

Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news, plus a full page from CLIA.

Join CLIA in 2026

THE Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) is encouraging Australian and New Zealand travel agents to join as members in 2026 and become river cruise specialists.

CLIA offers access to specialised river cruise training and resources designed to help drive professional development, strengthen cruise selling skills, and earn recognition as trusted river cruise specialists.

For more information on how to join, as well as the benefits CLIA memberships offers, head to the **back page** of *Cruise Weekly* today.

Ponant Group unifies loyalty experience

PONANT Explorations Group has unified the loyalty experience across its entire brand portfolio, including the newly acquired Aqua Expeditions (**CW** 21 Mar).

The new Status Match initiative means guests can enjoy reciprocal recognition, tier-matched benefits and onboard credits across Ponant Explorations, Paul Gauguin Cruises, Ponant Yachting, and Aqua Expeditions.

Previously, Ponant Explorations, Paul Gauguin Cruises and Ponant Yachting shared a loyalty program - the Ponant Yacht Club - while Aqua Expeditions operated its own, Circolo Aqua, which launched in Sep (**CW** 10 Sep).

The new initiative brings all the group's loyalty programs under a single framework, offering guests better recognition and benefits across its brands.

For Circolo Aqua members, this means access to tier-matched



privileges when booking with Ponant brands, including additional onboard credits of up to €50 (A\$89) per person, priority services and dedicated support from the Ponant Reservations team.

Circolo Aqua members will enjoy these benefits from their first sailing with Ponant, and will be matched to their respective Ponant Yacht Club tiers.

Ponant Yacht Club members will also be matched to their respective Circolo Aqua tiers, and receive US\$50 (A\$76) of on board

credits on their first sailing.

"Uniting our loyalty programs under one framework ensures our guests are recognised and rewarded seamlessly across all Ponant Explorations Group brands," said Deb Corbett, Chief Executive Officer, Asia Pacific.

"This Status Match initiative strengthens the value we offer our most loyal travellers and reflects our commitment to providing an elevated and consistent guest experience."

Find out more about the Status Match initiative **HERE**. JM



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Explora the world

Explora Journeys has announced it will sail its first world cruise in 2029 aboard *Explora I*.

The luxury vessel will embark on the 128-day 'Endless Worlds' voyage, covering four continents, 29 countries and territories, and 63 destinations with 12 overnight stays.

The journey will start on 06 Jan 2029 from Dubai and head east to India, the Maldives Islands, Sri Lanka and then to southeast Asia, before making her debut visit to Australia.

While Down Under, *Explora I* will visit seven destinations including Sydney, before sailing to New Zealand and the South Pacific Islands.

After continuing to South America and visiting destinations in the Caribbean Sea, the ship will cross the trans-Atlantic to end in Europe.

Riviera on her way to Oz



OCEANIA Cruises is preparing *Riviera* (pictured) for her inaugural Australia and New Zealand season, with the 1,250-guest ship scheduled to arrive in Sydney on 10 Dec after a 22-day sailing from Singapore.

Riviera will be the only Oceania vessel in the region to offer itineraries with a gourmet foodie focus, immersing guests in the local culinary scene.

The 2026 Australia and New Zealand season will run until Mar 2026, featuring itineraries ranging from 14 to 35 days, with departures from multiple ports across the region.

Guests can choose from a selection of small-group shore excursions, including visits to local markets, rice fields and truffle farms.

On board, they can join cooking classes inspired by regional flavours in the ship's dedicated culinary centre, and dine at

a wide array of venues, from French bistro Jacques to the Polo Grill steakhouse.

Voyages combine hidden gems like Mystery Island in Vanuatu, Dunedin in New Zealand, and Kangaroo Island in South Australia, with iconic ports such as Sydney and Melbourne.

"We are incredibly excited to bring *Riviera* to Australia and New Zealand for the first time," said Jason Montague, Oceania Cruises' Chief Luxury Officer.

"This new chapter reflects our commitment to offering exceptional, immersive experiences that celebrate the region's diverse cultures and breathtaking landscapes.

"*Riviera's* voyages will offer travellers an unmatched opportunity to savour the finest local cuisine while exploring some of the world's most iconic destinations in unparalleled comfort and style." JM

On location in
Hobart

Today's issue of CW is coming to you courtesy of Holland America Line, aboard *MS Noordam*.

ARRIVING in Hobart on an early summer day, *Noordam's* guests have already scattered far and wide on shore excursions making the most of the destination.

Docked on the Derwent River in the city centre, the ship is also conveniently located for passengers to simply stroll off and explore the local shops, while those heading further afield, either on organised tours or independently, are taking in sights such as the Museum of Old and New Art, Huon Valley, the Tahune Forest Reserve, Mt Field, Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary, Port Arthur, Richmond and more.

Bruny Island excursions are also popular, featuring transfers to Kettering and then a ferry crossing to the unspoilt gourmet destination for some local seafood amid spectacular landscapes and a beach walk.

It's appropriate that dinner tonight in the Lido Market is Australian-themed, given that for some of the international guests on board it's their first taste of Australia before the ship cruises northward to visit Melbourne and then Sydney.

Viking taps Tapster

VIKING has appointed Nicole Tapster as its new PR Manager for Australia and New Zealand.

Based in the Sydney, the marketing professional has more than six years of experience in the travel and tourism industry.

