

JUNE 2024



CRUISE

WEEKLY



River cruise *special report*

featuring

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THE ULTIMATE SHIP GUIDE

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Contents

15

THE REINVENTION OF RIVER CRUISING

Once viewed as the less glamorous sibling of ocean cruising, river cruising is taking travellers on new adventures.



09

IN THE NEWS

The latest updates in river cruising.



20

Q&A WITH BRAD KENNEDY

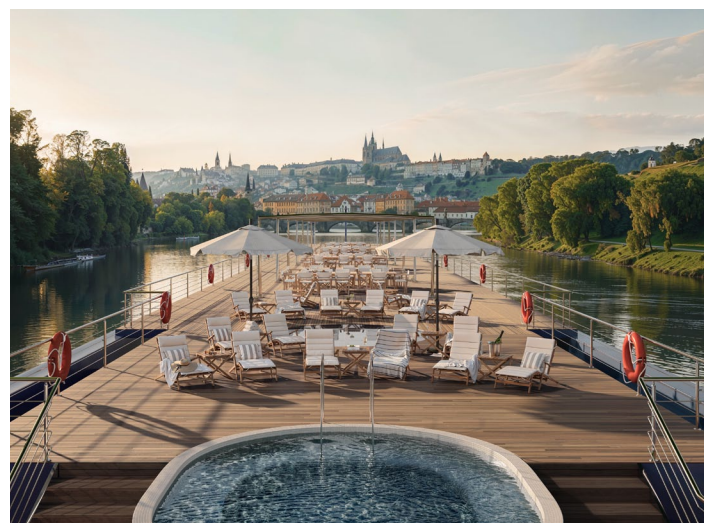
The Cruiseabout GM shares his views on the landscape.

Contents

23

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Authentic connections and magical on-shore experiences



21

RIVER CRUISE TRENDS

From family fun to tech integration, here's what you need to know.

27

THE ULTIMATE SHIP GUIDE

A practical tool for travel agents to inspire and share with customers.



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Editor's Letter



Welcome to *Cruise Weekly's* first special report, exploring the world of river cruising and the wonderful opportunities for both passengers and the industry.

Not long ago, river cruising was restricted to Europe and set up to serve mostly older travellers.

However, since the turn of the century, river cruising has changed. The sector has sprawled across Asia, Africa, South America and beyond and the age demographic is far younger.

If it sounds like river cruising has been turned on its head, that's because it has been. The past 10 years have seen it become one of the fastest-growing sectors in the travel industry. With river cruise lines mastering their craft in Europe, and passengers in search of more from their favourite brands, the sector has charted new waterways.

The Mekong has become a highly familiar destination to passengers around the globe, with lines such as Emerald and Scenic going in-depth in both the

upper and lower parts of the river.

I've been eyeing off a river cruise in South Asia for some time. Rivers are considered holy in Hinduism in India, and the opportunity to experience this vibrant country from the Brahmaputra River or the Ganges sees it at the top of bucket list for many, including yours truly.

River cruise ships have also become a key vessel to discovering the magic of Egypt and North Africa. Taking in sights such as the Tombs of the Valley of the Kings and the Giza pyramid complex, Luxor and Jordan have made a river cruise one of the most comprehensive methods to explore these ancient destinations.

Those with South America on their to-do list are now also well-served by the river cruise sector, with Aqua Expeditions now having decades of expertise on the Amazon River, and AmaWaterways preparing to launch a ship on Colombia's Magdalena River next year.

It is this variety of options and experiences offered by river cruising which has seen younger travellers incorporate the sector into their future plans. Avalon Waterways now includes culinary tours, painting classes, off-the-beaten-path nature tours, and even mountain climbing, ensuring its cruises serve passengers across a wide spectrum of interests and activity levels.

River cruising is now far more than a sector restricted to Europe and a certain type of traveller. It is a global phenomenon offering bucket list opportunities for young and old, and if you haven't been on a river cruise yet, it's about time you changed that. ••



Rivers are considered holy in Hinduism in India.

“IF IT SOUNDS LIKE RIVER CRUISING HAS BEEN TURNED ON ITS HEAD, THAT’S BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN.”

Myles Stedman
Editor
Cruise Weekly

Sponsor's Letter



The tides are turning in the cruising industry and river cruising has never been more popular with adventurous tourists than right now. In fact, 2025 sailings, particularly those in Europe, are a hot ticket already. Keen travellers should book quickly to avoid disappointment. After all, what better way is there to discover the beauty of Portugal, Germany or France than meandering down its classic waterways?

Lately, I've had my eye on a few emerging trends in river cruising, signalling new opportunities for our travel agents to sell to clients. Interestingly, I've noticed a greater demand for longer trips, such as our offer of two- and

three-week itineraries. There's also been an uptick in solo travel and younger passengers joining us, too. Gone are the days when it was mostly retirees on board, as Gen X travellers are finally discovering the joys of river cruising.

Meanwhile, I've observed more bookings for our active cruises, as consumers are increasingly becoming more conscious of their health and wellness, even on holiday. Avalon's Active and Discovery portfolio has increased by 600 per cent since launch in 2017 and is now offered on every major European waterway that we sail on.

Of course, much of the lure of river cruising for guests lies in immersing themselves within the charming towns and beautiful landscapes that they pass by. But passengers now want to enjoy a more luxurious experience on-board, whether it's sophisticated cabin designs or floor-to-ceiling panoramic windows, with cosy beds facing the outside for sensational views. These are discerning guests who are looking for that extra attention to detail, like menus of pillows and mattress toppers, local wines paired with on-board meals and indulgent L'Occitane skincare products on offer.

I'm thrilled to see river cruising in the limelight and I look forward to seeing you on board one of Avalon's ships soon. ••



Exploring Bordeaux via river cruise is the perfect way to get immersed in the culture.

“PASSENGERS NOW WANT TO ENJOY A MORE LUXURIOUS EXPERIENCE ON-BOARD.”

Gai Tyrrell
Managing Director Asia Pacific,
Globus Family of Brands



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In the news



Viking Sobek set to sail the Nile

Travellers will soon cruise the Nile in style aboard the new state-of-the-art *Viking Sobek*, sailing the 12-day Pharaohs and Pyramids itinerary. *Viking Sobek* will feature a clean, Scandinavian design, 41 staterooms and an indoor/outdoor Aquavit Terrace, filled with air and sunshine.

“Egypt has always captivated curious travellers with its rich culture and history, and it continues to be a destination of interest for our guests,” said Torstein Hagen, Chairman and CEO of Viking.

“We believe the *Viking Sobek* and her sister ships are by far the most elegant vessels on the Nile, and we look forward to welcoming even more guests to explore this fantastic region.”

During the trip, guests will immerse themselves in Egyptian treasures, from the Great Pyramids of Giza and the Temples of Luxor to tomb of Nefertari in the Valley of the Queens and the tomb of Tutankhamun in the Valley of the Kings, plus much more. ••

NEW AGENT REWARDS

Avalon Waterways parent company Globus family of brands (GFOB) has rolled out a new Australian trade advisor appreciation program, offering new tiered rewards allowing industry partners to unlock a range of benefits.

All travel advisors across Australia can begin reaping the program’s new quarterly rewards across bronze, silver, gold and platinum tiers based on the prior year’s gross sales across GFOB’s portfolio.

Benefits include cash rewards, special access to discounted rates on select cruises, opportunities to attend hosted famils, an additional local marketing budget, and more. Agency tiers will be reassessed quarterly based on revenue, and partners can begin climbing the ranks now.

