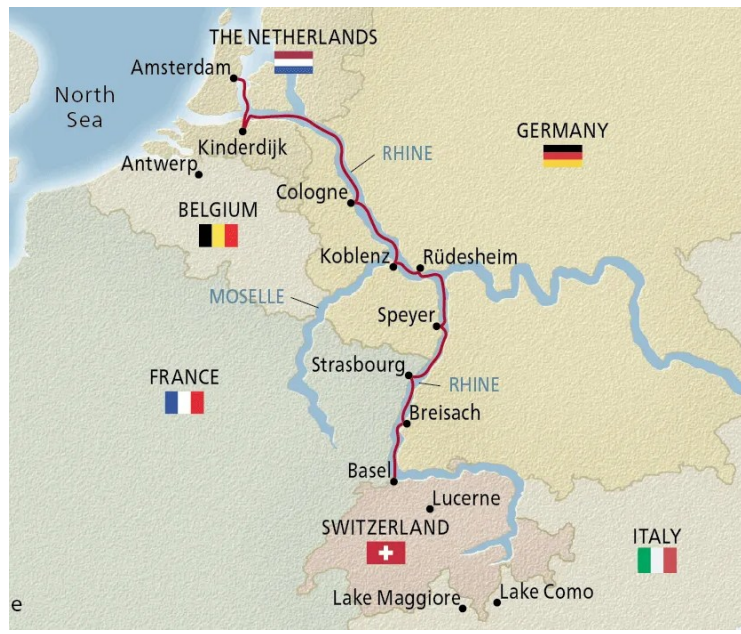


Tuesday June 4 – Friday June 14, 2024



Overview Comments

Some History

After our Pilgrimage to Italy and Greece in January 2024, I started reading Thomas Cahill's "The Hinges of History Series." Now I need to learn more about the history of Europe, especially of France, Germany, the Netherlands, Napoleon, and World War II. We saw the undeniable influence and intermingling of cultures of France and Germany along the Rhine River.

I learned that "...The Rhine is the widest river in Europe, rising out of Lake Constance in the northern Alps, flowing north, then northwest, until after 820 miles of travel it reaches the coast of continental Europe and empties into the North Sea just opposite the Thames estuary."

In 406AD, there was a large-scale barbarian invasion across the Rhine frontier into the territory of the Roman Empire, beginning a period of upheaval and decline...ending in 476AD with the Fall of the Roman Empire. "...in 406AD the river Rhine froze solid, providing the natural bridge that hundreds of thousands of hungry men, women and children had been waiting for. They were the Barbari...to the Romans an undistinguished, matted mass of Others, not terrifying, just troublemakers, annoyances, things one would rather not have to deal with...non-Romans."

The Roman Empire is generally understood to mean the period and territory ruled by the Romans following Octavian's assumption of sole rule under the Principate in 27 BC, the post-Republican state of ancient Rome. It included territories in Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia and was ruled by emperors. The fall of the Western Roman Empire in 476 AD conventionally marks the end of classical antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages.

The Holy Roman Empire, also known as the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation after 1512, ruled in Central and Western Europe, usually headed by the Holy Roman Emperor. It developed in the Early Middle Ages and lasted for almost a thousand years until its dissolution in 1806 during the Napoleonic Wars.

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As Roman power in Gaul declined during the 5th century, local Germanic tribes assumed control. In the late 5th and early 6th centuries, the Merovingians, under Clovis I and his successors, consolidated Frankish tribes and extended hegemony over others to gain control of northern Gaul and the middle Rhine river valley region. By the middle of the 8th century, however, the Merovingians were reduced to figureheads, and the Carolingians, led by Charles Martel, became the de facto rulers. In 751, Martel's son Pepin became King of the Franks, and later gained the sanction of the Pope. The Carolingians would maintain a close alliance with the Papacy.

In 768, Pepin's son Charlemagne became King of the Franks and began an extensive expansion of the realm. He eventually incorporated the territories of present-day France, Germany, northern Italy, the Low Countries and beyond, linking the Frankish kingdom with Papal lands.

On December 25, 800, Pope Leo III crowned Frankish king Charlemagne as Roman emperor, reviving the title in Western Europe more than three centuries after the fall of the ancient Western Roman Empire in 476AD. We saw the huge sculpture of Charlemagne on a horse near the doors of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in January...and the location inside St. Peter's where he was crowned.

The Viking River Cruise

Viking gave Pat and I, and our co-travelers, Kathy, Peggy, Phil, Becky and Julian, a vacation of a lifetime. We saw lots of water, windmills, castles and ancient cathedrals...and ate delicious European cuisine. We walked over 101,000 steps! Took 808 photos and videos.

Our luxurious “veranda” room 219 was on the same level as the central reception area and the restaurant. It was small but never really felt cramped. The sliding glass door wall of glass gave access to our balcony on which we enjoyed the crisp cool air each morning, peaked out during the night and allowed the sunlight to bathe our room in light all day. The bath room was so small, at first we wondered how it would function. But it was the height of efficiency and turned out to be unbelievably comfortable to use.

I can't say enough about the food. Every meal on ship offered a gourmet selection of traditional American fare as well as daily special regional offering. Everything was delicious!! Portions were the perfect size to actually finish. “Order whatever you want...two appetizers or main courses or deserts...be right up!” The french fries and the bread...OMG the they were insanely flavorful!...one French bakery told us all their bread/pastries/cakes use spelt flour (no enriched flour there) and sourdough cultures. And, the included red wine flowed...Heinrich Vollmer Meisterstuck Pfalz V! The coffee station was one flight up by the lounge. It brewed excellent drinks from espresso to Capuchinos...and had some light snacks 24x7. [The “Star” restaurant ratings are mine...Viking was the Standard at “5Stars.”]

Viking's “Culture Curriculum®” supplemented our on-ship time with a guest lecturer who spoke about typical German family life, remarkable classical guitar and cello local musicians, nightly live piano/DJ music, 4 nights with champagne toasts, and daily destination briefings before dinner.