Tapster was most recently Senior Account Manager at PEPR Agency, where she looked after several accounts including Virgin Australia.

SAILING NEW WATERS

Here's why the cruise industry is setting sail for Southeast Asia.

» **CLICK HERE TO READ**

Travel Daily



DISNEY Cruise Line has made it easier for guests who are thinking about a cruise to plan their "most magical day" on board its latest vessel, *Disney Adventure*, which will sail from Singapore next year.

The line has launched the Adventure Generator - a digital quiz designed to craft a personalised itinerary for prospective guests.

From immersive dining experiences to entertainment and recreational activities, the digital tool curates a schedule that highlights the ship's offerings - try it out **HERE**.

Users can even share their custom itineraries on Instagram Stories using the campaign tag @disneycruiselinesg.



Celestyal's first Jeddah call



CELESTYAL has made its first-ever visit to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, with the occasion marked by a traditional plaque exchange ceremony with Cruise Saudi.

The 1,260-guest *Celestyal Journey*'s maiden call took place on 29 Nov as the final port on the cruise line's new seven-night 'Athens to Jeddah' voyage, which set sail on 22 Nov and called at Marmaris, Turkey, and three ports in Egypt - Port Said, Sharm el Sheikh and Safaga - before

concluding in Jeddah.

Celestyal reps including Captain Angelos Vassilakos, as well as port officials and senior team members from Cruise Saudi, were at the ceremony.

"We are honoured to celebrate our maiden call in Jeddah alongside our partners at Cruise Saudi, marking the beginning of a long and effective relationship," said the line's Chief Commercial Officer, Lee Haslett.

"As the cultural heart of Saudi Arabia and the gateway to its incredible destinations, Jeddah offers huge potential for cruise tourism, and today's plaque exchange is an exciting step in our collaboration," she added.

The 1,360-guest *Celestyal Discovery* will also call into the city this Fri, before joining her fleet mate for her inaugural season in the Arabian Gulf.

Both ships will then continue their passage to Abu Dhabi to kick off Celestyal's second season in the region. *JM*



Celebrating expeditions

Expedition cruising has become one of the richest areas of opportunity in travel, offering extraordinary experiences in remote and unspoilt locations around the globe.

As a result, the number of people taking expedition cruises grew by 22% last year, reflecting a huge global interest in this style of travel.

The world's expedition cruise fleet is expanding to meet this demand, as specialist cruise operators introduce new, sophisticated, purpose-built ships - and we had a chance to witness part of that expansion in Australia last week.

Aurora Expeditions' brand-new ship *Douglas Mawson* visited Sydney for its christening at Circular Quay, providing a spectacular sight.

She will soon join others from CLIA's expedition cruise line members as they explore Antarctica over the southern polar season.

The world's expedition cruise fleet is set to increase in capacity by around 150% over the course of this decade, and even though it's still a relatively small area of tourism, this presents great opportunities for our agents.

CLIA's professional development programs are designed to help our members make the most of growing opportunities like this - explore the Members Hub **HERE** to find out more.



CRUISE WEEKLY On Board: *MS Noordam*



The Shops

Guests wanting to partake in a little retail therapy are spoilt for choice aboard Holland America Line's *Noordam*, with a wide variety of outlets on board offering duty-free jewellery, handbags, clothes, watches and more. An innovative partnership with Fujifilm also offers an array of photographic options including customised prints, 3-D photos, mementos & equipment.



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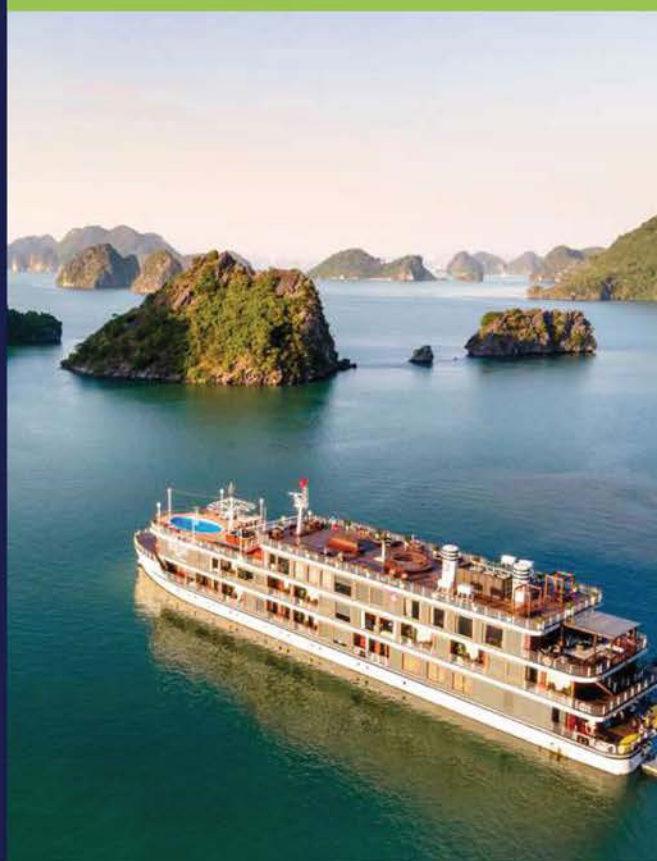
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