

Photo Anne Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)

Savor life . . . make memories . . . Visit Dream Destinations!



**Your journey begins here!**

# Europe River Cruise Company Comparisons 2020-21

By Hank Schrader  
Accredited Cruise Counselor  
Europe River Cruise Expert  
European Destination Specialist

# Overview

- All river cruises are very good values & special trips.
- There is no official rankings of river cruise lines & many have won awards from various travel organizations.
- These are my personal ratings & should be considered as such.
- My ratings are based on sailing 18 river cruises; selling river cruises to clients; personal research & attending numerous webinars by these individual companies; earning specialist designations from individual river cruise companies; and ratings from The Berlitz River Cruising in Europe & the USA Guide.

# Disclaimer

- The river cruise scene is constantly changing.
- I have tried to provide accurate information but changes happen rapidly.
- Also, companies change policies.
- Every effort has been made to communicate correct information. We apologize for any errors, omissions, but assume no liability should they occur.

# 8 Main River Cruise Companies for the US Market

- **AMAWaterways**—“Leading the Way in River Cruising”
- **Avalon**-- “Comfortably upscale... more-spacious-than-average-cabins.”
- **Crystal**—” All the hallmarks of the legendary Crystal experience “
- **Emerald**—sometimes refers to itself as the next generation of river cruising

## 8 Main River Cruise Companies for the US Market (cont.)

- **Scenic** “5-star, all-inclusive luxury river cruises throughout Europe and Asia”
- **Tauck**—“ Never Settle for Ordinary”
- **Uniworld**-- “The world's only authentic boutique cruise line”
- **Viking**– “Exploring the world in comfort”



AMAWATERWAYS™

LEADING THE WAY IN RIVER CRUISING

# AMAWATERWAYS Overview

**AMAWATERWAY'S** dream is to provide the most exceptional river cruise experience possible. They believe they achieve this by:

- Providing custom-designed ships
- Providing the Premium Experience
- Being the only River Cruise Line inducted into the Chaînes Des Rôtisseurs, the oldest & largest food & wine society in the world—most observers feel they have the best food & wine in Europe River Cruising
- Small group Excursions led by expert local guides
- Providing Complimentary Limited Edition Tours
- Complimentary Bicycles & guided bicycle excursions

# AmaWaterways AmaCerto

Photo Anne Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)





AVALON

WATERWAYS®

---

Legendary river cruises. Inspired design.™

# Avalon Overview

**Avalon** has two goals in their approach to river cruising.

- First, they believe their clients deserve more choices and they follow through with a long list of options that can be added for an extra fee.
- Second, they want to be known as the “floating room with a view” —most cabins have floor to ceiling windows that open up.

# Avalon Impression

Photo Anne Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)





**CRYSTAL**  
**RIVER CRUISES™**

# Crystal Overview

- All the hallmarks of the legendary Crystal experience to include:
- Six star service
- Superior dining
- The largest suites in river cruising aboard an exquisite new class of river vessels
- Delightful shore adventures amid expertly curated-itineraries, taking you to the heart of world-renowned European cities in world-class luxury.



# Crystal Bach

Photo Crystal River Cruises





**EMERALD**

**WATERWAYS**

# Emerald Waterways

- Emerald Waterways features include:
- complimentary wine, beer & soft drinks at lunch and dinner; all on board meals; balcony cabins on the upper 2 decks; bikes (without electronic assisted feature); & complimentary Wi-Fi.
- As with most river cruise lines, there are included tours in every sailing.
- They also have an EmeraldPLUS no addition cost tours to enhance the standard offerings. There are also Discover More tour options that cost extra and require a minimum number of passengers.
- Gratuities are included in the basic cruise fare.
- The long ships (135 meters or 443 feet) carry 182 passengers.



