

Your comprehensive guide to selling cruise holidays

cruisetradenews.com

ISSUE 118 | APRIL/MAY 2023

cruise

TRADE NEWS



CREATING CONNECTIONS

How advertising is changing the cruise industry's public perception

INTERVIEW

In conversation with
Azamara's Stuart Pearce

SPOTLIGHT ON

The challenges in finding
and retaining talent

DESTINATION FOCUS

Why Iceland and Greenland
are becoming popular

THINKING CRUISE? THINK NCL.

OVER 450 DESTINATIONS WORLDWIDE | SAILINGS AVAILABLE THROUGH TO 2025 | 18 AWARD-WINNING SHIPS



**WORLD'S LEADING
CRUISE LINE**
7 Years in a Row
World Travel Awards
worldtravelawards.com



**EUROPE'S LEADING
CRUISE LINE**
15 Years in a Row
World Travel Awards
worldtravelawards.com



**CARIBBEAN'S
LEADING CRUISE LINE**
10 Years in a Row
World Travel Awards
worldtravelawards.com

THE WORLD IS WAITING - SPIN THE GLOBE AND GO

MEDITERRANEAN



NORTHERN EUROPE



ASIA



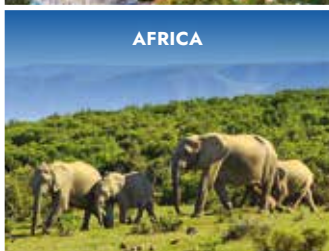
HAWAI'I



ALASKA



AFRICA



**EXTRAORDINARY
JOURNEYS**



& MORE!



CALL: 0333 241 2319



NORWEGIANCENTRAL.COM
YOUR DEDICATED TRADE PORTAL



NCLFREESTYLEREWARDS.COM
CLAIM POINTS AND REDEEM REWARDS
FOR ALL BOOKINGS YOU MAKE



EDITORIAL TEAM

EDITOR
Gary Peters
gary.peters@realresponsemedia.com

CONTENT WRITER
Lucy Abbott

CONTRIBUTORS
Sarah Holt
Dave Monk
Deborah Stone

ART DIRECTOR
Phil Couzens

SUB EDITOR
Heather Ford

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Barnaby Moore

GROUP COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR
Mark Bennett
mark.bennett@realresponsemedia.com

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR
Keith Cartwright
Keith.Cartwright@realresponsemedia.com

CRUISE MANAGER
David Broad
David.Broad@realresponsemedia.com

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
Lina Slater

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER
James Gambling

CEO
Chris Pitchford

For subscriptions & enquiries:
020 8444 2554
info@cruisetradenews.com
All enquiries
+44 (0) 20 8444 2554

Printed in the United Kingdom by Micropress.
Reproduction is not permitted without the
express written consent of the editor.
All efforts are made to ensure factual
accuracy at time of publication.

cruise
TRADE NEWS
Published by
Real.
RESPONSE MEDIA

Unit 4D, Cally Yard
445 Caledonian Road, London, N7 9BG
ISSN 2059-9986



**CONNECT ONLINE WITH
CRUISE TRADE NEWS**

cruisetradenews.com
 @cruisetradenews
 Cruise Trade News

Contents

APRIL/MAY 2023



REGULARS

6 The Briefing

The essential and latest cruise news

8 What's in it for you?

Training, incentives and support from cruise lines

11 Cruise column

Fred Olsen's Geoff Ridgeon espouses the benefits of educationals

12 Tech talk

Avoiding common tech pitfalls

16 Supercharging marketing

How to use data to improve sales

18 Insight

Spotlight on cruise & travel recruitment

19 Tips of the trade

Advice on selling group travel

26 At a glance

Inside the sleek *Amadeus Riva*

50 Agent engagement

On the road with A-Rosa's Stephen Joyner

FEATURES

22 Making waves

CroisiEurope's investment in the UK

COVER STORY

29 Analysis

How cruise advertising is changing

32 Interview

A chat with Azamara's Stuart Pearce

38 River cruising

Sailing the mighty Mississippi

42 Destination focus

Why Iceland and Greenland are becoming firm favourites

46 Cruise review

A joyful time on *Norwegian Jade*

TAUCK



EUROPEAN RIVER CRUISING

Award-winning riverboat travel

It's not just where we cruise that has earned us continual recognition on *Travel + Leisure's* "World's Best River Cruises" list. It's how our guests experience the destinations that ensures an extraordinary journey. Experience life along Europe's rivers in ways you couldn't do on your own. And discover why Tauck has been an industry leader since 1925.

French Escapade: The Riviera to Paris

Mediterranean playgrounds, Parisian glamour and the sun-kissed palette of Provence reflect life along the Rhône. Taste your way through villages like Chalon-Sur-Saône. Sip Burgundy bouquets and papal wines where they're made. Dine at a private castle and a ranch in the Camargue. And stay two nights in Cannes and Paris living like a rock star.

2023 Departures - 14 days from £5,930, tour only



For more information or to book, call Tauck at **0800.810.8020**
Please visit **tauck.co.uk** for complete details on our 150+ worldwide journeys





Editor's Letter

WELCOME TO THE APRIL/MAY ISSUE

When it comes to creating content and deciding what to focus on for each issue of *Cruise Trade News*, it's imperative for us to showcase the most important stories and deliver the information that is relevant at any given time.

However, sometimes there are trends that fly under the radar and, while they may not be immediately obvious, after a little digging a picture emerges. That is the theme for the issue's investigation, which looks at how cruise advertising is changing and what this means for the industry's public perception. As you'll discover, the sector is entering a new phase of how it connects with people.

Destination-wise, we report on the growing popularity of cruises to Iceland and Greenland and outline the experiences available on the mighty Mississippi. Experts from C&M Travel Recruitment also discuss the current challenges in finding and retaining talent.

As for trade investment and growing relationships, in recent weeks CroisiEurope has set in motion a plan to boost its presence in the UK market, with the appointment of a new business development manager for the north of England and Scotland a key part of



this. You can read more about the operator's ambitions in the Making Waves feature.

In our coverage of the *Cruise Trade News* and CLIA Supercharging Digital Marketing event, UniFida MD Jo Young looks at the importance of using data to generate growth. Last but not least, A-Rosa River Cruises head of sales Stephen Joyner discusses the ins and outs of agent engagement.

Happy reading.

Gary Peters

Editor, *Cruise Trade News*

Above: CroisiEurope aims to boost its UK market presence

CONNECT ONLINE WITH CRUISE TRADE NEWS



@cruisetradenews



cruisetradenews.com



Cruise Trade News

The Briefing

THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION FOR CRUISE NEWS

IN BRIEF

Princess goes long

● Princess Cruises will offer its longest voyage ever in 2025, with a 116-night world cruise. The itinerary will visit 51 destinations in 26 countries and six continents.

Celebrity fuel plan

● Celebrity Cruises has said it will “advance the use of alternative fuels” when it launches the fifth Edge-class ship. The line is working with parent company Royal Caribbean Group, technology company Wärtsilä and shipyard Chantiers de L’Atlantique to introduce a new engine model, along with storage and delivery systems.

APPOINTMENTS



● Unforgettable Travel Group has announced the creation of a dedicated trade team to better support travel agents. The team is headed up by **Pietro Molica Lazzaro**, in the new role of partnerships manager.



● **Ryan Readman** has joined Ambassador Cruise Line as business development manager for trade sales. Readman – who moves to the line from Scenic Group, where he was trade support executive – will report to divisional sales managers Louise Tansey and Karen Cameron.



AWARDS

Wave Awards 2023: Enter now

Entries for the Wave Awards 2023 are now open, with cruise lines, travel agencies, tourists board, ports and technology companies encouraged to enter for the chance to win the cruise industry’s highest accolade.

This year, there are new categories for travel agents, including Best Small Agency, which is open to high street, online or home-based agencies with 10 members of staff or fewer, and Best Independent/Solo Agent, designed to reward homeworkers and mini agencies.

In addition, for 2023 there is also a greater focus on technology and how this is changing the cruise sector. First up is Best Technology Provider, aimed at technology developers that excel in providing cruise lines with the back-office

systems that enable them to run their complex operations.

There is also Best Technology Innovation and Best Use of Content, for the company that is making the most of the rich content available in cruise.

As with previous events, there are a host of cruise line categories, such as Best Ocean Cruise Line and Best River Cruise Line, as well as on-board awards – think Best for Accommodation, Best for Cuisine, and so on. Special awards will also be announced on the night.

Go to thewaveawards.com for the full list of categories and more information on how to submit an entry.

THE NEWS YOU NEED

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

SIGN UP NOW AT cruisetradenews.com



LUXURY

Explora names godmother for first ship

Explora Journeys has announced that Dr Sylvia Earle, the world-renowned oceanographer, explorer and conservationist, will be the godmother of its first ship, *Explora I*.

Earle is widely considered a pioneer of deep-sea exploration and has dedicated her life to ocean conservation. She will name the ship during a naming ceremony in Civitavecchia, Rome, on 8 July.

Michael Ungerer, Explora Journeys CEO, said: "We are honoured to have

Dr Sylvia Earle as the godmother of our first luxury ship. Her lifelong commitment to ocean conservation and exploration makes her an inspiration to us all. We share her passion for protecting the world's oceans and we are excited to partner with her on this important mission."

Explora I is the first of a planned fleet of up to six luxury ships. It will depart for its 15-night maiden cruise on 17 July 2023 from Southampton.

TRAINING

CLIA boosts trade website

CLIA has introduced a new range of trade-friendly features and resources on its website to help support agents.

New training opportunities, sales tools and information resources are now available online, including an online booking guidelines page, which contains details of how agents can work with cruise lines to become an authorised seller.

In addition, agents can now access a compilation of the latest fam trip, ship visit and network opportunities from across CLIA's member cruise lines on the new CLIA Recommends page. The association has also created an outline of the online training opportunities that are directly on offer via CLIA's ocean, river, luxury and expedition member cruise lines.

More information on CLIA's new interactive sustainability toolkit is



STEVE DUNLOP PHOTOGRAPHY

available, as are itinerary experience factsheets to boost destination knowledge, among other enhancements.

CLIA UK & Ireland MD Andy Harmer said: "Cruise trade enquiries and bookings are on the crest of a wave and we're determined to help agents capitalise on that momentum."



Learn in style

Cruise Trade News'
David Broad looks ahead to the next batch of Cruise Challenge events

The Cruise Challenge is now well underway, kicking off with a brilliant first event of the year in Manchester, with more than 60 agents attending. This was followed by an equally impressive showing in Colchester in late March. They were a huge success with our cruise partners and everyone who attended had an amazing time.

Of course, there is so much more to come during the rest of this year. In May, we are visiting Southampton, Cheltenham and Birmingham, for what is sure to be a busy month of cruise learning.

At the Southampton event, a range of lines will be there to showcase their brands, including Virgin Voyages, Silversea, Regent Seven Seas Cruises and Norwegian Cruise Line. Cheltenham will, I'm sure, also prove to be a winner as we host the event at the famous Cheltenham Racecourse. I urge you all to sign up, take part and win more great prizes from Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, Holland America Line, Riviera Travel, Quark and Norwegian Cruise Line.

Don't forget to join the Agents Club by *Cruise Trade News* on Facebook to follow my journey around the UK. You can see a full list of Cruise Challenge dates and locations at cruisechallenge.evessiocloud.com.

What's in it for you?

INCENTIVES • ITINERARIES • SPECIAL OFFERS

APT unveils agent rate

APT has released a special travel agent rate, allowing the trade to experience its Travelmarvel Contemporary-class river ships in Europe for £699pp.

Valid on sailings between May and August 2023, the offer is the final phase of APT & Travelmarvel's drive to welcome travel agents aboard its fleet.

The operator recently announced plans to host more than 70 agents on fam trips and ship visits during the year, double the number that it hosted in 2019 and triple the number in 2022. In a statement, the line said that the £699 offer will allow "even more agents to immerse themselves in the Travelmarvel offering".

The £699 rate can also be extended to guests, should agents wish to travel with a plus one. To book, agents should email agentclub@aptouring.co.uk.



Agents can take advantage of special prices to sample APT's Travelmarvel river ships

SIGN UP

to the Agents Club by Cruise Trade News on Facebook and visit cruisetradenews.com for the latest incentives, itineraries, offers and training news



Experience what life's like on one of Ambassador's ships at a discounted rate

Ambassador announces agent discounts

Ambassador Cruise Line has revealed details about its travel agent concession programme for 2023/24.

The scheme, which is returning for a second year, will give agents the chance to experience the line's two ships – *Ambience* and *Ambition*. Fares start at £50pp per night and agents will also be eligible for a 15 per cent discount on any drinks package, plus 25 per cent off port parking. The offer is valid for cruises of up to 15 nights.

