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2023 ANNUAL

cruise

TRADE NEWS

The Ultimate River Destination Guide 2023

**The newest
river ships and
itineraries**



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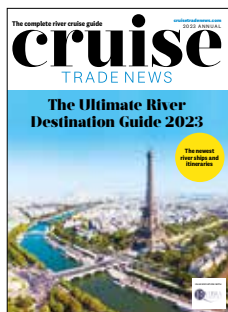
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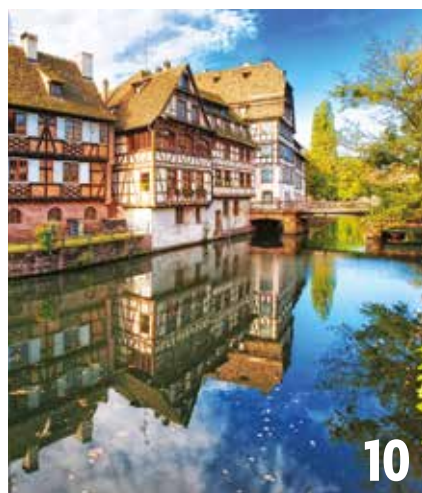


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WELCOME LETTER

Welcome to the 2023 Ultimate River Destination Guide



Looking ahead to 2023, one clear certainty is that many river cruise lines are putting the trade at the heart of their growth plans. For Riviera Travel, it has a long-term commitment to travel agents, says the line head of agency sales

Thomas Morgan, with its agent partners set to play a "huge role" in 2023, he adds.

That's music to agents' ears, and more good river news came in October, when research from Uniworld found that a third of guests who took an ocean cruise prior to the pandemic have since chosen to do their first river cruise in 2022/2023. The survey found that 41 per cent of clients preferred smaller ships and fewer passengers, while 30 per cent said river cruises provide more varied scenery and views.

Speaking of scenery, there's no better way to see the inner workings of some of the globe's finest cities than on a river cruise, and this publication is designed to give you another selling tool when chatting to clients – whether they happen to be experienced cruisers, new to cruise, or even new to river.

Gary Peters

Editor

CRUISE TRADE NEWS

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THINK BIG, THINK RIVER

Riviera Travel head of agency sales
Thomas Morgan looks to what 2023
has in store and how agents can attract
more ocean clients to the rivers

What's looking hot for 2023 and why do you think that's the case?

Our seven-night Blue Danube cruise priced from £1,299pp which takes guests to Budapest, Bratislava, Salzburg and Vienna continues to be our top seller and I predict it will be in 2023. It's a great cruise for customers new to river cruise as it's a great way to visit four great cities without the need to pack and unpack. It's also a great and easy cruise to sell for agents who either have not sold a lot of river cruise or as a first river cruise enquiry.

What itinerary highlights do you have planned for 2023?

We have a new river cruise for 2023 that is already proving to be very popular. Our 11-day river cruise, Lyon, Provencal Rhone & Camargue, from £2,399pp includes 11 guided tours and visits such as Cluny Abbey, Beaune, Lyon, Avignon, Uzès, Arles, Orange, Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, the Camargue, the Ornithological Park of Pont de Gau and the Ardèche Gorges.



THOMAS MORGAN
HEAD OF AGENCY SALES
RIVIERA TRAVEL

How will your decision to remove regional flight supplements boost sales?

We have always tried to have the best regional flight offering for customers in the UK by offering our European river cruise product from 15 regional airports. Removing the flight supplement ensures customers are completely free to choose which regional airport they want to fly from and not feel penalised for choosing one over another or worry about price differences.

Since the launch we have done a blitz of agent visits to spread the word and the reaction from agents has been extremely positive. We have also had a fantastic reaction from customers at several customer events we have done recently with our agent partners.

What can the trade expect from you in terms of support in 2023?

More support than ever before. We have increased the size of the trade team, so we are now a sales team of five permanently on the road and two in the office supporting our travel agent partners. We also have dedicated travel agent resource in our marketing team so we can produce more sales assets for agents.

