

## 180 Degrees From Ordinary

**An Interview with Janet Bava, Chief Commercial Officer; Patricia Gonzalez, Vice President of Marketing; Dianna Rom, Vice President of Sales; Jaymi Fiveash, Senior Director of Vacation Planning; and Cris De Souza, Director of Revenue Performance, Windstar Cruises**

**COMPANY BRIEF** Windstar Cruises ([windstarcruises.com](http://windstarcruises.com)) operates a fleet of six boutique all-suite and sailing yachts carrying 148-342 guests. Small ship cruises sail throughout Europe, the Caribbean, Costa Rica and the Panama Canal, Asia, New England and Eastern Canada, the Middle East, and the South Pacific, including a ship year-round in Tabiti. Windstar launched the \$250 Million Star Plus Initiative to transform the three all-suite Star Plus Class yachts with new suites, restaurants, and a world-class spa and fitness center. The award-winning line is known for immersive experiences, destination authenticity, port-intensive itineraries, exceptional service, and an innovative culinary program.



Star Breeze in Monemvasia, Greece



Janet Bava

**EDITORS' NOTE** Cuban born and Miami raised, Janet Bava found her love for travel at a young age. She had her first taste of cruising at the age of 15 when she celebrated her quinceañera onboard a Royal Caribbean cruise ship and never looked back. She describes herself as a cruise lifer and internationally travel driven – she even met her husband while traveling through Italy during her college years. Prior to joining Windstar Cruises during the summer of 2023, Bava was most recently the Chief Marketing Officer for AmaWaterways River Cruises and she has spent upwards of 20 years working in the travel industry. Most notably, prior to AmaWaterways, Bava was the VP of Marketing (The Americas) for Silversea Cruises where she fell in love with small-ship luxury cruising. Bava graduated from Florida International University with a marketing and international business degree.

### Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?

As Chief Commercial Officer, I'm responsible for driving strategic growth initiatives. It's a multifaceted responsibility that encompasses a

range of vital revenue generating functions within our organization leading marketing, sales, reservations, revenue management and deployment teams to achieve our overarching objective: to elevate our company's position in the global cruise market.

### How do you describe the Windstar experience?

At Windstar, we like to say that we are 180 degrees from ordinary. You can take all our guests and crew off one ship, and they would not even fill one lifeboat on a modern mega ship. Windstar is a cruise line where like-minded cultured, social, and worldly people come together with attentive and friendly staff. Our cruises are unregimented and relaxed, but they are also port-intensive, as our guests love to explore the world around them.

Windstar's small but nimble yachts can access places and waterways large ships simply cannot. Even in big cities like London, Windstar sails up the Thames and berths at Tower Bridge; we get to dock in Dubrovnik and Venice when big ships are turned away, and we can access ports other ships could never dream of, like Gustavia on gorgeous St. Barts.

### What do you feel are the keys to Windstar's industry leadership and how do you define the Windstar difference?

Many of our top executives at Windstar worked their way up through the ranks, beginning their careers at sea, from Windstar's president, who started out as a waiter on a small cruise ship (now Windstar's Star Legend), to other top Windstar executives who also worked as servers, entertainment leaders, and even captains on ships. That experience is rare in today's corporate world and brings with it knowledge and know-how, plus a deep appreciation for service and attention. This very much has shaped Windstar's leadership style. It's a team that is humble, extremely guest-centric, and focused on service anticipation, and it results in an onboard experience that is unmatched for deeply personalized service without pretension.

### Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for Windstar Cruises?

We just completed our most successful Wave Season ever and have announced the expansion of the company with two new small ships joining our fleet – one in 2025 and another in 2026. These new ships allow Windstar not only to grow, but also to go back to favorite destinations that we've been to before, and to add new destinations. But while we are expanding and will have more capacity for guests across the fleet, we're still keeping our ships small to maintain our signature Windstar style of cruising – growth for sure, but keeping our culture intact.

**“Windstar is a cruise line where like-minded cultured, social, and worldly people come together with attentive and friendly staff.” - Janet Bava**



Patricia Gonzalez

**EDITORS' NOTE** Patricia Gonzalez is a senior marketing leader and passionate advocate for the transformative power of travel. With more than 15 years of experience in the travel and marketing industries, she's currently leading the charge as Vice President of Marketing for Windstar Cruises. Before joining Windstar, Gonzalez held the position of Head of Marketing for Azamara Cruises, and she has also held key marketing roles with Royal Caribbean Group, Celebrity Cruises, and Unique Vacations Inc. (Sandals Resorts). Gonzalez earned a BS degree in advertising with a minor in business administration from the University of Florida and an MBA from Florida International University— College of Business.



