

Fodor's Travel

WORLD'S BEST CRUISES FOR 2015

IN 2015, SET SAIL ON THE SEVEN SEAS— and the many rivers in between—for a great-value, neatly bundled cruise vacation that covers a lot of ground in a single trip. Many of the year's best cruises take place on brand-new ocean-liners and river cruises with exciting new itineraries and ports of call. We've picked the 18 best cruises for 2015 and organized them by special interest to help you find the best one for your travel style, whether you're looking for family time or romance, or prefer to explore special interests like gastronomy, culture, or adventure.





CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Celebrity Cruises is adding new Signature Event Sailings to its 2015 collection, each timed to coincide with special events around the globe. One standout will take you to France's Cannes Film Festival with onboard perks like films and talks, plus a festival-time rooftop celebration in Cannes itself, with live French music, cocktails, and harbor views. The 10-night Mediterranean itinerary sails from Barcelona to Rome with several stops in Italy and France. *Embarks May 11, 2015; from \$1,799/person; celebritycruises.com*



RIO CARNIVAL

Next year's Carnival is sure to be an amped-up one, as Rio celebrates its twin World Cup and 2016 Olympics hosting duties. **Azamara Club Cruises'** comprehensive 12-night itinerary includes two full days in Rio, with special grandstand access to see the festivities' brilliantly dressed samba dancers and high-energy drummers. It then sails on to memorable South American stops in Montevideo, Punta del Este, Buenos Aires, and the beaches of Buzios, for post-Carnival relaxation. *Embarks February 7, 2015; from \$2,999/person; azamarclubcruises.com*



FRENCH IMPRESSIONISM

AmaWaterways' 2015 "Art Illumination" itinerary packages beautiful French scenery and art immersion onto one intimate, 7-night Seine riverboat cruise. Sailing round-trip from Paris, the route showcases the life and history of Impressionist painters like Monet, van Gogh, and Renoir, who once favored this region of France. As part of the art-themed programming, you'll see the inspiration of celebrated artworks, like Rouen's Notre Dame Cathedral (made famous by Monet), and participate in onboard painting classes and art lectures. *Embarks August 13, 2015; from \$3,599/person; amawaterways.com*



THE BAHAMAS AND CARIBBEAN

Kids of all ages will enjoy Royal Caribbean's new **Quantum of the Seas** when its 7- to 12-night cruises debut from Cape Liberty, NJ in fall 2014. Expect industry-first thrills like an onboard skydiving experience, bumper cars, an extendable observation arm, and disco roller rink. Age-appropriate kids' programming extends to 3D movies, DreamWorks character appearances, a Royal Caribbean standard surf simulator, a rock-climbing wall, and interconnected staterooms. *Select dates through April 2015; from \$1,199/person (third and fourth berths pay half); quantumoftheseas.com*

NORWEGIAN FJORDS

Disney Cruise Line's new 7- and 9-night Norwegian fjords voyages take in the natural majesty, Viking history, and Scandinavian culture of the northern landscape that starred in Disney's hit film *Frozen*. The recently renovated *Disney Magic* has all-new kids' clubs; Broadway-style shows with Disney themes; deck parties (including a *Pirates of the Caribbean* fiesta and fireworks); and a family pool area, splash zone, and waterslide. *Select dates in June 2015; from \$1,561/person (reduced third and fourth berths); disneycruise.com*

CARIBBEAN AND MEXICO

MSC Cruises, the only line to offer free passage to children 11-and-under and reduced rates for 12- to 17-year olds year round, provides lots of family extras on its 7-night cruises from Miami. Think dedicated kids' programs, Smurf-themed events, a 4D theater and poolside movies, and free strollers. Memorable family excursions, like swimming with dolphins in Cozumel or with stingrays in the Cayman Islands, await in port. *Select dates from January through March and November through December 2015; from \$369/person (reduced for children); msccruisesusa.com*



FIJI AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

Paul Gauguin Cruises is testing Fijian waters in 2015 with a 10-night round-trip cruise from Fiji to New Caledonia and far-flung Vanuatu. Romance-seekers will find a sun-soaked South Pacific paradise full of white-sand beaches and blue lagoons; enjoy hand-in-hand snorkeling or scuba diving; and go hiking through rain forests to hidden cascades. Honeymooners will be blessed in a special Polynesian ceremony. *Embarks October 31, 2015; from \$5,445/person, including airfare from LA; pgcruises.com*



