

The RIVER CRUISER

All About River Cruises

by

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TRAVEL





NOTE

From
KIM

River Cruising is one of the fastest growing segments in the cruise industry.

River Cruises are one of the fastest growing cruise styles. Many companies are debuting new ships as quickly as they can be built. Ships on some rivers are getting larger to accommodate more activities like Pickle Ball or have swimming pools. Cabins are getting larger, also. The largest segment of cruisers comes from the United States and the language spoken on board is almost always English. The demand is growing and I'm here for it.

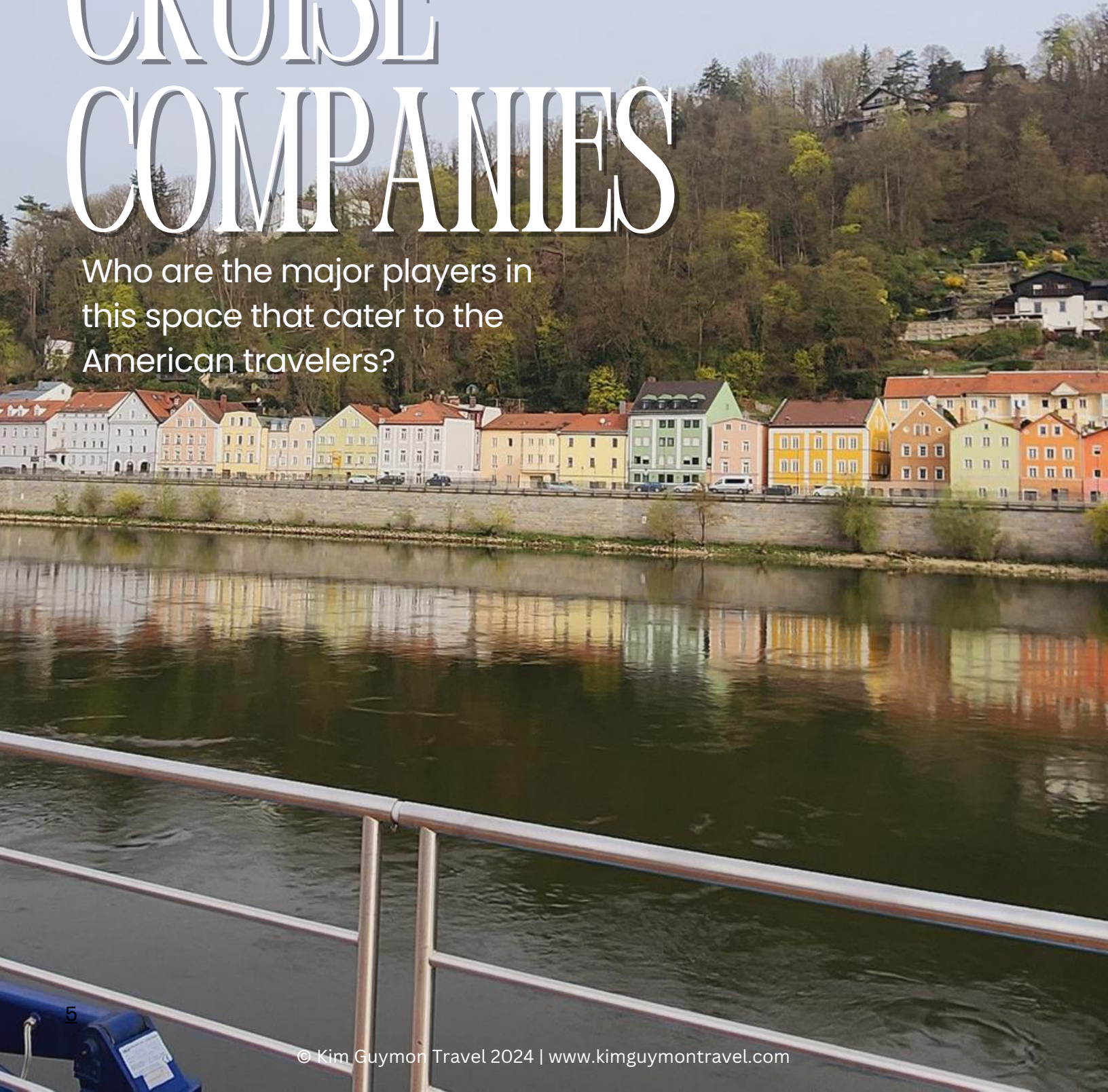
Many people are aware of the Viking brand of river cruises thanks to their PBS advertising. But, Viking is just one of a group of great companies that all have their own "Flavor" and price points. While river cruising used to be something your Grandparents talked about doing, it's now starting to become a multi-generational dream vacation. I can help you find the right company that fits your dream and budget.