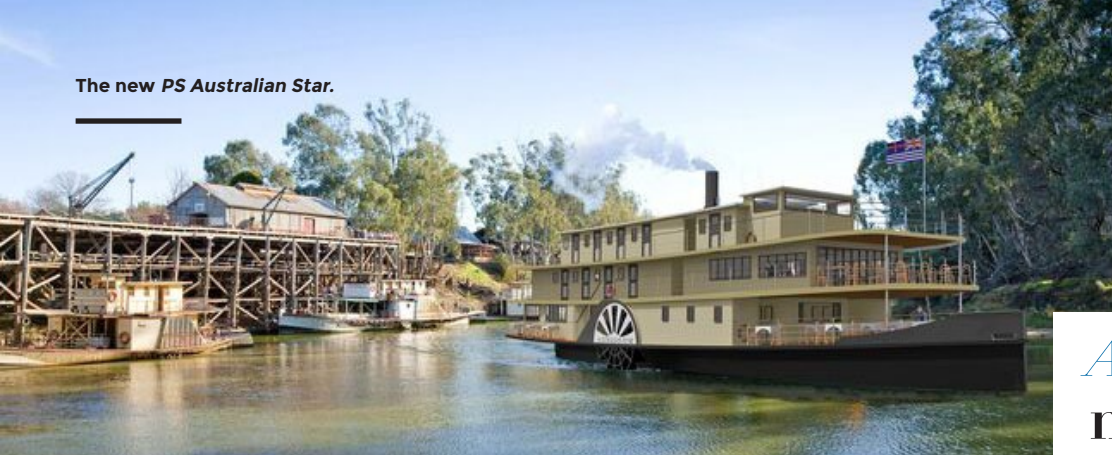
Avalon is hoping its increased France program will help travel advisors book its cruises, with the line offering two new rivers and six new voyages for one-third more capacity in the country next year. ••

River cruising best in show

The Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) will host a new river cruise showcase at its annual Cruise 360 conference at the International Convention and Exhibition Centre in Sydney this year.

The showcase will take place on 29 August, the day before the conference and all delegates are invited to attend. Agents will have the opportunity to understand the different experiences on waterways around the world and the unique offerings from the river cruise brands in the market. ••

The new *PS Australian Star*.



NEWS

APT unveils new cruising experiences

APT has just unveiled two new exclusive partnerships with ocean line Seabourn and Murray River Paddlesteamers. Under the new collaboration, APT will now be able to offer luxury ocean cruising in Europe, Antarctica, Australia, Canada and Alaska with Seabourn.

Meanwhile, APT and Murray River have released the charming *PS Australian Star*, the country's first ever five-star overnight river cruise. Currently under construction, the 38-guest vessel will be the largest paddle steamer in the southern Hemisphere, sailing the iconic Murray all year round. ••

AMA ENJOYS OFF-PEAK DEMAND

Due to increased demand for river cruising during shoulder seasons, AmaWaterways has added European departures outside the peak summer months of March, April, November and December.

In addition to record-breaking sales volumes for the year-to-date, the brand has experienced triple-digit year-on-year increases for departures in March and April.

According to Managing Director Australia and New Zealand Steve Richards, even though the brand's local office opened in March, almost

70% of bookings have been made for off-peak or shoulder season departures.

"The main reason is [because] it's less crowded," Richards said. "You don't have the European domestic tourists and their school holidays to compete with.

"It's also a lot cooler than the peak summer months."

According to sales figures, the hottest tickets include March and April 2025 cruises on the Rhine and Danube, along with October-December sailings on the Mekong.

At the other end of the year, the appetite for Ama's Christmas markets cruises has seen the line extend these departures from mid-Nov to 2025. ••



2026

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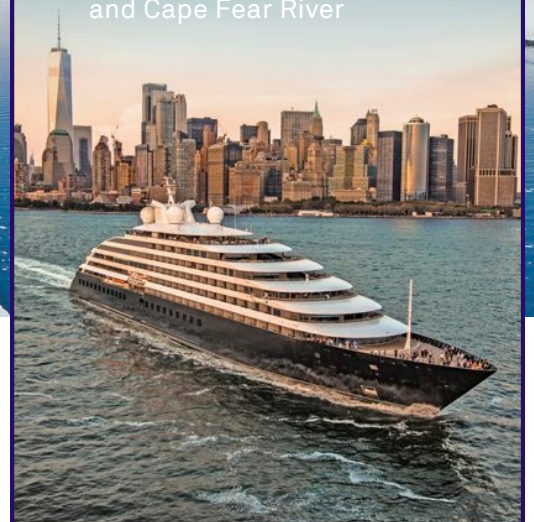


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North America: The Delaware, York River and Cape Fear River



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Amsterdam SLASHES RIVER CRUISE NUMBERS

In an effort to tackle overtourism, in April, Amsterdam announced plans to slash the number of river cruises entering the city. In 2023, it was reported that 2,300 cruise ships docked in the city, but as part of the new initiative, a maximum of 1,150 cruise ships will enter the canals per year.

“The entire river cruise industry is working together to determine how we can help the city to achieve their goals of lessening the burden of overtourism on their community,

while at the same time allowing river cruise guests to still visit in the sustainable and respectful way they have been doing for years,” a spokesperson from Avalon Waterways told *Cruise Weekly*.

Meanwhile, APT Travel Group may look to alternate solutions as a way of circumventing the new plans.

“As it stands, there are many ports in the vicinity of Amsterdam that we have used and could use if changes are made to any current arrangements,” an APT spokesperson said. ••

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

A-ROSA River Cruises has just become the first river cruise line to have its own entertainment department. From jazz and folk music to dance, yoga and meditation workshops, the new department is responsible for delivering the cruise line’s entertainment programmes, themed cruises and kid’s experiences.

A-ROSA’s diverse musical artist portfolio ranges from pop to folk and rock - and now, musical theatre. In fact, international Broadway performers from shows like *Phantom of the Opera* and *Cats* will soon grace the A-ROSA stage. Other musical artists will join the program, including trumpeter Francoise Berody, violinist Tamas Seres and cellists Grandcelli Duo, alongside new tribute artists covering Elvis, Elton John or Billy Joel.

The cruise line is also committed to supporting emerging artists and singer-songwriters. ••



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Navigating *bumpy waters*

Viking ANZ Managing Director **Michelle Black** shares how agents can prepare clients for the ebbs and flow of river cruising.



Cruises, like any other form of travel, have their own unique set of obstacles that may arise on any given day.

If your client has never taken a river voyage, they may not be aware of the natural ebb and flow of water levels that occurs throughout the rivers of the world.

With over 25 years' experience navigating the rivers of the world, we have found the most successful travel advisors educate their clients upfront about what life is like on the rivers, and are careful to recommend cruise lines equipped at handling disruptions quickly and efficiently. Should a client's voyage be affected by the unexpected, both advisors and their clients value two key advantages Viking offers.

First, we own and operate all our ships. We have a Swiss-based nautical team and a network of local partners and authorities that focus on monitoring and adapting to current water levels so that our guests experience the least possible disruption.

TO HELP EDUCATE YOU AND CONVERT YOUR RIVER CRUISE BOOKINGS, WE HAVE CREATED A HELPFUL DIGITAL GUIDE FOR FIRST-TIME RIVER CRUISERS.

Secondly, because we have the largest river cruise fleet, we can and do strategically launch sister ships on the same itinerary, sailing in opposite directions. This tactic allows us to easily implement a ship swap in the event of low or high water. This is typically seamless as the guests and their luggage are transferred to an identical stateroom on a sister ship sailing in the opposite direction.

Here is some wonderful feedback we received from one passenger, Margaret: "We couldn't fault a single aspect of the cruise, even though there was a hiccup due to low water levels in one of the canals. After the first week on the Magni, we had to be transferred by coach to the Baldur, which meant leaving behind our wonderful crew, but we were accompanied by our fantastic tour director and concierge and all went smoothly. I can't speak highly enough of Viking and am recommending them to all my friends. Fantastic!"

To help educate you and convert your river cruise bookings, we have created [a helpful digital guide](#) for first-time river cruisers. This is a great resource you can share with your clients as they are planning their river cruise. ••

CruiseHQ sets sail

Flight Centre's new B2B wholesale division CruiseHQ has finally set sail. Aimed at travel advisors, the new cruise marketplace offers access to global cruise, air and land partners. Agents can also benefit from unique rates, promotions, a wide range of incentives and wholesale commissions.

Cruise HQ also recently underwent beta testing during its launch phase, engaging with travel agency partners across FCTG networks such as Cruiseabout, Travel Associates, and Envoyage independent stores. The collection of beta testers scored CruiseHQ an average of 9.2 out of 10, with advisors highly rating the booking platform's content and ease of booking process. ••

A&K enters the Amazon

A new luxurious riverboat from Abercrombie & Kent (A&K) is set to explore the Amazon next year, the company's first in South America.

"This venture embodies our unwavering commitment to delivering experiences that are not only luxurious but also deeply enriching and sustainable," said Cristina Levis, CEO of Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group. "We are excited to introduce our guests to the untold stories and serene beauty of the Peruvian Amazon in a manner that honours and preserves the essence of this remarkable destination."

