

A photograph of a couple on a white catamaran at sunset. The man is standing and looking out at the sea, while the woman is sitting on the edge of the boat, pointing towards the horizon. The sky is filled with soft, golden light from the setting sun, and the water is dark with gentle ripples. The boat's mast and rigging are visible on the left side of the frame.

Sail Away!

There's something about being on a boat—any kind of boat, from a giant cruise liner to a humble dinghy—that makes a person feel free, adventurous, ready to explore. Here, we've compiled a veritable fleet of options for taking to the high seas (and low-lying rivers) this year.

Help Save the Amazon by Taking a Canoe Tour in Peru

The Amazon rainforest is home to an estimated 10 percent of the world's known species, and it's a major player in global climate regulation—yet, each day, more of it is destroyed. Now, fit travelers can do something to help: join a canoe expedition through the Peruvian Amazon. Combining adventure travel with sustainable tourism, **Amazon Canoe Challenge Expeditions** leads immersive Manu Canoe & Culture itineraries that invite a deep connection with the rainforest through homestays with Indigenous communities.

Each day promises an adventure on this journey along the edge of Manú National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and biodiversity hot spot. The trip begins with a stay at Manu Biological Station, a research facility located at the border of the Andes and the Amazon

that offers eco-friendly stays for nature-focused travelers. From there, the canoe voyage continues via the Alto Madre de Dios River toward Shintuya Hot Springs, a rustic, family-built inn with spa-like thermal pools, where guests can get fireside history lessons. The next portion brings travelers to Albergue Pankotsi Shipetiari, an eye-catching eco-lodge run by the Machiguenga community that offers birding, archery, and guided walks.

Combining a daily paddle of 18 to 25 miles with adventure activities and cultural exchange, the expedition offers a truly immersive view of life in the rainforest. Better still, the tourism dollars brought to the region support the locals who are leading the charge to protect the Amazon, and in turn help preserve our planet's greatest natural resource. —RACHEL RUDWELL



Padding in Peru with Amazon Canoe Challenge Expeditions

The Windstar Cruises all-suite yacht *Star Breeze*



See the Marquesas on a New Polynesian Itinerary

Windstar Cruises' newly renovated all-suite yacht, *Star Breeze*, is going where few have gone before: the Marquesas Islands, one of the most beautiful and remote archipelagos in the world.

The new 14-day itinerary, which launches in July, takes travelers to the island chain, some 900 miles northeast of Tahiti, where they can take in volcanic peaks, black-sand beaches, ancient cultural sites, and more. The 312-passenger *Star Breeze* will drop anchor at Fatu Hiva, one of the archipelago's

six inhabited islands, which, until this year, could only be reached on the cargo cruise ship *Aranui*. As a guest on *Star Breeze*, you can expect a welcome from local villagers, musicians, and dancers; bird-watching and hiking excursions led by local guides; and an experience in which you can sit side-by-side with Marquesans making *tapa*, a cloth crafted from the bark of banyan, breadfruit, and mulberry trees.

For a touch of adventure, kick up some dirt on a 4x4 tour of Nuku Hiva,

the largest of the Marquesas. Stops include archaeological sites dating back to 1000 CE, village churches such as the picturesque Église des Sacrés-Coeurs, and viewpoints of hidden beaches and crystalline blue water.

Traveling away from the Marquesas, you'll return to the Society Islands—and since *Star Breeze* is one of the few vessels with permission to sail to Bora Bora, you'll gaze up at Mount Otemanu and be glad you ventured off the beaten path. —REBECCA DEURLEIN

Go on a Cruise for Non-Cruisers

Do you hate standing on buffet lines and being herded around by flag-toting guides? So do the minds behind **Explora Journeys**, a new cruise brand from Geneva-based MSC Group. Launched last August, the company has big ambitions to win over non-cruisers, looking to luxury hotel brands like Belmond and Ritz-Carlton for inspiration. For starters, aboard *Explora 1*—the first ship in the fleet—you won't find any buffets. Instead, there's a collection of 18 food and beverage outlets, including the pan-Asian restaurant *Sakura* and a European-style steak house, *Marble & Co*. The dining is just one thing that sets *Explora Journeys* apart from the competition. All 461 suites, penthouses, and residences onboard are oceanfront, with floor-to-ceiling windows and private terraces, so you can gaze at the Mediterranean, Caribbean, or Arabian Sea from the privacy of your room. Or, better yet, post up on a daybed by one of the three outdoor pools; more than a third of the nearly 180,000 square feet of public space is outdoors. Shore excursions range from small group tours to once-in-a-lifetime experiences—say, dinner cooked by a famous chef on a private island—with no flag-toting guides in sight.

