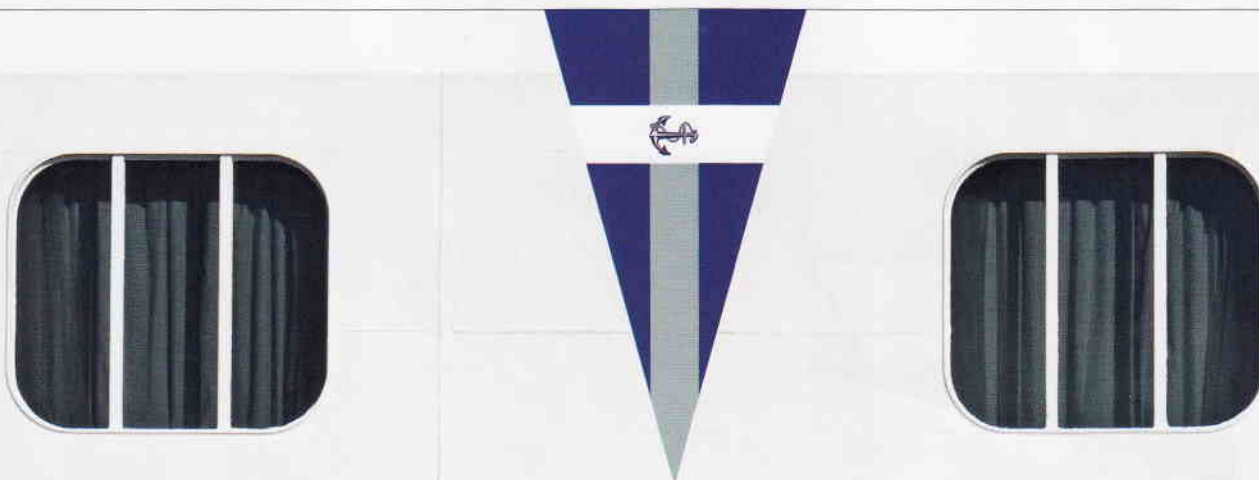




CRUISE





CRUISE

INTRODUCTION



As a cruise geek, I am happy to report that cruising remains the travel industry's most buoyant sector, having successfully weathered the double dip recession and the *Costa Concordia* disaster. Given that you may not be a cruise geek, I can confirm this means there is now an unprecedented choice of ships and onboard facilities, destinations and shore excursions. You can cruise for under £100 or over £10,000, sailing from British soil to the ends of the earth with five or 5,000 passengers for company. Come 2016, you'll even be able to sail into New York aboard a virtually perfect replica of



the *Titanic* (*Titanic II* will be three inches longer and 12 feet wider). Perhaps you'll lose your cruising cherry to the allure of an exciting voyage to the Venetian Lagoon, the promise of dining at Nobu every night, the appeal of sand-washed days and balmy evenings at sea with your lover, or the joy of seeing your children's faces light up when you tell them they're going on holiday with Mickey Mouse. Whatever encourages you to take the plunge, statistics show that your first cruise is unlikely to be your last. So, there are a few things cruisers can take for granted: they can travel to five different



countries in a week but only unpack once (or not at all, if they have a butler). They can travel with several generations of the family and each will be content. They can dine in diverse restaurants, under the stars or in the privacy of their cabin. They can spend their days zip-wiring through rainforests or swimming with sharks, wine tasting in Burgundy or touring the Uffizi in Florence. There will be a deserted pool and a luxurious spa at hand. Impressive, isn't it? So go on, embrace your inner cruise geek – you won't look back.

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CRUISE 2013



IMMERSIVE TRAVEL

While some cruise lines focus on making the highlight of your voyage getting from A to B, Azamara Club Cruises prides itself on making the time spent in those destinations exceptional. It doesn't want you to merely scratch the surface of a place, it wants you to get under its skin. That's not to say that its pair of 694-passenger ships, *Quest* and *Journey*, are anything other than beautifully appointed vessels with excellent cuisine, service and facilities. Furthermore, Azamara now offers complimentary house wines, beers and spirits with meals and at the ships' bars, and includes gratuities in cruise fares.

