



The Danube River

## River Cruising Is the Best of All Worlds

ONE COULD EASILY BECOME enchanted with life aboard a river cruise with its leisurely pace, superb food, personal attention, and usually less than 160 guests. A river cruise offers the convenience and luxury of an ocean cruise combined with the in-depth experience and personal freedom of a land trip. Step aboard. Unpack once. Explore, and enjoy.

For many travelers, a journey along the river is just the right pace for getting the lay of the land. Sitting on the top deck of a ship under blue skies, you gaze on fabled landscapes dotted with castles, villages, vineyards, lush forests, and historic sites.

A flight of stairs down, and you have the amenities of a modern hotel—restaurants, bars, lounges, fitness facilities, spas, internet access, and comfortable staterooms. River cruising appeals to a wide range of travelers of all ages who have an interest in art, history, food, wine, and architecture.

When starting to plan your first, or next river cruise, you will want to choose the area of the world you wish to visit. Many think of European rivers as the best place to start. Drifting down the Danube, you will encounter grand capitals like Vienna and Budapest, as well as charming hamlets and enchanting castles. The Douro in Spain and Portugal introduces you to the birthplace of port wine, or step ashore in fairy tale towns and fabled cities as you travel in Germany along the Rhine. World War II History comes alive visiting Nuremburg or the Beaches of Normandy.

You may choose a springtime cruise to see the Tulip Festival in Holland or an early summer cruise along the Rhône to see the Lavender Fields of Provence. Celebrate the magic of the holiday season as you wander the stalls of Europe's traditional Christmas Markets, shopping for handcrafted gifts, sipping hot mulled wine, and the breathing in the aroma of roasted chestnuts.



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Looking for a more exotic experience? Try the Mekong River to visit ancient empires of Vietnam and Cambodia, or the Yangtze visiting the remote areas of interior China. Or consider adding a river cruise experience to your African safari or cruising on the Amazon in Brazil. Discover the mystical and spiritual destination of Myanmar (Burma) as you visit temples and pagodas.

The cuisine is excellent and often inspired by local dishes of the towns or region you are visiting. Breakfast and lunch are usually buffet style. Dinners are generally three-course meals with table service and complimentary beer and wine. There are some river cruise lines that have all-inclusive packages, and some have a culinary and wine themed focus. A few have a family focus on some sailings.


Many itineraries offer overnight in the ports, which are generally in the middle of the town, giving you the opportunity to come and go as you please throughout the night, have dinners ashore, or late-evening strolls into town. There could be local performers or musicians offering entertainment onboard the ship. Choose a relaxed pace or fit in as much as possible.

Shore excursions are included in all ports. Additionally, most have complimentary bikes onboard, and offer guided hikes, wine-tastings, classical concerts, cooking classes, and so much more.

River cruising grows in popularity every year. Because the river cruise



*A room aboard a river cruise ship.*

experience is so unique, the choices and process of selecting the perfect itinerary and the ideal ship seem daunting, even for experienced travelers and cruisers. Before deciding which river cruise is right for you, speak with a professional travel expert who is experienced in river cruising. 

*Sue Shimkus is the president of Lake Zurich Travel. She has experienced five different river cruise lines on the Rhine, Rhône, Danube, and Seine Rivers, and rivers in the Netherlands for Tulip Time, the Amazon, and Yangtze. She may be reached at 847-438-5551 or visit [www.lztravel.com](http://www.lztravel.com).*