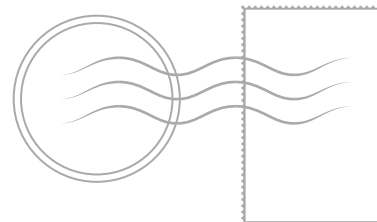


# POSTCARD

## Budapest



Erica Bush swaps new ship *Avalon Envision* for a canoe and a paddle on one of the line's Active & Discovery excursions

We're just a couple of hours' sailing out of the bustling city of Budapest, yet all I hear is birdsong as I glide down the River Danube in a bright red canoe. Life is lived at a much slower pace in Visegrád, the small castle town 25 miles north of Hungary's capital, but the region's sleepy nature is far from its only draw. Visegrád's volcanic hills, pristine valleys and commanding position on Europe's second-largest river also make it a fantastic playground for big kids.

River cruise line Avalon Waterways agrees, which is why its Active & Discovery itineraries capitalise on the town's storied history and undulating landscapes. Passengers can hike through the Danube-Ipoly National Park; partake in a knights' tournament at Visegrád's High Castle; or, like me, take to the water on the Danube Bend.

Leaving Avalon's sleek river ship for a considerably wobblier vessel, we head downstream in canoes that carry five people along the narrower Szentendre branch – a passage too small for large ships to navigate. Such seclusion means we're the only souls making tracks on the sun-dappled water, save for a few swans and teal.

Large weeping willows line the river's edge, their yellow-green branchlets populated with wildlife and dipping tentatively into the dull-grey water below. Lush, rolling hills dotted with tiny, thatched-roofed houses flank the river on either side, its banks sparsely populated with lone locals attempting to fish.

Of course, not all of our time is spent floating. Our canoeing excursion takes in a respectable nine miles and spans three (leisurely) hours – perfect for active clients wishing to work up a sweat away from the ship.

As Visegrád's castle grows smaller behind us, my boatmates and I quickly settle into a steady rhythm, simultaneously scooping our oars deep into the water to propel ourselves forward. Towards the end of our excursion, blue skies give way to grey and fat droplets of rain begin to fall – but our spirits aren't dampened. We return to the ship feeling accomplished and exhausted; luckily, afternoon tea has just been served. **TW**



### BOOK IT

Active & Discovery on the Danube is offered on *Avalon Impression* (in 2019) and *Avalon Illumination* (2020). A nine-day Active & Discovery on the Danube (westbound) cruise on *Avalon Impression* from Budapest to Linz departing October 28, 2019, starts from £1,387 per person cruise-only. [avaloncruises.co.uk](http://avaloncruises.co.uk)



FROM TOP: Canoeing on the River Danube; Visegrád's High Castle **PICTURE:** Shutterstock