We have ambitious growth plans with the trade not just over a 6-12 month period but for the long term. We are continuously looking at what we can do to take our support to the next level and are looking at a number of different things, from technology to how to we maximise the sales teams time with agents. Additionally, we have run several very successful fam trips this year already and we are aiming for a higher volume of agents away on our itineraries next year. We will always strive to support our agent partners in the best way possible.



St George's Church in Old Lyon
has a truly fascinating history

Ocean customers put off by the headline price of a river cruise often don't realise just how much is included



River cruises along the Danube continue
to be extremely popular with travellers



The 5-star *Lord Byron* is spacious and luxurious, with stunning 360-degree views



Relax in the splash pool or enjoy a spot of putting on the green



For agents not currently selling Riviera, how should they pitch the brand?

Riviera Travel is a five-star river cruise line that is designed specifically for the British customer. We include everything that your customer would want and need – flights, transfers, all excursions, full board – but at a very good price. There are no hidden costs. Our customer demographic is 55+ retired/semi-retired. Our focus is always on quality and not quantity, with the best value for money guaranteed.

How can you attract more switch selling from regular ocean guests?

Education – a lot of ocean customers are put off by a river cruise because they just look at the headline price. They don't realise how much is included in a river cruise. The big thing is that we include all the guided tours and visits in our pricing, as river cruise is all about the destination. A river cruise is a great way to go on holiday, but it is often not in the conversation when a customer is looking for a cruise holiday.

One of the things we try to do when training agents is to give them the tools

and the confidence to include river in the discussion and not just go for the usual suspects. With having dedicated cruise directors, concierges and tour managers this brings a more engaging and insightful experience to all of our destinations.

Based on what you're seeing now, will 2023 represent the year that river cruising returns to its pre-pandemic levels of popularity?

In short, yes. River cruising has taken slightly longer to recover than other holiday types, but all the signs are there that river cruising will be back in 2023. We already have a very healthy number of bookings for next year. These are new bookings and not transfers from customers that have postponed their holidays.

We are seeing an increase in enquiries for river cruise when we are doing customer events with our agent partners as well. We are not naive enough to think it will all be plain sailing (no pun intended) but we are very confident for next year and our agent partners are going to play a huge role in that. 🎯

38
YEARS
EST. 1984

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our collection of
River Cruises

NO REGIONAL
FLIGHT
SUPPLEMENTS
FOR 2023

Book your guests to cruise Europe's most beautiful waterways aboard the finest ships, featuring superb dining on board and spacious suites and cabins. They can choose from 19 fascinating river cruises that will take them to iconic highlights as well as lesser-known gems in destinations.

Included on all our cruises

- Return flights and transfers
- Full board
- Five-star accommodation in our luxurious cabins
- Full programme of visits and tours



There's something for everyone with Riviera...

RHINE CRUISE TO SWITZERLAND

We will welcome your guests aboard their first-class river cruise ship and luxury floating hotel for the next seven nights. From the exceptional full-board cuisine to the luxurious cabins and suites they will very soon relax as we journey south from Cologne through the Rhine Valley to Switzerland.

8 day river cruise from £1,499pp

Departures May to October 2023 and
May to October 2024



THE BLUE DANUBE - VIENNA, BUDAPEST & SALZBURG

Your guests can unwind on our magical river cruise and escorted tour to imperial Budapest, the Pearl of the Danube. See Bratislava, Esztergom, Melk, Salzburg and unforgettable Vienna along the course of Eastern Europe's mightiest river.

8 day river cruise from £1,349pp

Departures April to October 2023 and
April to October 2024



CRUISE THE HEART OF EUROPE

This 15-day tour takes your guests from Cologne in the heart of the Rhine Valley to Vienna and finally Budapest on the banks of the Danube. Absorb some of Europe's most stunning scenery, such as the impressive Rhine Gorge, as well as picturesque medieval towns and cities along the way.

15 day river cruise from £2,899pp

Departures May to October 2023 and
May to October 2024



Contact our Reservations team for all River Cruise departure dates and pricing.

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DON'T MISS...

