

Your comprehensive guide to selling cruise holidays

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cruise

TRADE NEWS

WE STAND AS ONE

Industry rallies in support
following coronavirus outbreak

Survive
& thrive

BUSINESS ADVICE

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#OneTravelIndustry



United, together

INSIDE: CTN Best Companies • MSC Cruises' Grandiosa
Stunning South America • Adventure on American waterways

THANK YOU

To all of our Captains, Officers, crew, guests, team and partners; we're sincerely grateful for your continued support through these unusual times. We are a business that has always prospered thanks to the loyalty of our guests and dedication of all our Travel Trade partners, and we have never been more grateful to you all for your patience and understanding.

You may have heard that we have paused all our ocean sailings until departures from 23rd May. This situation is obviously fast-moving so we will do everything we can to make sure all of you in our trade community are kept up-to-date as we take advice from the government on what's safe and sensible to do next.

We would like to wish you all the very best in what are challenging times for everyone, especially those of us in the travel industry. We are conscious that life has become very hard very suddenly, and that many of you and your customers may be feeling isolated at home. We are looking forward to brighter times ahead and to welcoming you all back on board when the time is right.

We'll keep you fully informed of our plans to ensure we all have something to look forward to. In the meantime, thank you for your support and for sticking with us. Stay safe and keep in touch if you have any questions that we are not answering. We're here to help in any way we can.

Follow us on **Facebook** for the latest news
Call us on **01473 746 164** with any questions
Visit **fredolsencruises.com/agent** for updates



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines



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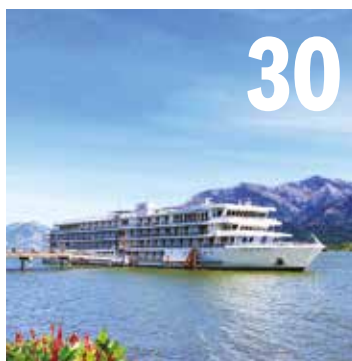
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EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to the April issue

There really is only one place to start this month. The coronavirus outbreak has caused a great deal of concern and disruption to many. This fluid and fast-moving situation poses many problematic scenarios, but the industry has shown its flexibility, and swift action has been forthcoming, as lines suspend all operations for a limited period.

Nevertheless, while it would be unwise to downplay the seriousness of the current state of things, it should be remembered that resilience is a fundamental element of the recovery. As an industry we must stay strong and positive. Yes, there will be hurt and distress along the way, but cruise, and the wider travel sector, will emerge stronger than ever.

We have put together a series of articles about the current situation, starting on page six. In addition, many lines have updated their cancellation policies to reassure guests, and have introduced a series of pledges to protect bookings and agent commissions – read more about this in our Sales Inspiration section on pages 12/13.

At *Cruise Trade News* we are doing everything we can to support you – our readers and friends – during this difficult time. We are all working to the best of our abilities to bring you the latest updates and important information.

We are all united, together as one, and to that effect the travel media in the UK & Ireland – including *CTN* – have joined forces under one banner, to support you



Above: #onetravelindustry, joining forces to support you and your work

during this time – see The Briefing for more details.

With that in mind, you will find that this issue, as always, includes everything you need to help you and your business.

This month we also have a special luxury cruising supplement and coverage of the inaugural *CTN* Best Companies to Work For in Cruise programme.

On a lighter note, we have created a reader survey to find out what you really think about the magazine and our website. We'd love to hear your thoughts. Please go to bit.ly/CTNSurvey2020 to take part – just a few minutes of your time is all we need.

GARY PETERS

Editor, Cruise Trade News

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In BRIEF

ABTA support

● If you work for an ABTA member and have been affected by coronavirus, the ABTA Lifeline could help you via its hardship fund. Visit abtalifeline.org.uk for more information and to fill in the relevant form.

Agent helpline

● Travel Counsellors has set up a helpline for any independent agents in need of support. Agents should call 0161 464 5040 for more information.

Advice for small businesses

● Business expert Kate Hardcastle has created an online resource with tips and support for small businesses and those who are self-employed. The page includes information on government schemes and industry-specific support groups. Visit bit.ly/2voYilw for more details.

THE NEWS YOU NEED

Sign up to the *Cruise Trade News* newsletter for all the latest in cruise news, features, destination guides, interviews and more.

Sign up now at
cruisetradenews.com

‘We will get through this’

CLIA UK & Ireland director **Andy Harmer** tells *Cruise Trade News* how the sector is coming together during this difficult time

Our colleagues across the cruise industry and the communities we serve are confronting a challenge that is unprecedented in scale.

As we face new restrictions having an impact across our daily lives, we are all being tested, and I'm proud to say that our cruising community is stepping up to the challenge.

Everyone is working around the clock to accommodate the new restrictions and they are making every effort to keep customers informed with updated information, even as developments seem to occur so rapidly.

Our customers should feel reassured that our industry remains focused on their safety, health and wellbeing.

The cruise industry is one of the most well equipped and experienced in providing for the care and safety of guests and crew, which is our number-one priority at all times.

The Covid-19 virus has presented the world with a new challenge, and as such our industry's already strict protocols have been strengthened throughout, as the world learns more about the challenge faced, under the guidance of international health authorities.

The wider travel sector has proved itself resilient in the face of previous global challenges, be they health-related, financial, or otherwise, and our industry is no different.

The cruise industry is a strong, close-knit community and a people business at heart. Whether you are a crew member working on a ship, or your



“Our customers should feel reassured that our industry remains focused on their safety, health and wellbeing”

role is shoreside in ports, offices or a travel agency, we all rely on each other to give our customers the best travel experience possible.

It is because of this collaborative culture that we are so adept at facing and addressing challenges. We will all continue to work together to overcome this latest challenge.

For the latest statements and FAQs regarding the cruise industry's response, visit cruising.org. CLIA will continue to monitor and share updates and data from our colleagues and partners within the travel sector.

For all the latest on the coronavirus situation, visit
cruisetradenews.com

Stay strong, says Travel Counsellors

Travel Counsellors head of cruise **Janet Whittingham** discusses the importance of wellbeing

Having worked in travel for over three decades, I feel it's true to say that our focus on caring for people – our customers, business owners and colleagues – has never felt more important.

Over the past few weeks I have been working as part of Travel Counsellors' dedicated crisis team, assisting our business owners to support their customers following the unprecedented impact of coronavirus across the globe.

It has been essential to ensure our people and their customers feel fully supported. Over the years we've nurtured a company culture that has a real sense of helping each other through thick and thin, supported by practical and holistic programmes focused on boosting mental wellbeing.

It's safe to say that we're in uncharted territory, and support systems are now being relied upon more than ever. We may all be facing a lot of time at home in the coming weeks, but many of the travel industry's 'homeworkers' are continuing to provide their customers with the best service possible.

Throughout this period we've used internal online forums to tap into a community of like-minded, helpful people, and have focused on creating dedicated spaces for positivity. Business owners and colleagues alike can post good news and success stories, plus a wealth of hints and on keeping a positive mindset.

We've taken advantage of the chance to talk via internal online forums and instant messaging technology, to engage with a daily schedule of TCTV



“Over the years we’ve developed a company culture that has a real sense of helping each other”

programmes and all the while making good use of the telephone.

We've also created a dedicated support package for Travel Counsellor business owners. This encompasses help and advice on managing finances and budgeting, highlights UK government support available and includes top tips from fellow Travel Counsellors plus recommended reads for mind, body and soul.

Wellbeing forms a huge part of this support package, which is accessed via an internal website and includes advice and information on stress management, keeping active and eating healthily, and features the best apps and online training for practising mental wellbeing exercises.

Watching a community pull together has been truly amazing. Throughout this we'll continue to fly the flag for cruise.



SURVIVE & THRIVE

A travel agent business plan has been released to support businesses over the coming weeks and months

Created by travel marketing company Net Effect, the Travel Agent Survive and Thrive Plan focuses on four actions designed to support business and ensure agents can keep working during the pandemic

The action points are: protect employees; set up a response team; ensure liquidity to weather the storm; and stay close to customers.

Net Effect founder Steve Rushton said: “The biggest issue is panic. We have to protect our business and protect ourselves by working in a logical and calm fashion.”

The plan looks at solutions for agents who are now working from home, such as software for video calls and enquiries, as well as employee welfare. It also highlights the need for travel agents to stay close to customers and shift their operations online.

“If you are not in your shop, customers are going to expect to talk and communicate with you online, so you need to make sure that your online business reflects exactly what you provide offline,” added Rushton.

The full plan is available to download at

net-effect.co.uk



The Briefing



MARKETING GURU

Mark Lewsey, head of marketing at Accord Marketing, explains what businesses can do to ensure they are fighting fit

The speed of the coronavirus spread has seen campaigns and messages change, but how can businesses ensure they are ready for when things begin to get back to normal? We at Accord Marketing have put together a series of tips that could be useful in the short and long term.

Website – ensure your website contains the right marketing messages with clear, authentic and credible calls-to-action.

Database segmentation – this will help you identify audiences that you're not currently reaching, expand into new markets and improve business focus.

Listen, track and measure – use the monitoring tools at your disposal to understand how your audience is reacting to any situation.

SEO – improve overall quality of content and build brand equity. It is crucial that all your product pages are accessible and indexable by Google to ensure higher visibility.

Social media engagement – this is one of the most effective ways of building trust and credibility between a brand and its customers, which over time can lead to brand loyalty and even championing.



INDUSTRY

Travel media united as one

The travel trade media in the UK & Ireland are uniting behind the #onetravelindustry movement, to bring competing media businesses together behind one common goal during the coronavirus crisis.

Titles including *Cruise Trade News*, *ABTA Magazine*, *Cruise Adviser*, *Selling*

Travel, *Travel Bulletin*, *TravelMole*, *Northern Ireland Travel News* and *TTG* are working together to stand behind the industry.

We will use #onetravelindustry over the coming weeks and months to showcase best practice, tips and experiences from across the travel industry, to share how companies large and small are dealing with the impact of the coronavirus.

We will also share each other's content under the hashtag, to ensure the widest exposure possible for the learnings and advice to come out of the crisis – demonstrating 'one travel media'.

WAVE AWARDS 2020



EVENTS

Wave Awards 2020 postponed

Following negotiations with our venue and suppliers, and due to the unprecedented situation we face, the Wave Awards 2020 have been postponed and will now take place on 16 October 2020, at 8 Northumberland Avenue.

The annual awards were due to take place on 2 April.

We have taken the decision in the interest of all our guests, staff and suppliers. This is not a decision we have taken lightly, but we have a responsibility to our industry friends and colleagues, and as such a postponement is the only foreseeable course of action.

We will keep everyone updated on the progress of the event and we look forward to welcoming you on the night. We thank you for your kind understanding in these difficult times.

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In my VIEW



Ben Bouldin, vice-president EMEA at Royal Caribbean International, explains why the power of community is crucial in the fight against coronavirus

The C-word. Yes, coronavirus – or Covid-19 – has consistently dominated conversation, influencing and impacting individuals and businesses across the globe for weeks. But as RCCL chairman and CEO Richard Fain says, is the world going to end because of it? No.

