



LELEPA

COMING 2027

BEACH DAY THE SOUTH PACIFIC WAY

The ultimate beach brag hits the serene shores of the South Pacific in 2027.

Introducing Lelepa — the first private cruise destination in the southern hemisphere, a pristine oasis with bold new ways to get away from it all. Bask in the island beauty and crystal-clear blue water of Vanuatu to relax to the max — this is a paradise you can only find with *Royal Caribbean®*.



ROYAL CARIBBEAN

Cruise Weekly today

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

APT's Aussie cruises

APT has unveiled its new Australia program for next year, with a number of new cruises on offer.

Guests can discover Western Australia on the new 13-day 'Coral Coast Adventure', a cruise showcasing Ningaloo Reef, Shark Bay, and the Muiron Islands.

Next year will also see the debut of Murray River Paddlesteamers' *Australian Star*, which is being chartered by APT on its eight-day 'Retreat to the Murray' itinerary (**CW** 17 Jan).

The cruise sails round trip from Echuca.

Royal's Lelepa Beach Club to launch in '27

ROYAL Caribbean's private beach destination in Lelepa (pictured) will arrive in early 2027, the line finally announced after years of speculation (**CW** breaking news yesterday).

The Royal Beach Club on the Vanuatuan island (see **cover page**) is the first private cruise destination in the South Pacific, and comes after years of discussion about the project.

The destination will offer a locally inspired experience for guests in Australia and beyond, complete with serene beaches, nature trails, water activities, dining, and more.

"Royal Caribbean is leading the way when it comes to holiday experiences with its ever-expanding destination portfolio, alongside its world-class ships.

"We're thrilled that we will have the very first private cruise ship destination in the southern



hemisphere with Lelepa.

"With crystal clear waters and the most stunning natural beauty, it'll be the perfect spot for our guests on their South Pacific holidays come 2027."

The destination was at one stage mooted to be developed as one of Royal Caribbean's trademark 'Perfect Day' islands (**CW** 28 Mar 2022).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the development of the project, which ultimately morphed into a smaller Beach Club.

Lelepa will join two other private beach destinations debuting over the coming years for Royal Caribbean, including The Bahamas (**CW** 13 Dec) and Cozumel (**CW** 11 Oct). *MS*



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Cruise good for QC

INTERNATIONAL cruises on the St. Lawrence River contribute significantly to Quebec's economy, with passengers disbursing an average of C\$364 a day when visiting one of the destination's nine ports of call.

The sector spawned a total expenditure of C\$329 million last year, generating C\$192 million in added value to Quebec's economy.

Last season wrapped up with more than 400,000 pax days, representing a 2.5% increase over the year prior, and a 54.5% rise over 2022.

"International cruises provide us with a unique opportunity to enhance market exposure for our regions, our culture and our know-how with curious international visitors in search of authenticity," Cruise the Saint Lawrence President Marie-Andree Blanchet said.

Bailey to Silversea

ASHLEIGH Bailey will replace Sara Puglia as Silversea's new Sales Manager for Queensland, Western Australia, and NT.

Bailey brings a wealth of experience and a passion for delivering exceptional service to the luxury travel industry.

She replaces Puglia, who was promoted to Manager Key Accounts & Sales Enablement (**CW** 06 Mar).

Explora Journeys revs up



EXPLORA Journeys has announced it will host exclusive onboard experiences during Formula 1's Monaco Grand Prix this year, deepening its connection with one of the world's most iconic races.

The cruise line's new ship *Explora II* will offer unrivalled access, curated experiences, and appearances by Formula 1 legends, as she spends the weekend docked at Port Hercule (**CW** 09 Aug).

Guests will hear personal insights and behind-the-scenes stories from some of the race's past winners, including David Coulthard, Jackie Stewart, and Mika Hakkinen.

These appearances will be complemented by perspectives from representatives of the BWT Alpine Formula One team.

Guests will also be able to take the driver's seat in a race simulator, featuring both VR and non-VR time trials, and compete on a live leaderboard.

Additional highlights include racing trivia competitions, themed entertainment venues, and a miniature onboard track.

Explora II will dock just 150 metres from the Circuit de Monaco on race weekend, offering travellers prime access to the destination.

Three- and four-night stay options are available, with passengers to be offered the exclusive Formula 1 Monaco Triple Crown Hospitality Experience, which includes Paddock Club yacht access, and an exclusive dining experience by celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay.

