



NEW TO **RIVER CRUISE** GUIDE



Cruise through the heart of your destination

cruising.org

New to River Cruise Guide

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AmaWaterways



HELLO THERE!

One of my first jobs, some years ago, was as a travel agent – selling holidays over the phone, and trying to keep up with destinations, airports and resorts through training and personal recommendations. As cruise holidays were starting to get more popular, so were the number of enquiries – and I didn't really know where to start...

With that in mind, I am delighted to offer you the CLIA New to River Cruise Guide, packed with useful advice from experts, resource material and guidance – created to help with your enquiries, to give you key information at your fingertips, and to add to the huge amount of resources we already offer via cruising.org.

CLIA is here to offer you unique resources, certified learning and inspiring events – so keep CLIA close, and with it our cruise community of over 14 River Cruise Operators. We hope to see you at a CLIA event soon, and in the meantime, happy river cruising!

ANDY HARMER
Managing Director
CLIA UK & Ireland

An Introduction to Global River Cruising



WE RIVER CRUISE

River cruising is growing in popularity, year on year. Having started as a small niche, based around a limited number of sailings, it has grown into a key market in its own right.

Europe accounts for the lion's share of sailings led by the Rhine and Danube rivers, but the region has grown increasingly diverse as it expanded from its Germanic roots to encompass rivers in France, Portugal and Italy.

On the fringes sit the Russian waterways, where such sailings have become a popular way to visit the country's foremost cities and lesser-known hinterland.

But it is Asia that has become the rising star of the river cruising world in recent years with Mekong sailings through Vietnam and Cambodia sparking the imagination of travellers, along with Myanmar's Irrawaddy River and India's holy river, the Ganges.

Paddle-steamer cruises capturing the romance of The Big Muddy, namely the Mississippi, have propelled the USA on to the river cruise scene, while in South America Amazon cruises have injected a heady flavour of rainforest adventures.

The market continues to grow with floating safari cruises on Africa's Chobe River, while lesser-known arteries such as India's Brahmaputra and Myanmar's Chindwin rivers provide a route into remote regions rarely visited by tourists.

But the sector's growth hasn't only been spurred by newcomers. One long established favourite making a comeback is Egypt's Nile, whose evocative mix of ancient antiquities and Arabian customs is proving more popular than ever.

Top reasons to take a river cruise

Floating city break – sailings along Europe’s rivers take guests into the heart of the Continent’s most beautiful and historical cities, including Budapest, Bratislava and Vienna on the Danube; Cologne and Strasbourg on the Rhine; Lyon on the Rhône; and Paris and Rouen on the Seine.

Into the wilderness – far-flung waterways enable passengers to delve into depths of the jungle along the Amazon; through the tropical landscapes along the Mekong in Vietnam and Cambodia; past golden temples gleaming alongside the Irrawaddy and Chindwin rivers in Myanmar; and headlong into the cultural marvels of the Ganges.

Active and relaxing – sitting on deck and admiring the constantly-changing views is one of the biggest pleasures of river cruising, but then so is exploring ashore on cycling trips, hiking treks, walking excursions and even jogging tours. Enthusiasts can also make a splash on kayaking and canoeing outings.

Sociable and intimate – with the largest vessels taking up to 200 passengers and the smallest accommodating just a handful of guests, river cruising resembles more a floating house party where the camaraderie flows as smoothly as the waterways thanks to a relaxed ambience that lends itself to convivial conversation.



A family affair – river cruising is crossing the generational divide thanks to dedicated sailings and activities aimed at younger cruisers. Specially-designed family cabins, children’s clubs and special child prices are helping to woo more youngsters and their parents, along with multi-generational groups where grandparents come along too.

Classily casual – guests don’t need to pack their poshest glad-rags as there are no black-tie events and the dress code is as laidback as the onboard lifestyle. Exclusive nights at private concerts ashore and the Captain’s dinner, often on the penultimate evening, are the main occasions that call for smarter attire.

Top marks for value – while river cruise prices are generally higher than for ocean cruises, much more is included. In addition to accommodation and food, rates often include drinks either with meals or 24/7, free wifi, gratuities, shore excursions and activities.



Soak up the views – river sailings offer some of the best vantage points, from the dramatic castle-topped hills of the Unesco-listed Rhine Gorge to the Gothic glories of Budapest’s parliament building (beautifully illuminated at night) and the majestic Iron Gate Gorge east of Belgrade.

Ripe for exploring – excursions tend to be informative and offer a cultural flavour of the destinations visited with walking tours a popular mainstay, plus concerts and recitals, wine-tastings, cookery classes and trips to local points of interest, museums and castles.

Culinary feasts – expect to dine royally on river cruises with haute cuisine three or four-course dinners that follow expansive breakfasts and lunches, plus the chance to top-up in-between with a mid-morning snack and afternoon tea. Early risers can dip in before breakfast with early-morning coffee and pastries too.

Smooth sailing – nervous sailors or those who suffer from seasickness do not need to worry about rough conditions on rivers. Vessels tend to sail during the evening and moor up late at night, so as not to disturb guests, before starting off again early the following morning.



Regional Overview - Central Europe

Europe is the undisputed leader of the river cruising industry, dominated by the Rhine and Danube that pass through some of the continent's most spectacular scenery and landmark cities.



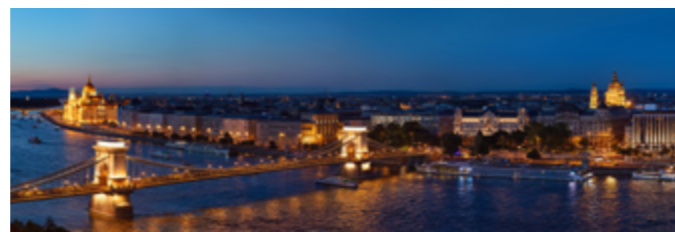
The Rhine, which runs from Switzerland through France and Germany, flowing into the North Sea at Amsterdam – where many sailings start or finish – passes through Strasbourg, Koblenz, Rudesheim, Cologne and the stunning Rhine Gorge with its procession of hilltop castles.

Additionally, there are sailings on the Rhine and nearby waterways through the Netherlands and Belgium to see the windmills and, in season, the glorious spring colours of the Dutch bulbfields.

The Danube flows from Germany's Black Forest to Romania where it joins the Black Sea. Cruises are normally split between the Upper Danube, the section between Hungary's capital Budapest and the German towns of Passau or Vilshofen; and the Lower Danube, between Budapest and Romania's capital Bucharest where a highlight is the Iron Gate Gorge on the country's border with Serbia.

