



The Ocean Explorer

VANTAGE Two New Ships

Deidre Dirkman, vice president of global operations



“The opportunity came up for us and we jumped on it,” said Deidre Dirkman, vice president of global operations at Vantage Deluxe World Travel, which will have two year-round expedition ships by 2022.

The Boston-based tour operator is a major player and has a small fleet of river ships.

On the expedition front, Vantage blocks space for large groups from operators such as Hurtigruten.

Come 2021 Vantage moves its operation year-round with the first of two SunStone newbuilds on long-term charter deals.

Dirkman said the company had been looking for opportunities with different companies and different vessels, and the Ocean Explorer and Ocean Odyssey will let them better

control the product experience. The Ocean Explorer will debut in March 2021 followed by the Ocean Odyssey in May 2022.

“We don’t have to rely on other vendors to improve their quality to be on par with our riverboats,” she said.

The ships have been configured for 140 guests each with eight stateroom categories. Some rooms will have space for triple occupancy and there will also be adjoining room options.

Among the features is a focus on single travelers.

“Both ocean ships will have 15 single cabins to accommodate the growing number of solo travelers,” Dirkman explained.

The ships will have a five-star offering as planning has been underway since the second quarter of 2018.

Starting from Hong Kong on March 2, 2021, the Ocean Explorer will sail a world-cruise style deployment, putting her in Northern Europe for the summer and Canada/New England for fall, before heading down the coast of South America to Antarctica. The vessel will then stay in the Americas year-round, Dirkman said.

The Ocean Odyssey will also launch from Hong Kong and run a similar deployment pattern to Northern Europe, but will then turn around and head back to Asia for her winter program.

Demand is strong for Antarctica as well as Iceland, Dirkman said.

“Part of our plan is to include those destinations on our own deployment going forward,” she added.

The average Vantage customer is around 67 years old, and sourced in the United States through direct mail marketing. Ages for the company’s expedition departures trend down on average, from late 50s to early 60s. ■