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5 Tips for Taking a Family River Cruise

A little research can alleviate a lot of stress.

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Slow-moving by design and sited on smaller boats without over-the-top diversions (no waterslides or rock-climbing walls here!), river cruises haven't traditionally been the first vacation choice for families with kids. That's changing fast. River cruise lines are shaking off their sedate reputation to offer fun, family-focused adventures. Here are five smooth-sailing tips for getting the brood on board.

1. Find a Family-Focused Sailing

Just because kids may technically be allowed on a regularly scheduled river sailing, that doesn't mean they'll enjoy being there. Dodge choruses of "I'm bo-o-ored" by looking to lines that tout specialized portfolios of family-friendly itineraries, such as [Tauck Bridges](#), [Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection](#), [Adventures by Disney](#), in partnership with AmaWaterways, and [CroisiEurope](#). Their voyages offer special shipboard activities, dining, amenities, staffing, and excursions.

2. Book Ahead

Among the lines that offer them, family-branded itineraries typically only run about a dozen or so times a year, during the summer or over the December holidays. With such limited inventory, it's advisable to book ahead; summer 2018 season sailings, for instance, will start to fill up this fall.

3. Leave the Littlest Tots Behind

Even the kid-friendly lines don't cater to the real young'uns. The minimum age to participate in a Tauck Bridges, Uniworld, or Adventures by Disney river cruise is four years old, though the general recommendation is for ages eight and up. CroisiEurope is an exception: It accepts infants and toddlers, too.



4. Prepare for Accommodation Frustration

Some lines, such as Tauck Bridges and the AmaWaterways/Disney partnership, offer triple-occupancy or connecting rooms for families, which work great for family trips. But many do not. Your best bet is to book early to secure adjacent staterooms.



5. We Hope You Like Europe

For the moment, the bulk of these family-centric experiences are limited to European waterways. So you may have to “settle” for history-rich regions lined with castles and storybook villages along the Rhine and the Danube.



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