

The River Cruise Report Card for Travel Agents

The Resource for Agents on River Cruise Line Policies



2017/2018

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

2017/2018

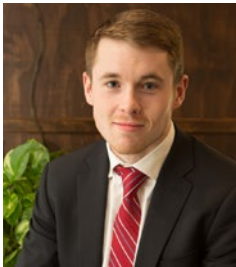
DEAR TRAVEL AGENT,

Welcome to the second ever Travel Market Report Supplier Report Card, our inside look at the practices of travel industry suppliers.

This is our second Supplier Report Card after publishing our inaugural edition, The Cruise Report Card for Travel Agents, in early 2017. These report cards seek out information about how the major suppliers in each sector of our industry interact with their most important partners, the travel professionals.

With this edition, The River Cruise Report Card for Travel Agents, we hope to provide you with a resource you can use when dealing with your clients who are booking river sailings all over the world. We want you to know the suppliers that truly have your best interest in mind.

We invite you to take a look and to keep a copy at your desk during your day-to-day dealings with clients and suppliers. Not all of the cruise lines we invited to participate chose to do so, but we're still very excited to show you just how valuable you are to the biggest companies in travel.



Sincerely,
Daniel McCarthy, *Editor-in-Chief*





SALES PERCENTAGE

Travel agents are responsible for a majority of sales at each one of the 13 participating lines. In some cases, like AmaWaterways (97%), Crystal River Cruises (95%), Uniworld Boutique River Cruises (95%), and Victoria Cruises (97%), agents are responsible for more than 9 in every 10 river cruise bookings.

chart 01

sales percentage

River Cruise Line	What percentage of your sales are from travel agents?
AmaWaterways	97%
American Queen Steamboat Company	75%
Avalon Waterways	"THE VAST MAJORITY OF OUR SALES"
Belmond	"WELL OVER 50%"
CroisiEurope	"ABOUT 85%"
Crystal River Cruises	95%
Emerald Waterways	"VAST MAJORITY"
Riviera River Cruises	70%
Scenic	"VAST MAJORITY"
Tauck	"A BIG PERCENTAGE"
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	95%
Victoria Cruises	97%
Viking River Cruises	"A MAJORITY"



COMMISSION PERCENTAGE

By the numbers:

- AmaWaterways has the highest base commission percentage with 15 percent.
- Of the lines who reported a maximum commission percentage, Avalon Waterways, Emerald Waterways, Scenic River Cruises, and Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, have the highest number with 18 percent.

chart02

commission percentage

River Cruise Line	What is your base commission percentage?	Is there a maximum commission percentage you pay? If so, what is it?
AmaWaterways	15%	NO
American Queen Steamboat Company	10%	16% (PLUS POTENTIAL OVERRIDE GOALS)
Avalon Waterways	10%	18%
Belmond	10%	NO (NEGOTIABLE)
CroisiEurope	10%	NO (BASED ON PRODUCTION)
Crystal River Cruises	10%	17%
Emerald Waterways	12%	18%
Riviera River Cruises	12%	16%
Scenic	12%	18%
Tauck	10%	15%
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	10%	18%
Victoria Cruises	10%	NO (NEGOTIABLE)
Viking River Cruises	12%	NO (DEPENDS ON VOLUME)



chart03

commission range & policies

River Cruise Line	Is your commission range different if an agency belongs to a marketing group or consortium?	Can commissions be netted against checks in a weekly summary?	Do you pay commissions on non-refunded cancellation monies paid?
AmaWaterways	YES	ONLY FOR GROUPS	YES ³
American Queen Steamboat Company	NO	NO ²	YES
Avalon Waterways	YES ¹	NO	YES
Belmond	N/A	NO	NO
CroisiEurope	YES	YES	YES
Crystal River Cruises	YES	NO	YES
Emerald Waterways	YES	YES	NO
Riviera River Cruises	YES	NO	N/A
Scenic	YES	YES	NO
Tauck	YES	NO	YES ⁴
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES	NO	YES ⁵
Victoria Cruises	NO ¹	N/A	NO
Viking River Cruises	YES	NO	NO

¹ Depending on volume

² For U.S and Canadian agents

³ Based on date of cancellation

⁴ Paid on penalties withheld

⁵ Within 30 days of sailing



NON-COMMISSIONABLE PRODUCTS

Over forty percent of lines surveyed said they don't offer any products that aren't commissionable to travel agents. Those river lines that did offer non-commissionable products listed pre-paid optionals, onboard shore excursions, and salon services.

chart 04

non-commissionable products

River Cruise Line	Do you offer products and services to consumers that aren't commissionable to travel agents?	What are they?	What products and services are included in your non-commissionable/resort fees?
AmaWaterways	YES	ONBOARD SERVICES: GIFT SHOP, LAUNDRY, AND MASSAGE AND HAIR SALON SERVICES	PORT CHARGES
American Queen Steamboat Company	YES	"VERY FEW"	ONBOARD PURCHASES, PREMIUM SHORE EXCURSIONS PURCHASED ONBOARD AND GRATUITIES
Avalon Waterways	YES	PRE-PAID OPTIONALS	PORT CHARGES
Belmond	YES		SPA AND ON-BOARD ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IF NOT INCLUDED IN BASE PRICE
CroisiEurope	NO		NONE
Crystal River Cruises	NO		NONE
Emerald Waterways	NO		NONE
Riviera River Cruises	YES		TRANSFERS, PRE- AND POST-CRUISE HOTEL ACCOMODATIONS AND AIR
Scenic	NO		NONE
Tauck	NO		NONE
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES	SOME OPTIONAL EXPERIENCES	NONE
Victoria Cruises	YES	PRE-BOOKED AMENITIES SUCH AS WINE OR FRUIT BASKETS	
Viking River Cruises	NO		N/A

1 Depending on volume

2 For U.S and Canadian agents

3 Based on date of cancellation

4 Paid on penalties withheld

5 Within 30 days of sailing



chart05

payment schedule

River Cruise Line

What is the payment schedule for paying travel agent commissions?

