

MISSISSIPPI RIVER CRUISE

New Orleans to Memphis on *American Queen* Paddlewheeler
April 11, 2019 - 18 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person: based on double/twin

\$10,275 Verandah C

\$10,530 Verandah B

\$10,785 Superior Verandah AA



- > Tour is exempt from GST.
- > Please enquire about single fares and other categories.
- > **Early Bookers:** \$250 discount on first 8 seats; \$125 on next 4
- > **Experience Points:** Earn 120 points from this tour.
Redeem **120 points** if you book by **January 3.**

Includes

- Transportation to Seattle airport and return
- 10 nights of accommodation and hotel taxes
- Flight from Seattle to New Orleans
- Current air taxes and security fees
- Locally-guided walking tour of French Quarter
- Locally-guided driving tour of New Orleans
- Maison Bourbon Dixieland Club with drink
- Mardi Gras World & Oak Alley Plantation
- New Orleans School of Cooking
- 7 days/7 nights on board *American Queen*
- Cruise gratuities, port charges and cruise taxes
- Entertainment and other services on the ship
- Transportation from ship to attractions and return
- Nottoway Plantation
- Tour of St. Francisville with Old Market Hall, Feliciana Museum & Grace Episcopal Church
- Tour of Natchez with Rosalie Mansion, Johnson House Museum, Magnolia Hall, Stanton Hall, Charboneau Distillery
- Tour of Vicksburg with Church of the Holy Trinity, Anchuca Mansion, Old Court House Museum,
- Coca-Cola Museum, Lower Mississippi River Museum, Old Depot Museum
- Tour of Greenville with History Museum, 1927 Flood Museum, Bass Cultural Arts Center, Washington County Courthouse, St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Greenville Writers Exhibit
- Coach transportation for 6 days in Tennessee
- Locally-guided tour of Memphis with Sun Studio
- Elvis Experience at Graceland with Mansion tour, galleries, museums, and airplanes
- Rock 'n' Soul Museum
- Performance in a Nashville Honky Tonk
- Locally-guided tour of Nashville with RCA Studio
- Country Music Hall of Fame
- Cheekwood Mansion, Gardens & Art Museum
- Grand Ole Opry performance
- Gratuities to guides and drivers on city tours
- Flight from Nashville to Seattle
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Luggage handling at hotels and ship
- **39 meals:** 17 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 12 dinners

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American Queen

American Queen is said to be the largest river steamboat ever built. The ship was launched in 1995 at a cost of \$65 million, and was christened by Lynne and Paul Harvey (of the radio show *The Rest of the Story*). She is a six-deck recreation of a classic Mississippi riverboat, built by McDermott Shipyard for the Delta Queen Steamboat Company. Although the stern paddlewheel is indeed powered by a steam plant, her secondary propulsion, in case of an emergency and for maneuverability around tight areas, comes from a set of diesel-electric propellers on either side of the sternwheel. *American Queen* has 222 staterooms for a capacity of 436 guests and a crew of 160. She is 127 metres long and 27 metres wide.

The three vessels of the American Queen Steamboat Company cruise the Mississippi River from New Orleans to Minneapolis as well as the tributary Ohio River as far upstream as Pittsburgh. The largest ship is *American Queen* which operates on seven-day cruises mostly between New Orleans and Memphis.

There are two restaurants on *American Queen*. The opulent J.M. White Dining Room is the centrepiece, serving breakfasts, lunches and dinners that are fittingly grand. Evening dining has a country club casual dress code. The informal Front Porch Café offers a wide variety of classic American favourites and can satisfy any craving. Should you be feeling peckish in the wee hours, there is 24-hour room service. Other facilities include gift shop, self-service laundry, chart room and library, spa, gym, and swimming pool.

The palatial Grand Saloon is two decks tall and resembles the small town opera houses of the 19th century with details modelled after Ford's Theater. Rousing musical revues and high-energy cabaret from a talented and energetic cast take centre stage each evening. College on the Mississippi performances bring authentic regional music to life with rich historical context. After the show, dance and swing to stellar performances of jazz, blues, ragtime, bluegrass, country, and rock and roll in the Engine Room Bar, or join in a lively piano sing-a-long in the Main Deck Lounge.

As history plays such a large part of your cruise experience, the Riverlorian imparts the history and lore of the Mississippi River. There is also a diverse lineup of guest historians who take to the stage and transport you to another era. These noted speakers offer astounding insights on the culture and heritage of America's Heartland and the Deep South. Relive a tale from Mark Twain for an enchanted evening and you will retire to your room convinced that you've just had a conversation with history.

Cruise & Tour Notes

All shore excursions included. River cruises are a very different experience to ocean cruises because the shore excursions are included. At each port along the river, a Hop-On Hop-Off bus operates on a schedule with departures from the ship about every 15-20 minutes. Attractions along the route are all included. Premium excursions for an extra fee are offered at most ports as an alternative and you can reserve on board.

