

ENJOY AUTUMN RIVER CRUISE IN EUROPE



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Sometimes I feel like a broken record when I write about river cruising. If you haven't already experienced a river cruise through Europe, chances are good that you're thinking about taking one — and there's more choice than ever before when it comes to the ships that ply the waters of famous rivers like the Danube, the Main and the Rhine.

One such line is **Emerald Waterways** (cruise.center.com/emerald/). Launched in 2014, as a subsidiary of upscale river-cruise -and- travel-provider Scenic, Emerald Waterways now has a fleet of four Star Ship-class river cruise ships, each of which can hold 182 guests.

The Emerald fleet is about to grow in a big way, however. In May, Emerald Waterways will launch Emerald Destiny, which will be christened in Vienna by Canadian news anchor and personality Coleen Christie, whom Vancouverites, in particular, will recognize for her time at CTV Vancouver.

"We're thrilled that Coleen Christie has agreed to be Destiny's godmother," said Lisa Norton, vice-president of brand management for Emerald Waterways North America. "Canada is

a strong market for us, and Christie's impeccable reputation as a newscaster along with dedication to charitable work makes her an excellent fit for our brand."

Christie will be the first Cana-

dian godmother for the line.

Emerald Waterways will also be taking delivery of two slightly smaller river cruise ships this year. The 138-guest Emerald Liberte will sail France's Saone and Rhone rivers, and will debut this month. It will offer the same amenities as its bigger sisters, in a slightly more scaled-down package. However, it will still boast Emerald Waterways' trademark swimming pool that turns into a cinema at night, thanks to a telescoping floor that rises up to completely cover the pool — 180-degree floor-to-

ceiling windows make this one of the best places to relax by day or night on-board.

Also debuting this year is the 112-guest Emerald Radiance. It will launch this May on Portugal's Douro River, where it will operate Emerald's eight-day "Secrets of the Douro" itinerary that departs round trip from the picturesque city of Porto. This is a great run for wine-lovers, as the Douro River Valley is the epicentre of port wine production (not to mention a pretty great UNESCO World Heritage Site, too).

As for Emerald Destiny, it will spend its maiden season cruising the Danube, the Main and the Rhine. Although it operates many itineraries, the weeklong "Danube Delights" voyage is

one of my favourites. Starting in the historic city of Nuremberg, Germany, it spends a week cruising along the Danube to some of Europe's most spectacular cities and towns. This includes calls on well-known places like Vienna, Austria and Bratislava, Slovakia, but also visits to lesser-known places like Regensburg, Germany and Melk, Austria. This cruise ends in Budapest, Hungary — a

place I've unexpectedly grown to love over the years.

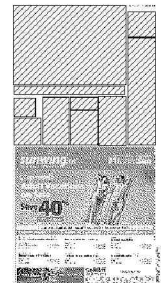
I like Emerald Waterways for a lot of reasons. Its ships have a clean, contemporary design that is trendy, but not too "in-your-face," and well-designed state-rooms that feature some of the most enjoyable balcony sitting areas afloat. With the push of a switch, the window drops down electronically, opening up your own private sitting area to the elements. It's great if you want the fresh air, and equally ideal for those who don't.

Emerald also includes quite a bit in its cruise fares, including all transfers from the airport to the ship and vice versa; and all gratuities for on-board and shoreside staff. The line also provides complimentary beer, wine and soft drinks with lunch and dinner, not to mention free bicycles for guests to use while onshore.

Now for the bad news: you're going to have to look way down the line to book an Emerald Waterways cruise. While there are still some spaces left on spring and summer sailings, availability on most sailings (especially the new Emerald Destiny), doesn't really open up until fall. But, that's one of the best times of year to visit Europe and avoid the crowds — and pay less in the process.

Happy cruising.

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Emerald Waterways is launching three new ships that will cruise down the unforgettable rivers of Europe this year. *EMERALD WATERWAYS*