AmaWaterways	COMMISSION PAYMENT IS PROCESSED ON DATE OF DEPARTURE
American Queen Steamboat Company	RANGES FROM WEEK OF DEPARTURE TO UP TO 3 WEEKS AFTER CRUISE DISEMBARKS
Avalon Waterways	APPROXIMATELY TWO WEEKS AFTER TRAVEL COMMENCES
Belmond	COMMISSION CAN BE DEDUCTED FROM FINAL PAYMENT IF PAID BY AGENCY CHECK; COMMISSION IS PAID ASAP AFTER TRAVEL IF PAID BY PASSENGER'S CREDIT CARD
CroisiEurope	AT TIME OF SAILING
Crystal River Cruises	PAID AT SAILING
Emerald Waterways	COMMISSION EARNINGS ARE PROCESSED BASED ON GUESTS SAIL DEPARTURE DATE
Riviera River Cruises	ONCE CRUISE DEPARTS
Scenic	COMMISSION EARNINGS ARE PROCESSED BASED ON GUESTS SAIL DEPARTURE DATE
Tauck	COMMISSION IS PAID 3 DAYS AFTER THE GUEST DEPARTS ON TOUR
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	TIME OF SAILING
Victoria Cruises	AFTER TRAVEL IS COMPLETED
Viking River Cruises	29 DAYS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE DATE

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RIVER CRUISES

More Than a Worthwhile Niche for Travel Agents

By Kerry Tice

If your client has never cruised before, a 4-day river cruise can be the ideal way to “sample” the cruise market. If your client is typically an ocean cruiser, why not consider giving them a more intimate option? If your client has always been drawn to land tours but wants something mobile, river cruising could be just the fit. Simple but true: these are the questions river cruise suppliers want travel agents to consider when they’re qualifying their clients for their next adventure. And according to industry experts, if you have a database of existing cruise or tour clients, you have river cruise sales potential.

River cruising is hardly new, but if you consider the constant evolution of the ships, product offerings and itineraries that make up this segment, the definition of new takes on a different meaning. That being said, the reasons why people choose to take a river cruise remain steadfast. Simply put, participation in river cruising is easy. It’s all-inclusive and hassle-free, allowing clients to truly enjoy the ride instead of worrying about packing and unpacking, vouchers or transfers from here to there. And

waking up in a different location every morning doesn’t hurt either.

“River cruising has dramatically increased in popularity over the last several years,” according to Kristian Anderson, senior vice president of global sales for Uniworld Boutique River Cruises. “It marries the immersive experience of a land package with the mobility of the ocean cruise. If you’ve got passengers that have been on a land package or an ocean cruise, then you’ve got clients ready for a river cruise.”

Joni Rein, vice president of Emerald Waterways and Scenic USA concurs, for the most part. “While the transition from ocean to river is a natural, it is actually the land resort and tour demographic that is the most likely to purchase a river cruise. The key to determining which of the travel agent’s guests is most likely to purchase it would be the adventurous, active and those with a desire to sail the European waters.”





The benefits of a river cruise aren't reserved for just the client.

For Avalon Waterways Managing Director Terri Burke, it all comes down to an acronym—an acronym that just happens to spell RIVER. “R’ stands for Room with a view. The number one reason people want to go on a river cruise is the vistas. All of our staterooms have open-air balconies,” said Burke. “I’ is for Immersion. You’re in the town center, you only have to unpack once and the immersion in the destination really shows itself in the special-interest cruises. ‘V’ is for Value. There are less people so there is value in the overall space proposition as well as the value in terms of the all-inclusive tours, entertainment and wine and beer.”

Burke continued, “Getting certified to sell river cruises is why ‘E’ stands for education. And finally, ‘R’ is for what else but Repeat. Ocean cruises make up 84 percent of onboard guests so if you’re a travel agent and you have a very robust list of ocean cruisers, what a great way to get them to repeat again with you by offering them a river cruise.”

Domestic river cruising (USA) also compares favorably to international river cruising, with its own unique benefits, pointed out Ted Sykes, president and COO of American Queen Steamboat Company. “There is no long haul air travel through multiple time zones, no foreign language or foreign currency to deal with and on a domestic river cruise, passengers are always within range of quality U.S. medical care.”

Knowing which river cruise

experience is best suited for your client comes down to education. Almost all of the river cruise suppliers offer training and certification programs to empower travel agents with the tools to sell this product.

“The well-informed travel advisor is his/her client’s most valuable asset,” said Mary Murrin, North America Account Manager for Tauck River Cruising. Tauck is just one of many suppliers who offer online certification, webinar sales training and access to sales support teams. What’s more, once certified, the majority of suppliers will refer consumers on their website to agents who have completed their programs and invite travel agent partners to participate in specially-priced familiarization cruises.

TRAVEL AGENT RETURNS MAKE NICHE WORTHWHILE

The benefits of a river cruise aren’t reserved for just the client. Travel agents can receive robust commission earnings from this segment and guest satisfaction scores typically exceed that of ocean cruising. Rein suggests travel agents capitalize on this segment further by looking to group travelers such as active cyclists, food and wine enthusiasts or the incentive travel market. This has been made easier with the recent introduction of special-interest, discovery and adventure-themed river cruising itineraries that are also helping to dispel the myth that river cruising is reserved for the mature market.

In fact, more and more of these

suppliers are diversifying their experiences to identify with the interests of all demographics and age groups, and the response has been overwhelming.

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises recently unveiled ‘B’, its first river cruise ship designed and created to cater to the Millennial generation, ages 21-45. According to Uniworld’s Anderson, there is not one place to sit onboard that doesn’t have a port for charging your phone. “Shore excursions for this ship have been designed to accommodate the tastes and preferences of Millennials. For example, they go longer into the evening and they start later in the day.”

Riviera River Cruises supports the travel agent channel through an agent portal that allows them to book and hold space online 24/7. What’s more, the supplier offers lifetime commissions to travel agents who have initiated a sale with them. “Even if the customer comes in direct the second time around, the agent that brought them to us originally will get the commission,” said Jana Tvedt, the company’s vice president, noting that only working with a different agent would invalidate that contract.

“I think it’s a powerful trend that some companies are aggressively marketing to clients directly. We want the travel agent community to know they are an important part of building our business and we are here to support them and not take their clients away.”



PREFERRED PARTNERS

Over half of respondents said they either currently have or are in the process of developing a travel agency referral program for preferred agencies. Some have a minimum sales requirement, while others note that the programs are by invitation only.

chart06

preferred partners

River Cruise Line	Does your website/ company have a travel agency referral program for preferred agencies?	If yes, how do agents get onto the referral/ preferred list?
AmaWaterways	YES	AGENTS CAN BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE BASED ON ACHIEVING SPECIFIC LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE CRITERIA
American Queen Steamboat Company	NO	N/A
Avalon Waterways	YES	BECOME AVALON WATERWAYS SPECIALIST, PRODUCE MINIMUM OF \$7500 ANNUALLY TO BE LISTED AND PRODUCE \$20K ANNUALLY FOR "CLICK TO CONNECT"
Belmond	YES	BY INVITATION
CroisiEurope	NO	N/A
Crystal River Cruises	NO	N/A
Emerald Waterways	NO ¹	N/A
Riviera River Cruises	NO	N/A
Scenic	NO ¹	N/A
Tauck	NO	N/A
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	NO	N/A
Victoria Cruises	YES	WE REFER CLIENTS TO TOUR OPERATOR PARTNERS
Viking River Cruises	NO	N/A

