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SECTION ONE

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Destination Weddings & Honeymoons Focus

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CRUISES

Avalon Expression calls at Durnstein while cruising the Danube River.

ROMANCING THE RIVERS

Eleven cruise operators offer Europe sailings suitable for honeymoon couples.

HEADING TO EUROPE WITH your special someone on a river cruise can be romantic; couples view bucolic countryside and city sites “up close,” ships dock in the heart of such cities as Venice, Budapest or Paris, and guests head out to taste fabulous wines and dine at romantic sidewalk cafes or Michelin-starred eateries. Plus, river lines have “themed cruises.”

ROMANCE IN ITALY: What could be more romantic than floating through Italy, exploring Milan and Venice and enjoying time in Verona, Padua, Bologna and Burano? Uniworld's new 10-day “Gems of Northern Italy” cruisetour on the 134-passenger *River Countess* begins in Milan, iconic for its fashion style and home to Leonardo Da Vinci's masterpiece, “The Last Supper.” Guests stay for two nights at the *Star-hotels Rosa Grand* or a similar category hotel and they receive breakfasts and transfers. They board *River Countess* in Venice, staying multiple days in the city and cruising through northern Italy.

In Venice, Uniworld's guests choose

between an exclusive “Do as the Locals Do” walking tour and a “Venetian Painters at the Accademia” tour with art-historian guide. During an included tour in “Verona, City of Romeo and Juliet,” couples will see Romeo's home and a 14th-century stone house where legend says Juliet listened to Romeo's vows; cruisers can snap a romantic selfie on or below the balcony.

SAVORY FRENCH CUISINE:

Revealing fine French cuisine and village life, Touck's 10-day themed “Taste of France” epicurean program starts in Paris with a reception and dinner at Fouquet's on the Champs Elysees. Guests also enjoy a chocolate demonstration and Ecole Lenotre pastry class. Then couples board the 118-passenger *Swiss Emerald* for an intimate, seven-night Rhone River cruise.

During an Arles port call, guests visit Roman sites, have free time and then are whisked to a private La Camargue ranch for a luncheon banquet of farm-grown Provençal specialties with a musical serenade. Here couples will

also see Camargue's white horses, black bulls and a “gardian” or French cowboy demonstration.

OPERA OR JAZZ: For couples who love opera, *Avalon Waterways'* 15-day opera-themed “Magnificent Europe” cruise on the 166-passenger *Avalon Illumination* departs October 28 from Amsterdam to Budapest. Onboard, professional Canadian opera singers will perform a selection of opera works. This itinerary includes Amsterdam's canals and the Rhine Gorge, as well as shore time in Cologne, Rudesheim, Bamberg, Nuremberg and Vienna. Guests also visit the inside of Wurzburg's Bishop's Residenz, and St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava; a Regensburg violin maker; the musical city of Salzburg, Mozart's birthplace; and a Strauss concert in Vienna.

A jazz-themed voyage is *Avalon's* “Burgundy and Provence” river cruise, 11 days from the Cote d'Azur to Paris on 138-passenger *Poetry II*, departing June 27 with evening jazz band performances onboard, plus free time for

guests to attend the Vienne Jazz Festival. The voyage begins in Arles with calls at Viviers, Tournon, Lyon, Chalon-sur-Saone and Beaune. Then guests board a TGV train from Dijon to Paris for two overnights, guided sightseeing and free time in the "City of Light."

ROMANCE ON THE BLUE DANUBE: New luxury entrant, *Crystal River Cruises*, begins sailing on the Danube this year with the 160-passenger *Crystal Mozart*. Throughout the season, the vessel sails roundtrip from Vienna with pampering onboard perks for couples, including butler service and gourmet onboard cuisine. *Crystal Mozart* calls at Durnstein, Melk and Linz, Austria as well as Bratislava, Slovakia. Given strong bookings by the line's Crystal Society members for this new product, check with the line for the latest availability. Four new river vessels, *Crystal Bach*, *Crystal Debussy*, *Crystal Mahler* and

PHOTO BY STEPHEN J. YOUNG



Uniworld's new 10-day "Gems of Northern Italy" cruisetour will give passengers a chance to explore Venice.

Crystal Ravel will launch on European rivers in 2017.

On *Crystal Mozart's* 2016 "Danube's Capitals and the Wachau Valley" sailing, the vessel overnights at Passau, Germany; Budapest, Hungary; and Vienna. In Linz, cruisers might book an optional excursion

to Cesky Krumlov, a medieval, fairytale-like town crowned by a castle in the Czech Republic. It's a great place for strolling cobbled lanes, enjoying wine tasting and admiring UNESCO World Heritage Site architecture.

