



theconnectedtraveler

we connect you to the world.

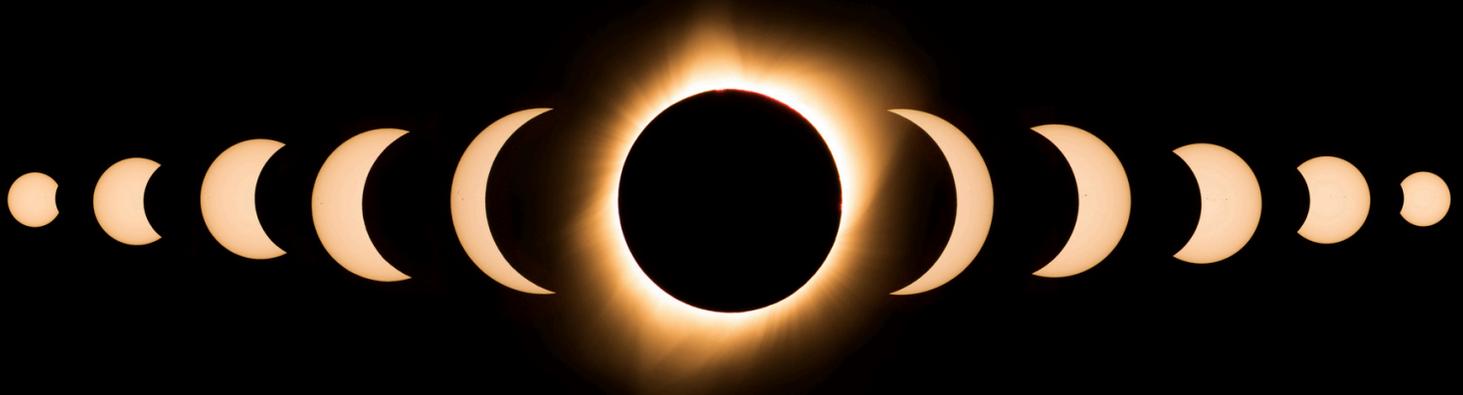


JULY NEWSLETTER

What a month it's been! July brought sun-soaked adventures, unforgettable memories, and exciting journeys across the globe for The Connected Traveler family. From cruising the Caribbean and Mediterranean to exploring historic cities and basking in beachy escapes, our clients made the most of every summer moment. Whether you traveled with us or followed along on social media, we loved sharing the joy of travel with you.

This July also marked a time of connection—both with the destinations we visited and with one another. Many of our hosted group trips were filled with laughter, new friendships, and a deep appreciation for exploring the world together. We're especially proud of the incredible experiences curated by our team, including VIP moments, special access, and thoughtful details that transformed vacations into something truly extraordinary.

As we turn the page on July, it's the perfect time to plan what's next. Fall, holiday, and New Year's travel are booking up fast, and we have some incredible journeys in store—from festive European river cruises to sunny escapes in the Caribbean and beyond. If you're dreaming of your next adventure, now's the time to reach out. Let's make magic together!



FEATURED CRUISE OF THE MONTH: SOLAR ECLIPSE 2026

Total Eclipse of the Cruise – August 12, 2026

Get ready, stargazers! On **August 12, 2026**, the moon's putting on a show — and the best seats are at sea. Imagine standing on the deck with a drink in hand as day turns to night and the sky dances overhead. Total solar eclipse visible from spots like Iceland, Greenland, northern Spain, and Portugal — and yes, we've got cruises headed straight into the path of totality! Some sailings even feature astronomers on board, themed events, and eclipse swag so you can celebrate in style while learning something cosmic.

Eclipse + Cruise = Magic

Want in? We've got options. Like... a lot of them. Expedition cruises near Iceland. Luxury sailings in the Med. Balcony cabins with ocean views just waiting for that eclipse selfie. Whether you're a space nerd, a thrill seeker, or just love an excuse to cruise — we've got a ship for you. Call us, message us, or beam us up. Let's get you booked on the most unforgettable cruise of 2026. Because this kind of magic doesn't happen every day.

