



## VIRTUOSO® SHARES TOP CRUISE TRENDS FOR 2020: IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES IN DISTANT DESTINATIONS AND CONSCIOUS TRAVEL



**NEW YORK (January 15, 2020)** – Cruisers are seeking far-flung, pristine destinations in 2020, driven by a desire for immersion in each location, according to global luxury travel network [Virtuoso®](#). The network is revealing its top cruise trends for the year in time for “wave season,” occurring January through March, when savvy travelers book voyages to benefit from special incentives. Virtuoso’s cruise portfolio includes 33 ocean, river, yacht and expedition partners offering thousands of itineraries to global ports-of-call.

“In 2020, cruisers are choosing itineraries based on destinations and the more unusual and faraway, the better,” said Beth Butzlaff, vice president, cruise sales at Virtuoso. “Cruising used to be considered more passive, but lines have overcome that misperception with more time in port and experiences that are unique to the destination. Passengers want to enjoy the essence of these places through interactions with local people and culture, and the industry has responded with innovative offerings to satisfy evolving preferences.”

Virtuoso’s top cruise trends for 2020 follow:

### **Distant Destinations**

According to a Virtuoso-YouGov survey, the number-one reason travelers are interested in cruises is the ability to visit multiple destinations. No longer just focused on the Caribbean or Mediterranean, cruise ships visit ports as diverse as Muscat, Oman; Manta, Ecuador; and Rarotonga in the Cook Islands. In fact, bookings for Silversea’s first Expedition World Cruise in 2021 are outpacing those for its classic World Cruise. The expedition cruise is visiting unusual ports including Rabaul, Papua New Guinea; Ksamil, Albania; and Bawemataluwo, Indonesia.

### **In-Port Immersion**

Cruise lines are creating new itineraries and shore excursions to provide more destination immersion. Azamara offers three ways to further that connection with a locale: late-night and overnight stays, complimentary evening performances in port and shore excursions that encourage deeper connections with local people and cultures. Seabourn also offers cultural, culinary, adventure and mindful-living experiences during shore excursions, bringing the destination to life for passengers.

### **Cold is Hot**

Lines as varied as Crystal, Seabourn, Viking and Ponant are offering more expedition cruises as the boom in adventurous cruising continues building. Passengers seeking pure, scenic destinations are attracted to chilly locales

such as Antarctica, the Arctic, Greenland and Norway's fjords. Cruise lines are also providing more once-in-a-lifetime experiences on these voyages. Silversea offers a private-jet trip so passengers can stand next to the South Pole marker, and Quark Expeditions will feature heli-skiing in Antarctica in 2021.

### **Conscious Travel**

Cruise lines are responding to consumers' growing awareness of sustainability by implementing more environmentally friendly technology and programs to boost the destinations they visit, both economically and culturally. Hurtigruten, Lindblad Expeditions, Aqua Expeditions and Royal Caribbean International are among those leading the way. According to the Cruise Lines International Association, by 2030, the cruise industry has committed to reducing its fleet-wide rate of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions by 40 percent. As well, the economic impact on the communities that cruise ships visit is enormous, sustaining 1.1 million jobs equaling U.S. \$45.6 billion in wages.

### **Micro-Cruises**

Micro-trips – short jaunts for people with more money and desire to travel than time – are trending in the cruise world. Lines such as Norwegian Cruise Line, Celebrity and Virgin Voyages offer two- to five-night Caribbean cruises. Equally convenient, passengers have multiple options for their port of departure, with Miami, Fort Lauderdale, Tampa, New Orleans and Galveston, TX all offering micro-cruises.

### **Americana**

While many cruisers pursue adventures in far-off lands, others are choosing itineraries closer to home. Cruise lines featuring U.S. sailings are flourishing, with American Queen's Mississippi River cruises in particularly high demand. The appeal extends beyond Americans, as Australians who want to cruise the legendary river are also booking voyages. Another trending U.S. river is the Pacific Northwest's Columbia, with cruises offered by American Queen and UnCruise.

### **The Suite Life**

Some cruise devotees only travel in style by booking a suite, and if the category they desire is not available, they push their sailing date further into the future. Suite inventory is relatively small, specifically for spacious owner's and penthouse suites, so this demand has inspired lines to open itineraries well in advance, especially for world cruises. With 2020 bookings strong, cruisers are bumping sailing dates out as far as 2022.

Travelers who want to take advantage of wave season and book through a Virtuoso advisor will receive complimentary amenities on select sailings. The Virtuoso Voyages program, celebrating 30 years in 2020, offers exclusives ranging in value from \$800 per couple to several thousand dollars on more than 650 hosted sailings each year. To view cruises from Virtuoso's partner lines, visit <https://www.virtuoso.com/luxury-cruises>. To find a Virtuoso advisor, go to <https://www.virtuoso.com/advisors#>.

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### **About Virtuoso**

**Virtuoso®** is the leading international travel agency network specializing in luxury and experiential travel. This by-invitation-only organization comprises over 1,000 travel agency partners with 20,000 elite travel advisors in 50 countries throughout North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. Drawing upon its preferred relationships with over 1,800 of the world's best hotels and resorts, cruise lines, airlines, tour companies and premier destinations, the network provides its upscale clientele with exclusive amenities, rare experiences and privileged access. More than (U.S.) \$26.4 billion in annual travel sales makes Virtuoso a powerhouse in the luxury travel industry. For more information, visit [www.virtuoso.com](http://www.virtuoso.com).

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