



Cruise Weekly today

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

The Star has risen

BOOKINGS have today opened to the public for Australia's first five-star riverboat, Murray River Paddlesteamers' *Australian Star* (**CW** 29 Nov 2023).

Pre-registration guests were able to book from the start of the month, with bookings very strong, according to Director Craig Burgess.

"We have been overwhelmed by the interest and bookings coming through from our pre-registered guests who, in the majority, have been keen to book the suites," he said.

"We expect sales to the general public from today will be similarly strong."

Carnival growing the fiesta with *Firenze*

THE Carnival Cruise Line fleet is set to grow to 27 ships as *Carnival Firenze* (**pictured**) was recently handed over in Cadiz.

The ship will become the second in the fleet to feature "Carnival Fun Italian Style", as she joins from sister brand Costa Cruises.

Team members from both lines met on *Firenze's* bridge to complete the handover.

Carnival's team will now lead a refurbishment project over the next two months to bring many of the favourite features the cruise line's guests know and love on board, with a touch of Italy.

Firenze will begin sailing year-round from Long Beach on 25 Apr, with a wide range of options available, including three- and four-day cruises to Mexico and Santa Catalina Island, and five-, six-, and seven-day voyages to the Mexican Riviera, visiting Cabo San Lucas, and Mazatlan, as well as



Puerto Vallarta.

The ship will immerse guests in Italian architecture, with *Firenze's* atrium modelled after the Piazza del Duomo in Florence, whereas the Lido deck is inspired by the Italian Riviera.

The ship will feature many food and beverage venues which are currently popular on *Carnival Venezia*, including La Strada Grill, with classic Italian street food, a Mexitalian fusion restaurant Tomodoro, and Il Viaggio,

Carnival's newest specialty Italian restaurant, showcasing distinct culinary regions of Italy.

Firenze's bars Amari and Frizzante will serve up a variety of Italian specialties, offering craft cocktails, authentic Italian coffee, biscuits, and more.

Guests will also enjoy activities like Festa Italiana, a deck party where Little Italy meets Lido, an Italian-inspired youth programming for kids and teens, and more. *MS*

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Sing-ing in tune

SINGAPORE'S position as a regional cruise hub strengthened last year, with a record two million passenger throughput received from more than 340 ship calls since the opening of the state's Marina Bay Cruise Centre.

Royal Caribbean International's *Spectrum of the Seas* and Resorts World Cruises' *Genting Dream* continued their year-round home port at Marina Bay.

TUI Cruises, Marella Cruises, and Silversea Cruises continued their seasonal home port, while maiden calls were made by Virgin Voyages' *Resilient Lady* and Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Edge*.

Singapore Tourism Board and Disney Cruise Line also signed a MOU on the exclusive home porting of *Disney Adventure* from 2025 (CW 11 Sep 2023).

Onward to Australia on Azamara WC

AZAMARA'S World Cruise is heading Down Under, with *Azamara Onward* (pictured) to cross paths with her sister ship *Azamara Journey* in Australia later this month.

The 684-guest *Onward* set sail on her first World Cruise from Fort Lauderdale on 05 Jan.

The ship will visit more than 40 countries in six continents during her 155-night voyage.

Onward's arrival in Australia will be the first time two Azamara ships have cruised Down Under at the same time.

"It is wonderful to have two of our beautiful ships in local waters this year and their cruises have been extremely popular," Director of Sales Victoria Chigwidden said.

"I'm also thrilled to announce that in 2025, *Azamara Onward* and *Azamara Pursuit* will sail into Sydney Harbour together - another first for our much-loved



cruise line."

Onward's 2024 World Cruise sold out so quickly Azamara has introduced additional world cruises for 2025 and 2026, which are filling up fast.

Destination highlights of the 2025 voyage, which will depart from San Diego, include calls to idyllic, less-visited ports in the South Pacific; a two-night stay in Bangkok, where guests can take extended shore excursions to Chiang Mai and Laos; and Indonesia's Semarang, the

'Venice of Java' and departure point for UNESCO World Heritage listed Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple.

The 2026 World Cruise, departing from Miami, is themed around the seven wonders of the world, with Azamara guests able to tick off bucket-list destinations such as Mexico's magnificent archeological site and pyramid at Chichen Itza; a three-night stay in Beijing to explore the Great Wall of China; and exclusive access to Rome's iconic Colosseum. *MS*

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Sail of the Year

SEABOURN Cruise Line has extended its exclusive shipboard credit offer during its Sail of the Year event.