¹ One is under development



chart07

co-op marketing

River Cruise Line	Do you provide co-op marketing to individual agencies?	If yes, how does an agency qualify for co-op marketing?
AmaWaterways	YES	AGENCY MUST AGREE ON A BUSINESS PLAN WITH THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER IN THEIR AREA
American Queen Steamboat Company	YES	AGENCY WILL NEED TO CONTACT THEIR REGIONAL SALES DIRECTOR OR MARKETING. CO-OP IS DEPENDENT ON PRIOR YEAR REVENUE PERFORMANCE (TIER-BASED)
Avalon Waterways	YES	BUSINESS/MARKETING PLAN MUTUALLY AGREED UPON WITH AGENCY & BDM
Belmond	YES	BASED ON REVENUE PRODUCTION
CroisiEurope	YES	BASED ON COMMITMENT WITH PLAN OF ACTION
Crystal River Cruises	YES	BASED ON THE DETERMINATION OF THE SBDM
Emerald Waterways	YES	TRAVEL PARTNER SHOULD CONSULT WITH THEIR BDM TO WORK OUT A MUTUALLY AGREED TO MARKETING PLAN
Riviera River Cruises	YES	IT VARIES CASE-TO-CASE
Scenic	YES	TRAVEL PARTNER SHOULD CONSULT WITH THEIR BDM TO WORK OUT A MUTUALLY AGREED TO MARKETING PLAN
Tauck	NO	
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES	VARIES BY SITUATION, NEED TO WORK WITH SALES MANAGER
Victoria Cruises	YES	IT IS REVIEWED ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS
Viking River Cruises	YES	AGENTS SHOULD CONTACT THEIR VIKING DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



MARK-UPS

Over fifty percent of lines surveyed said they do not allow agencies to mark up any fares or pricing. Those that do, only allow mark-ups with group or packaged bookings.

chart 03

mark-ups

River Cruise Line	Do you allow agencies to mark-up any fares/pricing?	If so, is there a fee to cover expenses (credit card fees, etc.) How much is the fee? Is there a cap to the markup?
AmaWaterways	YES 1	N/A
American Queen Steamboat Company	YES 2	NO CAP, BUT FEES ARE DEPENDENT ON ADD-ONS (LIKE EXCURSIONS, HOTEL NIGHTS, OTHER LAND TOURS, BEVERAGE PACKAGES)
Avalon Waterways	NO	
Belmond	NO	
CroisiEurope	NO	
Crystal River Cruises	NO	
Emerald Waterways	YES 3	
Riviera River Cruises	NO	N/A
Scenic	YES 3	N/A
Tauck	NO	
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	NO	
Victoria Cruises	YES 4	HANDLED BY TOUR OPERATOR
Viking River Cruises	NO	

1 Charters and part charters are priced on a net basis therefore travel agents may mark up accordingly

2 Yes, but as part of a group packaged cruise, not individuals with cruise only

3 Groups only

4 If the cruise is included in a package, the entire package is marked up by the agent or operator

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chart 09

consumer-agent issues

River Cruise Line	Do you prominently display the agency's name and phone in confirmations and documents?	Do you currently take consumer email addresses from travel agent bookings? Do you use emails for direct-to-consumer marketing campaigns?	Do you make your product and prices fully available in all GDSs, B2B websites with log-ins, call centers, and other portals?
AmaWaterways	YES	YES ¹	YES
American Queen Steamboat Company	YES	YES ²	YES
Avalon Waterways	YES	YES ³	YES ⁶
Belmond	YES	YES ⁴	NO
CroisiEurope	YES	NO	YES
Crystal River Cruises	YES	NO	YES
Emerald Waterways	YES	YES	YES
Riviera River Cruises	NO	YES ⁵	NO
Scenic	YES	YES	YES
Tauck	YES	YES ⁷	YES
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES	YES ¹	YES
Victoria Cruises	YES	NO	NO
Viking River Cruises	YES	YES ¹	YES

Chart 9 continues to next page.

¹ Includes "call your travel agent" call-to-action
² If given voluntarily by passenger or agent
³ Only for emergency communication

⁴ Only if consumer opts-in
⁵ Only with permission and all includes "call your travel agent" call-to-action
⁶ Sabre and passport online
⁷ Not used for direct marketing



chart09

consumer-agent issues

River Cruise Line	When marketing to past agency clients, do you include the booking agency's call to action?	If you do direct-to-consumer marketing, do you include a "call your travel agent" call to action all of the time? Some of the time? Not at all?	Do you allow agencies to rebate to their clients?
AmaWaterways	YES	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
American Queen Steamboat Company	YES	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
Avalon Waterways	NO	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
Belmond	YES	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
CroisiEurope	N/A	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
Crystal River Cruises	NO	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
Emerald Waterways	NO ⁸	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
Riviera River Cruises	NO ⁹	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
Scenic	NO ⁸	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
Tauck	YES	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	NO	ALL OF THE TIME	NO
Victoria Cruises	DECLINE TO ANSWER.	ALL OF THE TIME	YES
Viking River Cruises	YES	ALL OF THE TIME	NO

⁸ Currently under development to do so

⁹ Technology not in place



CRUISE ACCREDITATION

To qualify for commissions, the majority of river cruise lines accept one of the following accreditations: IATAN, CLIA ARC. Others have agreements with consortia and preferred agency groups.

chart 10

cruise accreditation

River Cruise Line	IATAN?	CLIA?	ARC?
AmaWaterways	YES	YES	YES
American Queen Steamboat Company	NO	NO	NO
Avalon Waterways	YES	YES	YES
Belmond	YES	YES	NO
CroisiEurope	YES	YES	YES
Crystal River Cruises	YES	YES	YES
Emerald Waterways	YES	YES	YES
Riviera River Cruises	YES	YES	NO
Scenic	YES	YES	YES
Tauck	YES	YES	YES
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES	YES	YES
Victoria Cruises	YES	YES	YES
Viking River Cruises	YES	YES	YES

Chart 10 continues to next page.



