

# A Mississippi River Steamboat Cruise



Supplemental power is supplied by two diesel outboard motors. On my cruise the speed while traveling up the Mississippi was only eight miles an hour. However, while cruising downstream, the speed picked up to twelve miles an hour! At these speeds it was enjoyable to relax in a chair on the deck in front of one's stateroom and soak in the scenery as it slowly crept by.

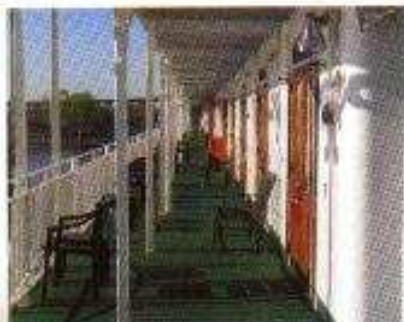
At one point in yesteryear's era of grandeur and elegance over 1,200 steamboats plied the great rivers of America's heartland. In April 2005 I enjoyed a three-day cruise on the Mississippi River on one of America's only three remaining overnight steamboats.

From the river bank the luxurious American Queen resembles a white, six-deck wedding cake. Operated by the Delta Queen Steamboat Company which can trace its roots back to 1890, the vessel, 418 feet long, 95 feet wide and with a draft of ten feet, is listed by Guinness World Records as the

largest steamboat ever constructed.

Costing USD\$65,000,000 to build in 1995, the American Queen carries 436 passengers and a crew of 160. With 222 staterooms and two elevators, this steamboat is very senior-friendly. The steamboat has a large red wooden paddlewheel in the stern which is powered by a steam engine (salvaged from another vessel and purchased at auction) built half a century ago.

The atmosphere of the American Queen transports its passengers back to the nineteenth century, an era of extravagance when steamboating was at the height of its popularity. The grand staircase, ornate chandeliers, grand dining room and elegant staterooms





uphold the best traditions of the steamboat era when passengers were drawn from afar to experience the luxury and excitement of river travel.

The American Queen's Grand Saloon was inspired by small opera houses and by Ford's Theatre, the Washington, D. C. institution where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. The ladies' parlor, the chart room and the gentlemen's card room all feature original antiques as do the staterooms themselves. The Engine Room Bar is also decorated in a style appropriate to the period. The boat even boasts a calliope.

During my Mississippi cruise I was entertained by music typical of the river (including the song 'Ol' Man River'), authentic Cajun music, Gospel music and even a Beatles show! A Cajun comic came aboard, and there was Mardi Gras revelry, which was appropriate since the cruise began and ended in New Orleans.

From New Orleans, with its world-renowned Creole and Cajun cuisine, ornate French quarter



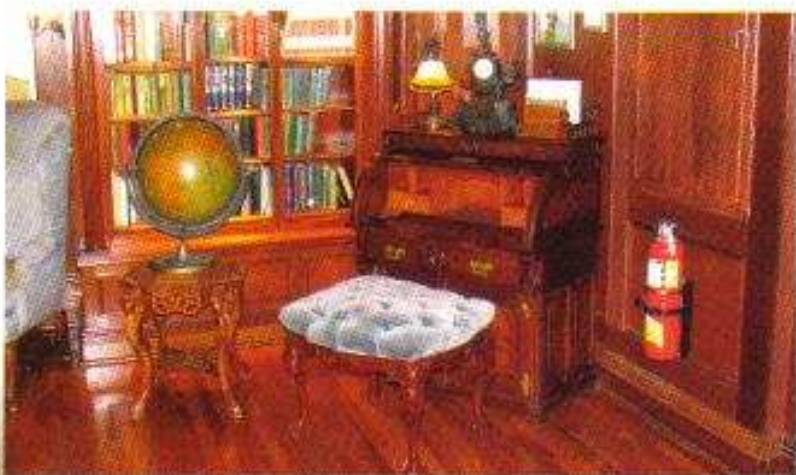
architecture and legendary jazz music, I cruised north to Baton Rouge, the state capital of Louisiana. Just adjacent to our dock in Baton Rouge was the U. S. S. Kidd, a restored World War II destroyer. En route one morning I disembarked from the American Queen where it had tied up below a grass-covered levee. Walking over the levee and down a shady oak-lined path, I toured the picturesque Oak Alley Plantation, said to be one of the most photographed locations in the South. The plantation's great house was completed in 1939.

Themed river cruises are quite



popular on the many of the seven-day or longer itineraries of the American Queen and the Delta Queen Steamboat Company's other two steamboats, the Delta Queen and the Mississippi Queen. Passengers are drawn by musical themes (Bluegrass Jamboree, Legends of the 1950's, Big Band, etc.) and historical themes (Civil War, Legends of American History, World War II Remembrance and Veterans' Reunion, etc.). Seasonal themes (Gardens of the South, Kentucky Derby, Fall Foliage, etc.) and miscellaneous themes (Golf, Patchwork, Wine and Food, etc.) are also favorites.

A fun and relaxing river cruise on a paddlewheel steamboat is a unique experience. It is a marvelous way to relive America's nineteenth-century past while savoring the legendary luxury and excitement of river travel.



#### ABOUT TED COOKSON:

Egypt's most widely traveled travel agent, Ted has visited 307 of the 315 destinations on the list of the Travelers' Century Club (visit [www.eptours.com](http://www.eptours.com) and refer to World Travel Club). A travel agent in Cairo since 1986, Ted manages EGYPT PANORAMA TOURS, a full-service travel agency, at 4 Road 79 (between Roads 9 and 10, near the 'El Maadi' metro station) in Maadi. Contact Egypt Panorama Tours (open 7 days a week 9 AM-5 PM) at:

Tel: 359-0200, 358-5880,  
359-1301.

Fax: 359-1199.

E-mail: [ept@link.net](mailto:ept@link.net).

Web site: [www.eptours.com](http://www.eptours.com).

(Password for residents: eptcool)