

U.S. River Cruise Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Region (Mississippi, Colombia & Snake River, Alaska, Great Lakes), And Segment Forecasts, 2025 - 2030

<https://marketpublishers.com/r/UE59B1446FE1EN.html>

Date: November 2024

Pages: 80

Price: US\$ 3,950.00 (Single User License)

ID: UE59B1446FE1EN

Abstracts

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U.S. River Cruise Market Growth & Trends

The U.S. river cruise market size is expected to reach USD 431.1 million by 2030, expanding at CAGR of 14.5% from 2025 to 2030, according to a new report by Grand View Research, Inc. More ships are being built in the US for use in American rivers as river sailing continues to gain popularity. The American Association of Retired People (AARP) reported in an article from February 2020 that river boating is a popular holiday option in the nation, especially among elderly tourists.

Two significant U.S. river cruise operators, American Cruise Lines (ACL) and American Queen Voyages (previously American Queen Steamboat Co.), which have been preparing for the last few years to satisfy the rising demand for river cruising vacations among Americans, have further validated this trend. Between 2018 and 2022, American Cruise Lines will launch six new ships for river cruising in the United States. By the end of 2023, the business intends to deploy two further river cruise ships.

Despite the major impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cruise industry in the U.S., with ease in travel restrictions, the river cruise industry in the U.S. has been witnessing a rise over the past few years. Moreover, unlike its parent industry - the ocean cruise industry, the river cruise industry was not majorly impacted in 2020 due to its limited passenger capacity ranging between 106 and 150 passengers.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control's Framework for Conditional Sailing, which extended to ships carrying 250 or more people or more, did not apply to river cruise ships due to their restricted capacity. The CEO of Cruise Planners, Michelle Free, said in a statement that interest in river cruises had nearly doubled since February 2020.

The 2022 Q1 AAA Consumer Pulse survey conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety in January 2022, revealed that despite the perception that river cruising appeals primarily to older generations, millennials have responded more strongly to several key attributes of river cruising than members of Generation X and Baby Boomers.

The younger generation is less likely than either Generation X or Baby Boomers to have taken a river cruise holiday, but they are more inclined to contemplate one for an upcoming vacation. The survey also revealed that younger generations, including Gen Z, are mostly looking forward to spending time with friends and family (57%) and enjoying water-based outdoor activities like swimming in the pool (44%). Also, it discovered that in the U.S., Gen Z has been shown a stronger preference for river boating.

U.S. River Cruise Market Report Highlights

Cruise line websites and travel agents play a significant role for market in the U.S. River cruise line operators rely on their online booking platform and travel agents to deliver their services to consumers

The U.S. river cruise market in the Mississippi region accounted for the largest revenue share of 69.98% in 2024. In the Mississippi region, iconic American landmarks, diverse local cultures, and famous destinations, such as St. Louis and Memphis

The Colombia & Snake River region of the U.S. river cruise market is anticipated to grow at the fastest CAGR of 14.5% from 2025 to 2030

Contents

CHAPTER 1. METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

- 1.1. Market Segmentation & Scope
- 1.2. Market Definition
- 1.3. Information Procurement
 - 1.3.1. Purchased Database
 - 1.3.2. GVR's Internal Database
 - 1.3.3. Secondary Sources & Third-Party Perspectives
 - 1.3.4. Primary Research
- 1.4. Information Analysis
 - 1.4.1. Data Analysis Models
- 1.5. Market Formulation & Data Visualization
- 1.6. Data Validation & Publishing

CHAPTER 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. Market Snapshot
- 2.2. Competitive Landscape Snapshot

