

# Condé Nast Traveler

HOT LIST

## The Best New Cruise Ships & Itineraries in the World: 2020 Hot List

*For the 24th edition of the Hot List—our picks of the year's top hotel and cruise openings—these 10 winners represent the best new ships and itineraries in the world.*

BY JANICE WALD HENDERSON

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When our team of editors and contributors set off for a year of hopscotching the globe to put together *Conde Nast Traveler's* 2020 Hot List, we could never have imagined that by the time we were able to announce our winners, we would be staying home for the foreseeable future. In 24 years of putting together this compendium of the latest and greatest industry openings, we've never published it in a year like this. Even still, we are proud to unveil this selection of 10 new **cruise ships and sailings**. These are the absolute best of the best; the game-changing, boundary-pushing, and vacation-making openings to get you dreaming. We know that right now you're probably wondering when you'll be able to take your next trip. When you do, we encourage you to use these exceptional launches as your guide. We have a feeling that, when the time comes and it's safe to travel, we're all really going to need these cruises, and they're going to need us, too. It will be worth the wait.



Roger Pimenta

## Scenic *Eclipse*

If James Bond were to choose a cruise ship on which to sip a Vesper Martini, it would be the *Scenic Eclipse*, where the low-lit bar is so inviting you'll want to hop on a stool and hang out for hours. Every aspect of this suave, slick 228-passenger ship is primed for active, daring, tech-savvy cruisers. The accommodations are all butler-attended suites—the prized ones have Philippe Starck–designed double-size Jacuzzis. But it's the two helicopters that whirl over glaciers in the Arctic and a submarine that dives nearly 1,000 feet to explore sunken ships and coral atolls in the Caribbean that make this ship truly 007-worthy. *From \$8,195 per person, based on double occupancy; [scenicusa.com](http://scenicusa.com)*



Regent Seven Seas Cruises



## Regent *Seven Seas Splendor*

Although *Seven Seas Splendor* is the 750-passenger *Seven Seas Explorer*'s twin ship, it's no clone. Regent understands that a true high-end experience requires a singular approach. There are the lavish details expected from the line, like more than an acre of marble, the \$5 million art collection that includes several Picassos, and over 500 crystal chandeliers. But just as memorable are the more intimate touches, like the soft bathrobes, the silky sheets, the buttery smooth leather headboards. This time around the line brought in two new design houses to work alongside longtime partner Tillberg Design of Sweden. The Miami-based Studio DADO injected some whimsy to the Observation Lounge, channeling an English garden for inspiration; Total Solution Interiors designed flower-shaped coffee tables and added Art Deco accents to the Splendor and Seven Seas Suites; and Tillberg made the Regent Suite larger and swankier, with a striking floor-to-ceiling ocean-edge shower (kind of like bathing while suspended over the sea, but not in a scary way). As dignified as all this sounds, there is some drama: A colossal art installation in the form of a swirling dragon tempts even the most selfie-averse to mug for the camera. *From \$8,599 per person, based on double occupancy; rssc.com*



Christian Santiago



## Norwegian *Encore*

While the *Norwegian Encore* has just about every buzzy dining and entertainment option imaginable, what makes it feel truly special is the possibility of also finding some peace and quiet, like in the adults-only upper deck lounge, or in a suite in the **Haven by Norwegian enclave**, a sort of cruise within a cruise, with a private bar, restaurant, and sundeck. *From \$321 per person, based on double occupancy; ncl.com*



## Silversea *Silver Explorer* in the Northeast Passage

The Explorer Northeast Passage itinerary, a 25-day sail aboard the 144-passenger *Silver Explorer*—the sibling trip to the wildly popular North-west Passage journey—feels like a mix of expedition-style travel and the glamour sailings of the early 20th century. There are black-and-white photos of legendary explorers lining the hallways and tuxedoed butlers doling out caviar and Champagne in the staterooms. But all that pampering is a blip on the radar compared with the extraordinary places this ship goes. Twenty-seven obscure ports plotted around the Arctic Circle—from Nome, Alaska, through Russia's nine time zones—make this the cruise for travelers seeking rarely seen destinations. Part of Explorer's objective? To go as far north as possible, through ice passageways where no other commercial cruise has ever been. Here that means sighting polar bears on Wrangel Island in far northwestern Russia or taking a Zodiac through the icy waters around Franz Josef Land, an archipelago in the Arctic Ocean. This itinerary epitomizes the conceit that in so many parts of the world, the best—no, the only—way to do it is by boat. *From \$44,900 per person, based on double occupancy; silversea.com*



Getty

## Regent *Seven Seas Explorer*, Fjords of Iceland

Few itineraries merge the wild, near-haunting beauty of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Scotland, Iceland, and Greenland like this one. Quite simply, this **Copenhagen**-to-Reykjavik route on 750-passenger über-opulent *Seven Seas Explorer* sails from one natural wonder to the next. Cruising the world's most breathtaking fjords surrounded by unsullied snow-capped mountains and reaching Godafoss, a famed fierce waterfall that roars over a wide horseshoe-shaped cliff, are two of the many highlights. In the nutrient-rich pristine seas off Westfjords peninsula, more than 20 species of whales and porpoises feed and frolic as flocks of birds soar overhead. Ashore, glaciers, geothermal springs, and lava fields beckon, as do charming villages with tin-roofed wooden houses and welcoming locals. More must-sees, like the 14th-century Faroe Islands cathedral ruins and North Orkney's Neolithic archaeological wonders—including the 5,000-year-old Standing Stones of Stenness, a UNESCO World Heritage Site—up the magic. On board, the all-suite, all-inclusive *Seven Seas Explorer* showcases a \$7 million art collection, which just might take the entire 18-day cruise to fully peruse. *From \$16,199 per person, based on double occupancy; rssc.com*



