



AQUA EXPEDITIONS

Press Release

AQUA EXPEDITIONS NAMED AMONG TRAVEL + LEISURE'S 2026 WORLD'S BEST AWARDS



23 July 2026 - Travel + Leisure readers have named Aqua Expeditions the #2 [Best River Cruise Line](#) and #2 [Best Intimate-Ship Ocean Cruise Line](#) in the publication's World's Best Awards 2026. The recognition marks another standout year for the luxury small-ship expedition brand. Aqua moved from #3 to #2 in the River Cruise Line category compared with the 2025 awards and has now ranked among the top three across both categories for the fourth consecutive year, reinforcing its reputation for intimate, design-led expeditions in some of the world's most biodiverse and culturally significant destinations.

Aqua Expeditions offers a distinct approach to luxury exploration, one that blends the intimacy of small-ship travel with the spirit of a safari on water. Across its six-ship fleet of contemporary river vessels, luxury yachts, and expedition ships, the brand delivers design-led, highly personalized journeys to remote regions including the Peruvian Amazon, Mekong Delta, East Indonesia, the Galapagos Islands, East Africa, and the Arctic. Each itinerary is crafted around immersive discovery, with expert-guided excursions, world-class cuisine, and a highly exclusive 1:1 crew-to-guest ratio, while Aqua's ongoing sustainability efforts reflect a commitment to protecting the extraordinary ecosystems its guests are invited to experience.

The recognition comes during a landmark year for Aqua Expeditions following the launch of Aqua Lares, the brand's sixth vessel and a 250-foot ice-class expedition yacht accommodating up to 30 guests with a 1:1 crew-to-guest ratio. The 15-suite Polar Class 6 expedition yacht debuted in the Seychelles in February 2026 and the Arctic in May 2026.

"We're honored to be recognized once again by Travel + Leisure readers, and proud to be highly ranked in both the River and Intimate-Ship Ocean Cruise categories," said Francesco Galli Zugaro, CEO and Founder of Aqua Expeditions. "This recognition is especially meaningful because it comes directly from travelers who have experienced Aqua. We're grateful to our guests for their continued support, and to our onboard teams for the passion and care they bring to every journey."



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LUXURY RIVER & YACHT CRUISES

Based on the results of the *Travel + Leisure* World's Best Awards 2026 readers' survey, *Travel + Leisure* recognizes the top hotels, islands, cities, cruise lines, airlines, spas, and more around the globe. This year, more than 207,000 readers participated, casting more than 661,000 votes across more than 10,088 hotels, cities, cruise lines, and other travel experiences. The full results are available [online](#) and will be included in the August 2026 issue of *Travel + Leisure*.

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

About Aqua Expeditions:

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 contemporary design. Guests can expect tailored five-star itineraries, a highly exclusive 1:1 crew-to-guest ratio with personalized service, world-class dining, and expert-guided excursions, with a maximum of 16–40 guests per ship. Aqua Expeditions operates river explorations in the Peruvian Amazon and the Mekong Delta, and coastal yacht voyages in East Indonesia — including Komodo National Park, Raja Ampat and the Spice Islands — as well as the Galapagos Islands. In February 2026, Aqua Lares became the brand's sixth vessel—an ice-class expedition yacht sailing East Africa (Seychelles, Aldabra Atoll, Zanzibar, and coastal Tanzania) and Svalbard & The Arctic Circle.

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.