CRUISE ACCREDITATION

To qualify for commissions, the majority of river cruise lines accept one of the following accreditations: IATAN, CLIA ARC. Others have agreements with consortia and preferred agency groups.

chart 10

cruise accreditation

River Cruise Line	Consortium Affiliation?	Other?
AmaWaterways	YES 1	TRUE, TICO (ONTARIO), OPC (QUEBEC)
American Queen Steamboat Company	NO	LIBERTY / FLIGHTCENTRE, NEXION, VALERIE WILSON, CRUISE PLANNERS
Avalon Waterways	YES 2	TRUE
Belmond	YES 3	
CroisiEurope	YES 4	
Crystal River Cruises	YES 1	TRUE, CODE
Emerald Waterways	NO	TOUR OPERATOR, TRAVEL BUSINESS LICENSE, SELLER OF TRAVEL LICENSE
Riviera River Cruises	NO	
Scenic	NO	TOUR OPERATOR, TRAVEL BUSINESS LICENSE, SELLER OF TRAVEL LICENSE
Tauck	YES 5	
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES 6	
Victoria Cruises	YES 7	
Viking River Cruises	YES 1	TRUE

1 All major consortia

2 All but AAA

3 All main U.S., E.U., and U.K. consortiums

4 Liberty Travel, TRAVELSAVERS, Nest, Oasis, CruiseOne-Dream Vacations, Cruise Planners

5 AAA, AMEX, ATC, Ensemble, Mast, STN, TFG, VCM, Virtuoso

6 AAA, Signature, Virtuoso, Ensemble, American Express

7 Tour operator affiliations

STEADY AS SHE GOES: WHAT RIVER CRUISE LINES HAVE PLANNED FOR 2018

By Maria Lisella

The latest trends cater to active travelers, food and wine aficionados, history buffs, wellness seekers, and Millennials.

Interest in river cruises and traveling onboard ships with a smaller passenger capacity is on the rise among travelers, according to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

“The small ship sector is a vital and constantly evolving part of the overall cruise industry that excels at creating unmatched travel experiences, making it more popular than ever,” said Cindy D’Aoust, president and CEO, CLIA.

The newest trends showcase itineraries for active travelers, food and wine aficionados, history buffs, wellness seekers, and at least one company is reaching out to convince Millennials that river cruises are not just for their parents.

Here is a roundup of new ships and expanded itineraries being offered by river cruise operators around the globe in 2018.

AmaWaterways first embraced the active travel trend back in 2006, when the company added 25 bicycles onboard each European ship. Earlier this year, AmaWaterways introduced a wellness program onboard the AmaLyra Paris & Normandy that will soon appear on additional ships in 2018. By 2019, the company will take active travel one step further with the debut of AmaMagna. At twice the width of traditional European vessels, the AmaMagna will feature a retractable water sports platform

and expanded fitness and spa facilities. AmaWaterways has also boosted its 2018 Wine Cruise lineup with 50-plus itineraries hosted by North American winemakers.

With American Queen Steamboat Company, travelers may want to start planning their 2018 holidays on the American Queen, the American Empress or the American Duchess exploring the waters and towns throughout the heartland of America and the Pacific. The 2018 season includes family suites onboard the American Queen; new American Duchess itineraries on the Ohio, Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers as well as on the Upper Mississippi and Illinois River that includes a nine-day Kentucky Derby-focused tour from Louisville to Cincinnati; and Pacific Northwest Adventure themed cruises on the American Empress include soft adventures such as kayaking or ziplining.

Next year, Avalon will expand its ever-growing list of special interest itineraries to include wine, culinary, beer, jazz, music and opera, art, history and Jewish Heritage. The author of the No. 1 New York Times bestselling *Outlander* novels and godmother to the Avalon Tapestry II, Diana Gabaldon is hosting an Author Cruise with Avalon Waterways in 2018, an 11-day vacation to the heart of Europe and the towns and cities along the Danube River. Also

new for 2018 is a Tulip Time Cruise for Garden Enthusiasts that gains access to some of the spectacular private gardens and courtyards of 17th-century homes.

A family business founded in 1976, CroisiEurope operates 50 cruise boats, including canal barges in France and a maritime coastal ship. The MS Elbe Princesse II, due to be inaugurated in February 2018, will be the third paddlewheel ship in the fleet. Like its sister ship, the Elbe Princesse will accommodate 90 guests in 45 outward-facing cabins. Two existing ships in the fleet, the MS Van Gogh and the MS Renoir, will undergo complete rebuilds and will be transformed to become the latest 5-anchor ships to join the fleet.

The European 2018 itineraries include an eight-day trip around the island of Corsica; a new coastal sail on the MS La Belle de l’Adriatique along the French Riviera; and foodies will delight in CroisiEurope’s new Italian gastronomy-themed itinerary that starts in Naples and travels the coastline of Southern Italy.

Earlier this year, CroisiEurope inaugurated its newest ship, the RV Indochine II, on the Mekong River in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Finally, a sister ship to the soon-to-launch RV African Dream is already in the works and set to debut late next year.



“The small ship sector is a vital and constantly evolving part of the overall cruise industry...”

Emerald Waterways is adding three new cruise itineraries on the Rhine river in Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Belgium for 2018. Additionally, Emerald has upped the ante for the 2018 sailing season with 17 new EmeraldACTIVE excursions taking place on their European itineraries. In 2018, guests can choose from a canoe trip in Pocinho, Portugal; new biking tours through some of Vienna, Bernkastle and Hoorn; and new hiking trips including a tour of some of the picturesque vineyard and orchards around Tournon, France, and a trek to Castle Hill in Budapest.

European river cruise operator Riviera Travel launched four new ships this year, and with a fifth ship coming in the spring 2018, this will double the size of its five-star fleet. The all-suite MS Emily Brontë, MS Thomas Hardy, MS Oscar Wilde and MS Robert Burns will sail the Rhine, Main and Danube Rivers, as well as tributaries; while the Douro Elegance will sail the Douro River.

Through a partnership with French-owned cruise line Ponant, Tauck will bring four Ponant new-builds into the fold starting with Le Lapérouse in summer 2018. By 2020, Tauck expects to be sailing a total of nine ships. Tauck's European river cruises for 2018 include two all-new cruise itineraries, the debut of two redesigned ships, and enhancements to the shore excursions. New itineraries include the Danube and Rhine; the Royal

Danube, Berlin & Krakow and the Rhine Enchantment, Milan to Amsterdam; Tauck has merged the Rhone, French Waterways and A Taste of France to form the 10-day “Savoring France: Paris, Lyon & Provence.”

The big news at Uniworld is that it will add a fifth super ship to its fleet. The River Beatrice, first launched back in 2009, is about to receive a bow-to-stern renovation with grand staircase, a private dining area, and three new suites by the time it sets off on its maiden voyage on April 4, 2018. The design team from Red Carnation Hotels will oversee redesign of the public spaces and rooms. High-tech amenities will also be added. The River Beatrice's transformation will coincide with the official launch of U by Uniworld, the company's new brand and the first river cruise line exclusively designed for travelers ages 21-45.

Sailings on U by Uniworld's ship dubbed The B, and its other ship called The A, will begin in April 2018 with prices starting at \$200 per person per day. Four eight-day itineraries – The Seine Experience, Rolling on the Rhine, Germany's Finest and The Danube Flow – will sail along the Rhine, Main, Danube and Seine Rivers, with overnight stops and longer stays available in major cities including Paris, Vienna, Amsterdam and Budapest. Also, building on its wellness initiative, Uniworld will sail its new, seven-

night “Port and Pedal” program, featuring daily biking excursions, in May, June, and September 2018 aboard the S.S. Antoinette.

