

WATER PERKS
River cruises have smaller groups than ocean cruises, a slower pace, and spectacular sights.



Old World, New Way

Is a European river cruise right for you? Take this personality test to find out

● **TRADERS HAVE** navigated Europe's rivers and intracoastal waterways for hundreds of years, but vacationers are increasingly enjoying these routes as well. Today's passengers can tour European cities by traveling through the shallow waters of France, Germany, Austria, and Hungary (among others). Think you're ready for a river cruise? Ask yourself:

ARE YOU A...

● **Hare or tortoise?** River cruises are ideal for those seeking slower-paced trips, says Nancy Yale, owner of Cruise Resort & World Travel in Fairfield, Connecticut. Since they have fewer passengers than cruise ships (the average is 100 to 300 people), you won't feel rushed along in large groups.

● **Spring breaker or mature vacationer?** River cruises typically appeal to those over 50 who've seen major tourist attractions and now want to delve into the countryside, says travel specialist Jamison Bachrach, owner of Wandering Puffin in Plymouth, Minnesota. When cruising a river, you probably won't have to contend with rowdy college kids tossing back shots at the bar. Another bonus: You won't experience motion sickness, because ships sail in shallow waters devoid of waves. But you should know that river cruises include fewer onboard amenities than ocean cruises, Yale says. River ships are floating hotels, not floating resorts, so don't expect midnight buffets, Broadway revues, or casinos.

● **Unathletic traveler or outdoor enthusiast?** Forget about spending your days inside playing bridge—river cruises can include excursions that involve lots of physical activity. Peter Deilmann Cruises (800-348-8287; deilmann-cruises.com) is known for theme trips that appeal to nature-loving types, from cyclists and gardeners to hikers and golfers. Just think about the bragging rights you'll gain when you tee off at Gouverneur Golf Resort, an 18-hole course built around the moated Château du Breuil in Monthieux, France. And both AMA Waterways (800-626-0126; amawaterways.com) and Uniworld (800-733-7820; uniworld.com) provide free bicycles you can grab for a quick countryside pedal.

● **Spendthrift or smart shopper?**

Excluding discounts and airfare, and depending on the ship and itinerary, expect to spend \$200 to \$300 per day. Though it may seem high, that price includes your stateroom, gourmet meals onboard, and shore excursions (which last from half a day to a full day). That rate may also include Wi-Fi service, lectures, and cultural activities such as tours or wine tastings in each port—so if you book a river cruise, you can end up with a nice package deal. Plus, you'll be treated to spectacular views that are included with your booking, since these cruises offer glimpses of multiple cities. Instead of miles of ocean between ports, you can see castles, monuments, pretty countryside, or charming villages as you sail.

● **Homebody or adventurer?** River cruises aren't for those who prefer the familiar; plan on lots of walking during trips and expect to immerse yourself in cultural shoreside activities. Many cruise lines, including Avalon Waterways (877-380-1535; avalonwaterways.com) and Uniworld, boast wine-tasting excursions in regions such as Burgundy and Provence. And a 14-night trip from Amsterdam to Budapest with Viking (877-668-4546; vikingrivercruises.com) may feature glass-blowing demonstrations and a visit to the site of the Nuremberg trials. Plus, one of Tauck World Discovery's (800-468-2825; tauck.com) Danube trips offers a private dinner in a Viennese palace. —*Laura Daily*



GRAPE DEALS
Many cruises offer local tastings.

2/3 VERTICAL AD