The gravity and unknown nature of the virus are, of course, cause for concern and the preventive measures to minimise contagion are something that we must all take very seriously. As an international business operating in all corners of the globe, a pandemic such as this impacts all corners of our business.

In addition to global operations, this includes our guests, our crew, our land-based employees and, unquestionably, our trade partners, who we see as a vital and integral part of our business.

In times like this it's paramount that we rely on the power of community and

avoid acting selfishly; we must support the most vulnerable.

In society this is the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions. At Royal Caribbean it also means our suppliers and trade partners, whose businesses may be at risk. While it may seem difficult to do so, Richard Fain's advice to the trade is to breathe – take a step back and breathe. There is a long road ahead of us. By accepting this we can start to look at our challenges and work to overcome them together.

RCCL has been a key player in the cruise industry for more than 50 years. One of the factors enabling us to succeed and to navigate the hurdles that have come our way is trust, both from our guests and from the trade.

This will pass

It's important that all actions taken during this time build and retain long-term trust, even if in the short term these decisions may seem unnerving. When we

“There is a long road ahead, but we can look at our challenges and work to overcome them together”

do come out the other side of this, when it comes to cruise, amid all the mixed messages, as an industry it's our job to reassure guests that it's still safe. We know the importance of on-board hygiene and the stringent measures we take – both in the wake of the virus and always as standard – to ensure the safety of our guests and crew. We must not lose sight of this.

While we do need to look at plans, let's step back, breathe and apply the p-word – perspective. When it comes to RCCL, I'm astounded by our ability to navigate and tackle short-term hurdles, while not losing sight of long-term goals.

At Royal Caribbean we are rejigging our plans as necessary, all the while knowing that this situation will pass and, when it does, we will be prepared to move forward.

When *Spectrum of the Seas* was no longer able to sail out of Shanghai, as a business we asked ourselves – how can she be put to good use and where might she be needed the most?

The ship was then redeployed to Australia, offering complimentary family cruises sailing from Sydney for first responders who worked tirelessly over the many weeks of the Australian bush fire crisis.

This virus will pass, so let's help it do so quickly, while applying some perspective and maintaining trust. ●



“It's our job to reassure guests that cruising is still safe”

Orkney

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cruise-orkney.com

Contact: Paul.Olvhoj@orkney.gov.uk

AmaWaterways

AmaWaterways has delayed the start of its European sailing season until 26 April 2020.

Passengers can take a future cruise credit equal to 115 per cent of the value of all services purchased through AmaWaterways or opt for a full refund.

The line is protecting all commissions for agents whose clients opt for a future cruise credit, and will pay an additional 10 per cent commission on the value of the future booking.

The line will also pay full commission on the difference between the fares, if applicable.



April is the earliest date that clients will be able to sail with AmaWaterways

VISIT
cruisetradenews.com
for more on current cruise
line suspensions and
booking policies.

Virgin Voyages

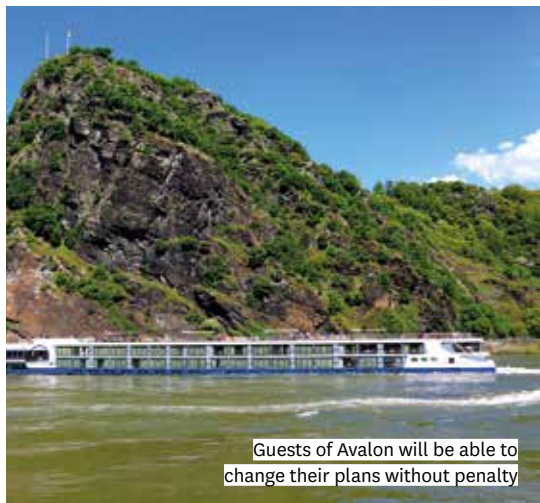
Virgin Voyages has postponed the inaugural season of *Scarlet Lady* until 15 July 2020, with the maiden voyage now taking place on 7 August 2020.

Guests booked on to cancelled sailings can receive up to 200 per cent in cruise credit to use for a future cruise. Guests can also receive \$500 in on-board credit if they re-book before 30 June 2020.

Virgin Voyages will also provide a 100 per cent refund for all guests who request one, as well as a 25 per cent future voyage credit on the value paid.



Scarlet Lady has had her debut postponed



Guests of Avalon will be able to change their plans without penalty

Avalon Waterways/Cosmos

Avalon Waterways has suspended travel through to 30 April. The line has introduced a Peace of Mind Plan that allows guests to move travel dates without incurring cancellation fees, land or airline penalties.

It is also offering a credit of £150 per person for a new reservation, redeemable for any future 2020, 2021 or 2022 cruise. Commissions will be protected on bookings during the affected dates.

Princess Cruises

Princess Cruises has temporarily paused all ship operations.

The company, which had three ships quarantined due to the virus, has paused operations on all of its 18 ships until 10 May 2020.

For those who are impacted, the line is offering guests the opportunity to transfer 100 per cent of the money paid for their cancelled cruise to a future cruise of their choice.

The company is also adding an additional future cruise credit benefit that can be applied to the cruise fare or on-board expenses depending on sailings.



Princess is offering a transfer of any money paid for a cancelled cruise



Crystal is aiming to resume service in May

Crystal Cruises

Crystal River Cruises has cancelled voyages scheduled to embark until 30 April 2020, in addition to *Crystal Esprit's* 10 April 2020 sailing.

Crystal Serenity has also had its sailings cancelled until 21 April 2020, while *Crystal Symphony* is suspended until 8 May 2020.

Guests will be offered a full refund or future cruise credit, details of which will be communicated by the line.



Agents will have Windstar commission protected

Windstar Cruises

Windstar Cruises has temporarily suspended operations worldwide for cruises sailing through to 30 April 2020.

Travellers can choose a future cruise credit valued at 125 per cent of all monies paid or a refund equal to the amount paid on the booking. They will have 24 months to book and embark on any available cruise using the credit. The line has said that travel agent commissions will be protected.

Cruise & Maritime Voyages

Cruise and Maritime Voyages has announced the suspension of operations until 24 April 2020.

Passengers will be offered a full refund or a future cruise credit of 125 per cent of the value of their cruise.

Passengers who use the future credit will also be offered a 20 per cent discount on drinks packages, plus a 10 per cent shore excursion discount and one cabin category upgrade, subject to availability. The future cruise must be booked by 31 July 2020.



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”
In conversation with...

The travel trade

In this special coverage, **Gary Peters** hears from members of the travel trade on their thoughts, plans and hopes for the future



Jacqueline Dobson

President

BARRHEAD TRAVEL

Resilient and adaptable are two words I always use to describe the travel industry. Year after year, it seems, we find ourselves facing situations that test our resilience and adaptability: from freak weather disruptions to the collapse of much-loved travel brands.

Right now, the colossal impact that Covid-19 has had is hard to put into words and I do think there will be a long road to complete recovery.

Our business is built around

people-to-people service – whether that be a personal conversation over the phone or customers popping into their local branch to chat with their travel agent.

The biggest challenge that we – and most other businesses – have faced has been filtering information. News flooded in minute-by-minute; processes and policies had to change as we continually received new updates.

This drastically hindered our ability to provide instant information to customers – to

many of whom we had to deliver the very disappointing news that their holiday was about to be cancelled.

I really have to give credit to our amazing team at Barrhead Travel. They handled everything with decorum and their work ethic was phenomenal as we worked round the clock to help our customers.

Usually we would be preparing Easter Holiday campaigns and completing preparations for a busy summer period. We now have to take stock and assess the ongoing impact that this virus has had on our industry.

We'll continue to work remotely over the coming weeks to service those of our customers who are looking ahead and planning holidays. Despite the world grinding to a halt, our customers can't wait – just as we can't – to continue exploring destinations across the globe.

We must now demonstrate those key industry traits – adaptability and resilience – to get through this testing time for the industry.

“I really have to give credit to our amazing team. They handled everything with decorum, their work ethic was phenomenal”



Michael Wilson

Managing Director

BOLSOVER CRUISE CLUB

After more than 50 years as a family travel business, and almost 40 years as a cruise specialist, we've experienced adverse conditions in the past and are using this experience to reassure our customers.

We have secured refunds, or in some cases, alternative cruise holidays, for hundreds of our Cruise Club members because of coronavirus in the past four weeks and will continue to do so as the situation changes. It has been a matter of all hands on deck, with members of the team from every department getting involved with customer queries.

We're all negotiating uncharted waters at present and we are very much changing with the situation. We have closed our Cruise Bureau and The Cruise Holiday Shop at Meadowhall for the time being, and now that we are running with a skeleton crew at our head office, our Cruise Experts and administration department are handling enquiries on new and existing bookings from home, while our marketing team is placing renewed focus on the months ahead.

Of course, our website remains open and poised to offer inspiration 24/7, because when all this is over, we're all going to need a holiday.

I wholeheartedly believe that travel, and more specifically cruise, will recover, entirely, in time. At the moment we are working blind, but as a timeline for normality becomes apparent, I think we will quickly see those people who have had holiday plans cancelled seeking to get something booked.

I also think we'll see a newfound appreciation for travel agents and the security that booking with one brings. Cruise is a flexible and dynamic part of the travel industry and I'm positive we'll continue to respond to the changing environment.

“It has been a matter of all hands on deck, with every department involved in helping clients”



Edwina Lonsdale

Managing Director
MUNDY CRUISING

Late in March my mother left her home of more than 50 years to stay with my sister. She mused on the fact that it was a whole 80 years, give or take a couple of months, since she was last evacuated from London, at the age of 13.

What a time that must have been for our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

I don't mean to underplay the challenges we all face – to be working flat out for zero or negative income is demotivating and demoralising.

As well as the challenges to the business, we are dealing with mental health and anxiety among our staff and our clients, adopting positions of calm and authority when we do not necessarily feel either calm or authoritative.

To counter this, let's weigh up the positives.

The warmth of our colleagues reaching out to support each other, the kindness of our clients whose heart-warming messages of concern lighten our days, and the generosity of our travel partners as they work with us to protect our livelihoods are all pointers to the very reason

we are passionate about our industry.

As soon as there is light at the end of the tunnel, our customers will want things to look forward to. They will be determined to reward themselves for their stoical forbearance through these dark days.

“On 14 March, I posted my direct email address for customers to contact outside office hours”



Paul Hardwick

Head of Commercial
FRED OLSEN TRAVEL

The past few weeks have definitely been the most challenging of my 23 years in the industry. While we had already been dealing with many amendments to Asian cruises in February, the main challenges for us began on Friday 13 March when cruise lines announced they would be cancelling all future cruises for the next few weeks and months.

With many making announcements late on the Friday evening and into Saturday, staff worked through the weekend keeping customers and other team members informed of the developing situation.

On the Saturday, I added a social media post advertising my direct email address for customers to contact outside normal office hours, so that we could work on any urgent queries or concerns and help manage the situation.

More recently, our 14 branches closed their doors temporarily and we now have staff set up to work from home.

