

Madison marks American Cruise Lines' inaugural port of call

4 Ohio River cruises planned this year, 11 in 2025

BY BOB DEMAREE

The inaugural port of call by American Cruise Lines in Madison was marked by the arrival of two riverboats — the American Melody and the paddle wheeler American Heritage — on Friday at the boat ramp on the Ohio River.

"We're thrilled to have American Melody and American Heritage together in Madison for the first time to mark the start of our bright future together," said Charles B. Robertson, president and CEO of American Cruise Lines. "We believe strongly in the tourism potential of the Ohio River and are grateful for a partnership to build tourism infrastructure in your community. We want our riverboats to celebrate Madison and each of the Ohio River towns for years to come."

The event comes just five months after American Queen Voyages (AQV) shut down operations. AQV had been docking boats at Madison for many years, and was in the midst of a five-year agreement before the company's bankruptcy and shut down seemingly left the city without any riverboat visits this summer. But shortly after that, the AQV fleet was purchased by American Cruise Lines, and in June the announcement was made that American Cruise Lines would begin bringing boats to Madison.

"This is a beautiful place in Madison, Indiana, and sometimes doors open and doors close," said Tony Steinhardt, the city's economic development director. "As you all know, we announced a few years back another partnership, and that



Mark Campbell

Mayor Bob Courtney presents a key to the city to Charles B. Robertson, president and CEO of American Cruise Lines, as a crowd welcomed the ACL's inaugural port of call in Madison Friday with the American Heritage paddle wheeler (right) and American Melody riverboats both docking at the Madison boat ramp.

door closed, but what I can tell you is that we went to work to find another cruise line that wanted to be here in Madison, Indiana. We are so fortunate that Charlie (Robertson) and his team at American Cruise Lines have chosen Madison today."

The docking of two boats together is a rarity for American Cruise Lines, something that last happened in September 2022 when the riverboats American Symphony and American Melody docked at River Heritage Park in Davenport, Iowa.

American Cruise Lines, the largest river cruise line in the United States, has pledged to visit Madison three more times this year with the American Heritage returning Aug. 2, Aug. 16 and Aug. 30. ACL is then sched-

uled to dock 11 times in Madison in 2025.

Steinhardt said each visit will be an influx of tourism dollars, with an average spend of approximately \$27,000 per visit in direct tourism revenue coming into Madison. He also noted that ACL's boats will be docking "longer than we've ever had boats" with 12- to 15-hour port of calls compared to the more brief stops AQV has made in the past.

"They'll get to experience Madison morning, noon and night. We're excited about that. We're excited our guests get to experience what we experience in Madison, Indiana," Steinhardt said.

"We are a community with a proud river heritage, and there's just something that evokes nos-

algia, and some kind of deep feeling inside of people in this river community when these riverboats show up in our port," said Visit Madison Executive Director Andrew Forrester. "Seeing them here on such a beautiful day is such an amazing thing for Madison, and we're excited to have them back."

"We're also excited about the future with American Cruise Lines, creating premium experiences for the guests, and it's beneficial for the guests to see all the things Madison has to offer, but also serve our restaurants, our retail stores and historic properties really well," Forrester added. "These visits are important for our economy because the impact they have, and the amount of money that is impacted in our community, and we know once visitors come to see Madison, just once, you'll want to come back and get a little bit bigger taste of Madison."

Madison Mayor Bob Courtney said having the riverboats stop in Madison is more than just economic impact. It's a treat for local residents and Madison's other visitors.

"I've been watching steamboats and cruise ships dock along our riverfront ever since I was a small kid living downtown. The excitement today is same as it was when I was a small kid," Courtney said.

Madison has always been known as a beautiful river town. We are so proud of that heritage" in which riverboats have long been a part of the city's history."

Courtney also read a letter from Indiana Destination Development Corporation Secretary and Chief Executive Officer Elaine Bedel who noted, "Once visitors disembark in Indiana and experience the unique charm of Madison, we are confident they will be captivated and eager to

return. Cruise ship tourism is not just a leisure activity but a vital part of our economy."

Robertson said he was impressed by what he saw in his first-ever visit to Madison. "We are very grateful to see so much happening in town, so much changing, and all the potential that exist here. The investments in places like the Cotton Mill have helped, this riverfront walk, the new plans that exist for landings and docks, and the potential in it, are all part of the potential we see in tourism domestically in the Ohio River specifically, so we are very, very excited to keep growing the town here, and bringing more and more ships to the river system," he said.

American Cruise Lines was founded in 1972 by Robertson's parents, Charles A. and Carol Robertson. Charles A. Robertson died Feb. 9, 2020, and after that Charles B. Robertson assumed his current role. "We have 20 ships across our country, and seven more under construction right now, so we will continue to expand our footprint all over America," he said.

"Indiana has been so welcoming to us. This is the first cruise investment that's coming into the state of Indiana, and the first cruise terminal that we're really discussing on the Ohio River. It is so ready for increased tourism traffic on this river system. It's a great way to see our country."