# Emerald Sun

Photo Anne Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)



**SCENIC**  **CRUISES**  
*The Ultimate River Cruising Experience*

# Scenic Overview

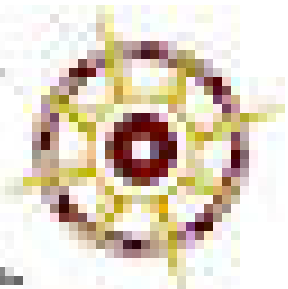
- Scenic cruise line features:
- your own butler (services vary by stateroom category)
- complimentary beverages all day, every day; six dining options
- the Tailormade GPS device
- balcony suites on the 2 upper decks
- electronically assisted bikes
- complimentary Wi-Fi; laundry and airport transfers.
- There are no extra charges for tours or gratuities but massages and the hairdresser are extra charges.
- The long ships (135 meters or 443 feet) carry 167 passengers.

# Scenic Opal

Photo Anne Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)



TAUCK



RIVER CRUISING

# Tauk River Cruise Overview

## **4 Cornerstones of Tauk River Cruising**

- Uncommon Access to included shore excursions
- All-inclusive Value
- Personalized Cruising from 4 on-board Tauk tour staff
- Intimate Club-like atmosphere



# Tauck Treasures

Photo Hank Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)





UNIWORLD®

BOUTIQUE RIVER CRUISE COLLECTION®



# Uniworld Overview

**Uniworld** is the world's only authentic boutique river cruise line

- All-inclusive
- one-of-a-kind ships—operates 13 in Europe-- each is different
- stylish décor
- thoughtful personal touches
- welcoming ambiance
- superb cuisine
- gracious service

# Uniworld River Royale

Photo Anne Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)



# U by Uniworld

- Uniworld has added a new brand aimed at younger cruisers—it is called U by Uniworld.
- There are 2 riverships—the A and the B—and are painted all black.
- Originally there were age limits—21-45 but these have been lifted.
- Idea is a more party central themed cruise in the cities.

# The A by Uniworld



Photo Hank Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)



VIKING  
CRUISES

*Exploring the World in Comfort®*

# Viking Overview #1

**Viking** provides good itineraries—a great value.

A Viking journey includes:

- Exceptional Accommodations
- Attentive Service
- Enriching Daily Shore Excursions
- Engaging Cultural Enrichment
- All Onboard Meals
- Complimentary wine, beer & soft drinks with lunch & dinner
- Free onboard internet service

# Viking Overview # 2

- Has 63 ships deployed in Europe by my count. 53 are longships (135 m or 443 ft) & carry 190 passengers.
- Has over 25 % of all river cruises ships in Europe.
- Heavy advertising campaign—brand is most well known river cruise company.



# Viking Jarl

Photo Hank Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)





# What to Consider When Comparing River Cruise Companies

- Number of on board passengers
- Quality of the vessels
- Accommodations
- Cuisine
- Service
- Shore excursions
- Extras
- Cost—are you getting the value for your money?

# How Many River Ships in Europe?

COMPANY	TOTAL SHIPS
AMAWATERWAYS	21
AVALON	14
CRYSTAL	4
EMERALD	7
SCENIC	13
TAUCK	8
UNIWORLD	12 + (2 U by Uniworld)
VIKING	63 Total (53 Longships)

# How Many Passengers?

COMPANY	Longships 135 m	110 m Class
AMAWATERWAYS	158-164	146-148
AVALON	166	138-128
CRYSTAL	106	n/a
EMERALD	182	138
SCENIC	167-169	128
TAUCK	130	118
UNIWORLD	159-154	130
VIKING	198-188	150 (FOR 375 FT SHIP)

# The Giant on the Danube—the AmaMagna

- Launched in May 2019, the AmaMagna, is a double wide vessel, & carries 196 passengers.
- It has expanded on board facilities—4 restaurants (included), 5 bars, 2 massage rooms, and a water sports platform.
- It can only sail on portions of the Danube, as their extra width does not allow it to use some of the locks on the Danube River .

# The AmaMagna

Photo AmaWaterways



# Quality of Vessels

- Designing & putting new river cruise ships on Europe's rivers is a constant source of competition between companies.
- There are many different approaches.
- The Berlitz guide evaluates riverships by 5 criteria. They are Hardware; Accommodations; Cuisine; Service and Miscellaneous. It is probably as objective a rating system as currently available to potential river cruisers.
- We use his evaluations in our rating system by using the top rated ship from each line.



