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MS Vasco de Gama CroisiEurope / Atelier Le Meridien

CroisiEurope Review



Family-owned and operated CroisiEurope was one of the first lines to pioneer Europe's rivers 40 years ago, and it now operates 50 ships in Europe, Asia, and — by the end of 2017 — Africa. The France-based family's third generation has taken the reigns of the cruise line, and they have added modern touches in decor that make the vessels feel fresh, while keeping the budget-friendly pricing. And, sure, you can sit and watch the scenery pass by from your balcony, but on board these river vessels (and two ocean-going ships), there are bustling bars and a laid-back sun deck, best enjoyed with a fine glass of French wine in hand.

What We Love

Shorter Sailings: Not everyone can settle in for a 10-day sailing, so the line's four- and five-day cruises are perfect for those who want a quick intro to a destination without having to worry about requesting extra time off work.

Lots of Options: There are many ways to tailor your cruise: You can choose a barge, a river vessel, or an ocean-going ship — which offer a variety of comfort levels (and price points). And if you've already navigated the Danube and the Rhine, CroisiEurope sails lesser known rivers, such as the Elbe in Germany; the Loire in France; and the Guadalquivir and Guadiana in Spain and Portugal.

Designer-Chic Rooms: The line's newer ships, such as the 96-passenger *MS Loire Princesse* and the 104-passenger *MS Camargue*, are decked out in designer wares thanks to CroisiEurope's exclusive partnership with Italian label Missoni Home — so expect colorful linens with signature zigzags.

Best Known For

Serious Value: Fares won't break the bank here like they will on some other river cruise lines — and still include tons of amenities: Wi-Fi, shore excursions, port taxes, all onboard meals, and an open bar (including wine and beer with lunch and dinner and house liquor). For an extra sweet deal, you can book far in advance or at the start or the end of a season.

Michelin-Star Cuisine: Chefs have trained with Alain Bohn (a member of the Maitres Cuisiniers de France), serving three-course French fare for lunch and dinner that lives up to haute restaurant standards. You can expect impressively presented foie gras and roast rack of lamb accompanied by glasses of white and red wine. Desserts could include *ile flottante* and *crepes suzette*, as well as some specialties inspired by your itinerary.

Who It's Best For

Families: The family-owned company is one of the few that warmly welcomes children on board, providing triples, kid-friendly menus, and family cruises in Spain, Portugal, and Italy during summer.

First-Time River Cruisers: With its varying itinerary lengths and attractive prices, these cruises are perfect for travelers hesitant about trading large ocean liners for a more intimate ride on Europe's rivers.

Francophiles: If you have an international mindset, you'll enjoy the company on this cruise. Most of the passengers hail from France and elsewhere in Europe, and are happy to help you brush up your language skills.

Don't Say We Didn't Warn You

Suites Are Limited: Ships are on the smaller side, accommodating fewer than 150 passengers and only some vessels have suites — which are spacious but lacking in luxurious amenities. Older ships don't have French balconies (only portholes and picture windows).

One Menu: Unlike other ships, where you can order your appetizer, entree, and dessert from a menu, here, there's only one choice for the three-course lunches and dinners. If you don't care for what's going to be served or have dietary restrictions, you can request an alternative (the sooner, the better).

English-Speakers Are A Minority: Each of the ships have their own way of accommodating English speakers, who, with some exceptions, will be fewer in number than the Europeans. Some ships hire private guides for the smaller group; on other ships, anglophones join a larger group, where announcements are made in two languages. At times, you'll feel as if you're a privileged few. Other times, you may feel overlooked (some of the activities, such as onboard lectures, aren't translated into English).

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