Staterooms. We have staterooms in 5 different categories. All have verandahs (public deck or private), tub/shower combo, and flat-screen TV.

- Category C — 140-160 sq ft; French doors open to an outside walk-around deck; located on Cabin, Texas, and Observation decks; exterior access.
- Category B — 190-205 sq ft; French doors open to an outside walk-around deck; located on Observation deck; interior corridor access.
- Category A — 190 sq ft with 40 sq ft private verandah; located on Texas deck; interior corridor access.
- Category AA — 210 sq ft; sitting area; French doors open to an outside walk-around deck; located on Promenade and Observation decks; exterior access.
- Category AAA — 230 sq ft; sitting area with desk; French doors open to an outside walk-around deck; located on Promenade deck; interior or exterior access; Commodore services.

Dining. There are no reservations taken for the ship's Dining Room or Café. Dinner is usually served from 5:30 to 8 pm. Come in when you are ready. Most tables seat 8 and you can sit with different people each time.

Please book early. *American Queen* has confirmed a block of cabins which are normally held until 90 days before sailing. However, any unsold cabins can be taken away from us at any time if the ship fills or if there is great demand for a category. The ship carries only 436 passengers.



Activity Level: Moderate activity including short distances to walk and steps during the shore excursions. The ship has two elevators that serve five decks, but not the Sun Deck. The coaches and ship cannot carry a scooter. There is walking in New Orleans, Memphis, Nashville, and river ports; seeing everything requires active participation. Check the Activity Level rating if you book a premium shore excursion. There can be longer walks in the airports; request a cart or wheelchair at check-in if this could be an issue for you. If you are not able to fully participate in Activity Level 2, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, local guides and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days of the tour. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense, and travel insurance will probably not cover you.

The Mississippi River

The Mississippi River rises in Lake Itasca in Minnesota and flows 3,734 km to the Gulf of Mexico. Along the way, it gathers major tributaries such as the Missouri River and Ohio River. The Mississippi's watershed (including tributaries) drains all or parts of 31 U.S. states and two Canadian provinces between the Rocky and Appalachian Mountains, an area of 3 million sq km. The Mississippi ranks as the 4th longest and 15th largest river in the world by discharge. The word Mississippi itself comes from Messipi, the French rendering of the Ojibwe or Algonquin name for the river, Misi-ziibi, meaning Great River. Ships can navigate the Mississippi as far as Minneapolis, thanks to 29 locks. The river has two nicknames — "Old Man River" and "Father of Waters".

Itinerary

Thursday, April 11:

Transportation is provided to Seattle and we stay overnight near the airport.

Friday, April 12:

Meals: B

We fly to **New Orleans** and stay three nights at the Wyndham Hotel, located in the French Quarter on Royal Street and a block off Canal Street. It has a restaurant, free wi-fi, indoor pool, and fitness centre.

Saturday, April 13:

Meals: B

This morning, a local guide takes us on a walking tour of the **French Quarter** where we hear the fascinating 300-year history of characters who built this city. Some highlights are the Cabildo Museum, the Spanish Quarter, St. Louis Cathedral in Jackson Square (where the original Louisiana Purchase is housed), Louis Armstrong Park, and **Bourbon Street**. After this walk, everyone gets a voucher to enjoy, at leisure, a New Orleans tradition of coffee and beignets at Café Du Monde. There is free time for lunch at the Historic French Market. Then we board the coach for a driving tour of the city: the Lower Ninth Ward where most of the damage occurred during Hurricane Katrina; **St. Louis Cemetery**, an above-ground cemetery known for its voodoo history; Audubon Park; Tulane and Loyola Universities; elegant **St. Charles Avenue**, lined with gracious mansions and trees; and the central business district beside the Mississippi River. Tonight, we visit the **Maison Bourbon Dixieland Club** on Bourbon Street for a drink and jazz show.

Sunday, April 14:

Meals: B,D

The morning is leisure time to stroll the streets of the French Quarter. This afternoon, we go to **Mardi Gras World**, the famous float-making studio where 90% of the floats used in New Orleans' Mardi Gras parades are made. We tour the many carnival dens and observe artists and sculptors as they create the world's largest fleet of floats. Try on elaborate costumes, view an exciting Mardi

Gras video presentation, and visit their gift shop. Tonight, enjoy a unique experience at the **New Orleans School of Cooking**. We learn how to prepare the taste of Louisiana, Cajun, and Creole with recipes provided. After a full meal from our culinary prowess, we are entertained with history, trivia, and tall tales. The general store has a great variety of Louisiana products.