Described as "a floating boutique hotel", the vessel has been created in collaboration with Ecoventura, A&K's expedition yacht brand in the Galapagos. It features 10 double cabins and two single cabins, each beautifully designed and showcasing local materials and artistry, as well as expansive floor-to-ceiling windows. The riverboat also includes an outdoor lounge and bar, an outdoor swimming pool, a gym and a massage room offering indulgent treatments and wellness experiences inspired by Amazonian traditions. ••

Cruise in numbers



71%

INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS CONSIDERING TAKING THEIR FIRST CRUISE

— CLIA SENTIMENT PERCEPTION AND INTENT SURVEY, MARCH 2024

“

TO SUSTAIN AND FOSTER CRUISING'S PRESENCE IN AUSTRALIA, THERE NEEDS TO BE BETTER ALIGNMENT AND RATIONALISATION OF FEES, TAXES AND OTHER COSTS, TO MAKE US COMPETITIVE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.”

— CLIA MANAGING DIRECTOR IN AUSTRALASIA, JOEL KATZ

\$6 billion

THE GROWTH OF THE RIVER CRUISE MARKET BY 2028.

— TECHNAVIO

\$1 million

TOURISM WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S INCREASED FUNDING TO CRUISE TOURISM OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS.

22%



THE INCREASED SPEND IN CRUISE TRAVEL FROM COMMBANK CUSTOMERS IN Q1 2024 COMPARED TO THE PRIOR CORRESPONDING PERIOD.

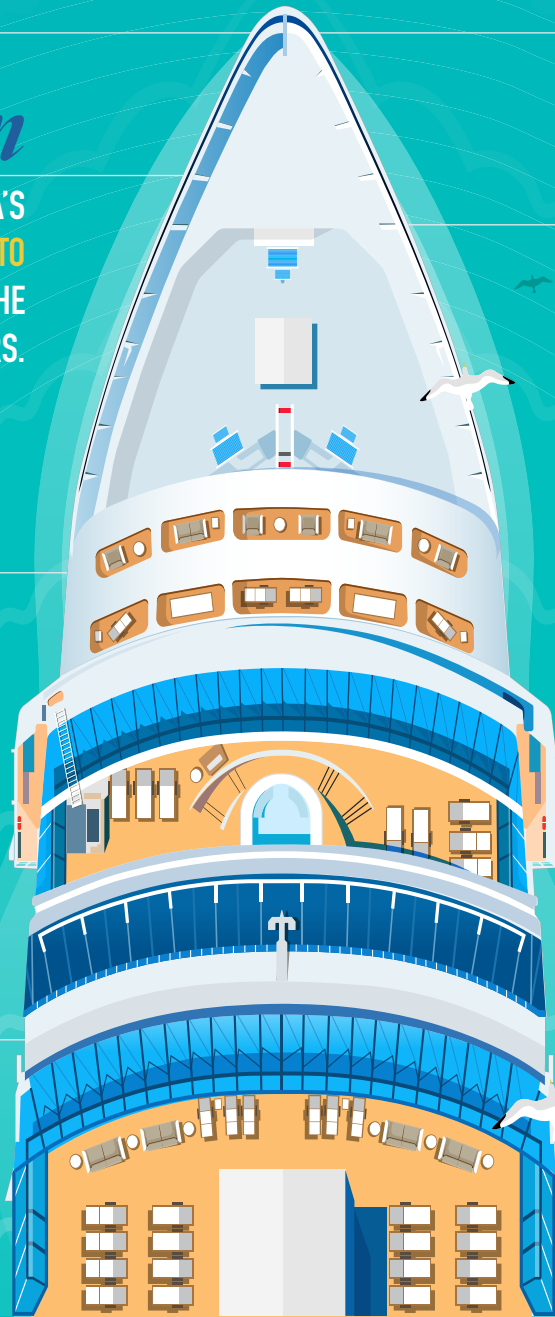
— COMMBANK IQ COST OF LIVINGS INSIGHTS REPORT, MAY 2024



8-13%

THE CRUISE PASSENGERS OPTING TO TRAVEL SOLO, MOST OF WHOM ARE MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z HOLIDAYMAKERS.

— 2024 STATE OF THE CRUISE INDUSTRY REPORT, CLIA



20%

THE FUEL BURN THAT TECH START-UP OCEAN INTELLIGENCE PROMISES TO SLASH PER VOYAGE BY GENERATING THE MOST FUEL-EFFICIENT ROUTE FOR EACH SHIP.

— OCEAN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF SCIENTIFIC OFFICER, SHANE KEATING

745,000

THE GLOBAL CRUISE CAPACITY IS FORECAST TO INCREASE BY 10% IN 2028.

— CLIA FORECAST



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2 THE WORLD'S LARGEST FLEET

We own and operate our fleet of nearly 80 innovative river ships sailing Europe, Egypt, the Mekong and the Mississippi - making us the largest river cruise line in the world. We're proud to also own many of the best docking locations throughout Europe, giving your clients priority access in most ports.



3 MORE DATES & DESTINATIONS

The scale of our river ship inventory gives you the widest variety of sailing dates, itineraries and destinations to choose from. With 2026 voyages now open for sale, finding the right cruise for your client is easier than ever.

4 IDENTICAL SISTER SHIPS

Our fleet of modern, identical sister ships makes it easier for you to sell a Viking river cruise. Plus, you can rest assured that no matter what Viking voyage your client embarks on they will enjoy the same state-of-the-art onboard experience, comfort and timeless Scandinavian-inspired design.



5 EXPERTS AT HANDLING THE UNEXPECTED

No one handles the unpredictable waterways like Viking. Whether it's navigating fluctuating water levels with identical sister ship swaps or adjusting itineraries to accommodate unforeseen changes to travel requirements, we provide the highest level of quality and consistency in the industry.

6 INCREDIBLE VALUE FOR MONEY

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7 YOU EARN MORE WITH NO NCFs

Our No NCFs promise ensures you earn commission on all components of our inclusive cruise fare. This means more money in your pocket because you don't miss out on commission for add-ons your clients would have booked once onboard.



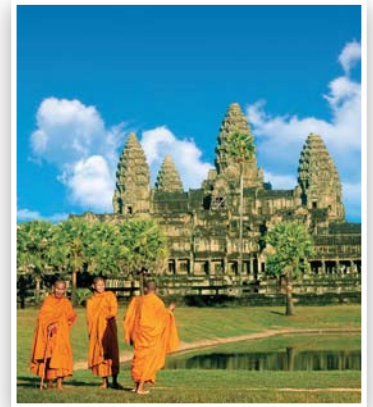
8 FLEXIBLE DEPOSIT

Our Flexible Deposit Policy allows your clients to book their cruise with just a \$1,000 per person* deposit, and if they change their mind, we will refund \$900 of their deposit in the form of a future cruise voucher.



9 PRICE PARITY GUARANTEED

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The reinvention of river cruising

Once viewed as the less glamorous sibling of ocean cruising, river cruising is now undergoing an evolution, taking travellers on new adventures, from the wilds of Colombia to the depths of the Amazon and beyond.

BY MYLES STEDMAN

The desire for tourists to visit new destinations has grown immeasurably over the past 10 years, as the industry struggles to keep up with the demands of the most intrepid travellers.

Enter river cruising: this once small sector of the travel industry was previously sidelined as a way to see Europe for older, less-mobile passengers who had graduated from fully inclusive touring or personal travel.

Since the turn of the century, river cruising has transformed from these simplistic roots to a full-blooded experience of its own, punctuating the bucket lists of travellers of all ages and demographics.

With hundreds of ships now sailing along the Rhine, Danube, and many of Europe's other popular routes, cruise lines are now meeting the demands of clients who have been to and seen it all – particularly ocean cruise passengers.

"River cruising is quickly becoming the preferred way to travel for many Australians as it's a luxury experience delivered in a relaxed way, giving travellers plenty of choice of how they'd like to experience incredible places around the world," says Chris Fundell, Head of Marketing Asia Pacific at Globus Family of Brands.

"River cruising is a stress-free way to travel and people love that they only have to unpack once and then enjoy the perfect blend of elegance and ease, with gourmet dining and attentive service throughout the trip."

According to TravelManagers Personal Travel Manager, Jane Fowler, another drawcard is the access to a destination that river cruising offers. »

Entering the depths of the Amazon is on the bucket list of plenty of adventurous travellers.





AmaWaterways will be the first line to cruise the Magdalena River in Colombia.

The Cessnock-based travel advisor says customers are increasingly looking for more immersive experiences, with a longer river cruise offering more frequent stops, and the chance to dig into a new city or region, exploring its culture, history, and environment on a deeper level.

