

discover

Sharing our love for France's spectacular waterways

River cruising

River cruising on the inland waterways of France is a serene and exquisite experience, the perfect social holiday.

Serene & sociable

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO RIVER CRUISING IN FRANCE

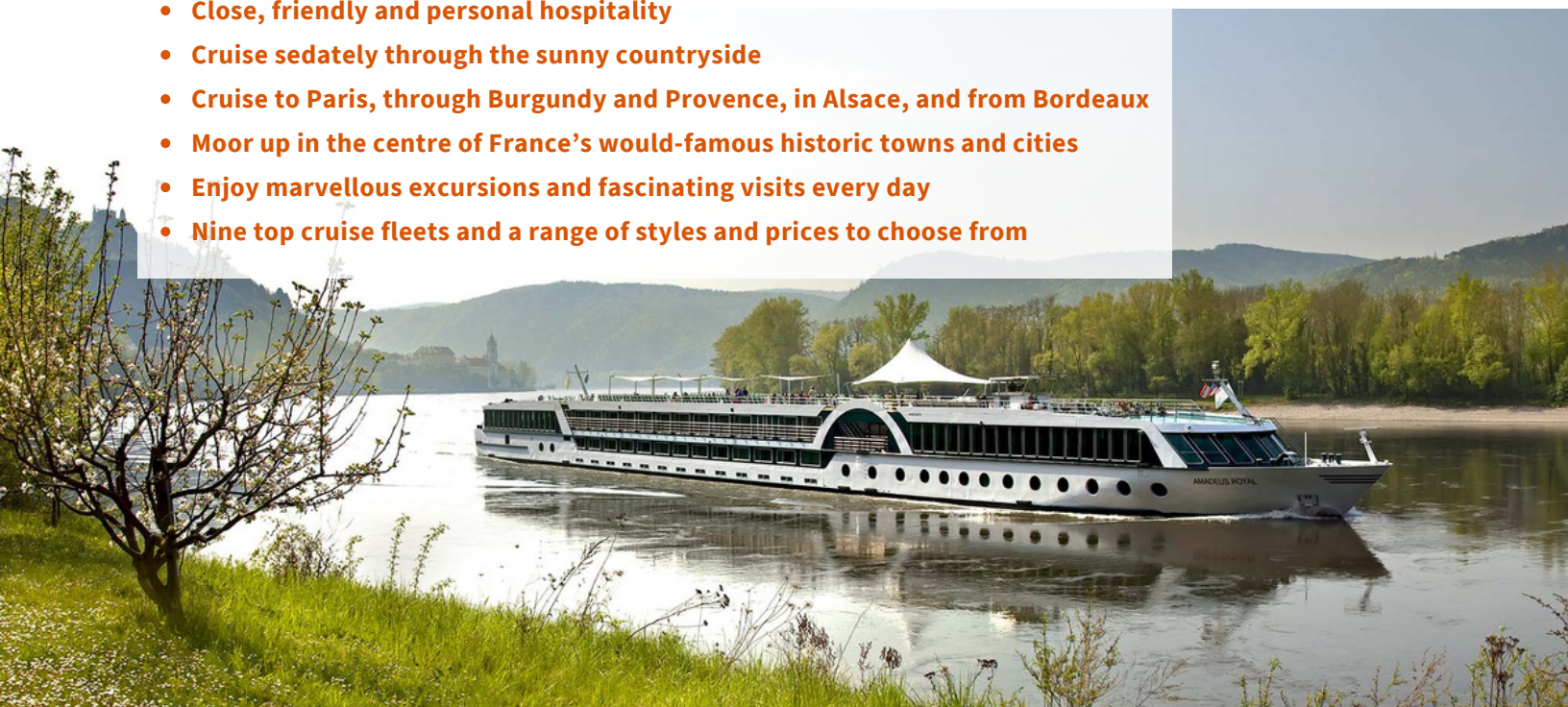
River cruise ships may not offer the enormous scale of an ocean-going liner nor the huge range of activities available on board to keep you amused as you cross the world's oceans. But swap these for the intimacy of close-up vistas brimming with chateaux, vineyards, markets and historic sights and you'll be thrilled with the contrast. There are no 'sea-days', no unpleasant sense of motion aboard a river cruise ship – just delightfully serene cruising with daily excursions of your choice to savour the culture and cuisine of your surroundings.