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TRAVEL BOUND

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CRUISES

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Viking River Cruises and other lines also offer Danube itineraries. Viking's eight-day "Romantic Danube" sails between Budapest and Nuremberg on multiple modern-styled Longships.

If clients want a contemporary product, **CroisiEurope**, celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, offers six-day romantic "Blue Danube" sailings between Budapest and Passau on either *La Boheme* or *L'Europe*. Calls include Melk, Durnstein and Vienna, Austria, and Esztergom, Hungary. Desire a good deal? For all new European bookings, including those on the Danube made through February 29, those booking a balcony suite on **Emerald Waterways** voyages departing through August 31, 2016, will receive free round-trip airfare from the U.S./Canada (for balcony suite bookings) or a reduced \$995 U.S./Canadian rate (other staterooms).

RED, WHITE, SPARKLING OR

PORT: Most European river lines have wine-focused voyages or designated wine sailings. **AmaWaterways'** 13-day "Taste of Bordeaux" features two nights pre-cruise in Paris; a TGV train ride to Bordeaux; a seven-night roundtrip cruise on the 146-passenger *AmaDolce* from Bordeaux; two nights in the Loire Valley and one night in Paris.

As the capital of Aquitaine, Bordeaux is surrounded by chateaux, vineyards and stunning scenery. *AmaDolce* sails along the Garonne River and its surrounding estuaries, with calls at such port cities as Cadillac, Bourg and Libourne. Cruisers will tour Pauillac, a small village town, and enjoy a Médoc wine tasting. They'll also tour St. Emilion and Pomerol and enjoy wine tasting in a cave, among other included experiences.

Other wine-focused regions in France, Germany and other European countries also await romantic travel-



Cesky Krumlov in Czech Republic is an optional excursion on Crystal's Danube sailings.

ers. In Portugal, for example, this year **Scenic Cruises** will launch its new 96-passenger *Scenic Azure* on roundtrips on the Douro River from Porto, Portugal to Vega de Terron, Spain. It's also possible to combine this voyage with Bordeaux and Seine river cruises, an extension in Lisbon or a Porto-to-Madrid land tour. The ship operates eight- and 11-day Douro River options, as well as the robust 13-night "Unforgettable Douro with Lisbon" itinerary that includes three, pre-cruise nights in Lisbon. Special perks include an exclusive "Sundowners" event, giving couples stunning views of the Regua area's vineyards and a port wine tasting from the Douro Museum's terrace.

CHRISTMAS MARKETS: Nothing is more romantic than strolling with your sweetie through a winter Christmas market in Europe, sipping on hot chocolate or hot mulled wine, with the smell of gingerbread and good cheer in the air. One of many choices for clients is **Abercrombie & Kent's** eight-day "Christmas Markets on the Rhine" itinerary, which departs December 10; it includes a five-night cruise on *AmaDeus Silver*, a pre-cruise night in Basel and a post-cruise night in Cologne. Guests will visit Christmas markets in Germany and France, explore Freiburg and Strasbourg on exclusive excursions and view the Lalique Museum's glassworks.

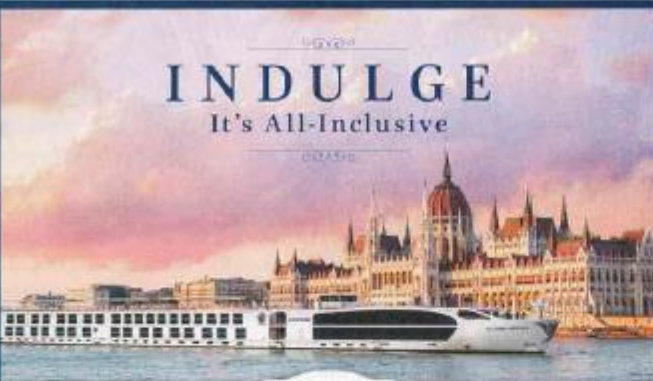
SHORTER CRUISES: For clients wanting to try out river cruising and take only a week (plus two weekends on either side) off from work, shorter river cruises are an option. **A-Rosa's** five-night "Romance on the Rhine" cruise operates from Cologne, Germany on *Silva* or *Viva* with calls at Koblenz, Mannheim, Strasbourg and Mainz. It's a good way to get a taste of a romantic river experience. —SUSAN J. YOUNG

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