



Cruise Weekly today

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

Explora milestone

EXPLORA Journeys has celebrated the launch of the “trocone”, or forward half, of its ship *Explora IV*.

The milestone is a key event in the construction of the vessel, which will be the fourth of six ships to launch for Explora by 2028.

The ceremony, a maritime tradition which celebrates a section of the ship being transferred from land to water for the first time, was held at Fincantieri’s Palermo shipyard, and was attended by more than 350 guests.

Explora IV, which is set for delivery in 2027, is one of four sister ships which will be powered by LNG.

Albatros to join with Polar Latitudes

ALBATROS Expeditions has been acquired by Nordic Expedition Cruise & Travel (NCET), which will see it join forces with new sister brand Polar Latitudes.

Under the deal, the two will coordinate and combine their Arctic and Antarctica expedition cruises, initially operating under their existing brands, before combining over time.

They will also draw on the Latin America land product of Australian-founded, fellow NCET brand, Chimu Adventures (**CW** 27 Sep) to create a full South America/Antarctica package.

Polar Latitudes already partners with Chimu on its Latin America product (**CW** 23 Oct).

It is not yet known what the name or leadership structure of the new Albatros/Polar Latitudes brand will look like.

“Our ambition is to create the most trusted and reliable brand



for all of our customers and business partners by learning from, and building on, each other’s strengths,” Albatros’ incoming Chief Executive Officer Patrick Shaw said.

The combined fleet for the 25/26 season will consist of *Ocean Victory*, *Seaventure*, *Ocean Nova*, and *Ocean Albatros*, with Albatros recently becoming the sole owner of the latter flagship newbuild vessel.

“We are excited to combine our two companies’ deep expedition knowledge and long experience,” Albatros founder Soren

Rasmussen said.

“It will strengthen us both and make us ready for future challenges,” he added.

“We look forward to seeing how the company will grow in this new constellation.”

Polar Latitudes Chief Executive Officer John McKeon said the move is a great step forward for both companies.

“Our combined resources and shared values will make us stronger as Polar tour operators and will lead to expanded offerings for our adventurous travellers,” he said. *MS*

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Second ship coming to Aranui Cruises

FRENCH Polynesia's hybrid line Aranui Cruises will introduce a second ship to the region in 2027, which will sail the remote Austral Islands.

The new vessel will be known as *Araoa*, and

like her sister ship *Aranui V*, will carry a mix of passengers and cargo, combining leisure cruising with deliveries of essential goods to remote Austral Islands communities.

Araoa will be slightly smaller than her older counterpart at 116 metres in length, and will cater to 198 guests across 93 intimately designed cabins - of which 62 will feature a private balcony - with each offering the latest amenities and technology.

Guest facilities onboard will include two restaurants, two bars, a fitness centre, day spa and two



jacuzzis, each with a sea view.

Departing from Papeete, the new ship will offer a round-trip itinerary to five main islands in the Austral archipelago - Rimatarā, Rurutu, Tubuai, Raivavae, and Rapa.

During their time at each island, travellers will be able to swim and snorkel, enjoy white sand beaches and explore mountains, while crew simultaneously carry out their cargo transfer duties.

Aranui said the new ship will feature the latest operational technology to limit its environmental impact.

The vessel will be powered by diesel-electric propulsion, featuring a 360-degree azimuth system and antifouling coating to optimise fuel consumption, reduce air pollution and lower acoustic impact.

"This project will help develop the Austral archipelago by providing new economic opportunities, fostering inter-island trade, and will help to promote its colourful landscapes and rich culture," the line said.

"A land of traditions, the Australs are renowned for their exquisite craftsmanship, particularly weaving, as well as for their legends and authentic way of life," it added.

Reservations for the new Austral islands itinerary onboard *Araoa* will go on sale in Jun. *ML*

Windstar sells out

A **SECOND** cruise dedicated to the 2026 solar eclipse has been scheduled by Windstar Cruises after the first sold out.

Sailing on board the line's 148-passenger traditional masted ship *Wind Spirit*, the line is now selling a seven-night 'Mediterranean Sunset Eclipse' cruise from Rome to Barcelona on 06 Aug.

The new voyage will visit Corsica, Sardinia, and Menorca, alongside two full days at sea, before positioning herself north of Mallorca in Spain to offer a clear view of the celestial event.

Spirit will host a party on deck and will provide special glasses for viewing the eclipse.

Windstar's first voyage to coincide with the solar eclipse will be a circumnavigation of Iceland on board *Star Pride*, departing Reykjavik on 10 Aug.



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CARNIVAL Cruise Line and language learning app Duolingo launched the mother of all cruises - and April Fool's Day pranks - with the announcement of a five-year voyage taking in 195 countries.

The fake cruise was mooted to visit all seven continents, and with Duolingo's involvement, was set to teach passengers fluency in more than 40 languages.

"Guests will 'speak like a local' in every port of call, Carnival boasted, from ordering tapas in Spain, attempting small talk in Japan, or realising too late that they had inadvertently agreed to something in German.

The line also secured a new ship, which would be dedicated to the five-year itinerary, christened as 'Carnival Gufo' - with "gufo" of course meaning "owl" in Italian.

"At Duolingo, we help language learners prepare for real-world conversations, so we thought: what if we gave learners even more conversation practice through five years of full immersion, with no hiding from Duo the Owl?" Duolingo Head of Global Partnerships George Audi said.



A Majestic transformation

PRINCESS Cruises' *Majestic Princess* (pictured) has emerged from dry dock in time for her upcoming Mediterranean season, with new and revamped spaces, and introducing a number of popular guest favourites.



The two-week construction in Palermo saw the addition of O'Malley's Irish Pub, Sabatini's Italian Trattoria, Alfredo's Slice, Salty Dog Cafe, Ocean Terrace Sushi Bar, Bellini's, as well as a number of rebranded shopping venues, and more.

"*Majestic Princess* has undergone a remarkable transformation that will introduce beloved venues and experiences from across our fleet as it sails," VP Hotel Operations & Guest Experience Lorna Warren said.

"We can't wait to welcome guests aboard for the upcoming Mediterranean season as we celebrate our 40th anniversary of cruising in this stunning, sought-after region."

After her Apr-Jul Mediterranean season, *Majestic* will sail to Canada and New England, where she will be based from Aug to Sep; she'll then sail the Caribbean from Oct-Dec to finish out 2025.

MEANWHILE, Princess has cancelled all sailings aboard *Majestic* from Galveston scheduled between Nov 2026 and Mar 2027, as the line tweaks its global deployment strategy.

Princess was unable to

confirm where *Majestic* will be redeployed to, when contacted by **Cruise Weekly**.

"We sincerely regret any inconvenience this may cause our guests and appreciate their understanding as we work to enhance our global cruise offerings," Princess said.

All affected guests have been provided a full refund. MS

Swan gets Grand

SWAN Hellenic is now offering the opportunity to travel West Africa, with two new Grand Voyages.

Cruisers can sail northwards from Cape Town to Casablanca and on to Lisbon, or south from Lisbon to Luanda, both aboard *Diana*.

The first departs South Africa on 25 Mar 2026, combining five northbound cruises to create a unique 51-night Grand Voyage.

The second is a 35-night Grand Voyage sailing south from Lisbon to Luanda from 07 Sep 2026, combining three different segments.

The individual cruises which make up the Grand Voyages can also be booked.

Both cruises represent a

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