

Cruise Weekly today

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

Aperitivo is back

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruises' online events are back, with the line inviting advisors to pull up a chair and their favourite drink for one of its Aperitivo events.

The cruise line will be hosting a series of online sessions which will see its brand experts share what makes the Uniworld cruising experience so special.

There will be six dates held across the next three weeks, with advisors needing to register ahead of time to be able to attend.

CLICK HERE to register for an event, and for more information on the theme of each of the six dates.

Australia's cruise sector on the rise

AUSSIE cruise holidays are on the rise this year, with one in three of us considering taking to the high seas in 2026, according to new research from the Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF).

The past two years have seen a particular surge in cruise interest, the industry group found, with a survey it conducted showing 33% of Australians are planning to go on a cruise this summer or within the next 12 months.

This is up from 26% in the last cruise survey, published 24 months ago.

Key to the sector's proposition is its value for money, with 53% of those surveyed believing cruising prioritises this when compared to other holidays, especially for families and older adults.

This was found to be particularly appealing as cost-of-living pressures persist, chief executive officer Margy Osmond said.

"At a time when household budgets are under pressure, cruising bundles accommodation, meals, activities and transport into a single package, making it an exciting yet cost effective option for holidaymakers," the TTF head said.

An increasing number of younger Australians are behind the rise in cruise holidays, with 44% of those under 35 looking to go on a cruise this year, compared with just 35% two years ago.

Interest also remains strong among 35 to 44 years olds, a key demographic for families, with 42% considering a cruise this year, compared with just 20% of Australians aged 65 and over.

Cruises are increasingly catering to younger travellers and families, Osmond said.

"From surf simulators and indoor skydiving to trapeze schools, mini golf, and even salt

therapy lounges, innovation never stops.

"Add world-class dining and spectacular shows, and there's something for everyone."

The Whitsundays and Sydney ranked equal first as the most popular Australian cruise destinations for this year.

This was followed by Hobart, Melbourne, Hamilton Island, and the Great Barrier Reef.

New Zealand ranked as the most popular overseas destination.

Osmond said this shows the importance of the Australian Government working to ensure more cruise ships don't leave local shores.

"By working together, government and the cruise industry can ensure this growing demand is met, while maximising the benefits for local communities and the wider economy," she said. *MS*

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ROYAL Caribbean is reuniting kids named Dorothy, Henry, and Shirley with their namesakes, inviting them on board for free next summer to party with Wiggles characters Dorothy the Dinosaur, Henry the Octopus and Shirley Shawn the Unicorn.

Kids named Dorothy, Henry, and Shirley can join one of three exclusive Wiggly-themed sailings departing from Sydney on *Anthem of the Seas* and Brisbane on *Quantum of the Seas* in summer 2026/2027.

"We can't wait for all the little Dorothys, Henrys and Shirleys to join our adventure on the high seas to celebrate the second year of this incredible Wiggly collaboration," said Purple Wiggle John Pearce, whose son is named Henry.

Believe it or not, the three names are among the most popular baby names in Australia, with Henry the most popular name for boys.



Explora serves up an ace



EXPLORA Journeys hosted almost 100 members of the travel trade and media last night in Melbourne for an evening with its global brand ambassador Jannik Sinner (*CW* 28 Aug).

The four-time grand slam winner and two-time Australian Open champion joined Irish sports journalist Catherine Murphy for a fireside chat, discussing performance, balance, recovery, as well as his professional career, and his ambassadorship of Explora.

Sinner was first welcomed to the cruise line in Sep in Monaco, where he lives, stepping on board *Explora II* to tour the ship, engage with guests, and take on the vessel's Captain Pietro Sinisi in a game of pickleball.

Since then, Sinner and his team have co-created exclusive onboard wellness rituals and activities for Explora guests.

When asked by Murphy if the program he and his team have created may be too tough for the average cruiser, Sinner joked he believes everyone has "their own kind" of fitness talents.

"One very important part is the breathing," Sinner added.

"I believe that breathing can help you recover so much energy and also focus on your day.

"It's nothing crazy, but if someone wants to stay fit and learn a few things, hopefully it can help." *MS*

Pictured is Sinner with new MSC Cruises Group Managing Director Katrina McAlpine and Murphy.

Atlas' record year

ATLAS Ocean Voyages has reported record sales for 2025, concluding the year in its strongest bookings position to date.