“It’s a great way for travellers to experience local culture and scenery, which is something that really appeals to a lot of people,” she says.

This focus is what draws people to the rivers – particularly as cruise lines broaden from their home turf in Europe.

Going off the beaten path

AmaWaterways Managing Director Steve Richards believes his line will be taking passengers to the most off-the-beaten-path river cruise destination in the world next year - Colombia’s main waterway, the Magdalena.

The *AmaMagdalena* will launch in November this year and her sister *AmaMelodia* will set sail in June 2025.

“Nobody’s cruised the Magdalena River ever,” Richards boasts. “The last commercial vessel that went out on that river was in 1952, and was carrying tobacco and coffee, so we’re the first ones to go there.”

AmaWaterways is currently selling two seven-night cruises on the *AmaMagdalena* for next year: the ‘Magic of Colombia’, which voyages from Barranquilla to Cartagena, and visits Nueva Venecia, Magangue, Mompox, and Pinto; and the ‘Wonders of Colombia’, which also visits Gambote. Activities on the cruises include tours of local neighbourhoods, exclusive

performances, shoreside dinners, birdwatching and hiking. Guests are also invited to celebrate Colombia’s grand ‘Carnaval’ commemoration in Barranquilla.

The Government of Colombia has been key to AmaWaterways beginning to sell cruises on the Magdalena, Richards explained. The country has spent US\$7 million to dredge up parts of the river so the cruise line is able to sail down it, while aware of both the impact cruises on the waterway will have - and the likelihood of copycats closely following *AmaMagdalena*.

As Richards notes, without government support, it would not have been possible to put infrastructure on the rivers to ensure they were navigable.

“THIS IS THE REAL DISCERNING TRAVELLER WHO HAS BEEN EVERYWHERE, DONE EVERYTHING.”

“When you get the local governments that want to invest and open the opportunity to get the infrastructure in there, you can create brand new destinations, like what we’ve just done in Colombia,” he says.

“You’ve got to get their buy-in. I think they see the benefits of tourism, and they also feel that once we get in there, then other river cruise lines could follow, so it’s an investment they see as definitely worthwhile.”

The new Colombia cruises are already selling well in North America,

and *AmaWaterways* has also recently taken its first few Australian bookings. According to Richards, the cruises are proving popular with experienced passengers, who have already been to typical river destinations.

“This is the real discerning traveller who has been everywhere, done everything, and is looking for some bragging rights that nobody else has,” he says. “They can [say] ‘I was the first to do that.’”

AmaWaterways’ Magdalena program will not be the only opportunity for tourists to boast to their friends about in the coming years. Richards teases the cruise line is currently exploring the development of a number of other nascent rivers around the world, with the possibility of developing them as cruise destinations.

“With the right investment from local governments and the right connections, we can open other areas,” he enthused. Richards predicts that backed by further government support, river cruising will evolve into the “expedition-style, off-the-beaten-track” sector that tourists are seeking.

Richards’ thoughts signal a future for river cruising far different from today’s reality – pegging the sector as the next evolution of expedition, as opposed to a smaller-scale, more relaxed version of travelling more closely related to its ocean brethren. “[When] you think of expedition [cruising], you think of polar ocean cruising... but like I said, we’re going where no-one has ever been on river ships, [which] is pretty much the definition of expedition cruising,” he enthuses. »

Vinh Trang temple on the Mekong River in Vietnam.



FEATURE

In search of the unexpected

The sentiment is not lost on Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours, a long-time river operator which has only recently started exploring the expedition sector. The line has noticed the synergy and similarity between the two, which has led it to deploy its luxury expedition vessel, *Scenic Eclipse*, to some of the world's lesser-explored rivers.

Scenic's 2026 voyage collection will see *Eclipse* take guests to rivers such as France's Garonne, Spain's Guadalquivir, and lesser-known rivers in North America, such as the Delaware, York, and Cape Fear.

Group General Manager Anthony Laver says Scenic's goal to blend its portfolio between its river and ocean programs provides the perfect connection between the two; in essence, creating a new class of product in both new and old destinations.

"If you go to Southeast Asia, it's hard to navigate, but when you're on the ship, you can go to tributaries, deltas, you can do things that you can't normally do on any other cruise options...it's discovering what is existing that [travellers] didn't know was there," he says.

Cruise Specialist at Mildura Travel & Cruise, Karen Ridge, concurs, adding clients are now seeking out river cruise experiences to unique destinations because the waterway is the best way to explore such mysterious places.

Ridge says the rivers of India are top of mind for plenty of travellers, as are many of the new luxury vessels which are hitting the Nile, from APT and Viking, and Avalon Waterways.

Meanwhile, Fowler points to the Irrawaddy River in Myanmar as an intriguing option, as it charts a course past remote temples and untouched landscapes, offering a deep dive into traditional Burmese culture. »



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Discover Dresden's charm and history on a cruise down the Elbe River.

TOP 5 NEW RIVERS TO DISCOVER

Chris Fundell from Globus Family of Brands shares the most exciting new destinations for river cruisers to explore.

1. **DOURO:** "The Douro's stunning terraced vineyards are a huge drawcard for those that want to explore Portugal's rich wine culture, historic towns and cultural experiences, so it is going to be extremely popular with river cruisers in the foreseeable future."
2. **RHINE:** "This European river remains consistently in high demand amongst Avalon's customers. Picturesque landscapes, medieval castles, and charming villages alongside highlights like the scenic Rhine gorge as well as cities like Cologne and Strasbourg contribute to The Rhine's popularity."
3. **MEKONG:** "Mekong river cruises allow travellers to explore the vibrant cultures and landscapes of Vietnam and Cambodia, including visits to the bustling markets of Ho Chi Minh City and the ancient temples of Angkor Wat."
4. **AMAZON:** "This is an adventurous and immersive experience in the heart of the world's largest rainforest, providing opportunities to observe diverse wildlife, lush vegetation, and indigenous communities. "
5. **NILE:** "Cruising along this iconic waterway is a unique journey through ancient Egypt, providing access to iconic historical sites like the Pyramids of Giza, Luxor, and the Valley of the Kings, while showcasing the rich cultural heritage and stunning landscapes along its banks."

She describes the Irrawaddy as "perfect for those looking for an adventurous journey in a less-commercialised setting, with a cruise typically including visits to Buddhist monasteries, where [guests] can observe the daily rituals of monks, and even join in on meditation sessions."

Those looking for a more active river cruise which may not appear in a typical brochure could look to the Amazon River, Fowler suggests. Guests on this river - which is explored by Aqua Expeditions, Avalon, and others - enjoy guided jungle treks, night safaris, and even piranha fishing, offering a glimpse into the destination's biodiversity.

Eyes on Europe

New and off-the-beaten path river cruise destinations are not restricted to South America and Asia. Europe loyalists who have been back and forth between Amsterdam and Budapest countless times are now sailing on the Elbe, another of Western Europe's major waterways, which traces through the Czech Republic and Germany. Visitors along the Elbe are drawn to its historic architecture, scenic countryside, and cultural gems, making it a popular alternative to Europe's more crowded rivers.

The less-travelled Douro in Portugal has also been attracting more attention lately, thanks to its spectacular terraced vineyards, undulating hills and tranquil countryside views.

Italy may be known for its coastal cruising, but growing in popularity is its river scene along the country's longest waterway, the Po. The river, located in Northern Italy, provides access to cities like Venice and Parma, along with picturesque rural landscapes, and is a fantastic way to explore

"THE NATURAL ALLURE OF RIVER TRAVEL HAS ONLY CONTINUED TO RISE."

the country's heritage away from the usual tourist spots. This evolution of river cruising shows the sector, once a pigeonholed and oft-forgotten dimension to the travel industry, has now become many different things to a wide variety of travellers.

The one advantage river cruising offers which hasn't changed over the years is the ease of access it offers to each destination – wherever intrepid passengers may want to go.

"Australians embraced river cruising early on, and I think the natural allure of river travel has only continued to rise in public awareness. It's an incredibly easy way to travel, but also very rewarding," notes Cruise Lines International Association Managing Director in Australasia Joel Katz.

"A river cruise allows you to unpack once, then draw back the curtains each day to find yourself in new landscapes, towns or cities. The river scenery is magnificent, the ships are superb, and the ability to sail into the heart of historic villages and towns makes for an incredible journey." ••

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Q&A

WITH BRAD KENNEDY

Travel agency *Cruiseabout* returned to the Australian market last year and has just opened new stores in Perth and the Gold Coast. Here, we chat with General Manager **BRAD KENNEDY** about the observations he has made on river cruising in the last few months - and the competition from ocean cruising.

