

8C\*\* (Wb, T, F, S, G, D, R, 6D, S, 4C, \*7C)

O&E Thursday, May 22, 1988

## Cruise on the Rhine is a vacationer's find

**I**T IS A COOL spring morning on the Rhine River in Germany. The tourist season hasn't really started yet so there are not many people here with me on the riverfront at Linz am Rhein.

A few of my fellow passengers have strolled to Linz to photograph the half-timbered buildings in the Sunday morning light, or to attend services in the medieval church, but most are just finishing breakfast on the KD cruise-ship Italia, moored nearby amid a row of international flags.

Most of the activity is on the river itself, where long low freight barges make a constant moving foreground between the picturesque villages that line both banks of the Rhine.

Iris Jones

The Rhine is similar in width and style to the Detroit River, wider in the north, narrower in the south, but the boats have a different look because these ships don't go out into the rough weather of the Great Lakes, or down a seaway to the ocean, as our Salties and Lakers do.

**RHINE HOLIDAY** boats cruise the whole 600 mile stretch of the Rhine River from Basel, Switzerland, just downriver from Lake Constance, through the river cities of Germany and the Netherlands to Rotterdam near the North Sea.

I am with a press group taking a taste of a Rhine cruise along part of that route, from Dusseldorf to Mannheim in Germany.

This gives us a morning in Cologne, a few days in the popular Middle Rhine area, a bus detour down part of the Mosel River and a good look at the famous castles that top every hill along what is known as the Romantic Rhine.

There are several cruise lines on various parts of the Rhine, but most of the docks in Germany are for the KD German Rhine Line, largest and oldest passenger cruise line on the Rhine, which has been cruising the river under various names for 160 years.

**KD HAS EIGHT** cabin ships sailing various itineraries up and down either the Rhine or the Mosel rivers, with special cruises to explore such things as the Holland tulips or the German wine cellars.

The cruises are either first class or Europa class; the main difference seems to be that first class gives you five courses for lunch and dinner, while the Europa class only gives you three.

Cruise ships like this are pleasant and comfortable but basic. They are not like Caribbean cruise lines, although most KD ships have small swimming pools aboard. The Italia is 341 feet long and carries up to 192 passengers in 96 cabins.

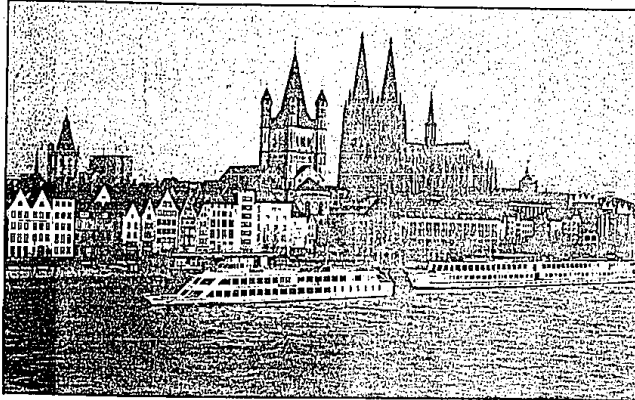
The rooms are compact, reminiscent of a sail boat: a small shower and toilet, washbasin tucked behind a cupboard door, a small table beside the window and two single beds — a day couch that wears a thin mattress at night and a single bed that pulls down from the wall.

**THERE ARE** three public areas where we spend our on-board times: a large glass-walled lounge for drinking, snacking, reading and socializing while the river scenery goes by, a large open sundeck, and a large dining room, also well-windowed for the view.

The food is excellent. It is of course included in the price of your ticket, but add the cost of wine and drinks to your budget. You should also be prepared to spend about \$60 a week on tips, usually given in one lump sum at the end of the trip.

This has been the coldest spring in more than a century, but summer cruisers should find pleasant warm weather and occasional summer rain on the Rhine, as the Romans, Celts, Franks, Vikings and World War II warriors did before them.

Most of the major cities on the west bank — known here as the "left bank" — were founded by the Romans. The Romans brought Christianity to Europe, so many of today's beautiful cathedrals, like the stun-



German cruise boats line up at the wharves of Cologne. Those who take part enjoy days of dining sumptuously and relaxing on board the

ning two-spired cathedral in Cologne, were built on the ruins of ancient Roman churches.

**THE ROMANS** also brought the grape vine to the area, and wine has made the Rhine Valley rich ever since. Charlemagne brought both peace and trade to this river country at the turn of the ninth century.

Wine profits allowed the people to build the stone and wooden houses that still make carved rooflines in the picturesque villages on either side of the river. Plan to drink a lot of it, along with the good German beer.

A Rhine cruise is a combination of shipboard life, mostly concentrated on food and drink, and regular excursions ashore.

In our case that meant touring Cologne, riding the funicular railway up the mountain at Koenigswinter, drinking wine in old castles at Linz and Marksburg, wandering the narrow streets and visiting the wine museum at Rudesheim, taking a side trip to Cochem on the Mosel and playing a little roulette in the casino at Wiesbaden.

**YOUR CRUISE** experience may differ from mine, depending on the itinerary you choose. KD pioneered the Basel-to-Rotterdam route in 1969, and now has 400 sailings on various European waterways between March and October.

The weather is chancy early spring and late fall; the tourist traffic is heavy July and September if you can get them.

First-class cruises on the Deutschland, Britannia and France cost \$609 to \$876 for the five-day cruise downstream from Basel to Rotterdam, \$638 to \$765 for the five-day cruise upstream.

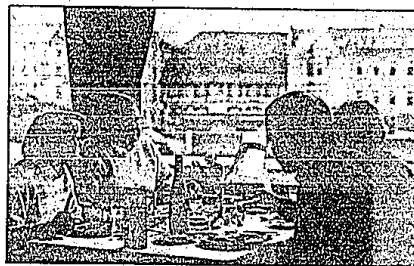
Four-day Europa-class cruises between Basel and Nijmegen are one day shorter and have less elaborate meal service: \$340 to \$409 for the three-day northbound sailing, \$390 to \$448 for the four-day southbound trip.

**MORE LEISURELY** three-country cruises of the same duration operate between Strasbourg and Amsterdam, at fares of \$371 to \$409 for three days and \$411 to \$448 for four days. Itineraries vary but all include

Cologne (in German its Köln), Koblenz, Gernsheim (with a side trip to Heidelberg), Koenigswinter, Speyer, the wine villages of Boppard and Rudesheim, and the castle towns of Braubach and Oberwesel.

There are also 50 sailings on the Mosel River, especially the most scenic stretch between Koblenz and Trier, which cost \$175 to \$209 for two days and \$244 to \$281 for three days. If they fit the rest of your travel schedule, you might also want to explore special cruises such as the waterways of Holland, a floating wine seminar, or a special five-country cruise that includes Antwerp in Belgium. If you can't do the whole Rhine River cruise, you can also buy a portion of it under certain circumstances.

For more information on Rhine River cruises contact your travel agent.



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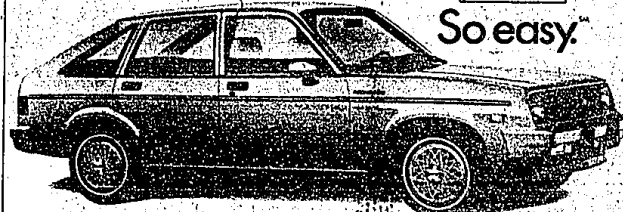
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