



Scenic views are a major part of river cruises.

Traveling With Family and Friends

River cruising checks all the boxes

Story and photos by Vikki Moran

Why not consider river cruising rather than independent touring? Unpack once as your floating hotel travels Europe with you.

Cruising through various regions and countries, majestic scenes unfold outside your bedroom window or balcony. Experience world-class service and feel like Cleopatra as you tour picturesque rivers.

If this isn't enough reason for river cruising, the ability to mingle when you want—but also be able to maintain the privacy you need—makes river cruising ideal for travel with friends.

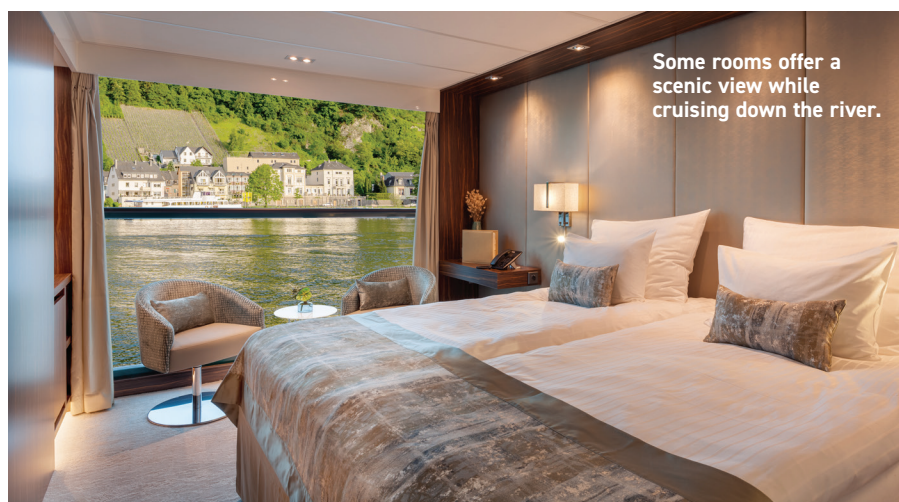
Traveling with friends can be tricky because it requires a lot of planning, compromise and time together.

At its best, traveling is a test of patience and passion.

If you are new to traveling with friends, or unsure about a newly formed group, consider river cruising.

Traveling from Amsterdam to Basel, Switzerland, on Amadeus River Cruises tested “group travel.”

Through the years, my husband and I have enjoyed the freedom of wandering the world together. Being just the two of us gave us the flexibility to change the itinerary on



Some rooms offer a scenic view while cruising down the river.

a whim.

Considering traveling with others was something to think through. I write about travel for a living, and knowing my husband never complains when I need time to write, interview a chef or take an excursion has been a luxury.

Would my adventurous group be the same way? Would I feel guilty for stealing away their vacation time? Would my early turn-in times annoy them? Can they keep up during touring time? Can I still meet new people and not feel like I am neglecting my friends?

These questions worried me.

Upon arising from a well-rested sleep, the day begins with breakfast. This can be done

early or with the late-rising majority.

Early risers can head down for coffee and a light breakfast, but if you prefer beginning the day at a leisurely pace, meet your group for a full breakfast. Have conversation about the adventures that lie ahead and laugh about the antics of the evening before.

Your day can be tailored to your desires and needs. It's fun to enjoy new sights and cultures with your friends. In our case, we already experienced a few places and opted for a journey to more obscure sites.

One day, friends went to see the Amsterdam Flower Market. My husband and I went further out into the Netherlands to enjoy quiet canals, farmlands, well-aged

windmills and cheese-making.

All parties were thrilled with their choices. We met in the evening to discuss our experiences over dinner.

Back onboard, downtime can be enjoyed in the ship's lounge or as a solitary reprieve by slipping away to your cabin for a nap.

Consider spending one afternoon with a glass of wine watching the scenes pass your window. Call it a restorative break that is only experienced on a river cruise ship.

Our excursion traveled past landscapes dotted with vineyards and castles. I felt like I was stepping in and out of a fairy tale.

When looking to visit with friends and make new ones in the afternoon and early evenings, head to the salon, lounge or deck. Camaraderie is there to enjoy.

Head back to your cabin to prepare for dinner and perhaps an after-dinner stroll in town, if docked. If sailing, entertainment in the lounge fits the bill. Dancing, music and games are among the nighttime fun.

As your journey progresses, your group of friends will grow if you are looking for that. River cruising generally has 120 passengers, allowing for making connections.

Cocktails are always flowing, and dinner is on par with top restaurants of the world.

If a low-key night is in order after dinner—and it rarely is for my party—head to a quieter lounge and enjoy a game, puzzle or book. Some ships also offer movies.

If you prefer, you can relive youthful summers off from school, when your days would linger long into the evenings with good food and fun with friends.

Time to turn in brings quieter luxury. Head back to your cabin for a good night's sleep on the finest linens, which no doubt have been turned down.

River cruising through constant calm waters brings only the gentlest rocking, which is perfect for slumber.

You awake to another day of sightseeing and fun without the slightest urge to arrange, micromanage or direct.

Just enjoy and let the professionals lead the way to making memories with the people you love. ■

For more information, contact Donna Borders at dnborders@gmail.com or Mary McDaniel at marymcdaniel99@gmail.com.



This tranquil and quaint area is about 30 minutes by bus or car from Amsterdam. Edam cheese is made here and makes great souvenirs.