

Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news plus a full page from **Cruise Lines International Association**.

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The Association offers specialised expedition cruise training and resources that will help drive agent development, strengthen cruise selling skills and become a specialist in expedition cruising.

The two-part training covers everything a travel advisor needs to know about expedition cruising.

CLIA was named the Most Outstanding Travel Industry Training Institution at last year's NTIAs - see **page 4**.

Pearl banking on luxury agent pivot

PEARL Expeditions will shun mass distribution of its product and instead focus on carefully selected trade partners it knows can deliver solid, reliable business.

Speaking to **CW** on board *Paspaley Pearl* in Dili this week, Executive Chair Sarina Bratton (**pictured**) admitted while the line is very late to market, it has faith in certain luxury-geared agents to book its staterooms.

"We invited a number of different people to our launch event last week, even people who aren't cruise sellers," Bratton said.

"But they might be really high-end African safari sellers and things like that, and the responses we were getting was 'wow, you know, I've never sold a cruise before, but I can see this is a product for me'."

Bratton said cruise lines experience was similar to a safari in some ways, namely the



remoteness of where *Paspaley Pearl* will go and the ability to offer a small, shared experience.

Despite the lack of mainstream brand awareness, Bratton said an enduring loyalty from customers who also sailed with her former business Orion Expedition Cruises, which she sold to Lindblad Expeditions in 2013, has helped the business charter the ship for 40 days out of its first 70 in revenue service.

Some of the loyal customers

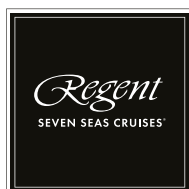
for these engaged with Bratton after finding her on Facebook, and include multi-generational families celebrating big birthdays, and other milestones.

While Bratton said these bookings were "amazing" and "welcome", the company had "a lot of work ahead" to raise the brand's profile in market.

"Things are just starting now, and we think that it will ramp up fairly quickly once people come on board and they realise it's a pretty special place," she said.

Agents will soon hear more from Pearl's representation partner La Collection, which is targeting luxury agents who may not necessarily be cruise sellers, which Bratton said is where she believes the opportunity lies.

Pearl has recently launched pages on a number of social media channels, with a website due early next month. **ML**



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Scenic gets fresh

SCENIC Group produced more than 21 million gallons of freshwater on board its ocean vessels last year, reducing reliance on port resources, and returning 92% of onboard water to the environment safely, the company said.

This was one of the highlights of Scenic's 2024 *Impact Report*, which also revealed river water consumption was down by 18%, compared to the prior year.

Sustainable sourcing was not the only aquatic contribution Scenic made last year, with the company expanding its Clean Water Program to a kindergarten in Vietnam's Tra Bong District.

This will deliver safe drinking water to more than 200 students and staff members.

Scenic also reduced its waste last year, cutting plastic intensity across its ocean operations by 27%, and decreasing wastewater use by around 13%.

"This year, we focused on what the data reveals: where we're improving efficiency and how our commitment to responsible practices is making a difference for guests and the destinations we serve," Director of Sustainability Phil Jordan said.

"We remain focused on driving long-term impact through innovation."

AI helps agents book cruise



TRAVELTEK is this week exhibiting what it claims is the world's first AI cruise search tool aimed at travel agents.

Dubbed AI Voyage Assistant (AIVA), the cruise booking assistant has been developed in partnership with AI specialist Traverse Automation.

The AI system reportedly understands natural language queries and responds with personalised cruise quotes in less than three seconds.

With each prompt, AVIA filters more than 1,000 cruise options and gradually eliminates them based on non-matches.

It handles questions such as "luxury cruise through Norwegian fjords with balcony cabins" and "adults-only Mediterranean cruise with specialty dining".

AIVA is now in testing but will be rolled out on Traveltek's iSell Connect platform in Jul.

Chief Executive Officer of Traveltek Mal Barritt said the

pending launch of the new tech is just the beginning.

"We have dozens of AI-driven initiatives in motion to unlock more value from our core iSell platform, delivering real service gains and a stronger competitive edge for our customers," he said.

Traverse Automation Chief Executive Officer John O'Neill said AIVA is just the first step to helping simplify how front-line travel advisors can utilise AI to aid their productivity.