However, it is Azamara Club Cruises' unusual shore excursions and immersive itineraries to lesser-known parts of the world which truly set it apart. Its ships not only stay longer in ports but frequently stay overnight, a rarity in ocean cruising. Far from your average coach tour, Azamara's Land Discoveries range from Caribbean fishing excursions and after-hours trips to St Mark's Basilica in Venice to off-road adventures in Brazil and strolls among the cherry blossom trees of Kobe (azamarclubcruises.co.uk; 0844 493 4016).

MEKONG MAGIC

For those looking for countries steeped in ancient history and



Clockwise from below:
Chameleon Marshall
travel wallet, £320,
smythson.com; Black Sail
Union Rucksack, £455,
cherchbi.co.uk; Anchor
pendant, £67, thomassabo.com; Vertu Constellation
Orange, £6,500, vertu.com

culture with mesmerising landscapes and vibrant cities, a voyage through Vietnam and Cambodia along the Mekong will hit the spot. The most coveted boat on the river is the 92-passenger *La Marguerite*, whose French colonial style blends rich silks and batiks with mahogany and rattan furnishings. Ever-changing views slip by your cabin: floating markets, stilted villages, dense mangrove, crumbling temples and serene monasteries. While the boats' sun deck, swimming pool, gourmet restaurant and spa remain a constant,

River cruise specialist AmaWaterways offers a 16-night itinerary, which starts with two days in Vietnam's capital Hanoi before spending a night aboard a wooden junk on Ha Long Bay and three days at Cambodia's Angkor Wat. Embarking *La Marguerite*, you will be ushered by rickshaw, oxcart or junk on trips to villages, fish farms, silk weavers and rice paper workshops, and you can pay

your respects at towering pagodas and monasteries. There's a full day in Phnom Penh before sailing back to Vietnam to conclude the trip in Ho Chi Minh City (amawaterways.co.uk; 0808 223 5009).

TRAVEL BY JUNK TO RURAL
SILK WEAVERS AND RICE PAPER
WORKSHOPS, AND BOW DOWN
AT A TOWERING PAGODA



Clockwise
from top right:
Azamara Land
Discoveries
travels to St
Mark's Basilica
in Venice; Monk
at Angkor Wat;
The beaches of
Rio de Janeiro
are also on
Azamara's
itinerary



CRUISE 2013



Clockwise from above
left: Pate de Sable girls
costume, £49, [alexandal-
exa.com](http://alexandal-exa.com); Women's leather
sandals, £59, boden.co.uk;
Alaia kaftan, £164, [beach-
cafe.com](http://beach-
cafe.com); Leather satchel
in honeysuckle, £115,
cambridgesatchel.com



HANDLE WITH CARE

Crystal Cruises is something of an anomaly in the 'ultra-luxury' cruising world. Not only are its two ships, *Serenity* and *Symphony*, significantly larger than their direct competitors (1,070 and 922 passengers respectively) but they are also the only ultra-luxury line to offer children's clubs and activities. With extensive onboard facilities, from theatres and Nobu restaurants to spas and iPad digital filmmaking classes, as well as dedicated onboard children's entertainment, it's no surprise that it has been voted the world's best large cruise line for 18 years by *Condé Nast Traveller* readers.

In addition to providing complimentary supervised activities during school holidays and a range of family-friendly theatre productions, shore excursions and enrichment classes, Crystal launched a 'Kids Sail Free' programme last year. This provides free

accommodation for children aged 17 and under when sharing a stateroom with two adults on select voyages. Crystal Cruises have expanded it this year, encompassing over 20 different week- and fortnight-long voyages from May to December 2013 (crystalcruises.co.uk; 020 7287 9040).

