

Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features four pages of all the latest cruise news, including a photo page from **Carnival Cruise Line**.

APT to score a B?

APT Travel Group has applied for B Corporation certification, Chief Executive Officer David Cox has told **Cruise Weekly**.

The APT head said the company is hoping to achieve the certification by early 2026.

Only one other cruise line - fellow Australian operator Aurora Expeditions - is a B Corp brand, a verification it achieved last year (**CW** 30 Jan 2024).

Just over 50 travel companies in total are B Corp certified, meaning they meet the B Lab's standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and accountability.

Katz: Australia reaping what it sows

AUSTRALIA is beginning to experience the fallout of the difficult operating environment facing the cruise industry, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Managing Director Joel Katz has warned.

Opening this year's Cruise360 conference today, the cruise executive said recent losses for the Australian cruise sector had long been feared and cautioned by local stakeholders.

"We have been warning for a number of years that this is an expensive operating region, with complex regulatory requirements," Katz explained.

"It is no surprise that we are now seeing the consequences, with some areas experiencing reduced visitation compared to previous years.

"This highlights what our industry has been saying for some time: that we need

action to improve the operating environment, and we need to address rising costs that deter ships from our shores, ensuring that Australasia remains an attractive and competitive destination for cruise tourism."

Australia has lost three high-profile international cruise lines in the past 18 months: Disney Cruise Line (**CW** 11 Aug), Virgin Voyages (**CW** 27 Feb 2024), and Cunard Line (**CW** 06 Nov 2023).

This is in addition to the sunseting of the P&O Cruises Australia brand earlier this year, which was folded into its sister marque brand Carnival Cruise Line (**CW** 31 Mar).

However it was certainly not all inauspicious news from Katz, who also remarked on the cruise sector's extraordinary opportunity Down Under.

"Since we met at last year's Cruise360, we've been pleased

to announce that the number of Australians cruising grew decisively last year to more than 1.3 million, an increase of almost 6% - that's one of our best-ever years in this region," Katz said.

"Opportunities in this market remain very strong. The intention to cruise is high.

"Repeat cruising continues at very high rates, and increasing numbers of guests are looking to fly-cruise options in other parts of the world."

CLIA is today hosting around 850 delegates at its 10th Cruise360 conference in Brisbane, bringing together cruise lines, agents, and industry stakeholders to discuss the latest trends.

More than 30 speakers and panellists will take part in this year's conference, with **Cruise Weekly** Editorial Director Damian Francis to moderate two sessions during the conference. *MS*

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On location in
Brisbane

Today's issue of *CW* is coming to you courtesy of Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), which is this week hosting us at Cruise360.

THIS week we are in Brisbane for the 2025 Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Cruise360 conference (see **page 1**) - slated to be the biggest-ever in the 10-year history of the event.

Today delegates will hear from key cruise industry leaders, including CLIA global head Budd Darr and local chief Joel Katz.

The first day of the conference will be celebrated tonight with a cocktail party.

Doubling down on destinations



AZAMARA has unveiled its enhanced Destination Immersion program for 2026-27, giving travellers the opportunity to experience the places they visit like a local.

The new program introduces the 'Discover What the Locals Know' concept, which will see a number of Mediterranean small group excursions led by residents of each destination.

These include exclusive entry to several European film festivals and artisan workshops, immersive culinary journeys showcasing traditional cuisine, and privileged access to iconic cities during off-peak hours.

The 'Discover What the Locals Know' experience will feature on the seven-night 'Best Of The Mediterranean Cruise: Florence, Genoa & Marseille' cruise, where passengers can settle into one of Florence's historic cinemas during Festival dei Popoli.

This program will also be available on the seven-night 'Best of the Mediterranean Cruise: Saranda, Catania, & Amalfi Coast', where passengers will celebrate composer Vincenzo Bellini's birthday on 03 Nov with a citywide musical tribute at an annual festival in his honour.

Passengers will enjoy a double overnight on the nine-night

'Spain Intensive Cruise: Valencia, Cartagena & Seville', and join the locals at the Festival de Sevilla celebration of film.

"Travel expectations are evolving, with a growing desire for genuine, immersive experiences that go beyond the typical tourist view," Chief Executive Officer Dondra Ritzenthaler explained.

"Today's travellers want to connect more deeply by sharing meals where locals gather, celebrating regional traditions, and exploring everyday life with a fresh perspective.

"That's what 'Discover What the Locals Know' offers: a reimagined approach to cruise travel that brings guests closer to the heart of each destination." *MS*

Hurtigruten adds two

HURTIGRUTEN has added two new Svalbard tours due to increasing demand, set to be introduced from next year.

'Arctic Norway Frontier' will travel over 17 days, starting with an overnight in Oslo.

This is followed by the two-day 'Norway in a Nutshell', and a seven-night northbound cruise to Longyearbyen.

Guests will then check into the world's northernmost boutique hotel, Funken Lodge, before enjoying an Arctic tasting menu dinner at the esteemed restaurant Huset.

The next five days include excursions showcasing the very best of Svalbard, such as a wildlife and glacier catamaran cruise, a multi-day expedition cruise through the destination's remote fjord systems, as well as a visit to Ny-Alesund, considered the world's northernmost functional civilian settlement.

There is also a 13-day option, which follows up the stay at Funken Lodge with a wildlife and glacier catamaran cruise, before passengers end their trip with a unique 14-course tasting menu at Huset.

These new tours follow Hurtigruten's recent announcement it is doubling capacity on its Svalbard Line due to growing demand for the product (*CW* 25 May).

FCTG cruise growth

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) cruise and tour sales in Australia increased by 20% in FY25, according to preliminary results posted to the ASX.

