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BEST



## RIVER CRUISES FOR 2021

With many clients having switched their sailings to 2021, availability is already tight. **Laura French** lines up some to sell before it's too late

**R**iver cruising has led the way for the sector this year as a handful of river lines were the first to restart their operations, setting sail over the summer along some of Europe's most popular waterways.

As lockdowns come back into force across the continent, those lines have been forced to hit pause once again, but there are still plenty of positives to focus on. Cruise customers have seen how safety protocols can be put in place without diminishing the onboard experience, and with Clia's industry-wide framework being rolled out, river cruising could, once again, be at the forefront of the sector's recovery in 2021. Here's our pick of the itineraries.



### DOURO DELIGHTS: APT

Portugal's 'river of gold' has seen a boom in demand in recent years and it's not hard to see why, with its verdant vineyards, historic villages, age-old port houses and crumbling castles. APT has a nine-day trip taking in the highlights, including Porto, Salamanca and the wine towns of Régua, Pinhao and Barca d'Alva. Activities include an exclusive cocktail reception and fado performance at the Palacio da Bolsa (pictured) in Porto. APT says availability is limited, so encourage clients to book soon.

**Book it:** From £3,795 per person, including all meals and drinks and based on two sharing, including flights from the UK on May 11, 2021. [aptouring.co.uk](http://aptouring.co.uk)



### VENICE & NORTHERN ITALY: UNIWORLD

Uniworld is set to debut its new Super Ship, *La Venezia* (pictured), in March on an eight-day trip exploring Venice and beyond. Experiences include a ride on a traditional *bragozzo* fishing boat in the port town of Chioggia; an exclusive pasta-making class in Bologna; and a basilica tour with an art historian on the Venetian island of Torcello. But the cherry on the cake has to be the private, after-hours lighting ceremony inside the iconic St Mark's Basilica, where guests will have this marbled feat to themselves for the evening.

**Book it:** From around £1,999 per person, based on double occupancy and including all meals, unlimited drinks and 'choice is yours' excursions and transfers, departing March 28, 2021. [uniworld.com](http://uniworld.com)

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### MAGNIFICENT MEKONG: VIKING

For clients after cultural immersion a little farther afield, the Mekong (pictured) deserves a spot on the list – and among the standouts to book for next year is this 15-day itinerary on Viking's new ship *Saigon*, scheduled to debut on August 30. Hanoi, Angkor Wat, Ho Chi Minh City and Phnom Penh are all on the agenda, but the real delights come in the Mekong Delta, where guests take sampan rides to explore local markets, traditional workshops, floating farms and the French colonial city of Sa Déc, the setting for the house of Huynh Thuy Le, the protagonist of Marguerite Duras's controversial novel *The Lover*.

**Book it:** From £5,595 per person, including all meals, excursions and flights from the UK. Viking is offering savings of £750 per person for river cruises booked before December 31.

[vikingrivercruises.co.uk](http://vikingrivercruises.co.uk)



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### CRUISING THE DANUBE: A-ROSA

If your clients love their history, suggest this eight-day themed cruise in partnership with Andante Travels, which meanders from the olde-worlde market town of Engelhartzell in Upper Austria through Vienna, Budapest, Bratislava, Melk (pictured) and the Wachau Valley, in the company of an expert archaeology guide. Guests will enjoy exclusive private excursions as they learn about the stories that have shaped the region, with highlights including a museum that houses a 22,000-year-old figurine, an opulent palace home to master artworks, and Devin Castle, one of the oldest forts in Slovakia.

**Book it:** From £2,745 per person including all meals, guide lecturer, excursions, transfers and flights from London to Munich, departing April 18 and October 10, 2021. [andantetravels.com](http://andantetravels.com)





# DESTINATIONS

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## PERUVIAN AMAZON: AVALON WATERWAYS

For a once-in-a-lifetime adventure worth booking well ahead, few places are quite as memorable as the Amazon. Avalon Waterways has an 11-day trip pairing land tours of Lima, Cusco, the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu (pictured) with a three-night cruise along the river, where howler monkeys and sloths hide in the trees and parrots and macaws soar overhead. Experiences include a visit to an Amazonian community, a night safari to spot caimans and the chance to swim with pink dolphins, with piranha fishing, dinghy rides and Peruvian cooking classes on offer too.

