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# Foreword

Travel packages. They've become one of the most important sales products you can sell. Whether a resort stay, a tour or a cruise, travel packages provide clients with a clearly defined, hassle-free vacation experience. And for you, they represent maximum profitability with minimum time and effort.

Cruises, of course, have become one of the best known and most popular vacation packages. No doubt you already have a well-focused idea of what the typical mass-market cruise experience represents, as well as the kinds of clients who buy it. But what about cruises that aren't of the mass-market variety, the type of experience that typically takes place on small ships? Who takes those? Why do they prefer them to big-ship products? And why do these clients often exhibit, even at much higher per diems, such a fierce loyalty to small-ship cruising — and to the travel agents who sell cruises to them?

To answer these questions and more, Cruise West has developed this Small-Ship Partner Program for you. We feel that the more you know about small-ship packages — whether our own or those of others — the more likely you'll be to spot clients who would find a small-ship cruise the perfect answer to their travel dreams — whether they're aware of it or not!

Cruise West's Small-Ship Partners Program will, we believe, provide maximum value for you, with only a modest amount of time and effort. What we'll be doing, in effect, is deconstructing the small-ship cruise experience for you, showing you all its features and benefits, so that you can do the very same thing for your clients. After all, a client's loyalty to you is dependent upon the quality of the insights and knowledge you impart.

We'd like to think, of course, that you'll see Cruise West as the best solution to many of your clients' needs, but we realize that we can't be the right choice for every single client. That's why we've tried to make this workbook completely objective. We want you to succeed as small-ship cruise counselors — and that means recommending the right product, whether it's our small-ship cruising or not.



# What You'll Get

Once you complete this educational package and pass the test that accompanies it, you personally will become a certified Small-Ship Partner (SSP), and your agency a Small-Ship Partner agency, with benefits for both. We fully describe what benefits this partnership represents at the end of Chapter Seven, but here are the highlights:

You will receive three personalized \$50 bonus commission coupons to use on your first three post-certification bookings (that's essentially \$150 in cash, just for completing this program!).

We will extend to you personally a \$250 credit toward a reduced-rate cruise, after a full-revenue booking has been made. That's \$250 over and above our already low SSP agent rates.

You'll receive a certificate that identifies you as a small-ship expert.



# What You'll Need To Do

Here's how you can qualify to be a Small-Ship Partner and benefit from the Small-Ship Partners Program:

1. Take the pre-test on page 4 to determine what you already know about small-ship cruising.
2. Read the workbook material and complete the interactive activities that are to be found throughout.
3. Complete the 20-question test that begins on page 47 and return it to us. To pass you must answer at least 18 of the 20 questions correctly.

We urge you to complete all your work and submit your completed test, as soon as possible. That way you'll begin benefiting from your Partnership as soon as possible.

Once you meet the passing standards, we'll send you our Small-Ship Partners Program benefits package listed on page 2. If you do not pass the test, we will also let you know and give you a second chance to submit.

Once you've qualified for the Small-Ship Partner designation, you'll begin to share in its many benefits and the wonderful profit-making opportunity that selling small-ship cruises represents.

Ready to learn? Great! Then move on to our pre-test and introduction, where you'll discover what selling the small-ship cruise experience is all about.



# Pre-Test

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SMALL-SHIP CRUISING?

Circle the answer which best completes each of the following statements or best answers each question.

1. About what percentage of small-ship passengers are first-time cruisers?
  - A. 25%
  - B. 40%
  - C. 55%
  - D. 70%
  - E. 10%
  
2. Shallow draft vessels are most commonly used by:
  - A. Holland America Line
  - B. Princess Cruises
  - C. Viking Cruise Line
  - D. All of the above
  - E. None of the above
  
3. When during the sales process is it the most important time to use features/benefits language?
  - A. Qualifying the client
  - B. Recommending the product
  - C. Countering objections
  - D. Right before the close
  - E. None of the above
  
4. Of the following ships, which one visits Antarctica?
  - A. Lindblad Expeditions' *National Geographic Sea Lion*
  - B. Cruise West's *Spirit of Oceanus*
  - C. Abercrombie & Kent's *MV Clipper Odyssey*
  - D. All of the above
  - E. A & C
  
5. When during the sales process is it the most important time to use open-ended questions?
  - A. Qualifying the client
  - B. Recommending the product
  - C. When countering objections
  - D. Right before the close
  - E. None of the above



## Pre-Test (continued)

6. Which statement about small-ship cruisers is incorrect?
  - A. They tend to be technologically sophisticated.
  - B. Their income levels are above average.
  - C. They're driven more by value than cost.
  - D. They're, on average, 40-70 years old.
  - E. They tend to be less sociable with other passengers.
  
7. Which statement is true about most small-ship dining?
  - A. Passengers can dine at any time they want.
  - B. Coat and tie are required at dinner only.
  - C. Meals are excluded from the cruise price.
  - D. There's a single seating, and it's open.
  - E. Several seatings are scheduled, since the dining room is too small to accommodate everyone.
  
8. When qualifying the niche client, you should:
  - A. Take notes
  - B. Use open-ended questions
  - C. Determine client's psychographic profile
  - D. All of the above
  - E. None of the above
  
9. More than half of potential small-ship cruise clients:
  - A. Tend to be less sociable than large-ship cruise clients
  - B. Are more interested in cost than in anything else
  - C. Tend to be wary of new experiences
  - D. All of the above
  - E. None of the above



# Introduction

## ESTABLISHING VALUE: HOW CLIENTS DECIDE TO BUY

It's what we all want from our purchases: value. It's definitely what your clients want when they come to you for advice. And it's certainly what you always try to give them as you determine which vacation choice best meets their needs.

But what is value, exactly? How do we recognize it when we see it, and how do our clients know when they've experienced it?

Value is a matter of perception, and that's what makes it difficult to recognize. Different people value different things. Some people value a walk along the beach more than a stroll down Rodeo Drive. Some people value a sports car, while others would find more excitement in owning and riding a horse.

Different strokes for different folks — right?

Not for everything. The word "value" holds at least one meaning in common for us all. There's one sure way to test value which just about everyone can agree on: **Something is valued if someone is willing — even eager — to spend time and/or money on it.** That valued something is different for everyone, but the test is always the same.

Most consumer goods reveal their value easily, and in advance. A customer shopping for a new suit can examine it, try it on, read the labels, and make an informed purchasing decision based on whether or not it fits his needs or desires. The decision of how to spend one's travel dollars (and hours), however, can be much more complicated and confusing, since travel isn't a thing — it's an experience. And — as with any experience — there's no absolutely accurate way of evaluating such an intangible beforehand.

That's where you, our travel agent partner, come in. Because most people have neither unlimited travel dollars, nor unlimited vacation time, the decisions they have to make about how to spend both are often difficult. Your job is to help your clients with these difficult decisions — to help them choose from among thousands of vacation travel options, the ones that will provide them with the richest — most valuable — experiences for their travel dollars. And that expertise is precisely what clients value in you. It's in your expertise, experience and wisdom that they place their trust.

What does all this have to do with small-ship cruising? Small-ship cruising offers an attractive alternative for many clients — to maximize their pleasure, avoid wasting valuable vacation time, and realize exceptional value for money spent. It's also an option many of your clients may not even realize they have. To many, cruising is synonymous with a big-ship experience.

As you'll learn, however, there's a whole other market out there in small-ship cruising. Small-ship cruisers tend to look at life in a special way. They tend to dream of visiting more off-the-beaten-path kinds of destinations. They want to have the richest possible experience at the places they visit. They tend to gravitate to destinations — not for the nightlife or the shopping or the restaurants — but rather for the nature of the destinations themselves. People with these kinds of preferences tend to find small-ship cruising enormously fulfilling.



# Introduction

There's something else that influences a person's perception of value: the vanity factor. Many people love to be able to tell their friends that they've done something, seen something, or experienced something that most people haven't. Small-ship cruises provide fantastic "bragging" opportunities. "Everyone" may take cruises to Alaska or Mexico. But not "everyone" gets to:

- See whales so close you can see the barnacles on their skin
- Visit beautiful isolated island beaches, accessible only by launch
- Sail through narrow, iceberg-filled fjords
- Explore intimate channels and out-of-the-way waterways
- Learn about nature and native cultures in deeply personal ways

And what do you value? What are you — the travel agent — looking for in your sales experience? Fundamentally, the same thing your clients seek: value. Plus, profitability from the valuable time you spend with your clients, and value in what your clients can get from your suppliers.

So, what's in it for you to sell small-ship cruises? Consider this:

- There's a sizable potential market out there for small-ship cruises — more than could possibly fit on all the small ships currently in existence.
- Small-ship cruises are often more profitable for the agency than large-ship cruises since, as you'll see, they tend to earn you higher commissions.
- Small-ship cruise products provide great potential for cross-selling and up-selling.
- Small-ship cruisers tend to be repeat customers.
- Through skillful qualifying, it's often easy to convert many kinds of clients to small-ship cruising — clients like these:
  - People who say, "I'd never take a cruise," or who express no interest for mega-ships.
  - Mass-market cruising regulars who are looking for a more in-depth destination experience.
  - People who like a casual atmosphere.
  - Exploration-minded people who want to get up-close to nature.
  - Sociable people who would like to make personal connections, both on and off the ship.
- And, by conversion, you can increase the size of the market, and the probability of repeat business.