Positively, we were able to offer a continuous service with at least one member of staff from each branch working normal hours, dealing with the amendments and re-bookings. Also, they have still been receiving some future cruise bookings, mainly for 2021 departures.

We have worked incredibly hard to re-book customers where possible. Also, we are still looking to promote late 2020 and 2021 sailings. I think everyone will need a holiday once this is all over. 🍷

Taster cruises

Short trips that pack in the highlights
are more popular than ever



Tangier is one of the highlights on Star Clippers' mini-cruise

Moroccan marvel

For guests looking for something different, Star Clippers has announced a series of shorter voyages on one of its famous clipper ships.

Itineraries on offer include the ultimate mini-break around Portugal, Morocco, Gibraltar and Spain, on *Royal Clipper* for a five-night sailing, departing Lisbon on 19 April 2021.

Visiting the historic fishing village of Portimão, guests will be

able to explore the lush golden beaches and blue waters before heading to Tangier in Morocco, to sample the melting pot of cultures. *Royal Clipper* will then sail across the Straits of Gibraltar on the 20-mile journey to the Rock.

Prices start from £1,110pp, including return flights and transfers to and from the ship, five nights on board, all meals and port charges.



Often called The Venice of the North, Bruges can be reached from Zeebrugge

Belgian dream

Ideal for a mini family holiday, P&O Cruises' two-night voyage to Belgium is sure to get everyone involved.

Departing from Southampton on 16 April 2021, the family entertainment and children's clubs on board *Britannia* will keep

everyone busy, before a day exploring the port of Zeebrugge.

With the city of Bruges only 10 miles away, guests can explore the city's picturesque criss-cross canals, historic buildings, decadent Belgian chocolate and range of local beers. Prices start from £211pp.

Sample Europe

For those with little time but a love for luxury, Scenic's five day Danube mini-cruise, Tastes of Imperial Europe, is a perfect chance to enjoy medieval towns, Baroque palaces and castles on a whirlwind trip.

Starting in Vienna and travelling through Austria, Slovakia and Hungary towards Budapest,

highlights include a guided tour behind the Iron Curtain, to discover the region's Communist history, a visit to the underground labyrinths of the Hospital in the Rock, built during World War Two, and a private classical music concert.

Prices start from £1,635pp, based on a 25 April 2021 departure, including all flights and transfers.



Slovakia's Bratislava Castle overlooks the Danube

Win at selling

EXOTIC ADVENTURES

Coral Expeditions UK sales manager **Amy Sharpe** explains why undiscovered regions are a great sell, and how to pitch these itineraries to clients

For 35 years Coral Expeditions has had one purpose – taking small groups of like-minded explorers to some of the most beautiful yet undiscovered regions of Australia and Asia

Pacific with expert guidance and warm Australian hospitality.

Whether it be the Kimberley, Great Barrier Reef, the Islands of the South Pacific or the Islands of Indonesia, tropical expedition voyages explore destinations away from the well-trodden tourist trail.

These expeditions are nothing new, but destinations such as the Kimberley in the North West corner of Australia are only recently coming into focus on the international stage.

The Kimberley represents one of the last true wilderness areas and is ideally accessed on a small-ship expedition cruise. No two cruises



“The Kimberley is one of the last true wildernesses”

are ever the same as there are always new and exciting things to discover in this remote area.

Departing from Broome or Darwin, voyages take guests to discover the breathtaking history of this incredible area.

Ancient landscapes

The landscape, covering hundreds of thousands of square kilometres (around three times the size of England, with a population of less than 40,000 people) and the untouched coastline of the Kimberley, offer phenomenal contrasts where clients will find incredible native wildlife (big crocs, rock wallabies, nurse sharks and humpback whales), as well as majestic waterfalls, canyons and freshwater swimming holes millions of years in the making.

There is also an opportunity for guests to immerse themselves in some of the world's oldest living cultures – seeing Aboriginal stories come to life in the rock art of the Gwion Gwion – believed to be some

of the oldest artwork on the planet, at more than 35,000 years old.

A Kimberley cruise offers soaring red gorges, majestic waterfalls and pristine islands and reefs, such as Montgomery Reef, King George Falls and the Lacapède Islands. Horizontal Falls in Talbot Bay is created by a huge tidal surge and guests can take a thrilling white water ride by zodiac as part of their cruise.

Coral Expeditions' 10-night Kimberley cruise is just right for someone who has been to Australia before but wants to see more of the real country. Plus, Darwin or Broome make for a great add-on to any Australian itinerary. 📍

Selling TIPS

A trip to the Kimberley is an ideal recommendation to expedition-hungry clients.

Highlight to clients that expedition and adventure need not mean the icy landscapes of the Arctic

•

Suggest to clients a post-cruise stay in Darwin or Broome to take in more of the wonders of Australia – mixing expedition with city life

•

Home to crocodiles, sharks and whales, the Kimberley is awash with awe-inspiring wildlife, showcasing nature at its best

Expedition and adventure need not mean glaciers or fjords



The Knowledge

Trade secrets from fellow travel agents to help you sell more cruise holidays, meet customer demand and market your brand



John Ferguson

Senior Cruise Consultant
THORNE TRAVEL

If speaking to a first-time cruiser, where would you recommend they go and why?

I would never send a first-time cruiser on a cruise that I wouldn't do myself, so I'd have to recommend the Mediterranean or the Norwegian fjords, as these are really popular routes with some wonderful ports. I also have a lot of personal experience of both. I'd also suggest a shorter cruise, perhaps seven nights, to give the customer an opportunity to get a taste of the various on-board facilities.

How do you ensure loyalty among your clients?

Customers will always be loyal if they receive excellent customer service and great value for money.

It's all about understanding what the customer wants and doing your very best to meet their expectations. Customer service is absolutely key at Thorne Travel and we've developed a customer loyalty programme to offer those

who give us repeat business some great discounts and rewards.

I find our customers always appreciate a call after they return from their cruise. It's a great opportunity for them to share their amazing memories and it allows us to discuss their next cruise.

How do you upsell cruise clients?

It's about knowing your customers and starting slow, for example by suggesting pre or post-cruise stays or a private transfer – this helps tailor the itinerary to their needs.

Also, knowing when they have special birthdays or anniversaries, where they've travelled previously and the type of cruise they've done before, will help in the process. It's also important to have knowledge of other products and brands that may be of interest to the customer.

How do you market what you do?

Social media is central to our strategy. We are very fortunate to have a huge following across our various channels and we operate a bonus page on Facebook, where our loyal customers can get exclusive deals. We also host in-store cruise events for customers to meet our suppliers. Then we have window posters, brochures, newspapers and regular mail shots.

“Social media is central to our strategy. We have a huge following”



What's the most effective way to target potential cruisers?

I believe each customer is a potential cruiser, but unfortunately there are a lot of myths about cruising. For me it's all about dispelling these, which I do by discussing my own personal experiences on board.

I tend to show potential clients images from my own cruises. They're blown away by the suites and amenities available on ships.

What do holidaymakers expect of a travel agent in today's world?

Expectations have changed. They want value for money and I've seen a rise in customers seeking all-inclusive deals or extras such as free drinks packages or credit.

Customers definitely need to feel they can trust their agent and they want to feel valued. It's important to develop a rapport quickly.

What's the number-one travel agent must-have?

Knowledge is everything. Combine that with personal experience and it's a winning formula. 📌

Spotlight *on...*

Light Blue Travel

The company's MD, **Rupert Thomson**, explains to Olivia Sharpe why the company has joined forces with river line Nicko Cruises

The end of 2019 was very busy for Light Blue Travel. As well as continuing to work closely with American Queen Steamboat Company (AQSC), which is undergoing a major fleet expansion, the Cambridge-based agency signed a partnership with European river cruise line Nicko Cruises to act as its UK representative for both trade and direct sales.

Light Blue Travel was founded in 1992 as a high street agent selling leisure holidays, before expanding into villa tour operations in the Algarve and Croatia, along with sports holidays and business travel. "Business travel is about 50 per cent of sales, our tour operation is about 30 per cent and leisure is 20 per cent," explains MD Rupert Thomson.

Innovate to grow

Never one to rest on its laurels, the company has always sought to expand and innovate within the travel industry, and Thomson proudly claims that it was one of the first agencies to go online, with its Algarve villa collection.

"We were approached by someone who said that he wanted to put us on something called the 'world wide web' and they believed it was going to be something big," he says, smiling.

According to Thomson, what makes Light Blue Travel really stand out in the industry are its personalised package holidays. "I think when a lot of people think about package holidays, they think it's just a week's holiday with a villa and pool," he says. "But really, package holidays are something that's bespoke and that's what we do best."

In 2013, Light Blue expanded its portfolio by partnering with US river line AQSC as its general sales agent. While US river cruising is still a relatively small



"He wanted to put us on something called the 'world wide web', which he thought was going to be big"

niche in the cruise sector, Thomson notes how it has never been a difficult sell for UK agents as "the popularity for river cruising has increased dramatically".

Tailor-made packages

As the demand for river cruising continues to rise – CLIA reported a 10.4 per cent increase in UK and Irish passengers in 2018 – Light Blue and Nicko have paired up.

The cruise line currently operates more than 30 vessels on European rivers and Light Blue Travel will market its four and five-star riverboats, sailing the Rhine, Danube, Rhône, Seine, Elbe and Douro.

The all-inclusive eight-day cruises can be booked with or without air or rail travel from the UK, and doing what it does best, Light Blue Travel will also be selling tailor-made packages plus pre and post-cruises.

To support trade sales, Light Blue Travel will be offering competitive commission levels, along with support including fam trips and webinars. 📍



Nicko Cruises has more than 30 ships on the waterways of Europe

Travel media unites to support #OneTravelIndustry



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TRADE NEWS

LUXURY CRUISING SPECIAL

**New ships,
new experiences**

Keeping you
in the loop

**Who includes
what?**

**What clients
get for their
money**

Crystal clear

**Why Crystal Cruises takes
the personal approach**

In association with





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Terms and conditions: *All drinks on board are included except for a very small number of rare, fine and vintage wines, champagnes and spirits. ^Helicopter and submarine activities are weather permitting, subject to availability and regulatory approvals, and incur additional costs.





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LUXURY SUPPLEMENT



I'll confess, before entering the world of cruising, my experience of luxury travel was precisely zero. Much of my previous travelling had come courtesy of last-minute flights and a frantic search for an apartment or hostel close to the centre of whichever city I happened to be in.

I added some touches here and there – meals and drinks, and the like. However, never extravagant trips. And then, upon joining the cruise sector, I soon discovered that luxury isn't just about those finer details. Yes, some want the private butler service, but in today's world, people want personalised holidays.

This is where ultra-luxury lines are excelling, as Seabourn's Lynn Narraway explains. The book definition of "luxury" is no longer the final word.

There is also a comprehensive round-up of the most luxurious new ships for you to regale clients with, and important information on what the luxury lines include as part of the standard fare.

Step into the world of luxury cruising.

GARY PETERS

Editor, Cruise Trade News



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Seabourn's Lynn Narraway explains how the definition of top class is changing

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How Crystal Cruises creates life-long memories for its devoted customers

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Keep your finger on the pulse with the latest

launches in the ever-growing luxe sector

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What do guests get for their money during a cruise? And what could they miss out on?