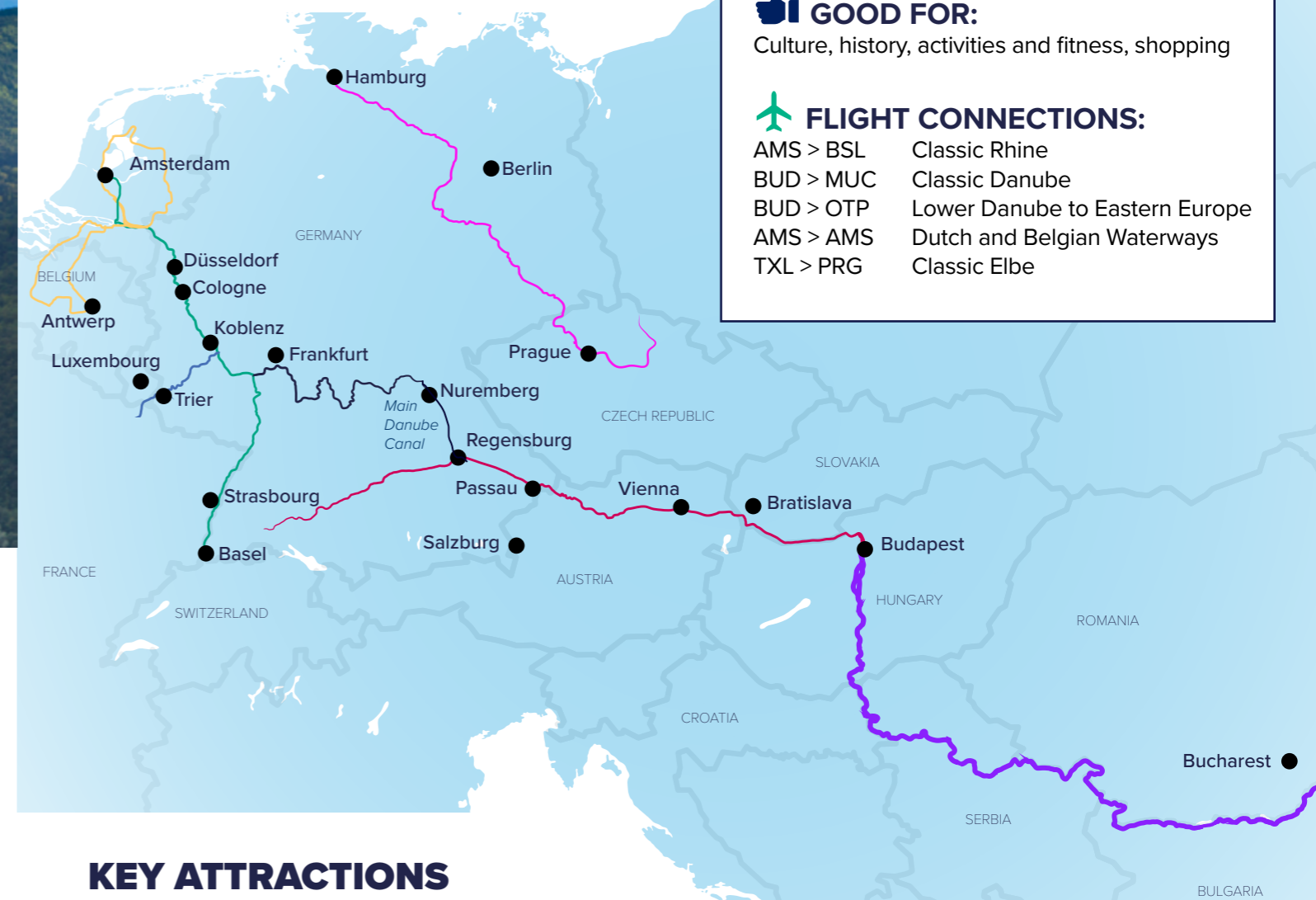
Both rivers are linked by the Main Danube Canal, making it possible to sail their length from Amsterdam to the Black Sea, or vice-versa. There are also cruises on Rhine tributaries, such as the Moselle which passes through Trier and Cochem in Germany, and the Main, which flows through Nuremberg.

The Elbe runs from the Czech Republic through Germany, from where guests can visit Prague and Berlin, along with the German cities of Wittenberg, Meissen and Dresden. Though this river is prone to low water levels, which can disrupt sailings.



RIVERS

- Rhine
- Upper Danube
- Lower Danube
- Elbe
- Main
- Moselle
- Dutch & Belgian Waterways



CRUISING SEASON:
March until November, though Christmas market sailings and festive season cruises run in November and December.

SELLING POINTS:
Varied cities that lend themselves to cruise-and-stay; stacks of history; picturesque scenery.

GOOD FOR:
Culture, history, activities and fitness, shopping

FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:

AMS > BSL	Classic Rhine
BUD > MUC	Classic Danube
BUD > OTP	Lower Danube to Eastern Europe
AMS > AMS	Dutch and Belgian Waterways
TXL > PRG	Classic Elbe

KEY ATTRACTIONS



Dutch & Belgian Waterways:
Keukenhof Gardens
A not-to-be-missed riot of colour every spring, as seven million tulip, daffodil and orchid bulbs burst into life.



Rhine:
The Rhine Gorge
The popular name for the Upper Middle Rhine Valley, a 65 km section of the Rhine in Germany.



