

A common theme

From literary breaks to musical extravaganzas, Laura French seeks out the best themed cruises for this year and next



Like many things, cruises come in all shapes and sizes – and from celebrity speakers to science lectures, history lessons to horticultural sessions, itineraries can be as much about the onboard experience as the destinations they visit.

That's never more apt than on a themed cruise, where guests get the chance to indulge their own interest in the company of like-minded souls, exploring some of the world's greatest treasures under the guidance of in-the-know specialists.

And whether it's gardening-themed itineraries or golfing holidays, music cruises or wellness trips, there's a wealth of choices – so where do you start when it comes to selling?

BEST FOR... WELLNESS

The cruise: Princess Cruises' Mind, Body & Soul

The details: Wellness has shot to the forefront after a tumultuous year, and Princess Cruises is capitalising on the trend with a special Mind, Body and Soul cruise departing August 21. The three-night, UK 'seacation' will travel around the coast from Southampton, with wellness talks from celebrity speakers including TV's Dr Ranj, *The Chase's* Jenny Ryan and The Reverend Kate Bottley from *Gogglebox* and *Songs of Praise*. The line is also running other themed cruises, including

a Culinary Stars itinerary in September with appearances from celebrity chefs John Torode and Michel Roux Jr along with *Bake Off* star Lottie Bedlow; and a comedy cruise featuring stand-up comedians, game shows and trivia.

Book it: From £309 for three nights, departing August 21.
princess.com

BEST FOR... BOOKWORMS

The cruise: Avalon Waterways' Storyteller series

The details: Direct literary types to Avalon's new Storyteller cruises – a series of six itineraries featuring famous authors and musicians who will entertain guests as they sail Europe's rivers next year. Highlights include a trip along the Danube with *Gone Girl* author Gillian Flynn, a cruise along the Seine with *Sex and the City* author Candace Bushnell, and a sailing along the Rhine with Diana Gabaldon, author of *Outlander*. "On each sailing, fans of our celebrity hosts will be privy to special gatherings," says chief executive Giles Hawke. "They range from book signings to concerts and Q&A sessions, as well as opportunities to interact with their host, while on the ship or in port." ➤



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *AmaKristina* on the Rhine; Pinnacle Point golf course, South Africa; Princess Cruises' Mind, Body & Soul sailing; National Symphony Orchestra on Cunard's *Queen Mary 2*

PICTURE: Paul Nordmann



Book it: From £3,090 for the Come Sail Away with Gillian Flynn itinerary, departing December 14, 2022, cruise only. avalonwaterways.co.uk

BEST FOR... FAMILY HISTORY

The cruise: AmaWaterways' Heritage on the River itineraries
The details: If clients have ever wondered what the lives of their ancestors might have been like, AmaWaterways' new family heritage cruises – created in partnership with family history specialist Ancestry – might be just the ticket. On a series of special departures, guests will have the chance to trace their forebears' footsteps, with pre-cruise and onboard private consultations delving into their family background, presentations exploring what their relatives' lives would have been like and excursions led by an expert genealogist, including visits to ancestral homes. The first

Heritage on the River cruise will sail along the Rhine from Amsterdam to Switzerland via Belgium, Germany and France from July 30, 2022.

Book it: From £4,315 for seven nights, cruise only. amawaterways.co.uk

BEST FOR... GOLFERS

The cruise: Azamara's 2022 South African Golf Cruise with PerryGolf
The details: Golfers can take to the water with Azamara's series of sporty cruises in partnership with specialist PerryGolf, taking guests to some of the world's leading hotspots – from Ireland to Scotland, the Middle East to the Med. But for those looking to add in an extra helping of adventure, suggest the line's South Africa trip from Cape Town to Durban. The 11-night voyage combines golfing highlights with historic sights, horse rides and other activities, then adds optional extras such as a pre-cruise safari in Kruger National Park for the ultimate

adventure-meets-golfing holiday.
Book it: From £2,372 cruise only. azamara.co.uk

BEST FOR... MUSIC LOVERS

The cruise: Cunard's National Symphony Orchestra Voyage
The details: Cunard is bringing back its themed transatlantic cruises in 2022, including its first Art & Design Week, a Literature Festival at Sea and a sailing dedicated to all things theatre in partnership with the Olivier Awards. But for those with a penchant for classical music, suggest the National Symphony Orchestra Voyage. Led by famous conductor Anthony Inglis, the seven-night cruise promises daily performances ranging from all-American songs to British classics as the ship sails from New York to Southampton on a foot-tapping voyage to remember.
Book it: From £949, departing October 25, 2022, cruise only. cunard.com

Rhine in Flames: The annual Rhine in Flames celebration sees Germany's riverside villages explode with colour between May and September, as Bengal lights shine from the turrets and illuminated ships sail past in a flotilla. A-Rosa Cruises will be joining the latter on a special seven-night voyage round-trip from Cologne as well as witnessing the colourful celebrations in St Goar, with prices from £1,799 including return flights on September 11, 2022.

Floriade Expo: Held every 10 years, the 2022 Floriade spectacle will be luring green-fingered types to the Dutch city of Almere with exhibitions focusing on sustainability. Scenic will be visiting on a special 10-day voyage from Amsterdam to Cologne, Koblenz and beyond, with prices from £3,865, departing August 22, 2022.

Halloween on the High Seas: Disney knows how to celebrate a holiday and its Halloween cruises will be no exception in 2022, with characters sporting their most festive attire at a special party plus themed food, drinks and decor taking over the ship. The cruises will run from mid-September to the end of October and take in the Baja Peninsula, Bermuda, Canada and beyond.