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## Cruise Watch: Fathom & Ponant Inaugurate U.S.-Cuba; CroisiEurope Boat To Ply African Rivers



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*I travel the world: smart, luxe, connected – and often.*



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Cruising continues to focus on new itineraries around the world, and Cuba and African countries are now among the most sought-after global destinations to be reached by water, whether oceans or rivers. Three examples:

Carnival's *Fathom* — the social-impact line — sailed into Havana with its 704-passenger ship *Adonia* in early May, the first time in over 50 years that a U.S. cruise line has sailed from the U.S. to Cuba. And for the first time in decades, Cuban-born cruise passengers were able to travel to or from Cuba.



*Cubans watch as the first U.S.-to-Cuba cruise ship to arrive in the island nation in decades glides into the port of Havana on May 2, 2016, marking a new milestone in the rapprochement between Washington and Havana. (Photo: Adalberto Roque/AFP/Getty Images)*

Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba are the three destinations on *Fathom's* exclusive seven-night Cuban voyages sailing to Cuba every other week. Onboard experiences include Cuban- and Caribbean-inspired food and films, music and dancing. Onboard programming ranges from an orientation of Cuba's history, customs and culture, to geographic-inspired entertainment, to casual and fun personal enrichment activities, along with conversational Spanish lessons.

The inaugural voyage had some programming and logistical glitches, and even some cases of gastrointestinal illness. But the itinerary remains heavily booked, with the assumption that the snafus will smooth out. In any case, Cuba is worth the trip as soon as possible, no matter how you go.



*French luxury yacht "Le Ponant" (AP Photo)*

Ponant, the only French-flagged cruise line, with destination-focused itineraries to remote and exotic destinations, is extending its yacht-style cruises to offer Americans the chance to explore Cuba on "People-to-People Cultural Exchange" cruises in 2017. These voyages will offer immersive itineraries from 7 and 8 nights on Le Ponant, the sailing yacht hosting only 64-guests in a highly-experiential, authentic manner.

Touring Cuba aboard a ship like Le Ponant means casual elegance with French-inspired cuisine, the convenience of unpacking just once, the sophistication of shipboard accommodations and traveling with a small group of like-minded travelers. And you don't have to worry about finding scarce lodging and crowded restaurants.

Cuba's historic cities offer some of the hemisphere's finest colonial architecture and cays to be visited are close to some of the best-preserved reefs in the world. Local experts will guide encounters with Cuban citizens, artists, professionals, and civic leaders.

"Ponant has been introducing Europeans to Cuba in the past and we are now delighted to offer Americans this enriching opportunity from a most comfortable setting aboard a cruise on Le Ponant," noted Navin Sawhney, Chief Executive Officer, Americas.

The only French-flagged cruise line and leader in polar expeditions, Ponant, was founded in 1988 by Jean-Emmanuel Sauvée and a dozen Merchant Navy officers. It's one of the newest fleets of small luxury ships, and in October 2015 was acquired by Artemis Holding Company of the Pinault family, strengthening the brand's competitive advantage globally.

Remember the classic movie “The African Queen” with Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn? It featured a hulk of a river boat, a far cry from what is coming soon to that still mainly unspoiled region. European river cruise line [CroisiEurope](#) announced plans to add a new riverboat and river cruise itinerary next year in a first-time destination for the company: Africa. Europe’s longest running river cruise line, celebrating 40 years this year, will be welcoming the ship on Africa’s Chobe and Zambezi Rivers.

The striking vessel offers luxurious accommodations for up to 16 passengers in eight exterior-facing deluxe suites with balconies; a restaurant with a panoramic view, a lounge bar and a rooftop patio with pool and chaise lounges.

Six-day, five-night cruise itineraries will sail along the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers, filled with hippos, and seabirds and attracting elephants and other African land animals. Following the cruise, guests will enjoy a four-day, three-night stay in 5-star lodge accommodations, owned by CroisiEurope, with safaris and a day at Victoria Falls.