

ALL ABOARD

Get Ready for the New Wave of Cruising

From Arctic art adventures to Egypt's ancient Nile and a new generation of small ships, these are the cruises creating a ripple in the year ahead

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PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 21, 2026



With a dozen expedition cruises under my belt, I know where I stand when it comes to cruising: I gravitate to the small-ship side of things. Off-grid. Unpredictable. Adventure-focused. That's my jam – and, it turns out, I'm not alone in my yen for adventure. "This booming new

cruise sector has become the go-to for ultimate, bragworthy adventures worldwide,” reports the Cruise Lines International Association. But river and ocean cruises can also be a joy if you choose wisely. So as we start dreaming about our 2027 travels, here are seven cruise lines that are adapting their itineraries around the world, with new ships, clever themes or interesting routes.

Arctic Art Adventure



Sail by Ellesmere Island and a landscape that shaped the Group of Seven's Arctic vision and defined a new way of seeing Canada; Inset: *Iceberg at Godhavn, Greenland* by A.Y. Jackson, 1930. | Craig Minielly, Adventure Canada / McMichael Canadian Art Collection

With the McMichael Canadian Art Collection in Vaughan, Ont., newly closed for a three-year redevelopment project, Adventure Canada has created an art-inspired voyage with curator John Geoghegan so you can see for yourself how the North has shaped the Canadian imagination. The High Arctic Expedition: Where Art Meets Land will mark the 100th anniversary of the famous 1927 journey Group of Seven artist A.Y. Jackson and insulin co-discoverer Dr. Frederick Banting made aboard the *SS Beothic*. As steward of the Group of

Seven's legacy, Geoghegan will lead illustrated talks, field observations and discussions connecting art, culture and place. The sailing runs Aug. 21 to Sept. 14 between Qausuittuq (Resolute), Nunavut and Nuuk, Greenland. "To journey here is to join an ongoing dialogue between landscape and imagination, and to see the Arctic not as 'remote' or 'discovered,' but as radiant, inhabited and profoundly alive," promises Cedar Swan, CEO of family-owned Adventure Canada. I've sailed with the Mississauga-based company six times and appreciate how it always brings together expert scientists, historians, cultural stewards, Inuit cultural educators, artists and musicians. This itinerary is on the upgraded 75-passenger *Ocean Nova*.



New Antarctica Bragging Rights



A colony of king cormorants in the Beagle Channel, Patagonia. | Neurobite / Getty Images

I've got my eye on ultra-luxury expedition cruise line Silversea as it's poised to open the southernmost hotel in the world in October. With 150 rooms, The Cormorant at 55 South is its first hotel and will serve as a new gateway to Antarctica for its popular Antarctica Fly Cruise. It's in Puerto Williams, Chile, overlooking the Beagle Channel and surrounding Patagonian landscape. Its name references the location at 55° south latitude and the cormorant, a bird tied to the region. With Silversea's Fly Cruise itineraries, you can complete the core itinerary in six days by boarding the *Silver Endeavour* after a flight to King George Island. It's perfect for time-strapped (impatient?) people like me who'd rather spend four hours flying back and forth over the Drake Passage than four days cruising across it twice, regardless of whether the "Drake Shake" or the "Drake Lake" materialize. With a buzzy hotel stay on one or both ends, it's even more appealing.

Modern Sailings, Ancient River



The River Nile in Aswan, Egypt. Inset: Hieroglyphic carvings on a wall at the Temple of Khnum in Esna. | Chalffy; PaulVinten / Getty Images

I'll never forget my mom taking me to the Art Gallery of Ontario in 1979 to see King Tut's golden artifacts but have yet to travel to Egypt to see them. So I'm glad to hear that Viking – with whom I've sailed twice – continues to expand its

Nile River fleet. The *Viking Ptah* is set to debut this month and the *Viking Sekhmet* in November. Both will sail the 12-day Pharaohs & Pyramids itinerary, visiting Tutankhamen's tomb and a Nubian village, as well as the Temple of Khnum in Esna, Dendera Temple Complex in Qena, and temples at Abu Simbel and High Dam in Aswan. Like their six sister ships, these two state-of-the-art beauties promise elegant Scandinavian design, a distinctive space-saving square bow and an indoor/outdoor Aquavit Terrace where you can drink Viking's own brand of the Scandinavian spirit. Each adults-only ship holds just 82 guests in 41 staterooms. "Egypt is truly a phenomenal destination, distinguished by its remarkable history, enduring culture and the singular power of the Nile," says Viking chairman/CEO Torstein Hagen. This trip starts with three hotel nights in Cairo followed by an eight-day roundtrip voyage on the Nile River accompanied by an Egyptologist. When people tell me they're worried about traveling to the Middle East, I advise them to monitor Canada's travel advisory for Egypt – note that it's currently at the same level ("exercise a high degree of caution") as places like France and Spain.

