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Cruise Weekly today

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

Royal to downsize for next ship class?

ROYAL Caribbean is reportedly preparing to order a brand new class of ships, according to France's *Le Marin*, which sources indicate could be the long-awaited 'Discovery-class'.

Although no official announcement has been made, *Le Marin* is reporting work on the new vessels may have already begun at Chantiers de l'Atlantique.

Speculation has suggested the Discovery-class is set to come in smaller than Royal Caribbean's current generation of ships, the Icon-class, with chief executive officer Michael Bayley suggesting as such at the launch of *Icon of the Seas* (CW 23 Jan 2024).

Bayley said the next phase of Royal Caribbean's ship development plan would be to replace its ageing Vision- and Radiance-class vessels.

The deal would also see Royal Caribbean deviate away from Finnish shipyard Meyer Turku, which is currently delivering its Icon-class.

Cruise Weekly has reached out to Royal Caribbean for comment on the reports.

Pearl unveils 2026-2027



PEARL Expeditions has unveiled its 2026-2027 calendar of cruises, which will travel to some of the world's most remote destinations.

The season will see *Paspaley Pearl* visit the Kimberley, Papua New Guinea, Raja Ampat, Eastern Indonesia and Borneo, as well as Australia's indigenous regions such as the Rowley Shoals, Arnhem Land, the Torres Strait Islands, and the Barrier Reef.

Paspaley Pearl will spend six months in the Kimberley during the season from Apr to Oct, where guests can experience an immersive range of itineraries visiting locations including Kununurra, the King George River, Prince Frederick Harbour, Collier Bay, the Buccaneer Archipelago and Broome.

Another highlight of the program will be Papua New Guinea, visited in Oct and Nov

annually, travelling to ancient village communities and learning from traditional cultures.

"Our 2026-2027 expeditions have been carefully designed to showcase the very best of each region while travelling in a way that is respectful, sustainable, and deeply immersive," executive chair Sarina Bratton said.

"We are venturing to never-before-visited destinations aboard the *Paspaley Pearl*, offering our guests something truly one-of-a-kind."

"The chance to experience some of the most untouched destinations in the world, combined with our signature style of service on board makes for an unforgettable journey."

Itineraries range from five to 12 days, with bookings for the seasons now open, priced from \$8,995 per person. MS

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Book online, or for more information, head to the **cover page** of today's *Cruise Weekly*.

Chile port expands

THE newly expanded Arturo Prat Pier in Punta Arenas has celebrated a milestone, with Holland America Line's *Oosterdam* becoming the largest ship to dock at the Chilean cruise port.

Prior to the expansion project, vessels between 258-300 metres needed to anchor in the Strait of Magellan and tender passengers ashore.

"We are starting 2026 with great news for Punta Arenas, the port that handles the majority of ship calls in the country, as this new infrastructure allows ships up to 300 meters in length to dock, improving the experience for both passengers and crew," Southern Cone Ports Corp President Juan Marcos Mancilla said.

He added that *Oosterdam*'s docking "reinforces Chile's role as a key destination on international cruise routes".



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SCORE a Greek holiday as part of Unforgettable Croatia's latest agent incentive.

Travel advisors who book an Unforgettable Croatia cruise before 02 Mar will be automatically entered into a prize draw to win a trip for two to Greece with sister brand Unforgettable Travel.

The prize includes flights, accommodation, and tours across Athens, Crete and Santorini, with the winner to be selected at random and contacted directly by the Unforgettable Group's new global partnerships team.

A bonus 3% commission is also available on any Unforgettable Croatia bookings made before 02 Mar.

Unforgettable Croatia currently has 145 guaranteed departures across eight itineraries this year.

The season runs from May to Oct, sailing on eight ships.

Aurora marks 35

AURORA Expeditions is offering 35% off on a selection of expeditions across Antarctica, the Arctic, and small ship journeys in 2026-27.

On until 31 Mar, the sale is in celebration of the cruise line's 35th birthday, and features popular itineraries such as the 12-day 'Spirit of Antarctica', now priced from \$19,059pp.

Seabourn takes on the world



SEABOURN Cruise Line's 2026 world cruise set sail last week, after a Hollywood gala on the eve of the departure.

The cruise left Long Beach on Tue, sailing aboard *Seabourn Sojourn* (pictured), with the line hosting a dinner at Spago in Beverly Hills the night before - the flagship restaurant of chef Wolfgang Puck.

