



# CRUISE

## WEEKLY

delivered daily!



cruiseweekly.com.au  
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Tuesday 25th Feb 2025

### New MSC webinar

MSC Cruises is hosting a webinar on its new MSC Carbin Upgrade Program. Scheduled over two sessions, the webinar will take place tomorrow at 8:30 AM and 12:30 PM - [CLICK HERE](#).

## Eden's business boom

EDEN'S growth as a cruise destination has been a big win for the town's small business community, with many local firms showing their support for the sector last weekend.

Sat saw the arrival of Royal Caribbean's *Ovation of the Seas* (CW yesterday), which delivered more passengers into Eden's stores, cafes, and eateries than any ship before.

Jackson, who runs Eden's Great Southern Inn Hotel, said Eden is in full support of the increased scale of cruise ship visitation, following last year's planning modification which saw larger vessels, such as *Ovation*, permitted to visit.

"The whole community and the

town [are] right behind it," he told *Cruise Weekly*.

Cruise's presence in Eden has also turned the town into a magnet for business activity from the surrounding regions.

Kahli Jensen, who runs Kahli's Kitchen, a Canberra-based out-of-home bakery, identified Eden's port days as a viable opportunity to bring a pop-up to the town.

She told CW she was doing "much better" than expected, having already sold half of her stock by mid-morning.

Another local business owner, who preferred to remain anonymous, said Eden becoming a major cruise and tourism exporter is a positive development for the destination.

"The town needs to move forward...back in the day [it was an] industry town, they had fishing and timber...it's not quite as strong as it was, so we've got to head toward tourism." MS

### Emerald sessions

EMERALD Cruises is inviting travel advisors to register for its travel lounge information events next month.

The cruise line is hosting a number of sessions across all states - sign up [HERE](#).

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### P&O settles storm

**THE** Federal Court has signed off on a \$2.4 million class action settlement to be paid by P&O Cruises Australia relating to a 2017 voyage which sailed into a Category 5 cyclone.

The *Pacific Aria* voyage, departed Brisbane on 05 May 2017 for Noumea and Vanuatu, but was forced to cancel port stops due to the effects of the cyclone.

According to legal filings, claimants sought refunds of their cruise fare and damages from P&O Cruises for "disappointment, frustration, discomfort and distress".

Passengers will receive the average price of the cruise of \$944 each plus "disappointment damages" of a further \$944 per person.

Carnival Corporation was sought for comment by *Cruise Weekly*, but was unable to respond by today's publishing deadline.

### Croisi on the Nile

**EUROPEAN** river cruise brand CroisiEurope will launch a new eight-day cruise on the Nile River onboard the fully chartered *Star of Luxor*.

The 106-passenger vessel has been secured from Mar-Dec 2025 and Feb-Dec 2026, with the ship featuring three decks, a restaurant, lounge bar, sun deck and swimming pool.

## Is a US cruise tax possible?



**FINANCIAL** analysts have described United States Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick's suggestion that cruise companies will be forced to pay income tax (*CW* yesterday) as "highly speculative", wondering if such a move is even possible.

Truist Securities cruise analyst C. Patrick Scholes said the other unknowns are what the tax rate for cruise lines would be, and what percentage of a line's income would be paid, given their significant operations outside of the United States.

"We note that the probability that these international companies would be forced to start paying taxes is still highly (we reiterate highly) speculative at this point," Scholes said.

"This is all in addition to possible push-back from Congresspersons from Alaska,

Florida, and Texas, amongst other states where the cruise lines do significant business.

"We note that the suggestion of these cruise companies needing to pay US income taxes is not new, as it has been proposed in the past in Congress but has never really gained any material traction," he added.

Scholes, laying out a "reasonable worst case scenario" in his analysis, suggested Royal Caribbean Group may be the worst-hit of the big cruise companies, with 65% of the company's itineraries departing from the United States.

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings (45%) and Carnival Corporation (40%) would also be hit.

"Again, this is a very high-level back-of-the-envelope analysis on what is a highly speculative and fluid situation," he added. *MS*

### Popular skipper out

**KATE** McCue, arguably the most famous cruise ship captain in the world, is saying goodbye to Celebrity Cruises.

The *Celebrity Beyond* skipper shared the news via an Instagram post earlier today.

McCue said she is not retiring, but declined to expand on what her next step will be.

"Today, I saw farewell to Celebrity...I've spent the last 22 years on 11 ships in the Royal Caribbean Group (RCG), from Second Officer to Captain," she added.

"I have seen some of the most beautiful places, met inspiring and wonderful people, and had opportunities to live my 12-year-old dream out loud."

She began her career with RCG in 2003, as the Second Officer aboard Royal Caribbean's *Nordic Empress*.

### Ponant package

**FLY** free to Bali and save \$2,545 per person on a luxury Ponant expedition around Indonesia, through small-ship specialist Cruise Traveller.