—LAURA ITZKOWITZ





One of The Moorings' catamarans off the coast of St. Lucia

Charter a Sailboat in St. Lucia

There are cruises ... and then there's piloting your own sailboat around the southern Caribbean, exploring the luscious white beaches and zephyr winds that make St. Lucia a sailing mecca. With 50 years' experience and some of the newest vessels at sea, **The Moorings** provides luxury sail-it-yourself experiences (not only in St. Lucia, but in many locations around the world) that are

about as close to your bog-standard "charter" (a day-trip on a cuddy, beer-cooler optional) as a five-star terrace suite is to a roadside motel. Ranging in style from the classic monohull sailboat to the power catamaran, each yacht is functionally its own boutique hotel that you can sail to a range of gorgeous seaside spots. Better still, the "bareboat" option allows the more

confident sailor to serve as skipper themselves, navigating to whichever destinations they can reach in a five-day to two-week cruise. Even the easier options—"skipped" by a designated Moorings pro, or "crewed" by a captain and chef team—guarantee a free-wheeling adventure, with breezes, sunsets, and views you can't get on dry land. —FINN RIVERS

Angle for the Giants of the Deep in the Bahamas

There's a bracing hunter's ethic to the mariners at **Riding Rock Resort & Marina**, whose guests can grapple with deep-water heavyweights—blue marlin, wahoo, tuna—while embracing a catch-and-release model that helps sustain the sport fishing that the wild region of the Bahamas around San Salvador Island is known for. Charter the 28-foot *Odyssey III* for either a full or half day, and the crew will provide tackle, bait, water, and, with advance notice, a meal and snacks. They will not, however, let you spearfish within 200 yards of an island, take coral or sea fans home, or use a spear, fish trap, or net without authorization. The guidelines suggest a kind of Zen-warrior discipline: "A person shall fish by the traditional method of angling with a hook or lure attached to a line held in the hand or attached to a pole, rod, or reel." —FINN RIVERS



Adam Rohmann (catamaran); courtesy of Riding Rock Resort & Marina (marlin)



Learn About the Great Lakes on a Scientific Expedition

Befitting its name, **Viking** boldly began expedition cruising with the 2022 launches of its vessels *Viking Octantis* and *Viking Polaris*. When these sister ships aren't exploring Antarctica, they're offering educational adventures closer to home, on the Great Lakes. "From a scientific perspective, the Great Lakes are a globally important ecosystem," says Dr. Damon Stanwell-Smith, Viking's head of science and sustainability. "This region is not only the world's largest liquid freshwater system by area, it is also home to more than 3,500 plant and animal species, including many that are only found in the Great Lakes."

Science nerds will feel at home on these floating laboratories—the first civilian ships to be designated official NOAA/National Weather Service weather balloon stations—as they can engage in what Stanwell-Smith calls "real, meaningful science": collecting samples on a Zodiac, using the ships' high-tech instruments, helping launch data-gathering sail-drones, and more.

Surprises abound, too: On a recent night-crossing between the U.S. and Canada, a flock of tiny bats hitched a ride on the deck of the ship. It was, Stanwell-Smith says, "a rare, ephemeral wildlife observation, interpreted enthusiastically by the resident specialist." —NICHOLAS DERENZO



A whale breaches off the coast of Baja California Sur

Courtesy of Viking (Great Lakes); courtesy of Paradero Todos Santos (whale)

Meet Mexico's Marine Life on an Ocean Safari

When **Paradero Todos Santos** opened in Baja California Sur in 2021, the resort represented a calming oasis away from the party animals in Cabo San Lucas. Now, from mid-November through March, hotel guests can commune with a very different wild bunch—the marine kind—with an Ocean Safari. The boat tour zips along the Pacific coastline in search of manta rays, sea lions, and migratory humpback and gray whales, which breed and calve here. "Whales are the reason we have tourism in Baja," says guide Hernando Torres. "This is considered the Mexican last frontier. It's like the Alaska

of Mexico." (Much of the Baja California Peninsula is federally protected, as are the hundreds of islands around it.) On the safari, you'll ride in a *panga* (skiff), piloted by a local fisherman, to get up close and personal with marine animals. You might find yourself bobbing alongside pelicans, watching flying fish glide over the water, or listening to humpbacks perform their hauntingly beautiful songs. If you want to spend more time on the water, book a multiday sailing experience on Paradero's luxury catamaran, which includes a private chef and bartender. —NICHOLAS DERENZO



Take an Active Cruise Through France

If you're an active traveler, you likely don't consider yourself a cruise person—but "active cruises," like the Seine River Cruise Bike Tour from **Backroads**, might change your mind. The concept is identical to Backroads' hotel-based trips, with great guides, van support, and cultural and culinary stops all the way from Paris to the English Channel—only, instead of changing hotels, you have to unpack just once, in your onboard cabin.

