

Celebrity Edge

Kelly Hoppen, Patricia Urquiola and Tom Wright
join The Celebrity Revolution

Belmond Andean Explorer

Rich artisanal detailing takes centrestage
aboard Peru's first luxury sleeper train

Virgin Voyages

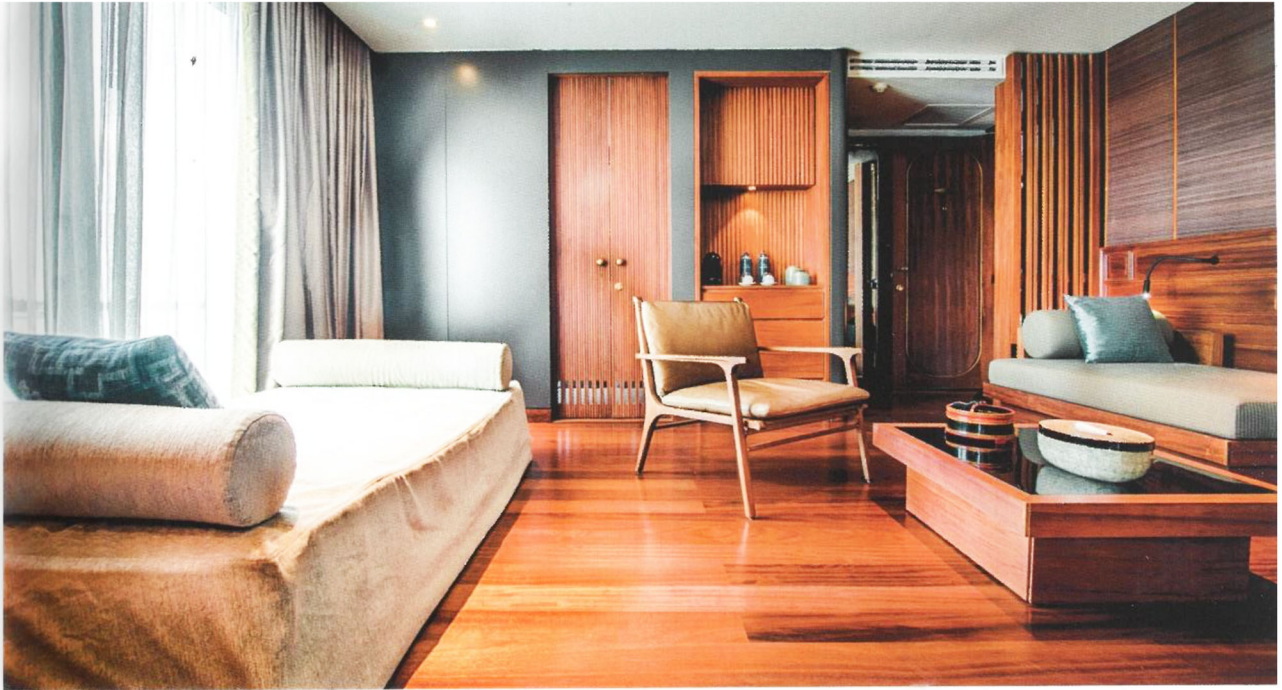
Virgin Group ventures into the cruise sector
with a new fleet of Lady Ships

STARBOARD

STYLE IN TRAVEL

ISSUE 1





RIVER BOAT

Aqua Expeditions eyes expansion

As the first adventure travel company to offer luxury cruises on both the Amazon and Mekong rivers, Aqua Expeditions has revealed plans to expand its fleet to new routes worldwide.

"I have every intention of putting more boats on more bodies of water," explains CEO Francesco Galli Zugaro, who founded Aqua Expeditions in 2011 having fallen in love with small-ship cruising whilst working in the Galapagos. "I spend 40% of my year scouting new destinations; I've done several trips to assess bodies of water in sub-Saharan Africa, and I've looked at Southeast Asia, from Indonesia to Thailand to Myanmar."

Argentina, Panama and The Kimberley in Western Australia are also on the radar, in a move that will add to the current routes in Peru, Cambodia and Vietnam. "The size of our boats – 45-60 metres with 15-20 cabins – means that we can travel to places larger boats can't get to," he continues. "We don't encounter the problems mainstream cruising has today in that they need more ports of call. We have the advantage that we can basically go anywhere."

Seeking to explore remote and culturally important destinations on the world's greatest rivers, the inaugural vessel, *Aria Amazon*, entered service in 2011 featuring interiors by Peruvian designer Jordi Puig. Having established a loyal guest

base, Galli Zugaro launched his second expedition ship in 2014, this time cruising the Mekong between Cambodia and Vietnam. Targeting adventurers who want an authentic experience without sacrificing creature comforts, *Aqua Mekong* features 20 suites measuring 30m², indoor and outdoor bars, an observation deck, cinema, games room and plunge pool. Interiors are by Vietnam-based Noor Design, and are more in-line with a boutique hotel than a cruise ship thanks to the quality finishes and high-end furnishings. Shore excursions and on-board programming are also an important part of the experience, with small group visits to historic and cultural sites hosted by experts in conservation, as well as special culinary expeditions led by Michelin-starred chef David Thompson.

Along with plans to add to his fleet, Galli Zugaro is partnering with a number of large cruise lines, who charter *Aqua Expeditions* as an optional add-on for their guests. For now though, the focus is on expanding the core business to new destinations. "I have plans to grow and now it's a matter of finding the right financing for the new venture," he concludes, remaining tight-lipped on the exact locations lined up. "What I can say, is that I'll be staying true to my vision and ethos."