

Travel Market Report's Outlook on River Cruise Outlook 2024



Grow Your *Business* on the Rivers





Encourage your clients to embark on a journey through Europe, Asia, Africa or South America, curated by the river cruise line with the most included experiences — unrivaled on the rivers.



Save your clients up to 20% on select sailings when they reserve by December 31, 2024.



SCAN FOR OFFERS



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Reader,

Travel advisors who have yet to fully embrace river cruising are missing a significant opportunity. River cruises have evolved beyond being a niche product in the North American market—nearly nine out of 10 advisors now sell river cruises, largely due to the distinctive itineraries that take guests through destinations rather than just to them.

This is exactly what consumers are seeking—more time immersed in destinations, with the convenience of being close to city centers—and an experience that only river cruising can offer.

According to our latest Outlook on River Cruise, the potential for advisors is clear. The river cruise segment provides an opportunity to sell higher-priced vacations to clients who are willing to invest in premium experiences. In fact, six out of 10 advisors report that their river cruise clients are spending more than others, with the average per-person, per-day spend increasing from \$796 in 2023 to \$931 today.

With this momentum, we are excited to present this Outlook. We encourage you to leverage the facts, figures, and trends within these pages—whether you're looking to deepen your commitment to the river cruise market or take your first steps into this growing segment.

Now is the time to seize the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Daniel McCarthy
Editor-in-chief

2024

← KEY FINDINGS ↓

- ★ Nearly nine out of 10 advisors said that they sell river cruises.
- ★ Three in 10 U.S. advisors reported that their clients take river cruises lasting longer than one week. In Canada, the percentage is higher, with four in 10 advisors stating that their clients take river cruises lasting more than a week.
- ★ 99% of advisors said that their clients prefer a European river vacation. 21% of advisors said that their clients would choose river cruise vacations in the U.S.
- ★ In Europe, Germany (83%), France (74%) and the Netherlands (61%) are the most selling river cruise destinations. Portugal and Spain are gaining in popularity said four out of 10 advisors.
- ★ May (56%) and September (62%) are the most popular seasons for river cruising.
- ★ Eight out of 10 advisors said that having fewer people on board was one of the top reasons why clients chose river cruises. Ease of access to city centers was another reason, said 80% of the advisors.
- ★ 84% of the advisors said that their clients are well travelled. One out of two advisors said that their clients preferred all-inclusive products.
- ★ Eight out of 10 advisors said that their clients opted for river cruises based on the itineraries and destination of the cruise and to combine land vacations pre- and post- the river cruise.
- ★ Itinerary (82%), quality of food and wine (69%), and value for money (64%) were the top factors determining a client's satisfaction with a river cruise.
- ★ Nearly nine out of 10 advisors plan to sell to affinity groups in the coming year.
- ★ Pre- and post-packages (85%) and ground transfers (83%) are the most in-demand products booked, besides river cruises (89%) by river cruise clients.
- ★ Six out of 10 advisors said that their river cruise clients spent more than other clients.
- ★ The average per day per person spend has gone up from \$796 in 2023 to \$931 in the current Outlook.
- ★ Word of mouth referrals (87%) and current/past clients (79%) are still the best lead generation source in river cruise.
- ★ Text messaging (97%), emails (95%), and phone calls (95%) were the most used modes for advisors while communicating with clients. Nearly seven out of 10 advisors also conduct video calls to speak to clients.
- ★ WhatsApp (47%), Facebook Messenger (44%) and Zoom (37%) are the most used instant messaging apps.
- ★ Eight out of 10 advisors said that they want FAM trips to make higher river cruise sales. Two out of five advisors said that commissions on NCFs would also be better support.
- ★ Product training (74%) and ship inspections (64%) were the preferred training formats for advisors.
- ★ Four in five advisors expect to see a growth in sales in the coming year, three out of five advisors expect to see a double-digit growth.
- ★ One out of two advisors had more than 15 years of experience in the industry.

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INTRODUCTION



The good news is that everybody is selling river cruises. The better news is that everyone wants to go on a river cruise!

The industry, which only until a few years ago was described as niche, is set to see a robust growth with predictions being that the market in the US will rise at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18.30% through 2034.

There are many advantages to a river cruise. With smaller ships—compared to ocean cruises—the number of guests on board is limited. With the ships regularly docking at city centers, the cruise experience comes with all the pluses of a land vacation—guided tours, local markets to shop at, a glimpse of local history—with none of its disadvantages such as traffic and large crowds.

And those are the luxuries that the average river cruise client wants.

This Travel Market Report (TMR) River Cruise Outlook 2024 points to the role that advisors can play in guiding their clients towards river cruises in general and also towards the ones that specifically meet their needs. With cruise lines creating itineraries for specific groups—the solo traveler, the wine lover—this is also a call to suppliers to stay in touch with the advisors, your eyes on the ground and the ones who will be able to direct the best client your way.



METHODOLOGY

This online survey was conducted by Travel Market Report in September 2024. A total of 703 travel advisors from across the U.S. and Canada participated in the survey. Of this, 72% were from the U.S. and 28% were from Canada. The aggregated results and analysis presented in this report are based on the responses of these advisors.

Discrepancies or nuances in the analysis are highlighted, wherever applicable. The frequent comparisons drawn against the year 2024 are taken from Travel Market Report's Outlook on Trends in River Cruise 2023 and Travel Market Report's Outlook on Trends in River Cruise 2022.



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LUXURY CRUISES & TOURS

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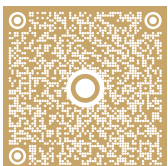


At Scenic, we redefine the river cruising experience with our truly all-inclusive, ultra-luxury offerings. Our award-winning fleet combines elegance, indulgence, and discovery as your clients sail through Europe's most iconic waterways. Whether exploring medieval castles, savoring regional cuisine, or relaxing in the comfort of their spacious suite, every aspect of your clients' journey is meticulously designed to create unforgettable memories and stories for life.

As your Partners in Travel, we recognize the invaluable contributions of travel advisors. Your expertise, and trust propel us forward, shaping the landscape of luxury travel. As we embark on new horizons, expanding our diverse fleet and elevate our offerings, your continued support remains at the core of our success.

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- **Spacious Scenic Space-Ships**
Luxurious comforts of a 5-star hotel with over 85% of suites featuring a full step-out balcony (Scenic Sun Lounge).
- **Truly All-Inclusive Ultra-Luxury**
Everything is taken care of, from gratuities and airport transfers to premium beverages and shore excursions.
- **Gourmet Dining**
Five dining options from gourmet meals featuring local cuisine highlights to casual bites, plus an onboard cooking school – Scenic Culinaire – when sailing the rivers of France.
- **Butler Service for All Suites**
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- **Exclusive Scenic Enrich Events**
Unique, handcrafted cultural experiences in iconic locations, with private access available only to Scenic guests.
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Award-winning spa and fitness center, complete with a vitality pool* and a Salt Therapy Lounge – a first for the river cruise industry.

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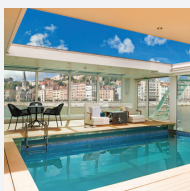
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CRUISES

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2 for 1
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+ Free Air*



At Emerald Cruises, we deliver an exceptional river cruise experience that combines comfort, innovation, and adventure. Our award-winning Star-Ships are designed to create unforgettable moments as your clients explore the heart of Europe's iconic waterways. From our **retractable pool** that transforms into a cinema by night to our diverse array of **included excursions**, we provide an all-encompassing experience like no other.

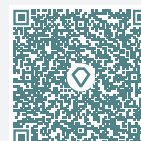
As your Partners in Travel, we recognize the invaluable contributions of travel advisors. Your expertise, and trust propel us forward, shaping the landscape of luxury travel. As we embark on new horizons, expanding our diverse fleet and elevate our offerings, your continued support remains at the core of our success.

THE EMERALD CRUISES EXPERIENCE

- ◇ **Award-Winning Star-Ships**
Elegant, spacious, and innovative.
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Savor locally inspired gourmet meals.
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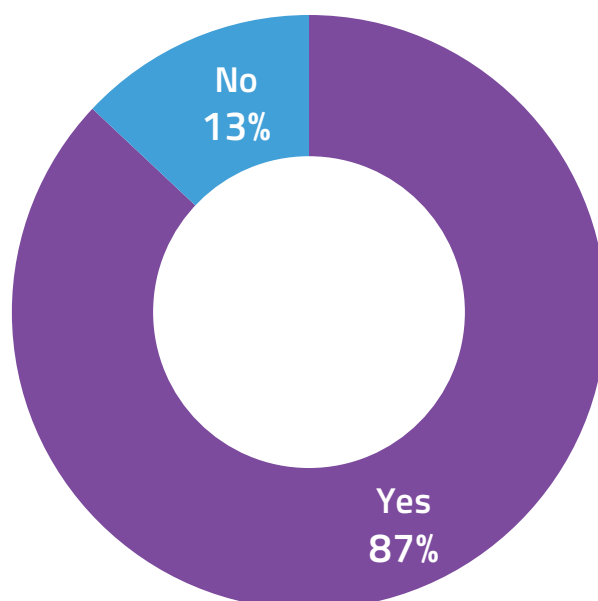
TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



There has been a lot of interest in the river cruise market since the pandemic. It has even been called the “luxurious alternative to back-packing”.¹ In fact, the river cruise market in the US is anticipated to rise at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18.30% through 2034.²

With more interest among travelers, the share of advisors selling river cruises is also growing steadily. In 2022 it was 84% and is at 87% in 2024.

DO YOU SELL RIVER CRUISES, SHARE (%)

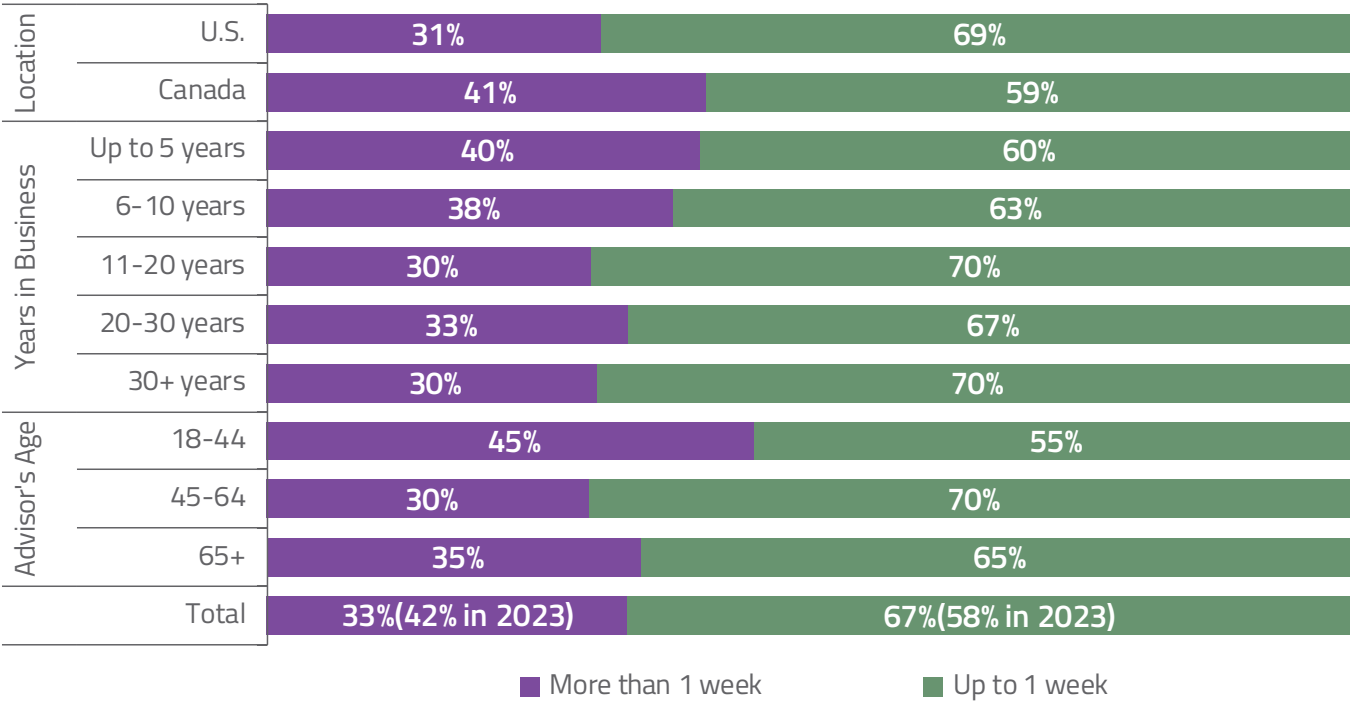


¹ https://uk.style.yahoo.com/why-luxury-grown-alternative-backpacking-112400178.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudHJhdmVsYWdlld2VzdC5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAJgWuvizjpX1rQHexY28dluXWJIRPCPK1rBSEKHVQr_kQVdkEr4QYa4ZgDR5AK6_pNK0f-a6VRvn7KkF1xheZwc4RDQvb2ZKhu9V93_y1kbk_h1kW0RHxDBSdQgrTpbBu0m_WpfMQauwiUWrEWbys2HmPn5EPFq6CSQy6znoWGY
² River Cruise Market Outlook for 2024 to 2034, www.futuremarketinsights.com



TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024

AVERAGE LENGTH OF RIVER CRUISE, SHARE (%)



There was a time when the river cruise segment was dominated by boomers and empty nesters. However, with finances improving and also changing trends in consumer behavior, the 36- to 45-year-old age group is the leading demographic segment in the river cruise category now. Is it possible then, that their work commitments are changing the average length of river cruising?

In 2023, 42% of the advisors said that their clients booked river cruise vacations of more than a week. That share has dropped to 33% in the current Outlook.

This is not a reflection on vacation spends (that has gone up, as we will see later). Reports are suggesting that many Americans are now looking at shorter, but more frequent, vacations. In addition, many river cruisers are also combining land vacations pre- and post- their vacations, which may result in shorter cruise vacations.



TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024

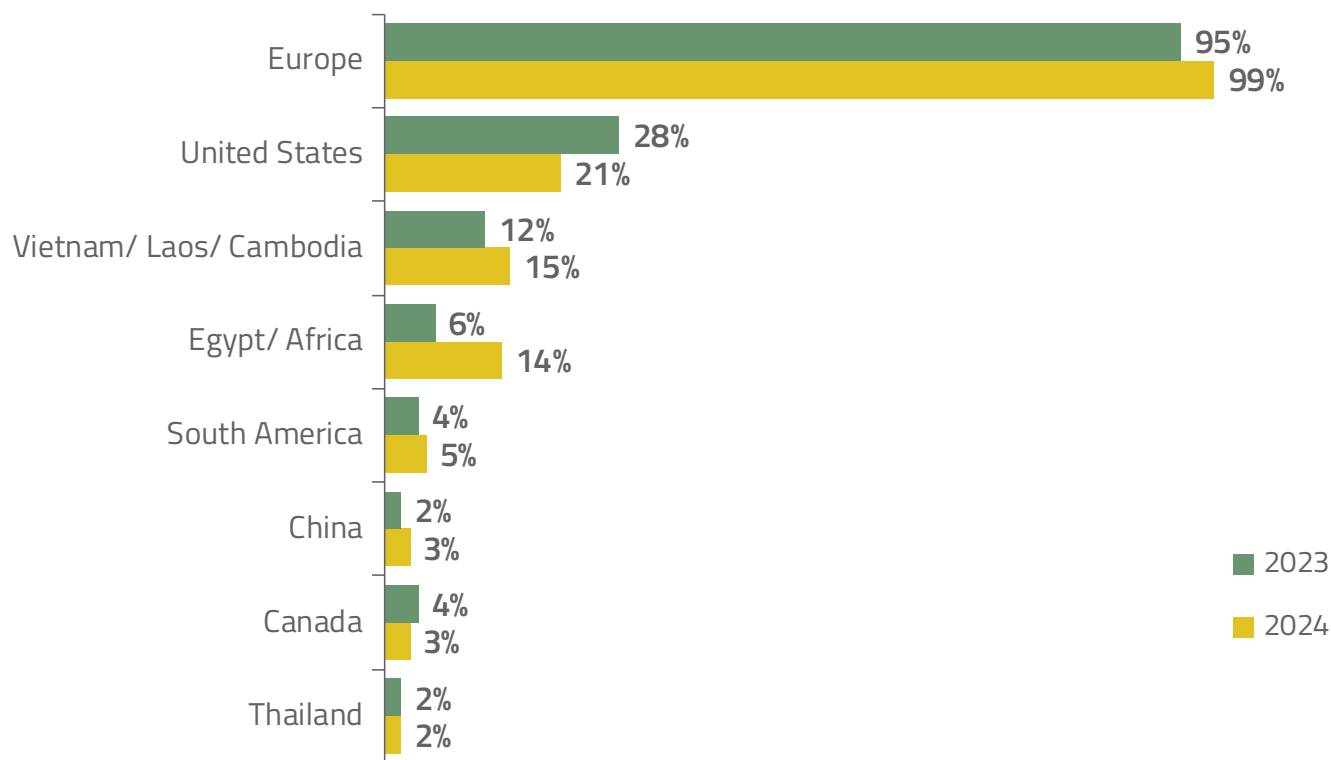


Everyone wants to travel to Europe. It's the most popular destination among clients, said 99% of the advisors. The rivers within America come in second. While that share has dropped from 28% in 2023 to 21% in the current Outlook, the overall vision for river cruising within the US is looking promising.

A report recently stated that luxury and comfort were the top priorities of American tourists and that river cruise companies in the United States are known for offering high-class facilities and excellent service.³

Southeast Asia and Africa are also gaining ground among river cruise travelers, with many advisors saying that they have been selling tours in Africa to their clients.

TOP DESTINATIONS SOLD FOR RIVER CRUISES



³ River Cruise Market Outlook for 2024 to 2034, www.futuremarketinsights.com



TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024

Recently, APT announced a new ship designed to sail on Portugal's Douro River, with Southern European-inspired interiors⁴. Riviera Travel also introduced the Porto Mirante, with a seven-night Douro itinerary⁵. The activity on the Douro has been picking up steadily. It's possible that this is also due to the interest in Portugal's wines as the Douro cuts through many of the European nation's oldest demarcated wine regions, famous for its port wines but also now gaining recognition for its white wines from local grapes such as Malvasia Fina, Gouveia and Rabigato⁶.

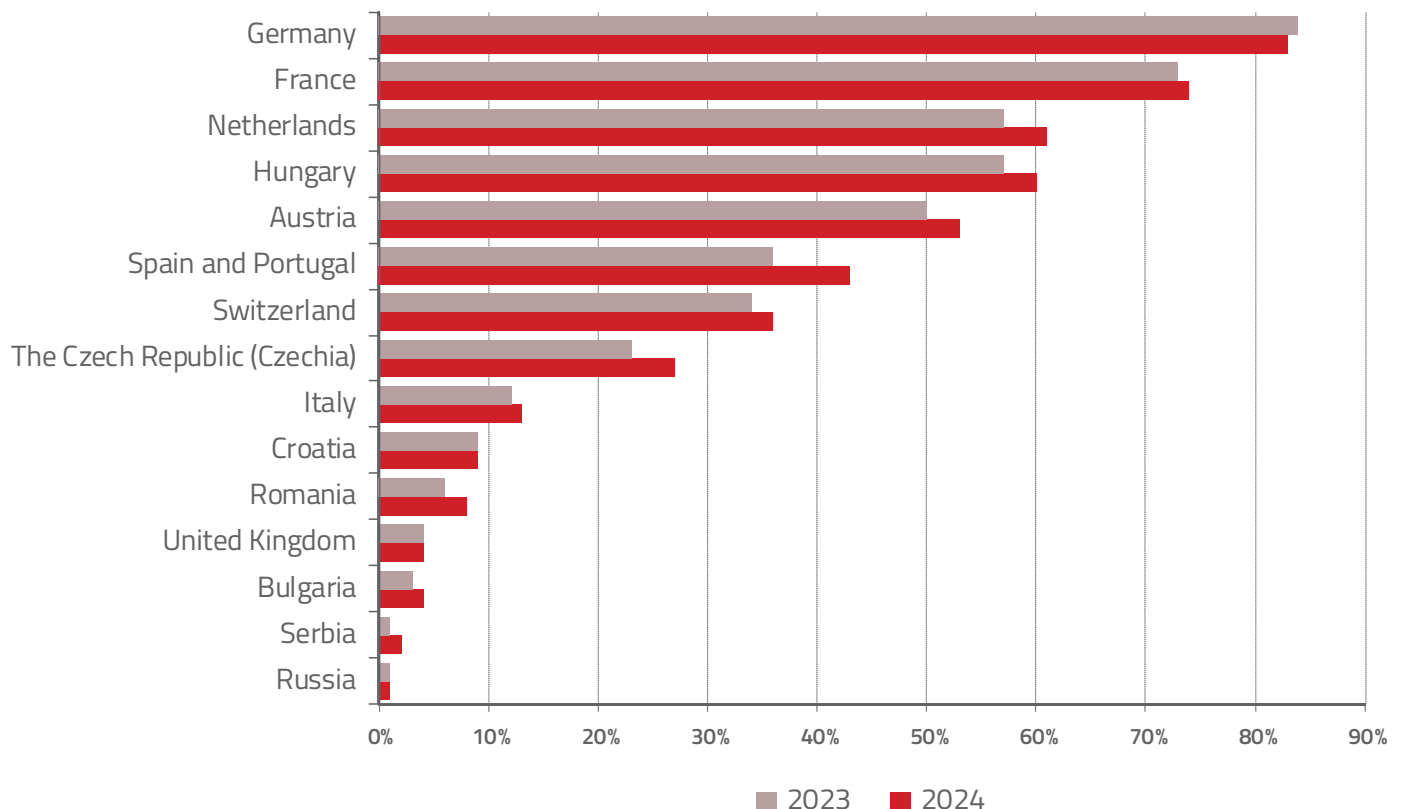
This is showing up in the share of advisors saying that the demand for river cruises in Portugal and Spain—where many of the Douro River cruises end—has gone up from 36% in 2023 to 44% in the current Outlook.

Meanwhile, Germany, France and the Netherlands continue to be the most in-demand European destinations.



Portugal is always very popular with our clients for river cruises.

TOP EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS SOLD FOR RIVER CRUISES



⁴ <https://www.aptouring.com/voyage/ways-to-travel/apt-announces-new-douro-river-ship>

⁵ <https://www.rivercruising.co.uk/blog/river-cruise-news/riviera-launches-new-douro-ship-for-2024>

⁶ <https://www.smh.com.au/traveller/travel-news/river-cruising-takes-off-in-europe-s-port-wine-mecca-20240827-p5k5so.html>

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ever wandered
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-  Spacious cabins with windows
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RIVER CRUISES

Riviera River Cruises is the United Kingdom's leading river cruise operator, having been in business for 40 years. Its 14 ships with spacious cabins and suites, relaxed atmosphere, sumptuous onboard meals and captivating excursions, offer exceptional value.

Riviera is top of the premium brands with less than premium prices. We pride ourselves in offering a selection of superior quality shore excursions included in the cruise and include in 2025 a superior drinks package offering wine beer and soft drinks for lunch and dinner and from 6 p.m. to midnight also include mixed drinks. In 2026 we will be offering an all-inclusive package from 10 a.m. to midnight. We have over 30 departures in 2025 where the entire sailing has no single supplements across all grades the sailing is entirely dedicated to the solo guest.

We have two new ships launching in 2025 Riviera Radiance, sailing mainly on the Danube and Riviera Rose on the Douro - 2026 also heralds another new ship the Riviera Resplendence sailing along a few different itineraries.

Riviera is making a major step into the North American market place with enhanced product offerings such as more theme cruises, more included shore excursions and soon to come a full air, hotel and land tours in combination with the river cruises. We are expanding our marketing reach and adding additional Regional Sales Directors to assist you in your sales efforts.

For the first time we will be offering 2026 at a 50% discount on all cruises if you book and deposit by December 15th so take advantage of this offer NOW!

We are 100% supportive the travel agency community, accepting bookings exclusively from advisors, the only river cruise company to do this. We also guarantee your guests will be happy - if not by day two we will bring them home with a full refund. That's how confident your clients will love Riviera.

For more information, visit rivierarivercruises.com or call 888-838-8820



For more information please contact us. Riviera reserves the rights to withdraw this offer at anytime. Visit our website for full terms and conditions. Correct at time of print. Riviera River Cruises, 715 Bayshore Drive - Suite 904, Ft Lauderdale, FL 33304





TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



Typically, spring and fall are the most favored seasons for river cruising, with May and September seeing the highest numbers.

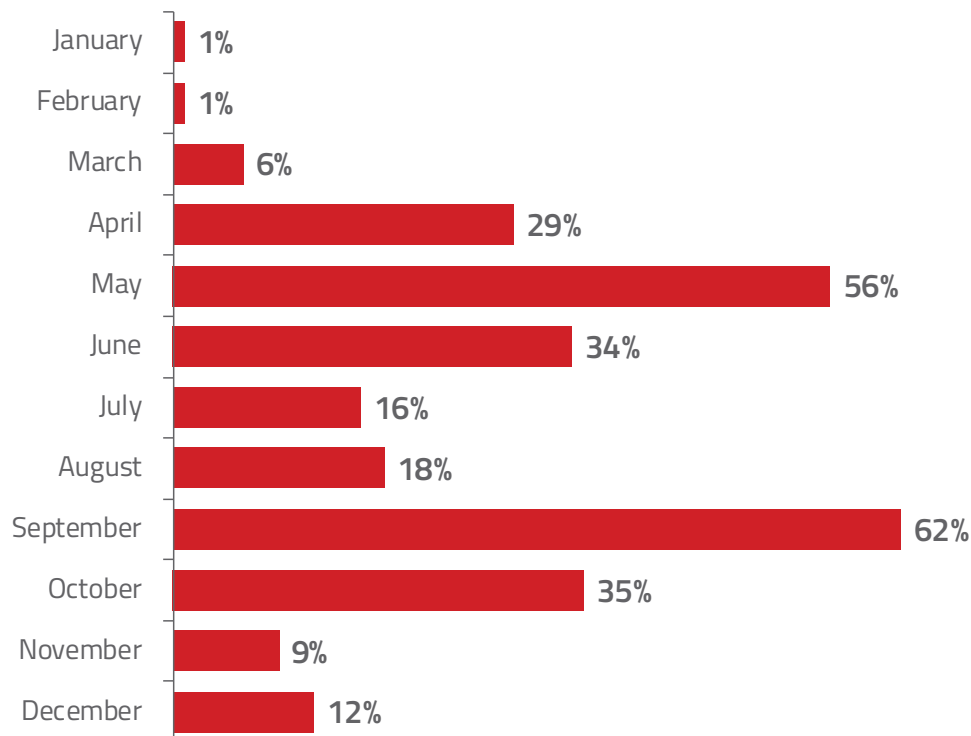
Yet, some cruise lines are looking at offerings beyond the peak season. In the winter of 2023, Viking River Cruises became the first line to operate year-round in Europe with a new itinerary for the Rhine⁷. January and February are also good months to go on a river cruise in Asia and Africa.

One advisor said, “We run a large group on Facebook, just under 400,000 members, many of whom want to visit the Christmas markets. So that itinerary is our most popular one.”

Another advisor shared:

“I will sell river cruises in summer but tend to let people know that Europe is overcrowded in summer and very hot. Likewise for Egypt. Stay away from Egypt in August. September is usually higher in cost... these are all things I let people know but if they want summer or those times I do sell them.”

