

MINNEAPOLIS, Dec. 26, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Excitement over river cruising is adding to Europe's overall allure for those taking cruise vacations in 2014; combined with European deep water cruises, the continent's cruise destinations rank second only to the Caribbean among Cruise Holidays clientele. Furthermore, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and Budapest, Hungary, are emerging as river cruising's top destinations. Additionally, cruisers will eagerly wait 11 more months until the most anticipated ship of 2014 begins welcoming cruise passengers. These are just some of the highlights of Cruise Holidays International's **2014 Cruise Trends** survey.* Cruise Holidays is a network of cruise-specialty travel agencies based in North America, and its cruise experts across the United States and Canada participated in the survey.

Top 10 Cruise Destinations

With its diverse itineraries, the Caribbean continues to hold the top spot in cruise bookings for the year ahead, by a wide margin. Thanks to its nearly year-round sunny weather and convenient access from the southern and eastern United States Unit

, the Caribbean drives the majority of all cruise bookings. Here is the full list of the Top 10 cruise destinations being booked by Cruise Holidays professionals across North America :

Destination

Percentage of Passengers

1. Caribbean (includes Bahamas)

54.8%

2. European Deep Water Cruises (includes Mediterranean, Baltic, Scandinavia and Greek Isles)

10.4%

3. Alaska

9.1%

4. European Rivers

Excitement Over European Cruises Continues to Grow On the High Seas and in River Cruising

Written by Australian Business

5.7%

5. Bermuda

3.5%

6. Panama Canal

2.6%

7. Trans-Atlantic

2.5%

8. Hawaiian Islands

2.1%

9. South Pacific (includes Australia/New Zealand)

1.8%

10. Canada/New England

1.2%

Overall, there is little change in the list of top 10 destinations year over year. However, it should be noted that this is the first time "European Rivers" have been broken out as their own category in Cruise Holidays' report. Had it been a separate category, European Rivers would have ranked fifth last year, just behind Bermuda. This year, they edge out Bermuda as the fourth most popular cruise destination. In the Caribbean

, Western Caribbean sailings are most popular, followed by Eastern Caribbean and Southern Caribbean, respectively.

"The enthusiasm over river cruising, particularly in Europe, continues to add a new dynamic to the vacation market. Even travelers who have never cruised before seem particularly drawn to river cruises as an attractive alternative to a land tour," said Kevin Weisner, Senior Vice President, Cruise Holidays International.

Cruise Holidays analyzed data from across its network of agencies to see where most river cruise passengers are heading in 2014. The windmills and tulips of The Netherlands, as well as cruises along the Danube and "Grand Tour" cruises of the Rhine, Main and Danube lead the way in popularity. Below is a list of the top five river cruise cities, where voyages either begin or end. The rivers or waterways most commonly associated with these cities are listed below each port, and commonly-booked itinerary lengths are also included:

City, Country

% of River Cruise Bookings

1. Amsterdam, The Netherlands

"Windmills & Tulips"

Rhine (7-day), Dutch waterways (if roundtrip), some Mosel, Rhine/Main/Danube (14-day)

19.3

2. Budapest, Hungary

"Grand Tour"

Danube (7-day), Rhine/Main/Danube (14-day)

16.8

3. Paris, France

"Normandy"

Seine (7-day), Rhone (8-10 day), Seine/Rhone (14-day)

9.7

4. Basel, Switzerland

"Rhine River Valley"

Rhine

8.5

5. Nuremberg, Germany

Main/Danube

5.4

Most Anticipated Ship

While river cruising proliferates, interest in large, new ocean-going (i.e. deep water) ships is also soaring. In fact, when Cruise Holidays experts were asked which new ship they are anticipating the most in 2014, the overwhelming response was Royal Caribbean International's *Quantum of*

the Seas

This ship will not debut until November 2014, but it opened for booking in May 2013; bookings have been very impressive, according to Cruise Holidays. In fact, the ship accounts for nearly 20% of all Cruise Holidays cruise bookings looking into 2015, the ship's first full year in service.

Best Value in Cruising

Cruise Holidays experts were asked: "In which region do you anticipate the best value in cruising during 2014?" The Caribbean again placed first, with European deep water cruises and European river cruises following. Alaska and the Pacific Northwest sit comfortably in fourth place, followed by trans-Atlantic cruising.

On the topic of pricing, each year, Cruise Holidays experts are asked what their clients' top reasons are for booking a particular cruise. For the fourth consecutive year, itinerary is the most popular response, followed by pricing. But compared to 2013, a full 10% fewer respondents answered that price is a major factor in their cruise decision. This gap has continued to widen each year dating back to 2011.

For more information about Cruise Holidays, or to locate a cruise professional, go to www.cruiseholidays.com, and click on "Locate An Agent" in the upper right-hand corner.

**Results are based on a survey of 133 Cruise Holidays agents from December 5 – December 22, 2013, as well as from actual booking data taken directly from more than 600 Cruise Holidays agents.*

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