

## 10 BOUTIQUE CRUISE VACATION IDEAS YOU MIGHT NOT EVEN KNOW EXIST



*Does* your heart skip a beat when you think about all of the breathtaking places around the world? Do you seek authentic, immersive vacations that focus on culture, nature, and incredible destinations? Does the thought of only unpacking once and being able to “come home” to your relaxing, intimate hotel on water after a day of exploring appeal to you?

Then let's explore some Boutique Cruises together.

Bucket-list destinations, exploring nature and seeing wildlife, authentic interactions with local people, charming little off-the-beaten-path towns, remote exploration, locally-sourced foods, launching a kayak off of the back of the boat, or simply relaxing in luxurious surroundings... These are all options with Boutique Cruising.

*Allow these 10 Boutique Cruise ideas to help you dream and plan for your next adventure.*



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*“What exactly is a Boutique Cruise?”* is a question I have been asked numerous times. By definition, a boutique is “a small company that offers highly specialized services or products.”

Imagine going to a boutique vs a department store to shop for a dress. Boutiques cater to specific customers, making them feel like the shopping experience is made for them. In the same way, a boutique cruise line caters to you in such a way that makes you know that this cruise was MADE FOR YOU.

Boutique Cruise lines usually have small ships, which allow you to experience a more intimate environment. Whether they are on the ocean or rivers, the focus is almost always on destination immersion. Smaller, more authentic (less tourist) ports, guest lecturers, locally-sourced foods, meeting local people, and/or seeing the wildlife up close. Some boutique cruises are luxury cruises, while others are adventure or exploration cruises.

When I first started learning about small ship, adventure, and luxury cruises, I could barely wrap my mind around it. “You mean there are actually cruises like THIS?” was something that I was constantly asking myself. I literally had no idea that these were even options.

The more I talk to people about their bucket list trips, wish list destinations, and travel goals, the more I realize that people are seeking something fresh. We are wired for authenticity. We want to connect with other people and our surroundings. Making memories and experiencing new things are important.

And that is exactly why I am excited to share these Boutique Cruise ideas with you.





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Photos courtesy of and copyright Celebrity Cruises.

### 1. GALAPAGOS ISLANDS (CELEBRITY CRUISES)

The Galapagos Islands: where tortoises, sea lions, iguanas, lizards, penguins, and rare bird species call home. Since the government of Ecuador closely monitors the tourist regulations of this amazing national park, a cruise is one of the only ways to see most of the islands. Not just anyone can cruise here, either. Only ships with less than 100 passengers are welcome, and only a certain number of people each year can enter these Islands. Talk about exclusive!

This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime trip for people who love to explore nature and experience rare animals in their natural habitats. Naturalists accompany each group ashore, and nightly lectures are an optional addition to this fascinating cruise.

Celebrity Cruises has four gorgeous, luxurious ships in the Galapagos, including a brand new ship, the Celebrity Flora—which is custom-built for the Galapagos, with floor to ceiling glass in much of the ship. Another great aspect is that Galapagos Island cruises with Celebrity are truly all-inclusive: excursions, food and drinks, gratuities, everything.

With unique wildlife as the entertainment, and breathtaking islands as the views, a cruise to the Galapagos is truly a vacation like none other.





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Photos courtesy of and copyright Hurtigruten.

### 2. NORWAY (HURTIGRUTEN)

Beautiful fjords, rare wildlife, charming ports, beautiful scenery, and thrilling adventures all await you on a cruise to Norway. There are also unexpected aspects to a Norwegian Cruise. You can journey to the Arctic and visit Hammerfest, the northernmost town in the world. Visiting an ice hotel, horseback riding through the lush countryside, and experiencing the majesty of the Northern Lights are also possibilities.

Whale watching, kayaking through the breathtaking fjords, dog sledding, and even snowmobiling in the Arctic are all possible excursions during your cruise. There will also be naturalists onboard to help guide you through the history and culture of Norway.

