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# BEST LIST RIVER CRUISES



Lush rain-forest life lies just outside the *Aria* Amazon's windows.

## Danube

**1** Tauck's 130-passenger M.S. *Joy* is smaller than most of the vessels on this waltz-inspiring river, making it easier to execute the line's famous level of detail. Everything is covered on these trips, including the euros (or Hungarian forints or Czech korunas, as the case may be) needed to use the bathroom in port. Tauck also arranges exclusive access, such as dinner at the private Akademia Club in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and tours of the Hungarian State Opera House, both in Budapest, and an intimate look at Engelszell Abbey, Austria's only Trappist monastery.

## Amazon

**2** Aqua Expeditions' *Aria Amazon* sails through the Peruvian rain forest, with visits to indigenous villages and a chance to fish for piranha. Onboard, menus celebrate local fare with ceviche, river fish, and hearts of palm salad.

## Chobe

**3** The *Zambezi Queen* sails the Chobe River, which borders Botswana and Namibia, year-round. You'll see a menagerie of animals along the banks of Chobe National Park, home to the highest density of elephants in Africa.

## Burgundy Canal

**4** Like all of French Country Waterways' canal cruises, the 12-passenger *Nenuphar* stops for sojourns at markets, cafés, and bakeries as it leisurely sails a northern Burgundy route past small French villages and Burgundy's acclaimed vineyards. The two-deck luxury barge has bicycles available for when you want to head off down a tree-shaded rural lane. One itinerary highlight: the visit to the Forges de Buffon, where guests are invited into the owner's home (circa 1768) for a glass of wine, stories of local legends, and a stroll in the vegetable garden.

## Nile

**5** Lounging on pillows stuffed with Egyptian cotton on the top deck of Nour El Nil's *Meroë*, you'll feel like a modern-day pharaoh as you journey past date palms, ibis, and the temples at Edfu and Kom Ombo.

## Mississippi

**6** As the 436-passenger iconic paddle-wheeler *American Queen* sails up the river, take in the view from the rocking chairs before heading to a meal of proper southern fare (biscuits, fried chicken, shrimp and grits, beignets).

## Mekong

**7** The 68-passenger *Scenic Spirit* launched last year with every cabin a one-bedroom balcony suite and orchids everywhere. On land, tour the monastery in the old Cambodian capital of Oudong and receive a monk's blessing.

## Irrawaddy

**8** The 36-passenger *Avalon Myanmar* is the only ship that sails to Myanmar's northern border all year. Take part in sing-alongs with Burmese schoolkids, visit the home of a fisherman, and give alms to monks.