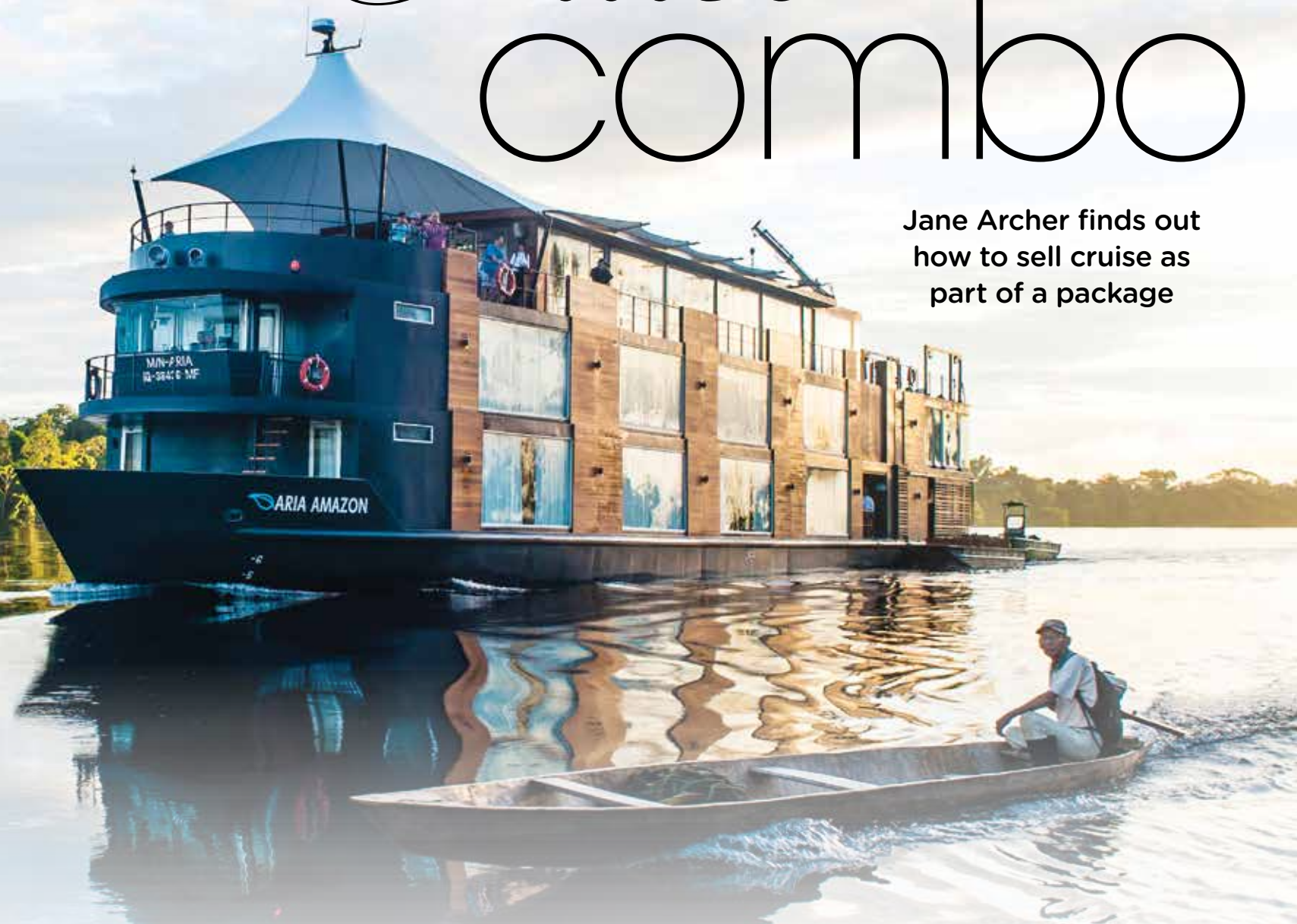




Cruise combo

Jane Archer finds out
how to sell cruise as
part of a package



Apologies in advance to anyone labouring under the misconception that escorted tour and cruise holidays are much the same. They might both involve touring, but are they blood brothers?

Definitely not, says Wendy Wu Tours global product director Jonathan Wilson. "Our clients are aged 50 and above, well-travelled and enjoy a cruise as part of a

destination experience, but they would never just go on a cruise."

Wendy Wu Tours, Titan Travel and Abercrombie & Kent are among a growing band of operators that specialise in touring holidays but also offer a range of cruise-tours, combining the road or rail trip with a few days on water.