The exclusive package is available for bookings made by 30 Mar, with flights included on the 14-night 'Tides of the Tropics' itinerary.

The cruise voyages from Bali to Darwin - **CLICK HERE**.

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## HOW does a cruise holiday make you feel?

If you know you want to go to sea on your next break, but don't know where, then a newly introduced "emotion-led" trip research search engine could be for you.

A luxury travel brand, Black Tomato, has launched 'The Feelings Engine' which matches travellers with a trip based on how they're feeling at the time.

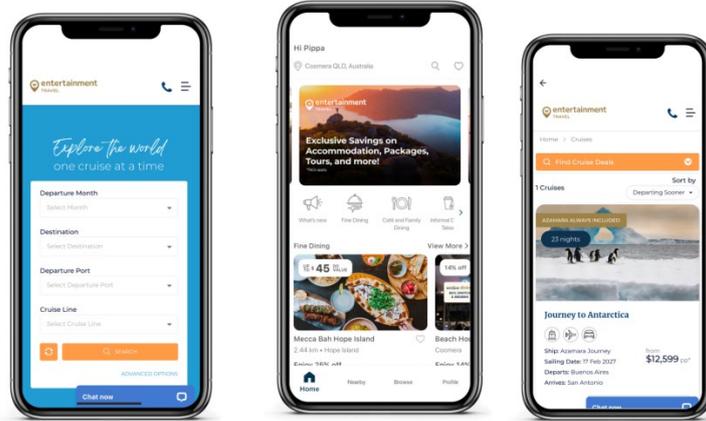
The AI tool matches travellers based on emotions such as revitalisation, freedom, distraction, challenge and contentment, with more than 100 experiences and itinerary suggestions at the ready.

Black Tomato co-founder Tom Marchant said users can enter phrases such as 'I want to feel wonder like never before' and any other internal musings to be matched with a trip - where would that take you?

A need for revitalisation could match with Alaska, while the Caribbean could offer a sense of freedom or if users want to be distracted, the Norwegian fjords are an option.

Once users tell the platform how they're feeling, and if it presents them with a holiday they'd like to pursue, an easy click can connect them with a human agent, who can view the conversation and then complete the booking process and transaction.

## Entertainment goes to sea



**MORE** than a dozen cruise lines and land tour operators feature on a new membership-based discount travel website launched by The Entertainment Group.

The former printed coupon book brand relaunched in 2018 with a new mobile app, offering customers access to special deals via membership, available for \$70 per year.

Like its former printed existence, The Entertainment Group has retained its core principle of donating 20% from each membership to charitable causes, sports clubs, and schools.

In three decades, Entertainment Group memberships have supported the Australian Red Cross, McGrath Foundation, Lifeline, Make-A-Wish and more.

Now featuring a travel vertical, the new portal has gone live, packed with savings of up to 20% on holiday packages and cruises with ocean, river and expedition cruise brands.

Customers can book staterooms on brands including Carnival Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean, Ponant, Silversea, Celebrity

Cruises, and Azamara, along with river brands Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours and Uniworld Boutique River Cruises.

More than 30,000 individual itineraries are on sale alongside more than 20,000 guided holidays with land brands including Wendy Wu Tours, Collette, and more.

Packages can also be combined with flights on Qantas Airways, Virgin Australia, Singapore Airlines, Air New Zealand and more, along with car rentals.

Customers are also supported by a team of experienced travel agents who can provide advice, recommendations and full service support with each booking. *ML*

### Disney on Catalina

**DISNEY** Cruise Line is seeking preferential anchorage rights at California's Catalina Island as it looks to increase visitation.

The cruise line is looking to make the island a regular stop on US west coast itineraries from late 2027.

So far, the proposal is being supported by the city council.

## Murray sales open

**BOOKINGS** for 2027 have been opened by Murray River Paddlesteamers, with a 15% discount available for earlybird bookings made by 30 Jun 2025.

The early release of 2027 inventory comes on the back of high demand for the new luxury *Australian Star* paddlesteamer, which has seen 75% of its 2026 cruises fly off the shelves.

The 38-passenger vessel is in the final stages of construction in Mildura and will debut its seven-night itinerary, sailing from Echuca in spring.

Fares for a seven-night voyage in 2027 inclusive of the earlybird discount start from \$5,338ppts, with a \$100 onboard credit also included.

## Home in San Diego

**ROYAL** Caribbean's *Serenade of the Seas* will be deployed to San Diego for the northern winter 2026/27 season, the line has confirmed.

The 2,490-passenger ship will operate three-, four and seven-night itineraries from the southern California port.

Destinations on the schedule will include Cabo San Lucas, Ensenada and La Paz, a new port for Royal Caribbean.

San Diego is the second Californian home port for Royal Caribbean, with four ships based further north in Los Angeles, including new arrivals *Navigator of the Seas* and *Ovation of the Seas*.

Bookings are now open for *Serenade's* San Diego sailings.