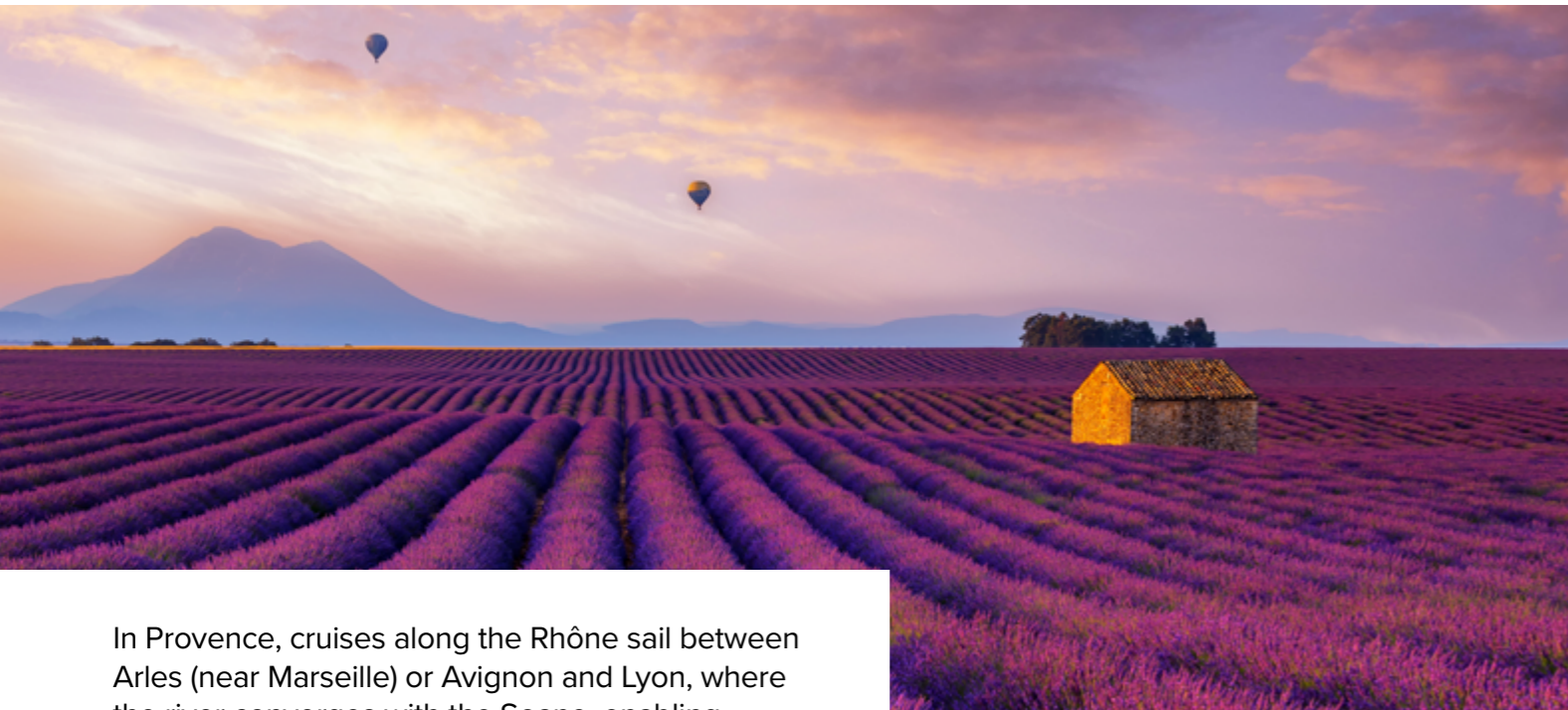
Lower Danube:
The Iron Gate Gorge
It forms part of the boundary between Serbia and Romania on the Danube.



Upper Danube:
Wachau Valley, Austria.

Regional Overview - France

Its most famous river is the Seine, and cruises operate between Paris, through Normandy towards the pretty coastal port of Honfleur, with stops enroute including the historic city of Rouen and Vernon, famous for the gardens of impressionist painter Claude Monet at nearby Giverny.



In Provence, cruises along the Rhône sail between Arles (near Marseille) or Avignon and Lyon, where the river converges with the Soane, enabling vessels to sail northwards into Burgundy.

Notable stops include historic Avignon, Tournon and the Roman city of Vienne.

Bordeaux is an up-and-coming spot for cruises along the Garonne, Gironde and Dordogne rivers into the heart of wine country with stops including Bergerac, Bordeaux and St Emilion, while another lesser-known spot is the Loire River where round-trip sailings from Nantes showcase the grandeur of the valley's famous chateaux.

Another French fancy are barging holidays that sail along the country's rivers and canals, offering a leisurely slice of Gallic life on atmospheric craft that hold anything from a handful of guests up to around 25. Such small groups guarantee a house-party style ambience with attentive service and exclusive excursions. Barges can be rustic and luxurious, with some offering high-class cuisine and fine wines to match.

 **CRUISING SEASON:**
March to November

 **SELLING POINTS:**
Varied cities that lend themselves to cruise-and-stay; stacks of history; picturesque scenery.

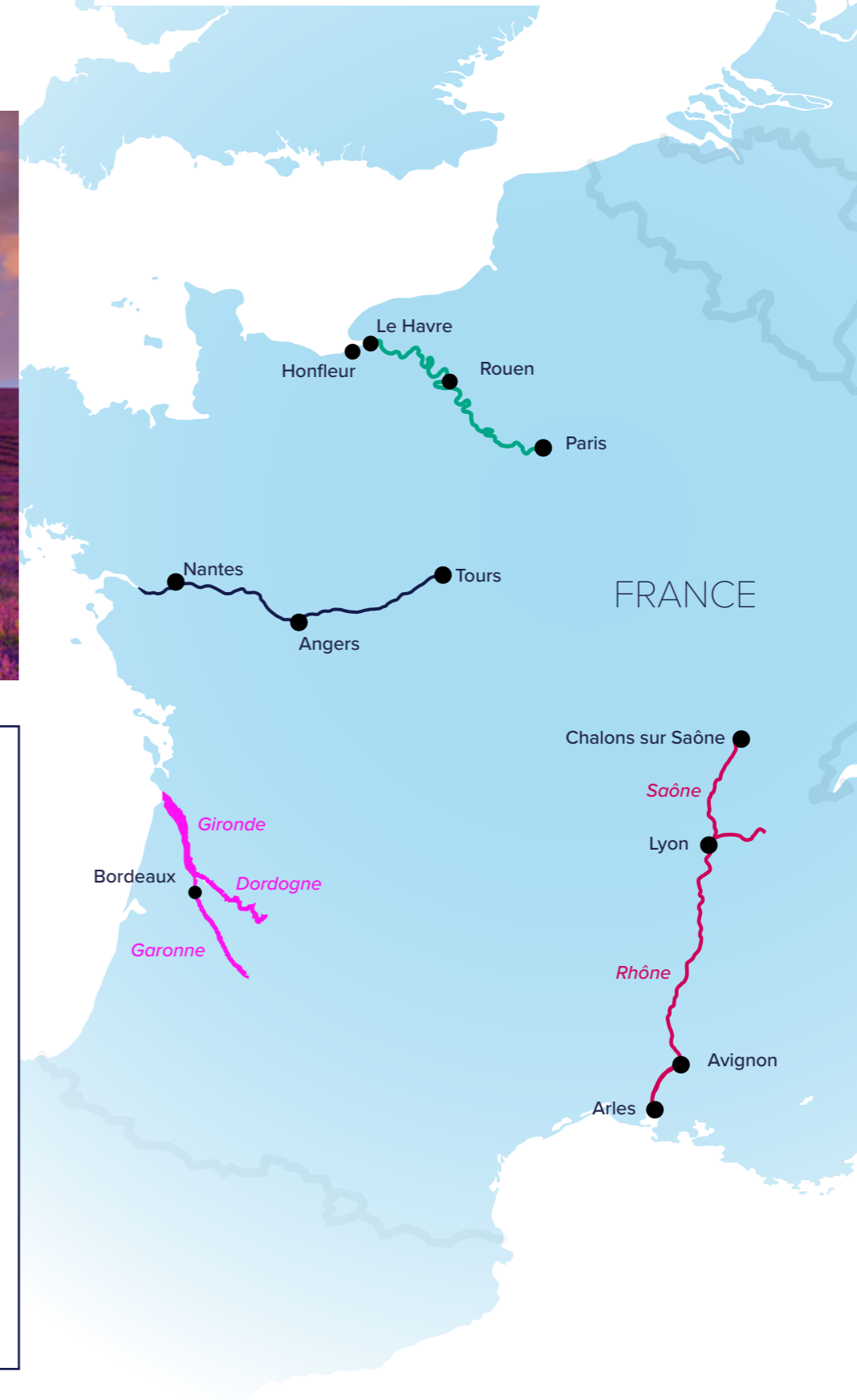
 **GOOD FOR:**
Francophiles, wine-lovers, French cuisine, culture, history, architecture