Many tap into short river cruises through regions that would be

tricky to visit any other way, with three and four-night sailings on the Yangtze in China, Amazon in Peru or Irrawaddy in Myanmar.

But plenty also combine land and longer sea travel. APT has cruise-tours in New Zealand, and Titan packages land stays around its voyages from Venice and its Canada and New England sailings, as well as offering an ever-popular Rocky Mountaineer

train and Alaska cruise combo. Kuoni's bulging cruise-and-stay programme packages hotels with cruises in continents stretching from Australia to Antarctica.

▶ CREATING A PACKAGE

Several factors influence which cruises are paired up with which land arrangements.

Wendy Wu Tours starts with the destination and creates



→ a package that balances the experiences available in that country. “We put a cruise with a tour, not the other way around,” says Wilson.

It offers three or four nights on the Yangtze, for instance, to provide a scenic break from city stays on its China tours. The operator works mainly with Victoria Cruises but it can offer short sailings on Sanctuary Retreats’ more luxurious *Yangzi Explorer* on request.

Titan seeks out cruises in trending hotspots and builds land tours around them. Head of product Ben Davis says Japan is currently popular, so the product team has built a tour around a Regent Seven Seas Cruises voyage from Hong Kong to Shanghai, which spends considerable time in Japan, in 2020. “The holiday might be 12 months away but we are already taking bookings,” he says.

Prices start at £7,499 for 21 days, departing February 27, 2020, including flights, transfers,

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A one-week Alaska cruise paired with the Rocky Mountaineer is a perennial favourite with several operators

RIGHT: Rocky Mountaineer

BELOW: Yangtze River tour

two nights in Hong Kong, the 12-night cruise and a post-cruise tour to Shanghai, Xi’an and Beijing.

Resurgent interest in the Nile has prompted Scenic to create a Treasures of Egypt combo pairing Cairo with a four-night sailing from Luxor to Aswan on Sanctuary’s *Sun Boat III*. Prices start from £4,645



for 11 nights including flights.

In southeast Asia, Abercrombie & Kent pairs land tours with three and four-night cruises between Bagan and Mandalay on Sanctuary Retreats’ *Ananda*. In South America, it offers up to a week on Aqua Expeditions’ Amazon river boat *Aria* to break up longer tours of Peru or Ecuador.

▶ TARGET MARKET

Despite the ‘sail’ content, these holidays don’t appeal to all cruise clients, according to Hercules Zeris, head of long-haul product for Riviera Travel.

“They love to travel but want to take life easy,” he says. “When the cruise becomes part of a tour, they are not interested.”

That means an opportunity to sell to clients who might not typically think of themselves as cruisers.

Riviera’s cruise-tours in China, Vietnam and India sell well with clients aged 60-plus. Quite a few are solo travellers, attracted by dedicated singles tours in China. There are four in 2019, in March, April, May and September, all combining three nights on the Yangtze with Beijing, Xi’an, Shanghai and Chengdu, with prices from £3,399 for 16 days.

Great Rail Journeys targets the over-50s and reckons there are many parallels between rail and cruise holidays, so combining them creates the perfect holiday.

▶ FAVOURITE ITINERARIES

A one-week Alaska cruise paired with the Rocky Mountaineer train in Canada is a perennial favourite with several operators, but there are plenty of other combos for clients to consider.

An Italian Lakes and Croatia cruise combo is a top seller for Titan, while Zeris says Riviera’s 15-day Journey on the Mekong is popular as it combines a week on the river with stays in Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap.

Wendy Wu Tours’ most popular itinerary is a 16-day Wonders of China tour with four nights on the Yangtze and a cruise along the Li River to Yangzhou. Prices start from £3,190 including flights.

Top sellers for Great Rail Journeys include 10 days combining the Jungfrau Express with the Rhine, and 12 days pairing Berlin and Prague with the Danube. Prices start from £2,095 and £1,995 respectively.

▶ TRADE SALES

Operators say agents are good at selling familiar cruise-tour itineraries such as Alaska and the Rocky Mountaineer and rail-sail trips in Europe, but struggle when they don’t know the destinations.

Wendy Wu Tours is among operators that provide lots of information to the trade, and have specialists on hand to offer expertise to help you clinch a sale – so grab it with both hands. **TW**



PICTURES: ROCKY MOUNTAINEER; SANCTUARY RETREATS; RICHARD MARK DOBSON