

**INSIGHT**

River Cruise Insight

# River cruise news to watch in 2018

By [Michelle Baran](#) / January 03, 2018

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There's quite a bit on the horizon in the river cruise world for 2018, so here are some of the events I'll be watching most closely this year.

Obviously, I'm excited about the unveiling of Uniworld's new U by Uniworld product, river cruises catering to the 21-to-45 market. It represents the biggest departure from the traditional river cruise to date (think silent disco parties and mountain biking in the Bavarian forest) and I can't wait to see how and whether Uniworld pulls off this coup.

Meanwhile, Crystal River Cruises launched its first newbuild vessels this past fall and will continue with two more in 2018, the Crystal Ravel and Debussy. They had promised to bring some aggressive new ideas to the rivers (such as open-seating dining, envelope-pushing interiors, and awe-inspiring excursions) with their "river yachts," and it will be interesting to see how they execute on that promise.

Here at home, American Cruise Lines will introduce the first of its "modern"-style river cruise vessels, the American Song, which sets sail this fall. American river cruise companies such as American Cruise Lines and its main competitor American Queen Steamboat Company, have been gradually creating vessels that are more contemporary in look and feel (and thus more like European river cruise vessels) compared to their paddlewheelin' predecessors. The American Song is taking that concept even further.

Viking River Cruises will launch its first company-owned vessel on Egypt's Nile River, the 52-passenger Viking Ra, an all-suite vessel slated to set sail this spring, complete with two Jacuzzis, a pool and suites that are all 291 square feet each.

Amadeus River Cruises, the North American arm of Austrian company Luftner Cruises, is gearing up to launch its 15th vessel in Europe this year, the 162-passenger Amadeus Queen, which will showcase a new feature for Amadeus river cruise ships - an indoor pool with a roof that can be opened in nice weather and that can be transformed into an area used for functions and movies. The Amadeus Queen will sail the Danube, Rhine and Main rivers.

Amadeus has also teased the idea of testing a millennial product in 2018 called "Project M" onboard its Amadeus Provence vessel, which sails along France's Rhone River. The details are under wraps, but our interest is piqued.

French river cruise company CroisiEurope has a second 16-passenger Africa vessel in the works, African Dream II, which will launch in December as a follow-up to its first act, the African Dream, launched in 2017. The vessels will sail along the Chobe and Zambezi rivers and are part of a larger southern Africa cruise-tour itinerary that appears to be resonating with Croisi's customers.

In addition to these highlights, I'll be looking for river cruise companies to continue to surprise me, of course, with new and interesting products and programs. They've done a great job keeping things interesting in 2017, let's hope for more shocks and splashes in 2018.