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## 40 of the most exciting river cruises for 2020



A cruise ship on the Moselle River in Germany

By **Teresa Machan**, TRAVEL WRITER

26 FEBRUARY 2020 • 12:20PM



We reveal the world's best river cruises, from Amazon adventures and sailing the Mississippi to travelling in Asia along the Mekong and Yangtze

## ASIA

### MEKONG

#### 1. See red (in a good way)

Over the past couple of decades, the Pandaw portfolio has grown from a single converted Clyde-built steamer ship to 17 hand-crafted brass and teak vessels that sail into some of Asia's most interesting and off-the-beaten-track corners. This itinerary tacks on a Red River cruise in northern Vietnam to a journey along the upper Mekong through Laos, Thailand and Myanmar to make an unforgettable 21-day expedition trip. Destinations include Halong Bay and Hanoi (Vietnam), the Golden Triangle in northern Thailand and the Unesco World Heritage city of Luang Prabang (Laos).

- *A 21-night Halong Bay, Red River and Laos Mekong voyage on board the RV Angkor Pandaw costs from £5,701pp, sailing on Sept 13. Includes all accommodation, tips and all scheduled excursions (0800 028 4272; [riversoftheworld.co.uk](http://riversoftheworld.co.uk) (<https://www.riversoftheworld.co.uk/>))*

- [Colonial architecture and vibrant street life – an expert guide to Hanoi](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/hanoi-cruise-port-guide/)

(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/hanoi-cruise-port-guide/>)

## 2. A new jewel

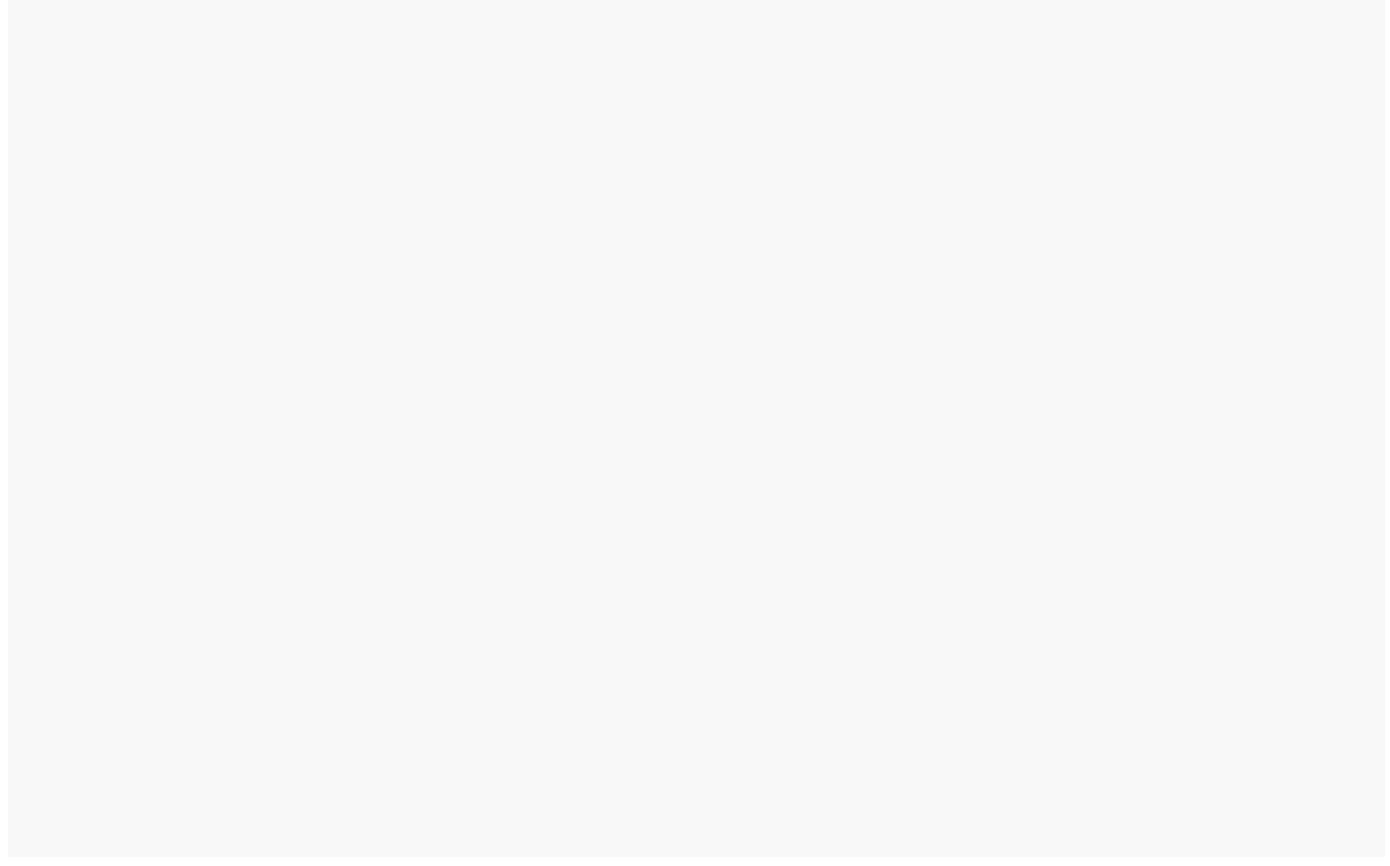
Constructed using sustainable materials, the new Mekong Jewel is Uniworld's most eco-friendly build yet. This is a luxurious all-suite ship with an impressive pool, gym, library and two Royal Suites (924 sq ft) with stunning balconies. For less humid evenings, there is also an al fresco dining area on the sun deck. Cruises are combined with city stays in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and Siem Reap, Cambodia, and include a visit to Angkor Wat. The operator partners with the charitable organisation Pack for a Purpose and encourages passengers to help designated Mekong communities by packing a few useful supplies.

- *A 13-day Timeless Wonders of Vietnam, Cambodia & The Mekong cruise costs from £4,789pp including five nights' luxury hotel accommodation, 11 days' excursions and transfers (0808 163 6487; [uniworld.com](https://www.uniworld.com/uk/) (<https://www.uniworld.com/uk/>))*

## 3. Explore the Mekong

The river-cruise market in Asia is flooded with luxury options. If you're after something more wallet-friendly, The River Cruise Line's new cruise in Cambodia and Vietnam should fit the bill. The ship, the four-star Indochine, visits the Mekong Delta and Cambodia's Tonle Sap lake, where stops are made at stilt villages. The cruise can be combined with an onward rail tour in Vietnam to make a 21-day Far Eastern adventure. The RV Indochine has just 24 cabins, each with large windows and there's a large sun deck for panoramic views.

- *The 12-day Mekong River Adventure costs from £2,995pp, including hotel accommodation in Siem Reap on arrival and excursions and transfers. Departures on Oct 24 and Nov 25 2020 (01858 435655; [rivercruiseline.co.uk](https://www.arenatravel.com/river-cruises/) (<https://www.arenatravel.com/river-cruises/>))*



The new all-suite Mekong Jewel is Uniworld's most eco-friendly build yet

- [Ho Chi Minh City cruise port guide](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/ho-chi-minh-city-cruise-port-guide/) (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/ho-chi-minh-city-cruise-port-guide/>)

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## YANGTZE

### 4. Magnificent China

Although China is off limits to tourists at the moment due to the coronavirus outbreak, a journey along the Yangtze River often forms part of itineraries that make the best of China's diverse attractions. When the country once again opens its doors, options include Wendy Wu's 22-day trip that visits Xian for the Terracotta Warriors, the Three Gorges dam and Chengdu for an evening at the opera and a visit to the Panda Conservation Centre. You will also visit Beijing and Shanghai and enjoy a cruise along the Li River from Guilin, to charming Yangshuo. The river's cormorant fishermen and dramatic karst peaks have been an artist favourite for centuries.

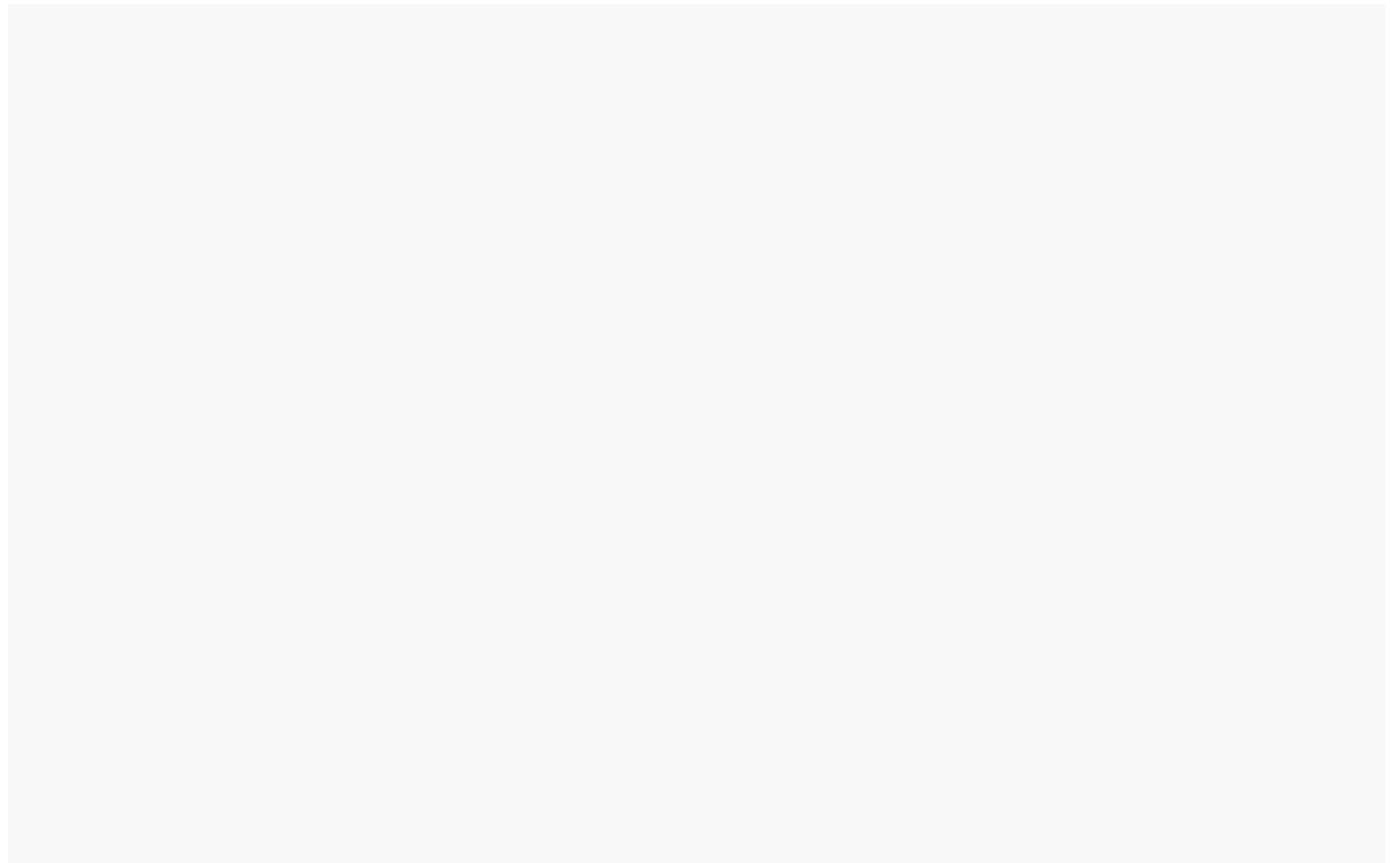
- *From £3,390 pp for a 22-day Magnificent China escorted tour, including flights (0808 2740 534; [wendywutours.co.uk](https://www.wendywutours.co.uk/))* (<https://www.wendywutours.co.uk/>)

### 5. Monkey business

For many, a holiday to Asia is as much about the food experience as the sights. On this family-friendly cruise along the Yangtze – again subject to the ending of the coronavirus

outbreak – there is the opportunity for some hands-on tuition in Chinese dumpling-making on board the Yangtze Explorer. During a visit to the Shennongjia Nature Reserve, watch golden snub-nosed monkeys (as seen on the BBC's Seven Worlds, One Planet) swinging between branches, and ask questions over lunch at Xiaolongtan, a wildlife rescue centre.