# Introduction

Value is a perception to agents, too. Many agents believe that their clients are looking for a “deal” — heavily discounted, or as cheap as possible. And they are right, but a “deal” isn’t necessarily the least expensive product. Of course, some clients’ budgets aren’t suited to small-ship cruises, but for those who can afford the somewhat higher cost, small-ship cruises can provide special values which make them “deals” — in the most important sense of the word. A true “deal” is maximum value for the money. Does the “deal” satisfy the client’s real needs? If it doesn’t, then it’s not the right deal.

For the right clients, small-ship cruising provides optimum value for both their time and the money spent. Rich experiences and dreamy memories — gathering experiences and storing them up for a lifetime — these are the products clients are paying for. And the small-ship cruise is — in many cases — the only way for clients to purchase certain highly valuable experiences. For clients who value them, it’s the perfect recommendation.



# Chapter One

## THE SMALL-SHIP CRUISE DEFINED

Before beginning this chapter, take a moment and imagine that you've just recommended a small-ship cruise to your client. The client asks, "How is a small-ship cruise different from a 'regular' cruise?" How would you respond?

In the space below, try to write four points about a small-ship cruise that you think might provide your client with the most significant information about small-ship cruising. When you've finished this chapter, compare your definition with what you've learned.

1.

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2.

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3.

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4.

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# Chapter One

## The small ship cruise defined

What's the best way to define a small-ship cruise? Many different opinions exist, but here's a set of useful parameters:

- **Defined by size of ship.** Small ships are much smaller than the mass-market cruise vessels, typically carrying 200 or fewer guests.
- **Defined by the kind of intimate experience the client receives.** An up-close, involving, and highly personal experience is a defining characteristic of small-ship cruises.

Two examples of small-ship cruise possibilities:

- Small destination-oriented companies, like Cruise West, Silversea Cruise Line, and Abercrombie & Kent, offer intimate, up-close cruises of fascinating, out-of-the-ordinary regions, often in places big ships simply cannot go.
- Companies like Windstar Cruise Lines offer cruises on masted sailing ships, with all the romance of wind-powered sailing.

First let's consider the bigger picture. What is it, exactly, that makes cruising — any kind of cruising — so appealing to many vacationers? Why does cruising represent the fastest-growing segment of the entire travel industry? By answering that question, you'll discover at least a part of what clients value in small-ship cruising, as well.

We have to ask another question, too. Why have some people resisted cruising? There are still travelers who are skeptical about cruising, and others who have taken cruises and simply don't enjoy them. By examining what clients find unappealing about mass-market cruises, you may find ways in which to answer the concerns of non-cruisers, and provide a cruising option they might find more to their taste.



# Chapter One

Before proceeding, take a few minutes and complete the following activity. When you've finished, you can compare your answers with the material covered in the remainder of the chapter, to see if you've come up with new insights into small-ship cruising as a travel option.

## Activity

In the space provided below, list five things your clients say they like best about conventional mass-market cruises. Then, list five things they say they like least. Try to list these items in order of importance.

Things liked best:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Things liked least:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_



# Chapter One

## THE MASS-MARKET CRUISE EXPERIENCE

Many of your clients will be familiar with mass-market cruises. Cruising, after all, represents a huge segment of the travel market, and provides many important benefits to clients, one of the most attractive features is “taking the hotel with you.” Cruise passengers have to pack and unpack only once during their entire vacation.

But there are a number of aspects specific to the mass-market cruise. Among these are:

- Huge, hotel-like ships, with a mega-resort atmosphere.
- Many hundreds to thousands of passengers.
- Resort-like amenities, such as casinos, swimming pools, showrooms, hairdressers, spas, etc. Many ships are virtual mini-cities at sea.
- Multiple dining seatings. Most ships have assigned seating, with passengers restricted to a specific hour for dinner.
- A somewhat impersonal, anonymous atmosphere during portions of the cruise experience.
- Often formal or semi-formal attire at dinner.
- Conventional itineraries and a selected range of well-known, popular destinations.
- Most cruise ships stop at major ports only: their itineraries are governed by the mass appeal of a limited number of heavily-visited destinations.
- Most cruise ships can only stop at major ports. These are the only ones big enough to accommodate huge ships.
- Las Vegas style entertainment, casinos, etc.
- A wide range of onboard activities available.
- Focus is often on the ship itself as a primary part of the experience — what’s inside the ship.
- Mass-market cruises are designed to appeal to vast numbers of people.
- Competition ensures a similarity of programs and activities among the larger cruise lines.



# Chapter One

These are the most significant features of mass-market cruises. Many, many people love what a mass-market cruise represents. But others aren't candidates for such cruises at all. They're looking for something else. Something different.

In many areas, small-ship cruising provides some very different experiences from what vacationers expect of mass-market cruises. Let's take a look at 11 of the most important differences.

## THE 11 DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SMALL-SHIP CRUISING EXPERIENCE

1. **Smaller, more intimate ships.** Small ships are more like "bed and breakfast" establishments than mega-resort hotel environments.
2. **The focus is on the destination(s), rather than the ship as the primary experience.** What's outside the ship is what's important. On most small-ship cruises, the emphasis is on an up-close and personal relationship with the environment, nature, and wildlife.
3. **A wider variety and flexibility of itineraries,** made possible by shallow-draft vessels (draft refers to how deep below the waterline the bottom of the ship is). This permits access to smaller ports where large vessels can't dock. Many ships also have bow ramps, and/or inflatable excursion craft for landings on remote and pristine shores. These smaller ships also make possible opportunistic side-trips to view nature up-close, for example, to whale-watch in small, secluded bays.
4. **Fewer people.** These smaller vessels mean smaller groups of like-minded people, sharing an intimate and fascinating experience most people only dream of. Shore landings bring fewer sightseers who don't overwhelm a town or an isolated, fragile environment with hordes of tourists, as some of the larger vessels can.
5. **More personal.** Small ships provide more intimate and personal interaction — among guests, and between guests and crew members. The service is individualized and welcoming. On Cruise West, for example, guests have access to their Exploration Leader all day.
6. **Usually informal, or at most, semi-formal evenings.** Most small-ship cruises tend towards informality, casual dress, and comfort, rather than glamour.
7. **Single-seating dining,** which means, on most small ships, open seating. Guests can sit where they want, and with whom they want. They're not restricted to the same table throughout the cruise, with the same companions. The service is often home-style and informal, too, and the food is high-quality and usually regional, taking advantage of fresh locally-available delicacies.



# Chapter One

8. **Onboard activities that center on educational lectures, films, etc.** Since the focus is on the destination — what’s outside the ship — most small-ship cruises include onboard expert lecturers who present, explain, and clarify the wonders visited. Many of these ships also have extensive libraries — filled not only with the latest best-sellers, but also with fascinating information on the places, people, and wildlife the ship is visiting.
9. **More feeling of being on the sea.** On a large vessel, there’s little connection with the waters below, and unless a guest is on deck, or in a room with large windows, it’s possible for him to forget he’s at sea at all. On a small ship, the sea is ever-present — a magical, romantic companion during the entire voyage, and an integral part of the experience. And since small ships tend to travel sheltered coastal waters, the risk of seasickness is minimized, while the assurance of spectacular views is maximized.
10. **Staterooms have all key facilities.** With very few exceptions, small-ship cabins have all the key amenities, such as private baths and comfortable beds. And most all are outside cabins — opening to outside passages, making the cabin as close to nature as possible, yet as cozy and comfortable as any on a larger vessel.
- 11 **Selected amenities.** Many small ships provide a surprising number of luxury amenities for the size, including TV’s, VCR’s, lounges, Internet and phone access, and bars. Depending on the degree of luxury your client requires, it’s possible to supply virtually any level of cruise amenities — from the most basic to the most luxurious — on a small ship.

It’s also important to realize that a small-ship cruise is a niche market product, designed to appeal to smaller numbers of people. As with most niche products, small-ship cruises offer unique experiences, unobtainable in any other way to people searching for such experiences. In other words, they’re a way of satisfying the needs of those of your clients who can’t be “pigeonholed” in the conventional cruiser category, or of those who just want something different.

Moreover, niche clients tend to be loyal clients, since their needs or desires can’t be met in a mass-market environment. They may be independent, and perfectly competent to research and plan their vacations on their own, but they are generally very busy people, without the time to do so — and welcome your expert advice. Also, since niche clients tend to be willing to spend more money on a niche product than they are willing to spend on a mass-market one, small-ship cruises are highly profitable travel packages for you to sell.

The small-ship cruising niche can be even further sub-divided. Our next chapter will reveal to you how — when you begin to analyze the small-ship cruise package you’ll find many different cruising possibilities, indeed.



# Chapter Two

## HOW SMALL-SHIP CRUISES DIFFER FROM ONE ANOTHER

### Four kinds of small-ship cruise experiences

People who've never had a small-ship experience would think that one ship is pretty much like another, but they would be wrong. We've seen how different the small-ship experience can be from the large-ship environment — how much more intimate, personal, destination-oriented, and informal they tend to be. But even small ships are not all alike. They differ in many ways — both in terms of their structural characteristics, and the kinds of experiences they provide.

