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**For more information contact  
Lisa Scholin, bluefly PR  
503-977-0483 (Office)  
503-320-9379 (Mobile)  
[lisa@blueflypr.com](mailto:lisa@blueflypr.com)**

### **Christmas tours un-wrap culture and hidden treasures in Europe**

Tradition comes to life with a lineup of three holiday offerings from Grand European Tours

Lake Oswego, Ore., June 4, 2008 – Travelers who yearn to learn know there is no better time to explore a destination than during a holiday – when festivals, foods and traditions, provide a full-sensory view. And this makes the Christmas season an especially magical time to visit Europe, when snow-dusted cities and villages are on full-display with twinkling lights and decorations. The air is filled with music and smells of gingerbread and hot spiced drinks. And there are plenty of opportunities to witness century old traditions, such as the Christmas Markets.

Originally opened to sell holiday wares to churchgoers, today's markets are still often set up outside a cathedral in a public square.

Visitors appreciate that not much has changed, and the markets provide a chance to not only experience a town's own special character, but also bring a little piece of it home with handmade toys and crafts perfect for holiday gifts.

Europe hosts thousands of these limited-run marketplaces each year, but luckily with their nearly 30 years of experience, Grand European tours has made it easy. This year, they are offering three tours designed to cover the very best of Europe's Christmas markets, while also infusing each trip with sightseeing and special holiday engagements, such as a caroling concert given by local children, a gingerbread making workshop or a horse-drawn sleigh ride through the Black Forest.

"There is nothing more spectacular than Europe all dressed up for the holidays," says Hans Sohlstrom, president of Grand European Tours, specialists in escorted tours for boomers and beyond. "Many experienced travelers find this to be one of their favorite times of year to visit."

Travelers also enjoy the lower prices of the winter season as well as a chance to experience their favorite countries in a more intimate way, when the large crowds of summer are gone.

"This is a holiday travel experience that you will leave you smiling," Sohlstrom says. "Our tours are designed to whisk you away from all the hustle and bustle and leave your soul feeling renewed."

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Grand European Tours takes care of all the travel details, including your bookings. The hardest part is picking which tour to take. Below are the choices for this upcoming season:

**Christmas Market Tours for 2008:**

**Danube Holiday Markets Cruise – 9 days**

Float on this festive river cruise as you explore holiday traditions from Budapest to Passau. Explore the large Christmas markets of Vienna as well as the more intimate markets of Bratislava, Passau and Salzburg. Enjoy a tasty gingerbread making demonstration and see floral displays come to life in a special decorating workshop. Witness the enchanting sounds of the region with an organ recital at the Benedictine Gottweig Abbey and an evening Mozart and Strauss concert in Vienna.

Prices start at \$2,549 per person, including airfare and 20 meals. Departures are available November 29 and December 6, 13 and 20.

**Alpine Christmas Markets – 9 days**

A tour with a sampling of holiday treats. Visit Europe's largest Christmas market in Strasbourg, enjoy a Christmas show given by local residents and relax aboard a horse-drawn sleigh ride. Stops at Swarovski crystal in Innsbruck and Lake Titisee – famous home of handmade cuckoo clocks – provide even more holiday shopping opportunities. The tour includes stays in Munich, Innsbruck, the Black Forest and Rhineland.

Prices start at \$2,249 per person, including airfare and 12 meals, with departures available December 1, 5, 8 and 12.

**German Christmas Markets – 10 days**

Here's a chance to explore the best of Germany's Christkinklemarkets as you explore five famous locations, including the country's oldest, the Striezelmarkt that dates back to 1434. Another, the Leipzig Market, is the inspirational location for Goethe's "Feast." Then put up your feet as you drive through the Bavarian Alps to see soaring mountains, quaint villages and fairytale castles. Sightseeing tours of Berlin, Dresden and Munich will give you a chance to see how the locals celebrate the holidays.

Prices start at \$2,579 per person, including airfare and 12 meals. Departures are available November 29 and December 6 and 13.

Prices are all-inclusive and include a full-time Tour Director who guides your entire trip, providing you with background and knowledge on every place you see. Additional savings may be available with promotions like the Early Booking Discount, so ask when booking your trip.

"An escorted tour is simply one of the best values right now for travel to Europe," Sohlstrom explains. "We are seeing growing numbers of travelers who are discovering that for the full experience we offer, it is hard to beat the price any other way."

For more information on the Christmas markets tours or to request a free catalog containing a complete listing of all tours, departure dates and prices, call 1-888-522-3950 or visit [www.getours.com](http://www.getours.com). The Web site also features current discounts and promotions.

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## **Grand European Tours**

For nearly 30 years, Grand European Tours has provided travelers with an easy and enriching way to travel through their escorted tours. With over 45 itineraries to Europe and beyond, every trip includes a team of travel experts to guide your journey and help you discover the gems of each destination. Grand European Tours even offers their GET Price Guarantee which locks in the price of your tour when you pay in full. For more information, visit [www.getours.com](http://www.getours.com) or call 1-800-522-5545.