Courtesy Uniworld SS Bon Voyage

## Uniworld S.S. *Bon Voyage*

Uniworld poured millions into converting *River Royale* into the 124-passenger S.S. *Bon Voyage*. The personality of every Uniworld vessel reflects its route, and this rethink highlights the Dordogne and Garonne rivers' wine and gastronomy traditions with restaurants that lean into the local, like Le Grand Fromage, where, come nightfall, the scent of Bordeaux-sourced truffles perfumes the air. With upgrades that go beyond dining (including an infinity pool) and wellness excursions such as yoga in the 17th-century Blaye Citadel, Uniworld has crafted a new kind of river-cruise experience. *From \$2,719 per person, based on double occupancy; uniworld.com*





Getty

## Oceania *Regatta* in Alaska

Consider the Alaskan Glory itinerary aboard the *Regatta* the trip for those who really want to engage with the 49th state. Walking tours around the mountain-rimmed town of Ketchikan with Tlingit guides stop at totem poles and historic sites, but the most spectacular excursions are those that get you out into nature, like paddling canoes around glacier-fed Mendenhall Lake and accompanying chefs into the spruce forests outside of Juneau to forage ingredients for cooking classes. The degree of connection this itinerary establishes between travelers and **Alaska's** people and places makes it a standout in the region. *From \$2,599 per person, based on double occupancy;*  
*[oceaniacruises.com](http://oceaniacruises.com)*



Courtesy Celebrity Cruises

## *Celebrity Flora*

*Celebrity Flora* gets major points for delivering a Galápagos rarity—an **eco-conscious, 100-passenger, all-suite sail**. The ship, built for the area, has special features to protect the fragile environment, like anchorless technology, and with one designated naturalist guide for every 12 guests, there's plenty of opportunity to ask questions about, say, the male blue-footed boobie's elaborate courting dance. Back on board, the education continues with seminars on how to identify birds and tutorials on wildlife photography. The ship tops the growing field of cruise lines with glamping programs by letting passengers spend the night on the top deck in open-air cabanas, where it's hard to say what's more memorable—the utter silence or the impossibly starry sky. *From \$11,299 per person, based on double occupancy; [celebritycruises.com](http://celebritycruises.com)*



Karsten Bidstrup

## Hurtigruten *Roald Amundsen*

Going groundbreakingly green *and* spotlighting science make this 530-passenger expedition ship a stark standout among competitors. The world's first such vessel with **hybrid electric power** made history by sailing on battery power alone. Named after polar hero Roald Amundsen, the Antarctic ship christening was done with ice rather than Champagne, duplicating Amundsen's gesture back in 1917. On board, the high-tech Science Center is the vessel's heart and soul, and curious guests are encouraged to play the part, working with biologists and geologists using advanced biological and geological equipment and joining resident researchers in collecting samples in the field. Sweeping views—here and everywhere—dominate *Roald Amundsen's* design, as do its clean Scandinavian lines. After days spent exploring the Poles or other remote locales, the wellness center, infinity pool, and hot tubs are just the thing. *From \$4,667 per person, based on double occupancy; hurtigruten.com*





Courtesy Aurora Expeditions

## Aurora Expeditions *Greg Mortimer*

Naming a cutting-edge, activity-driven polar expedition ship after Greg Mortimer sets this vessel's thrill-seeking tone. (The Aurora Expeditions' legendary cofounder was one of the first two mountaineers to successfully climb Antarctica's 13,000-foot Mount Minto.) *Greg Mortimer* is also the world's first vessel in its class to sail with a **fuel-efficient Ulstein X-Bow**, designed to cut through swell and transit faster through waves. Not to worry. State-of-the-art Rolls-Royce dynamic stabilizers swiftly undo any sea sickness that may have otherwise struck. With 15 Zodiacs and four dedicated sea-level launching platforms, nearly all 126 passengers disembark quickly and explore simultaneously (polar regions allow 100 passengers at once). Whenever possible, skiing, climbing, diving, and kayaking outings prevail. Hydraulic viewing platforms on board allow guests more glimpses into marine life and seabirds. Bravo, also, to *Greg Mortimer* for slipping a sexy side into its ruggedness. The exterior vibes are sleek, not stocky. Inside, neutral tones with pops of polar blues feel appropriately cozy. Top-deck Jacuzzis allow passengers to admire extraordinary vistas in bubbly warmth—further proof this ship leans hard, yet comfortably, into nonstop nature encounters. *From \$12,240 per person, based on double occupancy; [aurora-expeditions.com](http://aurora-expeditions.com)*