

Rise & wine

Come rain, shine or low water – nothing can stop a cruise through Germany's renowned wine regions, discovers Jill Sayles

“Do you all like the Beatles?” the cruise director jokingly asks. “Because we’re going on a magical mystery tour!”

It was the second day of Riviera Travel’s Rhine, Strasbourg and Heidelberg cruise, an eight-day wine-themed journey on board river vessel *Emily Brontë*, and it had become apparent upon boarding the previous evening – not in Cologne as scheduled, but in nearby Monheim, due to low water levels on the Rhine affecting mooring spots – that changes to the planned itinerary would be required.

Despite this, cruise company Scylla and Riviera Travel had quickly managed

to work out an alternative route that would shift from the Rhine to the Moselle River. The *Emily Brontë* had been able to reach its first stop on the original route, the city of Koblenz, which is set on the banks of the Rhine at the point where it’s joined by the Moselle.

From there, navigation continued along the Moselle to picturesque historical towns including Traben-Trarbach, Cochem and Trier.

Later in the week, however, and after some rain had fallen, it was possible to cover parts of the planned Rhine itinerary, such as Boppard on the beautiful Rhine Gorge. Coach trips were also arranged for those people who



As part of the trip, two Masters of Wine offered their expertise on the region’s produce

still wanted to visit Rudesheim and Heidelberg, some of the highlights of the original trip.

WINE SELLER

Back on board, the changes did not detract from another highlight of the cruise – wine.

As part of the trip, husband-and-wife team Peter Richards

and Susie Barrie – both Masters of Wine, a recognised qualification regarded by the wine industry as one of the highest standards of professional knowledge – joined the ship for a day, not only to offer their expertise on the produce of the region, but also for a wine-tasting session and fun quiz.

The pair previously presented wine slots on BBC One’s *Saturday Kitchen* for 10 years, and have now collaborated with Riviera Travel to create a wine partnership on a selection of river cruise departures in Europe this year. The partnership forms an element of a wider strategy to invest in the cultural offering provided for cruise customers.



The Moselle at Leiwen

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While on board, Richards explains why he and Barrie had been drawn to get involved.

"It was lovely to talk to Riviera Travel about this because they wanted to do exciting, ambitious things on the wine front," he says.

"Ultimately, you're travelling through some of the most amazing wine territory and it makes sense to join that up with what's happening on board. We felt it was a great project to be part of - to bring wine to life and maximise people's enjoyment of it

while on the trip, without it being too invasive."

The Rhine and Moselle regions are famous for producing some of the world's best rieslings and sparkling white wines, known as sekt. Richards said the pinot noir grape is also creating excitement among German wine-makers at the moment "as the world warms up", meaning the grapes are ripening better to give a fuller flavour.

Wines tasted during his presentation included a Herzog von Nassau

riesling sekt, a medium-dry riesling from Rudesheim and a red from the Allendorf winery. The onboard wine menu features local wines from the various regions the ship travels through, as well as from other parts of the world.

SCENE SETTER

As everybody enjoyed the crisp tasting wines, the *Emily Brontë* passed row upon row of beautiful vineyards. The rich foliage combined with beating sunshine to reflect a

brilliant green on the surface of the Moselle.

Throw in picturesque towns and villages that are rich in wine-producing culture, and marry these with views of castles - some ruinous, others as magnificent as when they were built - the churches with onion-shaped domes, half-timbered houses, numerous clock and bell towers, and the scenery along the way did not disappoint. In fact, the detour to the Moselle actually made the trip



LEFT:
Cochem

TOP:
Peter Richards
and Susie Barrie,
Masters of Wine



PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK; CATH LOWE PHOTOGRAPHY; BARRINGTON COOMBS PHOTOGRAPHY

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➔ more wine-centric. An addition to the journey was a stop at the pretty medieval town of Traben-Trarbach. It's in what was once one of Europe's main wine-producing regions, and a local producer came on board to offer guests a pre-lunch tasting.

Similarly, during an excursion to Cochem, with its impressive Reichsburg Castle, guests were able to explore the town, one of the most prominent places for wine production in the Moselle Valley.

The combination of the comfortable ship, quality food and wine, and excursions to interesting towns and villages with a long history of wine-making, made for a culturally rich trip.

When summing up why wine and river cruises go so well together, Richards explains: "You just need to look out of the window - it's there. These are some of the most stunning and historic scenes in Europe and a lot of it is colonised by the vine.

"You see these vineyards and you think, how does this work, and what kind of wine does this make? These are amazing spectacles and it's nice to make the connection.

"Instead of gliding past, which can be quite a passive experience, you can bring it on board." **rw**

Tried & Tested

EMILY BRONTË

Emily Brontë, built in 2017, is an all-suite, five-star ship, accommodating 169 passengers in 88 suites. All of the suites have a river view and double or twin beds, an en-suite bathroom and shower, a sitting area, flatscreen TV and minibar.

Decor in the suites is bright, modern and airy, with a cream and beige colour scheme and dark wood furnishings. The vessel operates eight cruises for Riviera Travel with an international crew of 44.

There are three passenger decks. The deluxe balcony suites on the upper deck feature a floor-to-ceiling sliding glass window and a balcony; the superior suites on the upper and middle decks have a sliding window and a French balcony; while the lower deck has smaller fixed windows. Some suites are available for sole occupancy with no supplement, and all are accessed by a lift



or staircase. They have UK plug sockets and coffee and tea-making facilities.

The Main Restaurant on the middle deck has panoramic windows. It serves buffet breakfasts, lunches and four-course dinners. The Bistro on the upper deck has outdoor seating and becomes the Chef's Restaurant in the evenings, while the Panorama Lounge on the upper deck has a bar in the evenings and an early risers' breakfast. Alcohol is available at extra charge throughout the ship.

The Sun Deck has shaded seating areas and a small plunge pool. There's complimentary onboard Wi-Fi and a laundry service, plus a small gym and hairdresser on the lower deck.

Tested by Jill Sayles

RIVERS OF THE WORLD

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