BY MYLES STEDMAN

Cruise Weekly: Why do you think river cruising is proving so popular post-pandemic?

Brad Kennedy: I think there has been a shift from customers to have the security and trust in something that has been pre-organised for them. I think there were obviously a lot of people who were burnt during the pandemic, so I think package [deals are] definitely hot.

I think there's a higher level of trust when you've got big, well-known and well-trusted brands looking after you from the moment you arrive at the destination to the moment you depart on your flight.

I think that's a trend generally across the industry. We're definitely seeing more door-to-door travel packages...we are seeing longer itineraries and back-to-back [cruises]. We're actually packaging ocean and river combos together in one trip.

CW: What is the key advantage to travelling on a river cruise?

BK: You don't really have the days at sea as you would an ocean liner, so you are amongst the destination a little bit more. I think it's a really cool and unique way of seeing a country. Rivers are typically in valleys, which means you have beautiful scenic mountains and topography around you, and because

most of civilisation builds on rivers and waterways, you have some amazing architecture to see along the way as well.

CW: What is one of the biggest river cruise developments of the past 10 or so years?

BK: Good question. It's cool to see and hear about the new destinations that are coming on board, because from a trade perspective, the more inventory we have to sell, the better. It's only going to help grow the cruise sector.

I've seen the Australian market is held super strongly by APT, Scenic and Viking. They're constantly innovating, they're constantly bringing in new ships, they're constantly looking at different ways to connect with customers and they've done an exceptional job of marketing themselves. You've got APT now owning and developing their own metal, which can be tailor-made to their customer, and their new ships look incredible.

CW: What have you learned in the past few months since Cruiseabout returned to the Australian market?

BK: Aussies love river cruise. We see an opportunity to bring non-cruisers into the space, particularly people who do a land component, or coach touring. I encourage



“WE SEE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRING NON-CRUISERS INTO THE CRUISE SPACE... I ENCOURAGE THE COMPETITION.”

the competition. I think it's great that we've got several brands in the space, and they're all forging their own paths and offering their own unique propositions to customers. That's good for us because it helps us to attract different customer segments.

CW: What do you think the future of the river cruising industry holds?

BK: From my perspective, I saw a period where I didn't feel like there was as much innovation in the river cruise sector as there was in ocean, particularly in terms of the product - the ship. I think one of the things that I've noticed is how much investment [ocean] cruise lines are making into their new ships, the core product.

I think it's going to help create competition, which is going to drive innovation, and whether that's through cool and unique destinations, or through new ships and a new service offering, I think it's good for the [river cruise] industry. ••

Trends *to watch*

HERE'S *WHAT'S HOT*
IN THE WORLD OF RIVER
CRUISING RIGHT NOW.



1. FAMILY FUN

While it may be typically viewed as an adult experience, some river cruise operators are now creating more multigenerational-friendly facilities and activities designed to engage travellers of all ages. Croisieurope offers free cruises for kids up to 16 years old in Portugal, France, Spain and Italy (excluding excursions). A cabin next to the parents or accommodation in the same cabin is offered, in addition to kid-friendly onboard activities and excursions. Think onboard crafting sessions with certified youth leaders or a treasure hunt in the city of Tain-L'Hermitage in France.



2. ON-SHORE EXPERIENCES

River cruise lines are now focusing on developing in-depth shore excursions for their clients, says Joel Katz, Cruise Lines International Association Managing Director in Australasia. "Excursions and touring options are becoming much more creative, and guests are returning with incredible memories from experiences like chef tours, cooking classes, private concerts or behind-the-scenes tours," he explains. "Many cruise lines are working to create a stronger connection with a destination's culture, history, food, wine, and way of life. Others are creating more adventurous activities for guests, introducing opportunities to explore by bike or kayak in scenic locations along the rivers."



3. LUXURY AND COMFORT

"Luxury river cruising is on the rise. People are looking for more comfort and high-end experiences, and river cruise lines are responding by offering more spacious cabins, gourmet dining options, and personalised service," explains Stephanie Webb from Tripshepherd. "Think of river cruises as floating boutique hotels with the added benefit of constantly changing scenery." Aqua Expeditions hired architectural firm Noor Design to bring *Aqua Nera* to life, as it sails down the Amazon. The ship combines contemporary design while paying tribute to the vibrant cultures of Portugal, Spain and Peru. At Uniworld, each ship is unique, featuring custom furnishings and original art and designed to reflect the local destination, whether it's India, Vietnam or Egypt. Meanwhile, APT will open an innovative levitating restaurant on its new European ships, which will launch next year.





4. SOLO TRAVEL

More passengers are opting to travel solo - and river cruise lines are now catering to them, from single cabins and solo itineraries to waiving single supplements on cabins.

“Traveling solo doesn’t always mean you’re on your own,” says Pam Hoffee, Avalon Waterways President. “Providing a balance of solo and ‘nolo’ (on your own but never alone) experiences, we set the stage for the perfect vacation on – and off – our Suite Ships with the bonus of an on-site Cruise Director and expert local guides to ensure an engaging, life-changing cruise.”



5. LONGER TRIPS

“I think travellers are increasingly looking for more immersive experiences. Longer journeys give them the chance to really dig into a destination, exploring its culture, history, and environment on a deeper level. Plus, from a practical standpoint, longer trips can be more cost-effective on a per-day basis because big expenses like flights are spread out over more days,” says Jane Fowler from TravelManagers.

“With the rise of remote work and more flexible schedules, it’s easier for people to blend work and travel, making extended trips more feasible. High-speed internet and better connectivity allow people to work from almost anywhere.

After being unable to travel for so long, many people are eager to tick off their bucket list items, which often means taking longer trips to really experience those dream destinations.”



8. TECH INTEGRATION

Tech-savvy cruise lines are going beyond just offering on-board wi-fi to now enhancing the cruising experience, whether it’s using interactive apps for booking excursions or offering virtual concierge services.

According to travel advisor Matt Coyle from The Travel Project, lines should look to travel players like Emirates to offer consumers an immersive try-before-you-buy experience. With the use of an Oculus, consumers can transport themselves to an Emirates economy, first or business class cabin or even experience life as a master pilot, trying out every gadget in the cockpit. There’s also access to exclusive areas such as the Onboard Lounge and A380 Shower Spa.



7. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

As consumers are becoming more health-conscious and looking to feel rejuvenated while on holiday, river cruise lines are responding by offering more experiences, from dedicated wellness studios, yoga workshops and zumba classes to spa services and healthy dining options.



Up close *and personal*

River cruising can be a luxurious experience, but its best features are often found off the ship, with the most authentic connections made during on-shore experiences.

BY MATT LENNON



On-shore excursions give travellers the opportunity to truly deep dive into a destination's history.

Some travellers enjoy nothing more on their holidays than to lounge by the pool, bask in the sun and abandon all cares and thoughts. It's the perfect attitude for a lazy week or two at an island resort in the South Pacific.

While this style of travel is certainly possible on a river cruise, the most rewarding experiences are often found beyond the ship deck and on shore, where exclusive experiences and one-of-a-kind cultural activities await.

See it your way

River cruising should always be approached with an open mind and a willingness to explore, as far as the budget will allow, of course.

While there are a handful of river cruise brands that serve up truly all-inclusive packages, many others offer highly competitive pricing, with optional experiences and the ability to tailor travellers' holidays to suit their precise needs and interests. Think going on a tiger safari in India, breaking a sweat at the Windsor Lawn Tennis Club or indulging in a meal at a Michelin-star restaurant in Portugal.

"I think one of the most noticeable things about river cruising is that not many of the lines offer a lot of free shore excursions, but they always have some [extras], so you can make your decision the day before about what you would like to do in each port," says

Gayle Fogarty, a highly experienced travel agent from Brisbane. Each day, and in some cases more than once, passengers can step off the ship and enjoy a deep dive into culture and history to open their eyes and mind.

Part of that may involve meeting the local community, some of whom will welcome tourists into their private homes for a look at their daily way of life. For example, in the charming German town of Miltenburg, coffee, freshly baked cakes and warm hospitality awaits APT guests via its Insider Experiences options.

"APT is one company where you might pay a bit more, but all of their excursions are included for no extra cost," Fogarty explains. "That's a bit of a 'wow' thing that I tell my clients - they won't need to put their hand in their pocket for anything once they're there."

