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The world is waiting

We look back on some of the top destinations and experiences of 2025. First up, seasoned travel journalist **Janna Graber** reveals her top picks for cruise journeys that explore the world's most legendary destinations

As a travel journalist, I've been fortunate to see some of the world's most spectacular destinations, and I've discovered something surprising: sometimes, the best way to explore these iconic places is from the deck of a cruise ship.

There was a time when I believed cruising meant sacrificing authentic experiences, but I've learned that the right cruise can offer deep insight into a destination. The best part? You can unpack just once and wake up in a new port each morning, accessing places that might be challenging to reach on your own.

Cruising can take you places far off the beaten path, help you explore new cultures, or give you a front-row seat to nature's wonders. From watching the sun rise over ancient temples to drifting past icebergs in Alaska, here are five epic cruises that showcase some of Earth's most remarkable places.

Exploring the Mekong Delta by river cruise

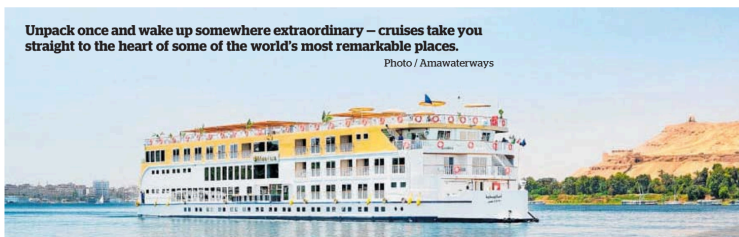
For centuries, the mighty Mekong River has been a primary source of life in Asia. It flows through China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, passing villages, farms, cities, and temples.

My husband, Ben, and I found that a river cruise on the Mekong was the perfect introduction to the heart of Southeast Asia. For seven unforgettable days, we sailed aboard AmaWaterways' "Charms of the Mekong", a river cruise journey that transported us from the bustling streets of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to the temple-dotted landscapes of Siem Reap, Cambodia. Our home during this adventure was the AmaDara, a French colonial-style river cruise ship built specifically for the Mekong River.

AmaWaterways' skilled guides from Vietnam and Cambodia sailed

Unpack once and wake up somewhere extraordinary – cruises take you straight to the heart of some of the world's most remarkable places.

Photo / Amawaterways



with us, explaining what we saw and sharing their insight. We experienced authentic local culture through guided excursions to traditional villages, historic sites, and even a palace. My favourite experiences were watching silk-weaving artists on Silk Island, receiving a Buddhist blessing at a Cambodian monastery, and travelling by oxcart through a rural village.

The journey provided a front-row seat to daily life along the Mekong.

An African safari by cruise ship

Cruising and safaris may not sound like they go hand in hand, but one of my favourite cruise experiences was a 10-day Land and Cruise Safari. Travelling with CroisiEurope, my husband and I spent three nights at a safari lodge in Namibia before flying to Zimbabwe for a safari cruise on Lake Kariba, the world's largest man-made lake.

We sailed on the Zimbabwean Dream, a 16-passenger luxury houseboat on Lake Kariba. Life aboard proved surprisingly luxurious. Despite our remote location in Zimbabwe's wilderness, we enjoyed gourmet meals, including perfectly flaky French croissants each morning. But it was the wildlife that made this journey extraordinary.

The lake was alive with wildlife,

from animals coming to drink at its shores to the creatures that made its waters their home. Each morning, I opened the curtains to see elephants grazing along the shoreline, countless birds soaring overhead, and the vastness of the lake stretching before us. In the evenings, we would climb to the top deck, where the absence of light pollution revealed a dazzling canopy of stars.

Our daily water safaris were the best of all. We saw hundreds of elephants along the shore, including playful yearlings and babies.

Hippoes were frequent sights, though we maintained a healthy distance as they fed in the shallows. A land safari to Matsadona National Park rounded out our wildlife viewing, where we saw elephants, zebras, kudu and more roaming the preserve.

Though Zimbabweans frequent the lake for recreation and fishing, we rarely saw other people, adding to the sense that we'd discovered our own private corner of Africa.

Exploring Antarctica, the world's last wild frontier

Antarctica is one of the last truly wild places on Earth, where nature still reigns supreme. In recent years, the continent has become more accessible by cruise ships,

Antarctica's cruise options offer two distinct ways to explore this pristine wilderness. Expedition vessels, like the luxurious Scenic Eclipse, focus on immersive experiences – you'll zip to shore in Zodiac boats, trek through snowy terrain, and get remarkably close to the continent's unique wildlife. These voyages are ideal for adventurous travellers who don't mind bundling up in gear and making wet landings to experience Antarctica's raw beauty firsthand.

In contrast, larger cruise ships like the Sapphire Princess provide a more traditional sailing experience. You'll have spectacular views of Antarctica's landscapes from the ship. While you won't make landfall, you'll witness the continent's majestic scenery and spot wildlife from the deck – perfect for travellers seeking a more relaxed way to explore this remarkable region.

Most Antarctic cruises operate during the austral summer (November to March), with December to February being the peak season when wildlife is most active, and temperatures are relatively mild.

Seeing Alaska by sea

Alaska is so remote that travelling by sea is often the best way to get around. Many of Alaska's most iconic

sights, like Glacier Bay National Park and the Inside Passage, are best – or only – accessible by water. Cruise ships can navigate narrow fjords and get close to tidewater glaciers that would be impossible to reach by land.

Alaska's capital city, Juneau, is only accessible by sea or air, and many coastal communities are not connected by road. An Alaska cruise lets you visit places like Juneau, Skagway, and Ketchikan without working out how to travel between them.

I've cruised in Alaska with several cruise lines, but one of my favourite trips was a family reunion cruise to Alaska. Celebrity Cruises' seven-night Alaska Hubbard Glacier itinerary offered something for everyone, which was perfect for our group of 20.

Uncovering the secrets of the Nile

Egypt is a bucket-list destination, but it helps to see it with local experts who know the region and its rich history. On the 11-night Secrets of Egypt & The Nile itinerary by AmaWaterways, local Egyptologists provide valuable inside knowledge into Egypt of the past and its vibrant living culture today.

You can't visit Egypt without spending time in Cairo. AmaWaterways' itinerary starts with three days to explore Cairo's treasures, including the Egyptian Museum, King Tut's artefacts, and the new Grand Egyptian Museum. Then, after flying to Luxor, the river cruise begins aboard the AmaLilia, AmaWaterways' newest river cruise ship.

I appreciate the care that AmaWaterways takes to provide memorable, bucket-list experiences along the way, from a guided tour to the mystifying Valley of the Kings to a scenic felucca ride (traditional wooden sailing boat) around Elephantine Island.