The weather throughout the trip was wonderful...comfortable temperatures from the 50's to low 70's...and we had a few sprinkles of rain once or twice. Amsterdam is on the same latitude as Calgary, Canada, so it was pleasantly cooler than Atlanta. Even Basel, Switzerland is on the same latitude North as Seattle, WA. The picturesque canals of Amsterdam last froze over in February 2021 and March 2018. Freezing canals are now rare occurrences providing a delightful opportunity to ice skate on the frozen waterways, creating a winter wonderland in the heart of the city. However, due to global warming, such events have become much less

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common, making them even more special when they do happen. We heard the same story in Kinder Dijk, where the canals seldom freeze over as they did in winters 50 years ago.

Upstream was a different matter! Heavy rains in the South had flooded the Rhine River the week before our voyage and the storms continued during the first few days of our trip. We didn't really appreciate how the storms in the south would affect us. We didn't think much about it when before we arrived we were notified that we would be embarking on a new ship from Amsterdam, the Viking Mani. Our original ship, the Viking Eir, would be staying in Basel Switzerland. We then heard that other cruises leaving Amsterdam were changed to bus/hotel tours because the Danube River was closed. It hit home with us on the morning of Tuesday June 11 when we were told the Rhine River was also closed due to high water levels. We left the Viking Mani in Mainz, Germany and were transferred by bus for a 3.5-hour trip to circumvent the flooded river, visited Speyer, Germany on the way and had lunch at the 3Star Domhof German beer garden, and met up with our new ship, the Viking Eir in Strasbourg, France. The "ship swap day" was painless! We were on an identical ship, back in our room 219, given €25pp to cover our lunch, had the same Program Director, Daniel, with a new crew, and were on our scheduled itinerary!

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Day 1 Tuesday, June 4 - Leave Atlanta to fly to Amsterdam (with 2-Day Extension)

High: 84°F Low: 66°F

Sunrise: 6:27AM

Sunset: 8:45PM

Steps: 3,285

- Left home at 12Noon...picked up friends Becky and Julian...ate at 3Star Firebirds Peachtree Corners on our way to ParknFly, Conley Street.
- Closed doors at 5:25pm Atlanta Airport ATL, Delta flight VS 3932, but were then delayed about an hour – ARR Amsterdam Airport AMS at 9:00AM (dur 8H 40m)

Breakfast: At home

Lunch: Firebirds 3Star restaurant

Dinner: On plane 0 Stars...terrible food; Delta needs to up its game

Day 2 Wednesday, June 5 – Amsterdam (with 2-day Extension)

High: 59°F Low: 54°F

Sunrise: 5:21AM

Sunset: 9:57PM

Steps: 14, 646



- Arrived Amsterdam Airport AMS: 9:00AM, and were greeted by Viking hosts at the gate and then again when exiting baggage claim. Transferred from the airport in a first class Mercedes van to our hotel, Mövenpick Hotel Amsterdam City Centre, on the Ij river, located near the historic city center in the heart of Amsterdam....one tram stop from Centraal Station.
- Viking Hosts gave us a map and helped us plan our time in Amsterdam.
 - **We loved Amsterdam**, the capital of The Netherlands. For some reason I thought of Garrison Keillor's Lake Wobegon, "where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average." But here in Amsterdam, I thought "all the women are young and beautiful, the men are strong and there are hardly any children."

Amsterdam is renowned for its museums, colorful gardens, abundance of bicycles and endless lattice of canals. It's population is young...average 35 years old. Amsterdam is also known for its historical attractions, for its collections of great art, and for the distinctive color and flavor of its old sections, which have been so well preserved. The inner city is divided by its network of canals into some 90 "islands," and the municipality contains approximately 1,300 bridges and viaducts. Amsterdam's intimate character is best reflected in the narrow, bustling streets of the old town, where much of the population goes about its business. While there are reminders of the glorious past—gabled houses, noble brick facades clad with sandstone, richly decorated cornices, towers and churches, and the music of carillons.

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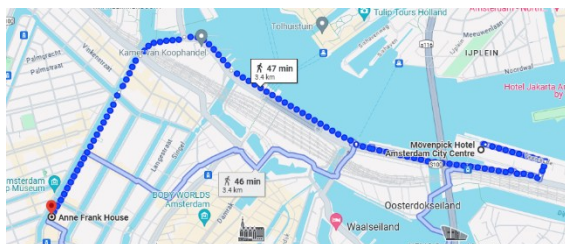
- Amsterdam is 2 meters (6ft) below sea level, but it never seemed to bother anyone. Amsterdam was built on water, on piles, or tall logs that were driven into the ground. The pilings were driven into the swampy water and clay until they reached the first layer of solid sand. Then soil is filled in around the pilings. As long as no oxygen can get to the wood, they won't deteriorate. They are literally a foundation for all Amsterdam's buildings. The ground under Centraal Station, for example, was built with over 9,000 logs from Germany's Black Forest.
- Two thousand years ago when the Romans visited the region for a few centuries, most of Holland was a large swamp, filled with peat, with a few rows of sandy dunes along the coast. The first parts to be inhabited were the dunes. Gradually the people started colonizing the swamp land and after some time started to live there permanently, often on small artificial hills because the land was flooded frequently.

In order to make the land suitable for farming, mainly cattle, the water table had to be lowered; this was done by digging ditches. This worked but it had an unwanted effect: the very soft peat slowly subsided, and after a few centuries the positive effect was lost. Thus, the flooding frequency increased dramatically in the 12th century, necessitating drastic measures.

The frequent flooding was detrimental also for agricultural activities and people started surrounding pieces of land with dikes. The diking schemes became bolder and ever larger areas, called polders, were reclaimed and protected. The dikes followed the larger rivers such as the Rhine branches in the SW of the Netherlands. Smaller rivers had to be closed off with a dam. To get rid of excess water from the inner area there was a culvert in the dam with a door to prevent flow from the outside water body to the inner area.

Once the land was protected the average water level did become lower, but the price paid was that the peat continued shrinking. It became difficult again to keep the land dry, particularly in winter. Also, a lot of peat was taken away for fuel which resulted in many large lakes, some of which are now favored for recreation. Improving technology was needed to keep the land inhabitable. The first windmills were introduced in the 15th century. Using ingenious schemes, it became possible in the 17th century to reclaim some of the lakes. In the 19th century steam power became used to drive the pumps, and in the 20th century electrical pumps were used; present polders of reclaimed land now are up to 6 m (18 feet) below sea level.

