

ARTHUR FROMMER'S

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# Budget Travel

Vacations for Real People

September 2009

## EUROPE

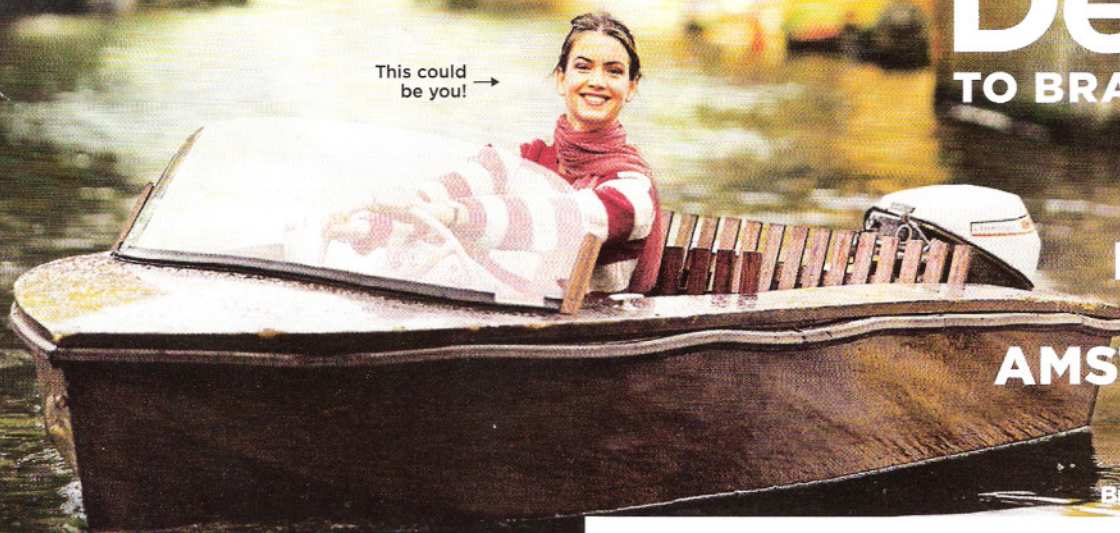
# 50

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DESTINATION: EUROPE



## New-School Europe

River cruises are making a splash as one of the most exciting—and value-packed—ways to see Europe's grand sights and cities. Budapest, as seen from the Danube, is one of Europe's most iconic views.

For decades, Europe has been the benchmark for culture and sophistication in everything from art and fashion, to fine food and wine. A trip across the Atlantic is one colored by history and an appreciation for *la dolce vita*. Amid medieval town squares, rustic vineyards, and rolling hills, the diverse mix of countries form a puzzle of landscapes and majestic rivers: the Seine, the Danube, and the Rhine, just to name a few. These legendary waterways are the bloodlines connecting Europe's grand cities, and the centuries-old imperial palaces, gothic arches, and charming villages that sprouted up along their banks.

### Rivers Run Through It

River cruising is quickly becoming one of the most convenient ways to see the sights and experience Europe's culture. In 2003, the family-owned **Globus** family of brands travel company launched a cruise company bringing together their years of tourism expertise and the Continent's river heritage. With the introduction of **Avalon Waterways**,

a new standard was set for small-ship cruising. Offering the youngest river fleet on the water, Avalon brings a fresh approach to the classic European vacation, combining accommodations, sightseeing, activities, and meals. Each year, Avalon continues to grow and add new ships for cruises down the Seine, Rhine, Moselle, Danube, Rhône, Saône rivers, Main, and Main-Danube canal.

### Boutique and Unique

Onboard, Avalon Waterways creates a boutique ambience catering to travelers who want to set their own pace and take advantage of excursions, wine tastings, concerts, and other activities. The small ship atmosphere instills a sense of camaraderie among its like-minded travelers, who never feel lost in the shuffle—or lost at sea. One major benefit of a river cruise is the proximity to the scenery. There is an ever-present view of the fascinating landscape as it changes from picturesque country landscapes to opulent cities. Travelers sit back and watch as the ship

glides past quaint villages, farmland, and impressive capitals. When the ship makes stops, passengers have access to escorted land programs operated by Globus, which has been an industry leader for over 80 years.

The thoroughly modern ships, many of which are less than three years old, come fully outfitted with cutting-edge amenities and state-of-the-art technology, such as flat-screen satellite TVs. The attention to detail and contemporary design come through in the impeccable rooms and interiors. Avalon offers the largest staterooms on the European waterways, as well as amazing views through floor-to-ceiling windows and lovely French balconies. The best amenity may be unpacking only once, even though you'll be stopping at several destinations.

### Fantastic Voyages

Since their maiden voyage six years ago, Avalon Waterways has garnered awards from travel editors and magazines. *Budget Travel* deemed Avalon the "Best Value in River Cruising" and *Travel Age West* awarded one of its vessels the honor of "Best New Ship." Not surprisingly, Avalon also receives similar praise from its customers—with an astounding 97 percent customer satisfaction rating on post-vacation surveys. To start, Avalon offers guaranteed departures and pricing, as well as 200 support staff in Europe and 32 offices worldwide. Once on the ship, passengers can count on the expertise of an English-speaking cruise director regarding trip activities.

During fall and winter, Europe offers the bounty of its summer harvest in delicious wine culture and a wonderland of Christmas markets and holiday traditions. Travelers can float through Burgundy and Provence on the Rhône, as it meanders past orchards and vineyards to the Mediterranean Sea; see the splendor of Prague, the beauty of Budapest, and the opulence of Vienna along the famously blue Danube; or experience France, Luxembourg, and Germany on the Moselle.

For value in experience (and your wallet), browse through more of Avalon Waterways' itineraries at [www.avalonwaterways.com](http://www.avalonwaterways.com) or call (877) 797-8789 for more information. To learn more about the Globus family of brands, call (877) 245-6287. ●