CAPTAIN MICKEY

It's every child's dream: going on holiday with Mickey and Minnie

Mouse, Pocahontas and Captain Jack Sparrow. Spending their days playing in the pool or on a private Caribbean island searching for treasure with new friends, and their evenings watching films in 3D, complete with lasers, fog and streamers. Fortunately, Disney Cruises ensures that your little angel's dream holiday needn't come

at the expense of yours – its four ships might be painted in Mickey's colours but they feature unusually large staterooms and adult-only pools, spas, bars and restaurants, proving that family-friendly and elegant needn't be mutually exclusive. Complimentary supervised childcare for tots aged three to 17, separated into five

IT'S EVERY CHILD'S DREAM: GOING ON HOLIDAY WITH MICKEY AND MINNIE MOUSE, POCAHONTAS AND CAPTAIN JACK SPARROW



Clockwise from top: Cruises are ideal for family time; Visit the bridge with Crystal Cruises; Kids are in heaven on holiday with their favourite Disney characters

age groups and offering fun yet educational activities, leaves adults free to make time for themselves.

Although, chances are, you'll be fighting off the children to brave the AquaDuck, a seaborne watercoaster, which propels riders on a raft up and down four decks of the ship, swinging out 13 feet off the side at one point, and 150 feet above the ocean (disneycruise.disney.go.com; 0800 171 2317).



CRUISE 2013

ANTARCTIC EXPLORER

Think you're too active to be cooped up on a cruise ship? With over 30 years' experience creating bespoke holidays, Bailey Robinson would beg to differ. Sailing in luxury aboard Silversea's *Silver Explorer* or the dedicated polar exploration vessel, *Akademik Ioffe*, adrenaline junkies will be in their element in the Antarctic.

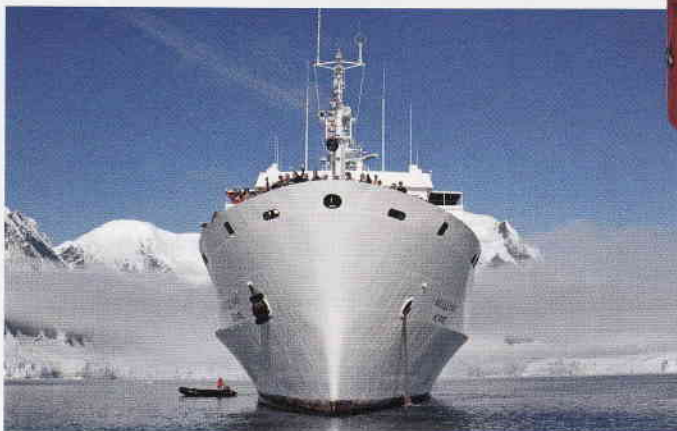
Over the course of an action-packed fortnight, guests can go on a ski-touring expedition lead by expert guides; spend a night on the polar ice cap; and commune with seals, orcas, penguins and whales while exploring on foot or snowshoes and onboard sea kayaks or Zodiac boats.



As you navigate some of the world's most pristine and dramatic scenery – Drake Passage, the Antarctic Peninsula and the South Shetland Islands – you can enjoy lectures on the wildlife, geology and history of Antarctica (baileyrobinson.com; 01488 689 700).

AMAZONIAN ADVENTURE

The world's largest river, the Amazon, conjures up images of dense rainforest packed with gem-coloured birds, snakes



SAILING IN LUXURY ABOARD THE SILVER EXPLORER OR AKADEMIK IOFFE, ADRENALINE JUNKIES WILL BE IN THEIR ELEMENT IN THE ANTARCTIC



Clockwise from above left: Trillium Parka in Berry, £650, canada-goose.com; Olmes Carretti Jacket, white, £275, henrilloyd.com; John Smedley Glenham Cardigan, £255; Cheaney Primine IIR boot, £295, both privatewhiter.com; Brioni sunglasses, £508, brioni.com; Below: Nikon Coolpix \$9500 camera, £299.99, nikon.co.uk

Are you an...

ADRENALINE JUNKIE?

Clockwise from above: The lounge of the MV Aria; Amazon cruiser, MV Aria; The Akademik Ioffe; Seal observation in Antarctica



and jaguars, waters teeming with crocodiles, pink dolphins, giant otters and piranhas, and indigenous people virtually untouched by modern life. To venture into this beating heart of South America is to experience the thrill of the exotic and unknown.