- Many towns and cities in the Netherlands, and certainly in its western region, Holland, bear a name ending in "dam". Among them are of course Amsterdam, and the harbor city of Rotterdam, but also numerous much smaller towns, such as the charming little towns Edam, Monnikendam, the brandy city of Schiedam, and villages such as Maasdam and Alblasserdam; in the North of the Netherlands: Appingedam.
- After lunch, we were bone tired. Got into our room about 1:30PM and took a 2 hour nap.
-



Pat and I walked to the Anne Frank House Museum with our (€23pp) tickets I booked six weeks earlier.

It was early enough that we visited the nearby Amsterdam Tulip Museum (€5pp) which is

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dedicated to the surprising and flamboyant history of the tulip. The interactive exhibits traced the famous flower's journey from its origins in the foothills of the Himalayas, to its arrival at the lavish court of the Ottoman Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent, to its growth popularity in home gardens around the world today. The name tulip is derived from the word turban, which the flower looks like.

Ate a snack at the 3Star Café Wester, a small neighborhood restaurant/bar. I tried the local bitterballen, a classic Dutch appetizer of fried meatballs with a hot creamy gravy...good, but not like anything we have in USA.

Entered the Anne Frank museum promptly at 7:30pm. The introductory program of 30 minutes explained the history of Anne Frank in the context of World War II. They had moved to Amsterdam fleeing persecution in Germany, but the Nazi oppression of Jews soon followed and they had to go into hiding. We walked thru the secret annex rooms in her father's company building where Anne Frank and her family hid from the Nazis for two years. The canal-side building was suitable for companies that required office space as well as a warehouse or large workspace...exactly what Otto Frank wanted for his company Pectacon, which was a wholesaler of herbs, pickling salts, and mixed spices, used in the production of sausages. We reflected on the horrifying atrocities committed against the Jewish people and others during World War II.

- Took the Tram, #12 from Westermarkt to Centraal Station (tap credit card on and off; easy peasy!), and took a 15-minute walk back to the hotel along the river Ij...arrived at 10:00PM...it was still light out!

Breakfast: On plane

Lunch: Movenpick 3Star bar lounge

Dinner: 3Star Café Wester

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Day 3 Thursday, June 6 – Amsterdam (with 2-day Extension)

High: 63°F Low: 50°F

Sunrise: 5:20AM

Sunset: 9:59PM

Steps: 18,247



- 9:30am – 11:30am After breakfast, we embarked on a walking tour with the Viking guide through the streets of Amsterdam to get acquainted with the neighborhoods and discover why romantic Amsterdam is a city best explored on foot.
 - Admired the countless gabled houses. The city's old tax code shaped these quaint homes into what they are today, as builders were taxed based on the frontage of their dwelling or sometimes the number of windows.
 - Amsterdam's charmingly crooked houses AKA "dancing houses" owe their slanted appearance to a combination of historical factors and the quality of their wooden foundations. Here's why: Quality Variation: These wooden pilings prevent the houses from sinking. However, the piles used in the past were often of varying quality, leading to uneven settling over time. Some wooden piles were too short or thin, lacking the durability needed for a 300-year guarantee. As a result, buildings settled unevenly, causing the characteristic tilt. Renovations: When renovating one house in a row, builders had to be careful not to disturb the neighboring structures. As long as the houses remained tightly connected, their collective stability was maintained.
 - We followed the tranquil canals (grachten) to the city's open squares (pleinen), where cafés and shops greeted us. The 60 miles of canals keep the waters of the North Sea at bay with a series of sluices at the city's perimeter. In all, the network of canals forms a horseshoe shape with Centraal Station at the center of the mouth.
 - Our guide gave us tips on getting around and staying oriented during our stay, and on walking in harmony among the many bicyclists and trams.
 - Amsterdam has an underground bicycle garage that holds over 12,000 bikes....soon to be 20,000. The steps and escalators have a track for the bikes to roll up/down.
 - Almost everyone recognizes the NEMO building as the striking, copper-green boat-shape rising high above Amsterdam's eastern docklands. Architect Renzo Piano had a clear vision for his design of the NEMO building, with its very own piazza 22 metres above water level. The construction of NEMO presented Italian architect Renzo Piano with a major challenge: the museum had to be built on top of a tunnel. The curvature of the tunnel acted as a foundation and was also the inspiration for the curved shape of the building itself. In a kind of mathematical mirror image of the traffic descending into the tunnel, the architect designed a building that seems to rise out of the water.
 - Easy - Walking portions were generally over easy surfaces with few steps or inclines.
- 12:00 Noon we took tram (#26 to Centraal Station, then #12 to Museumplein) for 2:00pm visit to the Van Gogh Museum.

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- When we arrived the ticket taker noticed our reservations were for the day before!!! Not a problem it turns out...welcome to the Van Gogh Museum(€25.75pp)!
- Ate a surprisingly good lunch at the museum 3Star restaurant.
- Visited the 4-floor “Always on Display” galleries: The permanent exhibition with paintings by Vincent van Gogh and his contemporaries are always on display. Never knew that he painted so many...saw Van Gogh's troubled development as an artist, and discovered the wide ranging ideas and ambitions behind his art....from early “dark” paintings to “much lighter” paintings after living in Paris
- Returned on tram #12 to Centraal Station, then #26 to Bimhuis/Mövenpick Hotel for early dinner with Pat’s sisters Kathy and Peggy, and b-i-l Phil joining us.

Breakfast: included at Mövenpick Hotel 4Star restaurant

Lunch: at Van Gogh Museum 3Star restaurant

Dinner: at Mövenpick Hotel 4Star restaurant

Day 4 Friday, June 7 – Amsterdam

High: 64°F Low: 50°F

Sunrise: 5:20AM

Sunset: 9:59PM

Ship: Mani Steps: 13,493



- In the morning, we had time to take a river cruise (€14pp) near the Centraal Station...1 stop from the Movenpick hotel. Created in the 17th century to keep the sea at bay, Amsterdam’s UNESCO protected canal belt is the quintessential postcard-perfect vision of Amsterdam. Floating along the canals by guided boat tour was a great way to see the city from a different perspective. We learned lots of fascinating facts along the way – such as why the tilting homes along the canals are known as ‘dancing houses’, and the river/lake by our hotel was fresh water on top 25’ and salt water on bottom 15’.
- Reguliersgracht is one of the most picturesque and tranquil canals in the Amsterdam city centre. It's also the location of "Seven Bridges Amsterdam" which you can see in the above photo I took. There is one bridge which is known as "Brug van 15 bruggen" from which you can see a total of 15 bridges in different directions. This viewpoint is located where Reguliersgracht joins Herengracht. Stand on the odd-numbered side and you can see 6 arched bridges across the Reguliersgracht. Look down Herengracht to the left and you see another 6 bridges. Furthermore, two more bridges are visible to your right. Finally, the 15th bridge is the one you’re standing on.
- At Noon, we transferred to our ship, the Viking Mani, to begin our river cruise. After lunch, we went on another Viking guided walking tour of Amsterdam.
- Nautical Term of the Day: *“Slush Fund” a slushy slurry of fat was obtained by boiling or scraping the empty salted meat storage barrels, This stuff, called “slush,” was often sold ashore by the ship’s cook for the benefit of himself or the crew. The money so derived became known as a “slush fund.”*

