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Thursday 20th Feb 2025

Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise news, plus a cover wrap from **Royal Caribbean**.

RCI's new Legend

ROYAL Caribbean (RCI) has unveiled the name of its third Icon-class ship, *Legend of the Seas*, which will make her debut in Europe in Aug 2026 (**CW** yesterday).

Legend will sail seven-night Western Mediterranean vacations from Barcelona in summer 2026.

She will then sail year-round from Fort Lauderdale, starting in Nov 2026, on six-night Western Caribbean and eight-night Southern Caribbean vacations, including visits to Royal Caribbean's Perfect Day at CocoCay private island in The Bahamas - see **cover page**.

Azamara double act dazzles Sydney

TWO Azamara ships sailed into Sydney Harbour yesterday (**pictured**), for the first time in the cruise line's history.

Azamara Onward led the way, docking in White Bay, followed by *Azamara Pursuit*, which treated guests and onlookers to a 360-degree twirl.

Both vessels are boasting nearly full bookings in Australia this season, underscoring Azamara's commitment to the region.

"We are absolutely delighted to welcome both *Azamara Pursuit* and *Azamara Onward* to Sydney," Director of Sales Victoria Chigwidden said.

"This historic event marks a significant milestone for Azamara as we continue to expand our presence in the Australia and New Zealand market.

"The strong demand for these itineraries reaffirms our guests' desire for authentic,



culturally rich experiences in this remarkable region."

Azamara celebrated the moment with the Australian travel cruise sector, hosting a cocktail party on board *Pursuit*.

Guests were welcomed onto the ship with drinks, before hearing updates from Azamara leaders,

and enjoying an exclusive medley of entertainment, including a sample of what pax enjoy on the cruise line's famous White Nights.

Both ships spent the night in Sydney, with *Onward* to today sail for Eden, and *Pursuit* to begin a new itinerary to Singapore, stopping next in Mooloolaba. *MS*



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On location on board
Diamond Princess

Today's issue of CW is coming to you courtesy of Princess Cruises, which is this week hosting us on a trip to Sydney aboard *the Diamond Princess*.

BEFORE we say our farewells to the wonderful team at Princess Cruises tomorrow morning, we will take advantage of some of our favourite experiences on board *Diamond Princess*.

We will start the day with a yoga class and de-stress at the Izumi traditional Japanese bathhouse, followed by a Swedish massage.

Then we will enjoy a slice of salami pizza and order a margarita to be delivered to us by the pool, where we'll lounge for the rest of the day.

Get ready for the World



MSC Cruises' latest flagship, *MSC World America* (pictured), has entered her final phase of preparation for her debut season in the Caribbean.

Marking the cruise line's third LNG-powered ship, *World America* has now successfully completed the deep-water intensive systems tests during her last sea trial in the Atlantic Ocean.

The tests checked the performance of the vessel's engines, manoeuvrability, fuel consumption, safety systems, speed and stopping distances, and now she will receive her finishing touches at Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyard in Saint Nazaire, France.

World America will be officially delivered to MSC on 27 Mar, before her naming ceremony on 09 Apr at the new MSC Miami Cruise Terminal.

She will then set out on her maiden voyage - a celebratory

sailing to the cruise line's private island Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve in the Bahamas.

During her inaugural season from 12 Apr, *World America* will offer alternating seven-night Eastern and seven-night Western Caribbean itineraries with stops in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Costa Maya and Cozumel, Mexico; Isla de Roatan, Honduras; and Ocean Cay.

With a capacity for 6,762 passengers, the newbuild will have 18 bars and lounges and 19 dining venues, including four main restaurants, two buffets, two venues in the MSC Yacht Club, as well as six additional specialty restaurants.

The new flagship will also feature two new lounge concepts - the All-Stars Sports Bar, offering a game-day atmosphere with all-American flair and bar games, as well as The Loft, a multi-purpose venue for comedy, karaoke, and more. *JM*



On location on board
Ovation of the Seas

Today's issue of CW is coming to you courtesy of Royal Caribbean, which is this week hosting us on *Ovation of the Seas*' first-ever call in Eden.

THIS weekend will mark one of the most exciting moments of Royal Caribbean's Australian program for the 2024-25 season, with *Ovation of the Seas* to make her inaugural visit to Eden.

The three-night round-trip cruise will sail from Sydney, arriving on New South Wales' South Coast on Sat.

The town will turn it on for *Ovation*, hosting the 'Taste of Eden' festival, which will showcase live entertainment, beach activities, and local food & drink, including prawns, paella, and of course, oysters.

