





European Castles Tours is based in Hopfen am See, just outside of Füssen in the southern part of Bavaria. Füssen is in the heart of castle country. King Ludwig's Neuschwanstein Castle and his family's Hohenschwangau Castle are both within 5 km (3 miles) of Füssen, and Ludwig's second castle, Linderhof, is near as well.

European Castles Tours offers tours in Bavaria, in Germany's Rhine region, in the surrounding countries of central Europe, and in Ireland and Portugal.



Astrid Baur

Astrid Baur grew up in Füssen, began giving castles tours as a summer job, learned what guests expect and appreciate most, established her own company in 2004, and now counts thousands of happy clients as tour friends.

Astrid acts as Tour Director when possible, as this is what she loves most of all. The company has added new tours to its offerings so Astrid has carefully recruited and trained an excellent team in how to do things the way she and her guests expect.

These experienced professionals give you an insider's perspective on each tour destination and create a holiday experience you could not have on your own.

Our team members act as your personal concierge, ensuring that your holiday is seamless and hassle-free. They all speak English fluently, are eager to share their deep knowledge of history and of the tour destinations, and are highly motivated, outgoing, caring, and fun.

Recommendations

Astrid Baur's tours are promoted primarily by people who have been on her tours, were pleased and impressed, and tell their friends. Many of our guests are repeat customers who come back to experience some of our other tours. **More guest comments on page 35, and on the References page of our website, and on TripAdvisor.**

THIS COMPANY IS THIS GREAT!!! We went on the "Bavarian Castles Tour", and this was the most amazing vacation my family and I had ever been on.... Our tour guides were the best tour guides imaginable.... The hotel in Bavaria was very relaxing and comfortable with the most amazing breakfast buffet you could imagine. Somehow, the dinners ended up being even better than the breakfasts.... We felt like we left the trip with not only amazing memories, but also new friends, and these new friends weren't just the other people on the trip with us, but also our tour guides and Astrid herself!

– Ms Chelsea R, Canada

My husband and I just came back from River Castles Tour. This was our 2nd tour with Astrid, and it was GREAT! The destinations were spectacular The itinerary was expertly planned.... The hotel rooms were very comfortable and spacious.... The food was gourmet.... Our driver – Mustafa - was very experienced.... Our tour guide – Federico – was excellent... We are very happy repeat customers, and are looking forward to our 3rd tour with Astrid.

– Natalya Stein, Kansas City, Kansas USA

Amazing, Amazing, Amazing. This [Bavarian Christmas Markets Tour] is the best tour hands down that I have ever done. I have been to Europe 3 times. If you want the best travel with Astrid.... The trip is very well planned out to the sights we see, to where we eat. We never felt like we were rushed and had plenty of time at all the sights. The group had plenty of time to shop at the Christmas markets and I did a lot of shopping. The restaurants that we ate in were the top notch. Our tour guides were a delight they were knowledgeable and fun. Thank you and we will see you in the future on another trip.

– Fab Thompson, Tallmadge, Ohio USA

Cover: Hall of Mirrors, Palace of Versailles, Paris





What makes these tours so special?

- **These tour packages are genuinely "all-inclusive".** Entrance fees for every castle, palace, and site visit in the itinerary are included in the price. All guide fees are included, as are all transportation costs (buses, carriages, boats, vans, cable cars, etc.). Airport transfers are included.
- **No hidden extras** and no "optional" activities that you pay for yourself.
- **Tour departures are guaranteed.** Once a scheduled tour is posted as available it will operate even if only a small number of guests sign on.
- **Inside tours** of the castles and palaces are provided, not just "photo opportunities" where you get off the bus, take two shots, and get back on.
- **Expert guides** provided by the castles and palaces take visitors on inside tours, provide comprehensive background information, and answer questions. Most walking tours of towns and villages are conducted by trained guides, licensed by municipalities to ensure that visitors receive the best possible visitor experience.
- **Pacing** seems leisurely, but a lot gets accomplished every day. Tours move effortlessly between destinations without travelers feeling rushed, and there's plenty of free time for relaxation and personal exploration.
- **Logistics** are our not-so-secret weapon. Your travel seems effortless because every detail is planned in advance, and successful execution of the plans benefits from a lot of local knowledge and experience.
- **Small groups** (maximum 30) are friendly and keep things moving. On a small group tour you can actually get to know the tour director and the other folks travelling with you. Small groups make things easier for everyone. Fewer people competing to ask questions. Shorter lines for the washroom. And fewer stragglers when it's time to move on.

2020 Castles Tours

Scheduled Tours

9 to 11 Days

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<i>Three Corners' Castles, Magnificent Scenery and Wine</i>		
Bavarian Christmas Markets	9 days	10 - 11
<i>King Ludwig II's Castles and the Bavarian Christmas Markets</i>		
Nutcrackers and Notables	9 days	12 - 13
<i>Treasures, Traditions and Christmas Markets, Romantic Road to Seiffen</i>		
Best of Germany and Austria	10 days	14 - 15
<i>Rhine and Danube, Castles and Mountains</i>		
Kids and Castles	9 days	16 - 17
<i>The Best of German Castles and Towns</i>		
French Castles	9 days	18 - 19
<i>Chateaux of Paris and the Loire Valley</i>		
Italian Highlights	11 days	20 - 21
<i>Rome, Florence and Venice</i>		

7 to 9 Day Private Tours

At Your Convenience

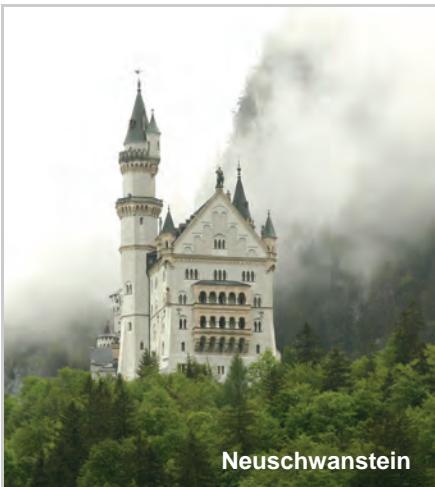
Irish Highlights	9 days	22 - 23
<i>The Emerald Isle's Southern Gems and Castles</i>		
Portuguese Castles	9 days	24 - 25
<i>Garden of Europe with a Glorious Past</i>		
Berlin and the East of Germany	9 days	26
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Bavarian Castles Tour

King Ludwig II's Castles and the Bavarian Lakes



Neuschwanstein

Discover the wonderful castles of King Ludwig II and the beauty of Bavaria's lakes and countryside. Tour inside the castles with local guides and take time to explore on your own. Alternate the visits to castles with other excursions, including a trip to the top of Mount Zugspitze, the Nymphenburg Palace and the Hofbräuhaus in Munich, the Church in the Meadow, Oberammergau and other picturesque towns and villages in the region.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home destination to Munich, Germany. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – HOPFEN AM SEE

Arrival in Munich, Germany. When the group is complete we head south to your home away from home in HOPFEN AM SEE, on the lake near Füssen, within hiking distance of Neuschwanstein in the beautiful Bavarian Alps. You are staying in a typical local "landhaus", where you are a friend, not a tourist. Your rooms are very *gemütlich*, decorated in Bavarian country style, all with cable TV, telephone, refrigerator, extra sitting area, balcony, and a great mountain view.

You'll be treated to a welcoming Bavarian dinner on the Lake Promenade tonight.



Day 3 – NEUSCHWANSTEIN, HOHENSCHWANGAU

Today's focus is NEUSCHWANSTEIN, Germany's most famous castle. First we go to Marienbrücke (Mary's Bridge) sitting high above the Pöllat Gorge, where we can take the best pictures of the castle. From there we walk downhill for our inside tour of Neuschwanstein. Afterwards there's time for lunch and a stroll on Lake Alpsee, where young Ludwig learned to swim. After lunch we visit HOHENSCHWANGAU, the castle built by his father Maximilian, where Germany's fairy tale king spent much of his childhood, and where he dreamed about his future castles. Local guides in both castles. Fantastic dinner tonight in the area where Ludwig was planning his next castle, Falkenstein.

Hohenschwangau



View from Zugspitze



Day 4 – ZUGSPITZE, LINDERHOF, OBERAMMERGAU

Beautiful drive into Austria to Ehrwald where we take a cable car to the summit of ZUGSPITZE, at almost 10,000 feet Germany's highest mountain, with a matchless panorama.

We continue on to LINDERHOF, Ludwig's beautiful castle hiding deep in the forest, which served as a background for the romantic fantasies of the young king. Inside visit with local guide. Back home via the pretty village of OBERAMMERGAU, known for the passion play, a tradition which derives from a vow to perform a passion play every ten years if God spared them from the bubonic plague. Dinner in Füssen tonight.

Day 5 – HERRENCHIEMSEE, BAD TÖLZ

Today we focus on King Ludwig II's largest castle, HERRENCHIEMSEE, which he built on an island in Lake Chiemsee after a visit to Versailles, and where he stayed only one week. Boat and horse carriage rides to the castle and local guide for inside tour. On the way back we stop in the beautiful town of BAD TÖLZ. There's time to relax before we join the locals tonight for great atmosphere and food at a local brewery.



Bavarian Castles Tour ...



Herrenchiemsee

Day 6 – MUNICH, NYMPHENBURG

We go to MUNICH and first we visit NYMPHENBURG PALACE, where Ludwig was born, and the Marstallmuseum, containing his elaborate carriages.



Nymphenburg

Our Orientation Tour of Munich features the Olympic Stadium, Olympic Tower, Leopoldstrasse, Schwabing, Ludwigstrasse, Odeonsplatz, Königsplatz, Karlsplatz, Church of our Lady, and Marienplatz where you see the famous Glockenspiel.



Marienplatz

Afterwards plenty of time on your own for shopping or more sightseeing. Dinner on your own in the evening. Why not have a stein of beer at the Hofbräuhaus, Munich's famous beer hall?



Hofbräuhaus

Day 7 – INNSBRUCK

We drive south through the mountains to INNSBRUCK, the capital of Austria's Tyrol. First we visit SCHLOSS AMBRAS, a Renaissance castle located in the hills above the city. The palace is notable for its architecture, furnishings, and art and armour collections. Private guided tour.



Schloss Ambras

In the city enjoy a nice stroll through its quaint medieval lanes, see the famous little Golden Roof below the impressive Austrian Alps, the Hofburg, and the Hofkirche, Innsbruck's fine Baroque church. Free time to explore on your own, and maybe shop for Swarovski Crystal, which is made here. Dinner in Austria tonight on the way back home.

Day 8 – WIESKIRCHE, LAKE STARNBERG, ANDECHS

We take the Romantic Road today to visit the masterpiece of Bavarian Rococo, WIESKIRCHE, a UNESCO World Heritage Site also known as the Church in the Meadow. We continue to LAKE STARNBERG and see the Votivkapelle and the cross in the lake where Ludwig died. Then on to ritzy Starnberg with time for lunch and a stroll on the lake. Afterwards a short drive to ANDECHS, a famous Benedictine monastery known for its own beer, which we have time to enjoy in one of the many beer gardens.

Enjoy your last evening with a wonderful farewell dinner in Hopfen.



Wieskirche

Day 9 – RETURN

Time to say "Auf wiedersehen". Transfer to Munich Airport for your return flight.

Three Nights Venice Extension Option: Travel across the Alps, visit Verona, and explore the wonders of magical and exquisite Venice from your 4-star hotel base on Lido Island. Details online or ask. Contact info is on the back.



Bavarian Castles Tour

King Ludwig II's Castles
and the Bavarian Lakes

Bavarian Castles is our most popular tour. It features inside visits at Germany's most famous castles and palaces, including all three of King Ludwig II's own creations, and a wide variety of other features in beautiful Bavaria – ranging from medieval towns to a ride to the top of Mount Zugspitze.

The castles are mostly much newer than on the other tours, generally more elegant and in better condition.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation **fees are all paid**.

Generous buffet **breakfasts** at the Landhaus each morning.

All **dinners** except one are included, with menu choices, one beverage, and coffee or tea after. (Lunches are not provided).

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Departure Guaranteed. There is no minimum group size.

Accommodations

All nights are at **Landhaus Kössel** in Hopfen am See, near Füssen. No daily packing and moving.

2020 Tour Dates

Friday, **May 22** through Saturday, May 30, 2020

Friday, **June 19** through Saturday, June 27, 2020

Friday, **July 17** through Saturday, July 25, 2020

Friday, **August 21** through Saturday, August 29, 2020

Friday, **September 18** through Saturday, September 26, 2020

9 days, including travel

Costs

Adult, Double Occupancy US \$ 2,599

Adult, Single Occupancy US \$ 2,899

Adult, Triple Occupancy US \$ 2,399

Child 8-16 with 2 Adults US \$ 1,499

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

River Castles Tour

The German Rivers Rhine, Moselle, Neckar and Main and their Castles



For hundreds of years the Rhine has ranked as one of the most popular travel destinations in Europe. This region, one of the most beautiful in Germany, was recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2002.

Spend plenty of time discovering the river, its castles and ruins, tales and legends and also those of its tributaries Moselle, Neckar and Main.

Visit strategic fortresses, Roman ruins, and medieval walled towns.

The days offer you many highlights, but they are leisurely paced with time for you to explore on your own.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home destination to Frankfurt, Germany. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO THE RHINE

Arrival in Frankfurt, Germany. When the group is complete we drive directly to the Rhine for lunch in one of the charming villages on the River.

Transfer to the four-star Bellevue Rheinhotel in Boppard, one of the best hotels in the Rhine area. This Art Nouveau style hotel is situated directly on the river, with a dock at its front door. We will spend the next five nights here.

You can spend some relaxing moments at the on-site swimming pool and sauna. Health conscious guests can work out at the fitness centre or go hiking in the beautiful countryside.

Tonight we meet for a welcome drink followed by dinner at the hotel.



Rhine Valley



Rüdesheim

Day 3 – CASTLES, CASTLES, CASTLES, RÜDESHEIM

Cruising all day on the Rhine on the most beautiful stretch of the river, the part added to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list. We travel upstream past the Loreley Rock and lots of medieval castles on both sides of the river to most charming RÜDESHEIM.

Time for lunch and souvenirs in famous Drosselgasse, and afterwards we take a cable car uphill through the vineyards to the Niederwald Monument. Be prepared for incredible views over the valley.

We re-board our Rhinesteamer back and later have a great dinner in a typical Rheinkeller with wine tasting.



Marksburg

Day 4 – MARKSBURG, KOBLENZ, EHRENBREITSTEIN

Today we cross the river by ferry to Braubach, the Town of Roses where we take a guided tour of the MARKSBURG, an 11th century castle, the only one on the Rhine that was never destroyed.

We continue to KOBLENZ, meaning confluence, where the Moselle joins the Rhine at the Deutsches Eck (the German Corner). Admire the equestrian statue of Wilhelm I. Time to explore Koblenz on your own, before we take a cable car up to EHRENBREITSTEIN Fortress for an inside visit at the Museum of the Rhine.