Hurtigruten ships have been sailing along the Norwegian coast for over 100 years, and they have departures year-round, multiple times a week. Each season is completely unique. Whether you choose a Norwegian spring, the breathtaking Summer coastline, bright colors of Autumn, or Northern Lights in Winter, you will experience things you never thought possible. And speaking of Northern Lights, there are certain itineraries that guarantee you will spot the Northern Lights—or you will receive a free cruise!

A Norwegian Cruise will leave you awed and inspired by the world around you.





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## NORWAY (HURTIGRUTEN)



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Photos courtesy of and copyright Paul Gauguin Cruises.

### 3. TAHITI/SOUTH PACIFIC (PAUL GAUGUIN CRUISES)

Nothing says "relax in paradise" like a vacation to Tahiti/the South Pacific. The clear blue water, white sandy beaches, lush vegetation, and private islands are truly the things dreams are made of.

The m/s Gauguin is a luxury ship specifically built to glide through the shallow waters of the South Pacific. It has a watersports marina with complimentary equipment for guests to use, three dining venues, an extensive spa, and 5-star accommodations. Yet, the atmosphere is casual and relaxed - leave your formal-wear at home. The warm, friendly feel, informal setting, and Tahitian staff will make you feel at home.

You will also gain access to Paul Gauguin Cruises' exclusive, private beach located on a motu off the coast of Bora Bora (for French Polynesia itineraries). A day at Motu Mahana, the cruise line's exclusive retreat off the coast of Taha'a, is also included for cruise guests. Snorkeling, watersports, bar service, Polynesian hospitality, and a delicious feast await you at your exclusive paradise.

Your week aboard the Gauguin will leave you feeling pampered and refreshed. The perfect combination.





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Photos courtesy of and copyright AmaWaterways.

### 4. AFRICAN RIVER SAFARI (AMAWATERWAYS)

The Serengeti is teeming with exotic wildlife: zebras, gazelles, elephants, wildabeasts, lions, buffalo, cheetas and other cats, giraffes, ostriches, heyenas, antelope, and crocodiles are just some of the millions of animals that live in this African World Heritage Site.

What better way to view these magnificent animals and grassy plains than from a luxurious river boat. On the 28-passenger AmaWaterways Zambezi Queen, your boutique hotel on water glides along in such a way that the animals feel no threat and continue to come to the water to drink and bathe. The floor to ceiling windows in the public areas as well as in the private suites afford breathtaking views of this African wonderland.

One unique aspect of this river safari is that you are actually only on a river cruise for part of your vacation. Each itinerary also includes hotel stays in luxurious accommodations, plane rides to other destinations, and excursions at each, so that you can get up close to many of the continent's highlights. One itinerary even includes a relaxing train ride.

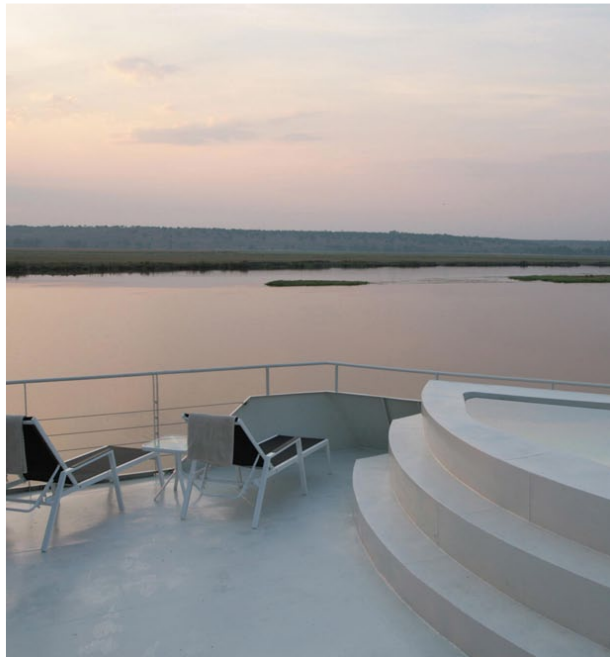
The word "safari" is translated from Swahili to mean "journey." And an African River Safari will truly be a journey of a lifetime for you.





