



THE INTELLIGENT TRAVELER CRUISE EDITION

## Choose a Cruise Line with Strong Local Ties

Part of the joy of cruising is interacting with the crew. When they hail from the destination you're visiting, the experience can be even more rewarding. **BY FRAN GOLDEN**

PLENTY OF SMALL SHIPS navigate the narrow fjords that surround the towering glaciers of Alaska, but only **Alaskan Dream Cruises** ([alaskandreamcruises.com](http://alaskandreamcruises.com); Signature series trips from \$3,795 per person) visit the isolated villages of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian tribes along the coast. Owned and operated by the Allen family, whose members are descended from the Tlingits of Sheet'ka Kwáan, the Sitka-based company infuses these journeys with its own heritage, not least with its choice of staff. Some native guides might perform traditional dances, while others tell the stories behind intricate

▲ An excursion among the glaciers with the Tlingit-owned Alaskan Dream Cruises.

totem poles. The result is that cruisers gain a deeper understanding of the places they visit, while also directly supporting the local economy.

As travelers seek to explore the world more responsibly, there's been a swell of support for cruise operators like Alaskan Dream Cruises, whose staffs—and sometimes owners—come from the sailing region. Halfway across the world on the Nile, **Nour El Nil** ([nourelnil.com](http://nourelnil.com); five-night trips from \$1,252 per person) staffs its ships with all-Egyptian crews, including several family members of one of the three owners, an Egyptian boat maker. A cruise aboard one of the company's modern-day dahabeas—classic wind-powered barges that ferry no more than 20 passengers at a time—also exposes guests to life along the river. All meals are made with ingredients procured daily from farmers and fishermen along the route between Esna and Aswan.

On its cruises to the remote High Arctic and through the Northwest Passage on the 198-passenger *Ocean Endeavour*, the family-owned company **Adventure Canada** ([adventurecanada.com](http://adventurecanada.com); 17-day cruises from \$9,995 per person) goes beyond fly-by visits to Inuit and First Nations communities. At any given time, guests will find five to seven Inuit on board—some elders, some younger generations—who generously share their own perspectives on the places you're visiting.

In the Ecuadoran Amazon, Quito-based **Anakonda Amazon Cruises** ([anakondaamazoncruises.com](http://anakondaamazoncruises.com); three-night cruises from \$1,966 per person in 2019, from \$2,070 in 2020) draws more than half of the crew for its intimate 28- and 56-passenger river ships from 15 local communities on the Napo River. On land, guests meet with Cofan and Secoya communities and spend quality time with Kichwa women, who demonstrate how they cultivate their gardens. On some cruises, passengers spend time with local families in their homes.

**Lindblad Expeditions—National Geographic** ([expeditions.com](http://expeditions.com); six-day whale-watching cruises from \$3,740 per person), which opened up remote destinations like the Galápagos and Antarctica to leisure travelers in the 1960s, is now introducing guests to a group of fishermen from the Mexican villages of Lopez Mateos and Puerto Chale. The men's whale-whispering skills bring groups within arm's reach of the California gray whales that migrate along the Baja Peninsula each winter. On most sailings, Lindblad's international crew also brings the fishermen and their families onboard one night to mingle with guests over dinner and mariachi music. ●

# 34.3%

Increase in the global popularity of cruising in the past five years.

SOURCE: FLORIDA-CARIBBIAN CRUISE ASSOCIATION