Concessions are limited to 10 cabins per sailing, on a first-come, first-served basis, with agents able to make a maximum of one concession booking per year. To be eligible, agents need to have made at least one booking with Ambassador and show proof of employment by providing their ABTA number.

All guests must be fully insured with Covid-19 cover and fully vaccinated in line with the company policy in place at the time of sailing.



Riviera Travel's luxury yacht cruise is the perfect way to explore the Dalmatian coast

Riviera to operate Croatia yacht cruises

Riviera Travel has announced it will operate four Croatian yacht cruise itineraries in 2024.

A total of 68 sailings will take place from early May to October, with six dedicated to solo travellers. The seven-night itineraries, available now, will sail on exclusively chartered, luxury yachts, each with a maximum of 38 to 40 guests.

Daily tours and visits will combine "historic towns and cities of Croatia

with the unspoilt beauty of the national parks of the Dalmatian coast", a statement said. An example itinerary is the Dubrovnik, Split & Jewels of the Dalmatian Coast voyage, sailing on *MV Corona*. Prices start from £1,799pp.

Riviera Travel head of product river and ocean cruise Katja Hildebrandt said: "These sailings offer a truly luxurious way to discover the history and charms of the Dalmatian coast, from the comfort of our exclusively chartered yachts."



Lee Haslett says Celestyal Holidays meets agent partners' requests

CELESTYAL LAUNCHES TRADE-ONLY BRAND

Celestyal has launched a dedicated trade packaging solution, in partnership with Aviate.

Celestyal Holidays will offer "unbeatable flight-inclusive packages and generous rates of commission", according to a statement.

It will be exclusively for the UK trade, allowing agents to create tailor-made packages with regional flights, pre and post-cruise stays and any itinerary in one simple booking protected by Aviate's ATOL licence.

Celestyal chief commercial officer Lee Haslett said: "The launch of Celestyal Holidays offers our agent partners exactly what they have been asking for – tailor-made packages that are simple to book, are great value for money, pay competitive commission and are fully protected."



MSC Cruises is incentivising shore excursion pre-bookings

Earn on MSC shore excursions

MSC Cruises is running a booking incentive for UK and Ireland agents.

The line has increased commission rates from 5 per cent to 15 per cent for Northern European sailings during summer 2023 and winter 2023/2024 to encourage agents to book shore excursions for customers. By pre-booking a shore excursion, customers can save up to 20 per cent on the on-board pricing.

MSC Cruises' newest flagship *MSC Euribia*, due to launch in June,

is included in the promotion, as well as the line's UK-based ship, *MSC Virtuosa*, and *MSC Preziosa*, *MSC Poesia* and *MSC Fantasia*.

Agents are advised to book the shore excursions through MSC Book, under the Manage My Booking section.

Customers can save up to 20 per cent on shore excursions by pre-booking through a travel agent, who can complete the booking at [msccbook.com](https://www.msccruises.com/uk/msscbook). The incentive is valid until 31 May.



CRUISING FROM MONTREAL OR QUEBEC CITY?

Those departing from either port have the option of using VIA Rail's daily, affordable and efficient services to visit some of the other cities on the east coast. How about visiting the capital of Ottawa or the cosmopolitan city of Toronto or why not both?



CRUISING FROM VANCOUVER?

Take the opportunity to add on VIA's famous 'Canadian' train and explore more of Canada. Perhaps take the one night trip to Jasper and explore the majestic Rocky Mountains or why not sit back and relax for the full four night journey to Toronto (you can always break the journey for a few nights en-route).



www.viarail.ca



www.viarail-ott.com

To book simply contact your preferred operator or use your online account. For product enquiries and additional training contact info@viarail.co.uk


VIA Rail Canada

Experiencing all aspects of a cruise, including excursions, allows agents to give advice based on first-hand knowledge



Fred Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales **Geoff Ridgeon** underlines the importance of maximising the opportunities provided by educationals

Now the clocks have gone forward and the sunshine is emerging, more and more people will be thinking about their holiday plans for the year. I talk a lot in this column about the importance of matching your customers with the best cruise line for them, which begs the age-old question: with so many brands out there, how can you really know which cruise line will best suit the needs of your customer?

The answer is simple – although I appreciate that doesn't necessarily mean it's easy. It really is a case of utilising the opportunities to get on board. It's one thing us, as cruise lines, telling you what makes us great, but there is nothing like experiencing a product or service in person. Seeing really is believing.

Even stepping aboard for a day can make all the difference. At Fred Olsen, we have a programme of ship visits for the year ahead where you can join us at one of our regional departure ports for a day aboard *Bolette*, *Borealis* or *Balmoral* and enjoy our smaller-ship experience. You'll enjoy a ship tour with a difference, a delicious lunch and meet with some of our wonderful crew.



“You can join us for a sailing and experience our product in the same way our guests would”

GEOFF RIDGEON
HEAD OF SALES
FRED OLSEN CRUISE LINES

Experience the product

We run a series of educationals too (or 'Freducationals' as we call them) where you can join us for a sailing and experience our product over a number of days in the same way that our guests would, as we visit a number of destinations across the world.

Having this extended time on board means you can sample the different restaurants, join shore excursions and



spend some time at leisure to enjoy the ship and to really experience the personal and attentive service for which we are renowned. You can register your interest for our ship visits and educationals on our online travel agent centre, and other cruise lines will have their own programmes available too.

I promise you, it is worth the investment of your time. By experiencing a product, it allows you, as the travel agent, to make a recommendation based on genuine knowledge or experience, rather than basing it all on research or word of mouth. I hope to see lots of you on our ships this year. 📍

TECH TALK

Traveltek chief commercial officer **Cressida Sergeant** looks at how to avoid common pitfalls when working on a new technology project

This month, I asked ChatGPT for some insight on how to steer clear of technology issues. To be frank, it was like reading a chapter from a book

I've sadly read many times. During my career, I've seen problems play out on multiple occasions.

One of the most common is inadequate requirement gathering. This is the start of the issues and for many businesses it can be hard to answer this question. In travel, you will be attempting to make the travel agent experience easier. However, new technology processes will also touch marketing, finance, operations and end users. Failing to fully understand the needs and requirements of all project stakeholders can result in a solution that does not meet their needs. So, get them involved early on.

Once you have your requirements, deliver that project first, as constant changes are extremely hard to manage mid-project. They will always cause delays and will result in the delivery of the project costing more. Be aware that the technology provider should not pick up the cost for this.

Technology is complex – there may be issues with software and dealing with cruise lines, bed banks, care hire suppliers, airlines and payment gateways add extra complexities. This may cause project delays and challenges.

What's more, a bespoke technology system will be extremely expensive to build and costly to maintain. Choose a software as a service (SAAS) product and build your processes around this.

In fact, implementing new technology is also a good time to review processes, as a new technology system without new processes will not provide a silver bullet to your challenges.

Resources matter

Open communication and working in partnership are the best ways to deal with the previous points raised. It is important that there is a dedicated person who is dealing with the technology provider and that they take responsibility for working with them. Hence, you need adequate resources at your business to make the project work. Some employees may need to be released from some of their day-to-day duties as the project progresses.

Scope creep is a real pet hate of mine. With this, the technology company will scope your project and know roughly how long it will take to deliver. When a customer constantly attempts to add in new features and functionality, the timeline and cost will need to move to accommodate this.

Think of your project like a full glass of water. If you keep adding water, it will overflow and require more resources – extra glasses to accommodate it. Also think of the spillage mess in the middle of this task. Scope creep is messy so stay on track.

At the end of a project, the technology company will perform quality assurance tasks and then hand the system over to you as the customer to perform user acceptance testing. Ensure you record the training sessions provided so you have these for anyone in the business to watch at a future time, or if you need a refresher session. The technology company cannot keep providing free-of-charge training, so ensure you are self-sufficient going forwards. This will also help you get the most out of your new system. 📌



“A bespoke technology system will be extremely expensive to build and costly to maintain”

CRESSIDA SERGEANT
CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER
TRAVELTEK



Inadequate requirement gathering for new technology can lead to painful and costly issues



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines



MAKE IT A YEAR TO REMEMBER

Save up to £500pp on a great selection of 2023 cruises from only £599pp.

To celebrate the arrival of warmer, brighter days, we're giving your customers the chance to sail the world for less. From awe-inspiring cruises in the Norwegian Fjords to culture-filled trips to Spain and Portugal, you will find plenty of hand-crafted itineraries to inspire.



Sail our smaller ships

Our elegant, smaller ships are spacious and uncrowded, with lots of restaurants and lounges for guests to relax in. Smaller also means we can journey to the places bigger ships can't reach.



Explore our hand-crafted itineraries

Our Journey Planners hand-craft each itinerary to take in nature's gems and cultural highlights. From a perfectly-timed sailing to witness the 'Midnight Sun' in Norway, to capturing Geysers in Iceland.



Discover the joy of the journey

With our new Signature Experiences, we'll bring guests destinations to life whilst on board. From seeking out wildlife on deck, to sampling authentic flavours in our cookery demonstrations and tastings.



Travel in the best of company

There's a phrase we say in Norwegian – 'i det beste selskap' – which means 'In the best of company'. And, on a cruise with Fred. Olsen, our guests really are. From our warm and friendly atmosphere, to journeying with like-minded travellers.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP

SALES TEAM

Our Account Managers and Sales Support team are here to help you to promote and sell our cruises, they would love to hear from you.

Call us on: 01473 746 164 or
Email us: cruise.sales@fredolsen.co.uk

TRADE MARKETING

We have a Marketing Team who are here to help you with tools and support including copy, imagery, video, over-branded materials and social media assets.

Email us: trade.marketing@fredolsen.co.uk

BRAND TRAINING

We'd love to help your teams understand more about what makes us different. Our dedicated Brand Training Manager is here to assist in person or with virtual training requirements to help you be more successful.

michelle.tingley@fredolsen.co.uk

Visit our Travel Agent Centre
at fredolsencruises.com/agent



To join our Trade Facebook group,
simply scan this code with your device



ENJOY YOURSELF

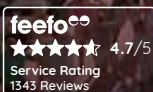
ON A PREMIUM VALUE CRUISE





AMBASSADORTM

CRUISE LINE



IT'S THE BEST VALUE AT SEA

SAY HELLO AT
ambassadorcruiseline.com



DIGGING INTO THE DATA

UniFida managing director **Jo Young**, who spoke at the *Cruise Trade News* and CLIA Supercharging Digital Marketing workshop, explains the importance of using data to generate growth

How important are digital solutions for the future of cruise marketing?

The digital landscape has grown over the past few years. During the pandemic, cruise customers gained more confidence in researching the digital marketplace and booking online. Cruising is also appealing to a younger audience who are naturally more digitally savvy. Given the competitiveness of cruise brands, and based on online trends, digital solutions are essential for the future of marketing in cruise.

What are your top tips for travel agents to enable them to succeed with digital marketing?

A top tip is to map out all the potential touchpoints on the way to a cruise booking, across both digital and non-digital channels. With digital marketing this means understanding a customer's digital path from being aware of a cruise brand (maybe from a shared social media post, for example), to researching cruise options, such as

through Google, and to being aware of attractive offers.

Travel agents are used to thinking like a customer and can use the digital map to understand where they can best tap into these touchpoints. For example, encouraging existing customers to share experiences on social media can create digital word of mouth recommendations.

How important is data to the future of marketing?

Data is essential and it always has been. It gives us the information needed to satisfy customers' needs. However, what has become more important is the need to collect, organise, interpret and use the data more effectively, as the paths to booking have grown more complicated.

How can you convince those who are wary of using data, perhaps due to a lack of skills, that it is the right course of action?

It is understandable that some are wary of using data, but travel agents are



Jo Young says technology and data are vital marketing tools

already doing data, to some degree. More technology is necessary because of the speed and vastness of collecting, organising and using digital data, which can make it more daunting. However, travel agents should think of it as just information about current and future needs.





A top tip is to map out all the potential touchpoints on the way to a cruise booking

“The need to collect, interpret and use data more effectively has grown as the paths to booking have become more complicated”

What are the challenges of using data?

The challenge is that there can be so much that it appears scary. The trick is look at it from a customer perspective and identify the key touchpoints – such as a website search for a particular cruise, a phone call, an email click-through, and so on. Identify the high-value data that could help enhance the sales process. Then it is worth sourcing the particular skills to help you fill and use the missing data to boost the sales process.

How can the cruise industry better manage its marketing budgets?

Optimising budgets is about first and foremost understanding what parts of the marketing budget are

working at bringing in new or existing customers. The marketing mix will be quite different for these two customer segments. Also, we should understand at what point in the sales process different channels work. Direct mail and social media may be good for brand awareness, but phone calls or emails may be better for closing the sale.

