

VACATION AGENT



Selling to the Affluent

Everything you need to know to tap into the highly lucrative luxury market

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The Panorama Lounge & Bar.

A TASTE OF BRITAIN

MS ROBERT BURNS IS REMINISCENT OF A LUXURY ENGLISH COUNTRY HOUSE – COMPLETE WITH **OPULENT FURNISHINGS AND GLITTERING CHANDELIERS**

By Jeannine Williamson

Christened in Vienna in April, Riviera River Cruises' newest vessel, the 167-passenger MS Robert Burns, offers a taste of Britain while sailing on some of Europe's most popular waterways. Riviera River Cruises, which was founded in 1984 and is the U.K.'s largest river cruise operator, debuted its offerings in North America in 2017.

The MS Robert Burns, the 13th vessel in the company's fleet, features three categories of accommodations, including some with balconies. Décor is beautiful throughout and replicates the quintessential English "country house" style with opulent furnishings, marble, gleaming brass

and glittering chandeliers. There are two dining venues and a host of amenities, including a gym, hair salon, massage room and fleet of bicycles. MS Robert Burns sails on five itineraries on the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers, ranging from a four-night Christmas market cruise to 14-night voyages.

Fanciest and Most Common Accommodations: Four deluxe balcony suites located midship on the upper deck measure 269 feet and feature verandas. The six superior suites on the middle and upper decks measure 247 square feet.

There are 78 staterooms that measure 172 or 183 square feet. The 14 smaller, lower-deck cabins have fixed windows, and the

remainder have French balconies with floor-to-ceiling sliding windows. All accommodations are tastefully decorated in muted tones with marble bathrooms and Crabtree & Evelyn toiletries. Reflecting the line's British heritage, all staterooms boast kettles to make tea, as well as coffeemakers.

What's Included: Fares include meals, daily excursions, tea, coffee and Wi-Fi. Other beverages are charged as consumed, or passengers can pre-book a drinks package covering beer, wine, juices and sodas with lunch and dinner for \$129 per person (\$159 in 2019). Gratuities are discretionary. The recommended amount is 5 to 10 euros per person, per day.

What's for Dinner? MS Robert Burns has two dining venues, the Restaurant and

JUST THE FACTS

✓ **Cruise Line:** Riviera River Cruises

✓ **Ship:** MS Robert Burns

✓ **Size:** 167 passengers, 443 feet long

✓ **Entered Service:** 2018

✓ **Itinerary:** The seven-night 'Blue Danube' itinerary roundtrip from Budapest calls at Esztergom, Bratislava, Durnstein, Melk, Linz and Vienna. Three-night Budapest post-cruise extensions are available.

✓ **Price:** From \$1,399 per person

✓ **Base Commission:** 15 percent

✓ **Contact:** 888-386-9370, www.rivierarivercruises.com/agency

the Bistro. The Restaurant, the main dining venue, is a light, airy space set on the middle deck, accommodating all guests in an open-seating format. Menus feature such British favorites as a full English breakfast of eggs, bacon, sausage and baked beans, as well as international fare appealing to a wide range of tastes.

The cozy Bistro, located aft on the upper deck, seats 26 and offers lunch, including pizza and burgers and reservations-only dinners at no extra cost. The Bistro's evening menu is the same for the entire cruise, including German beef stew and "bangers and mash" (sausages and mashed potato).

Guests can also take advantage of complimentary room service breakfasts.

Best Entertainment: There is a resident pianist and singer who perform easy-listening tunes and dance music at various times during the day and evening. Visiting entertainers board the vessel at a variety of ports; they include classical musicians in Vienna and a folkloric group in Budapest. Passengers can use the onboard bicycles to explore independently at no extra charge.

Favorite Excursion: In addition to the included shore tours, the line offers a number of for-fee "Personalize Your Vacation" excursions that delve a little deeper into European history and culture. These include a fascinating behind-the-scenes tour of Vienna's Spanish Riding School, famous for the magnificent "dancing" Lipizzaner stallions that perform

The Restaurant, the ship's main dining venue.



classical dressage movements. Priced at 15 euros, the tour offers fascinating information – for example, the number of years it takes to train both horses and riders, and the fact that these horses are born black before turning white – and takes guests on a visit through the stables.

Best Onboard Spot for a Cocktail:

A horseshoe-shaped cream banquette, scattered with cushions, curves around the front of the sundeck and is a panoramic spot for a sundowner.

Who Goes on This Ship? Well-traveled cruisers in the 55-plus age range. Although the majority of passengers are British, an increasing number of North Americans and Australians are sailing with the line.

Insider Booking Tip: The six superior suites are equipped with beds facing toward the river so passengers can enjoy the passing scenery while relaxing in their accommodations.

Key Selling Points: With 44 crew and 167 passengers on the size of ship that could carry up to 190 passengers, MS Robert Burns offers high levels of personal service. Five lower-deck cabins on every sailing are available for solo travelers at no single supplement. Riviera River Cruises' transparent pricing policy guarantees no discounting, so agents can sell with confidence, knowing that fares will not change.

Agent Assistance: Riviera offers lifetime commission to agents registered through its Travel Agency Portal; if a former client returns and books direct, the registered agent receives commission on that reservation. There is an online training program at www.TravelAgentAcademy.com and in-house training. Agents receive a 50 percent discount on cruises.