- *A three-night Yangtze Explorer cruise costs from £1,015pp (one child stays free with two adults in low season). Departures May 31 to Sept 3, 2020. Includes drinks and excursions. Excludes flights (00 86 27 8549 6106; [sanctuaryretreats.com](https://sanctuaryretreats.com/) (<https://sanctuaryretreats.com/>))*



Learn the art of Chinese dumpling-making on board the Yangtze Explorer

- A dynamic Chinese metropolis that's home to the historic Bund – an expert guide to Shanghai (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/shanghai-cruise-port-guide/>)

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## AYEYARWADY

### 6. Water festival

Plying the waterways of Myanmar's Ayeyarwady River between the ancient capitals of Bagan and Mandalay, The Strand Cruise is styled after its sister property, the culturally significant Strand Yangon (Kipling and Orwell are among those who have called its hallowed rooms home). The evocative bygone-era character of the hotel is echoed in the elegant 50-passenger ship, which has a sun deck, stylish pool and spa. The Strand Cruise sails on two, three and four-night itineraries from Mandalay. This year the April

departure happens to coincide with one of the most significant cultural and religious festivals in the Buddhist calendar, New Year, which is welcomed in with a water festival. Thingyan is a four-day celebration that combines religious observance with a good dowsing which, according to tradition, cleanses ready for the coming year. Expect to get wet!

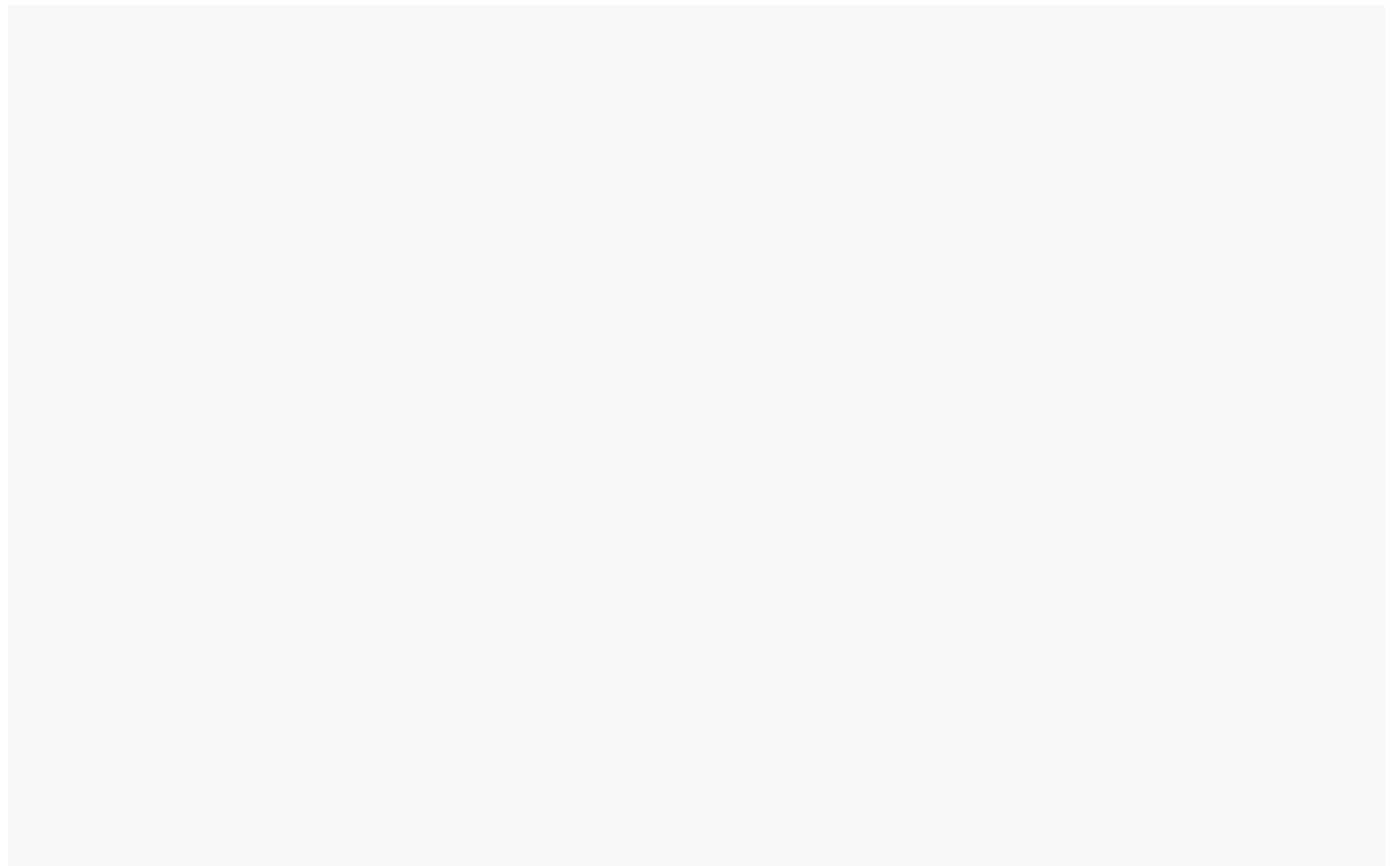
- *From \$1,106pp (£848) including activities and excursions, soft drinks and local beer, house wine with meals and Wi-Fi (no single-occupancy surcharge). Excludes flights (00 95 18 243377; [thestrandcruise.com](https://www.thestrandcruise.com/))*
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## BRAHMAPUTRA

### 7. Incredible India

With the opportunity to spot the greater one-horned rhino and visit several of the state's national parks, a river cruise in Assam in north-eastern India has much to offer the naturalist. Noble Caledonia has combined the cruise on board the 34-passenger RV Charaidew II, which launched last year, with hotel nights at the Oberoi in Kolkata and the option to extend the holiday with a side-trip to Bhutan. There's plenty to learn from expert guides along the route, and several Hindu monasteries and an ancient capital city are among the ports of call.

- *From £5,495pp departing in November and December and including excursions, local wine, beer and soft drinks with meals, tips and transfers and four nights' full-board accommodation in Kolkata (020 7752 0000; [noble-caledonia.co.uk](https://www.noble-caledonia.co.uk/))*



A one-horned rhino in the north-east Indian state of Assam CREDIT: GETTY

- **A journey through the India that time forgot**

[\(https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/brahmaputra-river-cruise-india-noble-caledonia/\)](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/brahmaputra-river-cruise-india-noble-caledonia/)

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## GANGES

### 8. Give back while you cruise

Sustainability is something many of us consider when booking an overseas trip. Air miles, the impact our holiday has on local resources and the interaction with the local community are key considerations. When booking, read the small print and ask the cruise line if there is anything you can take with you. Some encourage their passengers to take stationery for schools; others support local charities and offer excursions that facilitate volunteering. On the Hooghly River in India, Responsible Travel donates 5 per cent of the cruise fare towards a charitable foundation that seeks to positively impact lives and livelihoods through education, the environment and rural community development. The ship's guides are local and act as ambassadors in their own villages for issues around poaching, plastic bag usage and environmental stewardship. Ships are panelled with bamboo (a more sustainable wood) and simply but comfortably furnished. The 22-passenger ship sails from Kolkata to Farakka to Kolkata, calling at riverside villages and visiting several little-known Bengali terracotta temples.

- *The Lower Ganges Cruise costs from £2,585pp, departing March 5. Includes excursions; excludes flights (01273 823700; [responsibletravel.com](http://responsibletravel.com))*

## KWAI & CHAO PHRAYA

### 9. Echoes of wartime history

Taking in two very different rivers and two diminutive ships, this quirky itinerary from Audley Travel throws a light on central Thailand. The elegant and colonial-style RV River Kwai takes 20 passengers along the jungle-clad River Kwai to Kanchanaburi, where a museum details the moving history of the Thailand-Burma railway. An Allied cemetery honouring British POWs held here by their Japanese captors is not far away. Passengers swap ships in Bangkok for a cruise along Bangkok's main arterial waterway, the Chao Phraya, to the ancient capital of Ayutthaya. The eight-person Anantara Dream is a faithful restoration of a former rice barge.

- *A 10-night tailor-made Central Thailand trip costs from £4,140pp and includes three nights in Bangkok, one night in Amphawa, three nights on the RV River Kwai and two on Anantara Dream. Includes flights, transfers, B&B accommodation, the two cruises (full board) and some excursions (01993 838115; [audleytravel.com/thailand](http://audleytravel.com/thailand))*

[\(https://www.audleytravel.com/thailand\)](https://www.audleytravel.com/thailand)

RV River Kwai stops at Kanchanaburi, site of the famous 'Bridge over the River Kwai' CREDIT: GETTY

- [A castaway experience in a corner of Thailand untouched by mass tourism](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/small-ship-adventure-cruise-thailand/)

[\(https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/small-ship-adventure-cruise-thailand/\)](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/small-ship-adventure-cruise-thailand/)

# AFRICA

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## CHOBE

### 10. Out of Africa

An average day meandering the channels of Lake Kariba in southern Africa might bring sightings of basking crocodiles, hippos and elephants. But you'll see an awful lot more on CroisiEurope's The Ends of the Earth itinerary with an extension to Cape Town and the Cape of Good Hope. Throughout the journey, you will enjoy spotting a great variety of wildlife. You will also embark on a number of safari experiences – both on the water and on land – as you make your way through four different countries. The majority of cruising is done on board the brand-new Zimbabwean Dream. Highlights of the trip include cruising on the Gache Gache and Zambezi rivers, game-spotting in Matusadona National Park on the shore of Lake Kariba, a visit to Impalila Island in Namibia and an optional flight over Victoria Falls.

- *The 13-day trip costs from £6,475pp including city hotel stays plus accommodation at Cascades lodge, all meals and transfers, some cruise excursions, domestic flights, the services of a local guide and some tips. Excludes international flights and a Zimbabwean visa (\$30) (020 8328 1281; [croisieurope.co.uk](https://www.croisieurope.co.uk/))*