SEASONALITY IN RIVER CRUISE BOOKINGS



⁷ <https://www.cruisecritic.com.au/articles/a-viking-rhine-river-cruise-in-winter?stay=1&posfrom=1>



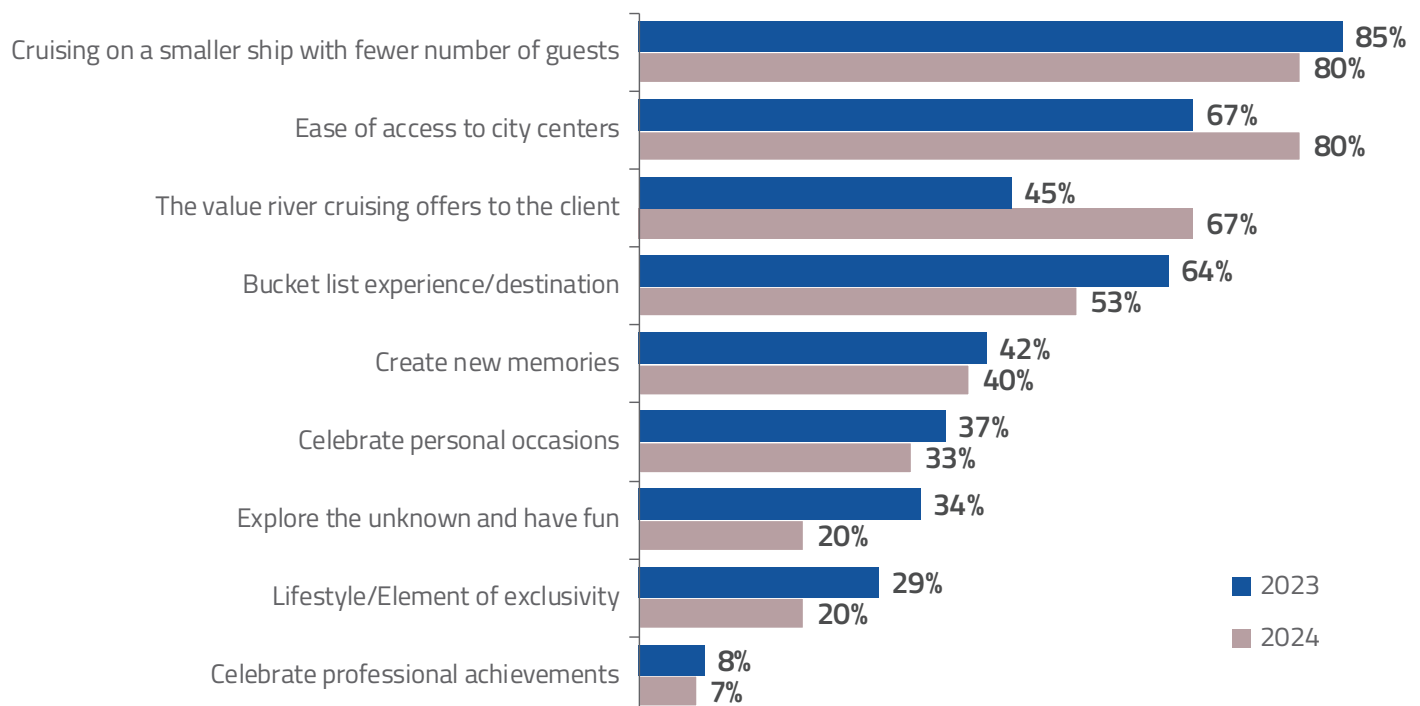
TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



The top motivators for river cruising consistently remain the number of guests on the ship (80%) and the ease of access to city centers (80%). The third most popular key motivator is the value that a river cruise offers, said 67% of the advisors this year, compared to 45% of advisors in the TMR River Cruise Outlook 2023.

With stay, food and drinks, evening entertainment, and tours included in the cruise pricing, opting for a river cruise offers not only a more unique experience to the traveler but also a more value-for-money option.⁸

KEY MOTIVATORS FOR TAKING A RIVER CRUISE VACATION



⁸ <https://travelobservations.com/river-cruising-great-value/>

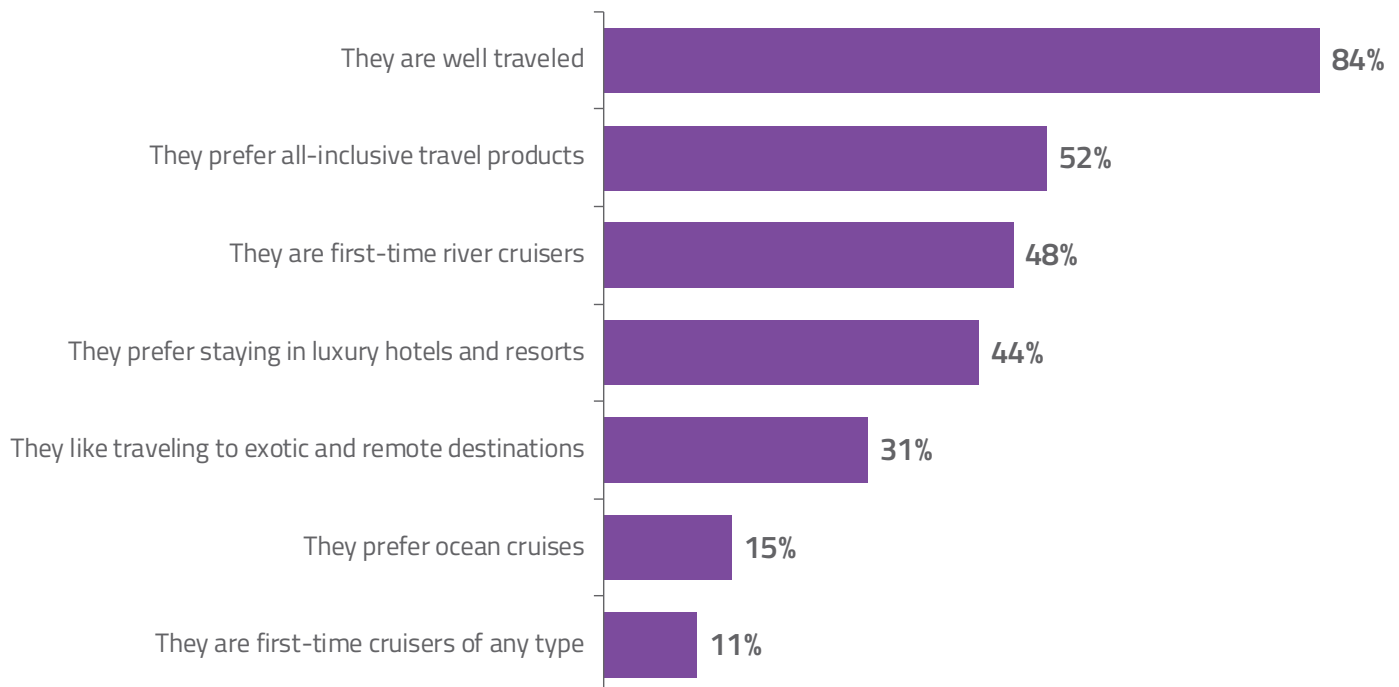


TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



The average river cruise client is someone who is well travelled (84%) and is open to trying something new, as long as the comfort of an all-inclusive service is guaranteed (52%). Advisors added that while some of their clients may be first-time river cruisers, they have likely tried ocean cruises before and are open to traveling to remote locations or exploring new experiences.

CLIENTS' TRAVEL PREFERENCES FOR TAKING A RIVER CRUISE VACATION





TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



The outlook on river cruising is positive. Destination and itinerary remain the top factor for a client choosing river cruises, said 83% of the advisors. Nearly eight out of 10 advisors say that clients combine pre- and post- land vacations with their river cruise trips. So, while the length of a river cruise may be shortening, many clients are booking vacations more than a week long.

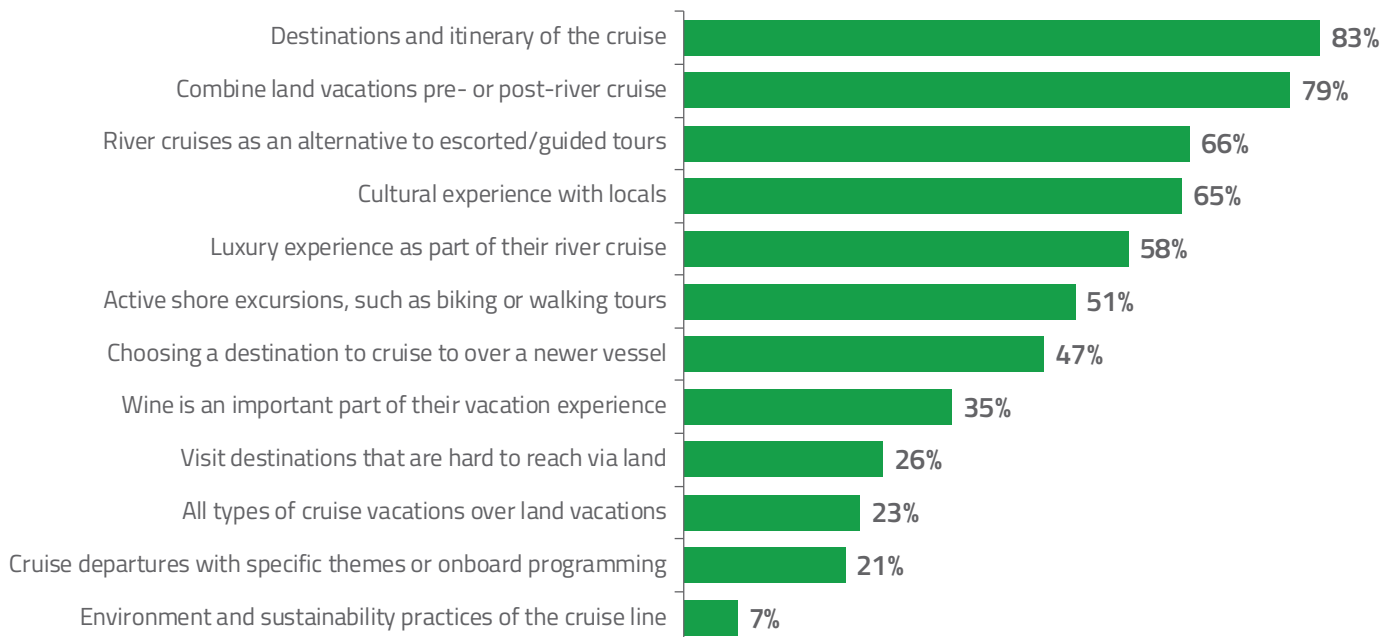
A cultural experience with locals (65%), and guided tours (66%) are also important factors while choosing a river cruise.

One advisor shared,



We specialize in wine groups and travel dates are planned around 'crush' and harvest times.

TOP INFLUENCERS FOR TAKING A RIVER CRUISE VACATION



2004

The Globus family of brands launches Avalon

2010

Avalon Wins Best Cabins in River Cruising for the 1st time

2011

Introduction of the Panorama Suite

2012

Avalon Launches the First Suite Ship on the Mekong River

2016

Introduction of Avalon Fresh, Avalon Choice, and Comfort Collection Beds

2017

Introduction of Active & Discovery Cruises

2019

Avalon's Full Fleet is Suite Ships

2021

Introduction of Storyteller Cruises

2023

Avalon Wins "Best Cabins" by Cruise Critic for the 5th time

2024

Avalon Celebrates its 20th Anniversary

Our Commitment to Travel Advisors is Timeless.

PERFECT PARTNERSHIP.

Our success is a collective effort, built on the expertise and dedication of Travel Advisors like you. Thank you for being an essential part of our journey.

Advisor Starts with A. Avalon Begins with You.

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WATERWAYS®

GLOBUS
family of brands

We've got **U.**

FIND YOUR DEDICATED BDM



Avalon Waterways: Redefining River Cruising Excellence

Avalon Waterways is leading the way in river cruising, known for its innovative Suite Ship® designs, custom itineraries, and diverse onboard and shore experiences. With Avalon, travelers are discovering the world's most iconic rivers in a truly unique fashion.

The Pinnacle of Suite Design

At the heart of Avalon's 15 Suite Ships is the groundbreaking Panorama Suite.™ These suites offer an unparalleled experience with the widest-opening, wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling panoramic windows in the industry. Avalon has revolutionized the concept of river cruising by incorporating its signature Open-Air Balcony,™ which maximizes space and comfort, making the suites 30% larger than standard cabins. The beds are strategically placed to face the window, ensuring guests enjoy the most expansive views available on the water.

Introducing the Avalon Alegria

Expanding its reach, Avalon recently introduced the Avalon Alegria, its latest Suite Ship, with a maiden voyage along Portugal's Douro River. This new itinerary, Vida Portugal: Vineyards & Villages Along the Douro, is a celebration of Portuguese culture, combining wine tastings with explorations of art, architecture, and local traditions. The Alegria is a 262-foot ship featuring 14 deluxe staterooms and 37 Panorama Suites®, accommodating 102 guests in luxury. The ship is equipped with Starlink Wi-Fi and a Sky Deck swimming pool, providing the perfect vantage point for Portugal's stunning scenery.

"The future of river cruising is all about personalization, flexibility, and authentic connections. That's why at Avalon Waterways, we're laser-focused on providing our guests—and our valued Travel Advisor partners—with unparalleled choice, expertise, and the tools to craft truly transformative journeys along the world's great rivers."

—Pam Hoffee, President, Avalon Waterways

Exploring Bordeaux with Avalon

Avalon is set to make waves in the Bordeaux wine region with its upcoming cruises on the Garonne and Dordogne Rivers. In 2025, Avalon will launch the Bonjour Bordeaux itinerary, offering extended journeys that combine this renowned wine region with other rivers in France and beyond.

Tailored Experiences

Avalon's guests are spoiled for choice with the brand's renowned Avalon Choice® excursions and experiences. The industry has taken note of Avalon's award-winning approach to customizable travel, where guests can select from a variety of Special Interest itineraries. These options cater to wine lovers, history buffs, music enthusiasts, and more, offering expert-led experiences that deepen their connection to the destinations. Active & Discovery itineraries add another layer of adventure, inviting travelers to engage in activities like biking, kayaking, and painting, with options suited to all fitness levels and cultural interests.

Looking Ahead to 2025

As Avalon looks to the future, the company is responding to a growing demand for longer, more immersive journeys. A recent survey of over 16,600 past cruisers revealed a strong desire for extended trips. Avalon is answering this call with new 10+ day itineraries debuting in 2025, including captivating journeys along the Rhine, Danube, and in Holland & Belgium.

Strengthening Ties with Travel Advisors

Avalon continues to prioritize its partnerships with Travel Advisors, offering an ever-evolving suite of tools and resources through its Travel Advisor Portal. This platform enables advisors to effortlessly share itineraries, access personalized marketing tools, and deepen their cruise and tour knowledge through GFOB University, ensuring they can provide top-tier service to their clients.

As part of the Globus family of brands, Avalon's team of BDMs is 100% dedicated to supporting our Travel Advisor partners, with an expansive familiarization program to experience our products first-hand, plus a new and improved Travel Advisor Portal that is a one-stop shop for marketing, sharing itineraries, and more.

Avalon Waterways is not just navigating rivers; it's charting the course for the future of river cruising, with innovation, luxury, and guest satisfaction at the helm.

[LEARN MORE](#)



TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



A cruise's itinerary is the leading factor determining a client's satisfaction with the river cruise vacation, said 82% of the advisors. Other key aspects are the quality of food and drinks and the quality of service provided by the staff, at 69% and 63% respectively.

