

# Take a leisurely cruise along scenic European rivers

BY NORMA AND WENDY SCHONWETTER  
CORRESPONDENTS

River cruises are an up and coming favorite among travelers to Europe and with good cause. Available from March through December, including Christmas cruises in Austria and Germany, they are an incredibly leisurely way to travel. European waterways are filled with beautiful and interesting sights. You can travel on the famous rivers of Europe – the Rhone, Seine, Rhine, Main Danube, Po, Elbe and Russia's rivers – the Volga, Svir, Neva. No need to worry about seasickness as the cruises are on rivers or canals, waterways that are very calm.

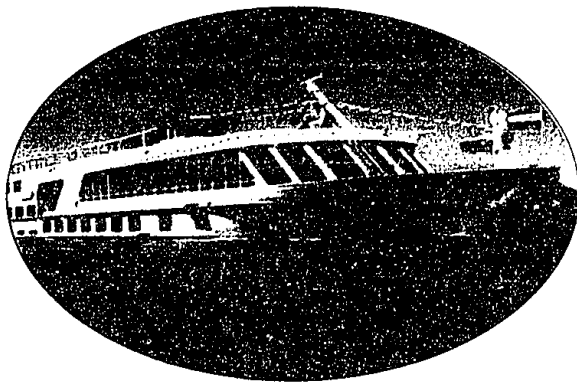
When you pull up to port, intriguing new places are just a stroll away. Imagine a vacation where you visit vibrant cities and quaint towns. A river cruise offers many advantages – no packing and unpacking, plenty to do on board, three gourmet meals a day, daily sightseeing tours, airfare and transfers. There are no hidden costs. It's a tremendous value.

Shipboard programs are educational – language lessons, history, cultural arts demonstrations – and entertaining – folk dancing, and concerts. Dining rooms are lined with panoramic windows with no assigned seating, so you can change your dining companions each day as you mingle and meet new friends.

Some river cruises include several days on land at a four or five star hotel, including full breakfast, in a major city, as part of the package or at a reasonable add-on cost before and/or after the river cruise.

Domestic add-on flights are usually \$100 to \$200 per person from Detroit.

All crew members and guides speak English. Excursions are well planned with knowledgeable guides, good buses and bus drivers who meet the ship at the dock. Sometimes it's possible to walk from the dock into the small towns in a few minutes.



## FLOATING HOTELS

There are a variety of ships and cruise lines. Amenities differ from ship to ship. Some have elevators, so don't eliminate this option if you have a physical disability. Some have fitness centers for the disciplined and hot tubs for the rest of us. All the ships have an all-glass enclosed, large lounge for viewing scenery in comfort, and have three to four decks.

This is the perfect way to travel if you are a single traveler. You'll never feel alone or have to be on your own. Seniors enjoy the slower, casual pace.

Since the beginning of 2002 twelve

European countries have converted their currencies into one new standard, the "euro." These are Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. This makes it easy to travel between countries in Europe, no conversion of currencies. Savvy travelers buy traveler's checks in euros before leaving the U.S. AAA is the most reliable source of euro traveler's checks.

River cruises offer an alternative to large cruise ships, where you can get lost among the throng of passengers. There are no decisions to make about "extras," because everything is included. No decisions about which restaurant

## PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Contact these leaders in River Cruising for brochures:

- Viking - (877) 668-4546, [www.vikingrivercruises.com](http://www.vikingrivercruises.com)
- Vantage - (800) 322-6677, [www.vantagetravel.com](http://www.vantagetravel.com)
- Uniworld - (800) 733-7820, [www.uniworld.com](http://www.uniworld.com)
- Grand Circle Travel - (800) 221-2610, [www.gct.com](http://www.gct.com)

to eat in, which shore excursions to select (at additional cost) or even what to wear for the special events. This is a marvelously relaxed and casual way to travel.

The waterways of Europe extend for hundreds of miles, making multi-country trips a delight! The Rhine River extends from the North Sea to its headwaters in Switzerland. The majestic Danube is the second longest river and connects eight countries from the Black Forest to the Black Sea. River cruises vary in the ports of call. The Main River, a tributary of the Rhine, twists and turns through parts of Central Europe. The Main-Danube Canal with 16 locks connects the Rhine to the Danube. Seeing Europe has never been easier. Try a river and give your suitcase a break.

Norma and Wendy Schonwetter are a mother-daughter travel writing team. Norma lives in Farmington Hills and Wendy in Seattle.


## TRAVEL BRIEFS

Send items for consideration in Going Places to Keely Kateski, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009, fax (248) 644-1314 or e-mail [kkateski@home.com](mailto:kkateski@home.com)

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**Expedition to Peru**

The Detroit Zoo is recruiting volunteers to participate in two ongoing conservation projects in the Peruvian rain forest. The first is April 25 to May 3 and May 9-16. The second expedition, a Herpetology Census to Manu, departs in mid-May. The cost is \$1200 per person, plus airfare. Includes room, board, and guides. Volunteers must be at least 21 and in good physical condition. Call (248) 398-0903, Ext. 3330 or e-mail [stjohn@detzoo.org](mailto:stjohn@detzoo.org).  
**Volunteers on the Adopt A School**  
expedition in April and May to Iquitos, Peru will help provide educational materials to over 3,000 children living in the Amazon region. Volunteers will also have opportunities to explore the rain forest. On the Herpetology Census

to Manu, volunteers will help survey reptile and amphibian populations. Volunteers will help photograph and identify all specimens found.  
**St. Louis**  
Valid through Dec. 31, the St. Louis Family Attractions Card makes a visit to St. Louis more affordable. The card offers more than \$500 in savings at many popular attractions. To get your free card, visit the St. Louis Convention & Visitors Commission's Web site [www.explorestlouis.com](http://www.explorestlouis.com) and click on the "Tickets and Deals" icon. The card is also available with copies of the Official St. Louis Visitors Guide which can be ordered online at [www.explorestlouis.com](http://www.explorestlouis.com) or call (800) 916-0040.



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