Rock with Chimu

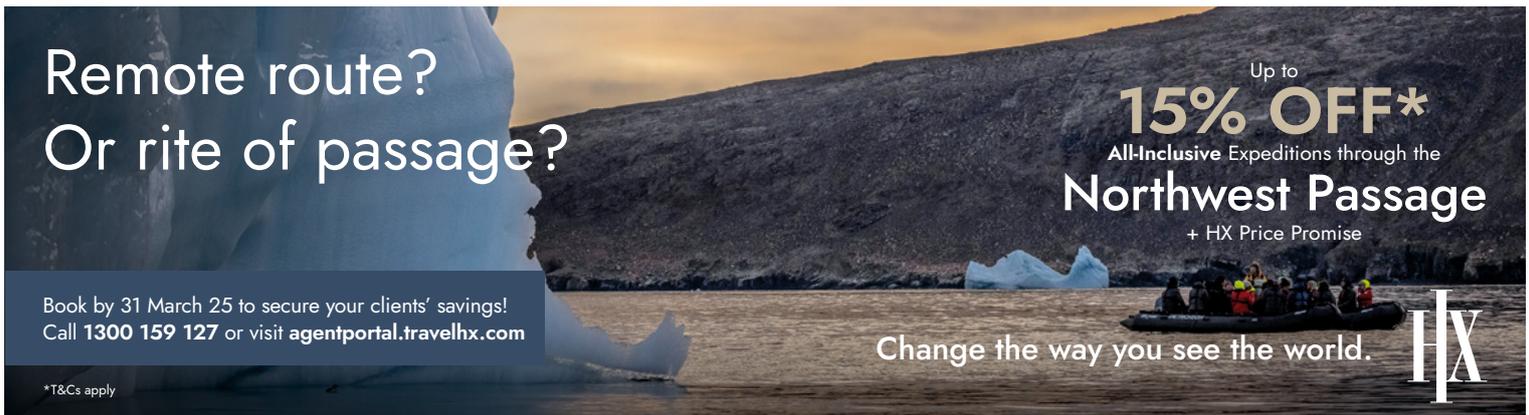
TRAVELLERS can rub shoulders with a rock star on their next cruise, with Chimu Adventures launching a new 11-day journey featuring special guest Mark Seymour, frontman of Aussie band, Hunters & Collectors.

He will perform on board *Ocean Nova* during the 'Best of Antarctica: The Holy Grail' sailing, departing 06 Dec 2026.

Ponant appoints

PONANT has announced the appointment of Fiona Stewart as the new State Manager for WA & SA.

Working closely with local partners, Stewart will draw on 25 years' industry experience to lead growth initiatives across the markets and enhance the brand's luxury cruise offerings.



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Seek-ing Asia trips

WINDSTAR Cruises has announced new land and sea experiences in South East Asia next year on board its new ship *Star Seeker*.

Guests will experience unique ports and destinations on 17 different trips, with a wide variety of pre- and post-cruise land programs.

Itineraries begin in-destination - in Hanoi, Bangkok, and Phuket - allowing passengers to maximise their time on land before and after their sailing.

The small size of *Star Seeker* enables exclusive access to ports and docking locations that larger ships cannot reach, including sailing up rivers to dock in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City and Bangkok.

Fly-cruise picking up speed

CRUISE Lines International Association Head of International Training & Development Peter Kollar has emphasised the importance of fly-cruise, describing it as the future of the cruise sector.

Kollar, speaking to a group of travel professionals on a Princess Cruises familar on board *Diamond Princess*, said fly-cruise would be key to the industry growing its addressable market.

“For us to grow our cruising base, we need to look for fly-cruise options and the number one suggestion I have is close-to-home cruising,” he said.

“It’s less travel time and depending where you live, it can be only a few hours.

“The flights are cheaper

because you’re not going across the world and you can start your holiday as soon as you land, because you don’t have to adjust to jet lag,” he enthused.

Kollar highlighted Singapore, Malaysia, and China as being the biggest destinations.

There is plenty of opportunity in Asia for cruising, Kollar said, with the market now returning to its pre-pandemic levels.

Cruising has a less than 1% penetration rate in Asia, according to Kollar, but by 2035, figures show that 14 million people will be cruising - half the number of those currently sailing - on 150 ships around the world.

Asia will be “a strong save” in terms of the growth of the industry, while there is also plenty of opportunity in India, through changing demographics and socio-economic growth, despite some infrastructure challenges.

“It needs to fix its regulations and get some good ports under its belt and that’s just India.

“There are also the surrounding areas, like Singapore and up to the Middle East...there could be a really strong hub for cruising.”

Governments in these nations see the potential economic benefits of cruising, and are now willing to back the sector’s infrastructure needs.

“[Cruise] is getting a lot of support and love, [the consumers are] just trying to learn how to cruise,” Kollar said.

“In fact, there are a lot of port opportunities...China has just bought 13 new embarkation ports over the next couple of years,” he added. *JHM*



HISTORIC American ocean liner *United States* has embarked on her final voyage - to become an artificial reef off the coast of Florida.

United States departed Philadelphia earlier this week, where she had been docked for the last 30 years, until the city evicted her in 2024.

The ship shattered a number of transatlantic speed records following her debut in 1952, and is now being towed on route to her final destination off the coast of Destin, Florida, where she will be sunk to become the world’s largest artificial reef.

Local officials believes the sunken *United States* could become a signature diving attraction, which could generate millions of dollars annually in local tourism spending for scuba shops, charter boats, and hotels.

APT celebrates VIPs

APT has kicked off its nationwide VIP events, celebrating its top performers.

The events kicked off in Melbourne last week, with six more on the docket.

APT Chief Sales Officer Scott Ellis hosted the event, along with co-owner Robert McGeary, with more than 60 Diamond agents honoured for over \$1 million in sales.

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