14 Win at selling

Top tips on how to encourage clients to book an up-scale cruise – it helps if you've done it yourself

A new Definition

What is the luxe life? For **Lynn Narraway**, managing director UK & Ireland, Seabourn, it is now less about material objects and more about bespoke experiences

Ultra-luxury ships are designed to offer extra space per guest, with luxuriously appointed all-ocean-front suites, a choice of restaurants and public areas to suit every mood. All of this comes with an all-inclusive lifestyle, ensuring that guests enjoy premium spirits, fine wines and an in-suite bar, stocked and replenished with their preferred drinks.

Most importantly it's about creating an intimate, elegant ambience that encourages socialising – our guests, for example, love to get to know their fellow travellers.

Seabourn also offers very high levels of personal service, so guests are not simply catered to, they are cared for, with staff getting to know their names and preferences very early in the voyage. Plus, on an ultra-luxury ship, tipping is neither required nor expected.



“Luxury cruisers want bespoke access to places, spaces, and faces”

LYNN NARRAWAY
SEABOURN
MD UK & IRELAND

Luxury cruising is also about having the right partnerships; those that enthrall and energise travellers. In Seabourn's case that means collaboration with UNESCO, chef Thomas Keller, Molton Brown of London, and Sir Tim Rice.

Scrap the book definition

Luxury can mean opulence, richness, upmarket, fancy or chic, but it's different for everyone. There has recently been a shift from ownership and status to experiential satisfaction.

Today it is more a reflection of emotion, aspiration and passion. Luxury consumers want bespoke curated experiences that push the boundaries, be that access to places, spaces, or faces. Personalisation is now king, as many travellers can now be described as adventurous voyagers.

Ultra-luxury lines increasingly offer individual or small-group exclusive



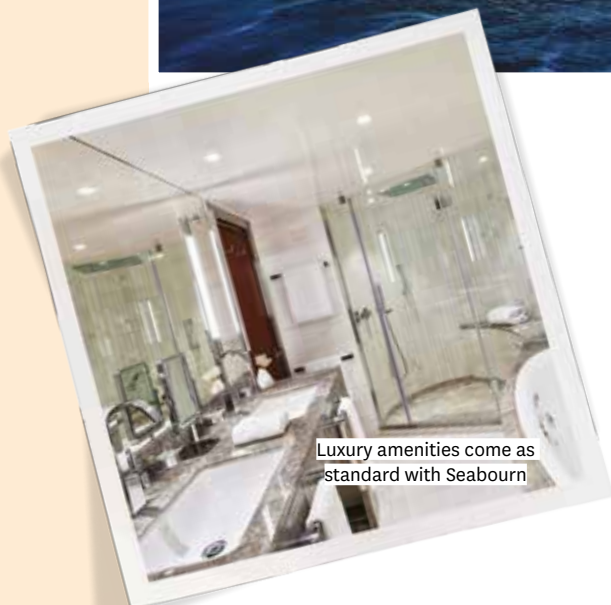
A sundowner on deck perfectly embodies the personalised experience



Seabourn's Penthouse suite is the ultimate in luxury



Seabourn Venture arrives in 2021



Luxury amenities come as standard with Seabourn

experiences. For example, the Seabourn partnership with UNESCO guests go behind the scenes at World Heritage sites, while the Ventures by Seabourn optional zodiac and kayak adventures allow them to experience nature at its wildest, visiting ice caves or penguin colonies with expert naturalists and expedition guides.

Sell to land lovers

Younger, new-to-cruise travellers also want to enjoy unique cultural and immersive experiences without compromising on comfort. For travel agents this is the perfect opportunity to sell cruise to luxury land-lover clients, explaining the experience in similar terms to that of a luxury hotel or resort. For such clients, agents should suggest an immersive pre or post-cruise stay – Seabourn can even organise a private jet.

There is also growth in expedition travel, with companies launching new expedition ships over the coming years.

Indeed, the next step for Seabourn is the launch of the ultra-luxury expedition product and the debut of 132-all-veranda-suite *Seabourn Venture* in June 2021. 📌

Epic Endeavours

Listening, learning and anticipating – the three key tenets to creating a truly grand voyage, says **Elaine Gillard**, Crystal Cruises' marketing director

How are you adapting in the current climate?

What an unprecedented and challenging situation we all find ourselves in at the moment – uncharted waters indeed. Like all my colleagues and friends across the industry, at Crystal we're focused on assisting our guests with their travel plans and endeavouring to look ahead to the time when our ships will sail and our crew and passengers can once again take to the seas and discover the world once more. And it is at times like this that you realise what an amazing industry we work in – we're resilient, we're kind and we look out for one another #onetravelindustry.

What plans do you have to improve your offering this year and beyond?

Always, now and into the future, we continue to strive to ensure that Crystal is the luxury travel experience our guests have come to love and that the company is a pleasure to do business with for our travel partners. This year and beyond, the team are focusing on how Crystal can continue to improve because we recognise that even for the world's best, there are always ways we can be better. This year we will welcome *Crystal*



“To be truly luxurious, a cruise should be about what guests want, when they want it”

ELAINE GILLARD
CRYSTAL CRUISES
MARKETING DIRECTOR

Endeavor to the fleet and she will be the world's most spacious luxury expedition yacht, exploring the furthest reaches of Earth, from the Arctic to the Antarctic and the exotic, far-away lands in between – exciting times ahead.

What's your most luxurious itinerary and why?

I would have to say the Antarctic and the Ross Sea expedition. This voyage is a once-in-a-lifetime adventure of epic proportions. Guests awake each day on board as if in a snow globe to witness expansive white landscapes, glittering glaciers, magnificent icebergs and historic explorers' huts, as well as the largest penguin colony on Earth.

Luxury is a word often bandied about – what's the Crystal definition?

It has a multitude of meanings but the delivery boils down to a handful of key attributes – listening, learning and anticipating. We love hearing guests relate how their bartender only served them once and the next time they visited the bar, he was already preparing their drink, or how the Trident Grill waiter remembers guests' favourite ice cream flavour. Of course, if guests have sailed with us before, then we



Dining options on board are of a standard consistently voted the best

already have what we need to ensure that their suite is set up with their preferred beverages and snacks, and their butler will probably have already booked their table in one of the speciality restaurants at their preferred dining time. What luxury means to each of us is definitely individual.

How are guests' habits changing?

In the past it has been about the shipboard elements of style, service and amenities, the shoreside experiences and the destinations. Ultimately, though, a luxury cruise should encompass all of this in a way that allows guests to experience the ship and destinations in a variety of ways, on their own terms.

How are you meeting these new demands?

Luxury travellers often find themselves to be time poor, so when they choose to spend their precious days travelling with Crystal, we take that very



The Crystal staff are trained in immaculate service, whichever type of ship they're on

personally. We like to say that people arrive as a guest, become a friend and return as family.

You have three main strands to Crystal – river, ocean and expedition. How does your offering differ across the three?

Across the entire fleet, whether that be on ocean, river, yacht or expedition, our guests enjoy the same standards of luxury that have won Crystal more World's Best awards than any other cruise line, hotel or resort in history. Guests choose to sail with us because of these exacting standards and they expect them whichever ship they choose to sail on.

What's your one top tip for agents?

Be patient and listen – luxury clients will have specific needs for their holiday. If agents can really respond to those and match them to the right itinerary and line, that client will come back again and again. And thank you – from all of our team to all of you – you are doing the most amazing job. 🙌

For some passengers, space to relax on board is essential





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New kids on the block

Ocean, expedition or river, luxury is fast becoming perfected on a host of new ships, as **Melissa Moody** discovers

Class adventure

Guests can adventure in style on board Crystal Cruises' latest ship, *Crystal Endeavor*, launching in August 2020. Carrying 200 passengers, it will be equipped with everything needed for the ultimate expedition cruise, including a fleet of 18 zodiacs, kayaks, two helicopters and a submersible for underwater exploration of shipwrecks and sea life. On board, passengers will



The Regent Suite aboard *Splendor* is more apartment than stateroom

be able to immerse themselves in the 200-seater theatre or relax in the spa centre, complete with a Jacuzzi and infinity pool. A 12-night Christchurch to Auckland itinerary departs 28 November 2020. Prices from about £7,995pp.

Opulence on the seas

She's here, the magnificent *Seven Seas Splendor*. The second in Regent Seven Seas Cruises' Explorer-class features the huge Regent suite – which is more akin to a family home than ship accommodation – eight dining venues, a lavish pool, two whirlpools, almost 500 crystal chandeliers and more than an acre of marble used in the decor around the ship. Prices for a 15-night Barcelona to Miami cruise start from £5,889pp, departing 13 November 2020.

Cruise with Ritz-Carlton

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Group is entering the world of ultra-luxury cruising in 2021 with the first of three new yachts. The



Ritz Carlton's *Evrma* is its first venture into ultra-luxury cruising

298-passenger *Evrma* will be all-suite with private terraces and floor-to-ceiling windows. Every suite will also have a personal concierge and there are some spectacular speciality restaurants too. A nine-night cruise from Lisbon to Palma de Mallorca departs 22 April 2021. Prices start from £6,569pp.



The S.A.L.T culinary programme will be a feature of *Silver Moon*

Silversea's duo

This year Silversea will launch not one but two ships. The first, *Silver Moon*, will launch in August. Guests on board will experience Silversea's new culinary programme S.A.L.T (Sea and Land Taste), which aims to showcase food cultures from around the world. A 15-day Fort Lauderdale to Lima cruise departs 23 November 2020. Prices from £6,030pp.

Next is *Silver Origin*, Silversea's first destination-specific ship – inspired by the Galápagos Islands and also sailing in the summer. Passengers will be able to explore in comfort on the line's most environmentally friendly ship. Features include Ecuadorian-inspired cuisine and ocean-view bathtubs, and the unique islands have been kept in mind throughout the ship's design. A seven-night sailing from San Cristobal to Baltra, on 14 November 2020, starts at £7,740pp.



AmaSiena will sail the waterways of Europe

Space is key

Space is an essential component of the 156-passenger *AmaSiena*, AmaWaterways' next addition to the fleet, sailing in July 2020. It offers staterooms with twin balconies, an airy main lounge and a sun deck. Guests will also be able to take advantage of the free wifi, an on-board wellness host and a fleet of bikes to get the most out of their trip



Guests on Tauck's Douro tours will be treated to tastings as well as trips

along the picturesque rivers of Europe. Prices for a seven-night Enchanting Rhine river cruise start from approximately £1,800pp, departing 11 November 2020.

Portuguese immersion

Its first ship on the Douro River in Portugal, Tauck's *Andorinha* will offer spacious public areas and an intimate atmosphere, sailing with a capacity of just 84 guests. Featuring a panorama lounge, sun deck, swimming pool and a fine dining restaurant, the ship is specifically built for cruising amid the historic villages that border the river. Prices for a seven-night Villages and

Vintages itinerary start from £3,080pp, departing Porto on multiple dates.