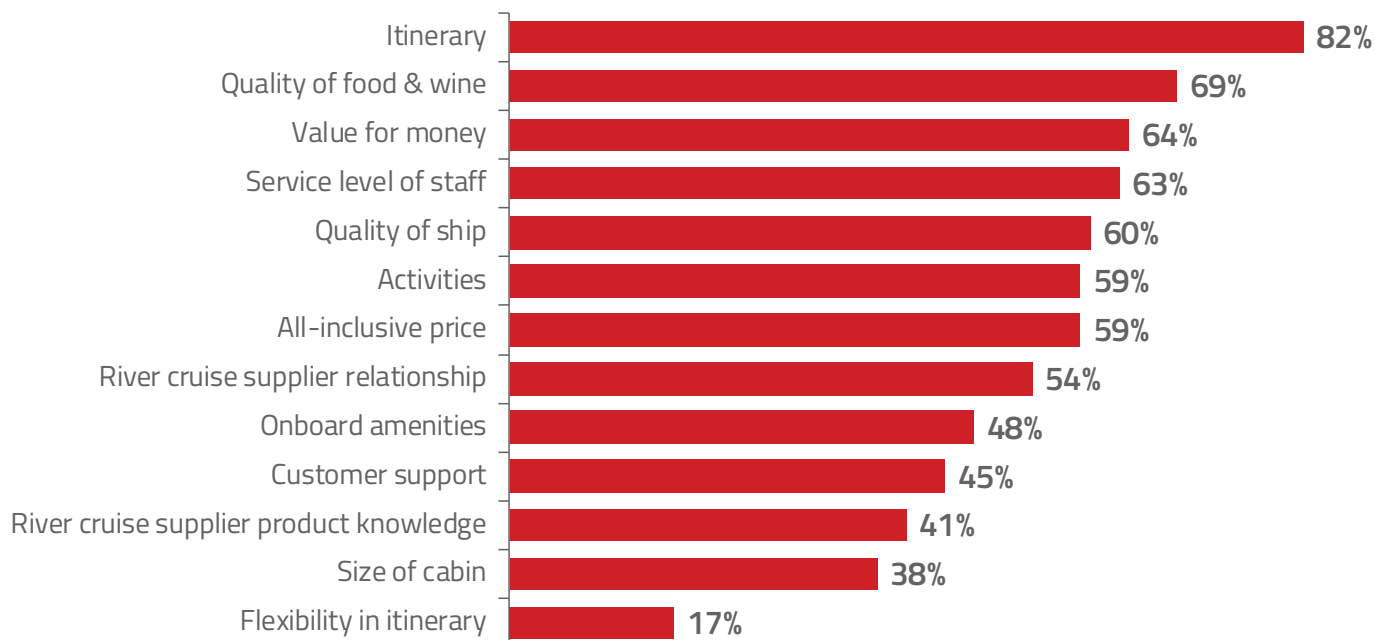
One advisor gave feedback about the itinerary, "Clients push back about having to get up so early to enjoy the included/optional excursions. They want to relax and enjoy the scenery (even if docked) and not be rushed."

Another advisor shared:



They should have a dine around plan for the port for lunch, and docents in the main square and near the docks, to show people how to get back to the ship on their own, so that they feel comfortable to see some of the town on their own. I really feel bad for the ports that are so overrun with river passengers and no one has any time to visit any of the shops or bars or bakeries.

FACTORS DETERMINING CLIENTS' SATISFACTION FOR A RIVER CRUISE VACATION





TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



Advisors are seeing a broad appeal for river cruising and are confident that they can sell to clients across multiple segments. Even as they remain bullish on couples (78%), seniors (78%),

empty nesters (76%) and those in the luxury/affluent groups (77%), there is a huge interest in selling to affinity groups (86%) and leisure (80%) groups.

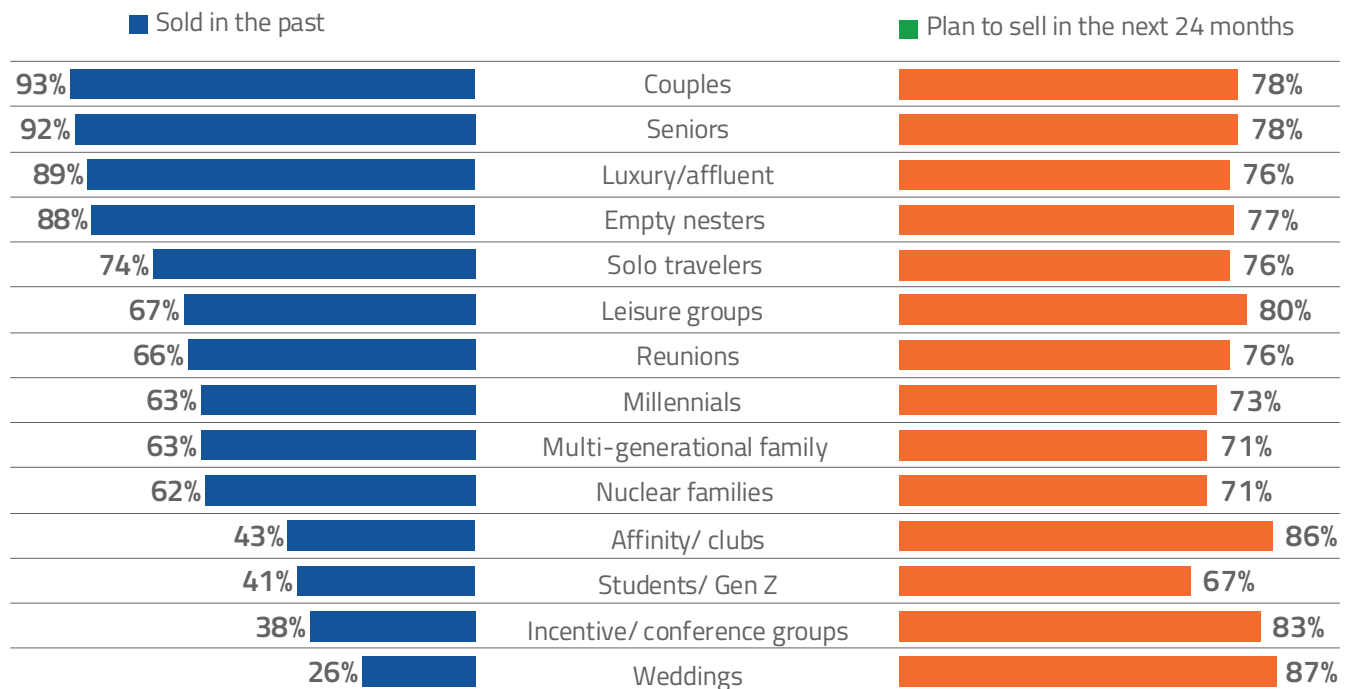
In the TMR River Cruise Outlook 2022, only 59% of the advisors said that they intended to sell to solo travelers. This share has gone up to 76% in the current Outlook. As solo travel rises, there is also a huge percentage of women wanting to take a vacation by themselves. To cater to this, Uniworld has announced its first women-only voyage in August 2025⁹. Many cruise lines also cater to the solo traveler with either solo cabins or packages tailored to the solo traveler¹⁰.

One advisor added,



My business is now focusing on solo travel opportunities and companies that support solo travelers.

RIVER CRUISE SALES: PAST PERFORMANCE & OUTLOOK BY CLIENT SEGMENTS



⁹ Uniworld's first women-only cruise, starting at \$5,000 per person.

¹⁰ <https://www.travelagewest.com/Travel/River-Cruise/solo-cabins-river-cruise>



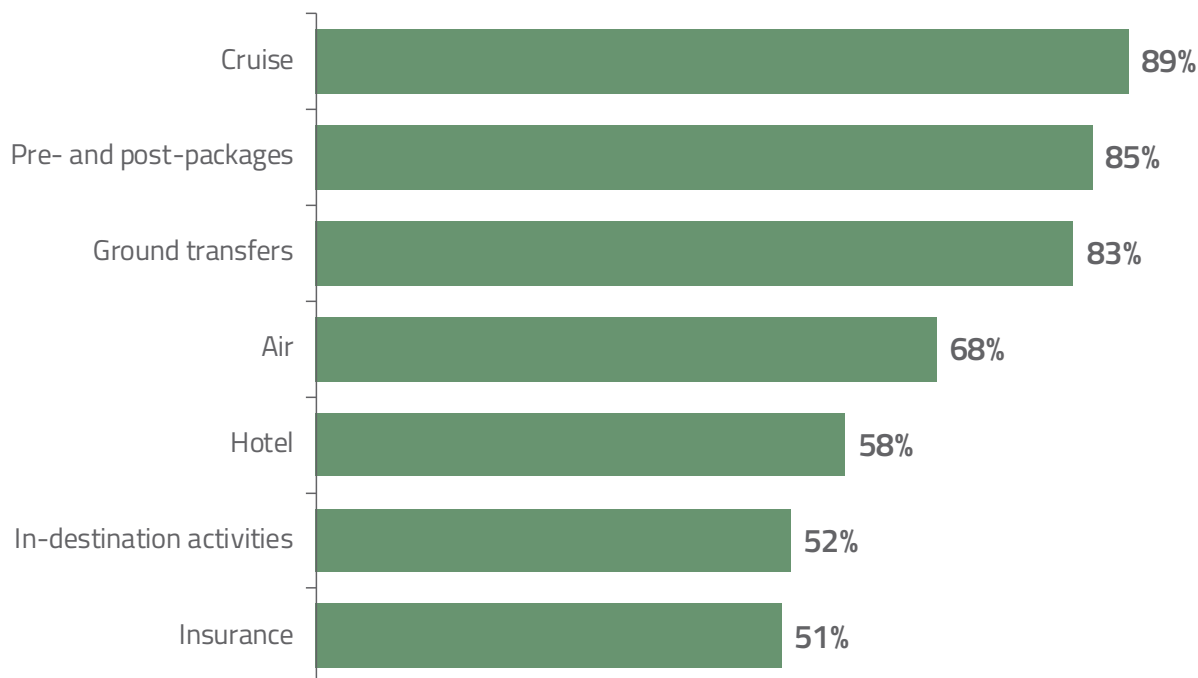
TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



What is the point of a luxury vacation if a significant amount of time is spent in figuring the next stop and ground transfers to the cruise from flights?

Advisors say that in addition to the river cruise (89%), most clients also book pre- and post- packages (85%) and ground transfers (83%) to ensure a seamless experience.

RIVER CRUISE: PRODUCTS BOOKED





TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024

With the average river cruise client being well aware and well traveled, the role of the advisor is even more important. Advisors can play a significant role in not just guiding the client to a cruise line more suited to their needs (seven out of 10 advisors), but also to guiding clients to river cruises when they were looking at land vacations instead (more than six out of 10 advisors).

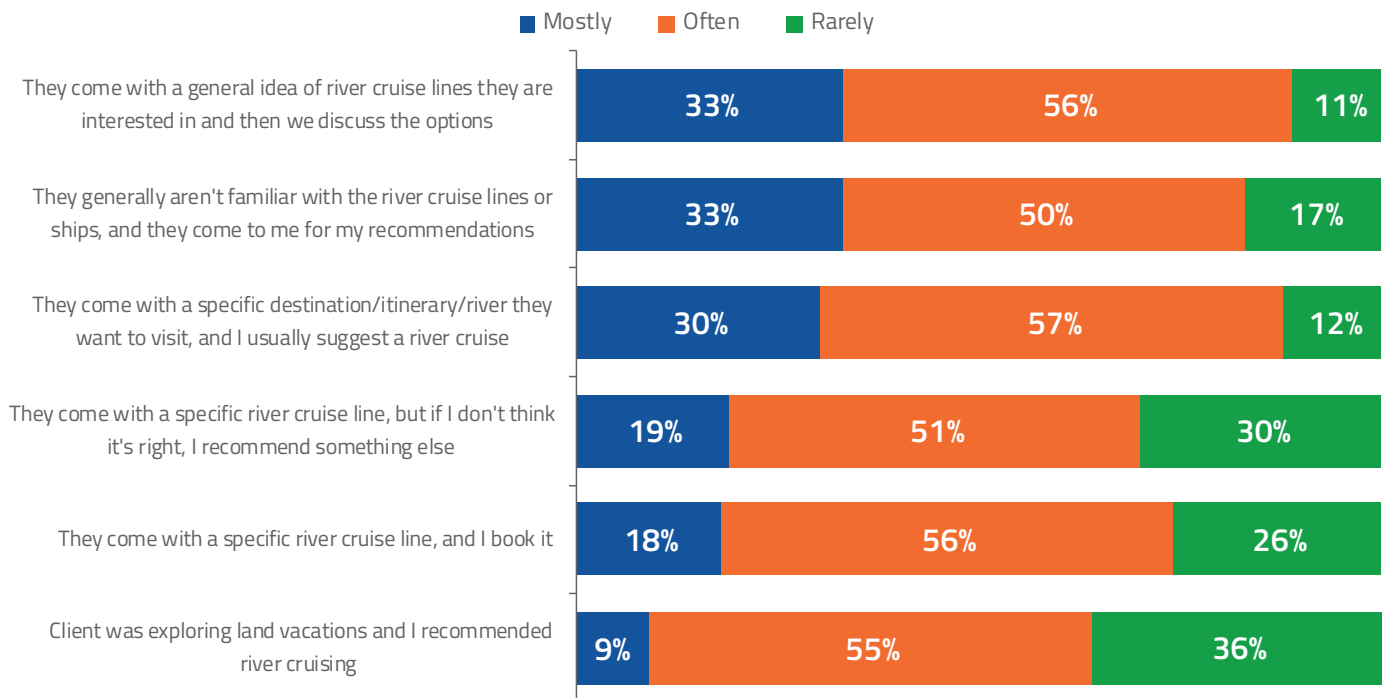
One advisor shared, “Most clients know about river cruising by word of mouth or by seeing marketing such as ads on billboards, television etc.”

Another advisor added:

“My first-time river cruise clients need a bit more coaching. Some think it might be boring which is the main concern.”