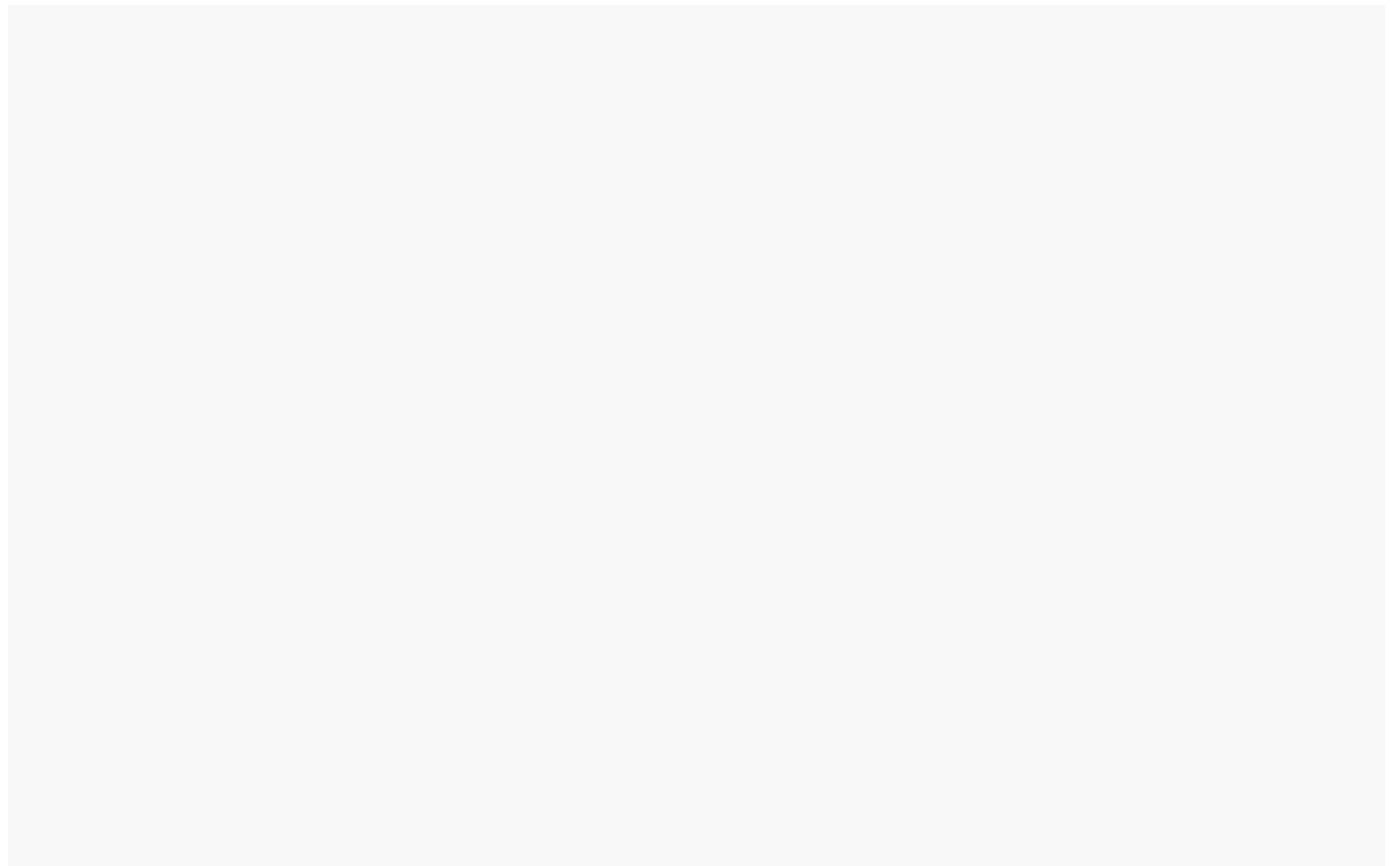
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## NILE

### 11. Sea of Galilee and the Pyramids

The opportunity to combine a Nile cruise with a visit to neighbouring Israel is rather unusual but Emerald Waterways is offering just that on a new itinerary that travels from Tel Aviv to Cairo via a slew of fascinating historical cities and sights. Highlights include a cruise along the Sea of Galilee, a tour of Jerusalem's beguiling Old Town and a visit to the ancient temples of Ramesses II in Egypt's Valley of the Kings. The cruise is aboard the MS Hamees.

- *The Israel and Ancient Egypt River Cruise costs from £5,420pp departing Sep 13. Includes a four-night river cruise in Egypt and 11-nights' hotel accommodation (0808 301 3228; [emeraldwaterways.co.uk](https://www.emeraldwaterways.co.uk/))*



The Great Temple of Abu Simbel, built by (and for) Ramesses II in the 13th century BC CREDIT: GETTY

- [Everything you need to know about cruising the Nile](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/nile-cruise-guide/)  
(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/nile-cruise-guide/>)

## 12. Mythical voyage

Luxury line Uniworld is set to launch a new ship on the Nile in August, the SS Sphinx. The 42-suite Sphinx is a good option for those wishing to spend a bit more time on the river, as she will sail on 12-day round-trip cruises from Cairo, where passengers spend two nights at the Four Seasons hotel. The cruise runs the gamut of sights including temples dedicated to Hathor and Hatshepsut as well as the Valley of the Kings. Giza's Grand Egyptian Museum is due to open in October.

- *A 12-day Splendours of Egypt and The Nile cruise costs from £5,000pp, including seven nights on board with unlimited drinks, excursions, tips, transfers and four hotel nights in Cairo (0333 300 8478; [uniworld.com](https://www.uniworld.com/uk/) (<https://www.uniworld.com/uk/>))*

## EUROPE

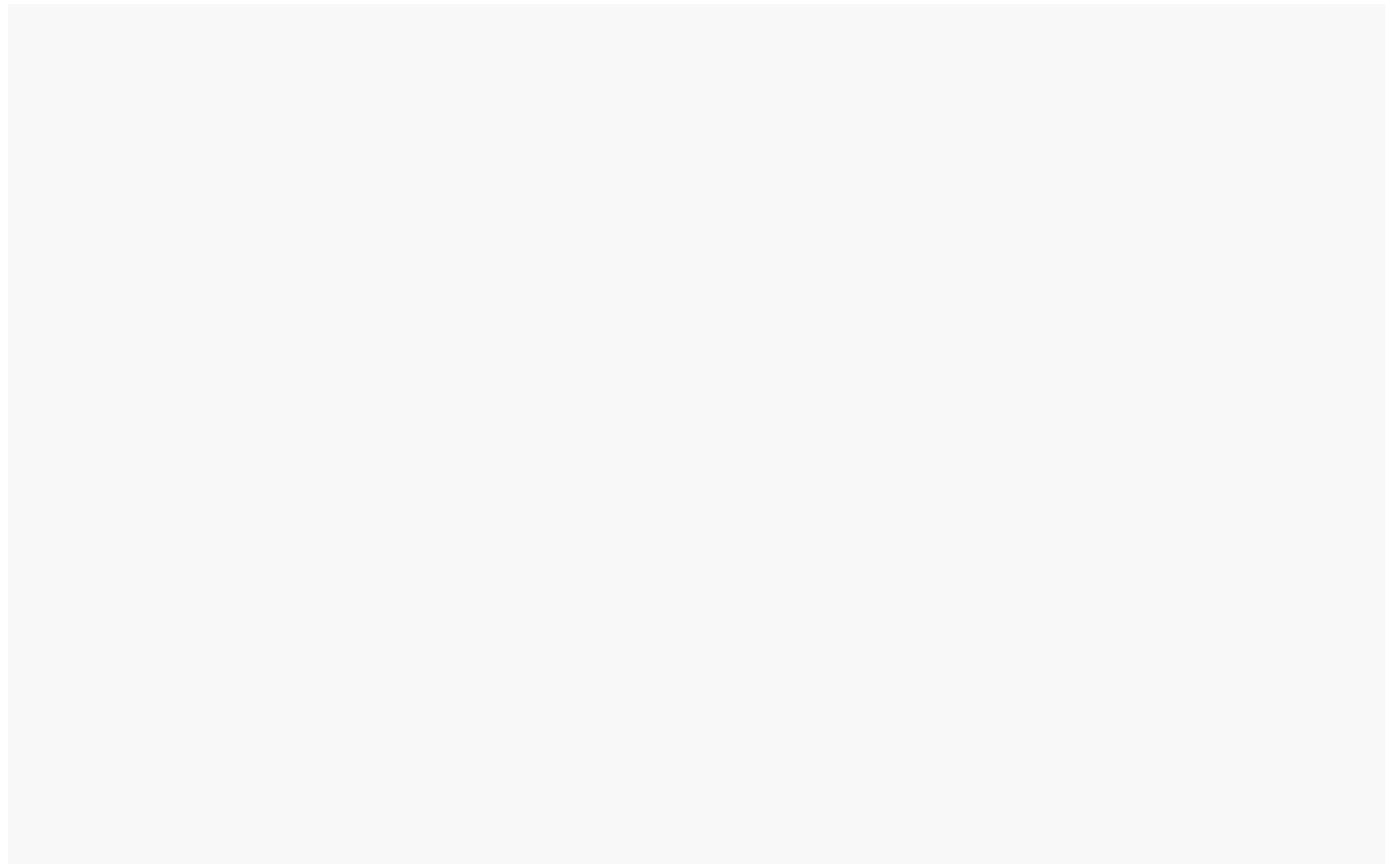
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### DANUBE

## 13. A rare passion

The Oberammergau Passion Play is a decennial event, which has been performed since the 17th century, and a handful of operators have bagged some of those once-in-a-decade tickets for passengers this summer. This journey through four countries, from the Alps to the Black Sea through the scenic Wachau Valley, is a perennial favourite among river cruisers. Activities include city tours and a tour of Melk Abbey. This year's Passion Play will involve active participation from more than 2,300 locals, ranging from infants to 96-year-old Anni Drohmann.

- *CroisiEurope's seven-night Cruise on the Beautiful Blue Danube and the Passion Play in Oberammergau costs from £2,159pp departing June 17; from £2,102pp departing Aug 26, cruise-only. Includes orchestra seat tickets to the Passion Play (020 8328 1281; [croisieurope.co.uk](https://www.croisieurope.co.uk/) (<https://www.croisieurope.co.uk/>))*



The Oberammergau Passion Play is staged once a decade CREDIT: GETTY

- [The ultimate guide to Europe's greatest river](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/river-cruises/need-to-know-danube-cruises/) (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/river-cruises/need-to-know-danube-cruises/>)

## 14. Balkan gems

River cruises to the Balkans have proved so popular for APT that the operator has added several more departure dates for this summer. Itineraries now include a journey to the Godollo Palace in Hungary on board the Grand Empress, a restored steam train once used by Emperor Franz Josef and his wife Sisi. Balkan Gems takes guests down a less

visited stretch of the Danube from Budapest to Giurgiu, in southern Romania. In Pecs, there is a chance to view the ceramics collection of Laszlo Gyugyi.

- *An eight-day Balkan Gems cruise from Budapest to Giurgiu costs from £2,345pp departing 2021. Includes transfers and drinks (0800 046 3002; [aptouring.co.uk](http://aptouring.co.uk) (<https://www.aptouring.co.uk>))*

## 15. Tales of empire

In a region endowed with picturesque riverside towns and villages, not to mention some of the world's prettiest perched castles, it's easy to overlook the more ancient historical significance of some of Europe's river-cruise favourites. Archaeological specialist Andante Travels has teamed up with A-Rosa to offer an in-depth look at the former Roman province of Pannonia, bound on the north and east by the Danube. An expert historian will accompany passengers on visits to two former capitals of Roman Pannonia – Carnuntum (near Vienna) and Aquincum (near Budapest) – and to Devin Castle, which dates back to the Neolithic period. On board the A-Rosa Donna, more tales of the Roman empire can be gleaned during early-evening lectures.

