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Contact: Melanie Born
847.420.8808
melanie@eda-pr.com

SMALL SHIPS. SMALLER GROUPS. BIGGER CONNECTIONS.
New Avalon Waterways Research Shows Travellers Prefer Fewer Crowds, More Choice & More Space – Exactly How Avalon Was Designed.

TORONTO, ONTARIO – March 31, 2026 – Bigger isn't always better in travel. Increasingly, travellers are seeking experiences that feel more personal, more spacious and more connected – and Avalon Waterways has the data to prove it.

According to new guest research from the award-winning river cruise line, **62% of travellers say they prefer cruising on ships carrying fewer than 150 guests** – a model Avalon has long embraced with Suite Ships averaging just 150 passengers, **roughly 30% fewer than many river cruise vessels.**

“Travellers today are redefining luxury,” said Pam Hoffee, president of Avalon Waterways. “Space. Personalization. Freedom to explore. Smaller ships allow us to deliver all of that – and more – in ways larger ships simply can't.”

The Advantage of Small. Avalon's intentionally smaller fleet and smaller guest count isn't just about numbers. From the number of guests onboard to the way spaces are designed and experiences are delivered, Avalon's intentionally smaller scale shapes every part of the journey. Fewer guests means:

- More personal service.
- More room throughout each ship.
- Easier embarkation and exploration.
- A more relaxed onboard atmosphere.

And, importantly, it means Avalon guests don't feel like part of a crowd. “A smaller ship changes how a journey feels,” said Hoffee. “We can focus more on the guest experience instead of managing volume.”

More Choice. Smaller Groups. Deeper Connection. Avalon's small-ship philosophy extends beyond its Suite Ships and into how guests explore ashore. With as many as 28 Avalon Choice Excursions available on select cruises, guests personalize each day based on their interests and pace – naturally creating smaller, more intimate touring groups.

Guest research confirms how important that flexibility has become. Nearly all Avalon cruisers (**99%**) say having a variety of excursion options matters when selecting a cruise. Among guest preferences:

- **60% favour Classic guided sightseeing**
- **20% choose Active experiences such as biking and hiking**
- **16% seek cultural Discovery experiences**
- **6% prefer exploring independently**

Smaller groups also create something less measurable but equally meaningful: connection. More time with Local Guides. More interaction with fellow travellers, turning conversations into friendships. “The difference between travelling in a group and travelling with people you’ve gotten to know is significant,” said Hoffee. “That’s one of the most meaningful benefits of a smaller ship experience.”

This approach mirrors a broader shift toward “**micro-travel**” – experiences designed around intimacy, flexibility and personalization rather than scale.

Smaller Ships. Bigger Space. While Avalon’s ships carry fewer guests, the company emphasizes that guest accommodations and gathering spaces are intentionally generous. Avalon’s Panorama Suites, for instance, which make up two full decks of every Suite Ship, are approximately 15% larger than the industry standard and feature wall-to-wall windows that open wide, with beds facing the view.

Public spaces are equally considered. The Panorama Lounge, Panorama Dining Room and Sky Deck are designed to comfortably accommodate all guests at once, while smaller venues such as the Observation Lounge and Club Lounge offer more intimate, quieter spaces to relax.

A Different Kind of All-Inclusive. Avalon’s small-ship approach supports its broader philosophy of personalized cruising: Included excursions with multiple daily choices; smaller touring groups; flexible exploration and 3:1 guest-to-crew ratio.

Cruising Designed for How People Want to Travel Now. As interest in river cruising continues to grow, Avalon believes its longstanding small-ship philosophy positions the company well with evolving traveller expectations.

“Travellers want experiences that feel more personal and less crowded,” said Hoffee. “That’s not a new direction for us. It’s how we have always approached river cruising. “

For more information, cruisers can visit www.avalonwaterways.ca. Travel Advisors can visit the [Travel Advisor Portal](#).

ABOUT AVALON WATERWAYS

CRUISING ELEVATED. Over two decades, Avalon Waterways has redefined cruising by going against the current and away from the ordinary. Delivering unparalleled experiences and boundless exploration, Avalon puts cruisers in the captain's seat to navigate their journey, fuel their passions and steer clear of the unexpected as they cruise down the world's most memorable and mesmerizing waterways. When Avalon guests step aboard the award-winning cruise line's modern, luxurious Suite Ships with the grandest views in cruising, they are invited to experience a new way to cruise. This is how you Europe. Learn more and explore cruises at www.avalonwaterways.ca. Travel Advisors should visit www.traveladvisorportal.ca.