Kim



RIVER CRUISE COMPANIES

Who are the major players in this space that cater to the American travelers?



WHO'S WHO IN RIVER CRUISING?

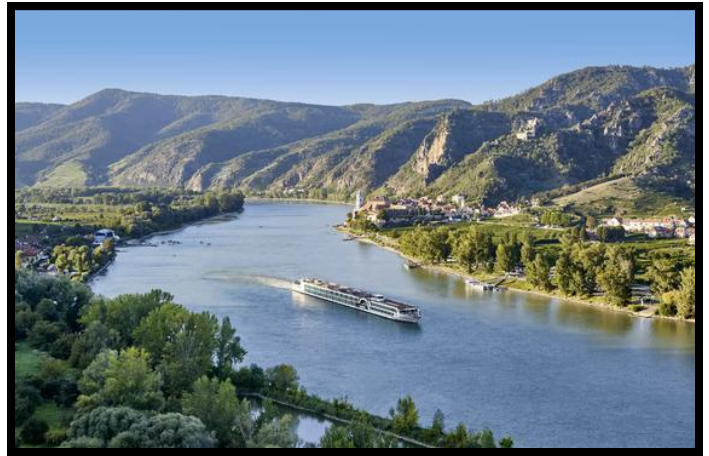


These are the Top 5 in alphabetical order. They are the major players for the cruise industry. There are a couple of very luxe lines not mentioned. The dollar signs indicate where the base cruise fare falls on my scale.

Amadeus \$\$

1

An Austrian company with 40 years of experience, they are newer in the US market. They concentrate on just European rivers plus specialty cruises like Christmas markets and golf cruises. Their price point is lower than most but you pay for your excursions. Ships are simple elegance.



AMA Waterways \$\$\$

2

One of the most popular cruise lines. In addition to all the European rivers, they have added the Mekong, the Nile and are adding South America. Their Ama Magna is the biggest in the cruise industry and they are adding another Magna ship next year. The Magna has pickleball on it. Their style is upscale simple elegance. Their ships handle low water better than most. Excursions are all included.



Avalon \$\$\$

3

Avalon is very similar to AMA Waterways. They are unique in that their beds face the French balconies so you can wake up to views.

They have active and discovery shore excursions for more choices of type of excursion. They also have an al fresco dining option that allows you to take meals on the top deck of their ships.



Uniworld \$\$\$\$

4

Uniworld ships have a unique design of their own. Each ship has a heavily decorated personality that is like an exclusive boutique hotel. Their excursions may focus more on culture and include art tours and cooking classes. Their cruises have more of a “white glove” service and suites come with Butler service.



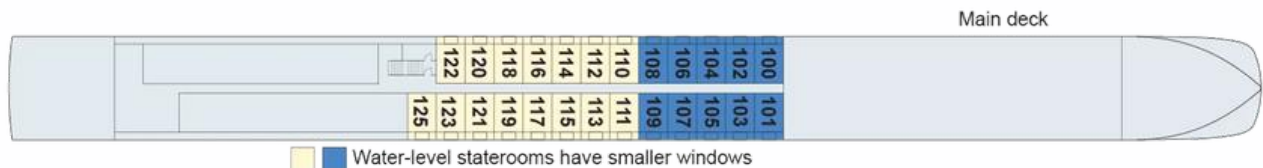
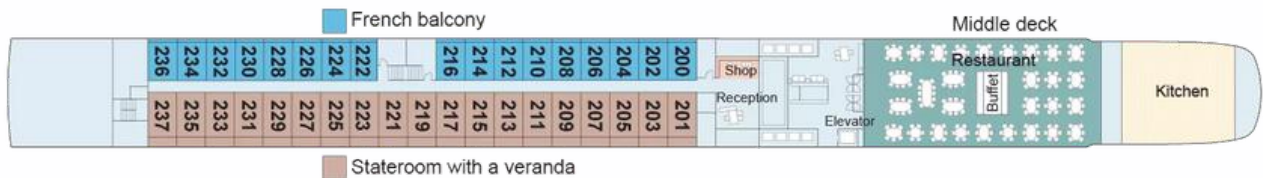
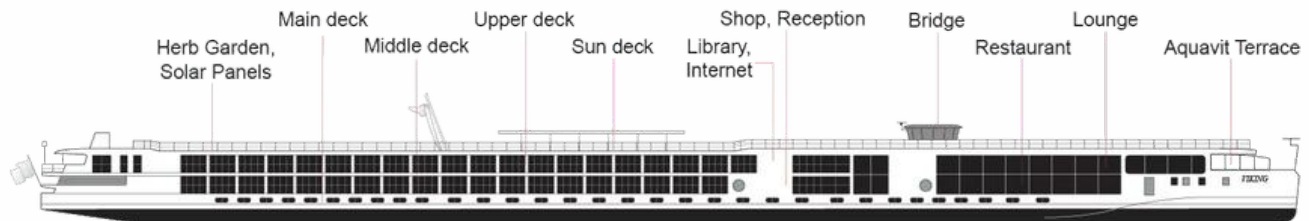
Viking \$\$

