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Scenic Opal Review

By [Katherine Rodeghier](#)

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Twelve purpose-built ships cruising rivers in Europe are dubbed Space-Ships, but when I stepped aboard one of them, *Scenic Opal*, no Jedi warriors or Vulcans with pointy ears greeted me.

Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours didn't coin the name to create an outer space or sci-fi theme. Instead, it meant to express the spaciousness of its ships.

Opal, and its sister Space-Ships *Jasper* and *Amber*, were built in 2015 and 2016 and refurbished in 2019. Each can accommodate up to 163 passengers with a one-to-three crew-to-passenger ratio. *Opal* staterooms range from 153 square feet for solo guests to 520 square feet in the Royal Owner's Suite. Most fall in the 200–250-square-foot range. Those on the second and third decks have balconies with windows that lower horizontally at the push of a button to create what Scenic calls a Sun Lounge.

In addition to spaciousness, *Scenic Opal* conveys luxury through its amenities and service. A butler assigned to every stateroom sees to guest's needs and keeps the minibar stocked with drinks and snacks. In high cabin categories, butlers unpack and pack for passengers. Laundry service is complimentary, with one bag in most staterooms and unlimited in the high-end suites.



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Luxury also means private, after-hours access to events on shore. These Scenic Enrich experiences might be a concert in Vienna's Palais Liechtenstein or the Pope's Palace in Avignon. On my cruise on the Rhine and Moselle rivers, passengers took a motorcoach to the Roman city of Trier, Germany, for a private classical concert in the UNESCO-listed Liebfrauenkirche, completed in 1260.

Although amenities on *Scenic Opal* are upscale, the atmosphere is relaxed. There are no formal nights. The dress code is casual during the day, smart casual in the evening. Passengers on my cruise were a congenial mix mostly from English-speaking countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

Cruise fares include crew gratuities, all shore excursions, airport transfers, dining in up to five restaurants on board and room service. Alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks are gratis night and day, not just during lunch and dinner. Exceptions are ultra-premium, top-shelf spirits and rare wines. Spa services also are extra.

Scenic Freechoice shore excursions cover a broad range of activities in several fitness levels. In addition to sightseeing in cities where *Opal* docked on the Rhine and Moselle rivers, passengers could choose side trips to Baden Baden, Germany, and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Those who preferred to explore on their own had free use of *Opal*'s fleet of e-bikes. Scenic's Tailormade app serves as a pocket guide with maps and narration both in port and while cruising. It came in especially handy as *Opal* navigated through the castle-studded Rhine Gorge, ticking off details as the ship passed each medieval fortress. The app also displays the ship's daily program and broadcasts the voice of guides through passengers' headphones during sightseeing tours.

Passengers who want to stay fit on their cruise use a walking track on deck four, the Sun Deck, which also has a small Vitality pool. Deck one has a fitness room, wellness area and Salt Therapy Lounge, a Scenic exclusive.



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Decks two and three house Panorama Bar & Lounge — the heart of the ship — as well as four dining areas. The main restaurant, Crystal Dining Room, offers a sumptuous buffet for breakfast

and lunch, but passengers also can order off a menu at their table. Dinner is a sit-down affair with international and regional dishes. In the evenings, Table la Rive, a chef's table with a six-course degustation menu, including wine pairing, is set up in the rear of Crystal. Access is invitation-only for passengers in the higher cabin categories. Upstairs, River Café serves light meals and, at night, becomes the 32-seat Portobello's with a five-course Italian menu available to all passengers at least once per cruise.



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After-dinner entertainment usually means performances in the lounge by the crew or entertainers from on shore. On the Rhine, a violinist came from Frankfurt to play classics and renditions of Led Zeppelin, Michael Jackson and The Beatles.

In addition to its dozen European river ships, Australian-owned Scenic has two luxury ocean yachts with itineraries in the Arctic and Antarctic and points between, as well as a river ship cruising in Southeast Asia.

Scenic Opal

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