



**MSU Concert Choral Friends & Family
Tour to Germany and Paris
May 24 - June 2, 2012
Day-by-day Itinerary**

Subject to change based on final confirmation of MSU Choral concerts

Thursday, May 24 Departure

Arrive at *JFK International Airport*, New York (group flight gateway airport) at least 2 ½ hours in advance of scheduled departure time for check-in for your non-stop overnight flight to Germany.

Friday, May 25 Arrival/Minden-Hannover area

Guten Tag! Willkommen in Deutschland! Scheduled morning arrival at *Frankfurt International Airport*. After claiming your luggage and clearing Customs and Immigration, you'll be met by your English-speaking German tour escort and transfer by private motorcoach to the Minden / Hannover area. Afternoon arrival and check in at your hotel, with some free time. Early group dinner and option to attend the MSU Choral **concert** this evening.

Saturday, May 26 Mainz area

After breakfast at your hotel, you'll have a morning sightseeing tour of **Hameln**. Built on the banks of the *Weser River*, *Hameln* (German spelling) gained fame as the home of the celebrated rat catcher immortalized by Goethe and Robert Browning as the "*Pied Piper*". In the story, the Pied Piper rid the town of its rats but when the townfolk refused to pay him, he played a different tune, luring all the children of the town through a mysterious door in a hill, never to be seen again. The *Rattenfängerhaus* (Rat-catcher's house) has frescoes depicting the tale. You'll see many other fine houses, built in the *Weser Renaissance* style dating from the late 16th century.

Check out of your hotel and board your coach to travel to the Rhine Valley. Your hotel for the next three nights will be in the Mainz / Wiesbaden area. Check in, followed by group dinner.



Sunday, May 27 Limburg/Mainz area
Whitsun (Pentecost) Sunday

Breakfast at your hotel. In the morning enjoy a guided walking tour of **Mainz**. You'll see *St. Martin's Cathedral*, one of the most important Catholic cathedrals in Germany. Visit the *World Museum of Printing* to trace the history of native son Johannes Gutenberg's world-famous invention and to see the treasured Gutenberg Bible. Afterwards you'll travel to one of the nearby wine growing villages for a winery tour and wine tasting (lunch included).

In the late afternoon transfer to **Limburg**, situated on the picturesque banks of the *River Lahn*. Limburg's historic old town has some remarkably well-preserved

155 W. 72nd Street, Suite 302, New York, NY 10023
Tel: 212-580-0760 Fax: 212-874-4554 info@Concept-Tours.com

medieval architecture, including many ornately decorated half-timbered buildings dating from the 13th to 18th centuries. The seven-towered *St. George's Cathedral* (completed around 1280) dominates Limburg's skyline. Dinner on your own in Limburg. Attend the evening **concert** of the MSU Chorale in Limburg, then return to your Mainz (area) hotel for overnight.

Monday, May 28 **Mainz or Karlsruhe area**

Whitsun Holiday – shops are closed

Breakfast at your hotel. Then you're off on a sightseeing tour of the beautiful Rhine River valley. Travel to **Lorch**, where you will embark on a Rhine cruise taking you along the most scenic stretch of the river past the famous *Lorelei* rock. Depending on the choir's concert arrangements for tonight you will travel to Maulbronn in the afternoon to visit the *Abbey (UNESCO World Heritage Site)* and to attend the MSU Chorale's evening **concert** at the Abbey (pending confirmation).

Group dinner and overnight.

Tuesday, May 29 **Paris**

Check out of your German hotel after breakfast and load the coach for your transfer to Paris, France.

Paris, the quintessential European city, is famed for its historical landmarks and cutting-edge fashion. With more than two million residents, Paris is a densely populated city served by a superb subway (Metro) system. Your panoramic tour of this grand city will include the *avenue Champs Elysées*. Lined on either side with luxury shops, cafes and clubs, this wide boulevard is acclaimed as "the most beautiful avenue in the world" by proud Parisians. At the end of the Champs Elysées you'll find the majestic *Arc de Triomphe*, commissioned in 1806 by the legendary Napoleon. Continue on to the city's largest square, the *Place de la Concorde*. Designed in 1775, the *Place* is filled with fountains and statues and ringed by opulent stone buildings

On arrival, check in at your hotel and meet your French tour escort. Group dinner tonight.



