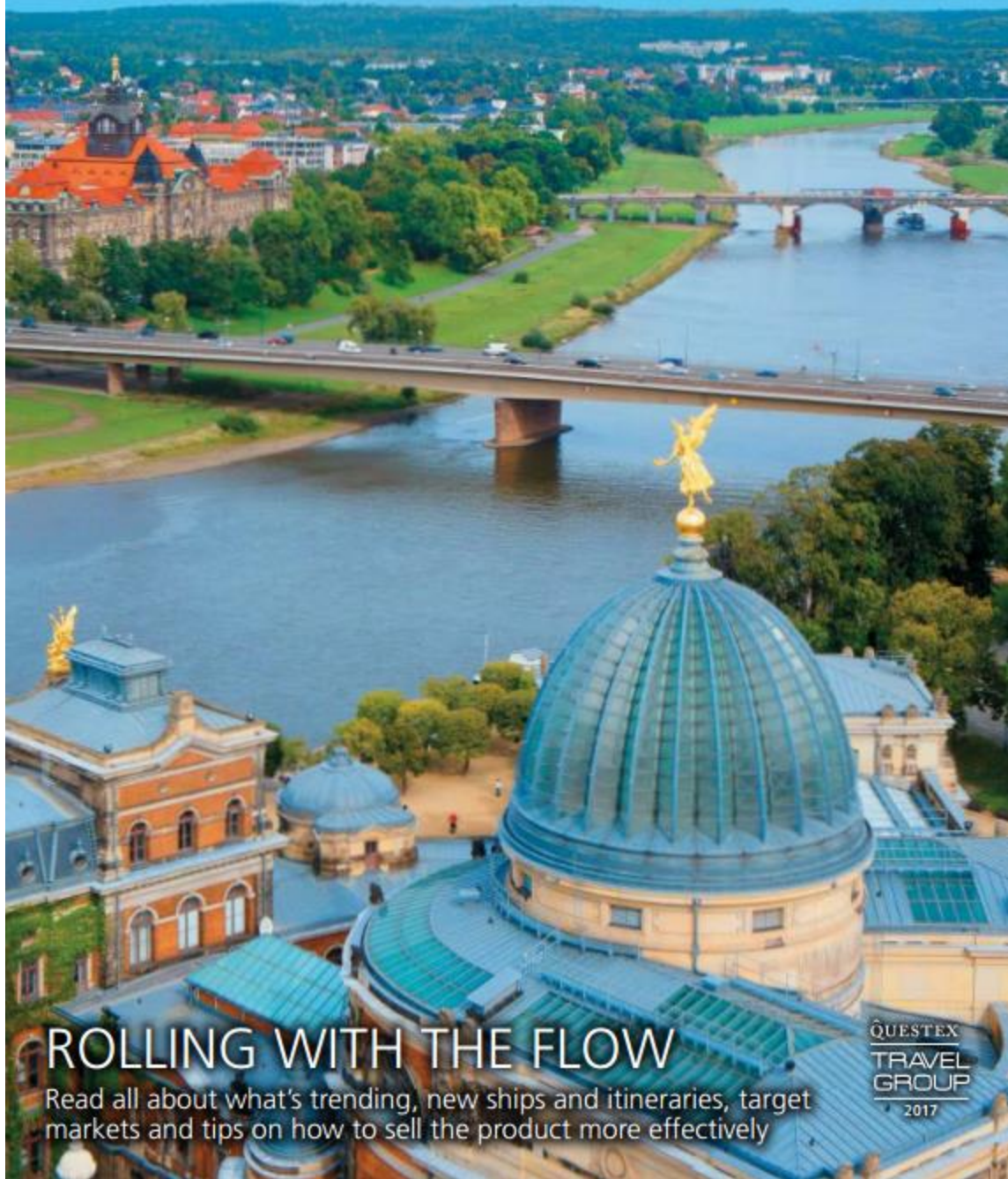


# RIVER CRUISE

## FOCUS



### ROLLING WITH THE FLOW

Read all about what's trending, new ships and itineraries, target markets and tips on how to sell the product more effectively

QUESTEX  
TRAVEL  
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2017

# WHAT'S NEW, WHAT'S NEXT ON THE WORLD'S RIVERS

**RIVER CRUISING** continues to expand across the globe and new options are creating demand to entice more clients. Simply put, "river cruising is hot," says Vicky Garcia, chief operating officer and co-owner, Cruise Planners, an American Express Travel Representative. "As a network, we continue to see double-digit growth in this segment, with some agents specializing in it quite successfully." So what's ahead?