Your cruise ship offers light, airy and spacious accommodation with superb dining areas, bars and lounges, and of course a large communal sun-deck with loungers and parasols. It will offer a range of cabin styles on different decks with staterooms for couples or families which invariably are outward facing with balconies for delightfully secluded moments watching the scenery drift by. In your comfortable suite you'll find a shower room, TV, service phone and electrical outlets, including WiFi.

River cruising in France remains one of the most popular vacations in the world, allowing you to travel effortlessly in stylish luxury and savour the delights of a region or two on your relaxing journey. It's intimate and sociable, fascinating and memorable. And excellent value for money into the bargain.

Ruth & the team

- **Modest size, 100 – 200 guests**
- **Close, friendly and personal hospitality**
- **Cruise sedately through the sunny countryside**
- **Cruise to Paris, through Burgundy and Provence, in Alsace, and from Bordeaux**
- **Moor up in the centre of France's would-famous historic towns and cities**
- **Enjoy marvellous excursions and fascinating visits every day**
- **Nine top cruise fleets and a range of styles and prices to choose from**



Why a France river cruise?

FIVE BIG REASONS

1. They're in France!

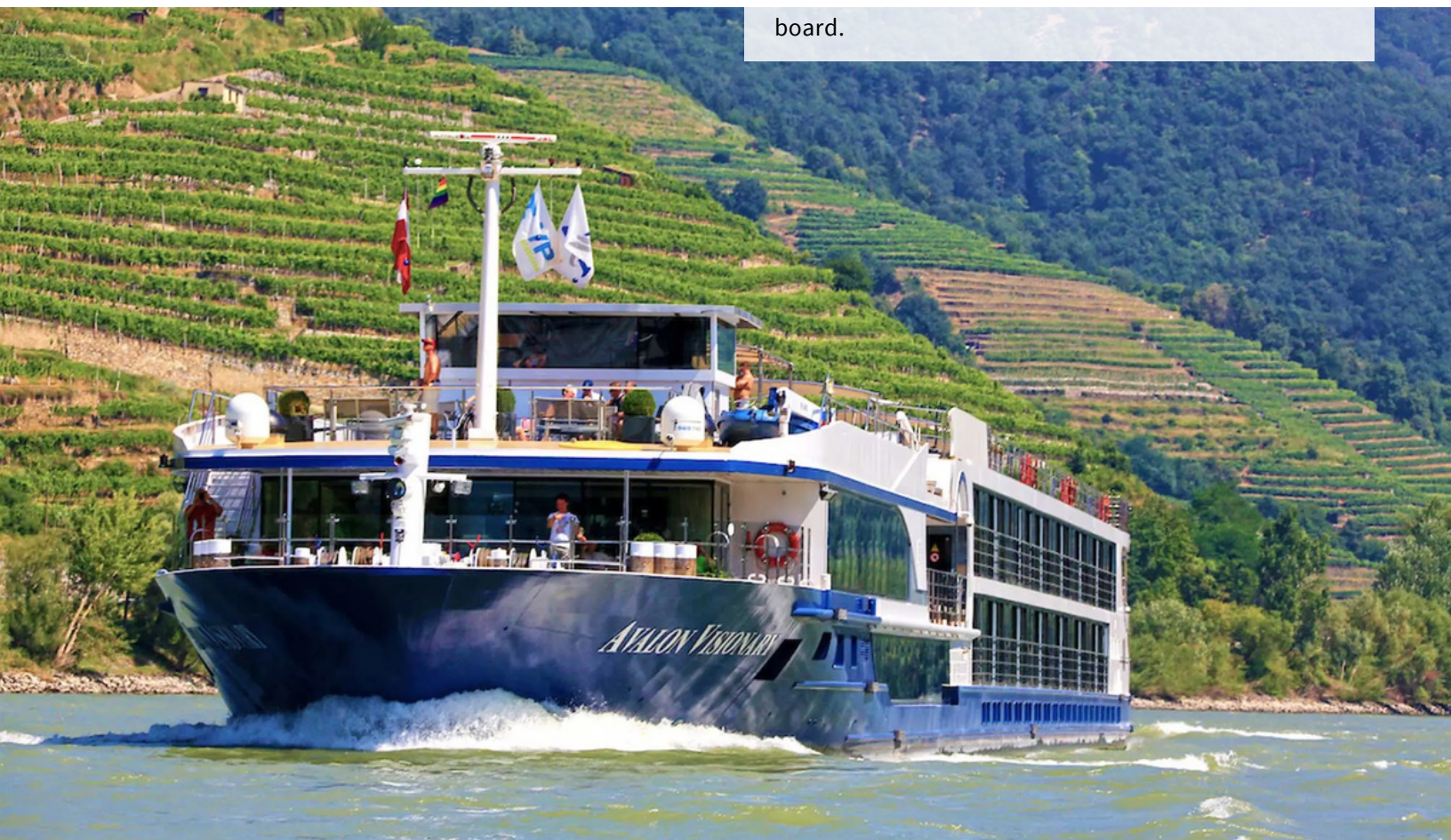
France is the world's most loved destination, the civilised home of couture and culture, the land of sophisticated towns and cities and incomparable countryside, dotted with pretty villages and tiny hamlets. The focus of fine dining and fine wines. And the land of five world famous rivers – the Seine, the Saône and the Rhône, the Rhine, the Loire and the Garonne-Gironde of Bordeaux.

