LEISURE & HOSPITALITY INTERNATIONAL
Your destination, event & lifestyle magazine

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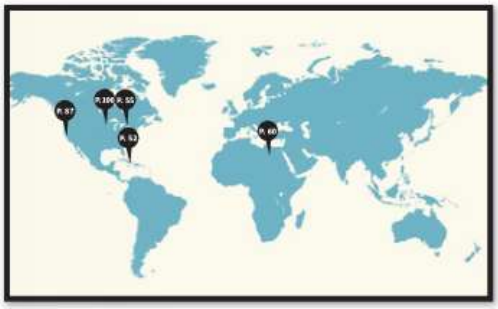
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Being There



Rollin' on the River...

A LOOK AT THE GROWING RIVER CRUISE MARKET

BY ROBERTA SCHWARTZ, MALS, CTC, MCC

When most people think of cruising, they picture a big ocean liner sailing the open waters to a balmy, tropical destination, where warm waters and white sandy beaches await their pleasure. Endless buffets, casinos and entertainment are there to while away the hours. And there are lots and lots of other people to mix and mingle with, if one so chooses. While this appeals to an ever-growing population of vacationers, there is a new emerging segment of the cruise industry that is quietly growing ever-stronger : river cruising.

Escaping to a small vessel that navigates the rivers and canals of the world, dropping vacationers off in the city center, where they fully engage in the culture and diversity of the region with fellow passengers on an incredible journey has its own appeal.

While people have always traveled by river or sea to get somewhere, river cruising as we know it today got its real start in the early 1990s in Europe with the opening of the Main-Danube Canal, linking Europe's major waterways between the North Sea and the Black Sea. Smaller vessels designed for rivers with accommodations ranging from the practical to the luxurious began to be offered to travelers seeking an alternative to ocean cruising, and to those looking to explore beyond a tour bus.

European rivers such as the Danube, Rhine, Elbe, Seine and Douro offer the most popular itineraries and see the most guests each year. Cruises range from five to more than 21 days, with seven being the most popular. Cruises are often themed to the destinations (tulips in Holland, castles on the Rhine, Christmas markets) during different times of the year. Africa is another growing market for river cruising, and while the ever-popular Nile River cruises may be a challenge in these times, the Zambezi River affords guests a chance to have a safari-like experience. In Asia, this is proving very popular – traveling through Vietnam and Cambodia, while the Yangtze River in China is a treat not to be missed. And let's not forget the rivers here in the Americas. The mighty Mississippi rolls out the paddlewheel boats to take one back in time to the Old South, and on the Columbia and Snake River routes one can visit the areas that explorers Louis and Clark did two centuries ago. Of course, the Amazon in South America gives guests an experience in the rainforest they'll not soon forget.

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Being There





STANDOUT BRANDS

Several river cruise companies have taken the lead in the marketplace by offering guests a more memorable experience. Uniworld Boutique River Cruises has been offering a luxurious hotel-like experience to its guests as it travels rivers around the world. AMA Waterways celebrates more than 10 years of providing guests with all-inclusive river cruising throughout the world, and Avalon Waterways' 14 vessels reflect a 10-year history of river cruising with a touring background dating back to 1928. Viking River Cruises began in 1997 with the acquisition of four Russian river ships, and has since expanded to include more than 50 vessels sailing the world.

MARKET APPEAL

So what do guests expect on a river cruise? I took my first river cruise in 2013, and after 30 years at ocean cruising I was glad to find an alternative. While I still love looking at the vast vistas ocean cruising affords guests, the quiet intimacy of a river cruise was a welcome change. Guest capacities are smaller, ranging from less than 100 to no more than 200, so fellow passengers get to know each other quite well. Typically, almost all tours should be included, and should cater to several levels of ability. Active guests can go charging off, while gentle walkers can take a slower pace to see the sights. Sometimes a river cruise will sit in one port for an entire day, and other times they visit one place in the morning and another in the late afternoon. Wine and beer are included and often Wi-Fi is as well, a most appreciated benefit to guests who want to keep in touch with the outside world. Entertainment on board is certainly not the Broadway/Las Vegas-style shows

> "The river cruise segment has grown by 10 percent over the past five years."
> ROBERTA SCHWARTZ, TRAVEL EXPERT

River cruising has also moved into the theme arena, with many cruises offering special departures for wine or chocolate connoisseurs. The upcoming 70th anniversary of the Normandy invasion has sparked a great interest in cruises on the Seine to coincide with this historic event. Jewish Heritage cruises have also been a popular itinerary.

