

STUDY CONCERNING THE CRUISES ON THE DANUBE RIVER

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Abstract

The paper aimed to promote the cruises on the Danube River. Generally, in our mind the cruises on the Danube river mean trips of a few hours along the borders of the Danube in Budapest or in its Delta. Just a few persons know, however, that there is an extended version of these trips from 7 to 15 days of all inclusive luxury on board travel on a ship, with stops in the most historical cities which are situated along the Danube. The voyages by boat on the Danube are a very convenient and enjoyable option both for leisure and visits to the main cities from the Western Europe which are crossed by the Danube river. However, most of the cruise variants start either from Passau, and ends Budapest, or from Budapest to Passau destination. The paper presents an interesting offer of 15 days/14 nights cruise by boat along the Danube River.

Key words: cruise, Danube, restaurant, Romania

INTRODUCTION

The cruise industry is such a dynamic part of the modern tourism all over the world.

In the last decades, the cruise industry was facing new challenges caused by the high growth rate of tourists number travelling abroad whose figure reached over 1,100 billion.

It was obliged to keep pace with the extended market and the new preferences of the modern consumer keen to travel to exotic destinations, enjoy special facilities on a ship board.

Under these conditions, the cruise industry prepared and designed new cruise ships in a modern concept, it also has developed new itineraries and destinations, new on-board/on-shore activities, it diversified and included new programmes of entertainment and facilities on board and new cruise lengths according to the changes in the patterns to spend holidays. [1,5]

Europe benefits of a large variety of important interior rivers. The Danube River is the longest one with its 2,888 km from its source to the Black Sea and considered "The Queen of Europe's rivers", because it is crossing ten countries with various cultures, history and attractions.

Many tourists are keen to travel by boat along the Danube, because this the best way to admire the magnificent waterway and the attractions situated on its borders. [10]

As long as the Danube river is navigable for 2,415 km (1,500 miles), many ships are floating up and down the Danube offering pleasant voyages to the tourists. [8]

In this context, the study presents the most important attractions along the Danube river, the river cruise companies and some travel offers. Its main purpose is to promote tourism by ship.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper is based on the information collected from literature and various tourism agencies regarding their offers for cruises on the Danube River.

Also, the sites of various river cruise companies were used to promote travel offers on the Danube River.

The trip programme is presented and discussed in details and serves to the promotion of the tourism on a ship board as a modern way for relaxation, culture and travel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Among the most important places to visit along the Danube, ten are in the top. It is about: Ulm, Ingolstadt, Regensburg, Straubing and Passau in Germany, Linz and Vienna in Austria, Bratislava in Slovakia, Szentendre and Budapest in Hungary. [7]

Also the Danube Parks and especially the Danube Delta, a biosphere reserve are of high interest for tourists.

The Danube Delta has a scientific, touristic and even economic importance. It has ecosystems represented by the Danube branches, channels, floating reedbeds, floodplains, levees, sands, river meadows, and forests. Tourists are involved in specific programmes such as: leisure tours, itinerant discovery tourism, scientific trips for ornithologists, researchers, students, special youth programmes, rural tourism, ecotourism, balneary tourism, birdwatching, nautic sports, fishing, tasting traditional meals. [6]

A special attention is given to the Danube Region since June 2011 by the European Council who established a Strategy for the Danube Region. All the countries and regions situated along the River but also many other countries are involved in fulfilling this strategy. It is about Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine. Among other objectives, this strategy is destined to develop and promote tourism. [2]

The cruises on the Danube river include in their itinerary the following cities: Passau, Salzburg, Linz, Melk & Dürnstein, Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest.



Photo 1. St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna [11]

Cruises on rivers are unique experiences, completely different from other cruises. The small boats floating on the Danube river provide access to the tourist attractions situated along the borders and to the cities.

The river cruise means a few hundred travelers instead of thousands like in the ocean cruises.

The most important cruises companies on the Danube River are: Viking River Cruises, Avalon Waterways and Tauck Tours.