Monday, April 15:

Meals: B,L,D

Step back in time as we enter **Plantation Country** which borders the Mississippi River and features splendid plantation homes and sugar cane fields at every turn. Today is devoted to learning about life in rural Louisiana, from the perspectives of both the entitled and the workers. We visit **Oak Alley Plantation**, the Grand Dame of the River Road. A 400-metre long canopy of giant live oak trees, believed to be 300 years old, forms an impressive avenue leading to the classic Greek-revival style Antebellum home. Lunch is included on the grounds. Back in New Orleans, we board the **American Queen** about 3 pm and settle into our staterooms. For the rest of the afternoon, explore the ship, meet the Riverlorian expert, and attend the safety drill at 5 pm. Soon after, the *American Queen* pulls away from the New Orleans dock and our journey up the **Mississippi River** begins. After our first elegant dinner in the J.M. White Dining Room, you may want to attend Showtime with staff introductions in the Grand Saloon or musical entertainment in the lounges.

Tuesday, April 16:

Meals: B,L,D

We dock at **Nottoway**, the South's largest and most glorious remaining Antebellum mansion. John Randolph was originally a cotton planter, but believed that a fortune could be made in sugar production. In 1844, he mortgaged his Louisiana home and 46 slaves to borrow money for the construction of the first steam-operated sugar mill in Iberville Parish. Nottoway was completed in 1859 and became home to John, his wife Emily, and their 11 children. The mansion has 64 rooms, 6 staircases, 22 massive square columns, 165 doors, and 200 windows. Its nickname is "The White Cas-

tle of Louisiana." The most stunning room is the semi-circular White Ballroom which is painted entirely in white and displays elaborate gold décor throughout. The mansion is set amongst a natural backdrop of vibrant gardens and 200-year old oak trees. Back on the ship, we cruise past **Baton Rouge** which is dominated by the 34-storey Louisiana state capitol.

Wednesday, April 17: *Meals: B,L,D*

Established in 1809, **St. Francisville** is the oldest town in the Louisiana Parishes. Beside the river was a settlement called Bayou Sara in the 1790s. When it was destroyed by flooding and fires, many of the structures and artifacts were hauled up the bluff into St. Francisville where they are still standing. The town is referred to as "two miles long and two yards wide," and there is lots to see. Spanish moss trees grow throughout the town, lending a beautiful southern comfort to the atmosphere. A **Hop-On Hop-Off bus service** is provided by the ship, so you can take a tour around town and visit attractions such as the Grace Episcopal Church, built in 1860, and West Feliciana Historical Museum. Old Market Hall dates to 1819 and hosts many local artists and craftsmen. You can also stroll down Royal Street and discover many interesting boutiques. A premium excursion is offered to the former Angola Penitentiary.

Thursday, April 18: *Meals: B,L,D*

We dock at the extraordinary heritage town of **Natchez**. Two hundred years ago, Natchez became a major river port and cotton was shipped downstream to New Orleans and overseas. Wealthy plantation owners and boat operators built incredible mansions which have been restored to their splendour and recall this era of fortunes and high society, supported by slaves. Cotton made Natchez wealthy and in 1860 it was considered the richest city in the USA. The Hop-On Hop-Off bus gives you access to several attractions such as the Visitor Centre, Afro-American Culture Museum, and Charbonneau Distillery. Admission to several mansions is included — **Magnolia Hall**, built in 1858 in Greek revival style; **Stanton Hall**, built by cotton merchant Frederick Stanton in 1857; the house of William Johnson who was a slave, gained his freedom at age 11, and became the Natchez barber; and **Rosalie Mansion**, built by a cotton planter in 1823.

Friday, April 19: *Meals: B,L,D*

The *American Queen* arrives in **Vicksburg** which was founded in 1811 and grew as a vital river port city. Described as the "Key to the South" by Abraham Lincoln, Vicksburg carries a history unlike any other Civil War city. In 1863, a siege lasting 47 days was intended to starve the city into submission since its location high atop the bluff made it almost im-

penetrable. The surrender of Vicksburg, together with the defeat of General Robert E. Lee at Gettysburg, marked the turning point of the **Civil War** and thus the Union Army gained control of the entire Mississippi River. The Hop-On Hop-Off bus lets you visit the Church of the Holy Trinity, the 1830 Anchuca Mansion, Old Court House Museum, Yesterday's Children Antique Doll & Toy Museum, Biedenharn Coca-Cola Museum, Lower Mississippi River Museum, and Old Depot Museum.

