

Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise news, plus a full page from **Ponant**.

Unlock the poles

POLAR adventures have been unlocked thanks to Ponant Explorations, with travellers invited to book early and save up to 30% on sailings across the next two years.

See **page 4** for more info

Sonata's big day

OCEANIA Cruises has celebrated a record-breaking launch day for its brand-new ship *Oceania Sonata*.

The vessel outperformed the previous record launch day for a new ship, *Oceania Allura*, by almost 50%, with Oceania witnessing demand across all suite categories.

NCLH expecting a "difficult" quarter

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) is seeing greater Q1 yield pressure than initially anticipated, due to capacity increases in the Caribbean, as well as the slower-than-expected roll-out of Great Stirrup Cay's (pictured) upgrades (**CW** 08 Jan).

NCLH leadership met with investors earlier this week, with the company saying deployment growth in the Caribbean has not been absorbed as well as initially hoped for.

An equity research report from bank holding company Truist, published overnight, estimated yield growth to be flat for Q1 or as much as -2%, in what NCLH described as a "commercially difficult" quarter.

This compares with the approximately 4% yield growth for the quarter NCLH had expected in its Q3 earnings update from last year.



NCLH did however note at the time Q1 could be "under pressure" as a result of the large Caribbean deployment increase.

The report noted better news for the rest of the year, which is currently trading as previously expected, with yield pressures isolated to the present quarter.

Caribbean deployment is increasing by around 10% year-on-year in Q2, which NCLH said it will be able to better absorb, relative to the current quarter.

Initial customer response to the upgrades at GSC has been overwhelmingly positive, NCLH

told investors, and the company still expects to see "good" margin expansion, both this quarter and for the full year.

The new pier, pool, and welcome centre have been up and running for around a month and a half, and passenger feedback has been positive, NCLH leadership said.

The pier currently has capacity to dock one ship, with a second berth to come online later this year, alongside the water park, which is expected to open around the middle of summer.

GSC's continued ramp-up means the facility is not expected to materially contribute to results this year.

The company said it also expects to report an expanded EBITDA margin for Q1 and the full year, thanks to a larger mix of more cost-favourable shorter duration itineraries. *MS*

NCL

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Crystal unveils its most *Grace*-ful suite

CRYSTAL has unveiled its first-ever owner's suite, which will be introduced on board its new ship *Crystal Grace* (CW 10 Dec).

The suite will span 181m² and feature a 183m² veranda, offering an expansive layout designed for comfort and personalisation.

Key features of the suite (render **pictured**) include a living room with a library, fireplace, custom wool carpets, walnut floors, and handcrafted cabinetry.

A state-of-the-art entertainment system covers all interior and exterior areas, allowing guests to enjoy movies or music, while dual LES touch panels in the living room and bedroom allow music to play across multiple zones.

The dining area will feature panoramic ocean views, a butler pantry, and personalised bar service, while the master bedroom includes a king-size bed or twin configuration; large walk-



in closets; a recessed in-ceiling television; and a custom-made sofa bench which converts into a third sleeping accommodation when required.

A private whirlpool and shower punctuate the veranda, which also includes an outdoor dining area and music diffusion.

"We're introducing a suite that goes beyond expectations," Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group chief executive officer Cristina

Levis said.

"From its elegant interiors to its seamless technology and personalised services, this suite embodies what makes Crystal distinctive: attention to every detail and an elevated way of life at sea."

Grace is scheduled for delivery in May 2028, and will embark on her inaugural voyage on 11 Jun 2028, following a series of preview sailings. *MS*

Celestial revs up

CELESTYAL has announced new Doha and Abu Dhabi Formula 1 sailings for 2026.

The 1,260-guest *Celestial Journey* will arrive in Qatar for an eight-night Doha F1 itinerary on 27 Nov.

Journey will stay in port for three nights, allowing guests to watch all practice sessions, qualifying, and the race.

A few weeks later, the 1,360-guest *Celestial Discovery* will offer a seven-night Abu Dhabi F1 itinerary.

The ship will also stay in port for three nights, allowing guests to watch all practice sessions, qualifying, and race day events.

Fares for both cruises include all meals, soft drinks, wi-fi, port fees, and gratuities.

Race tickets will be available to purchase via Celestial, with advisors able to pre-register.

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MSC Cruises' MSC Yacht Club is all the rage at the moment, as the line rolls out its ship-within-a-ship concept across its fleet.

One other place you can expect to see Yacht Club soon will be at the Miami Grand Prix, offering views over one of the most exciting parts of the Formula 1 track.

The 80-metre, five-deck structure will overlook turns 5-9 on race day, and feature a dining experience curated by Bagatelle restaurant.

There will also be a general admission area with an elevated viewing platform inside turn 7, allowing any ticketed guest a taste of MSC Yacht Club hospitality.



Two Queens reunite in LA



CUNARD Line's flagship *Queen Mary 2* reunited with the original *Queen Mary* earlier this week, marking their first meeting in 20 years (**pictured**).

The rare rendezvous took place in Long Beach, as *Queen Mary 2*, the world's only ocean liner, visited her namesake, which today serves as a hotel, museum, and convention space.

Queen Mary 2's starboard funnel still houses a fully refurbished whistle originally installed aboard *Queen Mary*, cementing a tangible and enduring connection between the two vessels.

"This iconic rendezvous pays a powerful tribute to Cunard's

enduring legacy and the spirit of ocean travel," president Katie McAlister said.

"*Queen Mary 2*'s reunion with the original *Queen Mary* for the first time in 20 years reflects our past, present and future, reminding us of Cunard's distinct connection to maritime history and the generations brought together through timeless elegance, innovation and one-of-a-kind journeys around the world," she added.

The reunion followed *Queen Mary 2*'s first-ever transit of the Panama Canal, as she continues on her world voyage (**CW** 19 Jan).

Queen Mary retired from service in 1967. **MS**

TTW incentives

TRAVEL The World (TTW) has launched four new cruise trade incentives for travel advisors this month.

Three agents booking Virgin Voyages sailings through the Voyage Store will have the opportunity to win from a \$1,000 prize pool, in an offer valid until 27 Feb, while those who book a Windstar Cruises voyage through TTW will receive a \$100 bonus for every confirmed reservation.

Meanwhile, TTW is offering those who book a Ponant Explorations cruise up to \$200 bonus commission for new bookings, while passengers who book a select Holland America Line sailing can get up to \$100 credit.

Call 1300 857 037 for bookings or more info.

Tauck godmothers

TAUCK has announced two of its employees, Kristen Mack and Brenna Shay, will serve as co-godmothers of *Lumiere*, while vice chair Jennie Norman will godmother *Serene*.

YEAR IN REVIEW

Our analysis of the biggest news of the year

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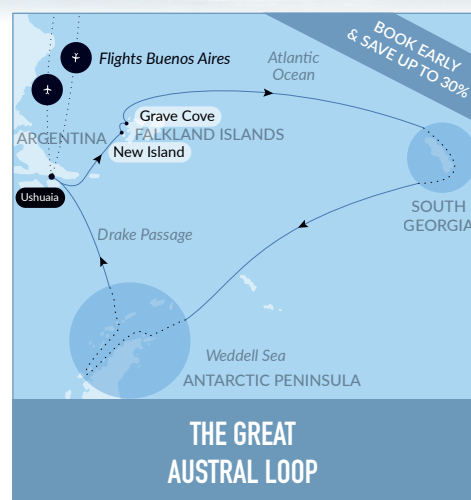
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