There are basically four kinds of small-ship cruise experiences your clients might consider. These are:

- "Soft" Adventure Cruises
- Expedition or "Hard" Adventure Cruises
- Masted Sailing Ship Cruises
- River Cruises

We've chosen not to include in this workbook the small, ultra-luxury cruises of Seabourn, Regent Seven Seas, and Cunard. These are either in a market niche of their own, or at the extreme-luxury end of the traditional cruise industry. River barges, too, represent a very separate market niche, and will not be covered in this workbook.

While the categories that we have included are somewhat arbitrary, and may overlap in many cases, they represent the most common features of small-ship cruise types available. Before proceeding through the rest of this chapter, take a few minutes to complete the activity on the following page. It'll help you explore your own preconceptions about these four kinds of small-ship experiences.



# Chapter Two

For each of the four types of small-ship cruise experiences, try to think of three words you believe might best characterize that kind of cruise. Let the categories stimulate your imagination, and try to visualize what such an experience might be like. When you've finished the chapter, compare your answers to what you've learned.

## Soft Adventure Cruises

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Masted Sailing Ship Cruises

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Expedition or Hard Adventure Cruises

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## River Cruises

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Now you'll have the opportunity to compare your ideas to what types of special, unique experiences are available on each kind of cruise, and what your clients will find most tempting about them. The question here is one of features and benefits. What are the features of small-ship cruises — what exactly do they offer — that provide specific benefits to your clients — that is, the answers to their dreams, needs, and requirements?

Here are some of the fundamental ways in which small-ship cruises can differ from one another, and how the features of each kind of cruise provide specific benefits to those clients who most seek them.

- **Soft Adventure Cruises.** Of the four categories, this is the one that will attract the greatest number of your clients. That's because, in some ways, soft adventure cruises have the most in common with the large, mass-market cruises. But the differences are critical.
- The key to the soft adventure experience: **It's truly up-close and personal.** Because the ships are smaller, with shallower drafts, they can go where the large ships can't. This provides your clients with the most important benefit of small-ship cruising — the ability to experience the destination in an intimate, colorful, and immediate way.



## Chapter Two

- The focus of soft adventure cruising is on the **destination**. This kind of cruise furnishes its guests with an intensive, up-close experience of the things they're most interested in: nature, culture, history and learning.
- **Lecturers and expert guides** enhance the learning experience on most soft adventure cruises, providing information that helps guests understand and fully appreciate what they're seeing.
- Bow ramps and/or inflatable excursion craft allow shore landings where larger ships can't dock, giving guests safe and **comfortable access to a variety of unspoiled areas**.
- **Off-the-beaten path, remote and unusual locales, where small ships go**, offer guests access to engaging and otherwise inaccessible areas. These ships visit such remarkable, fascinating and out-of-the-way destinations as the Alaskan fjords, the South Pacific, Mexico's Sea of Cortés and the Mediterranean.
- Soft adventure cruises attract an interesting mix of passengers, permitting **interaction between people of similar interests** but with a variety of different backgrounds.
- These cruises also offer **varied shore excursion and pre- and post-tour options**, which allow cruises to be easily combined with air, motorcoach or train trips to interesting or related inland destinations.

Soft adventure cruises include those offered by Cruise West.

- **Expedition or Hard Adventure Cruises.** The biggest difference between expedition cruises and soft adventure cruises is a "hint of discomfort," permitting expedition cruise guests the illusion of "roughing it," while enjoying the most important creature comforts and all the safety such cruises ensure. There's a small but growing clientele for this kind of product, and it's a highly profitable one for agents who sell expedition cruises.
- The key to the expedition cruise experience is **high adventure**, from the wilderness and remoteness of the destinations to the special outfitting of research-type ships.
- Another major difference between soft adventure and hard adventure cruising is that **some of these expedition vessels can go where even soft adventure cruise ships can't**. Quark Expeditions' Russian icebreakers, for example, can maneuver through heavy ice fields, enabling their one particularly well-equipped vessel to circumnavigate the North Pole.
- All expedition ships are equipped with **bow ramps or inflatable excursion craft**, providing guests access to pristine natural beauty and small, usually isolated villages or wilderness areas.
- These cruises require guest willingness and ability to undergo **somewhat more exertion and discomfort** than soft adventure cruises, providing hardy, adventuresome passengers with authentic, exciting, but safe, shore experiences otherwise unobtainable.



## Chapter Two

- The lecturers and guides who provide education in nature, science, culture, and so on are often **experts in their fields**. Guests receive accurate and detailed information on what they're seeing and experiencing. As with soft adventure cruises, the focus on expedition ships is education and learning.
- The style of most expedition cruises tends to be casual, with **informal dress and a relaxed and natural shipboard environment**, maximizing the focus on the destination rather than on glitz and glamour.
- **Some expedition vessels are surprisingly luxurious**, and provide an impressive number of guest facilities, including pools, fitness centers, and other amenities usually associated with large-ship cruising.

Examples of expedition cruise experiences available to your clients include Abercrombie & Kent's Explorer cruises, and the voyages of Quark Expeditions and Lindblad Expeditions.

- **Masted Sailing Ships.** These are fully masted, sometimes historically-accurate vessels for practical and safety reasons. Some of these ships, however, use only sail-power during most voyages, providing unique satisfaction to clients who yearn for the romance and excitement of experiencing what it was like to go "down to the sea in ships." This product appeals to a very defined niche clientele, and is more popular than you might suppose. Below are some of the specific features and benefits of masted sailing ship cruises.
  - The key to the experience is the **fulfillment of client fantasies of the wind and the sea**.
  - Two kinds of experiences are available, each providing a slightly different measure of authenticity:
    - **Low-tech, highly authentic sailing vessels**, that generally sail fully rigged under wind power only.
    - **High-tech sailing vessels** with computer-controlled sails, that sail under both wind and/or engine power.
    - Both types of sailing vessels provide the unique experience of "sailing the high seas" in a ship that feels very much as ships did hundreds of years ago.
  - **High-priced to moderately-priced experiences** are available, providing clients with a choice of how much to spend to achieve their seafaring dreams.
  - Most ships provide **amenities similar to soft adventure vessels**, furnishing guests with the thrill of sailing minus the discomforts.
  - On some sailing vessels, guests can help the crew, hoisting and trimming sails, and even taking a turn at the helm, allowing them to **experience the real adventure (and work) of sailing**.



# Chapter Two

Examples of masted sailing ship cruises are those provided by Windstar Cruises and Star Clipper.

- **River Cruises.** Various kinds of river-going vessels ply the inland waterways of major rivers and their tributaries worldwide, and offer travelers a unique way to experience a country or culture from the inside. There are basically two kinds of river craft that provide these opportunities:
  - River-specific Cruisers
  - “Soft” Adventure River Boats

Each of these river cruisers provides its own individual form of river experience, and some are unique to the regions, and even the river, in which they operate. Here are some of the most important features and benefits each kind of river cruiser offers to your clients.

- **River-specific Cruisers** are very popular among European travelers, but are relatively new to U.S. clients. As Americans discover their wonderful possibilities, however, the market for these cruises is likely to grow.
  - The key to the experience: **a leisurely pace.** The traditionally slow pace of river passes by — not as the blur train passengers perceive — but as intimately and invitingly as it would on a casual walk in the countryside.
  - These are **small, but well-appointed ships**, furnishing guests with many amenities commonly found on larger vessels, including private baths, bars, lounges, etc.
  - Interesting and culturally important river ports offer **fascinating shore excursions**, and even **shopping opportunities.**
  - These cruises can range from informal to formal, casual to luxurious, affording clients a **variety of style and price choices.**

Examples of companies offering river-specific cruises include Viking River Cruises and AMA Waterways.

Examples of companies providing small-ship soft adventure river cruises are Cruise West and Lindblad Expeditions.



# Chapter Two

## WHAT TO WATCH FOR

The most important distinctions among the various kinds of small-ship cruises concern the question of “style.” Different companies within each category may have widely differing styles – from formal and even “stuffy” to informal and decidedly casual. Careful qualifying of clients and accurate product knowledge will help you guide your clients in the right direction.

In Chapters Four and Six, you’ll discover some important tips to help you identify potential small-ship cruise clients, as well as ways in which to match these clients with the right product. But nothing will substitute for first-rate qualifying skills and product knowledge. The differences between large-ship cruises and small-ship cruises are substantial, but so are differences among small-ship cruises themselves. Your ability to recognize these differences can mean a great deal to your clients, and a great deal to your agency’s profitability, as well.

But first, we need to understand which destinations are best served by small ships. As you’ll discover in our next chapter, they’re destinations where mass-market cruises dare not go.



# Chapter Three

## WHERE MASS-MARKET CRUISES DARE NOT GO THE GEOGRAPHY OF SMALL-SHIP CRUISING

Based on your experience, try to name one specific (and different) cruise line that offers small-ship cruises to (or in) each of the following areas:

- The Nile

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- Alaska

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- The Caribbean

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- Central/South America

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# Chapter Three

## WHAT CLIENTS WANT

What do your clients want from a cruise to Alaska? How about the Caribbean? What are they looking for when they tell you they're thinking of booking a cruise on the Mississippi River? What dreams and fantasies drive different clients in different directions?