 **FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:**

CDG > CDG	Classic Seine
MRS > LYS	Classic Rhône
BOD > BOD	Classic Bordeaux
NTE > NTE	Classic Loire

RIVERS

-  Seine
-  Rhône & Saône
-  Garonne, Gironde, Dordogne
-  Loire



KEY ATTRACTIONS



Seine:
Normandy Landing Beaches



Seine:
Monet's gardens at Giverny



Loire:
Nantes - castles and chateaux



Bordeaux:
St Emilion



Rhône & Saône:
Avignon - Palais des Papes

Regional Overview - Portugal & Spain

Portugal's Douro River, navigable from Vega de Terron on the Spanish border to the coast at Porto, memorably carves through the spectacular Douro Valley and the heart of port wine country, with tours to the Spanish city of Salamanca, and Vila Real to see the baroque Mateus Palace (famously featured on bottles of Mateus Rose wine).

Sailings start and end in Porto, cruising upriver to the border and retracing the route back to the city.



 **CRUISING SEASON:**
March to November with hot summers

 **SELLING POINTS:**
A contrast to the city-focused itineraries of other European river cruises with an emphasis on scenic cruising; beautiful cities of Porto and Salamanca; visits to wineries or quintas.

 **GOOD FOR:**
Beautiful scenery, relaxed pace, wine and port lovers, Portuguese cuisine, culture, history, architecture.

 **FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:**
OPO > OPO Classic Douro

KEY ATTRACTIONS



Douro:
Port houses of Gaia across the river from Porto



Douro:
The cathedral of Salamanca, Spain






Douro:
Mateus Palace, Portugal



Douro:
Porto, Portugal

RIVERS

-  Douro
-  Guadalquivir
-  Guadiana



In Spain, cruises along the Guadalquivir and Guadiana rivers open up the country's southern region of Andalucia – famous for its evocative mix of flamenco and fiestas, while overflowing with history represented by the grand cities of Seville, Cadiz, Cordoba and the Moorish Alhambra Palace in Granada.

Regional Overview - Italy

Italy's longest river, the Po, flows into the Adriatic near Venice, though only part of it is used for river cruising. The longest section, between the Venetian Lagoon and along the Bianco Canal through the Po Valley to the Renaissance city of Mantua, can only be accessed by smaller craft that ply this route. Sailings also feature coach trips to Padua, Bologna and Verona, but the main attraction is the chance to explore Venice and its islands.



KEY ATTRactions



Po: Venetian Lagoon



Po: Verona - Roman amphitheatre which stages opera performances.

RIVERS

Po

CRUISING SEASON:

February to November

SELLING POINTS:

Ideal way to explore the Venetian Lagoon; visit Venice's islands such as Murano and Burano; tick off historic and medieval Italian cities such as Ravenna and Ferrara.

GOOD FOR:

Italian la dolce vita, history, culture, an alternative taste of Venice

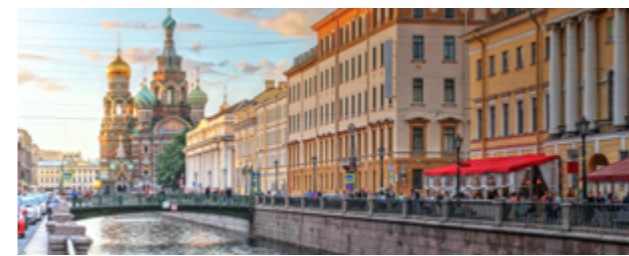
FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:

VCE > VCE Classic Po

Regional Overview - Russia

While not strictly Europe, the waterways of Russia are a key cruising ground that not only showcases the architectural and historical wonders of Moscow and St Petersburg, but the country's unexplored hinterland. Cruises generally sail between these two cities, following different waterways that make up the route, with points of interest including Uglich, one of Russia's oldest cities, and Yaroslavl, known for its cathedrals and churches. New cruise destinations in the Yenisei and from Rostov-on-Don started in 2020. Clients need visas that must be arranged in advance.

KEY ATTRactions



Russian Waterways: Griboedova Canal with Church on Spilled Blood (or Resurrection Church of Our Saviour) in St Petersburg, Russia



Russian Waterways: Moscow Kremlin, Russia



RIVERS

Russian Waterways

RUSSIA

CRUISING SEASON:

May to October

SELLING POINTS:

Cruises often include overnight stops in Russia and St Petersburg, allowing two days to sightsee or spend an evening at St Petersburg's Bolshoi Ballet; sailing through Russia's lesser-known heartlands.

GOOD FOR:

Russian culture and heritage; notable World War II history; long daylight hours in June and July marked by festivities of the White Nights season

FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:

MOW > LED – Classic Moscow-St Petersburg

Regional Overview - American river cruising

The Mississippi unlocks the heart of America's Southern States with sailings that explore its rich musical heritage, Civil War battlefields plus the slave history of the cotton plantations. Most cruises are between Memphis and New Orleans, though longer itineraries take in the Upper Mississippi between St Louis and St Paul.