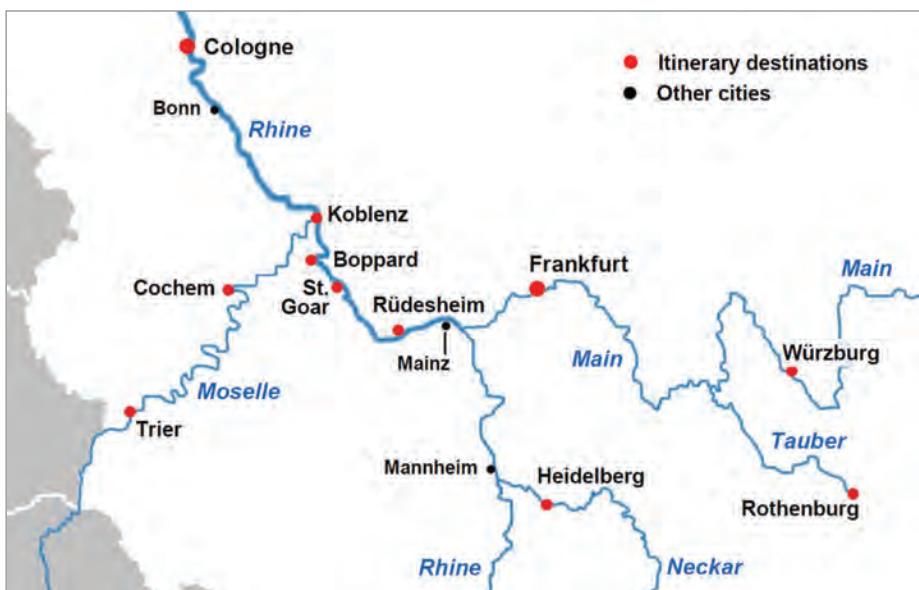
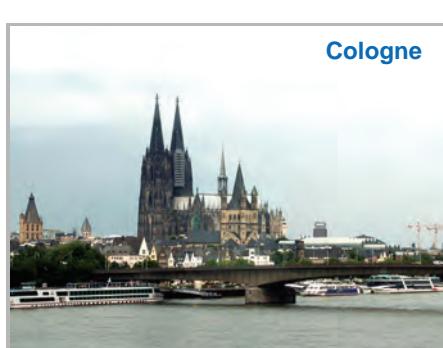
From Koblenz we take a boat back and have dinner on board.

Day 5 – REMAGEN, COLOGNE

Morning stop at the Peace Museum of REMAGEN, located in surviving towers of the former railway bridge which fell into American hands almost intact on March 7, 1945, but collapsed later under the weight of armored vehicles.

We continue to COLOGNE, the biggest city on our tour and on the Rhine. See the famous gothic Cathedral, and have a Koelsch or a cup of coffee in one of Germany's longest pedestrian zones.

Cologne



River Castles Tour ...

Day 6 – MOSELLE RIVER, BURG ELTZ, COCHEM, TRIER

Today we drive upstream along the MOSELLE River, which in scenery, castles and vineyards does not stand in the shadow of its big brother, the Rhine.

Our first stop is the twelfth century BURG ELTZ, one of Germany's most beautiful castles, rising majestically above the rear end of the wild Eltz Valley and surrounded by the river on three sides. Inside tour with castle guide.



We continue to COCHEM, located on an idyllic bend on the river, where you have time for lunch on the Moselle Promenade.

Then on to TRIER, Germany's oldest city, with lots of Roman sights. We get a deeper insight into this place with a guided walking tour, which takes you inside the Porta Nigra, a roman fortress from the second century, and the best preserved roman construction north of the Alps. The tour also includes the Cathedral, one of Germany's oldest churches with foundations dating from the fourth century, and the Church of our Dear Lady, the oldest purely gothic church in Germany.

Day 7 – RHEINFELS CASTLE, HEIDELBERG, BURGENSTRASSE

Today say goodbye to the Rhine after your visit to RHEINFELS CASTLE in St. Goar, and head south to HEIDELBERG, on the Neckar river. In medieval times the Electoral Palatinate, with Heidelberg as the political centre, was one of the most advanced European States.



Day 7, continued

See the beautiful red-walled castle, including the great vat, with a guided tour. Afterwards we take a cogwheel train down into the city where you have more time for sightseeing, shopping and postcards.

Tonight we are staying in a typical country hotel in the Neckar valley on the BURGENSTRASSE (Castle Road).

Day 8 – ROTHENBURG, THE ROMANTIC ROAD, WÜRZBURG

Our last traveling day takes us to medieval ROTHENBURG OB DER TAUBER in Frankonia where you feel like you just jumped back into the 16th century. Completely surrounded by its medieval ramparts with countless towers, Rothenburg is famous for its ancient houses, fountains, cobbled lanes, hidden corners, ornate street signs, and market square.



After lunch we take the ROMANTIC ROAD to where it starts, to WÜRZBURG on the Main River. Take a guided tour of the UNESCO-listed Residence, this superb baroque palace, one of the biggest in Germany, and admire the staircase, the frescoes by Tiepolo, the Hofkirche and the Gardens.

After, see more of Würzburg on your own and get your final shopping done.

Back to Frankfurt for overnight. Farewell dinner tonight at our hotel.



Day 9 – RETURN

Time to say "Auf wiedersehen".

Transfer to Frankfurt Airport for your return flight home.

European Castles Tours

River Castles Tour

The German Rivers Rhine, Moselle, Neckar and Main and their Castles

The River Castles Tour is the most focused on castles, and features the oldest ones (and very old ruins).

The vineyards of the Rhine valley are the scenic backdrop, and cruising on the Rhine is a unique transportation experience.

This tour is rich in history. It finds remnants of the Roman occupation at the time of Christ in Cologne and Trier, and the castles along the Rhine date from the 11th century.

Cruising the Rhine on the deck of a river boat, counting the castles going by on the hilltops above, gets this tour off to a great start.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation fees are all paid.

Generous buffet **breakfasts** each morning.

All **dinners** except one are provided. Lunches are not included.

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Departure Guaranteed. There is no minimum group size.

Accommodations

Five nights at **Bellevue Rheinhotel** in Boppard. One night on the Castle Road. Last night in Frankfurt for convenient return.

Possible upgrade to Boppard River View room or suite. Please ask.

2020 Tour Dates

Friday, **June 19** through Saturday, June 27, 2020

Friday, **September 18** through Saturday, September 26, 2020

9 days, including travel

Costs

Adult, Double Occupancy US \$ 2,899
Adult, Single Occupancy US \$ 3,199
Adult, Triple Occupancy US \$ 2,699
Child 8-16 with 2 Adults US \$ 1,999

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

Black Forest, Alsace and Switzerland Tours

- 1) Three Corners' Castles, Magnificent Scenery and Wine
- 2) Castles, Scenery, Wine and Christmas Markets of the Three Corners



Explore the "Three Corners" of Europe – where Germany, France and Switzerland meet by the Rhine River. Tour beautiful castles in Germany and France, explore charming towns in both countries, and marvel at the unique mix of Germanic and French architecture and culture. Go sightseeing in Strasbourg and Colmar, and follow the Alsatian Wine Route.

Then head into the German corner of Switzerland, to stop at the Rhine Falls, explore gorgeous Lucerne, and take in the breathtaking vistas from the top of Mount Pilatus.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home destination to Zurich, Switzerland. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO ALSACE

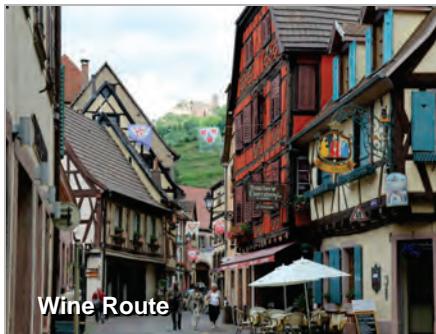
Arrival in Zurich, Switzerland. At 12 noon the complimentary transfers depart from the airport to your hotel in Alsace where we'll spend three nights.

Rest in the afternoon, begin exploring the town, or just take it easy. Tonight you'll meet your travelling companions and tour director and enjoy a great welcome dinner.

Day 3 – HAUT-KOENIGSBOURG, ALSATIAN WINE ROUTE

Since its construction in the 12th century, the HAUT-KOENIGSBOURG CASTLE at Orschwiller in Alsace has been a constant witness to both European conflicts and rivalry between lords, kings and emperors. Enjoy a tour of this magnificent castle, with its majestic architecture and its incredible view across the Alsatian plain.

We continue on the ALSATIAN WINE ROUTE, stopping in villages along the way, each of them offering a delightful picture postcard setting and some of the best examples of Alsatian architecture.



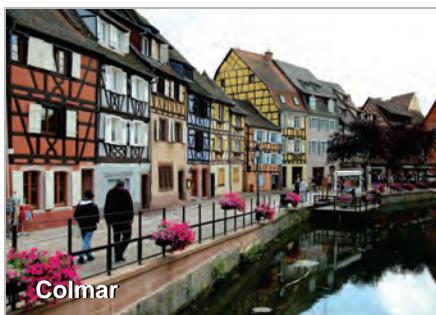
Day 4 – STRASBOURG, COLMAR

This morning we visit STRASBOURG, seat of the European Parliament. Join your guide for a walking tour of the old town and visit the Cathedral of Notre Dame. The 142-metre (466-foot) spire is a masterpiece of architectural elegance and intricacy.

We also visit La Petite France, the most picturesque district of old Strasbourg, with magnificent half-timbered houses that date from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Fishermen, millers and tanners once lived and worked in this part of town.

We continue to COLMAR in the heart of Alsace. Colmar's Germanic and French architectural heritage was spared in the frequent wars that ravaged this area.



Highlights include the "Koifhus", Pfister House, the House of Heads, and the romantic Tanner's and Little Venice districts. Your guided tour of the old town includes a visit to the Bartholdi museum, showcasing the work of the creator of New York's Statue of Liberty. Dinner tonight in France.

Day 5 – FREIBURG, WINE TASTING, BREISACH

This morning go for a stroll around the old city of FREIBURG with your guide. Walk the main streets and squares, its small streams and lanes with the colourful mosaics made of Rhine pebbles.

See Freiburg's Cathedral Square with its merchant town houses and secular buildings and its colourful farmers and traders market, and get to know the city's very long history. A tour of the Gothic cathedral with its wealth of medieval treasures forms the highlight of the tour.

Visit the Badische Winzergenossenschaft winery, the largest of its kind in Europe, explore their wine cellars, and enjoy some wine tasting.

Continue to BREISACH for a visit to the town followed by dinner.



Black Forest, Alsace and Switzerland Tours ...

Day 5, continued

Then we cross the Rhine into Germany and head to beautiful LAKE TITISEE in the Black Forest for two nights.



Hohenzollern

Day 6 – HOHENZOLLERN AND LICHTENSTEIN CASTLES

Today visit two of Germany's most beautiful castles, both rising majestically from atop the Swabian Hills. First we go to massive HOHENZOLLERN CASTLE for an inside guided tour. Castles on this strategic site date from 1200. The bastions and towers offer a breathtaking panorama over the countryside, and the splendid halls and rooms offer lots of valuable works of art pertaining to Prussia's Kings and Germany's emperors.



Lichtenstein

Next we go to LICHTENSTEIN CASTLE. The first castle was built here in 1200 but reconstructed for King Frederick I of Württemberg's nephew, the Duke Wilhelm of Urach, between 1840 and 1842. The castle is still owned by the Dukes of Urach. You can enjoy the breathtaking scenery from the hilltop.

Dinner tonight in the country in the heart of the Black Forest.

Day 7 – RHINE FALLS, LUCERNE

Today we cross the border into Switzerland. We stop at Schaffhausen to see the RHINE FALLS, the largest waterfalls in Europe.

The Christmas version of this tour includes visits to charming **Christmas markets** in **Freiberg** (Germany), **Strasbourg** and **Colmar** (France), and **Lucerne** (Switzerland). The visit to Lichtenstein is replaced by a scenic drive through the Black Forest.

We continue to beautiful LUCERNE, at the foot of the Swiss Alps on fabulous Lake Lucerne. See the Lion Monument, walk the wooden Chapel Bridge and join your guide for a stroll in the old town. Later shop for something really Swiss – chocolate, watches or army knives – or stroll along the Lake this afternoon.

Tonight look forward to a typical Swiss dinner in town, on your own.



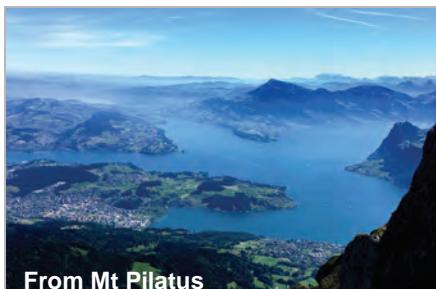
Lucerne

Day 8 – LUCERNE, MT. PILATUS

This morning be prepared for incredible views as you climb up MOUNT PILATUS. In summer we ascend by cogwheel train, the steepest in the world, in winter by cable car. From the top enjoy endless views of the mountains and plains and lakes below. Time for a Swiss hot chocolate before we return down on the other side of the mountain by cable car.

Back in LUCERNE you have the afternoon free to spend at your leisure. Maybe go for a cruise on Lake Lucerne, visit the Swiss Museum of Transport or one of the many Art Galleries, go hiking in the stunning surroundings, just relax, or to get your final shopping done.

Tonight be prepared for lots of fun at a Swiss Folklore Farewell Dinner.



From Mt Pilatus

Day 9 – HOME FROM ZURICH

Time to say "Auf wiedersehen". One final breakfast and then a complimentary transfer to Zurich Airport for your return flight home. If your flight is leaving earlier than 10:30 a.m. we can arrange for an alternative transfer at your expense.



Black Forest, Alsace and Switzerland

- 1) Three Corners' Castles, Magnificent Scenery & Wine
- 2) Castles, Scenery, Wine and Christmas Markets of the Three Corners

These tours are adventures in varieties – the cultural variety in this region where centuries of Germanic and French traditions are both preserved and exchanged, and the variety of tour destinations.

Massive castles, towns with amazing histories, cathedrals, big cities, wine tasting and a tour through wine country, a stop at a huge waterfall and a trip to the top of a mountain.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns.

Entrance, guide and transportation **fees are all paid**.

Generous buffet **breakfasts** each morning.

All **dinners** except one are provided, with menu choices.

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Departure Guaranteed. There is no minimum group size.

Accommodations

Three nights in Alsace, two at Lake Titisee in the Black Forest, and two nights in Lucerne, Switzerland.

2020 Tours

Friday, **June 5** through Saturday, June 13, 2020

Friday, **September 25** through Saturday, October 3, 2020

Adult, Double Occupancy US \$ 2,899
Adult, Single Occupancy US \$ 3,199
Adult, Triple Occupancy US \$ 2,699
Child 8-16 with 2 Adults US \$ 1,999



Friday, **December 4** through Saturday, December 12, 2020

Adult, Double Occupancy US \$ 2,799
Adult, Single Occupancy US \$ 3,099
Adult, Triple Occupancy US \$ 2,599
Child 8-16 with 2 Adults US \$ 1,899

9 days, including travel
Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

Bavarian Christmas Markets Tour

King Ludwig II's Castles and the Bavarian Christmas Markets



Neuschwanstein

Marvel at the fascinating Christmas markets of Germany and Austria, do as much or as little Christmas shopping as you wish, and still see many of the features of the Bavarian Castles tour. Highlights include the Neuschwanstein, Hohenschwangau, Linderhof, and Herrenchiemsee castles, Innsbruck, Füssen, Kempten, Oberammergau, Munich, Nymphenburg, Hofbräuhaus, and the Church in the Meadow.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home destination to Munich, Germany. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – HOPFEN AM SEE

Arrival in Munich, Germany. When the group is complete we head south to your home away from home in HOPFEN AM SEE, on the lake near Füssen, within hiking distance of Neuschwanstein in the beautiful Bavarian Alps. You are staying in a typical local "landhaus", where you are a friend, not a tourist. Your rooms are very *gemütlich*, decorated in Bavarian country style, all with cable TV, telephone, refrigerator, extra sitting area, balcony, and a great mountain view.

You'll be treated to a welcoming Bavarian dinner on the Lake Promenade tonight.



