffle at one of the outdoor cafés on the city's attractive main square. This afternoon, enter Holland, also known as The Netherlands (or Nederland in Dutch which means "low lands"). Much of the country lies below sea level and is protected from flooding by an intricate system of canals, dikes and pumping stations. Many of the windmills, which used to do the pumping, have been beautifully preserved and can be seen on the drive to your Holland hotel. (Breakfast, Dinner)

**DAY 13 - HOLLAND.**

Take advantage of the efficient bus and railway network to a myriad of interesting places, many of which are less than an hour away. Your tour manager will offer a full-day optional *Grand Holland* excursion (see Optional Excursions), featuring the neatly-groomed countryside, a picturesque Dutch village, and a boat ride through the canals of historic Amsterdam showcasing the elegant bridges and 17th-century architecture. Choose from pancakes, seafood, or other Dutch specialties for your independent dinner. (Breakfast)

**DAY 14 - GERMANY . . Rhine River - Rüdesheim.**

Today, return to Germany and travel on the Autobahn (Expressway) to the Rhine River Valley. From Boppard, embark on a scenic up-stream boat ride on the Rhine River, one of Western Europe's most important waterways. Glide past endearing villages, hillside vineyards, medieval castles and fortresses. Pass by the legendary Loreley Rock, which is the subject of boatmen folklore about a bewitching siren. Your last overnight is in the village of Rüdesheim, located along the Rhine River. Known for its fine wines and festive atmosphere, this is a fitting location for tonight's "Farewell Dinner." (Breakfast, Dinner)

**DAY 15 - Daytime flight back to U.S.A.**

Your journey of Europe's scenic, cultural and historic highlights has come full circle. You will forever remember the many sights, sounds and tastes as well as your newly-made friends. Transfer to the Frankfurt Rhein- Main Airport for the return flight home. We sincerely hope you will return and experience more of Europe's treasures with Image Tours. Until we see you again — "Auf Wiedersehen!" (Breakfast)      ITINERARY SUBJECT TO CHANGE