Breakfast: included at Mövenpick Hotel 4Star restaurant

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Lunch: Viking Mani 5Star restaurant

Dinner: Viking Mani 5Star restaurant

Day 5 Saturday, June 8 Kinderdijk, scenic sailing Waal and Merwede

High: 64°F Low: 50°F

Sunrise: 5:23AM

Sunset: 9:58PM

Ship: Mani Steps: 6,691



This morning we sailed to Kinderdijk, The Netherlands. *Kinderdijk is a small village community in the Alblasserwaard province. This corner of South Holland, part of the scenic Waal and Merwede regions, has long been shaped by Rhine Delta waters. Kinderdijk is most known for its 19 remarkably preserved 18th-century windmills. The charming hamlet is located amid low-lying polders, 1.5-6 meters (4-20 feet) below sea level, tracts of land reclaimed from the sea by the power of the windmills and enclosed by embankments, or dikes. At one time, there were over 10,000 windmills in the Netherlands; now there are approximately 1,200. The windmills no longer pump water' massive pumps are use now..*

- 10:30am – 12:30am SHORE EXCURSION: Kinderdijk Windmills

The Largest Concentration of Windmills in The Netherlands

- Saw the picturesque Dutch countryside and the original technological marvels of historic Kinderdijk, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- *The name Kinderdijk is Dutch for "Children dike". During the Saint Elizabeth flood of 1421, the Grote Hollandse Waard flooded, but the Alblasserwaard polder stayed unflooded. It is often said that when the horrendous storm had subsided, a villager went to the dike between these two areas to inspect what could be salvaged. In the distance he saw a wooden cradle floating on the water. As it came nearer, some movement was noted, and upon closer investigation, a cat was found, trying to keep it in balance by leaping back and forth in such a manner that water couldn't flood the cradle. As the cradle eventually came close enough to the dike for a bystander to pick up the cradle, he saw that a baby was quietly sleeping inside it, nice and dry. The cat had kept the cradle balanced and afloat. This folktale and legend has been published as "The Cat and the Cradle" in English.*
- *In the 13th century, this area was governed by Count Floris V of Holland. He was a great strategist and not only conquered many territories from the West Frisians in the north, but was also wise and loved by his citizens. It was he who decided to control the water by working together. Floris founded one of the oldest water boards in the Netherlands here in 1277, to maintain the dikes around the Alblasserwaard together with the residents. However, things ended badly for Floris: he was betrayed and murdered by his own nobles. Fortunately, the future of his water boards was brighter, because what Count Floris set in motion almost a thousand*

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years ago has made Kinderdijk and the rest of the Netherlands what they are today: unique places where people and water have learned to work together!

- We walked into the serene polder lands of South Holland. Crossed the dike to the windmills, noticing that they in fact are at a lower elevation than our ship, as much of this part of The Netherlands is well below sea level. Built in the mid-18th century, these 19 windmills, the largest concentration in The Netherlands, stand like sentinels on a hushed landscape. We saw firsthand how they work by stepping into a working windmill to observe its mechanics and living quarters. Though owned by the local water board, families who live in these mills are required to keep them in working order. The miller we met still wears the traditional wooden shoes. The end of the massive arms are going 80mph!
- Our guide maintained that the term “Three Sheets to the Wind” came from Holland. 3 sheets on a windmill makes it very unstable...AKA drunk. 2 or 4 sheets are in balance....AKA sober
- Moderate - Walking portions may be long and somewhat challenging with occasional step-ups, stairs and inclines.
- Returned on board for lunch.
- 2:30PM nautical talk with our Captain Marten.
- 4:00PM Dutch teatime with variety of Dutch pastries.
- 4:15PM Wheelhouse Tour on the top Sun Deck. Met Co-Captain Marten, wife of the Captain, as she steered the Viking Long Ship with a “joystick.” Saw that the wheelhouse could be lowered to pass under low bridges.
- We cruised through the night.
- Nautical Term of the Day: *“Bear Down” This is the action of sailing downward rapidly toward another ship or landmark.*

Breakfast: Viking Mani 5Star restaurant

Lunch: Viking Mani 5Star restaurant

Dinner: Viking Mani 5Star restaurant

Day 6 Sunday. June 9 Cologne, Germany

High: 68°F Low: 48°F

Sunrise: 5:18AM

Sunset: 9:44PM

Ship: Mani Steps: 7,924



- 9:15am – 11:15am SHORE EXCURSION: Cologne Walking Tour
A Historic City Crowned by Cologne Cathedral, Northern Europe’s Largest Cathedral
 - We walked into Cologne over the Hohenzollernbrücke bridge, a rail and pedestrian/bike bridge, that was reopened after reconstruction in 1948 from bombings during WWII. Over 1,200 trains cross the bridge each day...the bridge was extremely solid with no vibrations felt from trains as we walked.

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The bridge's pedestrian/bike path is lined with "love padlocks." Since 2008 an astonishing 40,000 locks with couple's names and romantic messages have been affixed to the bridge....while the keys were discarded into the Rhine River below.