**Call us at 865-973-9744 or visit us at
www.theconnectedtraveler.com**



From Ocean liner Elegance to Istanbul Wonders: A SmokyMtnBears Virtuoso Voyage to Remember

The **SmokyMtnBears** recently hosted a truly unforgettable Virtuoso Voyage aboard the iconic **Queen Mary 2**, sailing from **New York City to Southampton** — and what a journey it was! Known as the last great ocean liner, the Queen Mary 2 isn't just a cruise ship; she's a floating legacy. With her sleek, powerful design and graceful art deco touches, she effortlessly combines old-world glamour with modern luxury. Onboard, guests were treated to daily high tea in the Queens Room, celestial shows in the only planetarium at sea, engaging lectures, stargazing, and even ballroom dancing under chandeliers — talk about a dream!

As a **Virtuoso Voyage**, our guests enjoyed exclusive amenities, including a **private cocktail reception** just for Virtuoso travelers. We were thrilled to welcome **58 Virtuoso guests** onboard — including some of our cherished **Connected Traveler family: Felicia Soza, and Karl & Tiffany Harden**. The vibe was elegant, enriching, and oh-so-fabulous. And just when you thought the magic was over — we took it to the next level.

After disembarking in Southampton, we made a meaningful stop at the mystical **Stonehenge**, walking in the footsteps of ancient history. From there, it was off to the airport and onto **Turkish Airlines**, where we flew to the dazzling city of Istanbul. Our base: the beautiful **Marmara Pera Hotel**, offering sweeping views of the city and a perfect launchpad for adventure.



In just two and a half whirlwind days, we immersed ourselves in everything Istanbul had to offer. We cruised the **Bosphorus River by moonlight**, explored the majestic **Hagia Sophia**, the serene **Blue Mosque**, and the breathtaking **Cistern Basilica**. We wandered the vibrant lanes of the **Grand Bazaar** and **Egyptian Spice Market**, scooping up Turkish delights and spices, and even visited a traditional rug store, where we learned how **Turkish rugs** are meticulously handwoven — a single piece taking months, even years, to complete.

One of the absolute highlights? **Afternoon High Tea** at the legendary **Pera Palace Hotel** — the very hotel where **Agatha Christie** is said to have penned part of **Murder on the Orient Express**. We not only indulged in exquisite pastries and teas in its opulent lounge, but also had the honor of touring **Room 101**, a suite preserved in honor of **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk**, the founder of modern Turkey. This room has been maintained as a museum, paying tribute to the man who helped shape the nation, making the Pera Palace one of the most historically significant hotels in the country.

We explored **Hippodrome Square**, soaked up history, and shared so many laughs, discoveries, and special moments that this trip is now firmly planted in our hearts. From the Atlantic crossing on a true maritime legend to the exotic allure of Istanbul, this was more than a trip — it was a journey of connection, discovery, and lifelong memories.

Ready to join us on the next unforgettable voyage? You know where to find us.



Cape Town to Mombasa Virtuoso Cruise

WOW!



Cape Town to Mombasa -December 23, 2025 to January 5, 2026

Set sail on a once-in-a-lifetime journey aboard the ultra-luxury Crystal Symphony as it cruises from Cape Town, South Africa to Mombasa, Kenya. This all-inclusive voyage explores the breathtaking eastern coast of Africa from November 2025, delivering a seamless blend of culture, nature, and refined comfort. With Crystal Cruises, you'll enjoy exceptional service, Michelin-inspired dining, enrichment programs, shore excursions, premium spirits, gratuities, and Wi-Fi—all included. Begin your adventure in Cape Town, where iconic Table Mountain towers over vineyards, penguin-filled beaches, and the storied Robben Island. Then travel onward to coastal gems like Mossel Bay, Port Elizabeth, East London, and Durban, where you can spot whales, go on safari, and dive into South Africa's rich cultural tapestry. **Pricing starts at \$6130 per person.**