STATEMENTS REPRESENTING RIVER CRUISE CLIENTS, SHARE (%)



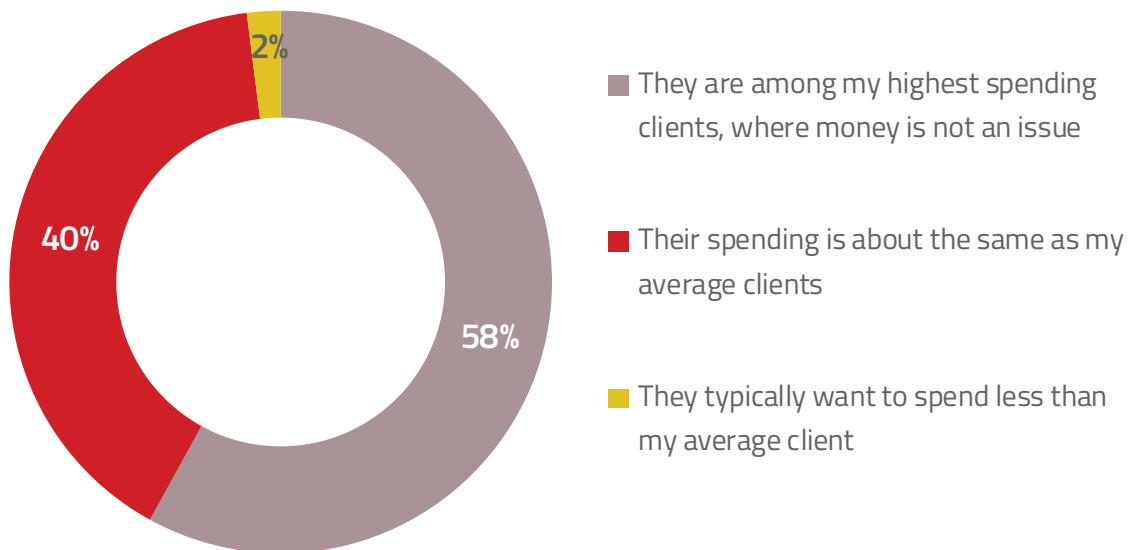


TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



With so much emphasis on luxury and all-inclusive vacations, it's not a surprise that the average river cruise client is a high spender. Nearly six out of 10 advisors said that their river cruise clients were not concerned about spending money on the vacation, and four out of 10 advisors said that their river cruise clients spend as much as their average clients.

CLIENTS' BUDGET FOR RIVER CRUISE VACATIONS, SHARE (%)



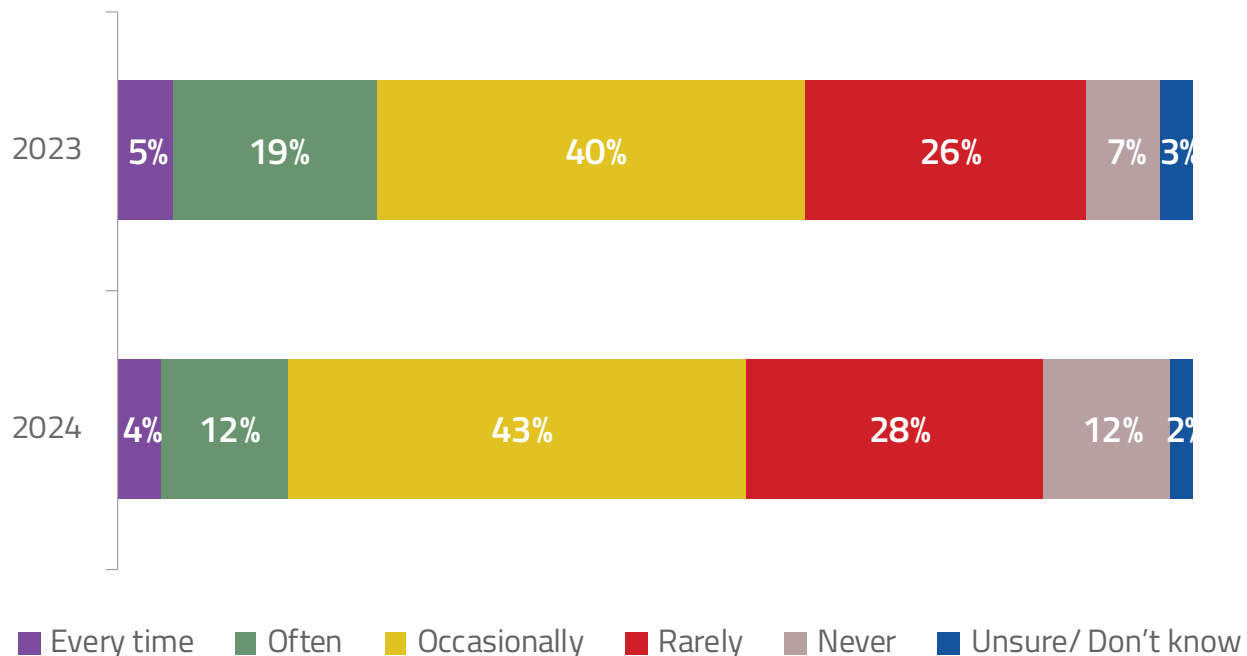


TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024

Four out of 10 advisors said that they upsell a river cruise vacation to their clients. With trends showing that vacations are getting shorter, even as they are getting more frequent¹¹, the ideal clients for upselling a river cruise vacation are probably the seniors, empty nesters and boomers.



FREQUENCY OF UPSELLING A FOLLOW-UP RIVER CRUISE, SHARE (%)



¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ti3LKHhNu4#:~:text=A%20survey%20revealed%20only%2033%20of%20Americans,vacations%20is%20more%20restful%20than%20long%20vacations.>



THE UNIWORLD DIFFERENCE

Reasons to Book Uniworld for Your Clients

Why Uniworld? Because you deserve the best. Uniworld Boutique River Cruises represents the gold standard in river cruising for both your clients and your business. We adore our Travel Advisor partners, which is why we strive for excellence across every aspect of the Uniworld experience.



THE HIGHEST TRAVELER SATISFACTION

Uniworld's outstanding service and one-of-a-kind ships lead to satisfied and loyal guests. So, if you can sell a client once, you'll have a luxury river cruising customer for life.



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With an average capacity of 120 guests, Uniworld's small ship experience makes your group's trip even more special. Plus, explore options for full-ship charters with customizable itineraries.

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Sailing by river means enjoying all the conveniences of a traditional cruise and only unpacking once, along with all the benefits of inland travel—like going past the coastline to stay in the heart of bustling cities and visit hidden gem villages.

River cruising is absolutely the best way to cruise, and the best and most luxurious river cruise is with Uniworld.

The Uniworld Difference



OUTSTANDING SERVICE



THE MOST ALL-INCLUSIVE



ONE-OF-A-KIND SHIPS



CULINARY EXCELLENCE



CAREFULLY CURATED EXPERIENCES



PRE & POST CRUISE EXTENSIONS



WELLNESS ON THE WATER



COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY



BENEFITS FOR PAST GUESTS

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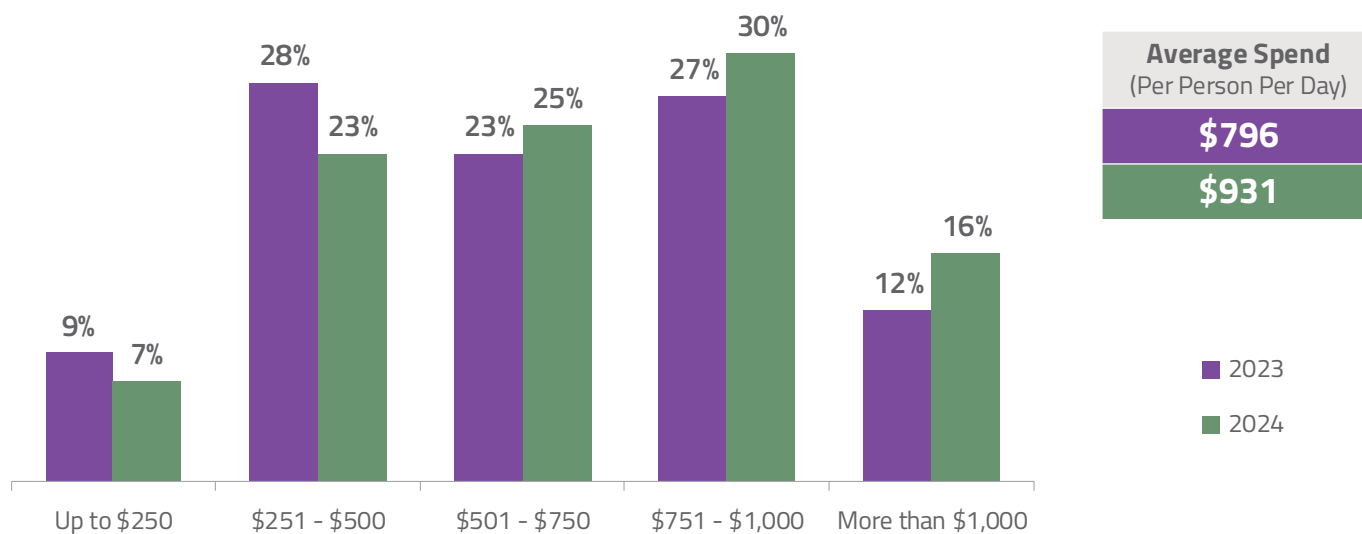


TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



One of the biggest advantages of being on a river cruise is that you avoid the on-road traffic, and you can access the heart of most cities directly while escaping the summer crowds in Europe¹². All these factors are why, even though the average spends on river cruising have increased—it's gone up from \$796 in 2023 to \$931 in 2024—the demand is still at a high.

AVERAGE SPEND (PER PERSON PER DAY) FOR RIVER CRUISES, SHARE (%)



¹² <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/cruises/2024/05/09/river-cruises-europe-danube-rhine-seine/73602529007/>



TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024

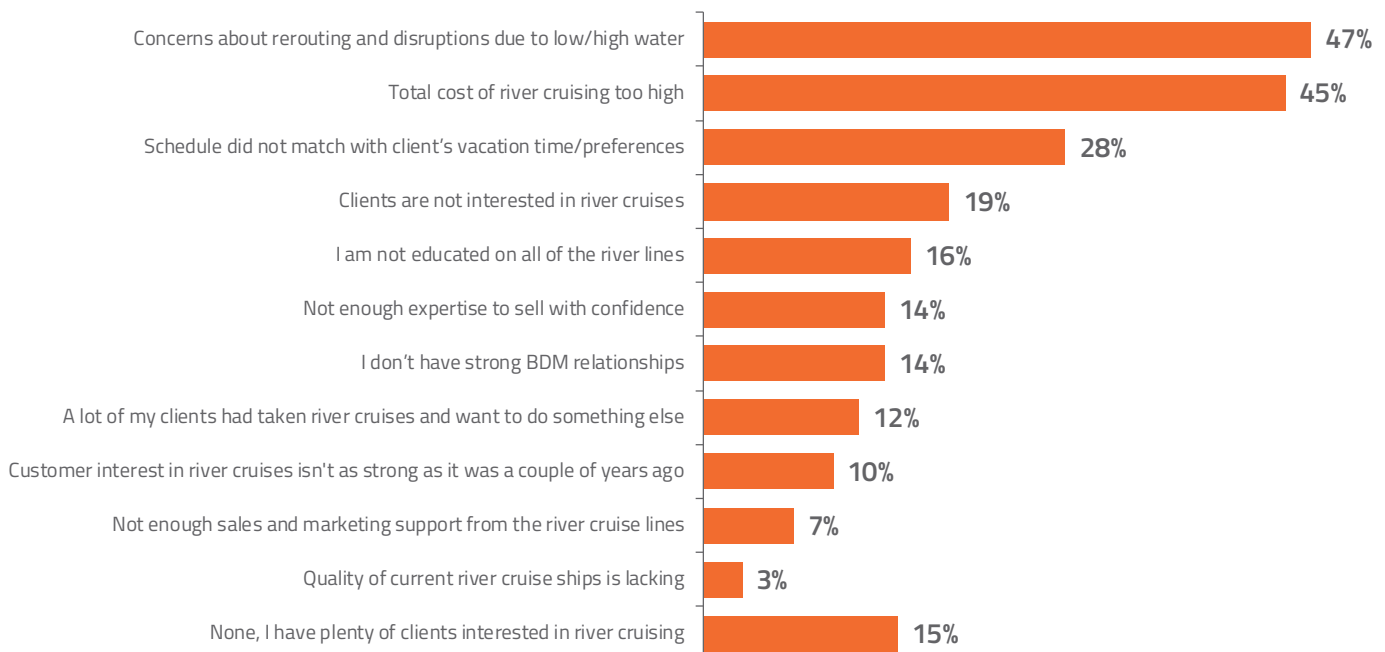


Water levels are a prime concern for those booking river cruises. Concerns about rerouting and disruptions remain a primary challenge while convincing clients to book a river cruise, said nearly half of the advisors.

River cruise lines are taking some steps to ensure that the passenger experience remains intact. Not only do they have multiple ships on the same route, which can be swapped if one part of the river becomes inaccessible, but many ships are also designed with shallow drafts, i.e. their keels, or the lowest points of the vessel, are not far beneath the water surface. This means the ships can sail in shallow rivers. In addition, should the conditions make river cruising entirely impossible, some cruise lines also convert it into a land vacation taking the guests to their destinations in a coach with stays at hotels, along with meals and guided tours¹³.

Price and difficulty in matching the cruise line's schedule with the client's needs are other challenges that advisors face. Some advisors also said that they don't have a strong enough relationship with the supplier's Business Development Manager (BDM) (14%). Many of these advisors have less than five years of experience in the industry and could use additional tools (i.e. focused training and attention) from suppliers.