Foodie clients will relish the opportunity to take a goulash cooking class in Budapest. Made with onions, sweet paprika, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes and chunks of beef, this saucy stew is Hungary's national dish.

Cruise excursions often take passengers to Budapest's Great Market Hall to shop for ingredients before they get stuck into preparing the dish.

Sweeping through Vienna's streets on a horse-drawn fiaker carriage is the perfect way to take in the city's many sights



The DANUBE

Danube cruises introduce
passengers to a land of wine,
waltzing and world heritage sites

Squiggling its way from Germany's Black Forest in the west to the Black Sea coast of Romania in the east, the Danube is Europe's second largest river. Flowing through Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and others, the waterway is a springboard to UNESCO world heritage sites, expansive wine lands and some of Eastern Europe's most famous capital cities. The Danube also makes it easy to keep selling cruises into winter, as it puts passengers in easy reach of major Christmas markets like Strasbourg's Christkindelsmärik.



Explore Belgrade's cultural history by day and enjoy its lively Bohemian quarter by night

EXCURSION HIGHLIGHTS

Belgrade

Sitting at the confluence of the Danube and Sava Rivers, the Serbian capital is a city of yawning pedestrianised boulevards, pavement cafes, statues and sculpture. Top of the daytime to-do list is a visit to the Tesla Museum, where you can learn about the Belgrade-born inventor and genius Nikola Tesla, who gave the world the alternating current electrical system. It may sound dry, but the museum tour is full of surprises. At night, the Bohemian quarter is the place to be. Brave clients should try a flight of rakija, which is sold outside the front of most bars.

Budapest

The Danube guillotines through the Hungarian capital, severing Buda in the west from Pest in the east. On the hillier Buda side, visitors can explore the World Heritage-listed castle district and soak in the colonnaded swimming pool and hot spring spa baths at Gellért Spa. On the Pest side, meanwhile, clients can amble down the three-kilometre long Andrassy Avenue and tuck into an A to Z of traditional Hungarian dishes – from squidgy flódni cake to peppery goulash – in the cavernous Central Market Hall.

“The Danube is perfect for first-time and seasoned river cruisers alike”

Dürnstein

Wrapped up in the vineyards and humpback hills of Austria's Wachau Valley, Dürnstein is a town of cobbled streets, red-roofed buildings and wood-shuttered windows. Must-see sights include its Baroque abbey, with its cornflower blue facade, and its crumbling hilltop Medieval castle, where Richard the Lionheart was imprisoned after the Crusades. The town is also haloed by wineries like Domäne Wachau, where visitors can take cellar tours to learn all about the production of Grüner Veltliner and Riesling wines.

Melk

Located in the lower part of Austria's Wachau Valley, the city of Melk is best known for its UNESCO world heritage-listed Benedictine Abbey. Staring down at the town from its hilltop perch, the Baroque building is filled with frescoes, gilding and sculpture. Visitors can take guided tours that take in highlights such as the eye-widening two-storey galleried library and the domed church. The countryside around Melk is also cornrowed by vineyards, where wineries offer tours and tastings.

Salzburg

While the waters of the Danube arrive in Salzburg via the River Inn tributary, cruise passengers tend to travel to the city on a coach excursion from either Passau or Linz. In the balmy seasons, day trippers can mooch around the

UNESCO-listed Old Town, see the Mirabel Gardens where scenes from *The Sound of Music* were filmed, and visit Mozart's birthplace. In winter, the city's biggest draw is its Christmas market, which sees more than 100 stalls spring up around the cathedral selling everything from roasted chestnuts to tree ornaments.