American Cruise Lines

The relatively unknown Columbia and Snake rivers carve through the country's north-west, following the route taken by American explorers Lewis and Clark 200 years ago.

Sailings are between Portland in Oregon and Clarkston in Washington State, from where passengers can admire the contrasting scenery and trace the region's history.



Mississippi: French Quarter, New Orleans



CRUISING SEASON:

February to June and October-December for the Lower Mississippi and July-October for Upper Mississippi; April to November for the Columbia & Snake rivers.



SELLING POINTS:

Mississippi: Links to Elvis in Memphis, musical heritage of Memphis and New Orleans, civil rights history, grand antebellum mansions.

Columbia & Snake: pioneering history of the Oregon Trail, contrasting scenery that ranges from verdant landscapes to desert.



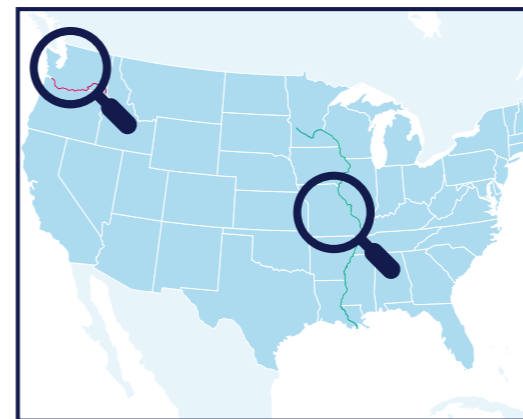
GOOD FOR:

American culture and history; musical heritage of the Mississippi; hallmark cities, hinterland scenery



FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:

MSY > MSY	Classic Mississippi
MEM > MSY	Lower Mississippi
STL > MSP	Upper Mississippi
PDX > LWS	Classic Columbia and Snake rivers



RIVERS

- Mississippi
- Columbia and Snake

KEY ATTRACTIONS



Columbia & Snake: Oregon Trail



Columbia & Snake: Portland, Oregon, USA



Mississippi: The Crescent City Connection Bridge on the Mississippi River and downtown New Orleans, Louisiana



Mississippi: The mighty Mississippi River aerial view





Ganges: Taj Mahal. An immense mausoleum of white marble, built in Agra between 1631 and 1648.

The cultural appeal of India's Ganges River is attracting more interest and sailings are often combined with the Golden Triangle, while the lesser-known Brahmaputra in Assam is noted for wildlife, tea plantations and views to the Himalayas.

The most famous river in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) is the Irrawaddy, where the thousands of temples of Bagan are one of the main draws in addition to the cities of Yangon and Mandalay. Further north in the country is the Chindwin River, which takes travellers into more remote areas leading to the Indian border.

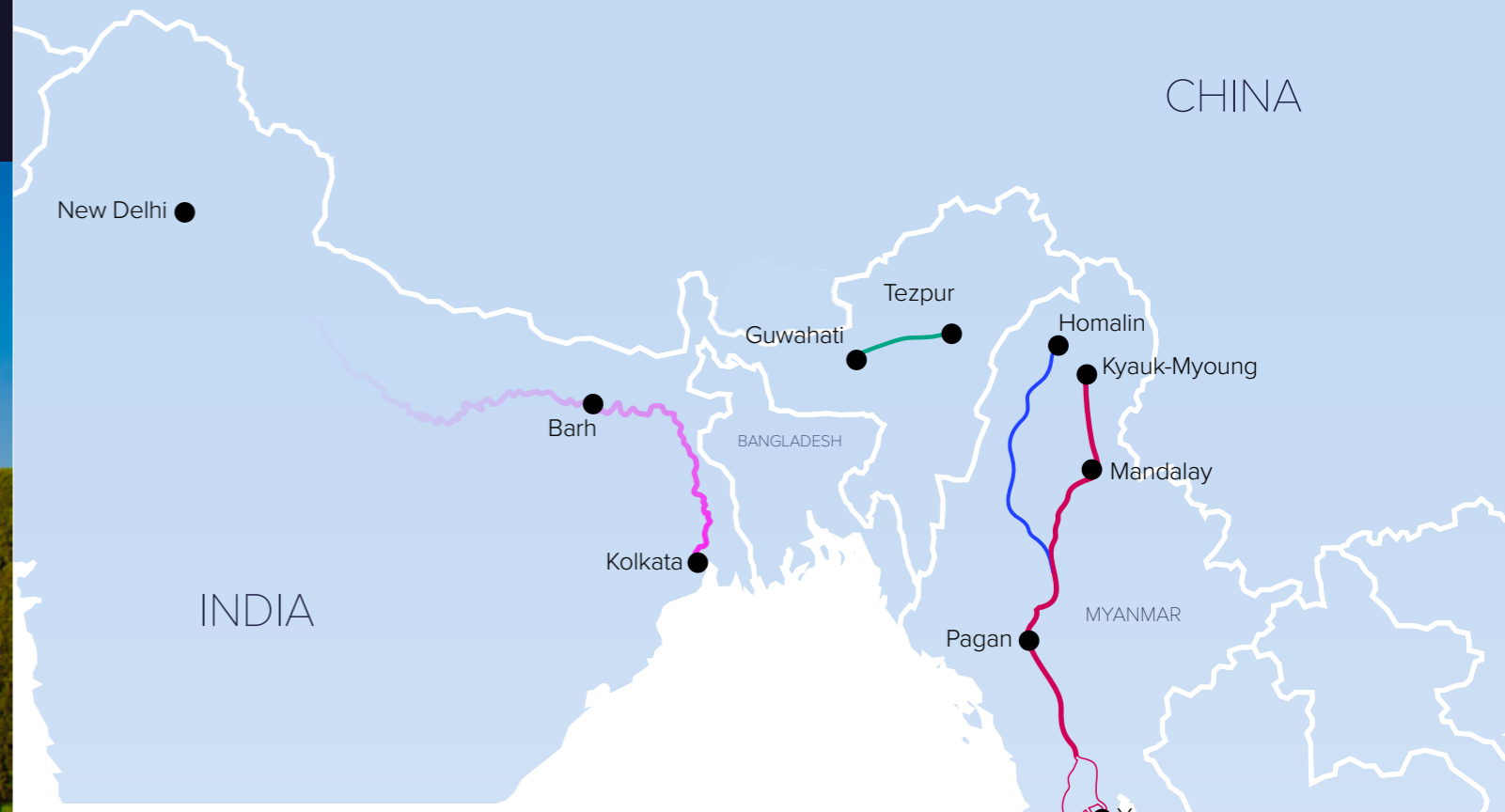
 **CRUISING SEASON:**
In India, the best time is generally between October and April. In Myanmar, the main season is from September to April, though some longer Chindwin sailings depart in August.

