



Looking Forward to Stellar Holiday Cruises

CRUISE LINE & CRUISE SHIP | CRYSTAL CRUISES | JASON LEPPERT | OCTOBER 17, 2017



PHOTO: Christmas decorations onboard Crystal Cruises' Crystal Symphony. (photo by Jason Leppert)

Are you looking to celebrate the holidays at sea or on the river this season?

A number of cruise lines have your options covered with exciting special sailings to consider

CroisiEurope

Those looking for a river cruise during the holidays can check out [CroisiEurope's Christmas sailings](#) to destinations such as the Black Forest, Paris and the South of France.

On November 28 and December 4, the line will embark on short four-day voyages from Strasbourg through Alsace and the Black Forest to the Freiburg market and Colmar Christmas markets. Highlights include blown glass, wooden toys, ginger cake and mulled wine.

Rates begin at \$771 per person double.

For a warmer Christmas experience, the South of France through Provence and the Rhone Valley beckons on December 21 roundtrip from Lyon calling on Viviers, Montelimar and Avignon.

Rates begin at \$1,409 per person double.

Another Christmas Markets Cruise departs from Strasbourg to Rudesheim, Mainz and Nuremberg (rates begin at \$885 per person double). Christmas in Normandy conveniently leaves roundtrip from Paris to Rouen, Duclair and Honfleur (rates begin at \$651 per person double).

Meanwhile, New Year's Eve cruises are also available with routes in Venice, Paris, the Rhine Valley, the Rhone Valley and more.

Crystal Cruises

[Crystal Cruises](#) covers the oceans and the rivers of the world for the [season](#). All of its vessels will be decked out for Christmas and New Year's while they serve up traditional feasts for the holidays along with corresponding multi-faith services.

Crystal Serenity will respectively depart on a 14- or-15-day sailing roundtrip either from Charleston or Fort Lauderdale for its Holidays in the Caribbean itinerary.

Crystal Symphony will embark on a 16-day South African Holidays cruise roundtrip from Cape Town for the line's first holiday trip to the continent.

Crystal Esprit offers its Crystal Yachting Christmas itinerary for an 11-day voyage roundtrip from Marigot Bay, St. Martin to the West Indies.

Crystal Mozart will sail roundtrip from Vienna on an extended 13-day Dazzling Danube Celebration river cruise to Austria, Germany and Hungary.

Crystal Bach heads out on a 10-day Spectacular Rhine Holiday river journey from Amsterdam to Basel showcasing the season.

Crystal Mahler will cruise another long 16-day Grand Europe itinerary from Amsterdam to Budapest to Christmas markets along the Rhine.

MSC Cruises

From Thanksgiving to the New Year, [MSC Cruises](#) is preparing delightful sailing opportunities, including on the line's newest [MSC Seaside](#) starting in December 2017. It will join the MSC Divina, cruising the Caribbean from Miami, Florida.

Thanksgiving can be celebrated aboard the MSC Divina during its November 18 departure. Turkey day itself will be enjoyed on a relaxed sea day via a feast complete with all the fixings, plus football game screenings throughout the day. Kids can participate in a Thanksgiving cooking class as well as a costume parade and show while teens head out on a scavenger hunt and join a flash mob and disco party.

Rates begin at \$609 per person.

Hanukkah will also be celebrated on the MSC Divina's December 9 cruise with a nightly Menorah lighting and daily prayer service. Traditional Hanukkah foods will be available in the main dining rooms and buffet while kosher meals can be ordered ahead of time. Kids and families can play Dreidel onboard, and a menorah will also be displayed in the ship's atrium.

Rates begin at \$499 per person.

Christmas aboard MSC Seaside will be available on the brand new ship's December 23 sailing—its very first weeklong itinerary. To start, embarkation photos can be taken with Santa and his elves, and the ship itself will be fully decorated with Christmas lights and trees.

Carols will be heard throughout the ship, and a festive show will be performed. Live holiday music infills the rest as a tree lighting ceremony is capped off with Gluhwein, hot cocoa, eggnog and cookies. Plus, gifts will even be delivered to each cabin.

