

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

River cruising attracts affluents with intimacy and opulence

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American Queen Steamboat Company's new vessel American Duchess. Image credit: American Queen Steamboat Company

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

American Queen Steamboat Company is looking to harness the power of personalization and intimacy that inland river cruising entails to attract affluent travelers.

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With much fewer passengers and a high-end experience, river cruising is growing in popularity with affluent consumers. American Queen Steamboat looks to capitalize on this with a focus on history, upscale local cuisine and a bevy of amenities.

"River Cruises are a convenient and relaxed form of travel with all of the benefits of inclusive big ship ocean cruising, but with fewer passengers creating a more personalized, intimate vacation experience," said Ted Sykes, president and chief operating officer of [American Queen Steamboat Company](#), Memphis, TN.

"The unique blend of stunning landscapes and profound history, acclaimed regional cuisine prepared with locally sourced ingredients, multiple dining venues, exceptional entertainment and the adventure of exploring riverside port cities is just a sampling of the many elements fueling the strong appeal of river cruising," he said.

Affluents and river cruising

American Queen Steamboat has just named daughter of company chairman John Waggoner Marissa Applegate as the "Godmother" of its all-suite riverboat American Duchess.

The riverboat company is ushering in overnight stays in port with American Duchess as it inaugurates its godmother. The new riverboat will begin its 23-day inaugural voyage on the Mississippi River.



American Queen Steamboat appeals to affluent travelers. Image credit: American Queen Steamboat Company

Fare for the journey will start at \$2,999 per person. The cruise will end in Red Wing, Minnesota but will make various stops along the way.

Staying aboard the American Duchess includes bottled water and soft drinks, wine and beer at diner and complimentary shore adventures in each port.

American Queen Steamboat is also in ownership and operation of two other river vessels, the American Queen and the American Empress. American Queen is known as the largest riverboat in the world, with the six-deck-high vessel spanning the size of a football field on the water.



American Queen Steamboat appeals to affluent travelers. Image credit: American Queen Steamboat Company

The American Duchess has joined the team this month, and American Empress began operation in 2014 serving the Pacific Northwest.

Insight on river cruising

Luxury travel bookings are seeing a hefty bounce back for 2017, with more than 81 percent of high-end travel agents claiming their bookings for this year were higher or on par with 2016, according to Travel Leaders Group.

The 2017 Luxury Travel Trends report shows that not just American river cruising is growing but also European river cruises are leading the way in terms of destinations from affluent consumers. Vacations to Italy and Cuba are also increasingly strong, which is mirrored by a common fear of the Trump presidency seeing to the embargo on Cuba being reinstated ([see more](#)).

Similar to American Steamboat but in Asia on the sea, Dream Cruises has created a VIP experience for travelers with a Dream Palace concept.

Guests who stay in the newly opened Dream Palace Suite and Garden Penthouses are offered a first-class experience in an exclusive environment that includes a pool, spa, gym and dining options separate from the rest of the ship. Now available on the Genting Dream vessel, this luxury ship within a ship option will also roll out on the soon to launch World Dream ([see more](#)).

"American Queen Steamboat Company river cruises provide the ideal vacation experience for those seeking an inclusive river cruising experience with all of the fluff and none of the hassles," Mr. Sykes said.

"When you choose a river cruise aboard the American Queen, American Duchess or the American Empress, you will

experience an abundance of luxurious amenities along with the signature benefits of pre-cruise deluxe hotel stays, remarkable Hop-On Hop-Off shore excursions in each port, fabulous dining venues with exceptional cuisine, nightly entertainment and dancing, wine and beer with dinner, 24-hour room service, the warm hospitality of an all-American crew and so much more," he said.

"Whether you seek to explore inviting destinations of the Heartland or wish to embrace breathtaking views of the great Pacific Northwest, prepare for an unforgettable journey from the indescribable perspective of the river. Authentic America is out there just waiting to be discovered and it is unlike anything you have ever experienced before."

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