

My Week with the Queen

by Jodie Vance



Courtesy American Queen Steamboat Company



Day 1

We embark at Memphis. As we arrive at the American Queen, there is a sense of stepping back in time for a grand experience of culture and history. The white-glove treatment as we were welcomed and escorted to our cabin let us know that this would be a week that we'd be made to feel like queens.

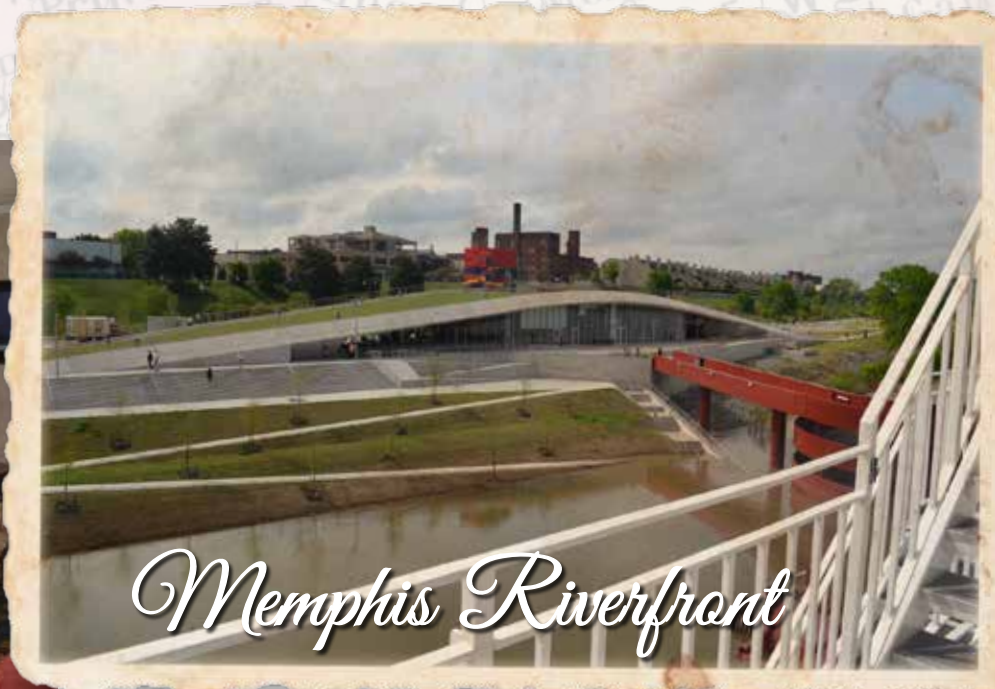
Left the city to the sounds of the calliope playing and the Memphis skyline from the river's perspective. A perfect send-off with a five-course dinner in the elegant J.W. White Dining Room, then to the show in the Grand Saloon, where we got a taste of the talent we were going to enjoy for the week.

Back to our luxurious cabin. Floating down the Mississippi on our cloud-like beds made for the sweetest of dreams.