Landhaus Kössel

Day 3 – NEUSCHWANSTEIN, HOHENSCHWANGAU

Today we focus on NEUSCHWANSTEIN, King Ludwig's first creation, and Germany's most famous castle. First we go up to a lookout where you can take wonderful pictures of the castle. From there we walk downhill for our inside tour of Neuschwanstein. Afterwards there's time for lunch and a stroll on Lake Alpsee, where young Ludwig learned to swim. After lunch we visit HOHENSCHWANGAU, the castle built by his father Maximilian, where Germany's fairy tale king spent much of his childhood, and where he dreamed about his future castles. Local guides in both castles. Tonight we will have a gourmet dinner in one of Bavaria's oldest restaurants.



Hohenschwangau



Wieskirche



Linderhof

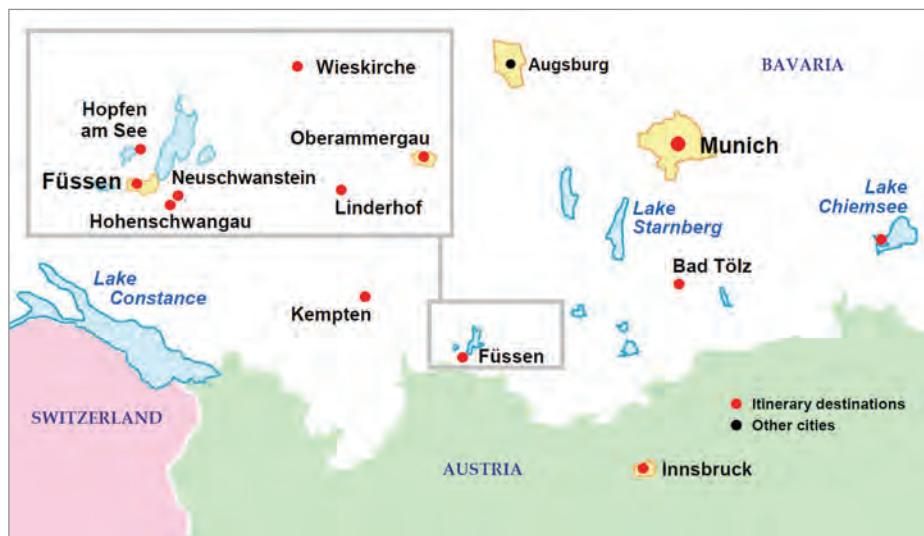
Day 4 – WIESKIRCHE, LINDERHOF, OBERAMMERGAU

Our first stop today is the famous WIESKIRCHE, or Church in the Meadow, one of the few buildings in Bavaria that are on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. On to LINDERHOF, Ludwig's beautiful castle hidden deep in the forest. He spent more time here than in his other castles. There's time for lunch on the grounds before we visit the inside of the castle, and afterwards there's time to explore the beautiful gardens on your own, before we go on to ...



Oberammergau

OBERAMMERGAU, the pretty village known for its Passion Play, a tradition which derives from a vow to perform a passion play every ten years if God spared them from the bubonic plague. Oberammergau is also known for its painted houses, woodcarving, and Christmas stores.



Bavarian Christmas Markets Tour ...

Day 5 – HERRENCHIEMSEE, BAD TÖLZ

Today we focus on King Ludwig II's largest castle, HERRENCHIEMSEE, which he built on an island in Lake Chiemsee after a visit to Versailles. Boat ride to the castle and local guide for inside tour.

On the way back we stop in the beautiful town of BAD TÖLZ.

There's time to relax before we join the locals tonight for great atmosphere and food at a local brewery.



Day 6 – MUNICH, including NYMPHENBURG and HOFBRÄUHAUS

We go to MUNICH and first visit NYMPHENBURG PALACE where Ludwig II was born, and the Martallmuseum, which contains many of Ludwig's elaborate carriages.

Our orientation tour features the Olympic Stadium, Olympic Tower, Leopoldstrasse, Schwabing, Ludwigstrasse, Odeonsplatz, Königsplatz, Karlsplatz and ends by the Residenz and the Opera, where we get off and continue on foot to Marienplatz, the very heart of Munich.

Here you will find one of the best Christmas markets in Germany. Enjoy the atmosphere and have some Glühwein and gingerbread. You have plenty of time for shopping, more sightseeing, or enjoying the city from a rooftop cafe.

Dinner tonight at Munich's most famous beer hall, the Hofbräuhaus, where the atmosphere is closest to what you would expect at the Oktoberfest.



Day 7 – INNSBRUCK

Today we head to INNSBRUCK, the capital of Austria's Tyrol.

First we visit the famous Swarovski Kristallwelten in Wattens, then we enjoy a walk through the quaint medieval lanes of Innsbruck, see the Golden Roof, the fine Baroque Church, and take a guided tour through the Hofburg, built by Empress Maria Theresa as a summer residence.

Enjoy Innsbruck's famous Christmas Market, admire the setting of this beautiful town, and get more Christmas shopping done.

Dinner on your own tonight. How about wiener schnitzel in a typical Tyrolean Restaurant?



Day 8 – FÜSSEN, KEMPTEN

Today we focus on FÜSSEN, an old Roman Town on the Lech River. Walk its narrow streets and lanes and enjoy the details your local guide provides. Afterwards enjoy a hot Glühwein and homemade applestrudel in one of Füssen's cozy cafes.

This afternoon we take a short ride to KEMPTEN an old Roman City, about 20 miles away from Hopfen. Admire the baroque Residenz, have free time for great shopping, and spend time on Kempten's gemütlich Christmas Market. Tonight enjoy a great farewell dinner.



Day 9 – RETURN

Time to say "Auf wiedersehen". Transfer to Munich Airport for your flight home.



This is our original Christmas tour, operated since 2004. We also offer the **Nutcrackers and Notables** tour and Christmas versions of our **Black Forest, Alsace and Switzerland** tour and our **Berlin and the East of Germany** tour.

European Castles Tours

Bavarian Christmas Markets

King Ludwig II's Castles and the Bavarian Christmas Markets

Bavarian Christmas Markets is an early-December Christmas version of the Bavarian Castles itinerary.

The visits to Ludwig's castles are included, but Christmas markets in Munich, Bad Tölz, Innsbruck, Oberammergau, Füssen and Kempten replace the excursions to Mt. Zugspitze and Lake Starnberg.

Germany's Christmas markets offer special shopping opportunities, but their appeal is much broader than that, and they are fun even for those who are shopping-averse.

Food and drink play a major role in German Christmas celebrations, and in the Christmas markets one can enjoy all types of delicious Christmas edibles and beverages.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation fees are all paid.

Generous buffet **breakfasts** at the Landhaus each morning.

All **dinners** except one are provided, and include menu choices, one beverage, and coffee or tea after. (Lunches not included.)

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Departure Guaranteed. There is no minimum group size.

Accommodations

All nights are at the **Landhaus Kössel** in Hopfen am See, near Füssen. No daily moves.

2020 Tour Dates

Friday, **December 4** through Saturday, December 12, 2020

9 days, including travel

Costs

Adult, Double Occupancy US \$ 2,499

Adult, Single Occupancy US \$ 2,799

Adult, Triple Occupancy US \$ 2,299

Child 8-16 with 2 Adults US \$ 1,399

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

Nutcrackers and Notables Tour

Treasures, Traditions and Christmas Markets from the Romantic Road to the Toy Town of Seiffen



Rothenburg

Focus on the Christmas markets of central Germany and on the cultural treasures and rich history of the region. Spend a night in fairy-tale-like Rothenburg, visit Nuremberg, then shift to a base in Seiffen, a traditional crafts town in the Ore Mountains.

Go on excursions to historic Prague and to Renaissance Dresden, see Weimar and Erfurt, and sleep in a Monastery where Luther lived. Also visit Wartburg Castle, where he translated the bible into German.

This tour includes visits to the famous Christmas Markets of Rothenburg, Nuremberg, Seiffen, Prague, Dresden, Weimar, Erfurt, and Frankfurt.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home destination to Frankfurt, Germany. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO ROTHENBURG

Your guide will pick you up at the Frankfurt Airport and the group will drive south to ROTHENBURG OB THE TAUBER.

After check-in go for a walking tour of Rothenburg. Completely surrounded by its medieval ramparts with countless towers, Rothenburg is famous for its ancient houses, fountains, cobbled lanes, hidden corners and street signs.

Enjoy the famous Christmas markets of Rothenburg on the Main square and in the little alleyways.

After a great welcome dinner go for a walk with the Rothenburg night watchman.

Day 3 – NUremberg

After breakfast today we leave Rothenburg and go east to NUremberg, the former free Imperial City dominated by a large fortress, the Burg.

An orientation drive features the landmarks of the city and ends on the main square, the Hauptmarkt, where Germany's most famous Christmas Market takes place.



Nuremberg

Take a tour of the Nuremberg Castle. The castle towers over the Altstadt (Old Town) north of the River Pegnitz, and was once the most important in Germany. It was the seat of the Holy Roman Emperors who ruled over Europe for hundreds of years from medieval times.

Visit the Romanesque chapel and the Imperial Apartments which contain a permanent exhibition on the Holy Roman Empire. Go up the Sinwell Tower (Sinwellturm), which has a viewing platform for fine city panoramas, and go with your tour guide to the deep well.

After that just walk downhill to Nuremberg's sprawling Christkindlesmarkt. The oldest and most famous Christmas market in Germany (400 years) will delight you.

Then on to Seiffen for the night.



Seiffen

Day 4 – SEIFFEN

Seiffen is located in the heart of the Ore Mountains (German: Erzgebirge), which are famous for many Christmas traditions. After breakfast join your guide on a city tour of Seiffen.

Christmas craft goods include nutcrackers, Christmas pyramids (carousels with figures from the Christmas story or from mining), and Schwibbögen (wooden candle arches displayed in windows, symbolizing the opening of a mine).

Take a tour of the Glässer company's workshops and see decorations still being made by hand today.

In the afternoon there's time for your own Christmas shopping.

In the Evening enjoy a three-course dinner in a typical restaurant.



Dresden



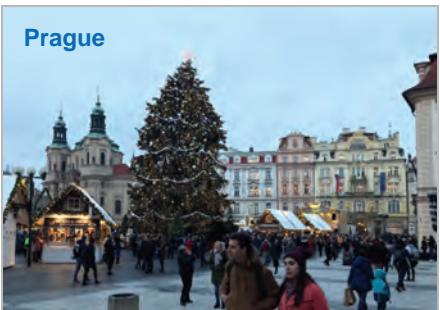
Nutcrackers and Notables Tour ...

Day 5 – DRESDEN

Today we travel to DRESDEN, one of Germany's most beautiful cities and a jewel of art, culture, and history. On our orientation tour we see the Royal Palace, Zwinger Palace, the Semper Opera House, Elbe castles, Villa Quarter, Hellerau garden city, award-winning modern buildings, and the "Blue Wonder" bridge east of the city centre. Inside visit at Frauenkirche (The Church of Our Lady), one of Germany's most amazing post-WW2 reconstructions.

We also have an inside visit at the Green Vault which Augustus the Strong and his successors filled with priceless treasures from all over the world.

In the late afternoon there's time to visit the Striezelmarkt, one of the oldest Christmas Markets in Germany. Later enjoy a dinner overlooking the Elbe.



Day 6 – PRAGUE

Today we go east across the border to PRAGUE, where you will have plenty of time to explore one the largest castles in the world, Hradcany or Prague Castle.

There was already a castle here in the 9th century. It was rebuilt in the 14th century, and given its final style under Empress Maria Theresa. Today it is the historical and political centre of both city and state.

Join your guide on a walking city tour of Prague, the immortal capital of the Czech Republic, also called the Golden City or the Mother of Cities. See the Jewish Prague, Old Town Square, and the Astronomical Clock. After free time for early dinner we return to Seiffen.



Day 7 – WEIMAR and ERFURT

We continue to WEIMAR, famous as a centre of the Enlightenment during the 18th and early 19th centuries, notably as the home of writers Goethe and Schiller.

The National Goethe Museum is the most important monument to the classical period. But the town has more than 40 museums, including the Bauhaus Museum and the Museum of Prehistory and Early History.

Go for stroll with a local guide and spend time on Weimar's Christmas Market.



From here we go for a short ride to ERFURT. Check into your monastery room, the very same monastery where Luther stayed in Erfurt. Join your guide for an orientation walk before dinner.

Day 8 – ERFURT and WARTBURG CASTLE

Before leaving Erfurt take a tour with the historic tramway and a short stroll through the historical old quarter.

Then a beautiful drive this morning to WARTBURG CASTLE, constructed between 1155 and 1180. The castle overlooks Eisenach in the Thuringia Forest. It was here that Luther translated the Bible into German. See his room and enjoy your guided of the rest of this wonderful castle!

Return to Frankfurt for a visit to its Christmas Market and for a great farewell dinner.



Day 9 – RETURN

Time to say "Auf wiedersehen". Transfer to Frankfurt Airport for your flight home.



This is one of our Christmas tours. We also offer the original *Bavarian Christmas Markets* tour and Christmas versions of our *Black Forest, Alsace and Switzerland* tour and our *Berlin and the East of Germany* tour.

European Castles Tours

Nutcrackers and Notables

Treasures, Traditions and Christmas Markets from the Romantic Road to the Toy Town of Seiffen

Nutcrackers and Notables is a special Christmas itinerary that covers a delightfully wide range of features, from traditional Christmas gift crafts and common German Christmas traditions to the exalted heights of literary, religious, and architectural fame.

Destinations range from well-preserved medieval Rothenburg to modern-day Frankfurt, and include Dresden's art, culture, and treasures, Prague, Weimar (famous for Goethe, Schiller and Bauhaus), and Erfurt and Eisenach (where Luther translated the bible).

Germany's oldest and most famous Christmas market in Nuremberg and six others are featured.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation fees are all paid.

Generous buffet **breakfasts** each morning.

All **dinners** except one are provided, and include menu choices, one beverage, and coffee or tea after. (Lunches not included.)

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Departure Guaranteed. There is no minimum group size.

Accommodations

Four nights in Seiffen to minimize repacking. One night each in Rothenburg, Erfurt, and Frankfurt.

2020 Tour Dates

Friday, **December 4** through Saturday, December 12, 2020

9 days, including travel

Costs

Adult, Double Occupancy US \$ 2,629

Adult, Single Occupancy US \$ 2,879

Adult, Triple Occupancy US \$ 2,479

Child 8-16 with 2 Adults US \$ 1,840

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

Best of Germany and Austria Tour

Rhine and Danube, Castles and Mountains

Burg Eltz



Go for a cruise on the legendary Rhine and tour the Burg Eltz and Heidelberg castles. Visit the medieval towns of Rothenburg and Dinkelsbühl.

Tour King Ludwig II's Neuschwanstein and Herrenchiemsee Castles. See the highlights in Munich, including a stop at Nymphenburg Palace.

See Innsbruck's famous Golden Roof, and enjoy a traditional Tyrolean folklore show. Tour Salzburg's Hellbrunn Palace. Finish your "Best Of" tour in elegant Vienna, touring Schönbrunn Palace.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home destination to Frankfurt, Germany. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO THE RHINE

Arrival in Frankfurt, Germany. When the group is complete we drive directly to the Rhine for lunch in Rüdesheim.

Afterwards board a Rhinesteamer and cruise on the most beautiful stretch of the river, the part now on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list. Relax as we go downstream past the Loreley Rock and lots of medieval castles on both sides of the river, on to most charming Boppard – our home for the next two nights.

Tonight we meet for a welcome drink followed by dinner at the hotel.

Rhine



Day 3 – BURG ELTZ, COCHEM, MOSELLE DRIVE

Today, as we drive upstream along the MOSELLE River, our first stop is the twelfth century BURG ELTZ, one of Germany's most beautiful castles, surrounded by the river on three sides. Inside visit.

We continue to COCHEM located on an idyllic bend on the river. Time for lunch on the Moselle Promenade.

Back to Boppard for free time in the afternoon. Dinner tonight in a wine cellar with wine tasting.

