



AQUA EXPEDITIONS

Press Release

AQUA EXPEDITIONS APPOINTS MICHELIN-STARRED CHEF KARIME LÓPEZ FOR AQUA LARES

Chef Karime López will define the culinary vision aboard Aqua Lares, Aqua Expeditions' newest ultra-luxury expedition yacht launching in 2026, delivering a destination-driven dining experience at sea.



6 January 2026 - Aqua Expeditions is pleased to announce the appointment of **Chef Karime López** as Consulting Chef for **Aqua Lares**, the brand's newest ultra-luxury expedition yacht set to launch in the Seychelles in February 2026. Chef Karime will oversee the culinary concept on board, designing menus that elevate the guest experience.

Born and raised in Mexico, Chef Karime López brings a highly personal yet globally informed culinary perspective. Her passion for food began in childhood — inspired by her mother's cooking and her family's restaurant background — before formal training in Paris confirmed her path as a chef. Her career has since taken her through leading kitchens across Spain, Mexico, Peru, Japan, and Italy shaping a style that is both expressive and precise.

In 2018, **Chef López became the first Mexican woman to earn a Michelin star** for her work as Head Chef at **Gucci Osteria da Massimo Bottura in Florence**, part of the Kering family of brands. That same year, she was **named Chef of the Year in Italy**, followed by further international recognition with the **Best Chef Art Award (2022)** and **Best Outstanding Chef Abroad by CANIRAC (2023)**.

Under Chef Karime López's culinary direction, dining aboard Aqua Lares will be defined by cuisine that is elegant and closely tied to each expedition. Menus will balance Mediterranean influences with coastal Creole flavors, elevated through Japanese techniques and meticulous attention to detail.

Signature dishes will include a Zanzibar-spiced rib eye, perfectly grilled and finished with a deeply reduced demi-glace that delivers richness, smokiness, and subtle heat, and lobster tagliatelle coated in a luxurious ocean jus, slow-simmered with lobster and finished with caviar. Additional highlights will range from glazed short ribs with smoked carrot purée to Creole shrimp curry with fried plantain; citrus-forward profiles bring freshness and clarity to each plate. Together, the menus reflect Chef Karime's belief that true luxury lies in clarity of flavor, precision of technique, and food deeply connected to place.

With this appointment, Aqua Expeditions continues to push the boundaries of culinary excellence at sea, reinforcing its commitment to immersive travel where exploration, luxury, and gastronomy are seamlessly intertwined.



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LUXURY RIVER & YACHT CRUISES

Chef-Hosted Voyages Across the Aqua Expeditions Fleet

Cuisine sits at the heart of the Aqua experience, with menus designed to reflect each destination and elevate life at sea. Across the fleet, guests have the exclusive opportunity to sail alongside the chefs behind these menus, joining select departures hosted by Aqua's culinary partners for an even deeper, more immersive gastronomic voyage.



Chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino

A pioneer of modern Amazonian cuisine, Chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino brings deep regional knowledge and a contemporary approach to indigenous ingredients. His menus aboard Aqua Nera, Aqua Mare, and Aria Amazon celebrate the rainforest-to-table cuisine and the biodiversity of the Peruvian Amazon.

Ship: Aqua Nera

Expedition: The Peruvian Amazon, Nauta to Nauta

Dates: 1 September to 5 September 2026 and 13 October to 17 October 2026



Chef Benjamin Cross

Known for his globally influenced yet ingredient-driven cooking, Chef Benjamin Cross crafts menus inspired by Southeast Asia's culinary heritage, using local produce and bold, balanced flavors. His onboard presence offers guests insight into the philosophy and creativity behind the Aqua Blu dining experience.

Ship: Aqua Blu

Expedition: Flores (Labuan Bajo) to Bali, Komodo National Park

Dates: 2 May to 9 May 2026

To join the chef-hosted departures, guests can book directly at aquaexpeditions.com, contact our reservations team at reservations@aquaexpeditions.com, or speak with their preferred travel advisor.

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For media enquiries, please contact Global PR & Communications Manager, Emilie Cunningham -
ecunnington@aquaexpeditions.com

About Aqua Expeditions:

www.aquaexpeditions.com



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LUXURY RIVER & YACHT CRUISES

A recognized global leader in luxury small-ship expeditions, Aqua Expeditions explores the world's most biodiverse and culturally significant destinations aboard best-in-class vessels of stylish contemporary design. Expect tailored five-star itineraries, a highly exclusive 1:1 crew- to-guest ratio with personalized service, world-class dining, and small group expert-guided activities and excursions, with a maximum of 16-40 guests per ship. Aqua Expeditions currently operates river explorations in the Peruvian Amazon and the Mekong Delta (Cambodia and Vietnam), and coastal yacht voyages in East Indonesia — Komodo National Park, Ambon and the Spice Islands, Raja Ampat, and Asmat — and the Galapagos Islands. Launching in February 2026, Aqua Lares will become the brand's sixth vessel—an ice-class expedition yacht sailing East Africa (Seychelles, Aldabra Atoll, Zanzibar, and coastal Tanzania) from November to April, and Svalbard & The Arctic Circle from June to September.

Aqua Expeditions is proud to be a part of PONANT EXPLORATIONS GROUP, a portfolio of brands renowned for their expertise and destination-focused exploration cruises.