CHAPTER 3. U.S. RIVER CRUISE MARKET VARIABLES, TRENDS & SCOPE

- 3.1. Market Lineage Outlook
 - 3.1.1. Parent Market Outlook
 - 3.1.2. Related Market Outlook
- 3.2. Penetration and Growth Prospect Mapping
- 3.3. Industry Value Chain Analysis
 - 3.3.1. Booking Mode Analysis and Trend
 - 3.3.2. Profit Margin Analysis (Industry-level)
- 3.4. Market Dynamics
 - 3.4.1. Market Driver Analysis
 - 3.4.2. Market Restraint Analysis
 - 3.4.3. Market Opportunities
 - 3.4.4. Market Challenges
- 3.5. Industry Analysis Tools
 - 3.5.1. Porter's Five Forces Analysis
- 3.6. Market Entry Strategies

CHAPTER 4. U.S. RIVER CRUISE MARKET: BUYER BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

- 4.1. Demographic Analysis
- 4.2. Consumer Trends & Preferences
- 4.3. Factors Affecting Buying Decisions
- 4.4. Consumer Product Adoption
- 4.5. Observations & Recommendations

CHAPTER 5. U.S. RIVER CRUISE MARKET: REGIONAL ESTIMATES & TREND ANALYSIS

- 5.1. U.S. River Cruise Market, By Booking Mode: Key Takeaways
- 5.2. Booking Mode Movement Analysis & Market Share, 2024 & 2030
- 5.3. Market Estimates & Forecasts, by Booking Mode, 2018 - 2030 (USD Billion)
 - 5.3.1. Mississippi
 - 5.3.1.1. Market estimates and forecast, 2018 - 2030 (USD Million)
 - 5.3.2. Colombia & Snake River
 - 5.3.2.1. Market estimates and forecast, 2018 - 2030 (USD Million)
 - 5.3.3. Alaska
 - 5.3.3.1. Market estimates and forecast, 2018 - 2030 (USD Million)
 - 5.3.4. Great Lakes
 - 5.3.4.1. Market estimates and forecast, 2018 - 2030 (USD Million)

CHAPTER 6. U.S. RIVER CRUISE MARKET: COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

- 6.1. Recent developments & impact analysis, by key market participants
- 6.2. Company Categorization
- 6.3. Participant's Overview
- 6.4. Financial Performance
- 6.5. Service Benchmarking
- 6.6. Company Market Share Analysis, 2024 (%)
- 6.7. Company Heat Map Analysis, 2024
- 6.8. Strategy Mapping
- 6.9. Company Profiles
 - 6.9.1. American Cruise Lines, Inc.
 - 6.9.1.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.1.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.1.3. Service Portfolios
 - 6.9.1.4. Strategic Initiatives

- 6.9.2. American Queen Voyages
 - 6.9.2.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.2.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.2.3. Service Portfolios
 - 6.9.2.4. Strategic Initiatives
- 6.9.3. Viking River Cruises
 - 6.9.3.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.3.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.3.3. Service Portfolios
 - 6.9.3.4. Strategic Initiatives
- 6.9.4. UnCruise Adventures
 - 6.9.4.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.4.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.4.3. Service Portfolios
 - 6.9.4.4. Strategic Initiatives
- 6.9.5. Celebrity Cruises, Inc. (Royal Caribbean Group)
 - 6.9.5.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.5.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.5.3. Service Portfolios
 - 6.9.5.4. Strategic Initiatives
- 6.9.6. Lindblad Expeditions LLC
 - 6.9.6.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.6.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.6.3. Service Portfolios
 - 6.9.6.4. Strategic Initiatives
- 6.9.7. Pearl Seas Cruises
 - 6.9.7.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.7.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.7.3. Service Portfolios
 - 6.9.7.4. Strategic Initiatives
- 6.9.8. Ponant
 - 6.9.8.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.8.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.8.3. Service Portfolios
 - 6.9.8.4. Strategic Initiatives
- 6.9.9. Hapag-Lloyd Cruises (TUI cruises GmbH)
 - 6.9.9.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.9.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.9.3. Service Portfolios

- 6.9.9.4. Strategic Initiatives
- 6.9.10. Alaskan Dream Cruises
 - 6.9.10.1. Company Overview
 - 6.9.10.2. Financial Performance
 - 6.9.10.3. Service Portfolios
 - 6.9.10.4. Strategic Initiatives

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