Victoria Cruises has transformed a technological improvement into an excursion on its Three Gorges itinerary. After installing the world's largest ship elevator that allows passengers to bypass the slow and arduous five-stage ship locks, passengers can experience the new ship lift on a specially designed sightseeing boat followed by a tour of the world's largest hydroelectric dam – another feat of modern engineering. Otherwise, the line will continue operating its current portfolio of itineraries in 2018.

According to a presentation Viking River Cruises Chairman Torstein Hagen made earlier this month, Viking has doubled its share of the river cruise market since 2010 to 50 percent of the North American pie. The classic river cruises remain popular, according to Hagen, such as the Grand European Tour from Amsterdam to Budapest, and the Waterways of the Tsars from Moscow to St. Petersburg. However, the company will be returning to Egypt in 2018 with a new ship design and itinerary. Agents can expect to see six new Viking Longships for the Rhine, Main and Danube; and a new one that will set sail on the Douro. Viking River Cruises will add seven new ships in 2019 bringing its fleet up to 69 total, by far the most of any river cruise line.

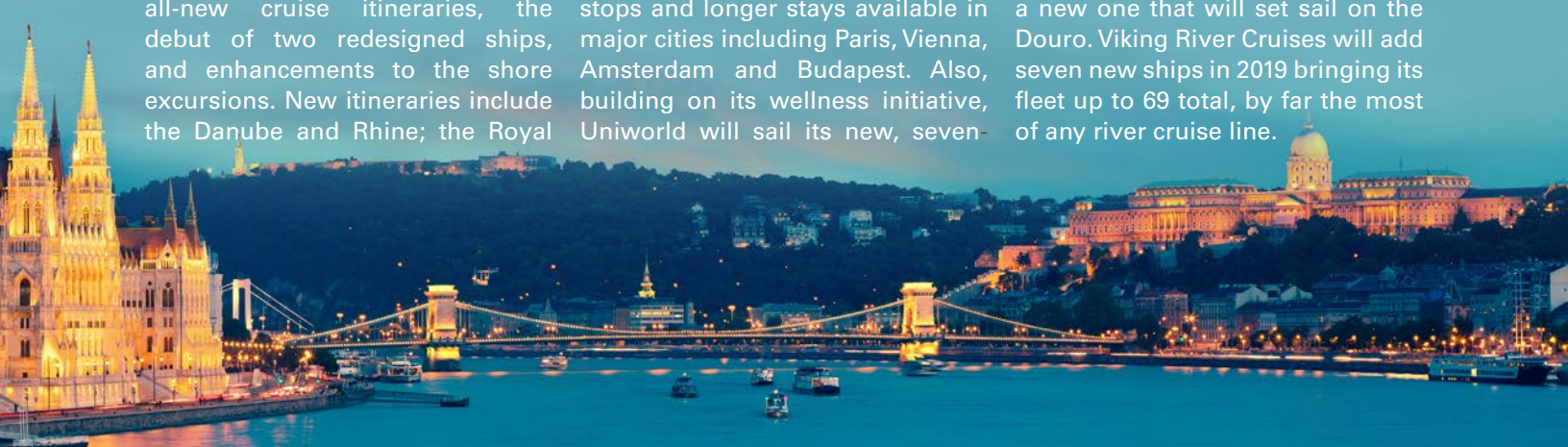




chart 11

fam trip policy

River Cruise Line

What is your familiarization trip policy for travel agents?

AmaWaterways	FAMS ARE OFFERED 60 DAYS PRIOR TO DEPARTURE AND ARE SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY
American Queen Steamboat Company	FAMS ARE OFFERED ON SOME SUMMER AND WINTER SAILINGS FROM TIME TO TIME AND BOOKABLE INSIDE 30 DAYS OF DEPARTURE ONLY
Avalon Waterways	AGENT MUST BE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED WITH AGENCY, PRODUCING MORE THAN 5 TRAVELED PASSENGERS ANNUALLY
Belmond	SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY AND BASED ON PRODUCTION OF THE AGENCY. NOT CONFIRMED MORE THAN 60 DAYS FROM DEPARTURE
CroisiEurope	OFFERS A 50% DISCOUNT PER PERSON BASED ON AVAILABILITY
Crystal River Cruises	FAMS ARE OFFERED ON SELECT SAILINGS THROUGHOUT THE SEASON AT SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED RATES
Emerald Waterways	DISCOUNTED RATES ARE AVAILABLE FOR TRAVEL PARTNERS THROUGH BDMS
Riviera River Cruises	FAMS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST
Scenic	DISCOUNTED RATES ARE AVAILABLE FOR TRAVEL PARTNERS THROUGH BDMS
Tauck	FAMS HAVE BEEN REPLACED WITH OUR AGENT REWARDS PROGRAM, WHICH ALLOWS AGENTS TO EARN POINTS BASED ON TRAVELED PASSENGERS TO APPLY TOWARDS THEIR PERSONAL TRAVEL WITH TAUCK
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	FAMS OFFERED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR
Victoria Cruises	OFFERED THROUGH TOUR OPERATORS, AT WHOSE DISCRETION PARTICIPANTS ARE ACCEPTED
Viking River Cruises	FAM TRIPS ARE AVAILABLE BASED ON AVAILABILITY AND DEMAND

Chart 11 continues to next page.



chart **11**

fam trip policy

River Cruise Line	What is your policy for promoting fam trips to agents and how do agents sign up?	Do you have travel agent rates for agents to experience your products?
AmaWaterways	FAM DATES AND APPLICATIONS ARE ON THE TRAVEL AGENT PORTAL ON OUR WEBSITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES ¹
American Queen Steamboat Company	FAM OPPORTUNITIES ARE ANNOUNCED VIA EMAIL AT VARYING TIMES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. AGENTS WOULD COMPLETE A FAM REQUEST FORM AND SEND IT TO OUR OFFICE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES ²
Avalon Waterways	OPEN TO ALL AGENTS VIA THE GLOBUS FAMILY WEBSITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES
Belmond	ORGANIZED FAM TRIPS ARE BY INVITATION ONLY; INDIVIDUAL FAM TRIP REQUESTS ARE QUALIFIED BASED ON AVAILABILITY AND PRODUCTION OF THE AGENCY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES
CroisiEurope	ESCORTED FAMS ARE ORGANIZED SEVERAL TIMES A YEAR BY INVITATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES
Crystal River Cruises	AVAILABLE ON CRYSTAL TRAVEL AGENT RESOURCE CENTER AND THROUGH BLAST EMAILS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES
Emerald Waterways	WILL BE PROMOTED TO AGENTS WHO HAVE SIGNED UP TO PARTNER WITH US THROUGH OUR WEBSITE OR THEIR BDM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES
Riviera River Cruises	AVAILABLE ON REQUEST THROUGH RIVIERA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES
Scenic	WILL BE PROMOTED TO AGENTS WHO HAVE SIGNED UP TO PARTNER WITH US THROUGH OUR WEBSITE OR THEIR BDM	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES
Tauck	FAM TRIPS WE ARE ABLE TO OFFER ARE INVITATION ONLY BY OUR NATIONAL ACCOUNT MANAGERS WHO HOST THE TRIPS	<input type="checkbox"/> NO ³
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	WE PROMOTE THROUGH E-MAIL BLAST AND YOU CAN SIGN UP BY CALLING 1800-733-7820	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES
Victoria Cruises	HANDLED THROUGH AFFILIATED TOUR OPERATORS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES ⁴
Viking River Cruises	TRAVEL AGENTS CAN CONTACT THEIR VIKING DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND/OR INSIDE SALES FOR AVAILABILITY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES

¹ FAM rates can start from as little as \$90 usd per person per day for each occupant in a double-occupancy stateroom beginning in base category

² It would be a FAM trip rate

³ Not since launch of Agent Rewards program

⁴ 40% discount, depending on availability



chart 12

types of training

River Cruise Line	Seminars in agency office?	Regional training seminars?	Video training?	Teleconference /webinar training?	Certification program as specialists?
AmaWaterways	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
American Queen Steamboat Company	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Avalon Waterways	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Belmond	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
CroisiEurope	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Crystal River Cruises	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
Emerald Waterways	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Riviera River Cruises	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Scenic	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Tauck	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Victoria Cruises	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Viking River Cruises	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES



Europe's Highest Rated Ships?

AS A MATTER OF FACT, WE ARE. When editors of the renowned Berlitz Travel Guide publish their list of Europe's Top Ten riverships, all ten start with Ama. Yes. They do.

How did we get there? By saying yes. Yes to onboard luxury. Of course to active, innovating events and excursions. Absolutely to the best in fine wines and gourmet dining with local flair.

And we'll always say YES to you. Do we mean it? *Yes, of course we do.*



Highest Rated
River Cruise Ships in Europe



2017 Cruise Critic Awards Named AmaWaterways:
Best River Cruise Line • Best River Cruise for Active Cruisers



TRAINING IS THE KEY TO RIVER CRUISE SALES SUCCESS

By Kerry Tice

An investment in knowledge can reap limitless returns. Travel agents and suppliers would most likely agree this is true for every product they sell, but perhaps none more than the river cruise market. The value of an educated travel advisor is sometimes taken for granted by consumers, but for the agents themselves, becoming educated on this specialized product can pay off in spades. Commissions on the bundled amenities within a river cruise package can far outweigh the piecemeal components of land programs, making it easier for travel agents to earn more. But, first, they must harness the knowledge.

Turning a call into a sale is all about asking the right questions, according to Mary Murrin, North America Account Manager for Tauck River Cruising.

“One of the most surprising elements of our market research is how often even the most experienced agent neglects to adequately qualify the initial inquiry. We encourage our partners to ask the following: Who is calling? Why do they want to travel? What have they enjoyed in the past? And, what is their budget? Becoming your client’s sage advisor and advocate is invaluable.”

Offering insight beyond what a consumer can read online is what separates travel advisors from their counterparts and that knowledge is delivered best through supplier training programs.

“Nothing can do more for your business than showing that you’ve invested in it,” advised Terri Burke, managing director of Avalon Waterways, which like its competitors, hosts multiple online universities for agents to take part in. “As consumers, we look for attorneys and doctors with certifications and licenses ... you really need to talk to your customers [and tell them you’re a specialist] because they respect that.”

While a 10-year veteran in Europe, Riviera River Cruises is new to the U.S. market, having just opened its office in the states

earlier this year. Understanding the importance of educating travel agents, Riviera launched its first travel agent academy course in November. It includes an overview of the brand and updates on six new ships that are coming on line in 2017-18. Webinars are also scheduled to debut within the next few months. In response to travel agent demand, American Queen Steamboat Company also recently introduced its own agent training program called “Steamboat Academy,” a series of educational webinars that offer certification after the successful completion of each module.

Getting Down To Specifics

For Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, the company’s approach to education is in detailed training, according to Kristian Anderson, senior vice president of global sales. “We really get into the specifics. We come out with a new program every 18 months so folks can refresh themselves on the new ships or offerings. The information is constantly changing and we want our travel partners to be aware of that every step of the way. Our primary mission is to make it relevant, user-friendly and up to date.” What’s more, once certified, the majority of suppliers, including Uniworld, will refer consumers on their website to agents who have completed their programs.

Differentiation is the focus of travel agent training efforts from Crystal River Cruises. Through webinars, module training and first-hand experience by travel agent partners, the company is intent on articulating what makes Crystal unique so travel agents can better qualify the sale. “It’s critical that we actually speak more to our differences so our travel partners can articulate that to their clients,” said Walter Littlejohn, vice president and managing director of Crystal River Cruises. “We have to make sure that the guest is well informed as to how we’re unique and special and how that is going to turn into a great vacation for them. We want them to know this is the experience that they wanted, not just what they *thought* they wanted.”

According to Yann Guezennec, Belmond’s worldwide sales and marketing director for trains and cruises, it all comes down to enthusiasm. “At Belmond we invite agents to presentations throughout the year. We also do regular webinars and invite agents to register on our intranet, which is a mine of the latest information and a really useful resource. For the most enthusiastic, we also organize group or individual educationals.”

For a supplier training directory listing, go to the [Travel Market Report training tab](#).





COMMISSION FARE INCLUSIONS

While base fares and government taxes appeared to be the norm for most river cruise lines in terms of what is included in the commission fare, the inclusion of other services such as spa, dining, port charges, shore excursions and insurance varied.

chart 13

what is included in your fare?

River Cruise Line	Base fare?	Government taxes?	Ancillary services?	Spa services?
AmaWaterways	YES	YES	YES ¹	NO
American Queen Steamboat Company	YES	NO	N/A	NO
Avalon Waterways	YES	N/A	NO	NO
Belmond	YES	YES	NO	NO
CroisiEurope	YES	YES	NO	NO
Crystal River Cruises	YES	NO	YES	NO
Emerald Waterways	YES	NO	NO	NO
Riviera Travel	YES	YES	NO	NO
Scenic	YES	YES	SOME	YES
Tauck	YES	YES	YES	NO
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES	YES	NO	NO
Victoria Cruises	YES	YES	YES	NO
Viking River Cruises	YES	YES	YES	N/A

Chart 13 continues to next page.

