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The Daily Telegraph

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SOUTH AMERICA

The World Cup in Brazil is only one reason for a visit to the region. Introducing our new online guide, **Chris Moss** offers plenty more, and suggests how to plan a trip



River cruising

Flow a winding river to places unknown

Unlike an ocean cruise, a journey down a meandering inland waterway can take you right to the heart of a country – and there's an itinerary to suit every taste, says **Pat Richardson**

One of the biggest differences between an ocean cruise and a river cruise is that the former takes you to countries, while the latter takes you through countries, making river cruising in many ways a more immersive experience. And with itineraries to match every interest or passion there's no compromise on choice. Here's our round-up of the best in a selection of popular holiday categories.

Scenic splendour

The serene Moselle meanders through a picture-book landscape of vineyard-clad hills and a succession of half-timbered medieval towns and villages. New bid on the deck, *Luxemburg Waterways* (0800 270 7017; emeraldwaterways.co.uk) offers a 12-day Rhine and Moselle cruise on *Luxemburg Sky* departing on April 15, 2014 (from £1,045 per person).

There's show-stopping scenery, too, on the Danube's 1,777-mile sweep across Europe from Black Forest to Black Sea, most notably in the Wachau Valley between Melk and Krems, where church spires, castle towers and abbey ruins soar and cultivated terraces spill down mountain slopes.

Most itineraries offer optional excursions to Melk Abbey, for views from its cliff-top terraces. The River Cruise Line (0845 344 6137; rivercruiseline.co.uk) has a 10-day round-trip cruise from Passau on *Serenity* from £2,949pp. Other scenic highlights include the Danube Bend – the river's sharp turn south as it approaches Budapest; and the dramatic Iron Gates Gorge beyond Belgrade. When it reaches the Black Sea the Danube fans out over a vast, reed-

delta, threaded with lakes and rich in bird life. Bend, gorge and delta feature on a Saga (0600 506600; travelsaga.co.uk) 16-night Danube Delta Odyssey on *Felis Rheni II*, departing May in August 2014 and costing from £2,589pp.

City sightseeing

A cruise on the lake-travelled Elbe will reward you with Dresden and its unmissable treasures – and will usually be bookended with stays in Prague and Berlin. Viking River Cruises (020 5780 7200; vikingrivercruises.co.uk) has a 10-day cruise on *Viking Fontaine* or *Viking Schumann*, which calls at Dresden and includes overnight stays in Berlin and Prague with the option to extend (from £1,995pp, departing from March to November 2014).

Three of Europe's great capitals, Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest, feature on a number of Danube cruises. Avalon Waterways (0800 115 2755; avaloncruises.co.uk) offers a Vienna-to-Budapest Taste of the Danube cruise on *Avalon Affinity*, combining a two-night stay in each of Vienna and Budapest, from £1,765pp for departures from May to September 2014.

Paris is usually the launch point for cruises along the Seine with time to enjoy the city before heading further afield. Great Rail Journeys (01904 221082; greatrail.com) offers a selection of seven-day cruises on board the three-star converted barge, *Anacostia*. All sailings include an illuminated evening cruise through Paris, from £1,295pp, departing March to November 2014.

Indulging in food and wine

Rhone cruises include Lyon, France's capital of gastronomy, and



the river's route reads like a wine list. Great Rail Journeys (01904 221082; greatrail.com) has an eight-day cruise on *Amadeus Symphony* including visits to Meocon and Beaune for a Beaujolais wine tasting, and also featuring Arignon, Ales and the Ardèche, from £1,850pp departing May to August 2014.

A Devon cruise is a journey through Dart wine country, and a chance to learn about and taste this celebrated beverage. Unworld (0800 988 0867; unworld.co.uk) offers an eight-day round-trip cruise from Poole on the *Queen Isidore*, with Dart tastings and a dinner at Quinta da Mesada, as well as an excursion to Salamanca,

departing May to August 2014 and costing from £2,799pp. **Clockwise from main: the Danube flows through the Wachau Valley, Austria; the Moselle; the Irrawaddy in Burma; near Saigon; the Salween and the Chobe in Botswana**

departing May to August 2014 and costing from £2,799pp. Genoa and Dordogne cruises take in the scenic Gironde estuary, the handsome city of Bordeaux and an ancient village, Saint-Léon, which gives its name to a fine-spread application. Viking River Cruises (020 5780 7200; vikingrivercruises.co.uk) has an eight-day cruise on *Viking Fjord*, with Manx and Sauternes wine tastings included, from £2,089pp for departures March to December 2014.

Palaces and castles

River cruises are steeped in rhine, not least on the Volga, where a wealth of historical

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Avalon Waterways (0800 115 2755; avaloncruises.co.uk) includes this place in Germany, the fairy-tale Neuschwanstein Castle – one of the most popular of all Europe's palaces and castles – and the Versailles-inspired Linderhof Palace, both built for King Ludwig II of Bavaria. There is also a visit to Munich's baroque Nymphenburg Palace, where Ludwig was born. The itinerary combines a five-night cruise on *Avalon Artistry II* with three nights in Munich, from £2,038pp for departures May to October 2014. **Scenic Tours** (0800 266 8777; scenic-tours.co.uk) includes a private concert at Vienna's Palais Josephstadt on its



River cruising

ALAMY



15-day Amsterdam to Budapest (or in reverse) cruise, departing March to November 2014 and costing from £3,245pp. More than 60 castles line the Middle Rhine, many along this river's most scenic stretch, the Rhine Gorge. Riviera Travel (0845 163 9728; rivieratravel.co.uk) offers an eight-day Rhine cruise on Lord Byron, departing May to July 2014, from £1,349 per person.

