




Oberammergau Cruise Tips: Seeing the Passion Play by River Cruise



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In 2020, river cruisers headed to Europe have the chance to experience a unique event that only comes along once in a decade: the Oberammergau Passion Play.

If you haven't heard about it yet, get ready to be inundated with Oberammergau fever in the run-up to 2020, as river cruise lines tailor sailings and itineraries to allow passengers to take in the spectacle. Avalon Waterways, CroisiEurope, Emerald Waterways, Scenic, Tauck and Viking River Cruises are among the lines offering itineraries -- and taking bookings -- for travelers looking to attend.

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The passion play -- which sometimes runs well over five hours in duration -- has been performed by the villagers of Oberammergau, Germany, since 1634. Staged one year per decade, it tells the story of the Passion of Jesus, from the arrival of Christ in Jerusalem to his crucifixion, death and resurrection. Faced with the ravages of the plague that was sweeping Europe, the villagers vowed to perform the play every 10 years in the hopes that their tribute to the Passion of Christ would spare them from further suffering.

In 2020, more than 2,000 actors, performers and technical staff will bring to life 100-plus performances of the Oberammergau Passion Play. Running between May and October 2020, the play is a huge economic driver for the region; a local expression, *Die Passion zahlt*, translates as, "The Passion pays for it." An estimated 450,000 visitors are expected to descend on the town in 2020.

While the play has faced charges of rampant anti-Semitism in the past, modern iterations have strove to present a more balanced performance through the elimination of the play's more controversial elements. Revisions to successive performances are common, with the 2010 performance being noted for its radical changes.

For those wanting to attend the play, river cruises offer a real convenience. People attending independently must secure hotel stays, transportation, meals and tours, while river cruise lines are taking care of all of the logistic details on behalf of their passengers.

With the next Oberammergau Passion Play not scheduled until 2030, this could be the hottest ticket around for the next decade.

Oberammergau River Cruise Lines

If you've got a favorite river cruise line, chances are good that it has released a 2020 itinerary that includes admission to the Oberammergau Passion Play. Nearly every popular river cruise line is offering at least one or two voyages featuring a visit to Oberammergau, and all are available for booking right now.

River cruise lines offering Oberammergau 2020 itineraries include [Avalon Waterways](#), [CroisiEurope](#), [Emerald Waterways](#), [Scenic](#), [Tauck](#) and [Viking River Cruises](#).

AmaWaterways isn't hosting any formal Oberammergau 2020 river cruises, but a company called Educational Travel Services (ETS) is chartering AmaCerto's July 29, 2020, voyage specifically for the Passion Play.

Oberammergau River Cruise Itineraries

Because of its location south of Munich, river cruise itineraries that feature visits to Oberammergau for the Passionsspiele are often combined with an overland tour to Munich and can sail both the Rhine and the Danube.

Avalon Waterways is offering a 12-day Danube Dreams river cruise that includes Oberammergau, traveling between Budapest and Munich. Sailing between May and September 2020, nine departures will include admission to the Passion Play along with calls on Budapest, Bratislava, Vienna, Melk, Linz and Passau, with an extension to Innsbruck, Austria and Munich. At the time of this writing, several departure dates were listed as sold out.

CroisiEurope is featuring a Danube itinerary with two nights in Oberammergau (including admission to the Passion Play), coupled with a six-day Danube river voyage between Passau and Budapest with calls on Bratislava, Melk and Vienna. The line offers the reverse itinerary as well.

Emerald Waterways, meanwhile, includes a Passion Play experience as an add-on for four departure dates in 2020: May 23, June 20, September 4 and September 12. The cost for this extension, which includes a one-night stay in Munich and one night in Oberammergau plus admission to the Passion Play and transfer to embark the river cruise ship in Nuremberg, is \$995 per person, plus a \$150 single supplement.

Scenic is running five departures between May and September 2020 that include visits to Oberammergau for the Passion Play. The new Alpine Highlights and Oberammergau from Vienna to Zurich and the Bavarian Highlights and Oberammergau itinerary from Munich to Vienna will also link to one of four river cruise itineraries, including the eight-day Gems of the Danube and the 15-day Jewels of Europe.

Tauk is offering the Passion Play on three of its river cruise itineraries in 2020: The Romantic Rhine, Blue Danube and the new Danube Reflections. Bookings are being taken with a small deposit.

Viking River Cruises is offering a dedicated 10-day itinerary between May and October 2020 that travels the Danube between Munich and Budapest, with the river cruise portion taking place between Nuremberg and Budapest, with calls on Regensburg, Passau, Krems and Vienna. This one is available for booking and several itineraries already list as sold out.

Oberammergau River Cruises Tips

Book Early. With limited availability, early booking is essential for these voyages, some of which are already sold out.

Budget Appropriately. Because of the high demand for these special itineraries, some cruise lines are requiring additional deposits in order to make a booking. Avalon Waterways, for example, requires an increased deposit of \$350 per person for its Oberammergau Passion Play itineraries, payable in February 2019.

Check Frequently. Because these voyages are so far out in the future, a few river cruise lines are still determining the exact ships that will operate these runs. Each line is at a different stage for their Oberammergau voyages, making it important to check with your favorite river cruise company to see if they are taking bookings at the moment and, if they are, what (if any) special conditions will apply to these river cruises.