Day 4 – HEIDELBERG, ROTHENBURG

Today we head south to HEIDELBERG, on the banks of the Neckar river. See the beautiful red-walled castle, including the great vat, with a guided tour. Then we take a cogwheel train down into the city where you have more time for sightseeing, shopping and postcards.

Heidelberg



We continue to medieval ROTHENBURG OB DER TAUBER in Franconia, where you feel like you just jumped back into the 16th century. Completely surrounded by its medieval ramparts with countless towers, Rothenburg is famous for its ancient houses, fountains, cobbled lanes, hidden corners, and ornate street signs.



Day 5 – ROMANTIC ROAD, DINKELSBÜHL, MUNICH

This morning we drive along the ROMANTIC ROAD to DINKELSBÜHL. Go for a walk in this beautiful town surrounded by its medieval walls.

Continue on the Romantic Road via Nördlingen and Augsburg to MUNICH for early afternoon arrival.

Take your pictures of Nymphenburg Palace, the summer residence of the Bavarian royal family, do an Orientation Tour of the city, and continue the last few metres on foot to Marienplatz, known for the Glockenspiel carillon in the Town Hall.

Nymphenburg



Tonight why not have a beer at Munich's famous Hofbräuhaus beer hall, or have a traditional Bavarian dinner in one Munich's fine restaurants? Dinner is on your own tonight.



Best of Germany and Austria Tour ...

Day 6 – NEUSCHWANSTEIN, INNSBRUCK

This morning we drive south to the Bavarian Alps. From the village of Hohenschwangau we go up to a lookout where you can take wonderful pictures of Neuschwanstein Castle.

Afterwards we walk down for our inside tour of NEUSCHWANSTEIN – Germany's most famous castle – with a castle guide.



Neuschwanstein

Back down in Hohenschwangau, you have time for a bite to eat, and a stroll on Lake Alpsee, one of the most beautiful Lakes in the region, where Ludwig learned to swim.

Then we drive through the mountains to INNSBRUCK on the Inn River, the capital of Tyrol. Enjoy a stroll to see the famous little Golden Roof below the impressive Austrian Alps, the fine baroque church, and the Hofburg built by Empress Maria Theresa, and maybe shop for Swarovski Crystal, which is made here.

In the evening, we have a nice Tyrolean dinner and a traditional folklore show.



Innsbruck

Day 7 – HERRENCHIEMSEE, SALZBURG

We drive back into Germany to Ludwig's largest castle, HERRENCHIEMSEE, on an island in Lake Chiemsee. We take a horse carriage to the Palace. Inside visit with a guide. Time for lunch on the island.

We continue east to SALZBURG, and go on a walking tour to see the Mirabell Gardens, Getreidegasse with Mozart's birthplace, and the Cathedral. Later, if you wish, you can take the funicular up to Fortress Hohensalzburg for breathtaking views or go shopping in the beautiful streets.

In the evening we have dinner in one of Austria's oldest restaurants.



Herrenchiemsee

Day 8 – WACHAU VALLEY, VIENNA

This morning we go east along the Danube's famous WACHAU VALLEY, known for its vineyards, castles and picturesque villages. Enjoy a morning break in one of the pretty towns and try a glass of Wachau wine.

We arrive in VIENNA in the early afternoon and drive along the Ring Road which offers Vienna's most famous sights: Opera, Hofburg, National Museum, Town hall, Burgtheater, University, Parliament and much more. Afterwards a walking tour of the heart of Vienna, including an inside visit at St. Stephen's Cathedral. Enjoy free time for shopping or more sightseeing.

Dinner on your own tonight.

Day 9 – VIENNA, SCHÖNBRUNN

This morning see SCHÖNBRUNN, Austria's answer to Louis XIV's Versailles. See Maria Theresa's summer palace and enjoy free time in the splendid baroque garden. Inside guided tour. Afterwards you are shown how apple strudel is made in the Imperial Kitchen, and you may try it together with a cup of coffee.



Schönbrunn

Your afternoon is at leisure. Maybe ride the Giant Ferris Wheel in the Prater, visit the Opera or the Hofburg from the inside, relax in one of the beautiful parks or a typical "Kaffehaus", or get your final shopping done.

Great farewell dinner in a typical Heurigen tonight.

Day 10 – RETURN

Time to say "Auf wiedersehen".

Transfer to Vienna Airport for your flight home which arrives the same day.



Best of Germany and Austria Tour

Rhine and Danube, Castles and Mountains

This tour is for travelers who want to see the highlights of both Germany and Austria but have limited time. This tour combines the best of three of our other tours – the River, Bavarian, and Imperial Castles Tours.

This tour starts in the Rhine region with a cruise on the river and visits inside famous ancient castles. The route south stops at the medieval walled towns of Rothenburg and Dinkelsbühl.

In Bavaria this tour visits Munich and King Ludwig's extravagant castles. And in Austria it takes in the highlights of Innsbruck and Salzburg, and ends in stately and elegant Vienna.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation fees are all paid.

Buffet **breakfasts** each morning.

All **dinners** except two are provided, and include menu choices, one beverage, and coffee or tea. (Lunches not included.)

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Departure Guaranteed. There is no minimum group size.

Accommodations

Two nights in Boppard on the Rhine, one each in Rothenburg, Munich, Innsbruck, Salzburg, two in Vienna.

2020 Tour Dates

Thursday, **May 21** through Saturday, May 30, 2020

Thursday, **September 10** through Saturday, September 19, 2020

10 days, including travel

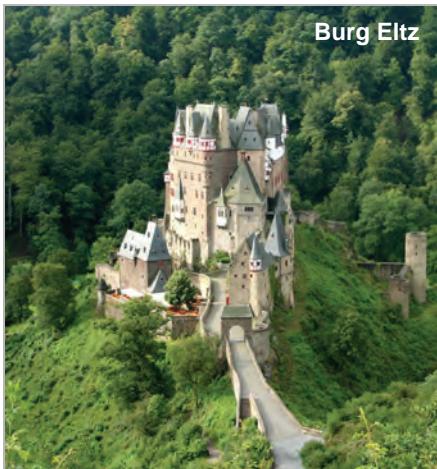
Costs

Adult, Double Occupancy US \$ 3,199
Adult, Single Occupancy US \$ 3,399
Adult, Triple Occupancy US \$ 2,899
Child 8-16 with 2 Adults US \$ 2,199

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

Kids and Castles Tour

The Best of German Castles and Towns



This is a family tour designed for kids 4 through 14 with one or more parents or grandparents, or for all three generations together.

Spend plenty of time discovering the beautiful Rhine, its castles and ruins, its tales and legends and those of its tributaries, Moselle, Neckar and Main.

Also spend time in Bavaria to see King Ludwig II's Neuschwanstein, the most famous castle in Germany, and visit the famous Wilhelma Zoo and Legoland Germany.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home destination to Frankfurt, Germany. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO THE RHINE

Arrival in Frankfurt, Germany. When the group is complete we drive directly to the Rhine for lunch in one of the charming villages on the River.

Transfer to the four-star Bellevue Rheinhotel in Boppard, one of the best hotels in the Rhine area, situated directly on the river, with a dock at its front door. We will spend the next three nights here.

You can spend some relaxing moments at the on-site swimming pool and sauna. Health conscious guests can work out at the fitness centre or go hiking.

Tonight we meet for a welcome drink followed by dinner at the hotel.



Day 3 – CASTLES, CASTLES, CASTLES, RÜDESHEIM, RHEINFELS

Cruising all day on the Rhine on the most beautiful stretch of the river, the part added to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list. We travel upstream past the Loreley Rock and lots of medieval Castles on both sides of the river to most charming RÜDESHEIM.



Time for lunch and souvenirs in famous Drosselgasse, and afterwards we take a cable car uphill through the vineyards to the Niederwald Monument for incredible views over the valley. From there a short drive downstream again to visit the RHEINFELS at St. Goar, one of the most amazing and largest ruins on the river.



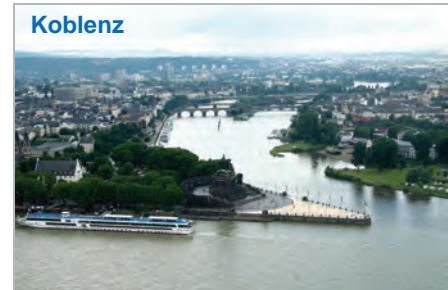
Day 4 – MARKSBURG, KOBLENZ, ELTZ CASTLE

Today we cross the river by ferry to Braubach, the Town of Roses where we take a guided tour of the MARKSBURG, an 11th century castle, the only one on the Rhine that was never destroyed.



We continue to KOBLENZ, meaning confluence, where the Moselle joins the Rhine at the Deutsches Eck (the German Corner). Admire the equestrian statue of Wilhelm I. Time to explore Koblenz on your own before we head along the Moselle.

Next we visit the twelfth century BURG ELTZ, rising majestically above the end of the wild Eltz Valley, one of Germany's most beautiful castles, surrounded by the river on three sides. Inside visit.



Kids and Castles Tour ...



Heidelberg



Neuschwanstein

Day 5 – HEIDELBERG, STUTTGART

Today we leave the Rhine area and head south to HEIDELBERG, on the banks of the Neckar river. In medieval times Heidelberg was the political centre of one of the most advanced European States.

See the beautiful red-walled castle, including the great vat, with a guided tour. Afterwards we take a cogwheel train down into the city where you have more time for sightseeing and shopping.

Later continue to STUTTGART where you can go shopping, join an included excursion to the Wilhelma, one of the most beautiful and oldest zoos in Germany, or visit the Mercedes Benz Museum. Dinner in a garden restaurant tonight.

Day 6 – LEGOLAND, BAVARIAN ALPS

Today we drive to LEGOLAND DEUTSCHLAND at Günzburg, a fantastic world created using over 50 million LEGO bricks. With countless attractions and spectacular shows, a special adventure awaits everyone here!



Legoland

The IMAGINATION area is for those fascinated by research and experimentation. ADVENTURE LAND is hidden in the middle of a LEGO brick jungle. A suspension bridge takes you inside a giant castle in KNIGHT'S KINGDOM, the realm for all budding knights and damsels. Racing drivers, pilots, helmsmen and pirates are in their element in LEGO XTREME, TEST TRACK, LEGO CITY and PIRATE LAND.

Late afternoon arrival at your hotel in the BAVARIAN ALPS near the Royal Castles.

Day 7 – NEUSCHWANSTEIN, TEGELBERG

Today we visit NEUSCHWANSTEIN, Germany's most famous castle. First we go up to Marienbrücke (Mary's Bridge), sitting high above the Pöllat Gorge, where you can take the best pictures of the castle. Then we walk downhill for our inside tour of Neuschwanstein with a castle guide.

We ride a horse carriage back down to the village of Hohenschwangau, and you have time to eat and go for a stroll on beautiful Lake Alpsee, where young Ludwig learned to swim.

Afterwards we go by cable car up to MOUNT TEGELBERG, the mountain above the castle, and later ride a bobsled on the foot of the hill. Dinner tonight in a great place in the mountains.



Rothenburg

Day 8 – ROTHENBURG, FRANKFURT

Our last traveling day takes us to medieval ROTHENBURG OB DER TAUBER in Franconia, where you feel like you just jumped back into the 16th century. Completely surrounded by its medieval ramparts with countless towers, Rothenburg is famous for its ancient houses, fountains, cobbled lanes, hidden corners and street signs. Also famous for the Meistertrunk, in which – according to legend – the burgemeister saved the town by emptying a 6-pint tankard in one single draught.

Back to FRANKFURT for overnight.

Farewell dinner tonight at our hotel.

Day 9 – RETURN

Time to say "Auf wiedersehen". Transfer to Frankfurt Airport for your flight home.

European Castles Tours

Kids and Castles Tour

The Best of German Castles and Towns

The Kids and Castles Tour borrows heavily from the Bavarian Castles Tour in southern Bavaria and the River Castles Tour along the Rhine and its tributaries around Frankfurt.

The castles are Germany's best: Neuschwanstein, Marksburg, Burg Eltz, Heidelberg, and Rheinfels.

Other tour features include visits to the towns of Rüdesheim and Koblenz on the Rhine and to the amazingly well-preserved medieval town of Rothenburg on the Tauber.

Features unique to this tour are visits to the Wilhelma Zoo or the Mercedes Museum in Stuttgart, the Legoland Germany fun park at Günzburg, and a cable car ride up to the top of Mount Tegelberg.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation fees are all paid.

Buffet breakfasts each morning.

All dinners except one are provided, with menu choices, one beverage, and coffee or tea after. (Lunches are not provided.)

There are no hidden extras that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Departure Guaranteed. There is no minimum group size.

Accommodations

Bellevue Rheinhotel in Boppard for three nights, Stuttgart, Füssen for two nights, then Frankfurt.

2020 Tour Dates

Saturday, June 13 through Sunday, June 21, 2020

Saturday, July 25 through Sunday, August 2, 2020

9 days, including travel

Costs

Adults, Per Person US \$ 2,499
Rates Per Child vary from US \$ 1,199 to \$ 1,949 depending on the numbers of adults, children, and rooms.

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each



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French Castles Tour

Chateaux of Paris and the Loire Valley



Begin in Paris, tour the Versailles and Fontainebleau Palaces and visit the city's most famous landmarks.

Then continue for four nights to the Loire Valley, the garden of France.

With its mild climate the Loire was understandably the favourite residence of kings and their kin.

The Loire Valley remains a corner of paradise, with its dream-like palaces, elegant towns, quiet landscapes and majestic rivers. The vineyards are a feast to the eyes and their fruits a joy to the palate.

Return to Paris for a Seine cruise and a farewell dinner.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home base to Paris, France. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO PARIS

Arrival in Paris, France. You are picked up individually after your flight and taken to your hotel in Paris.

Tonight you'll meet your travelling companions and tour director, and enjoy a welcome dinner at Montmartre, the artist centre high above the city with great panoramic views.



Versailles

Day 3 – PARIS – VERSAILLES, EIFFEL TOWER

After breakfast, enjoy a guided tour of VERSAILLES, perhaps the most famous palace in the world. From 1682, when King Louis XIV moved from Paris, until the royal family was forced to return to the capital in 1789, the Court of Versailles was the centre of power in France. Spend several hours visiting the Palace of Palaces and the famous gardens with the fountains.



Versailles

In the afternoon we go up to the second floor of the EIFFEL TOWER for majestic views. This tower, built for the 1889 World's Fair, is one of the most recognizable structures in the world and is the most visited paid monument anywhere. Dinner tonight on your own.

Day 4 – FONTAINBLEAU, ORLÉANS, LOIRE VALLEY

We leave Paris this morning to visit nearby FONTAINBLEAU. Used by kings of France from the 12th century, the royal hunting lodge of Fontainebleau was enlarged and embellished in the 16th century by François I, combining Renaissance and French artistic traditions.

We continue on to Orléans, the city which Joan of Arc liberated in 1429. Breaking the English siege was one of the great episodes in the history of France, and marked the rebirth of a country and of a people that had been sinking into despair. Enjoy free time here for lunch and an orientation tour of the city.

Later continue to your chateau in the heart of the Loire Valley, our new home for the next four nights.



Chenonceau

Day 5 – CHENONCEAU PALACE, AMBOISE CASTLE, CLOS-LUCÉ

In the morning we go first to visit nearby CHENONCEAU, the "Ladies Castle". This beautiful castle stretches across the River Cher in a harmonious natural setting of water, greenery, gardens and trees. Over a period of 400 years this castle was shaped by women, royal wives, mistresses and queens. A tour of the château and stroll in the gardens will explain the allure.



Amboise

We continue on to Amboise for lunch, and visit the CHÂTEAU D'AMBOISE, once a very important royal residence and home for several French kings. The palace is a mix of Gothic and Renaissance architecture, now only about a third of the size it was in the 16th century.



