

What's new in river cruising in 2015

Fran Golden, Special for USA TODAY 10:44 a.m. EDT March 11, 2015



[f 8](#)
[TWEET 15](#)
[LINKEDIN](#)
[COMMENT](#)
[EMAIL](#)
[MORE](#)

River cruising remains a very popular vacation choice, with more and more travelers embracing the idea of a leisurely trip to places including the fairy tale villages, historic cities and castles along the Rhine and Danube and wine-sipping regions of France.

Leading river cruise lines, trying to keep pace with demand, will debut more than 20 new ships this year in Europe alone.

Here's what's hot in river cruising in 2015.

New ships in Europe: The Big Kahuna of the industry, Viking River Cruises, will follow its record-breaking launch of 18 ships last year with the introduction of a dozen new ships this year – 10 of the line's 190-passenger, state-of-the-art "Longships," plus two 98-passenger, but similar style ships designed specifically for the Elbe (through East Germany). Also adding brand new ships: Avalon Waterways (2), AmaWaterways (2), Uniworld (1), Scenic Tours (2), Tauck (1), CroisiEurope (2) and Emerald Waterways (2). There will be re-launches of refurbished ships as well.

NCL NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

NORWEGIAN'S FREESTYLE CHOICE SPECTACULAR

- 1 FREE Beverage Package
- 2 FREE Dining Package
- 3 FREE Spending Money up to \$300
- 4 FREE Gratuities*

PLUS
FREE - Friends & Family Sail Free

LEARN MORE

CRUISE LIKE A NORWEGIAN

*Restrictions Apply. 21+; Registry: Bahamas and USA

USA NOW



See passengers tackle man on United Airlines flight

Paddle wheeler on the Loire: French company CroisiEurope makes waves with the new, 96-passenger Loire Princesse, the first overnight passenger vessel on France's longest river – which happens to be home to several UNESCO World Heritage sites. The river is tricky, but on the shallow draft ship the line will launch six- and eight-day cruises, beginning in April.

Theme cruises: Passengers on select Uniworld cruises on the Danube will have opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of "The Sound of Music." Elisabeth von Trapp, granddaughter of the couple who inspired the story, will be performing for passengers and lead a sing-a-long of "Do-Re-Mi." Among other themes: Abercrombie & Kent has a new Rhine itinerary focused on World War II history; Avalon Waterways is introducing a new Author Cruise featuring Patricia Schultz (1000 Places to See Before You Die) as well as an Opera Cruise with live performances; and AmaWaterways will launch new beer-themed cruises.

Asia is in: The Mekong through Cambodia and Vietnam and the Irrawaddy in Myanmar (Burma) continue to attract those looking for an exotic river cruise experience. To meet the demand, Avalon Waterways cruises on the Irrawaddy for the first time with the new, 36-passenger Avalon Myanmar, launching this fall. The line also just launched its first "Suite Ship" in Asia, the 36-passenger Avalon Siem Reap. AmaWaterways increases its Mekong fleet with the new, 124-passenger AmaDara in August, while Viking adds the newly refurbished, 60-passenger Viking Orient on the Irrawaddy this fall.

Longer itineraries: River cruisers are showing interest in spending more time in Europe and river lines are responding with longer itineraries. Uniworld is launching a 22-day "Ultimate France" itinerary, from Paris to Lyon, involving three ships. Tauck has a new 23-day, three-country cruise and tour that involves two ships, and takes cruisers from London to Monte-Carlo, via France.

Family itineraries: Most river cruises are adult-oriented. But some lines designate select family itineraries. New this year is Tauck's eight-day "Castles on the Rhine: Family Riverboat Adventure" from Basel to Amsterdam, on the ms Inspire.



USATODAY

Kooky and cuddly: Characters on cruise ships

Bordeaux and the Douro: Last year saw a flurry of new activity in Bordeaux, France, and on the Douro in Portugal and Spain. This year Grand Circle Cruise Line continues the trend with a new 13-day Bordeaux itinerary (with hotel nights in Paris and La Rochelle) on the line's recently acquired, 90-passenger Chanson (formerly the River Cloud II). CroisiEurope adds the new 132-passenger Gil Eanes on the Douro.

U.S. market grows: The Mississippi and its tributaries will see a new paddle wheeler from American Cruise Lines. The U.S.-built, 150-passenger American Eagle is a sister ship to 2012's Queen of the Mississippi. The American Eagle will do mostly seven-day cruises, either round-trip from New Orleans or between New Orleans and Memphis.

New amenities: Among the nifty new river ship features, Scenic Tours' 169-passenger



USA TODAY

GET MORE NEWS

Exclusive Offers, Highlights, Special Editions,
Rewards and More from USA TODAY

Sign Up Now >

"Space-Ships" Scenic Jasper and Scenic Opal, both debuting in Europe this spring, bring side-by-side pools – one for relaxing, the other for exercise.

Royal godmother: Not all the river ship godmothers have been revealed, but the most exciting name on the roster so far is Princess Anita von Hohenberg, a direct descendant of Maria Theresa of the powerful Habsburg-Lothringen dynasty. Princess Anita later this month in Amsterdam will be naming, in honor of her relative, Uniworld's new S.S. Maria Theresa.

For more photos of Royalty christening cruise ships, click through the carousel below:



50
PRINCESS CRUISES
come back new
EXPLORE

USA TODAY
GET MORE NEWS
Exclusive Offers, Highlights, Special Editions,
Rewards and More from USA TODAY
Sign Up Now >

- 8 CONNECT
- 15 TWEET
- LINKEDIN
- COMMENT
- EMAIL
- MORE