- We learned about Cologne's heritage and visited its iconic Cologne Cathedral, towering over the city in all its Gothic splendor. While the metro area is large with over 1 Million inhabitants, the old city area we visited was much smaller than we expected...only a dozen or so streets wide.
 - It was one of the farthest north locations of the ancient Roman Empire...we saw a roman road that had been relocated from a building excavation without any planning to restore it to the original condition ...it was just a rugged cobblestone road, unlike the flat and worn Roman roads we saw in Greece.
 - *Cologne lost its status as a free city during the French period. According to the Treaty of Lunéville (1801) all the territories of the Holy Roman Empire on the left bank of the Rhine were officially incorporated into the French Republic (which had already occupied Cologne in 1794). Thus this region later became part of Napoleon's Empire.*
 - *During World War I, Cologne was the target of several minor air raids but suffered no significant damage. Cologne was occupied by the British Army of the Rhine until 1926, under the terms of the Armistice and the subsequent Versailles Peace Treaty.*
 - *The Allies dropped 45 tons of bombs on the city during World War II, destroying 61% of its built up area. During the Bombing of Cologne in World War II, Cologne endured 262 air raids by the Western Allies, which caused approximately 20,000 civilian casualties and almost completely wiped out the central part of the city.*
 - *In Old Cologne, we visited Cologne's magnificent Gothic cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Construction of this towering structure began in 1248 and continued in stages over the next seven centuries. The largest Gothic cathedral in Northern Europe, this magnificent church boasts two soaring spires and beautiful stained-glass windows (which were removed prior to the bombings of WWII), and the Cathedral survived some 18 direct Allied bomb strikes.*
 - Our guide told us some NSFW insights of the various graphic gargoyles on the town hall....hilarious!
 - Moderate - Walking portions may be long and somewhat challenging with occasional step-ups, stairs and inclines.
- Had a tasty sausage and sauerkraut lunch and "several" Kolsh beers at the outdoor plaza of Peters Brauhaus. *In 1994 the Peters family founded a new tradition. Behind the old facade, which was completely restored after the war, condominiums and residential apartments with a cozy courtyard were built. In the summer of 1994, the Peters private brewery took the initiative and made the house what it was for many centuries: an original brewery, which is now called the Peters brewery. The Kölsch culture had returned.*
- After lunch we returned on board for an afternoon nap and dinner.
- Played some "6-card golf" games before dinner.
- 9:00PM Enjoyed the evening entertainment of Classical Music by guitar and cello duo.
- Nautical Term of the Day: *"Under the Weather" If a crewman is standing watch on the weather side of the bow, he will be subject to the constant beating of the sea and the ocean spray. He will be "under the weather."*

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Breakfast: Viking Mani 5Star restaurant

Lunch: Peters Brauhaus 4Star restaurant

Dinner: Viking Mani 5Star restaurant

Day 7 Monday, June 10 Koblenz, Rhine Scenic Sailing, and Rüdesheim, Germany

High: 55°F Low: 45°F

Sunrise: 5:18AM

Sunset: 9:39PM

Ship: Mani Steps: 7,443



Koblenz, Germany is a traditional German city, founded more than 2,000 years ago. This former trading settlement rests on a ridge of the Middle Rhine Highlands. Its cobblestone streets, wood-beamed houses adorned with flowers, ancient market square and medieval churches recall the fairy-tale Germany of old. At the “German Corner,” a massive equestrian statue of Prince William I observes the lovely riverside scene. The famed Teutonic Knights set up their first base here in 1216. The Romanesque Basilica of St. Castor, Koblenz’s oldest building, dates to 836.

- Sailed along the Rhine, disembarking for a walking tour of Koblenz.
 - 8:15am – 11:45am SHORE EXCURSION: Historic Koblenz
 - Began tour at Deutsches Eck, the city’s famed German Corner. Jutting into the waters like the prow of a ship where the Rhine and Moselle Rivers meet, this public park is home to a popular equestrian statue of Emperor Wilhelm I.
 - Visited Jesuitsenplatz, or Jesuit Square, in the heart of the Old Town and named after the religious order of the same name. Admired the beautiful old school that sits on the eastern side of the square, and has been used as Koblenz City Hall since 1895. Our guide pointed out influences from ancient Rome, the Middle Ages and the Napoleonic era.
 - The roof windows on the Town Hall are used as an Advent Calendar during the Christmas market.
 - Motorcoached to Braubach to join the Viking Mani.
 - Moderate - Walking portions may be long and somewhat challenging with occasional step-ups, stairs and inclines.
 - After lunch, sailed on a breathtaking stretch of the Middle Rhine that leads from medieval Koblenz to Braubach to Rüdesheim. We sat on the Aquavit Terrace warmed by radiant heaters to view and photograph the 21 turreted castles and fortresses overlooking the river from their hilltop posts, such as the Marksburg Castle and the Katz Castle above. Saw the Lorelei Rock towering over the river. Listened to Program Director Daniel’s commentary along the way.
 - 3:00PM viewed the demonstration of making Rüdesheim coffee with coffee, brandy, sugar, whipped cream and dark chocolate...and then sampled some... there went my low carbs ...sugar coma.
 - Played some “6-card golf” games before dinner.
 - Arrived in Rüdesheim, Germany in the late afternoon. *Located in the heart of Germany’s Rheingau region, Rüdesheim is the area’s center of winemaking. The famed Drosselgasse, a cobblestone street*

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lined with taverns that pour local vintages and spill music into alleyways, attracts locals and visitors alike. Half-timbered houses, narrow warrens and old inns lend the town a medieval flavor. Castles once provided security for the region, including the 9th-century Brömserburg Castle, the oldest on the Rhine.

- Dined on board our ship.
- We departed after midnight.
- Nautical Term of the Day: “Overreach” *If a ship holds a tack course too long, it has “overreached” its turning point, and the distance it must travel to reach it’s next tack point is increased.*

Breakfast: Viking 5Star restaurant

Lunch: Viking 5Star restaurant

Dinner: Viking 5Star restaurant

Day 8 Tuesday, June 11 Speyer, Germany

High: 66°F Low: 48°F

Sunrise: 5:26AM

Sunset: 9:31PM

Ship: Mani and Eir Steps: 6,934



Ship Swapping Day

8:30AM After breakfast we transferred via motorcoach from Mainz to Speyer, Germany. The quiet German town of Speyer lies on the west bank of the Rhine. The city features a Romanesque imperial cathedral, burial place of eight emperors including some of the most famous Holy Roman Emperors, and a statue of St. James the pilgrim on his “El Camino” to Santiago de Compostela, Spain (where we are visiting with St. Andrew’s church next June 2025). Speyer was once a major Celtic center that traded hands several times between the Romans and the Huns. The term Protestant originated here at the Diet of Speyer in 1529, when 14 free cities of Germany and 6 Lutheran princes protested the Edict of Worms that had banned the writings of Martin Luther and labeled him a heretic and enemy of the state.