Amboise

Leonardo da Vinci lived nearby in MANOR CLOS-LUCÉ as a guest of King Francis. We visit this palace, now a museum with period furniture, sketches and working models of the ideas of this renaissance genius.



French Castles Tour ...

Day 6 – CHEVERNY, CHAMBORD, BLOIS CASTLE AND TOWN

This morning our first visit is to the CHÂTEAU DE CHEVERNY. The symmetric design and harmonious grandeur of the façade are characteristic features of the period of Henri IV and Louis XIII, and the interior is sumptuously appointed.

We continue with a very short ride to CHÂTEAU DE CHAMBORD, the largest by far of all the Loire chateaux, built on a scale foreshadowing that of Versailles.



On to the Royal City of Blois where we visit the ROYAL CHÂTEAU DE BLOIS, the residence of several French kings. Built in the middle of the town that it effectively controlled, the Château de Blois comprises several buildings constructed from the 13th to the 17th century around the main courtyard. Free time for dinner in this beautiful city overlooking the river Loire.



Day 7 – VILLANDRY, TOURS

Today we visit CHÂTEAU DE VILLANDRY, one of the last great Renaissance chateaux to be built in the Loire Valley. Villandry's international fame is based largely on its gardens, among the most fascinating in all of France and Europe.



Day 7, continued

In the afternoon we drive to TOURS, the capital of Touraine, a thriving economic and cultural centre. Go for a stroll in Place Plumereau, a picturesque and animated square, once the hat market, lined with 15th century timber-framed houses alternating with stone facades. Enjoy a café au lait in the square and get your final Loire Valley souvenirs.

Tonight a nice dinner in a medieval village.

Day 8 – PARIS – NOTRE DAME, SEINE RIVER CRUISE

We leave the Loire Valley this morning and head north again to Paris, arriving in time for your lunch break.

We are all saddened by the April 2019 fire at NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL. After lunch you will have time to see restoration work at the site, but from a distance.



Then a short walk across Île de la Cité to SAINTE CHAPELLE, a royal chapel in the Gothic style, part of the onetime residence complex of the Kings of France. Marvel at the famous stained glass collection.



Later we board a River Boat for a scenic cruise on the SEINE RIVER. We see many of the city's most famous landmarks from the river, and pass under many of the three dozen bridges over the river in Paris.

Then a short ride to your overnight hotel near the Charles de Gaulle (CDG) airport in Roissy. Enjoy a great farewell dinner and celebrate a wonderful week in France with your travelling companions.

Day 9 – AU REVOIR FRANCE

After breakfast individual transfers to catch your homebound flight, which arrives the same day.

European Castles Tours

French Castles Tour

Chateaux of Paris and the Loire Valley

This tour is for both first-time visitors to France and those with a more focused interest in the grandeur and elegance of the Renaissance palaces, chateaux, and castles erected along the Loire River and its tributaries.

Sightseeing in and near Paris features the Versailles and Fontainebleau Palaces, but also includes Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, and a cruise on the Seine.

After two nights in Paris the tour moves to a château hotel in Céré La Ronde, in the heart of the Loire Valley, for the next four nights. The most elegant chateaux are all clustered nearby, so daily excursions can be leisurely.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation fees are all paid.

Buffet **breakfasts** each morning.

All **dinners** except 2 are provided. (Lunches are not provided.)

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Departure Guaranteed. There is no minimum group size.

Accommodations

Three nights in Paris, two at the beginning, one at the end. All other nights at the Château de Razay at Céré la Ronde in the Loire Valley.

2020 Tour Dates

Friday, **June 12** through Saturday, June 20, 2020

Friday, **September 25** through Saturday, October 3, 2020

9 days, including travel

Costs

Adult, Double Occupancy US \$ 3,199

Adult, Single Occupancy US \$ 3,499

Adult, Triple Occupancy US \$ 2,999

Child 8-16 with 2 Adults US \$ 2,199

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

Italian Highlights Tour

Rome, Florence and Venice



Visit and tour some of the most beautiful regions of Italy – Umbria, Tuscany and Veneto.

– Stay three nights in Rome, the capital of Italy and the eternal city that has had a uniquely central role in the history of the western world and Christianity.

– Spend three nights based in Florence, exploring its wealth of art, culture and history and visiting Tuscan highlights in Pisa, Siena and San Gimignano.

– Spend three nights in Venice, “La Serenissima” – the most serene.

Discover Roman ruins and Renaissance palaces, admire tiny medieval hill towns, architectural and artistic masterpieces. Or simply come to enjoy the food and the wine.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from your home base to Fiumicino / Leonardo da Vinci Airport, Rome, Italy. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO ROME

Arrival in Rome, Italy. You are picked up individually after your flight and taken to your hotel in Rome. Time to relax in the afternoon, or to go for a stroll or start sightseeing on your own. Tonight you'll meet your travelling companions and tour director, and enjoy a welcome dinner at one of Rome's fine restaurants. After dinner join your tour director for a leisurely stroll to the Trevi Fountain.



Day 3 – ROME, ST. PETER'S, COLOSSEUM

Sightseeing in ROME today starts with an inside visit to ST. PETER'S SQUARE and BASILICA. Work started on the new basilica 500 years ago and took 150 years to complete, involving the contributions among others of Brabante, Raphael and Michelangelo, whose dome soars 119 metres above the papal altar and the site of St. Peter's tomb.

Afterwards admire the COLOSSEUM – the greatest amphitheatre of the classical antiquity – built about 1,930 years ago. This architectural wonder remains a standing proof of both the grandeur and the cruelty of the Roman world.

In the afternoon a leisurely stroll to see the Spanish Steps and free time followed by dinner in a local trattoria.

Day 4 – TIVOLI, FRASCATI, CASTEL GANDOLFO

Late morning departure on a country excursion to TIVOLI, for a visit to the famous VILLA D'ESTE. The park has over 500 fountains, including masterpieces by Bernini and Pirro Ligorio.



After lunch and free time we continue to FRASCATI, situated on the Alban Hills, known for the splendid villas built from the 16th century by the Popes, Cardinals and Roman nobles as status symbols of Roman aristocracy.

From here it is a short ride to CASTEL GANDOLFO, famous for its Papal Palace, the summer residence of the Holy Father. The lovely town is situated on the edge of an extinct volcano, the Alban Lake.

Early Country Dinner on the way back to Rome.

Day 5 – PERUGIA, ASSISI

Our first stop today is PERUGIA, the capital of Umbria, for a guided tour of the city. One of the best preserved Italian hill towns, it has a lively and bloody past. It was also home to fresco painters like Pietro Vannucci.

After lunch we go to famous ASSISI, the home of St. Francis of Assisi that has somehow managed to remain a beautiful and tranquil refuge. Visit the Basilica with a Franciscan monk. Continue to Florence, for your three-night stay. Dinner at the hotel tonight.



Italian Highlights Tour ...



Day 6 – FLORENCE

Today we focus on FLORENCE, the cradle of the Renaissance, the home of Dante, Machiavelli, Michelangelo and the Medicis – overwhelming in its wealth of art, culture and history, yet one of the most atmospheric and pleasant cities.

Enjoy a guided tour, visit Michelangelo's David, stand in awe of Brunelleschi's magnificent Duomo and Giotto's bell tower. Walk the Ponte Vecchio, and visit the Uffizi Gallery, the world's best collection of Renaissance paintings. End your walk in Piazza della Signoria, the hub of city life through the centuries.

The afternoon is at leisure to do more sightseeing on your own or to shop. Tonight take your pictures from Piazza Michelangelo overlooking this magnificent city, and then head for our perfect Tuscan garden dinner.

Day 7 – PISA, SIENA, SAN GIMIGNANO

Our first stop today is PISA to take your pictures of the most famous bell tower in the world. The top of the tower is more than 12 feet off vertical.

Our next stop is SIENA. Walk with a local guide in this beautiful city built on three hills and still surrounded by its ramparts. Its medieval centre has streets lined with majestic Gothic buildings in various shades known as burnt sienna.

On a hilltop in the heart of Tuscany, just a few miles down the road from Siena, stands SAN GIMIGNANO, a majestic medieval walled town, its profile bristling with tall towers. When you walk through the ancient gates, you'll think time had stopped centuries ago. It still has all its old streets, walls, gates, palaces, strongholds and 14 of the original 72 towers.

Dinner tonight on your own in Florence.



Day 8 – VERONA, VENICE

Today we go north to VERONA, the setting for Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. See "Julia's" balcony and the Roman Arena. Enjoy free time to stroll in the market square, before we head to VENICE for a late afternoon arrival.

When we arrive in Venice check into your hotel on Lido Island – home of the Venice Film Festival, the Casino and the famous sandy beaches. Lido is an under-appreciated gem, with upscale homes, historic architecture and an easy, island feel. Access to Venice is quick and easy on the waterbuses.

Enjoy a first impression of St. Mark's Square in the evening, and a nice dinner by the canal.



Day 9 – VENICE

Today see Venice with a local guide: Arrive by boat at St. Mark's Square and tour this most unusual city. See St. Mark's Basilica, the Doge's Palace, the Bridge of Sighs, and maybe go up the Bell Tower for an incredible view. We see the Grand Canal in style on a gondola ride.

Dinner on your own tonight.



Day 10 – VENICE, VENETIAN LAGOON

This morning we cruise the Venetian Lagoon and stop in Murano, the glass blowing island, Burano, the fisherman island, and Torcello island, once the largest settlement in the Venetian Lagoon.

This afternoon go back into Venice or enjoy the sandy beaches of the Lido.

Tonight a fantastic farewell dinner.

Day 11 – RETURN

After breakfast we have arranged for individual transfers to Venice Marco Polo Airport for your homebound flight.



Italian Highlights Tour

Rome, Florence and Venice

This tour is less oriented towards castles than the others, but it does visit its share of palaces. It takes in the major attractions in central and northern Italy from bases in Rome, Florence and Venice.

In each base location at least one full day is devoted to the treasures of the city itself, and then daytime excursions branch out to take in regional highlights such as Pisa, Siena, Assisi and San Gimignano.

There are many monumental landmarks on this tour, but much of the emphasis is on the ambience and colours of the Italian city bases and of the tiny medieval hill towns of Tuscany and Umbria.

This tour was designed to respond to client requests for an Astrid Baur approach to sightseeing in Italy.

Discover for yourself what makes these regions so seductive. (And enjoy the food and the wine.)

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation fees are all paid.

Buffet **breakfasts** each morning.

All **dinners** except 2 are included.

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Departure Guaranteed. There is no minimum group size.

Accommodations

Three nights each in Rome, Florence, and Venice – minimizing daily packing and moving.

2020 Tour Dates

Saturday, **June 6** through Tuesday, June 16, 2020

Saturday, **September 12** through Tuesday, **September 22**, 2020

11 days, including travel

Costs

Adult, Double Occupancy US \$ 3,299

Adult, Single Occupancy US \$ 3,499

Adult, Triple Occupancy US \$ 2,999

Child 8-16 with 2 Adults US \$ 2,199

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

Irish Highlights Private Tour

The Emerald Isle's Southern Gems and Castles

at your convenience



Experience the legendary charms of the Emerald Isle in all their incredible variety. Big cities and small villages. Castles, historic sites, and cottages. Mountains, midlands, rugged coastal cliffs, and beaches. Pubs, good food, and traditional songs and entertainment.

Travel to and from Dublin, and tour southern Ireland, with overnights in Dublin, Killarney, and Limerick.

Visit Dublin Castle, the Rock of Cashel, and Blarney Castle. Explore the cliff tops and beaches of the Iveragh Peninsula, and tour the Dingle Peninsula, "the most beautiful place on earth". At the Cliffs of Moher, see the Anan Islands, Galway Bay, and Connemara, and go for a nature walk with a trained Ranger. Return to Dublin for sightseeing and relaxation.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from home to Dublin, Ireland. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO DUBLIN

Arrival in Dublin Airport, Ireland. Meet your guide at the airport and go to your Dublin city hotel. In the afternoon visit DUBLIN CASTLE, the seat of power and government for many centuries.

Dublin is one of Europe's oldest and greatest cities, one that retains its historical and cultural charms.

Tonight enjoy a welcome drink - or sip a first pint of world famous Guinness - at a local pub with your new friends hosted by your tour director followed by dinner.



Day 3 – BLARNEY STONE AND CASTLE, KILLARNEY

Depart Dublin and travel through the midlands of Ireland, which has many mixed farms. Stop for photos of the stately ruins on the ROCK OF CASHEL, rising high above the surrounding plain. Continue south, and just a few miles outside Cork, visit BLARNEY CASTLE and kiss the famous "Stone of Eloquence".

Blarney Castle



Drive through Macroom, built around a fine castle, and into County Kerry where the scenery becomes more mountainous. Arrive in KILLARNEY, picturesquely set beside lakes with Ireland's highest mountains, the Macgillycuddy's Reeks, forming a backdrop. Check into your hotel and relax before dinner.

Day 4 – RING OF KERRY

At the very edge of Europe, on south-west Ireland's wild Atlantic seaboard, the RING OF KERRY circles the Iveragh Peninsula.

The Ring is one of Ireland's best known attractions. It's the contrast between the warmth of the people and the elemental nature of the place that makes it so special and worth slowing down to explore.

The Ring will truly reveal itself as you take the time to stand wind-buffeted on cliff tops and wander on white sandy beaches.



Ring of Kerry

Later visit a Brewery and sample some of the beer. Return to Killarney and KATE KEARNEY'S COTTAGE, a 150 year old family-run establishment, to dine and watch lively music, song and dance.



Iveragh Peninsula

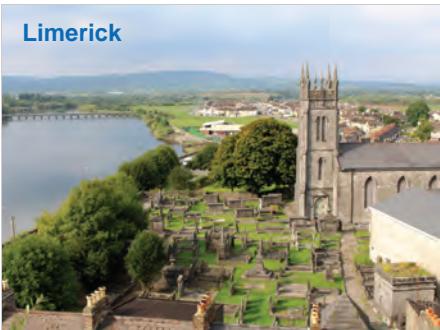


Irish Highlights Private Tour ...

Day 5 – DINGLE PENINSULA, LIMERICK

Leave Killarney this morning and visit the DINGLE PENINSULA, as far west as you can go in Ireland. It has been described by National Geographic as "the most beautiful place on Earth".

A place of spectacular seascapes and landscapes shaped by the elements, a place where the mountains roll into the oceans. It's here that you'll find the real Ireland in the Peninsula's thriving and unbroken traditions of language and music, folklore and storytelling, arts, crafts and artisan foods. DINGLE, with its bright coloured houses, is known for the best food. Leave inspired and refreshed.



Continue to Limerick, your home for the next three nights.

In the evening we have dinner at BUNRATTY CASTLE, the most complete and authentic medieval fortress in Ireland. Built in 1425, it was restored in 1954 to its former medieval splendor and now contains mainly 15th and 16th century furnishings, tapestries, and works of art which capture the mood of those times.

An unforgettable evening with superb food and a fabulous selection of Irish medieval and traditional songs and instrumental music.

Day 6 – LIMERICK, KING JOHN'S CASTLE

Spend the morning at KING JOHN'S CASTLE, on "King's Island" in the heart of medieval Limerick city. The stunning new exhibition at the Castle brings to life over 800 years of dramatic local history. This 13th century Castle reopened in June 2013, following a multi-million Euro investment.



Explore the new visitor centre, and have Irish coffee here, with terrific views of the castle courtyard and the Shannon River.

Free time in the afternoon to enjoy Limerick on your own. In the evening join your tour director on a pub tour with dinner.