As the Symphony glides further north, discover the wild beauty of Richards Bay and Zululand, the colonial-meets-modern vibrancy of Maputo, Mozambique, and the spice-scented shores of Zanzibar and Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania. End in the colorful port city of Mombasa, Kenya, where history, beaches, and the option of a post-cruise safari await. This sailing is more than a cruise—it's a curated cultural immersion through the heart of East Africa, made even more extraordinary with Crystal's signature elegance and immersive experiences.



Mombasa to Mumbai

Virtuoso Cruise



Mombasa to Mumbai-January 5-18, 2026

Embark on an unforgettable voyage aboard the luxurious Crystal Symphony as you sail from Mombasa, Kenya to Mumbai, India—an itinerary rich in culture, natural beauty, and exotic charm. Begin in Mombasa, where the echoes of Swahili history come to life in the narrow alleys of Old Town and the storied walls of Fort Jesus. From there, cross the Indian Ocean to Mahé in the Seychelles, a paradise of granite peaks, turquoise waters, and lush rainforest. Lounge on the powdery sands of Beau Vallon Beach, explore local markets in Victoria, or hike through Morne Seychellois National Park. Then it's on to Malé, the bustling capital of the Maldives, where coral reefs, seaplane tours, and cultural landmarks await. **Pricing starts at \$5,370 per person.**

As your journey continues, discover the vibrant rhythms of Colombo, Sri Lanka, where colonial architecture and Buddhist temples offer a fascinating contrast to the city's modern energy. Visit temples, markets, or take a day trip to Kandy or Pinnawala. In Goa, India, immerse yourself in a laid-back coastal lifestyle with Portuguese-influenced churches, colorful spice markets, and stunning beaches. Your voyage concludes in the dynamic city of Mumbai, a kaleidoscope of history, culture, and urban excitement. With Crystal's signature all-inclusive luxury—gourmet dining, curated excursions, fine wines, gratuities, and exceptional service—this journey offers an extraordinary way to explore the Indian Ocean in comfort and style.





Riveria Maya Scott's Birthday Cruise



March 22-27, 2026

Get ready to trade winter blues for ocean views as the SmokyMtnBears take over Virgin Voyages' Scarlet Lady for a 5-night birthday celebration like no other! Sailing roundtrip from Miami, we'll stop in Cozumel, Mexico for vibrant culture and coastal fun, and spend a full day soaking up the sun at Virgin's exclusive Beach Club at Bimini — where powdery sand and poolside beats set the tone for a perfect getaway.

But that's just the beginning — we'll also be celebrating Scott's birthday at sea, so expect themed events, group fun, and plenty of chances to toast to our favorite bear! With cabins starting at just **\$1,690**, this is your invitation to cruise with your chosen family in true SmokyMtnBears style. And with Virgin Voyages, here's what's always included:

- ✓ Over 20+ eateries — no buffets, no main dining rooms, just incredible cuisine
- ✓ All tips covered — no surprise charges
- ✓ Free Wi-Fi and unlimited group fitness classes
- ✓ Award-winning entertainment and nightlife
- ✓ Adults-only ship (18+) for a truly elevated experience

Space is limited and this birthday bash is bound to sell out fast. Join us for the ultimate celebration at sea — because you deserve to cruise differently!



MUST GO

Brilliant Lady LA Mermaiden

**BOOK
NOW**



LA Mermaiden-April 7-12, 2026

Join the SmokyMtnBears for an exhilarating adventure aboard Virgin Voyages' Brilliant Lady on her La Mermaiden voyage, sailing roundtrip from the vibrant city of Los Angeles. This unforgettable cruise will take you to the charming coastal towns of Santa Barbara and San Diego, where sun, surf, and laid-back vibes await. You'll also explore the cultural richness and culinary delights of Ensenada, Mexico—perfect for a day of discovery and indulgence before returning to the City of Angels.

