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What makes one cruise in particular the best? Perhaps it's a new destination that you've always wanted to visit. Or you're onboard with loved ones or friends who are so much fun, your sides hurt from laughing by the end of the cruise. Or maybe you have one of those "magic moments" where you stop and say to yourself, I will always remember this.

This week, we are taking a look back at 2017, noting our favorite (and least favorite) cruise experiences of the year. We hope it inspires you to share your top cruise memories, and think about where you want to go in 2018. (read our [Worst Cruise Experience](#) from yesterday, our [Favorite Shore Experience](#) from Wednesday and [Biggest Cruise Surprises](#) from Tuesday). Today: we finish the year with our best overall cruise experiences of 2017.

Viva la France! A Bastille Day baby, I've always been a closet Francophile, although it had been years since I had spent a significant amount of time in the country. I remedied that in 2017, visiting Paris three times and taking two extraordinary river cruises in different regions. The first, a Bordeaux river cruise on [Scenic Diamond](#), introduced me to #chateaulife and enhanced several years of wine studies; until you actually walk among the terroir of the world's most famous wine region, it can be hard to grasp its complexity. The ship's fun-loving crew made the experience even more enjoyable. The second, [a barge cruise](#) among the small villages on the Upper Loire Canal with the Strasbourg-based company CroisiEurope, showed me that smaller is better when it comes to relaxation and service -- and that no one, really *no one*, can put together a cheese course like the French. Quand puis-je revenir?

-- Chris Gray Faust, Senior Editor