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New \$7.75 million Five-Star River Cruise Vessel announced for Mildura on the Murray River

*Third vessel for Murray River Paddlesteamers
to connect Mildura and Adelaide with iconic overnight cruises*

Australia's legendary Murray River is set to welcome a spectacular new addition in 2027 with the announcement of a luxurious, overnight paddlesteamer – *Australian Sky* – to be built by Murray River Paddlesteamers, with the support of the Victorian Government and APT, Australia's leading luxury tour operator

Funded in part by a grant from the Victorian Government's Regional Tourism Investment Fund, and supported by APT through a long-term charter partnership, *Australian Sky* will become the first, five-star, overnight cruise vessel to homeport in Mildura in decades, offering unforgettable journeys of three to 11 nights between Mildura and Adelaide.

The 19-cabin vessel – a sister ship to the soon-to-be-launched *Australian Star* – will carry 38 guests in comfort and style, blending the heritage of traditional paddlesteamer design with premium, contemporary amenities. *Australian Sky* will be the only five-star paddlesteamer based in Victoria's sunny northwest, and just the second of its kind in Australia, joining her sister ship in redefining luxury river cruising on the Murray.

As the sunniest city in Victoria, Mildura's golden skies and starlit evenings have inspired the vessel's name. Where *Australian Star* celebrates the twinkling night sky over the river, *Australian Sky* completes the story – representing the vast horizons, warm sunlight, and timeless beauty of Australia's outback river regions. Together, these sister ships tell a uniquely Australian story – a journey where the river meets the sky.

Launching in late 2027, *Australian Sky* is expected to generate a \$5.8 million annual economic boost for the Sunraysia region, drawing an estimated 4000 additional domestic and international visitors each year. More than 65 jobs will be created through construction and ongoing operations.

Australian Sky's itinerary will feature:

- Three, four, and seven-night cruises between Mildura (VIC) and Wentworth (NSW) during spring, summer, and autumn.
- Historic 11-night cruises in winter between Mildura and Mannum, near Adelaide – the longest river cruises ever offered on the Murray.

Guests will enjoy guided shore excursions to wineries, national parks, historic homesteads, Indigenous cultural sites, country towns, and unique outback experiences like a riverside campfire and dinner in a shearing shed. Cruise fares will be all-inclusive, covering meals, shore excursions, transfers, gratuities, Wi-Fi, and selected beverages.

Murray River Paddlesteamers Director Craig Burgess said the expansion marks a new era for Australian river cruising: “Australians love cruising – and they love the Murray River. But there’s been a clear demand for a world-class, five-star product that matches what you’d find on Europe’s iconic waterways. That’s exactly what *Australian Star* and now *Australian Sky* will deliver,” Mr Burgess said.

“The strong demand we’ve seen for *Australian Star* – with 85 per cent of sailings already sold or chartered for 2025–2026 – confirms the appetite for premium, overnight cruising. *Australian Sky* will help us meet that demand, grow regional tourism, and put Mildura firmly on the map as a luxury river cruise destination.

“We’re deeply grateful to the Victorian Government for supporting our vision to elevate Australian river cruising to new heights.”

A refurbished, vintage, wood-fired steam engine/diesel-electric engine will power the vessel, with construction set to begin in October, 2025. Bookings are expected to open in mid-2026.

While modelled on traditional paddlesteamers, *Australian Sky* will feature a sleek, contemporary interior, including:

- 19 river-view staterooms with ensuites, air-conditioning, and private deck access
- Panoramic bar, lounge, and viewing deck
- A fine-dining venue
- Passenger lift to all accommodation and decks
- Expansive outdoor relaxation areas
- Complimentary Starlink Wi-Fi
- Premium onboard inclusions

Australian Sky will become the third vessel in the growing Murray River Paddlesteamers fleet, joining:

- PS Emmylou – A boutique, wood-fired paddlesteamer for 16 guests, offering cruises from Echuca (to be chartered by Travelmarvel from September 2025)
- Australian Star – Launching in spring 2025 with three to seven-night itineraries from Echuca (already experiencing strong advance bookings into 2027)
- Australian Sky – Launching in 2027 from Mildura

For more information or bookings, contact Murray River Paddlesteamers on 03 5482 5244 or visit www.mrps.com.au .

Travel agents receive a 10 per cent commission for bookings plus bonuses for multiple bookings.