 **SELLING POINTS:**
Heading off the beaten track to areas where tourists rarely visit, strong culture, tribal traditions and wartime history of Myanmar, enchanting people.

 **GOOD FOR:**
Tropical lush scenery, remote villages, religious culture, friendly locals, colonial and war history

 **FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:**

JRH > GAU	Classic Brahmaputra
CCU > DEL	Classic Ganges
RGN > RGN	Classic Irrawaddy
MDL > HOX	Classic Chindwin



KEY ATTRACTIONS



Brahmaputra:
Kolkata, Guwahati, Kaziranga National Park, and it can be combined with the Golden Triangle.



Ganges:
Showing the colorful traditional clothing and Hindu religious ritual of bathing in the Ganges River from the ancient ghats of Varanasi.



Irrawaddy:
Yangon and the magnificent Shwedagon Pagoda, Mandalay and the U Bein teak bridge, Bagan and its temples, pagodas and stupas.



Chindwin:
Mandalay, teak monasteries of Mingkin, colonial history of Mawlaik, World War II history of Sitthaung.

RIVERS

- Brahmaputra
- Ganges
- Irrawaddy
- Chindwin

Exotic River cruising - East Asia

The evocative experience of cruising through Asia has brought added cachet to sailings here. The Lower Mekong has become increasingly popular for sailings between Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam and the Cambodian city Siem Reap, best known for the ancient temples of Angkor.

The Upper Mekong is a lesser-known stretch of this river with sailings through Laos that generally travel between its capital Vientiane and Chiang Saen in Thailand, with stops at remote villages.

Cruises along China's Yangtze River through the famous Three Gorges are a popular mainstay as part of longer tours featuring Beijing, Xian and Shanghai, with sailings generally three or four nights long.



Lower Mekong: The massive temple complex of Angkor Wat in Siem Reap, Cambodia, is the world's largest religious monument.

CRUISING SEASON:

Mekong sailings operate for most of the year, though November to January is considered the optimum time. The main season for Yangtze cruises is from April to October.

SELLING POINTS:

Several destinations in one trip, cultural immersion, less explored areas, fascinating history, Unesco World Heritage treasures

GOOD FOR:

Centuries-old temples, buzzing cities, remote villages, natural and man-made wonders, lush scenery and friendly inhabitants

FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:

SGN > REP	Classic Lower Mekong
PVG > PEK	Classic Yangtze
VTE > CEI	Classic Upper Mekong

RIVERS

-  Lower Mekong
-  Yangtze
-  Upper Mekong

KEY ATTRACTIONS



Lower Mekong: Ho Chi Minh City, Siem Reap, Phnom Penh, **floating markets**, Buddhist temples.

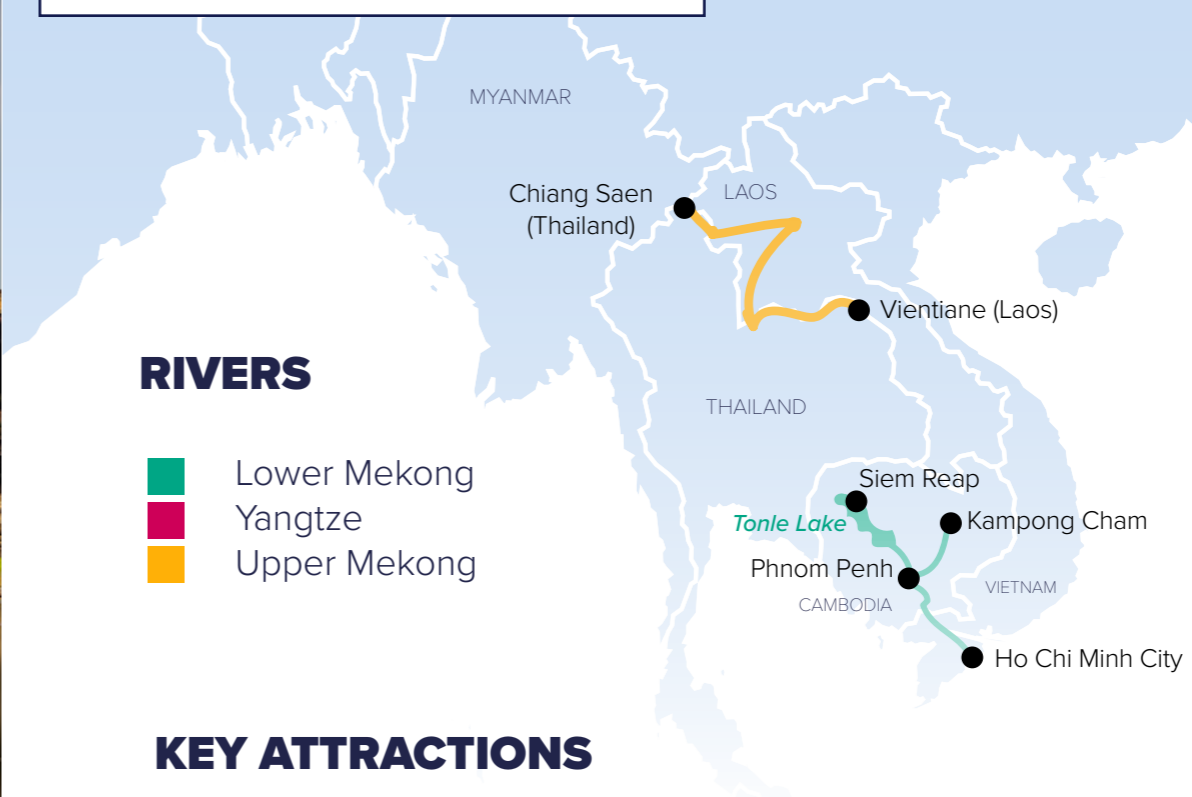


Yangtze: Beijing and the Great Wall, Xian and the Terracotta Warriors, **Shanghai**, Three Gorges and the Three Gorges Dam.



