



Tour Itinerary – Heart of Europe Circle Tour

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 begin. Take time to relax on your transatlantic flight.

DAY 2 - GERMANY...Arrival at Frankfurt Airport - Heidelberg - Schriesheim.

As morning arrives, the European coastline comes into view and your plane will soon touch down at the Frankfurt Rhein-Main Airport. Disembark, clear passport control, claim your suitcase, and pass through customs. Communicating is no problem, as English is widely spoken in the airport. You will be met by your tour manager. Board your deluxe motor coach for a pleasant drive through the countryside of central Germany to your hotel in the village of Schriesheim. One German word you must learn is 'gemuetlichkeit' which expresses the feeling of comfort, coziness, and leisure that you will experience in the days ahead. This afternoon, the tour manager will invite you on a visit to the town of Heidelberg, idyllically situated on the Neckar River and dominated by the ruins of Heidelberg Castle. This renowned university town is considered by many to embody the spirit of Germany. This evening, enjoy the 'Welcome to Europe/Get-acquainted' dinner at the hotel. (Dinner)

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

This morning travel to the storybook town of Rothenburg, a beautifully preserved medieval village surrounded by the original town walls and without a single modern building in sight. When you see the narrow cobblestone streets, distinctive inns, and quaint shop fronts, it feels as if you are walking into a fairy tale. During your free time, climb to the top of the Town Hall bell tower for a bird's-eye view of the city, walk atop the old city walls surrounding the town, check out the Medieval Criminal Museum which exhibits tools of punishment from more draconian times, or stroll through the castle gardens overlooking the River Tauber. Delightful shopping awaits you at Käthe Wohlfahrt's Weihnachtsdorf, a sprawling, year-round Christmas shop. Your afternoon journey leads south on the Romantic Road, an area rich in unspoiled countryside, ancient castles, and untouched villages. Tonight, your meal at the hotel in Adelsried will be enlivened by accordion music. Try a stein of Paulaner Pilsner (beer), a glass of Liebfrau Milch (wine), or a refreshing glass of Apfelsaft (apple juice). (Breakfast, Dinner)

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

Munich, the elegant capital of Bavaria, lies 60 kilometers (37½ miles) east. Step out for free time at the Marienplatz, a pedestrian-only zone where historic buildings are cleverly interspersed with modern store fronts. The focal point of the square is the Rathaus (Town Hall) with its captivating Glockenspiel (clock tower). For lunch, consider the Hofbräuhaus, a one-of-a-kind beer hall, which exudes an Oktoberfest atmosphere year-round. After lunch, head south to the Austrian border. Continue through the scenic Austrian Alps to the Tyrolean Village where you will spend the next two nights in a chalet-style hotel. ([Breakfast, Dinner](#))

DAY 5 - AUSTRIA . . Tyrolean Village.

The peaceful villages, tucked in the valleys around Innsbruck, provide the perfect location for a relaxing day. Choose from an abundance of paths for an exhilarating hike or bike ride with awe-inspiring panoramas. Take a chair lift up one of the mountains for magnificent views. Or, simply relax in your Tyrolean Village amidst the boundless splendor of the Alps. Frescoed and flower-adorned chalets create a serene atmosphere as you walk through town. 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 at an alpine village restaurant. ([Breakfast](#))

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

Travel along the Inn River as it winds its way through the Austrian Alps to the Imperial City of Innsbruck, capital of Tyrol and two-time host of the Winter Olympics. Bisected by the Inn River and surrounded by mountains, Innsbruck is a stunning setting. See the Imperial Church, the Golden Roof (built in 1500 for royalty to view entertainment in the square below), the Maria Theresia Boulevard and the Triumphal Arch. Innsbruck owes much of its beauty to Maximilian I, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire from 1493 to 1519. From Innsbruck, it is only a short distance to the Italian border. Enter Italy via the Europa Bruecke (Bridge), a remarkable feat of mountain highway engineering through the Dolomites, a mountain range known for its reddish appearance. You are in for a special treat as you descend to Lake Garda. In some places, the rocky cliffside rises straight up from the lake. Its sheltered location gives the area a subtropical climate rich in vegetation, including oleander bushes, olive groves, fruit 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 an Italian ice cream (gelato). From here, it's a short ride to the legendary city of Verona, made famous by Shakespeare's tragic love story of "Romeo and Juliet." Experience an authentic Italian meal during an independent dinner in Verona, before transferring to your hotel. ([Breakfast](#))

DAY 7 - ITALY . . Verona.

One of the most romantic countries in the world, Italy is the cradle of European civilization, art, architecture and music. This day is yours to do as you please. Spend the day studying the fascinating architecture and browsing the fashionable shops of Verona, or take the public bus back to Lake Garda where you can relax along the shores sipping a Campari or cappuccino. Another choice for today is to join the optional [Venice](#) excursion which includes dinner at a typical Venetian restaurant. Venice is famous for its canals, bridges, colorful gondoliers, magnificent St. Marks Square and engaging outdoor vendors. After a memorable day of sight-seeing, return to your Verona hotel. (Breakfast)

DAY 8 - SWITZERLAND . . Lake Lugano - Gotthard Pass - Swiss Alps.

