



5 European River Cruise Lines Worth a Look by Americans



Jeannine Williamson
Contributor

Updated June 22, 2018

As river cruising continues to boom, more and more lines compete for attention on the European waterways. While many American travelers have heard of companies such as Viking, Grand Circle, Tauck, AmaWaterways, Crystal and Avalon -- to mention just a few -- there are also some European companies out there that Americans probably don't know that may deserve consideration. Here's a look at who they are and what they offer.

CroisiEurope

Who: [CroisiEurope](#) is the biggest river cruise line you've never heard of. One of the original pioneers of river cruising, the French-owned company was founded more than 40 years ago and is the largest European-based river line. Still family owned and run, it operates 50 company-owned ships and five chartered vessels. In addition to regular riverboats, the fleet includes hotel barges and innovative modern paddlewheelers designed to sail on the shallow Loire and Elbe rivers. In addition to all the major European waterways, CroisiEurope offers cruises on lesser-known rivers such as the Tisza in Hungary and Guadalquivir in Spain. It also features exotic destinations, including the Mekong in Vietnam and Lake Kariba in South Africa, and in 2018 debuted cruises on Canada's Saint Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. It also has a seagoing vessel, MS Belle de l'Adriatique, which was completely renovated last year and sails along the Mediterranean and Adriatic coastlines.

Why You'd Like It: For Francophiles, CroisiEurope is a dream come true, particularly on sailings in its homeland that provide a really authentic French experience. Throughout the fleet, all the vessels have a predominantly French crew and showcase French cuisine -- even the ships on the Mekong have a dedicated baker producing croissants, baguettes and pastries. The line also offers some unique sailings you won't find anywhere else. While mainstream lines give a wide berth, in every sense, to the notoriously low waters of the Loire, CroisiEurope commissioned a paddlewheel vessel with an ultra-shallow draft to sail on the river and is the only line operating on the Loire. It has since launched a pair of similar vessels on the Elbe. It is also the only line to sail from Seville on Spain's Guadalquivir with the dual-purpose river and sea vessel La Belle de Cadix, which also takes passengers along the Atlantic coast to Cadiz. Despite offering value-for-money fares, there are plenty of inclusions, including wine, beer and soft beverages with lunch and dinner and an open bar throughout the day.

Caveat: Lunch and dinner menus are fixed, with no a la carte options. However, if you are vegetarian or, for example, don't like fish, most dietary requirements can be accommodated and you will be served an alternative dish. This should be mentioned at the time of booking and confirmed once onboard. Like Amadeus, CroisiEurope also operates fixed dining room seating for the duration of the cruise. On most cruises, North Americans and other English speakers will be in the minority, but all the crew speak English and announcements and written material are in English.