# 3 Typical Europe River Ships in Port



Photo Anne Schrader [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)

# Overall Ratings by Douglas Ward

## River Cruising in Europe & the USA

COMPANY	Best Rated Ship	Score (Company Rank based on best rated ship)
AMAWATERWAYS	AmaKristina	427/500 (1)
AVALON	Imagery II	374/500 (8)
CRYSTAL	Debussy	424/500 (2)
EMERALD	Dawn	385/500 (7)
SCENIC	Jasper	411/500 (3)
TAUCK	Joy	387/500 (6)
UNIWORLD	SS Joie de Vivre	388/500 (5)
VIKING	Herja	399/500 (4)



# River Ship Size

- There are basically 2 sizes of river cruise ships. River cruise ships have some limitations in width & height.
- To fit under bridges, they generally have only 3 decks (not counting the sun deck which is basically a roof).
- All are generally 38 ft wide but 1 rivership is now double wide (AmaMagna).
- The big difference is their length. The two types are:
- **Longships** are 443 ft (135 m) & 360 ft ships, known as **110 m Class Ships**.
- How the limited space is used on the vessel is an important factor in your choice of which company to use.

# Why is river ship length important?

- One of the real subtle differences in river cruising is what the cruise line has on board their ships.
- For accommodations, this includes # of passenger cabins, what is in the cabin & views from the cabin.
- Unlike Ocean Cruising, there are no inside cabins, but there is a significant difference in window size & balconies.
- On board facilities & equipment is another factor that should be considered.

# Stateroom Size/Views Longships

## Slide 1 of 2

Company	Large Suite >200 sq ft	Veranda <200 sq ft	French Balcony	Window	Small Window
<b>AMA</b>	4 (350-300 sq ft) 45 (290-210 sq ft)		16 (170 sq ft)		17 (160 sq ft)
<b>AVALON</b>			64 (200 sq ft) 2 (300 sq ft)		17 (172 sq ft)
<b>CRYSTAL</b>			2 (506 sq ft) 34 (253 sq ft) 1 (237 sq ft) 18 (188 sq ft)		
<b>EMERALD</b>	4 (315 sq ft) 8 (210 sq ft)	60 (180 sq ft)			18 (162 sq ft) 2 single (117 sq ft)

# Stateroom Size/Views Longships

## Slide 2 of 2

Company	Large Suite >200 sq ft	Veranda <200 sq ft	French Balcony	Window	Small Window
<b>SCENIC</b>	<b>45</b> (205 sq ft) <b>17</b> (225 sq ft) <b>2</b> (240 sq ft) <b>2</b> (360 sq ft) <b>2</b> (475 sq ft)				<b>13</b> (160 sq ft)
<b>TAUCK</b>			<b>3</b> (150 sq ft) <b>2</b> (190 sq ft) <b>28</b> (190-225 sq ft) <b>22</b> (300 sq ft)		<b>4</b> (150 sq ft) <b>8</b> (225 sq ft)
<b>UNIWORLD</b>	<b>9</b> (391-294 sq ft)	<b>20</b> (196 sq ft)	<b>33</b> (196 sq ft)		<b>15</b> (163 sq ft)
<b>VIKING</b>	<b>8</b> (445-275 sq ft)	<b>39</b> (200 sq ft)	<b>22</b> (135 sq ft)		<b>25</b> (150 sq ft)

# Stateroom Size/Views 110 m Class

## Slide 1 of 2

Company	Large Suite >200 sq ft	Veranda <200 sq ft	French Balcony	Window	Small Window
<b>AMA</b>	<b>4 Ships</b> 3 (255 sq ft) 1 (225 sq ft)		<b>56</b> (170 sq ft) <b>2</b> (140 sq ft- Single cabins)		<b>12</b> (170 sq ft)
<b>AVALON</b>	<b>2</b> (300 sq ft)	<b>50</b> (200 sq ft)			<b>12</b> (172 sq ft)
<b>CRYSTAL</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>EMERALD</b>	<b>2</b> (315 sq ft) <b>4</b> (207 sq ft)		<b>48</b> (170 sq ft)		<b>14</b> (162 sq ft) <b>2 single</b> (105 sq ft)