Upper Mekong: Vientiane, **Luang Prabang**, Chiang Saen, Pak Ou Caves.

CHINA



Exotic River cruising - South America

The Amazon is the legendary river on this continent and its Peruvian stretch is better suited to river cruises as it is narrower and quieter, offering rainforest adventures, colourful birdlife and indigenous tribes who live along its banks. Sailings generally start and finish in the Peruvian city of Iquitos and explore Amazon tributaries and lakes.



Amazon: Amazon Rainforest Peru, South America.



CRUISING SEASON:

Year-round

SELLING POINTS:

Jungle trips by boat and on foot, wildlife spotting, adventurous activities

GOOD FOR:

Getting off the beaten track, discovering remote villages, indigenous cultures and exotic flora and fauna

FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:

IQT > IQT Classic Peruvian Amazon



Exotic River cruising - Africa

Egypt is where North Africa meets the Middle East and its famous Nile River has been a longstanding favourite that is making a strong comeback after political unrest led to its decline. Most cruises are between Luxor and Aswan with highlights including the Valley of the Kings and notable temples including Karnak and Edfu.

In sub-Saharan Africa, sailings along the Chobe River in Botswana resembles a floating safari with superb wildlife viewing opportunities. This is also the case for cruises on Zimbabwe's Lake Kariba where some itineraries finish with a visit to Victoria Falls.



CRUISING SEASON:

October to April for the Nile and year-round for the Chobe, though high season is April-November



SELLING POINTS:

Unforgettable experiences on the Nile of exploring Ancient Egyptian antiquities, or spotting elephants, leopards and hippos against the African landscape on the Chobe or Lake Kariba



GOOD FOR:

Bucket list moments, cultural contrasts, remote settlements, ancient antiquities on the Nile and African safari game drives on the Chobe



FLIGHT CONNECTIONS:

LXR > LXR Classic Nile
JNB > JNB Classic Chobe

KEY ATTRACTIONS

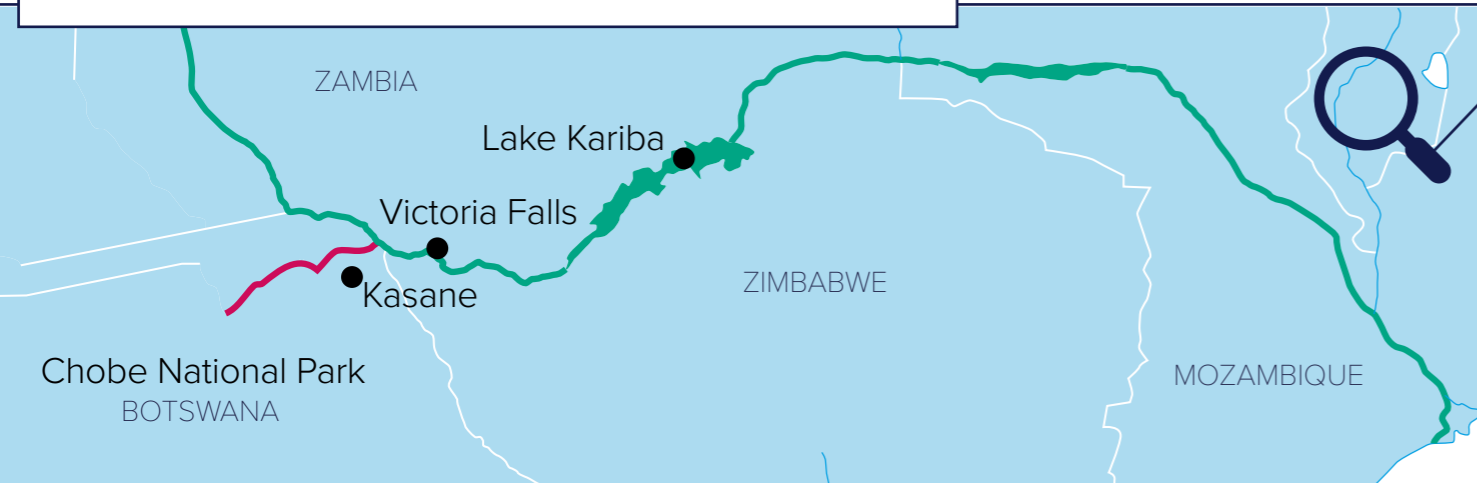


Zambezi River: Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe



Zambezi River: Victoria Falls, Zambia

RIVERS ■ Zambezi ■ Chobe



Nile: Aswan

KEY ATTRACTIONS

RIVERS ■ Nile

KEY ATTRACTIONS

- Nile: Horus Temple, Edfu
- Nile: Valley of the Kings
- Nile: Karnak Temple



Dining Experiences

Quality rather than quantity is the mantra when it comes to the culinary appeal of river cruises.

Lack of space means river ships cannot match the choice and variety of dining venues found on ocean vessels but, instead, they offer a more select and exclusive experience.

Restaurants on river ships are smaller, giving them a more upmarket ambience and there's more chance of being able to bag a prime spot by the window as seating is not pre-allocated.

Many river cruise companies still have set dining times, particularly for evening meals, though some offer more flexibility with a time window when guests can arrive.

River vessels increasingly have additional dining venues that supplement the main restaurant. These are generally smaller, with some adopting a more casual atmosphere and serving lighter bites or, alternatively, focusing on haute cuisine and a more upscale feel.

They often require reservations and there may be limits on how many times passengers can dine there during a sailing. There may also be an extra charge, but aside from this, all food is generally included.

Another factor that marks out river cruises is the complimentary wine, beer and soft drinks often included at meal times.

While dinners tend to be four courses or more, lunches and breakfasts have traditionally consisted of high-quality buffet fare, complemented by chefs at cooking stations preparing freshly-made dishes.

Anyone not wanting to take breakfast or lunch in the main restaurant can often choose from a pared down selection of casual bites in the lounge, from where they can take them out on deck if they wish.

Between mealtimes, there are early-riser breakfasts of pastries and coffee, mid-morning snacks and afternoon tea, while pre-dinner drinks will often be spiced up with plates of hors d'oeuvres, ensuring that there's no chance of guests going hungry.



Staterooms

River cruise cabins are generally more compact than the ocean equivalent, and the smaller size of vessels means there are less categories and no interior cabins either.

Generally speaking, there are four types of cabin:

- Window / River View
- French balcony
- Verandah
- Suite

Lead-in accommodation tends to be on the lowest deck often with small, narrow windows.