Day 7 – CLIFFS OF MOHER

Leisurely departure this morning to County Clare – a haven of wild beauty and wonderful music – to one of Ireland's top visitor attractions. The CLIFFS OF MOHER are 700 feet high and extend for five miles over the Atlantic Ocean on the western seaboard of County Clare.

O'Brien's Tower stands proudly on a headland and one can see the Aran Islands, Galway Bay and Connemara. The cliffs are home to major colonies of cliff nesting seabirds.

Especially for you: a guided nature walk conducted by a trained Cliffs of Moher Ranger.

Return to Limerick late afternoon. Dinner tonight on your own.

Day 8 – WICKLOW MOUNTAINS, DUBLIN

Today a beautiful drive back to Dublin via Glendalough through the Dublin / Wicklow mountains, steeped in history, with ancient monasteries and absolutely stunning vistas.

Back in Dublin, enjoy more sightseeing in this lively city with your guide before checking into your hotel.

Tonight enjoy a great farewell dinner with your traveling companions.



Day 9 – RETURN

After breakfast a transfer to Dublin airport to reach your homebound flight.



Irish Highlights Tour

The Emerald Isle's Southern Gems and Castles

This tour balances three main types of ingredients:

- explorations of the breathtaking coastal scenery and the ever-changing Irish landscape,
- inside visits at famous castles and historic sites, and
- opportunities to sample healthy doses of Irish culture and hospitality.

Ireland features an astonishing diversity of terrain. We follow scenic coastal routes and go for a nature walk with a trained Ranger.

We visit four castles, including famous Blarney Castle.

Dinner venues range from a local pub to an historic castle and a famous cottage, both with traditional music and song.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation fees are all paid.

Generous buffet **breakfasts** each morning.

All **dinners** except one are included, and include menu choices, one beverage, and coffee or tea after. (Lunches are not provided.)

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Flexibility. Since this is a private tour we will try to accommodate minor itinerary adjustment requests made in advance.

Accommodations

Dublin, two nights in Killarney, three in Limerick, and Dublin again.

Duration

9 days, including travel

Costs per person

Based on Double Occupancy:

2 persons (min)	US \$ 3,349
4 persons	US \$ 2,999
6 persons (max)	US \$ 2,882

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

Portuguese Castles Private Tour

Garden of Europe with a Glorious Past

at your convenience



Let us enjoy splendid cities, medieval towns, castles, and historic places which have unique stories to tell – of adventurers, seafarers, enormous wealth, and discoveries which changed the view and the knowledge of the whole world forever.

Beautiful architecture reflects the glorious times of this country at the western edge of Europe. The landscape and scenery ranges from almost tropical to breathtaking cliffs and wild but romantic beaches.

Delicious seafood and produce from the fertile soils and good climate make the Portuguese dishes so special and tasty! And of course the wines are of excellent quality.

Explore the country of discoverers and kings, with uniquely styled castles and monasteries. Listen to the Portuguese music and enjoy the friendliness and warmth of the Portuguese people, among the best hosts in the world!

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight to Lisbon, Portugal. This itinerary assumes this to be an overnight flight. Air fare independently arranged.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO PORTUGAL

Arrival in LISBON, Portugal. Today you will meet your travelling companions and your tour director and drive directly to your hotel in SINTRA. Enjoy dinner tonight at your beautiful hotel, and afterwards take an evening stroll with your guide in the heart of the old royal summer resort.



Day 3 – SUNSHINE COAST, LISBON

In the morning we will go from Sintra to Lisbon along the SUNSHINE COAST (costa do sol), visiting Cabo da Roca, the wild coast of Guincho, and the elegant seaside resorts of Estoril and Cascais.



In LISBON we will visit the famous Jerónimos monastery and the Belem Tower, witnesses of the seafarers and captains who started from here to discover new worlds. A city tour of Lisbon will bring us to the famous places in the town – St. George Castle, the Alfama district, and the streets and squares of the baroque part of the city. Here you find the best coffee shops and restaurants and a wide variety of beautiful shops and stores. Enjoy a little free time to relax, discover and enjoy the Portuguese capital on your own.

Tonight we return to Sintra.

Day 4 – SINTRA, ÓBIDOS

After breakfast, in SINTRA we will visit the Palacio Nacional de Sintra (Paço Real), dating back to the 14th century. We enjoy the fresh and green surroundings of the



summer residence of the Portuguese kings with exotic trees, vineyards and magnificent seaside views.



Then we will drive up to the Pena National Palace, the eclectic summer residence of King Ferdinand II. We will only look at the fancy palace, built in the 19th century, from the outside.

We carry on to the beautiful medieval city of ÓBIDOS, with its original protective town walls from the 12th century and lovely white houses.

Time to have a nice walk and to stroll around the narrow streets where nowadays painters and other artists make their living and contribute to the unique atmosphere of the place.

In Óbidos we stay in an historical hotel for one night.



Portuguese Castles Private Tour ...

Day 5 – ALCOBAÇA, BATALHA, NAZARÉ

This morning we leave Óbidos. Today we will visit the most impressive monasteries in the center of Portugal. Both places, Alcobaça and Batalha, reflect the importance the small country had from the 14th to the 18th century.

ALCOBAÇA is a mighty monastery in the pure gothic style of Citeaux, housing the tombs of the famous lovers Pedro I and Inês de Castro. Alcobaça is also the hometown of very beautifully decorated ceramics, which copy the designs of the mosaics from the Roman villas in Conimbriga nearby.



In the afternoon we continue to BATALHA, the monastery and church built in memory of Portugal's great victory against Spain in 1385. King John I and famous contemporaries, including Henry the Navigator, are buried here, and we can see the beautiful and elaborated "manuelin" artwork in the incomplete chapels.

Then we continue to NAZARÉ, a traditional and picturesque village where fishermen and women still wear their traditional clothes. We will stay here for two nights, with time to enjoy the beautiful beach and the lively seaside village.

Dinner will be in a seafood restaurant at the seaside.

Day 6 – COIMBRA, TOMAR

Today we visit the university town of COIMBRA, the romantic academic heart of Portugal, with the second oldest university in the world. We visit the historic university buildings and have a look at the fortress-like cathedral of the city.



After lunch we head towards the former monastery-fortress of the Temple knights in TOMAR. The order of the temple knights was dissolved by the Pope in the 14th century, but in Portugal it just changed its name and continued as an important motor for overseas discoveries.

After the visit to the castle we return to Nazaré for the night. Dinner on your own tonight.

Day 7 – PORTO

From Nazaré we head north to the second biggest city of Portugal. PORTO has always been and still is the city of trade and commerce with a very British lifestyle and attitude. We will have a guided city tour of the historical city center and the old customs area, which is now under UNESCO World Heritage protection. We will see the river Douro and learn about one of the most famous products from Portugal, growing at the banks of this river. Port wine is specially matured and processed in Vila Nova da Gaia at the other side of the river. We will visit one of the wine cellars and have a delicious tasting experience.

After dinner we stay overnight in Porto.



Day 8 – LISBON

We return to Lisbon on the highway. After check-in we tour other parts of the city. In the evening we will enjoy our farewell dinner in a Fado restaurant, where we learn about the special music of Portugal and the traditions around and the feeling of "saudade". In the old "Alfama" quarter, we will find a place uniting the musical experience with a beautiful environment and delicious Portuguese food.

Day 9 – RETURN

After breakfast a transfer to Lisbon airport to reach your homebound flight.

European Castles Tours

Portuguese Castles Tour Garden of Europe with a Glorious Past

This tour offers a mix of castles, palaces, monasteries, and historic sites combined with landscape and scenery that ranges from almost tropical beaches to dramatic cliffs.

The mix is not unlike many of our other tours, but the setting and culture are totally different.

This is the land of the seafaring explorers who opened up so much of the "new" world. Monuments to their achievements are everywhere.

We visit the most important religious and secular sites, and communities that continue proud traditions.

This is also a land of seafood, produce from fertile soils and a good climate, fine wines to complement them, distinctive music, and warm hospitality, all of which we sample and enjoy.

Tour Features

Guided inside tours of castles, palaces and towns, not just exterior "photo opportunities".

Entrance, guide and transportation fees are all paid.

Buffet **breakfasts** each morning.

All **dinners** except one are included, with menu choices, one beverage, and coffee or tea after. (Lunches are not provided.)

There are **no hidden extras** that you pay for yourself. No surprises.

Flexibility. Since this is a private tour we will try to accommodate minor itinerary adjustment requests made in advance.

Accommodations

One night in Lisbon, two in Sintra, one in Óbidos, two in Nazaré, and one in Lisbon again.

Duration

9 days, including travel

Costs per person

Based on Double Occupancy:

2 persons (min)	US \$ 3,349
4 persons	US \$ 2,999
6 persons (max)	US \$ 2,882

Reservation Deposit US \$ 300 each

Berlin and the East of Germany

Monarchs, Poets and Reformers

Private Tour

9 days, including travel



Visit the elaborate royal residences of the rulers of Brandenburg and the stunningly beautiful cities of Leipzig and Dresden.

Follow protestant reformer Martin Luther's footsteps, and visit Weimar, the town of poets and thinkers.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from home to Berlin.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO BERLIN

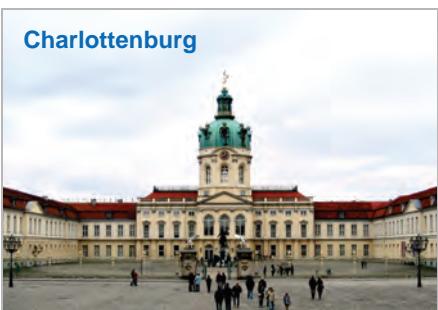
Arrival in Berlin, the German Capital. You are met at the airport and taken to your hotel. Rest or go for a first stroll in the city. Tonight meet your travelling companions and tour director for a welcome dinner.

Day 3 – BERLIN SIGHTSEEING

Your orientation tour of BERLIN features the elegant Ku'damm, the restored Reichstag, the Victory Column in the Tiergarten Park, the Holocaust Memorial, and Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church with its bombed tower. Drive past the State Opera House and Checkpoint Charlie, and continue on foot in the old part of the city to Brandenburg Gate in old Prussia.

Spend the afternoon at CHARLOTTENBURG PALACE, the largest residence of the Hohenzollern in Berlin, with its majestic rooms, art collections, baroque garden.

After dinner a show at Friedrichstadt Palast!



Day 4 – POTSDAM

Today in POTSDAM, the capital of Brandenburg, we first visit SANS SOUCI, Frederick the Great's "without care" palace. This summer residence was both a

favourite place and an important sanctuary for him in difficult times. Later we visit CECILIENHOF, the palace of the Potsdam Conference in 1945, which Emperor William II built between 1913 and 1917 for his eldest son, Crown Prince William.



Day 5 – HEADING SOUTH

Today first we visit LUTHERSTADT WITTENBERG, the home town of Dr. Martin Luther, the Great Reformer. We see the Luther House, the Castle Church where Luther posted his 95 critical theses in 1517, and the Town Church where he preached.

On to lively LEIPZIG for a stroll through the city centre. Visit the market place with the Old Town Hall, St. Thomas's Church where Bach was cantor, and St. Nicholas Church.

Late afternoon arrival ERFURT, the capital of Thuringia. Go for a stroll in the old town followed by dinner in a local brewery.



Day 6 – WARTBURG, WEIMAR

Beautiful drive this morning to WARTBURG CASTLE overlooking Eisenach, constructed between 1155 and 1180. It is one of the best preserved secular buildings of the late Romanesque period north of the Alps. It was here that Luther translated the Bible. Guided tour of this wonderful castle!

Our next stop today is WEIMAR, home of Goethe and Schiller. Go for a stroll with a local guide, and visit the National Goethe Museum, the most important monument to the classical period.

Day 7 – DRESDEN

Leave the state of Thuringia and drive back into Saxony to DRESDEN, one of Germany's most beautiful cities and a jewel of history.



On our orientation tour of Dresden we see the Royal Palace, Zwinger Palace, the Semper Opera House, Elbe castles, Villa Quarter, Hellerau garden city, and the "Blue Wonder" bridge. Inside visits at FRAUENKIRCHE, one of Germany's most amazing post-WW2 reconstructions, and the GREEN VAULT, filled with treasures from all over the world.

Later enjoy a dinner overlooking the Elbe.



Day 8 – ELBE, PILZNITZ

Today we cruise on the Elbe River to CASTLE PILZNITZ, originally acquired by Elector Augustus the Strong for his favorite lady Anna Constantia von Cosel. Tour inside and take a stroll in the extensive gardens. Return to Berlin for free time and a fabulous farewell dinner.

Day 9 – HOME FROM BERLIN

We also offer a Christmas version of this tour. Details online or on request.

Tour Features

Included: Guided inside tours, transport, all fees paid, 7 breakfasts, 6 dinners, no hidden extras.

Accommodations: First 3 nights in Berlin, 2 in Erfurt near Weimar, 1 in Dresden, and last night in Berlin.

Costs

Prices, based on double occupancy, are US \$ 3,399 each for 2 persons (minimum), \$ 2,999 each for 4, and \$ 2,799 each for 6 (maximum).

Royal Delights Tour

Bavarian & Austrian Castles & Churches, Cities & Villages

Private Tour
8 days, including travel



This tour visits the most famous royal palaces, castles and landmarks of southern Bavaria and Austria. It features the Neuschwanstein and Linderhof Castles of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, and the Vienna Hofburg and Schönbrunn Palace of Austria's Habsburg dynasty.

But there's also variety, ranging from famous religious sites to picturesque villages and stunning vistas.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from home to MUNICH.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO MUNICH

Arrival in MUNICH, Germany. You are met at the airport and taken to your downtown hotel. Tonight you'll enjoy an orientation drive of Munich and a welcome dinner at the Hofbräuhaus, the world's most famous beer hall.

Day 3 – BAVARIAN HIGHLIGHTS

After breakfast we take a scenic ride to the village of Hohenschwangau and up to Mary's Bridge to get a clear view of famous NEUSCHWANSTEIN CASTLE. A short walk downhill takes us to the castle for our inside tour with a local castle guide.



We continue to the elegantly baroque WIESKIRCHE (The Church in the Meadow), the only monument in the region on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list.

Our next stop is OBERAMMERGAU, the beautiful Passion Play village below the mountains that's known for its house frescos, woodcarvers, and Christmas shops. Free time to explore here.

On to LINDERHOF, Ludwig's beautiful rococo palace in the mountains. We tour inside the palace and you have time to continue up to the Venus Grotto and to stroll in the formal gardens.

Day 4 – EAGLE'S NEST, SALZBURG

On our scenic mountain excursion we visit Königssee, one of the most beautiful Alpine Lakes, and continue to Obersalzberg to see the remains of Hitler's EAGLE'S NEST. (Stormy weather alternative: HERRENCHIEMSEE palace.)



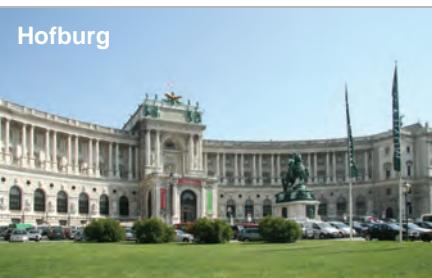
From there it's a short ride to SALZBURG, to visit the Mirabell gardens, Getreidegasse with Mozart's Birthplace, and the beautiful Cathedral, and to take the funicular up to Hohensalzburg Fortress for stunning views.

Dinner tonight in one of the oldest restaurants of Europe, the Peterskeller.

Day 5 – VIENNA - SCHÖNBRUNN

This morning we head to VIENNA, the capital of Austria and at one time capital of one of the largest empires in Europe. We visit SCHÖNBRUNN, Austria's answer to Louis XIV's Versailles. Queen Maria Theresa developed Schönbrunn into the imperial summer residence from a modest palace begun in 1696. You have time to explore the 190 hectares / 470 acres of gardens, which include the hilltop Gloriette, gardens, fountains, an artificial Roman ruin, a maze, an orangerie, a Palm House, and the Tiergarten, the world's oldest existing zoo.