# Stateroom Size/Views 110 m class

## Slide 2 of 2

Company	Large Suite >200 sq ft	Veranda <200 sq ft	French Balcony	Window	Small Window
<b>SCENIC</b>	<b>43</b> (205 sq ft) <b>9</b> (225 sq ft) <b>2</b> (305 sq ft) <b>2</b> (455 sq ft)				<b>7</b> (160 sq ft)
<b>TAUCK</b>	<b>14</b> (300 sq ft)		<b>6</b> (183 sq ft) <b>30</b> (150 sq ft)		<b>1</b> (183 sq ft) <b>8</b> (150 sq ft)
<b>UNIWORLD</b>	<b>4</b> (215 sq ft) window			<b>60</b> (151 sq ft)	
<b>VIKING</b>				<b>63</b> (170 sq ft)	<b>12</b> (120 sq ft)



# Longship Onboard Features

Company	Bikes	Dining Rooms	Gym	Guest Laundry	Lounge	Pool / Hot Tub	Spa/ Hair Salon	Free WIFI
<b>AMA</b>	Yes	2	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Both	Yes
<b>AVALON</b>	yes	2	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Hair	Yes
<b>CRYSTAL</b>	Yes + jet ski	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Both + Sauna	60 min daily
<b>EMERALD</b>	Yes	1	Yes	No	Yes	Yes Converts to movie theater	Both	Yes
<b>SCENIC</b>	Yes	2	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Both	Yes
<b>TAUCK</b>	Yes	2	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Both	Yes
<b>UNIWORLD</b>	Yes	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Spa	Yes
<b>VIKING</b>	No	2	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

# Hardware Ratings by Berlitz

- The next slide needs a little explanation.
- Hardware includes the condition and maintenance of the vessel, its age, and public areas.
- It also includes floor & wall coverings, passageways and stairwells.
- It also includes pools (or lack of them), and lifts (elevators—or lack of them).

# Hardware (Ratings from Berlitz River Cruising In Europe & the USA)

COMPANY	Hardware	Rank
AMAWATERWAYS	87/100	2
AVALON	79/100	8
CRYSTAL	90/100	1
EMERALD	80/100	7
SCENIC	82/100	4* Tie
TAUCK	81/100	6
UNIWORLD	82/100	4* Tie
VIKING	84/100	3

# Accommodations (Ratings from Berlitz River Cruising In Europe & the USA)

COMPANY	Accommodations (Rank)	Comments
AMAWATERWAYS	87/100 (1)	Best in Industry; Twin Balconies
AVALON	76/100 (7* Tie)	Panoramic Window Opens to French Balcony
CRYSTAL	84/100 (2* Tie)	Only line with King Beds French Balconies Only
EMERALD	76/100 (7* Tie)	Full indoor/outdoor Balcony w/motorized window
SCENIC	82/100 (4)	Full indoor/outdoor Balcony w/motorized window
TAUCK	79/100 (6)	French Balconies Only
UNIWORLD	81/100 (5 )	Each ship has different theme
VIKING	84/100 (2* Tie)	Mix of Balconies & Windows

# Cuisine & Beverages

(Ratings from Berlitz River Cruising In Europe & the USA)

<b>COMPANY/ Rank</b>	<b>Cuisine</b>	<b>Beverages</b>
<b>AMAWATERWAYS/ 1</b>	<b>86/100; impressive food They spend more than competition on food</b>	<b>Good wines &amp; beers Free wine &amp; beer dinner &amp; lunch</b>
<b>AVALON/8</b>	<b>71/100; Dinners underwhelming</b>	<b>Free wine &amp; beer dinner &amp; lunch</b>
<b>CRYSTAL/2* Tie</b>	<b>82/100</b>	<b>Free wine &amp; beer &amp; spirits</b>
<b>EMERALD/5* Tie</b>	<b>75/100 food well above average</b>	<b>Free wine &amp; beer dinner &amp; lunch</b>
<b>SCENIC/ 2* Tie</b>	<b>82/100 good but not outstanding</b>	<b>Free wine &amp; beer &amp; spirits</b>
<b>TAUCK/5* Tie</b>	<b>75/100 Good food; lacks wow factor</b>	<b>Free wine &amp; beer &amp; spirits</b>
<b>UNIWORLD/7</b>	<b>74/100; decent food, based on French cuisine</b>	<b>Young wines, beer &amp; spirits all included</b>
<b>VIKING/ 4</b>	<b>78/100 tasty, unpretentious cuisine</b>	<b>Tend to use the same 2 wines for whole cruise; wine &amp; beer with lunch &amp; dinner meals</b>