Robertson noted the company began operation as a ship builder and American Cruise Lines continues to build its own ships. "We're very proud to do it, to manufacture them here in America with American steel with engines and generators, some of which come from Indiana, and every where we go, we strive to keep our ships efficient, keep them small, and really let the destinations do the talking."

Twisted Torque Car Show winners



Above: John Backus won the award for Best Rat Rod at the third Annual Twisted Torque Car Show Saturday at Carrollton's Point Park.



Left: Tim Donovan won the award for Best Car in Show at the third Annual Twisted Torque Car Show Saturday at Carrollton's Point Park.

Photos by Shalayne Wyman



Kevin Birge won the award for Best Truck in Show at the third Annual Twisted Torque Car Show Saturday at Carrollton's Point Park.

TRIMBLE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY AUGUST PROGRAMS

ONGOING EVENTS

Library Scavenger Hunt: Come to the library any time this month. Search high and low for clues. Get entered into the drawing for a prize. All ages welcome.

OTHER EVENTS

Friday, August 2 Noon Homeschool Tween Meetup: Calling all homeschooled teens and tweens! Friday from noon to 2 p.m. Snacks provided. No registration.

Saturday, August 3 11 a.m. & 1 p.m. The Science Guys: Join us for our finale program of Summer Reading featuring — STEM Adventure with the Science Guys!

In this thrilling show, young scientists will embark on a STEM adventure. Kids will jump right into a mission that reveals the challenges of defying gravity and electrifying obstacles, all while exploring science principles to navigate an escape. This adventure includes the powerful forces of physics, stunning reactions of chemistry, and much much more. Please call to register 502-255-7362.

Monday, August 5 9 a.m. Take & Make: Stop by anytime to pick up your DIY mosaic tile coaster take home kit. For teens and adults. Available while supplies last.

6 p.m. Adult Bingo: Join us for a fun-filled evening with

unique prizes. Make sure to arrive early and check out materials. For every check out you will receive an extra Bingo card. No registration.

Friday, August 9 5 p.m. Nerf War: After hours nerf war inside the library! For kids and teens. Bring your Nerf gun. We supply the Nerf bullets and protective eye wear. If you've read a book ahead of time, you'll fill out a form when you come and get entered in a prize drawing. No registration needed.

Saturday, August 10 1 p.m. Adult Crafternoon: A craft for adults and teens. We will be making watermelon Ball jars. Please register 502-255-7362.

Monday, August 12 1:30 p.m. Teen VR Adventures: Come join TCPL for fruit ninja Olympics with the Virtual Reality (VR) headset! Will you be the Olympic champ? Registration required. 502-255-7362 for ages 13-17.

6 p.m. Family BINGO: Join us for a fun-filled evening with unique prizes. Make sure to arrive early and check out materials. For every check out you will receive an extra Bingo card. All ages welcome. Bring the family. No registration.

Tuesday, August 13 4 p.m. Kids in the Kitchen: Join us for our Kids In The Kitchen series. This week it's all about slime. For children ages 8-12.

Registration required.

Friday, August 16 11 a.m. Homeschool Social: Calling all homeschooled families! Network with other homeschooled families and enjoy lunch on us. Third Friday of every month from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. No registration.

Saturday, August 17 & 31 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. (drop in) Gamer's Hangout: Come hangout in the teen room, play some video games, meet new people, and enjoy snacks on us. Recommended for ages 8 and up. Every other Saturday. No registration.

Monday, August 19 9 a.m. Take & Make: Stop by anytime to pick up your DIY Fall Macrame Rainbow take home kit. Available while supplies last. For teens and adults.

Thursday, August 22 10 a.m. La Leche League: Connect with fellow moms and get lactation support. Older children are welcome to come to play in the children's department. Snacks provided. No registration.

Tuesday, August 27 4 p.m. Kids in the Kitchen: Join us for our Kids In The Kitchen series! This week we will be making mug recipes — you will get to pick what recipe you'd like to try! For children ages 8-12. Registration required.

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LEGAL

Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency Request for Proposals from Qualified Environmental Professionals

Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency (KIPDA) has received a Brownfields Assessment Coalition Grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency and intends to hire a qualified firm or team of firms to conduct environmental services for the grant. The Qualified Environmental Professional will be selected according to certain criteria outlined in the Request for Proposals (RFP) and will provide technical services to KIPDA with respect to the assessment of eligible properties, community engagement, and cleanup planning.

Proposals will be accepted until August 22, 2024 by 12:00 PM, Local Time. Interested and qualified firms can obtain an official copy of the RFP by contacting:

KIPDA Community and Economic Development Division
ced@kipda.org

Disadvantaged Business Enterprises/Minority Business Enterprises/Women's Business Enterprises are encouraged to apply. KIPDA is an equal opportunity employer.

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