

# a River runs to It

Story | HALEY SHAPLEY

Smaller and more nimble than their ocean counterparts, river cruise ships are able to navigate waterways that aren't accessible to 2,000-passenger boats. With the opportunity to sail straight to the heart of your destination, you're able to hit the ground running with exploring—and see some sights that you might not have had access to otherwise. It's a slower-paced, less amenity-laden experience than a big ship provides, but sometimes, that's just what you're looking for. Deciding where to go is the tough part, so we've pulled together a few hot destinations in the coming year for your consideration.

## Seine River

A tried-and-true spot fit for architecture buffs, history enthusiasts and lovebirds alike, the Seine winds its way through Paris, where the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and perfectly flaky croissants await. This is a quintessential European river cruise, and a great place to dip your toe into this mode of travel. Outside the city, quaint towns, ornate cathedrals, the gardens that inspired Monet and stunning countryside scenes reinforce why French landscapes and culture are so romanticized.

### WHO SAILS THERE

AmaWaterways, Avalon Waterways, CroisiEurope, Tauck





## Mekong River

Although the Mekong touches six countries in Asia, it remains largely undeveloped, offering an abundance of flora and fauna instead of industry. You're likely to see monkeys along the way, and the biodiversity is pretty incredible—at least 1,100 freshwater species swim about, including Irrawaddy dolphin (of which there are estimated to be fewer than 100) and giant freshwater stingray, which lives up to its name at a weight of up to 1,300 pounds. The route goes past Cambodia's elegant and bustling capital, Phnom Penh; Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, brimming with motorbikes and a tumultuous history; the impressive Angkor Wat; and an array of villages, rice paddies, fruit orchards and woodlands.

### WHO SAILS THERE

Aqua Expeditions, Avalon Waterways, Pandaw, Viking Cruises





## Columbia and Snake Rivers

Celebrate the centennial of the National Park Service this year in a unique way—by cruising to a park. Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in Astoria, Oregon is on the route for ships plying the Pacific Northwest's Snake and Columbia rivers, and a visit will give you great insight into what life was like here in the early 1800s. As you follow in the wake of the two famous explorers, you'll encounter everything from waterfalls and wineries to museums and mountains. The Columbia River Gorge's breathtaking vistas are a big highlight.

### WHO SAILS THERE

AdventureSmith Explorations, American Cruise Lines, American Queen Steamboat Company, Un-Cruise Adventures







## Volga River

Go between Russia's two best-known cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, largely via the Volga River. In between, the so-called Golden Ring towns give you an opportunity to meet locals and see Russia's heartland, an area that isn't necessarily easy to reach for travelers. In Yaroslavl, stop by the covered food market or visit the Church of St. Elijah the Prophet, a striking example of 17th-century craftsmanship. On Kizhi Island, the 22-domed Church of the Transfiguration was impressively built without a single nail. Itineraries typically include several days in both Moscow and St. Petersburg, so you can bookend your trip with an exploration of city life.

### WHO SAILS THERE

Scenic Cruises, Uniworld, Viking River Cruises, Volga Dream







## Ganges River

At times complex, exotic, confusing and fascinating, sailing the Ganges River in India is many things all at once—but it's always memorable. You'll see some of the country's most famous attractions, such as the Taj Mahal, which was built as a monument of love to Emperor Shah Jahan's dearly departed wife. You'll also stumble upon surprises you might not have expected, such as grand Victorian buildings. In between Delhi and Kolkata lies a world that many travelers never get a chance to experience—making this a good choice for those with an adventurous spirit.

### WHO SAILS THERE

APT, Haimark Travel, Uniworld, Vantage Adventures







## Amazon River

It doesn't get more diverse than the Amazon River, the world's second longest. Cruises here cover different portions, but you might find yourself in the company of giant otters, three-toed sloths, electric eels or jaguars. In the Peruvian Amazon, you're likely to visit the Yacapana Isles, known for a big population of iguanas. In Brazil, Boca da Valeria gives you a peek into the local lifestyle, which involves living in wooden-stilt houses and getting around via canoe.

### WHO SAILS THERE

Aqua Expeditions, International Expeditions, Lindblad Expeditions, Smithsonian Journeys