The Cruiseabout network in Australia and the acquired Cruise Club business in the UK "made solid TTV contributions" but collectively incurred \$5 million in losses.

The company revealed plans to double down on its cruise segment, along with its luxury, independent, tours, packages and foreign exchange arms.

FCTG also confirmed it will introduce a new leisure loyalty program in Australia later this year, which will encompass Cruiseabout as well as Flight Centre and Travel Associates.

The program aims to reward customers across the entire travel journey, unlock value for suppliers with new ways to grow sales, and create new partnerships beyond travel.



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Carnival Cruise Line launches first-ever family-friendly famil

IN A departure from the traditional famil format, 12 travel agents from across Australia and New Zealand were invited to join an exclusive famil cruise aboard *Carnival Adventure* to the South Pacific.

Key Account Manager Sarah Miller and Julie Boustani from Trade Engagement guided the participants through a program designed to showcase both the professional and personal appeal of a Carnival holiday.

Highlights included a decadent Carnival chocolate melting cake cooking demonstration with the onboard chef, and an exclusive behind-the-scenes experience with the Entertainment and Cruise Directors.

There were also memorable shore excursions, including a group tour in Noumea, a snorkelling experience at Mystery Island, and a stop at Port Vila, which recently welcomed back cruise ships.

"This was not just a famil; it was a chance for our trade partners to put famil at the heart of the experience," said Mark Richards, National Sales Manager at Carnival.

"We know the important role famil play in supporting our travel professionals, and we wanted to give our valued agents the chance to experience the Carnival product in the way their customers do - with their loved ones by their side."



ALL about *Carnival Adventure*.



MYSTERY Island snorkelling adventures.



TASTE testing the onboard chef's melting chocolate cake.



TIME for New Zealand Natural ice cream.



THERE was lots of time to explore the islands.



THE latest cruise converts.



A FAMILY-FRIENDLY silent disco.



A DELICIOUS melting chocolate cake demonstration with the onboard chef.

PORTHOLE

A DEVOTED Christian from Singapore, who also happens to be a multimillionaire, has turned what was once the oldest passenger ship still floating into a five-star hotel, based on what he described as "a calling from God".

Long after it was declared unseaworthy, Eric Saw, 74, purchased *MV Doulos Phos* and transformed her into the five-star Doulos Phos Ship Hotel in Bintan, Indonesia.

The project took 15 years and almost A\$30 million, with Saw exerting painstaking care to preserve every ounce of the vessel's heritage - which dates back to 1914.

Under several different names and purposes, the ship has docked at over 100 countries, sailed hundreds of thousands of nautical miles, and was at one point the oldest operating passenger vessel on the seas.

Saw felt pulled to purchase *MV Doulos* while she was drydocked in Singapore awaiting bids for new ownership, just a few years shy of her 100th birthday.

At the time, Saw - obviously a maritime enthusiast - was also running a three-storey restaurant inside a Mississippi-style paddlesteamer.

MV Doulos now operates as a hotel on Bintan Island, with Saw taking a US\$1 salary, while donating operating profits to charitable causes.

Let Seabourn entertain you



SEABOURN Cruise Line has unveiled the acclaimed entertainment for next year's 129-day World Cruise, 'Ring of Fire: Hidden Gems'.

The sailing departs 06 Jan 2026 on board *Seabourn Sojourn*, with headliners including ukulele virtuoso Jake Shimabukuro (pictured).

He will perform for guests on 13 Jan in Honolulu.

Hamilton star Christine Allado, who has sung alongside Andrea Bocelli, will also showcase her talents during the voyage.

Another onboard highlight will be singer-songwriter Ashley Campbell, daughter of country legend Glen Campbell.

Her debut single *Remembering*, written for her father, was featured on the Oscar-nominated docu-soundtrack *Glen Campbell: I'll Be Me*.

Guests will also enjoy performances from renowned Steinway pianists such as Congyu

Wang, Dominic Ferris, Nurry Lee, and Van-Anh Nguyen.

Adding a theatrical twist will be award-winning string quartet Bowjangles, with their style blending classical music, comedy, and physical theatre.

The cruise will also feature the theatrical debut of *Being Mr. Wickham*, and the Broadway-style production *V for Variety*.

"Our 2026 World Cruise promises to be an extraordinary journey, and the entertainment will be a central part of that experience," Director of Entertainment & Enrichment Handre Potgieter said.

"We're crafting an unparalleled stage experience at sea, featuring world-class talent and breathtaking productions that will resonate with guests well beyond their voyage."

Seabourn's 2026 World Cruise departs Long Beach, and visits 63 destinations in 14 countries with seven overnights. *MS*



Cruise360 sets sail

TODAY marks the start of our 2025 Cruise360 Australasia conference in Brisbane, and I'm proud to say it will be the biggest cruise industry gathering ever held in this region.

Our 10th anniversary event will be a chance to remind our Australasian members why we're excited about our future.

Our industry is strong. It is vibrant. It is incredibly resilient, and it is enjoying global prosperity we might never have imagined a few years ago.

The opportunities in our local markets remain very strong.

The intention to cruise is high. Our domestic cruise guests are as enthusiastic as ever. Repeat cruising continues at very high rates, and increasing numbers of guests are looking to fly-cruise options in other parts of the world. Today and tomorrow, we'll hear much more about these opportunities at Cruise360.

Expanded to two days, our 2025 conference offers our biggest-ever line-up of international speakers, as well as an expanded Cruise360 Australasia Trade Show involving more than 50 exhibitors from among CLIA's cruise line members and executive partners.

If you can't be there, be sure to follow our media partners *Cruise Weekly* and *Travel Daily* over coming days.



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