



Interview with Kathleen Kavanagh from Avalon Waterways



Last summer Tim took an Avalon River Cruise on the Danube through parts of Hungary, Austria and Germany. It was a fantastic trip! Tim was fortunate to have sailed with a river cruise “expert” on that voyage – Kathleen Kavanagh from Globus. We recently talked with Kathleen about river cruising and what’s new with Avalon Waterways.

FamilyTravelGurus: Many of our readers have cruised on the big ocean ships - what about a River Cruise is different and would appeal to people who like cruising?

River Cruising is a much more intimate cruising experience. Think of it as similar to a huge hotel versus a boutique hotel. Our largest ship holds only 180 passengers and our newer ships only hold 132. River Cruising takes you into the villages, towns and major cities on the rivers versus commercial shipping ports. In many instances, you walk to the city center and truly can experience the area. River Cruising appeals to the more experienced traveler who looks to combine the unpack once concept but experience the different destinations. River Cruise ships are dry docked every year for two months for cleaning and updating versus the dry docking of larger vessels is every 2-3 years for upkeep so our vessels maintain their ‘newness’ for much longer than ocean vessels.

FamilyTravelGurus: The prices for a River Cruise are often higher than an Ocean Cruise, why is that and what is all included in an Avalon River Cruise?

Avalon Waterways build in a lot more than deep ocean cruises. First we include all local sightseeing. In every port stop, you experience the destination with a local guide who takes groups of 15-20 people around their town. We use head sets so you can hear the local guide give tips on what makes their town so special. Also, we include wine with dinner every night until dessert is served to the table. The biggest expenses on an ocean cruise are the bar and the sightseeing – with Avalon, we include both.

FamilyTravelGurus: Do you allow children on your river cruises? Do you have staterooms that hold more than 2 people?

The age for children on Avalon is 12 years of age. The pace of a river cruise is much slower. We don't have children activities or a children cruise director. If you would like to take a child, I would recommend one of our Rhine River Cruises or Danube cruises as they often visit two villages/towns daily. We take up to three people in a cabin. Unlike some of our competitors that use upper and lower berths, all our staterooms have twin beds on the floor with fluffy duvets to cover with. Our suites hold three people and have a beautiful marble bath.

FamilyTravelGurus: Tell us about the new ships Avalon has coming out, and what new features those ships will have compared to your existing fleet.

Instead of increasing passenger size on our vessels, we are going with the smaller designed vessels. The average age of our fleet is 2.6 years. Our oldest ship is the Artistry in 2004 and the newest vessels in 2009 are the Affinity (April, 2009) and the Creativity (July, 2009). We like this design so much (132 passengers), we have ordered two more for 2010 – the Felicity and Luminary. The smaller vessels are great because they enable us to stop at many more unique towns along the rivers in Europe. The new ships all have an area that hold up to 40 passengers for a private reception or meeting. These ships also have broadband, wireless connections as many of our guests bring along their laptop computers.

FamilyTravelGurus: What River Cruise itineraries does Avalon have planned for 2010?

We are focused on all the major rivers in Europe but our new 2010 itineraries are:

Paris to the Normandy Beaches on the Seine

Grand France – combines the Paris to the Normandy Beaches with our Flavors of Paris and Provence (sister ships used so the cabin number remains the same)

A Taste of the Danube – 3 or 4 night cruises that can be combined with cities like Vienna and Budapest

Castles on the Rhine to the City of Music – from Zurich to Vienna

Christmastime in Germany and Austria – Frankfurt to Vienna

PLUS we have specialty cruises including

Jazz Festival

Classical Music Festival

Wine Festival and

Oberammergau Passion Play

FamilyTravelGurus: Finally, what has been your favorite River Cruise and why?

My personal favorite is Rhine and The Moselle because I like wine and the smaller towns. The Moselle has over 150 vineyards and the villages are like pictures from fairy tales. The castles on the Rhine are a must but the trade off is the Danube because everyone equates the Danube with Vienna and music so it depends on the type of person you are. I would personally love to take our North Sea to the Black Sea which is a 21 night cruise that goes all the way from Amsterdam to the Black Sea. That way, I would sail every major river in Europe on one vacation.

FamilyTravelGurus: Thanks Kathleen. We are excited to take more river cruises with Avalon in the future!

If you missed it last year, read Tim's review of his Avalon River Cruise in 2008:
<http://www.familytravelgurus.com/reurft0808.html>

Interested in a River Cruise? We can help! Contact us at info@familytravelgurus.com

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