Email is typically the most cost-effective way to market to those who have given their contact details. The email message can be personalised and targeted at the right time, especially if you can combine this with an understanding of their past purchase or current website research behaviour. It is important to understand – and respect – the value of an email address.

How useful was the CTN/CLIA supercharging digital marketing event?

The event showed how much the industry is changing and how important it is to keep up to date with these trends. For example, changes in one area have an impact in other aspects of cruising, such as the trends in digital marketing echoing the willingness for customers to use technology on board, and vice versa.

What were your key takeaways from the day?

Cruise lines are competing fiercely for passengers and travel agents are uniquely positioned to help customers navigate the vast cruising landscape. Trends in digital marketing mean looking anew at cruise marketing and the sales journey, but the principles of marketing do not change – matching the right cruise to each person at the best time for them. Data and technology help us do that. 📊



Looking at the process from a customer perspective can help identify high-value data

Spotlight On



Cruise recruitment

C&M Travel Recruitment MD **Barbara Kolosinska** and team leader and cruise recruitment specialist **Rachel Elmore** discuss the current challenges in finding and retaining talented people

The year has got off to a terrifically busy start, but every single cruise company out there is still experiencing some level of difficulty in retaining or recruiting staff. The key for the whole sector is training and upskilling.

The advantages are clear – offering comprehensive training programmes to the sector's talent will provide numerous rewards that will benefit the individual, their employer and the whole industry. However, the current level of training in cruise varies wildly from operator to operator.

Some cruise companies provide thorough training courses lasting six weeks or longer, teaching new recruits everything they will need for their role, whereas other operators with fewer resources can only offer one week of training at most. The quality of training also differs across the sector. Companies without their own training team will typically pull a sales manager away from their usual duties and ask them to train a new recruit for their first five days.

However, those with in-house trainers can offer longer educational programmes over a number of weeks, resulting in each new recruit having a far higher chance of being instantly successful in their role. These companies also often hire candidates based on their attitude and personality rather than their skills and experience – allowing for a far greater talent pool to choose from.



BARBARA KOLOSINSKA
C&M Travel Recruitment MD



RACHEL ELMORE
C&M recruitment specialist

“We must do more as an industry to support and guide the fantastic talent within the cruise sector”

Train to thrive

When looking at comprehensive training and upskilling programmes, only very few cruise companies can put their hand up in 2023 and say, “I’m already doing that”. Offering these training opportunities will allow the talent in the sector to thrive and reach their full potential, as well as

generate loyalty in the employee towards their company. It will also ensure that we keep hold of talented individuals in the cruise industry rather than losing them to other sectors.

However, training and upskilling doesn't end after an employee's probation period. Some cruise companies offer opportunities for career progression, but not all are able to. For instance, some quality niche cruise operators have a low level of staff turnover, but this creates the side effect of placing limits on an employee's potential for promotion.

Conversely, some companies in the sector are very good at promoting from within and at C&M we have placed many candidates in lower-level cruise roles who have since moved up to become product managers, product executives and customer service managers. Another client of ours has developed a programme to work in luxury cruise.

Unfortunately, the cruise industry generally pays less than other travel sectors. In order to combat this, we have no choice but to increase salaries, but training and clear career progression opportunities must also be available.

Those already working in cruise should proactively look for opportunities to advance their skills and ask their management team about what training options are available to them. Cruise is a wonderfully attractive sector to work in, but we must do more as an industry to support and guide the fantastic talent within it. 📌

Win at Selling Group travel

Discover the top tips for pitching cruise holidays to clients who are keen to travel in groups



Earlier this year, Explora Journeys revealed its latest group travel programme. The Journey Together Gatherings concept has been designed to expand travel opportunities for extended families or friendship groups.

According to the luxury line, its suites on board have been designed as 'Homes at Sea' with spacious living areas. When booking a minimum of three/maximum of four suites, with one suite required to be an Ocean Penthouse or Ocean Residence, groups "can enjoy this space together as a social hub, to gather, relax and enjoy each other's company in a private setting", the operator said.

Digging deeper, Explora chief sales officer Chris Austin tells *Cruise Trade News*: "Our Journey Together Gatherings are perfect for a family reunion or extended multi-generational family,

"The appeal of travelling with others is the opportunity for discovery with like-minded people"

a gathering of friends, or milestone celebration. With the increased desire for family, social and multi-generation travel, the Journey Together Gatherings programme provides travel agents with a creative new approach. This is a simple turn-key solution for travel agents to offer past clients in their existing database."

Indeed, as Austin highlights, many lines are seeing demand for group cruises. For example, Ambassador Cruise Line has numerous offers, such as an additional five per cent group discount on saver fares and Ambassador fares, for groups of more 15 guests, as well as preferential dining arrangements, among other things.

Head of distribution Nicola Harper explains: "Whether they are a club, society, business or friends, Ambassador can offer a group the opportunity to experience an authentic cruise holiday together."

Sharing experiences

The appeal of travelling with others on a cruise, says Austin, is the opportunity for discovery with like-minded people. "Our Journey Together programmes offer the opportunity for guests who share the same

interests to discover new destinations safely and with the company of others," he says. "Our vibrant, cosmopolitan, boutique hotel vibe will naturally attract guests who want a more personalised experience. The intimate size of our ship transports guests at a slower pace off the beaten path where larger ships cannot go."

Ambassador Cruise Line, which primarily targets the 50 plus market with a premium value offering, "has been a real hit" since its launch, says Harper.

Harper continues: "Meeting new people as an over 50 is no different than at any other age, but if it isn't something people are used to, it's normal to feel a little uncomfortable. The key thing to remember is that everyone feels the same way – some are just better at hiding it than others – and a group cruise can really help bring people together and give guests who are unsure of cruising the confidence to travel." 🗨️

SELLING TIPS

- "Take advantage of the marketing resources offered to help stay in touch with existing clients and attract new ones," says Austin.
- Harper urges agents to "outline what guests can expect while travelling and clearly explain the benefits groups can enjoy". Groups can be "very loyal and hard work will pay off in the end".
- Austin says: "Seek out possible group opportunities through local social organisations, clubs and community events."



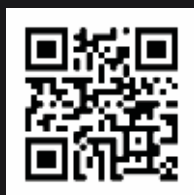
Toast one year to go until Queen Anne sets sail



Win a Balcony Stateroom on Queen Anne's maiden voyage

To celebrate one year until Queen Anne sets sail, we're giving away a balcony stateroom on her maiden voyage for you and a guest. To be in with a chance to win, be sure to play all your Cunard Fare and Early Saver Fare bookings made between 3 May and 31 May.

We're also offering additional money for guests to spend on board on selected 2023 and 2024 voyages between 3 May and 31 July.



For more information visit
Shinerewardsclub.com

QUEEN MARY 2

QUEEN VICTORIA



YOUR VOYAGE TO RECOGNITION AND REWARD

Start shining with Cunard

What is Shine Rewards Club?

Shine Rewards Club is all about rewarding you for your hard work. From making a Cunard Fare booking, to joining our webinars and testing your knowledge on quizzes, you'll always earn Shine points.

How can I spend my Shine points?

You can buy vouchers for retailers, including M&S, ASOS and The White Company, plus restaurant vouchers. Or you can use your Shine points to pay 25%, 50% or 100% of any fare type on your own Cunard voyage.

What are Shine points?

At Shine Rewards Club, Shine points can be used to treat yourself to a host of rewards. Shine points are valid for 2 years, and points you earn from Cunard or P&O Cruises will be combined.

What else is available at shinerewardsclub.com?

The latest news, training and details about Cunard promotions are all available at Shine Rewards Club.



QUEEN ELIZABETH

QUEEN ANNE

BUILDING BLOCKS

CroisiEurope has its eyes firmly set on boosting its presence in the UK market, with new team members and a dedicated call centre

In the past few months, CroisiEurope – which is Europe's largest river cruise operator with more than 50 ships sailing on over 30 waterways worldwide – has signalled its intent to significantly grow its UK business.

The cruise line has invested in a new call centre to allow it to sell flight-inclusive packages in the UK for the first time. The investment “opens up a number of new opportunities... and will enable the company to target new audiences and effectively grow the business in the UK”, the company said.

When the news was announced in February, CroisiEurope UK sales director John Fair said: “With strong sales and increased interest in our river, ocean, coastal and hotel barge products, now is the perfect time to invest in the UK and

further reinforce our commitment to this very important market.

“We're really excited to be working with Blue Water Holidays who will be managing our call centre. We've enjoyed a successful relationship with them for many years and I'm confident that they can help us with our expansion plans in the UK.”

Growing the UK team

More was to come just a few weeks later, with the appointment of Janine Sykes in the new position of business development manager (BDM) for the north of England and Scotland. Sykes, who started on 14 March, has spent the past 25 years working as a BDM in the travel industry, most recently with 3For Limited, where she represented Norwegian Cruise Line.

Sykes has been tasked with building and managing relationships with new and existing trade and industry partners, supporting the business in delivering strategy and core initiatives and identifying new opportunities.

Sykes said: “I'm delighted to be joining the CroisiEurope team at such an exciting time, with the launch of the new call centre and the ability to offer ATOL-protected fly/cruise packages for the first time. I look forward to working closely with our trade partners

in the north and helping drive forward CroisiEurope's growth plans.”

Fair added: “Janine's appointment clearly demonstrates our commitment, not only to growing the business, but to investing in the UK and supporting our agent partners in northern England and Scotland. I'm delighted to welcome Janine on board and am confident her vast experience, energy and passion for the travel industry will prove invaluable.”

This investment in the UK team also comes at a time when CroisiEurope has unveiled a range of new cruises for this



CroisiEurope is Europe's largest river cruise operator



“With strong sales and more interest in river, ocean, coastal and hotel barge products, it's the perfect time to invest in the UK”



CroisiEurope is expanding its offering to provide flight-inclusive packages.

PHOTO: ©BERAUER

“CroisiEurope has unveiled a range of new ocean and coastal voyages, a new hotel barge cruise and hiking cruises”

year. For its ocean operation, the line is offering itineraries from the Moroccan coast to the Mediterranean, while coastal voyages will take place from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

Guests will also be able to take a new hotel barge cruise from the Petite Seine to the Yonne, as well as hiking cruises in the Canary Islands and Corsica, and a three-night Christmas Markets cruise from Strasbourg to Basel that takes in the festive traditions of Alsace and Switzerland.

CroisiEurope also has a selection of special offers to celebrate 10 years

of the *Cyrano de Bergerac* operating on the Gironde as well as 30 years of operation on the Danube.

On the Gironde, CroisiEurope is offering discounts of up to £330pp on all 2023 departures plus all excursions, a choice of free deck upgrade, or no single supplement on all April 2023 departures and a choice of no single supplement or free cruise for children under 16 on all July and August 2023 departures. On the Danube, discounts of up to £385pp are available, plus no single supplement on select sailings. ①



ONE-TO-ONE WITH CROISIEUROPE'S JOHN FAIR

Why is now the right time to grow your UK business?

We have made an excellent start to 2023 and river cruise in general is returning to growth. Taking those factors into consideration, along with the increased need for financially protected packages, we felt that this was the perfect time to make the investment in the new call centre.

How will your trade relationships evolve now that this investment is forthcoming?

This new investment will open up new accounts, strengthen long-standing relationships and give agents more confidence to book CroisiEurope.

What else can agents expect from CroisiEurope this year?

With the appointment of a new business development manager, agents can expect more contact from us as well as more training opportunities and more offers.

How are sales looking at present and demand for the remainder of this year?

I'm delighted to say that we have now returned to 2019 levels and are continuing to see good demand. 2023 looks as though it will be strong and we will be putting 2024 itineraries on sale soon.

2024 NOW ON SALE: UP TO 15% EARLY BOOKING DISCOUNT



UNIQUE RIVER CRUISES



WHY CHOOSE TO CRUISE WITH CROISIEUROPE?

Widest choice of
river cruises

Dedicated UK
trade call centre

Commission on full package
price ATOL and ABTA bonded



MS RENOI, PARIS

NOW OFFERING ATOL PROTECTED FLY-CRUISE PACKAGES!



