

PONANT EXPLORATIONS GROUP Acquires Majority Share of Aqua Expeditions



January 16, 2025 | PONANT EXPLORATIONS GROUP, a world leader in luxury expedition cruises in the small ships segment under 500 passengers, proudly announces the acquisition of a majority stake in Aqua Expeditions, the award-winning small ship expedition company renowned for its exceptional river and ocean cruises in South America, Southeast Asia and beyond.

This strategic acquisition by PONANT EXPLORATIONS GROUP, backed by Artémis Group, the Pinault family's investment company—which owns prestigious fashion houses through Kering including Gucci, Saint Laurent, Bottega Veneta, Balenciaga and famed auction house Christie's; Pinault Collection, the world's largest private collection of contemporary art; Artémis Domaines, encompassing a collection of the most exclusive wine estates, including Château Latour; and Creative Artists Agency (CAA), the world's leading entertainment and sports agency—will empower Aqua Expeditions to continue expanding its footprint globally and enabling the company's growth as a destination specialist. Aqua Expeditions currently operates small ships in biodiversity hotspots such as the Galápagos, Raja Ampat, Komodo, Spice Islands, the Mekong River, and the Peruvian Amazon River. Francesco Galli Zugaro, CEO and Founder will remain as a shareholder and along with his senior management team, will continue to lead the company as a stand-alone business unit, continuing to operate under the brand name "Aqua Expeditions".

This transaction comes at a pivotal time as Aqua Expeditions ramps up the launch of its East Africa itineraries, exploring the Seychelles and Tanzania, with a particular focus on the Aldabra group of islands.

"We are thrilled to welcome Aqua Expeditions into the Ponant family," said Hervé Gastinel, CEO of PONANT EXPLORATIONS GROUP. "This partnership aligns perfectly with our vision of excellence and sustainability in the luxury sector. It reflects our commitment to offering unparalleled travel experiences in iconic destinations such as the Galápagos and now also river journeys, while preserving the natural beauty of the places we explore. We are deeply impressed with the exceptional company that Francesco has built over the past 18 years and the unique brand he has developed in the experiential travel space."

"Joining forces with PONANT EXPLORATIONS GROUP and having the support of the Artémis Group is a remarkable opportunity for Aqua Expeditions," said Francesco Galli Zugaro, CEO of Aqua Expeditions. "Partnering with another family-owned business ensures we maintain a heritage of luxury in our brand. With the financial support and expertise from our partners, we are well-positioned to continue our growth and offer our guests unforgettable journeys to the world's most biodiverse and culturally rich regions while maintaining our core brand values."

ABOUT PONANT EXPLORATIONS GROUP

Explore to Inspire: explore to better understand, learn, share and protect. PONANT EXPLORATIONS GROUP has been committed to more responsible tourism, and purposeful voyages of exploration for over 35 years. Aboard a fleet of 14 French-flagged small ships, fitted with the latest environmental technologies, the journey of exploration is always elegant, authentic and inspiring. For more information www.ponant.com

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ABOUT AQUA EXPEDITIONS

A recognized global leader in luxury small-ship expeditions, Aqua Expeditions explores the world's most biodiverse and culturally significant destinations aboard best-in-class vessels of stylish contemporary design. Expect tailored five-star itineraries, a highly exclusive 1:1 crew- to-guest ratio with personalized service, world-class dining, and small group expert-guided activities and excursions, with a maximum of 16-40 guests per ship. Aqua Expeditions currently operates river explorations in the Peruvian Amazon and the Mekong Delta (Cambodia and Vietnam), and coastal yacht voyages in East Indonesia — Komodo National Park, Ambon and the Spice Islands, Raja Ampat, and Asmat — and the Galapagos Islands.

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ABOUT ARTÉMIS

Artémis was founded in 1992 by French entrepreneur François Pinault. Artémis is a holding company which manages a range of companies and holds shares in various sectors, in France and abroad. For over 20 years, Artémis has been the controlling shareholder of global luxury group Kering. Artémis also owns Christie's, the worldwide leading auction house, Artémis Domaines with several exclusive wine estates including Château Latour and Clos de Tart, Pinault collection as the largest collection of contemporary art in the world, and holds several other key assets such as Creative Artists Agency (CAA) the world's leading entertainment and sports agency, and Ponant, a world leader in cruise expeditions. It is also a significant shareholder of the sports brand Puma. As a professional shareholder, Artémis is focused on long-term growth and shareholder value creation, while remaining on the watch for new investment opportunities. Artémis' consolidated assets exceed 60 billion euros.