# Service (Ratings from Berlitz River Cruising In Europe Guide 2016-2017)

COMPANY	Service (Rank)	Comments
AMAWATERWAYS	85/100 (1)	Service is very good
AVALON	71/100 (8)	
CRYSTAL	82/100 (2)	Butler Service
EMERALD	76/100 (4* Tie)	
SCENIC	81/100 (3)	Butler Service
TAUCK	75/100 (6* Tie)	
UNIWORLD	75/100 (6 Tie)	Butler Service in Suites
VIKING	76/100 (4* Tie)	



# Shore Excursions Slide 1 of 2

Company	Daily Excursions	Comments
<b>AMAWATERWAYS</b>	<b>Often 2 tours at each stop Fast/normal/slow groups local guides, maps</b>	<b>2-3 Optional tours per cruise may cost extra. Free limited bike tours Have limited free culinary/wine tours</b>
<b>AVALON</b>	<b>Use local guides 3 different paced tours</b>	<b>Optional tours extra</b>
<b>CRYSTAL</b>	<b>2 tours at each stop</b>	<b>Optional Crystal Adventures included. Crystal Adventure Boutique and Private Adventures extra</b>
<b>EMERALD</b>	<b>Tour in each port</b>	<b>EmeraldPLUS no addition cost tours to enhance the standard offerings. Discover More tour options extra</b>

# Shore Excursions Slide 2 of 2

Company	Daily Excursions	Comments
SCENIC	All tours included at each stop. Includes all listed in comments on each cruise	Has Freechoice tours & Scenic Enrich & Sundowner & GPS Tailormade go on your own on each cruise
TAUCK	4 Tauck staff on ship Highly Rated tours	Exclusive tours free
UNIWORLD	Tours & Options every stop	Exclusive tours free At least one culinary tour Each cruise
VIKING	One tour per day free May have to pay for 2nd	Most optional tours cost extra

# Ownership

## Slide 1 of 2

Company	Type	Comments
AMAWATERWAYS	Family-Owned	Owners Rudi Schreiner (former Uniworld & Viking), & Kristin Karst (AM Express) & Gary Murphy.
AVALON	Globus	Linked with Globus (tours) enhances tours
CRYSTAL	Genting Hong Kong	Operates 4 ships
EMERALD	Family Owned	Emerald is division of Scenic. Only river cruise company that operates 2 different cruise lines.

# Ownership

## 2 of 2

Company	Type	Comments
<b>SCENIC</b>	<b>Family-Owned</b>	<b>Glen Moroney started company in 2008. This brand emphasizes all inclusive including gratuities &amp; all onboard drinks.</b>
<b>TAUCK</b>	<b>Family-Owned</b>	<b>Tour company pays close attention to every detail of guest experience.</b>
<b>UNIWORLD</b>	<b>Travel Corporation</b>	<b>30 itineraries in Europe</b>
<b>VIKING</b>	<b>Scandinavian and Dutch consortium</b>	<b>Fastest growing river cruise company; have 53 innovative longships</b>