MemphisTravel.com

Courtesy American Queen Steamboat Company

American Queen Room



Memphis Riverfront

Port of Call: Greenville



Day 2

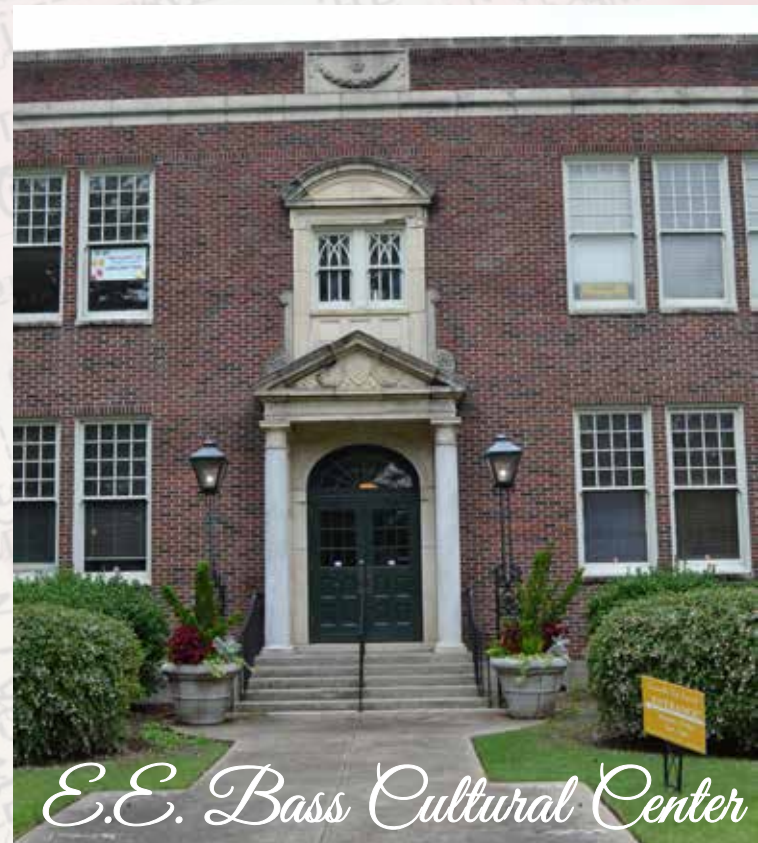
Started the day with a wonderful Southern breakfast and a leisurely morning exploring the boat while watching the changing scenery as we arrive in Greenville, MS. After a casual lunch (a divine shrimp salad!) in the Front Porch Café, we head down the gangway to the Hop On Hop Off bus to experience our first “port of call.”

Loved that admissions to all the attractions are included in the shore excursions. The River Times program delivered to our stateroom nightly gave us all the details for the day’s activities. Tours included the Greenville History Museum, Hebrew Union Congregation Temple and Museum, Flood of 1927 Museum, Washington County Courthouse, and Trop Casino. We got to experience a flashback to childhood at the E.E. Bass Auditorium & Cultural Center. What a special feeling knowing you’re riding the oldest functioning Armitage Carousel in the world.

Back to the boat to enjoy the captain’s Welcome Aboard Champagne Reception with Captain Brent Willits.

After dinner we enjoyed the great music of the “Bourbon to Beale” show and took a tour of the engine room in action

VisitGreenville.org



Port of Call: Vicksburg



Old Courthouse Museum

Day 3

We woke at the beautiful riverfront of Vicksburg, MS. After breakfast in the dining room with passengers from England and Ohio, we were off for some shopping and touring. Washington Street was filled with unique, artful shops and great museums, including the Biedenharn Coca-Cola Museum and Yesterday's Child Doll and Toy Museum. We discovered a jewel in the Old Courthouse Museum, filled with Civil War treasures and a wealth of historical information. Other sites included the Church of the Holy Trinity, Anchuca Mansion, Lower Mississippi River Museum, and the Old Depot Museum.

A relaxing swim in the AQ's pool after touring was just the thing to refresh us before dinner. Seeing the dropping of the stacks and the lowering of the Pilot House as we sailed under the bridge was the treat of the day.

Another beautiful sunset.

VisitVicksburg.org



The Courtroom



Coca-Cola Museum



Doll & Toy Museum

Port of Call: Natchez

Day 4

We've landed at Natchez-Under-the-Hill — notorious during the steamboat days for attracting the rough adventurers and keeping them out of the more refined city of Natchez, the richest U.S. city in 1860. It's a day spent touring the most impressive historic homes and sites. My favorite was Rosalie. Perched on the bluff and named for the 1716 French fort, it has stood here since 1823. The gardens, gazebo, and overlook were great places to relax between tours to Magnolia Hall, Stanton Hall, Wilson-Holders Drug Co., King's Tavern and Charboneau Distillery, and Natchez Museum of African-American History & Culture.

A visit to the William Johnson House gave us insight into the life of the "Barber of Natchez." After gaining his freedom from slavery at age 11, Johnson worked and became almost fully accepted within society. His diary documents 16 years of the stories and gossip of the townspeople.

The passengers were buzzing about the premium tour, "Entertaining Southern Style with Regina Charboneau." Guests had an afternoon of gourmet treats and entertainment with AQ's culinary director and chef de cuisine at her historic home, Twin Oaks. I must remember to do this next trip!

There was so much to do onboard. Pilot House tours and a "River Chat" with Riverlorian Jerry, coffee with the cast in The Mark Twain Gallery for a chance to meet and talk with the AQ Ensemble, Dixieland music by The Steamboat Syncopators in the Captain's Bar — there was even the movie "Mama Mia" in the Grand Saloon!