- *An eight-day Cruising the Danube: Romans, Amber & Habsburg Splendour itinerary costs from £2,499pp departing on August 30 and October 18, including transfers and excursions (01722 713800; [andantetravels.com](http://andantetravels.com) (<https://andantetravels.com/>))*

- Dramatic history, thermal baths, buzzy 'ruin' bars – an expert guide to Budapest

(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/budapest-cruise-port-guide/>)

## 16. Ripping up the rule book

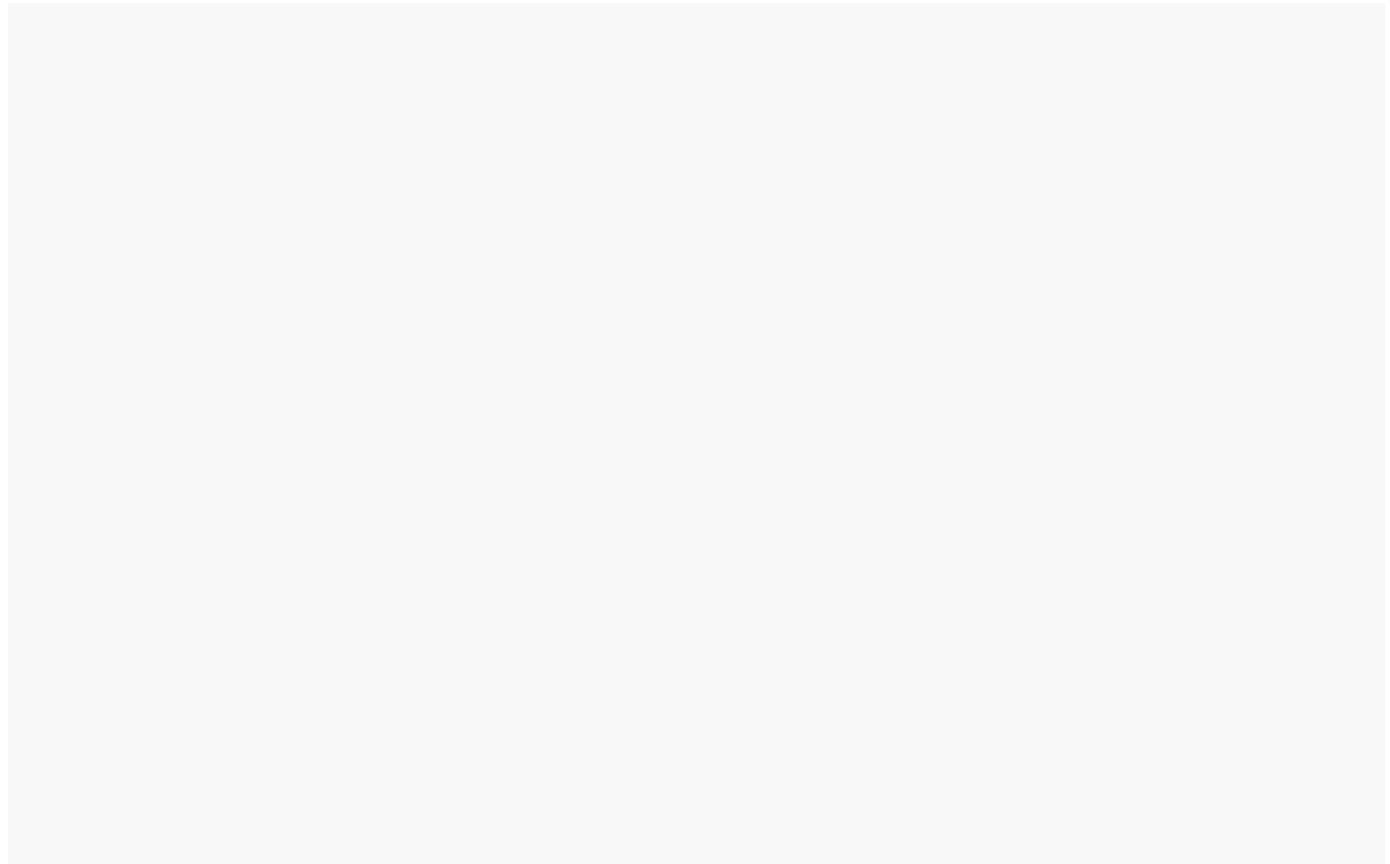
With its open-all-hours approach to breakfast, lounge-style rooftop bar, truly informal dress code and late nights in port, U by Uniworld not only has a younger demographic in mind but also the prices to match. This year, Uniworld is offering three new itineraries and moving its ship, The B, to Central Europe (on an Amsterdam and Brussels-bound itinerary). The A will sail the Danube on a new Vienna Vibe itinerary from Vienna to Nuremberg. Sailing includes a DJ set and a complimentary daily happy hour and the itinerary builds in plenty of time to explore independently in Krems, Melk, Linz, Passau and Regensburg.

- *From £1,899pp in a studio cabin. Excludes flights (0845 678 2795; ubyuniworld.com (<https://www.ubyuniworld.com/uk/>))*

## 17. Secret Danube

Finding new experiences on return visits to a favourite region or country can be tricky. Jules Verne's Secrets collection has been created with this in mind. A new Secret Danube itinerary delves into the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, travelling via capitals that were once behind the Iron Curtain and visiting places including Constanta/Tulcea, Bucharest, Veliko Tarnovo, Ruse, the Iron Gates, Belgrade/Novi Sad and Osijek. At the Black Sea, the river widens into the marshy, tree-fringed lakes, reed islands and forests of the Danube Delta, possibly one of the well-travelled river's best-kept secrets.

- *A nine-night Secret Danube cruise from Bucharest to Budapest on the MS Gerard Schmitter or MS L'Europe costs from £2,395pp departing on May 20 and Oct 6. Also includes one hotel night and drinks on board (020 3733 2694; yjv.com (<https://www.yjv.com/>))*



The rock sculpture of Decebalus overlooks the Danube within the Iron Gates (a deep gorge)

- [Vienna cruise port guide](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/vienna-cruise-port-guide/) (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/vienna-cruise-port-guide/>)

## 18. Ultra luxury

Impeccably executed menus, longer stays ashore (with the option to dine in acclaimed restaurants) and an unparalleled crew-to-guest ratio have secured Crystal's footing in the ultra-luxury river-cruising category. With an eye on December's Christmas markets, passengers sailing on Crystal Ravel between Regensburg and Budapest can take advantage of a new shore extension in Prague, which offers exclusive access to the Rothmeyer and Spanish halls, the Rudolph Gallery, the Throne Hall, and the Glass and Habsburg salons.

- *A seven-night Delightful Danube cruise on board Crystal Ravel costs from £2,938pp, departing on Dec 7. Includes drinks, transfers, some shore excursions and tips. The Prague Discovery extension costs £1,230pp and includes three nights at the Mandarin Oriental with breakfast, private transfers and most tours (020 7399 7604; [crystalcruises.co.uk](https://www.crystalcruises.co.uk/))* (<https://www.crystalcruises.co.uk/>)

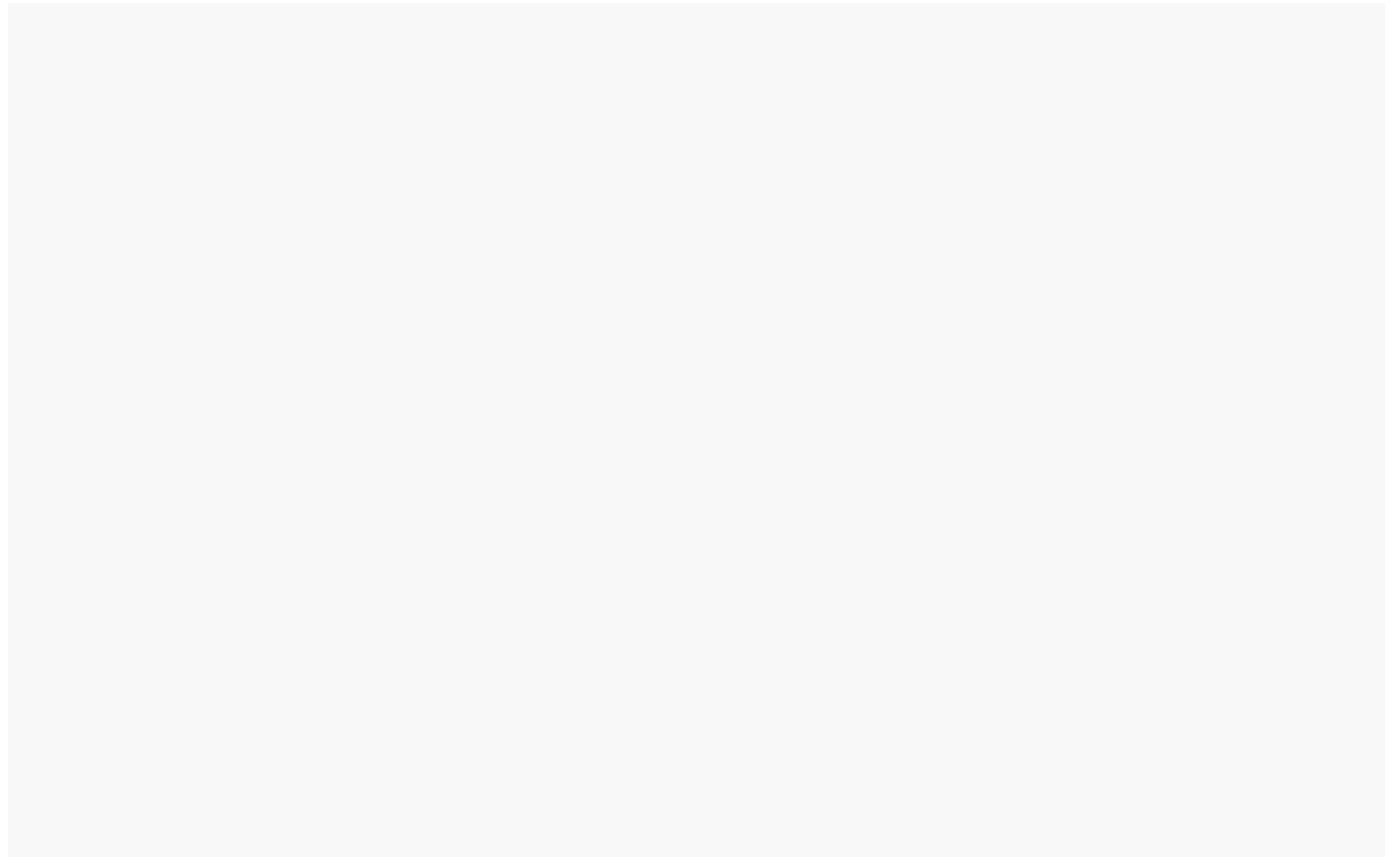
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## RHINE

## 19. Rumba on the river

Snake-hipped ballroom heart-throb Pasha Kovalev was noticeable by his absence on the most recent series of Strictly Come Dancing but guess where you'll find him this spring? Rumba-ing down the Rhine past tulip fields, windmills and castles on an Emerald Waterways river cruise from Basel to Amsterdam. Exclusive events will include a private dance performance at the Electoral Palace in Koblenz, a Q&A with Kovalev and, of course, the chance to hit the dance floor yourself.

- *The Rumba down the Rhine with Pasha Kovalev cruise, on board Emerald Sun, costs from £1,845pp departing April 3, including tips and excursions and events (0808 301 3228; [emeraldwaterways.co.uk](http://emeraldwaterways.co.uk) (<https://www.emeraldwaterways.co.uk/>))*



Basel is the launch point Emerald Waterways' Rumba down the Rhine cruise CREDIT: ISTOCK

- [Rhine river cruise guide](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/river-cruises/Rhine-river-cruise-guide/) (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/river-cruises/Rhine-river-cruise-guide/>)