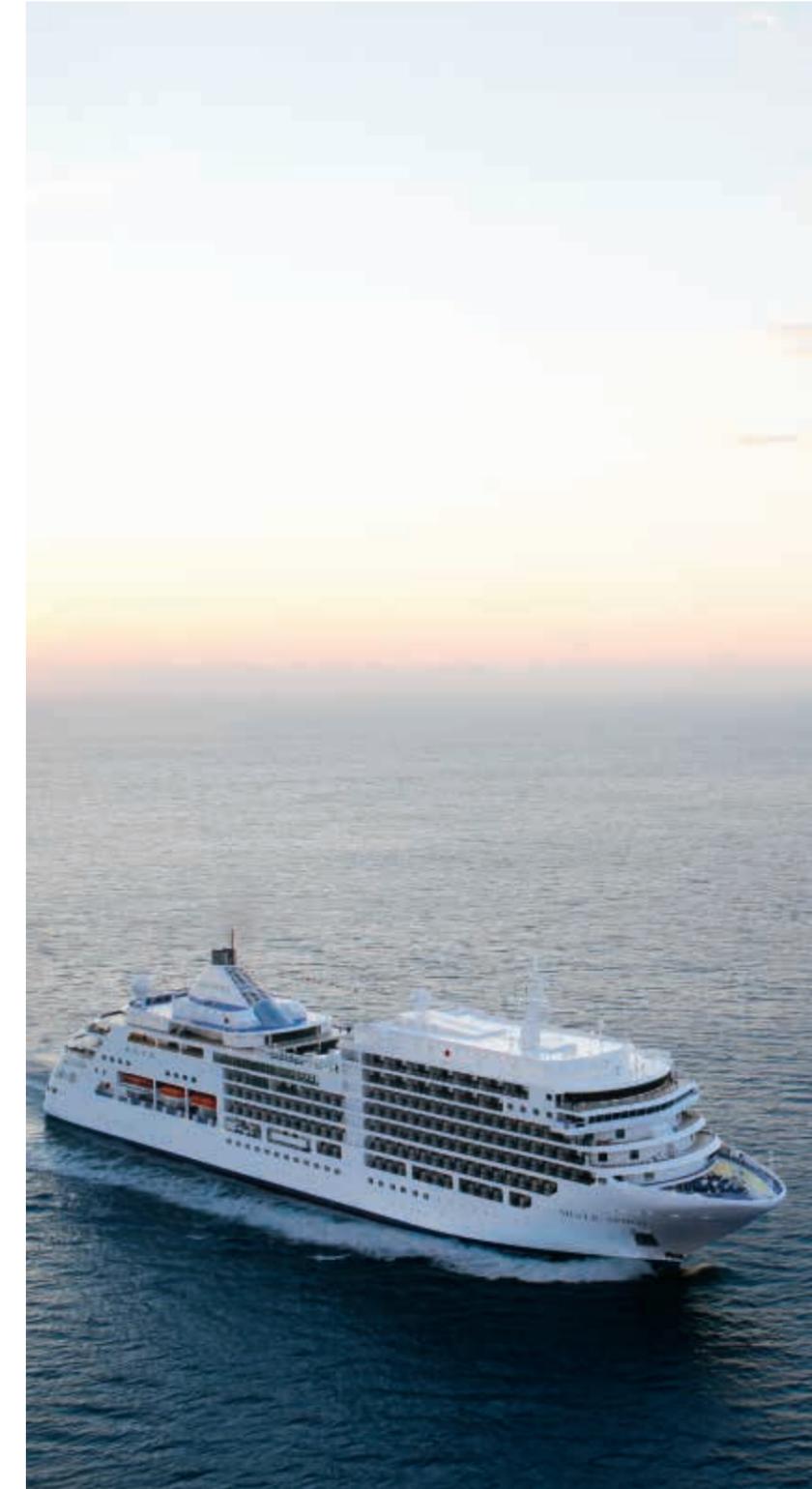
MEDITERRANEAN ISLES

Seabourn is launching an exciting new Mediterranean itinerary next spring, with stops in romantic, picturesque towns from Monte Carlo to Rome. Couples can fill their trip with wine tastings, castle tours, and romantic port-side lunches, and retreat to spacious suites with minibars stocked with champagne, and private balconies primed for candlelit dinners. Exceptional ports along the way include Corsica in France; Santa Margherita, Florence, Sardinia, and Amalfi in Italy; and an overnight in Malta. *Select dates between May and September 2015; from \$5,499/person; seabourn.com*



TAHITI AND FRENCH POLYNESIA

Windstar recently returned to French Polynesian waters (after a 10-year hiatus) for select 7- and 11-night voyages aboard an intimate, all-balcony-cabin yacht. Cruising round-trip from Papeete, Tahiti, you'll get to duck into tiny Tahitian coves and enjoy overnight stays in Moorea, Raiatea, and Bora Bora (the longer voyages tack on the Tuamotu Islands). You can even opt for a mid-cruise overnight in one of Le Meridien Bora Bora's extraordinary over-water bungalows. *Select dates from June through November 2015; from \$2,499/person; windstarcruises.com*



CARIBBEAN

Widely lauded for its strong culinary tradition, **Oceania** is adding a new 12-night Caribbean Culinary Discovery Tour out of Miami next year. The epicurean-themed voyage will feature its own master chef–helmed Bon Appétit Culinary Center on board, the only hands-on cooking school at sea, and highlight the local gastronomy of St. Lucia and Antigua with chef-accompanied visits to island markets, plantations, and restaurants. *Embarks January 24 or February 23, 2015; from \$2,499/person, including airfare; oceaniacruises.com*