VisitNatchez.org



Natchez-Under-the-Hill



Port of Call: St. Francisville

Day 5

We've crossed into Louisiana to the oldest town in the Florida Parishes, St. Francisville. A small town of only 1,765 people, it is home to the famous Angola Prison.

After a quick breakfast at the Front Porch, we're off for the premium tour, "Redemption and Rehabilitation at Angola Prison." Formerly America's most dangerous penitentiary, Angola is now a model facility. This tour took us inside the barbed wire for an inspirational experience. Years of renovation, reform, education, and the faith-based rehabilitation of the inmates, most of whom will never see release, has created an environment for moral rehabilitation and decreased violence. Several documentaries have been made about the prison, and two were nominated for Academy Awards.

The afternoon was spent shopping and sightseeing in this quaint town. Grandmother's Buttons offers jewelry made out of 100-year-old buttons, Old Market Hall features local artisans, and Grace Episcopal Church, with its 1860 organ, are all charming.

Met the most interesting people at dinner, which was wonderful. Enjoyed Greg Lupton on piano in the Captain's Bar and Jay and Will's '70s tunes in The Engine Room. A night of great music.

StFrancisville.net



Entry Gate



Port of Call: Baton Rouge

Day 6

We traveled during the day, so we enjoyed the tree-lined banks of the Mississippi and its nature on the way to Baton Rouge, along with some great pool lounging time. Arriving at noon, we caught our first real port in action. Barges and cargo ships welcomed us into one of the most beautiful riverfronts.

After a fabulous lunch from the create-your-own pasta station, I headed out on the Hop On Hop Off bus to get acquainted with Baton Rouge. The Louisiana State Museum was a treasure trove of state history, from early settlement, politics and Mardi Gras, music to geography. There were more than 450,000 artifacts and works of art! The Old Governor's Mansion designed by Huey Long was a replica of the White House both inside and out. The Louisiana State Capitol (the tallest state capitol in the U.S.) was a beautiful Art Deco building standing 450 feet tall. Built during The Depression, it has 34 floors and an observation deck on the 27th floor, with panoramic views of the city.

The USS Kidd — known as the “Pirate of the Pacific” — the Veterans Memorial Museum, and the LSU Museum of Art were just a short walk from the AQ dock.

After dinner, Jay's calliope concert in the Calliope Bar entertained us as we departed Baton Rouge.

VisitBatonRouge.com



Baton Rouge Riverfront



Louisiana State Museum



Louisiana State Capitol



Day 7

We woke docked in White Castle, LA. It's quite a contrast to Baton Rouge's state-of-the-art dock. We're tied to a tree!

The South's largest remaining antebellum mansion, Nottoway Plantation, was today's only destination. It did not disappoint. All 65 rooms (53,000 square feet) and the manicured grounds were breathtaking. The period-dressed guides were very informative on the history of this magnificent home. A 2008 renovation added cottages and amenities, making it a unique 21st-century resort complete with fine dining.

On board there was a scavenger hunt, bingo, lectures, and tours. We said good-bye to the crew that had taken such good care of us at the Captain's Farewell Reception. We celebrated a wonderful week aboard this grand lady with Jay's last calliope concert, dinner, and the show in the Grand Saloon.

Nottoway.com



Nottoway Plantation Home

Day 8

Disembark at New Orleans. Some passengers took the guided premium tours, but we decided to explore the Big Easy on our own. It's off to Bourbon Street to feast on jambalaya, drink Hurricanes, and listen to some Jazz.

NewOrleansOnline.com



Dining Room



Restaurant



Guide in Entry

What a trip it's been!