¹ Onboard Laundry not included except for suites



BY THE NUMBERS:

- Emerald Waterways and Scenic River Cruises are the only two lines who include insurance in their commissionable fare.
- It was almost an even split between those river cruise lines that include gratuity in their fare versus those that do not.
- None of the lines include airfare, though some do allow travel agents to add it in their packages.

chart **13**

what is included in your fare?

River Cruise Line	Dining packages?	Shore excursions?	Port charges?	Insurance?
AmaWaterways	N/A	YES	NO	NO
American Queen Steamboat Company	N/A	YES ²	NO	NO
Avalon Waterways	N/A	YES ²	NO	NO
Belmond	YES	YES	YES	NO
CroisiEurope	YES	YES	YES	NO
Crystal River Cruises	YES	YES	NO	NO
Emerald Waterways	N/A	YES ³	YES	YES
Riviera Travel	YES	YES	YES	NO
Scenic	N/A	YES	YES	YES
Tauck	YES	YES	YES	NO
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES	YES	YES	NO
Victoria Cruises	YES ⁵	YES ⁴	YES	NO
Viking River Cruises	YES	YES	YES	NO

Chart 13 continues to next page.

² Premium excursions are charged
³ Discover More excursions are charged
⁴ Quoted separately but included in packages
⁵ A la carte meals are additional



chart 13

what is included in your fare?

River Cruise Line	Gratuities?	Transfers?	Airfare?
AmaWaterways	NO	NO ⁷	NO ⁶
American Queen Steamboat Company	NO	YES	NO
Avalon Waterways	YES ¹⁰	NO ⁷	NO
Belmond	NO	NO	NO
CroisiEurope	NO	NO ⁶	NO ⁶
Crystal River Cruises	YES	YES	NO
Emerald Waterways	YES	YES	NO ⁸
Riviera Travel	NO	NO	NO
Scenic	YES ⁹	NO ⁷	NO ⁸
Tauck	YES	YES	NO
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES	YES	NO
Victoria Cruises	NO	NO	NO
Viking River Cruises	NO	NO ⁷	NO ⁸

Chart 13 continues to next page.

⁶ Is available

¹⁰ With groups

⁷ Yes if air package is included

⁸ Though it can be, depending on promotional offer

⁹ Onboard and tours



chart13

what is included in your fare?

River Cruise Line	Hotel accommodations?	Pre- and post tours?	Others?
AmaWaterways	YES 11	YES 11	WIFI, ENTERTAINMENT ON DEMAND SYSTEM
American Queen Steamboat Company	YES 12	NO	WIFI, WINE/BEER, BOTTLED WATER, SOFT DRINKS, SOFT SERVED ICE CREAM
Avalon Waterways	YES 13	NO	
Belmond	NO	NO	
CroisiEurope	NO 6	NO 6	
Crystal River Cruises	NO	NO	
Emerald Waterways	NO	NO	ONE COMPLIMENTARY PREMIUM EXCURSION
Riviera Travel	NO	NO	
Scenic	NO	NO	ENRICH TOURS, SUNDOWNERS EVENTS
Tauck	YES	NO	
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES 14	NO	WIFI
Victoria Cruises	NO	NO	WIFI, EXCLUSIVE HAPPY HOUR, BEER AND WINE WITH DINNER
Viking River Cruises	YES 15	NO 16	ACCESS TO EXCLUSIVE SHIP AREAS, SPECIALTY COFFEES AND TEAS, BOTTLE WATER, WIFI, IN-ROOM ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

6 Is available

11 When purchasing Cruise/Land program

12 One pre-cruise hotel night

13 When part of itinerary

14 With some products

15 When cruisetour, pre- or post- packages are purchased

16 Hotel packages are available



PRICING

The good news on the pricing front is none of the river cruise lines add a surcharge for merchant fees on credit card purchases. Also, most lines have local partners or offices in the regions they are traveling to, ensuring your clients have on-site assistance.

chart 14

pricing

River Cruise Line	Is pricing based on US dollars or is it priced in local currency when outside of the United States?	Do you add a surcharge on credit cards to cover merchant fees?	Do you have local partners or offices from the region you are traveling to?
AmaWaterways	USD AND CAD	NO	YES
American Queen Steamboat Company	USD	NO	YES
Avalon Waterways	USD	NO	YES
Belmond	LOCAL OPERATING CURRENCY ON ALL SAILINGS	NO	YES
CroisiEurope	USD AND EUR	NO	YES
Crystal River Cruises	USD	NO	YES
Emerald Waterways	USD	NO	YES
Riviera Travel	USD	NO	YES
Scenic	USD	NO	YES
Tauck	USD, AUD, CAD & GBP	NO	YES
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	USD	NO	YES
Victoria Cruises	USD	NO	YES
Viking River Cruises	USD AND CAD	NO	YES



CHANGE FEES

By the numbers:

- Belmond and Victoria are the only lines to allow all four changes without a charge for the first one. Crystal, which doesn't allow for name changes, doesn't charge for date changes outside of 90 days from departure, cabin/room upgrades, or cabin/room downgrades.

chart 15

change fees

River Cruise Line	Name changes?	Date changes?	Cabin/room upgrades?	Cabin/room downgrades?
AmaWaterways	YES	YES	NO	CASE-BY-CASE
American Queen Steamboat Company	YES	YES	NO	YES
Avalon Waterways	YES	YES	YES	YES
Belmond	NO ¹	NO ¹	NO	NO
CroisiEurope	NO	BASED ON AVAILABILITY	BASED ON CABIN CATEGORY	BASED ON CABIN CATEGORY
Crystal River Cruises	NOT ALLOWED	NO ³	NO	NO
Emerald Waterways	YES ²	YES ²	NO	NO
Riviera River Cruises	YES ⁴	YES ⁴	NO	NO
Scenic	YES ²	YES ²	NO	NO
Tauck	NOT ALLOWED	NO	YES	NOT ALLOWED
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	YES ⁵	YES ⁵	NO	NO
Victoria Cruises	NO	NO	NO	NO
Viking River Cruises	YES	YES	NO	NO

¹ Charges after first
² \$100 inside of 90 days
³ Charges inside of 90 days from departure

⁴ \$20
⁵ \$30



chart **16**

water level issues

River Cruise Line

What is your policy when it comes to high or low water levels? Are commissions protected in the event of refunds?