What's more, there will be holiday trivia, bingo, karaoke and the screening of Christmas movies. Santa will make another appearance via zip-line on Christmas Day, and there will be a Christmas mass available too. Rounding out the offerings is a Christmas Eve Gala dinner and Christmas lunch.

Rates begin at \$958 per person.

Both Christmas and New Year's can be enjoyed on the MSC Divina's December 23 cruise. It too will be decorated for the holidays with themed activities, dining, games and trivia planned during the voyage. For New Year's Eve specifically, a champagne toast and pool deck party celebrate the coming of 2018.

MSC Seaside will depart again for its own New Year's sailing on December 30. A glass of champagne starts the festivities at embarkation before the likes of themed trivia and bingo programming. Next comes a New Year's Eve Gala Dinner as well as New Year's Eve dance party, New Year's lunch and special toasting cocktails. Families can more easily enjoy the fun thanks to extended kids club hours and free babysitting.

Rates begin at \$1,138 per person.

Oceania Cruises

[Oceania Cruises](#) is bringing themed menus, treats and activities to its [seasonal itineraries](#) at Christmas time and New Years.

The Marina's Caribbean Gems itinerary in the Western Caribbean roundtrip from Miami on December 17, 2017 will be in Colon, Panama on Christmas Eve and in the Caribbean Sea on Christmas Day.

Its Riviera sister-ship will be at sea for both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day on another relaxing roundtrip from Miami during December 22, 2017. Ports along the way include Great Stirrup Cay, Martinique, Grenada, Barbados and St Lucia. St John's, Antigua will mark New Year's Eve before ringing in 2018 on another sea day.

For an even longer journey, the latest acquired Sirena leaves from San Diego to Rio de Janeiro for 35 days on December 16, 2017, for its Festive Americas cruise. Included is the Mexican Riviera, Central America, Panama Canal, Southern Caribbean and South America by the New Year.

The Regatta, Insignia and Nautica also celebrate Christmas and the New Year on their respective sailings.

The ships in the fleet will offer Christmas and Chanukah services as well as decorating the vessels with trees, garlands, lights and even a gingerbread-house village. Fine dining will extend to lavish Christmas Eve and Day dinners, and entertainment is comprised of Christmas Eve carols, a special show and reading of "The Night Before Christmas." Santa Claus will also be making an appearance.

SeaDream Yacht Club

[SeaDream Yacht Club](#) is deploying its SeaDream I and SeaDream II on December 21 to the [Caribbean](#) for a warm Christmas escape. Each 112-guest sister-ship is scheduled on its own distinct seven-day holiday cruise.

SeaDream I is set to head from St. Martin to Barbados, calling on Anguilla, St. Barts (overnight), St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

SeaDream II is leaving roundtrip from St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. for St. John, Saba, St. Barts (overnight), Virgin Gorda, Tortola, Norman Island and Jost van Dyke, B.V.I.

Both itineraries feature complimentary water sports equipment like wave runners, kayaks and stand-up paddleboards. Rates also include accommodations, dining, gratuities, wine with lunch and dinner and more.

Tauck

Also headed to the [Christmas Markets](#) via river is [Tauck](#) on a pair of eight-day sailings featuring the likes of Nuremberg, Vienna, Strasbourg and Aachen.

Christmas Markets Along the Rhine heads to Germany and France from Cologne to Basel or in reverse. Itinerary highlights include Old Town Heidelberg and Heidelberg Castle, a cookie-making demo in Rudesheim and storytelling in Strasbourg. Rates begin at \$2,690 per person plus airfare.

Christmas Markets Along the Danube goes from Nuremberg to Vienna or the reverse along the Danube, showcasing a Christmas lunch and children's choir performance at a private Viennese palace, Austria's Baroque Melk Abbey and Thurn und Taxis Palace. Rates begin at \$2,690 per person plus air.

Onboard experiences encompass seasonal decorations and music, caroling, gingerbread house decorating, treats, gluhwein, a tree-trimming party and more.