The geography of small-ship cruising encompasses the entire world: every ocean, and many inland waterways on virtually every continent. Your familiarity with what different destinations have to offer will help you enormously in guiding your clients to just the right destinations. And your understanding of how a small-ship cruise can enhance the experience of different destinations will help you provide your clients with a richer variety of options.

Here are some of the most important benefits your clients will receive from a small-ship cruise at key destinations:

### ALASKA

- **Awe-inspiring scenery** (of the steep, wild and rugged variety). Of course, your clients can see fjords and pristine bays from large, mass-market cruise ships, but the most spectacular views often require ships that can get into the smaller bays and restricted entry inlets along rugged coastlines where glaciers calve. Small ships can reveal wonders larger ships can't.
- **An up-close wildlife experience.** On a huge ship, whales in the ocean appear distant and small. On a small ship, they're treated as a highlight, and the ship can actually stop and turn around so guests can see the whales up-close.
- **The "real" thing.** Sure, the mainstream tourist ports of call are all included on most small-ship cruises, but they usually **also take guests to where resident people live and work**, as well, fishing villages, and small unique towns where most tourists don't and can't go.

### EUROPE

- Small ships explore not merely the well-touristed Greek and Turkish islands, but the **less-frequented ones**, too, with their millennia-old ways of life.
- They also visit not just major ports, but **small, picturesque villages and harbors**.
- They offer not merely what you can see of the Rhine from a motorcoach, but the **awe-inspiring vistas offered from the river itself**, made possible by small-ship river cruisers on many major European rivers.
- In short, small-ship cruises in and around Europe offer guests a **unique and up-close experience** that is very different from the experience they'll have on a large-ship cruise.



# Chapter Three

## MEXICO/CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

- Your clients can't really appreciate the **biological wonders** of the Galápagos Islands or the desert islands of Mexico's Sea of Cortés in any other way.
- Guests can visit, not just the Amazon — an amazingly wide river from which guests often can't even see both shores at once — but its **tributaries**, surrounded by lush jungle foliage, teeming with the sounds of wildlife, as well.

## THE CARIBBEAN

- Islands — not just the well-touristed ones, but **lovely little out-of-the-way dots on the map** like the San Blas Islands, with their sparkling white-sand beaches backed by waving coconut palms.
- **The warm, soft feel of the tropics**, with the wind and the sea as an important part of the experience — heightened on a masted vessel under full sail, or a dive off the stern of a small ship.



# Chapter Three

## PRIMARY AREAS OF SMALL-SHIP CRUISE TOURING (SEA-GOING VESSELS)

- **Africa** Many small-ship cruise companies offer North African ports on their Mediterranean itineraries, and some offer Eastern Africa and Madagascar on Indian Ocean itineraries.
- **Alaska** One of the most popular small-ship cruise destinations worldwide, since its natural beauty is most readily appreciated from smaller, more maneuverable vessels.
- **Antarctica/the Arctic Circle** These are popular destinations for those with a fascination for the wild and remote frozen wilderness, usually accessible only on expedition vessels.
- **Australia/New Zealand/South Pacific Islands** The South Pacific has long been a popular destination for cruise ships, and is increasingly available to those who prefer smallship cruising.
- **Canada** This important small-ship destination is often coupled with Alaska as a dual destination on a single trip.
- **The Caribbean** In addition to the well-known major tourist islands, the Caribbean offers small-ship cruisers countless smaller, lesser-known, but even more spectacular bays, ports, and islands inaccessible to mass-market cruise vessels.
- **Central/South America** This area is an extremely popular small-ship cruise destination — especially the Galapagos Islands and the shores of Costa Rica and Panama, best known for outstanding snorkeling sites.
- **Europe** Many kinds of experiences are possible on small-ship cruises in Europe, from the sunniest Mediterranean ports to the fjords of Norway.
- **Far East** These cruises include such diverse destinations as Japan, Vietnam, the Kuril Islands, and Russia's Sea of Okhotsk.
- **Indian Ocean** The Seychelles — a spectacularly beautiful group of islands in the Indian Ocean — are the most popular destination here, on cruises which sometimes include the east coast of Africa, as well.
- **Indonesia/Malaysia** There has been increasing interest in these exotic destinations in recent years, and they're now accessible on small-ship cruises, as well as the larger ones.
- **Mexico** There are two areas of Mexico that draw small-ship cruise visitors — the eastern Gulf of Mexico side, which is often part of Caribbean cruises, and the western side, which boasts the glorious Sea of Cortés along the eastern edge of Baja California.
- **The Middle East** Often visited as part of Mediterranean cruises, this important destination includes Israel, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and many fascinating and exotic small ports.



# Chapter Three

- **Russia** Cruises to Russia are often part of Scandinavian cruises. Quark Expeditions couples Russia with the North Pole in its nuclear icebreaker expedition vessel cruises.
- **United States** There are many coastline cruises available on both the east and west coasts — from New England to the southern states, and from Alaska to Napa Valley in the west.

## PRIMARY AREAS OF SMALL-SHIP CRUISE TOURING (INLAND WATERWAYS)

Below is a list of the most important areas worldwide where cruise companies provide small-ship cruises on major — and often remote — inland waterways like rivers and canals.

- Alaska
- The Amazon and its tributaries
- Canada
- China, especially the Yangtze River
- Europe, including the major rivers and the appealing canals of France and England, Belgium and the Netherlands.
- The Nile, which offers the easiest way to visit Aswan and the Valley of the Kings.
- The United States, with its majestic and historic rivers, especially the Hudson River, the Mississippi/Ohio River system, and the Columbia & Snake Rivers.
- The South Pacific
- Japan
- Vietnam and the Mekong Delta Region

There are, in fact, very few places small-ship cruises don't go — because their size enables them to do just that — go anywhere that any boat can. So if you have a client who's interested in visiting a particular corner of the world, and if you suspect that he or she is a candidate for a small-ship cruise experience, then it's time to select the right supplier serving that destination.



# Chapter Four

## HOW TO IDENTIFY PROSPECTIVE SMALL-SHIP CRUISING CLIENTS

You may already have clients who might be good prospects for small-ship cruising. Below list five real clients of yours whom you think might enjoy small-ship cruising. Then give two reasons for each choice.

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# Chapter Four

## SMALL-SHIP CRUISES: A NICHE MARKET

Look back, now, at the clients you've listed. Could any of them be classified as special interest — or niche — clients? Small-ship cruise clients represent a niche market — even several niche markets — and like all niche markets, they share certain traits in common.

- They have **higher income levels** than average, and therefore are usually more profitable clients.
- They tend to be **better educated** than average, often with post-graduate degrees. They're better informed, and therefore often require less hand-holding than other clients.
- They tend to take **longer vacations**, and go to **more distant destinations**. This leads to greater profitability.
- They **spend more** on a specialty vacation than they (or anyone else) would do on an "ordinary" vacation of the same distance and duration.
- They enjoy **socializing** with others who share their interests. The idea of spending time on a package trip with people like themselves is a benefit you can stress.
- They tend to **form their own opinions**; when they use a travel agent, they often do so for convenience, rather than to obtain general information. Only expert, informed advice is welcome.
- Niche clients are usually very appreciative, gravitating to whomever they do buy from, when they perceive their needs have been recognized and met. They can be **very loyal** when their perceived needs are exceeded.

In order to effectively sell small-ship cruises, you must be able to identify the "typical" small-ship cruise niche clients when they come to you. There are two sets of criteria that can help you in this: demographics and psychographics.

The demographic characteristics of individuals are the hard facts about them, such as age, income level, educational level, etc. This information is usually quantifiable (can be expressed in numbers).

The psychographic characteristics of individuals are their likes and dislikes, attitudes, preferences, lifestyles, tendencies, habits, and so on. These are less easily quantified than demographic characteristics, and categories of psychographic criteria tend to overlap. For example, there are many people who both love photography and travel. There are others, however, who love photography and dislike travel, and some who dislike photography, but love to travel. Psychographic information is not as cut-and-dried as demographic data.

These two sets of characteristics, taken together, can help you to identify whether or not your client will be attracted to the small-ship cruise, and which type of small-ship cruise. The traits we listed earlier are very general, and apply to all sorts of niche consumers. What follows here is a more detailed profile of the small-ship cruise client.



# Chapter Four

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL-SHIP CRUISE GUESTS

- Small-ship cruise guests tend to be **40-70 years old**, on average.
- They are positioned in the **top half of the income bracket**, with a high level of disposable income.
- They tend to be **well-educated**, often with post-graduate degrees.
- About **40 % have never taken a cruise** of any kind.
- Nearly half are members of **frequent flyer programs**.
- More than **one-third are retired**; most others work in professional, technical or managerial professions.
- More than **80%** own their own homes.

## PSYCHOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SMALL-SHIP CRUISE GUESTS

- Small-ship cruise guests tend to be **sociable**, seeking companionship.
- They're **adventurous** and open to new experiences.
- They tend to be **younger in mind** than in body.
- Most seek **intellectual enrichment** and personal growth.
- They're also **independent** and want to be treated as individuals rather than part of a crowd.
- They're much more **interested in value** than in cost.
- Over **one-third own personal computers**.
- Nearly **one-half are invested in stocks and bonds**.



