
Northern Xplorer - the world's first zero-emission cruise ships concept

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Northern Xplorer AS (NX) is delighted to announce the launch of its zero-emission, luxury cruise concept that aims to open the door to unique communities, natural attractions and experiences in the Nordic countries using advanced eco-friendly vessels.

NX brings 'experience tourism' to the cruise forefront under the slogan '*Destination Discovery*' - a new type of cruising providing immersive, enriching experiences for those interested in responsible travel with a minimal footprint.

'Off the beaten track'

As well as enjoying stunning scenery, authentic experiences will include interacting with local communities through cultural (arts and craft, architecture, music and lifestyle) activities and social dining in small groups. "Northern Xplorer will provide opportunities to travel 'off the beaten track', connecting passengers with unique locations in the Nordic countries in a personal way," says company founder and CEO Rolf André Sandvik.

The concept is exclusive yet accessible, intimate yet open, and firmly focused on delivering value for all stakeholders. "NX sets a new course for sustainable cruising for thinking travellers, with future expansion providing a gateway to other European destinations both coastal and on navigable waterways inland," says Sandvik.

In Norway specifically, new government regulation coming into force from 2026 will make zero emissions mandatory in the world-heritage sites of Geirangerfjord and Nærøysfjord. "This will mean the end of polluting cruise ships sailing in what will be the world's first zero-emission marine zones. Northern Xplorer provides the perfect zero-emission solution with a strong focus on local value creation and empowerment," says Sandvik.

World's first hydrogen-powered cruise ships

The current plan is for a series of 14 ships accommodating up to 300 passengers in

150 cabins supported by approximately 100 crew. The first are intended to be operational from 2024/2025, well in advance of the 2026 zero-emission regulations affecting Norway's world-heritage fjords.

The ships will feature clean technologies including fully electric propulsion, battery energy storage, hydrogen fuel cells and auxiliary renewable energy supply (wind and solar power). Sophisticated HVAC systems will safeguard against pathogen spread while extensive use of recyclable materials will promote circularity. They will also feature advanced LADAR technology to detect marine plastic debris and raise awareness of maritime pollution. Built to the highest classification notations, all the vessels will be performance-optimised for superior energy efficiency and reduced fuel consumption.

“Low-impact discovery travel in smaller vessels is infinitely preferable to overcrowded ships and marquee destinations teeming with tourists. Somewhere between ocean and river cruising, it's for those who want a more intimate on-board experience, to get insights into a new culture up close, and leave with the feeling their holidays have contributed positively to local communities and the planet,” says Sandvik.

NX's offering is disruptive to the mass tourism mainstream by visiting harbours that large ships cannot access, with attention to detail in service and bespoke excursions that will make every journey special. “As a company we will be part of the local fabric offering compelling activities that support local employment and innovation. We will perform strict due diligence of sub-suppliers to ensure our green philosophy spans the value chain, while also facilitating scientific research and marine conservation,” says Sandvik.

Long industry experience

Sandvik is a master mariner with extensive experience with cruise lines NCL and Crystal Cruises. For several years he was also VP Destination Development. Latterly he founded travel company The Fjords, based in Flåm in western Norway, where as CEO he ushered in a new era of environmentally friendly sightseeing, commissioning the hybrid electric vessels *Vision of the Fjords* (built 2016) and *Future of the Fjords* (built 2018). Each vessel can accommodate up to 400 passengers on noiseless, pollution-free journeys in the UNESCO-listed Nærøyfjord. Constructed by specialist Norwegian shipbuilder Brødrene Aa, both vessels won the 'Ship of the Year' award during maritime trade fair SMM in Hamburg in their respective delivery years.

“NX represents the next step of my own journey to green the waterborne tourist industry. We want to 'walk the talk' on green maritime innovation. Scaling up what we seeded at The Fjords to sustainable cruising on brand-new vessels compliant with the

strictest global regulations is, I believe, the best way to show discerning visitors the amazing nature and breadth of culture we have up here in Northern Europe,” Sandvik says.

(Northern Xplorer)