Strategic Caribbean Departures



Aerial view of Cayo Levantado, a small island in the Caribbean off the north coast of the Dominican Republic.

Speaking of global concerns, don't bypass the Caribbean just because most cruises leave from American ports. Emerald Cruises can get you there without setting foot in the U.S.. [Discover Eastern Caribbean & Grenadines](#) sails from Philipsburg, Saint Marten to Bridgetown, Barbados. [Eastern Caribbean with St. Barths](#) journeys between the same two spots with a different combination of islands. [Discover the Yachting Islands of the Caribbean](#) starts and ends on some dates in San Juan, Puerto Rico, which technically is an unincorporated territory of the U.S. but is self-governed and its residents don't vote for the U.S. president.

Best of Both Worlds



Images from first to last: The historic *Grosse Cloche* (Great Bell) on Rue Saint-James in Bordeaux, France; a view of the Thames snaking through London and Tower Bridge; Tahiti's Teahupo'o reef and lush mountains. | UnSplash (Bordeaux, London) / Mark Meredith / Getty Images

Another personal favourite is Windstar Cruises, which continues to pioneer single-vessel, river-to-ocean sailings. Purpose-built for this seamless travel style, its 224-guest yacht *Star Explorer* debuts Dec. 28 and can navigate waterways that are too small for larger ocean ships and reach coastal destinations that traditional river vessels can't access. Seine veterans may be drawn to the 10-night Impressionist France sailing from Bordeaux to London that pairs the Seine and the River Thames, cruising beneath Tower Bridge. Windstar gets to dock beside *HMS Belfast*, the historic cruiser that's now a museum. As well, Windstar will have two yachts (*Wind Star* and *Star Breeze*) sailing French Polynesia year-round beginning in 2027. They will operate the seven-day Dreams of Tahiti itinerary as Windstar celebrates 40 years of cruising Tahiti.

European River Cruises with Expedition Experts



Castle Katz perched on Lorelei cliffs overlooking the Rhine Valley in Germany. | Hiroshi Higuchi / Getty Images

In August, National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions launched European river sailings with the **Holland and Belgium: Medieval History and Scenic Waterways** itinerary aboard the new 120-guest Transcend *Connect*. The expansion continues in September with the launch of **Rhine River: Castles, Culture and Culinary Delights**, which takes travellers on the *Connect* through the Rhine Gorge with its rolling hills and lush vineyards before calling on charming towns from Germany to France's Alsace region. I've sailed with this outfit through the Galápagos Islands and California's Channel Islands National Park, and can't wait to see how the expedition pioneers that specialize in polar and ocean journeys compete for European river cruisers. In 2027, Lindblad will debut Christmas market sailings aboard another new build, *Evolve*. The bespoke vessel promises 60 spacious staterooms for 120 guests, each with full-width, floor-to-ceiling windows. The top deck houses fitness zones, a lounge grill and bar, and there's even a fleet of bikes for independent explorations.

A Ferry Trip Disguised as a Cruise



The Aurora borealis on the coastline at Hamnøy, Lofoten islands, Norway. Inset: The Hurtigruten Coastal Express sailing under the northern lights. | Hurtigruten; Mumemories / Getty Images

It's the opposite of new, but Hurtigruten's Coastal Express itinerary has been connecting Norway's world-famous fjords, towns and people since 1893, and intrepid travellers love it as long as they go in with eyes wide open. The roundtrip route lets you sleep on a comfortable working passenger ferry ship as it visits 34 coastal communities along the way, sometimes for just 15 or 30 minutes, sometimes for several hours. The unusual 12-day voyage goes from Bergen in the south to Kirkenes in the north and back, crossing the Arctic Circle twice. But it's more comfortable than the ferry comparison suggests, with private-bathroom cabins, spacious sea-view suites and good Norwegian food, including local fish and other seasonal ingredients. The entertainment? The spectacular scenery and a front-row seat to Norway's coastal life. From late May to early August, you'll experience the midnight sun. I'll be aboard in February for a winter voyage that showcases the northern lights.

Also on the horizon: Watch for the debut of the *Emerald Raiya* in June 2027 as

she sails on an eight-day Greek Islands & Turkish Coastlines voyage. She will summer in the Adriatic and East Mediterranean and winter in the Red Sea and the Seychelles.



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