# Chapter Four

## CONVERTING CLIENTS TO SMALL-SHIP CRUISING

Many of your clients may fit some or all of the characteristics described. And many of these are potential clients who may be converted to small-ship cruising. There are two types of clients who — if their demographic and psychographic characteristics are a good match — present you with excellent prospects for selling a small-ship cruise. These are:

- Clients who never cruise because they don't like crowds, or the glitz of large cruise vessels, might love the intimacy of the small-ship cruise, and
- Clients who enjoy mass-market cruises, but may prefer small-ship cruises in certain situations, such as:
  - They may just want a change of pace
  - The destinations they seek are unavailable on a mass-market cruise (or even any other way — e.g., the Kuril Islands).
- The client may be seeking a more close-up, intimate experience.
- The client may be seeking more adventure.
- The client may be seeking a deeper, more enriching experience, or
  - A more friendly, warm, companionable, atmosphere
  - Less formality than on mass-market cruises
  - The companionship of others who share his/her interests
  - Has an interest in learning and experiencing the destination.

Of the four categories of small-ship cruise experiences, soft adventure — such as Cruise West's small-ship cruises — will yield the most sales prospects and potential for profit, because soft adventure cruises fulfill the needs of the greatest number of members of the small-ship cruise niche. Remember this, and you'll be able to maximize your sales efforts. But even before selling, you may have to do research — and that's what the next short chapter will help prepare you for.



# Chapter Five

## PREPARING TO SELL SMALL-SHIP CRUISES

### THE NEED TO PREPARE

It isn't enough just to have first-rate sales skills. Closing the sale depends every time on three important factors:

- A thorough knowledge and understanding of the wants, needs and desires of the client,
- Expert product knowledge, and
- The ability to effectively match the client with the right product.

Not only does expert product knowledge figure prominently in the sales process, but it's also the key to providing your clients with a sense of confidence and security in your recommendations. It's the most essential factor in assuring repeat business, too.

So it should be worth a little extra effort to ensure that your product knowledge is up-to-date and sound. As with every profession today, selling travel requires keeping abreast of the latest developments in the industry, constant re-education, and competitive survival skills. It's important, as well, to be aware of all the resources available to help you keep your information updated and current.

In the activity below, you'll have an opportunity to test your research skills.

**Using only in-house materials, try to research the length, number of cabins, and number of passenger decks for the following ships:**

- Cruise West's *Spirit of Discovery*

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- Star Clippers' *Star Flyer*

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- Lindblad Expeditions' *Polaris*

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- Abercrombie & Kent's *Eclipse*

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# Chapter Five

## RESEARCHING THE SMALL-SHIP CRUISE PRODUCT

There are many resources available to you that provide the product information you need to sell small-ship cruises. Often, it's enough just to know where to look. Here are some of the avenues you might explore while bringing your small-ship cruise product knowledge current.

- **Literature:** Available from both inside the agency and from outside sources as well.
  - **In-house resources include:**
    - Magazines — All of the standard industry publications feature articles or supplements on small-ship cruise lines. Each year Cruise and Vacation Views Magazine has an excellent special edition that reviews all the cruise lines.
    - The Official Cruise Guide — This book provides ship specifications indicating number of cabins, total passenger capacity, and other physical data for most cruise ships. There's information on client profiles, too.
    - Internet Sources — Most small-ship cruise companies (including Cruise West) have their own Web page. Our address is [www.cruisewest.com](http://www.cruisewest.com).
    - Star Service — This resource has ship profiles at the back, after the hotel profile section. Mostly mass-market ships, but a few small-ships are included, as well.
    - Weissmann Travel Reports Ports-of-Call — Profiles port and shore excursion possibilities in the Caribbean and the Americas. Pages can be printed to give to clients as a value-added resource.
  - **Outside research resources:**
    - **Libraries**, which may contain recent periodicals with articles on small-ship cruising, as well as other useful information.
  - **Seminars & Webinars:** Most suppliers give product seminars. Cruise West offers an ongoing, monthly calendar of agent Web seminars on [www.cruisewestagents.com](http://www.cruisewestagents.com). Check our site for information or to register.



# Chapter Five

- **Consumer travel guides, including:**
  - Berlitz Complete Handbook to Cruising, by Douglas Ward, published by Berlitz Publishing Co., Princeton, NJ.
  - Adventure Cruising, by Don and Betty Martin, published by Pine Cone Press, Columbia, California.
  - Fielding's Worldwide Cruises, by Shirley Slater & Harry Basch, published by Fielding Worldwide, Redondo Beach, California.
  - The Unofficial Guide to Cruises, by Kay Showker, with Bob Sehlinger, published by Macmillan Travel, New York, NY.
- **Brochures** — You'll need to contact most of the smaller cruise lines directly, and ask for brochures to be sent to your office. Set up a file for small-ship cruises, keeping a marked copy of each brochure in the file. Code each brochure for price, style, and other helpful data.

Research — and the continued, up-to-date re-education it provides — is probably the most overlooked of all sales skills, because it's a pre-sales skill. It's the most important thing you can do to prepare to sell small-ship cruises, because accurate product knowledge is especially important with niche clients.

Of course, research has little value until it's applied, during the sales process. So turn the page to find out how your selling can easily include the small-ship experience.



# Chapter Six

## SELLING THE SMALL SHIP Cruise West

In the wonderful book, *Fielding's Worldwide Cruises, 1997*, the author tells the story of a man who called their publishing offices one day several years ago. The man had previously called three travel agents, asking which cruise line was the best, and had received three different answers.

He wanted the Fielding offices to give him the real story: which cruise line really was the best?

The publisher began qualifying the man, trying to find out what kind of cruise experience he was looking for.

"I should have known," screamed the man. "You're all alike. You don't know any more than they do!"

The point of the story? You need to explain why you're asking all these personal questions. You want the client to get the cruise of his dreams — not the cruise of someone else's dreams.

- **When qualifying, use open-ended questions.** Don't ask, "Do you like cruises?" This question will get simply a "yes" or "no" response. Instead, ask, "What kinds of vacations have you enjoyed in the past?" A question phrased in this way will get a far more detailed and revealing response.
- **Identify the client's travel patterns.** Find out:
  - Has the client taken mass-market cruises?
  - Has the client taken mass-market escorted tours?
  - Has the client taken unique or exotic trips or destinations before?
  - Is the client an experienced or novice traveler?
- **Determine the client's objectives.** What kind of experience does the client want on his or her vacation? Remember to listen for signs that the client is exhibiting the psychographics of the small-ship cruise niche. Some of these key words might tip you off that this is indeed a prime candidate for the small-ship cruise experience:
  - Adventure? Excitement? Small-ship cruises visit off-the-beaten track destinations in a most unusual way, and offer a much more involving, immediate, participatory experience than big ships do.
  - Relaxation? There's nothing like the rhythms of small-ship cruising down a river, or enjoying the casual, friendly atmosphere that is so quick to develop among small-ship guests and crew alike.



# Chapter Six

## THE KEY: CONVERSION

The key to selling small-ship cruises is conversion — that is, converting non-cruisers to cruisers, and, when appropriate, converting mass-market cruisers to small-ship cruisers. The traditional sales skills, however, need to be tailored to ensure success with these kinds of clients. This involves a six-step process that enhances the skills you've already acquired in your professional career.

Here are the traditional six steps to selling — but tailored to the potential small-ship cruise clients.

### Step 1. Opening

- **Look for clues** that may help you determine whether or not you have a small-ship cruise client and the type of vessel they may be interested in — remembering what you've learned about the demographics of this niche. For example:
  - Language (cultural, casual)
  - Behavior (kind of brochures, pictures they're attracted to)
- **Mirror their style.** For example, adjust your greeting to one appropriate to the clues you've gathered. "Hello" might be more appropriate than "Hi."

### Step 2. Qualifying the client

- **This is the most important step in any sale.** Without an accurate assessment of the client's needs and desires, it's impossible to recommend a product with confidence and assurance.
  - Passive? Active? On a small ship no one is forcing a guest to do anything, but most people want to be out on deck enjoying a region's wildlife, chatting with the Exploration Leader, or checking out a port-of-call on foot.
  - Personal enrichment? A learning experience? Small-ship cruises provide opportunities for in-depth learning experiences, through lectures, narrations, local guest speakers and one-on-one conversations.
  - Safety, security? Intimate, casual and friendly, small-ship cruises provide a safe and secure vacation experience.
  - High degree of independence? Guidance throughout? Small ships offer both independence and guidance, leaning toward self-sufficiency. Most small-ship guests want to be right where they are, for all the right reasons.
  - Companionship? Privacy? On small-ship cruises, guests tend to share similar interests. And because there are fewer guests, there's a greater sense of being among friends. Plus, the stateroom is always nearby for a peaceful nap.



# Chapter Six

- Convenience? As with all cruises, small-ship cruising provides the convenience of once-only packing and unpacking, as well as the luxury of trouble-free transport in occasionally quite remote areas.
- Comfort? Small-ship cruises provide virtually the same comfort level available on larger cruise ships.
- Luxury? Within the small-ship cruise category, it's possible to find products from the most basic to the most luxurious.
- Free time apart from a group? Most small-ship cruises offer shore options that allow for free time.
- Try to **determine**, as well, the **client's subconscious needs and desires**. Ask them to describe their favorite vacation experiences. Also ask them to describe their least favorite vacation experiences.
- **Determine the client's practical needs:**
  - budget range?
  - childcare facilities?
  - special dietary needs?
  - disabled facilities?
  - length of time available and when they'd like to travel.
- While you're qualifying the client, **take notes**. It shows the client that you're paying attention, and it'll help you remember what he or she said.