Sometimes, those "everyday" residences may take the shape of a European palatial castle dating back hundreds of years, with expansive grounds, stately rooms with priceless artwork and sculptures, enveloped by delicately manicured gardens.

Passengers on Avalon Waterways will find numerous activities to enjoy at every port, each suited to a range of preferences and styles. More active travellers may wish to sail in a kayak and explore smaller inlets at their own pace, while others can explore towns on foot or a set of wheels. »



Schloss Vollrads is one of the oldest wineries in Germany.

Some river cruise brands carry a small fleet of compact bicycles onboard, available for people to rent and take ashore. In some destinations, such as Durnstein and Melk in the Wachau Valley, travellers can set off on a guided bike ride between the two Austrian towns. Meanwhile, Uniworld offers combined river cruising and cycling tours, featuring routes that showcase spectacular scenery, such as its Basel to Amsterdam tour.

Those wishing to take to the streets can join a relaxed walking tour with a local guide. This in-depth knowledge grants added credibility by virtue of the fact that every insider tip comes from first-hand experience, whether it's the best cafe to find a homemade soufflé or where to buy the most authentic souvenirs.

Alternatively, guests may prefer to explore local neighbourhoods solo. The AvalonGo mobile app is an ideal companion for free time exploring, with GPS maps and expert recommendations for excellent local bars, restaurants and entertainment options.

Opening doors

One of the best features of a river cruise is the exclusive access it offers travellers to a variety of landmarks and attractions for tours or experiences. If private access isn't possible, river cruisers may have the opportunity to enter extra rooms normally closed to the general public or welcomed inside before opening times.

In Egypt, guests on Uniworld Boutique River Cruises are treated to a ride down the Nile on a felucca, a traditional small wooden boat with a triangular sail. This is followed by afternoon tea at the Old Cataract Hotel, the site where legendary author Agatha Christie wrote the iconic mystery, *Death on the Nile*. It's an experience typically not offered to the general public, who are only able to walk through the lobby.

This kind of exclusive access is available on every Uniworld sailing and forms part of its Masterpiece Collection – a range of ultra-premium optional experiences available for an additional surcharge. »

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These may include before-hours access at the Taj Mahal in India, a retro sidecar tour of Bordeaux in France or a visit to the towering stone sculptures of ancient Egypt, with commentary from an expert Egyptologist. Or it may comprise an elegant private orchestral performance at a Viennese concert hall where legendary composers like Mozart and Strauss have once played.

A feast for the senses

Many sophisticated river cruise lines offer guests an epicurean odyssey, with exclusive and personalised invitations to some highly prized social engagements.

Guests on Tauck's 'French Escapade' itinerary between Paris and Arles will receive a formal invitation to dinner with the Duke of Uzès at his private family castle – the imposing Duchy d'Uzès which was once a Roman military fortress and housed an exiled 9th century duchess.

Passengers also have the opportunity to sample premium Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines under the expert tutelage of a professional sommelier. Foodies are welcomed into the kitchen to help prepare - then enjoy - a delectable luncheon. During the meal, everyone enjoys fascinating stories about the origins of the Avignon wine industry dating back to the 14th century priesthood, paired with premium Rhône Valley labels and accompaniments.

Scenic is another line which offers visitors an opportunity to visit Châteauneuf-du-Pape, but with a slight twist as the ship's sommelier is in tow. According to travel agent Emily Kadinski of itravel Carlingford in Sydney, this added expertise creates a truly special experience that may be the most popular experience her clients rave about.



FEATURE

“ONE OF THE BEST FEATURES OF A RIVER CRUISE IS THE EXCLUSIVE ACCESS IT OFFERS TRAVELLERS.”

“You do your wine tasting, and based on the reading of the room, the sommelier ends up buying a wine from the winery that day, and serves it with dinner that evening,” she explains. “And if you’ve ever had any of the wines, they are sensational.”

On one occasion, says Kadinski, Scenic's sommelier decided upon a particular label which sold for €300 (AUD\$490) per bottle and bought cases of it just for dinner that night, based on what passengers preferred from their tastings. Then, the chef developed a bespoke menu, based on the same wine.

“And everyone that has come back from that itinerary says that was their highlight,” says Kadinski.

River cruising offers wondrous opportunities for foodies who enjoy getting hands-on. During a Viking river cruise, those with a sweet tooth can indulge in their passion, don a Lindt uniform and become a Maître Chocolatier at the Lindt Home of Chocolate in Kilchberg, Switzerland. Guests will return to the ship with a chocolate bear, personalised pralines and newfound skills to try at home.

Not much in the world of travel can claim to be all things to all people, but with so many options available, river cruising comes close. At the end of their trip, travellers are certain to return home with a full heart, mind and memory card. ••



A multitude of unique experiences are on offer for river cruise passengers.

LUXURY RIVER CRUISING 2025

DISCOVER A NEW GENERATION OF LUXURY CRUISING



APT SOLARA AND APT OSTARA

Experience unparalleled luxury on APT's brand-new river ships sailing along the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers. Relish world-class dining with more onboard venue choices than any other river ship in Europe, including The Grüner Bar & Dining, an exclusive bar and restaurant featuring a state-of-the-art hydraulics system that raises the entire venue, affording stunning 360-degree vistas. Indulge in a range of luxury suites, elegantly decorated with soothing tones and relax in an array of wellness spaces including a fitness centre, pool and luxurious spa.

MS ESTRELA

Cruise aboard APT's newly launched Douro River ship, designed to gracefully navigate the picturesque waters of Portugal. Purpose-built to offer unparalleled comfort and style, the majority of the ship's luxury suites feature outside balconies. The MS Estrela promises an unforgettable journey through Portugal's enchanting wine country, with exquisite dining experiences, an expansive rooftop swimming pool, outdoor bar and delightful alfresco dining.

MEKONG SERENITY

Cruise aboard the Mekong River's newest and most luxurious ship, the Mekong Serenity. Immerse yourself in unparalleled service, relish intimate culinary delights, and indulge in opulent amenities. With just 44 suites for a maximum of 88 guests, the Mekong Serenity's intimate size means your voyage is highly personalised. Showcasing sophisticated style with local flourishes, this is a ship beyond compare.

For almost a century, APT has been creating unforgettable travel experiences, each unrivalled from the first step to the final farewell, with impeccable personalised service that sets the bar beyond compare. All continents. Every culture. Limitless moments.

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WEEKLY

SHIP GUIDE

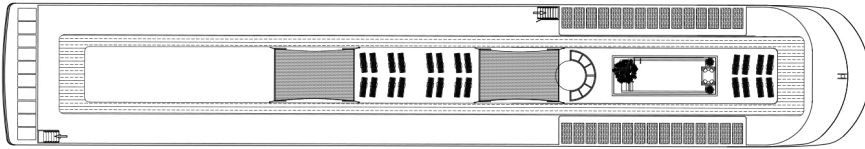
THE LATEST VESSELS IN RIVER CRUISING

On board APT's *Solara*

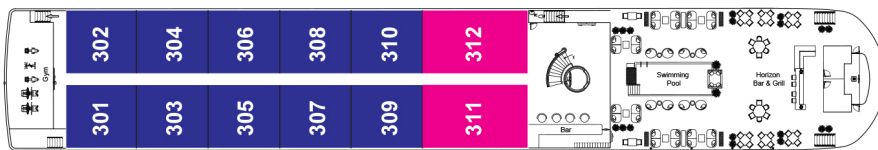
APT MEKONG SERENITY

Discover Vietnam and Cambodia in five-star luxury, passing by riverside villages, meeting traditional farmers and artisans and surrounded by peace and tranquility.