Aqua on the Amazon

Drawing inspiration from the Peruvian blackwater lagoons, Aqua Expeditions' *Aqua Nera*, launching in October 2020, will include a cinema under the stars with private screenings available, and an observation deck for the perfect vantage point from which to observe life on the river. A particular highlight will be the restaurant, designed to feature Peruvian-inspired cuisine. A seven-night sailing departs Iquitos, Peru, on 13 February 2021. Prices from approximately £7,400pp. ❶



Aqua Nera's lounge is perfect for a drink before sampling the best of Peruvian cuisine

Who includes what?

From meals to wifi, shore excursions to transfers, here is what cruise lines include as part of the standard fare

	Flights	Transfers	Accommodation (pre and post)	Main meals
AMAWATERWAYS				
AQUA EXPEDITIONS				
AZAMARA				
CRYSTAL CRUISES (OCEAN)		 		
CRYSTAL RIVER CRUISES				
CUNARD				
HAPAG-LLOYD CRUISES				
HEBRIDEAN ISLAND CRUISES	 			
OCEANIA CRUISES				
PAUL GAUGUIN CRUISES	 			
PONANT				
REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES			 	
RITZ-CARLTON YACHT COLLECTION				
SCENIC				
SEABOURN	 		 	
SILVERSEA CRUISES			 	
STAR CLIPPERS				
SEADREAM YACHT CLUB				
UNIWORLD BOUTIQUE RIVER CRUISE COLLECTION			 	
WINDSTAR CRUISES				

Luxury cruising index

A Additional cost

T Tetra Pak water supplied

W 120 minutes free per guest

S Selected itineraries

R River cruises only

O OLife choice

L Flights between Los Angeles and Papeete

P Pre-cruise for long haul

H Pre-cruise hotel on long haul/fly cruise packages

 Yacht and expedition cruises

Speciality dining	Alcoholic drinks	Soft drinks	Recyclable water bottle	Wine (or beer)/ soft drinks with meals	Gratuities	Shore excursions	Wifi
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Win at selling

LUXURY HOLIDAYS

Keen to book luxury clients? It's about combining knowledge and a unique customer journey, says SeaDream Yacht Club's Jos Dewing, who heads the line's UK sales operation



Luxury is not a category or a label, rather it's an overall experience. To truly understand the art of selling it's important to take a step back and first consider what luxury means today, especially within the travel context.

For me, it's essentially a state of mind and that means the travel seller is responsible for delivering it. The notion of a luxury experience will be different for everyone and so it's imperative that the agent first understands what their customer wants.

Personal relationships with prospective clients are essential: to know the client is to know their needs and understand the best products to suggest. Read notes on the client in the CRM or reservations system, review their booking history and build a picture of how they like to unwind.

With SeaDream for example, personalised service is at the core of the product and will flow throughout the

guests' experience. The crew will know client names and quickly learn their tastes and preferences. A great example is how one of our chefs overheard a guest talking about a favourite meal – the next day, it was on the menu.

Hold their hand

With SeaDream, client names are even embroidered on their complimentary night clothes. This personal approach must start with the first enquiry.

Guests are discerning, so they will expect their agent to be an expert on the product under consideration, or better still, to be recommended the product by the agent.

In a perfect world, agents will have experienced the product first hand on a fam trip, as there is just no better way to sell than by guiding the customer booking journey from first-hand experience.

However, this is not always possible, so it's key to engage with the content on offer from the travel principle. Watch videos, take any online training on offer and make copious notes.

In addition, Q&As are a fantastic method for learning. For a luxury cruise ship or yacht, for example, how many restaurants are there? What is the policy on gratuities or single travellers? Are land programmes included in the fare? It really helps to create crib sheets for the different products. Clients also tend to have more questions than most as they are spending more money on the experience.

Don't focus on brochure copy for research: try to read blogs from other agents who have been on fams, or online reviews from real guests. These are easily accessible and likely to give a more

Selling TIPS

Do not treat every client the same.

Everyone is an individual and that should be reflected in the itinerary and recommendations

•
Be proactive when it comes to following up with clients – they're likely to appreciate the communication

•
Luxury clients are paying for the ultimate experience on board and ashore – match this level of service when finding their ideal holiday



Knowing the product is crucial: are land excursions included, for example?

balanced and detailed view of things – good and bad.

It's essential that the service during the booking process is consistent and positive. Many companies selling luxury such as concierge platforms gauge their service on tools like NPS (Net Promoter Score). This essentially rates a service on how a customer would rate it.

Lastly, follow up. Always contact the client, unless they have requested otherwise, keep communication focused and helpful and always track learnings in a CRM. 📌

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IN GOOD CRUISE COMPANY

Which are the best cruise companies to work for in the UK? *Cruise Trade News* has partnered with the Best Companies Group to find out

What makes a company great? Such a question will produce all manner of answers, reliant on size, perks, culture, holiday, social gatherings and many other variables. Of course, all companies like to describe themselves as 'great' – their ability to attract talented and loyal staff depends on it.

However, how can greatness be proven? Wouldn't it be helpful, say, if there were a scientific and analytical method to judge the claims, crunch the data, and produce a fully independent, comprehensive report?

That is exactly what *Cruise Trade News* and the Best Companies Group – an independent research organisation – have done, as part of the inaugural CTN Best Companies to Work For in Cruise programme.

Open to cruise lines, travel agencies selling cruise holidays, and suppliers to the cruise industry, this is all about shining a spotlight on those companies that go above and beyond, and to demonstrate what a brilliant industry cruise is to work in.

CTN also partnered with staff training consultancy Ethos Farm for the initiative.

Read on to discover more.



Sponsored by Ethos Farm

15 – organisations must have at least this number of employees to participate
78 – questions in the employee engagement survey

THE FAB FOUR

The numbers have been crunched and the analysis is complete. Here – in no special order – are the CTN Best Companies to Work For in Cruise



AmaWaterways

What it is: Luxury river cruise line offering itineraries across Europe, Asia and Africa, with a strong focus on wellbeing and enrichment.

Number of UK employees: 17

Paid holiday per year: 23 days

Fun activity: Drinks and nibbles on Friday afternoons

What it says: “AmaWaterways is a business that has been built on people. We are very customer-service driven and that has to come from each and every individual that works for us – whatever their role. While our benefits packages are generous (private medical insurance, critical illness cover and life

insurance), developing the right culture for our growing business is, I believe, the single most important thing we can do for our employees’ wellbeing. There is a genuine company ethos of family that is driven from the very top of our business by Rudi Schreiner (president) and Kristin Karst (co-owner). We want AmaWaterways to be a place where the best of the best in the cruise industry want to work,” says Jamie Loizou.



Jamie Loizou
Managing Director



World Travel Holdings UK

What it is: One of the largest and fastest-growing multi-brand travel distributors in the UK, with a number of owned brands.

Number of UK employees: 197

Paid holiday per year: 21 days

Fun activity: Two well-being weeks each year, including yoga and running clubs and other activities

What it says: “World Travel Holdings serves hundreds of thousands of customers with an appetite for leisure travel. Our mission is to deliver a remarkable experience through providing superior quality and service and a passion for having real conversations with our customers. It’s that personalised experience that engenders customer loyalty and puts us in a league of our own. Our extensive product offerings give our customers the freedom to choose how they want to vacation.” (Official website statement)





Mundy Cruising (and the Cruise Portfolio)

What it is: The original UK cruise specialist, providing tailored holidays since 1970, with a strong focus on small-ship cruising.

Number of UK employees: 30

Paid holiday per year: 25 days

Fun activity: Themed dress-up days.

What it says: "Our key aims link closely with the holiday booking process, which should always be happy, friendly and kind. This is not like any other retail business – we are not just selling a product, but a state of mind. As we are a small company with an organised structure, and a business model that is not frenetic, we have time

to support, train and nurture our staff, who in return are loyal and supportive. The advantage of a small company is that you can take the time to listen to each staff member as an individual, and understand what motivates them. Interestingly, this replicates the skillset we expect from our sales people: to listen to their clients and take the time and trouble to work out what makes them tick," says Edwina Lonsdale.



Edwina Lonsdale
Managing Director



Cosmos Tours

What it is: Independent tour operator providing a range of holidays and itineraries, with an emphasis on adventure-style activities.

Number of UK employees: 61

Paid holiday per year: 23 days

Fun activity: Weekly Kahoot! quiz

What it says: "We have recently focused on mental health and wellbeing. We now have a trained mental health first aider; a point of contact and reassurance for anyone who may be experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. We celebrated and raised money for World Mental Health Day by hosting voluntary staff tea and talk sessions where we discussed surviving and thriving, bearing in mind mental health. We have also introduced a volunteering policy as we're committed to making a meaningful contribution to the communities where we work and live and evidence shows that helping others is beneficial for your own mental health and wellbeing. Our staff have shared wonderful feedback when they have spent time taking a day to volunteer. I think employee engagement will impact on how HR practices will change. We will continue to work across all levels of the business, creating opportunities for staff and management to become involved in HR projects," says Gemma Garvey.



Gemma Garvey
Head of Human
Resources & Training



96%

of Best Companies employees have a clear understanding of their job role

94%

of Best Companies employees are satisfied with their employer

Employee satisfaction survey

Results from all four firms that made the cut

Leadership & planning: **92%**

Corporate culture and communications: **89%**

Role satisfaction: **91%**

Work environment: **87%**

Relationship with supervisor: **94%**

Training, development and resources: **84%**

Pay & benefits: **64%**

Overall employee engagement: **92%**

Survey average: **87%**



HOW WE DID IT

Andrew O'Kelly, director of partnership development, Europe, Best Companies Group, explains the science and methodology behind the programme

The programme was open to all publicly or privately held organisations that are cruise lines, UK-based travel agencies selling cruise holidays, or suppliers to the cruise industry. To be eligible for consideration, organisations must have at least 15 employees to participate.

The Best Companies survey process was managed by Best Companies Group (BCG), which organised the registration process, conducted a two-part survey process and ultimately chose the employers that were good enough to make the list.

This is not one of those awards where a skilfully crafted entry from the company's PR department will influence the judges. There are no judges here, just a rigorous, scientifically proven, two-part assessment process.

Part one of the assessment (one-quarter of each organisation's score) consisted of the BCG employer questionnaire, used to collect information about benefits, policies, practices, and other general information.

Part two (three-quarters of each score) involved a confidential 78-question employee engagement and satisfaction survey, which was used to evaluate the employees' workplace experience and culture.

In addition to the employee opinion data, the report also included transcribed employees' written comments.

LONG LIVE LOYALTY

What is the true value of investing in staff and their wellbeing? **Sally Alington**, CEO of training consultancy firm Ethos Farm, outlines the benefits – from an individual and business point of view

I am often asked, what is the true value of investing in workforce learning and development?

It is a broad but nonetheless pertinent question for any company when it comes to weighing up the benefits versus the costs of releasing employees from their daily functions, buying-in training expertise or developing and delivering training programmes in house.

In a former life as the managing director of a large experiential marketing agency, I was asked about how to measure the success of immersive brand activations. Arguably, these two areas of my personal expertise are not actually that different.