Ancient civilisations
The story of the world's longest river, the Nile, is told through the impressive monuments that line its banks – the Karnak Temple Complex, the monument to Queen Hatshepsut and the tomb of

Tutankhamen. Saga (0800 506066; travel.saga.co.uk) offers a seven-night round-trip cruise from Luxor on Jay Rople, departing March to June and September to October 2014, from £740pp. Discover Egypt (0207 407 2111; discoveregypt.co.uk) offers a seven-night round trip from Luxor cruise, on Alexander the Great, departing June 9 and 16 2014, from £1,350pp.

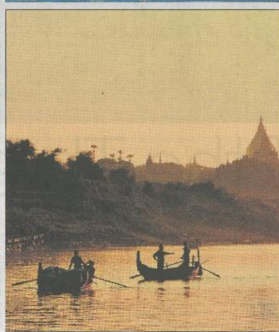
Largely off the map for British cruisers until recently, a cruise on the *Imwaddy*, in Burma, reflects this Buddhist land's unburied pace, as do the centuries-old pagodas and shrines that gold its landscapes. AmriWaterways (0808 149 9256; amriwaterways.co.uk) offers a 10-night cruise, on the *Amara*, plus two nights pre-cruise and one post-cruise in Yangon costing from £4,990pp for December 5, 2014 departure.

A *Yangtze* cruise (see page 22) through the spectacular Three Gorges gives a perspective on China neither road nor air travel can rival, but top historic sites – the Great Wall, Terracotta Army and Forbidden City – aren't on the river. To see them, choose an overland cruise holiday. Shearings (0844 874 8060; shearings.com) offers a 13-day holiday with four-night cruise on board President Prime and stays in Shanghai, Xian and Beijing from £2,579pp

including a seven-night cruise on River Orford, three hotel nights in Siem Reap with two days exploring the Angkor Temple Complex and stays in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, departing March and July to September 2014 from £5,049pp.

Egypti aside, the only luxury river cruise on the African continent is a safari cruise on the Chobe in southern Africa, where wildlife sightings on the Zambezi Queen include elephants, lions and zebra. AmriWaterways (0808 149 9256; amriwaterways.co.uk) offers an 11-night itinerary with a four-night cruise, three nights in Cape Town and two in Victoria Falls, departing March to November 2014 from £8,689pp.

On the Amazon, where water lilies grow up to 6ft wide, sightings from the boat might include pink dolphins, with more in the way of bird and wildlife ashore. Aqua Expeditions (0808 189 0361; aquaexpeditions.com) offers seven-night cruises year-round along the Peruvian stretch on *Amazon Explorer*, featuring night-time wildlife safaris and a visit to the Manatee Rescue Centre from £2,022pp excluding flights. Titan (0800 888 5806; titantravel.co.uk) has a 13-night adventure on *Amazon tributaries* – the Coca and the Napo – on *Manatee Amazon Explorer*, including pre and post-cruise hotel nights in Quito, departing May, June and September to November 2014 from £2,855pp.



for April 7 and November 3, 2014 departures.

Adventure

Gift-wrapped in intimate and colonial-style vessels, Mekong cruises offer a window on time-honoured traditions and contrasting far Eastern cultures. Most Mekong cruises sail northbound or southbound between Siem Reap in Cambodia and Ho Chi Minh City – accessed from the Mekong delta port of My Tho. It's also possible to sail further upstream, in Laos, between Chiang Mai and Pakse. Uniworld (0800 198 5867; titantravel.co.uk/uniworld) has a 17-day itinerary,

including a seven-night cruise on a nine-day round-trip cruise on the Tisza from Budapest, offered by CroisiEurope (020 8328 1241; croiseurope.travel). There's also an excursion to the Tokaj wine region. The trip costs from £1,165pp cruise only, departing in May and June 2014.

For another off-the-beaten-track route, cruise the Oder along the German-Polish border, to the Baltic. Noble Caledonia (020 7782 000; noble-caledonia.co.uk) offers a seven-night voyage from Berlin on the Johannes Brahms, sailing to Szczecin in Poland, then Germany's historic Pomeranian region, the islands of Usedom and Rugen, and Hanseatic Stralsund, departing in May and September 2014 from £1,795pp.

Following the launch of cruises on the Mississippi in America's Deep South on a renovated paddlewheel steamer, the American Queen Steamboat Company (001 888 742 5284; americanqueensteamboatcompany.com) has turned its attention to the stunning scenery of the Pacific Northwest. This is the Snake on the Columbia and *Snoke* rivers recreates the final stages of Lewis and Clark's expedition to find a river route to the Pacific in the early 1800s. Expect abundant wildlife and the chance to sip some celebrated wines. Jagli Blue Travel (01223 588094; jaglibluetravel.co.uk) will feature an eight-night cruise (details not yet available online) tracing the explorers' route from Clackamas in Washington State to Portland, Oregon (or in reverse) on the paddlewheel steamer *American Empress*, costing from £3,495pp for departures from April to November 2014.