Dianna Rom

**EDITORS' NOTE** Dianna Rom is a seasoned travel industry executive with more than 25 years of experience. As Vice President of Sales, she is responsible for Windstar Cruises' overall global sales efforts, developing sales strategies, and leading teams that support travel advisor communities worldwide, with a focus on North America, Europe, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Middle East, and Latin America. Rom's journey in the travel and tourism industry began early, and she has built her entire career working in hospitality, including roles at renowned brands such as Omni Hotels, Hilton Brand Hotels, Holiday Inns, and boutique branded hotels. Joining Xanterra in 2000 as the Director of Sales and Marketing for eight resorts, she transitioned to Windstar Cruises in 2014, continuing her career with the Xanterra Travel Collection.

**Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?**

As the Head of Marketing at Windstar Cruises, I lead an incredible team focused on sharing our unique story. We highlight what sets us apart, like our intimate yacht-style ships, personalized service, and carefully curated itineraries. My focus areas include brand positioning, storytelling, digital and traditional marketing strategies, and travel advisor and customer initiatives, all aimed at conveying the message that Windstar Cruises offers a 180-degree departure from ordinary travel experiences.



Star Breeze Yacht Club

**How do you describe Windstar's culture and values?**

At Windstar, we believe in being welcoming, innovative, and present in the moment. Our culture is all about making guests feel like part of our family and taking responsibility for our impact on the environment and the communities we visit. We aim to create unforgettable moments that ignite a passion for travel.

**How important is it for Windstar Cruises to build a diverse and inclusive workforce?**

We understand that having a diverse team helps us better serve our diverse guests. That's why we're committed to building a team that reflects the world around us. By embracing different perspectives, we can provide even better experiences for everyone who sails with us.

**How do you define the power of travel and its ability to change lives?**

Travel isn't just about seeing new places; it's about inspiring personal growth. At Windstar, we believe travel has the power to change lives by connecting people, cultures, and ideas. Whether it's experiencing breathtaking natural wonders, exploring historical landmarks, or simply enjoying moments of tranquility at sea, travel has the power to transform lives by opening hearts and minds to new possibilities. We are proud to facilitate these life-changing experiences for our guests, creating memories that last a lifetime.

**Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?**

In my role, I oversee the Sales Division for Windstar Cruises and am responsible for driving revenue growth through strategic partnerships and initiatives. My area of focus includes developing sales strategies and relationships with our charter and trade partners, implementing sales programs, and identifying opportunities for growth.

**Will you highlight Windstar Cruises' commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction?**

Our commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction is simple – personalized service and unforgettable experiences. Our staff strives to exceed expectations at every touch point on land and at sea ensuring a memorable and enjoyable cruise experience.

**Do you feel that there are strong opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry?**

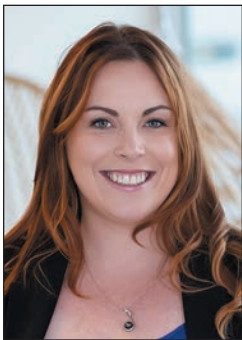
Yes, absolutely. I believe there are opportunities for women to grow and lead in the industry. Windstar Cruises has strong female leadership team members in addition to many other positions within our company, including Captaining our ships. Windstar Cruises sponsors ASTA'S Icon Award honoring female leaders in travel. This award will inspire and empower other women in the travel industry.



Star Breeze pool deck

**Did you know at an early age that you had a passion to pursue a career in the hospitality industry?**

I have been in hospitality my entire adult working career. Although my dream was to become a traveling nurse, fashion designer, lawyer, and who knows what else, I ultimately did none of those things once I started working at a hotel as my first adult job and fell in love with the hospitality industry. I could not imagine my life without the excitement of this industry. The opportunity for career advancement, the satisfaction of making people's travel experiences unforgettable, and the chance to travel and see the world have made this career decision an unbelievable journey. I have had opportunities I could not even have dreamed about.



Jaymi Fiveash

**EDITORS' NOTE** Jaymi Fiveash has been a part of the Windstar team for over a decade, first coming aboard in 2013. Initially joining the team as a Voyage Service Agent who excelled at connecting guests with their dream vacations, she soon realized she had a passion for leading through mentorship. Now serving as Senior Director of Vacation Planning, her favorite aspect of her profession is her team – she enjoys helping her team members grow professionally and watching them excel to their highest capabilities. In addition to her time experiencing Windstar behind the scenes, Fiveash has also spent plenty of time enjoying the cruise line as a guest. In fact, she got engaged on the back of Wind Spirit, and

if you ask her what her favorite place in the world is, she'd tell you it's the deck of a Windstar ship.

**Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?**

As Senior Director of Vacation Planning, I am responsible for and oversee the Vacation Planning Sales and Services Teams and the Guest Services Operations Team. The Reservation Vacation Planning Team consists of an Inbound team (both Trade and Direct), Outbound Direct Sales, Groups Trade and Direct Sales, and Onboard Future Cruise Sales. Our department also houses the Passenger Air team, Guest pre-cruise Operations team, and the department's personal Training team.



