

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Windstar campaign shows bigger is not always better

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Windstar employees are sharing how smaller ships still have a large payoff for guests. Image credit: Windstar

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Small ship luxury cruise line Windstar Cruises is showcasing its intimate and engaging voyages by featuring its own employees.

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While less attention-grabbing than larger ships that resemble floating cities, small-scale cruise ships afford travelers several benefits. As luxury cruise lines continue to emphasize their unique experiences and amenities, more affluent travelers are drawn to these vacations.

"While all of the Windstar ships have the amenities of a luxury cruise ship, we chose to focus on what people tend to remember the most about their travels: the people," said Jessica Chiang, director of marketing communications at **Windstar Cruises**. "Anyone can build new ships with bells and whistles, but not everyone can say that they have a dedicated crew that goes out of their way to delight their guests."

Small ship adventures

Windstar's new video series examines the brand's ships, culture and culinary options from the perspective of ship employees. The employees featured include a captain, chef and destination manager.

"None of the narration was scripted," Ms. Chiang said. "We wanted to present an authentic view of what it is like to sail on Windstar."

Since Windstar's ships are shallow draft vessels, they are able to sail down rivers, bays and port cities where larger cruises cannot. These smaller destinations often offer travelers more authentic experiences since they are less consumed by the tourism industry.

Windstar Cruises enlists employees as brand advocates in its new series

Since no Windstar ship has more than 310 guests, travelers are more likely to build relationships with each other as well as staff members.

The cruise line encourages these connections, and has an "open bridge" policy so guests can learn more about

sailing directly from a captain. Since the voyages are more intimate, employees reiterate that they are often on a first-name basis with guests and able to provide better service.



The Windstar fleet is made of six small ships. Image credit: Windstar

Windstar's partnership with the James Beard Foundation gives the cruise line an advantage in reaching affluent travelers who prioritize trying new cuisines.

The cruise line created the campaign partly to assist travel agents and suppliers market the Windstar experience. As part of its Star Promise initiative aimed at helping agents promote its cruises, the brand is ensuring these consultants have sharable digital content.

Cruise competition

As cruises regain their popularity, luxury brands are emphasizing what sets them apart from more mass-market options.

Cruise line Cunard used a similar tactic as Windstar for its most recent campaign.

Cunard's "The Transatlantic Crossing" film features a variety of passengers, from frequent travelers to first-timers. By featuring real-life passengers, Cunard is sharing its offerings through more trustworthy influencers ([see story](#)).

Recently, Crystal Cruises capitalized on the popularity of experiential travel with a special culinary immersion program at sea. Earlier this summer, the "Baltic Bliss" voyage sailed from Stockholm to London with special menus curated by acclaimed chef Nobu Matsuhisa along with a series of other activities ([see story](#)).

"[Our] campaign reflects the Windstar brand because it focuses on the different aspects throughout the videos on what makes Windstar 180 degrees from ordinary," Ms. Chiang said. "A Windstar ship is a very special way to travel to create lifelong, unforgettable memories, and we wanted to showcase that through our videos in this campaign."