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Rolling on the (Rhône) River

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Scenic Luxury Cruises and Tours

Think river cruising is less sexy than stuffy and more low energy than high fun? You just might want to reassess that verdict. **Scenic Luxury Cruises and Tours** serves up the best of both worlds: opulent comfort aboard a sleek, powerful watercraft that offers passengers all-inclusive perks including a private butler, combined with visits to some of the world's most fab destinations for LGBT fun, like Amsterdam, Prague, Paris and Munich.

Onboard, it's all about relaxation and ease, with staterooms that feature balconies for stellar views of the countryside as it unspools past, and plenty of room to unpack.

Off the ship, there are daily excursions to some of the planet's most picturesque places -- and later? There's always plenty of time to explore the LGBT scene of that night's exotic, erotic port of call.



Avignon Sapphire (Source:Scenic Luxury Cruises and Tours)

France's Ooh-La-La South

Scenic offers a boatload of cruises all over the world, but no other trip packs in the glamour like the company's journey up the Rhône River through the South of France.

Stops on the eight-day cruise (longer itineraries are also available) include the medieval city of Avignon, for a time the seat of the papacy in the 1300s and still home to the jaw-dropping splendor of the Pope's Palace. Scenic guests get the tony treatment with a private classical concert in the Palace's soaring Grand Tinel Room, once the banquet hall, where fine champagne flows as freely as the music.

For lovers of the grape, the cruise includes a day trip to Oingt, in the stunning Golden Stone region of Beaujolais, ripe with opportunities aplenty to sample Beaujolais' celebrated wines along the way. But the title of most charming village on the entire Rhône journey may have to go

to Uzès.

A perfectly preserved medieval town, its winding, narrow stone streets are lined with picturesque cafés and boutiques where it's possible to while away hours in absolute contentment. Wednesdays, when Scenic guests visit Uzès, the South of France's best market takes over the town's Place aux Herbes, where everything from locally made goat cheese to Provence's legendary lavender is sold.



Lyon, France (Source:Lauren Frye)

Loving it in Lyon

Lyon, with its energetic, university town vibe, stunning medieval center and reputation as the culinary center of France, offers the best LGBT nightlife of Scenic's Rhone cruise.

Start out wandering the riverbanks, where on warm evenings hundreds of students from University of Lyon converge, playing music, smoking cigarettes -- of all kinds -- and drinking wine. They're generally as friendly as they are good-looking, but if you're looking for a bit more adventure, France's third-largest city boasts great

venues for cruising of a different sort. Among the more beguiling is **Premier Sous-Sol**, a two-floor dance club with a maze and private cabins, and , owned by a congenial French couple and offering regular theme nights.

Or, plan to get out your plastic at **Le Trou**, a cruise club with a killer shop inside, and then head over to one of Lyon's several saunas, like **Sauna Hammam**, also known as Bellecour, one of the gay community's favorite spots for four decades.

Meanwhile, **Pinks Club** is young, gay Lyon's choice for serious parties, including their famed Pride blast, while **Le Marais** brings in both men and women. **L'Étoile Opéra**, with a great terrace, funky interior and well-made cocktails and tapas, is big with locals and visitors.



Scenic balcony stateroom (Source:Scenic Luxury Cruises and Tours)

Great Isn't Good Enough

Attention to detail -- and personal attention lavished on guests -- helps separate Scenic from other cruise lines and next year the company is upping the ante by rebuilding three of their ships in France.

Scenic Diamond in Bordeaux and Scenic Emerald and Sapphire on the Rhône and Saône in the South of France will sail into 2017 with fewer staterooms and guests but the same number of staff, for even greater service.

Wellness centers and gyms will increase in size, vitality pools will be added and Scenic Culinaire, a high-tech, onboard French cooking school with its own dedicated space will debut.

Scenic Culinaire will offer classes in the cooking of the region the ship is sailing through, with ingredients procured from local markets, and like all Scenic programs included in the price of the cruise.

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