A French river cruise means exploring one or more of these uniquely marvellous destinations, close up and very personally. Each day's cruise passes through fabulous scenery and moors up in the centre of an historic town, city or close by a world-famous vineyard.

2. They're intimate and luxurious

Compared to their huge sisters, river ships are modest in size and consequently intimately luxurious. Personal service, superb cuisine and great wines are signature features. All cabins are 'outside' cabins with constantly changing vistas passing by. There is a range of facilities, features, sizes and qualities including balconies, suites, marble-clad bathrooms and hotel quality beds. On the most luxurious cruises, personal service quality extends to having one's own butler to wait attendance.

On-board facilities may not extend to water parks, flumes or night clubs, but can often include swimming pools, spa and fitness suites, and always bars, restaurants, lounges and sun decks. English is the language spoken and perfectly understood on-board.



3. They're captivating and varied

It's quite possible to experience a river cruise in a completely laid-back 'slow travel' mode, just relaxing and watching the passing scene, reading a book (about France?), enjoying the dining and the wining and the being thoroughly looked-after. You don't have to 'join in' with anything or everything!

More active souls enjoy the daily programme of excursions and visits, wine-tastings and cookery demonstrations. City guides are professional, approachable and speak perfect English. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are all opportunities for some friendly socialising with like-minded fellow guests. In the evening, after dinner, live music is often featured, as are cocktail parties, quiz-nights and regionally themed entertainments.



4. They're technology and environmentally adept

The environmental aspect is, of course, a developing one but many river ships already have hybrid fuel/electric engines and other energy-saving installations. Aspiring eco warriors can ride the excellent bikes often provided to explore the locality, some electrically powered.

WiFi connections are a given and of course, TV and air conditioning.

5. They're price inclusive

French river cruises offer great vacation value. Meals, drinks (local wines), excursion tours, and events are all often fully included (depending on details and cruise line). Some cruise packages may also combine city break hotel accommodation before or after the cruise and travel between cruises, for example for two-week cruises that experience the delights of the Seine (to Paris) and the Rhone (to Avignon and Provence). A few cruise lines (Scenic, for example) expand all-inclusiveness into return flights, transfers, unlimited drinks, taxes and gratuities.



Magnificent France

BEAUTIFUL RIVERS

Each region of France has its own character, offering its own unique variety of treasures for you to discover – in cuisine, wine, architecture and culture – so it's almost impossible to rank one region over another.

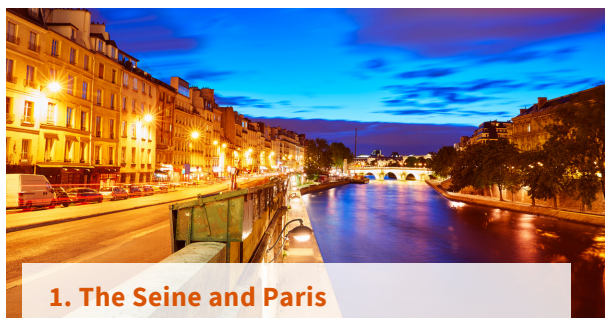
Add geography and climate to the mix and your choices expand to many blissful destinations to experience at different times of year, and come to know and love.

And of course six beautiful river regions to enjoy, each with its own special character . . .

