

Ocean of adventures



Adventure cruises are all the rage, but which one's right for your client? **Sue Bryant** sizes up the options

Expedition cruising is booming. Passenger numbers increased by 44% in 2018 on the previous year, according to Clia, and the appetite for adventure continues.

With 26 ships due to launch in the sector by the end of 2021, joining the many that are already in operation, agents may understandably feel overwhelmed when it comes to matching a client to the right expedition voyage. Here are six ideas to suit different tastes.

BEST FOR... SPORTY ADVENTURERS

Antarctica is the ultimate bucket list destination but simply stepping onto the ice is no longer regarded as the thrill of a lifetime. Now, it's all about experiences, and Antarctica offers unrivalled opportunities for adventure bragging rights. Hurtigruten has camping on the ice,

kayaking and snowshoeing, while Aurora Expeditions goes even further with skiing, for experts who bring their own gear, as well as scuba diving and snorkelling. The activities aren't cheap – snorkelling costs £630, for example, and skiing around £850 – but then, Antarctica isn't a budget destination.

Book it: An 11-night voyage with Aurora Expeditions on the new 120-passenger *Greg Mortimer*, departing November 28, 2020, costs from £9,520, including most activities and drinks with dinner; flights extra. aurora-expeditions.com

BEST FOR... LUXURY LOVERS

The last thing you want is to pluck a client from a sumptuous boutique hotel and plonk them onto a Russian icebreaker with bunk beds and canteen-style dining. ➤

HOW TO SELL EXPEDITION CRUISES

- Target clients who take luxury or experiential land holidays, not just cruisers.
- Tell a story. Expedition cruising is an expensive commitment and shouldn't be bought on price.
- Think about the client's expedition 'journey'. It may be better to start with northern polar cruising like Spitsbergen or Greenland, before committing to Antarctica and the Drake Passage crossing.
- Consider warm climate expeditions: Australia's Kimberley, Indonesia's Raja Ampat and Komodo, Mexico's Sea of Cortez, and the Galápagos are sure-fire hits.

- Don't discount rivers. The Brahmaputra in India, the Amazon, the Chobe in southern Africa and the upper Mekong all offer adventurous river voyages – and there's no danger of seasickness.

PACKING TIPS

- Most lines supply boots and polar jackets for Antarctica, but the packing list beyond this is extensive. Layers, thermals, hats, gloves, sunglasses and binoculars are all essentials.
- Wicking fabrics, neutral colours, long trousers that zip off to shorts, insect repellent and lightweight boots are all useful for tropical expeditions.
- Encourage clients to reduce waste. Take a reusable water flask, avoid wet wipes and buy gear from ethical suppliers such as Patagonia and Fjallraven.



For clients who want butlers and an open bar but are still looking for adventure, there are plenty of options.

The swish, all-balcony *Scenic Eclipse*, due to launch this summer and sail in the eastern US, the Caribbean and then Antarctica, comes complete with submarine and helicopter, as well as multiple restaurants.

Crystal Cruises' 200-passenger *Endeavor*, launching next summer and sailing in Asia, Australia and New Zealand, should be perfect for clients used to perks like a spa, a butler and Michelin-style dining.

Silversea Cruises' expedition ships aren't new but the calibre of the expedition leaders is exceptional, making the operator a good choice for demanding clients used to the highest levels of service.

Book it: An 11-night all-inclusive expedition from Reykjavik to Longyearbyen on the 254-passenger *Silver Cloud*, departing June 10, 2020, costs from £6,930. silversea.com

BEST FOR... SUN-SEEKERS

Not everybody is excited by snow and ice, so think about warmer options too. Borneo, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Mexico's Sea of Cortez, the Galápagos – there are plenty of expedition routes.

Australia's pristine Kimberley Coast is an expedition classic, with towering waterfalls, windblown rock formations, Aboriginal art, mangroves and empty, red-sand beaches.

Stepping onto the Antarctic ice is no longer regarded as the thrill of a lifetime – now it's about kayaking, camping, snoeshowing and diving

Ponant's all-balcony *Le Lapérouse* will sail the region in summer 2020 and is a good choice because of its high-tech underwater lounge, Blue Eye, and the infinity pool on deck (there's limited swimming in the Kimberley because of crocodiles).

Book it: From £7,529 for a 10-night, all-inclusive cruise departing July 7; flights to Darwin and from Broome extra. en.ponant.com

BEST FOR... FAMILIES

Kids and expedition cruises aren't always a match made in heaven but UnCruise Adventures has a couple of fantastic family departures every summer in Alaska on the 90-passenger *Legacy*. Activities include kayaking, snorkelling, paddleboarding, whale watching, beach bonfires and rock pool treasure hunts. This is a small-ship expedition, not a standard Alaska cruise, and goes well off the beaten track, hence the higher price.

Book it: Budget around \$6,145 (£4,850), including



ABOVE: Silversea's *Silver Cloud*; OPPOSITE: Riverboat on the Peruvian Amazon; blue-footed booby in the Galápagos; kayaking in Antarctica
PICTURES: Oana Dragan/G Adventures; Jennifer Prerou/Aurora Expeditions; Stefan Dall

all meals, drinks and activities, with \$500 off per child aged eight to 13, for an August 9 departure. Flights to Juneau are extra. uncruise.com

BEST FOR... THE PRICE-CONSCIOUS

Expedition cruising, to the farthest corners of the Earth, is by nature expensive. But clients on a budget can still enjoy soft adventure on a more basic ship. G Adventures, for example, offers affordable river voyages on the Peruvian Amazon, exploring the remote Pacaya Samiria National Reserve with jungle walks, night excursions, wildlife spotting and a visit to a local shaman. The company has a twin-share scheme too, so singles don't pay any supplements.

Book it: From £1,279 for a seven-night December 30 departure on the 28-passenger *Amatista*, including most meals and activities. Flights extra. gadventures.co.uk

DESTINATIONS EXPEDITION | CRUISE

BEST FOR... WILDLIFE SPOTTERS

The Galápagos is the ultimate adventure for wildlife encounters. For many, it's a life-changing experience as you get up close to iguanas, sea lions, birds, turtles, rays and even sharks. The wildlife is completely unafraid, the environment pristine and the volcanic scenery starkly beautiful.

The destination can be done on a relative budget: Journey Latin America offers a 10-night cruise from £3,867 excluding flights, for example. But increasingly, the Galápagos is about luxury, with Celebrity Cruises and Silversea both introducing smart new ships: *Celebrity Flora* this year and *Silver Origin* next year.

Book it: A 10-night voyage on *Celebrity Flora*, departing October 18, costs from £7,020, including flights, two nights in Quito, seven nights on board, all activities, all-inclusive drinks and tips. celebritycentral.co.uk

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