"This is one of the most prestigious events in the calendar, and it is only fitting that this would be where we offer sporting enthusiasts an unforgettable experience that brings together the world of motorsports with the luxury of maritime travel," the Executive Chair of MSC Group's Cruise Division Pierfrancesco Vago said. *MS*

Summer in swing

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's northern summer season is in full swing with bucket list itineraries to Alaska and Europe on its newly revitalised ships (**CW** 02 May).

The cruise line is putting its best foot forward to Alaska this summer, with its youngest-ever fleet in the destination.

Five ships will sail to Alaska from Seattle and Vancouver including *Norwegian Encore*, *Norwegian Joy*, and the newly revamped *Norwegian Bliss*.

A number of Norwegian's renovated ships will cruise in Europe, including *Norwegian Breakaway* and *Norwegian Epic*, which will sail on destination-intensive itineraries, with almost no days at sea and an average of 10 hours at each port.

Another season highlight will see the all-new *Norwegian Aqua* (**CW** 29 Apr) sail Caribbean itineraries.

The new ship is currently offering round-trip, seven-day Caribbean cruises from Orlando, and will also sail a series of five- and seven-day voyages to Bermuda departing NYC from Aug through Oct.

"We have invested significantly in new and newly renovated ships to give our guests more to do, more to enjoy and more value for their vacation," President David Herrera said.

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OF ALL the things to pack for a cruise holiday, 150,000 cigarettes would not be on the top of many traveller's lists.

However, two passengers arriving at a Californian port last month had other ideas.

American federal border agents found and confiscated 749 cartons of cigarettes in 10 pieces of luggage in Long Beach, owned by two women who had just arrived on a cruise ship from Mexico.

There was something for every smoker in their collection, including 326 cartons of Newport 100s, 58 cartons of Newport regulars, 112 cartons of Marlboro Red, 43 cartons of Marlboro Silver, and 210 cartons of Marlboro Gold cigarettes.

While the cigarettes were legally purchased, the pax did not have permission to import the large quantity into the US.

It is not known whether the duo were charged, but it must have been punishment enough watching tens of thousands of dollars worth of their precious cargo go up in smoke.

Agents take on Antarctica



A GROUP of ten Travel Associates agents have embarked on an exclusive Antarctica famil with Aurora Expeditions.

The group was selected as part of Travel Associates' exclusive famil program, which focuses on providing advisors with the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of different brands and destinations.

Travel Associates General Manager Rachel Kingswell said famil trips like these are key to providing advisors with the tools to curate one-of-a-kind experiences for clients.

"We're committed to investing in the experience of our people and at the same time, driving value back to our most loved suppliers," she said.

"Antarctica is such a special destination, but given it's only accessible via small cruise ships, it's rare for advisors to get the opportunity to go on famil there,

so we're really grateful to Aurora for taking ten of our advisors there," Kingswell added.

Travel Associates' bookings to Antarctica have increased by 50% on the prior year to-date, echoing the industry-wide demand for more immersive luxury holidays.

"Our clients are discerning luxury travellers who are increasingly redefining what luxury means to them," the Travel Associates head added.

"Often, they've experienced the white glove service, the champagne on arrival and dinner at hatted restaurants, so now they want the luxury amenities, but paired with the unique, immersive experience.

"Because of this demand it's important that our advisors are familiar with the destination and the cruise lines sailing there so they can give invaluable first-hand knowledge to clients." *MS*

Pictured: the famil group.

Virgin spreads Jam

VIRGIN Voyages has announced plans for its next sailing with American singer Nicky Jam.

The 'X' singer will curate an eight-night music takeover of *Valiant Lady* in the Caribbean.

The cruise will include exclusive concerts and pop-up sets for what is set to be the ultimate Latin music experience at sea from 05-13 Dec 2025.

The voyages sails round trip from San Juan, and visits some of the Caribbean's most vibrant destinations, including Curacao, Aruba, Dominica, Antigua, and St. Maarten.

Viking river savings

VIKING has released new booking incentives for 17 of its river journeys.

Travel advisors can save their clients up to \$9,600 per couple on new bookings for select departures from Aug to Dec on cruises across Central Europe, France, Portugal, Egypt, and Southeast Asia.

Bookings are open now and are available until sold out.

Cruises include the eight-night 'Rhine Getaway', as well as the 10-day 'Portugal's River of Gold'.



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