BORDEAUX

Launched in 2014 as part of **Uniwold's** Epicurean Adventurer Program, this weeklong Bordeaux, Vineyards & Châteaux river cruise rewards oenophiles with guided tastings of superb Médoc vintages, meetings with Sauternes winemakers, cellar tours of Saint-Émilion wineries, and a wine-pairing lunch at a Bordeaux château. Culinary delicacies like duck confit, Aquitaine caviar, and Arcachon oysters are a big draw, as is the intimate ship. *Select dates March through November 2015; from \$2,899/person; uniworld.com*

AUSTRALIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC

For an exceptional culinary experience, join one of **Silversea's** exclusive "L'École des Chefs" sailings for wine tastings, cooking classes led by Relais & Châteaux pros, and vineyard and market tours. **Silversea's** decadent 14-night cruise from Melbourne, Australia is a great choice. It sails to Tasmania; up the Australian coast to Sydney and Brisbane; and onward to the exotic flavors of the South Pacific, with stops in New Caledonia, Vanuatu, and Fiji. *Embarks February 23, 2015; from \$6,950/person; silversea.com*

BEST FOR HISTORY BUFFS



RHINE RIVER

Viking River Cruises' new "Legends of the Rhine" itineraries home in on the historical events that helped shape northern Europe. You'll visit the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam; explore the Netherlands' National War and Resistance Museum; and discover Germany's most-storied castle in Heidelberg. The 7-night cruises sail between Amsterdam and Frankfurt and feature onboard lectures on the Rhine's rich history, particularly as it relates to World War II. *Select dates in April and May 2015; rates from \$2,456/person; vikingrivercruises.com*



MEDITERRANEAN

Crystal Cruises' newest Mediterranean itinerary calls on ancient ports from Turkey to Italy in a sweeping 13-night cruise from Istanbul to Rome. In all, there are 11 ports of call on the line's inaugural "Mediterranean Majesty" itinerary, including Ephesus; Rhodes; Malta (featuring a maiden call in off-the-beaten-path Goza); and Pompeii. James Fallows, *The Atlantic's* national correspondent, will act as onboard lecturer, providing insights into regional politics and trends. *Embarks September 20, 2015; from \$5,760/person (with 2-for-1 promo rates); crystalcruises.com*



MISSISSIPPI RIVER

When it debuts next year, **American Cruise Lines'** new, art-and-antique-filled paddle wheeler will set the tone for exploring Civil War sites along the Mississippi River. Sailing round-trip from New Orleans, the 7-night voyages will make history-rich stops at essential battlefields, monuments, and museums in Louisiana and Mississippi, including National Military Park and the Rosedown State Plantation. On board, you'll benefit from enriching lectures by Civil War scholar and author Dr. Michael Deeb. *Embarks April 25 or October 31, 2015; rates from \$4,320/person; americancruiselines.com*

BEST FOR ADVENTURE SEEKERS



ANTARCTICA

For the true trip of a lifetime, sign up for one of **Lindblad Expeditions'** 2015 Antarctica voyages commemorating the centennial of Sir Ernest Shackleton's legendary trans-Antarctic expedition. Two *National Geographic* ships will make the 11-night journeys, each with a team of naturalists, undersea specialists, *National Geographic* photographers, and Pulitzer Prize-winning authors as guest speakers. Hiking, kayaking, and Zodiac cruises to icebergs are all part of the package. *Select dates in November and December 2015; from \$12,950 with lots of inclusions; expeditions.com*



PERUVIAN AMAZON

Head into the wild in style with an intimate, upscale 5-night land-and-water adventure crafted by **Rainforest Cruises**. Cruise the Amazon for three nights on an 8-passenger riverboat outfitted with king-size beds, air conditioning, and chef-prepared meals sourcing exotic local ingredients. A 2-night, pre-embarkation stay at a new jungle lodge will have you sleeping in a bungalow perched 65 feet above the rainforest floor. Throughout, Amazonian naturalist guides lead activities like night walks, bird-watching, piranha fishing, and community visits. *Select dates year-round; from \$2,499/person; rainforestcruises.com*



TRANSATLANTIC

Channel the intrepid spirit of 19th-century American settlers and explorers on a modern-day transatlantic voyage. In 2015, the esteemed **Cunard Line** will commemorate the 175th anniversary of its first transatlantic crossing by sailing the same route as the *SS Britannia* in July 1840. The fabled *Queen Mary 2* will recreate the trip in 12 nights and follow the original westbound route from Southampton to Liverpool; across the Atlantic to Halifax; then on to Boston and New York City. *Embarks July 2, 2015; from \$2,638/person; cunard.com*



Written by Elissa Garay

All cruise prices and sail dates were accurate at the time of writing.

PHOTO CREDITS

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