

American Queen Famil Report – Amanda Radovanovich

Sailed from Louisville to St Louis
17 - 24 July 2017



From the moment we approached the ship and heard the strains of the jazz quartet, playing we knew we would enjoy everything the American Queen had to offer.

Guests spend one night in Louisville in a hotel before being brought to the ship on sailing day. This is included in the cost of the cruise.

Stateroom:

Our stateroom was on Deck 5 (Leonore K Sullivan – Suite 524) and as well as the bed we had two chairs, a bathroom with a shower over the bath (this may be an issue for older customers), a small dressing table, a safe and a table with an ice bucket and two bottles of water replaced daily.





These maps were on each level so you could see where you were! Very handy! Outside on the balcony every room had two chairs plus a small table. Bliss!

Beverage Options:

The beverage package was US\$399 for the 7 night trip for both in the room. Wine and beer is included at dinner (and they are happy to keep pouring for you during your meal).

There are several bars onboard – the Captain's Bar (Deck 1 – perfect for pre dinner or after dinner drinks), the Engine Room Bar (Deck 2 – Aft and last to close), River Grill (Deck 5 Aft), Front Porch Café (Deck 3 Fwd), and before the nightly entertainment in the Grand Saloon you could order drinks. There was a happy hour every day and a Cocktail of the Day too!

On-board Services:

Gift shop, Self service laundry (washer and dryer – free with detergent provided), Spa, small gym and a small swimming pool. Wifi is available onboard but was very intermittent in your room. The best spot to use Wifi was in the Mark Twain Gallery (where the router is located). There were also newspapers, computers and a printer available in the Mark Twain Gallery.

Hop On Hop Off Bus:

Next to the Purser's Office was a machine which from 5.00pm every day – you could select which Hop On Hop Off bus time you would like to take (they were at 15 minute intervals) from 8.30am. If the bus tickets were all taken you could wait to see if there were any seats available, and at some ports it was not a long walk to the first stop so we gave our tickets away and walked. In the afternoon the bus pick ups were at half hourly intervals.

The bus could accommodate largish motorised scooters which could be lifted hydraulically at the back of the bus and secured to the bus for travelling plus they could put walkers or smaller scooters in the luggage hold underneath. Water was available for each customer (which was a blessing in 40 degrees of heat) and the bus was air-conditioned. All of the stops were signposted with a corresponding number on your map – making it very easy to follow (see photo with Stop No 4).

While in port – everyone was free to do whatever they liked off the boat and it was clear when the boat was departing every day. We were all scanned in and out to prevent anyone being left behind.

Every night there was a *River Times* (information broadsheet) on your bed for the following day. This included the expected temperature/weather, the onboard activities with the appropriate times, any Premium Excursions that were to be offered and a map of the town you were visiting with the stops numbered and information on what to see. (Photos included).



Dining:

You could order coffee to be delivered to your room from 6.30 – 9.30am. Coffee machine, plus teas and hot chocolate were available in the Mark Twain Gallery 24 hours of the day and there were always freshly baked biscuits available. Yummo!!

Breakfast in the main dining room included freshly made to order waffles or omelettes alternating each day. There was a breakfast menu you could order up until 9am or you could choose from the extensive buffet of fresh fruit/berries, breads, pastries, yoghurts, cereals as well as a choice of hot dishes - eggs, tomatoes, hash browns, bacon, sausages etc.

A casual choice for breakfast, lunch and dinner was available at **The Front Porch**. Every day at lunch they would offer soup and rolls, salads and some hot dishes. Plus there was a daily option for freshly made pasta/sandwiches/omelettes etc from the chef. Inside was air-conditioned and outside was warm!



The Front Porch



At The Front Porch you could have an ice cream from the soft freeze machine with the addition of nuts, chocolates, sprinkles etc. The Popcorn machine was available all day too. There was a small bar at The Front Porch if you fancied an alcoholic drink or there were a lot of choices of cold drinks, including iced tea, lemonade and fizzy drinks (as above) plus hot drinks too.

