

LUXURY TRAVEL ADVISOR

South America Cruising

Often overlooked and underrated, a South America cruise presents one of the most fascinating itineraries. Few cruise destinations offer such variety. There are sophisticated, cosmopolitan cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Valparaiso, the renowned beaches of Brazil and the natural wonders of Patagonia, the Chilean fjords and the Strait of Magellan. With the summer season approaching quickly, now is the time to suggest to your clients a luxury cruise to South America.

Seabourn's first South America cruise of the season departs January 4, 2010, from Fort Lauderdale aboard Seabourn Spirit. The 19-day "Treasures of the Inca Coast" itinerary makes three stops in Chile: Arica, Iquique and Santiago, where the cruise ends. It also visits Lima and Paracas Bay in Peru, along with Puerto Moin, Costa Rica and Guayaquil, Ecuador. Tip: One of the better shore excursions in Peru is a visit to the pre-Columbian temple of Pachacamac, which pre-dates the Incas by approximately 2,000 years.



Those who are truly committed to seeing all of South America should consider Regent Seven Seas Cruises' 65-day itinerary roundtrip from Fort Lauderdale. The voyage, which departs January 10, 2010, on Seven Seas Mariner, does a full circuit of South America. This includes rounding Cape Horn, the southernmost headland of the Tierra del Fuego archipelago of southern Chile, which is also considered the southernmost point of South America. The itinerary is as extensive as it is long and includes nine calls in Brazil alone between February 22 and March 7. There are also nine different stops in Chile, including Laguna San Rafael, where the much talked-about San Rafael Lagoon awaits. This is an arc-shaped lake into which glacial ice falls nearly every day.

Crystal Cruises has six voyages in and around South America in 2009 and 2010. Its season kicks off November 22 with a 13-day food-and-wine-themed cruise aboard Crystal Symphony. The cruise, from Miami to Manaus, first visits Caribbean ports before making three stops in Brazil.

There are two segments of Crystal Serenity's world cruise that travel through South America. The first leg, from Miami, departs January 11, 2010, with an overnight in Rio de Janeiro. On January 26, the cruise continues from Rio de Janeiro to Montevideo, Uruguay and Buenos Aires, Argentina, before a weeklong trans-Atlantic voyage to Cape Town, South Africa.

Silversea kicks off its South America season in October with cruises aboard Silver Cloud (Silver Whisper will operate South American voyages beginning October 2010). The line offers a combination of eight-, 14-, 15- and 16-day cruises. The 16-day Santiago-to-Buenos Aires cruise, which departs December 20, immediately grabbed our attention. The itinerary includes cruising the Chilean fjords and around Cape

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Horn, as well as an overnight stop in Punta Arenas, Chile, where spending an afternoon in and around Plaza de Armas is a must. The square is the hub of the city and is surrounded by a number of architecturally important buildings from the turn of the last century.

For those seeking an adventurous South America experience, Galapagos Explorer offers a balance between sustainable tourism, adventure and wildlife and geology discoveries. The line offers a range of sailings, from three- to seven-nights long, throughout the year across the Galapagos Islands. The Galapagos Explorer II is a ship built explicitly for ocean expeditions but offers many of the same comforts luxury travelers have come to rely on, such as a massage room and a solarium. Islands are visited twice a day and a naturalist guides each group.

Six Keys to Selling a Great Luxury South America Cruise

Nancie Svensen, an Independent Affiliate of America's Vacation Center, offers six keys that can open a world of wonderful South America cruise experiences for your luxury clients.

1. Know your geography. Have a map handy to reference countries, ports of call, and major destinations such as the Chilean fjords, Patagonia, Ushuaia, the Falkland Islands, the Sub-Antarctic region and Antarctica. Also, research cruise lines offering pre- or post-cruise extensions to well-known sites such as Machu Picchu or Iguazu Falls.
2. Know current visa requirements.
3. Help your clients prioritize. If customers have limited time, find out their priorities and help scale down the itinerary to match their time frame.
4. Find what is especially important to your client. For example, to a yachtsman, it may be imperative to round Cape Horn instead of going through the canals north of the cape.
5. Understand the significance of Antarctica. For many luxury clients, this may be their seventh continent, capping a quest to step foot on every continent in the world, and they will want to go onshore. Be careful, many itineraries state "See..." meaning they just sail closely by.
6. Give insider suggestions. Many South America cruises offer enrichment programs featuring renowned scientists, explorers and other experts enabling guests to learn more about the regions they are visiting. If your client is an avid golfer, tell them Ushuaia boasts the southernmost golf course in the Americas. And, if it's available, recommend the land side of the ship for your client's cabin.