5

Viking is the name everyone knows. Their ships are simple elegance. They offer all-inclusive pricing for excursions, food, etc. They also have ocean cruises on bigger ships that can take you beyond the rivers. Viking is one of the few companies offering a Mississippi cruise as well as ocean/river combo cruises. They also cruise the Mekong and the Nile.



COMMON SHIP LAYOUT



| Upper Deck | | | | Middle Deck | | Main Deck | |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| ES 445 ft ² Wraparound Balcony | AA 275 ft ² Twin Balcony | A 200 ft ² Balcony | C 135 ft ² French Balcony | B 200 ft ² Balcony | D 135 ft ² French Balcony | E 150 ft ² Fixed Window | F 150 ft ² Fixed Window |

Every company and even every ship within a company, will have some variation of this layout. There are usually 3 decks of cabins and then a top sundeck that will have an array of activities from swimming pools and hot tubs to walking tracks and sports courts and even a putting green. Plus there will be a lot deck chairs and tables - some with a sun cover.

There will be a restaurant and lounge with most lines having a compact fitness room with equipment like treadmills and exercise bikes. Aside from a couple of super ships that are double the width and can't go through the locks, most ships are roughly the same width so they can go through locks. All cabins will have windows to the outside.

WHAT TYPES OF CABINS?



Some cruise lines will have bigger suites, but many will have cabins with a French Balcony that is a wall of windows that opens with a barrier and an outside balcony you can sit on. This will be one of the most expensive combinations short of a full suite if it's available.

The middle range of cost and most common will be just a French balcony where the entire wall will open up with either a railing or bottom glass. Some lines have their beds always facing this way. These are sometimes found on 2 decks.



The base price of any river cruise is for the lower deck level of cabin. They will have fixed windows higher on the wall that looks out at river level. If you don't think you'll spend much time in your room, this is a good choice for the price.



THEME CRUISES



River cruises offer a variety of affinity itineraries that cover a wide variety of interests and times of year. Here are the most popular themed cruises that I can book you on.

Tulip Time

1

Almost all companies offer cruises in the Spring from Amsterdam timed to when the tulip fields will be in bloom. Your excursions will take you to some of the most beautiful tulip fields as you leave Amsterdam. The only trick is timing the blooms correctly as it can vary slightly from year to year. But, if you love Amsterdam and tulips, this might be the cruise for you!



Christmas Markets

2

Cruises that sell out quickly every year take you to some of Europe's best Christmas Markets. You'll often find these cruises on the Rhine and Danube as they take you to places like Strasbourg, France which is known as the Home of Christmas. Cologne, Nuremburg and other great Christmas markets will be on the list. The ships will be festively decorated and the Christmas party will continue on board every night.



Golf

3

Some lines have introduced golf cruises. Guests will have their clubs delivered to them at some of Europe's most beautiful and iconic golf courses where they will play a round of golf. The cruise will have a golf pro on board to help you with your game and non-golfing companions can take advantage of the shore excursions and activities offered at each port



Wine

4

Some of Europe's best wines are made from grapes grown along the rivers of Europe. Wine cruises with a focus on these great wines and the vineyards and wineries producing them have become very popular. Nearly every line will have wine cruises. Local wines will be featured on board and there may be evening tastings and education focused on wine.