This 5-night voyage is more than just a getaway—it's a celebration of community, exploration, and the magic of the open sea. With Virgin's signature adult-only experience, elevated dining (all included), and next-level entertainment, every moment promises fun and connection. **Plus, pricing starts at just \$1,790 per cabin**, based on double occupancy, making this Mermaiden sailing a stylish and accessible escape. Don't miss your chance to be part of history and set sail with the SmokyMtnBears on this coastal California and Baja getaway!

Coming Soon-More information on Justice for Mermen and Pre Cruise Hotel & Party Information





Japan to Alaska



Japan to Alaska-May 9-21, 2026

Embark on an extraordinary transpacific voyage aboard the Azamara Pursuit, sailing from the vibrant city of Tokyo, Japan, to the breathtaking wilderness of Alaska. This one-of-a-kind journey begins in Japan's cultural heart, with a stop in Aomori—a city steeped in tradition and beauty. Here, you can explore ancient temples, admire the colorful Nebuta Festival floats, stroll through Hirosaki Castle Park, or visit the tranquil shores of Lake Towada. As cherry blossoms bloom and modern art meets historic heritage, Aomori sets the stage for a journey filled with discovery. **Pricing starts at \$3,289 per cabin**, based on double occupancy, offering exceptional value for a cruise that spans continents.

As the ship sails across the vast Pacific Ocean and crosses the International Dateline, you'll experience a rare and exciting moment in time. The adventure continues in Kodiak, Alaska, known as “Alaska’s Emerald Isle” for its lush landscapes and rich wildlife. Explore rugged coastlines, spot brown bears, hike scenic trails, or enjoy world-class fishing in this remote and beautiful destination. Your journey concludes in Whittier, Alaska, surrounded by the dramatic fjords and glaciated mountains of Prince William Sound. With Azamara’s intimate ship size, immersive shore excursions, and inclusive amenities, this transpacific voyage is the perfect fusion of cultural exploration and natural wonder.



Heaven Across the Seas



Lisbon to Miami-June 1-13, 2026

Set sail on an extraordinary **12-day voyage** aboard the **Regent Seven Seas Mariner**, traveling from the timeless charm of Lisbon, Portugal, to the vibrant shores of Miami, Florida. Along the way, you'll explore the lush landscapes of Horta, Azores, the pastel-colored elegance of Hamilton, Bermuda, and bask in the tropical beauty of Great Stirrup Cay, Regent's private island retreat. This sailing offers the perfect balance of serenity at sea and enriching cultural discovery — all wrapped in all-inclusive elegance.

From spacious all-suite accommodations with private balconies to unlimited shore excursions, fine dining, premium beverages, spa access, and even valet laundry service, Regent's legendary luxury ensures every moment is worry-free and unforgettable. Indulge in multiple gourmet restaurants, sip handcrafted cocktails or specialty coffees, and enjoy nightly entertainment, enrichment lectures, and personalized service that's second to none. With pre-paid gratuities, 24-hour room service, and unlimited WiFi, this isn't just a cruise — it's a refined escape across the Atlantic. Set sail from **\$8,199 per person** and experience what true luxury at sea feels like.



Greece, Turkey & Italy

PRIDE Cruise



June 15-26, 2026

Get ready to sail with pride! Join The Queer Nomads on an unforgettable 11-night Pride Cruise aboard the spectacular Celebrity Ascent, one of the newest ships in Celebrity's luxury Edge Series. Departing roundtrip from Rome, this voyage is more than a cruise—it's a celebration of community, connection, and unapologetic joy. With visits to breathtaking destinations like Crete, Ephesus, Istanbul, Santorini, Mykonos, and Naples, this journey blends rich culture, ancient history, and stunning coastlines with an inclusive, festive atmosphere that welcomes all LGBTQIA+ travelers and allies.