Watersports platform

**Will you highlight the strength of the Windstar team?**

One of the biggest strengths we have among our senior leaders is the fact that they have worked onboard and spent the beginning of their careers interacting directly with the guests and other crew members. This brings balance to the overall company values and decision-making guiding principles.

Vacation planning specifically finds strength in the fact that our team spans a huge variety of people, positions,

experiences, and walks of life. We have entry level positions that allow new to the industry individuals an opportunity to find a new home in a new workforce, and expert level positions requiring industry proven expertise and managerial skill sets. We are a tenacious and eager group that is passionate about travel and providing the best customer experience.

**You have been with Windstar Cruises for more than ten years. What has made the experience so special for you?**

This truly is a family. A lot of companies can say they are a family, but I don't know if everyone else truly embodies that. We are open, collaborative, encouraging, and truly want to see people succeed whether that be long term with Windstar or somewhere else. I feel that we are a human first employee brand and I have always felt supported to grow and encouraged to be myself along the journey. One would be remiss not to acknowledge the amazing travel opportunities I have had, from Tahiti to Greece, from Sail Ships to Power Ships, I have traveled the world and look forward to the continued destinations we explore and take our ships to.

**What advice do you offer to young people interested in pursuing a career in the cruise industry?**

Work hard, and then work harder. Work ethics will outshine degrees and titles every single time. Find your personal work ethic. Also, you must be flexible and adaptable to succeed in the ever-changing world of international travel. You must find comfort in discomfort, as the impacts of social climates, economic challenges, and extreme weather changes are out of your control but will impact you drastically. Learn to thrive in chaos, not survive chaos.



Cris De Souza

**EDITORS' NOTE** Cris De Souza's career in the travel industry started with Royal Caribbean Group in Revenue Management, piloting and pioneering the cruise line's revenue performance and business intelligence modeling initiatives in addition to leading yield management teams to maximize revenue. Her career grew into sales and marketing leadership roles with Celebrity Cruises and transitioned to the travel agency distribution channel as Vice President of Marketing and Sales with Travel Leaders Group. In 2021, during the "great pause," she was retained by the boutique influencer agency Advance Your Reach as Head of Business Development, developing the agency's

strategic consulting division offering digital event marketing and management services retaining clients including Michael Phelps, Tony Robbins, Bethany Hamilton, and Dwayne Johnson. In 2021, De Souza returned to the travel industry and joined Windstar Cruises as the Director of Revenue Performance, leading the cruise line's inventory, pricing, business intelligence and strategy team. De Souza holds a bachelor of business administration in marketing management and an MBA in international business from Florida Atlantic University, and a MA degree in sustainability and environmental management from Harvard University.

**What excited you about the opportunity to join Windstar Cruises and made you feel it was the right fit?**

I had the pleasure of rejoining the travel industry with Windstar Cruises after a 2-year hiatus during the pandemic. Windstar, and our parent company, Xanterra Travel Collection, were on my shortlist of travel organizations I was targeting for re-entry into the travel industry.

One of the unique things about our ownership is a strong focus on preservation, sustainability, and revitalizing iconic cruise ships and hotels versus tearing down and building new from scratch. This combined philosophy and approach carries into the fabric of the culture of Windstar, where under the leadership of our President, Christopher Prelog, the company honors and builds on the time-honored traditions of the past with our crew and staff and ships, combining the new with innovative products and services built on a fresh leadership approach with our 180 degrees from ordinary way of being.

**Will you provide an overview of your role and areas of focus?**

As Director of Revenue Planning, my team's role is twofold: to maximize revenue for the company through a blend of pricing and inventory management decisions across our fleet of six ships and acting as catalysts for the sales enablement process with our trade and direct sales organizations. We pride ourselves in Windstar revenue planning to always find "a path to yes" wherever possible. Our sales and guest services teams along with our valued guests are our customers, and our role is to reduce friction, increase sales, and keep the guest experience front and center with every decision we make.

**How important is it for the revenue management function to be engaged in business strategy?**

Our team analyzes various data sources and trends daily and weekly to make informed decisions rooted in data science. External factors also play a critical role in our business and go-to-market strategy, including volcanic eruptions, geo-political conflicts, and economic trends. It is our collective responsibility to be plugged into travel and cruise industry trends and the competitive landscape. It's critical for us to be both inwardly focused on data trends and on what's needed to support and enable our teams, as well as stay keenly focused on the outer industry and global environment.

**What are your priorities for Windstar's business as you look to the future?**

Our team's priority for Windstar is to build on our team's collective success and evolve into the best revenue performance organization in the cruise industry. Continuing to push the envelope beyond the ordinary, solving complex problems to drive future business and relationships, resulting in the financial outcomes our ownership has tasked us collectively to deliver on. Maximizing revenue, over-delivering on the guest experience, and embracing change and the exciting times ahead that we will create together here at Windstar. ●