

Cruise Weekly today

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

Gerardi lands Star

ROYAL Caribbean has revealed research astronaut Kellie Gerardi as the new godmother of *Star of the Seas*, following Diana Ross' decision to step away from the role only days before her first voyage (**CW** 15 Aug).

Known for her innovative work in bioastronautics and STEM advocacy, Gerardi was the 90th woman in history to fly to space and the first female payload specialist to fly on a suborbital science mission.

Gerardi, who is also a social media influencer, will take part in the naming ceremony this Wed, which will be hosted in the new ship's AquaTheater while it is docked in Florida.

Lelepa to feature in almost all RCL cruises

EXCLUSIVE

ROYAL Caribbean's (RCI) upcoming Beach Day at Lelepa private destination (pictured) will not just be a highlight of the cruise line's local program - it will appear in almost all of its itineraries, according to President and CEO Michael Bayley.

The long-awaited beach club in Vanuatu (**CW** 16 May) is being designed by Aussies for Aussies, Bayley told **Cruise Weekly**, in the same manner its other destination Perfect Day at Cococay was developed.

Lelepa will debut in 2027 as one of six of the cruise line's 'Ultimate Destinations', joining Cococay, Perfect Day Mexico, Labadee, and Royal Beach Clubs in Paradise Island and Cozumel.

Most of Royal Caribbean's local cruises will sail to Lelepa when it is complete, mirroring its strategy in the North Atlantic.



"We've already done the research and our Australian customers have told us what they want...it's going to be very different, it will be an Australian beach club, and that's what we're going to create," said Bayley, speaking exclusively to **CW** on board *Star of the Seas*' shakedown last week.

"When we open up the Beach Clubs and Perfect Day by 2026,

something like 90-plus-percent of all of [RCI's] Caribbean capacity will visit [them]...when we open up Lelepa in 2027, if you're sailing out of the Australian market, you will be going to Lelepa."

The highly anticipated destination will be "lower-touch and more sympathetic to its surroundings", SVP Sales & Trade Relations Vicki Freed told **CW** earlier this year (**CW** 04 Jun). *MS*

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Seabourn unveils 2027-28 season

SEABOURN has announced its ocean voyages and expedition itineraries for 2027-28, offering adventures across Alaska, Japan, Canada and New England, Antarctica, the Arctic, and the South Pacific.

The collection includes 111 departures, 72 itineraries, and visits to 369 destinations across 71 countries, operated by *Seabourn Pursuit*, *Venture*, *Encore*, *Quest*, and *Ovation*.

Guests can enjoy the line's first 'Pole-to-Pole: Grand Expedition', a 94-day adventure sailing from the High Arctic to Antarctica, as well as a new 11-day Baltic voyage visiting Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia.

The lineup also includes a 14-day solar eclipse voyage offering front-row views of the celestial event in Aug 2027; Seabourn Signature Events in select destinations; maiden and notable calls throughout Europe and Asia; and opportunities to explore UNESCO World Heritage sites.

"Whether guests are drawn to the thrill of expedition travel or the allure of exploring hidden destinations, our 2027-2028 season offers life-expanding voyages for every kind of traveller," said Mark Tamis, President of Seabourn.

Bookings for the 2027 sailings are now open.

Royal Caribbean here to listen

ROYAL Caribbean Group's goal is to improve cruise outcomes for the destinations it visits around the world by being "really good listeners", President & Chief Executive Officer Jason Liberty (pictured) said.

The head of the Royal Caribbean, Celebrity Cruises, and Silversea parent company believes the firm is working well with the communities it visits, as it attempts to diversify its value proposition to coastal destinations around the world.

Speaking on board the new *Star of the Seas* last week (CW 15 Aug), Liberty said: "What we're trying to do is work with different countries that really need more travel tourism - they just want to spread it out."

Responding to a question from **Cruise Weekly**, Liberty singled out Greece as extremely pro-cruise, in contrast to public perception following new recently introduced restrictions on the sector (CW 18 Jul).

"What they're trying to do is spread the cruisers or the guests farther around the country and we are working with them to help them do that," Liberty said.

"Some of that is creating more ports, some of that is being able to bring the incredible culture to life," he explained.

Liberty also once again hinted at a downscaling in size for RCI, following the delivery of its fourth Icon-class ship in 2027.



The vessel will be followed by a slightly smaller Oasis-class delivery the year after, with Liberty recognising the Icon-class' mammoth size is not to everyone's tastes.

"There's recognition that there is also an opportunity to build ships that have a lot of the same amenities and activities, but on a slightly smaller platform, and that is very much in the dream engine."

"As we expand, it is not just about large ships...of course, to get to certain destinations around the world, you need to be on a smaller platform."

"The experiences that we want to bring to life, the destinations that we want to go to - that informs what the ship is going to look like and feel like, and then we [will] calculate what the size is going to be," Liberty added. MS

Festivale keel laid

A KEEL-LAYING ceremony took place on Fri for Carnival Cruise Line's newest ship, *Carnival Festivale*, at Meyer Werft in Germany.

Due for delivery in 2027, the music-themed ship will sail from Port Canaveral, Florida, as Carnival's fourth Excel-class flagship (CW 07 Apr).