CHALLENGES FACED IN SELLING RIVER CRUISE



¹³ <https://www.tripsavvy.com/europe-s-drought-will-happen-again-here-s-how-that-might-affect-the-future-of-river-cruising-6542670>



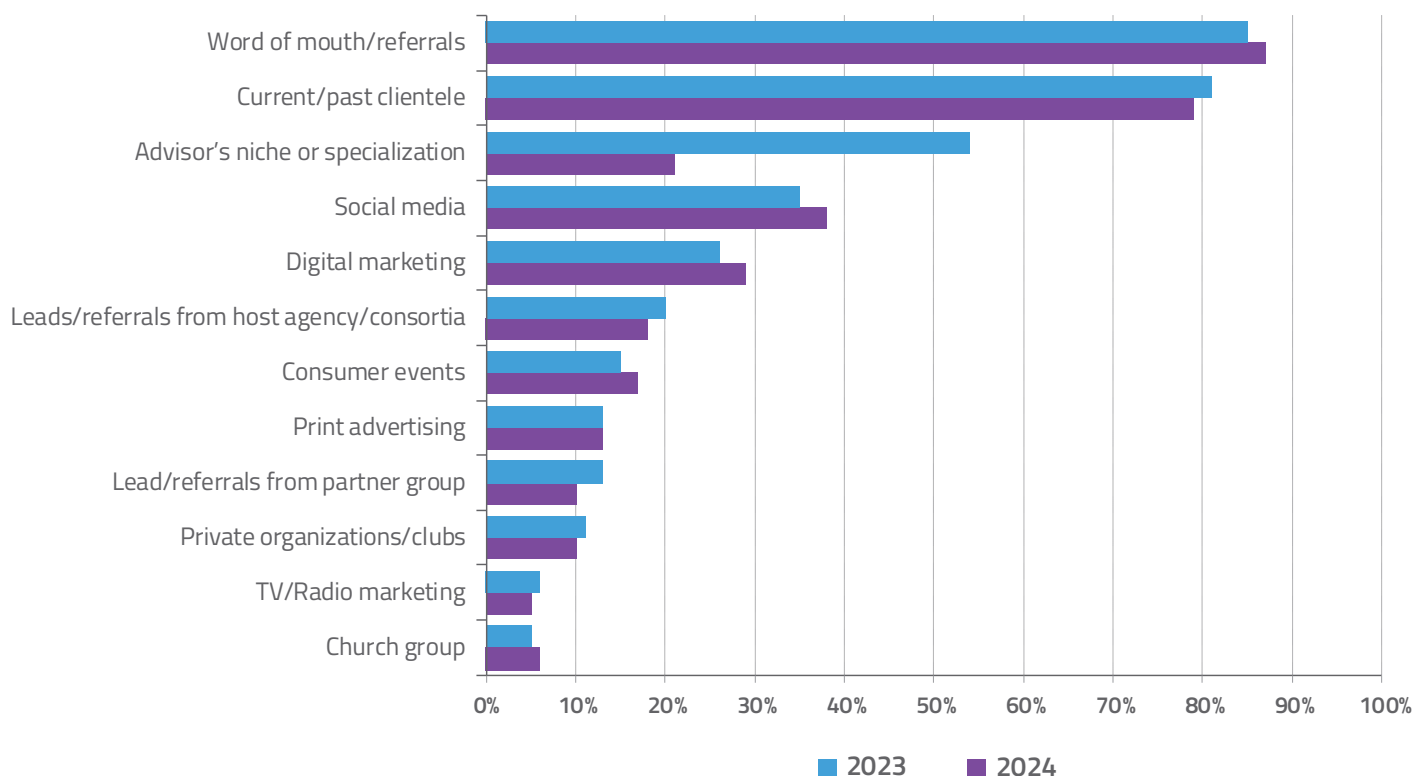
TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024

Word of mouth referrals continue to be the top lead-generation source for advisors. With river cruising having gone mainstream and advisors looking at multiple client segments, the need for an advisor's personal niche has reduced from 54% in 2023 to 21% in the current Outlook.

Over the last few years, we have seen the steady rise of social media as a lead generation channel for river cruising. Nearly four out of 10 advisors said that they now see social media as a lead generation avenue. The world is getting more digital and reliant on social media for decision making. With river cruise clientele expanding to a younger demographic, it is important that advisors utilize social media to increase their sales.



LEAD GENERATION CHANNELS FOR ADVISORS





TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024

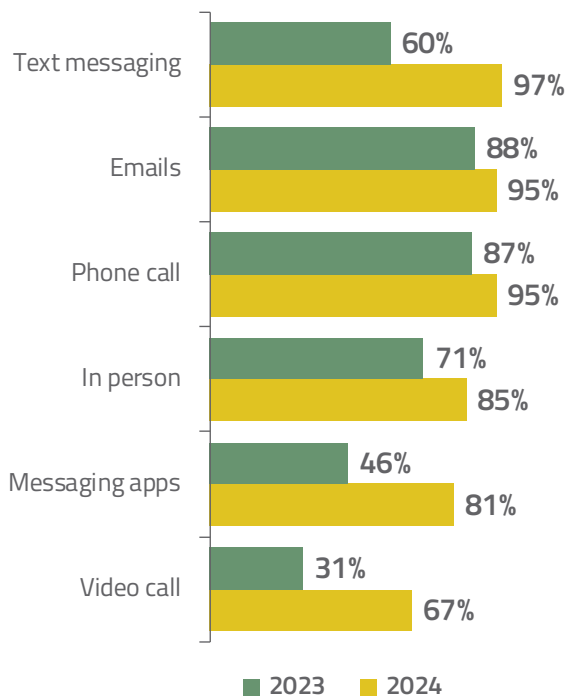
It's heartening to see how the use of communication technology by both the advisors and suppliers has increased over the past few Outlooks, as has the use of messaging apps and video calls.

In the 2023 TMR River Cruise Outlook, almost five out of 10 advisors said that they use messaging apps to connect with their clients. That has improved to eight out of 10 advisors in the current Outlook. This jump can also be seen on the supplier side with 46% of the advisors saying that they use messaging apps to communicate with suppliers, versus only 20% in 2023.

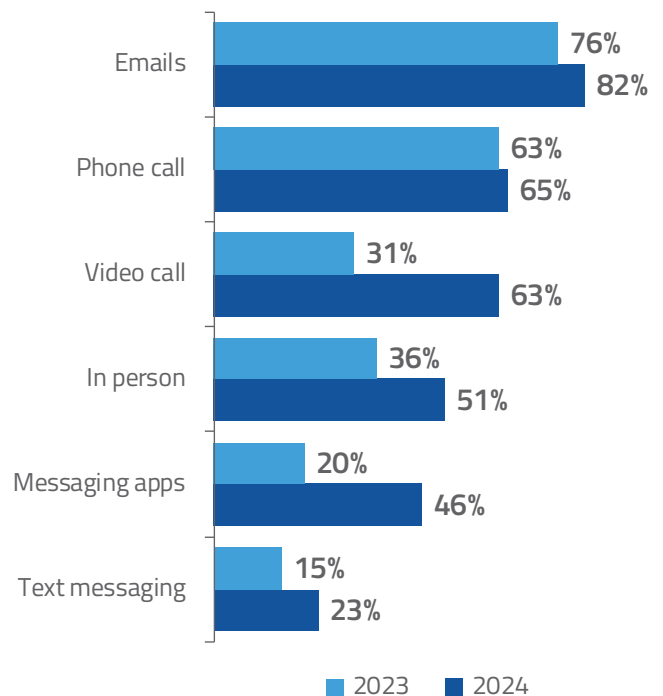


MODES OF COMMUNICATION USED BY ADVISORS

CLIENT SIDE COMMUNICATION



SUPPLIER SIDE COMMUNICATION



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SUITE SIZES: 194 – 883 SQ. FT.

2025 GROUP SPACE AVAILABLE: All guests enjoy unlimited shore excursions, and groups of 10 or more also receive one complimentary half-day, private excursion.

NO SINGLE SUPPLEMENT on all 2025 itineraries in select Harmony Suites aboard *Riverside Mozart* and *Melody Suites* aboard *Riverside Ravel* and *Riverside Debussy*.



Elevate your clients' expectations and exceed their dreams with Riverside Luxury Cruises. With meticulously designed itineraries, elegant accommodations, award-winning gourmet cuisine, our cruises redefine luxury travel. From medieval charms of European towns to breathtaking riverscapes that unfold along the banks, every moment promises to be extraordinary.

Riverside Luxury Cruises is Europe's newest luxury river cruise line offering distinctive vacations on the Rhine, Rhône, Danube, Moselle, Main, and Sône rivers. The all-suites *Riverside Mozart*, *Riverside Ravel*, and *Riverside Debussy* offer guests the largest average size suites, all with king-size beds, highest staff-to-guest ratio, and up to five onboard restaurants. Guests can choose active tours among our menu of Riverside Choice excursions; take out a pedal- or e-bike, stored on board, for self-guided exploration; and bask in a rejuvenating treatment in the onboard FEHI Spa. In all, Riverside offers your clients more onboard amenities than other river lines.

On all itineraries, Riverside ships stay late or overnight in some of Europe's most captivating towns and cities, so your clients can immerse in authentic cultures and the destination's social

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We appreciate travel advisors for the vital role that you play in curating exceptional experiences for your clients. Register with us today and learn more about our generous commission rates, FAM trips and how we can collaborate to create unparalleled experiences for your clients.

Riverside Luxury Cruises is a winner in Travel + Leisure's World's Best Awards for 2024 – earned in less than one year in service – and is Cruise Critic's 2023 Editors' Pick for Best Dining in the River Category.



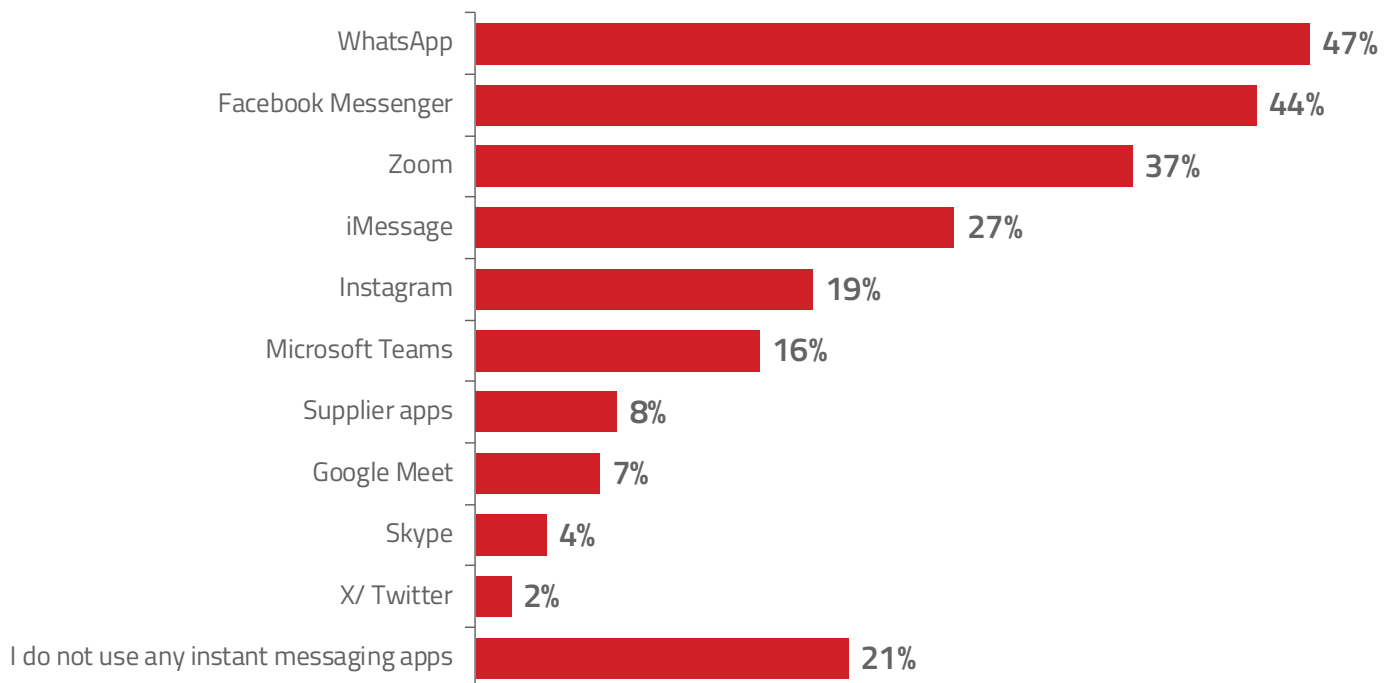
TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



WhatsApp has raced ahead of Facebook Messenger as the most popular means of instant communication used by advisors. The share of advisors not using messaging apps has been dropping steadily with only one out of five advisors saying that they don't use any instant messaging apps. Travel advisors would greatly benefit from adding messaging apps to the modes through which their clients can contact them.

Many apps also allow one to send voice messages, make video and phone calls, and some can be synced with voice to text features—in case extensive typing is a hindrance.

MESSAGING APPS USED BY ADVISORS



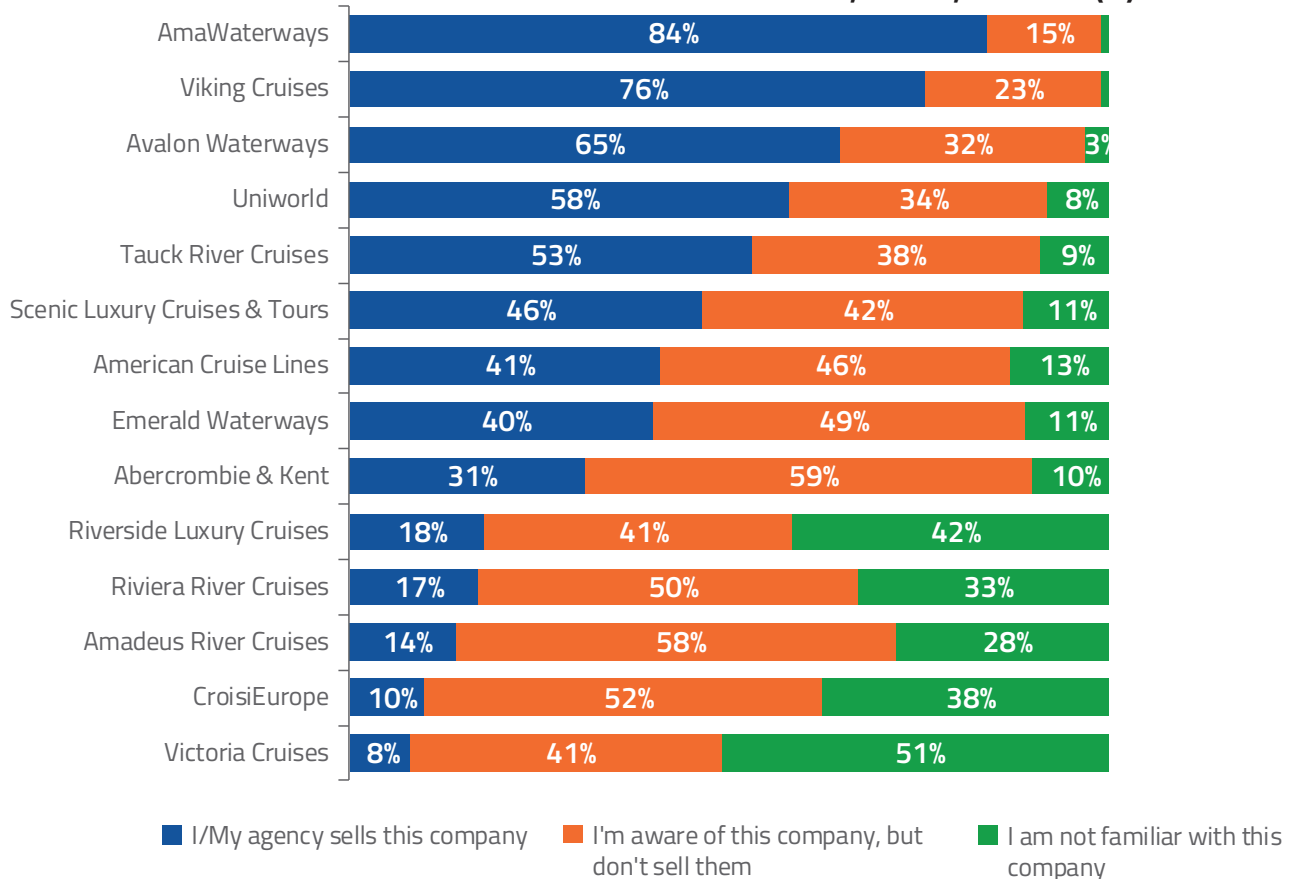


TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



The top selling river cruise brands are AmaWaterways (84%), Viking Cruises (76%), Avalon Waterways (65%) and Uniworld (58%).

