

TRAVEL TIPS

# River cruise woos young and old alike with full itineraries



**ON THE MOVE**  
**Loren Christie**

A recent trip on the inaugural cruise of the Avalon Tranquility II has been an Ivy League crash course in one of the fastest-growing trends in the travel industry, river cruising.

Based on my abbreviated four-day itinerary from the

stunning castle-land of Germany's Rhine River gorge through to Basel, Switzerland, I offer this quick tutorial on River Cruising 101.

River ships are not a floating senior citizens' home. Longer itineraries will likely have more retirees on board due to the time commitment, but that doesn't mean it's not a great experience for younger folks. Once you factor in the cost of doing a similar trip on your own,

accommodation, meals (including wine with dinner), excursions, entertainment and transportation, the value proposition is excellent.

It has been a welcome surprise that many of the excursions are not geared toward the sedentary set. Pack your walking shoes and be prepared to cover some ground.

Size does matter. Due to infrastructure restrictions, such as the height of bridges and size of locks, the ships

plying the rivers of Europe will never be larger than 135 metres long, 11.4 metres wide and a hair more than 6 metres high. That translates to an average of 140 people on any given ship.

Those used to large ship cruising can say goodbye to long lines to embark, disembark or simply enjoy a meal. These small ships also provide easy access to the destinations, where you can wander into town from the

dock at your leisure.

Not all river ships are created equal. When booking, ask questions on the benefits and restrictions of your ship. For example, a big selling feature for some companies is the addition of balconies off of the staterooms. Unfortunately, due to the restrictions on ship width, this means ships with balconies have smaller staterooms. I prefer Avalon's panorama suite model, which offers

200 sq. ft. of spacious stateroom minus the balcony. The configuration of the suite also places the bed facing out toward full-length sliding glass doors, allowing you to lay back and watch the world float by.

It's just civilized. Settling into a stateroom, unpacking once, stopping at fairy tale-like villages and sharing stories over dinner with likeminded travellers are all part of the experience.

# 4

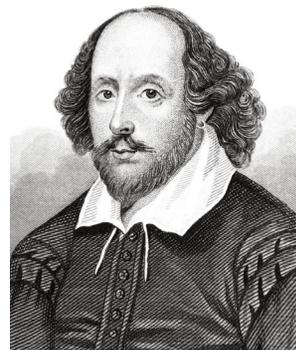
## INTERACTIVE MAPS TO WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF AUTHORS

A recently launched map allows users to discover Edinburgh via its literary history, while an ongoing mapping project getting buzz this week delves into Shakespeare-era London. With these interactive maps, the world's literary capitals are just a click away. **AFF**



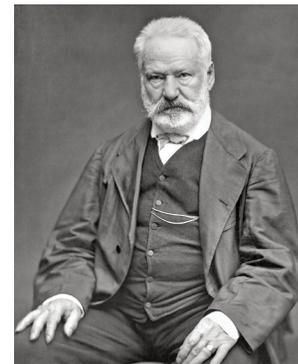
### Edinburgh as seen by Scott and Stevenson

Launched late last month, Lit Long: Edinburgh incorporates nearly 550 novels, stories, memoirs and journals focusing on the 19th and early 20th centuries — Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and Muriel Spark all appear — but also tying in works by the likes of Alexander McCall Smith and Irvine Welsh. The map is the visual, interactive output of the Palimpsest project, created to mine texts such as these. **litlong.org**



### Shakespeare's London

Prof. Janelle Jenstad of the University of Victoria is behind the Map of Early Modern London (MoEML), which uses a 1560s woodcut map of London known as the "Agas" map and overlays it with references to people, places, topics and terms to provide a virtual visit of Shakespeare-era London. The Atlantic's CityLab featured the map this week. **mapoflondon.uvic.ca/dev/agas.htm**



### The France of Hugo and Flaubert

You may need to brush up on your French for this one, but Cartographie littéraire de la France by the Strasbourg bookstore Ivres de Livres covers the rich literary past of not just Paris but of the country as a whole. Follow Victor Hugo (pictured) and Émile Zola through the streets of Paris, or see Normandy as Flaubert depicted it in Madame Bovary. **cartographie-litteraire.net**



### San Francisco, city of Beats

The San Francisco Chronicle has created The Literary City, with references from The Kite Runner, The Joy Luck Club (by Amy Tan, pictured), The Maltese Falcon and A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius all matched to their location in the city, and a number of key Beat hangouts all given their due. **sfchronicle.com/theliterarycity**

## TRAVEL NOTES CALIFORNIA TREASURE, ECO-HOTELS AND KENTUCKY'S BIGGEST PARTY

### Re-opening: Hollyhock House

Architect Frank Lloyd Wright's 1921 Los Angeles landmark Hollyhock House is ready to once again welcome visitors after a \$4.3 million restoration that began nearly a decade ago. Donated to the city in 1927 by the owner, oil heiress Aline Barnsdall, the 17-room, 5,000-sq. ft. concrete house is California modernism at its finest. Go online and visit **Barnsdall.org** for details.

### Tool: Green accommodation

New, eco-conscious booking platform Green Hotel World helps you minimize your travel impact on the environment. The site lists only green-certified hotels and supports those that sustain the local community. It features a rating system so you know just how green each hotel is, and compensates for the carbon emissions of your stay by donating to MyClimate. Visit **GreenHotelWorld.com**.

### Bucket List: The Kentucky Derby

The 141st running of "the greatest two minutes in sports" is coming up May 2. Three-year-old thoroughbreds will compete for a \$2-million purse at the storied Churchill Downs, capping off a two-week party in Louisville that includes fireworks, a marathon, music and mint juleps. Don't forget to pack the seersucker suits and fancy hats. Visit **KentuckyDerby.com**. **DOUG WALLACE**



The Kentucky Derby offers a day at the races on May 2. **CONTRIBUTED**