



Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

Viking kicks off Eu

VIKING has celebrated the start of its European river season, during which it will introduce seven new ships. One of those vessels will be the newly delivered *Viking Nerthus*, built specifically to sail the Seine (**CW** 19 Mar). The cruise line will also sail three new itineraries on the Rhine, Main, and Seine rivers. These will include the new 'Rhine & Main Explorer' (11 days; Nuremberg-Basel); the new 'Christmas on the Rhine & Main' (11 days; Nuremberg-Basel); and the new 'Christmastime in Paris & Normandy' (eight days; round trip from Paris).

Why RSSC is proud to be a cruise line

EXCLUSIVE

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) is not hiding from being a cruise line, even as some of its competitors attempt to downplay that aspect of their businesses.

RSSC recently debuted its new 'Unrivalled at Sea' positioning (**CW** 06 Dec), among a wider "soft rebrand", with the line choosing not to remove the word 'cruises' from its name, as a number of its competitors have of late.

Senior Vice President International & Consumer Sales Steve Odell (**pictured**) told **CW** RSSC is proud to be a cruise line - a fact which is helping it dominate its space in the market.

"There are some new brands in coming into the market who talk about not wanting to be a cruise ship...well, we want to be a cruise ship," he enthused.

"You'll see us say 'Unrivalled at Sea', because there has sort of



been a push to say, 'oh, we're a cruise ship, but we're not really, we're a resort'.

"We're a cruise company, and what we're saying is, we're unrivalled in our space at sea."

The rebrand has helped RSSC to update its positioning, in a market which has greatly changed in the past five years.

The result has been higher recognition and recall from

consumers, particularly with RSSC emerging from the so-called "sea of blue" which typically dominates cruise line marketing, Odell explained.

However, the rebrand also attempts to position RSSC for the future - particularly the generational shift of luxury travellers which is underway.

"We can plan for today, but looking ahead, there is a generational shift in part of the market," Odell explained.

"The baby boomers are still really important to us, and they will be, but now you've got the next generation, including millennials, coming into our space, and that's what we need to capture for the future.

"So the brand refresh is more about trying to reposition ourselves and trying to give the correct impression of who we are and where we sit." *MS*



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Discovery's refit

CELESTYAL Cruises' *Celestyal*

Discovery has returned to service after her major refit, commencing her Greece & Mediterranean season.

The refurbishment saw 32 suites added, expanding *Discovery's* premium capacity by more than half, reflecting growing demand.

The 32 suites include two new categories - 30 junior dream suites, which are 25m² in size, featuring balconies up to 5.6m² each; and two 42m² 'Grand Horizon' suites, which are situated above the bridge, and include separate living areas and 15.5m² balconies.

A further 15 interior cosmos cabins were also added, with the overall increase in staterooms lifting *Discovery's* total capacity by 7.4%.

Other upgrades include the addition of the Smoked Olive restaurant available on *Discovery's* fleetmate *Celestyal Journey*, available as a dedicated dining space for all suite guests.

An evening pop-up restaurant, Grill Seekers, with a bookable private dining area will also be available later in the season, offering high-end, speciality regional cuisine inspired by the destinations visited by the ship.

Discovery celebrated the emergence from her Athens refit, last week.

Agents to Master cruise

CRUISE Lines International Association's (CLIA) Masters Program is set to take 60 of Australia's top travel advisors to the next level, as part of the first intake of candidates for the year.

The program is a six-week course designed to help travel advisors stand out in the market as cruise specialists, and move into an environment beyond mainstream selling.

Participants learn how to pursue new revenue streams, create a unique brand differentiation, and forge a unique position in a competitive retail landscape.

This year's course is being held in Mar and Sep, and after completing the online Masters course and assignment, successful participants will receive 100 accreditation points and enter the prestigious CLIA Cruise Masters ranks.

This will see them rank higher on the CLIA website.

This year's program will also include 24 "rising stars" sponsored by Royal Caribbean - a selection of top performing agents (**pictured**) nominated by multiple agency brands, who were hosted at the recent Cruise Industry Awards (**CW** 10 Mar).

They will also be able to sail on a future Royal Caribbean cruise.