To celebrate the construction milestone, commemorative coins that were inscribed with musical notes were placed on the vessel under a 598-ton keel block.

Brett Vitols, Associate Vice President of New Builds for Carnival Cruise Line and Petu Kummala, Associate Vice President of Interior Design and Architecture, attended the special occasion, along with members of Carnival's new-build team and the Meyer Werft team.

Christine Duffy, President of Carnival Cruise Line, said: "*Carnival Festivale* isn't just joining our fleet, she'll be setting the tone for how to have fun at sea by blending vibrant designs and guest experiences that you can't find anywhere else."

"Music is a universal language that connects people from around the world, and this ship will bring that to life in true Carnival fashion."

Sailings for the newbuild ship's inaugural season are now open for booking.

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THE hot air balloon at Royal Caribbean's Perfect Day at Cococay is one of the private destination's highlights - and the cruise line very nearly introduced a similar concept on board one of its ships.

Outgoing Royal Caribbean Group Chair Richard Fain, speaking as part of a fireside chat on *Star of the Seas* with President & Chief Executive Jason Liberty, said the company almost introduced a blimp on board *Oasis of the Seas*.

The airship would have floated at the end of a tether around 150 metres above the vessel, and was trialled extensively by Royal Caribbean on land, before the cruise line decided to test the concept at sea.

Fain was so confident in the blimp's abilities he was the one to ride it for the trial off the coast of Sweden - which was successful - until overnight, it shook free of its tether, and took off on its own.

"The captain got a call from the Swedish Air Force, who said, 'we have a report of a blimp with a crown and anchor on it,'" Fain narrated, referring to Royal Caribbean's logo.

"We thought you might know something about it.

"Right now it's in the air traffic lanes, would you mind if we shot it down?"

Safe to say, that was the end of the idea, Fain lamented.

Hawaii set to cut cruise

LAWMAKERS in Hawaii have outlined a plan to cut cruise ship calls in commercial harbours by 75% below 2023 levels by the next decade, creating fears for the local visitor economy.

The *Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) Energy Security & Waste Reduction Plan* details a phased decrease of cruise ship access, first to 50% below 2023 levels by 2030, and up to 75% by 2035.

Curbing emissions from marine and transportation industries is key to the plan, with the state aiming to reduce emissions by 50% by 2030 and hit net-negative transportation emissions by 2045, based on 2005 baseline levels.

According to the plan, the state will work to develop policies to prioritise the transition of larger ships of 3,000 passenger or more to smaller, more efficient vessels.

Restrictions will be introduced for ships with more than 3,000 lower berths, including a cap on ship or passenger numbers in ports across the islands by 2030, and a total ban from 2035.

Only one cruise ship - Norwegian Cruise Line's 2,200-guest *Pride of America* (pictured) - is based year-round in Hawaii.

However, the state also serves as a regular stop for ships repositioning cruises across the Pacific, and other round trips from the west coast of the US.

Hawaii is further aiming to develop an incentive scheme for clean fuels to achieve price parity with traditional marine oils and build infrastructure for renewable diesel and LNG in the short term.



Longer-term shifts to cleaner fuels such as green hydrogen, aimed at fully decarbonising the marine sector, are also factored.

The HDOT plan said the indirect economic impact of this strategy "must be carefully examined".

"Hawaii's economy relies heavily on tourism and reducing cruise ship visits could impact local businesses that depend on cruise passengers for revenue, such as tour operators, restaurants, and retail shops near port areas," the plan document stated.

"While some economic activity from cruise visitors may shift to higher spending overnight by tourists arriving by air, a detailed economic impact analysis [can] assess how changes in cruise ship arrivals could affect jobs, local businesses, and tax revenue.

"Understanding these potential economic shifts will be essential in ensuring that emission reduction policies align with Hawaii's economic priorities, while maintaining a sustainable tourism industry," the report states. *ML*

Carnival fatalities

TWO American cruise passengers, both aged in their 70s, drowned hours apart at Carnival's newly opened private Bahamas resort on Fri.

The incidents involved guests on two different ships.

Star Princess dials up the magic

PRINCESS Cruises has unveiled a new version of its speakeasy experience, *Spellbound by Magic Castle*, which will debut on board the upcoming *Star Princess*, setting sail this Oct (*CW* 17 Jul).

The redesigned venue will deliver a new theme paying homage to the golden age of magic, with a nod to one of its most iconic figures, Richard Valentine Pitchford - better known as Cardini.

Guests will discover a series of themed spaces within the speakeasy, including a ticketing booth, the Cardini Bar, a behind-the-curtain backstage area, and the Peacock Theater.

As part of its transformation, *Spellbound* on *Star Princess* will introduce a new cocktail menu exclusively available at the Cardini Bar.

Lorna Warren, Vice President Hotel Operations and Guest Experiences, said: "*Spellbound* has quickly become one of the most talked-about experiences at sea, and we are re thrilled to take it to the next level aboard *Star Princess*."

"By bringing to life the spirit and setting of the original Magic Castle in Hollywood, our reimagined speakeasy will deliver a one-of-a-kind venue where every guest can feel like they've stepped into a world of true magic."

Spellbound by Magic Castle is open to all guests aboard *Star Princess*, with several showtimes nightly - admission is US\$45 per guest.