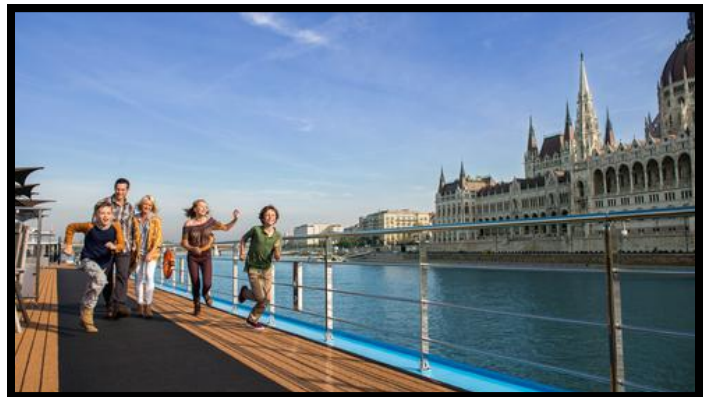


Family/Multi-generational

5

Disney has partnered with a cruise line to bring families together on river cruises. Other lines are starting to have cruises catering to multi-generational groups.

Grandparents and parents are wanting to take their children and grandchildren on vacations where everyone has fun and everyone can participate. River cruise lines are starting to respond more and more.



BEST



First Timer ITINERARY



The BEST itinerary is really up to you. But, I have an opinion about what is the best if you've never been on a river cruise before.

The best first timer itinerary is really the one you want to see most. But, if you asked me what the best itinerary was for someone who has never been on a river cruise before, I would probably suggest The Rhine. All of these companies have a Rhine River Cruise. And, there's a reason it's one of the most popular rivers to cruise.

The Rhine is sometimes called "The Father" because it's one of the most important rivers in Europe that connects major cities. It has a lot of shipping traffic on it moving goods from the Port of Rotterdam deep into Europe.

It has been important for hundreds of years and has been protected and taxed and fought over many times as people tried to control the flow of goods.

The result is about 10 castles in a short span of the upper middle Rhine Valley. Some are ruins and some are still inhabited by the families that built them. They are on both sides of the river and at times, in the middle of it.

A Rhine itinerary will stop at several of the charming villages along the river full of cobbled lanes and half-timbered buildings. You'll have the opportunity to see some of these castles on shore excursions.

You'll also get to visit other great places on or near the Rhine like Amsterdam, Cologne (The cathedral is not to be missed), Heidelberg with its hilltop castle and old university, Strasbourg, France, a charming French village and Basel, Switzerland where you can sample Swiss chocolate and cheese at the start or end of your cruise.

This is the itinerary sure to turn you into a river cruise addict. You'll love it so much you can't wait to try another river.

FOOD *and* DRINK

If you have ever been on an ocean cruise, sometimes the food is largely 24/7 and buffet-style. A river cruise is different. It's more like a floating luxury hotel where you eat in the hotel restaurant every night.

River cruises compete to bring on the best trained and best chefs. Food often rivals any 5 ★ restaurant you would eat at on shore. The food will also reflect the itinerary. As you float through Germany, you will have German dishes or desserts. If you're leaving or arriving in Budapest, you can expect Goulash at least one night. If you are floating the Ganges River, you will have delicious and fragrant dishes reflecting the tastes of India.

Often times breakfast will have an element of a buffet but with dishes you can special order. Lunch often offers a menu of prepared dishes in the main dining room, but also a more casual bistro in the lounge where you can order a specialty sandwich or burger. Many lines will have afternoon tea for you, too.

Dinner will be a total table service in the dining room with free-flowing drinks including soft drinks and wines from the region you are in.

The menu will be posted in the lobby prior to mealtimes and perhaps on your cruise app so you can see what's available. This is helpful for times you might be overnighting in a town. You may decide to visit a local restaurant rather than eating on the ship. But, seeing it beforehand means you can make sure to not miss something special.

Every line will allow all guests to experience a Chef's or Captain's table night where the food will be another level of fancy. That's the night you'll want to dress up a bit.

Drinks are included with dinner and lunch. Other times, you can purchase drinks in the lounge from the bar. There is always tea, coffee, hot chocolate and water available near the lobby. Sometimes the bar will have out an infused water for you.

Even though it's not a 24/7 buffet, you will NOT go hungry. Many ships can also cater to dietary restrictions and allergies. They ask at every meal if you have any and they do their best to accommodate you. It's something you would discuss with the chef when you arrive and they will make sure it is noted. They may even take your photo so all the wait staff is aware and can coordinate with the kitchen to keep you safe.



WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Every Cruise Line will have their own level of inclusions but here are the most likely that are included and also what may not be included in the price of your cruise.