**Expansion of Luxury:** "The luxury segment has expanded even further on some of the most popular rivers with **Crystal River Cruises** entering the market, and their holistic approach is bringing heightened awareness among a lucrative segment that may not have previously considered river cruising," says John Lovell, president of Travel Leaders Network, Leisure Group and Hotel Division.

The line's *Crystal Mozart* welcomed travel partners onboard earlier this year as it began its second Danube River cruising season. Among its voyages this year is a 13-day "Dazzling Danube Celebration," sailing roundtrip from Vienna on

December 23. Yet to come? Crystal plans a private dock for *Crystal Mozart* in Vienna in 2018; it will be located across from the Vienna Hilton.

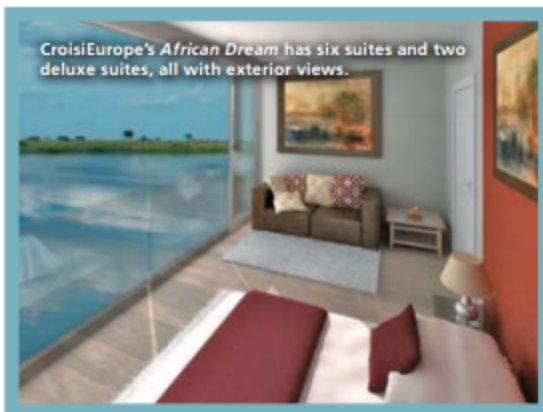
Separately, the new 106-passenger *Crystal Bach* — launching on August 13 — is the first of six new river builds. Its 10-day "Spectacular Rhine Holiday" sails from Amsterdam to Basel, departing December 23. Sister *Crystal Mahler* will debut on September 30 and sail a 16-day "Grand Europe" itinerary. Vessels will have a Palm Court with a glass ceiling, a pool area with a glass roof and staterooms with floor-to-ceiling glass walls that become French balconies at the touch of a button.

**The Rise of Millennials:** In 2018, upscale **Uniworld** will introduce **U by Uniworld** — a new river product designed for Millennials and Generation Xers, launching next spring. It will be operated by the refurbished/reconfigured *River Baroness* (renamed *The B*) on the Seine or *River Ambassador* (renamed *The A*) on the Rhine and Danube. "The U by Uniworld brand is built on a foundation of Uniworld's river cruising expertise and the leadership in youthful travel of its sister brands **Contiki** and **Busabout**," says Brett Tollman, CEO, The Travel Corporation.

Serving 120 guests, the two U by Uniworld ships will be all black outside. Inside, they'll have a sleek interior design with open communal spaces and rooftop lounges. Agents can promote the two vessels as fully equipped waterfront contemporary hotels with a taxi, bar, restaurant, café, nightclub and yoga studio. Onboard programming will include classes for wine & painting, mixology and Chef's Table cooking. Guests will explore ashore via included excursions and activities, optional "U Time" outings or self-guided city tours. At night, "U Hosts" will introduce guests to local hotspots and onboard entertainment will include "live" DJs.

Four eight-day itineraries sail the Rhine, Main, Danube and Seine Rivers, with overnight calls and longer stays in major cities like Paris, Vienna, Amsterdam and Budapest. Three Super Cruise options combine two or more U itineraries into one 15- or 22-day bucket list journey. Ships will offer three room categories with river views — Studio, Balcony and Suites. Solo travelers can book single rooms or tap into special room share rates. The A's week-long Rhine, Main and Danube river voyages start at \$1,699 per person double, while The B's France voyages start at \$1,999 per person double; gratuities are included.

