T&C TRAVEL
TOWN& COUNTRY
FALL/WINTER 2016
AFRICA
THE T&C CRUISE AWARDS
CHOOSE YOUR ODYSSEY
ROMA
PASSPORT
United States of America
THE GRANDEST TOUR
25 TRIPS OF A LIFETIME

You can get the finer things on Lindblad Expeditions ships these days.

Aqua Expeditions' posh, beautifully minimalist Aria Amazon.

A Lindblad sailing on the Amazon.

EXPEDITION CRUISES

How to Rough It Luxuriously

Inspired by the great explorers of yore? You can still have a twin bed that is bolted to the floor and a shower that hangs over the toilet. But the good news is you now have other options. Seabourn and Silversea Expeditions offer a cross between a cruise and an expedition; Ponant, the French line owned by the Pinault family, operates a fleet of vessels with ice-strengthened hulls as well as classic French cuisine. The venerable Lindblad line is building two new 100-passenger coastal expedition vessels. The destinations too are changing. The big three are still Antarctica, the Galápagos, and Greenland, but ships are also increasingly pioneering itineraries in Indonesia, Japan, and Europe's extreme north.

BEST OVERALL

ABERCROMBIE & KENT/PONANT

The combo delivers superbly orchestrated adventure experiences (the A&K part) on modern, all-balcony, full-service vessels (the Ponant part). On a recent day at sea in the infamous Drake Passage, you could have learned about icebergs from one of A&K's expert geologists, attended a lecture on penguins, received coaching on how to adapt your camera settings to the tricky light conditions of Antarctica—or splurged on an "uber facial" in the spa. And, yes, the bars were open. ABERCROMBIEKENT.COM

Blue and yellow macaws are part of the spectacle on Amazon cruises.

National Geographic scientists enrich the experience on Lindblad trips.

Lindblad's active explorations include polar kayaking.

BEST FOR FAMILIES

LINDBLAD EXPEDITIONS/ NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Because less self-consciously family-friendly is sometimes better. Yes, there's a kids menu, but Lindblad does not excessively bulk up on counselors whose task is to keep kids happy and engaged. It just does what it does best: offer active explorations that appeal to everyone, aged 12 or 92, including polar kayaking to see crabeater seals in Antarctica, learning First Nations history in Canada, and swimming with sea lions in the Galápagos. EXPEDITIONS.COM

BEST FOR ON-SHORE ACTIVITIES

ABERCROMBIE & KENT

True to the nature of expedition cruising, Abercrombie & Kent is willing to go with the flow. This disclaimer on many of the outfitter's itineraries says it all: "Based on ice, weather, and sea conditions, your captain and expedition crew determine the day's best sightseeing opportunities." And that's as it should be—the unpredictability (and thrill) of adventure.

BEST FOR FOOD

ABERCROMBIE & KENT/PONANT

Cuisine is not a priority for most expedition lines; it's difficult to procure fresh and seasonal ingredients, or even restock, in some of the world's wildest places. However, Ponant, two of whose five ships partner with Abercrombie & Kent on some adventure trips, offers an appealing and reliable blend of classic and contemporary French cooking. (Seabourn's cuisine is in many ways unsurpassed, but the line has only one true expedition ship, the Seabourn Quest, which goes to Antarctica.)

BEST FOR ONBOARD ACTIVITIES

LINDBLAD EXPEDITIONS/ NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Because whatever adventures you have ashore, the learning continues onboard. Lindblad's partnership with National Geographic means that in addition to expert expedition leaders, on every voyage there are researchers, naturalists, and photographers.

BEST FOR SUITES

AQUA EXPEDITIONS

Aqua's feel is glamorous in a minimalist, Aman resort way. On both all-suite ships (the 32-passenger Aria Amazon and the 40-passenger Aqua Mekong), the rooms are decorated with locally made fabrics and other materials (silks and hardwoods on the Mekong boat, for instance), and they're larger than what you'll find on most expedition vessels, the space enhanced by spare but comfortable furnishings. AQUAEXPEDITIONS.COM

BEST FOR ACTIVE TRAVELERS

REI ADVENTURES

You haven't really experienced Antarctica until you've camped there, so REI Adventures (an affiliate of the retail chain) offers Antarctic cruises with stay-on-land options. Its expedition teams organize active visits, from kayaking among whales to glacier hiking. REI.COM/ADVENTURES

BEST FOR ADVENTURE NEWBIES

SILVERSEA EXPEDITIONS

Just the line for anyone not 100 percent committed to intense experiences in remote locations. On the Silver Explorer, Silver Galapagos, and Silver Discoverer (as well as the Silver Cloud, being retrofitted for sailings in the Arctic and Antarctic), adventure comes with open bar, butler service, and larger-than-average suites. SILVERSEA.COM

WE LOVE: BALINESE DREAM BEDS (on SeaDream Yacht Club)

These platform daybeds tucked around the ship's funnel (near the Top of the Yacht bar) are marvelous for sunbathing—or sleeping under the stars. (The staff replaces towels with proper bed linens at night.)

Galápagos sea lions frolic near Floreana Island.

BEST FOR DESIGN

AQUA EXPEDITIONS

A local yet contemporary design aesthetic, and floor-to-ceiling windows (and glass balconies on the Aqua Mekong) that let the views reign supreme. Everything—from the throw pillows to the local items for sale in the gift shop—has been brilliantly and rigorously curated. And there is nothing like returning after sunset in a skiff from an on-shore exploration and seeing the boutique ship waiting for you, invitingly aglow against the mighty river's darkening waters. «