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Rollin' On The River...

by TFB EDITORS on SEPTEMBER 12, 2012



by Jan Ross

We are avid ocean cruisers. We love every single thing about them: the food, the fact that you only have to unpack once, the time to relax, time to stay busy, time to make whatever choice you want that makes you happy. We love hanging out on our cabin verandah just watching the water slip by. Seriously. Every single thing.

So when we were offered an opportunity to go on a *river* cruise in Europe with [AmaWaterways](#), we were a little hesitant — not about going to Europe for the first time. We were very excited about that. But a river cruise? Weren't those ships very small? Would we have any choices about what we ate? Would we have any choices about things to do?

Our hesitations were complete unfounded.

The *MS AmaLegro* was docked right near the hotel where we stayed in Amsterdam for a few days to see the city. We also wanted time to recover from any residual jet lag before we headed out on our seven-day wine-tasting cruise on the Rhine and Mosel Rivers through Germany, Luxembourg and, eventually, Paris.

It was dusk in Amsterdam, the early dusk that comes on in the fall in Northern Europe, and the *MS AmaLegro* was lit up like a Christmas tree. Warm, golden light shone from the welcoming, large picture windows onto the dock. Uniformed AmaWaterways personnel came out to help us with our luggage.

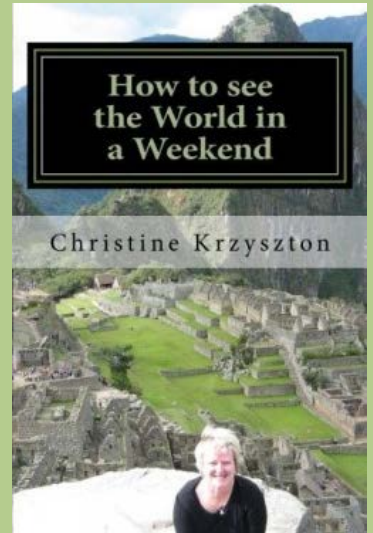


The AmaLegro Lounge

The lobby was decorated for Christmas with a fully lit and decorated tree and evergreen garlands hanging on the winding staircase. After marveling at the beauty of our home away from home, we dropped our bags in our cabin then went to the lounge area, where we would proceed to spend most of our time for



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Cruising past a windmill in Amsterdam.

the next seven days.

The lounge was very comfortably furnished with plenty of couches, love seats, and chairs. There was a bar and buffet area that was set up with cookies, snacks, and plenty of drinks. We soon learned that there were always snacks available here, in addition to the wonderful food onboard.

From being unsure about river cruising we ended this trip declaring that this had been the best cruise we'd ever taken! I absolutely recommend that you take a river cruise. And here's why.

1. The Size of the Ship

One of the things we were the most worried about – that the ship would be small – ended up being one of the things we loved most about our trip. With a design that fosters comfort and relaxation, the ship became much more like a home than any ocean liner we had ever sailed on. The lounge area became like a living room for all of us onboard and, when we were not ashore, we spent most of our time hanging out there, watching the scenery go by, eating, drinking, and conversing – and actually making friends. The relatively small size of the river cruise ships also means that they can dock right in the middle of the river cities in Europe and you can literally step out onto the main street of a place like Cologne, Germany. No waiting in long lines to get off the ship – just step out and you're there!



Ashore, we visited a stunning flower market in Amsterdam.

The People

We have never made friends on an ocean cruise. It's not a situation that's particularly conducive to making friends unless you're extremely outgoing, which we are not. We have had perfectly pleasant table mates at dinner, but none with whom we stayed in contact after the cruise. But we're still Facebook friends with the people we met on our river cruise. We were welcomed to their table at meals, they made an effort to be with us when we went ashore, and they made it very obvious that they enjoyed being with us. This is largely due to the intimate nature of the river cruise and we loved it.



We sampled freshly made pretzels in Cologne.



We cruised by a castle in Germany.

The Food

I can't say enough about the wonderful food we had on this cruise. We were initially hesitant about the options but we couldn't have been more wrong. In each port, the ship took on local produce, wine, and other necessities, then the chefs presented us with a sumptuous repast at each meal. There were menus for every meal and we could choose from a variety of offerings. Breakfast and lunch featured sumptuous buffets, but we could choose from a menu if we didn't see anything on the buffet that we liked.

The Shore Excursions

When you plan and budget for an ocean cruise, you better set aside plenty of money for the shore excursions because they are really going to add to your costs. Not so with a river cruise. Unbelievably, every single shore excursion is included in the

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And we slipped by vertical vineyards in Germany.

price of the cruise. AmaWaterways provides you with these great little devices that include headphones and a small box gizmo you tuck in your pocket, which allows you to hear everything the guide is saying. Such a nice change from missing everything if you're in the back of the group. If there are tickets required to get into a museum, etc., you don't have to worry about it.

AmaWaterways has already taken care of it. It's kinda nice to go to the head of the line everywhere!

The Crew

Crew members on an ocean liner can be very nice, and we've had very friendly waiters and room stewards in the past. But the crew members on this cruise seemed to honestly enjoy everything about their job and were eager to help us in any way they possibly could. I never saw them get impatient with the dozens of questions we asked and they went out of their way to make sure everyone was comfortable and having a wonderful time.

River cruising may seem like an expensive way to take a vacation at first glance, but make sure you compare everything when you're trying to decide between a river cruise and another sort of vacation. With everything included in the price – meals, shore excursions, your transportation from one country to another via the scenic rivers – it truly can be the most economical way to see Europe. And the cruise lines often offer special deals. I've even seen a "buy one, get one free" offer. This is one time that a travel agent will come in handy as they will know about all the special offers.

I think you'll love river cruising as much as we did.

Have you ever been on a river cruise? Please share your experiences with us in the Comments section.

Tagged as: [AmaWaterways](#), [cruises](#), [European vacation](#), [river cruises](#)



The accommodations were very comfortable aboard the MS AmaLegro.

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Jane September 12, 2012 at 9:06 am



We too were on a river cruise that left out of Amsterdam. We were going to cruise down the Rhine on Avalon cruises. I liked that as we were cruising there was always something to see on both sides of the river instead of vast, open ocean. With one seating for dinner, we really got to know our cruise mates. We did have some local entertainment a few nights on the cruise as well as great card games that were organized by the passengers. We brought on board the ship beautiful bouquet of flowers from the flower stalls in Amsterdam, delicious cheese from their cheese shops, wine, crackers, etc. No looking through our bags like they do on the other type of cruising. We are now planning our next river cruise – the Danube!

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