Table 1. Comparison regarding the facilities offered by three cruise companies operating on the Danube River

Characteristics	Viking River Cruises	Avalon Waterways	Tauck Tours
No. of ships	2	3	3
Guests capacity	(1)Viking Danube Ship= 150 guests (2)Viking Legend= 189 guests	(1)Avalon Visionary (2)Avalon Artistry (3)Avalon Expression	118 guests/ Ship
Room types	95 deluxe staterooms	Staterooms and suites	Double room
Other facilities	-Balcony -Picture window -Sun deck	-Picture window	
Trip duration	8 to 16 days	5 to 14 days	12 days
Tourist offer	"Romantic Danube" to discover grand cities and quaint villages on this 8-day river cruise along the "Blue Danube."	"Christmastime on the Danube"- to visit the Christmas markets in the cities (I)8 days from Vienna to Budapest (II) 11 days Budapest to Prague	"Budapest to the Black Sea - Eastbound"
Price	2,056 USD	2,039 USD 3,058 USD	5,590 USD

Source: [9, 12, 13, 14]

Study case- Cruise Star of the Danube Delta, 15 days/14 nights from Budapest- The Danube Delta-Passau-Vienna-Budapest, from Euro 1,200/person/All inclusive

Cruise ship Star of the Delta offers a high standard of service at unbeatable value for money.

The hospitality proved by the Romanian crew is always a positive factor.

According to the ancient custom, the crew on board welcomes the guests with a small but authentic Romanian gourmet.

All the tourists are surprised by the charming landscape of the sunny deck of the boat, the chance to swim in the pool or relax in its pleasant atmosphere.

The Star of Delta Program (15 days / 14 nights) could be sometimes subject to change depending on force majeure (low waters, floods, shallow water, locks).

In this case, the tourists should pay attention to the program and the current announcements made on board by the Cruise Manager. [3]

In the cruise price are also included meals and snacks, and guide services for visiting cities where the ship stops are made [4].

In this context, the purpose of the paper was to promote the cruises on the Danube river as a chance to admire the beautiful landscapes on its borders from various countries, to enjoy living on board of a luxury ship, and to visit various cities and have contact with the historical places and cultural life of those cities and also to enjoy admiring the biodiversity of the Danube Delta as a final destination.



Photo 2. Cruise MS Delta Star 15 days/14 nights [3]

(i) The travel offer includes the following services on the ship board:

Accommodation in the chosen cabin on the ship; the cabin has shower/tub and toilette, air conditioned, telephone, hairdryer, TV, wardrobe, internal sound system and a safe deposit box is assured at reception.

All inclusive regarding the all 3 meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Lunch has 3 versions of the main dish, and vegetarian dish.

Dinner consists of 2 versions of the main dish, one of them being vegetarian.

Between the meals: snacks.

Only breakfast is served in a buffet style and the others meals are served in an "a la carte regime".

Bar-offer in the all-inclusive menu: 4 non-alcoholic cocktails, Romanian house-wine, draft beer, water (still or sparkle), tea/coffee.

Free access on the outside deck, at the pool and sunbeds.

Port taxes

Daily program: games (tombola, karaoke) live shows, themed party watching movies from the Video Library of the ship;

The info-desk on board is opened 24 hours/day

There is one tourism office where you can get information and book excursion in each city the ship stops.

(ii) The travel offer also does not include the following services:

- Alcoholic drinks;
- Hair-dresser, laundry service, medical service;
- Optional trips (pay on the ship);
- Phone calls outside the ship;
- Shopping on board;
- Trip insurance-recommended;
- Ship transfer;
- Accommodation service before/after embarkation/disembarkation;
- Airport transfer [4].

Facilities offered on the board of the ship

All-inclusive /Bar with light alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks /Library access /Pool access /Sunbeds / Fitness zone /Hair-dresser / Massage/Music live shows Juice, coffee, milk, tea, water, airport transfer.

Cabins.

The upper deck cabins feature large windows that can be opened (inclined) and main deck cabins feature two smaller windows that do not open.

The cabins are equipped in a practical way. Amenities include air conditioning, shower and toilet, satellite TV, telephone board, hair dryer and a wardrobe.

The 2-bedded cabins measuring approximately 11 square meters and all contain two beds (single-deck) of a person.

The Deluxe Cabins 2 beds have a size of 20 sqm and have a separate lounge and bedroom area with a double bed.

