

RIVER OF DREAMS

AMAWATERWAYS' AMASIENA REINVENTS RIVER CRUISING FOR A NEW GENERATION

WRITTEN BY ELYSE GLICKMAN



After our long stretch of COVID-19 restrictions and cabin fever, it is nice to fly across the ocean to experience a different kind of cabin—one outfitted with vibrant décor, fragrant organic bath amenities, and an outdoor deck that reveals views of impressive castles, vineyards, cityscapes, and adorable

villages. You can find all of this and more aboard the just-debuted AmaSiena, which made its debut along AmaWaterways' "Captivating Rhine" (Amsterdam to Basel, Switzerland) route this past September.

While this unplug-and-play itinerary is the stuff dreams are made of...(more so if

you add extra days in Amsterdam on the front end and/or Lucerne and Zurich on the back end), you can now do it aboard this sparkling, just-christened AmaSiena ship. Along the Rhine, one of Europe's most storied waterways, renaissance and medieval architectural marvels fill in the chronological and physical space between notable German towns and small cities

(including Cologne and Heidelberg, a university town surrounded by wineries).

A little past the midway point, the ship docks near the center of sophisticated Strasbourg and, later, stops near the intentionally storybook-scaped Riquewihr, France (inspiration for the original animated Disney picture “Beauty and the Beast.”) Both border towns expose one to hearty-but-elegant Alsatian delicacies along with the visual fusion of French and German aesthetic sensibilities. Strasbourg’s streets are also lined with a bevy of artisanal chocolate shops interspersed with curated boutiques and charming outposts of Parisian retailers. For many of us who grew up with the “Choose Your Adventure” books, the itinerary has a bit of that spirit. With a mix of generations on board, from well-traveled Baby Boomers to increasingly younger and world-savvy travelers, there’s a nice cross section of active options. Instead of eating your way through Riquewihr, you could opt for a morning bike ride through a vineyard or a hike in the Black Forest. History buffs might love a local specialty museum or two, often off the beaten path. Depending



on the location, sometimes you’ll have the option of simply getting off the boat and walking around the city or renting a bike to cruise the riverfront at a leisurely pace—provided you and the bike are back on the boat before the (strictly enforced) departure time.

What also sets AmaWaterways’ excursions apart from other river cruise lines is that they do not operate like a hyper-chaperoned school field trip. Should you stumble into an overbearing guide, the ship’s cruise manager (such as the AmaSiena’s warm and attentive Martina Valachova aboard the debut cruise) will encourage you to discuss your likes and dislikes about the experience, as well as provide recommendations for other activities and must-see sites based on your personality and interests.

“The goal throughout our 20-year history has been to create a river cruise experience that we ourselves would love, with elegantly appointed ships, the freshest locally-sourced food and wine, immersive tours, and an astute crew,” said Kristin Karst, co-founder and Executive Vice President, about the importance of keeping cruising relevant for younger travelers. “We have stayed true to our vision while continuing to pursue innovation and sustainability whether onboard or on shore. We are just as excited about new itineraries and destinations, such as our recently announced Seven River Journeys and expansion to the Magdalena River in Colombia in 2023, as on July 1, 2002, when we launched AmaWaterways.”

Like other crafts in the Calabasas-based AmaWaterways fleet, the AmaSiena is at its heart a floating boutique hotel. However, in contrast to other high-end ocean and river cruise ships with a signature interior design style that extends throughout its fleet, each AmaWaterways ship has its own aesthetic and identity based on the geography where it will



sail. It is also designed with the tastes of Gen-X and Millennials in mind—bold yet uncluttered, allowing passengers appreciate the castles, cityscapes, wine country expanses, and other points of interest on the top deck, the lounge’s floor-to-ceiling windows, or a stateroom’s outdoor deck.

Culinary Director Robert Kellerhals, meanwhile, is not only responsible for implementing AmaWaterways president/co-founder (and Karst’s husband) Rudi Schreiner’s vision for the fleet (no more buffets!), but making sure the dishes developed or adapted for vegetarian and vegan guests will appeal to every guest while being in alignment with AmaWaterways’ new emphasis on health and wellness.

Kitchen highlights aboard AmaSiena’s inaugural sailing included perfectly executed vegetable soups, fresh fish mains and eclectic appetizers that match up with the food culture of each port-of-call. A vegetarian falafel plate served at lunch sailing out of Amsterdam (vegan with the omission of a honey mustard drizzle) was one of the cruise’s culinary standouts. The “Chef’s Table” tasting dinners and “Chaîne des Rôtisseurs” night



(the marquee AmaWaterways culinary offerings) are even more boundary-pushing and impressive.

While COVID safety is now a part of the itinerary, kudos to the entire crew for working the precautions in so seamlessly. Valachova and hotel manager Romeo Luchian use humor laced with honest to set the tone in enforcing the necessary rules and





providing information about sanitation practices in the public and private areas. Valachova’s delivery in her PA announcements positions the necessities of masking up, pre-meal temperature checks, and pre-departure COVID tests as extensions of the safety protocols that existed in the “before-times.”

Wellness director Teodor Leta, who has to limit the number of people per class, makes sure everybody who wants some sort of coaching gets it. He deftly juggles the responsibilities of communicating the cruise line’s wellness emphasis equation and adhering to safety in his bouncy



THE GOAL THROUGHOUT OUR 20-YEAR HISTORY HAS BEEN TO CREATE A RIVER CRUISE EXPERIENCE THAT WE OURSELVES WOULD LOVE, WITH ELEGANTLY APPOINTED SHIPS, THE FRESHEST LOCALLY-SOURCED FOOD AND WINE, IMMERSIVE TOURS, AND AN ASTUTE CREW.

KRISTIN KARST, CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT - AMA WATERWAYS



repartee. While his daily on-board fitness classes lean towards beginner-to-intermediate, he also participates on some of the more difficult hike and bike land excursions and provides fitness tips for the asking.

“We have started implementing a variety of new wellness options on our newer ships, such as the AmaMagna, which features an expansive Zen Wellness Studio complete with a large exercise area with an outdoor “spinning with a view” exercise area, group classes led by a professionally trained Wellness Host, a juice bar, two massage rooms and manicure, pedicure and hair services,” details Karst on what travelers can expect on other new and existing itineraries and ships. “In 2019, we debuted new guided wellness activities inspired by the culture and heritage of Vietnam and Cambodia aboard the AmaDara, including

an introduction to the traditional way of making organic teas, a beginner’s guide to yoga, tai chi and guided meditations.”

The new “MyAmaCruise” app, meanwhile, nicely ties the whole experience together as it simultaneously helps make cruising more sustainable and connects to younger guests in a tangible way. While saving paper and cutting down on stateroom clutter is a nice benefit, the app puts the whole itinerary and each day’s activities into a manageable format, while its GPS feature proves to be useful offshore. Although AmaWaterways’ complimentary postcards and postage for guests is still available, the app shifts that idea into an e-postcard/social media format.

In keeping with Karst and Schreiner’s proactive approach to cruising vacations, AmaWaterways is not your grandparents’

cruise line...but they’re confident your grandparents will appreciate the changes, too.

For more information, visit [AmaWaterways.com](https://www.amawaterways.com).

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