Both the learning sector and the experiential marketing world are about immersing people in new experiences, enabling them to acquire knowledge and leave with a fresh, or refreshed, level of advocacy and appreciation for the subject matter.

Employees are also our customers and as employers we all need those internal customers to buy into our brands. We need our workforces to be our biggest promoters.

This potentially explains why the likes of PricewaterhouseCoopers are now helping organisations to measure return on experience (ROX,) as the evolution of traditional customer experience return on investment metrics.

It is also no surprise that employee experience ranks as high on that ROX scale as the customer experience. Clearly, the two are inextricably linked.

So how, and why, does training directly impact the end customer experience? Part of the answer to this question really goes back to focusing on the employee journey. To what degree



does your organisation focus on making every step of that employee experience the best it can be?

From job applications and interviews, through to development and career progression, successful organisations will make sure their employees feel like treasured assets of the business, every step of the way.

The impact of creating a happy, engaged and valued workforce is tangible. Deloitte recently reported that "enterprises with a top-quartile employee experience achieve twice the innovation, double the customer satisfaction, and 25 per cent higher profits than organisations with a bottom-quartile employee experience".

Enabling employees to feel worthy of investment is such a simple point and yet creates long-term value and positivity. This directly affects external customer experience, which in turn supports client loyalty and business growth. 📌



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6
OF THE BEST

Expedition cruises

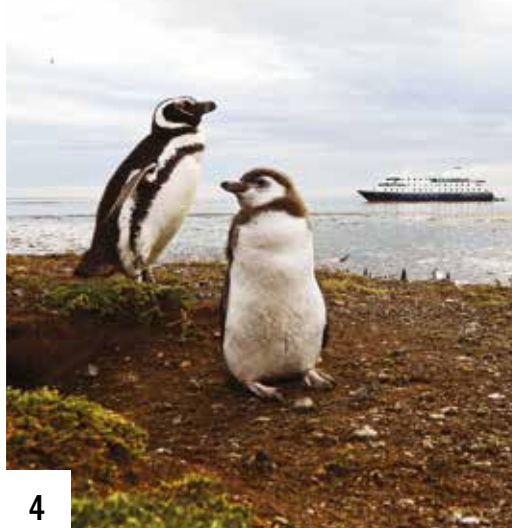
Cruising isn't all about lounging on the top deck drinking cocktails. For adventurous individuals, an expedition itinerary is ideal, as **Melissa Moody** discovers

1 Born in the USA
Passengers on this trip can sail up the North American West Coast for a unique expedition. From the towering redwoods of Portland to the Space Needle in Seattle and the quaint town of Astoria, Oregon, there's good news for all. Animal lovers will be in for a treat too, with humpback whales breaching along California's coast, orcas in Victoria Island, Canada, and osprey, bald eagle and red-tailed hawk circling the skies overhead. Departing on 9 October 2021 on *Silver Cloud*, prices start at £5,400pp.

2 Cool coral
Sailing on the *Coral Discoverer*, travellers will be able to experience the best parts of the Great Barrier Reef, rainforest trails and tropical islands including Lizard and Dunk, and Sudbury Cay. The seven-night itinerary provides the opportunity for guests to snorkel over corals, with private moorings away from crowds and guidance from an expert marine biologist on tours in a glass-bottom boat. There's even a chance for customers to join in a certified dive on the outer reef. Prices start from approximately £1,960pp, departing 14 July 2021.

3 See the stars

This is a chance for guests to view the pristine night sky and Norway's changing landscape. Immersed in the beauty of the Arctic with Hurtigruten, the programme provides a whistle-stop tour of the northern part of the world, while also attempting to catch a glimpse of the Northern Lights. Departing on 8 February 2021 for 12 days aboard *MS Nordkapp*, prices start from £1,349pp with flights included from a number of UK regional airports. It also includes a Northern Lights promise, giving guests another classic voyage free of charge if the Northern Lights don't appear.



4

4 The edge of the world

The outer edge of the world awaits on an adventurous nine-day journey along the same waterways that inspired Charles Darwin. Sailing on Australis' *Stella Australis*, the itinerary departs from Punta Arenas, crossing the Strait of Magellan, to visit the Tuckers Islets penguin colony and wildlife-rich Ainsworth Bay before cruising across Patagonia and sailing through Glacier Alley. There are also stops at historic Wulaia Bay and the fabled Cape Horn. Departing on 16 January 2021, prices start from £5,375pp.

5 Sun, sea and the Seychelles

Guests can set sail for the sunshine on a 13-day expedition voyage to discover the beautiful islands of the Seychelles while enjoying the delights of Ponant's *Le Bougainville*. Departing Victoria, the ship calls first at Curieuse Island, renowned for the hundreds of Aldabra giant tortoises that live there. Guests will have many opportunities to dive or snorkel, notably in Poivre, Astove and at the coral reef in the Alphonse lagoon. Prices begin at approximately £4,300pp, departing 1 May 2021.

3

5



6 Adventure in Costa Rica

On a round trip from San Jose on 15 April 2021 for seven days, guests can explore a slice of Costa Rica rarely visited. Sailing on Aurora Expeditions' *Greg Mortimer*, they can see the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Guanacaste Conservation Area, try kayak or stand-up paddleboard, or snorkel among pristine coral. For £2,500pp, they can also hike into wildlife-rich rainforests and glimpse Costa Rica's ancient past. ①

6



The American DREAM



Traditional paddlewheelers and modern river boats provide contrasting ways for clients to explore North America's great rivers in style, says **Jeannine Williamson**

There are few rivers that fire the imagination like the mighty Mississippi, a winding 2,340-mile waterway that flows through 10 states, has inspired authors such as Mark Twain and is steeped in both adventure and *Gone with the Wind* romance.

It is undoubtedly the country's best-known river and filled with unique and unforgettable 'only in America' sights, from thought-provoking Civil War history, grand antebellum mansions and the toe-tapping musical cities of New Orleans – birthplace of jazz – and Memphis – home of Elvis – that bookend the most popular week-long Mississippi itinerary.

Alternatively, modern-day pioneers can follow 19th-century explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark on their historical expedition to discover the Pacific Ocean, with a cruise from Portland to Lewiston along the lesser-known Snake and Columbia rivers.

CLIA UK & Ireland director Andy Harmer



A visit to Nottoway Plantation gives clients a taste of pre-Civil War American life

says: "There are two main river cruise lines that take you down these majestic rivers – American Cruise Lines and American Queen Steamboat Company.

"American river cruises are perfect for those interested in history. When selling this type of cruise, really focus on the destination, where the guests are going and what they can experience ashore. Focusing on experiences is key."

The new wave

Although the Mississippi conjures up images of traditional paddlewheelers, in recent years these ships have been joined by new-look vessels that will appeal to clients who prefer to sail in more contemporary surroundings.

American Cruise Lines, sold in the UK through Fred River Cruises, has a 13-strong fleet of river and coastal ships that accommodate between 100 and 200 guests. In addition to historic Victorian-style river ships, the line has introduced the first-ever modern riverboats without a paddlewheel.

The first two vessels in this class, the 184-passenger *American Song* and 190-passenger *American Harmony*, were launched in 2018 and 2019 respectively, and feature an innovative front-opening bow with a retractable gangway that enables them to make bow landings, with easy access for passengers embarking and disembarking. For the 2020 season, *American Song* cruises the Columbia and Snake rivers and *American Harmony* is on the Mississippi. This

ITINERARIES

American Cruise Lines

● 11-night Mississippi River Gateway cruise, departing 12 November 2020, sold through Fred River Cruises. Prices from £5,125pp, cruise only. 0800 0213 172

🔗 agentfred.co.uk

American Cruise Lines

● Eight-night Columbia and Snake rivers Clarkston to Portland cruise on *American Song*, departing 2 November 2020. Prices from £5,270pp, cruise only.

0800 0213 172

🔗 agentfred.co.uk

Light Blue Travel

● 10-night New Orleans to Memphis cruise, with multiple departure dates in 2021. Prices from £3,595pp, including flights and shore excursions in every port. 01223 568904

🔗 lightbluetravel.co.uk



The National Military Park in Vicksburg, Mississippi, commemorates a key battle



Beale Street, Memphis, where music fans will feel right at home

August they will be joined by the 190-passenger *American Jazz*, which will sail on the Mississippi in its inaugural season, with *American Melody* scheduled to launch later this year, followed by a fifth vessel at a date yet to be announced.

American Cruise Lines spokesperson Alexa Paoletta explains: "Each new ship in American's modern riverboat series will showcase the patent-pending opening bow, which is a new and exciting feature. The interior spaces on all the new riverboats highlight contemporary design and spacious architecture. The ships have soaring multi-storey glass atriums, airy, comfortable lounges and alternative casual dining cafés.

"All the stateroom categories are huge, especially measured against industry standards, and each stateroom features floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors.

"In some of the larger suites there are entire walls of glass, as well as separate sleeping and living areas, double vanity

bathrooms and gorgeous wrap-around private balconies," she adds.

Paddlewheel magic

The other key player is the American Queen Steamboat Company, with packages sold in the UK by Light Blue Travel. The line has three, soon to be four, luxurious paddlewheel vessels including the 436-passenger *American Queen*, a magnificent six-deck recreation of a classic riverboat and said to be the largest steamboat ever built. It sails on the Mississippi with the all-suite *American Duchess* and this month (April) they will be joined by the 245-passenger *American Countess*.

Sailing on six to 15-day itineraries, the ship will sport a similar traditional exterior, but in contrast to the palatial decoration of her sister vessels she will boast a sleek, modern interior. The company's fourth ship, *American Empress*, cruises on the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Selling tips from Light Blue Travel managing director Rupert Thomson include suggesting American river cruises to clients who have sailed on some of the rivers in Europe and would like something different, along with first-time cruisers who love America, American music or are interested in the country's history.

"Perhaps a client who is put off by mass ocean cruising and wants something more personalised where the staff will call them by name and remember what they want to drink," he explains. "River cruising in America is



Traditional cabaret shows take centre stage on *American Queen*

Selling TIPS

From old-school to contemporary, there is now a choice of vessels sailing on American waterways, giving agents the chance to sell to a wider clientele base

If guests want the cruise experience without what they might deem the formalities that come with it, an American river itinerary should be top of their list – casual is the key word

Many guests appreciate the opportunity to add pre or post-cruise stays to their voyage and the US is awash with mega cities to suggest – make this a key part of the sell

very laid back. That doesn't mean you can't dress up, but equally you can go casual.

"The ever-popular Lower Mississippi cruise between Memphis and New Orleans is a joy for agents to package, with city stays at either end of the cruise. This has been made simpler with the introduction of British Airways' direct flight to New Orleans. For clients who have been to New Orleans or Memphis, or want to cruise in July or August when it is very hot in the south, agents should check out the Upper Mississippi cruises.

"[There are also] itineraries that go up as far as St Louis and even Minneapolis. To extend the trip, Mississippi cruises can easily be packaged with a Florida break, or Nashville, New York or Chicago stopovers. Other good city breaks to package with *American Empress* include Seattle, or Vancouver over the Canadian border or, further south, Los Angeles or Las Vegas.