Wednesday, May 30 **Paris**

Today you'll have a brief walking tour of the *Ile de la Cité*. You'll see the *Cathédrale de Notre Dame*, whose structure dates from the 12th-14th centuries and is renowned for the gargoyles and grotesques that adorn its exterior. While inside, be sure to view the three extravagant *Rose Windows*, rich with color.

Attend the MSU Chorale **concert** at *La Madeleine* church this afternoon.

Group dinner following the concert, with the balance of the evening free. Consider a trip to the top of Paris' tallest structure, the *Eiffel Tower*, to see for yourself why Paris is known as the *Ville Lumière (City of Lights)*. In addition to offering a wonderful vantage point to view the city's lights, the Tower itself has offered a stunning light show nightly since New Year's 2000, when thousands of twinkling lights were installed.

Thursday, May 31

Versailles/Chartres/Paris

Excursion today. First you'll have a guided visit to *Versailles*, the magnificent residence of the "Sun King" Louis XIV who lived, entertained and governed there on a grand scale. You'll then visit the lovely city of **Chartres**.



Upon arrival you'll have a brief walking tour through the medieval cobblestone lanes of the *Vieux Quartiers* (Old Town). You will have also a guided tour of the magnificent *Cathedrale Notre-Dame de Chartres*. When a huge fire in 1194 devastated the church that previously stood on the site, the Chartres community was inspired to build a new cathedral. Called the "French Acropolis" by Rodin, this magnificent two-spired Gothic cathedral is one of the architectural masterpieces of the Middle Ages.

The 176 glorious stained-glass windows inside (more than 3,000 square yards of glass!) attest to the talents of the French craftsmen of medieval times.

Attend the MSU Chorale afternoon **concert** at *Chartres Cathedral*.

Return to Paris, with the evening at leisure.

Friday, June 1

Paris

On your final day in Paris you'll have a guided visit to the *Louvre Museum*, with its I.M. Pei-designed pyramid entrance. There you will see some of the great icons of art history, including Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Michelangelo's *Slave*, the *Venus de Milo*, and an impressive collection of *Egyptian artifacts*.



Free time to explore some of Paris' many other attractions. For a taste of medieval history, visit the *Cluny Museum*, home to an outstanding collection of European medieval art including the famous *Lady and the Unicorn* tapestries. Visit sublime *Sainte-Chapelle*, located in the central courtyard of the *Palais de la Cit\u00e9* (residence of the French kings from the 10th – 14th centuries, now home to the Paris law courts and the notorious *Conciergerie*). Dedicated in 1248, Ste-Chapelle was constructed by King Louis IX to house the Crown of Thorns and other Christian relics. A masterpiece of Gothic architecture, the upper chapel is famed for its stained glass windows, which bathe the sanctuary in an exquisite array of colors on sunny days. Explore the neighborhood of *Montmartre* with its monolithic *Sacre Coeur Basilica* and the *Place du Tertre* where local artists congregate. Stop at *D'Orsay Museum* for its amazing collection of Impressionist paintings. Other options include the *Rodin Museum*, *Les Invalides* (where Napoleon is buried), the *Tuileries* and *Luxembourg Gardens*.

Tonight you'll enjoy a **festive farewell dinner** with the MSU Concert Chorale at a fine Parisian restaurant to celebrate your tour!

Saturday, June 2

Fly home

Transfer by private coach to *Charles de Gaulle Airport* for your return flight to *JFK Airport*, NYC. Bid "a bientot" to your escort and check in. On arrival in NY, claim your bags and clear Customs and Immigration.

Welcome home!