- **Truly beautiful scenery that varies season by season and region by region**
- **Historic locations, medieval architecture and stunning châteaux**
- **Ancient, charming villages set amidst rolling vineyard hillsides**
- **Local cuisine, fresh produce and delicious wines**
- **During the long spring-summer-autumn season, sunny skies and comfortably warm temperatures**



We offer guidance about each region, its countryside, towns, villages, culture and rivers on our destinations page: [french-waterways.com](https://www.french-waterways.com)
Our experience is uniquely based on personally cruising more than 10,000km of the French waterways network.



1. The Seine and Paris

From the WW2 Normandy landing beaches, and the nearby pretty (once Viking) fishing port of Honfleur, to Monet's beloved garden at Giverny and the iconic sights and thrilling enchantments of Parisian city life itself, your cruise will immerse you in all these delights.



2. The Rhine and Alsace

To the east, board your river ship to sail the famous Rhine, bordering France and Germany. Be amazed by a journey that encompasses Swiss Basel, the Black Forest, historic and modern Strasbourg, medieval Heidelberg, the Rhine Gorge, Koblenz and Cologne. Discover how this region of chocolate box scenery has developed its unique character, a vibrant mix of two complementary cultures.



3 The Garonne and Gironde - Bordeaux and the Medoc

Justly famed, the ancient birthplace of Claret, Bordeaux, Graves, Sauternes, St Emilion and Medoc wines, the Garonne river flows to the magnificent culture-filled city of Bordeaux, joins the Dordogne river and becomes the Gironde estuary.



4 The Loire, Nantes, and Valley of the Châteaux

In the west, the wide Loire is cruised by a unique paddle-powered modern ship from just one cruise fleet. She sails to and from the historic sea and river port of Nantes, with visits to the world famous castles and châteaux of the Loire Valley.

5 & 6 The Saône and Rhône - Burgundy and Provence

Many cruises combine the vineyards of Burgundy and the lovely Saône river south to Lyon where it joins with the memorable Rhône river to the vineyards of Châteauneuf du Pape, Avignon and Van Gogh's dazzling sunflower fields of Provençal Arles.



Authentic pleasures

CHOOSING YOUR CRUISE

France is the world's most beloved home of fine wines, exceptional cuisine and haute couture. France is steeped in European history, architectural heritage and culture - but away from the well-known icons of Paris and large cities lies authentic French life, natural and captivating, a wealth of beauty and fascination. Wherever you journey on the waterways there's something mouth-watering to savour, views to marvel at and things to discover.

You can choose river cruises of varying length, from 4 nights to a number of weeks, sometimes with a stay in a lovely hotel to begin or end your cruise, or join two cruises in different regions together. These 'cruise and stay' packages are proving very popular indeed, and some cruises start with a pick-up from your doorstep!

Our expert River Cruise partners, Panache Cruises, know all the fleets, the ships, the rivers, the possibilities. They are friendly, professional and independent so you can rely on the assistance they provide. Just make an enquiry!



ALL THE FLEETS - A RANGE OF OPTIONS

We work with the top nine river fleets cruising in France. Each offers stylish cruising at differing levels of comfort and price points.

- **Amadeus**
- **AmaWaterways**
- **A-Rosa**
- **Avalon**
- **CroisiEurope**
- **Emerald Waterways**
- **Riviera Travel**
- **Scenic**
- **Uniworld**



A five-star river cruise with Amadeus, for example, will include the following:

- Generously sized staterooms and suites (most with balconies)
- Multi-course lunches and dinners included
- A selection of wines, beers and soft drinks included
- Personal infotainment system
- Individually controlled air conditioning
- On board entertainment included
- Choose add-on shore excursions in advance and at a discount
- Complimentary use of bicycles
- Complimentary state-of-the-art audio headsets for excursions
- Large sun deck with reclining chairs and pool and the Lido-Bar
- Panorama-Bar with an almost uninterrupted 360° view
- Fitness room open 24 hours
- Free Wi-Fi



In contrast, CroisiEurope four-star cruises have a distinctly French flavour, focussing on gastronomy and haute cuisine, and offering plenty of options when it comes to excursions. Choose between the Classic Package for traditional cultural and historical tours, or the Discovery Package that offers out of the ordinary experiences like tastings and gourmet tours, hikes and expeditions.



Your perfect cruise

ON BOARD AND ON SHORE

Who?

