



AQUA EXPEDITIONS

Press Release

AQUA EXPEDITIONS NAMED BEST SMALL SHIP CRUISE EXPERIENCE AT 2026 VIRTUOSO CRUISE AWARDS

Virtuoso win comes alongside three nominations at the 2026 Expedition Cruise Network Awards.



20 August 2026 – Aqua Expeditions has been named **Best Small Ship Cruise Experience at the 2026 Virtuoso Cruise Awards**, recognizing the luxury expedition operator for delivering exceptional and distinctive experiences within the small-ship cruise sector.

Announced during the 38th annual Virtuoso Travel Week in Las Vegas, the Cruise Awards recognize leading cruise partners across the luxury travel network with nominees determined by Virtuoso's global network of luxury travel advisors.

The award recognizes cruise lines offering exceptional and unique experiences for niche markets. Aqua Expeditions operates intimate river and ocean expeditions aboard vessels carrying 16 to 40 guests, combining expert-led exploration, personalized service and world-class dining.

Francesco Galli Zugaro, Founder and CEO of Aqua Expeditions, said: *"To receive this recognition from Virtuoso's travel advisor community is particularly meaningful. We are grateful to our travel trade partners for their continued support, and to our teams around the world who make these experiences possible."*

The win comes amid further trade recognition for Aqua Expeditions, which has also been shortlisted in three categories at the **Expedition Cruise Network Awards 2026**:

- **Favorite Warm-Weather Expedition Cruise Operator**
- **Favorite Luxury Expedition Cruise Operator**
- **Favorite Micro Expedition Cruise Operator**

The ECN Awards are determined by votes from the expedition cruise travel trade, with winners to be announced during the ECN Conference on 29 September 2026.

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For media enquiries, please contact Global PR & Communications 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.