Fortunately for contemporary explorers, two ships – *MV Aqua* and *MV Aria* – offer the rare comfort of a luxury vessel to retire to after a morning spent with a local tribe, an afternoon piranha fishing or a night-time jungle trek.

Both are stylish new ships, with just 12 and 16 oversized suites respectively, each boasting floor-to-ceiling windows through which to admire the passing landscape. As you meander down the Amazon through Peru, penetrating deep into the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve, experienced naturalists can whisk you up tributaries aboard skiffs to show you the local wildlife, while celebrated Peruvian chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino will delight with his modern twist on local delicacies (journeylatinamerica.co.uk; 020 3432 9404).



CRUISE 2013

Are you a...

SPA SEEKER?

A TASTE OF BALI

The beauty of a cruise ship with a superb spa is that you can indulge your footloose soul during the day and your inner spa goddess after the sun sets, retreating to the healing hands of the therapists as you sail on to the next exciting port. With a fleet of 12 stylish ships, Italy's MSC Cruises is at the forefront



From left: 40th Anniversary Stowaway bag (with wash and lotion), £54, mclanproducts.co.uk; Canvas pumps, £75, fildun.co.uk

of seaborne wellbeing, with its highly-acclaimed Aurea Spas among the finest in the industry. Fragrant lotus flowers, delicate orchids and traditional Thai sculptures set the scene for candle-lit treatments administered by a team of expert Balinese therapists. You can select from traditional Balinese massage, reflexology and candle butter massage as well as facials, Shiatsu and detoxifying wraps.

For instant radiance, advanced beauty treatments such as Mya Advance and O-Frequency radio frequency treatments are available, while a personal trainer and yoga master will create dedicated exercise routines for you. For a seamless wellbeing experience, book an Aurea Suite – where the cabins are located in the prestigious Yacht Club of select MSC ships with exclusive access to the Aurea Spa (msccruises.co.uk; 0844 561 7412).



Clockwise from above: Hocken rugby shirt, £60.99 and Ugles Rotorua mid-grey pumps, £44.99, both canterbury.com; Rigging belt, tan, £100, henrillloyd.com



TRANS-ATLANTIC PAMPERING

Crossing the Atlantic aboard a Cunard ocean liner should be on everyone's Bucket List: the unabashed opulence and sheer romance of being cocooned in luxury miles from land creates the ultimate escape. An eight-day transatlantic crossing aboard *Queen Mary 2* provides a rare opportunity to revel in 'me time': reading, listening to illustrious guest speakers, mastering the tango or digital photography, or simply

snoozing in the sunshine. The grandest passenger ship in the world, *Queen Mary 2* boasts a destination spa to match: 20,000 square feet of Canyon Ranch indulgence, the first of its kind at sea. The Canyon Ranch SpaClub offers a vast array of body and skincare treatments, a Thermal Suite and Thalassotherapy Pool, beauty salon, gym and juice bar. Experts conduct group and private fitness classes, yoga and tai chi, healthy living experts give lectures and workshops addressing lifestyle change and dedicated chefs create their Canyon Ranch cuisine (cunard.co.uk; 0843 374 2224).



Above image:
The spa on the MSC Lirica.
Main image:
The *Queen Mary 2* departing from New York on a trans-atlantic crossing

INDULGE YOUR FOOTLOOSE SOUL DURING THE DAY AND YOUR INNER SPA GODDESS AFTER THE SUN SETS



CRUISE 2013



Below: Seafolly Harlow tie-front bikini, £89, beachcafe.com; Travel purse, £29, stories.com



SOLSTICE SHIPS FEATURE CONTEMPORARY INTERIORS, STYLISH ART COLLECTIONS AND INNOVATIVE RESTAURANTS

Boréal feature a muted palette of creams, taupe and dark wood with splashes of red, *Soléal* will echo the ultra-stylish French seaside spirit, with natural woods, white Corian and nautical touches. Fortunately there is more to Ponant than just stylish interiors and, with some 15 years' experience in polar cruising, there's plenty of luxury to be had within the ships' ice-strengthened hulls (ponant.com; 0800 980 4027).