## Step 3. Recommending

- If you've identified a potential small-ship cruise client, you'll need to match the client with just the right product. There are two major considerations you should cover:
  - **Practical considerations**, such as budget, duration of cruise, when they want to go, etc.
  - **Subjective considerations**, destination preferences, style of cruise, and so on.
- **Don't over-recommend**. Keep your initial suggestions to one or two specific cruises. Too many choices can confuse, intimidate or inhibit the client, and result in complicating the decision-making process.
- **Use features/benefits language** when you make your recommendations. Review their expressed needs, and recommend a product with features that meet those needs. Stress the benefits of specific features and how exactly they address the need or desire the client has expressed to you. Remember, features are the facts about a product (e.g. shallow-draft, big windows) and benefits are the results (e.g. can get into narrow channels, offer close-up views.)



# Chapter Six

- While recommending, **seize opportunities for up-selling**. Remember that niche clients are more interested in value than in cost, so a higher-quality product may very well be a better fit for their needs. Keep in mind that no matter what your clients' degree of sophistication, they probably don't know everything — and that's where your professional expertise, and ability to recognize what your clients really want, provide **true added value to the travel agent/client relationship**. Explore their interest, for example, in:
  - o air packages
  - o upgrading stateroom categories
  - o travel protection (Stress the importance of this!)
  - o pre- or post-cruise packages
  - o land-tour add-ons

## Step 4. Handling Objections

Before you read the material outlined in Step 4, try to list five objections the client might come up with when you recommend a small-ship cruise, and then provide a possible response to each of these objections.

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# Chapter Six

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## WHAT OBJECTIONS?

What is there to object to? In many cases, not very much. Objections are very often a resistance mechanism for people with “cold feet.” Frequently — as, no doubt, you’ve experienced — clients want to book the cruise you’ve recommended, but are afraid to.

What should you do to counter their fears?

First, assume that the objections express real fears, and address them directly. But assume, as well, that there are unexpressed fears lurking in the background. If you follow these easy rules, the unexpressed fears will almost always reveal themselves.

- **Listen carefully.** Why is the client resisting? Budget considerations? Family conflicts? Fear of the unknown? Luckily, most niche clients are fairly self-assured people, so their most-likely fear is that their needs and wishes won’t be fulfilled.
- **You must clarify the client’s expectations** and the mental image they have of both the kind of cruise they want and the kind of cruise you’ve proposed.
- If you really haven’t misunderstood the clients’ needs, and you’re certain the product you’ve recommended will fulfill those needs, perhaps you haven’t painted an accurate picture of the product. Try to **paint a new mental image** for the clients, via key words that address their questions.
- If you find that the product/client match really isn’t quite right, **adjust your product recommendations** to meet the client’s objections.



# Chapter Six

## TYPICAL OBJECTIONS

What kinds of objections might your clients pose, after they've read brochures and/or you've made your recommendations? Here are some typical objections raised by potential small-ship cruise clients:

- **Expense** Small-ship cruises are usually more expensive than mass-market cruises. But that's because the added cost represents real added value to the niche client. Stress this added value, such as the up-close quality of the experience and more personalized treatment. When possible, underscore as well any included items, such as all meals and/or shore excursions, etc.
- **Reliability** Many people are under the incorrect impression that small companies are less reliable than huge ones. You should, of course, be certain of the quality and reliability of the supplier you're recommending, and reassure the client that your reputation rests on the quality of the products you sell. If possible, provide testimonials from other clients that will help to ease their concerns.
- **Safety** Even sophisticated travelers may have concerns that smaller vessels (and smaller companies) may mean increased risk. In fact, small cruise ships are every bit as safe as large ones, for several reasons.
  - Ships taking more than 12 passengers must meet international standards for safety and hygiene. Cruise West, for example, adheres to all U.S. Coast Guard and Federal maritime regulations.
  - All ship crews have a trained First Responder, and are usually within easy medivac distance from a hospital. Cruise West also staffs a full-time doctor while sailing in Mexico's Sea of Cortés, and at all times aboard the Spirit of Oceanus.
  - When storms threaten, vessels head for port. And ports are a lot closer for smaller ships, since they tend to hug coastlines more closely than larger vessels.
- **Seasickness** This may be a concern for either non-cruisers, or for mass-market cruisers who are used to ships with sophisticated stabilizer systems. Most small-ship cruises travel in protected waters, in the lee of the land, where the waters are calm. It's the larger ships that sometimes travel in mostly open ocean, where passengers get the greatest feel of surging ocean water.
- **Stateroom or cabin size** Since the ships are so much smaller, the usual client impression is that the cabins will be much smaller, as well. Most often, this isn't the case. And, even when staterooms are somewhat less spacious than on larger ships, you can stress that not much time is spent in the cabin anyway — after all, they'll get the best view of the whales from on deck.
- **Small ships mean more crowding.** Not at all. The space ratio on smaller ships is often better than on larger ships. Moreover, on a small-ship cruise, there's no sense of being part of a vast group of strangers, since the faces of most guests become familiar in a very short time. In fact, small ship means no lines or crowds in port or onboard.



# Chapter Six

## Step 5. Closing the Sale

- Make sure you've fulfilled the client's dreams, wants, and expectations. What you offer may not be what he/she asked for at first.
- The "space is limited" close may be a cliché, but on small ships, space is — by definition — limited, and so is the availability of the cabin category your client might prefer. It's often not recommended to wait.
- Advise them not to wait for "special deals" as most small-ship cruise lines don't discount.
- Stress that upgrades can be handled later, if they're still available, but it's better to guarantee a booking now than to wait.
- Where Early Booking or Early Final Payment Savings are available, make sure your clients are aware of the expiration date.
- Studies have shown that the most common reason travel agents fail to make a sale is that they fail to ask for the sale.

## Step 6. Follow-up

- Prior to departure, send a "bon voyage" note, and perhaps a little gift for the client to take along. Ask for an opportunity to see his/her photos when he/she returns.
- When your clients return, send a "welcome home" note, and ask to see the photos when they're ready. Remember, they've just had an intimate experience. That intimacy should carry right through to their relationship with you and your agency. When you meet with clients to see the photos, be prepared to tell them about their options for their next small-ship cruise adventure.



# Chapter Seven

## ABOUT CRUISE WEST

### THE CRUISE WEST STORY

Cruise West is a long-established, highly experienced and well-regarded company, founded by Chuck West. Chuck was, in his early years, a “hump” pilot with the Flying Tigers, flying between India and China. After World War II, in 1945 — long before tourism came to Alaska — he came to Alaska to be a bush pilot, working for Wien Airlines and flying near the Arctic Circle.

Chuck had a vision of sharing the wonders he discovered in Alaska with others. He opened a small travel agency in Fairbanks (Arctic Alaska Travel Service), joined ASTA, founded the first air tours to Alaska, the first motorcoach line there, and the first small-ship cruises. And Chuck also founded a tour company that still exists today, Westours of Holland America.

In the early 1970s, Chuck sold Westours and founded the company that has become Cruise West — America’s leading small-ship cruise line. The company is now run by his son, Richard West, who is chairman and managing director.

### THE CRUISE WEST PHILOSOPHY

Chuck West’s core idea was to provide superior personal service in the delivery of a top-notch experience, and the philosophy has succeeded.

At Cruise West, details matter. Employees at all levels share a commitment to ensuring that the design and execution of all Cruise West cruises and cruise/land-tours exceeded the hopes and expectations of our guests. From the route and schedule adjustments when a pod of whales appears to the nourished relationships with the communities we visit, Cruise West is always striving to create a unique and memorable adventure.

Another important part of the Cruise West philosophy is the idea that destinations must be seen up-close — and the closer the better. The focus is on caring, personal service that is vital to a trip’s success. Smaller is better, we think, because of the many benefits small-ship cruising offers our valued guests.

Cruise West is committed to providing the support and assistance you need to “close the sale.” We are here to help. Please contact us if you would like assistance with promotional needs or more information on our destinations.

“Take only photographs, leave only our wake behind,” is the ecologically responsible attitude of all Cruise West personnel. We stress the importance of care for the environment to all our guests as well. Because we don’t disembark thousands of people at a time, we don’t overwhelm either remote, pristine landing spots or small, quiet towns. We’re welcome wherever we go.

We want our guests to experience the glories of every destination we offer as personally and intimately as possible — and we strive to provide every opportunity for them to do so.



# Chapter Seven

## MEET THE FLEET

While each of our ships is unique, there are some common elements they all share. Among these are:

- Most Cruise West ships are **U.S.-flagged vessels**, having U.S.-manufactured hulls, American ownership, and American crews. This appeals strongly to the demographic and psychographic attitudes of many small-ship cruisers.
- All ships **share the same safety, hygiene and service standards**. You can assure your client of uniformity and high quality throughout the fleet.
- All ships also maintain **high standards for cuisine**.