"For any agents who like to put together tailor-made itineraries, we can provide all the elements, from private airport transfers, additional hotel nights, and city stays with guided tours to museum passes and premium shore excursions, including special fast track access to Graceland."

That tour is a natural fit, Thomson adds: "Priscilla Presley is the godmother of *American Queen*." 🎵

Winning streak

In this regular series of articles, we profile the winners of the latest Cruise Stars Awards



Amanda Elgie

Regional Sales Manager –
Yorkshire, North East &
Lincolnshire
MSC CRUISES

How did you feel about winning the cruise line sales star award?

I was overwhelmed. There were so many strong candidates in this category that I was honestly speechless when my name was revealed at the ceremony.

What do you think were the main factors that contributed to you winning the award?

I have been in the travel industry since 1995, in various roles including retail, overseas and other positions for a handful of tour operators. I roll my sleeves up for anything (being a rep for seven years teaches you this), and since joining MSC Cruises in April 2018 I have worked alongside many high street agents to help them grow their cruise business.

What tips can you pass on to others in your position to help them be successful in their role?

It's important not to walk away. You have to keep knocking on doors and try different tactics, because one size doesn't fit all. Treat every agent as an individual.

"The cruise industry is one big family and we will not be knocked down – we rally round"

What has been your best experience in the industry so far?

Wow – there are too many to mention. We are one big family and we will not be knocked down. When something goes wrong I love the way we all rally round for each other. The launch of *MSC Bellissima* in March 2019 was a highlight, however. This was the biggest launch that Southampton had ever seen and for us to bring one of our newest ships to the UK and showcase her to thousands of agents over three days was amazing. The event was hard work but great fun.

What innovations would you like to see being introduced in the industry?

I'd love a machine to apply sun cream.

When entering the pool area you could choose your sun factor and pop your money in and have it sprayed on.

What is your dream cruise destination and why?

I'll go for Alaska. It is full of amazing wildlife and seeing animals wandering around in and out of the water, with the stunning backdrop of the landscape, would be surreal – truly getting close to nature. We're hoping to have Alaska in the MSC Cruises portfolio.

What on-board amenity do you enjoy the most?

Alongside the bar area, I love the spa. It's a place where I can completely relax, unwind and forget all my troubles. A nice hot-stone massage is a must.

How do you see your career progressing in the future?

I would love to become national account manager at MSC Cruises, so this is what I am working towards. ☺



The launch of *MSC Bellissima* in Southampton was a true highlight



A grand ENTRANCE

Colette Doyle samples MSC Cruises' flagship – *MSC Grandiosa* – and finds fantastic restaurants, extravagant entertainment and a host of new touches

Discover the grandeur is the ambitious slogan for MSC Cruises' latest mega ship, *MSC Grandiosa*, and as I step on board I learn that it's no idle boast. This latest addition to the Italian-owned cruise line is 67 metres high, 331 metres long and 43 metres wide and can accommodate a whopping 6,300 passengers in its 2,421 cabins and two Royal Suites.

On a cold night, the ship is docked at Southampton but on board feels warm, inviting and yes, very grand. I'm here overnight to check out the facilities on this super smart new mega ship.

First stop is my stateroom, to drop off my suitcase. My balcony cabin is stylish

and spacious with an extremely comfortable bed. Those feeling flush can upgrade to the MSC Yacht Club suites, which come equipped with luxurious memory foam mattresses, crisp Egyptian cotton sheets and a complimentary mini bar.

This ship within a ship, as it is known, also features 24-hour butler service and a dedicated concierge, plus an area on the foredecks of the ship, complete with a private bar and lounge, a gourmet restaurant, pool area and sundeck spanning some 1,225 square metres.

Fit for the gods

As I expect from this Italian cruise line, the food on board is spectacular. There

are no fewer than 13 different outlets dotted around the ship, including pan-Asian, an American-style steakhouse, Spanish tapas and my favourite, the Marketplace, which has its own mozzarella station, where the cheese is freshly made every day. On this night I dine at The Purple Crab, which has a sophisticated ambience and seriously good food, including a sumptuous lobster bisque.

MSC Cruises is collaborating with several big-name chefs to enhance its food offering; the best known of these in terms of a British audience is probably Raymond Blanc, the French mastermind behind the charming and justifiably renowned Le Manoir aux

The ship's thrilling aquapark, featuring three water slides and two racing tube slides, promises lots of fun

Quat'Saisons in Oxfordshire. What a culinary treat.

After dinner, I stroll through the impressive Galleria Grandiosa, which showcases a number of the ship's many bars and speciality restaurants. There's plenty more to divert clients, too, as costumed entertainers delight the younger passengers.

As I look upwards I spot the awe-inspiring, 93-metre LED sky dome, which features a range of eye-catching images, and which creates a stunning son et lumière-type experience three times daily.

Fun loving

The cold weather in Southampton isn't conducive to using the outdoor facilities (although one of the pools does have a sliding roof), but the ship's thrilling aquapark, featuring three water slides and two racing tube slides plus the 80-metre-high Himalayan Bridge where guests attach themselves to a rope course, promises lots of fun.

Other on-board attractions include the largest dedicated retail space ever



Everything on board, including the food, comes on an epic scale



Grandiosa accommodates 6,300 guests

offered at sea; this incredible 1,200 square metre area has 12 different boutiques where passengers can browse and shop.

Then there's the dazzling performances from Cirque du Soleil: two brand-new original breathtaking shows featuring innovative acrobatic acts as well as audience participation. The Aurea Spa, meanwhile, blends organic brands with new technologies for an ultra-relaxing experience.

MSC Grandiosa is the company's sixth connected cruise ship, offering next-level MSC for Me features such as the multi-lingual Zoe app, which can assist guests with queries about the on-board facilities and help book services such as speciality restaurants.

Later, the Galleria plays host to the smooth grooves of Radio One DJ Scott Mills and, as the music plays, the cocktails flow (there's a huge choice on offer, but, in my opinion, there's nothing better than a Piña Colada on a cruise) and the guests party. I can't help but think that a full cruise on board MSC Grandiosa is bound to be a truly grand experience. 📌

Selling TIPS

Highlight the rapid increase in on-board innovations, from Cirque du Soleil to personalised technology features

Retail space on MSC Grandiosa is more akin to a bustling complex. Sell this to shopping lovers

Ideal for those who want the big-ship experience. There's never a dull moment when sailing with MSC Cruises

Like all MSC ships, MSC Grandiosa features a range of activities for the whole family

Details

● A seven-night Mediterranean cruise on MSC Grandiosa, departing Palma de Mallorca on 21 May 2021. Prices from £949pp, cruise only.



The Infinity Atrium offers a spectacular place for passengers to meet up



MINI BUT *mighty*

A world away from mega ships carrying thousands of passengers there are many small but perfectly formed cruise vessels, writes **Jeannine Williamson**

How often do clients say they could never go on a cruise? Chances are it's because they imagine all ships are huge resort-style vessels that are not to their taste. However, for any sailing sceptics, a small-ship cruise could be just the thing to float their boat.

Granted, these ships don't have the multiple dining and entertainment venues, waterparks and novelties found on their larger siblings, but, equally, that is a huge part of the attraction. What they do offer is a very personal experience and the chance to explore uncrowded, out-of-the-way destinations.

Technically a small ship is one that carries fewer than 1,000 passengers, so Saga, Cruise & Maritime Voyages and Viking Cruises' ocean ships fall into this category, and are ideal for mature clients wanting a traditional cruise experience without the masses. Meanwhile, much smaller vessels offer everything from exciting expedition adventures to magnificent masted ships that recreate the golden age of sailing.

"Sailing on a small ship offers a unique and enriching experience," says CLIA UK & Ireland director Andy Harmer. "Most have a one-to-one ratio for crew and guests, ensuring that service can be personal and attentive, while the small number of other guests on board makes it possible for passengers to enjoy a very

personal break or have the opportunity to get to know one another.

"For customers who seek genuine and authentic destination experiences, these cruises could fit the bill perfectly. They're heavily focused on the destination and on self-enrichment, both ashore with exciting excursions or on the ship where they can learn about the neighbouring region via lectures and enjoy performances by the local community, who often come on board while the ship is in port."

Island hopping

River line Emerald Waterways will enter the sector with its first new-build 100-passenger yacht, *Emerald Azzurra*, launching under the new Emerald Yacht Cruises brand next year. The cruises, on



The ships run by Star Clippers are powered by sail whenever possible

Selling TIPS

Many itineraries promise to take guests to new destinations featuring exciting excursions, but small ships really do provide the chance to get away from the tourist hotspots

From a purely practical point of view fewer passengers equals less time spent embarking, disembarking and queuing while on board. The intimate atmosphere also helps build relationships with fellow guests

What small ships lack in on-board amenities and space they make up for in their lecture programmes and opportunities for enrichment

sale now, include the Red Sea – Israel, Jordan and Egypt – and Greece, Montenegro, France, Cyprus, Turkey, Malta and Spain in the Mediterranean.

Emerald Cruises' director of marketing & global brand curator, David Winterton, says: "We are thrilled to be introducing a new sister brand to Emerald Waterways. We have ambitious growth plans for the UK and can't wait for past river cruise guests and new customers alike to join us on board our new ocean-going yacht."

Meanwhile Windstar Cruises' three Star Plus ships – *Star Breeze*, *Star Legend* and *Star Pride* – are undergoing an innovative \$250 million investment to add a section to each vessel to extend them by 25.6 metres (84 feet) to 159 metres (521.6 feet).

The year-long project is scheduled to finish in December and add 50 new suites to each ship, bringing the total to 156, along with improvements such as two new dining locations, an enhanced, fitness centre and pool, more deck space and more ecologically friendly engines.

Vice-president of sales Steve Simao says: "While Windstar's three Star Plus ships are getting a lot of attention, our smaller motorised sailing ships, *Wind Star* and *Wind Spirit*, are still integral to the brand. These can access really tiny harbours and are perfect for island hopping in destinations like the Greek Isles and Tahiti, where they are primarily located."

Then there is SeaDream Yacht Club, with boutique vessels *SeaDream I* and *II*, where a maximum of 112 passengers are looked after by a crew of 95. For the first time in more than 10 years, SeaDream is returning to South Florida for 2022. The announcement comes as SeaDream also opens bookings for 33 new 2022 West Indies voyages, including maiden calls to the Bahamas and Turks & Caicos.

"We wanted 2022 to be filled with surprises, to explore unexpected destinations," says SeaDream owner and chairman Andreas Brynstad. "The 2022 West Indies season is unlike any other season we've done before. We wanted to bring something really fresh for our returning and new guests and show them a different side of the region they've never explored before with SeaDream."

Different ways to sail

Seafarer Cruises is the UK GSA for specialist operators such as Variety Cruises. New for 2020/2021 are seven and 11-night cruises in French Polynesia and the line is returning to Israel, Egypt and Jordan from December to February

with an itinerary that includes a transit of the Suez Canal and a land-stay in Luxor, with the cruise accompanied by an expert Egyptologist. Variety's theme is 'small is beautiful', focusing on sustainable travel and protecting the environment.