All in all, according to Cruise Lines International Association, the river cruise segment has grown by 10 percent over the past five years, while the cruise industry average has only been 7 percent, so this is definitely the market to watch. Most river cruise guests are in the 50- to 70-year-old demographic. Prices average from $2,000 to $4,000 per person for a seven-day cruise. It appears that the demand for river cruising is currently exceeding the supply, with many sailings sold out months in advance, especially popular summertime cruises.

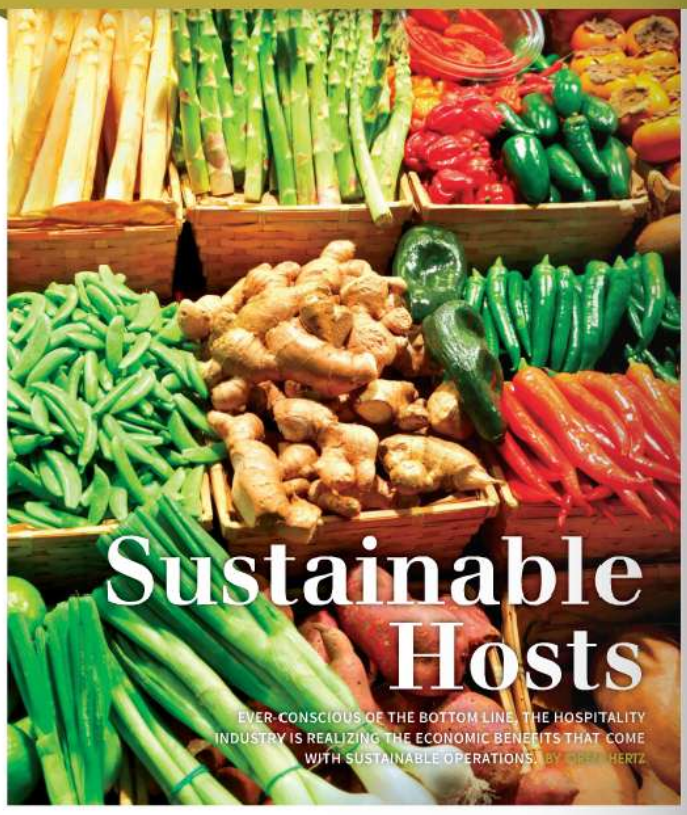
So, is it time to hop on board and invite guests to go "roll in" on the river?" Seems like a good idea to me! ◦

Roberta Schwartz teaches courses in travel and tourism, event management and cruise line management at Johnson & Wales University. She is also the owner of a travel agency, Cruise Planners.

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Staying There



Sustainable Hosts

EVER-CONSCIOUS OF THE BOTTOM LINE, THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IS REALIZING THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS THAT COME WITH SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS. BY OREN HERTZ

Sustainability has been around for many years, all over the world and in different practices and industries. It took the hospitality industry some time to catch up with the movement, but now sustainability and "going green" are standard vocabulary in most hospitality operations. The main reason it took the hospitality industry some time to catch up was the concern of costs associated with sustainability. Lessons were quickly learned that the bottom line would not suffer as originally thought. And, in fact, there are several incentives to green initiatives.

Sustainability is no longer the business of small community groups or organizations like Greenpeace. The hospitality industry at-large is a major player in advancing sustainable systems to better the planet, save energy, increase profits and cater to today's more consciences consumers.

There are pockets in the United States where restaurants, hotels, private clubs, cruise lines, airlines and other hospitality operations are expected to practice some sort of sustainability in order to attract customers. In South Florida, there are several established as well as up-and-coming restaurants that focus on local and sustainable purchasing. TAP 42 in Fort Lauderdale purchases all its fruits and vegetables from Marando Farms – a local organic farm located literally behind the restaurant.

Sustainability also has gone beyond recycling. John Hardman, Ph.D., in his book "Leading for Regeneration: Going Beyond Sustainability in Business, Education, and Community" refers to sustainability as "the need for a profound cultural shift toward regenerative human systems" and details how regenerative and sustainable organizations are driven by the sense of a higher purpose.

We are witnessing the sense of a higher purpose in several areas of the hospitality industry. More restaurants and foodservice operations are looking for alternative purchasing – focusing on locally grown products and buying from local farmers markets.