River cruise line AmaWaterways, Backroads' partner in Europe (itineraries are also available in further-flung locations), focuses on local specialties, and the ship does something no hotel can: move during the night. On

day one, you'll pedal from the City of Lights to the Palace of Versailles, then board the ship and celebrate your departure with Champagne and dinner. The next morning, you'll wake up in Normandy, ready to ride again.

The cruise affords flexibility—for example, you can schedule a short visit to the Normandy American Cemetery and Omaha Beach, followed by an afternoon bike ride, or do a more immersive World War II tour with an AmaWaterways guide. Ultimately, non-cruisers will love combining the daily rides with the onboard amenities. By the end of the journey, you might even call yourself a cruise person.

—LARRY OLMSTED

Make Your Vacation Home on a Houseboat

There are navigable canals and rivers all over the U.K., continental Europe, and Canada. By chartering a houseboat from **Le Boat**, you can turn these waterways into your own private, backdoor access to quaint villages, wild forests, and scenic vineyards. Imagine waking up on the Lot River in the south of France and drinking your coffee on deck, with a view of the impossibly perfect stone houses of Saint-Cirq-Lapopie, then embarking on an excursion—walking a towpath cut into a steep limestone cliff? A mountain bike ride? Wine tasting? Then board your houseboat once more to motor your way downstream (no captain's license required). There's chilled white wine from a local vineyard in the galley, and you can drop a line in the water in the evening to see if you can snag a carp. You will hit no traffic and miss no trains, simply settling into one cozy cabin with a new view every day. It's just you, your traveling crew, the red kites and river otters, the church lights in the distance, and everything lovely on Earth.

—RAMONA AUSUBEL

Lee Michaux (bikes); courtesy of Le Boat/photo by Stuart Pearce (Burgundy)



Hawaiian Sails' 35-foot sailing canoe, *Hahalualele*



Navigate Like the Ancient Explorers on a Hawaiian Sailing Canoe

More than a millennium ago, Polynesians arrived in Hawaii aboard double-hulled sailing canoes, navigating the Pacific Ocean by observing the stars, wind, waves, and wildlife for weeks on end. Today, visitors can find traces of that experience on several Hawaiian islands, including the Island of Hawai'i, where **Hawaiian Sails** offers 90-minute excursions along the Kohala Coast.

Mahealani and Koka Gionson bought their 35-foot-long sailing canoe, *Hahalualele* ("flying manta ray"), in 2016 and spent a year restoring its koa panels and traditional rope lashings (with the help of their five children and extended family). On the sailing

trips, Koka serves as captain and storyteller, noting landmarks such as Pu'ukohola Heiau, a massive stone temple built at King Kamehameha's behest, and the mansion of a modern titan, Salesforce CEO Marc Benioff.

January and February are peak months to spot humpback whales migrating from Alaska. Mahealani recalls one memorable sighting near Hapuna Beach: "A baby had just been born, so there was afterbirth in the water, along with the newborn, mama, and three escorts," she says. "We ended up getting really amazing videos, and our guests invited us to dinner the next night because they wanted to share their pictures." —JEANNE COOPER

LEARN TO SAIL AT THESE THREE SCHOOLS



Blue Water Sailing School

St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

"The U.S. Virgin Islands are one of the nicest places in the world to sail, because it's a tropical setting, winds are very consistent, and it's just very beautiful," says David Pyle of Blue Water Sailing School in St. Thomas. During the school's six-night/seven-day Bareboat Monohull Skipper Courses (\$3,695 per person), you can get your American Sailing Association (ASA) certification.

The courses are rigorous, Pyle says, but once you're moored in a pretty bay for the evening, there are beach bars beckoning you to relax.

Offshore Sailing School

St. Petersburg, Florida

"We like to say we can take you from the couch to the captain's chair in a week," says Beth Oliver of Offshore Sailing School. The eight-night Fast Track to Cruising course (starting at \$5,845 per person) starts with three nights in a hotel in St. Petersburg's walkable downtown, while you hone your skills on a 26-foot sailboat during the day; then you move to a larger yacht for the remaining five nights. By the end of the course, you will have earned three U.S. Sailing certifications, allowing you to skipper a yacht up to 50 feet long.

Nautilus Sailing

Baja California Sur, Mexico

With Nautilus Sailing, you can earn ASA certification by taking a weeklong course (starting at \$7,175 per person) on the Sea of Cortez, which Jacques Cousteau once called the "world's aquarium." Stops to eat fish tacos ashore are woven into an itinerary that includes circumnavigating islands under sail and charting a course for remote beaches. "Some of the highlights for many of our students are snorkeling with playful sea lions, learning to make fresh ceviche in a fisherman's hut, or hiking through an ancient cactus forest," says lead instructor Tim Geisler. —TERRY WARD