Here's a more detailed, complete description of our five American-registered ships, the Panama-registered *Pacific Explorer*, the Bahama-registered *Spirit of Oceanus*, the German-registered *Amadeus Diamond*, and the Ecuador-registered *Galapagos Explorer II*.

- ***Spirit of Columbia*** This ship carries 78 guests and operates in Alaska on the Gold Rush Inside Passage, and in Alaska's Prince William Sound. With her shallow draft and stately pace of cruising, guests don't miss a thing as she takes time to linger among the back channels and wilderness fjords. The variety of cabin categories is one of the widest in our fleet, ranging from lower-deck inside cabins to Suite and Deluxe categories.
- ***Spirit of Discovery*** The 166-foot *Spirit of Discovery* operates in Alaska on Gold Rush Inside Passage and Glacier Bay Highlights cruises, and on the Columbia & Snake Rivers. She carries 84 guests in style, with a range of cabin categories, all with view windows, beautifully appointed interiors, and a guest lounge with a forward-facing wall of high viewing windows. Many stateroom windows open to the refreshing sea air.
- ***Spirit of '98*** This is our most distinctive ship, built to resemble the lines of old-time cruising vessels. She carries 96 guests on our Columbia & Snake Rivers cruises. Her staterooms are among the largest in our fleet, and include a special Owner's Suite. The *Spirit of '98* is a beautifully appointed ship, with a Gay Nineties ambience, carved cabinetry, etched glass, and elegant, plush upholstery. This ship has an elevator, email, Internet and phone access.
- ***Spirit of Endeavour*** This spacious ship cruises Alaska, British Columbia and Mexico's Sea of Cortés for 102 guests, and features a variety of comfortable staterooms, all with view windows or portholes. There's a lounge with huge windows, permitting views of the passing scene, and an aft launch platform. This ship also provides Internet, email and phone access.
- ***Spirit of Oceanus*** This all-suite, 120-guest vessel is equipped with stabilizers, an elevator, Internet, email and phone access, and is rated for all seas. Our flagship features inflatable excursion launches to allow access to remote island shores and iceberg-choked waterways. The *Spirit of Oceanus* cruises the world on the Voyages of the Great Explorers.



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- ***Pacific Explorer*** This 100-guest vessel serves Costa Rica and Panama. Her friendly, English-speaking Costa Rican crew are experts in this region, very knowledgeable about the plants, animals, birds and sealife. And her various decks provide the perfect platforms for viewing the wildlife-rich Central American forests.
- ***Spirit of Yorktown*** Our biggest small ship, this 138-guest relaxing and roomy vessel travels in Alaska on the Gold Rush Inside Passage and Alaska's Inside Passage routes. Features include inflatable excursion craft, satellite phone and email capability, a comfortable lounge with large picture windows and an aft launch platform.
- ***Amadeus Diamond*** The lovely NEW 148-guest *MS Amadeus Diamond* has generously proportioned cabins, all with river-view windows that stretch the entire width of the cabin...this casually elegant vessel is on our European River itineraries.
- ***Galapagos Explorer II*** The *Galápagos Explorer II*, sister ship to our *Spirit of Oceanus*, is the safest and most elegant of the vessels cruising the Galápagos's waters. Designed to provide comfort and scientific information to 100 passengers visiting the Galápagos National Park, the vessel is fully air conditioned with a desalinization plant for producing the vessel's own fresh water. The ship offers 50 exterior suites, each equipped with a marble bathroom, hair dryer, television, refrigerated bar and wireless Internet.

## THE SERVICE/CREWS

Our guests are treated not as customers, but as members of our family. With a ratio of one crew member to each four guests, our crew is able to provide guests with a high level of personal, attentive service. Our crew members share the passion for adventure and the wonders of the landscapes, towns, people and natural beauty our cruises feature. We pride ourselves on the warmth and friendliness of our personnel, and the inviting atmosphere of shared pleasure they help create.

## THE ITINERARIES

Alaska has become a highly popular tourism destination, and its beauty and grandeur never fail to awe and impress our guests. Considerable effort has gone into creating itineraries that best display the spectacular natural beauty and unique ports of call throughout the region. Here are examples of the kinds of experiences your clients will find on Cruise West Alaska cruises.

- **Alaska's Inside Passage Cruises** These 7-night cruises operate roundtrip from Juneau, combining spectacular wilderness glaciers and fjords with beautiful ports such as Sitka, Juneau, and historic Wrangell. All cruises include a visit to Glacier Bay National Park.
- **Glaciers of Prince William Sound** Cruise West's unique 4-night cruises of the beautiful Prince William Sound provide unparalleled access to the numerous glaciers, hidden coves, and teeming wildlife of this lesser known but equally spectacular counterpart of the famed Inside Passage. This destination is served by the Spirit of Columbia.
- **Gold Rush Inside Passage** These 10-night cruises sail between Seattle and Juneau. Follow the route of the original stampede of the Klondike Gold Rush. Cruise north or southbound through the San Juan Islands, Glacier Bay National Park, Frederick Sound, and Tracy Arm.



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- **Glacier Bay Highlights** Cruise West's exciting 4-night cruise takes you through Glacier Bay National Park's remote and protected waterways, teeming with wildlife. Get up-close with whales, sea lions, bears and sea birds. Maneuver through ice-studded waters, listening for the thunderous clap of calving glaciers. And learn from National Park Service Rangers and Native Cultural Interpreters about the park's thriving flora, fauna and its rich history. This destination is served by the Spirit of Discovery.
- **Land-Tours** Cruise West complements our small-ship cruises with a complete range of tours to Alaska's most popular land destinations, including motorcoach and rail excursions between Anchorage, Denali National Park, and Fairbanks. The experience is designed to be just as involving and rewarding as the small-ship cruise part of your client's trip. We also offer a select number of wilderness lodges for those clients looking for unique experiences in the outback of Alaska.

## THE HIGHLIGHTS

Alaska is many things, mountains, glaciers, wildlife, waterfalls, whales, native cultures, and unique history — much still untouched by man. But words are insufficient to describe the magic, the mystery, and the enchantment Alaska offers to those wise enough to seek her out.

This is a glimpse of some of the marvels available to clients who book an Alaska cruise with Cruise West.

- **Glacier Bay National Park** This deep, 60-mile-long bay is home to puffins, seals, and many whales. The protected bay is encircled by high, rocky mountains pouring many glaciers into the sea. Our ships cruise almost 60 miles up-bay to a point where a giant wall of ice greets guests, and surrounding waters are dotted with icebergs.
- **Tracy Arm** This is a single fjord, less than a mile wide at points, very deep, with cliff walls rising straight out of the water, thousands of feet high. When visited deep inside, the experience is unforgettable. And — just around a corner — two glaciers in different "arms" are the source of myriad floating icebergs.
- **LeConte Bay** Similar to Tracy Arm, with cliffs, icebergs, and glaciers, this wonderful fjord has one unique feature — an underwater terminal moraine (a pile of rock left by a retreating glacier), which restricts access to all but the smallest ships. Traveling through the fjord, the ship's hull is actually brushing icebergs away. This is the kind of intimate experience only a small ship can provide.
- **Sitka** This is one of Alaska's most historic towns — the oldest non-Native village in Southeast Alaska — with a Russian heritage, totem poles, a Russian orthodox cathedral, and fabulous shopping opportunities. Visitors can even go salmon fishing and kayaking in the lovely bay.
- **Juneau** Alaska's state capital, with a population of about 31,000, is dramatically situated at the base of high mountains and connected by road only to nearby Douglas Island and a few outlying areas. This city — founded during the 1880 Gold Rush — is the key focus of much Alaska tourism. Optional shore excursions include Mendenhall Glacier, a walking tour, and floatplane or helicopter flightseeing tours.



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- **Skagway** The smallest — and one of the most charming — of the mainstream ports of call, Skagway was founded during the Klondike Gold Rush. Virtually the whole downtown area is a historic monument, and offers a well-preserved glimpse of “Klondike Fever.” A popular optional excursion is the 4-hour trip on the White Pass & Yukon Railroad, with its antique touring cars and costumed guides.

Smaller ports of call (the ones few other ships have the time or ability to visit) include:

- **Petersburg** A Norwegian-founded fishing village in the winding, shallow Wrangell Narrows offers as an added bonus nearby LeConte Fjord.
- **Haines** A small fishing center known for the thousands of bald eagles that gather here in the fall, plus Fort Seward, built in 1906. This is the traditional land of the Chilkat Tlingits.
- **Cordova** This small port town of Prince William Sound is based on fishing and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline terminus.