Sun Deck



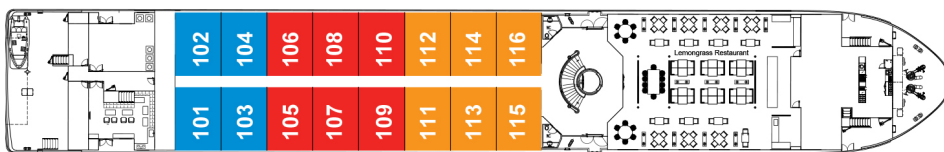
Lotus



Orchid



Lily



SUITE CATEGORIES

LOTUS

Angkor Suites
Panoramic Balcony, Outside Balcony & Balcony Terrace

Bayon Suites
Panoramic Balcony & Outside Balcony

ORCHID

Category A
Panoramic Balcony & Outside Balcony

Category B
Panoramic Balcony & Outside Balcony

LILY

Category C
Panoramic Balcony & Outside Balcony

Category D
Panoramic Balcony & Outside Balcony

Category E
Panoramic Balcony & Outside Balcony



SPECIFICATIONS

Year: 2023

Number of passengers: 88

Number of decks: 4

Rivers: Mekong

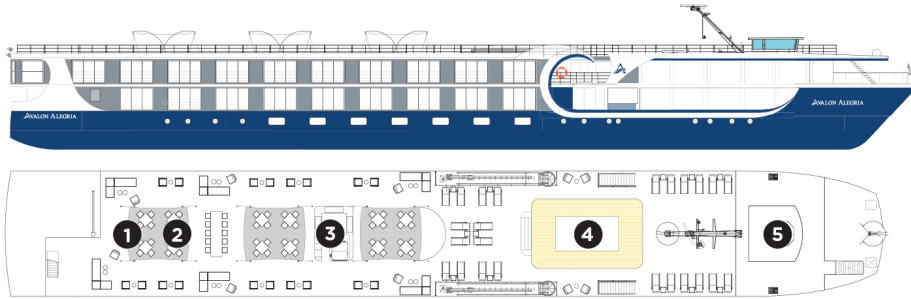
Onboard experiences:

- Indochine Restaurant
- Lemongrass Restaurant
- Harmony Lounge
- Horizon Pool & Grill
- Onboard spa
- Walking track
- Fitness centre
- Butler service

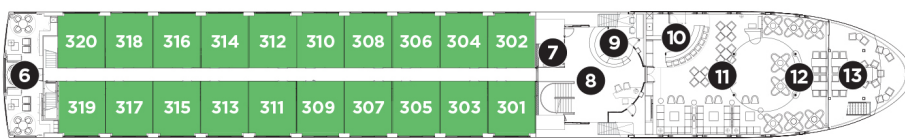
AVALON ALEGRIA

Immerse yourself within the lush Douro Valley wine region and its unique tiered vineyards.

SIDE VIEW & SKY DECK



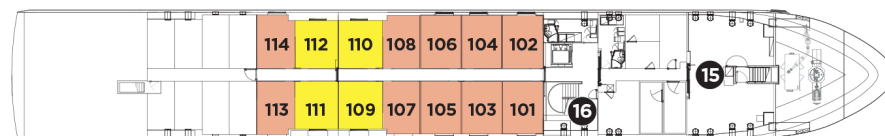
ROYAL DECK



SAPPHIRE DECK



INDIGO DECK



DECK PLAN

1. Sky Lounge
2. Premium Lounge Chairs and Shade Awnings
3. Sky Grill
4. Pool
5. Navigation Bridge
6. Club Lounge
7. Elevator
8. Adventure Centre
9. Reception
10. Bar
11. Panorama Lounge
12. Panorama Bistro
13. Observation Lounge
14. Dining Room
15. Galley
16. Fitness Centre

CATEGORIES

- CAT. P** Royal Deck | Panorama Suites
- CAT. A** Sapphire Deck | Panorama Suites
- CAT. B** Sapphire Deck Aft | Panorama Suites
- CAT. D** Indigo Deck | Deluxe Staterooms
- CAT. E** Indigo Deck | Deluxe Staterooms



SPECIFICATIONS

Year: 2024

Number of passengers: 102

Number of decks: 4

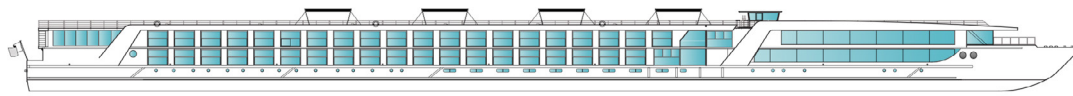
Rivers: Douro

Onboard experiences:

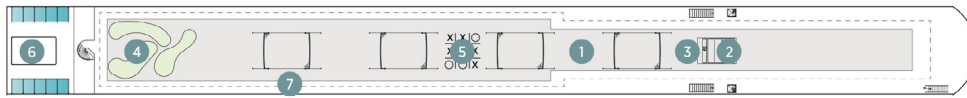
- Wall-to-wall panoramic windows
- Sky deck
- Retractable glass roof
- Panorama Dining Room
- Panorama Lounge and Bar
- Fitness centre
- Onboard adventure centre
- Headsets for guided shore excursions
- Walking track
- Golf putting green
- Sky barbecue

EMERALD DAWN, SUN & LUNA

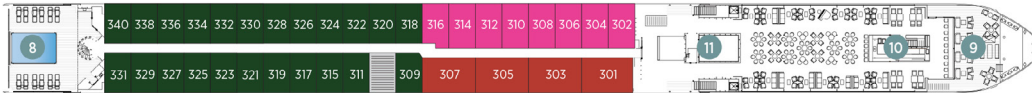
Sail through old-world Europe aboard an Emerald Star-Ship, floating by castles, grand cathedrals and quaint German towns.



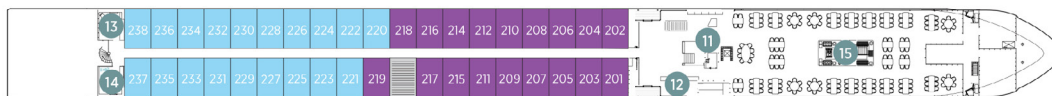
SUN DECK



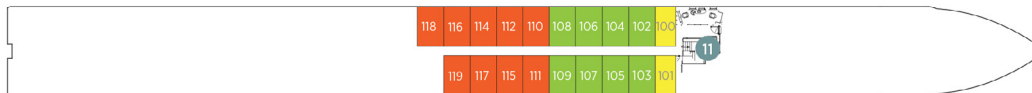
HORIZON DECK



VISTA DECK



RIVIERA DECK



CABIN CATEGORIES

HORIZON DECK

Category	SIZE FT ² (M ²)
Owner's One-Bedroom Suite	315ft ² (29.3m ²)
Grand Balcony Suite*	210ft ² (19.5m ²)
Emerald Panorama Balcony Suite*	180ft ² (16.7m ²)

VISTA DECK

Emerald Panorama Balcony Suite	180ft ² (16.7m ²)
Emerald Panorama Balcony Suite	180ft ² (16.7m ²)

RIVIERA DECK

Category	SIZE FT ² (M ²)
Owner's One-Bedroom Suite	162ft ² (15m ²)
Grand Balcony Suite*	162ft ² (15m ²)
Emerald Panorama Balcony Suite*	117ft ² (10.9m ²)

- Sun deck with deck chairs[^]
- Navigation bridge
- Sky barbecue
- Golf putting green
- Games area
- Retractable glass roof
- Walking track
- Daytime pool & bar/evening cinema
- The Terrace
- Horizon bar & lounge
- Lift
- Reception
- Wellness area
- Fitness area
- Reflections restaurant