SOUTHERN EUROPE ON A CRUISE



VENICE

From the canals of Venice to Renaissance-infused Mantua

7-DAY / 6-NIGHT FLY-CRUISE PACKAGE:
Venice • Chioggia Porto Viro • Padua • Canda • Ostiglia
Verona • Cremona • Mantua • Venice

2023 DEPARTURES: May, June & July • from £1,200/pp.⁽¹⁾



SEVILLE

Andalusia: Tradition, Gastronomy and Flamenco

8-DAY / 7-NIGHT FLY-CRUISE PACKAGE:
Seville • Cordoba • Cadiz • El Puerto De Santa Maria
Isla Minima Granada • Seville

2023 Departures: July • from £1,629/pp.⁽²⁾



RETURN FLIGHTS FROM LONDON & AIRPORT TO PORT TRANSFERS

DISCOVER FRENCH RIVERS



SAINT-ÉMILION

Bordeaux: Châteaux & Vineyards

7-DAY / 6-NIGHT FLY-CRUISE PACKAGE: Bordeaux
Cussac-Fort-Médoc • Royan • Rochefort • La Rochelle
Libourne • Saint-Émilion • Cadillac • Arcachon • Bordeaux

2023 Departures: May, June & July
from £1,292/pp.⁽³⁾ £1,540/pp.



MS LOIRE PRINCESSE

The Loire, a Royal Legacy

6-DAY / 5-NIGHT FLY-CRUISE PACKAGE:
Nantes • Saint-Nazaire • Ancenis • Chalonnes-Sur-Loire
The Châteaux of the Loire Valley • Nantes

2023 Departures: May, June & July
from £1,443/pp.⁽⁵⁾ £1,605/pp.



HONFLEUR

The Meandering Seine

7-DAY / 6-NIGHT FLY-CRUISE PACKAGE:
Honfleur • Rouen • Mantes-La-Jolie • Paris • Melun • Paris

2023 Departures: May & July
from £960/pp.⁽⁴⁾ £1,330/pp.



AVIGNON

The Saône and the Rhône

8-DAY / 7-NIGHT FLY-CRUISE PACKAGE:
Lyon • Mâcon • Vienne • Avignon • Arles • The Camargue
Arles • Viviers • Tournon • Lyon

2023 Departures: June & July
from £1,314/pp.⁽⁶⁾ £1,857/pp.

EXOTIC CRUISES



RV AFRICAN DREAM

Safari-cruise in Southern Africa

9-DAY / 8-NIGHT FLY-CRUISE PACKAGE:
South Africa • Botswana • Namibia • Zimbabwe

2023 Departures: May to December • from £5,645/pp.⁽⁷⁾

+ FREE HELICOPTER FLIGHT OVER VICTORIA FALLS



RV INDOCHINE II

Along the Mekong

11-DAY / 10-NIGHT FLY-CRUISE PACKAGE:
Cambodia • Vietnam

2023 Departures: August to December
from £3,561/pp.⁽⁸⁾ £4,115/pp.



RETURN FLIGHTS FROM LONDON & AIRPORT TO PORT TRANSFERS

INFORMATION AND RESERVATIONS:

Tel. 01756 691 269 • agents@croisieurope.co.uk • For our full range of special offers visit our website.

<https://pro-uk.croisieurope.com/login-b2b>    

Prices based on: (1) 9 april departure. (2) 20 july departure. (3) 29 july departure. (4) 11 april departure. (5) 10 july departure. (6) 24 july departure. (7) 24 november departure. (8) 23 august departure. - All prices and offers are based on two adults sharing a double cabin, category C, are correct at time of going to press, subject to availability, apply to new bookings only, cannot be applied retrospectively and can be withdrawn at any time. Terms and conditions apply. All the flight-inclusive holidays are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. When you pay you will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please ask for it and check to ensure that everything you booked (flights, cruise, hotels and other services) is listed on it. CroisiEurope UK Ltd partners with Blue Water Holidays Ltd for ATOL protection. Blue Water Holidays is a company registered in England and Wales, number 4085664. CroisiEurope UK Ltd registered office: 3rd Floor, Waverley House, 7-12 Noel Street, London, W1F 8GQ. © Grégory Gérault, Shutterstock, CroisiEurope, Kevin Hogan, Alexandre Sattler, Creastudio 2304018.



Fast Facts

Amadeus Riva, the latest ship from Amadeus River Cruises, sets new standards for luxury river cruising with five-star travel comfort combined with cutting edge technology. The ship – sailing on the Rhine, the Danube and the Dutch and Belgian waterways – follows the progressive design and top-level standard that the Amadeus fleet is famous for, accompanied by generously designed public spaces and numerous luxury outdoor and dining venues such as the elegant Panorama Restaurant, the classic Café Vienna, the glazed open-air River Terrace bar and a spacious sun deck with relaxed lounge and outdoor restaurant. There is also a choice of stylish suites and cabins featuring walk-out balconies and lowerable panoramic windows.

158

PASSENGERS

46

CREW

135m

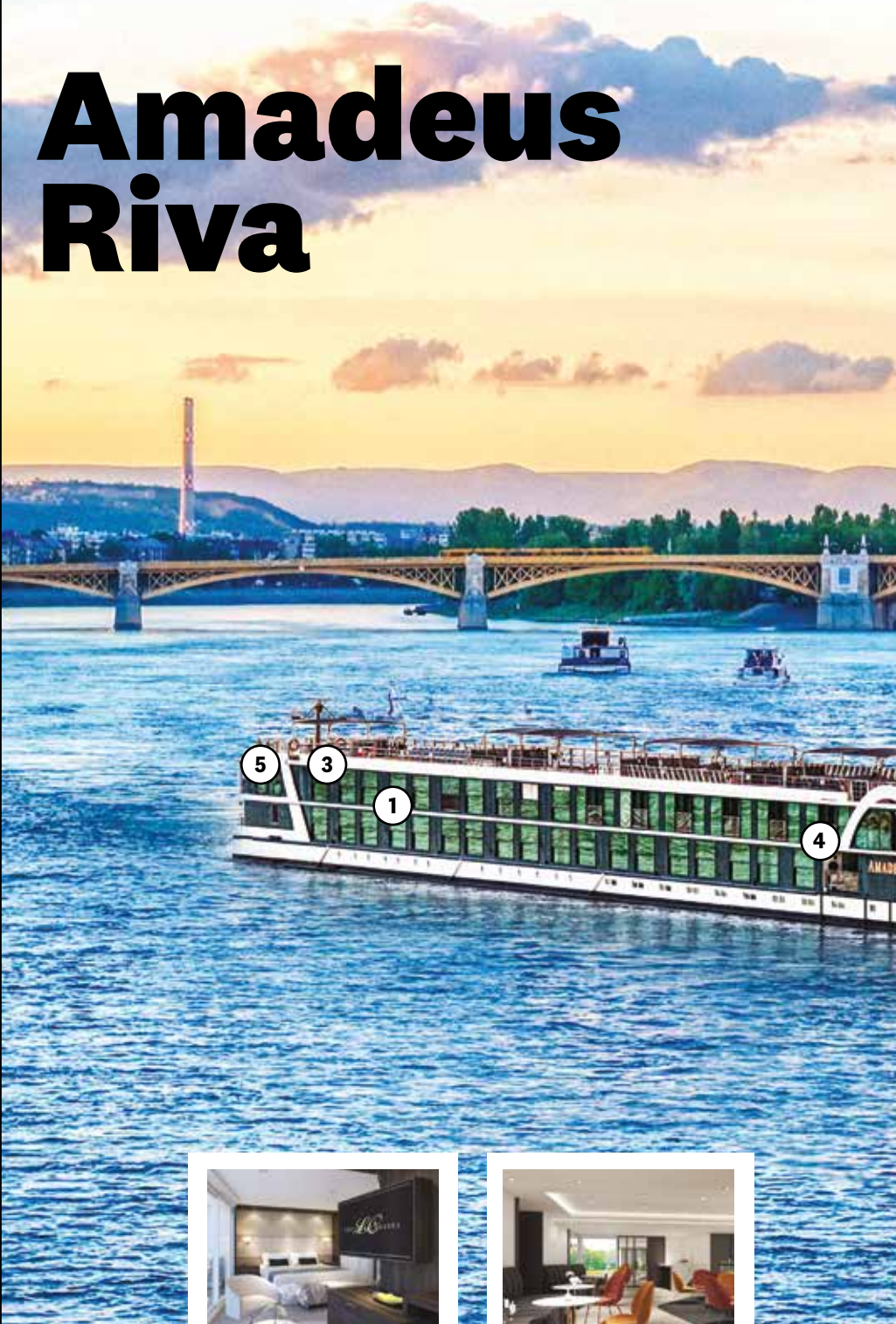
LENGTH

4

DECKS

25km/h

SPEED



1



Accommodation
Amadeus Riva offers a choice of elegantly appointed accommodation. The 12 Amadeus suites feature walk-out balconies while the 67 deluxe cabins mainly feature lowerable panoramic windows. Each contemporary accommodation comes with a spacious en-suite bathroom, a mini bar and much more.

2



Café Vienna
This lovely area features plush couches and chairs set around a cluster of tables decorated with fresh flowers. Guests can choose from a wide variety of authentic Viennese specialty coffees such as wiener eiskaffee, made with milk, vanilla ice cream and whipped cream.



3

Restaurants

Amadeus Riva offers multiple dining options, including the elegant Panorama Restaurant serving up a magnificent breakfast buffet, numerous lunch options and five-course evening menus. There is also the Sun Deck, which offers an al-fresco dining area on sunny days, and the open-air River Terrace lounge.



4

Culinary excellence

With the importance of food and hospitality in Austrian culture, cuisine always been a centrepiece of the *Amadeus* experience. *Amadeus Riva* delights its guests with mindfully composed menus offering numerous choices of regional specialties prepared with the freshest ingredients.



5

Sustainability

Amadeus Riva incorporates the very latest technology in sustainable travel. The state-of-the-art ship's engine not only enables highly efficient energy management but also significantly reduces CO₂ emissions. Equally innovative is the ship's newly developed air filtration system with two-stage purification.



adventure made effortless



Get more from your tour

At Titan, we create incredible travel experiences. Our effortless adventures take you to destinations around the world, where you'll see more and do more - see epic landscapes, explore culturally rich cities, taste exquisite food and meet extraordinary people. At Titan, we go further for you to get more from your tour and that's why we're the UK's most awarded escorted tour company.



Journey on the Mighty Mississippi 16 days from £5,869

- 22 meals included
- 3 excursions & visits
- Local Titan tour manager
- Travel in destination by coach
- Includes our VIP door-to-door travel service†

Price based on 9 September 23 departure.
Other dates available.



0800 988 5898



titantravel.co.uk

Prices are per person based on two people sharing, subject to availability and correct at time of print, single supplements applicable. † Mainland UK only



CTN *investigates*

Creating CONNECTIONS

The way in which cruise lines advertise and market their product is evolving, but how will these developments influence its public perception? **Gary Peters** investigates

Gone are the days when cruise lines had a select few avenues in which to impart their messages. Today, there are more possibilities than ever, with key messages often tailored to speak to a specific audience, on a specific method of communication. With multiple ways in which to connect and attract people, cruise lines – and indeed some travel agencies – are blazing a path forward.

“The single most noticeable change for cruise has been the emergence, indeed explosion, in cruise enthusiasts that have become influencers,” says Digital Drums

chief executive Steve Dunne. “YouTube, for example, is awash with video reviews and tours of dozens of different cruise brands and ships, presented not by TV celebrities but by people like the viewer – fellow ordinary cruisers. Instagram and Twitter have thousands of influencers talking cruise and doing so with an honesty and passion TV celebrities just can’t replicate.

“Both influencers and television have moved cruise very much into the mainstream in the eyes of the public, making it have a less exclusive or out of reach style travel experience.”

What’s more, it’s not just the way in which messages are spread that is shifting, but also the content and meaning in the messages themselves. The PC Agency CEO Paul Charles says lines are switching from a “traditional focus of advertising ships to one of highlighting the experiences you get as a couple or family”.

He continues: “Cruise lines are tugging at our emotions and showcasing the emotional benefits of cruising, including sharing moments with loved ones, enjoying incredible food, or experiencing wellbeing and exciting adventure sports in fresh destinations. Advertising has



Connecting with customers is now more complex due to the abundance of platforms

ILLUSTRATION: PHIL COUZENS



P&O's Ruth Venn notes the challenge of reaching the wider holiday market

matured from talking about a ship and its size to demonstrating why guests will have such a great holiday because of these experiences. That shift to the emotional side is clearly working – as cruise bookings continue to defy expectations in most cases.”

Breaking the mould

So, what do these changes look like in practice? Last year, Riviera Travel launched a campaign designed to “break the mould” in river cruise advertising. The operator invested more than £3.7m in the Forever Curious campaign, which appeared across a host of channels, including various trade marketing platforms. Partnership trade activities were launched, including e-shots, social media posts, direct mail and print and

digital advertising. In addition, television, radio and digital advertising also ran.

“For us the key objective is to cut through what can otherwise – particularly in the river cruise space – be a bit of a sea of sameness,” says Riviera Travel head of brand and acquisition Sarah Fowler. “It’s harder to create strong differentiation in the product than it is in ocean cruising, and as a result, much of the advertising across brands can look quite similar.

“In our most recent campaign, Forever Curious, rather than focusing on the functional inclusions of a river cruise holiday, we decided to tap into the customer’s mindset and the emotional benefits of cruising with us.”