CELEBRITY STYLE

Celebrity Cruises' signature style – refined yet young, fresh and quirky – is reflected across its fleet of 11 ships, which includes five pioneering Solstice class ships and features contemporary interiors, compelling art collections and original restaurants. When you sail with Celebrity Cruises, you can create your own dishes at the interactive Qsine restaurant, concoct yourself the ultimate cocktail with 'liquid chef', mixologist Junior Merino at the Molecular Bar, and navigate the largest wine collection at sea with the assistance tutored wine classes.

On the top deck of all Solstice ships sits half an acre of beautifully manicured lawn, the Lawn Club. Feel the grass between your toes as you play croquet, enjoy barbecued lobster at the Lawn Club Grill. Celebrity's Boutique Adventures take passengers to art studios, museums and castles for meals, lessons, workshops and behind-the-scenes tours, unavailable to any other cruise lines (celebritycruises.co.uk; 0845 456 0523).

SUITE FRANÇAISE

Although the days of fusty, drab cruise ship interiors are long gone, some lines are simply more stylish than others. The French *Compagnie du Ponant* is one such, oozing that inimitable French 'art de vivre' across its fleet of four beautiful ships. From the elegant lines and classical nautical style of the three-masted yacht *Le Ponant* to the contemporary design and state-of-the-art facilities of its three expedition sister ships, *L'Austral*, *Le Boréal* and the soon-to-be-launched *Soléal*, Ponant brings a distinctive 'je ne sais quoi' to cruising.



The three 264-passenger expedition ships (complete with zippy Zodiacs) offer multiple restaurants serving classic French cuisine, a theatre for evening entertainment and lectures, a coveted Sothys spa and chic, minimalist bars. While *L'Austral* and *Le*

Clockwise from top left: The three-masted yacht *Le Ponant*; Suite on Ponant's *L'Austral*; Celebrity Cruises' Solstice class ships come bedecked with art



Ally Capellino waxed cotton holdall, £336, liberty.co.uk



CRUISE 2013

A TOUCH OF 007 CLASS



It's hard to get more James Bond than chartering a yacht. Whether you're racing along the Côte d'Azur, island hopping in the Maldives or mooching around the Andaman Islands, a private yacht delivers unparalleled luxury, privacy, service – and bragging rights.

The Y.CO charter team will help you select your dream yacht from a choice of over 1,000, and then create your dream itinerary. Once aboard, a professional crew is on hand at all times, not only to ensure your martinis are shaken to perfection, but to enable you to be as involved in the sailing as you wish. Budding double 077's can



Are you...

JAMES BOND?



A PROFESSIONAL CREW IS ON HAND AT ALL TIMES, NOT ONLY TO ENSURE YOUR MARTINIS ARE SHAKEN TO PERFECTION, BUT ALSO TO ENABLE YOU TO BE AS INVOLVED IN THE SAILING AS YOU WISH



Left: Cutler & Cross sunglasses, £299, sunspel.com

Based on a True Story, or BOATS for short. Whether it's a private tour of an orangutan sanctuary in Borneo or a Mediterranean treasure hunt, nobody says 'no' to James Bond (ycoyacht.com; 0207 584 1801).

BOYS TOYS

There's a lot to be said for the tranquillity and peace of navigating the seas under sail. However, sometimes a man just needs to play with some serious toys. And, when you're in need of toys, it's time to call superyacht specialist Edmiston.

Edmiston's renowned E100 is a jaw-dropping list of the world's 100 top superyachts available for charter. Selected not only for their exceptional size, design, performance and facilities (think helipads, outdoor cinemas and double-sided, swim-up bars), these boats also fulfil gruelling criteria for the quality of their captain, chef, crew and toys.