**Major Fleet Updates:** River lines continue to update their ships. In early April, **Tauck** welcomed the *Sapphire* back into its Seine fleet after a massive interior reconfiguration; it



CroisiEurope's *African Dream* has six suites and two deluxe suites, all with exterior views.

Cover photo of the Elbe River running through Dresden, Germany, provided by Getty Images / lavendertime

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was the first of Tauck's four 361-foot ships to receive that. *Emerald* was similarly reconfigured earlier this year, while *Treasures* and *Esprit* will undergo identical work this winter.

On the *Ruby* (middle) Deck, 30 of the 150-square-foot cabins were replaced by 20 larger (225-square-foot) staterooms, reducing the ship's overall capacity from 118 passengers to 98. These vessels also have 14 300-square-foot suites. Staterooms of 225 square feet or more will account for 69 percent of all accommodations.

In response to the surging popularity of river cruising among families, Katharine Bonner, senior vice president, Tauck River & Small Ship Cruising, says two sets of family-friendly connecting cabins were also added

on the *Sapphire* and *Emerald*, each connecting a 183-square-foot Category 5 cabin with an adjacent 300-square-foot Category 7 suite. On *Sapphire*'s Diamond (upper) Deck, the ship's second dining venue, The Bistro, now renamed Arthur's, has its own dedicated kitchen and chef and an expanded menu.

**Innovative Programs:** "The river cruise experience continues to evolve with a multitude of partners adding new itineraries and innovative programs," notes Lovell, who cited **AmaWaterways'** special interest tours. For 2017-2018, AmaWaterways will operate 95 wine-themed sailings hosted by North American wine experts from the U.S. and Canada. "It has been extraordinary to witness the increase in interest and enthusiasm for our wine cruises over the past several years," says Rudi Schreiner, president and co-owner.

"Due to high demand, we have more than doubled the number of Wine Cruises since 2015 and are excited to see the program continue to expand this year with our new ship, *AmaKristina*, and two new itineraries," Schreiner said. Guests can learn about the wine cultures of Austria's Wachau Valley, France's Bordeaux or Rhone regions, or Portugal's Douro Valley.

Onboard, the wine hosts recommend food and wine pairings, lead discussions and offer tastings. Ashore, guests will enjoy wine tastings, winery tours, private cellar tours, vineyard visits and more. For example, "Europe's Rivers & Castles" is a seven-night wine focused cruise from Nuremberg to Luxembourg; it includes Kitzingen Castle connected through legend to wine and Count Dracula.

Among the new wine-focused itineraries are "Rhine & Moselle Splendors," and "Captivating Rhine," and AmaWaterways' "2017-2018 Wine Cruises Through Europe" brochure can be downloaded from the line's website.

Lovell also cited **Avalon Waterways'** Avalon Active Discovery program, which encompasses hiking, biking, culinary



walking tours, painting classes, market tours, wine tastings and more. The line provides immersion in local culture — so guests can see and live life as the locals do. Already on the Danube, the program will expand to the Rhine in 2018 with two eight-day Rhine River cruises between Amsterdam and Frankfurt.

Guests can bike along the Rhine River, take a running tour of Amsterdam or hike on incredible trails, according to Terri Burke, managing director, Avalon Waterways. Guests can also opt for excursions to castles, a culinary tour or painting class. "Avalon travelers can even dress up in real Roman attire and participate in a reenactment of the Roman Games, tour an extinct volcano and a coal mine — a UNESCO World Heritage Site," says Burke.

For the second year, Avalon Waterways will also offer the Active Discovery cruises on the Danube voyages — nine days between Budapest and Linz. How about conducting an orchestra or helping a farmer in his apricot orchard?

**More Customer Benefits:** Both **Scenic Cruises** and sister line **Emerald Waterways** have launched a "River Cruise Travel Guarantee," a new complimentary guest perk. Backed by Chubb Insurance, it will automatically cover every guest upon the start of their cruise for delays or cancellations due to weather, natural disasters, mechanical breakdowns, labor strikes or high/low water issues. Those with approved claims will receive direct monetary refunds up to certain levels.