Guests who book by the end of the month will enrich their experience with up to US\$1,000 per suite shipboard credit, which can be used to book a shore excursion, a spa treatment, or on Seabourn's wine list.

The Sail of the Year event also features savings of up to 25% on select Seabourn ocean and expedition voyages, and a reduced 15% deposit.

The promotion applies to more than 600 worldwide cruises - **CLICK HERE** for all applicable sailings.

"We're delighted to extend the exclusive shipboard credit offer during our Sail of the Year event," President Natalya Leahy said.

Six new Viking information sessions

TRAVEL advisors and cruisers are set to learn more about Viking at the line's free capital city Explorer Sessions.

The newly scheduled meetings are now open for registration, ahead of their commencement in Sydney on 27 Feb.

Sessions are also scheduled to be hosted in Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, as well as the Gold Coast, before concluding in Perth on 21 Mar.

They provide the perfect opportunity for agents and travellers to learn about cruising with Viking, find inspiration for their next voyage, and discover the cruise line's river, ocean, and expedition journeys.

Viking says attendees will not only leave the session informed and inspired to book, but will also receive an exclusive offer, encouraging them to secure their preferred dates and itinerary.



Registration is essential as availability is limited, and places are expected to fill fast.

Travel advisors who register on behalf of their clients are recommended to list themselves as the preferred agent for accuracy in the attribution of client bookings.

"Based on feedback from guests and agents, we have added several new sessions to the 2024 agenda," Managing Director Michelle Black explained.

"Our Introduction to Viking session is perfect for those new to Viking, covering the difference between our ocean, river and expedition voyages and what life is like on board."

"Our destination sessions are for those who know where they want to explore, and our unique destinations are dedicated to our loyal guests who have extensively explored with us, and are looking for something new or different," she added. *MS*

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SEVENTY thousand fans at Levi's Stadium in California last week saw the San Francisco 49ers defeat the Detroit Lions to reach another Super Bowl, however millions more at home saw an exciting new advertising concept from Carnival Cruise Line (**pictured**).

The company's CGI "Celebration Key moment" popped up in the middle of the field at the start of the game, showing off its new private island destination, and what guests may be able to expect.

The moment was posted on LinkedIn by Carnival's proud President Christine Duffy - **CLICK HERE** to view.



Heritage marks a milestone



MORE than 66,000 pairs of breeding Adelie penguins on Antarctica's Franklin Island had some company recently as guests from Heritage Expeditions enjoyed a visit to the remote outpost in the Ross Sea.

The call was part of the Heritage's 'Ross Sea Antarctic' voyage, timed to coincide with the 183-year anniversary of the Island's discovery in Jan 1841 by James Clark Ross.

Guests on the *Heritage Adventurer* (**pictured**) spent the morning retracing Ross' footsteps on the rarely visited island, which is named after British naval officer John Franklin.

"All landings in Antarctica's

Ross Sea are special, but being able to visit Franklin Island on the anniversary of its discovery turns an already unforgettable experience into an iconic moment for everyone on board," said Expedition Leader, Nathan Russ.

The visit to Franklin Island was the second historic moment celebrated during the voyage, following the 129-year milestone of Carsten Borchgrevink's landing at Cape Adare in Jan 1895.

Both commemorations included opportunities for guests to take part in citizen science initiatives including helping to collect penguin bones to advance further research at the University of North Carolina. *ML*

MSC's Grand sale

MSC Cruises' Grand Mediterranean sale invites passengers to discover the best of both the eastern and western parts of the region.

The sale includes MSC's Easy Plus drinks, unlimited wi-fi, \$400 onboard credit, and coach transfers.

Kids 17 years and younger also cruise free, with only port and hotel service charges payable by guests.

The limited time offer is valid until the end of the month.

MSC's Grand Mediterranean cruises combine two seven-night voyages on either side of the region to create a grand journey, connected by the included coach transfer between Genoa & Venice (or vice versa).

There are a variety of combo cruises for guests to choose from that sail between 28 Apr to 31 Oct, with departures every Sat, Sun, or Mon - call 1300 028 502 for more info.

MSC recently announced Antonio Paradiso has been appointed VP of International Sales (**CW** 25 Jan).

#TRAVELINSPO

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