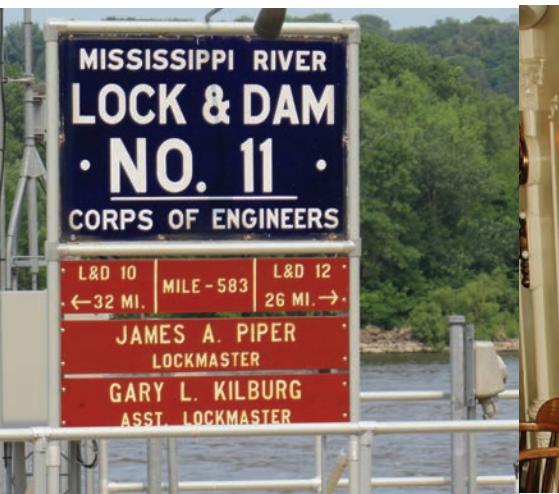


Port of Dubuque



Native Wildlife



Cruise the Mississippi



"There's a tremendous amount of history out here, and the upper Mississippi is the most beautiful stretch of river you'll ever find."

- John Miller of Keokuk, IA

If you've been thinking about experiencing a Mississippi riverboat cruise, a one-day or two-day journey on the Riverboat Twilight makes an ideal excursion. Captain Kevin Stier and the crew members work hard to ensure that every passenger enjoys a fun, relaxing time aboard.

This elegant replica of a 19th century passenger steamboat is enhanced by the amenities of today. Have a great time with terrific food and entertainment. Not to mention an exceptional view from the water of the natural splendor and attractions along the upper Mississippi River.

Ever wonder what it's like to work on a riverboat? Below, we'll introduce you to a couple of members of the Riverboat Twilight's crew:

Emilee Anderson: Peep Girl

"We have a really good crew. We have a lot of fun together," said Emilee Anderson, who is from Scales Mound, IL. She works as a dining room server and gift shop hostess. She is also a college student, studying for a degree in biology at Highland Community College in Freeport, IL.

Her conversational skills help to make passengers feel at ease in the gift shop, which is open at select times during every cruise. "I like talking to people, seeing why they're riding the boat, and if they're having fun," she said.

The gift shop offers souvenirs, books, Riverboat Twilight t-shirts and sweatshirts, and other river-oriented items for those who wish



"For people who've never had a chance to take an excursion, this is the best deal around. They pull out all the stops and do everything to accommodate the passengers. You're in for a real treat."

- John Miller of Keokuk, IA

the crew BEHIND THE REAL experience

to purchase memories to take home. Because of the peaceful perspective lent by its comfortable size, passengers who've experienced other, bigger cruises often express to her their preference for the Twilight.

Emilee's favorite moments on the water are the unexpected glimpses of wildlife. For instance, a whitetail deer will occasionally be spotted swimming the river.

As we talked, the Captain's voice came over the sound system, directing our attention toward a 1000-ft. towboat pushing 12 empty coal barges. Passengers learn more about the river as he points out interesting features from his position at the pilothouse wheel.

When the Twilight slowed for a group of pelicans, we learned interesting tidbits about their life history. The editor of *S&D Reflector: America's Steam & Diesel Riverboat Magazine* also provides assistance in historical narration during cruises.

An enjoyable trip is possible even in rainy weather. Passengers may choose from the covered exterior verandas or the enclosed, air-conditioned decks. The ornate interior décor features gracious Victorian scrollwork and comfortable, captain-style wooden chairs at each private table.

We soon heard the Twilight's sonorous whistle as it sent a passing signal to the towboat operator. Emilee hurried to her next responsibility in providing for the well-being of the passengers. If she is typical of the

friendly Twilight crew, you will enjoy your time aboard.

Zach Lavine: Dining Room Manager

The quality of the food served is one terrific aspect of taking a cruise on the Riverboat Twilight. The dining room manager coordinating these efforts is 24-year-old Zach Lavine from Rock Island, IL. He's in his third year, working a cruise season that lasts from April through November.

"I grew up in a Mississippi River town. It's always been a part of my life," he said. In the off-season, he helps to repaint the riverboat's charming blue and white exterior. He also enjoys photography – nature and landscapes are his favorite subjects – and playing electric rhythm guitar.

Zach pointed out that the difference between a one-day cruise and a two-day cruise is "quite significant." On a longer cruise, he said, "By the end of the first day, everyone kind of gets an idea of how we operate, what's going on, and by the second day we all know each other. We've gotten to interact with the passengers. By the end of the trip they'll know our names."

For many people, it's a treat to see bald eagles, and Zach has noticed that passengers also appreciate "just relaxing outside." Because it's a fact that the river level fluctuates, he mentioned the movable stages at the front of the Twilight that are sometimes used to board or disembark travelers. If you are uncertain about "walking the plank," crewmembers are

always present with a friendly, outstretched hand.

The Twilight carries a crew of about a dozen individuals. To shorten their commute to work, crewmembers have the option to stay at a shared house in the Dubuque area. "It's quite handy," Zach said. As a result, they get to know each very well.

"We all get together and work six days a week, like a family. You've got to be able to get along with the people you work with, because you also go back home with them. We work as a team."

He recommends the Riverboat Twilight for the authenticity of the experience. "If you ever want to know what it was like to actually ride on a packet boat, to 'time travel,' this is the authentic way to do it at an affordable price. If you're into river history or just boats in general."

He's become keen on the history of river travel. "A packet boat was a steamboat before barges came along," he explained. "The main deck was open for hauling cotton, livestock, or any type of trade goods. Basically, they 'packed' the boat up for shipping along the Mississippi River system. The second deck would be for passengers, the third deck for crew."

"If you've ever thought about taking any type of cruise before, a river cruise is a great one to start out with." Bringing smiles from nearby crew members," he added. ♦

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