Dinner in The Main Dining Room – Lobster, Catfish and Desserts

Dinner - in the **Main Dining Room** had a great choice of starters, entree, salad and mains with at least three choices of each. The food standard was very high and there was always a vegetarian option too. The restaurant staff were great – very friendly and informative. Food was ordered and delivered promptly every night.





Breakfast omelettes made to order in the Main Dining Room:



If you are feeling peckish during the day – you can go to the rear of the ship and grab a hotdog – very popular with the gents!!

Buffet Lunch in the Main Dining Room on the last day of the cruise:



Optional Excursions:

There was a varied choice of optional excursions (there wasn't one every day), most required a reasonably long bus ride. We chose to do the Makers Mark Bourbon Excursion while we were docked at Brandenburg. This is one of the best excursions I have ever taken. The bus was air-conditioned, comfortable and water was provided. The guide at Makers Mark was very informative – we were quite a large group to keep together and there was a lot to see. We were lucky enough to be there when they had a Chihuly glass exhibition on as well – spectacular! This was USD\$69 each.

They took us through the full process from grain to the finished product including a very good tasting, plus there was an opportunity to seal your own bottle in the gift shop. I was amazed to discover that they are still using the same specially commissioned printing press that was used in the beginning and that they still hand dip the bottles. They have miles of warehouses that are 5 stories high and store 50,000 barrels in each one!



Included excursions:

Great variety of options as we were in Kentucky mostly and visiting small towns where the people were so friendly and loved our NZ accent!

Examples of excursions were – Civil War Museums, General Patton Museum, The National Quilt Museum (a-ma-zing – even the men were impressed), Moonshine Distillery, John James Audubon State Park and Museum, Bluegrass Museum of Music, a Victorian House, Botanical Gardens, and you could also just stroll the streets of small towns along the river chatting to the locals.





Entertainment:

Excellent musicians, very accomplished singers and very professional performances. Even the Captain played a mean guitar on the deck one balmy evening. The nightly "Showtime" show had a theme, as this was a 50's and 60's music cruise. If you went to early seating for dinner (at 5.15pm) then you went to the show at 7.45pm. If you were dining later in the evening at 7.45pm then you had the opportunity to see the show before dinner at 6.15pm and everyone could meet the performers afterwards. Every evening in the Captain's Bar before and after dinner Phil Westerbrook played the grand piano and entertained with his stories, plus got the crowd singing along to some well known tunes and a few not so well known for the Kiwis on board!! If that was not enough for you, then the Night Owls could continue dancing in the Engine Room Bar at the rear of the boat and we were entertained by Will and Jay. The Steamboat Syncopaters were excellent and a small group jumped on board for our last two nights and played excellent music for the crowd. On our one cruising day we even had bingo in the Grand Saloon. Every day there was a movie showing in the theatre. Plus there was a Riverlorian on board who knew everything there was to know about the river, the wildlife and stories galore of life of the grand rivers of the US. He also took the Pilot House Tours which were popular for those who like seeing behind the scenes.



What a great cruise with mostly Americans on board who were very well travelled. I was surprised that of the many guests I spoke to, over 90% had been to NZ so were very familiar with us and our country! Most had cruised around NZ.

It was definitely an older demographic with some guests having very limited mobility, however they were all catered for regardless if they had a stick, a walker, a scooter or a full mobile chair and the crew were very attentive. There are a few stairs on board (and there are lifts for the immobile) and getting onto the bus also required mobility so you would need to be aware of this.

The south is a beautiful part of the country to visit and I would recommend this cruise to anyone who has river cruised before, those that are new to river cruising, those who love music and those who want an easy way to travel – just unpack once! We had just 349 guests on board and you could participate in as much or as little as you wished.

Guests receive a pre night in a hotel included in their cruise cost and can take an excursion that day before embarking (you could chose to visit Churchill Downs on this cruise – the home of the Kentucky Derby horse race) and then they're transported to the ship. When disembarking there was a large variety of options for pick ups, for those who were staying, those who were flying out and for those who were flying later on. We chose to go into St Louis and spend the rest of the day sight seeing, as our flight was in the evening and the bus to the city was just USD\$10 each (approximately 20-30 minutes). The hotel stored our bags for us for the day until we left for the airport which was a great option.