And One bed cabins have a space of about 10 square meters.

Other Facilities on board

Restaurant with panoramic view, bar with panoramic view, store, barber/hairdresser, sun deck with swimming pool, awning, deck chairs and tables, safe/safety deposit box at reception available in the permanent vessel customers [3].

Table 2. The Programme of Cruise Star of the Danube Delta, 15 days/14 nights from Budapest- The Danube Delta-Passau-Vienna-Budapest, from Euro 1,200/person/All inclusive

DAY	CAP SHORE	ARRIVAL	DEPARTURES	REMARKS
Monday	Budapest	08:30		EMBARKING
TUESDAY			23:00	20:30 - 22:30 Budapest night
	Mohacs	09:30	17:15	09:00 - 13:00 Pecks (facultative)
WEDNESDAY	Belgrade	08:00		08:15 - 11:45 City Tour Belgrade
			22:30	20:00 - 22:30 Night Trip Belgrade (facultative)
SATURDAY	Iron Gates			
SUNDAY	Ruse	08:30	13:30	09:30 - 13:00 City Tour Ruse (facultative)
MONDAY	Mila 35	08:30	13:30	09:00 - 13:00 Danube Delta (facultative)
TUESDAY	Oltenita	08:00	09:00	08:30 - 14:00 City Tour Bucharest (from Oltenita /to Giurgiu)
	Giurgiu	13:00	14:00	
WEDNESDAY	Iron Gates			
THURSDAY	Novi Sad	08:30	14:00	09:30 - 13:00 Novi Sad
FRIDAY	Mohacs	01:00	03:00	Revision
	Kalocs	08:30	13:30	08:45 - 12:45 Puszt-Trip- Ordas (facultative)
SATURDAY	Bratislava	14:00	19:00	14:00 - 16:30 City Tour Bratislava
SUNDAY	Melk	12:00	16:30	13:00 - 16:30 Trip "Impressions from Wachau" - Melk
MONDAY	Passau/ Engelhartzell	08:30		City tour Passau/Engelhartzell
TUESDAY	Vienna	13:00	18:00	City tour Vienna
WEDNESDAY	Budapest	08:30		DEBARKING

Source: <http://www.infinity-agency.com/en/cruises/cruise-ms-delta-star-15-days-14-nights-budapesta-danube-deltapassaubudapesta.html>[3]



Photo 3. Star of Delta cabin

Restaurant / Kitchen

All meals are served in the spacious panoramic restaurant. The crew of the vessel

is a professional and extremely friendly. Diversified menus contain international cuisine and traditional dishes from local regions along our route [2].

Program onboard

Theme evenings, quizzes, bingo (as planned) and live music are just part of the fun aboard the motor vessel portfolio. Books, board games and playing cards are also available near the library vessel (Free).

Payment on board

Payment on board is made in euros. At the end of the cruise you can pay your bill by the

bar / restaurant and excursions booked on board, either in cash (Euro) or by debit or credit card (Visa, MasterCard or Maestro PIN code is required, do not accept V -Pay).



Photo 4. Star of Delta boat [2].

Life on board

The atmosphere on board is one of nature relaxing. We suggest smart casual attire - a sweater for cooler evenings and resistant shoes for shore excursions. Please dress more formally for dinner. Ship's crew will always be available for any questions, help and tips throughout your stay.

Please note that the smoking is allowed only in special places [2].

CONCLUSIONS

Danube is one of the main tourist destinations in the world. Its ability to attract tourists is a driver for a much larger area and this contributes to its development.

For visitors, the Danube presents a large variety of tourist attractions and sites which can be visited from wherever the tourist is staying.

The Danube area of influence has a rich collection of tourism elements that make it a powerful international leader that also provides services to a larger area.

The Danube is much more than the river. It offers a large range of possibilities to enjoy leisure activities, culture and nature.

The Danube is a valuable asset in terms of tourism and for this reason there is a lot of effort being put into the mutual collaboration

between countries, crossed by this river, that can be beneficial for all parties.

From a customer perspective, which is well understood by tourism business owners in the cities crossed by this river, further efforts are being made to develop the competitiveness of the Danube's tourism.

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