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PROFESSIONALS



## OCEANS OF OPPORTUNITY

With customer demand at an all-time high and new-build ships on order from all the major players, there's never been a better time to grab a slice of the cruise market

**Plus: Winter-sun hotspots, Latin America, Indian Ocean, Cambodia, Namibia, how to make the most of sports sponsorship and on location with Swords Travel**

A surge in demand for bespoke, active itineraries is giving rise to a proliferation of exciting river, ocean and “crossover” offerings across Europe, Asia and Africa



River cruises are now firmly trending and it's an exciting time for the industry, particularly with the “crossover” between river and ocean experiences within the luxury sector, such as river cruise company Scenic's introduction of its new expedition yacht.

Uniwold Boutique River Cruise Collection has announced its European product line-up for 2019, including the renovation of the River Royale to create the brand's sixth Super Ship – Bon Voyage. There will also be new routes including 15-day Alluring Amsterdam & Vienna and 10-day Authentic Danube & Prague cruises onboard the River Princess, as well as 10-day Magnificent Moselle & Rhine sailings onboard the River Queen.

Exciting changes to its 2019 Exotics Asia and Egypt programme have been revealed – notably on China's Yangtze river, where Uniwold will offer Highlights of China & the Yangtze cruises on Sanctuary Yangtze Explorer.

Chris Townson, UK managing director at Uniwold, says: “River cruise customers are looking for more bespoke, active and local experiences that tap into their areas of interest. Agents who can identify these points of difference will reap the rewards of selling such a high-end product.”

Coming up in the spring will be the Bon Voyage – a result of taking River Royale

out of service in October for an extensive transformation and putting the ship back on to the Dordogne and Garonne rivers in April with a host of new high-end features.

AmaWaterways' 2019 Europe, Asia and Africa brochure includes three new ships, cruise and



rail travel options, two new itineraries and an expanded wellness offering.

Managing director Stuart Perl says: “It's an exciting time to be in the river cruise industry, especially with the launch of AmaMagna on the Danube next May. We have significantly increased our travel agent partners in recent months.

“There has been a 47% growth in agent bookings since January; this is due in part to *Cruising with Jane McDonald*, which featured AmaDara on the Mekong earlier this year. The programme created a surge in demand for our product and allowed us to build relationships with many new industry colleagues.”

#### Asian options

Emerald Waterways is set to shake up the lucrative Asia river cruise market by launching its first Star-Ship on the Mekong river.

Dawn Quinn, head of UK trade sales, says: “We are looking forward to working with our trade partners to promote the newest Star-Ship, which will bring the innovative features and impressive inclusions that the brand offers onboard European river cruises to the Mekong.”

In other moves in the river sector, Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours has partnered with National Geographic Expeditions. On each of the eight new sailings on Scenic's



fleet of custom-built five-star river ships, guests will have a choice of Scenic Enrich all-inclusive sightseeing and activities, ranging from hikes and bike rides to in-depth learning experiences focusing on the natural world, culture and history.

Taking the river less travelled, all-inclusive Crystal River Cruises is introducing 10-day Enchanting Moselle itineraries onboard Crystal Bach, a round-trip from Amsterdam, starting in May 2019. The voyages feature five entirely new ports of call along the vineyard-flanked Moselle, considered to be one of the most breathtaking stretches of river in Europe.

Aqua Expeditions has launched a Honeymoon & Anniversary Experience, featuring romantic touches and offering guests an immersive river safari experience – all for the same price as a standard Aqua Expeditions trip. These sleek “floating boutique hotels” sail on the Peruvian stretch of the Amazon and on the Mekong in south-east Asia. The company recently launched its agent portal, which is a more user-friendly system available 24/7.

Pandaw is also set to ramp up its cruise offering – this time in India, following the popularity of its Lower Ganges sailings, which start in December, when a Pandaw ship will be positioned in the country for the first time. The company’s expansion plans for India include deploying two more ships, which will cover the Upper Ganges – from Kolkata all the way to Varanasi – and the Brahmaputra, another of Asia’s major rivers, where Indochina Pandaw will be positioned for the first time. There will also be a range of new pre- and post-cruise tours of the country. ■

**Pictured**

1. Silversea Antarctica voyage
2. Seabourn Ovation
3. Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection
4. Ponant Le Laperouse
5. AmaWaterways AmaMagna
6. Hapad-Lloyd Cruises Hanseatic Inspiration
7. Aqua Expeditions Aria Amazon
8. Uniworld SS Beatrice
9. Upper Ganges, a new Pandaw option

## In the know

Six of the best cruises for all interests, from wine to wildlife

### EXPANDING HORIZONS

**What?** Jewels of south-east Asia, Seabourn

**Why?** Onboard this Oriental odyssey, the guest speaker in the Seabourn Conversations programme is businessman and broadcaster Lord Digby Jones, who is best known for his blunt and outspoken attitude during his reign as director-general of the Confederation of British Industry. This engaging industry guru remains dedicated to fighting adult illiteracy and promoting his vision of socially inclusive wealth creation.

**How to book it:** This 18-night voyage onboard Seabourn Sojourn from Singapore to Shanghai departs April 10, 2019; from £7,699pp, [seabourn.com](http://seabourn.com)



### ONCE IN A LIFETIME

**What?** Seychelles Yachting Serenade, Crystal Yacht Expedition Cruises

**Why?** The 62-passenger all-suite yacht Crystal Esprit is perfect for exploring the pristine islands of the Seychelles archipelago, where unspoilt sugar-white beaches, crystalline waters, lush emerald mountains and Unesco-protected wildlife reserves beckon. This trip will suit bucket-list cruisers looking to experience one of the most serene corners of the planet in all-inclusive luxury. Honeymooners and those seeking romance will love the overnight stay in Praslin, too.

**How to book it:** This seven-night cruise departs Eden Island Marina on Mahe on March 7, 2020; from £4,628pp, [crystalcruises.co.uk](http://crystalcruises.co.uk)