



The Moselle River loops around vineyards in Trittenheim, Germany.



Storybook Settings

A CRUISE ON THE RHINE, MAIN AND MOSELLE REVEALS CENTURIES OF GERMAN TRADITION **BY LESLIE FORSBERG**



WE'VE CLIMBED the cobbled riverside hill to Bamberg's 13th century cathedral and adjacent rose garden, its formal paths and vivid blooms in an orderly grid, in contrast to the meandering streets and sinuous river below, veiled in morning mist like a bride. ¶ Stepping through a stone archway into a large square, our guide, Moritz, motions our group of 30 to take a

closer look at ornate carvings in the stonework. On the left, a recumbent man is accompanied by a sleeping dog. To the right, a cherub appears to pinch the toe of a woman. "It's said that the sleeping man and dog signify the Main River, and the cherub pinching the woman shows the liveliness of the Regnitz," he says; the Regnitz River dashes through the heart of the city. On a 12-day Cities of Light Viking river journey through Germany with my 22-year-old daughter, Kirsten, we

come to know the moods and scenic splendors of the Main, the Rhine and the Moselle with every ripple that shimmies beneath the hull of our floating home, the luxurious *Viking Idun*. While the tour begins in Paris and ends in Prague, we embark the 95-state-room ship in Bamberg and disembark in Trier, with buses filling in the gaps. ¶ The cruise wends its way through Germany's verdant heartland, passing through 43 locks along its route. Medieval villages, historic

castles, proud palaces and lush vineyards abound—as do six UNESCO World Heritage sites: places so remarkable and drenched in history that visitors come from around the globe to experience them. But that doesn't mean these places are museum relics. They're very much thriving communities, with lively market squares, friendly merchants selling handicrafts and designer goods, and sidewalk cafes ideal for quaffing glasses of locally made beer or wine. »