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Photos courtesy of and copyright UnCruise.

### 5. ALASKA (UNCRUISE ADVENTURES)

The Last Frontier. Nature, beauty, wildlife. Kayaking in a secluded inlet, whale watching from a skiff boat, hiking through the backcountry, taking photos of majestic animals in their natural surroundings, eating fresh-caught salmon. This is what Alaska is all about.

Since Alaska is so unique, why not explore it in a unique, authentic way? With UnCruise Adventures, the focus is on the nature and wildlife. Instead of booking a shore excursion to whale watch, your small adventure ship (with a maximum of 88 guests) is the same size as the excursion boats. This means that the whales literally come up beside the boat—and the captain will stop the ship for you to enjoy them. Instead of booking a tour to show you various landmarks, allow your adventure guides to take you on a guided hike through the breathtaking backcountry. There is no "entertainment" onboard because the stunning nature around you is all the entertainment you need.

From the kayaks that are launched directly from the boat, to the food and drinks onboard, to the guided hikes and skiff boat whale watching, everything is included in your fare. Many itineraries even include a complimentary massage.

With more permits than any other cruise lines in Alaska, UnCruise will help you experience The Great Land in ways that will stay with you forever.



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Photos courtesy of and copyright Cunard Line.

### 6. TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING (CUNARD LINE)

Step back in time to the "golden age of cruising" with a Transatlantic Crossing with Cunard. Picture calming ocean waters as far as the eye can see, luxurious accommodations, endless choices of onboard activities, and 5-star service.

After a night of being lulled to sleep by the waves, you will awake to a delicious breakfast and a day full of possibilities. Luxurious spa treatments, sports and onboard activities, champagne afternoon tea, live planetarium show, classes and guest lectures are all options, as well as relaxing in the pool or on a sun deck, reading in the extensive library, or taking a stroll on the walking deck. Each day can be as relaxing or active as you desire.

At night, you will be treated to exceptional dining, followed by music and dancing, a theater performance, orchestra or jazz performance, late night film, or simply sitting in a deck chair and stargazing.

Cunard began sailing from Southampton to New York and back in 1847, and a Transatlantic Crossing remains one of travel's most iconic experiences. This is one of the only boutique cruise experiences where the focus is on enjoying all that the gorgeous ship has to offer. As the boundless ocean surrounds you, enjoy the rhythms of dining, discovery, mingling and relaxing.





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Photos courtesy of and copyright Avalon Waterways.

### 7. EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS RIVER CRUISE (AVALON WATERWAYS)

A European River Cruise is absolutely incredible any time of year. From the tulips blooming in spring, to the lush greens of summer, to the breathtaking colors of autumn, your relaxing river journey will allow you to both relax and enjoy the quaint towns that dot the European countryside.

Now picture these quaint towns decked for the holidays. Huge trees with lights and ornaments, market booths selling handmade crafts and goods, mulled wine and hot apple cider, ice skating rinks, festively lit villages, and Christmas cheer.

Avalon Waterways has numerous Christmas Market itineraries, which allows you to choose the towns, landmarks, castles, and activities that best interest you. One of their greatest features (in addition to the incredible food, ship decor, and included excursions), is that many of the staterooms offer floor to ceiling windows that can be opened to transform your entire room into an open-air balcony experience.

The relaxing atmosphere, historical towns and landmarks, holiday festivities, and Christmas decorations will etch the memories from this experience on your heart.





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Photos courtesy of and copyright Windstar Cruises.

### 8. MEDITERRANEAN YACHT CRUISE (WINDSTAR CRUISES)

Culture and cuisine. Islands and history. Relaxation and exploration. These are all reasons why you will fall in love with the Mediterranean. And what better way to explore such an amazing part of the world than by yacht?

Many large cruise lines stop in ports like Rome and Florence, Italy; Barcelona, Spain; and Monte Carlo, France. These are incredible destinations. However, there is so much more to the Mediterranean than this. Windstar Cruises can take you to both the bustling cities listed above AND interesting locales such as Portofino, Mallorca, Giardini Naxos, and the beautiful islands of Elba, Corsica, and Sardinia.