The Boat: American Queen



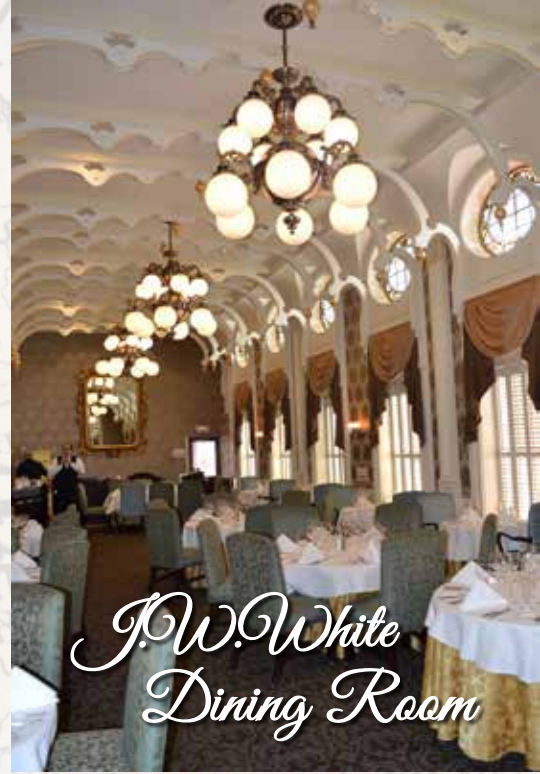
The Grand Staircase

The American Queen, the only authentic overnight paddlewheel steamboat in America, is the largest steamboat ever built. It is a gracious and elegant triumph of American ingenuity.



Bikes

Verandas



J.W. White Dining Room



Pool

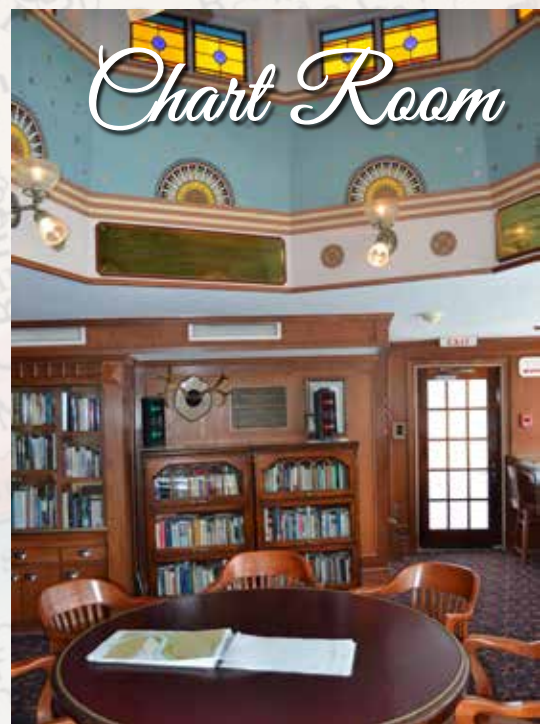


Chart Room

While on board, you can select a volume from the vast collection in the Mark Twain Gallery, check out your location on the river in the beautiful Chart Room, and see the engine room in operation.

Engine Room



Grand Saloon



Mark Twain Lobby



Ladies' Parlor



Men's Parlor



Welcome Reception



Moon over the Mississippi

Dining

Every meal aboard the American Queen is an affair to remember. Regina Charboneau, culinary director and celebrated American chef, draws her inspiration from the great Heartland and has created a movable, delectable feast for you to indulge in. You'll enjoy everything from piping-hot beignets and bananas foster French toast for breakfast to succulent five-course dinners. Every day celebrates the culinary senses.

Dining options include the elegant J.W. White Dining Room or the more casual buffet-style Front Porch Café, where you may be surprised with a steak cookout on the deck.



Dining



Dinner Call



Waffle Station





Showtime

Award-Winning Entertainment

Nightly top entertainers bring down the house at "Showtime" in the American Queen's majestic Grand Saloon. Rousing musical revues and high-energy cabarets from an immensely talented and energetic cast take center stage each evening. The palatial Grand Saloon is two decks tall and resembles the small-town opera houses of the 19th century, with details modeled after Ford's Theater.

After the show, dance and swing to stellar performances of jazz, blues, ragtime, bluegrass, country, and rock and roll in the handsome Engine Room Bar, or join in a lively piano sing-along at the Captain's Bar in the Main Deck Lounge.

As you leave each port of call, you will be entertained by Jay on the calliope in The Calliope Bar.



Engine Room Bar



Calliope Concert

Front Porch Cafe



Jay at calliope

Lowering of stacks



Ending

You can't help but feel you have stepped back in time when you board the American Queen. The beautiful antiques, attention to detail, and impeccable service from the crew make for an impressive vacation. It's a touch of history with all the modern conveniences and luxuries.

Combining the best of the old and the new, this beautiful lady of the river and her crew epitomize the grace and grandeur that has made river cruising a cherished American tradition for more than two centuries. One voyage and you'll see why.



Guy Lupton in Captain's Bar



Hop On Hop Off Bus



Turndown Service

Farewell Reception



Crew



Champagne served



Captain hosting



Tribute to Crew