# EXTRAS

Company	Dining Rooms	Optional Tours	Bikes/ Bike Tours	Ashore Dining	Gratuuity	Transfers	Port Charges
<b>AMA</b>	2	EXTRA	YES/ YES	SOME	EXTRA	EXTRA	EXTRA
<b>AVALON</b>	1	EXTRA	EXTRA/YES	NO	EXTRA	EXTRA	EXTRA
<b>CRYSTAL</b>	3	EXTRA	YES/YES E-BIKES	YES	INCLUDED	INCLUDED	INCLUDED
<b>EMERALD</b>	1	EXTRA	YES/YES	NO	INCLUDED	EXTRA	INCLUDED
<b>SCENIC</b>	2	INCLUDED	YES/ YES E-BIKES	YES	INCLUDED	INCLUDED	INCLUDED
<b>TAUCK</b>	2	INCLUDED	YES/ YES	SOME	INCLUDED	INCLUDED	INCLUDED
<b>UNIWORLD</b>	1	EXTRA	YES	NO	INCLUDED	INCLUDED	EXTRA
<b>VIKING</b>	2	EXTRA	NO	NO	EXTRA	EXTRA	EXTRA

# Comparing Prices

- Comparing prices is difficult at best.
- In our 2016 guide, I was able to make a price comparisons, but river cruise companies have recently added so many add-ons and seasonal price points, that these comparisons are no longer accurate or meaningful.
- Also, some companies are not actually publishing fare prices and require their guests to call.
- The best we can do now is to advise of what is included in the fare.
- Here is a price range (all 8 cruise lines) for a balcony cabin in August 2019--**\$3,880 to \$5,769** per person for a 7 day Danube cruise (based on my personal research for a client).



# AMAWATERWAYS

## What is included in the fare?

- Fine dining—all meals are first class
- Chef's Table—an intimate dining alternative that features delicious dishes
- Complimentary, high-quality unlimited red & white wine with lunch & dinner, or beer, or soft drinks.
- City tours at all stops, limited edition tours & bicycle trips, all led by qualified, local guides. All excursions tailored to guest's walking pace.
- Impeccable service—guests are treated like family
- Great onboard entertainment
- Free Wi-Fi
- Fleet of onboard bikes/wellness instructor

# Avalon

## What is included in the fare?

- Choice of spacious outside staterooms with plenty of room to relax (price varies).
- Special touches, like regional wines and beer at every onboard dinner.
- Complimentary Wi-Fi access
- Good shore excursions, led by Certified Local Guides
- VIP entrance into the must-see sites.
- Unique Local lectures designed to bring your destination to life.
- Expansive panoramic views throughout the ship – included—bed faces window.

# Crystal

## What's Included in the Fare

- All meals included, featuring Crystal's innovative & acclaimed six-star cuisine, highlighted by regional specialties.
- Each cabin has butler service.
- Choice of Crystal Adventures Shore Excursions.
- Unlimited soft drinks and premium beverages including champagne, fine wine and spirits. All soft drinks, beer and bottled water in-suite.
- 24-hour self-service pantry featuring specialty coffees, teas, wines and non-alcoholic beverages.
- 24-hour room service.
- Free Wi-Fi/Internet usage of 60 minutes per person, per day.
- Gratuities included for all shipboard staff .

# Emerald

## What's Included in the Fare?

- All meals
- Carefully selected wine, beer & soft drinks at lunch & dinner
- An included shore excursion in each port using local guides
- Bikes on board for daily use
- Complimentary Wi-Fi onboard
- Airport transfers to & from ship
- All gratuities
- Port charges

# Scenic

## What's Included in the Fare?

- Most guests will never buy anything extra—it's all included except massage & hairdresser or gift shop
- Your own butler (services vary)
- Complimentary beverages all day, every day. Mini bar in room.
- Six dining options (some are limited to higher paying guests)
- Exclusive Tailormade GPS for self guided tours
- Electronically assisted bikes
- Free Wi-Fi
- Airport transfers
- All tours

# Tauck

## What is included in the fare?

- Virtually every river cruise expense is included in one upfront price
- All shore excursions
- Unlimited complimentary beverages onboard (including all liquor—even stocked mini bar in stateroom)
- All meals
- Crew Gratuities
- Pre/Post stays depending upon itinerary
- There are no little extras to pay for, no hidden expenses, no options sold.