SPECIFICATIONS

Year: 2015 and 2020

Number of passengers: 180

Number of decks: 4

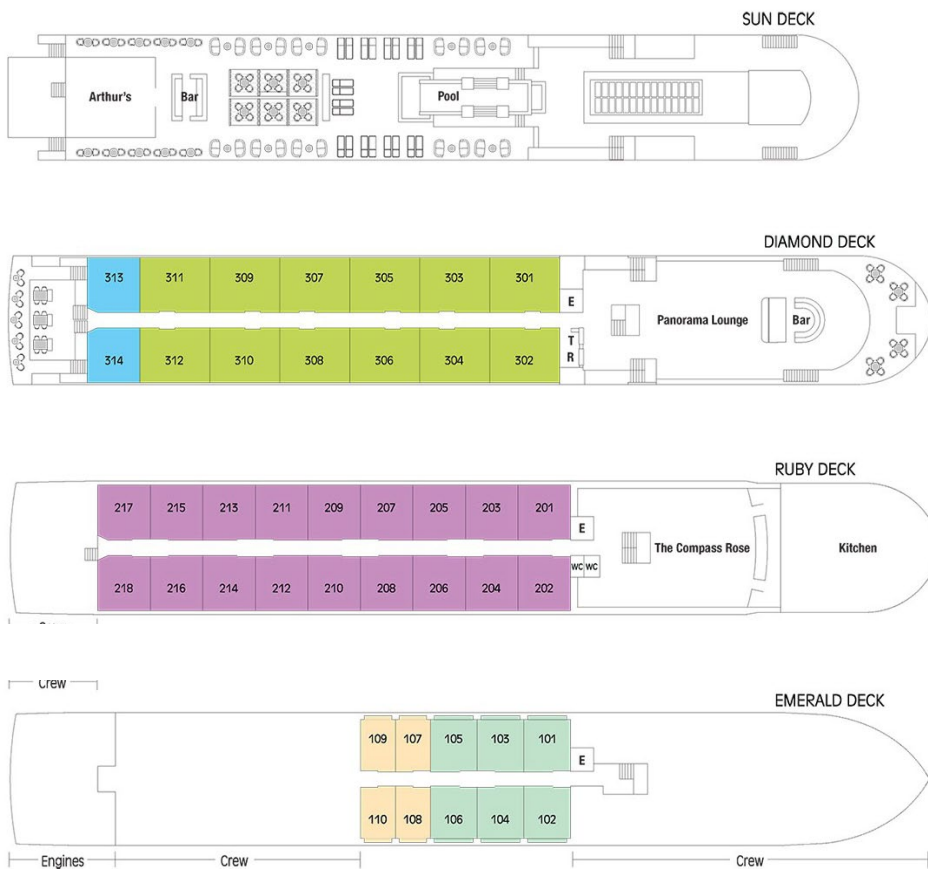
Rivers: Danube, Rhine, Main & Moselle

Onboard experiences:

- Horizon Bar & Lounge
- Reflections Restaurant
- Sun deck
- Navigation bridge
- Sky barbecue
- Golf putting green
- Games area
- Retractable glass roof
- Walking track
- Daytime pool and bar/evening cinema
- Fitness and wellness areas

TAUCK MS ANDORINHA

A custom designed 80-metre ship specifically built for cruising amidst the historic *quintas* and villages along the Douro.



CABIN CATEGORIES

Category 1
(150 sq. ft)

Category 2
(200 sq. ft)

Category 3
(225 sq. ft)

Category 4
(225 sq. ft)

Category 5
(300 sq. ft)

Note: All Category 5 cabins are three-guest capacity suites with a pull-out sleeping couch.

E = Elevator

R = Reception Desk

T = Tauck Desk



SPECIFICATIONS

Year: 2021

Number of passengers: 84

Number of decks: 4

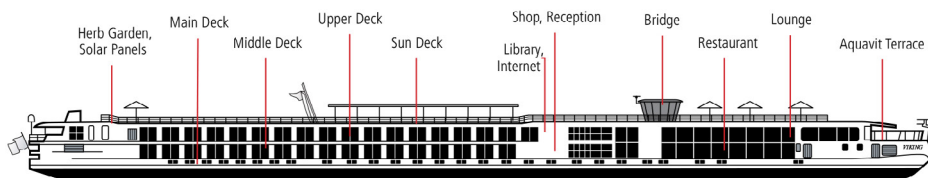
Rivers: Douro

Onboard experiences:

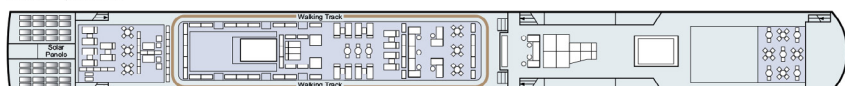
- Outdoor swimming pool
- Sun deck
- The Compass Rose restaurant
- Arthur's restaurant
- Nightly piano music
- Lounge with bow terrace
- Outdoor bar
- Floor-to-ceiling windows with French balconies

VIKING FJORGYN, KARI, RADGRID & SKAGA

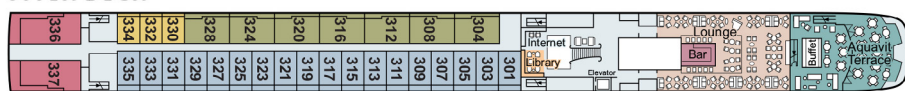
Enjoy the beauty of the Seine River aboard Viking's fleet of Longships, custom-designed to navigate the waterway and dock in the heart of Paris, near the Eiffel Tower. A fifth Longship will be added in 2025.



SUN DECK



UPPER DECK



MIDDLE DECK



MAIN DECK



SUITE CATEGORIES

- Explorer Suite (ES)**
(445 sq. ft)
- Veranda Suite (AA)**
(275 sq. ft)
- Veranda (A)**
(205 sq. ft)
- Veranda (B)**
(205 sq. ft)
- French Balcony (C)**
(135 sq. ft)
- French Balcony (D)**
(135 sq. ft)
- Standard (E)**
(150 sq. ft)
- Standard (F)**
(150 sq. ft)

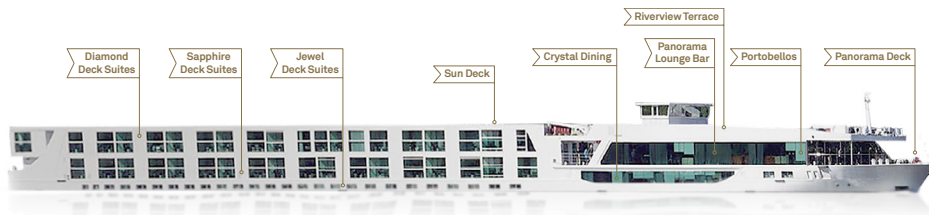


SPECIFICATIONS

- Year:** 2020
- Number of passengers:** 168
- Number of decks:** 4
- Rivers:** Seine
- Onboard experiences:**
 - Aquavit Terrace, the only outdoor restaurant on any river ship in Europe.
 - All suites feature two full-size rooms with a verandah
 - Restaurant with floor-to-ceiling windows
 - Sun deck with 360-degree views
 - Two-tiered atrium
 - Scandinavian-style spaces
 - Lounge and bar
 - Walking track

SCENIC *CRYSTAL, JEWEL & JADE*

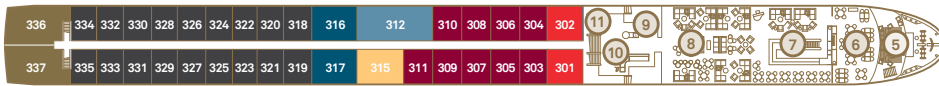
Scenic's fleet of ultra-luxury Space-Ships offer a multitude of amenities and experiences for guests as they glide along beautiful European waterways.



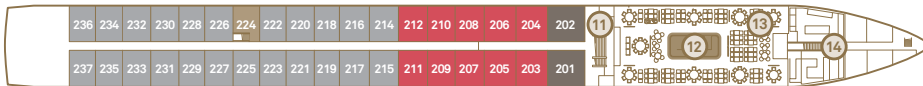
Sun Deck



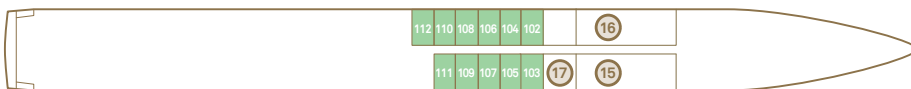
Diamond Deck



Sapphire Deck



Jewel Deck



DECK PLAN

1. Riverview Terrace
2. Wheelhouse
3. Sun Deck
4. Walking Track
5. Panorama Deck
6. Portobellos Restaurant
7. River Café
8. Lounge & Bar
9. Gift Shop
10. Reception
11. Elevator
12. Crystal Dining
13. Table La Rive
14. Galley
15. Wellness Area
16. Fitness Centre
17. Salt Therapy Lounge

SUITE CATEGORIES

DIAMOND DECK

- RS** Royal Panorama Suite
- A** Balcony Suite
- RA** Royal Balcony Suite
- R** Royal Balcony Suite
- RO** Royal Owner's Suite
- PD** Deluxe Balcony Suite
- RJ** Junior Balcony Suite

SAPPHIRE DECK

- C** Balcony Suite
- BS** Single Balcony Suite
- BD** Deluxe Balcony Suite
- BJ** Junior Balcony Suite

JEWEL DECK

- E** Standard Suite



SPECIFICATIONS

- Refurbished:** 2024
- Number of passengers:** 163
- Number of decks:** 4
- Rivers:** Rhine, Main, Danube, Moselle
- Onboard experiences:**
 - Riverview terrace
 - Wheelhouse
 - Sun deck
 - Walking track
 - Panorama deck
 - Portobellos restaurant
 - River café
 - Lounge and bar
 - Crystal dining
 - Table La Rive
 - Wellness area
 - Salt Therapy lounge