The Masters Program is available exclusively to CLIA travel advisors who have achieved



Ambassador status.

"Masters candidates already have among the best cruise knowledge in the industry, so this course is designed to take them further to focus on business development and create new strategies to build their client base and sales," CLIA Head of Training & Development Peter Kollar said.

"Fewer than 2% of retail travel agents are CLIA Masters, which means they stand out from the crowd as holders of CLIA's highest professional development qualification," he added.

Royal Caribbean Director of Sales Dave Humphreys said the Masters Program is an investment in the future for cruise specialist travel advisors.

"Top trade partners nominate a team member from any field who goes above and beyond to support the cruise industry and is a shining star in their organisation," Humphreys said.

"It's key for Royal Caribbean to continue supporting these leaders' long-term development culminating in their CLIA Masters accreditation," he added. *MS*

AIDAdiva undergoes extensive refurb

A **NEW** chapter has begun for AIDA Cruises with the modernisation of *AIDAdiva*, the first of seven ship refits as part of the line's 'Evolution' program (**CW** 05 Jul).

The seven-week dry dock at the Chantier Naval Shipyard in Marseille took place from 03 Feb to 21 Mar.

The "ground-up" renovation saw the installation new technology, upgraded staterooms, and new restaurants & entertainment.

Some accommodations have been expanded from a three- to a four-person occupancy to create further options for family bookers.

There are also six new spacious, family-friendly suites at the stern of the ship with their own sun deck.

These are divided into living and sleeping areas with double beds, with the pull-out couch in the living room allowing for additional sleeping places.

There are now even five-bed occupancy staterooms with a baby cot.

The public areas on decks 9, 10 and 11 underwent an extensive redesign, with new restaurant and bar concepts providing an expanded culinary offer, while suite guests also have access to two new exclusive retreats- the Sky Deck and the Rossini Lounge.

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PORThOLE

RARE and mysterious whiskey bottles have been found washed up on a New Jersey beach by a local Coast Guard worker.

The Prohibition-era stash turned up last month as the man was walking his dog on the beach.

The pooch began to sniff at something deep in the sand, which led the man to find 12 completely full glass bottles of rare, old whiskey, thought to be from the 1920s-1930s.

The bottles all had the name 'Lincoln Inn' etched on them, which a quick Google revealed was produced at a distillery in Montreal in the 1930s, which went out of business around 50 years ago.

Although the man who discovered them does not drink, the whiskey did not go to waste.

The man gifted a bottle to his father, and 11 of his friends.

NCL not backing away from live shows

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has pushed back against "misconceptions" that it is backing away from live entertainment productions.

Speaking aboard *Norwegian Aqua* recently, the cruise line's Chief International Sales and Marketing Officer Jason Krimmel insisted nothing could be further from the truth, and its call to remove some of its Broadway shows was simply part of a broader strategic realignment.

Furnishing Krimmel's point was Vice President of Entertainment Production Bryan White, who said the volume of entertainment is being increased in line with NCL's 'More at Sea' value proposition.

"Let me give you a number - 112 - that's how many individual shows and experience projects our team is currently working on across the fleet," White said.

"That should give you an idea of the amount of new and exciting entertainment that we're going to be offering our guests between now and Mar 2026."

White also pointed out that for NCL, the goal is to provide a high watermark of quality



entertainment, while also offering passengers a rich variety.

"We want to offer our guests the quality that they've come to expect from NCL, whether that's a Broadway title or something that we've created in-house - we will always emphasise quality."

Interestingly, White also revealed that market feedback conducted by NCL showed guests want shorter shows that are easier to digest.

"[Guests] want narratives that are easy to follow, they don't want complicated storylines with 15 different characters and have to sit in the theatre for two hours, they're not interested in that.

"Our attention spans post-COVID...have gotten a little bit shorter...we all have had a little bit of a shift in the amount of time we are willing to sit and so we've been responsive to that."

Alongside shorter shows, NCL said feedback also suggested guests want music they recognise, and more visual spectacles.

The commitment comes as NCL earlier this month introduced a new onboard entertainment strategy, headlined by the introduction of four new stage productions (**CW** 06 Mar).

The new strategy involves taking more entertainment outside the ship's theatre. **AB**



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