Clockwise from top left: Interior of the Y.CO yacht Vertigo; Edmiston's yacht Nefertiti; Below decks on the Nefertiti; Launching the Vertigo's 8-metre limo tender

grind the winches of Vertigo, the 2012 World Superyacht Awards 'Sailing Yacht of the Year', or thrill to the classic racing pedigree of the 180-foot Elena, a replica of the 1928 Transatlantic Race record holder. The special treatment continues ashore, thanks to Y.CO's collaboration with land-based travel specialist,



Far from a snorkel and goggles, these 'toys' range from jetskis and under-water scooters to Cougar racing tenders and mini submarines. And, the joy of chartering one of these yachts is that their comforts are available wherever in the world you want them (edmistoncompany.com; 020 7495 5151).

From above: Setter shorts, £125, orlebarbrown.com; Vertu Ti phone, £6,700, vertu.com; Cruise suitcase, blue, £1,135, globe-trotter.com





CRUISE 2013



From above:
Sorrento sandals,
£59, boden.co.uk;
Escada dress,
£900, harrods.com



BON APP AT SEA

While quantity is no guarantee of quality, Oceania Cruises successfully delivers both in its cuisine, with no fewer than 24 restaurants across its five-strong fleet. With celebrated chef Jacques Pépin at the helm, Oceania Cruises' culinary credentials are among the best at sea. You can indulge in a candlelit French dinner à deux in the elegant Jacques restaurant, savour fragrant duck salad and Thai curry in red ginger, feast on melt-in-the-mouth steak in the Polo Grill and enjoy an olive oil tasting before dinner in Toscana. Such is Oceania Cruises' dedication to cuisine that the ships' bouchers source Viron flour direct from France to create authentic baguettes, croissants, brioches and artisanal breads each day.

If all the fine food inspires you to don your chef's whites, Oceania

Cruises' two larger ships, *Marina* and *Riviera*, each boasts a Bon Appétit Culinary Centre, the world's only hands-on cookery studio at sea. Expert chefs will instruct you to create delicacies from each region you visit, from Sicilian gnocchi and Mexican empanadas to Swedish meatballs and lovely Moroccan tagines (oceaniacruises.com; 0845 505 1920).

STELLAR DINING

The all-frills *Silversea* consistently delivers excellent cuisine across its four mid-size ships and 132-passenger expedition ship, *Silver Explorer*. However, this November the cruise line will raise the culinary bar even higher, as guests sailing from Hong Kong to



From above:
Silversea
cruises take
their cuisine
very seriously;
Fusion cuisine
will be on offer
on the *Silver
Explorer* this
November with
superchef Jason
Atherton

Singapore will have the opportunity to enjoy a four-course meal cooked by the Michelin-starred chef of the moment, Jason Atherton. The man behind London's Maze and Pollen Street Social, as well as restaurants in Singapore, Hong Kong and Shanghai, Atherton's signature approach to fusion cuisine has earned him global recognition. Not

only will he prepare a banquet for his fellow passengers, Atherton will also be a guest speaker throughout the nine-day cruise and host guests on a tour of a food market in Ha Long Bay in northern Vietnam. While you're not feasting on Atherton's words and dishes, you can enjoy fascinating shore excursions to Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Hanoi, Nah Trang and Ho Chi Minh City (Voyage 3334 departs Hong Kong on November 25 2013; silversea.com; 0844 770 9030).

EXPERT CHEFS WILL INSTRUCT YOU
TO CREATE DELICACIES FROM EACH
REGION THAT YOU VISIT



Clockwise from left: Uniworld's new *Queen Isabel* has launched on Portugal's Douro river; The *Seabourn Spirit* at Santorini; The Veranda Cafe on *Seabourn*



Are you searching for... ULTRA LUXURY?

SEABORNE HEDONISM

Right: Propeller overnight bag, £1,000, globe-trotter.com;
Above left: Straw hat, £17, stories.com



'Luxury' has become a hackneyed term in the world of travel, applied to everything from campsites to ferries. When you reach the ultra-luxury bracket, however, you're talking about the real McCoy. The benchmark for ultra-luxury cruising was set in 2009 by the American cruise line Seabourn with the launch of the ground-breaking 450-passenger *Seabourn Odyssey*. Together with her two sister ships, *Sojourn* and *Quest*, which launched over the following two years, *Odyssey* offers guests the industry's greatest passenger to space ratio, with large, yet understated suites and spas, as well as exceptional service, world-class cuisine, superb onboard facilities and imaginative itineraries.