Pricing starts at just \$1,874 per person, based on double occupancy—making it the perfect opportunity to join a global celebration of Pride while exploring the world. **Plus, we've got you covered before and after the cruise with pre- and post-cruise travel options to extend your adventure.** Whether you're dancing in Mykonos, wandering through ruins in Ephesus, or sipping wine at sunset in Santorini, this cruise promises unforgettable memories, specially curated events, and a vibrant community ready to welcome you aboard. Let the countdown to Pride at sea begin!



Your Hosts
The Queer Nomads

America's 250th Celebration

Virtuoso Cruise

**HOT
DEAL**

MUST GO



Queen Elizabeth 2 Sailing-July 3-10, 2026

Step into a world of refined relaxation with Cunard's well-appointed inside staterooms—your personal sanctuary at sea. Thoughtfully designed for both comfort and function, these elegant retreats offer everything you need to unwind in style. Sink into your luxurious Cunard bed draped in soft, sumptuous linens as you enjoy a good book, your favorite film, or reflect on the day's adventures. Each stateroom features an invigorating shower and a selection of Penhaligon's luxury toiletries to help you refresh and recharge.

With pricing starting at just \$1,899 per person, based on double occupancy, this is timeless luxury at an exceptional value—especially on itineraries that include scenic ports like Newport, Rhode Island and Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Your voyage experience is elevated with thoughtful amenities such as complimentary robes and slippers, in-room tea and coffee service, and the indulgent option of breakfast in bed. Whether you're watching the sunrise over Newport's historic harbor or exploring the maritime charm of Halifax, your dedicated steward ensures every detail is flawlessly handled. Cunard's inside staterooms offer a tranquil retreat that pairs beautifully with your days of exploration—making it the perfect blend of elegance, comfort, and unforgettable destinations.



MUST GO

8 Day Inside Passage ALASKA

MUST DO!



Alaska-Sept 20-27, 2026

Adventure awaits in the untamed beauty of Alaska aboard the Sun Princess, sailing from Seattle to Vancouver on a breathtaking journey through the Pacific Northwest and America's Last Frontier. Begin in Ketchikan, where colorful totem poles, lush rainforests, and the iconic Creek Street boardwalk welcome you to a land steeped in Native Alaskan culture. Continue on to Juneau, where glaciers, whales, and alpine views await — from the towering Mendenhall Glacier to the thrilling Mount Roberts Tramway. In Skagway, step back in time to the Klondike Gold Rush with a scenic rail ride or stroll through the historic district set against a backdrop of rugged peaks.

This epic voyage concludes in Vancouver, Canada — a cosmopolitan city framed by majestic mountains and serene coastlines. With fares starting at just \$1,768 per person, this unforgettable itinerary is elevated even further with Princess Premiere included. That means you'll enjoy a truly carefree cruise with:

- ✓ Unlimited Wi-Fi for up to 4 devices
- ✓ Two specialty dining meals per guest
- ✓ Unlimited premium desserts and drinks (including specialty coffees and smoothies!)
- ✓ Reserved theater seating
- ✓ Princess Prizes and photo package
- ✓ Pre-paid gratuities

Cruise in comfort, explore with ease, and treat yourself to the best of Alaska and the Pacific Coast — all aboard the brand-new Sun Princess.

Southern Caribbean Cruise-Thanksgiving

**Hot
DEAL**



Thanksgiving Cruise November 21-28, 2026

This year, ditch the oven and pack your flip-flops — because Thanksgiving just got a luxurious upgrade! Join the SmokyMtnBears aboard Azamara Journey, November 21–28, 2026, for an all-inclusive cruise from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Bridgetown, Barbados. This extraordinary itinerary visits some of the Caribbean’s most enchanting and off-the-beaten-path islands, including Virgin Gorda, Antigua, Martinique, Bequia, Grenada, and Tobago. Think sun-drenched beaches, vibrant local culture, and plenty of time to unwind and connect with your travel family.

