Luxury expedition cruise ship, the *Silver Discoverer* will make its maiden voyage to Darwin tomorrow.

Minister for Tourism Matt Conlan said the arrival of the five-star ship marks a new opportunity for the Northern Territory to capitalise on the growing expedition cruise sector.

“As the gateway to Northern Australia, Darwin is ideally suited to explorations along the remote northern coastline,” Mr Conlan said.

“Our coastline is one of the world’s last remaining unexplored frontiers and is fast gaining attention in the expedition cruise ship sector, as tomorrow’s maiden voyage of the *Silver Discoverer* shows.

*Silver Discoverer* is an expedition vessel, engineered to access remote regions and destinations in the Pacific which are not accessible to larger vessels.

An on-board fleet of inflatable boats allows exploration from the water or landings anywhere nature or curiosity dictate. She also has on-board experts who interpret the history culture and wildlife of the area – adding to the unique Territory experience for passengers.

“As part of our Tourism Vision 2020 plan to boost tourism numbers, the Country Liberals Government is exploring opportunities in the cruise sector to increase the number of cruise ship visits, attract home-base cruise ship operations and improve the visitor experience in the NT.

“With passenger, crew and operational spend, the cruise sector contributed an estimated $66.8 million to the NT economy in 2012-13 up 3.7 per cent on the previous year, according to Cruise Down Under.

“The cruise season runs from the beginning of October to the end of April and Darwin will receive 27 cruise ships over this period. This year, we are expecting a total of around 51,000 passengers to visit Darwin.”

*Silver Discoverer* carries up to 120 passengers and is served by 96 crew. Passengers are treated to fine dining, butler service and an on-board swimming pool as well as on board guides ranging from marine biologists to dive masters, historians and naturalists.

The ship will be sailing in the Kimberley region out of Broome and Darwin throughout April and May this year, and will return to Australia’s Top End in 2015.

*Silver Discoverer* arrives in Darwin at 8am tomorrow and will be in port for the day allowing departing and arriving passengers to further explore the Territory, touring Darwin and beyond.

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