

RIVER CRUISE

Oberammergau sailings pick up steam

By Jeri Clausing [Twitter](#) [Email](#) | Sep 27, 2018



Pontius Pilate washes his hands after condemning Jesus to death, as portrayed in the 2010 Passion Play. Photo Credit: Courtesy of Passion Play 2020

How do you score one of the hottest tickets in Europe? Take a river cruise, of course.

At least that's what some savvy travelers are doing to secure their spot at the once-every-decade Passion Play performance in Oberammergau, Germany, the curtain on which will rise once again in 2020.

Most river cruise lines are selling Oberammergau sailings in 2020 that include entrance to the epic performance, and they are going fast.

The tradition dates to 1633, when the people of the Bavarian village vowed to re-enact the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ every 10 years to ward off the plague.

Not only has the ritual lasted, it has a strong following. Today, more than 2,000 actors, instrumentalists, singers and supporters, all hailing from the village, take part in the event.

The five-hour performances, which include a three-hour break, begin in the afternoon with the entry into Jerusalem and tells the passion story through the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. It ends in the evening with the Resurrection.

The 42nd performance of the play is taking place from May 16 to Oct. 4, 2020, with 103 shows scheduled. And river cruise lines, like most European tour operators, have been scurrying to work it into their itineraries.

Avalon Waterways is offering a 12-day Danube Dreams with Oberammergau sailing in 2020, with nine departures between May and September 2020. Avalon will be serving its guests dinner during intermission.

Viking has 10 sailings between June and August that include the play. Tauck has three, two of which are already sold out, and Scenic is offering five sailings, including an Alpine Highlights and Oberammergau cruise and a Bavarian Highlights and Oberammergau cruise from Munich to Vienna. Scenic's sister line, Emerald Waterways, is also offering it on four sailings.

Crystal River Cruises became the most recent river cruise line to join the Oberammergau frenzy, announcing it will be offering the opportunity to attend the performances on select Crystal Mahler, Crystal Debussy and Crystal Ravel sailings.

French river cruise line CroisiEurope has also reportedly secured tickets for some sailings, as well.

It's likely we'll hear of more Oberammergau sailings from Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection, AmaWaterways and others as the excitement for the 2020 event continues to build.

The village of Oberammergau expects 450,000 visitors for the play, which is considered to be one of the world's most successful amateur dramatic performances.

Although it tells the story of the last days in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, substantial changes are made to the production each decade.

"The staging changes fundamentally every time," Christian Stuckl, who will direct the play for the fourth time in 2020, said in a news release. "Since the Passion Play takes place once every 10 years, I keep having to write the text in a new way, tell the story in a new way. I'll include things I learned from the previous play and it always has to reflect the respective time period and its political circumstances."

Michelle Baran contributed to this article.