AmaWaterways	EACH INCIDENT IS EVALUATED SEPARATELY AND GUESTS ARE GENEROUSLY COMPENSATED BASED ON THE IMPACT IT MAY HAVE HAD ON THE ENJOYMENT OF THEIR CRUISE.
American Queen Steamboat Company	WE OPERATE WITH A DEVIATED ITINERARY DURING HIGH/LOW WATER LEVELS, PRESERVING AS MUCH OF THE ORIGINAL ITINERARY AS POSSIBLE. COMMISSIONS ARE PROTECTED IN THE EVENT OF FULL CRUISE CANCELLATION THAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COMPANY AND NOT FORCE MAJEURE / "ACT OF GOD".
Avalon Waterways	COMMISSIONS ARE PROTECTED.
Belmond	COMMISSIONS ARE PROTECTED.
CroisiEurope	WITH 41 YEARS AS RIVER CRUISE PIONEERS WE HAVE SHIPS DESIGNED BASED ON EACH RIVER THEREFORE WE HAVE LITTLE OR NO ISSUES WITH SUCH SITUATIONS.
Crystal River Cruises	COMMISSIONS ARE PROTECTED.
Emerald Waterways	THE GUEST IS PROTECTED WITH OUR RIVER CRUISING GUARANTEE AND IN THE EVENT A CLAIM IS REQUIRED DUE TO A HIGH OR LOW WATER SITUATION THEY WILL BE REFUNDED IN CASH OR IN THE ORIGINAL FORM OF PAYMENT; TRAVEL PARTNER COMMISSIONS ARE PROTECTED.
Riviera Travel	EVERY SITUATION IS DIFFERENT AND MAY REQUIRE ITINERARY CHANGES. PROTECTION OF TRAVEL AGENT COMMISSION IS DETERMINED ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS.
Scenic	THE GUEST IS PROTECTED WITH OUR RIVER CRUISING GUARANTEE AND IN THE EVENT A CLAIM IS REQUIRED DUE TO A HIGH OR LOW WATER SITUATION THEY WILL BE REFUNDED IN CASH OR IN THE ORIGINAL FORM OF PAYMENT; TRAVEL PARTNER COMMISSIONS ARE PROTECTED.
Tauck	HIGH OR LOW WATER LEVELS ARE TREATED ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS.
Uniworld Boutique River Cruises	VARIES BY THE SITUATION.
Victoria Cruises	WE CURRENTLY CONTINUE TO OPERATE, WE HAVE A FAIR DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY AND WE DO NOT CANCEL SAILINGS. IF RIVER CONDITIONS PREVENT US FROM ACCESSING ONE OF THE RIVER TRIBUTARIES FOR CHINESE SAMPAN EXCURSION WE HAVE SCHEDULED FOR THAT DEPARTURE, THERE ARE OTHER TRIBUTARIES WE CAN SUBSTITUTE IN ITS PLACE.
Viking River Cruises	DUE TO VIKING'S IDENTICAL FLEET OF SISTER SHIPS, WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO PERFORM A SHIP SWAP AND GUESTS ARE RARELY AFFECTED BY HIGH OR LOW WATER SITUATIONS. IN THE EVENT A CANCELLATION DOES OCCUR, COMMISSIONS ARE PROTECTED IF WITHIN 29 DAYS OF SAILING.

UNPREDICTABLE WATER LEVELS IN EUROPE AND THE PROBLEMS THEY CAUSE

By Daniel McCarthy

Cruise lines offer contingency plans when dealing with water level headaches.

Any travel agent booking river cruises needs to educate themselves about the industry's most common, and most annoying, problem: water levels.

Ever since river cruising became a major player in the cruise industry, river lines have been forced to accept that building a business on European rivers means dealing with high and low water levels at different times of the year that will delay or cancel the occasional sailing.

High water tends to hit in the spring in Europe as snow on the continent's mountains melts and water runs down. If the weather heats up quickly rather than gradually or if Europe experiences a season of heavy rainfall and water levels rise higher than normal, it makes it difficult for ships to navigate under Europe's low bridges. This is particularly troubling on the Danube and on the Rhine.

On the other hand, there is also the possibility that a hot, dry summer will cause another problem: low water levels that make it impossible for a ship to float without hitting the bottom of the river. This tends to happen in the fall on the Elbe but can happen on other European rivers, as well, if the continent suffers a dry season. Low water levels can also be caused by a winter with less than normal snowfall in the Alps, which robs rivers of that water running down the mountains.

HIGH AND LOW WATER ARE UNPREDICTABLE

Maybe the worst part of dealing with the water level issue is just how unpredictable it can be. In August 2015, a drought in Europe caused river cruise cancellations by Avalon Waterways, Scenic, Tauck River Cruises, Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection, Viking River Cruises, AmaWaterways, and more.

Then, just a year later, heavy rainfall in southern Germany closed the Rhine River to all river cruise traffic, forcing Viking, CroisiEurope, and others to cancel sailings.

According to AmaWaterways President and CEO Rudi Schreiner, 20 years ago most itineraries were two weeks along the Danube from Amsterdam to Budapest. But things changed and now 90-95 percent of sailings are only seven nights, stopping before the biggest problem areas on the river (just after Passau to avoid the critical areas past Budapest).

RIVER CRUISE LINES HAVE CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR GUESTS

Despite the best intentions, travel agents cannot guarantee a client that their sailing will go on unaffected by water level issues. But they can guide anxious clients to river lines that will do their best to accommodate them. Most of them have a contingency plan in place.

Some lines, such as Viking River Cruises and Avalon Waterways,

guarantee sailings by performing a "ship swap;" lines will deploy two ships from opposite sides of a river, running the itineraries with the same port calls. If the ships reach a level where the water levels become troublesome, they turn them around, switch the guests from one ship to the next, and carry on with the sailings in identical ships.

Other lines will leave the ship in one port and accommodate travelers by taking them to different cities on tour buses during the day and putting them in hotels in different cities during the night.

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises has a program service team located locally in Europe that is ready to jump in and make necessary adjustments to itineraries, should water level issues cause a problem.

Scenic Cruises vice president of U.S. sales told TMR earlier this year that dealing with these issues is just "part of being on a river." At the same time, Scenic, and its sister brand Emerald, made waves when they announced a new policy. For every day of a sailing that is disturbed because of high or low water, guests on Scenic get a \$1,000-per-day cash refund; guests on Emerald get \$750.

Voice of the Travel Agent

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The River Cruise Report Card for Travel Agents is the second edition in our series of Report Cards highlighting travel agent policies from companies in all corners of the travel industry. The first, Ocean Cruise Report Card for Travel Agents, was published in early 2017. The second will be released in the first quarter of 2018. The next two editions will focus on Tour Operators and will be published sometime in 2018. By the time we're done, we hope to have a multi-volume reference you can keep at hand and consult any time you want to check the policies of a supplier with whom you deal.

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Abercrombie and Kent, Alexander + Roberts, American Cruise Lines, Grand Circle Cruise Lines, Hurtigruten, Linblad, and Ponant were also given the chance to participate in the Report Card, but declined to do so and/or could not meet the deadline.

This document will be updated on the Travel Market Report website if or when information changes.

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