# Uniworld

## What is included in the fare?

- All gratuities onboard and onshore
- All meals onboard
- Unlimited beverages onboard, including extensive selection of distinctive wines, craft beers, spirits, soft drinks, specialty teas and coffees
- Carefully crafted shore excursions—many exclusive to Uniworld—hosted by English-speaking local experts with options to personalize
- All scheduled airport transfers
- All entertainment & cultural enrichment programs onboard
- Internet and Wi-Fi access onboard

# Viking

## What is included in the fare? # 1

- Choice of staterooms, including Suites, Junior Suites and Staterooms with verandas and French balconies & window cabins (price varies).
- Complimentary internet service
- In-room Infotainment system
- Complimentary beer, wine & soft drinks served at lunch & dinner

# Viking

## What is included in the fare? #2

- Daily shore excursion - led by friendly, knowledgeable local guides utilizing a high-tech audio headset system.
- Cultural enrichment - itinerary includes informative talks, performances, hands-on cooking and craft demonstrations.
- All onboard meals - the exquisite cuisine created by Swiss-trained chefs, features fresh ingredients and regional specialty options.

# My Personal River Cruise Line Ratings

Company	Comments
# 1 AmaWaterways	Best food/wine; best overall; great partners with Backroads (bikes) & Disney; sometimes pricey; all guests get same perks
# 2 Scenic	Best All-inclusive; tours very good; sometimes inconsistent—generally very good value; higher price cabins get more perks
# 3 Emerald	Best lower priced river cruise line but delivers good value for your money; 182 guests capacity is a negative
# 4 Crystal	All-inclusive a plus; new longships good but not elegant; always seem there are extra charges, especially wine dining room (299 Euro per person)
# 5 Uniworld	All-inclusive a plus; elegant cabins; generally pricey; U by Uniworld controversial
# 6 Tauck	All-inclusive a plus; use 4 on board tour directors instead of local guides; higher price than others
# 7 Viking	Most green ships; may have grown too quickly; no frills approach OK but does not always live up to advertising
# 8 Avalon	Ships have low scores by Douglas Ward for food & service; extras drive price up but improving

# AMAWATERWAYS Advantages

- Best food & fine regional wines that change daily—added free cocktail hour—including Chef's Table
- Best Active line—added wellness instructor
- Good tours—usually 3 groups & at least 2 options—sometimes more
- Crew becomes your friends—service is excellent & consistently high standards
- Slow, steady growth—new ships have high staff standards; no long term debt.
- Owners hands on—they read every critique—always improving
- Great Cruise Managers go the extra mile for your trip
- Great Partners with Backroads (bike touring) & Disney
- Only cruise line fully Green Certified in Europe

# AMAWATERWAYS Disadvantages

- No gratuities included in price
- If food & wine are not of high importance, price may be considered too high by some.
- Double Wide AmaMagna can't sail on Main-Danube Canal—won't fit into locks.

# Avalon Advantages

- They deliver a good product at a fair price.
- Since they are owned by Globus Corporation (tour company), they have good tours.
- They claim to have the newest fleet in Europe market—oldest ship built in 2008 but with Crystal, Scenic & Emerald no longer true.
- Cabin bed faces window—has larger windows & French balconies compared to others
- Added more active options during shore visits



# Avalon Disadvantages

- A lot of extra services for a fee
- Food is described as “bland” by some observers & wines “are low quality” but Avalon Fresh (vegetarian option) very good.
- Lease, do not own, riverships.

# Crystal Advantages

- Trying to replicate Crystal Ocean going ships with facilities on a smaller scale—72% sail on Crystal based on the brand (source company webinar).
- 4 new longships highly rated—all suites above waterline, no river line cabins.
- All-inclusive
- Butlers & room service (24 hour)
- Included e-bikes, kayaks & jet ski—even has a high speed boat (extra for boat)

# Crystal Disadvantages

- 4 longships limits access but some may see this an exclusive feature.
- Common areas just bland looking compared to elegant suites.
- While most normal items covered, exclusive liquors, meal in exclusive 12 person dining room & exotic high speed boat & helicopter extra.
- Some tours extra.

# Emerald Advantages

- Very good quality cruise at a good price.
- Gratuities included.
- 2 upper decks on most ships have ½ window balcony that opens with touch of a button.
- Pool has retractable roof & converts into evening cinema—it is awesome!
- Even with higher guest capacity (182) it has bikes, spa & fitness area—while Viking (190) does not have these extras.
- It does not feel crowded based on our inspection tour.