Vienna

Seeing a performance of Mozart or Strauss in the city they once called their muse; tucking into a silky slice of Sacher-Torte beneath the chandeliered ceilings of Café Sacher; or sweeping through the streets on a white-horse-drawn fiaker carriage: these are just a few of the things visitors can experience in Austria's capital. There's far more to see and do here than visitors can fit into a day, though, which is why cruise lines often offer stopovers in the city. 📍

EXPERT VIEW

Arguably one of the most picturesque rivers in Europe, the Danube has so much to offer and is perfect for both first-time and seasoned river cruisers alike. The upper part of the Danube encompasses everything quintessentially river cruise from quaint towns and villages to iconic imperial cities such as Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest. Scenic cruising takes guests through the breathtakingly beautiful Wachau Valley and excursions to vineyards and wineries along the way give the opportunity to sample some of the region's finest wines. Cruises are generally seven nights and operate from March through to December, with each season offering its own unique experience. The lower part of the Danube is typically less explored and offers guests a real cultural experience.

JENNY WADE

Product and sales manager
Amadeus River Cruises

Dürnstein's Baroque abbey and tumble-down Medieval castle are must-sees





La Petite France in Strasbourg is a delight with its cobblestone streets, canals and traditional half-timbered houses

DON'T MISS...

Between May and September, a series of Rhine in Flames firework displays are held along the banks of the river that see the river's waters light up in kaleidoscopic colour as they reflect the rockets and roman candles exploding overhead. The display in Koblenz is the biggest, and many cruise lines craft itineraries around this event.

The RHINE

This 760-mile waterway welcomes passengers to a world of bedtime story-style castles, cloud-kissing cathedrals and Christmas markets

Rising in Switzerland and meeting the North Sea in the Netherlands, the Rhine ribbons through Lichtenstein, Austria, France and Germany. Some of the most popular itineraries on this river take passengers from Amsterdam to Basel or vice versa, passing castle-speckled valleys, UNESCO-listed cities and landscapes thick with forests en route. Summer sailings give clients the opportunity to experience the Rhine in Flames – an eye-widening fireworks display that turns the waters of the Rhine disco floor bright and lights up the landmarks along its banks – while winter cruises give them the chance to see the region's famous Christmas markets.

EXCURSION HIGHLIGHTS

Breisach

The red-roofed cathedral-crowned town of Breisach in the Rhine Valley is a springboard to the Black Forest.



Visitors to Cochem castle can soak up its history alongside stunning views

In winter, Strasbourg is 'the Capital of Christmas' with one of Europe's largest festive markets

Excursions from here take passengers hiking amongst the pines, beeches and oaks and introduce visitors to regional traditions like cuckoo clock making, glass blowing and Black Forest gâteau baking. Breisach is also halloed by wine-producing villages such as Ihringen, Gottenheim and Bötzingen, so many cruise lines sprinkle wine tasting into their excursion offerings.

Cochem

Cochem is a popular stop on Rhine itineraries that include some time on the Moselle River, such as Trier to Basel sailings. The German town is best known for its indomitable-looking Gothic castle, which peers down at the rest of Cochem from its 90-metre hilltop perch, and for its wineries that specialise in Rieslings. Many cruise lines offer wine-tasting excursions from Cochem. Or visitors can sample the tipples at their own pace in the town's many 'winestube' wine bars.

Explore the Black Forest or enjoy wine-tasting with Breisach as a base

Cologne

The twin spire Gothic cathedral is the emblem of Cologne. Spearling 157 metres into the sky, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is one of the tallest cathedrals in the world. Cruise passengers can admire the building from the outside as they take in other city highlights like the Old Town and the 'brauhaus' beer houses. Or, they can duck inside to see the gilded Shrine of the Three Kings, which is said to hold the remains of the Three Wise Men, and to climb the heady heights of the south tower.

Rüdesheim

All half-timbered buildings and higgledy-piggledy streets, Rüdesheim is one for wine lovers. The town is in the midst of Germany's Rheingau wine region, which is renowned for its Rieslings and pinot noirs and its pedestrianised Drosselgasse street is lined with taverns and bars where visitors can sample the best local tipples. This is also the place to try a Rüdesheimer Kaffee – a distinctive coffee that's served with a shot of brandy and a shower of chocolate flakes on top.

Speyer

With a timeline that reaches back to Roman times, Speyer is one of Germany's oldest cities. Its main landmark is its UNESCO World Heritage-listed cathedral. Founded in the 11th century, this cloud-skimming building has four towers and two domes. Inside, meanwhile, there's a cavernous crypt, which features the tombs of eight Medieval emperors and kings of the Holy Roman Empire and their wives.

