

WHAT I LIKE ABOUT RIVER CRUISING AND THINGS TO BE PREPARED FOR REGARDING THEM:

What do I like:

1. No getting up in the wee hours to get in a bus and pack and repack the suitcases nearly every night/morning
2. Freedom of options, excursions are nearly all included but some optional may be offered Our cruise NO COST excursions.
3. Riverboats in particular follow historically the commerce routes and dock in city centers or close by, excellent for even just walking off the boat and do whatever on your own
4. No gambling and local entertainment is often brought on in the evenings.
5. Many times late departures so you can enjoy some nightlife during your stop.
6. Slow paced, no lines, lounges are like oversized living rooms
7. No charge for cappuccinos etc. Food, snacks etc. available most of the time on board.
8. Intimate environment - no crowds, get to know the other passengers, personally - generally no children
9. Most use a device for ability to do own tours walking with explanations or listening to narration from quite a distance away from the tour guide. Use of local guides and done in small group departures 20<>

Things I would do differently OR would think a passenger should be aware of:

1. This is a hard one, Ron and I chose to experience the Scenic line for the luxury claim experience: All suites all butler. I personally don't need a Butler (some of my clients love it however)...that's a personal choice. I would not pay the extra for a butler, also, the butlers service several cabins during the cruise.. though touted as personal one. Many passengers loved this. I find it personally pretentious for my life style.
2. There can be issues at docks when the boats tether, sometimes 3 deep. So you could be the last boat into port and have to walk through or over other boats to get the shore. If you have a balcony - privacy could be compromised. Ron and I have tried all the levels and personally prefer the lowest level for QUIET but for our trip we had the balcony and it was pretty nice, but you do have to have your curtains drawn for no surprises in the morning or late at night when going to bed - plus - those cabins cost more, go figure.
3. I don't need an elevator, but, most ships do not have elevators to the bottom level, some none at all.
4. Many balcony/veranda cabins are really French Balconies deep enough only to stand at the opening. One cruise line has two balconies both a sitting one and a French Balcony (AMA Waterways), One has the beds facing the water (Avalon)- and the floor to ceiling windows that will open making your cabin a huge balcony type experience...Lower levels have windows or Port holes in their lower levels, however no cabins can be totally under the water. All cabins are generally the same or close in size. None of them are LARGE ha. Some of the riverboats have the smallest cabins in the industry, some the ambiance is different i.e. contemporary, rustic, french provincial (foofoo type), some are rich with over-stuffed furniture, I would choose one that felt more like home rather than glitzy..just for ambience..but they all are very nice! For comfort, personally I would choose the cozy rather than the 'cold'
5. I personally don't need to pay for the luxury of an all inclusive (liquor packed) [some have a selection of a couple of pkgs], The Emerald Brand - the sister company to the Scenic offers 2 beverage pkgs. reg. and top shelf + port. Scenic simply including the top shelf is included in the price. Uniworld has all inclusive sailings as well, with the exception of wind/beer for dinners and some times lunch, you do pay for the liquor on many of the lines up and above the meal times.
6. Be cognizant of time of year, and likelihood of sailing interruptions i.e. our trip - couldn't sail all the way to Honfleur because of the storm that moved from Ireland/England to the French western coast. However, just after winter and just before fall (ie. April and Sept/Oct) there is more of a probability the rivers being either too high from snow melt or too low from heat. Some boats are purpose built and can sail in 6" of water - **seriously**. Rivers to be cautious about are **THE ELBE** and the **PO rivers** particularly.
7. Clients should be aware that there are more companies out there besides Viking, many of them though they make our phones ring for sure, but many times the promos from the many river cruises can beat the pricing - so without the misleading advertising ie. (personal opinion). Viking shows on their website reg. price \$7,800 2 for one reduces the price to \$3,600 and the other lines may have the same itinerary for \$2,800 with shipboard credits. Clients must do their homework OR work with an agent who has the best relationships and offers value-adds, waived single supplements etc. Lots of stuff. Be leery of the tag words: DEAL, DISCOUNTS, 2-4-1 deals, FREE AIR (has so many caveats).