# Emerald Disadvantages

- 182 passengers—only Viking carries more
- Only 7 boats at present, limits access

# Scenic Advantages

- All inclusive—all is included—most guests will not pay anything more unless they get a massage or use the hairdresser.
- Onshore tours are awesome—includes Scenic enrich (exclusive experiences) & sundowner (hosted cocktails in Europe's most beautiful locations).
- Seafood buffet is excellent!
- Offers 6 reds & 6 whites wines at dinner for free.

# Scenic Disadvantages

- More expensive cabins get more services, especially diamond deck guests
- Exclusive Table La Rive located in main dining room—other guests get to see the 6-course degustation menu while served a lesser meal
- Service & meals inconsistent on our cruise with them



# Tauck Advantages

- All-inclusive
- Generally fewest passengers on Tauck ships as compared to other river cruise companies, but Crystal has less
- Many feel they offer the best tours & on-shore experiences—mostly due to 4 onboard staff members who lead all tours—others disagree, like local guides
- Generally has more large sized staterooms than others but only French Balconies. Crystal has larger sized staterooms but fewer available.
- Has best window first deck (waterline) staterooms
- Has a good family program called Tauck Bridges

# Tauck Disadvantages

- Usually the most costly cruise line
- 8 ships provide limited availability to take a Tauck River Cruise—they often sell out very early.
- Lease, do not own, riverships but have refurbished 110 m. riverboats.

# Uniworld Advantages

- All-inclusive
- Each ship is different—big emphasis on boutique aspect for the client
- Only cruise line on the Po River (Italy) & has a Burgundy region cruise
- Rate very high on most comparison lists—a lot to like about their product & service.

# Uniworld Disadvantages

- Some find interiors just “too much”
- Higher price point
- 110 m ships have no French Balconies—only windows
- U by Uniworld controversial product

# Viking Advantages

- Sometimes best pricing but often requires full payment at booking while other river cruise companies allow deposit + 90 day prior to departure final payment.
- Only company that cruises Elbe (special shallow water design)
- Herb garden; solar panels (very green ships)
- Since long ships are identical; in low water situations; Viking has been able to switch ships to avoid extended bus tours—generally successful but does not always work
- Has best port docking locations

# Viking Disadvantages

- Carries 190 passengers on long ships—all others carry around 165-170 or less on longships except Emerald at 182.
- No extras—no bikes, no exercise room, no pool
- Dinner meals sometimes only has 2 choices & they often use same 2 wines for all 7 days of a cruise
- Some cruisers feel they are crowded--not enough room in lounges & main dining room
- Only major river cruise line that caters to US market that is not CLIA member (more protections for cruise clients)
- On most cruises only 6 tours provided for free; if more than 2 tours per day it may require an extra fee.

# How Best to Use This Comparison Guide

- First, realize that all river cruises are a good value!
- The most important info is to first select the itinerary and make sure it visits the sights you desire to see, then pick the line.
- To select the line, match the items you consider most important from the river cruise line—this guide is a good place to start.
- Use price last—look for value!
- This is very complicated—why not seek our advice to get the best possible trip?



# Visit Dream Destinations, LLC

*Your Journey Begins Here!*

- **We want to be your travel consultants!**
- **Please contact us at:**
- [aschrader@dreamdestinations.com](mailto:aschrader@dreamdestinations.com) or
- [hschrader@dreamdestinations.com](mailto:hschrader@dreamdestinations.com) or
- Call us at:
- 713-397-0188 (Hank Cell); or 832-244-0215 (Anne Cell)
- Or visit at [www.dreamdestinations.com](http://www.dreamdestinations.com)
- [www.pinterest.com/visitdd](http://www.pinterest.com/visitdd) or
- [www.facebook.com/visitdreamdestinations](http://www.facebook.com/visitdreamdestinations)



**Let Us Plan your next vacation!**

Call Hank (713-397-0188) or  
Anne (832-244-0215)

