

NICHE TOURISM: RIVER CRUISE IN PARIS EMBRACES RETRO



Transportation is a differentiator in the tourism business. The river cruise companies that operate their ships on the river Seine offer a very specific niche tourism product.

Steam trains, vintage car rallies, coaches from the 1930s, or gatherings of old sailboats - in France, 'retro' is back! **A number of travel companies got inspired by the trend and use it to their benefit to distinguish themselves from the competition.**

In Paris, several businesses, each with their own particular niche tourism service, offer receptions or promenades along the river Seine aboard ships which evoke the luxury of a yacht from the "Belle Epoque" or the charm of a short sea voyage.

This niche grows by 4 to 5% per year globally. In Paris, the 50 companies offering these special cruises on a hundred ships transported 8 million passengers last year. The main companies include the Bateaux-Mouches, the Bateaux Parisiens, the Vedettes de Paris and the Vedettes du Pont Neuf.

"The offer is very diverse, each has its own way of working," says Frédéric Avierinos, General Manager of the Vedettes de Paris. The company, which belongs to the Bordeaux family shipping company Socatra, reported nearly EUR 11 million in revenue with a staff of 80.

It operates five ships, two of which are discoveries; reminiscent of small sea vessels that have nothing in common with the large ships used for mass tourism. **Their niche tourism offer attracts mostly individual travelers - last year they transported 800,000 passengers.** The clientele however is more a subject to the season and weather changes than the mass market, explained Mr. Avierinos.

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