Tonight an unforgettable dinner in a typical Heurigen (wine tavern-restaurant).

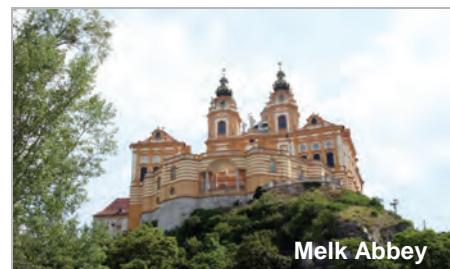


Day 6 – VIENNA

A drive along the Ring Road offers VIENNA's most famous sights: the Opera, the Hofburg, the National Museum, the Town Hall, the Burgtheater, the University of Vienna, Parliament, and much more. Join your local guide for a walking tour of the heart of Vienna, including an inside visit at St. Stephen's Cathedral. Your afternoon is free for more sightseeing or shopping.

Day 7 – WACHAU VALLEY

After breakfast we go west the scenic way – along the Danube's famous WACHAU VALLEY, known for vineyards, castles and the picturesque villages that placed it on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Enjoy a morning break in one of the pretty towns.



We visit MELK ABBEY, a Benedictine abbey founded in 1089, and one of the world's most famous monastic sites. It is located above the town of Melk, on a rocky outcrop overlooking the Danube River.

Back to Munich for a great dinner to celebrate a wonderful week.

Day 8 – HOME FROM MUNICH

Tour Features

Included: Guided inside tours, transport, all fees paid, 6 breakfasts, 5 dinners, no hidden extras.

Accommodations: 2 nights in Munich, 1 in Salzburg, 2 in Vienna, back to Munich for the final night.

Costs

Prices, based on double occupancy, are US \$ 2,599 each for 2 persons (minimum), \$ 2,299 each for 4, and \$ 1,999 each for 6 (maximum).

Imperial Castles Tour

Castles of Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic

Private Tour
11 days, including travel



Tour the legacies of the centuries when European imperial emperors and countries competed to build the largest, most ornate, and most expensive castles and palaces.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight from home to Munich.

Day 2 – WELCOME TO MUNICH

Arrival in MUNICH, Germany. You have time in the afternoon to rest or do some sightseeing on your own. Tonight meet your travelling companions and tour director for dinner at the Hofbräuhaus, the world's most famous beer hall.

Day 3 – NUERMBERG, PRAGUE

We head north to NUERMBERG, the former free Imperial City dominated by a large fortress, the Burg. An orientation drive features the landmarks of the city and ends on the main square where Germany's most famous Christmas Market takes place. Free time for early lunch.

Then east to PRAGUE, the capital of the Czech Republic. Enjoy a leisurely evening stroll through the old town. See the Jewish Prague, Old Town Square, and the Astronomical Clock, and enjoy a great Bohemian dinner in town tonight.

Day 4 – PRAGUE

Today in PRAGUE spend all morning at one of the largest castles in the world, Hradcany or Prague Castle. There was a castle already in the 9th century. It was rebuilt in the 14th century under Charles IV, and given its final style under Empress Maria Theresa. Today it is the historical and political centre of both city and state. Enjoy a free afternoon and evening for sightseeing, shopping or an opera.



Day 5 – VIENNA

We head southeast to VIENNA, the capital of Austria and at one time capital of one of the largest empires in Europe.

We arrive in time for lunch, after a drive along the Ring Road which offers Vienna's most famous sights: Opera, Hofburg, National Museum, Town hall, Burgtheater, University, Parliament and much more.

Afterwards a walking tour of the heart of Vienna. Free time for shopping or more sightseeing. We have an unforgettable dinner in a typical Heurigen tonight.

Day 6 – VIENNA, SCHÖNBRUNN

This morning we have pre-arranged access to see SCHÖNBRUNN, Austria's answer to Louis XIV's Versailles. See Maria Theresa's summer palace and enjoy free time in the splendid baroque garden. Inside guided tour with local specialist.

Afternoon and evening at leisure. The to-do list is endless. We'll help with ideas for you. Dinner on your own.



Day 7 – HLUBOKA, CESKY KRUMLOV

We head back into the Czech Republic to HLUBOKA NAD VLTAVOU, famous for its stunning Hluboka Chateau, built in the Windsor Neo-Gothic style. The castle is surrounded by beautiful gardens and an art gallery. Inside guided tour of the palace.

From there a very short ride to CESKY KRUMLOV, one of the best preserved medieval towns in the world. After free time for lunch, join your local guide for a tour of the Castle of Cesky Krumlov, founded by the Lords of Krumlov in the thirteenth century. It is the second largest in the Czech Republic, after Prague Castle



Day 8 – SALZBURG

We go south along the Vltava River to SALZBURG. Upon arrival you are met by your local specialist for a walking tour.

See the Mirabell Gardens, Getreidegasse with Mozart's birthplace, the Cathedral, and take the funicular up to Fortress Hohensalzburg for an inside guided tour.

In the evening we have dinner in one of Austria's oldest restaurants.



Day 9 – INNSBRUCK

Today we depart for INNSBRUCK on the scenic Alpine road. Enjoy a nice stroll to see the famous Golden Roof, the fine baroque church, and the Hofburg. Maybe shop for Swarovski Crystal, made here.

In the evening, we have a nice Tyrolean dinner and a traditional folklore show.

Day 10 – LINDERHOF, MUNICH

Today we cross the border back into Germany. Morning break at LINDERHOF, King Ludwig II's beautiful castle hidden deep in the forest. Inside tour with castle guide. Time on your own to explore the gardens, theatrical Grotto and Kiosk.

Then back to MUNICH in time for lunch around Marienplatz. In the afternoon you have tickets for the Residence, the winter palace of the Wittelsbach family.

Tonight enjoy a hearty Bavarian farewell dinner with your travelling companions.

Day 11 – RETURN

Breakfast and transfer to Munich Airport.

Tour Features

Included: Guided inside tours, transport, all fees paid, 9 breakfasts, 7 dinners, no hidden extras.

Accommodations: 9 hotel nights, 2 each in Prague and Vienna. First and last nights in Munich.

Costs

Prices, based on double occupancy, are US \$ 3,990 each for 2 persons (minimum), \$ 3,540 each for 4, and \$ 3,390 each for 6 (maximum).

Themeparks Kids' Tour

Disneyland Paris, Europa Park, Alsace and Black Forest

Private Tour
9 days, including travel



Europa Park

This tour for families with active kids blends the best of themepark thrills and attractions with cool slices of European history.

Disneyland Paris and Europa Park in Germany are Europe's best and most popular themeparks.

Visits to these modern attractions are balanced by real-world European marvels from long ago.

Day 1 – DEPARTURE

Board your flight to Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris. (Return from Zurich.)

Day 2 – WELCOME TO DISNEYLAND PARIS

Arrival in Paris and transfer to the Dream Castle Hotel. You can use your included DISNEY PARKS day pass to begin exploring.

Disneyland Park features five themed realms with rides and attractions ranging from the family fun of Pirates of the Caribbean to the thrills of Space Mountain: Mission 2.

Dinner on your own so that you can stay at the themeparks as late as you wish.

Day 3 – DISNEYLAND ALL DAY

All day at DISNEYLAND PARIS. There are 34 rides and attractions in the Disneyland Park, and another 18 in the Walt Disney Studios Park. Some favourites: It's a Small World, is Big Thunder Mountain, and Buzz Lightyear Laser Blast



Disneyland

The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror is considered one of the most extreme. The Disney Railroad, Peter Pan's Flight, and Alice's Curious Labyrinth are some of the attractions for younger kids.

Dinner on your own.

Day 4 – PARIS

Enjoy a guided tour of VERSAILLES, the most famous palace in the world, and the centre of power in France in the 17th and 18th centuries. Spend several hours visiting the Palace of Palaces and the famous gardens with the fountains.

Eiffel Tower



In the afternoon we go for majestic views from the second floor of the EIFFEL TOWER. Free time around the opera for shopping and dinner on your own.

Day 5 – REIMS, ALSACE

We drive into the champagne region to visit the impressive 13th century Gothic REIMS CATHEDRAL, where the kings of France were crowned.

We continue south to the ALSACE region and your hotel in one of its picturesque medieval villages. Alsatian dinner in the country.

Haut-Koenigsbourg



Day 6 – HAUT-KOENIGSBOURG, COLMAR

HAUT-KOENIGSBOURG is a magnificent castle perched on a mountaintop in Alsace. Tour this majestic castle and see its incredible views across the Alsatian plain.

We continue to COLMAR in the heart of Alsace, where the Germanic and French architectural heritage was spared by the frequent wars that ravaged this area. Dinner tonight in France.

Day 7 – EUROPA PARK

All day today at EUROPA PARK on the western edge of Germany's Black Forest, the Trip Advisor Travelers' Choice pick as "Best Theme Park in Europe".

Europa Park is famous for its 12 roller-coasters – high, fast, spinning, indoor / outdoor, water, and dark ride coasters.

Silver Star



There are also dozens of lower-speed attractions, and Children's World offers experiences for younger visitors.

Dinner on your own so that you can stay late at Europa Park if you wish.

Day 8 – BLACK FOREST OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

Culture and history come to life today in Germany's largest and most popular open air museum, the VOCTSBAUERNHOF OPEN-AIR MUSEUM.



Open-Air Museum

The museum is organized around six fully furnished farmhouses spanning the 16th to 18th centuries and drawn from different parts of the Black Forest.

Many of the farmhouses accommodate both families and their livestock. There are lots of animals on the grounds – including cows and calves, pigs and piglets, goats and kids, bunnies, chickens and geese.

Dinner together this evening.

Day 9 – RETURN

Breakfast and transfer to Zurich Airport.

Tour Features

Included: Guided inside tours, transport, all fees paid, 7 breakfasts, 3 dinners, no hidden extras.

Hotels: 3 nights adjacent to Disneyland, 2 in an Alsatian village, and 2 in Germany's Black Forest

Costs

Private Tour Charge US \$ 1,400 for the group, plus per person costs:
Adults, Per Person US \$ 2,699
Rates Per Child vary from US \$ 1,119 to \$ 1,949 depending on the numbers of adults, children, and rooms.

Guided Vacation in Tuscany

Hilltop Villages and Vineyard Valleys, History and Hospitality

Private Guided Holiday

7 days, including return



This is a guided holiday, and your guide is the key to making it special. Your guide is local and knows the places, stories, history, and art in detail – and loves sharing all that with you.

Tuscany is renowned for its art, history, and evocative landscape. Hill-towns gaze across the countryside from on high; the valleys are lined with vineyards, olive groves, and quiet hamlets.

Your guide will pick the best spots, the best food, and make the best of your time.

Day 1 – MEETING

Meet your guide today upon your arrival in FLORENCE. Let us know where and when to pick you up. Spend the afternoon at leisure by the pool of your resort or Agriturismo. Tonight have a fantastic dinner at your place with a welcome drink, three-course meal, and Chianti wine.

(We can make arrangements to pick you up in Bologna or Pisa, or arrange a pre-tour program, if you wish.)

Day 2 – CHIANTI CLASSICO

Today your guide takes you on an excursion driving through the Chianti Classico Roads: CASTELLINA IN CHIANTI with its medieval pathways and breath-taking panorama, RADDA IN CHIANTI with its typical Palazzo Pretorio (municipal palace), and GAIOLE IN CHIANTI with its castles.

Wine tasting and lunch in a wine estate. Dinner at the hotel.



Day 3 – ANGHIARI, CAPRESE MICHELANGELO

We begin our day driving through enchanting Valdarno and Val Tiberina (Tiber Valley). We visit ANGHIARI, a small and elegant medieval hamlet, known for the Anghiari Battle, and claimed to be among the most beautiful villages in Italy. Lunch on your own.

In the afternoon we drive to CAPRESE MICHELANGELO, a tiny hilltop village in the province of Arezzo, to visit Michelangelo's birthplace and family house. Dinner tonight in a typical Tuscan trattoria.

Day 4 – PILGRIMAGE ROUTE, SIENA

Today we take the ancient PILGRIMAGE ROUTE, the Francine Road, with short stopovers in several small villages, including Monteriggioni - with its ancient and well-preserved city walls and garrisons, Abbadia Isola – with its abbey founded in 1001, and San Galgano - with the ancient small "pieve" (parish church) where the mysterious "sword in the stone" has been kept for centuries.



We reach SIENA in early afternoon and go for a walk with a local guide in this beautiful, gentle city built on three hills and still surrounded by its ramparts. Its medieval centre has streets lined with majestic Gothic buildings in various shades known as burnt sienna.

You have free time later for shopping or more sightseeing. Dinner on your own tonight in Siena, with great suggestions.

Day 5 – SAN GIMIGNANO, COOKING CLASS

Today we visit SAN GIMIGNANO, a majestic medieval walled town standing on a hilltop in the heart of Tuscany, its profile bristling with tall towers that are famous all over the world. It has retained all its old streets, its walls, gates, palaces, strongholds, and 14 of the original 72 towers.

After an orientation walk enjoy free time to explore the beautiful town. Later a wine tasting in an organic wine estate / winery. Tonight we have arranged a cooking class for you. Buon Appetito!

San Gimignano



Day 6 – CORTONA, AREZZO

Today we first visit CORTONA, a small charming hill-town in southern Tuscany, enclosed by stone walls dating back to Etruscan and Roman times. The heart of Cortona is Piazza della Repubblica, with the Palazzo Comunale or town hall building overlooking the square. Time at leisure and lunch on your own.

After we continue to AREZZO in south-eastern Tuscany, one of the wealthiest cities in Tuscany. The Early Renaissance fresco cycle by Piero della Francesca depicting the Legend of the True Cross at the Church of San Francesco is a highlight.

Farewell dinner tonight in a Tuscan trattoria in the Tuscan Hills.

Day 7 – RETURN

Breakfast and return transfer.

Tour Features

Included: Guides, transportation, all fees paid, 6 breakfasts, 5 dinners, no hidden extras.

Accommodations: 6 nights in First Class Tuscan villa hotel. Luxury or economy options also available.

Costs

Prices, based on double occupancy, are US \$ 3,300 each for 2 persons (minimum), \$ 2,990 each for 4, and \$ 2,590 each for 6 (maximum).

Private Editions, Custom and Shorter Tours

Private Editions of our Major Tours



Our scheduled tours offer great value, and our small group sizes make for friendly tours where you get to know the tour director and the others travelling with you.

But the dates we've chosen for our scheduled tours may not work for you.



We now offer our scheduled multi-day group tours as private tours.

These private edition tours are based on the same itineraries and are all-inclusive on the same basis as the regularly scheduled ones.



You have your own professional private guide / chauffeur.

Prices per person are the same as for the regular tours, plus a US \$ 200 per day private tour premium for the group as a whole.

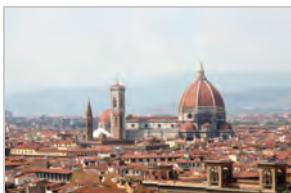
The following major 9 to 11 day tours are available privately:

See pages

<i>Bavarian Castles</i>	4-5
<i>River Castles</i>	6-7
<i>Black Forest, Alsace and Switzerland</i>	8-9
<i>Bavarian Christmas Markets</i>	10-11
<i>Nutcrackers and Notables</i>	12-13
<i>Best of Germany and Austria</i>	14-15
<i>Kids and Castles</i>	16-17
<i>French Castles</i>	18-19
<i>Italian Highlights</i>	20-21

Please contact us to confirm availability.

Custom and Group Tours



We already offer a wide range of tours, scheduled and private, long and short, but maybe you would like something a bit different.