In hotels, it is now a common practice to reuse towels and bed sheets. Some hotels have even made it their goal to become LEED-certified as part of a strategic plan.

Research suggests that the importance of "being green" is driven by the newer generation of customers – generation Y, also known as the millennials.

A survey conducted by Deloitte Automotive Group asked millennial respondents to elaborate on the importance of the environment independent of economic constraints. The results demonstrated that gen Y does have concern for the environment when making purchases. Hospitality operators are shifting towards the need to cater to the younger generation of customers.

Additional advantages to investors in the hospitality industry are governmental programs, grants and tax breaks for those who pursue alternative energy, implement environmentally friendly practices and constantly seek ways to make their operation more energy efficient.

Sustainability is a trend that, in my opinion, is not going to die down any time soon. Dr. Hardman states in his book that "it is now time for a paradigm shift – a different way of thinking – that is more global than individual."

Hospitality operations should strive to become more self-sustained not only to meet consumer demand but also to reduce costs and seek for alternative and more efficient ways of doing business. There are different options. It is simply a matter of seeking information and utilizing the abundance of sources available today to learn more on how sustainability impacts us all.

***Oren Hertz**, MBA, is an instructor at Johnson & Wales University's Hospitality College. He can be reached at oren.hertz@jwu.edu.*

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Eating There

Food and Beverage Trends for 2014

CHEFS TAKE THE CUTTING-EDGE APPROACH **BY BRIAN CONNOR**



As we enter the holiday season, let's take a look through the crystal ball to see what will be hot and what will flop in 2014. I decided to take a different approach this year and "phone a friend." In my case it was a few friends that just so happen to be industry professionals. These are people that eat, sleep and breathe the food and beverage industry – natural trendsetters who are able to predict and react to where the business is headed.

CHEF FERMENTATION

Tony Adams, executive chef and owner of Big Wheel Provisions in Orlando, Fla., says that chef fermentation or barrel aging will definitely be trending in the culinary world.

"I think barrel aging will be a big hit as chefs look for a way to put their own personal spin on making cheap ingredients interesting with little to no increased investment," Adams says. "If I can take a product that everyone can get and make it my own with aging in as little as three weeks, it sounds great to me."

Adams is currently fermenting his own vinegars and soy sauce.

HOME-GROWN VEGAN

Patrick Rebholz, chef de cuisine of the award-winning Peninsula Grill in Charleston, S.C., says to expect more vegan menu items.

"I predict that vegan restaurants, more specifically chains, will make a big go at it," Rebholz says. From farm-grown citrus to micro greens, Rebholz believes that "more restaurants will partner with farms and/or own their own farms, branding all their products as grown on site or grown on the restaurant farm. 'Home-grown,' if you will, is going to replace 'made-in-house' as the new menu statement of choice."

Rebholz also says that 'sea-to-table' will be trending in 2014, and I agree. Chefs are asking local fishmongers for something new and interesting. For instance, from the cooler waters of New England, chefs are asking for sea robin and other fish that where once considered "throw-away fish." "Restaurants that are able to source the freshest and most desirable ingredients, no matter where they are grown, harvested, or caught, will continue to flourish," he says.

The chefs are split on foraging. Adams says that foraging is going to see its peak, as he believes "we are at a point where we may see a major restaurant or chef make someone quite sick because of the amount of foraging happening by untrained cooks and chefs." Rebholz, however, says foraging has room to grow and surmises that "edible foliage that grows in weird everyday spots ... will be appearing in your salads."

SOUTHERN SWAGGER

Chad Billings, executive chef of Southern Season, also based in Charleston, says that southern swagger still has legs and both Adams and Rebholz agree. Billings is leading a southern foodie destination fitted with retail space, cooking classes, restaurant and wine/craft beer shop.

Adams is also forecasting that we will see Nashville's cuisine celebrated even more this approaching year. He says some of the world's most influential chefs gathered at Cook it Raw 2013 held in Charleston, "solidifying its continued ingredient and southern swagger influences to this year's cuisine."

DRINK LOCAL

I am happy to report that wine and more importantly local wines will be trending in 2014. With consumers' wine knowledge on the rise, we will see a new breed of "cork dorks" that want to experience wines produced in their areas. Craft beer will still be hot, as the need for a better-beer experience is more and more desired.

"Bourbon will lose steam, but whiskies being produced in local areas will continue to be celebrated, especially ones from organic micro-distillers," Adams says.

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