

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Victory Cruise Lines and PONANT join Cruise the Great Lakes** *International cruise marketing organization gearing up for busy 2025*

(CHICAGO, IL) – Cruise the Great Lakes welcomes two premier cruise lines as its newest members, Victory Cruise Lines and PONANT.

Both cruise lines have had ships on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River for several years and have decided to strengthen their commitment to serving the region. They join Pearl Seas Cruises, St. Lawrence Cruise Lines, and Viking Cruises as members.

Founded in 2018, Cruise the Great Lakes is the region's cruise marketing program focused on attracting more passengers. It is a forum to bring together the states, provinces, cruise lines, ports, convention and visitors bureaus, chambers of commerce, associations, and others to work toward shared goals. The program is an initiative of the Chicago-based Council of Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers, which unites the chief executives from the eight states and two Canadian provinces bordering the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River.

This past December, Cruise the Great Lakes announced that Great Lakes cruises are projected to welcome over 22,000 individual passengers, representing a nearly 10% increase from 2024. It also projects more than 700 port visits planned, up almost 30% from last year.

Victory Cruise Lines announced in 2024 that it would return to the Great Lakes in 2025, bringing its intimate luxury vessels, Victory I and Victory II.

"There is a strong market for cruising the Great Lakes, and our talented team is passionate about delivering a wonderful experience in the region," **said John Waggoner, founder and chairman of Victory Cruise Lines.** "As we prepare for our first season, we look forward to being a part of 'Cruise the Great Lakes' and supporting their efforts."

PONANT's striking ships, Le Bellot and Le Champlain, are also familiar sites around the region. The cruise line has a full 2025 cruising schedule.

"We are delighted that both Victory and PONANT have chosen to join Cruise the Great Lakes," **said Cathleen Domanico, Tourism Director for Cruise the Great Lakes.** "Their beautiful ships turn heads in every port, so we are pleased the companies have strengthened their commitment to the region so more passengers can enjoy the amazing experiences these cruise lines provide."

Cruise passengers could give the region a tremendous economic boost. Cruise the Great Lakes officials announced recently that it anticipates more than \$230 million in economic impact across the area in 2025, reflecting a 15% increase from 2024.

"The beauty and diversity of our region continue to attract visitors from around the world," **said Anne Sayers, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism and Chair of Cruise the Great Lakes.** "With more ships and ports on the itinerary, the positive economic contributions of Great Lakes cruising will continue to be felt across the region."

Cruise lines scheduled to operate on the Great Lakes in 2025 include Pearl Seas, Viking, St. Lawrence Cruise Lines, Ponant, Hapag-Lloyd, and Victory.

"As we look to 2025, we're excited to see continued growth in the Great Lakes cruise sector," added Domanico. "We forecast this upcoming season to be even stronger than 2024, both in terms of passenger numbers and economic impact, which underscores the appeal of cruising in the Great Lakes."

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### **About Cruise the Great Lakes**

[www.cruisethegreatlakes.com](http://www.cruisethegreatlakes.com)

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