**Book it:** From £4,159 per person, based on two sharing, from November 7, 2021, including most meals, domestic flights and guided tours. International flights extra.  
[avalonwaterways.co.uk](http://avalonwaterways.co.uk)

ASK THE  
expert

LUCIA ROWE

managing director, A-Rosa

"We've been really encouraged by the number of rebookings we've had for 2021 as customers choose to transfer to next year rather than miss out. We are seeing the greatest demand for the second half of the year, so much so that some summer departures on our most popular rivers are already sold out. This summer, we were one of the few river cruise lines to set sail again on Europe's rivers. We had to adapt areas of our onboard concept, but our guest feedback has been hugely positive. One trend that we have noticed is that we are attracting significantly more guests who have ocean-going experience. In the past, the ocean and river markets have been quite separate, but this overlap could provide a new opportunity for agents. Looking to 2021, we expect the Douro and the southern Rhine to be key performers. Demand is always high for the Douro, as cruises in this region are restricted to minimise environmental impact, and Germany grew in popularity this summer as it was deemed a safer option. We are already seeing signs that this will continue into 2021."



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## RHINE AND MOSELLE: EMERALD WATERWAYS

With its cobbled old cities, fairytale castles and lush, verdant landscapes, the Rhine has become something of a river favourite – and the Moselle is following hot on its heels, thanks to a reputation for world-class wineries and a smattering of picture-book villages. Emerald Waterways combines them on an eight-day jaunt from Frankfurt to Bernkastel (pictured), throwing in extras such as wine tasting in Bernkastel, a bike tour along the Moselle and an evening visit to Cochem Castle, with Roman ruins, ancient spa towns and rolling vineyards aplenty along the way.

**Book it:** From £2,045 per person, including all meals and selected drinks, excursions, transfers and flights, departing July 21, 2021.  
[emeraldwaterways.co.uk](http://emeraldwaterways.co.uk)







### BURGUNDY AND PROVENÇE: AMAWATERWAYS

Calling all wine lovers: AmaWaterways has a new, eight-day wine-themed itinerary for 2021, taking passengers on the little-known Saone before joining the Rhone for tipples in some of southern France's famous wine regions. Stops include Chalon, Macon, Beaujolais, Cornas and Provence, with tastings in every region and a wine host on board throughout the voyage to provide expert insight. Other excursions include food tours in Avignon and Lyon, and a trip to a French cookery school in Valence to get the taste buds tingling a little more.

**Book it:** From £3,104 per person cruise-only, sailing from Chalon-sur-Saône to Arles, including a saving of £200 per person and transfers, based on travel between July 29 and August 5, 2021.

[amawaterways.co.uk](http://amawaterways.co.uk)

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### WONDERS OF THE NILE: RIVIERA TRAVEL

Egypt is the stuff of dreams for history lovers and there's nothing so magical as exploring its ancient remnants from Africa's most legendary river. Riviera Travel has a 15-day voyage exploring the key sights, from the Great Pyramids of Giza to once-powerful ancient cities, hieroglyph-filled temples to tombs dedicated to entire dynasties of pharaohs. Among the highlights are Luxor, where a cluster of ornate stone colonnades mark out the former capital, and Karnak, whose origins date back to 2000BC. But the main event has to be the iconic Valley of the Kings and the many ancient sites that surround it (*pictured*), home to the elaborate tombs of pharaohs and their treasures, including the illustrious Tutankhamun.

**Book it:** From £3,640 per person including all meals, transfers, excursions and flights.  
[rivieratravel.co.uk](http://rivieratravel.co.uk)



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