## OTHER WONDERFUL DESTINATIONS

We've carefully selected these destinations for their own spectacular beauty and uniqueness. Our brochures attempt to provide prospective guests with the images and atmosphere they'll find on Cruise West vessels, as well as trying to offer some idea of the miracles of nature they'll be exposed to. Examples of our additional terrific destinations include:

- **British Columbia and Islands of the Pacific Northwest** These unique, 7-night adventure cruises depart from Seattle in Spring and Fall, and explore Desolation Sound, Vancouver, and Victoria in British Columbia, and the San Juan Islands, and Port Townsend in Washington State. All shore excursions are included.
- **Columbia & Snake Rivers** Following the route of the famed Lewis & Clark Expedition, guests cruise nearly 1,000 miles round trip from Portland on the West's most historic riverway, from the Pacific Ocean at the Columbia River Bar all the way to Hells Canyon on the Oregon/Idaho border. They experience eight different locks and dams on the river. All shore excursions are included, such as wineries, historic forts, heritage mansions, and a jet boat ride.
- **Mexico's Sea of Cortés** Numerous volcanic islets in the Sea of Cortés east of the Baja California Peninsula harbor a wide variety of unusual flora and fauna, making this destination the Galápagos of the North. Cruising round trip from Cabo San Lucas, guests will spend a week exploring this delightful warm-weather destination. Many light sporting activities such as kayaking, snorkeling and hiking make this cruise attractive to younger couples and families.
- **Costa Rica & Panama** The Pacific Explorer visits pristine national parks and offshore islands, with access to the shore and waterways via inflatable excursion craft. Itineraries transit the Panama Canal, explore old bastions of the Spanish Main, and visit traditional Indian cultures in Panama's Darién Jungle.



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- **The Galápagos** Discover the natural paradise that inspired Darwin in this 9-night voyage focused on stunning wildlife and breathtaking scenery. In Quito, Ecuador, visit Latin America's best-preserved colonial historic center. After sailing to the Galapagos, meet sea lions, iguanas, masked and blue-footed boobies, diving penguins, 40 giant tortoises living in the wild, and more. Plus, walk along red sand beaches and through a small cactus forest. An optional 5-night land package to Peru's incredible Machu Pichu can be added.
- **European Rivers** Few places on earth can match the incredible combination of culture, history, and natural beauty offered by the river regions of Central Europe. Our three unforgettable river cruises, each 11 nights long, will introduce you to epic castles, gorgeous vineyards, medieval towns, spectacular churches, charming villages, amazing music, exceptional museums, and much more... one amazing port after another. Choose from journeys down the Danube, the Danube, Main & Rhine, or the Rhine and Mosel.
- **Voyages of the Great Explorers** History's greatest adventurers explored the world in small ships. Now it's your turn. Choose from unique and incredible adventures that will take you up-close to the places you've always dreamed of visiting... from Asia to Africa and Europe... from the Americas to the South Seas and Australia. Every adventure is spectacular and you can choose to take one voyage, consecutive voyages, even multiple voyages at different times of the year – each on our beautiful flagship, *Spirit of Oceanus*.

## WHAT MAKES CRUISE WEST SPECIAL

Many things, of course, combine to provide Cruise West with a special and unique ability to fulfill the dreams of thousands of guests every year. Your clients will benefit from many of the features summarized below:

- Our distinctive fleet of primarily U.S.-flagged small ships.
- Our enthusiastic, friendly and helpful crews.
- Our comprehensive consumer protection policy.
- Our respect for the land and peoples we visit.
- Our focus on what's happening outside, not inside the ship.
- Our flexible schedules that allow ships' captains to stop for a close-up view of a whale, or mute the engines to afford a better opportunity to hear a glacier calving.
- A wide range of ports.
- Our knowledgeable, onboard Exploration Leaders and Guides, as well as visiting local experts.
- Our commitment to no lines, no crowds – either onboard or on land.



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- The intimacy of the experience we offer. Our ships are a few yards from the shoreline, and our decks are just 15 feet above the water. Passengers on large ships are a quarter mile away and far above the action.
- Our comfortable and casual atmosphere, and the wonderful, interesting, and friendly people who take our cruises.

## **SUMMARY OF THE SMALL-SHIP PARTNERS PROGRAM**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this Small-Ship Partners (SSP) Certification Course. This course was designed to help you increase your sales, better serve your clients — and of course sell more Cruise West cruises! We want your business, and we want to help you increase your sales.

Once you complete this educational package and pass the test that accompanies it, you personally will become a Certified Small-Ship Partner, and your agency a Small-Ship agency, with benefits for both.

- You will receive three personalized \$50 bonus commission coupons to use on your first three post-certification bookings (that's essentially \$150 in cash, for completing this certification).
- After your first booking, we'll extend to you personally a \$250 credit toward a reduced rate cruise. That's \$250 over and above our already low SSP agent rates.
- You'll receive a certificate that identifies you as a small-ship expert.
- U.S. Small-Ship agencies are found by zip code on the "Find a Travel Agent" page of our website.

All we ask in return is that — when you have a client you've qualified as likely to enjoy one of our cruises — you commit to Cruise West. That shouldn't be hard, since our average booking is \$7,000, representing a premium commission.

## **HOW CAN WE THANK YOU?**

We at Cruise West want to thank you for the interest you've shown in small-ship cruising by completing this training workbook. We value you — the travel agent who handles our bookings — because you're our most direct link with our customers, you provide us with an important service, and because relationships matter.



# Chapter Seven

## SMALL-SHIP PARTNER TEST WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT SMALL-SHIP CRUISING?

Circle the answer that best completes each of the following statements or best answers each question.

1. **Which of the following cruise lines uses only shallow-draft vessels?**

- Princess Cruises
- Cruise West
- Celebrity Cruises
- Norwegian Cruise Line
- Holland America Line

2. **Which statement about small-ship cruisers is incorrect?**

- They tend to be technologically sophisticated.
- They tend to have above-average incomes.
- They're driven more by value than by cost.
- They're on average, 40-70 years old.
- They tend to be less sociable with other passengers.

3. **When qualifying the niche client, you should:**

- Take notes
- Use open-ended questions
- Determine client's psychographic profile
- All of the above
- None of the above

4. **During which sales step is the use of features/benefits language most critical?**

- Opening
- Qualifying
- Recommending
- Handling objections
- Closing

5. **Which of the following is not a usual feature of small-ship cruises?**

- Informal or casual style
- Widely varied itineraries
- Assigned-seat dining
- Focus on the destination
- Expert lecturers



# Small-Ship Partner Test

6. **Which of the following statements is more true of niche clients than of mass-market ones?**
  - They tend to have average income levels.
  - They tend to be independent, and to know what they want.
  - They tend to take shorter vacations.
  - They tend to need considerable help in making decisions.
  - They have, on average, a high-school education.
  
7. **When recommending small-ship cruise products to a niche client, you should recommend how many specific cruises?**
  - Only one
  - No more than four
  - Three
  - One or two
  - None: they won't need you to make a recommendation
  
8. **About what percentage of small-ship cruise guests are first-time cruisers?**
  - 75%
  - 62%
  - 40%
  - 33%
  - 25%
  
9. **Which is not true of potential small-ship cruise clients?**
  - They are over 40 years old.
  - They tend to be followers.
  - They are retired.
  - All of the above.
  - None of the above.
  
10. **Of the following, which is not usually a specific characteristic that is distinctive to all expedition-type cruises?**
  - Inflatable excursion craft use
  - Onboard formality
  - Expert lecturers
  - All of the above
  - None of the above
  
11. **The Galapagos Islands are located...**
  - Off the coast of Africa
  - Off the coast of Alaska
  - In the Indian Ocean
  - Off the coast of South America
  - In the Caribbean



# Small-Ship Partner Test

**12. Which of the following companies does not operate masted sailing vessels?**

- Lindblad Expeditions
- Star Clippers
- Windstar Cruises
- Cruise West
- None of the above

**13. More than half of the potential small-ship cruise clients:**

- Tend to be less sociable than large-ship cruise clients
- Are more interested in cost than anything else
- Tend to be wary of new experiences
- All of the above
- None of the above

**14. The likes and dislikes of a client are described by the term:**

- Niche
- Demographics
- Psychographics
- All of the above
- None of the above

**15. Ships taking over a certain number of passengers must meet international standards for safety and hygiene. What is that number of passengers?**

- 100
- 50
- 25
- 12
- 6

**16. Which of the following is true of mass-market cruises?**

- The focus is often on what's inside the ship.
- They feature itineraries which stop at major ports.
- They're designed to appeal to a large number of people.
- All of the above.
- None of the above.

**17. Which statement is true about most small-ship dining?**

- Passengers can dine at any time they want.
- Coat and tie are required at dinner only.
- Meals are excluded from the cruise price.
- There's a single seating, and it's open.
- Several seatings are scheduled since the dining room is too small to accommodate everyone.



# Small-Ship Partner Test

**18. Providing true added value to your travel agent/client relationship means exploring your clients interests and take opportunities for up-selling cruises. Which of the following are examples of up-selling cruises?**

- Pre- or post-cruise packages
- Upgrading stateroom
- Land-tour add-ons
- Travel protection
- All of the above
- None of the above

**19. What is the “key” to the river cruise & soft adventure experience?**

- Enrichment
- Adventure
- Access to remote locals
- All of the above

**20. Which of these rules should you follow when encountering client objections?**

- Change the subject
- Clarify the client’s objections
- Avoid discussing their fears
- All of the above
- None of the above



# Small-Ship Partner Test

Your Name:

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Agency Name

---

IATA/CLIA Number

---

Agency Address

---

City

---

State

---

Zip

---

Agency Phone

---

Agency FAX

---

Email Address (Required)

---

Print out the Small-Ship Test pages, answer the questions  
and FAX to Cruise West at : 206.441.4757  
Attention: Manager, Small-Ship Partners Program