Strasbourg

Strasbourg offers reams to see all year round. However, the city really comes into its own in winter when it adopts the moniker 'the Capital of Christmas' and hosts one of the largest festive markets in Europe. Celebrations begin in late November when a 30-foot-tall Christmas tree is erected in Place Kléber and more than 300 stalls open, selling everything from gifts to Christmas bredele biscuits.

The Rhine



The Rüdesheim cable car offers a magical view of the town's attractions

Upper Middle Rhine Valley

In this UNESCO-recognised part of Germany, the banks of the Rhine rise up into verdant green peaks, which are topped by more than 40 castles. The timelines of these buildings stretch back as far as the 13th century and, while many of them are in ruins, some are still in working order and open to the public. On guided tours of these sites, cruise passengers get to hear all sorts of soap opera-worthy stories about everything from double crossings and hauntings to battles and Knights Templar slayings. ❶

EXPERT VIEW

F

ringing the romantic meanders of this iconic European river that flows from the Swiss Alps through central Europe to the Netherlands is a dreamy landscape of lushly forested gentle sweeping slopes, crowned by fairy-tale, age-old castles and enchanting medieval towns unchanged in centuries. Along its legendary riverbanks lie clusters of the most picturesque timber-framed houses, huddled around pretty, stone quaysides and quaint churches where time stands still. Spectacular, historic cities such as Cologne, Koblenz and Strasbourg are awash with magnificent architecture and culture to explore.

KATJA HILDEBRANDT

Head of product river and ocean cruise, Riviera Travel

Porto's traditional Rabelo boats, once the main method for transporting Port from vineyard to cellar



DON'T MISS...

The southern banks of the Douro in Porto are speckled with port cellars such as Graham's, Cockburn's and Sandeman where cruise passengers can take part in tours and tastings. As with Champagne, Port can only be called Port if its grapes are grown in the Douro Valley region and visitors to the cellars can find out all about the novel history and provenance of the ruby-hued drink.

Rest of EUROPE

Flamenco dancing, port tasting and visits to cities immortalised in Shakespeare's plays are all on the cards when clients look beyond the Rhine and Danube for a river cruise

The Rhine and the Danube may be the stars of the European river cruising show, but a number of other waterways wait in the wings that offer experiences that equal their more famous neighbours.

Cruises on the Douro, Elbe, Guadalquivir and Po take passengers to Spain, Portugal, Italy and parts of Germany that the Rhine doesn't reach, allowing them to make memories that are a little less mainstream.

Douro

Often sailing round-trip from Porto, Douro cruises chart a course through valleys terraced with vineyards and past

Lilliput-sized villages where traditions have remained unchanged for centuries. Some of the most popular itineraries give passengers the opportunity to visit the UNESCO city of Salamanca in Spain and others begin or end with a land-based stay in Lisbon, Portugal's City of Light.

EXCURSION HIGHLIGHTS

Pinhão

This postage stamp-sized village is in the heart of the UNESCO-recognised Alto Douro Wine Region and the countryside that surrounds it is mottled with 'quintas' or wine estates where visitors can take cellar tours to find out about the production of table wines,

muscat and port and take part in tastings. Most cruise lines offer quinta excursions and itineraries often include a traditional Portuguese lunch.

Porto

One of the newest attractions in Porto is WOW or The World of Wine, which opened in 2020. Located on the same side of the river as the city's famous port cellars, WOW features eight interactive museums, dedicated to everything from wine growing and cork production to chocolate and history. The Pink Palace museum is especially fun. Here, visitors can learn all about rose wine while unleashing their inner kid in exhibits like a pink ball pool and a pink Cadillac.