These emotional-based concepts are equally prevalent in ocean cruise. “Our marketing creative reflects the importance of time together,” P&O Cruises director of sales Ruth Venn explains to *Cruise Trade News*. “For example, our previous TV campaign highlighted the collection of small, personal memories that make holidays meaningful and memorable.”

Venn says these ads “cast real life relationships including a married couple, parent and child, and two friends”, telling how a P&O Cruises holiday “offers guests exceptional experiences to share with their loved ones”. The challenge, as Venn highlights, is to ensure that campaigns “reach beyond the cruise category to the

wider holiday market and speak to an audience which may never have thought about a cruise holiday before”.

While the likes of P&O Cruises and many other large lines are well versed in TV campaigns, APT & Travelmarvel created its first earlier this year, to “explore fresh channels through which to introduce the brands to a new audience”, says the operator’s head of sales and business development Brad Bennetts.

“It’s a crowded marketplace,” he adds. “It is therefore key that campaigns can succinctly establish the core values and USPs of our brands and create affinity with prospective customers. With many of us offering the same destinations, this is best achieved by focusing on the unique aspects of the fleet, the staff and the experiences on offer.”

A new focus

While this drive for new-to-cruise guests is dominant in nearly all advertising and marketing, in January MSC Cruises decided to mix it up with a global promotion to showcase how sustainability “is at the beating heart of its daily activities and long-term growth strategy”.

The Discover the Future of Cruising campaign, visible in more than 30 countries, included a multi-channel output on TV, print media, digital and social media. A one-minute TV ad was filmed on board the line’s first liquefied natural gas (LNG) powered ship, *MSC World Europa*, which came into service late last year.

MSC chief marketing officer Antonio Burrello says: “We aspire to make it central to the brand’s DNA and the way we operate as a business. I think it’s important for us to share our story because we’ve been investing in sustainability for over a decade. This campaign shows our customers that we have embarked on an ambitious



Sarah Fowler says Riviera Travel is focusing on impactful messaging

sustainability journey and we are determined to push our efforts further in order to meet our objective of net zero emissions by 2050.

“Sustainability is a complex area to navigate and data must be understood in context,” Burrello explains. “So, when we started developing and implementing our sustainability-focused work, we wanted to make sure we focused on the tangible environmental benefits and actions, taking extra effort to ensure that any of our claims are fact-based and verifiable.”

This chimes with what CLIA UK & Ireland MD Andy Harmer says is the role of cruise to “advance the environmental agenda operationally and increase traveller awareness of and commitment to the environment”.

“The commitment of cruisers and potential new cruisers to making travel decisions based on environmental considerations is higher than it was three years ago,” he continues. “Cruise lines are increasingly including environmental education in their communications, marketing and on-board offerings – and that is increasing awareness of the importance of environmental protection and advancing a green agenda.”

Nevertheless, despite advertising and marketing attempting to keep up with wider societal trends, Clare Weeden, a principal lecturer in tourism and marketing at the University of Brighton business school, argues: “For many decades a cruise company would promote to its key market segments based on what the brand stood for – its identity. This remains the case, as brand identity takes years (and money) to develop. They trade heavily on the brand’s roots, its history and the original image that developed, either purposefully or incidentally.”

Perception progress

Alongside the direct-to-consumer marketing described thus far sits the world of public relations, which in turn leads to journalism and the influence that is involved in this sphere. The cruise sector had a difficult time during the



Riviera Travel's Forever Curious campaign is geared towards the emotional benefits of river cruising

“Companies need to tell a story and ensure their messaging has wider appeal rather than simply being brand hype”

pandemic with critical headlines filling many newspapers and social media awash with less-than-favourable content.

The role of effective PR is perhaps most noticeable during a crisis but, since the restart of passenger operations and the subsequent positive cruise seasons across the globe, communication has once again focused on feel-good holiday vibes, pushing the ‘there is a cruise for everyone’ message.

David Sanders, director and founder of PR42, works with multiple clients in the travel and cruise sectors. He says: “There is still a huge amount of competition in the cruise space and messaging must stand out. Companies need to tell a story, create conversation and ensure their messaging has wider appeal rather than simply being brand hype.”

“At a tactical level, cruise lines need to demonstrate value for money to customers. That’s reflected in all media, from trade titles to tabloids to broadsheets. Whether a brand has a more basic offering or a high-end luxury

proposition, passengers want to see their budgets go as far as possible.”

So, here there exists a two-pronged attack – marketing and PR – attempting to improve the industry’s public perception. Steve Dunne says: “The trend in marketing is towards more authentic communications and we will see that more and more in cruise marketing, particularly as existing audiences age and younger demographics emerge as cruisers.”

“The launch of Virgin Voyages and its media coverage has brought the sector to the attention of new markets in a very credible way,” he continues. “I’ve been on several cruises across different brands since the end of the pandemic and, judging by guest numbers, I would say the industry is in full cry again.”

MSC’s Burrello agrees, claiming that “booking levels are getting stronger every day”, while Fowler at Riviera believes the innovation across the sector is generating “much more of a wow factor” and subsequently boosting its perception. All roads – it seems – point to progress. ❶

Stuart Pearce

Azamara is primed and ready to take its trade support and agent relationships to the next level. The line's head of trade sales UK **Stuart Pearce** speaks to Gary Peters



Stuart Pearce says Azamara has had an “amazing” wave season

trade partners,” Pearce tells *Cruise Trade News*. “It’s all about giving our partners more support and greater reach. We’re going from strength to strength here in the UK; it has been a key market for us during the wave period.”

Bookings bounce

With the benefit of hindsight, the changes in the UK team could not have come at a better time for Azamara. As Pearce says, the line has had an “amazing” wave season, with trade sales accounting for the “majority of UK bookings”.

Pearce continues: “We’ve had our best wave here in the UK and that is absolutely thanks to our trade partners. They supported us through the pause and then bouncing back have continued to do

the same. Cruise represents a great value proposition in the market, and especially with Azamara being an inclusive cruise line, with longer days in ports, more overnights and the destination immersion that we offer.”

Something that has struck Pearce is the change in the selling process and “also the process that we use with our travel partners”. He says: “Technology has played a huge part – we can use technology and have a virtual chat. Nothing will replace face-to-face; agents tell us that they still love to speak to their guests and some want to walk into a travel agency, sit in front of their favourite travel agent and have that personal experience, so it’s about finding that blend.”

Rewind to October last year. For those at Azamara, it was a significant time, as the line announced it had restructured its UK sales team, primarily to bolster market growth and generate greater confidence among trade partners in the region.

As part of the changes, David Duff, formerly the line’s international commercial director, became UK managing director, focusing on developing the UK market, driving growth and providing visible market leadership, while Stuart Pearce took on the responsibility of managing the UK sales strategy as head of trade sales UK. In addition, Moira Gregson joined as business development manager (BDM) in late 2022, followed earlier this year by Adam Morris, again as a BDM.

“It puts us in a position moving forward to support growth and better serve our



Destination immersion in locations such as Monte Carlo is a key differentiator for Azamara



The addition of *Azamara Onward* offers more availability for new customers

“Our travel partners are asking us to provide more digital content and we’ve stepped up to the mark on that”

He continues: “Our travel partners are asking us to provide more digital content and we’ve stepped up to the mark on that. We’ve just launched our new trade portal – Azamara Connect – which incorporates all of those digital assets. We also have a booking tool to support our trade partners further in making that sale. That makes it just that little bit easier.”

On the question of how he and his colleagues will make Azamara Connect the go-to portal for agents – with plenty of other platforms available in the market – Pearce explains: “We work around the travel partner... so rather than having a plan where it’s our thought process, we think about agents’ thoughts and needs first. We like to make sure it’s fun – I always think the more you keep it fun, the more you’ll be at the forefront.”

Immersion is paramount

Something else that has long kept Azamara in agents’ minds is its focus on destination immersion. With a strong emphasis on overnight stays and what it terms country intensive voyages, getting under the skin of a destination is very much the Azamara way.

“It’s our key differentiator,” says Pearce. “Longer days, more overnights, country intensive voyages – they have all been winners for us. On country intensives, guests are sailing to one country and the itinerary intensifies the ports, meaning guests can see that country to its fullest.”

The on-board offering was also boosted with the arrival of *Azamara Onward* – the line’s fourth ship in the fleet – which was christened in May 2022 in Monte Carlo.

The ship formerly sailed for Princess Cruises as *Pacific Princess* and was announced as Azamara’s latest addition following its change of ownership to Sycamore Partners.

Pearce explains: “*Azamara Onward* created huge excitement for us and the ship has performed very well, especially here in the UK. She’s loved by our guests, both those loyal to Azamara and also new to brand. Bringing in a fourth ship has given us the opportunity to offer more availability for those who hadn’t considered an Azamara cruise in the past.”

With more UK trade support available than ever before and sales pointing in the right direction, the Azamara story in the UK seems set for yet more successful chapters. 📍



The internationally renowned Museum of Islamic Art houses masterpieces from three continents, spanning 1,400 years

A GRAND WELCOME

The Grand Cruise Terminal in Doha now provides a spectacular welcome for visitors, as well as easy access to the very best of what Qatar has to offer



Located at the south-eastern corner of the Arabian peninsula, Qatar is fast emerging as a prominent cruise destination in the winter season, not least due to the opening of the new Grand Cruise Terminal in 2022.

The deluxe new terminal can welcome up to 12,000 passengers per day, with dual terminals serving two berths. The elegant Arabic-style design features 1,174 arches. Covering more than 24,000 square metres, the terminal offers passengers seamless immigration and customs services, foreign exchange services, taxi and bus stands, a duty-free shop, cafe, specially designed waiting areas for cruise passengers and staff, and other tourist information services.

Passengers arrive and depart via stunning glass tunnels that feature the region's largest aquarium. The aquarium is located between the two terminals in the centre of the building and within City Gallery, which is open to the public and surrounded by gardens outside. Open-air events can also be hosted on the large terrace stretching across both terminals.

This spectacular building is also the gateway to the countless sightseeing and cultural discoveries that await in Qatar.



Guests arriving at the terminal will be awestruck by its architecture

“The Grand Cruise Terminal is the gateway to the countless sightseeing and cultural discoveries that await in Qatar”

Legacy plans

Strategically located in the heart of Doha, the Grand Cruise Terminal is close to many of the city's most popular tourist attractions, such as the Corniche, the Museum of Islamic Art, the National Museum of Qatar, Msheireb Downtown and Souq Waqif, the traditional market.

The terminal is also adjacent to Mina District, home to winding lanes and colourful buildings in pink, orange, teal, blue and yellow. The district is home to shops selling clothes, beauty products, paintings, oud or perfume, fishing equipment and more. Food lovers can take their pick from a wide range of restaurants and cafes – including Chabrat Al Mina, the fish restaurant located in the fresh fish market in Mina District.

Looking forward to the 2023/24 season, Qatar anticipates a wider variety of cruise lines calling into the country, including small luxury ships from operators such as Windstar Cruises and Oceania Cruises.

There's plenty of space to relax just outside the terminal





The delightful Mina District has a wide range of shops and restaurants

“Qatar’s compact size and ease of accessibility means visitors can pack a lot into 24 hours”



A trip on a traditional dhow offers a different perspective of the city

The rise of Qatar’s cruising industry follows on the heels of the world’s largest sporting event, the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, which put the country on the map for billions of avid fans around the world.

During the tournament, Qatar hosted three cruise ships – *MSC World Europa*, which also had its official naming ceremony in Doha – *MSC Poesia* and *MSC Opera*. Thousands of football fans stayed on the ships during the World Cup, providing an opportunity for those who’d never before set foot on a ship to experience a taste of cruising.

Compact and accessible

There’s so much to experience in Qatar, but the country’s compact size and ease of accessibility means visitors can pack a lot into 24 hours. Once passengers have gone through the impressive Grand Cruise Terminal, it’s a short walk to the Mina District, a pretty collection of colourful shops and restaurants. The main attraction is aforementioned the fish market, which is well worth a stop for lunch.

Delve into the soul of Qatar at Souq Waqif, where visitors can stumble across traditional Qatari artefacts displayed



The Grand Cruise Terminal will give a boost to Qatar’s cruise sector

throughout the scattered stalls of this traditional marketplace, while exploring intricate alleyways full of local treasures.

Across from the souq is Msheireb Downtown Doha, the world’s first sustainable downtown regeneration project. Buildings and structures in the area create a unique fusion of modern design with traditional Qatari architecture. With an aim to revive the old commercial district in Doha, the redevelopment utilises the latest in sustainable technologies and the highest standards in green building.

Architecture and art

Qatar has a long list of awe-inspiring architecture and a thriving art scene, the pinnacle of which is the National Museum of Qatar, which takes visitors on a journey through Qatar’s fascinating natural, social and political history.