- 10:00AM – 2:00PM SHORE EXCURSION: Speyer Walking Tour
Enjoyed a stroll through Speyer, home to the largest of the three Romanesque imperial cathedrals.
 - *It is believed that the Protestants earned their name here in 1529 after citizens and royalty drafted the “Protestation at Speyer,” proclaiming their right to practice Christianity as they please. In 1689, Louis XIV’s troops plundered Speyer and left it in ruins; over many decades, it was artfully rebuilt.*
 - During our walk, we marveled at the exterior of the red sandstone “Imperial Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption and St Stephen I” cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Eight emperors are entombed here, including some of the most notable Holy Roman Emperors. Reconstructed after Louis XIV’s invasion, its six towers dominate the skyline.

Beneath the cathedral lies the crypt of Pope St. Stephen I, adorned with intricate carvings and

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ornate decorations. This subterranean sanctuary houses the remains of emperors and bishops, adding historical and religious importance to the cathedral.

The altar slopes up and back at least 100' from the Cathedral floor. Upstairs to the right of the upper altar is a relics room including several leg bones from various saints and the head of Pope St. Stephen I.

Outside, the sculpture of the Mount of Olives with Jesus praying on top was destroyed in the great fire of 1689 and left in ruins after the rubble of the cloister was removed in 1820 to create some open space. Later it was fitted with a roof to prevent further deterioration. The sculptures were supplemented by a local sculptor, Gottfried Renn. Inside the mount is a chapel dedicated to the Archangel Michael.

- Passed the Jewish courtyard, once home to one of the most important medieval synagogues, and saw from afar Speyer's Altpörtel, or Old Gate, the last remains of the town's fortifications.
- Ate lunch at the guide's favorite restaurant, Domhof German beer garden 3Star restaurant. Sat outside under the trees in a lovely beer garden. Ordered "sausage salad" which turned out to look like shredded hotdogs...and, tasted like shredded hotdogs...mustard didn't fix it. German potato salad was tasty. Large pretzels were hard.
- Moderate - Walking portions may be long and somewhat challenging with occasional step-ups, stairs and inclines.
- Free time to walk and shop
- 2:00PM to 4:00PM Transferred via motorcoach from Speyer, Germany to Strasbourg, France.
- Nautical Term of the Day: *"Gone by the Board"* This refers to anything seen to have gone overboard or spotted floating past the ship. *"By the board"* was considered lost at sea.

Breakfast: Viking Mani 5Star restaurant

Lunch: Domhof German beer garden 3Star restaurant

Dinner: Viking Eir 5Star restaurant

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Day 9 Wednesday, June 12 Strasbourg, France

High: 70°F Low: 45°F

Sunrise: 5:26AM

Sunset: 9:31PM

Ship: Eir

Steps: 11,458



We docked this morning in Kehl, Germany and went on a guided tour across the river to Strasbourg, France.

The largest port on the Upper Rhine, Strasbourg is the cultural center of France's Alsace region. Thanks to its location at the border of France and Germany, it boasts a convivial mix of cultural influences. The well-preserved Old Town is enclosed on all sides by the Ill River, with sites so compact that it is easy to explore the "island" on foot. And there was plenty to explore: cobblestone streets lined with wooden houses and intersected by picturesque canals. Indulging in Alsatian café culture is central to any visit here. enjoyed seeing lovely half-timbered houses.

- 8:30am – 12:30pm SHORE EXCURSION: Strasbourg Highlights

Where Germany Meets France to Great Effect

This delightful city steeped in equal parts French and German culture.

- Drove drive through the German Imperial District and the European Quarter, home to institutions such as the European Union and the Council of Europe. Passed remarkable Renaissance architecture enroute to the city center for a walk through picturesque Petite France, the former Tanners' District surrounded by the Ill River and crisscrossed by charming canals. Here, we saw the Old Customs House and the bridges with their defensive towers.
- *Ludwig Philipp Albert Schweitzer (14 January 1875 – 4 September 1965) was an Alsatian polymath. A statue on Place Saint-Thomas, in the center of Strasbourg, honors the memory of Albert Schweitzer, a pioneer of humanitarian medicine who died in 1965 in Lambaréné (Gabon), where he built a hospital that bears his name.*

He was a theologian, organist, musicologist, writer, humanitarian, philosopher, and physician. A Lutheran minister, Schweitzer challenged both the secular view of the historical Jesus as depicted by the historical-critical method current at this time, as well as the traditional Christian view. His contributions to the interpretation of Pauline Christianity concern the role of Paul's mysticism of "being in Christ" as primary and the doctrine of justification by faith as secondary. He received the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize for his philosophy of "Reverence for Life" ...

- In Cathedral Square, we visited the magnificently restored Strasbourg Cathedral. One of Europe's finest Gothic cathedrals, it was the world's tallest building from 1647 to 1874. Enjoyed free time to see the great Gothic rosette window, the beautiful red sandstone portal, and the remarkable astronomical clock inside.

Strasbourg Cathedral, also known as the Cathedral of Our Lady of Strasbourg (Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Strasbourg), features a single spire. Originally, it had two towers on its west front, similar to the iconic Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. However, an earthquake in Basel

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caused damage to the western masses of the cathedral. To stabilize the structure, a central belfry was added, which was later crowned with a large octagonal tower and spire in 1439. The foundations were not strong enough to support the extra weight of a second spire, hence its distinct profile

The astronomical clock is the third clock on that spot and dates from the time of the first French possession of the city (1681–1870). The first clock had been built in the 14th century and the second in the 16th century when Strasbourg was a Free imperial city of the Holy Roman Empire. The current, third clock dates from 1843. Its main features, besides the automata, are a perpetual calendar, an orrery (planetary dial), a display of the real position of the Sun and the Moon, and solar and lunar eclipses. The main attraction is the procession of the 18-inch high figures of Christ and the Apostles, which occurs every day at solar noon, while the life-size cock crows three times.