## 20. Cruising in comfort

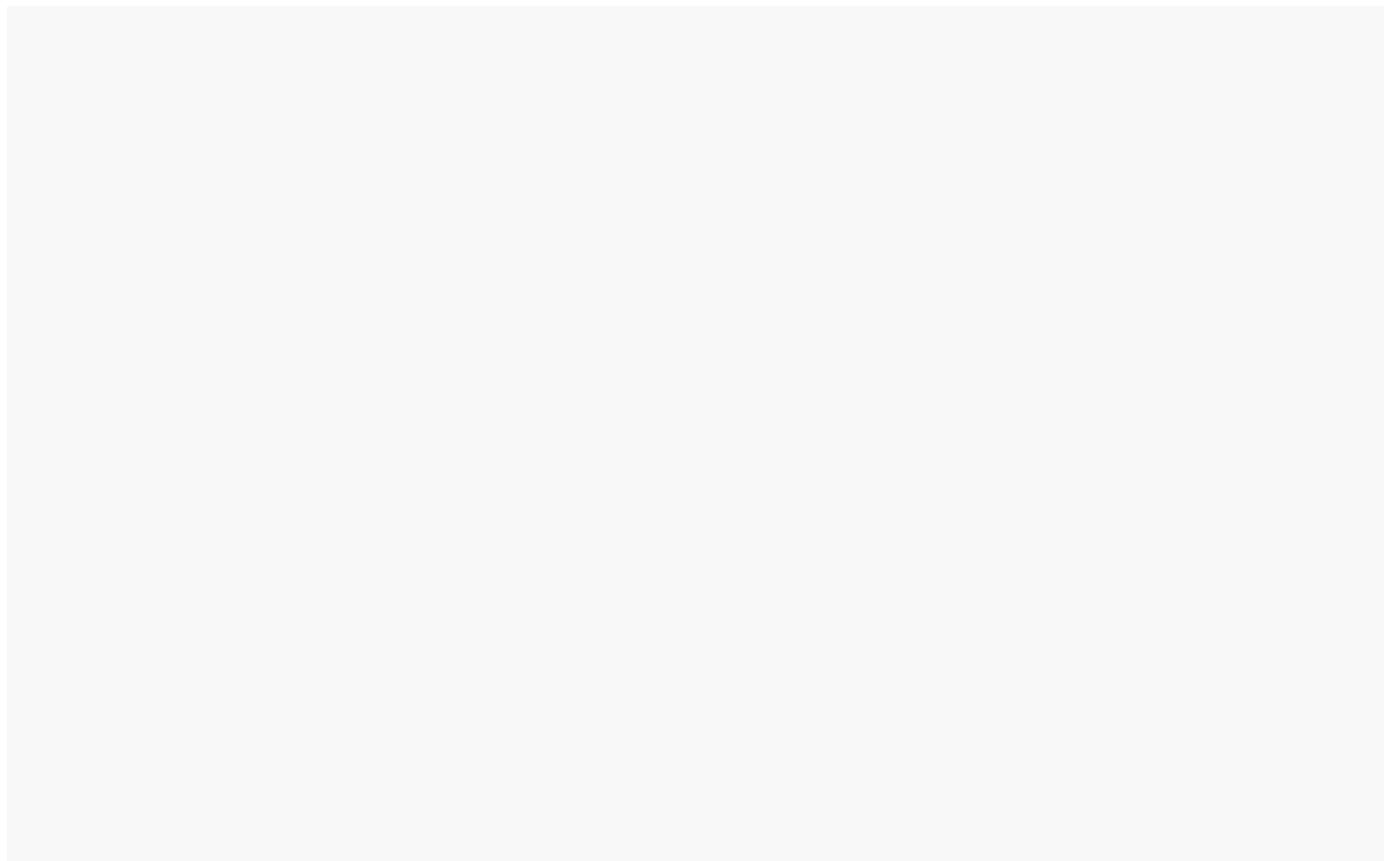
The high standards found across the board on river ships means that there's very little compromise, even if you are looking for a more affordable holiday. The Polaris is the first of three contemporary ships being rolled out within APT's Travelmarvel brand. The ship offers several places to dine, including a terrace and roof garden and has stylish relaxation areas and light-filled cabins, some with Juliet balconies. Perfect for admiring the Rhine Gorge and the string of hilltop castles that line the river.

- A 15-day European Gems Essential River Cruise costs from £2,795pp, sailing from Amsterdam to Budapest (0800 046 3002; [aptouring.co.uk](https://www.aptouring.co.uk/) (<https://www.aptouring.co.uk/>))

## 21. More ways to be active

AmaWaterways takes a unique approach to on-board fitness by offering exercise classes led by a wellness host. Launching this summer, the elegant 156-passenger AmaSiena has a top-deck walking track and a pool with swim-up bar and there is sightseeing ashore by bicycle. Roomy cabins have two balconies (one is a Juliet balcony). New routes include Treasures of the Main and Rhine (Nuremberg to Amsterdam) and Vineyards of the Rhine and Moselle (Amsterdam to Luxembourg).

- From £2,434pp for a seven-night Christmas Markets on the Rhine cruise departing on Dec 2 (0800 320 2336; [amawaterways.co.uk](https://www.amawaterways.co.uk/) (<https://www.amawaterways.co.uk/>))



AmaWaterways is ramping up its fitness offerings this year CREDIT: GETTY

- [Rich in history, sausages and gingerbread – an expert guide to Nuremberg](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/nuremberg-cruise-port-guide/)  
(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/nuremberg-cruise-port-guide/>)

## 22. Beethoven's big birthday

Bonn's beloved Beethoven will be the centre of attention later this year when Europe-wide celebrations take place to mark the German composer and pianist's 250th anniversary. Scenic has devised a Beethoven-themed walking tour in Bonn across all of

its Rhine itineraries this year, while in Vienna, passengers are treated to a private concert featuring Strauss and Mozart, with a special tribute to Beethoven.

- *An eight-day Rhine Highlights cruise from Amsterdam to Basel costs from £2,720pp departing July 1 including private transfers, tips and excursions. (0808 250 8614; [scenic.co.uk](https://www.scenic.co.uk/) (<https://www.scenic.co.uk/>))*

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## LOIRE

### 23. Loire in vogue

It's comforting to know when you take the time to complete feedback forms that someone is reading them. The Loire was one of the most requested rivers from Titan passengers last year, and there's a new cruise to satisfy demand: a five-night sailing through the picturesque Loire Valley on the paddle ship Loire Princess, visiting châteaux. An alternative six-night cruise, Discover the heart of France, also explores France's longest river.

- *Titan Travel's Vineyards and Chateaux of the Loire Valley costs from £1,799pp departing June 21. Includes door-to-door transfers and flights plus six excursions (0808 274 2725; [titantravel.co.uk](https://www.titantravel.co.uk/) (<https://www.titantravel.co.uk/>))*

- [Seine river cruise guide](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/river-cruises/Seine-river-cruise-guide/) (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/river-cruises/Seine-river-cruise-guide/>)
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## SAÔNE

### 24. Barge in Burgundy

Fancy exploring the Burgundy wine region by piloted peniche? The 22-passenger barge, Daniele, criss crosses centuries-old canals and soaks up the Saône's bucolic riverside scenery as she sails round-trip from Dijon. Cycle along the Côte de Beaune and taste the fruits of that terroir. Mustard tasting is a must, but there's another reason to visit Dijon this year: its Musée de Beaux-Arts has reopened following a major refurbishment.

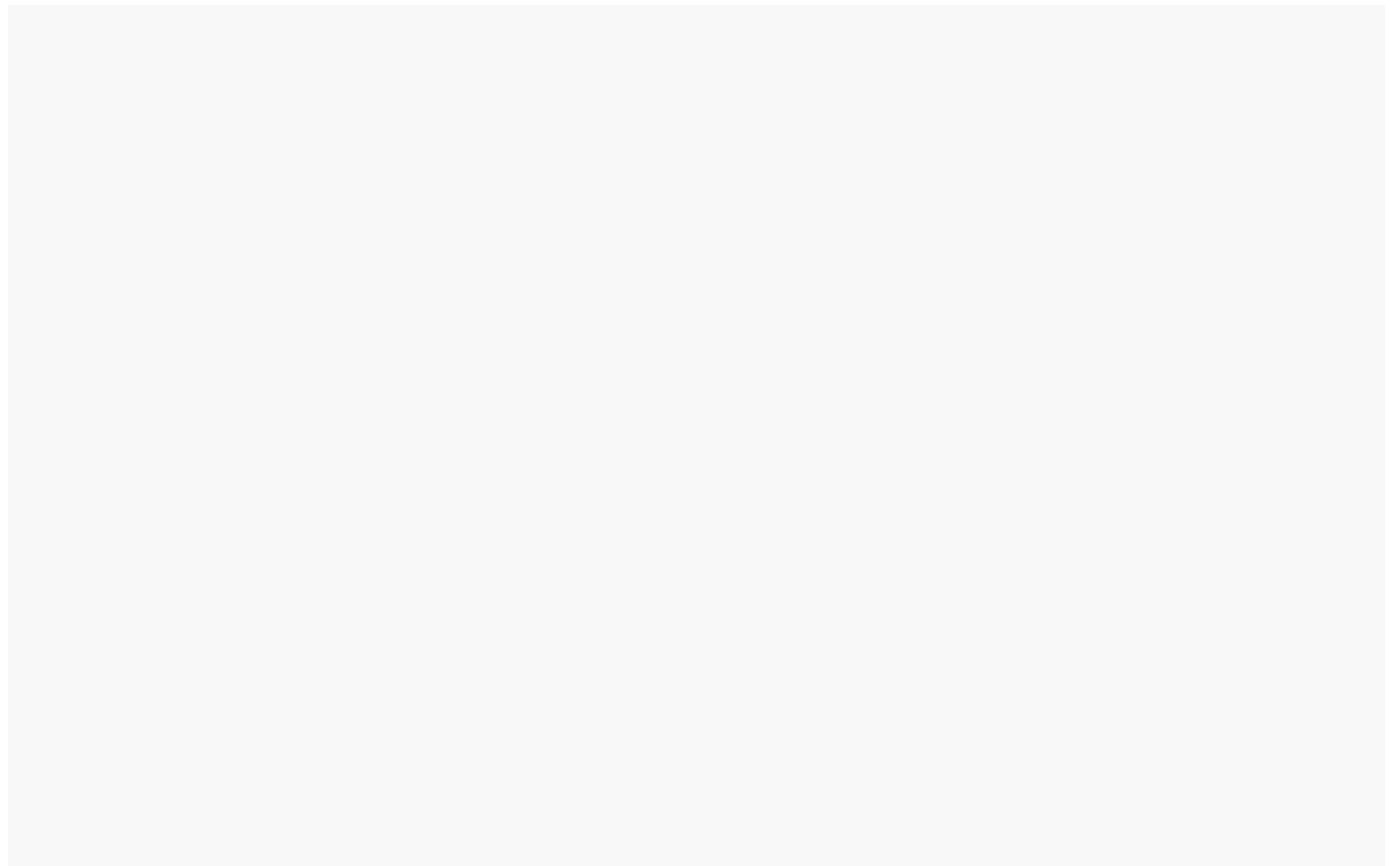
- *The Burgundy River Cruise Adventure costs from £1,187pp meals included, but not flights. Departs April 3. E-bikes are available for an extra charge (020 7313 6953; [gadventures.co.uk](https://www.gadventures.co.uk/))* (<https://www.gadventures.co.uk/>)
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## RHÔNE

### 25. A Rick Stein favourite

This trip on the Rhône on the piloted eight-passenger hotel barge, Anjodi, could be just the thing for a break or a holiday for a small group of friends. Having appeared several times on Rick Stein's French Odyssey, foodies should find the Anjodi a big draw. Sailing from Avignon to Marseillan (where Noilly Prat produces its famous Vermouths), highlights include a tour of Arles, a private tasting at the vineyards of Châteauneuf-du-Pap and a mooring at the striking walled town of Aigues-Mortes, in the Camargue.

- *The Classic Cruise, Avignon to Marseillan costs from £3,290pp departing on June 28, July 5, and Oct 25 (01753 598 555; [europeanwaterways.com](http://europeanwaterways.com))* ([https://www.europeanwaterways.com/](http://www.europeanwaterways.com/))



European Waterways' culinary cruise on the Rhône starts in Avignon CREDIT: GETTY

- A walled old town, annual arts festival and super restaurants – an expert guide to Avignon (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/avignon-cruise-port-guide/>)

## 26. Take the whole family

Think river cruising is for adults only? A-Rosa has been welcoming families on to its ships for years and has now extended its children's club (from four to 15 years) to cruises on the Rhône and added two Easter holiday departures. Dedicated activities might include a pirate's day; a Q&A with the captain and dance and lyric writing workshops. Older kids can write for an on-board newspaper. On deck there is a pool and mini-golf.