President Mark Tamis hosted the orchestrally inspired evening on the iconic Newman Scoring Stage at 20th Century Studios, with special appearances from screen and stage actor Michael Nouri, singer Monica Mancini, and saxophonist Dave Koz.

Departure day saw Tamis and *Sojourn*'s senior officers welcome guests as they boarded the ship to officially mark the start of the world cruise.

The 129-day voyage will explore 63 destinations across 14 countries, offering a range of immersive experiences.

"Our 2026 world cruise is one of the most meaningful journeys we offer," Tamis said.

"It brings together everything our guests value, such as time and access to explore the world in depth, paired with personalised service and a relaxed sense of luxury," he added.

"From the moments we share before departure to the experiences that unfold along the way, this voyage is about connection to the destinations we explore, the cultures we encounter, and to one another."

The next two Seabourn world cruises are already on sale, including 2027's edition, which will explore our region.

Next year's world cruise: 'Australia & South Pacific Panorama', is a 145-day voyage on *Seabourn Quest* exploring 67 destinations in 19 countries across Australia, New Zealand, Polynesia, the South Pacific and South America. MS

AIDA back in the ME

AIDA Cruises is set to return to the Middle East in 2027-28, opening a number of cruises for booking.

The cruise line has been missing from the region for two years, having been one of many brands to cancel its season in 2025 due to the Middle Eastern crisis.

AIDAperla will depart from Dubai and Abu Dhabi on a series of seven- to 14-night sailings to destinations in the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain, and Qatar.

The season runs through early Apr 2028, when the ship will return to Europe.

P&O takes a bite

P&O Cruises donated more than 10,000 meals to British families last year, saving 13,284 meals from the trash over the past 12 months.

The program has benefitted 84 families across Southampton, where the cruise line is based.

P&O has partnered with food sharing platform Olio since 2024, an app that facilitates the redistribution of surplus food to local communities, ensuring good food does not go to waste.

The partnership provides a route for redistributing excess food from P&O's development kitchen on W Quay Road.



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THE global cost of living crisis is continuing to bite, hard enough that many are still turning cruise ships into their new address.

A couple from Colorado recently sold all their possessions to set up their new life aboard Villa Via Residences.

Randy, 66, and Kit, 71, said they believe their new lifestyle would be cheaper than the cost of living in London for a year, British online publisher *LADbible* reported.

"We had designed and built a house that was our dream home...I expected to die there, but fate clearly had a different plan for us," Randy said.

He added, in a rather bleak admission: "I'm not coming off that ship alive."



Royal breaks ground



MIAMI Mayor Daniella Levine Cava joined Royal Caribbean Group and its partners late last week to celebrate the groundbreaking of the company's new cruise terminal at PortMiami.

Miami-Dade County's Board of Commissioners, PortMiami director & chief executive officer Hydi Webb, and Royal Caribbean Group chairman & chief executive officer Jason Liberty were among those who led the groundbreaking for the terminal, which will be able to accommodate up to 7,000 guests when it opens next year.

The new US\$345 million (A\$518 million) facility will include one berth, and will be delivered by a joint venture between Lemartec and NV2A in partnership with architects Perez & Perez.

Included as part of the facility will be a multi-level parking garage, an intermodal facility, and other critical infrastructure to support large cruise ships, such as Royal's gigantic Icon-class.

"This world-class facility will enhance Miami-Dade County's skyline while marking another milestone in PortMiami's evolution," Levine Cava said. *MS*

StarCruises dials up the laughs

STARCRUISES has tapped silent comedy star Tape Face, known for his appearances on *America's Got Talent*, for a limited-time performance run aboard *Star Voyager*.

From 09 Jan until 05 Feb, guests sailing on the ship during her seasonal deployment from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur will be treated to live performances by Tape Face, who blends physical theatre, expressive mime, and visual humour.

Featuring his signature use of props, playful audience interaction and deadpan comedic timing, the complimentary shows will appeal to guests of all ages and backgrounds.

"Tape Face's internationally recognised comedy adds a fresh and exciting dimension to our onboard entertainment," said Michael Goh, president of StarDream Cruises.

"His universal appeal perfectly complements *Star Voyager*'s regional itineraries and diverse guest profile."

YEAR IN REVIEW

Our analysis of the biggest news of the year

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