A river cruise could be compared to a floating luxury all-inclusive hotel. But, the level of inclusiveness you get may vary slightly from line to line.

You will get a beautiful cabin with daily service. Many times you will also have a turn-down service at night. Your room will have its own bathroom with nice basic toiletries like hand and shower soap and shampoo and conditioner. You will also have a hair dryer, so no need to bring your own. Irons are not available on most ships due to the fire hazard and some ask you to not bring your own hair appliances but to check one out at reception.

There may be robes and slippers for your use, too. Your room may have a small safe for your use as well as a phone and TV.

You'll probably also have access to an app for your daily schedule.

Very ships have self-service laundry but almost all will have laundry services available, but not included in the price.

Food and drinks during mealtimes are always included. That includes wine with dinner. Water, tea, coffee and often hot chocolate will be available all day somewhere on the ship. Sometimes there will be an afternoon tea or snacks included. It will be rare that you will have to pay for food on the ship. Drinks are another story. Outside of mealtimes, you'll almost always be billed for drinks from the bar - including soft drinks.

You may also return to your cabin and find a small gift or chocolates or flowers. Some cruise lines work hard to earn your loyalty with surprises like this.

And, some lines include gratuities for crew members in the price of your cruise.



Every line will have shore excursions available for guests. In some cases, they are all included in the price and you just have to choose the ones you want to go on. In other cases, one per stop might be included in the price of the cruise with others being purchased, or, all of them must be purchased either separately or in packages. It really depends on the cruise line you're going with.

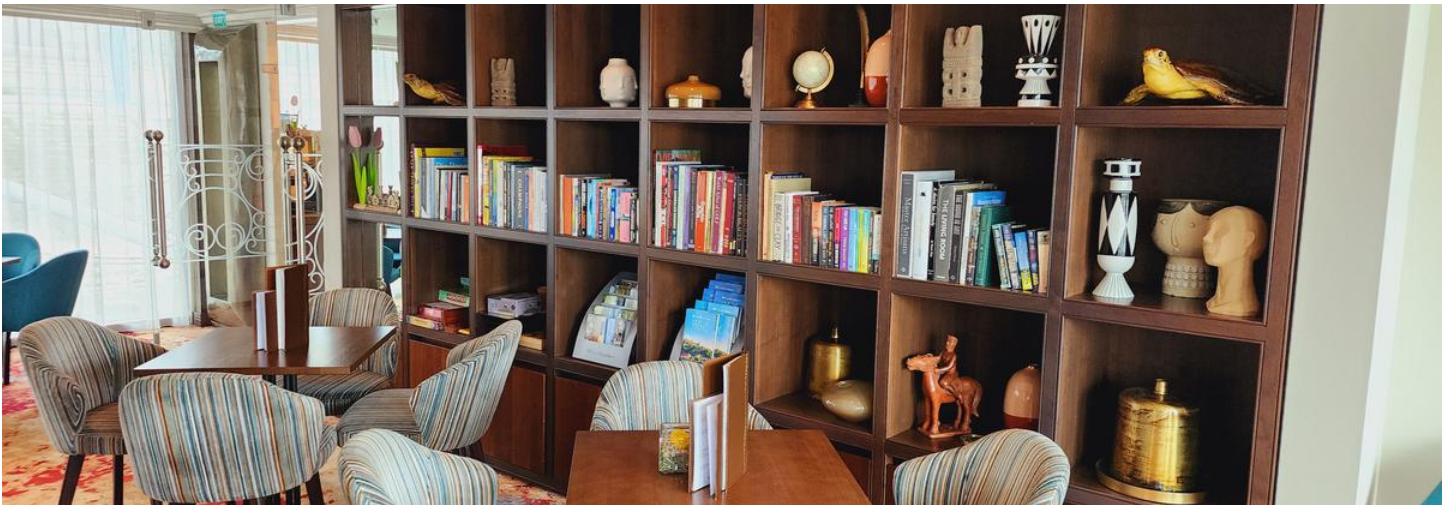
Also included in most cruise lines will be the ability to check out bikes and ride them on your own. Some lines have E-bikes and some have just regular bikes, but you can usually sign them out and go for a ride. Many of these rivers have flat paths next to them making for a beautiful ride.