The cruise line recorded a 22% year-on-year increase in sales revenue, fuelled by exceptional Q3 results.

President & chief executive officer James Rodriguez said Atlas's performance reflected both robust guest demand and disciplined long-term planning, resulting in forward bookings that continue to outpace prior-year benchmarks.

He said Atlas' strong bookings position signaled confidence across key markets, and underscored the cruise line's growing presence in the luxury expedition space.

"We've seen consistent demand for our polar, epicurean, and cultural expeditions," Rodriguez said.

"With availability now open through to Mar 2028, Atlas enters the new year exceptionally well-positioned, with exciting updates ahead."



Bhaya is extended

HA LONG Bay-based Bhaya Cruises has extended its Bhaya Soul 'Soul Sanctuary' wellness voyages through to Mar, following the success of its inaugural sailings in late 2025.

The series unfolds from Jan to Mar, weaving Vietnamese heritage, creativity, and inner calm into each sailing through art, ritual and mindful practice.

There have been three more sailings added: one this month, one next month, and one in Mar, focusing on silk watercolour paintings, modern Dong Ho painting, and flower arranging, respectively.

Wellness is woven into every cruise, including a complimentary 40-minute spa treatment per guest.

Some Icon-ic news

ROYAL Caribbean's fourth Icon-class ship has had her first staterooms fitted at her construction yard in Finland.

The modular cabins were prebuilt, and are the first of 2,800 the ship will feature.

When the as-yet-unnamed ship's construction is completed and she enters service late next year, she will join three sister ships: *Icon of the Seas*, launched in Jan 2024; *Star of the Seas*, which debuted in Aug 2025, and *Legend of the Seas*, set to begin operating in Jul.

'Icon 4' is currently being built next to *Legend of the Seas* in the shipyard

Construction on Icon 4 began in Sep (**CW** 09 Sep).

The cruise of my life



DIRTY *Dancing: In Concert* is set to come aboard MSC Cruises' *MSC Poesia* during her upcoming summer season in Alaska.

The ship will become the third in MSC's fleet to feature the hit live-to-film concert, following its highly successful reception aboard *MSC World America* last year (**CW** 11 Mar).

Dirty Dancing is also set to continue on *Virtuosa* for her upcoming winter season in the Southern Caribbean.

The 90-minute experience brings the beloved 1980s dance movie to life, featuring a live band alongside singers and dancers, performing in sync with the film.

Guests travelling aboard *Poesia* will have the chance to catch the show throughout their cruise, including matinees on sea days, during MSC's first-ever season in Alaska (**CW** 09 Oct).

"We are thrilled to have *Dirty Dancing: In Concert* on board *MSC Poesia* for MSC Cruise's first ever sailings to Alaska this summer season," said Steve Leatham, VP of entertainment.

"Following the incredible response we have seen since the launch on *MSC World America* and *MSC Virtuosa*, we're excited to be able to offer it on more of our ships for our guests to enjoy this truly one-of-a-kind experience at sea."

Poesia is soon to undergo one of the largest upgrades in MSC history (**CW** 25 Sep), which will include the addition of the MSC Yacht Club, two specialty restaurants, Butcher's Cut and Kaito Sushi Bar, All-Stars Sports Bar, a newly refreshed MSC Aurea Spa, and an enhanced MSC Gym.

The refurb will take place from late Feb to early Apr. *MS*

CLIA UPDATE



with Joel Katz
Executive Director -
Australasia & Asia, CLIA

The fleet of the future

With the Australian cruise season in full swing, we have a lot to be excited about heading into this new year.

Cruising continues to thrive at the global level, and more travellers are heading to sea.

This is forecast to continue, and the world's shipyards have orders for close to 80 new ships over the next decade, representing a combined value of more than \$100 billion.

Together these ships will bring an enormous amount of innovation and creativity, and add capacity for more than 200,000 cruise guests.

This is proof of the confidence in cruising right now, and a sign of the huge opportunities available for our travel agent community.

To help agents capitalise on cruising's fleet evolution, CLIA will next month host its 2026 Ocean Debut Virtual Showcase, introducing seven of the newest ships set for debut this year.

Running from 03-06 Feb, the showcase will offer daily live online sessions presented by seven CLIA cruise lines, each outlining essential features of their ships.

It's the first event in a big year planned by CLIA - all designed to provide the insights and education opportunities needed for agents to thrive in a dynamic cruise market.