While Seabourn has sold its three smaller ships (due to leave the fleet from 2014), plans are afoot to build a fourth sister ship for the fleet. It's clear, therefore, that having featured on *Condé Nast Traveller's* illustrious Gold List for 19 consecutive years, Seabourn's all-inclusive, ultra-luxury

approach is going down a storm with its chic, well-travelled and extremely loyal guests (seabourn.com; 0845 070 0500).

RIVER CLASS

Until the arrival of boutique river

cruise line Uniworld, river cruising was distinctly lacking in luxury, let alone ultra-luxury. Although already long-established in river cruising, a new-look Uniworld burst onto the scene in 2006 with a burgeoning fleet of new ships boasting lavish interiors, attentive staff, ZAGAT-rated restaurants, swimming pools and spas. Today, the company continues to pioneer

ultra-luxury river cruising on 13 rivers in 20 countries aboard 17 different ships. The latest addition to the fleet is the 116-passenger *Queen Isabel*, which launched on Portugal's Douro river earlier this year. The first river ship to boast full balconies for its 20 upper deck suites, *Queen Isabel* is the most sumptuous ship on the Douro, if not on any European river.

CHAUFFEUR-DRIVEN TRANSFERS USHER YOU FROM YOUR FRONT DOOR TO THE AIRPORT CHECK-IN, AND THEN BACK AGAIN ON YOUR RETURN... NOW THAT'S WHAT WE CALL ULTRA LUXURY



Working in the United Kingdom exclusively with Titan Travel, Uniworld further ensures that you start and finish your holiday in the lap of luxury with Titan's VIP Home Departure Service: private, chauffeur-driven transfers usher you from your front door to the airport check-in, and then back again on your return. Now that's what we call ultra luxury (uniworldrivercruises.co.uk; 0845 678 8558).

*****NEWS FLASH: FAMILY-RUN BOAT OPERATOR, WOODS' SILVER FLEET, HAVE RECENTLY GONE INTO PARTNERSHIP WITH JAMIE OLIVER'S FABULOUS FEASTS. ENJOY DELICIOUS, HONEST FOOD ABOARD THE THE SILVER STURGEON OR THE ROYAL NORE WHILE CRUISING THE RIVER THAMES IN LONDON. FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT silverfleet.co.uk**

CRUISE 2013

*The MSC Opera
winds her way
through the stunning
Norwegian fjords*

What's hot in Cruise RIGHT NOW



It's virtually impossible to keep track of all the new ships, gizmos, destinations, excursions and deals on offer from the raft of cruise lines operating across the world today. To save you the homework, we've sniffed out this season's hottest trends.

SAFETY AT SEA

In the wake of last year's *Costa Concordia* tragedy, safety regulations have been tightened and standardised across the entire cruise industry. While many changes won't be felt by passengers (such as muster drills and life jacket requirements and lifeboat training for crews), they do help to ensure their safety. Just remember: the chances of serious injury in a cruise ship accident

is about the same as being hit by lightning or winning the lottery.

INCLUSIVE LUXURY

Ultra-luxury cruising might be exclusive but its pricing is becoming more all-inclusive. Calculating the value for money offered by budget, deluxe, luxury and ultra-luxury cruises can be bewildering. All-inclusive fares might seem prohibitive at first glance but go for a cheap fare and you could end up with a sizeable bill at the end of your voyage. Hebridean Island Cruises (hebridean.co.uk) not only include all excursions, drinks and gratuities in its fares, but stretches its all-inclusive policy to tearooms and pubs ashore. Meanwhile, mainstream cruise lines such as MSC Cruises,

Royal Caribbean (royalcaribbean.co.uk) and Norwegian Cruise Line (ncl.co.uk), offer a range of beverage packages, which combine exclusive dining and excursions, as well as fee-based amenities and services, like priority boarding and speciality restaurant access.

