

TRAVEL



Hungarian horseman in Puszta put on a thrilling display of their superb horsemanship.



The Picton girls: (from left) Aileen, Lynne and Marlene with the perfectly-even glasses of Vin d'Alsace.

'Stress-free travel'

or double-bed serviced cabins with ensuite bathrooms and huge picture windows; three superb gourmet meals a day; unlimited beer and French wine with meals; music, dancing and entertainment in the evenings; the best local guides in the business . . . and of course transport.

I am reliably informed that not only are the wine and beer included in the price for 2014, so too are spirits at the bar.

Air-conditioned coaches with multi-lingual guides were waiting at the ports to take passengers right to the heart of the sight-seeing spots — no parking hassles, no need to pore over guide books to figure out where to go and what to do in a limited time-period, no risk of getting lost. Passengers were then delivered back to the boat in time for another splendid meal while the ship made its way to the next port of call.

The people we met on the cruise enriched our experience enormously, especially the Picton girls who were always up to mischief. On our last night there was a diplomatic incident when the trio defected, en masse, to the French contingent during a quiz. Aileen managed to win a bottle of bubbly for the French team which brought loud accusations of fraternisation with the enemy, especially

when she ended up on the dance floor with the best dancer on the ship, a debonair Frenchman, of course.

Marlene summed it up nicely: "We have so many happy memories of the Danube River cruise not the least of which were the lovely people we met and the wonderful crew who all went out of their way to make sure we were well taken care of."

• *Justine Tyerman travelled courtesy of Innovative Travel Company www.innovativetravel.co.nz the New Zealand representative for CroisiEurope www.croisieurope.co.nz*

Travel bookings: Elliott Travel, Gisborne

Fact file:

• *CroisiEurope Imperial Danube Cruise itinerary: Vienna, Melk Abbey and Dürnstein in Austria; Bratislava and Sturovo in Slovakia; Kalocsa, Puszta, Budapest and Esztergom in Hungary.*

• *The French-owned MS Beethoven is 110-metre long, 11.4-metre wide and holds 180 passengers on three decks.*

• *Getting there: We flew Emirates to Vienna. There are four flights a day from New Zealand to Dubai offering daily connections to Vienna.*



View of the Danube River from Dürnstein Castle, Austria.



The MS Beethoven in Budapest.