- *A Springtime on the Rhône cruise costs from £3,642 for a family of four departing April 6. Ports of call include Lyon, Viviers, Arles and Avignon. Includes transfers and two excursions. Excludes flights (0344 874 8220; [shearings.com](http://shearings.com))* (<https://www.shearings.com/>)

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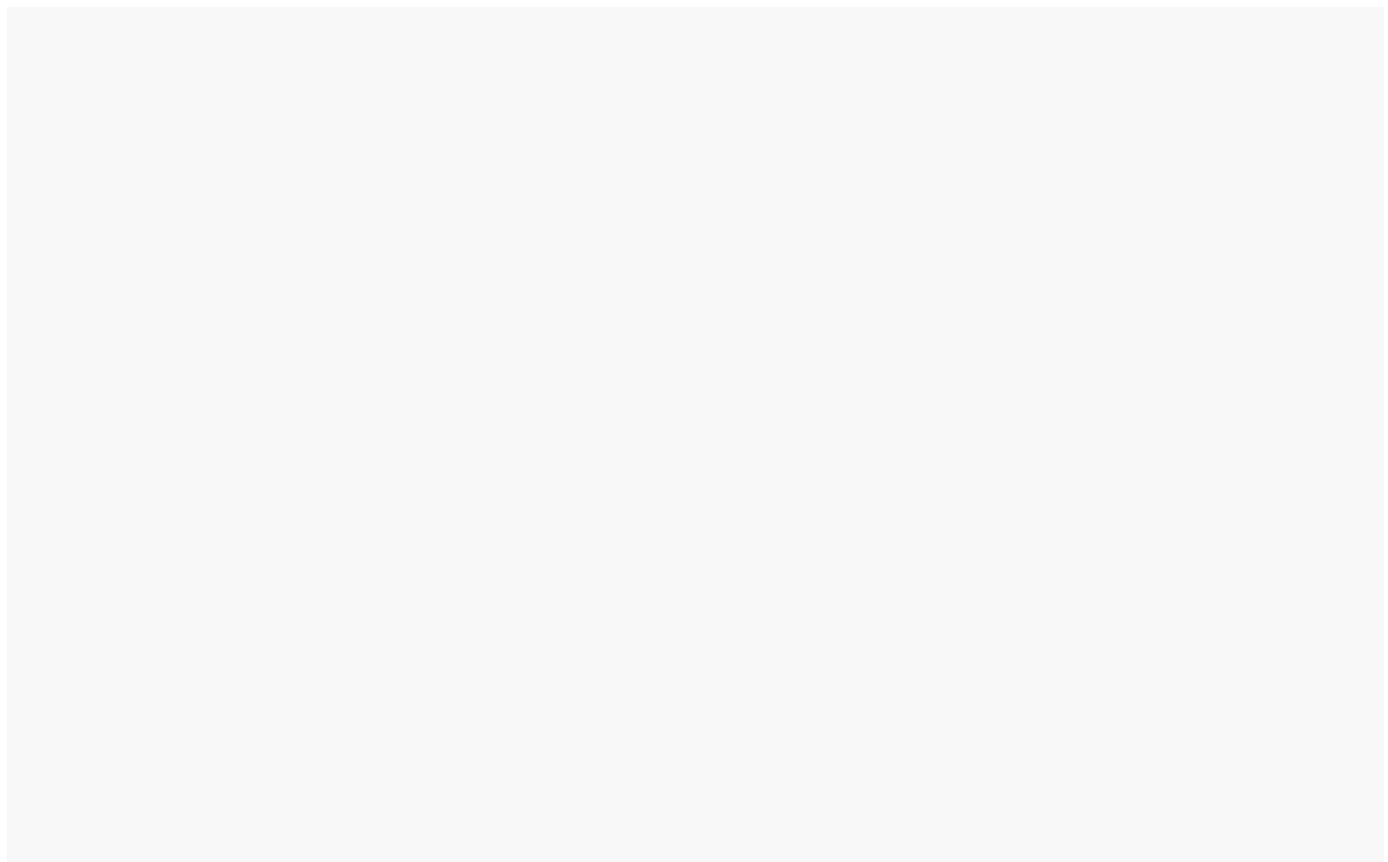
## SEINE

## 27. Norman treasures

Such is the popularity of cruising in France that Viking is bringing four new custom-designed ships to the Seine next year. Carrying 168 passengers, and channelling the line's trademark Scandinavian design ethic, Viking Fjorgyn, Kari, Radgrid and Skaga

will dock in the centre of Paris. A cruise through Normandy will visit the gardens at Giverny, Normandy's Second World War beaches and the magnificent chateau of Les Andelys.

- *An eight-day Paris and the Heart of Normandy cruise costs from £2,545pp (0800 319 6660; [vikingcruises.co.uk](https://www.vikingcruises.co.uk/) (<https://www.vikingcruises.co.uk/>))*



Monet's garden at Giverny is a highlight of the Paris and the Heart of Normandy cruise CREDIT: GETTY

- **20 cruises to the world's most beautiful gardens**  
(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/cruises-to-the-best-gardens-in-the-world/>)

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## DUTCH WATERWAYS

### 28. Tui moves to rivers

Tui enters the river-cruise arena this summer with three ships and flexible pricing that lets passengers choose how “inclusive” they would like their cruise to be. Instead of paying for excursions up front you can bolt on as many or as few as you like. The same goes for drinks on board. This brings the lead-in price for a cruise from Amsterdam to Frankfurt on board Tui Isla to just under £1,500pp.

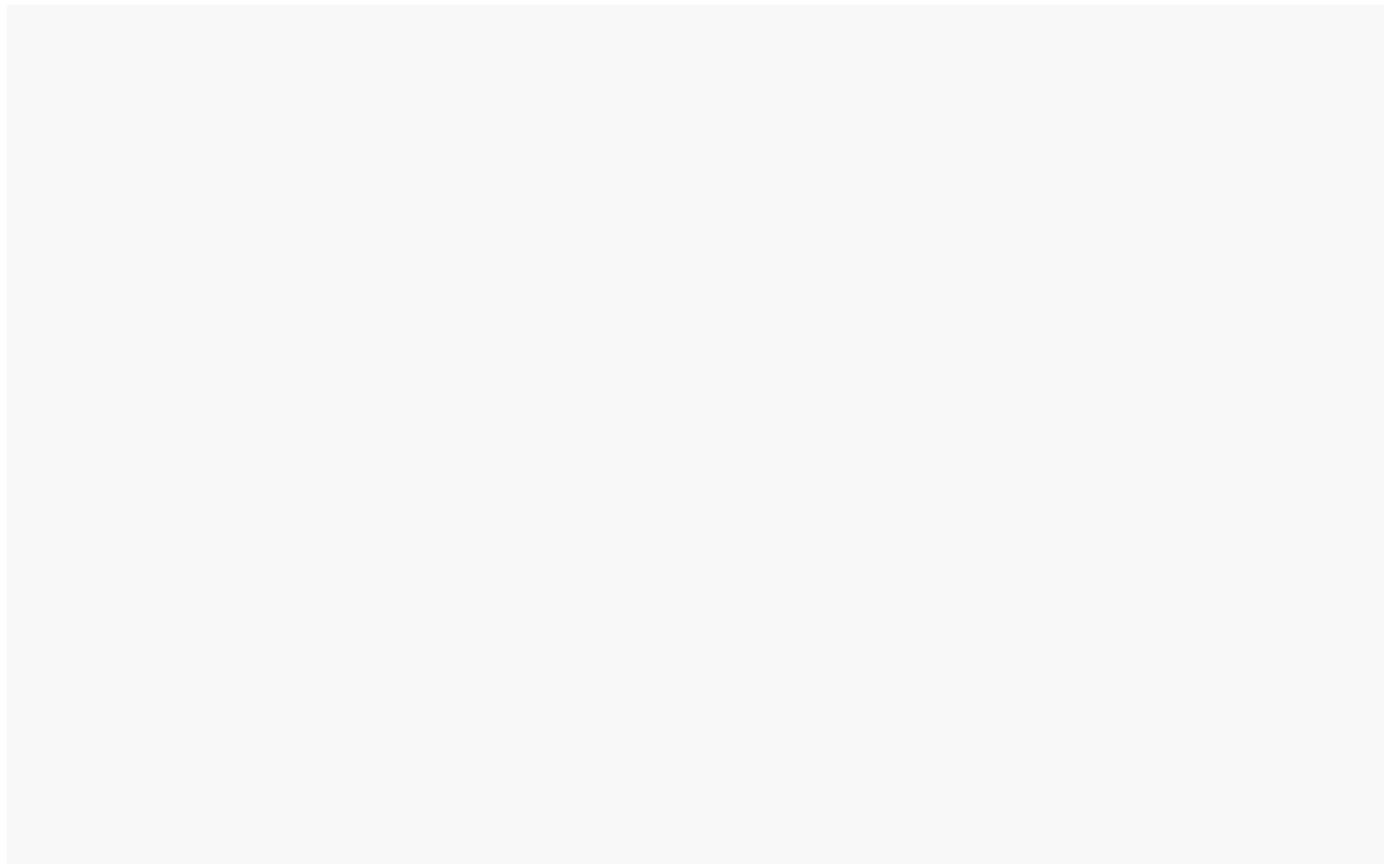
- *A seven-night Dutch and Deutsch Explorer cruise calling at Rotterdam, Dusseldorf, Bonn, Koblenz, Boppard and Frankfurt costs from £1,450pp departing on May 31.*

*Includes transfers (0800 975 4477; [tui.co.uk/river-cruises/](https://www.tui.co.uk/river-cruises/))*

## 29. Battlefields and Bruges

A new itinerary sailing from Amsterdam on a Concerto ship navigates the canals of the Netherlands and Belgium – even stepping into France with excursions – before making the return journey up to the Dutch capital. From pillow waffles and Flemish cheeses to Renaissance architecture and poignant battlefield excursions, there is something for everyone. The line's signature experiences include lunch at the Michelin starred Chateau Neercanne.

- *A 15-day Western Front Explorer cruise from Amsterdam and calling at Ghent, Antwerp and Bruges, Maastricht and Rotterdam among other destinations. Western Front Explorer cruise costs from £3,695pp departing on March 18 (0800 046 3002; [aptouring.co.uk/](https://www.aptouring.co.uk/))*



APT has a new itinerary taking in the 20th-century battlefields of north-western Europe CREDIT: ISTOCK

- [Eight cruises that reveal Europe's poignant wartime history](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/how-to-see-Europe's-wartime-history-on-a-cruise/)

