

By Susan Arnot

Ready to dive into your first river cruise experience? You're not alone. River cruises are fast becoming the newest method for experiencing the world. Over 100 river ships have launched itineraries over the past 4 years and options are so diverse that there is a river cruise itinerary for practically any bucket list destination. Whether it's wandering trails in the Amazon in Brazil, soaking in the sun (and history) of the Rhine in Germany or sailing the Ganges en route to India's Taj Mahal, here are some tips for getting the most out of your river cruise experience.



Views from the Rhine River Cruise

Consider booking outside of the summer months. It's the busiest time of the year and crowds can make even a river cruise feel hectic. Research what off season times could work. You could improve your overall experience and possibly save a few bucks.

Because cabin configurations and facilities vary from line to line, and ship to ship within a fleet, be sure to get all the details on how your stateroom will look before you book. While you may be inclined to book the best room, keep in mind that there will be lots of ship locations where you will be able to appreciate the passing views and getting out of your rooms gives you a chance to get to know your fellow cruisers. Who knows? You may even make some lifelong travel buddies!



Danube River Cruise

All meals are included, with many river cruise lines offering complimentary wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner, plus unlimited tea and coffee. Be sure to check with your cruise line about an open bar and whether gratuities are covered.

BONUS TIP: Does your cruise offer an afternoon snack? Be sure to snag some of those delish cookies in case you need a late night snack as well!

Wi-Fi is usually available throughout a ship, but because the Internet is satellite-based, reception is often spotty. This is most noticeable when going through the river and canal locks. The best place to pick up wi-fi in your cabin? Usually the bathrooms, as they are closest to the hallway.



Galia - Our inimitable cruise director on Cruising Russia

When the Program Director or Hotel Manager tells you to let them know if you need anything, they are not kidding! (Hint hint: Tips are not included with your cruise price and are usually paid at the end of the tour by cash or card.)

Come prepared with a good quality camera and a zoom lens. While many river cruises offer off-boat excursions that will get you up close, there will be some sites that you are only able to see from a distance.



Portugal's Douro River

Have a plan for storing pictures, whether it's bringing an extra SD card or uploading images to the cloud. You don't want to miss the chance to take a perfect picture because you ran out of memory! And if you are planning to upload to the cloud, keep in mind any data cost by your provider and that a steady wireless signal isn't guaranteed on the ship.

Bring extra batteries and/or charge your devices often. There are so many photo ops on tours that you may find your battery needs to be charged during lunch for the afternoon tour. Make it a habit to keep your devices plugged in when not in use. Remember to factor in the additional social media and email usage during travel too.



Germany's Heidelberg on the Rhine River Cruise

If you are with a reputable guided group, they will most likely take care of sharing information once you're onsite, but why not get familiar before the boat leaves the dock? Grab a guide book, or a nonfiction book, and start reading up on your destination before you leave - it's a great way to build excitement for your adventure!

Ships typically post a list or meet daily to discuss excursions available for the next day. And there are usually events such as lectures, presentations, cooking demonstrations, and floor shows scheduled daily on the ship. Take advantage of these offerings as another way of learning about the region and enriching your experience!



Voyage to Antarctica

Resist the urge to overpack. Storage space is limited on most river cruise ships, and the more luggage you take with you, the more you're going to have to fuss with at airports and on motorcoaches and pre-/post hotel stays. Some river cruises offer laundry services but it can be pricey. The most important packing tip is to take layers that can be used interchangeably to cope with unpredictable weather and comfortable shoes or sneakers. Many tours involve walking on cobblestones or uneven surfaces.

BONUS TIP: Bring a short length of clothesline with you. You can wash your clothes in your cabin sink and let them air dry.



Out for a walk on the Danube River Cruise

And above all - go with the flow! There are many things that are in the control of the cruise ship but there are many more things that are NOT in their control including weather and labor strikes. Take it easy, be flexible, and know that your cruise staff is doing their best to give you the most valuable experience possible. Enjoy both the calm moments of smooth sailing and the more Adventurous happenings which may alter your schedule, but may end up improving your journey!

Walking Adventures International offers an alternating selection of river cruises yearly. In 2019, we have the **[Portugal - Douro River Cruise](#)** and **[Rhine River Cruise](#)** coming up. Our 2020 cruises include the **[Danube River Cruise](#)**, **[Ecuador & the Galapagos Islands](#)**, and **[Antarctica](#)**.

Contact us with any questions at **800.779.0353** or **fun@walkingadventures.com**.