The Ponte Pietra bridge in Verona dates back to Roman times



“One of Europe’s most unspoiled rivers, the Elbe can be enjoyed most times of the year”

Elbe

Rising in the Czech Republic’s Krkonose Mountains and flowing into the sea north of Hamburg in Germany, The Elbe allows cruise passengers the opportunity to visit some of Europe’s most popular city break destinations. Itineraries vary but options include Hamburg to Berlin, Berlin to Prague and round-trip sailings from Prague. Longer cruises are also available that take guests on to Elbe tributaries like the Havel and Vltava.

EXCURSION HIGHLIGHTS

Dresden

Much of Dresden was turned to rubble during the Allied bombings of the second world war, but the city has



Dresden’s Zwinger Palace, lovingly restored to its pre-war condition

been painstakingly rebuilt and it’s now known as ‘Florence on the Elbe’. Its clutch of striking buildings includes the domed Frauenkirche church, which was razed during the war, and Zwinger Palace, which has been almost completely restored to its pre-war condition following a £350 million investment and is now often described as ‘the Versailles of Dresden’.

Guadalquivir

With a name that translates as Great River, the Guadalquivir flows from the Cazorla Mountains to the Gulf of Cadiz on Spain’s south west coast. Cruises on this waterway tend to sail round trip from Seville, introducing passengers to the sights, tastes and unmistakable flamenco sounds of Andalucía.

EXCURSION HIGHLIGHTS

Doñana National Park

Less than an hour’s drive from Seville, Doñana National Park spreads out for 52 square miles. Its salt marshes, dunes and springs provide a habitat for an A to Z of birdlife and wildlife, from Spanish red deer and wild boar to Spanish imperial eagles and Iberian lynx. Passengers who take excursions here can learn all about the region’s unique biodiversity from a knowledgeable guide.

El Puerto De Santa Maria

Alongside Jerez de la Frontera and Sanlúcar de Barrameda, El Puerto de Santa Maria is part of Spain’s sherry triangle, and the town is home to one of the oldest wineries in the region. The Bodegas Osborne has been producing sherry since 1772 and cruise passengers can take a tour of the winery to learn about everything from how sherry is made to the story behind Osborne’s bull emblem. Tours usually end with a tasting of around four sherries.

Po

Italy’s longest river is only navigable for 60 miles, but those miles are lined with sights. Some are world-famous, like the

EXPERT VIEW

The Douro is one of our most popular summer river itineraries. Our signature Douro itinerary is in fact a cruise tour as it includes time in Lisbon at the start of the itinerary to soak up the city while staying in a central hotel for a few nights. The Elbe, meanwhile, is one of Europe’s most unspoiled rivers and can be enjoyed by travellers at almost all times of the year. At Christmas, guests can enjoy Berlin’s festive atmosphere and shop for handmade porcelain in Meissen.

NEIL BARCLAY

Head of sales
Viking UK

cities of Venice and Verona. Others are less sung about but just as worth a visit, such as Polesine Parmense with its meat and cheese curing cellars and Mantua, mentioned below.

EXCURSION HIGHLIGHTS

Mantua

Off the radar of many tourists to Italy, Mantua is home to one of the largest residences in Italy. Once the home of the powerful Gonzaga family – Mantua’s answer to the Medicis – the Ducal Palace is second only in size to the Vatican and it features more than 500 rooms, seven gardens and eight courtyards. Highlights include the Bridal Chamber, where every inch of the wall wears a fresco, and the Hall of the Labyrinth, which has a maze on the ceiling.

Verona

Walking a circuit of the stone seats in the 1st-century arena, peering out of Juliet’s balcony while reciting a line from Shakespeare, and sipping a glass of Amarone – the queen of Valpolicella – in one of the wine bars in the Piazza delle Erbe are top of the to-do list in Verona. Visitors with a specific interest in wine can head into the vineyards that nuzzle up to the city for tours and tastings, too. 🍷



Guests will be transported into another world on a cruise along the mighty Mekong

DON'T MISS...

From Siem Reap, cruise passengers can take excursions to UNESCO-listed Angkor Wat with its beehive-shaped temples and its stone carved friezes. The walk from the outer causeway of this complex through the main entrance and on to its highest tower is said to represent the journey to the centre of the universe.