RIVER BOOM

The appeal of slower-paced river cruises is growing fast, increasing by 14 per cent on European rivers alone in 2012. An unprecedented number of new river cruise ships launched last year, with Viking River Cruises (vikingrivercruises.co.uk) inaugurating 10 ships in one record-breaking ceremony and revealing plans to start sailing on the Mississippi in 2015.

CLOSER TO HOME

As flying gets more expensive, more heavily taxed and less glamorous, the appeal of cruising from your doorstep grows, as reflected in the sustained increase of cruises departing from British ports. Furthermore, many of this year's ex-United Kingdom voyages are short breaks – the perfect way to dip your virgin cruising toe into the water or to simply enjoy a short but sweet escape. British stalwart P&O Cruises (pocruises.com) is offering 25 two- to four-night cruises from Southampton this year to places such as the Mediterranean, while Cruise & Maritime Voyages (cruiseandmaritime.com) will be offering 34 itineraries from ports across the country.

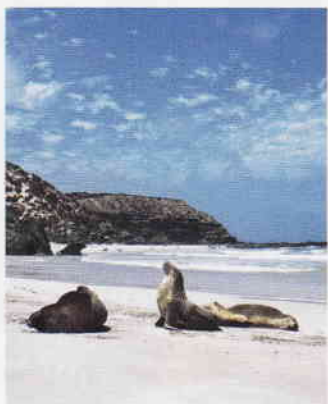


Travelling the world by ship offers access to far-flung destinations from desert islands and fjords to iceberg-strewn seas and fortified cities. Here are some of our favourite hot new ports of call:

BURMA

The best way to appreciate the mystical pagodas, astonishing natural beauty and rich cultural diversity of Burma (other than by floating above Bagan in a hot air balloon) is floating down the Irrawaddy River. Orient Express (orient-express.com; 0845 0772 222) offers three-, four- and seven-night voyages on the river aboard the 82-passenger *Road to Mandalay* while Ampersand Travel (ampersandtravel.com; 020 7289 6100) creates itineraries around a six-night cruise onboard traditional Burmese wooden boats.

KANGAROO ISLAND



Located off the south-eastern Australian coast, Kangaroo Island is one of the world's last unspoiled wildernesses. Rich in flora and fauna, much of it indigenous to the island, it is a remarkable spot for bird watching, seal spotting and, of course, kangaroo viewing. It is also a blossoming gourmet destination, with locally-sourced and produced oysters, smoked freshwater trout, artisanal cheeses and wines. Silversea's *Silver Shadow* will sail to Kangaroo Island in January 2014, en-route from Auckland to Melbourne.

AMSTERDAM

2013 is a year of celebration for Amsterdam: not only did the city welcome the new Dutch king in

April but its famous canal belt is celebrating its 400th birthday and the Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh Museum have re-opened after years of renovations. Visit the jubilant city before embarking on a river cruise from its heart with Avalon Cruises. You could meander along the Rhine to Basel, branch off on to the Moselle for Paris or press on down the Danube for Vienna, Budapest and the Black Sea (avaloncruises.co.uk; 0808 115 2757).

NORTHWEST PASSAGE

Seafarers spent over 400 years searching for the elusive Northwest Passage – an Arctic sea route which connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, travelling along the northern coast of North America and through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. Roald Amundsen finally penetrated the Passage in 1906, yet it remains a wild place of ice floes, polar bears, whales and remote Inuit

Clockwise from above: Hapag-Lloyd's Hanseatic on the Northwest Passage; the Road to Mandalay river cruiser on Burma's Irrawaddy River; Seals on Kangaroo Island



ROALD AMUNDSEN FINALLY PENETRATED THE PASSAGE IN 1906, YET IT REMAINS A WILD PLACE OF ICE FLOES, POLAR BEARS, WHALES AND REMOTE INUIT COMMUNITIES

communities. Hapag-Lloyd Cruises' five-star expedition ship *Hanseatic* first navigated the Northwest Passage in 1994 and the cruise line now boasts unparalleled expertise in the region,

offering voyages from Greenland to Alaska aboard both the *Hanseatic* and its sister ship *Bremen* (hl-cruises.com; 0049 40 3001 4580).

Traveller's Hot NEW DESTINATIONS

