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DEPARTURES

THE
ESCAPES
ISSUE



Thai river, come with marble-clad bathrooms and butler call buttons.

The crew is just as elegant. Dressed in gold-silk jackets and traditional *sompot chong kben* trousers, they serve Thai tasting dinners (including one created by chef Thitid Tassanakajohn of Bangkok's Michelin-starred Le Du), as well as afternoon tea and sunset cocktails. Every day after breakfast, they'd hand us over to an expert guide, who'd whisk us by *tuk-tuk* or long-tail boat to little-visited temples and palaces. We explored Ayutthaya's canals, where

we were the only visitors in the late afternoon. Other journeys included a visit to the ancient summer royal palace of Bang Pa-In and cycling excursions in "the green lung," a jungle-covered peninsula in Bangkok.

Even from the *Song's* deck, the riverbank became a slideshow, and the late-night monk procession was just one of the many awe-inspiring scenes passing by. Over the course of three days, we saw the landscape change from clusters of gleaming skyscrapers to riverside shanties backed by golden temple

spires. Bangkok's incessant buzz faded into a chorus of crickets and cicadas, its concrete sprawl into one of banyan trees and palms. At every bend—and there were many of them—we discovered a new vignette: fishermen casting their nets in the water, crocodile-sized monitor lizards lazing in the sun, wooden boats ferrying troops of schoolchildren. Life in front of us slowed down, lost its fuss. And with that (and a little help from the bottomless sparkling wine), so did we. *Two-night sailings from \$6,870 per cabin; loypelavoyages.com.*

Take Me to the River

More ships sailing slow and steady, from the Amazon to the Nile.



UNIWORLD

The cruise line known for its lavish Super Ships is heading into 2021 with a trio of new vessels that will be anything but cookie-cutter. First up will be the *SS Sphinx* on the Nile, followed by the

SS São Gabriel, which will cruise Portugal's Douro River. Coming later this year, the 126-passenger *SS La Venezia* is sure to fit in with the palazzos and piazzas along the Venetian

Lagoon and Po River, thanks to Fortuny fabrics, Murano glass, and hand-etched glass walls. uniworld.com

VIKING SAIGON

The mighty Mekong River will have a sleek new resident this summer when this 80-passenger vessel makes its debut with sailings between Kampong Cham, Cambodia, and Ho Chi Minh City. The *Saigon's* all-white design sticks to Viking's signature Scandinavian aesthetic, but the itineraries—packed with ruins, temples, and traditional markets—offer an authentic immersion into Southeast Asian culture. viking.com

AMADAHLIA

AmaWaterways returns to the Nile in September after a ten-year hiatus with this 68-passenger ship with a sundeck bar, swimming

pool, fitness room, spa, and two restaurants. Between trips to temples and pyramids, onboard entertainment includes *galabeya* (Egyptian gown) parties and dervish performances. amawaterways.com

AQUA NERA

Aqua Expeditions has redefined cruising on the Amazon with its stylish ships, world-class cuisine, and wildlife excursions—and now the company is improving its winning formula with this 20-suite vessel. In addition to a contemporary look by the Vietnamese studio Noor Design, the *Nera* offers visits to remote villages and markets and locally sourced cuisine from award-winning Peruvian chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino. aquaxpeditions.com—Donna Heiderstadt