With **Interior Cabins starting at \$1,149 pp, OceanView Cabins from \$1,389 pp, and Veranda Cabins from \$1,839 pp, all based on double occupancy**, this is the perfect way to spend the holiday in luxury. Onboard Azamara, you’ll enjoy a boutique cruising experience with thoughtful inclusions like:

- ✓ A variety of dining venues and 24-hour room service
- ✓ Unlimited spirits, wine, and international beers
- ✓ Gratuities and tips already included
- ✓ Unlimited self-service laundry (yes, really!)
- ✓ AzAmazing Evenings® cultural experiences
- ✓ Small-ship access to unique ports and longer stays

Let Azamara handle the holiday prep while you explore the Caribbean with a welcoming and fun-loving crew. Celebrate gratitude, adventure, and connection — island style!



Experience "Mystical Maya" A Luxury LGBTQ+ Valentine's & Palentine's Cruise



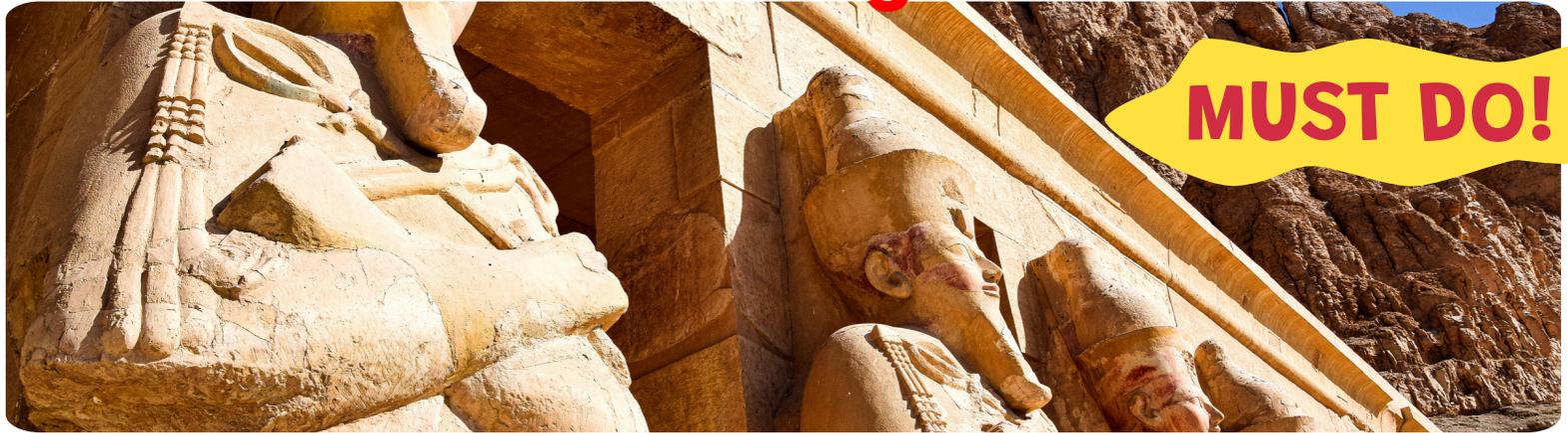
The Connected Traveler is thrilled to announce an extraordinary collaboration with The Queer Nomads, Lexie Shaibu-Lenoir and Aisha Shaibu-Lenoir, for an unforgettable luxury Valentine's cruise aboard Regent Seven Seas' Grandeur. Set sail on February 9, 2027, this exclusive journey, titled "Mystical Maya," will immerse guests in the wonders of the ancient Mayan world while providing an elegant and welcoming space for LGBTQ+ travelers. Designed to celebrate community and connection, the voyage will feature exclusive events, enriching excursions, and world-class luxury aboard one of the most stunning cruise ships at sea.