- Moderate - Walking portions may be long and somewhat challenging with occasional step-ups, stairs and inclines.
- Returned to ship for lunch.
- 1:45 PM - 6:15pm SHORE EXCURSION: Alsatian Wine Tasting (\$139 pp)
 - Unfortunately this tour was a disappointment.
 - Long drive through the seemingly most nondescript cities of Alsace. We expected much more knowing that the region is world-renowned for its viticulture.

Alsace is enriched with a dry mild climate, favorable soils and ideal exposure for its vineyards. Its location creates a blend of Germanic and Roman influences, and tells a story started by wine-producing Romans. The fine white wines produced here rival the crisp Rieslings of neighboring Germany. Drove along the “Alsatian Wine Route” and a stopped in one of its charming villages. At the winery, we toured the cellar but were not taken to walk through the vineyards. The winegrower introduced us to local wines and described the history of harvesting and wine growing in the region. We tasted several vintages (were just OK...white wine is not our thing; we should have known)

- Moderate - Walking portions may be long and somewhat challenging with occasional step-ups, stairs and inclines.
- The “Taste of Germany” dinner event was spectacular! Appetizers of cheese, sausage and soft pretzels....and German Kölsch beer and red wine, of course. Went to the buffet to sample extraordinary sausage and all the trimmings and desert. (could have ordered a sampler plate from the waiter.)
- Nautical Term of the Day: “Above Board” *This is anything on or above the open deck. If something is open and in plain view, it is “above board.”*

Breakfast: Viking Eir 5Star restaurant

Lunch: Viking Eir 5Star restaurant

Dinner: Viking Eir 5Star restaurant, Taste of Germany dinner event!

Day 10 Thursday, June 13 Breisach and Alsace, Germany

High: 70°F

Low: 48°F

Sunrise: 5:29AM

Sunset: 9:30PM

Ship: Eir

Steps: 6,480

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This morning arrived in Breisach, gateway to the fabled Black Forest region, is built on a basalt rock outcropping in the Rhine plain. It is located in one of the warmest parts of Germany, across the river from French Alsace, famous for its wine growing. But Breisach, too, can boast about its wine: it is home to Europe's largest cellars, with a storage capacity of more than 160 million liters. The most prominent landmark of Breisach is the Romanesque-Gothic St. Stephen's Cathedral, built between the 12th and 13th centuries. Its two towers are visible from throughout the city and from the Rhine. Our ship navigated through 4 locks today.

- 8:15am – 12:15pm SHORE EXCURSION: The Colmar Pocket in World War II: Museum & Memorial, (\$129 pp) was EXCELLENT and well worth the cost!!
 - Our impassioned guide Angie Lorimer touched our hearts while she honored those who fought and fell to free France from the Nazis. I told her she needs to write a book...now, not after she retires!
 - Visited the Colmar Pocket, where Allied forces under General Patton pushed back Nazi troops during the brutal winter of November 1944 to February 1945. US forces fought alongside the French Army to overthrow the German occupation of this key region. The charming French countryside provided the backdrop for 3 months of fighting, until the Allied armies forced the German retreat. This battle was happening at the same time as Patton's "Battle of the Bulge," known as the last major German offensive campaign on the Western Front during WWII which took place from 16 December 1944 to 25 January 1945. The Germans were very offensive at Colmar Pocket as well!
 - Traveled to the Colmar Pocket Memorial Museum, where life-sized dioramas with actual artifacts provided personal context to those difficult months.
 - Stopped at the US War Memorial on Mt. Sigolsheim to pay homage to those who laid down their lives to free France.
 - Drove to Ostheim, the first village liberated in the campaign. Saw storks in nest above the memorial.
 - Crossed the Maison Rouge Bridge, following in the footsteps of US forces who freed the French village of Holtzwihr.
 - Visited the Audie Murphy Memorial on a desolate forest road to honor one US soldier's heroic stand that changed the course of the Colmar Pocket campaign.

While enroute to Brouvelieures, France on 26 October 1944, the 3rd Platoon of Company B was attacked by a German sniper group. Murphy captured two before being shot in the hip by a sniper; he returned fire and shot the sniper between the eyes. At the 3rd General Hospital at Aix-en-Provence, the removal of gangrene from the wound caused partial loss of his hip muscle and kept him out of combat until January 1945. Murphy received his first Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Purple Heart for this injury.

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The Colmar Pocket, 850 square miles in the Vosges Mountains, had been held by German troops since November 1944. On 14 January 1945, Murphy rejoined his platoon, which had been moved to the Colmar area in December. He moved with the 3rd Division on 24 January to the town of Holtzwihr, where they faced a strong German counterattack. He was wounded in both legs, for which he received a second Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster for his Purple Heart. As the company awaited reinforcements on 26 January, he was made commander of Company B.

The Germans scored a direct hit on an M10 tank destroyer setting it alight, forcing the crew to abandon it. Murphy ordered his men to retreat to positions in the woods, remaining alone at his post, shooting his M1 carbine and directing artillery fire via his field radio while the Germans aimed fire directly at his position. Murphy mounted the abandoned, burning tank destroyer and began firing its .50 caliber machine gun at the advancing Germans, killing a squad crawling through a ditch towards him. For an hour, Murphy stood on the flaming tank destroyer returning German fire from foot soldiers and advancing tanks, killing or wounding 50 Germans. He sustained a leg wound during his stand, and stopped only after he ran out of ammunition. Murphy rejoined his men, disregarding his own injury, and led them back to repel the Germans. He insisted on remaining with his men while his wounds were treated. For his actions that day, he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

- *Saw the pock-marked Alsace and Lorraine statue in Mittelwihr, a wine-growing village that is located on the Alsace wine road. Unfortunately, Mittelwihr suffered significant damage during World War II. The village was bombed and almost entirely destroyed during the fighting in the "Colmar pocket" in December 1944.*

The modern history of Alsace–Lorraine was largely influenced by the rivalry between French and German nationalism.

France long sought to attain and then preserve what it considered to be its "natural boundaries", which it considered the Pyrenees to the southwest, the Alps to the southeast, and the Rhine River to the northeast. These strategic claims led to the annexation of territories located west of the Rhine River in the Holy Roman Empire. What is now known as Alsace was progressively conquered by France under Louis XIII and Louis XIV in the 17th century, while Lorraine was incorporated from the 16th century under Henry II to the 18th century under Louis XV. These border changes at the time meant more or less that one ruler (the local princes and city governments, with some remaining power of the Holy Roman Emperor) was exchanged for another (the King of France).