TOP SELLING RIVER CRUISE LINE BRANDS, 2024, SHARE (%)





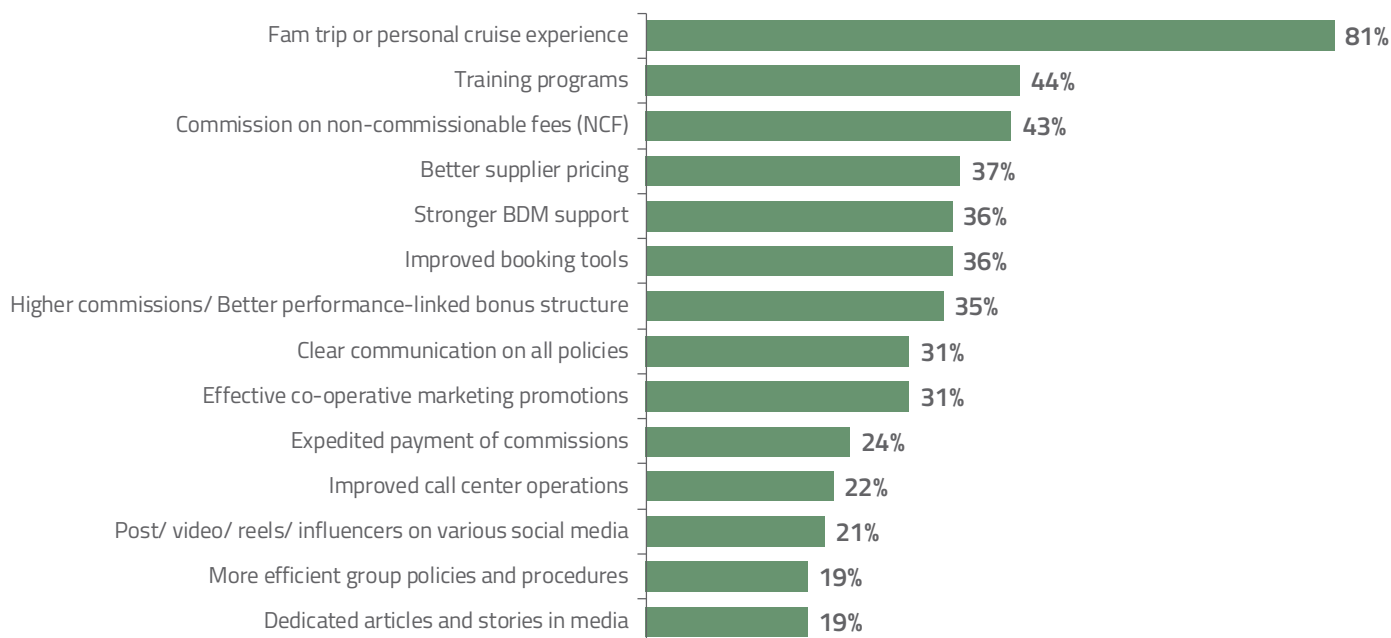
TRENDS IN RIVER CRUISE 2024



FAM trips or personal cruise experiences continue to be the most in-demand supplier support for eight out of 10 advisors. Advisors also said that they would benefit from more training programs (44%) and commissions on NCFs (43%).

Call center operations have been improving in the last few years and we expect them to improve more in the next Outlook.

SUPPLIER SUPPORT TO ENABLE HIGHER RIVER CRUISE SALES





TRAINING NEEDS

FAM trips (90%) are always a popular training method as they help advisors understand more about the river cruise experience and therefore, sell it to their clients. Like FAM trips, the demand for virtual training too has seen a small rise since the previous TMR River Cruise Outlook, with seven out of 10 advisors saying they like this format.

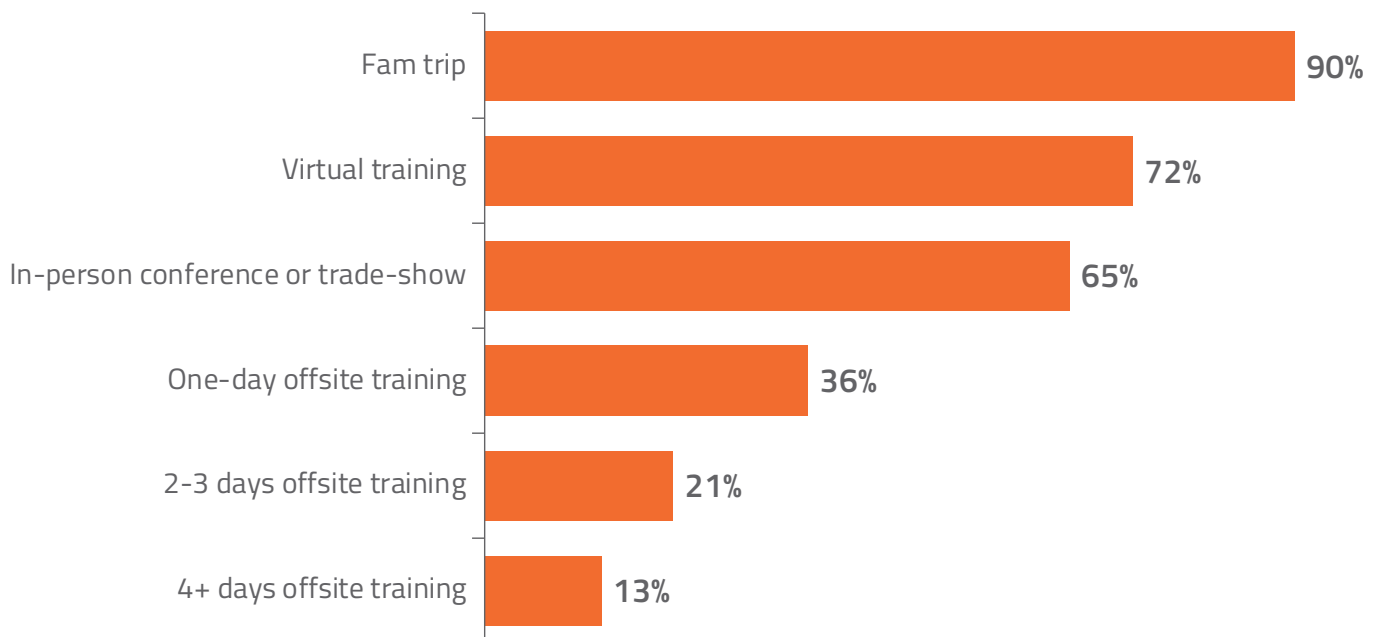
One advisor, reflecting on the growth sentiment said,



The more we know about a product, the better we can present it to the client. FAMs, meetings with marketing reps, videos, zoom training... all are good ways to educate us.



ADVISOR TRAINING: PREFERENCE BY FORMATS





TRAINING NEEDS



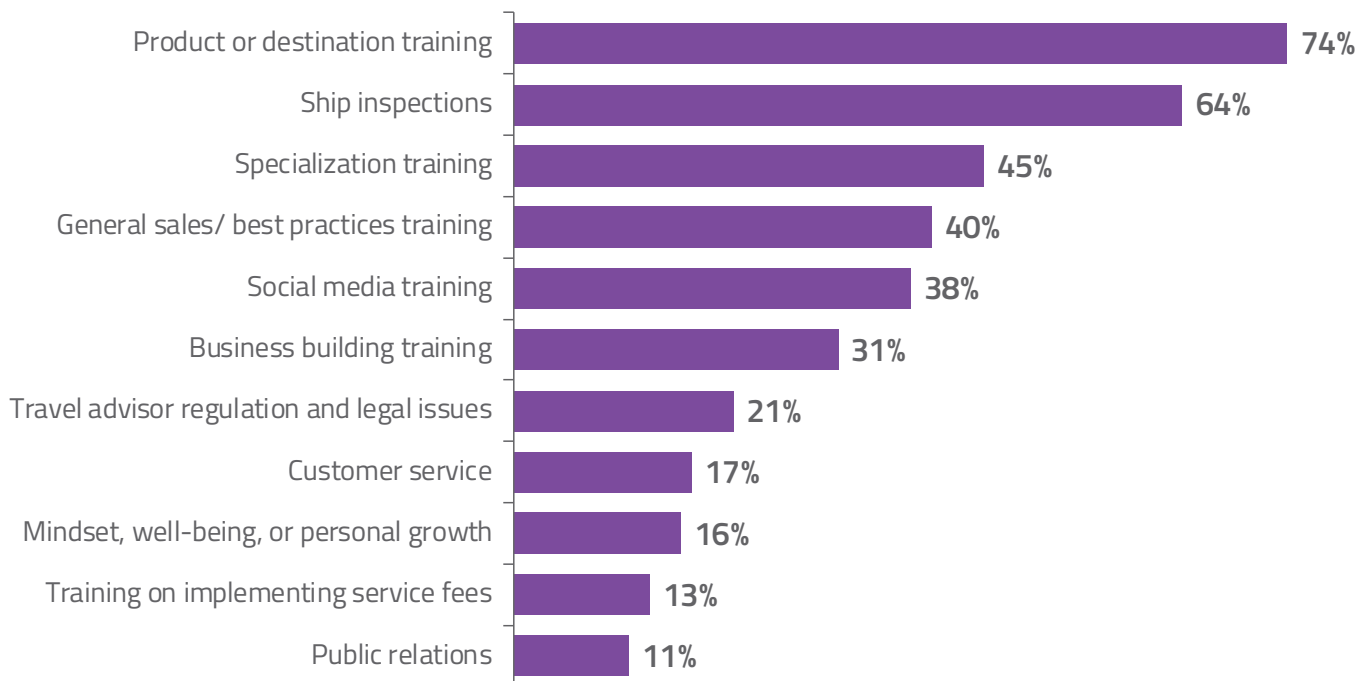
Such is the growing popularity of river cruising that in 2025, 20 new river boats will be launched by seven cruise lines¹⁴. As new destinations get added to the itinerary and specially curated itineraries are created for niche segments, advisors are looking at suppliers for more product and destination training (74%), ship inspections (64%) and specialized training (45%).

One advisor shared:



We have asked ASTA to be able to tour a ship like ACL or Viking when in port nearby.

ADVISOR TRAINING: PREFERRED TRAINING PROGRAMS



¹⁴ <https://cruisepassenger.com.au/rivercruise/new-river-cruises-2025/>

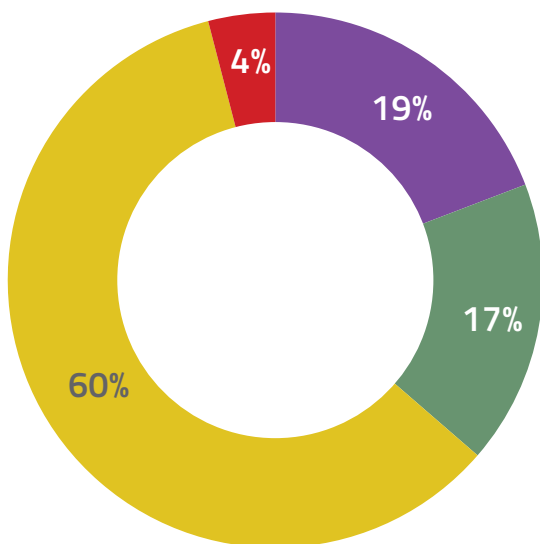


ADVISOR'S PROFILE

The shift that one had been seeing in advisor profiles in the last two years has now settled. Approximately two out of three advisors are ICs. This share has been similar across the past few Outlooks.

