

Ahead of the *curve*

For clients who've been there, done that, show there's much more to discover on a second sailing, says Jeannine Williamson

The waterways of Europe are not a one-trick pony. Even if clients have previously drifted down the Danube or relaxed on the Rhine, these endlessly interesting regions always have something new to explore for those who return to take a closer look.

And for travellers who don't fancy retracing their steps, there are longer sailings or cruise-and-stay adventures that give them a way to go farther and discover more of the destination's secrets along the way.

Take a look at these suggestions for how to send clients for a second sailing that offers all the excitement of their first visit.

IF THEY'VE DONE THE DANUBE... TRY THE LOWER DANUBE

The Danube is a river of two halves. While the majority of cruises sail in the popular stretch around Vienna and Budapest, the lesser-known Lower Danube is an enticing option for a return visit. From Slovakia, the river continues its journey through Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania towards the nature-rich wetland delta and the Black Sea.

A sailing highlight is the dramatic Iron Gates gorge, a once-turbulent stretch of water that's now tamed by locks and overlooked by a giant rock carving of ancient king Decebalus. On Travelmarvel's cruise from Budapest to →

REPEAT RIVER CRUISERS



FROM LEFT: Bran Castle, Romania, one of Travelmarvel's excursions; Rhine in Flames Festival, Germany
PREVIOUS PAGE: Danube Gorges, Romania PICTURES: Shutterstock/ecstk22, SSKH-Pictures, Colin Stan

Bucharest, memorable excursions include a trip to Bran Castle in Transylvania, easily recognisable as the inspiration for Dracula's castle, and a visit to a Serbian family farm to stroll through fruit orchards and discover how *slivovitz*, the fiery local plum brandy, is made.

Book it: A 10-night Legends of the Balkans with Transylvania sailing on a Travelmarvel contemporary ship is priced from £2,745, departing on July 21, including flights.

aptouring.com

IF THEY'VE ROLLED DOWN THE RHINE... TRY THE RHINE IN FLAMES FESTIVAL

A spectacular annual highlight on the Rhine is the dazzling Rhine in Flames event. Over five summer weekends, towns and villages lining the river are lit up by fireworks and flares that illuminate the sky, reflect off the water and provide a colourful backdrop to the castles and historic buildings that edge its banks. The tradition started in Koblenz in 1756; when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert visited 90 years later, they said they were the best fireworks they'd ever seen.

Passengers on A-Rosa River Cruises' special sailing from Cologne to Bonn will get the best seat in the house when they visit the charming

ask the expert



JONATHAN DAVIES
head of sales, Scenic Group

"We offer a broad selection of excursions that provide deep immersion into every destination – this is a big drawcard when securing repeat cruisers. There's everything from extended time in port to speciality sailings and our Freechoice and Enrich programmes. On the Rhône Bliss: Beaujolais Harvest Journey sailing, guests meet vintners to learn first-hand how the famed Beaujolais wine is produced, while on the Windmills, Tulips and Belgian Delights itinerary, guests get after-hours access to the digital art installation Fabrique des Lumières in Amsterdam."

wine-making village of Rudesheim to coincide with the magical display. When darkness falls, A-Rosa Brava will join a flotilla of more than 50 ships sailing as part of the celebrations and culminating with the music-accompanied firework extravaganza.

Book it: A seven-night Rhine in Flames cruise on A-Rosa Brava costs from £2,358, departing on June 29, including flights. newmarketholidays.co.uk

IF THEY RELISHED THE RHONE... RAISE A GLASS TO THE WINE HARVEST

It would be hard to do a sailing along France's Rhône and Saône rivers without tickling the taste buds with the region's delectable dining and vintage wines. So if clients want even more reasons to enjoy these epicurean delights, try a cruise that celebrates the annual wine harvest.

These rivers run through some of the most famous French wine-growing regions and Scenic has an itinerary from Arles to Lyon coinciding with the Beaujolais harvest season.

After a drive through the rolling hills of the Beaujolais wine region, there's an exclusive visit to meet a local vintner to learn about the significance of the harvest season and the wine-making process. Naturally, this is [➔](#)

REPEAT RIVER CRUISERS



FROM LEFT: Tombs of Pharaohs, Egypt; Claude Monet's house in Giverny, France
PICTURES: Shutterstock/Sergii Figurnyi, Alex_Mastro

followed by sampling some of the region's best wines, each with its own story and connection to the harvest. Other tastings take in the renowned Châteauneuf-du-Pape region.

Book it: The seven-night Rhône Bliss: Beaujolais Harvest Journey on a modern Scenic 'space-ship' costs from £2,945, departing August 29, including flights. scenic.co.uk

IF THEY'VE NAVIGATED THE NILE... ADD AN EFFORTLESS LAND STAY

The Nile remains a beguiling river cruise destination. The classic seven-day sailing between Luxor and Aswan is filled with wonders such as the Valley of the Kings, where pharaohs – most notably the 'boy king' Tutankhamun – once lay entombed.

But a longer journey can take in more sites in the company of an expert Egyptologist or tag on an extension on land. Titan Travel has a river sailing that offers interesting extras, including a traditional one-sailed felucca journey, along with a two-centre land stay. In Cairo, there's a trip to the Pyramids and a chance to visit the Grand Egyptian Museum, which opened last year. Moving to the coast, Alexandria is rich in cultural treasures, including a Roman amphitheatre and ornate centuries-old catacombs.

Book it: Titan Travel's 12-day Cairo, Alexandria and a Nile Cruise starts from £2,695 departing on August 28, including flights, cruise on *Nile Plaza* and home pick-up service. titantravel.co.uk

IF THEY'VE SEEN THE SEINE... SAVOUR A GASTRONOMIC CRUISE

Enjoy a taste of Normandy on a mouth-watering food-themed sailing in a region famed for its apples – some 750 varieties – and dairy produce. Riviera Travel's round-trip Paris cruise begins with a visit to a cider farm to sample apple-based drinks and local specialities. Other days take in a historic crêperie in the coastal town of Honfleur, cider and regional cheese in Vernon's elegant Château de Bizy, and melt-in-the-mouth macarons in Paris.

The culinary theme continues on board with French menus, a champagne reception and cookery demonstration to learn how to make Normandy apple dessert *tarte tatin*. The cruise also includes sightseeing tours of Claude Monet's house and garden at Giverny and the poignant D-Day Landing beaches in Normandy.

Book it: A seven-night Gastronomy of the Seine River Cruise on *Jane Austen* costs from £2,799, departing on August 1, including flights or rail travel. rivieratravel.co.uk ●

BEST OF THE REST

● **AmaWaterways** is launching all-new Celebration of Wellness River Cruises, with fitness classes, active excursions and healthy cuisine. The activities are available on the Melodies of the Danube cruise, departing August 2, and Paris & Normandy sailing, departing August 9. amawaterways.co.uk

● **Uniwold** offers immersive Jewish history cruises – visiting Holocaust memorials, museums and wartime sites – on selected Delightful Danube and Remarkable Rhine & Historic Holland sailings. uniworld.com

● **Tauck's** nine-night Autumn Along the Rhine: Munich's Oktoberfest sailings, departing September 16 and 23, 2026, coincide with Germany's best-known beer festival and include reserved seating in one of Munich's brewery tents and a beer-pairing lunch in Heidelberg. tauck.co.uk