Travel north towards the unsurpassed splendor of the Italian and Swiss lake districts. Crossing the border, Switzerland greets you with the contrast of snow-capped peaks as the background to palm tree-lined Lake Lugano. Often referred to as the “Rio de Janeiro of the Old Continent,” Lugano is the perfect spot for a lunch. In the afternoon, the 11-mile-long St. Gotthard Tunnel takes you from the Italian to the German-speaking region of Switzerland. Your hotel resides in one of the scenic Swiss Alps villages. ([Breakfast](#), [Dinner](#))

DAY 9 - SWITZERLAND . . Village of Stans - Lucerne - Swiss Alps.

Traveling through William Tell country, you descend upon Lake Lucerne. The soaring peaks of Rigi, Stanserhorn and Pilatus, standing guard over this vast water basin, create one of the most imposing sights in Europe. Today's first stop is the old mountain village of Stans with an optional [Swiss Mountain](#) excursion by funicular and cable car for thrilling panoramic views of the Swiss Lake District. Next, motor along the lake to the city of Lucerne, where you will see the Old Town Wall and famous Lion Monument. This inspiring stone carving, hewn out of natural rock, commemorates the heroic death of Swiss soldiers who defended Louis XVI during the French Revolution. The rest of the day is yours to explore the Old Town, visit the Swiss Transport Museum, or relax on one of the lovely lakeshore promenades. Lucerne is a shopper's paradise; you will enjoy browsing through displays of woodcarved music boxes, delicate Swiss lace, delicious chocolates, and Switzerland's world famous watches. Before returning to your hotel, the tour manager will offer an optional [Swiss Lake Boat Ride](#) excursion. ([Breakfast](#), [Dinner](#))

DAY 10 - FRANCE . . Besançon – Troyes.

The church bells usher in another glorious day. Follow the Swiss Autobahn to Basel, where Switzerland, Germany and France meet and the Rhine River becomes navigable. The mountains give way to hilltop villages and rustic vineyards. Make a lunch stop in Besançon, with its charming historic centre and imposing hilltop citadel. Continue through the Burgundy wine region to Troyes, conveniently located for minimum travel time to Paris the next morning. ([Breakfast](#), [Dinner](#))

DAY 11 - FRANCE. . Paris.

By mid-morning, you will reach Paris, La Ville Lumière (The City of Light). What a thrill it is to enter this dynamic city, rich in history, art and architecture. Before beginning your free time, we suggest joining your tour manager for the optional [Seine River Cruise](#) excursion for unsurpassed views of some of the city's major landmarks. Transfer by motor coach to the Place de la Concorde, adjacent to the Champs-Élysées. Your tour manager will direct you to the location of the principal sights such as the Notre Dame Cathedral, Eiffel Tower, Louvre Museum (open every day except Tuesday), Opera (Palais Garnier) , Arc de Triomphe and famous Galeries Lafayette department store. In the late afternoon, transfer to the hotel. Spend this evening on your own or consider the optional [Paris Evening](#) excursion, with dinner at a characteristic French bistro located in the heart of Paris. Your brief taste of Paris is meant as an introduction to one of the great cities of the world and will certainly make a lasting impression. (Breakfast)

DAY 12 - BELGIUM . . Antwerp & HOLLAND.

Travel North from Paris to the French/Belgian border. Entering Belgium, the French language will stay with you for another hour or so until you reach the province of Flanders where Flemish (similar to Dutch) is spoken. In Antwerp, the Flemish capital of Antwerp known for its convivial atmosphere and outdoor cafés, join a short orientation walk and explore the old city center. Admire lace-trimmed handicrafts in the quaint shops and treat yourself to irresistible Belgian waffles or chocolates on the Grote Markt, the city's attractive main square. This afternoon, enter The Netherlands (Holland), a country with very strong historical ties to the United States. The western part of Holland was wrestled from the sea, and still today lies below sea level, protected from flooding by an intricate system of dikes and pumps. Netherlands literally means Lowlands. Watch for the canals, bridges and windmills on the way to your hotel. (Breakfast, Dinner)

DAY 13 - HOLLAND.

This day is yours to spend as you like. Communication will not be a problem as English is widely spoken throughout Holland. Consider taking advantage of Holland's efficient bus and railway network to a myriad of interesting places, many of them less than an hour away. Bikes are available for rent in many cities. There's also a full-day optional [Grand Holland with Dinner](#) excursion, featuring a kaleidoscopic overview of Holland, including the unique countryside, a picturesque Dutch village, and sightseeing in Amsterdam, one of the great cities of the world. Renowned for its impressive architecture and world famous museums that offer a window to the past, Amsterdam is also a vibrant, modern city with a wide variety of shopping and food venues. (Breakfast)

DAY 14 - GERMANY . . Rhine Cruise - Rudesheim.

After breakfast, you will return to Germany. Exit the German Autobahn near Koblenz, where the Rhine and Mosel rivers converge, then follow the Rhine River to Boppard. Here, you will board a pleasure boat for an upstream cruise on the Rhine River, one of Western Europe's most important waterways. Glide past endearing villages, medieval fortresses, and hillside vineyards known for producing the distinctive Rhine wines. Near the end of your cruise, you will pass by the legendary Loreley Rock, subject of boatmen folklore about a bewitching siren. Your hotel is located in the wine village of Rudesheim. Known for its 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 from your adventure, 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 then, Auf Wiedersehen!!! (Breakfast)

Itinerary subject to change