WORLDWIDE

Standing in the shadow of the pyramids, eyeballing the Terracotta Warriors and sailing through the valleys of the Three Gorges are just a few of the inimitable experiences that await passengers on worldwide cruises

Egypt, India, China, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos can all be explored via river cruise. In these parts of the world, itineraries are filled with visits to incense-scented temples, echoing monasteries and haywire markets. Plus, depending on which cruise they choose, passengers get to see sights like the pyramids and walk in the footsteps of pharaohs, emperors and golden-robed monks.

Nile

Africa's longest river stretches for more than 4,000 miles from Uganda in the central east of the continent to the north coast of Egypt, coursing through another

nine countries. The majority of cruises, however, focus on the small section of the waterway that connects Aswan and Luxor, where the banks of the river were once walked by pharaohs and where ancient temples and tombs are within easy reach.

EXCURSION HIGHLIGHTS

Karnak Temple

Part of the ancient Egyptian city of Thebes, Karnak and the area around it were known as the 'Ipet-isut or 'the most selected of places'. It's easy to see why. The complex consumes 42 acres of earth, filling it with temples, yawning columned halls, obelisks and statues. In November 2021, the Avenue of Sphinxes was opened to the

public. Connecting Karnak Temple with Luxor Temple, this 1.7-mile avenue features more than 1,000 sphinx and ram's head statues.

Valley of the Kings

For 500 years between the 16th and 11th century BC, the pharaohs and nobles of Egypt were laid to rest in the Valley of Kings. Today, more than 60 tombs have been discovered in the valley, some featuring more than 120 different chambers, with the most famous burial place belonging to boy king Tutankhamun. A little further down the Nile, there's also the Valley of the Queens, where more than 90 of the pharaohs' wives were buried.

The spectacular Three Gorges loom large above the Yangtze River

This waltz ride of a city is a mash-up of colourful markets, street food stands, pagodas, temples and some slightly more unexpected sights such as the Saigon Notre-Dame Cathedral with its twin bell towers that were built in the late 19th century.

Luang Prabang

The city of Luang Prabang is made up of 58 neighbouring villages, 33 of which are recognised by UNESCO for their architectural and their religious and cultural heritage. It's a city where French colonial buildings rest in the shadows of monasteries, temples and palaces. Visit in the morning and you'll see the local Buddhist monks dressed in satsuma-coloured robes parading through the streets collecting alms.

Yangtze

Snaking across the entire width of China, the Yangtze is the longest river in Asia and the third longest in the world. Cruises on this mammoth waterway tend to be part of wider cruise tour itineraries and they give passengers the opportunity to change down through the gears between visits to frenetic cities like Beijing, Xi'an and Shanghai.

EXCURSION HIGHLIGHTS

Three Gorges

As the Yangtze reaches its midpoint, it passes through the Qutang, Wu and Xiling gorges and the river's banks rise up into sheer-sided mountains mossed with more than 6,000 different types of plants. Many tour operators dedicated an

Mekong

With a name that derives from the words 'Mae Nam Khong' meaning 'mother of waters', the Mekong flows for more than 3,000 miles from the Tibetan plateau to the southern tip of Vietnam. Cruises on the river focus on either the 'upper' area around the Laos capital Vientiane or the 'lower' area that flows between Siem Reap in Cambodia and Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, with the latter type being more common.

EXCURSION HIGHLIGHTS

Ho Chi Minh City

Although Ho Chi Minh City is more than 50 miles from the Mekong, it's often the starting point for lower Mekong cruises.

EXPERT VIEW

For a true departure into the unknown, nothing surpasses a worldwide cruise. While some elements of European cruises may have influences from home, venturing into the mighty Mekong or the enchanting Ganges will transport guests to other worlds. On a worldwide cruise, there is true immersion into local culture and customs. Included excursions not only focus on the important and popular sights, but on shared experiences and rituals that dictate tradition and ways of life. Such examples are to take part in a traditional water blessing by local monks or travel by rickshaw through local crafts markets that have stood on site for hundreds of years.