Your fellow travellers are invariably friendly, intelligent and cultured with a good spirit of adventure and a keen appreciation of what makes France, France. The vast majority are English-speaking but you won't be confined to an English, American or Australian bubble, you'll have plenty of stimulating interaction with French culture and French people.

Many guests are frequent inland cruisers and the exchange and comparison of cruise experiences is a regular part of lunch and dinner sociability. Some are independent singles or couples, others come together in small groups. Larger groups from historical, wine or gastronomy associations are welcomed and special rates can be negotiated (please enquire).



How much?

River cruises in France offer amazing value – all-inclusive at highly competitive prices. They should not be directly compared with thousand-passenger ocean cruises in the Caribbean or Mediterranean whose headline price might look cheaper. Small ship river cruises offer so much more vacation enjoyment and experience.

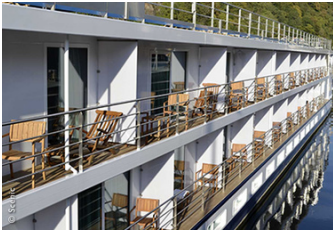
The nine cruise lines cruising the French inland waters offer a range of styles and qualities with matching price points. Uniworld, AmaWaterways and Scenic are usually rated as the most luxurious five and six star fleets, whilst CroisiEurope and Riviera offer fully-featured, comfortable and modern cruises at exceptional value for money.

Early booking offers, group prices and last-minute deals are often available. Talk to our river cruise partner, Panache Cruises, who keep their eyes firmly glued to market conditions and price offers and will find the best deal for you.



How?

Your cruise may start in one port and finish at another, or it may conduct a round trip, there and back. Some river cruise trips start by train and finish by coach; they tend to include a few nights in a land-based hotel, when you'll be able to take in the city sights and some nightlife.



This is a typical daily schedule – not every cruise is exactly like this. Many cruises are all-inclusive of the following but for some, excursions are an optional, additional cost, choice.



Generally speaking, river ships do not cruise through the night. After a peaceful and relaxing night's sleep moored-up, the day will start with breakfast taken in the ship's showpiece restaurant. Cooked favourites, omelettes, cereals, cheeses, fresh fruits are all available self-service buffet-style, with fruit juices, coffees and teas accompanying. A select few river ships have luxurious suites where a continental breakfast can be ordered, to be enjoyed in the comfort of your own room, or on your private balcony.



Depending on the daily itinerary you may be free before or after lunch to take your own time to stroll around, explore and enjoy the ship's facilities or simply to sit on deck in the sunshine, read or chat to fellow guests, and experience the river scenery as the ship smoothly cruises along between destinations.



Similarly, before or after lunch, you will be able to join a visit or excursion to the locality. This might involve just walking into town with your guide, or taking an air-conditioned private coach into the nearby city, to an historic cathedral or to a vineyard wine-tasting.

Lunch is also taken in the ship's restaurant, with table service featuring local cuisine and local produce and with drinks included. Cruising to the next port of call might then happen after lunch.



Fine dining on linen tablecloths using gleaming tableware and sparkling glasses is the highlight at the close of day. Naturally, cuisine is of the highest quality, with fine local wines featured.

Next steps

HOW DO I BOOK MY CRUISE?

A luxury river cruise in France is simply not the kind of vacation that's chosen solely on price, nor booked with a mouse-click. It takes planning and with such an excellent choice of ships, routes and excursions to choose from it's a good idea to take some expert advice.

Why choose us to help? Because, quite uniquely, we have over fifteen years' experience of cruising throughout France on our own boat and we know first-hand about the joys of cruising in France's idyllic countryside and the treasures to be discovered.

For river cruise vacations, we've chosen to work with an expert agent partner, Panache Cruises, to provide a selection that's just right for you.

Contact the connoisseurs at
Panache Cruises:

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(0044) 161 513 8208

Please mention French Waterways
when you get in touch.



At French Waterways, our expert advice and guidance is freely offered and always greatly appreciated, and when you're ready to plan your river cruise simply get in touch with our river cruise partner, Panache Cruises, and they'll work with you to match your requirements with prices and availability. They have specific expertise in luxury river cruising and decades of experience on board ultra-luxury river cruise lines around the world so you can trust them to secure your perfect river cruise.

We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you aboard in beautiful France!



French Waterways

Cruising Inspiration and Information