Managing director of Seafarer Cruises Chris Lorenzo says Variety is the "natural choice" for guests "looking for a product that gets them close up and personal to the true culture while being gentle on the environment".

Star Clippers' head-turning fleet of tall ships, carrying up to 200 passengers, are powered by sail when conditions allow. Represented in the UK by Fred Olsen Travel, new sailing routes and ports of call for summer 2021 include Chalki, Symi and Kastellorizo, three lesser-known islands in Greece's Dodecanese, and Fethiye in Turkey. There are full details in the summer 2021 brochure.

For clients looking for something even smaller, SailSterling offers sailing charters and catamaran tours and has launched a wine-themed tour to the Aeolian Islands. Each four-cabin catamaran has a chef and professional skipper, and an itinerary that includes private vineyard tours. 🍷

ITINERARIES

Windstar Cruises

- 10-night Alaska Glaciers & Prince William Sound cruise, departing 7 May 2021 on *Star Breeze*. Prices from approximately £3,500pp, cruise only. 001 888 989 0756 (overseas number) [windstarcruises.com](https://www.windstarcruises.com)

Seafarer Cruises

- Eight-night Tahiti and the Pearls of French Polynesia cruise, departing 2 February 2021 on *MS Panorama II*. Prices from £2,000pp. 020 8324 3117 [seafarercruises.com](https://www.seafarercruises.com)

Star Clippers

- Nine-night Malta, Balearic & Spain cruise, departing 16 April 2021 from Malaga to Malta on *Star Flyer*. Prices from £2,005, cruise only. 0808 231 4798 [starclippers.co.uk](https://www.starclippers.co.uk)



Deep DISCOVERY

From the famed Galápagos Islands to the energetic cities of Rio de Janeiro and the majestic Amazon River, South America is an adventurer's dream. **Lisa James** reports

Among the various certificates I've picked up over the years, my favourite is the one I have for sailing on the *MV Mare Australis* to one of the most remote parts of the world.

It takes pride of place in my downstairs cloakroom, where visitors to the smallest room in the house marvel at my diploma, awarded for 'having shared with us this unforgettable adventure visiting the southern-most point of the earth'.

Of course, I didn't have to do much to get this certificate, just board a ship at Ushuaia – the capital of Argentina's

Tierra del Fuego and the southern-most city in the world – and enjoy fabulous South American hospitality, washed down with several pisco sours (including one that was chilled to perfection with a little piece of ice tapped from a bay-side glacier, while we were out wildlife-watching), as we navigated the Magellan Straight and Cape Horn.

Before the Panama Canal opened in 1914, this was the only route for ships transiting between the Pacific and the Atlantic, with brave sailors battling the fierce winds, strong swells and icy conditions that have always made the route notoriously difficult.



Destination special: South America



The fauna of South America varies as much as its terrain

Passengers can discover a natural wonderland as they wander almost within touching distance of the wildlife

there's something for everyone. The type of cruise a client opts for in South America will depend on their interests, how much time they have to spare and, of course, budget.

An 83-day Southampton round-trip with Saga starts at around £20,000, while Cruise & Maritime Voyages offers an 84-night itinerary starting at less than £13,000. Both pack in plenty of ports of call that passengers can tick off their wish lists – capital cities such as Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Lima and Quito, and natural wonders including the Chilean Fjords and 'the tip of the world' at Ushuaia.

There's also the Amazon River, where a highlight, not far from the port of Manaus, is Encontro das Aguas, the 'meeting of waters' where the dark Rio Negro and sandy-coloured Amazon waters run side-by-side for miles without mixing. Britain's southern-most territory, the Falkland Islands, is also a major pull, attracting those with an interest in political and military history as well as wildlife enthusiasts who flock to watch the five types of penguin that live there.

The inimitable Galápagos

From July 2020, G Adventures will have a sixth high-end yacht in the Galápagos Islands, with the custom-built,

Over 6,000km to the north, the Galápagos Islands offer a completely different experience within the same continent, with calmer waters and warmer skies. Passengers can discover a natural wonderland as they wander almost within touching distance of giant tortoises, sun-worshipping iguanas and the comical blue-footed boobies.

Searching for lost cities

Then, of course, there's everything in between – from must-visit capitals that are major players on today's global stage, as well as 'lost' cities that have been rediscovered. North-east of the Galápagos, Colombia – once a no-go area – now finds itself on South American cruise itineraries, with Cartagena one of the most impressive colonial cities in the region.

For a huge continent extending from equatorial tropics to sub-Antarctica,

ITINERARIES

Saga Cruises

● The 83-night ex-Southampton South America: A Grand Voyage takes in the major highlights, with overnights at several key cities, including Rio de Janeiro and Stanley in the Falkland Islands. Prices from £20,327pp, departing 6 January 2021.

🔗 travel.saga.co.uk

Aqua Expeditions

● Aqua Nera sails the Peruvian Amazon operating three, four and seven-night itineraries, taking in Amazonian towns and villages along the way. Prices for a three-night cruise, departing 8 October 2021, start from £3,170pp.

🔗 aquaexpeditions.com

Crystal Cruises

● A 12-night cruise from Puerto Montt in Chile to Ushuaia in Argentina. Port calls include Castro, Pio Xi Glacier, El Brujo Glacier, Amalia Glacier, and Punta Arenas. Cruise-only prices start from £8,550pp, departing 31 October 2022.

🔗 crystalcruises.com

Cruise & Maritime Voyages

● 84-night Grand Round South America & Amazon Discovery cruise on board *Magellan*, takes in the Amazon River, Buenos Aires and Montevideo. Departing Tilbury on 7 January 2021, with prices for inner twins starting at £6,299pp.

🔗 cruiseandmaritime.com





The Colombian city of Cartagena shows many signs of its colonial past

16-passenger *Reina Silvia Voyager* catamaran, one of the most comfortable passenger touring vessels of its size. Importantly, it will reflect the company's commitment to responsible tourism.

Eight of its 10 cabins are designed for twin/double stays and two are dedicated to solo travellers. The catamaran will operate 40 different itineraries, offering access to the 20 different islands of the Galápagos, ranging from seven to 17 days in length.

G Adventures global vice president of product Yves Marceau says: "There is nothing in the world like making eye contact with a curious sea lion, gentle sea turtle, tiny seahorse or prehistoric-looking iguana in a place where Darwin himself studied evolution.

"We want our guests to have all of these adventurous experiences and still enjoy a dose of maritime luxury." Also in the Galápagos, Metropolitan Touring's 48-guest *Yacht la Pinta*, which has some of the largest cabins of all ships operating in the archipelago, with floor-to-ceiling windows, has been updated for 2020, with a complete refresh.

A spokesperson says: "With the smallest guide-to-passenger ratio in the Galápagos, guests can enjoy a more personalised touch to their island expeditions with a larger range of activities available. Due to the size of the ship, 84 per cent of the time visitors enjoy the benefits of exploring the national park without having to share sites with other ships."

Meanwhile, Silversea's new ship, *Silver Moon*, will sail its inaugural South America season in winter 2020/2021, offering six different voyages from November 2020 to February 2021.

Silversea managing director Peter Shanks explains: "It can be difficult to find the best way to take in a lot of what South America has to offer. By taking a voyage – and especially by combining a number of voyages – then all that travel is taken care of.

"It is a remarkable way to witness the very best of South America, as well as all the excitement of an inaugural season." 📌



The old district of Buenos Aires is famous for being tango central

Selling TIPS

South America cruises are a great sell as they offer the chance to visit many awe-inspiring destinations in one sailing, from big cities to the wonder that is the Galápagos. In addition, the wide selection of overland tours, such as Machu Picchu in Peru, is a real selling point

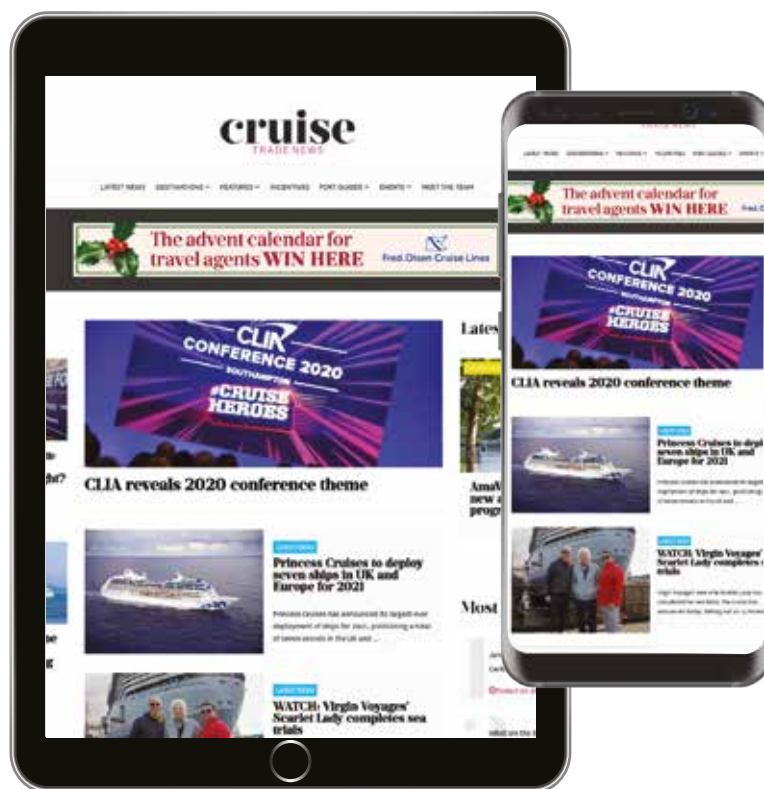
• Compared with other cruise regions, there are relatively few ships around South America. It is still quite untouched in terms of the cruise calendar

• Some may be put off a South American itinerary as they fear they may have to fly to meet the ship. However, nervous flyers, or those who want to avoid long flights and lengthy transfers, needn't miss out, as there are ex-UK itineraries available

• Many of the ships sailing this part of the world are small and intimate, ideal for those with an explorer mindset who want to experience the adventure without having to participate in the mega-ship environment

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Our commitment to you

We are doing all we can to support you during this difficult and uncertain time.

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The current situation is undoubtedly one of the worst crises the travel sector has faced. Recent events have left many wondering what the future holds.

However, despite the uncertainty, cruise is demonstrating that, in times of difficulty, the industry stands as one.

While no one knows quite how this situation will develop over the coming weeks and months, we will support you in any way we can.

Yes, we all face immense challenges, but we fully intend to continue providing all the updates you need.

We are all working to the best of our abilities, as we strive to bring you, our readers, colleagues and friends, the

latest information on coronavirus and its impact on the travel industry.

Everyone here at *Cruise Trade News* stands ready to do whatever we can to ensure the cruise industry thrives.

Please get in touch by emailing *Cruise Trade News* editor Gary Peters – gary.peters@realresponsemedia.com – with any questions you have, or any suggestions about how we can support you.

What must be remembered is that things will get better. We must speak as one voice and look forward to the good times ahead. From all of us here, we wish you all the best, and please stay safe.

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New date 29 October

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