JANET PARTON

Sales and marketing director
Avalon Waterways

“For a true departure into the unknown, nothing surpasses a worldwide cruise”

entire day to simply taking in the scenery of this region. Others offer excursions to gorge-side towns like Baidicheng, from where cruise passengers can take in the view of Kui Gate – one of the points in the Three Gorges where the gorge walls are at their most dramatic.

Xi'an

Statues of more than 8,000 soldiers, 130 chariots, 520 horses and 150 cavalry horses await visitors to Xi'an. This city is home to the Terracotta Army, a battalion of sculpted warriors that were buried with Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, who believed they would protect him in the afterlife. Visitors to the site can explore a museum to find out more about the world-renowned army as well as see the phalanxes of fighters themselves. ①

The Buddhist monks of Luang Prabang parade daily through the streets collecting alms

Sailing to greatness

It's good news for river cruise fans, with a range of new additions to the global river cruise fleet and fresh itineraries coming in 2023

SHIPS

Viking Aton **Launching 2023**

Guests will be able to explore the Nile on a vessel crafted to sail this very river, *Viking Aton*. Views of the majestic waterway will greet guests from their balconies before they relax in a separate sitting room or queen-sized bed.

With an occupancy of 82 guests and 64 members of crew, spaces on board range from the pool and pool deck to the sun deck – both featuring 360-degree views and an all-important shaded sitting area. In fact, every space on board is optimised for the best views, with the restaurant, lounge and bar featuring floor-to-ceiling windows.

Accommodation includes the Explorer Suite, including a separate sitting room, 40 inch flat-screen TV, private arrival/departure transfer in destination, complimentary laundry and complimentary in-room breakfast service.

Viva Two **Launching April 2023**

This all-inclusive river cruise ship will be Viva Cruises' ninth ship. Its all-inclusive offering means dining, wifi, beverages, tips and beauty products will be included – all available on the ship's 2023 sailings along the Moselle, Rhine, Danube, Seine and more.



Viva Two guests can expect themes from crime mystery cruises to wellness sailings



Uniworld's new line-up includes the charming city of Zurich

The ship will also feature three restaurants, ranging from casual eateries to upscale dining. Viva Cruises will continue its themed cruises on its newest ship – guests can expect themes ranging from crime mystery cruises to wellness sailings. *Viva Two's* maiden voyage will sail from Frankfurt, for a seven-night voyage, visiting ports such as Bamberg and Passau. Prices start from £1,450pp.

ITINERARIES

Scenic

Europe collection

Scenic's Tastes of Imperial Europe is a new itinerary for 2023. Beginning in Vienna, guests will explore the city known for being host to countless musical masterminds – from Mozart to Beethoven.

Up next is Bratislava, where guests could opt to explore with a local guide to learn the hidden features that this city has to offer. The cruise will end in Budapest, making this cruise extra-special for guests, as it is commonly known as one of Europe's most stunning cities.



Viking Aton has been designed to explore the wonders of the Nile

Emerald Cruises Rhine and Moselle

Emerald Cruises has introduced a 2023 Frankfurt roundtrip. Guests will sail from Mainz, visiting Wiesbaden, Rudesheim, Koblenz, Cochem, Trier and Bernkastel. There will be six included excursions with this itinerary – such as a walking tour of Wiesbaden, a visit to Eberbach Abbey and a guided tour of Trier.

Uniworld Europe and beyond

Uniworld has been busy lately, launching four new river cruise itineraries for 2023. New European river cruises include the

With floor-to-ceiling windows, every space on *Viva Aton* is optimised for the best views

10-day Zurich and the Rhine River Valley itinerary cruises on the Main and Rhine, as well as a longer 15-day Grand Central Europe voyage, which take in the Main, Rhine and Danube. The line has also revamped two itineraries, the first being the Milan, Venice and the Jewels of Veneto sailing, exploring Venice and the Veneto region, and the second the Timeless Wonders of Vietnam and Cambodia itinerary on *Mekong Jewel*. 📍

Emerald Cruises' 2023 Frankfurt cruise will visit Eberbach Abbey

