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(1:10 p.m. EDT) -- Shortly before guests arrived for the christening ceremony of Indochine II on Saturday in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, two saffron-robed monks made the rounds of the ship's public areas, strewing jasmine buds from silver bowls in a ritual blessing of CroisiEurope's newest vessel on the Mekong River.

With the launch of the three-deck, 62-passenger [Indochine II](#), CroisiEurope now has five vessels plying the Mekong River and its tributaries in Cambodia and Vietnam. The ship will cruise between Siem Reap, Cambodia, and Ho Chi Minh City on nine-day itineraries from August to April.

The French family-owned line targets an international clientele and prides itself on offering comprehensive packages at competitive rates. As its name implies, CroisiEurope's fleet of 50 ships operate primarily in European waters. But the creation of Indochine II is in response to growing demand for a premium ship on the Mekong River, said ecommerce director Lucas Schmitter, whose grandfather, Gerard Schmitter, founded the company in 1976. The four other ships in its Asian fleet, including the 48-passenger Indochine I, were acquired by CroisiEurope when it purchased Compagnie Fluviale du Mekong in 2014.

Indochine II shares some of the colonial ambiance of its other Mekong cruisers, but adds contemporary European flourishes. All cabins have private balconies. Interiors are light and airy. And it boasts a swimming pool.

Indochine II's shallow draft enables it to navigate Cambodia's Tonle Sap Lake and river longer into the season than some river ships. And at 216-feet-long by 131-feet-wide, it's proportioned to fit through the Gao Canal in Ho Chi Minh City, which most other ships can't, enabling passengers to overnight on board at the start or end of the cruise for easy access to the bustling Vietnamese city.

There's been an uptick in interest in [Mekong River cruises](#), said CroisiEurope's Asia director Naidah Yazdani, noting that, "It's a more comfortable way to travel than going by coach and staying in hotels."

Unfortunately, the efforts of the monks weren't enough to thwart Mother Nature. She blew in with a vengeance as the christening ceremony was getting underway on the shores of the Tonle Sap River. A ferocious wind gust lifted the giant CroisiEurope sign that served as a backdrop to the stage. Rain pummeled. And guests, including a couple of ambassadors and members of the Cambodian royal family, scurried up the gangway to take cover.

But what might have seemed an inauspicious beginning ended well enough. In the time it took to down a glass (or two) of champagne in the ship's lounge, the skies cleared and everyone reconvened outside for the formal breaking of a champagne bottle on the ship's bow. Prince Sisowath Chivannariddh and Princess Norodom Sita served as godparents.

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--By Jayne Clark, Cruise Critic contributor