## 30. Tales from the sea in Aveiro

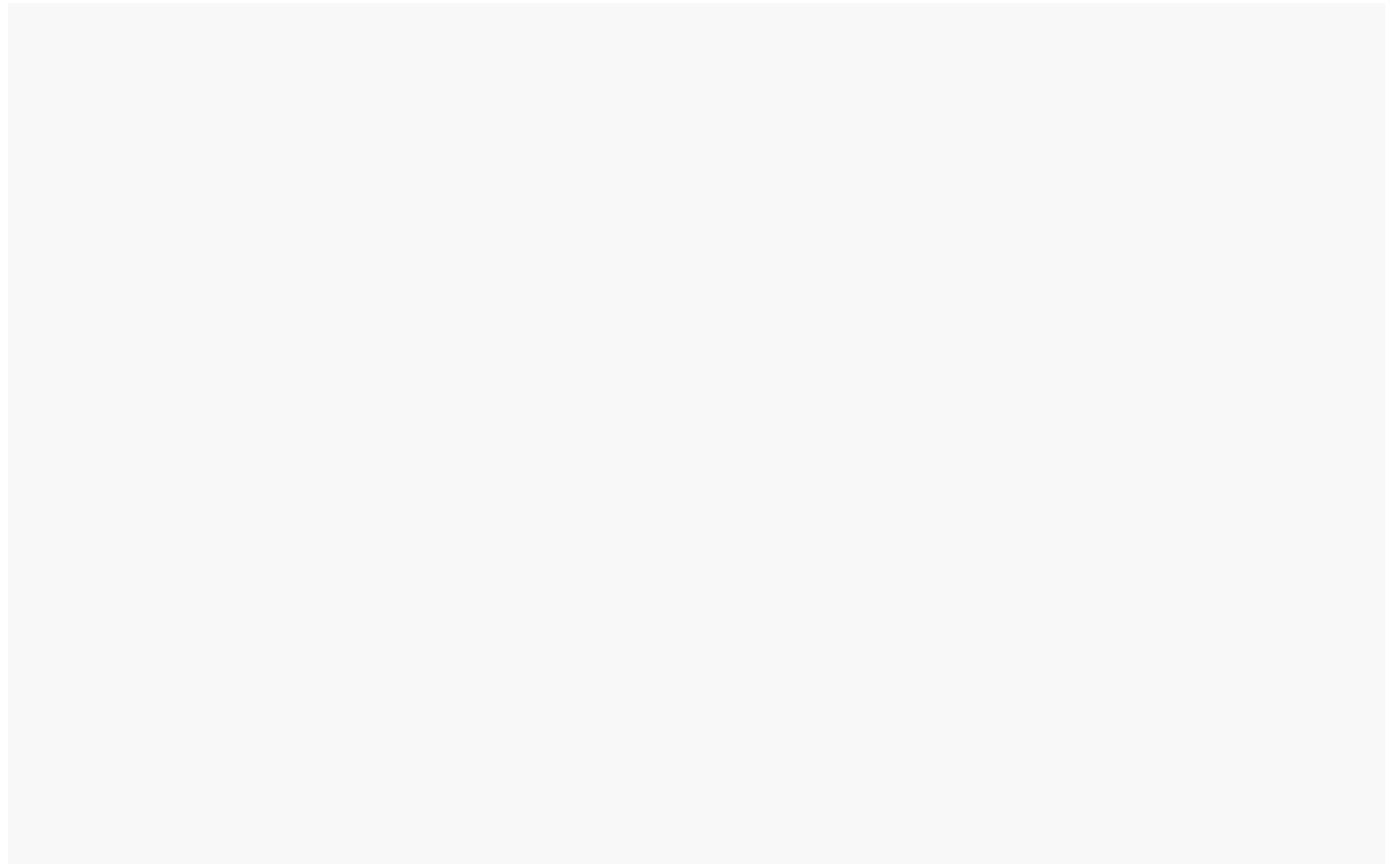
Warmed by the Iberian sun, Portugal stays mild well into autumn, making it a great option for late-season cruising. Douro itineraries follow a typical route but this new Scenic Freechoice excursion visits the maritime city of Aveiro, known for its lagoons and beaches. Colourful barcos (boats) once used to harvest seaweed bob on the canals and in among the art nouveau architecture you will find the interesting Museu de Aveiro, housed in a former convent. The cruise is on the luxury Scenic Azure, which affords all passengers a personal butler.

- *An 11-day Unforgettable Douro cruise costs from £4,090pp departing October 29, including transfers, tips, a butler and all shore excursions (0808 271 6331; [scenic.co.uk](http://scenic.co.uk) (<https://www.scenic.co.uk/>))*

## 31. One for active teens

Along with A-Rosa, river operator Tauck caters to families with its Tauck Bridges cruises. The line's debut on the Douro this year will suit older, active children. There's a hike through hilltop vineyards in Pinhao, a cycling excursion in the picturesque town of Amarante and river kayaking. The holiday begins in Lisbon where children can ride the rattling city tram and climb bell towers and ramparts for views.

- *From £3,150pp for the eight-day Douro Discovery: A Family River Cruise in Portugal cruise including two nights at the Four Seasons Ritz Hotel Lisbon, transfers to and from the Andorinha in Porto and excursions, but not flights (0800 810 8020; [tauck.co.uk](http://tauck.co.uk) (<https://www.tauck.co.uk/>))*



The Douro is a scenic avenue into Portugal's wine-growing heartlands CREDIT: ISTOCK

- Douro river cruise guide (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/douro-river-cruise-guide/>)

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## ITALY

### 32. Opera in Verona

Performances at Verona's Arena di Verona are a highlight of the summer's operatic calendar. If you're keen to experience it don't miss out on a Venice, Verona and opera combination from European Waterways that also includes premium-seat tickets to see Nabucco at the Roman amphitheatre. There's a visit to the famous fish market in Chioggia and the stunning Ducal Palace in Mantua, as well as wine tastings and dinner in a private stately home. In Venice, La Bella Vita moors on the Giudecca Canal.

- *A six-night Opera Cruise costs from £3,360pp departing Aug 16, and includes a hotel night in Verona; opera tickets, fine wines and an open bar on board and excursions and transfers. Departures on July 5, 12, Aug 2, 9, 16 and 23 (01753 598 555; [europeanwaterways.com](http://europeanwaterways.com) (<https://www.europeanwaterways.com/>))*

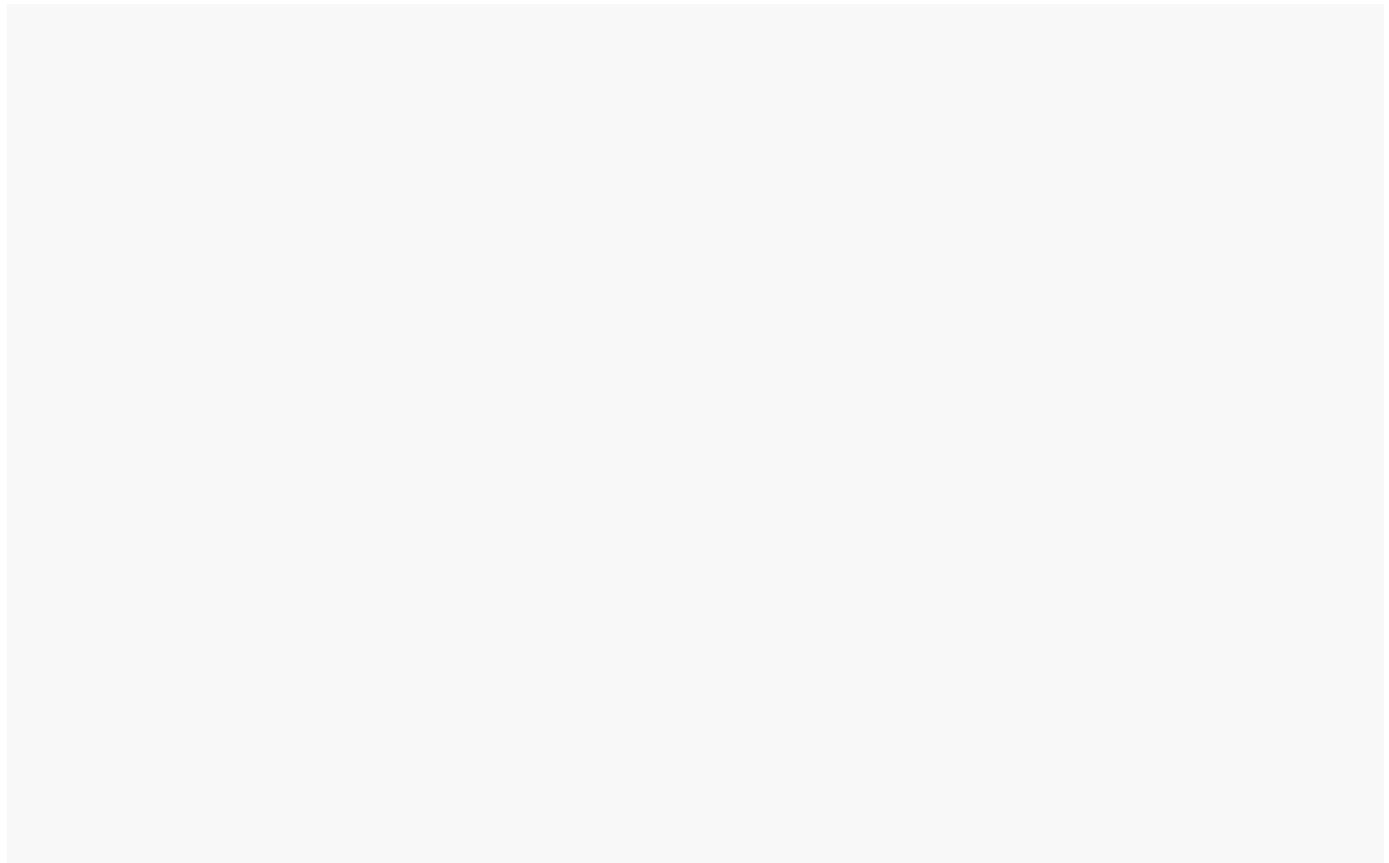
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## RUSSIA

### 33. Waterways of the tsars

This seven-night sailing along the rivers, lakes and canals between Moscow and St Petersburg is a refreshed version of Jules Verne's popular Russia Revealed cruise. It uses the five-star Rostropovich and features walking tours of historic Uglich (founded by merchants in 1148 and home to the former Kremlin), the farming villages of Goritsy and Mandrogi and Kizhi Island, where there is a Unesco-listed Museum of Architecture. The 212-passenger ship has a lift, a gym and Wi-Fi.

- *The Waterways of the Tsars cruise costs from £2,045pp including transfers and excursions, departing Aug 22 (020 3733 2694; [vjv.co.uk](https://www.vjv.co.uk) (<https://www.vjv.co.uk/>))*



The historic town of Uglich sits on the Volga River CREDIT: GETTY

- Russia river cruise guide

(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/russia/articles/Russia-river-cruise-guide/>)

### 34. Access all areas of the Hermitage

Who could resist a visit to the world-famous Hermitage museum, stuffed with gilt, gold, paintings and priceless artefacts, after watching Dame Helen Mirren starring as Russia's longest ruling female leader, Catherine the Great? This cruise on the Volga comes with a rare opportunity to enjoy the museum on an exclusive-access basis, and see works of art that are usually off limits. Passengers also visit a village banya (spa), swap stories with an Uglich family and gain an insight into life at a Soviet-era kommunalka.

- *A 13-day Waterways of the Tsars cruise from St Petersburg to Moscow costs from £3,545pp departing on Sep 2. Includes return flight, a river-view room, wine, beer and*

*soft drinks, Wi-Fi and 10 guided tours (0899 458 6900; [vikingcruises.co.uk](http://vikingcruises.co.uk)  
[\(https://www.vikingcruises.co.uk/\)](https://www.vikingcruises.co.uk/))*

## 35. Space exploration

Commercial trips to space, it would seem, are not far off. But should space flights materialise in the next couple of years, the price tag will deter most of us. Still, there are other ways to engage with space flight. Russia has enjoyed a decades-long love affair with space and yet, despite putting the first man and woman in space, the Soviet Space programme remains shrouded in secrecy. Which is why you won't want to miss a guided tour of the intriguing Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics in Moscow. Scenic includes a visit here on its Jewels of Russia itinerary. Find out about the Soviet Union's space exploration programme and space travel as well as the Sputnik satellite and the Soyuz programme. And don't miss the taxidermy space dogs. Scenic rounds off this day of the cruise with a private ballet performance at the Palace of Prince Vladimir.