We're very flexible and will be happy to customize a tour for you.

We design custom tours for couples, families, and for groups large and small.

We have a variety of transportation options available to match your party's requirements.

We welcome inquiries from individuals, groups, organizations, and travel agents.

Our specialty is tours in Germany, Austria, and the neighbouring countries. Our home territory is Bavaria.

We can mix and match elements from any of our regular or short tours and can add specific features for you.

You can use the itineraries of our existing tours as a guide to the locations and highlights we typically recommend.

Tell us about your interests and we'll try our best to add you to our list of repeat customers.

Shorter Tours



We offer shorter and day tours that will make the most of the time if you are under a time constraint, or allow you to pursue your own specific interests.

We're experienced at picking the most interesting destinations, getting there quickly, and avoiding long lineups.

These private tours feature the services of an experienced and knowledgeable English-speaking driver / guide, transportation in an air conditioned Mercedes van, and pick-up and drop-off, with all entrance fees and tickets included.

These shorter tours are described on the following three pages:

See pages

Three-Day Private Tours 32 - 33

Bavarian Castles Highlights

Rothenburg and Northern Bavaria

Salzburg and Eastern Bavaria

Day Tours page 34

Private Day Tours from Munich

Private Day Tours from Füssen



Three Day Private Tours from Munich

We offer three different three-day private tours designed for visitors with time or schedule constraints.

These three tours all have the same design features, logistical arrangements, and prices.

Features

- Your tour is conducted by an experienced and knowledgeable English-speaking driver / guide.
- Transportation is provided in an air-conditioned Mercedes van.
- You are picked-up and dropped-off at your hotel or preferred location in Munich.
- 2 three-course dinners are provided.
- 2 breakfast buffets are provided.

- 2 nights' accommodation is included.
- All entrance and guide fees are paid.
- There are no hidden extras.

Prices per person

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| • 2 persons (minimum) | 830 EUR each |
| • 4 persons | 730 EUR |
| • 6 persons (maximum) | 630 EUR. |

We're flexible and will be happy to make minor itinerary adjustments within the general framework of the established tour itinerary.

These tours operate year-round. Please contact us to confirm availability for your preferred itinerary and dates.

Bavarian Castles Highlights



This expert guided tour to the "fabulous but hard to get to" Bavarian Castles includes the "must see" highlights of our longer Bavarian tours.

- Visit and tour inside all three of King Ludwig II's magnificent castles – Neuschwanstein, Linderhof, and Herrenchiemsee.
- Marvel at the splendour of the UNESCO-designated Wieskirche, the Church in the Meadow.
- Explore beautiful Oberammergau, the Passion Play village.
- Enjoy a walk through the medieval centre of Innsbruck, and see the Golden Roof, the Cathedral, and the Hofburg Palace.

Day 1

- You are picked up at your hotel or preferred location in Munich.
- We first drive south to LAKE CHIEMSEE and take a boat to Herrenchiemsee Island where King Ludwig II built HERRENCHIEMSEE, his largest castle, modelled after Versailles, and where he stayed only one week. Inside guided tour of the Palace and time to explore the Old Palace and the Ludwig Museum.
- Then through the mountains into Austria and on to Innsbruck. Welcome dinner tonight.

Day 2

- Today we explore INNSBRUCK, the capital of the Tyrol. Stroll its quaint medieval lanes and see the famous Golden Roof in front of the Karwendel Mountains, the fine Baroque Church, and the Hofburg built by Empress Maria Theresa.
- In the afternoon we cross back into Germany and proceed to Hohenschwangau village for a guided tour inside King Ludwig's world-famous NEUSCHWANSTEIN CASTLE.

Neuschwanstein is perched atop Swan Rock in the foothills of the Alps. It was designed for Ludwig by Christian Jank, a theatrical set designer, and built in the period from 1869 to 1876 incorporating the latest technologies of the day. Marvel at the architecture, opulence, and stunning views.

– Overnight in nearby Füssen. Enjoy the location and maybe go for an evening stroll, surrounded by mountains and lakes.

Day 3

– We leave Füssen and go for a short ride to the famous Wieskirche, the Church in the Meadow, an oval rococo church built between 1745 and 1754 as a shrine for a new sacred pilgrimage site. The interior is decorated with frescoes and elaborate stuccowork. The Wieskirche was restored between 1985 and 1991, and is the only monument in the region on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list

– Our next stop is Linderhof, Ludwig's beautiful palace hidden in the mountains, built between 1870 and 1879 in an elaborate rococo style. Ludwig lived here for several years. We tour inside with a local castle guide, and you have time to continue up to the Venus Grotto's illustration of the first act of Wagner's Tannhäuser, and to go for a stroll in the formal gardens.

– On to Oberammergau, the village internationally famous for the Passion Play which it mounts every ten years in thanks for being spared during the bubonic plague. Oberammergau is also known for its house frescos, woodcarvers, and Christmas shops. You have free time to explore on your own and to shop for great souvenirs.

– We return to Munich for late afternoon arrival.

Rothenburg and Northern Bavaria



Travel back in time to charming medieval towns and impressive historical landmarks.

Explore the medieval town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber in depth. Marvel at the 16th century ramparts and towers surrounding the town, and its ancient houses, fountains, and cobbled lanes. Spend two nights here.



Also visit other notable landmarks in the region, including Harburg Castle, the Würzburg Residence, Ulmer Minster, and Augsburg's Fuggerei.

Day 1

– We take the autobahn west towards Augsburg and then Bavaria's Romantic Road to the quaint village of Harburg to tour **HARBURG CASTLE**, never damaged by war and fully intact after 900 years. Lunch break in **DINKELSBÜHL**, another fully fortified medieval town.

– On to medieval **ROTHENBURG OB DER TAUBER**, completely surrounded by its medieval ramparts with countless towers, where you feel like you just jumped back into the 16th century. Rothenburg is famous for its ancient houses, fountains, cobbled lanes, hidden corners, and iconic street signs.

– After dinner take a tour with the town's world-famous night-watchman. Overnight here.



Day 2

- This morning we explore **ROTHENBURG** further. Visit the St. Jakob church or the criminal museum, and enjoy the markets and Christmas stores.
- After lunch we take the Romantic Road to Würzburg on the Main River for a guided tour of the **WÜRZBURG RESIDENCE**. This superb baroque palace, one of the biggest in Germany, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was dubbed "the nicest parsonage in Europe" by Napoleon. Free time after to see more of Würzburg and stroll along the banks of the Main River.
- Dinner and overnight again in Rothenburg.

Day 3

- This morning we go south to **ULM**, birthplace of Albert Einstein and home of the world's tallest church, the **ULMER MINSTER**, which you will discover from the inside. You may climb to the top of the tower, if you wish.
- On to **AUGSBURG** for a guided tour in the **FUGGEREI**, the oldest social housing complex in the world. It was founded in 1516 by the prosperous Fugger family as a place where the needy citizens of Augsburg could be housed.
- Late afternoon arrival back in Munich.

Salzburg and Eastern Bavaria



Explore legendary and attractive Salzburg in detail, and mix in some Bavarian variety.

Salzburg has one of the best-preserved city centres north of the Alps. See its cultural, architectural, and fortification highlights, and savour the local delicacies. Two nights here.



En route visit King Ludwig's Herrenchiemsee Castle and the serene Fraueninsel. On the return visit the mountaintop Eagle's Nest, Berchtesgaden, and Lake Königsee.



Day 1

– We drive to **LAKE CHIEMSEE** and take a boat from Prien to Herrenchiemsee Island to visit King Ludwig's largest castle, **HERRENCHIEMSEE**, which he built after a visit to Versailles, and where he stayed for only one week. Inside guided tour of the New Palace and entrance to the Ludwig Museum and the Old Palace.

– We travel by boat to the nearby island of **FRAUENINSEL**. Time to visit the ancient Benedictine monastery, and to stroll at leisure around the beautiful and peaceful island.

– We return by boat to Prien and continue on to your **SALZBURG** hotel. Join your guide for a stroll through the historic centre of this famous baroque city, so rich in culture and tradition. Welcome dinner tonight.



Day 2

- We have all day to explore **SALZBURG**. See the **Mirabell Gardens**, a setting for *The Sound of Music*, Getreidegasse with **Mozart's Birthplace**, and the Cathedral. Take the funicular up to massive **Fortress Hohensalzburg** for fabulous views.
- In the afternoon you can chose to visit **Hellbrunn Castle**, famous for the trick fountains ordered by one of Salzburg's bishops, or **Hohenwerfen Fortress**, a strategically placed castle dating back over 900 years, or go for a stroll or swim in the beautiful **Salzkammergut** lakes region.

Day 3

- We return to Germany and the **EAGLE'S NEST**, presented to Adolf Hitler on his 50th birthday, and now preserved in its original state, with proceeds going to charity. An elevator travels through 400 feet of solid rock to the top of the mountain. Enjoy the breathtaking view of the Bavarian and Austrian mountains from the top.
- During winter or as an alternative, take a tour of **SALT MINE BERCHTESGADEN**, with a train ride into the heart of the mountain.
- We visit **BERCHTESGADEN** and stop at picturesque **LAKE KÖNIGSEE** before returning to Munich for late afternoon arrival.

Day Tours

Private Day Tours from Munich and Füssen



If your time is limited it's especially important that things go smoothly. Relax and let us take care of the details for you.

No need to worry about reservations, taking a wrong turn, parking, missed connections, or finding local transportation.



- Your tour is conducted by an experienced and knowledgeable English-speaking driver / guide.
- Transportation is provided in an air-conditioned Mercedes van.
- You are picked-up and dropped-off at your hotel or preferred location.
- All entrance and guide fees are paid.

Your guide will not only show you the sights but also give you background information and share local stories.

These day tours from Munich and Füssen also give you an opportunity to tailor your visit to pursue your own specific interests. You can book two or more day tours to design your own custom tour.

We'll adjust tour features if we can to make the day perfect for you.



Private Day Tours From Munich

Price Group



A Royal Fairy Tale Day in the Bavarian Alps

Neuschwanstein, Oberammergau and Linderhof 1



Mozart and The Sound of Music Salzburg

History and Mountains Eagle's Nest and Berchtesgaden 1



Romantic Road Special Rothenburg, Dinkelsbühl and Harburg Castle



Closest to Heaven Zugspitze Summit, Garmisch and Ettal

500 Years of Mining "White Gold"

Salt Mine, Berchtesgaden

and Königsee 1

The Best of the Tyrol

Innsbruck and Swarovski

Crystal World 1

Germany's Best Playground for All Ages

Legoland 1

Private Day Tours From Füssen

If you have your own transportation or are already in the area, our Füssen tours may have an advantage for you because they start closer to the destinations.

Price Group

Bavarian Highlights Day Tour

Neuschwanstein, Wieskirche, Oberammergau and Linderhof 3

Mount Zugspitze and Innsbruck Day Tour

Zugspitze and Innsbruck with Swarovski or Hofburg 4

Lake Constance and its Islands Day Tour

Lake Constance, Lindau and Mainau 3

Prices

Prices are in EUROS per person, and vary depending on the tour type and group size.

One child up to 13 free per adult, maximum 3. Children 14 to 16 pay 50%.

Minimum group size is 2 adults.

Prices for larger groups on request.

	From Munich		From Füssen	
	1	2	3	4
Adults				
2	300 €	330 €	240 €	265 €
3	205 €	225 €	170 €	185 €
4	160 €	175 €	130 €	145 €
5	131 €	143 €	110 €	120 €
6	112 €	123 €	95 €	105 €
7	100 €	110 €	85 €	95 €

Full itinerary details for each of these tours are provided on our website at

europiancastlestours.com

"Two wonderful day trips in Bavaria

The day tours were fantastic! We took a small group tour of Neuschwanstein Castle, Linderhof Palace, and the white church in the meadow, with a lunch stop at a village with wonderful painted houses. The next day we took a private tour to Lindau and Mainau on Lake Constance. These two days absolutely made our trip!"

– PhamilyTime on TripAdvisor

Recommendations

Comments from Participants

Bavarian Castles Tour

BEST EVER!!!! Astrid and her staff are phenomenal. The staff at the Hopfen Am See Landhaus we phenomenal as well.... The tour itself was awesome (wasn't too big either)! It was very educational as well. We didn't have to wait in line for anything!! If this is your first time visiting Germany and you like castles and beautiful countryside, I highly recommend this tour.

– Schosa, Hardin, Montana USA



River Castles Tour

What a great time! From the minute we were met at the airport by our guide, until the minute we said goodbye, it was apparent at what a well organized and detailed oriented company you run. It was so nice to sit back and know everything was arranged and taken care of and all we had to do was meet the group in the lobby of our hotel each morning. Then we were transported from city to city to see some of the most magnificent castles and lovely towns dating back hundreds and hundreds of years.

– Diane Check, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania USA

Black Forest, Alsace and Switzerland Tour

The most wonderful tours ever !!! I have gone on 4 tours with European Castles Tours and they were all amazing, well organized and let us see many charming towns off the beaten tourist traps while still seeing some amazing castles! My most recent trip was Black Forest, Alsace and Switzerland.... The hotels used on all the tours are charming locally owned and run establishments (no large chains used here).... The breakfasts were more than ample and the dinners arranged were creative and most enjoyable.

– msesqct, West Hartford, Connecticut USA

Bavarian Christmas Markets Tour

Highly Recommended! My daughter and I thoroughly enjoyed our travels with Astrid Baur. Our tour guides, Astrid, Jan and Carolyn were knowledgeable, personable, and humorous, and the historic sites we visited were amazing.... The markets were great fun and i have a new fondness for Gluhwein, which is hot spiced wine. Bavaria is a wonderful place to kick off the Christmas season. Our hotel was very comfortable and we visited a different restaurant every evening for dinner and each meal was delicious.

– SandraS101, Buckeye, Arizona USA

Best of Germany and Austria Tour

Our Tour guide Federico was by far the best tour guide I have ever had. The tour went to amazing castles and palaces. We had a small group and Federico was knowledgeable, unbelievably supportive and made a great tour the best tour I have ever taken.

– gerry2002, Los Angeles, California USA



There are dozens more reviews, sorted by tour, on our References page at europeancastlestours.com

At press time our TripAdvisor ratings were 94 % "Excellent".





Contact Information

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with any questions you may have about these tours.

Website

Full details of tour itineraries, maps, photo galleries, and travel information pages are provided on the internet at
europeancastlestours.com

Email

Email is fast, flexible, and free. Send email inquiries and messages to castles.office@yahoo.com

Telephone

Telephone connections work well, but please be careful of time zones. Germany is normally 6 hours ahead of Eastern Time, 9 ahead of Pacific. When it's 8 p.m. in New York, it's 2 a.m. in Germany.

Our U.S. phone number is **(202) 580 - 8732**

You can also call Astrid Baur directly on her cell phone in Germany.

The international phone number is **+ 49 - 171 - 546 6839**

where + is your code to access International Calling (011 in North America), and
 49 is the Country Code for Germany

We can call you. Send an email or write with your number and the time of day most convenient for you.

Fax

You can send a fax message to our office at **+ 49 - 8362 - 916 723**

Mail

Air Mail letters should be addressed to **Astrid Baur Travel
Hoehenstrasse 8
87629 Hopfen am See
Germany.**

Reservations

We would love to have you join us on a castles tour. You can book directly with Astrid Baur Travel.

- Use the Online Reservation Request tool at europeancastlestours.com, or
- Send an email to castles.office@yahoo.com.

You can pay the Deposit (at Reservation time) and the Balance (45 days before the tour) by MasterCard, VISA, PayPal, check, or bank transfer.



Participation in Astrid Baur Travel tours is conditional on acceptance of the Astrid Baur Travel Terms and Conditions for tours posted on europeancastlestours.com in the Reservations sections or available by email or paper mail.

