

Castles and Cobblestones

A River Journey Through Germany

BY VIKKI MORAN | THE GRATEFUL TRAVELER







Above: Classic German baked goods.
Here: Bavarian beer with history.

Like turning the pages of a storybook with castles, forests, imaginary dragons, and of course the occasional damsel in distress, a river cruise through Germany sends your senses soaring. In my experience, the Moselle, Rhine, and Main rivers are the most consistently picturesque to enjoy via cruising.

My traveling companion/husband and I recently sailed on the Emerald Waterways ship *Destiny* for the aptly named Legends of the Moselle, Rhine, and Main itinerary. A wonderfully modern 3-year-old ship, *Destiny* appeals to passengers' present-day creature comforts while sailing through scenery that dazzles with history.

We embarked in Bernkastel, Germany, which itself dates back to 3000 BC. Gracefully perched on the banks of the Moselle, this wine-growing town's steep slopes dot the landscape. A stroll through the main gate brings you past buildings that have been standing since 1416, reminding you of its medieval heritage.

The EmeraldActive option on this cruise allows you to bike up the slopes and tour Bernkastel instead of the traditional walking tour. For guests who want to remain active while enjoying the marvelous food and treats on and off the ship in Germany, the active selection is wonderful.

Cochem is another enchanting town, with its Reichsburg Castle that can be seen from any vantage point in the town or from the ship itself. Touring the castle – like all castles – is a unique experience for fellow Americans. As the “youngsters of the world” compared to our European counterparts, castles and other architectural marvels still trigger wonder and excitement. Beyond the uniqueness, however, this castle, in particular, delivers the most amazing views of the Moselle Region.

Koblenz, with its Ehrenbreitstein Fortress, is a military must-see for both its use in World War II by the Americans as well as by the French much earlier in world history. It is also the gateway for us to sail through the Rhine Gorge with its mystical Lorelei statue. Medieval castles and vineyards line the river drawing an apt metaphor: Riesling now reigns supreme as the lords of the castles once did in this region.

Miltenberg and Wertheim usher us on to the Main River and into true Bavarian life. While the Rhine region loves its wine, Bavaria is truly the land of *bier*! Beer was not invented in Bavaria, much to their dismay, but they boast the most breweries per area than any other place in the world. Their beer is varied and world-renowned. They are also leading the world in developing alcohol-free options.

Würzburg, in the Bavarian region, is affectionately known as the “Pearl of the Romantic Road.” Romantic is the word used many times in this part of Germany for so



Photo courtesy of Emerald Waterways

many valid reasons. Bavaria is beer-loving, while Würzburg is blanketed in slopes of grapevines. The Würzburg region produces a different type of Riesling than we enjoyed earlier in our trip, a drier wine that made me very happy. Maybe too happy, but that is a Grateful Traveler footnote that will stay hidden from view!

Bishops once ruled life in Germany, charging taxes without inhibition. The baroque *Residenz* palace illustrates how these crippling levies supported the extravagance of the ruling class. Someone must have seen Versailles and whispered to the bishop of the era that he needed one, too. The *Residenz* is certainly grand on all scales and much in line with France's Versailles.

Magical Bamberg is a Unesco World Heritage city, and for character and old-world charm, it is a treasure as well as our last stop before ending our Emerald Waterways Cruise in Nuremberg. The gardens were in full glory when we visited; the roses, in particular, were staggering in scent and beauty. On our day in Bamberg, there was a wedding taking place in the city cathedral. I wonder if the young couple had planned their day of dazzling sun and full-bloom rose gardens and thought that it would be the perfect way to embark on their adventure of a lifetime. I certainly found it to be a picture-perfect memory to carry with us from our amazing journey. CRL

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- The onboard language is English.
- Spacious and beautifully appointed state rooms. Large closet and drawers to unpack and sail to each destination without carrying your luggage to each new city.
- It is all included: suites, excursions, dining, tipping, EmeraldPLUS, EmeraldACTIVE, DiscoverMORE, EmeraldEXPLORER.
- Reception desk for any need, open 24/7.
- Internet and in-room televisions complete with movies.
- Maître d' seating service. Open seating for privacy or meeting fellow cruisers.
- Complimentary drinks with lunch and dinner. Includes wine, beer, coffee, and soft drinks.
- Bicycles, helmets, and locks available for optional bike touring.
- Local guides provided at each stop for complete sightseeing needs.
- Onboard laundry service.
- EmeraldACTIVE offers a range of onboard and onshore activities to suit active guests.
- Onboard chef for daily meals; breakfast, lunch, and dinner.
- Cruise Director available for day-to-day assistance and evening "port talks" for the following day's activities. These "port talks" not only help plan your following day, but you also have a chance to unwind before dinner with new friends and cocktails.
- Casual atmosphere to dress down or up with two dinners that allow for more glam if you wish.

ON THE DESTINY SHIP

- A swimming pool for classes and open swimming.
- Movies nightly in converted pool/movie theater complete with top movies and popcorn.
- Sundeck with reclining chairs and tables with umbrellas.
- Putting green and giant tic-tac-toe board on sundeck.
- Fitness center with yoga and Pilates sessions.
- Massage, hair and facial salon.
- Onboard shopping.
- Evening entertainment with guest performers and staff.

Continue on this river cruise journey with The Grateful Traveler as she writes about her extended visit to Nuremberg in an upcoming issue.