This one-of-a-kind experience will include tailored social gatherings, immersive cultural excursions, and engaging discussions led by The Queer Nomads. Guests can look forward to a welcome mixer, a Queer Nomads panel sharing inspiring travel stories, private themed parties, and expert-led tours to iconic Mayan sites like Chichén Itzá and Cozumel. With Regent Seven Seas' renowned all-inclusive service, travelers will enjoy gourmet dining, luxury accommodations, and unparalleled hospitality throughout the journey. **Deposits as low as \$500 per cabin**, and bookings are already open, with spaces expected to sell out quickly. Pricing is MUCH CHEAPER than online. This is the time to try this ALL INCLUSIVE (INCLUDING SHORE EXCURSIONS) LUXURY CRUISE.

We are honored to collaborate with Lexie and Aisha of The Queer Nomads to create a truly unique and inclusive experience for the LGBTQIA+ community. Regent Seven Seas' Grandeur provides the perfect backdrop for a journey that celebrates diversity, connection, and the beauty of travel. Similarly, Lexie and Aisha Shaibu-Lenoir emphasized the importance of creating safe and joyful spaces for LGBTQ+ travelers, where they can celebrate their identities and forge lasting connections. Don't miss this opportunity to sail in style, embrace new adventures, and celebrate love and inclusivity. Visit theconnectedtraveler.com to secure your spot today!



A Grand Journey from Egypt's Secrets to Mediterranean & Aegean Adventures



Egypt - March 18-25, 2027

Embark on an unforgettable journey aboard Explora II with Explora Journeys, where all-inclusive luxury meets immersive discovery on a stunning itinerary from Luxor, Egypt to Athens, Greece. This voyage offers the perfect balance of ancient wonders, cultural exploration, and indulgent relaxation—all from the comfort of one of the most elegant ships at sea. Your journey begins in Luxor, home to the majestic temples of Karnak and the Valley of the Kings, then continues to the tranquil port of Ain Sokhna, gateway to the Red Sea and the legendary Pyramids of Giza. **Pricing starts at just \$3,044.50 per person, based on double occupancy., even better it has a reduced Solo Supplement.** You can also check out the article I wrote about it at <https://theconnectedtraveler.com/travel-guide/sailing-in-the-wake-of-the-ancient-wonders>.

Sail through the iconic Suez Canal before visiting Rhodes, where medieval streets and sun-drenched beaches await. Then, head to Kuşadası, your access point to the extraordinary ruins of Ephesus—one of the most well-preserved ancient cities in the world. The voyage concludes in Athens, Greece, where the Parthenon rises above a city rich in history and modern charm. Onboard Explora II, enjoy spacious suites, curated dining experiences, premium beverages, gratuities, and access to wellness and enrichment programs—all included. This is more than a cruise—it's a luxurious cultural odyssey unlike any other.



Japan Intensive: Kyoto, Hiroshima & Busan



Japan Intensive-April 22-May 3, 2027

Set sail on an unforgettable 14-night journey through the Land of the Rising Sun aboard the Azamara Pursuit, a boutique-style ship offering a luxurious and intimate cruising experience for just under 700 guests. With its smaller size, Azamara Pursuit accesses ports that larger ships cannot, allowing you to explore both iconic cities and off-the-beaten-path treasures. This Japan Intensive Cruise features extended stays and overnights in vibrant ports such as Tokyo, Kobe, and Hiroshima—giving you the time to truly immerse yourself in Japan’s rich culture, world-renowned cuisine, and captivating history. **Pricing starts at \$4,599 per person, based on double occupancy.**

Your voyage includes signature Azamara experiences designed to elevate your journey. One standout is the chic and festive “Dress in White Night,” where guests celebrate under the stars in elegant white attire. You'll also enjoy an AzAmazing Evening—an exclusive, complimentary cultural event created just for Azamara guests, such as a traditional Japanese performance or private after-hours museum tour. From the ship’s exceptional personalized service to curated shore excursions and enriching onboard moments, this cruise is the ultimate way to experience Japan in comfort, style, and depth.