“With an abundance of undiscovered experiences and varied itineraries, Qatar is suitable for every type of traveller”



Souq Waqif is the place to go for traditional Qatari artefacts

The iconic Museum of Islamic Art, by the award-winning I. M. Pei, reopened last October, after an extensive period of renovation and refurbishment. Doha is fast becoming one of the world’s top luxury shopping destinations with a range of grand and unique malls, featuring high-end brands, select fashion labels and lifestyle boutiques. Highlights include the Pearl-Qatar, Galleries Lafayette and Place Vendôme.

The Pearl-Qatar is a man-made island near Doha’s prestigious West Bay District. Featuring Mediterranean-style yacht-lined marinas, residential towers, villas and hotels, the area also offers a luxurious shopping experience



Heading to the desert provides a completely different experience

with premium designer boutiques and showrooms.

The island is home to modern dining spots – from refreshing ice cream parlours to five-star culinary experiences – and stands out for its pedestrian-friendly squares and plazas, along with its wide range of landscaped gardens.

Head out of the city and into the desert for a completely different experience. Qatar is home to the impressive Inland Sea, or Khor Al Adaid, a UNESCO-recognised site. Situated to the south of the city, the Inland Sea is one of the few places in the world where the sea encroaches into the desert.

Its beach features clear waters and fine sand, surrounded by miles of desert. Accessible only by 4X4, even getting to this haven is an adventure, as guests will pass Bedouin settlements and camels before dune bashing over the sandy hills.

Qatar features an abundance of undiscovered experiences and varied itineraries suitable for every type of traveller and is fast emerging as one of the most exciting global travel destinations. ❶



MISSISSIPPI CALLING

It's America's second longest river, meandering some 2,350 miles from its source in Minnesota through 10 states. In fact, the Mississippi is so big that native Americans named it Misi-ziibi – the father of rivers. **Deborah Stone** reports

Old Man River has always been central to America's economy, which is why it's such a rich source of culture and history for visitors. It's also home to 60 per cent of all bird species in the country and countless mammals, reptiles and amphibians. No wonder it's the most popular river cruise destination in the US.

However, although there have been steamboats on the river since the 1800s and cruise ships from the 1940s, it wasn't until the current *American Queen* was launched in 1995 that Mississippi cruises as we know them began to be established. Now owned by American Queen Voyages, *American Queen* is the largest river steamboat ever built, an authentic copy of a classic Mississippi riverboat.

Three cruise lines operate on the river – American Queen Voyages (AQV),

American Cruise Lines and Viking – although Light Blue Travel is the UK general sales agency for AQV. Titan Travel and Saga also sell escorted holidays that include cruises on *American Queen*, while Fred. \ Holidays sells American Cruise Lines trips for the UK market.

'A way of life'

"The Mississippi Delta is more than just a geographical region – it's a way of life," says Titan Travel USA product manager Hercules Zeris. "The small river towns we visit have been the inspiration of authors, musicians and artists for centuries. It is a true cultural experience based on the unique agriculture, music and history of America's deep south."

The best times to go are spring and autumn, to avoid summer's heat and humidity. The main routes are the Lower Mississippi and Upper Mississippi or a combination of both. Lower Mississippi

cruises are between New Orleans in Louisiana through Natchez in Mississippi state to Memphis in Tennessee, while the Upper Mississippi is between St Louis in Missouri through the states of Iowa and Wisconsin to Saint Paul in Minnesota.

Longer cruises run between New Orleans and Saint Paul and some cruises take in the Mississippi's tributaries. American Cruise Lines offers the most variations, 11 itineraries from 5 to 22 days, including some that branch off to Nashville on the Cumberland river, to Pittsburgh on the Ohio river and Chattanooga on the Tennessee river.

Light Blue Travel UK & Europe commercial director Michelle Daniels says: "The most popular Mississippi cruise, and the one I'd recommend for anyone new to US river cruising, is the 10-day itinerary sailing between the two iconic music cities of New Orleans and Memphis on the Lower Mississippi."



Fans of The King can revel in Elvis memorabilia at Graceland



Streetcars are by far the best way to see the city of New Orleans



The jaw-dropping Crescent City Connection bridges span the mighty Mississippi

“The Mississippi Delta is more than just a geographical region... the towns we visit have inspired authors, musicians and artists for centuries”

American Queen Voyages also offers a Memphis to Nashville cruise on the Upper Mississippi and Ohio and Tennessee rivers, traversing through part of the states of Tennessee, Missouri and Kentucky.

Classic cruises

The Lower Mississippi is classic deep south countryside with excursions to plantations such as Nottoway, the south's biggest antebellum mansion, and Civil War sites such as Vicksburg, a historic town that was a pivotal battleground in 1863 when Unionists took control of the river from Confederates. It's now a US Military Park.

Other must-do visits include Graceland, Elvis Presley's Memphis home; Sun Studios in Memphis where Elvis, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins recorded; the former Lorraine Motel in Memphis – now The Civil Rights Museum – where Dr Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated in 1968, and New Orleans' Mardi Gras Museum.

There's also BB King's hometown, Indianola in Mississippi state, and the BB King Museum & Delta Interpretive Centre – dedicated to blues music – and the Grammy Museum Mississippi in Cleveland.

While Viking has just one ship here, American Queen Voyages has three paddle steamers full of antiques and reproduction Victorian design on the Mississippi, and American Cruise Lines has five ships on the river in 2023, including two newly renovated paddle steamers and three river ships launched in 2021, 2022 and 2023, respectively.

Fred. Holidays river cruise product and sales manager Andy Hawke explains: “There are quite a few must-do excursions, but our favourites include the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville on our Music Cities cruise, where guests experience a live country music show featuring seasoned performers as well as up and coming stars. There's also the Cajun Pride Swamp Excursion in Baton Rouge where we relax in a comfortable, covered boat with walking room and open viewing from any seat.”

American Cruise Lines also offers a trip to the Mark Twain Cave Complex, the labyrinth that featured in the literary classic *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and Missouri's oldest show cave. Mark Twain, whose real name was Samuel Clemens, once worked as a steamboat pilot and lived in Hannibal, Missouri, from childhood to the age of 17.



EXPERT VIEW

“Agents who know their product tend to earn more commission as they know how to upsell. One agent who had an enquiry for an eight-day Lower Mississippi cruise ended up selling a 16-day cruise from New Orleans to Minneapolis – worth €29,000 [£25,817].”

MICHELLE DANIELS
UK & Europe commercial director
Light Blue Travel



SELLING TIPS

● The Lower Mississippi – New Orleans to Memphis – is the most popular with first-time cruisers to the US and will sell with other US attractions either end

● Don't discount younger customers. The demographic is getting younger and river cruising in America is informal but sophisticated

● Suggest river cruising to customers who say they are put off by mass ocean cruising and want something more personalised, where the staff will call them by name and remember what they like to drink

Viking's arrival

Viking brought its own vision of river cruises to the Mississippi in 2022 with 386-passenger *Viking Mississippi*, which has the company's trademark Scandi-style interiors and is by far the most contemporary ship on the river. It offers four itineraries – an eight-day return from New Orleans to Vicksburg; nine-day New Orleans to Memphis; eight-day St Louis to St Paul, and 15-day St Paul to New Orleans.

"A Mississippi cruise offers the rare opportunity to sail through America's heartland," says Viking UK head of sales Neil Barclay. "Included excursions vary from visits to historic mansions and panoramic drives, to a visit to Vicksburg National Military Park, a Mark Twain-themed walking tour, or a visit to the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium."

Viking also has exclusive experiences, says Barclay, such as a special visit to the Putnam Museum in Quad Cities, Iowa during the Upper Mississippi itineraries. He continues: "Guests join the Putnam's curator of history and anthropology for an in-depth, privileged access tour of the River, Prairie and People exhibit and can view some of the museum's most valuable artefacts of the period – including one of the few surviving copies of the 1832 Black Hawk Treaty signed by Chief Keokuk."

New excursions and experiences are being added by all the cruise lines and Light Blue Travel's Daniels says: "Although the Mississippi itineraries haven't changed over the years, what has changed is the introduction of some cruises featuring Mississippi tributaries, the Cumberland, Tennessee and Ohio rivers. *American Queen* is too big to negotiate these smaller rivers but, since the launch of *American Duchess* in 2017 and *American Countess* in 2020, it has been possible to include them."

American Queen Voyages has stayed loyal to the paddlewheel riverboat style because it believes guests want the elegance of bygone days, a view partly backed by Fred. \ Holidays, which offers both modern paddlewheel boats and contemporary modern riverboats through American Cruise Lines.

"The most popular for the UK are still perhaps the paddle wheelers as they're

seen as the quintessential experience when sailing the Mississippi," says Hawke. "The feedback we have from our modern ships is excellent too and they're also very popular." He also agrees that the Mississippi itineraries are changing with the extension into other rivers: "On our new Tennessee rivers cruise, we begin in Chattanooga and sail all the way to Nashville through Tennessee, Alabama and Kentucky."

Neil Barclay says *Viking Mississippi* offers guests a "different experience" to the paddle wheelers, but it's also different from other Viking river ships: "There is the Bow, a unique outdoor seating area at the front of the ship, the Aquavit Terrace, outdoor seating area at the top of the ship, and the River Café, which is new for a Viking ship," he explains.

Mississippi cruises are expected to grow in popularity, which is why American Cruise Line launched its sixth modern river ship – *American Serenade* – this April. But for the UK market, Hawke says that the company's paddle wheelers "tend to catch the eye and inspire the customer". He adds: "It's always good to have these on display when possible." ①

ITINERARIES

American Queen Voyages

- A 10-day New Orleans to Memphis cruise and stay starts from £3,810pp, including flights, transfers, excursions, drinks, gratuities and two nights' hotel, departing 18 November 2023.
- ↳ aqvoyages.co.uk

American Cruise Lines

- A seven-night New Orleans roundtrip starts from £3,121pp, including all gratuities and shore excursions, departing 31 March 2024.
- ↳ fredholidays.co.uk

Viking

- An eight-day America's Heartland cruise from St Louis starts from £4,690pp, including flights, transfers, excursions, drinks, wifi and gratuities, departing 12 August 2023.
- ↳ vikingcruises.co.uk

Now We're *Sunset Seeking*

From serene, azure waters to vibrant coastal cityscapes, every exclusively adult voyage includes dining at 20+ eateries, entertainment, group fitness classes, all tips, WiFi, and essential drinks. Earn a brilliant commission of 16% on voyage fare (with no NCFs!), plus 10% commission on pre-voyage bookables like hotel, airfare, Shore Things, and more.



AIRFARE CREDIT

SAVE UP TO

£1000
PER CABIN

+

FREE
DRINKS
UP TO \$600

BOOK BY 24 MAY



Now we're
Voyaging

LEARN MORE ON [FIRSTMATES.COM](https://firstmates.com)
FOR PACKAGES, VISIT [TRADE-VOYAGESTORE.COM](https://trade-voyagestore.com)

ON THE UP

Thanks to a wave of new ship and itinerary launches, Iceland and Greenland are becoming firm favourites with UK cruisers, as **Sarah Holt** discovers

Temperatures in Iceland and Greenland can drop as low as -30°C in winter. Yet these destinations are fast becoming some of the hottest tickets in cruising, according to industry experts. Across the board, cruise lines are reporting that interest in cruises to these remote lands is on the rise, with lines like Celebrity Cruises revealing that sailings such as its 12-night Greenland and Iceland cruise are selling out fast.

“Iceland is becoming increasingly popular with UK cruisers as a closer-to-home holiday destination, with our Northern Europe itineraries proving ever popular,” says Norwegian Cruise Line senior director of sales UK and Ireland

Gary Anslow. “Cruises are able to show guests the vastness of the region from a different perspective – the water – and some of the highlights, such as glaciers, are only accessible from the sea.”

Meanwhile, Ambassador Cruise Line chief commercial officer Phil Gardner explains: “We have various calls to Iceland in 2023 and 2024, with these itineraries being some of the most popular cruises we offer. Iceland is typically an expensive destination, so to encapsulate the transport journey, the food and beverage, accommodation and experiences all through cruising with Ambassador helps guests to explore this incredible destination affordably.

“Greenland, meanwhile, offers an entirely different experience for UK travellers. Featuring stunning horizons

and broad snow-covered views, offering an unbridled level of tranquility, it's often regarded as a bucket-list destination.”

See it to believe it

Iceland is an other-worldly country. Nicknamed the Land of Frost and Fire, its interior is a patchwork of lavascapes, steamy lagoons, spitting geysers and ranches of Icelandic horses that stretch as far as the eye can see.