- *The 15-day Jewels of Russia from Moscow to St Petersburg (or vice versa) calling at Uglich, Yaroslavl, Goritsy and Mandrogi costs from £6,190pp departing on May 10. Includes transfers and tips (0808 271 6331; [scenic.co.uk](http://scenic.co.uk)  
[\(https://www.scenic.co.uk/\)](https://www.scenic.co.uk/))*

The Memorial Museum of Cosmonautics in Moscow CREDIT: GETTY

- [St Petersburg cruise port guide](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/st-petersburg-cruise-port-guide/) (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/port-guides/st-petersburg-cruise-port-guide/>)

# NORTH AMERICA

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## UNITED STATES

### 36. Mississippi paddlewheel

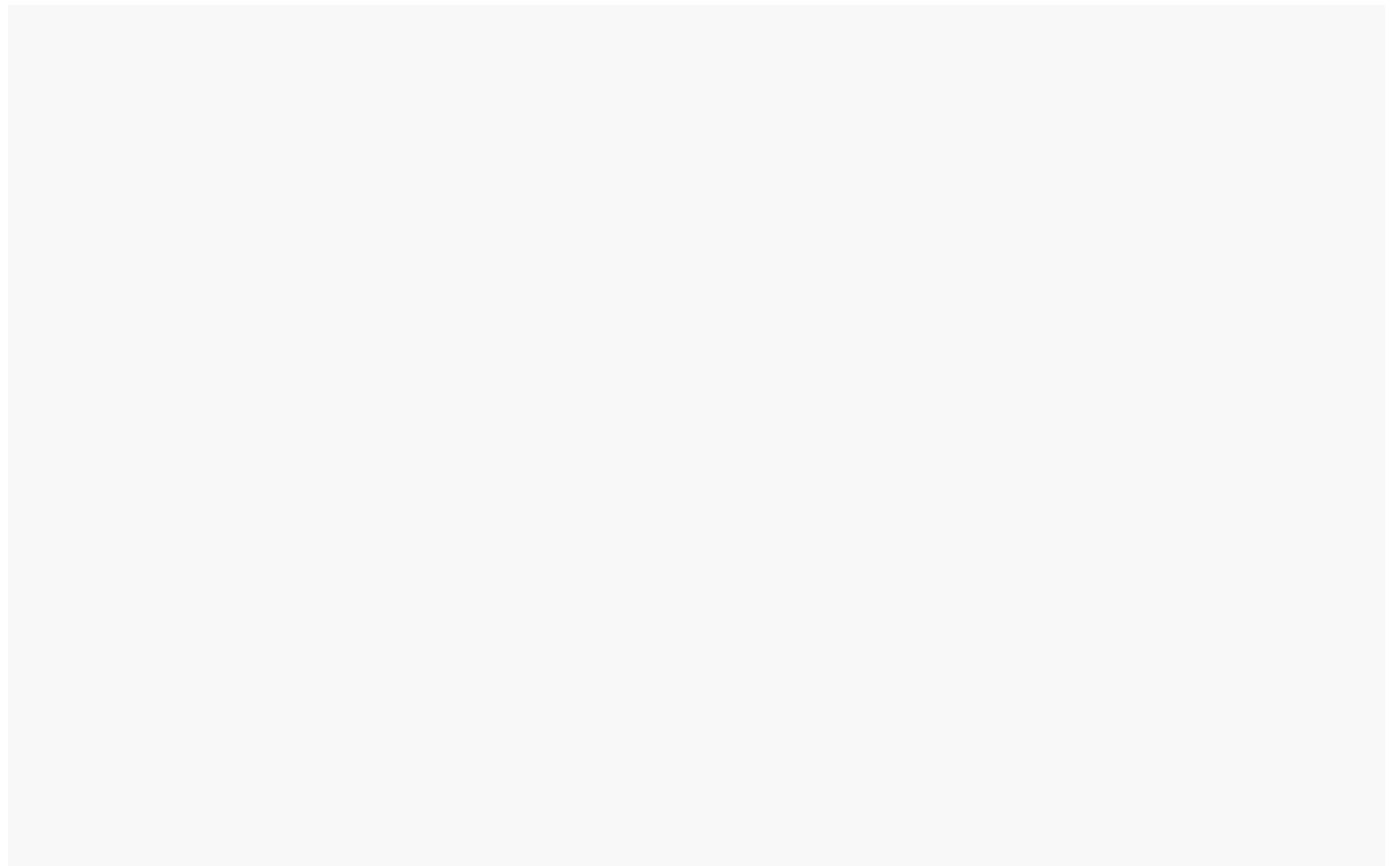
While the United States has very few cruisable rivers the ones it does have certainly pack a punch. The most famous of course is the Mississippi, which snakes its way through several states. The newest paddlewheel ship on the river, the American Countess, will sail on her inaugural voyage in April. In contrast to the showboat-style interiors that have characterised the previous three ships in the American Queen Steamboat Company fleet, the Countess does away with chintz in favour of a modern look. The ship will, of course, retain the trademark ketchup-red paddlewheel.

- *A seven-night Lower Mississippi cruise from New Orleans to Memphis costs from £3,495pp including two pre-cruise hotel nights, seven nights on board with drinks, private transfers, tips and shore excursions (01223 568 904; [lightbluetravel.co.uk](http://lightbluetravel.co.uk) (<https://www.lightbluetravel.co.uk/>)*

### 37. When the snake bites

Picture the Pacific north-west of America and forest, salmon fishing, mountain peaks and grizzlies might come to mind. Tracing the tracks of explorers Lewis and Clark, who set off to “discover” the region in 1804, the four-deck paddlewheel ship American Empress sails on the Columbia and Snake rivers between Portland, Oregon and Clarkston in Washington State. In that same spirit of adventure, passengers on board the Empress can now participate in fun and active experiences that showcase the region’s spectacular wilderness. There’s family friendly ziplining in the forests of Oregon, fishing on the Columbia river and, on the Snake river, a scenic jet boat ride into Hell’s Canyon – so formidable that even Lewis and Clarke took a detour. The canyon is home to thousands of native plants, rare birds and wildlife including bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer, mountain lion and black bear. Best leave those alone.

- *A 10-day cruise from Clarkston to Portland costs from £2,995pp including one hotel night, some excursions, wine and beer with dinner and transfers. A five-hour Catch of the Day: Fishing on the Columbia river excursion costs \$249pp; Hells Canyon Scenic Jet Boat Experience \$149pp and a zip-line tour \$139pp (01223 568 904; [lightbluetravel.co.uk](http://lightbluetravel.co.uk) (<https://www.lightbluetravel.co.uk/>)*



The Mississippi Queen channels the spirit of 19th-century river travel in the US

- **Six of the best cruise excursions from the Mississippi**

(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/best-mississippi-cruise-excursions/>)

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## CANADA

### 38. A slice of France in North America

French line CroisiEurope will be taking its new ship La Belle des Oceans to the St Lawrence river this summer. Bookended by the French Canadian cities of Quebec City and Montreal, the itinerary showcases some of Canada's most beautiful scenery. There's the chance to spot whales in Tadoussac, visit a bird sanctuary at Bonaventure Island and enjoy cruises on the Saguenay Fjord and around the wild Magdalen Islands.

• *An 11-day Cruising Canada on the St Lawrence River cruise costs from £4,694pp departing on Aug 19, including drinks with meals, one night's full-board accommodation in Montreal, guided tours of Montreal, Quebec City and Saint Pierre, a short flight and transfers. Excludes international flights (020 8328 1281; [croisieurope.co.uk](https://www.croisieurope.co.uk/)) (<https://www.croisieurope.co.uk/>)*

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## SOUTH AMERICA

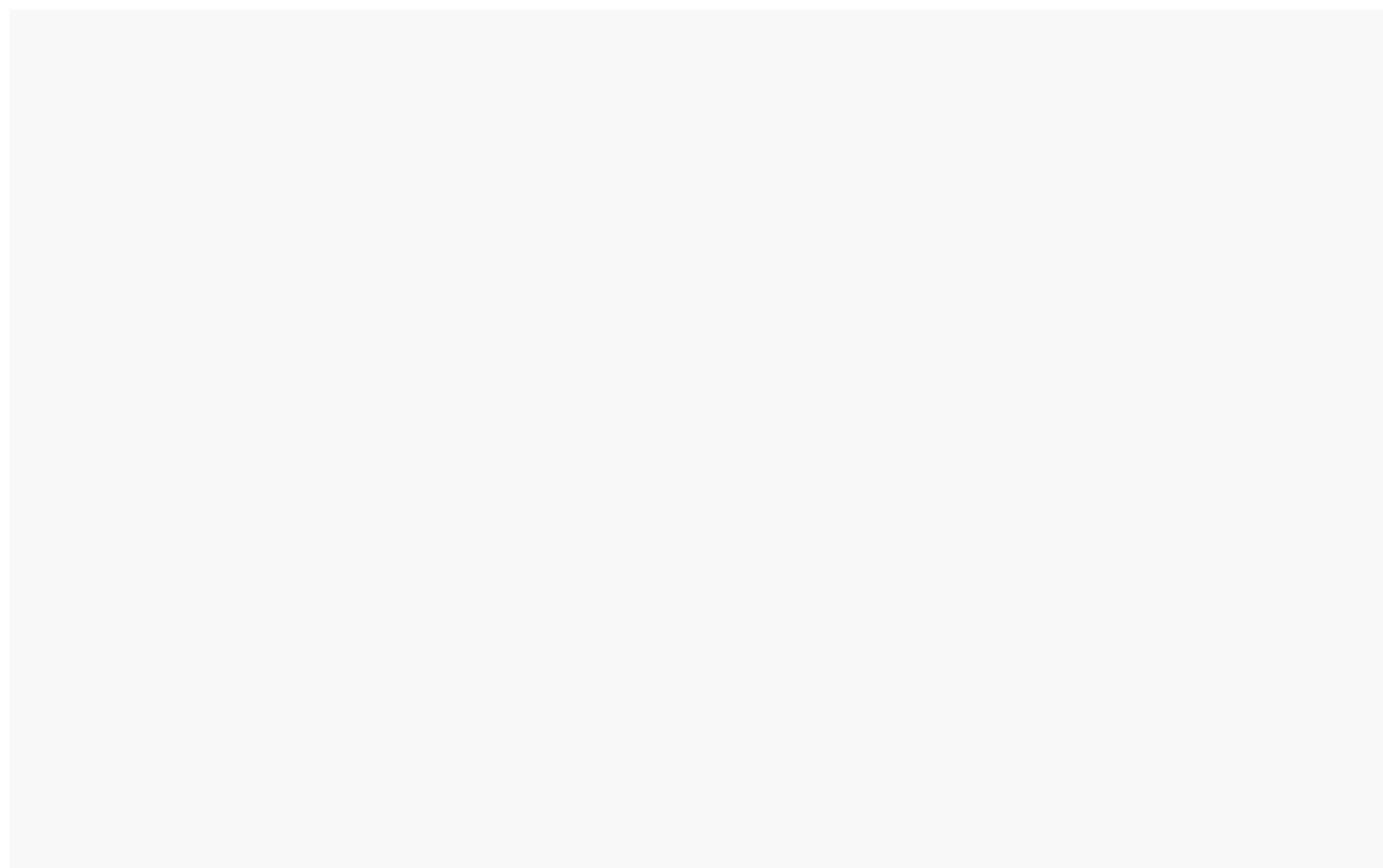
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## AMAZON

## 39. Fun for all the family

If you've got children or grandchildren that like donning boots and ponchos and heading out with torches and binoculars, this trip to the Ecuadorean Amazon could make for an unforgettable family adventure. The Anakonda Amazon sails in the upper basins of the Napo and Aguarico rivers, from where there are guided visits to the Limoncocha Wildlife Reserve and the biologically diverse Yasuni National Park. Four suites on the family-friendly ship are interconnectable and all suites can take an additional bed. There are children's menus, child-specific jungle activities and opportunities to explore by kayak or camp out overnight.

- *A four-day Oriente Cruise on the Anakonda costs from £1,949pp; children (under 12; minimum age 7 years) £975. Includes transfers and guided excursions. Excludes flights ([rainforestcruises.com](https://www.rainforestcruises.com/) (<https://www.rainforestcruises.com/>))*



The Aria Amazon takes tourists into Peru's under-the-radar Amazonian north-east

- [Everything you need to know about booking an Amazon river cruise](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/an-expert-guide-to-the-amazon/)  
(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/cruises/articles/an-expert-guide-to-the-amazon/>)

## 40. A new view on Peru

Although it flies well under the radar, the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve is the second largest protected area in Peru. Explore its lakes and lagoons on the Aria Amazon. The Aria is part of the Aqua Expeditions fleet and sails from Iquitos, a two-hour flight from Lima. On board, keep your eyes peeled for manatees, pink dolphins and monkeys.

Kayaking and hiking on jungle trails will help work up an appetite for the Peruvian-Amazon cuisine of chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino (selected departures).

- A seven-night Amazon Expedition cruise costs from \$9,450pp including transfers but excluding all flights (0065 6270 4002; [aquaexpeditions.com](http://aquaexpeditions.com) (<https://www.aquaexpeditions.com/>))

**Note: Flights included unless otherwise specified**

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