"It's a future-facing breakthrough, and likely just the first of many advanced applications we're developing as we continue to explore the full potential of this technology."

Traveltek said the technology addresses the growing gap between customer expectations for instant, personalised service and current booking capabilities, and can give agents a competitive advantage through natural conversation-based booking. *ML*

Silversea reunion

SILVERSEA has unveiled its Venetian Society Reunion Voyage for next year, which will depart Nice in Jun.

The 12-day cruise aboard *Silver Shadow* will be hosted by President Bert Hernandez, and will take in some of Italy's most iconic destinations, as well as smaller ports of call.

Highlights of the cruise will include Portofino, Porto Santo Stefano, Livorno, Civitavecchia, Valetta, Giardini Naxos, Salerno, and Portoferraio.

The special voyage will feature onboard receptions, enriched entertainment, and special experiences ashore.

Venetian Society members can also enjoy perks such as a 5% cruise fare discount and commemorative gifts.

"Our Venetian Society Reunion Voyages truly reflect what makes Silversea special," Hernandez said.

"They bring together a close community of past guests, offer exceptional service, and feature immersive experiences - both on board and ashore."

"From curated events to memorable entertainment and thoughtful touches along the way, these voyages celebrate the spirit of Silversea."

Bookings are still open on this year's Venetian Society Reunion Voyage, which departs from Fusina on 17 Oct to the Adriatic and Greece.



EOFY SAVINGS

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DEPOSITS***





A DIP in the water is the goal for many cruise passengers, but certainly not when you're sitting in your stateroom.

Two guests on Marella Cruises' *Marella Explorer 2* were sitting in their stateroom, when a pipe carrying macerated food waste to the ship's hold burst, showering their bed and possessions with half-chewed protein.

Marella apologised and offered a partial refund, plus US\$680 in compensation, which they accepted.

The couple said the reimbursement still does not cover the damage to their belongings - watch the unfortunate aftermath [HERE](#).

Viking weekly deal

VIKING'S deal of the week will see cruisers save up to \$6,800 per couple on the cruise line's 'Iconic Western Mediterranean' voyage.

The sailing, which travels between Barcelona and Rome, explores the French Riviera and Tuscany over eight days.

The cruise is priced from \$2,995 per person in a deluxe veranda stateroom, with savings available on departures in Nov.

The deal is available now on new bookings until sold out.

CLICK HERE for more details on the cruise.

Slovenia on the rise



SMALL ship cruise line Unforgettable Croatia has experienced a steep rise in bookings to Slovenia from Australians seeking a European getaway to the Adriatic country.

Unforgettable co-founder Graham Carter said he has been blown away by the interest in the country over the past 12 months.

"Slovenia has proven to be a standout surprise, with bookings increasing by an impressive 286% year-on-year," he explained.

"This surge strongly indicates a growing appetite among travellers for emerging and lesser-known destinations.

"While Slovenia may not boast the same volume of UNESCO-listed sites as some of its neighbouring countries, it more than compensates with its breathtaking landscapes, pristine lakes, and an increasingly recognised wine region.

Carter said Slovenia ([pictured](#)) works well as an add-on for Unforgettable's small-ship cruises.

"Australians in particular are interested in our cruise and land packages as they plan to spend more time in the region after

travelling so far," he said.

Carter also noted that Unforgettable's guests prefer to extend their visit with pre- and post- stays in Split, Sibersnik or Dubrovnik, as well as extra time spent in Slovenia and Montenegro, turning their holiday into a longer, two-week, three-country visit. *MS*

Robotron to Texas

MSC Cruises will introduce a new thrill-seeking attraction to *MSC Seascope* ahead of the ship's arrival to its new home port in Galveston, Texas later this year.

Robotron is a high-energy robotic arm that delivers "a roller coaster-like experience with a twist", the line said.

Suspended more than 50 metres above the sea, Robotron will flip, twist and spin three riders at a time, even turning upside down over the ocean.

Riders can choose from a range of "thrill levels" from family-friendly to high-intensity" and can also set it to correlate with their choice of music and lighting.

Seascope will make her debut from Texas in Nov.



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