German nationalism on the other hand, which in its 19th century form originated as a reaction against the French occupation of large areas of Germany under Napoleon, sought to unify all the German-speaking populations of the former Holy Roman Empire into a single nation-state.

- *After the defeat of France in the spring of 1940, Alsace and Moselle were not formally annexed by Nazi Germany. Although the terms of the armistice specified that the integrity of the whole French territory could not be modified in any way, Adolf Hitler, the German Führer, drafted an annexation law in 1940 that he kept secret, expecting to announce it in the event of a German victory. Through a series of laws which individually seemed minor, Berlin took de facto control of Alsace–Lorraine, and Alsatians–Lorrainians could be drafted into the German Army. During the occupation, Moselle was integrated into a Reichsgau named Westmark and Alsace was*

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amalgamated with Baden. Beginning in 1942, people from Alsace and Moselle were made German citizens by decree of the Nazi government.

*Beginning in October 1942, young Alsatian and Lorrainian men were inducted into the German armed forces. Sometimes they were known as the *malgré-nous*, which could be translated into English as "against our will". Ultimately 100,000 Alsatians and 30,000 Mosellans were enrolled, many of them to fight against the Soviet Red Army, on Germany's Eastern Front. Most of those who survived the war were interned in Tambov in Russia in 1945.*

- *In relation to its special legal status since reversion to France, the territory has been referred to administratively as Alsace–Moselle. Since 2016, the historical territory has been part of the French administrative region of Grand Est.*
 - Saw the clever “cat walk” from the 2nd story of a house (see photo above)...easy way for the cat to do it’s business.
 - Easy - Walking portions are generally over easy surfaces with few steps or inclines.
- 2:00pm – 6:00pm SHORE EXCURSION: The Black Forest
 - The Rich Beauty and Culture of Picture-Book Woodlands. Admired the dense, lofty fir forests of Germany’s Schwarzwald, the fabled Black Forest. Embarked with your guide on a scenic drive through a mythical land of cuckoo clocks, glassblowing and timeless fairy tales. Our panoramic route took us through wine-producing villages, each of them cradled among the soft, undulating hills, bucolic woodlands and prolific vineyards of southwestern Germany.
 - Our journey culminated in a winding ascent up to the beautiful Hofgut Sternen hotel, a loyal keeper of Black Forest traditions. During our visit we experienced Black Forest culture: took a brief stroll to a 12th century chapel, watched a glassblower at work, learned to make the decadent Black Forest Cake for which this region is known, and saw a huge cuckoo clock that was the side of a house, chime.
 - Easy - Walking portions are generally over easy surfaces with few steps or inclines.
 - Returned to ship via Freiburg, a major university and ecclesiastical center.
 - Nautical Term of the Day: “*Overwhelm*” This is the Old English term for “*capsize*” or “*founder*” as in a shipwreck.

Breakfast: Viking Eir 5Star restaurant

Lunch: Viking Eir 5Star restaurant

Dinner: Viking Eir 5Star restaurant

Day 11 Friday, June 14 Depart Basel, Switzerland and Arrive in Atlanta

High: 73°F Low: 54°F

Sunrise: 5:31AM

Sunset: 9:28PM

Ship: Eir Steps: 4,561

Located along the Rhine River, Basel sits at the point where French, German and Swiss borders meet, marking the gateway to the Swiss Rhineland.

- 3:15am Early Wake up
- 4:20am Disembarked and transferred to the Basel Airport BSL for our return flights home. The Viking Eir docked in a bleak industrial area. The brief drive to the airport was through a dense industrial area with absolutely no charm...it was quick, if nothing else.

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- 6:45am LV Basel Airport BSL on Lufthansa LH 1211 – ARR Frankfurt Airport FRA at 7:45am (dur 1 hour)
- 10:15am LV Frankfurt Airport FRA on Lufthansa LH 444 – ARR ATL 2:15pm (dur 10H 30m) watched 3 movies and slept about 3 hours. Chicken dinner was much better than Delta's meal.
- Arrived home at 6:00PM...21 hours after wakeup...home again, home again, jiggety jig!
- Nautical Term of the Day: *"Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea"* The "devil seam" was the curved seam in the deck planking closest to the side of the ship next to the scupper gutters. If a sailor slipped on the deck, he could find himself "between the devil and the deep blue sea."

Breakfast: Viking Eir coffee and snack

Lunch: On plane

Dinner: On plane

Carousel in Strasbourg



My Packing List

Wearing To/From

Underwear
Undershirt
Gingham button shirt
Jeans/belt
Hat
Socks
Sketchers
Wallet w/daily Euros and 1 credit card
Money belt
iPhone
Ball cap

Money Belt

\$50 and €65
AAA Visa credit card (no foreign fees)
Costco Visa credit card (no foreign fees)
Visa debit card (no ATM fees)
Kaiser Permanente Medicare Advantage Card
Passport
Driver's license

Back Pack

Neck pillow
Rain jacket
4-N95 masks
Folder
 Fraser Travelogue Outline
 Viking tags/badges
 Lufthansa bookings
 Anne Frank Museum tickets
 Van Gogh Museum tickets
 Copy of Roger Passport
 Allianz Insurance E2365610573
Medicine bag
Cough drops
1-Power converter
3-earbuds
4-clorox disinfectant pads
2-iPhone cords w/chargers and EU plug adapters
1-iPhone USB-Lightening cord for airplane charging
Tissues

2-packs playing cards

Suitcase

10-underwear
2-white undershirts
9-long socks & 2 short
1-tan pants
1-green shorts
1-blue shorts
1-Black cargo pants
3-long sleeve Ts
1-ls Henley
1-Gingham ls button shirt
2-Oxford ls button shirts
1-black ss shirt
2-henley ss shirts
3-Polos
Fleece vest
Hokas
Big hat
1-PJ bottoms
Daily Bag
 Shaver
 Razor
 Toothbrush
 Tooth paste
 Floss
 Shampoo

Medicine Bag

14- Roger's Daily Meds
5- Oxycodone 5MG/Acetaminophen 325mg
10-Ondansetron 4mg (nausea)
4-Meclizine 25mg (travel sickness)
4-Rehydration salts
12-Loperamide Hydrochloride 2mg (anti-diarrheal)
6-Decongestant
Flonase
7-Antiseptic towelette
5-bandaids