



Cruisin' on the river

by Jan Ross

My husband and I love cruising. We went on our first cruise for our 20th anniversary and, as we sat on the deck and marveled at the expanse of navy-blue sea, climbed a waterfall in Jamaica and strolled on sugar-white sands in Grand Cayman, and enjoyed meals where the plates were virtual works of art, we became firm cruise lovers.

We have cruised the Caribbean, Bermuda, Mexico and Alaska – all different, all wonderful in their own unique way. We never minded the fact that the ships were so very, very large with thousands of passengers

because we enjoy being together and we travel in our own little world where we share secret smiles at the follies of other travelers and share bits of the best chocolate soufflé or the juiciest filet mignon.

We enjoy sharing a table at dinner with strangers who become friends and have met honeymooners; a former Vietnam helicopter pilot and a couple who spent so much on a Tanzanian ring that they were concerned about the duty they would have to pay on the way home.

Because we enjoy our small, private world of travel and also enjoy allowing a few other select travelers into our little world who we enjoy equally, we

were both thrilled to be invited on a wine-tasting river cruise of Europe this fall by AMA WATERWAYS.

River cruising is not a new concept: people have been cruising the rivers of the world for hundreds of years. In the late 1800's, Thomas Cook organized the first river cruises of the Nile in large, luxurious steam vessels for upper-class individuals who could afford that sort of travel. Then, in the middle of the century, they began offering river cruises to the middle class.

Beginning in Brussels, tourists could cruise down the Rhine from Cologne to Mainz then head to Paris by rail via Frankfurt, the casinos at Baden-Baden, Wiesbaden castle and Strasbourg. This tour was consistently one of Cook's most popular: by the end of the century, thousands of tourists were making the journey each year.

Today, over a million people are cruising the rivers of the world every year and it is becoming more and more the most popular way to see destinations. But, with all the huge cruise ships have to offer – lavish meals at any time of the day or night, activities from rock-climbing to ice skating, elaborate Vegas-style shows – why are more and more people consistently choosing river cruising?

This is an individual choice and people will have individual answers, but this is why we are very excited about our wine-tasting cruise from Amsterdam to Paris with AMA WATERWAYS.

Smaller ships

On the AMALEGRO, built in 2007, there will be only 148 passengers who will travel in luxury, style and comfort.

Bicycles

AMAWATERWAYS has the unique position of being the only river cruise line which stocks a large number of bicycles for their passengers to use while in port. Many passengers choose to ride to the next stop and meet the ship – we are not that athletic and will probably just use them to ride around the towns where we stop.

Shore excursions

When you book a big-ship cruise, you better take out your wallet if you want to participate in any shore excursions because that can really add on to the price of your vacation. With AMA WATERWAYS, every shore excursion is already included in the price.

Wine and liquor

Better take out that wallet again if you want a glass of wine with your dinner on the big-ship cruises, but complimentary wine, beer and soft drinks are

included every night at dinner with AMA WATERWAYS.

Meals

I have been appalled at the way the big ships are all offering dozens of restaurants onboard – all of which charge huge prices for the meals. That was one of the big appeals about cruising, the fact that all your meals was included. Well, on AMA WATERWAYS, they are still included. And these meals are culinary delights with regional specialties and local wines.

Scenery

The only time you can enjoy the scenery on the big ships is when you are pulling into harbor or when you are leaving (Alaska is an exception) but with a river cruise, the scenic villages, ancient castles, rolling meadows and cobblestone streets are just a few feet away all the time.

Staterooms and suites

On one of our cruises, we chose a higher-level deck which was a great idea except for the fact that we were under the pool deck. Every night, they moved the pool furniture around and every night we listened to them do it. The staterooms and suites on AMA WATERWAYS are roomy and comfortable and over 82 percent have balconies. And because the ship is small and well-designed, there are no bad locations for staterooms.

For all these reasons and even more, we are thrilled about our wine-tasting cruise from the Netherlands, through Germany and ending in France with AMA WATERWAYS this fall. We can't wait to taste regional wines, bicycle through ancient, scenic lanes, visit awe-inspiring castles and cathedrals, and then return to our comfortable stateroom and watch the scenery scroll by our huge picture window. It's nothing like big ship cruising. And that's exactly what we like about it.

About the Author

Jan Ross is a freelance travel writer and the Blog Editor for The Travel Authority. Contact her at jan@samplerpublications.com with comments or suggestions for article topics. You can read her travel blog at <http://thetravelauthority.blogspot.com/> to find out about other great travel deals and information. Or call The Travel Authority at 1-877-AXP-1515. They have locations all over Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Florida and Tennessee and will help you get the possible deal for your next trip.

REPUBLIC BANK'S
PREMIER 50 ACCOUNT
Exclusively for folks as young as 50.

- Free Checking
- Free Checks
- Free Debit Card
- Free Online Banking
- Free Bill Pay
- Free Travelers Cheques

REPUBLIC BANK
www.republicbank.com
MEMBER FDIC
225-5099
Minimum opening deposit \$50.

**We were here for you yesterday. We are here for you today.
 We will be here for you tomorrow.®**