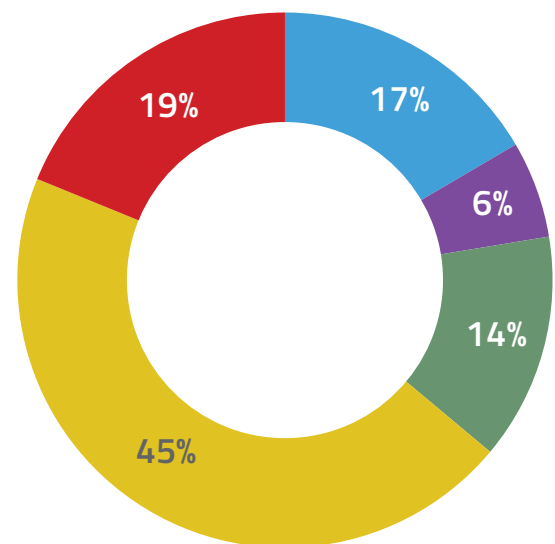


BUSINESS CLASSIFICATION, SHARE (%)



- Retail travel agency with a storefront location
- Retail travel agency with an office/non-storefront location
- Independent contractor/advisor working with a host agency or franchise or consortium
- Independent contractor/advisor working on your own

AGENCY/ADVISOR POSITION, SHARE (%)



- Owner
- Manager
- Employee
- Independent Contractor (IC)
- ICs who identify themselves as owner



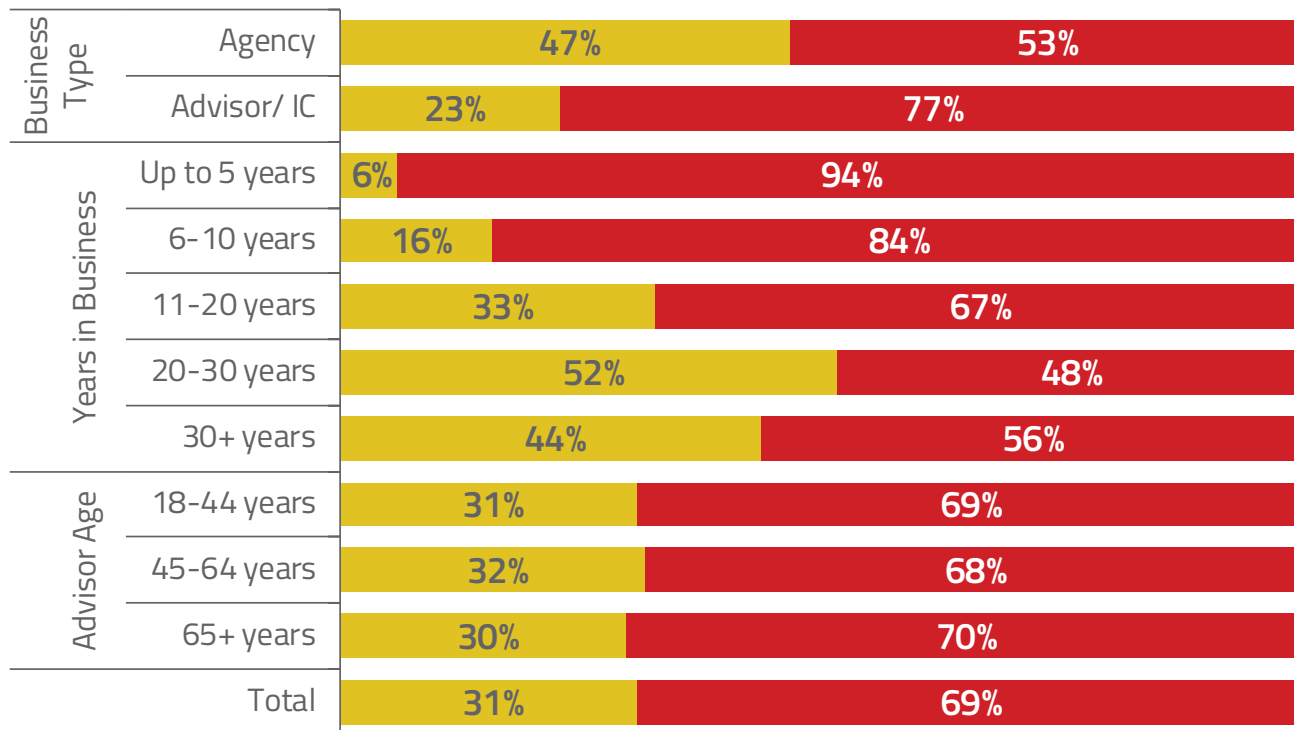
ADVISOR'S PROFILE



The travel industry story has always been one where experience sells. The more seasoned the advisor, the better chance they have of making more than \$1 million in annual gross sales. This is also the case in the agency vs Independent Contractor segment where nearly one in two agencies make more than \$1 million whereas it's only two out of 10 for ICs.

On an average, three out of 10 advisors make more than \$1 million. The industry is expanding and there's great opportunity for the younger and less experienced advisors to become part of this growth story.

**ANNUAL GROSS SALES BY BUSINESS TYPE,
YEARS IN BUSINESS & ADVISOR AGE, SHARE (%)**



■ More than \$1m

■ Up to \$1m



ADVISOR'S PROFILE



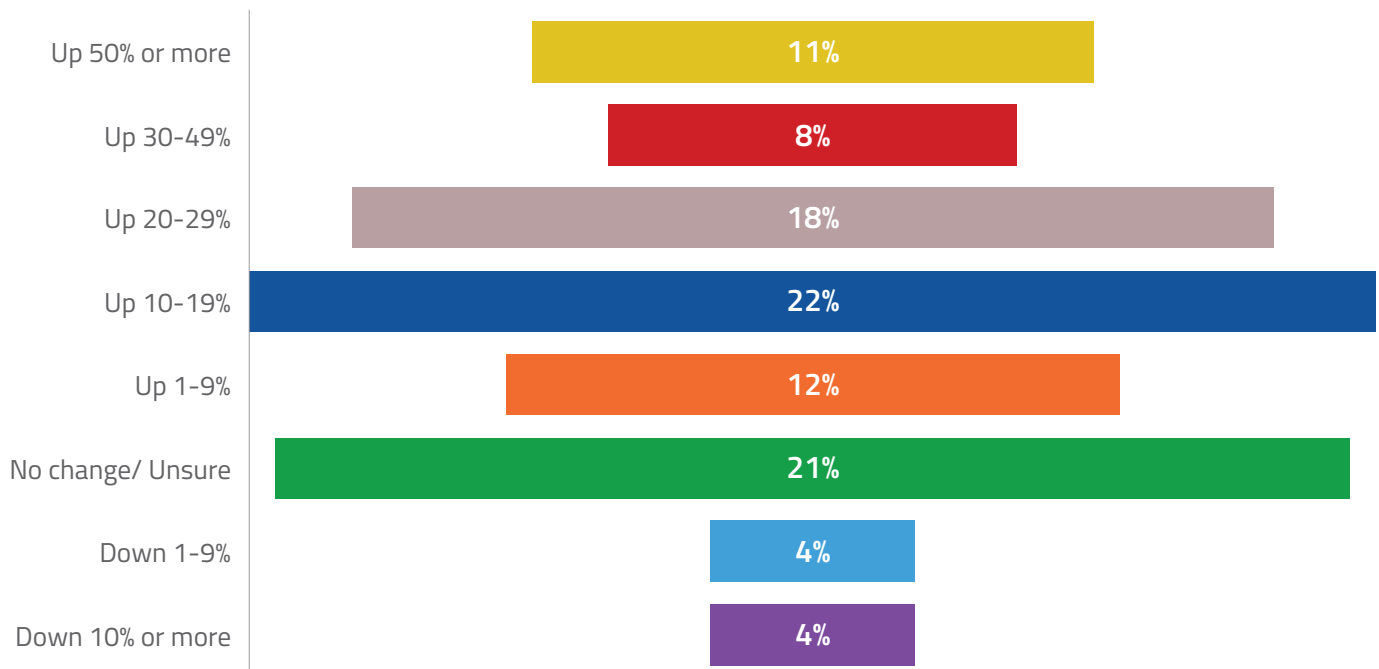
The advisor community is bullish on the prospects of river cruising in the coming year. Seven out of 10 advisors expect to see a rise in sales in 2025 and six out of 10 advisors expect this to be a double-digit growth!

One advisor shared:



I sold about \$400,000 gross in 2023. My year-to-date gross for 2024 is about \$626,000, \$340,000 of that is for river cruises!

ANTICIPATED CHANGE IN ANNUAL GROSS SALES, 2024 VS. 2023, SHARE (%)





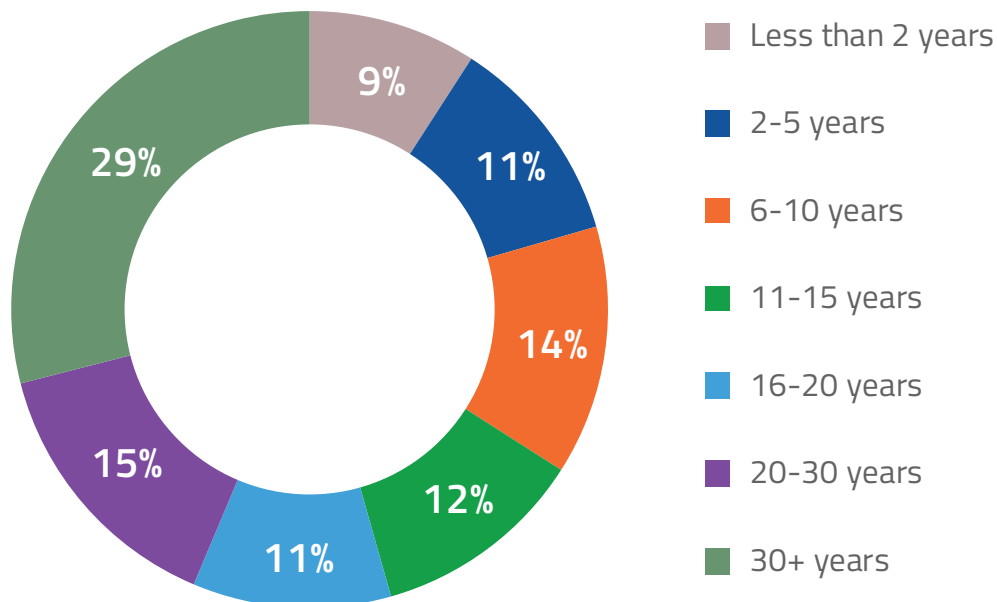
ADVISOR'S PROFILE



More than one out of two advisors have over 15 years of experience in the travel business. The last few years have also seen a steady influx of younger talent and every one out of five advisors is someone with five or less years of experience in the industry.

This provides the industry with a good opportunity to gain new perspective on the travel needs of a younger demographic, as well as gaining some knowledge from the veterans in the industry.

YEARS OF TRAVEL SALES EXPERIENCE, SHARE (%)





Memberships in the associations are not just a boost to the individual advisor but also the community when the associations lobby for the community. For example, in September 2024, the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) concluded the ASTA Legislative Day 2024 in which about 250 travel professionals shared with Congressmembers and their legislative aides two issues impacting the industry: airline ticket refunds and representation on ACPAC, the influential Department of Transportation Committee.¹⁵





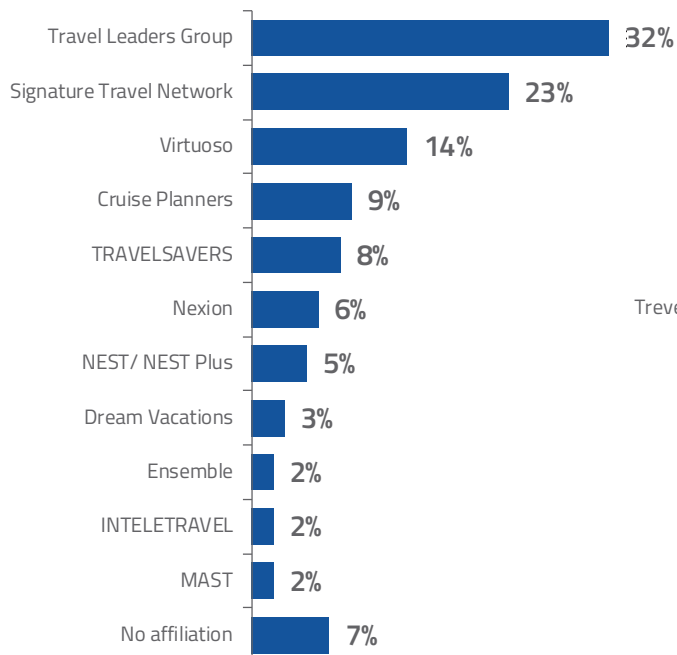
AFFILIATIONS MATTER



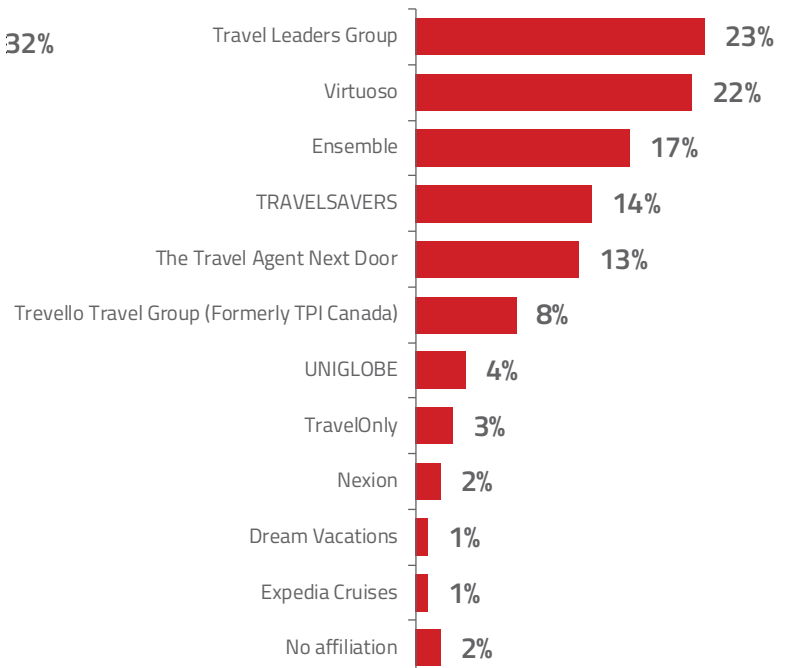
The agency/advisor affiliations across US have a story similar to last year's. Travel Leaders Group (32%), Signature Travel Network (23%) and Virtuoso (14%) continue to enjoy the highest affiliations.

There has been a shift in Canadian affiliations, however. Travel Leaders Group (23%), Virtuoso (22%) and Ensemble (17%) have the highest affiliations.

AGENCY/ADVISORS AFFILIATION – U.S.



AGENCY/ADVISORS AFFILIATION – CANADA





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NO EXCEPTIONS

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Travel Advisors have 60 days to take over any direct booking which we believe is the most trade-friendly policy in existence.

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CONCLUSION



Twenty new ships in the coming season, new itineraries in January, solo-specific cabins... much is happening on the rivers and it's all good news.

As more people discover river cruises, there's also potential for more river cruises to cater to different segments with different interests.

It's been heartening to note the increased adoption of technology by advisors—from being available on instant messaging apps and conducting video calls, to harnessing the power of social media to generate leads. After all, the key demographic of river cruises is shifting from empty nesters to millennials. There has also been an improvement in the call center operations of suppliers and we hope to see this become a seamless operation by the next Outlook.

While vacation days may be getting shorter, the spends remain high. Clients are seeking experiences that provide good value for their money and it's now more crucial than ever for suppliers to provide advisors with the necessary training to create a smooth connection between vacationers and the cruise lines.

In this Outlook advisors have shared all that they feel can help sell river cruises better, from FAM trips, to ship inspections and help in striking better relationships with BDMs,

We hope this Outlook helps foster more collaborations between these two arms of the river cruising industry.



Please go to the following link to view the downloadable pdf version of this outlook:
<https://www.travelmarketreport.com/media/Outlooks/TMRRiverCruiseOutlook2024.pdf>

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