Saturday, April 20: *Meals: B,L,D*

Greenville was founded in 1824, but was destroyed by the Union Army during the siege of Vicksburg in 1863. It was rebuilt on the highest point beside the Mississippi River below Memphis, and recovered its prosperity thanks to cotton. Greenville has its fair share of **Blues music** integrated into its culture. B.B. King was born nearby and many writers and musicians grew up here. The Hop-On Hop-Off bus stops at Greenville History Museum, Hebrew Union Temple, 1927 Flood Museum, E.E. Bass Cultural Arts Center, Washington County Courthouse, Trop Casino, and Greenville's Writers Exhibit. A premium excursion to Indianola features King's music and legends.

Sunday, April 21: *Meals: B,L,D*

Today is spent on board the *American Queen* as we cruise up the Mississippi River to Memphis. There are lots of activities provided on board. Consider booking an indulgent, stress-relieving massage in the spa.

Monday, April 22: *Meals: B,L,D*

We arrive in **Memphis** at 8 AM and bid farewell to the *American Queen*. Our coach and local guide meet us at the dock and the morning is devoted to a tour of Memphis, the "Birthplace of Rock & Roll." Highlights include Overton Park where Elvis Presley did his first paid performance in 1954. We pass Galloway House and the Methodist church where **Johnny Cash** and the Tennessee Two put on their first performance. Lunch is included at the renowned Peabody Hotel, famous for its ducks in the lobby fountain and the **March of the Ducks**. This afternoon, we tour **Sun Studio**, the recording studio opened by rock-and-roll pioneer Sam Phillips in 1950. Rock and roll, country music, and rockabilly artists including Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Roy Orbison, Charlie Feathers, Ray Harris, Warren Smith, Charlie Rich, and Jerry Lee Lewis recorded their music here through the late 1950s. Afterwards, there is free time to stroll along famous **Beale Street** with dinner and entertainment at King's Palace Café. We stay two nights at the newly-opened **Guest House at Graceland**, one of Memphis' top-rated hotels.

Tuesday, April 23:*Meals: B,D*

Memphis is **Elvis Presley**, the King of Rock 'n' Roll. The Guest House is adjacent to the Graceland complex, consisting of the mansion, museums and galleries, and we spend the morning immersing ourselves in the Elvis Experience. Tour the mansion, visit the Elvis the Entertainer Career Museum, explore the Automobile Museum, and see his airplanes. In the afternoon, we visit the Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum which tells the story of musical pioneers who, for the love of music, overcame racial and socio-economic barriers to create the music that shook the entire world.

Wednesday, April 24:*Meals: B,L,D*

Leaving Memphis, we head east across Tennessee. **Welcome to Nashville**, home of Country Music, USA. In downtown Nashville, we have an exclusive lunch performance at one of the Honky Tonks. Our accommodation for the next three nights is the fabulous **Opryland Hotel**. With almost 3,000 rooms, this incredible building will keep you exploring its three large tree-filled atriums, its multitude of restaurants and lounges, and its indoor gardens with extensive water features including a river. We are booked into Atrium View rooms in the Cascades section. Dinner is included in the Cascades Restaurant.

Thursday, April 25:*Meals: B,L*

We enjoy a sightseeing tour around Nashville featuring Music Row, **Ryman Auditorium**, the Parthenon replica, Printers Alley, and homes of several stars. A

tour of **RCA Studio B** is included. It became famous in the 1960s for the production style and technique known as the Nashville Sound which revived the popularity of country music. This afternoon, we visit the extraordinary **Country Music Hall of Fame** housed in a striking limestone and glass building that resembles a curved piano keyboard.

Friday, April 26:*Meals: B,D*

The morning is free time. In the afternoon, we visit **Cheekwood Mansion**, built in the 1930s by a grocery magnate. The property was donated in 1960 to create a Museum of Art and Botanical Gardens. We have a barbecue dinner at the iconic Wildhorse Saloon, followed by one of America's greatest shows, **The Grand Ole Opry**. Running since 1925, the Opry features about 20 performers from its exclusive membership of about 70 stars. However, we cannot tell you who will perform as the stars are announced just a few days prior.

Saturday, April 27:*Meals: B*

The morning is free time, then a transfer is provided to Nashville airport. We fly to Seattle and stay overnight near the airport.

Sunday, April 28:*Meals: B*

Transportation is provided to your pickup point in Victoria.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due January 3, 2019. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$250 discount on first 8 seats and \$125 on next 4 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after January 3.

Cancellation Policy: Up to December 3, 2018, your tour payments will be refunded less an administrative charge of \$400 per person. From December 4, 2018, to January 3, 2019, the cancellation charge is \$600 per person. From January 4 to February 1, the cancellation charge is 40% of the tour fare. From February 2 to March 1, the cancellation charge is 80% of the tour fare. After March 1, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to currency exchange rates, taxes and surcharges from airlines, the cruise ship, and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up until the time of departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Home pickups and dropoffs may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and the size of the chartered vehicle. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

Photo Credit: American Queen Steamboat Company

e-points: This tour earns 120 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until January 3, 2019.

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