

River Cruise Destination Comparison Chart

Use this chart to identify the waterways that best match your interests, preferred pace, climate, and level of travel experience.

 River or Region	 Best Known For	 Typical Experience	 Activity Level	 Typical Sailing Season / Preferred Travel Period	 Best For	 First-Time Fit
EUROPEAN RIVERS						
1 Rhine 	Castles, vineyards, medieval towns, and the Rhine Gorge	Balanced mix of scenic sailing, historic cities, villages, wine, and culture	Easy to moderate, with active options available	March–December	First-time cruisers, castle lovers, photographers, wine enthusiasts, and Christmas market travelers	Excellent
2 Danube 	Imperial cities, music, palaces, abbeys, and several countries	Major cities such as Vienna and Budapest combined with scenic valleys and smaller towns	Moderate; some itineraries include longer touring days	March–December	History lovers, music enthusiasts, cultural travelers, and guests wanting several countries	Excellent
3 Main and Main-Danube Canal 	Medieval German towns, locks, and longer European journeys	Quieter route linking the Rhine and Danube, often in extended Amsterdam-to-Budapest itineraries	Easy to moderate	April–October, plus selected holiday sailings	Travelers with more time, repeat European visitors, and guests interested in small German towns	Very Good
4 Moselle 	Steep vineyards, wine villages, castles, and gentle scenery	Relaxed, intimate journey through smaller towns and a beautiful wine region	Easy to moderate	April–October	Wine lovers, photographers, repeat cruisers, and travelers who prefer villages to large cities	Excellent
5 Seine 	Paris, Normandy, art, gardens, and World War II history	Parisian culture, riverside towns, artists' villages, and Normandy excursions	Moderate; Normandy touring may involve longer motorcoach days	March–November	Art lovers, Francophiles, history enthusiasts, and travelers adding time in Paris	Excellent
6 Rhône and Saône 	Provence, Burgundy, Roman history, cuisine, and wine	Colorful towns, regional food, vineyards, markets, and warmer southern French scenery	Moderate	March–November	Food and wine travelers, Francophiles, art lovers, and warm-weather travelers	Excellent
7 Douro 	Porto, terraced vineyards, Portuguese culture, and dramatic valley scenery	More emphasis on daytime sailing, landscapes, wine estates, and smaller communities than on major cities	Moderate; excursions often involve hills, steps, and motorcoach travel	March–November	Wine lovers, scenic travelers, repeat European visitors, and guests who prefer a slower regional experience	Very Good
8 Bordeaux: Garonne, Dordogne, and Gironde 	Famous wine regions, châteaux, cuisine, and historic Bordeaux	Destination-focused cruise with vineyard visits, tastings, and motorcoach excursions through several wine districts	Moderate	April–October	Serious wine enthusiasts, food travelers, Francophiles, and guests interested in regional culture	Very Good
EXOTIC AND IMMERSIVE RIVERS						
9 Mekong 	Village life, temples, markets, floating communities, and Southeast Asian culture	Immersive journey through Vietnam and Cambodia, usually combined with hotels and land touring	Moderate to active	Cooler, drier months generally preferred	Experienced international travelers, culturally curious guests, photographers, and adventurous food lovers	Better for confident travelers
10 Nile 	Ancient temples, tombs, archaeology, and Egyptian history	Highly structured cruise-and-land experience centered on major historic sites such as Luxor and Aswan	Moderate to active; walking, heat, steps, and early touring days	October–April is generally most comfortable	Ancient-history enthusiasts, archaeology lovers, and travelers comfortable with guided touring	Good with careful planning
11 Chobe 	Elephants, wildlife, birdwatching, and river-based safari experiences	Small-ship safari journey often combined with lodges, game drives, flights, or rail travel in Southern Africa	Moderate; small boats and safari vehicles may be used	Dry season often preferred for wildlife viewing	Wildlife enthusiasts, photographers, safari travelers, and guests seeking a once-in-a-lifetime journey	Better for experienced travelers
12 Magdalena 	Colombian music, culture, colonial towns, birdlife, and riverside communities	Small-ship cultural journey through tropical Colombia, often combined with Cartagena, Medellín, or other land stays	Moderate; heat, humidity, uneven surfaces, and small-boat outings should be considered	Available much of the year; drier periods may be more comfortable	Repeat river cruisers, culturally curious travelers, birdwatchers, music lovers, and guests seeking a newer destination	Better for confident travelers
NORTH AMERICAN RIVERS						
13 Mississippi 	American history, music, river towns, Southern culture, and paddlewheel traditions	Upper Mississippi emphasizes scenery and historic towns; Lower Mississippi highlights music, plantations, cuisine, and Southern heritage	Easy to moderate	Varies by river section; cruises operate during much of the year	Travelers preferring a domestic vacation, American-history enthusiasts, music lovers, and guests who want to avoid international flights	Excellent
14 Columbia and Snake Rivers 	Pacific Northwest scenery, waterfalls, wineries, and Lewis and Clark history	Nature- and history-focused journey through gorges, high desert, small towns, and regional landscapes	Moderate; some excursions involve walking and outdoor activities	Spring through fall	Nature lovers, photographers, wine travelers, American-history enthusiasts, and travelers seeking a domestic adventure	Excellent

QUICK MATCH GUIDE

	First river cruise	Rhine, Danube, Seine, Rhône, Mississippi, or Columbia and Snake
	Castles and medieval towns	Rhine, Moselle, Main, or Danube
	Wine and cuisine	Douro, Bordeaux, Rhône and Saône, Moselle, Rhine, or Danube
	Major European cities	Danube, Rhine, or Seine
	Small towns and villages	Moselle, Main, Douro, or Upper Mississippi
	Christmas markets	Rhine, Danube, Main, or selected Moselle itineraries
	Ancient history	Nile
	Wildlife and safari	Chobe
	Local culture and community interaction	Mekong or Magdalena
	Music and regional traditions	Mississippi, Danube, or Magdalena
	Domestic travel without an international flight	Mississippi or Columbia and Snake
	Scenic sailing	Rhine, Moselle, Douro, Columbia and Snake, or Chobe
	Repeat river cruisers seeking something different	Magdalena, Mekong, Chobe, Nile, Moselle, or Bordeaux



Elizabeth's Advisor Note

The river should usually be chosen before the cruise line. Begin by deciding what you most want to see and experience. Once the destination is clear, compare the cruise lines, ships, cabin designs, excursion styles, and inclusions available on that waterway.

The right choice begins with the question:
What do you want to remember most when the journey is over?