When you arrive and leave the ship, some lines will include a transfer for you between the airport and train station and the ship. Others will charge you for it. You may also get free transportation into a city. When we docked in Vienna, we had been there before and chose to go out on our own. We paid for an Uber into the city center. But, on the

way back, we caught the bus the cruise line had set up for the afternoon free time. We can discuss what's included and what must be paid for with your cruise so you can see the value for the price you're paying. Every

line will be slightly different in their inclusions. But rest assured that at a minimum, your food and some activities will always be included in the price of your river cruise as well as onboard evening entertainment as shown below.

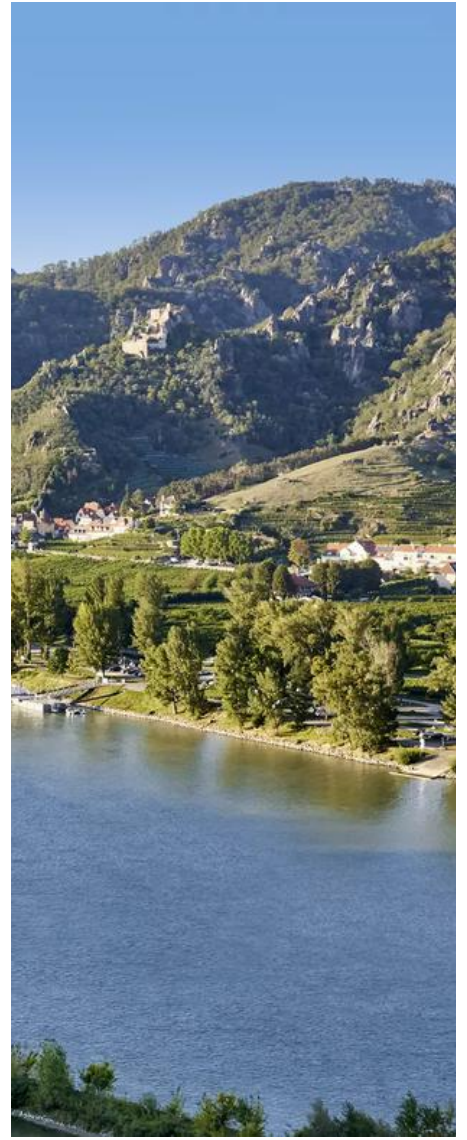
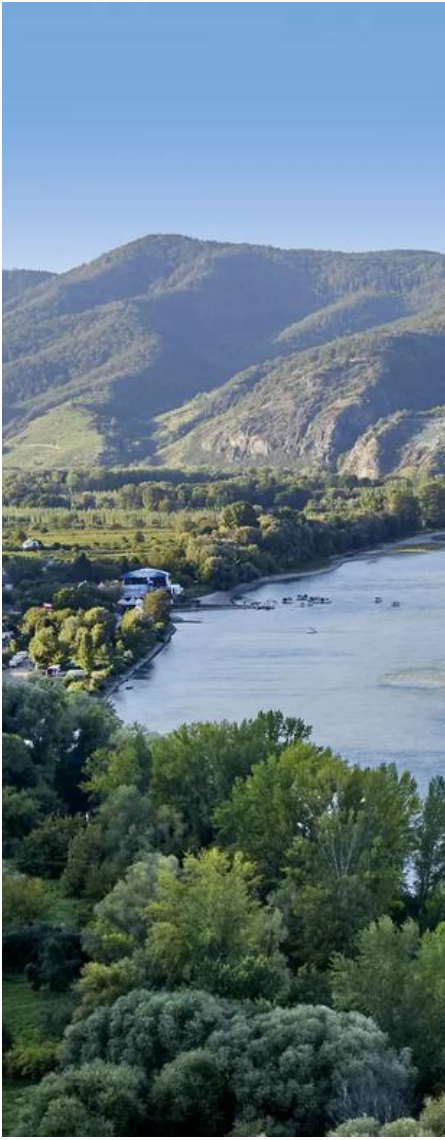




One Last NOTE



River cruising is addictive. I think the price, from the view of a person who has never done it before, seems like too much at times. But, once you experience a river cruise, you will be hooked. It is literally one of the most relaxing ways you can travel. You unpack once and float through several countries enjoying unbelievable views and exceptional food. You are pampered, with some ships having spas, and catered to in a very upscale kind of way. It's like a small private luxury club that you get to be a part of for a few days. You will come home not needing a vacation from your vacation, but with a soul nourished with great memories and a heart ready for another cruise.



READY TO CRUISE?

Let's talk about an itinerary and
cruise line that works for you!

www.kimguymontravel.com

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