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(1:00 a.m. EDT) -- The iconic Strand Hotel in Yangon, Myanmar, has branched out to river cruising with the launch of a small ship, Strand Cruise.

Built locally from scratch, the vessel will have 27 cabins with floor to ceiling Juliette balconies, a pool deck, sun deck for outdoor dining, a wellness centre, reflexology station, beauty parlour, and cocktail lounge. A regular schedule of three- and four-night sailings between Bagan and Mandalay are slated to start early January 2016.



Jerome Seban, general manager of Strand Cruise, said: "Having operated The Strand Hotel in Yangon for the past decade, we know that there has been a steady growth in demand from luxury travellers to explore the ancient monuments of Myanmar by using the Ayeyarwady's [also known as Irrawaddy] waterways. This demand presented us with an opportunity to reinvent the legendary style and unique personality of The Strand Hotel within a contemporary river cruise experience."

Reduced from January to March 2016, rates include all excursions, onboard meals and soft drinks, local beer and house wine during meals, port charges, English speaking guides, satellite Wi-Fi. Passengers booking one of the two Strand Suites will have added extras such as a one-hour spa treatment of their choice and a night at The Strand Hotel pre- or post- cruise with private airport transfers.

--By Louise Goldsbury, Australia Editor