Windstar's yachts are luxurious, gorgeous, comfortable, casually elegant, and filled with high-class service. Yet, at the same time, with only 148-310 guests onboard, it feels like you are cruising on a friend's private yacht. Each itinerary features Destination Discovery events to connect you with the culture around you. You are also invited to use the Watersports Platform, featuring complimentary kayaks, paddleboards, water trampoline and more. Another option is accompanying the chef as he shops in the local markets.

Explore and connect with the Mediterranean in ways that can only happen aboard small ships. Experience the culture in authentic ways, and come back refreshed and enlivened.





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Photos courtesy of and copyright Viking River Cruises.

### 9. CHINA RIVER CRUISE TOUR (VIKING RIVER CRUISES)

The mighty Yangtze River in China flows past lush banks of bamboo groves, forest-covered mountains, and cascading waterfalls. Experience the unique culture of China with its' rich history, meaningful customs, and important landmarks.

On a China River Cruisetour with Viking River Cruises, you will have the opportunity to visit key cities and important cultural centers as well as sail along the gorgeous Yangtze river in a custom-built luxury river cruise ship. While on the land portion of your cruisetour, you will be treated to luxury hotels and iconic landmarks. Once aboard the Viking Emerald, you will be able to relax and take in your incredible surroundings as you cruise through the Three Gorges and experience unique towns along the river.

Walk along the Great Wall, visit Beijing's old hutong neighborhoods, marvel at the lifelike statues of Xian's Terra Cotta Army, and observe panda bears. Some itineraries also include a visit to the Viking-sponsored elementary school, where you can interact with the local children.

Delectable foods, included excursions, and honorable Chinese hospitality make a China River Cruisetour a truly unforgettable time of your life.





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Photos courtesy of and copyright Silversea.

### 10. ANTARCTICA (SILVERSEA EXPEDITIONS)

Set foot on the last continent and discover a world untouched by humanity. Elephant seals and penguins are there to welcome you to their wonderland, while you marvel at the sheer majesty of nature.

Like explorers of old, you will be able to cross seas of glass and pass giant prisms of ice as you journey to this remarkable land. As you step foot where few have gone before, you will feel a sense of awe and wonder. This is truly an experience many can only dream of.

Silversea allows you to explore Antarctica in comfort and luxury, while maintaining the highest level of safety. After a day of exploring, you can return to your luxury expedition vessel and relax, while enjoying delicious foods and world-class service. Enjoy lectures from naturalists and experts, pamper yourself in the spa, or unwind in the lounge while listening to a pianist and watching the magnificent scenery pass by.

Complimentary small-group shore excursions are led by a team of expert guides so that you can truly embrace all that your Antarctic expedition has to offer. Awaken your senses to what might possibly be the most unique vacation destination in the world.





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*I truly hope that these ideas have opened your eyes to a few of the incredible possibilities that await you with boutique cruising. I hope that this is the start of more dreaming, more exploring, and more memories.*



It is a joy of mine to be able to help you find the perfect vacation for YOU. Each person is unique, so why should vacations all be the same? Traveling, exploring, relaxing, and making memories are all so important. They help to shape our worldview and broaden our minds. It is my pleasure to be able to help you plan your next adventure.

If you are ready to begin the planning process, I am thrilled to be able to help! You can schedule a time to talk with me by booking a free **Vacation Memory Planning Session**. You can also contact me at [Staci@FairyGodmotherTravel.com](mailto:Staci@FairyGodmotherTravel.com) if you prefer to communicate via email.

*P.S. Just so you know, my planning services are FREE. Our agency is paid directly by the cruise lines, etc. so we do not charge our guests anything.*





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5. **ALASKA** (UNCRUISE ADVENTURES)
6. **TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING** (CUNARD LINE)
7. **EUROPEAN CHRISTMAS MARKETS RIVER CRUISE**  
(AVALON WATERWAYS)
8. **MEDITERRANEAN YACHT CRUISE** (WINDSTAR CRUISES)
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