On higher decks (most riverboats have two or three decks), cabins have larger windows which can often be turned into French balconies at the flick of a switch that lowers the top section of glass, or with doors that slide open, with a safety rail.

Selected river ships have full walk-out balconies and in some cases, these also have windows that can be closed to create a sun-lounge.

Suites on river ships will often offer a combination of full and French balconies, though some suites may be just slightly larger than the average cabin while others will offer separate bedrooms and living spaces.

We recommend that you check the stateroom size when researching options for your client, noting that if a stateroom has a verandah, it is usually included in the square footage of the room.

The variation between river cruise lines is also reflected in diverse decor styles, but as a rule of thumb, cabins come as double or twin-bedded with flat-screen TVs, wardrobes and storage, a coffee table and seating.

There is often a fridge or minibar and bottled water is generally provided free of charge. Ensuite facilities are well designed and have a shower, with baths not being common.

The new generation of river cruise ships has also brought accessible cabins offering more space and modified facilities, plus inter-connecting cabins and accommodation aimed at families plus solo travellers.

On certain vessels, beds face the windows allowing for all-encompassing views, but remember that when river ships are moored up two or three deep at some docks, the view is temporarily obscured and guests can find themselves looking into someone else's cabin.



Onboard Wellness

More modern river ships are leading a wave of onboard wellness and fitness facilities on the waterways. Several vessels now have hot tubs and/or deck pools, some of which are under cover, but have retractable roofs.

The expansive top decks allow room for walking or jogging tracks and areas where al fresco yoga and keep fit sessions are held to a backdrop of river views.

Several companies employ fitness hosts who organise classes or co-ordinate activities in onboard fitness rooms that generally include a handful of cardio machines (running, cycling, rowing) and free weights.

Some vessels have small spas that include saunas and relaxation areas while most, at the very least, have a treatment room for massages and other therapies, plus a small hairdressing salon.

Onboard fitness sessions help to complement activities ashore with a growing range of keep-fit excursions, from cycle rides and energetic hikes (which may be split into ability-based groups), to canoeing, kayaking and jogging.

Rising numbers of river craft now come with their own fleet of bikes that passengers can take out on their own or use during cycling excursions.

More companies also highlight healthy dining options on dinner menus and use locally-sourced ingredients.





Shore Excursions

River cruise excursions have traditionally been more informative and educational than those on ocean cruises, reflecting the cultural riches of the destinations they sail through.

Walking tours and coach trips have been the traditional mainstay of such cruises with city tours and visits to sites of historical and architectural note.

But the growth of river cruising has brought a proliferation of different options, with more hands-on experiences such as cookery classes with a chance to rustle up local dishes, wine-tastings and truffle-hunting trips aimed at giving clients a more immersive flavour of destinations along the route.

There are even visits to locals' homes, where guests can see how they live and enjoy a snack or meal while chatting about their lives.

Exclusive experiences, such as orchestral concerts, dance displays or visits to palaces and castles where passengers enjoy a private tour and a chance to meet the local nobility, are also popular.

A growing trend is the rise of more active-based outings, from bike rides and kayaking adventures to hiking trips and jogging excursions. Many riverboats carry their own fleet of cycles, enabling guests to help themselves and cycle off under their own steam if they don't wish to join a tour.

Family-friendly cruises have excursions to match with scavenger hunts, fun-filled water play sessions and visits to local attractions with accompanying activities designed to appeal to younger tastes.

Two other factors that differentiate river cruise excursions is that at least one excursion per day/port may be included within the price, and walking tours normally involve the use of wireless audio headsets which enable passengers to hear their guide from several metres away, making life easier all round.





All river cruise lines include three meals a day in the fares, but many throw lots more into the package. Here's a useful guide to the frequent inclusions which your guests can consider when looking for the right river cruise:

EXCURSIONS / ACTIVITIES / ONBOARD FACILITIES

Daily Excursions (often with a choice of options)

Use of wireless audio headsets is often available on tours so you never miss a thing!

On-board bikes

Internet and Wi-Fi access

Some ships offer evening entertainment onboard

Many cruise lines now include activities or wellness programmes, and some river ships have gym facilities or spa treatments

In-room movies

Onboard Pools, Jacuzzis or Cinema facilities on select ships

Butler service for Suite guests



TRAVEL & CHARGES

Flights, coach, ferry or rail travel

Overseas Transfers

Home Pick-Up

Pre-cruise hotel nights

Taxes and port charges

Gratuities



FLEXIBILITY IN DINING

Relaxed, casual breakfast

Lunch onboard

Enjoy afternoon teas, or snacks or complimentary drinks on some cruise lines during the day

Dinner onboard, often including wine, and sometimes with a choice of dining venue and dining time

Some operators include all alcoholic and soft drinks throughout the cruise

24-hour tea and coffee station / In-cabin options

Speciality dining

Pre-dinner cocktail hour

In-room dining





Cross-Selling

While it's easy to assume that anyone who takes an ocean cruise will be a die-hard river-cruiser too, that isn't necessarily the case.

It is an obvious market to start from, but for every person who would happily opt for both types of cruise, there are those who will only ever consider a river sailing. In fact, they may not even consider it to be a cruise in the traditional sense.

However, the similarities between river cruises and city breaks and escorted touring holidays makes these two sectors obvious targets from which to switch sell.

Promoting the ease of being able to tick off several destinations in one trip, with having to unpack only once, while enjoying the comfort and security of the river ship is a big selling point.

This is particularly true for anyone who has never cruised before or for those wanting to explore more exotic destinations, but wary of having to organise everything themselves. It also makes river cruises ideal for group travel as well.

Travellers interested in getting under the skin of each destination will be tempted by some of the culturally-rich itineraries or sailings themed around subjects such as Jewish heritage or classical music.

The chance to cruise with a smaller number of fellow travellers and in a relaxed and sociable environment are points to highlight, along with the ease of exploring ashore both as part of an excursion or independently.

There's also much to tempt families as several companies are now targeting this market with family-friendly sailings and facilities, such as on-board swimming pools, family-focused accommodation, fleets of bikes and active excursions, designed to appeal to younger cruisers.

Combining river cruises with hotel stays at either end of the voyage, or as part of a longer tour – particularly in Asia which lends itself to such arrangements – is an ideal way to introduce clients to cruising with an initial first taste. Of course, for anyone who suffers from seasickness or is wary of spending days aboard a ship with no sight of land, river cruises are the perfect solution.

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