There's an A to Z of things to do in Reykjavík, which is why cruise lines such as Celebrity Cruises are offering an increasing number of overnights in the city. Highlights include the world-famous Blue Lagoon, the Sky Lagoon, where the jacuzzi-warm waters look out over the North Atlantic Ocean, and the city's traditional fish and chip shops



where guests can try cockle-warming dishes like plokkari fish stew and fried arctic char. For clients that want something a little bit different, there's the Lava Show, where they can watch real molten lava flowing, cooling and cracking a few metres from their seats.

Elsewhere, the north coast town of Akureyri sits at the tip of Eyjaðfjörður Fjord, one of Iceland's longest fjords. In summer, visitors can take boat trips into the fjord's waters to glimpse humpback whales and take excursions out to the cinematic Gullfoss Waterfall, where water thunders into the Gullfossgjúfur Canyon at a rate of 140,000 litres a second.

In spring on Heimaey island, puffins outnumber people at a rate of more than 200 to 1. Located off the south coast of Iceland, this remote island is part of the Westman Islands chain. From Heimaey, cruise passengers can also take excursions to see the 5,000-year-old Holy Mountain.

Meanwhile, Greenland is a place that has to be seen to be believed. More than 80 per cent of the world's largest island is covered in ice and the rest is a collage of fjords, national parks and villages where the headcount rarely tops 100.

Qaqortoq, for example, is a little cluster of Lego-coloured houses located on the southern tip. While some clients will be content walking around the town itself, exploring its churches, fish market and following its Stone and Man sculpture trail, others will want to venture out to discover the region's hot springs and to explore the ruins of Erik the Red's Viking colony.



EXPERT VIEW

“ Cruises to Iceland offer a unique holiday.

On the edge of the Arctic Circle, the landscape is nothing short of spectacular and cruising there gives guests the chance to see geysers, waterfalls, thermal pools, dormant volcanoes and lava sculptures. Iceland continues to grow as a cruise location, drawing both repeat guests and those new to cruising, with its trendy nature and enviable music scene.”

RUTH VENN

Director of sales P&O Cruises

SELLING TIPS

- Secure repeat bookings by emphasising how different itineraries to Iceland and Greenland can be. One cruise in the region can be completely different to the next

- Explain to clients how cruising takes the hassle out of exploring Greenland and Iceland – both notoriously remote countries with challenging terrain

- Remind customers how expensive it can be to travel independently around Iceland and Greenland and how cruising can keep costs down



Norwegian Prima is now sailing several Iceland-based itineraries

The dinky town of Nanortalik is known as The Place of the Polar Bears, as the animals live and hunt on the sea ice outside of town. The settlement is also the gateway to the Tasermiut Fjord, a 70-kilometre-long fjord with sheer-sided edges that flows into the Labrador Sea. During summer months, cruise passengers can go on iceberg spotting excursions where they can learn the difference between a genuine iceberg and their smaller counterparts, the growlers and bergy bits.

An abundance of choice

There are dozens of Iceland and Greenland itineraries to choose from. Options include roundtrip cruises, one-way cruises, sailings that depart from the UK, itineraries that leave from Iceland and Greenland themselves, and cruises that call into the countries at the start or end of transatlantic crossings, like Norwegian Cruise Line's 15-day Transatlantic: France & Iceland sailing from New York.

There are sailings that focus on Iceland alone, usually sailing from the country's capital Reykjavík and visiting ports of call on



Enjoy the sights of Akureyri in Iceland or use it as a base for boat trips into the fjords

Destination focus: Iceland & Greenland



Iceland's thunderous Gullfoss waterfall is a breathtaking sight

“Iceland's landscape is spectacular, with geysers, waterfalls, thermal pools, dormant volcanoes and lava sculptures”

the north and east coast of the country – places that city breakers don't often get to see.

A handful of itineraries, like Silversea's Kangerlussuaq to Kangerlussuaq expedition cruise centre on Greenland alone. Then there are cruises that combine Iceland with the UK, Scotland, Ireland, Norway and northern European destinations such as the Netherlands and Belgium.

Some itineraries, like Silversea's Reykjavik to Kangerlussuaq cruise, sail neatly from Iceland to Greenland and stop there. Others, like Viking's 15-day Iconic Iceland, Greenland & Canada, keep going once they've reached Greenland, taking passengers across the Labrador Sea to Canada and the US.



There's a host of things to do and see in Reykjavik

Iceland and Greenland have something to offer year-round. Summer sailings give passengers the chance to experience the Midnight Sun, spot whales, take hikes to waterfalls and to witness icebergs calving. Slightly rarer winter sailings, meanwhile, offer clients the opportunity to see the elusive northern lights strobing through the night sky and to take part in snow sports like dog sledging.

What's new?

Launched in late summer 2022, Norwegian Cruise Line's new Prima-class ship *Norwegian Prima* will sail several Iceland-based itineraries in 2023 and beyond. Itinerary options include the 10-day Northern Europe: Iceland and Norway to London sailing, which departs from Reykjavik, where the ship was inaugurated, and sails to places like Isafjordur and Akureyri.

“*Norwegian Prima* was the first mainstream cruise ship to be inaugurated in Reykjavik,” says Anslow. “Iceland is a special place for us here at NCL.” Ushering in a new era for the line when it was launched, the 3,100-passenger ship is home to a freefall waterslide, a speedway-style racetrack, a flying theatre simulator, escape rooms and more.

Silversea's newly minted 200-passenger *Silver Endeavour*, which launched in November 2022, will also join sister ships *Silver Wind* and *Silver Cloud* to offer a selection of Iceland and Greenland cruises in 2023 and 2024. There's a range



In spring on Heimaey island, puffins outnumber people by 200 to 1

of itineraries to choose from, including the 14-day Reykjavik to Tromsø sailing and the 10-day Kangerlussuaq to Pond Inlet (Canada) cruise.

At the time of writing, Viking's new *Viking Saturn* will join the line's fleet in April and her maiden season will include the new 15-day Iconic Iceland, Greenland and Canada cruise, a 15-day Iceland and Norway's Arctic Explorer itinerary and the longer 29-day Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Beyond sailing.

Finally, in May, Ambassador Cruise Line's new ship *Ambition* will make its Iceland debut, sailing itineraries like the 14-night Land of Ice and Fire, which sails from Newcastle, and the dedicated Northern Lights cruise. 📌

ITINERARIES

P&O Cruises

- The 14-night Icelandic cruise sailing from Southampton on *Arcadia* is priced from £1,099pp, departing 22 June 2023.

📌 [pocruises.com](https://www.pocruises.com)

Norwegian Cruise Line

- NCL has the 11-night Northern Europe: Iceland, Norway & Belgium sailing from Southampton on *Norwegian Prima*, priced from £932pp and departing 4 June 2023.

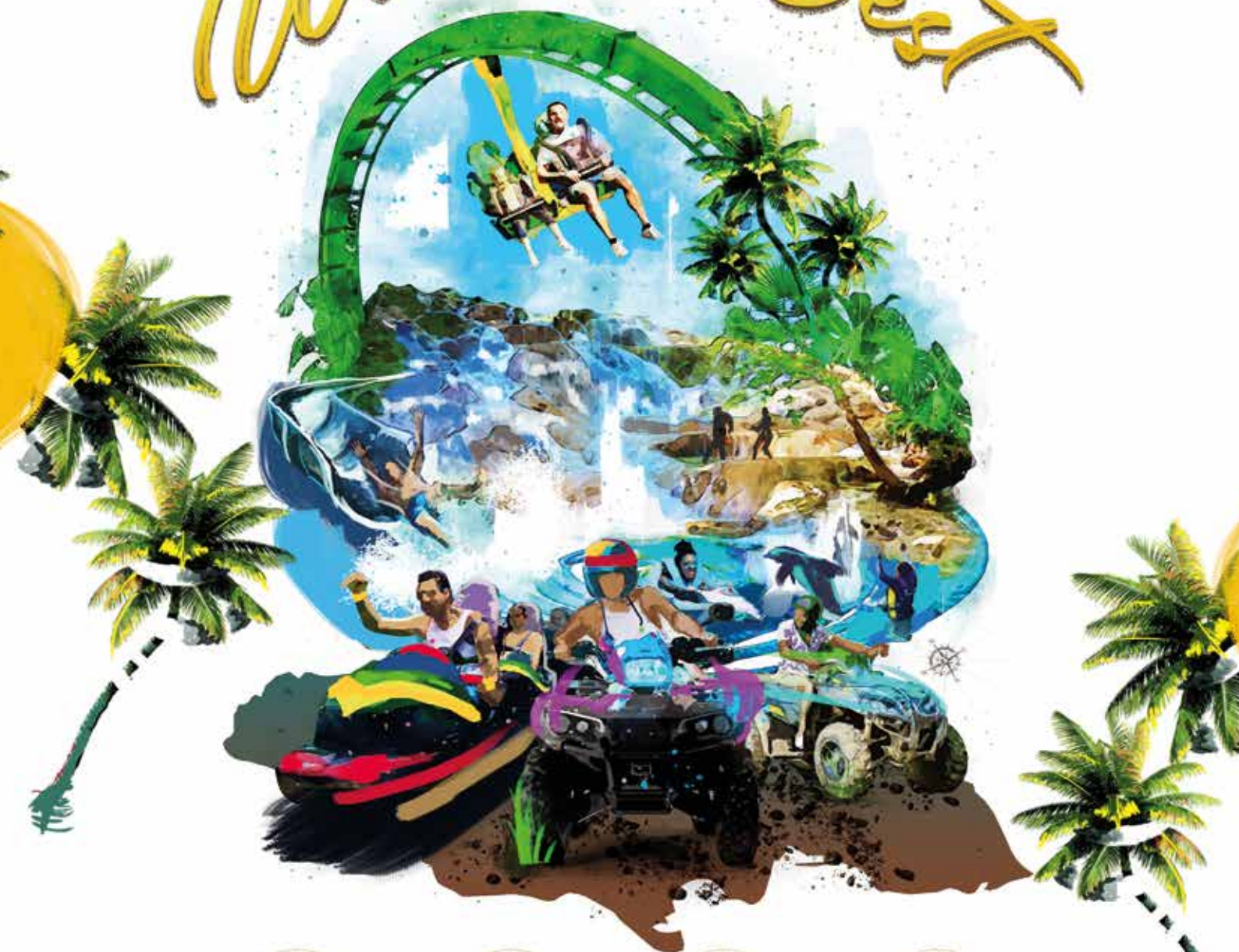
📌 [ncl.com](https://www.ncl.com)

Ambassador Cruise Line

- Ambassador's 34-night Grand Canada & Greenland Experience cruise on *Ambience* is priced from £2,319pp, departing on 12 September 2023.

📌 [ambassadorcruiseline.com](https://www.ambassadorcruiseline.com)

World's Best



Caribbean's Leading
Cruise Destination
2022: Jamaica



Caribbean's Leading
Cruise Port 2022:
Port of Falmouth, Jamaica



Caribbean's Leading
Home Port 2022:
Port of Montego Bay, Jamaica



Caribbean's Leading Tourism
Development Project 2022:
Historic Naval Dockyard,
Port Royal, Jamaica

Our ports are consistently ranked among the best in the world as the Port Authority of Jamaica continuously invests in port development & infrastructure. Our programme of upgrades is routinely conducted regardless of market conditions, to ensure our ports maintain their attractiveness and competitiveness.

5 Ports of Call. 5 Unique Experiences:
Montego Bay | Falmouth | Ocho Rios | Port Antonio | Port Royal

The Port  Authority

Cruise
JAMAICA
THE PORT AUTHORITY OF JAMAICA

Norwegian Jade's style and venues make it perfect
for clients looking for a home-away-from-home vibe



THE JOYOUS JADE

Dave Monk joins *Norwegian Jade* to enjoy the best of both worlds on a cruise to South Africa and Namibia that combines safaris, dune walking and wine tasting

Why did the giraffe cross the road? No, it isn't to see the zebra crossing, it is obviously to

give me a great photo opportunity while on safari in South Africa. In 42°C heat, many of the animals are understandably seeking shade, as I am, sitting in a covered but open-sided 4x4 with nine other holidaymakers. Even so, we spot some hippos and zebras and vultures, as we splash through streams and bounce over long, grassy tracks in the search for wildlife at the Thula Thula game reserve. At one stage, we halt as a two-week-old nyala antelope stares Bambi-like at us before it bounds off.

Two days before, we were at the Addo Elephant Park, watching in awe as dozens of animals gathered at a watering hole, with many taking to the water to play and hose themselves down. Other sightings include warthogs, ostriches, and impalas. These two wildlife sanctuaries, which are more than 600 miles apart by road, are easily reachable from different ports on a 12-day *Norwegian Jade* voyage. Addo is a tour from Port Elizabeth (now named Gqeberha) while Thula Thula, named after a Zulu lullaby for peace and calm, is an excursion from Richards Bay.



