

Ocean Cruising versus River Cruising - Apples to Apples Price Comparison

Have you ever priced a river cruise vacation and recoiled in sticker shock? I certainly have. Actually, that is, until I started digging and I realized that when you compare “Apples to Apples” a lot of times the river cruises are offering quite a lot for the price tag.

Now, I’m not here to convince you that river cruises are better than ocean cruises, the pros and cons of both are a topic for another day and another blog. HOWEVER, this graphic gives you a side by side comparison of just what you’re paying for when you see those totals when a quote is given.

Data Chat

For data purposes, I pulled 7-9 night cruises for 2 adults from three popular vendors from both River and Ocean Cruise Line operators.

River Cruises – 7 – 9 night cruises with Viking, AMA Waterways, and Avalon. To make the numbers as close as possible, each of these river cruise itineraries visited 5 Northern European Countries with excursions included offered in each port. The 7 night Itineraries were considered to have 6 included excursions. Also, all three of the included river cruise offerings included economy airfare (at a minimum) in their price offerings.

Ocean Cruises – 7-9 night European itineraries from Carnival, Royal Caribbean, and Disney.

Drink packages – pricing for the ocean cruises were taken directly from the vendor websites and averaged together. Disney doesn’t offer a liquor package, but they do have a wine package that was used in this average.

Excursions – prices were calculated based on \$150 per person excursions or activities on each of the sailing days to best compare to the excursion offerings on the River Cruise lines.

AIRFARE AND GROUND TRANSFERS ARE NOT INCLUDED on the Ocean Cruise numbers.

River Cruises vs Ocean Cruises

Initial Cost River Cruise -
\$6834

Initial Cost Ocean Cruise -
\$5438

- Airfare INCLUDED
- All Ground Transfers INCLUDED
- 6-7 Excursions Included
- Beer/Wine at Lunch and Dinner Included
- 5 Countries Visited

- Airfare – NOT INCLUDED
- Ground Transfers NOT INCLUDED
- 6-7 Excursions + \$2100
- Alcoholic Beverage package +\$830
- 3 Countries Visited

Final Cost River Cruise -
\$6834

Final Cost Ocean Cruise -
\$8368

A note about included airfare

River cruise lines very frequently offer itineraries that include airfare, or very discounted airfare from many major cities across the US and Europe.

Ground transfers

Most River Cruise lines offer ground transfers as part of their original cruise fare. Ocean cruise lines usually DON'T. However, ground transfers often necessary with cruise travel, and a lot of travelers don't take it into account when looking at overall cost.

Example – Disney Cruise Line offers transfers to their cruise clients. Those sailing on DCL can choose between one way transfers. One way transfers are \$39 per person so for 2 adults that's \$78. Round trip cost is \$78 per person, so ground transfers are worth \$156