



### Cruise Weekly today

**CRUISE Weekly** today features two pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

### HAL is back here

**HOLLAND** America Line's *Westerdam* arrived in Cairns this morning, signalling the much-anticipated return of the brand to local waters.

CLIA MD Joel Katz hailed the arrival, noting that Dec was likely to deliver a "Christmas bonus" to Cairns with 16 ships set to visit over the coming months, bringing in thousands of passengers and crews.

"Ports and communities around the Australian coast will benefit from significant visitors as the cruise season ramps up, and businesses including restaurants, cafes, tour operators, retail and suppliers will see the increased economic activity," he said.

## Cruise plan for the Murray outlined

**MURRAY** Regional Tourism's vision is to establish cruising as "the most compelling and iconic" visitor experience in the destination, as outlined in the organisation's new *Murray Region Cruising Strategy*.

The report was launched yesterday to enable destinations within the Murray to understand the changing face of consumer demand and grow their visitor economy.

The *Strategy* outlines a number of objectives, including: grow the number of visitors engaging in cruising experiences on the Murray; establish river cruising as an iconic and uniquely Murray experience; drive demand in new markets by developing cruise experiences aligned to market preferences; and establish iconic cruise experiences that link to existing and potential product strengths of the Murray, such

as food, wine, nature-based, indigenous, and heritage.

Other objectives include supporting the development of vibrant and "activated" cruising hubs through investment in existing precincts & the establishment of new precincts; encourage the dispersal of cruising product across the Murray that leverages local product & experience strengths; and strengthen the link between cruising product & other Murray product pillars.

The *Strategy* also highlights consumer demand for a variety of cruising options across the Murray region, as well as the challenges, barriers, and the sector's complexities.

"The cruising sector is integral to the strength and vibrancy of the Murray region visitor economy," according to Chair, Wendy Greiner.

"It is important that as a region we understand the offerings available and opportunities for investment and growth in this exciting sector.

"Cruising contributes \$88.8 million in direct visitor expenditure to the Murray region economy, with 128,000 visitors annually currently undertaking commercial cruises."

The *Strategy* states that "cruising can become an integral way to travel through and experience the Murray region, differentiating itself from other destinations across Australia", with investment in cruising expected to add 1.8 million visitors and \$259 million in spend.

Its unveiling is well-timed, with keystone regional cruise line Murray River Paddlesteamers recently announcing the debut of a new five-star, \$6.75 million cruise vessel (**CW 29 Sep**).



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**A DIVER** in distress off the coast of California's Catalina Island last week probably thought he was hallucinating when a group of mermaids came to his rescue.

Pablo Avila lost consciousness during a scuba dive, but luckily a group of female dive students were nearby undertaking an advanced PADI mermaid rescue course - because apparently that's a real thing.

Swimming with a mermaid tail has grown in popularity in recent years, and according to a report about the incident on news site *Geartape*, the activity "is about much more than just breathing heavily and wearing bras made of seashells".

The mermaids swung into action to give Avila mouth-to-mouth resuscitation while pulling him back to the shore where he was rushed to a decompression chamber, making a full recovery.

## Apex UK year-round

**CELEBRITY** Cruises' Edge-class *Celebrity Apex* will homeport in Southampton for its entire 2024 season.

*Apex* will replace the recently-revitalised *Celebrity Silhouette*, bringing one of the cruise line's newest and most innovative ships directly to British shores, signalling the importance of the UK market.

The ship will offer four-to-13-night sailings from May to Nov 2024, allowing travellers to take a short multi-city break or an extended adventure at sea.

Following feedback from travel partners, *Celebrity* is announcing its deployment plans two weeks in advance of its launch date to allow agents to pre-register interest.

To support its travel partners in selling *Apex's* Southampton season, *Celebrity* will host 600 advisors on board the ship next year.

Advisors will also be supported through a suite of training and marketing tools via *Celebrity Central*, including a dedicated training webinar and social media collateral.

## Scenic digital deal

**SCENIC** Group has appointed digital agency Dentsu X as its new global digital media partner.

The consolidation covers all brands including Scenic, Emerald, Evergreen and Mayflower, with Dentsu X to manage digital strategy, planning and buying requirements for the group in all international markets including Australia, NZ, USA, Canada, the UK, and throughout Europe.

Local market teams will manage paid media, with Anthony Laver, Scenic Group GM Sales & Marketing APAC saying he was delighted to work with Dentsu X teams to develop integrated digital programs across the group's portfolio of luxury cruise & tour products.

## Silversea to Asia

**SILVERSEA** Cruises has confirmed it will deploy four ships in Asia over the upcoming season, including *Silver Shadow*, *Silver Whisper*, *Silver Spirit* and *Silver Muse*.

The operations will see Silversea sailing in Asia for the first time since the start of the pandemic.

Travel Daily

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