Enjoy the majestic sight of elephants in their natural surroundings in Addo National Park

At \$429 (around £350) per person, the Thula Thula tour is more than double the price of the Addo Elephant Park excursion, which costs \$189 (£150) when booked through Norwegian Cruise Line. They're both worth it for once-in-a-lifetime views of endangered animals in their natural surroundings, but for me, the Addo trip – arranged through the Dung Beetle River Lodge – is better value for money.

There is more to come, too. Once the ship reaches Namibia, we drive over sand dunes and visit Kolmanskop, a ghost town abandoned when the diamond mine dwindled. Back in Cape Town, which was also the cruise's departure port, I use the time before catching my plane home for a private tour to see African penguins and visit the Cape of Good Hope.

“We spot hippos, zebras and vultures at the Thula Thula game reserve”

Fast Facts

2402

passengers

1037

crew

14

restaurants

3

pools

£2,000

average cost of a 7-day Med cruise

Explore the deserted but amazingly well preserved mining town of Kolmanskop





The teppanyaki restaurant blends food and theatre, with chefs juggling utensils and bursting into song

Back in comfort

Having been on Norwegian Cruise Line's latest ship, *Norwegian Prima*, with its three-level go-kart track and 10-storey slides, returning to *Norwegian Jade* is like slipping into a pair of comfortable shoes.

Norwegian Jade, which entered service in 2006 as *Pride of Hawaii*, was given a refurbishment in 2017 and refreshed again last year with new carpets, furniture and fittings. But in terms of white-knuckle rides, guests won't find anything more challenging than a shuffleboard game or giant chess board.

I dine in a different place almost every night, including the buffet, main dining rooms and Jasmine Garden pan-Asian and sushi restaurant. For a cover charge, I also eat at the teppanyaki – a wonderful blend of food and theatre, as chefs juggle utensils, form snakes out of grilled eggs and burst into song – and the Moderno churrascaria, where waiters carve different meats from skewers until you finally turn a card to say no more.

Other restaurants charge by the dish, such as the always reliable Cagney's steakhouse, La Cucina Italian and French-themed Le Bistro. Plus,

SELLING TIPS

- *Norwegian Jade* may not have the same choice of activities as newer ships in the NCL fleet, but its style and venues on board make it the perfect ship for clients looking for a home-away-from-home vibe
- This South Africa itinerary is ideal for clients who want to see wildlife in a responsible manner, with expert guides and knowledge along the way
- The ports of call on offer, as well as the excursions available, mean a cruise such as this with NCL is suited to clients looking to celebrate milestone occasions

there's the Topsiders Grill for afternoon snacks or the 24-hour-a-day venue of O'Sheehan's for the midnight munchies.

On the drinks front, I love the routine every night of walking down an elegant staircase surrounded by art deco reliefs to the Magnums champagne bar, bordered by the Tankards and Mixers venues. For entertainment, I enjoy karaoke in the Bliss bar and am fond of the variety of live bands and DJ sets in the Spinnaker every night, with themes ranging from eighties music to Motown, Abba and The Beatles.

One night, a glow party is held on a balmy pool deck at 10pm, with white-clothed dancers leading synchronised moves while the enthusiastic crowd wave coloured light-up sticks. Entertainment on *Norwegian Jade* includes acrobats, illusionists and a Freddie Mercury tribute act. What's more, one afternoon I attend a talk by a former Scotland Yard murder squad detective turned comedian – you don't get many of them.

Serene surroundings

Our cruise involves four sea days but, aside from catching the sun, there is



It's easy to book a private tour from Cape Town to see African penguins

so much else to do, such as relaxing in the spa. The *SS United States* library – complete with a model of the famous liner – is another serene haven. The seas off the southern tip of Africa can be choppy but our captain sails through some bumpy nights to find calmer waters and the sun is almost guaranteed.

The first port of call on the itinerary is Mossel Bay, named after the Dutch word for mussels. After a long drive, we have the first of two tastings for the day – cheese. It feels surreal sitting in the middle of nowhere around a shaded table tucking into locally made Gouda and cheddar in smoked, paprika, pepper or chilli varieties, paired with a choice of wine, beer, gin, port, grape juice, or chocolate.

A few miles on, we pull into one of the many South African vineyards to sample sauvignon blanc with pickled octopus, merlot with carpaccio, pinotage with chilli chocolate, cabernet sauvignon with tempura camembert and sparkling wine with a jalapeño rissole.

Following our two game reserve outings, there is plenty of time to relax before arriving in Luderitz, Namibia. If that name looks strange for an African port, it's because it's named after a German settler.

After a walk round the oddly Bavarian-looking town, with its coloured buildings, we take a tour to Kolmanskop, a deserted diamond mining settlement where visitors can explore the empty homes, shops and even a bowling alley. In many rooms, the sand is now window high. The final port stop is Walvis Bay, also in Namibia, where 4x4 cars take us to

“4x4 cars take us to a flamingo lagoon, to salt flats and then on for miles of beach and dunes”



Discover the story behind Cape Town's colourful Bo-Kaap region



South Africa's capital city offers an abundance of tempting local produce

a flamingo lagoon, to salt flats and then on for miles of beach and dunes, before veering off-track over the mountains of sand. At one stage, I scramble down a 100ft dune for a picnic laid out from the back of our vehicle.

A sea day back to Cape Town gives me the chance to reflect on an amazing adventure. This truly was the bucket-list holiday I didn't even know I wanted. 📌

DETAILS

● The 11-night South Africa: Port Elizabeth, Durban & Luderitz cruise, roundtrip from Cape Town via Mossel Bay, Port Elizabeth, Richards Bay, Durban, Luderitz and Walvis Bay, is priced from £1,433, departing 8 March 2024.

ON THE ROAD WITH...

Stephen Joyner

In this new feature, we hear direct from cruise line BDMs and sales managers. Up first is A-Rosa River Cruises head of sales **Stephen Joyner**

What's the best thing about your job?

For me, it's the face-to-face engagement with agents and their customers. I absolutely love being able to educate and inspire people about river cruising and A-Rosa. Nothing gives me more of a sense of achievement and satisfaction than when relationship building and training with an agent translates into quotes and bookings.

How has being on the road and meeting agents changed in recent times?

There have been many challenges that have presented themselves in recent years. As the number of high street agents has decreased, it has resulted in more miles between visits, which can be exhausting. The substantial growth in the homeworking sector has mixed things up a bit, as reaching out and meeting them can be more challenging than popping into a shop. While webinars are good, nothing can beat in-person engagement and attending events.

What key A-Rosa selling points are you focusing on when meeting agents?

Our strapline is 'Cruising Differently', so my focus is always to show what makes us stand out from the crowd. Our style is much more flexible, relaxed and informal and has an all-ages welcome ethos so, alongside traditional river customers, I push agents to consider us for families and multi-generational groups. And, of course, let's not forget our flagship new vessel – *A-Rosa Sena*. I love seeing agents' eyes light up when they hear just how innovative she really is.

What do you have planned over the coming months to support agents?

Ensuring agents receive useful information and marketing tools from us has been a real focus. We have just launched our first UK dedicated



"I absolutely love being able to educate and inspire people about river cruising and A-Rosa"

STEPHEN JOYNER

A-ROSA RIVER CRUISES HEAD OF SALES

brochure with a very clear message that we are 100 per cent trade only and clients must visit their favourite independent agent for quotes and bookings. This is an absolute milestone moment for us and we worked really hard to make it stand out from the crowd. We've created itinerary-specific flipbooks for agents to send out to customers interested in key cruises and we will be adding more to these going forward.

What are the current challenges in agent training?

The pandemic resulted in so many people leaving the industry; now business has picked up, agencies are struggling to recruit staff to meet demand. The result is that currently agents are more stretched than ever and have less time to organise training sessions. Many agents took part-time jobs, which they are still undertaking, as well as running their travel business. All agents saw an uptake in enquiries and bookings at the start of 2023, so finding time to join webinars can be challenging.

How do you anticipate agent engagement changing?

I love face-to-face contact, but I think the reality is that more and more of it will become video-led. Pre-recorded content will also continue to be the way forward, so agents can consume it when it suits them. I also expect that the follow up will become more instant as, rather than an email, agents will want to jump on WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger to ask questions in real time. That could mean sales people receiving questions at any time of the day or night. 📞

Agents are always impressed by A-Rosa Sena's innovations



ULTRA-LUXURY MEDITERRANEAN HOLIDAYS

Europe Voyages with
Inclusive Air from £3,499pp

SANTORINI

ALL-INCLUSIVE | ALL-SUITE

On a Seabourn Mediterranean cruise, your clients may explore great cities such as Athens and Istanbul and stroll timeless island villages hugging tiny harbours on Mykonos, Skiathos and Santorini. They may take in the sophisticated resorts of the French and Italian Rivas and discover Croatia's golden coastline. They'll enjoy all this and more... elegant settings for meals and bistro-style dining alfresco with complimentary premium spirits and fine wines included. Intuitive and personalised service provided by staff passionate about exceeding expectations. Sparkling pools, spacious decks and private verandas from which to take in the sun and scenery.



THE SEABOURN ALL-INCLUSIVE DIFFERENCE

- Intimate ships with a private club atmosphere
- Intuitive, personalised service provided by staff passionate about exceeding guests' expectations
- All ocean-front suites, luxuriously appointed
- Complimentary premium spirits and fine wines available on board at all times
- Tipping is neither required, nor expected
- Welcome Champagne and complimentary in-suite bar stocked with guests' preferences
- World-class dining, further enhanced through a culinary partnership with Chef Thomas Keller
- All dining venues are complimentary, guests may dine where, when and with whom they wish

Just a few of our Extraordinary Mediterranean Cruises

7-night Iberian Tapestry

12 Nov 2023 | SEABOURN OVATION

Barcelona to Lisbon

Cruise from £4,359pp | Inclusive Air

Visits: Ibiza; Cartagena; Almeria; Gibraltar; Casablanca

7-night 'Royal Themed' Aegean Allure

5 Nov 2023 | SEABOURN ENCORE

Piraeus (Athens) to Istanbul

Visits: Spetses; Agios Nikolaos; Kusadasi (Ephesus^); Mykonos; Skopelos; Skiathos; Bozcaada.

Cruise from £3,599pp | Inclusive Economy Air

- Featuring the Royal Butler, Grant Harrold
- Seabourn's Classical Concert at Ephesus

7-night 'Wine Themed' Greek & Turkish Treasures

12 Nov 2023 | SEABOURN ENCORE

Istanbul to Piraeus (Athens)

From £3,499pp | Inclusive Air

Visits: Limnos; Cesme; Bodrum; Symi; Santorini; Ermoupolis (Syros).

- Featuring Wine experts Will Lyons and 'The World Wine Guys'
- Included and optional wine themed events



SEABOURN HIGHLIGHT:

Evening at Ephesus, Kusadasi, Turkey



When the ancient site of Ephesus closes to visitors for the day, Seabourn guests are treated to the extraordinary experience of classical music among the ruins, featuring a chamber orchestra, as well as local snacks and drinks.

Discover the Extraordinary at seabourn.com

Contact your Seabourn Business Development Team | Call 0344 338 8614 | email: salesupport@seabourn.co.uk

Visit GoSeabourn.com. Your Resource for Selling the World's Finest Ultra-Luxury Travel Experience



Terms & Conditions: Featured prices are per guest based on double occupancy on Pounds Sterling. Europe Inclusive Air offers are subject to availability, valid only for guests residing in the UK and applicable to the first and second guests. In the event that promotional Air is not available (at the sole discretion of Seabourn) or for guests not wishing to utilise the promotional air offers, a cruise credit will be applied to the booking amount. Promotional air offers include complimentary transfers between the airport and ship and in case of an airline delay or cancellation, next port protection. If promotional air flight(s) and/or cruise schedule(s) force an overnight, a complimentary hotel night is included. Promotional Economy Class Air offer is based on promo code JE. All offers are capacity controlled and may be modified or withdrawn at any time without prior notice. Other restrictions may apply. Seabourn reserves the right to correct errors. Ships' registry: Bahamas. ©2023 Seabourn





DISCOVER THE OCEAN STATE OF MIND

Spaces that offer guests relaxed luxury, creating a home at sea. Restoring life's essential balance with a combination of discovery and appreciation for wellbeing and nature. Each of our 461 ocean-front suites, penthouses and residences – all designed with a refined, European elegance – are created to get you closer to the ocean. All suites feature private terrace and large floor-to-ceiling windows.

The Explora Journeys team look forward to welcoming guests onboard beginning July 2023.

**REGISTER AND JOIN OUR COMMUNITY AT
[EXPLORAJOURNEYS.COM/TRAVELADVISORS](https://explorajourneys.com/traveladvisors) OR CONTACT 0 800 014 8486**