If a cruise is delayed or canceled once it's begun and up through disembarkation, guests will be reimbursed for some/ all the cruise fare (up to certain caps) if the following occurs: a complete itinerary half when the ship can't sail and the lines can't deliver the scheduled shore excursions except via three-hour-plus motorcoach rides; guests can be accommodated on another ship due to high/low water but the itinerary is delayed

*Continued on page 12*





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more than 24 hours; the ship breaks down, can't continue and no alternative ships are available; or an industrial action (strikes, riots, river or canal lock damage/closure) prevents the ship from passing through a lock, thus stopping the cruise.

The insurance isn't, however, for minor delays or deviations, and Scenic and Emerald urge guests to still purchase personal travel insurance.

**More Cultural Enrichment: Viking River Cruises**, describing itself as "the thinking person's cruise," christened two new Viking Longships this spring and expects another year of growth. Plus, "Viking Cruises continues to support enriching cultural programming as it recently announced a premier partnership with National Geographic as a proud sponsor of 'Genius,' a series that explores the achievements of Albert Einstein," Lovell says. With "Genius" April 25 global premiere, Viking debuted, "Time," a new brand campaign featuring Torstein Hagen, Viking Cruises' founder and chairman, a lifelong Einstein admirer and physicist.

When Viking first went on PBS a few years ago with river cruise video, upscale consumers suddenly realized that a river cruise could be a great vacation. Agents are thus likely to get inquiries as this new campaign rolls out across additional marketing channels throughout the show's 10-part global event series on National Geographic. The show will focus on key locations in Einstein's life — Germany (Berlin, Munich, Würzburg, Heidelberg), Switzerland (Zurich, Basel) and Austria (Vienna, Salzburg), many river cruise destinations.

**Global Expansion:** Joining CroisiEurope's four existing vessels on Southeast Asia's Mekong River in August is the 60-passenger *Indochine II*, a Colonial-style ship with 30 spacious cabins with private balconies, a pool, restaurant lounge/bar and sun deck. It will sail 11- and 14-day cruises on the Mekong between Siem Reap and Ho Chi Minh City.

Starting in December, CroisiEurope, which recently joined USTOA and CLIA, will offer a new three-night, cruise-safari on the Chobe and Zambezi rivers. *African Dream* has six suites and two deluxe suites, all with exterior views, plus a panoramic res-

taurant, lounge-bar and rooftop terrace. Post-cruise, guests will stay four nights in one of two five-star lodges, CroisiEurope's first ground accommodations; guests will enjoy safaris and a day at Victoria Falls. Extensions to the Cape of Good Hope are also available. Nine-day package pricing starts at \$6,319 per person. A second ship is already planned for 2018.

In Europe, on the Douro River, the line just launched the 132-passenger *Miguel Torga*, a premium-class, three-deck ship with a pool, contemporary interior design and 66 staterooms. Eight-day cruises depart from Porto and a sister ship is planned for the Douro in 2019. In 2018, the new 90-passenger *Elbe Princesse II* will launch on Germany's Elbe river.

**Guest Interaction and Feedback:** Lines are now looking for more personal ways to interact with potential guests on their websites and via social media. For example, **Pandaw**, which operates exotic river cruises, has created a new "Traveller's Hub" on its site. Here guests can share travel memories with like-minded travelers by posting photos or videos. If guests submit photos via Instagram or Twitter using the hashtag "Pandawmemories," the photos will show up on the hub's Traveler's Wall. The hub also features travel blogs. ■

## RIVER CRUISE TREND WATCH

### Greater Interest, Increased Capacity

#### Likely to Take a River Cruise During the Next Two Years

2015	2016
41%	48%

#### 2016, by Age Group

Millennials	Xers	Boomers	Matures
55%	48%	41%	45%

Source: MMGY Global's 2016 Portrait of American Travelers

#### MORE SHIPS ON THE WAY

Due to demand, CLIA-member cruise lines currently deploy 184 river cruise ships with 13 new ones either deployed or on order for 2017 – an increase of about 7 percent over 2016.

Source: CLIA's 2017 State of the Cruise Industry Outlook.

Avalon Waterways and other river cruise lines offer hiking and biking opportunities along the Danube River.

