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ISSUE 115 | DECEMBER 2022

cruise

TRADE NEWS



WIN

Play the advent
calendar game to win
big this Christmas

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Merry
Christmas



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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.

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TRADE NEWS

Published by

Real.
RESPONSE MEDIA

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



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Cruise Trade News

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Editor's Letter

WELCOME TO THE DECEMBER ISSUE

Christmas is here. How strange it feels to be writing those words – it seems only a few moments ago that I used this page to usher in this year for *Cruise Trade News*. It's been a whirlwind 12 months for us, with the launch of an updated website, new digital publications and a stronger focus on tackling the important issues in the industry through the printed magazine.

There's plenty to be excited about for next year, too, as we continue to evolve and improve on what we offer you across all our channels. However, as for the here and now. In what has become a *Cruise Trade News* tradition, it is time for the cruise advent calendar, in partnership with Fred Olsen Cruise Lines.

This, of course, means a different front cover than usual, replicating that much-loved Christmas hobby of opening doors, as the days tick by, for a small treat. The difference being that opening the doors of our cover advent calendar could win you a fantastic prize. More on that inside this magazine.

Elsewhere, we take a forensic look at what 2023 has in store for the industry and explain why you should join the Cruise Challenge next year for the most innovative training event in cruise.

Our final cruise of the year takes us to Corsica, on board Ponant's gorgeous *Le Bougainville*, while we also provide some handy tips on how to sell ship-within-a-ship concepts, which are growing in popularity.



Above: The Wave Awards 2022 took place in November

We also showcase some of the highlights from the Wave Awards 2022, which we held in November in central London. It's been said many times before, but there's no better feeling than celebrating success in the cruise industry. I think I speak for all those who attended when I say it was an absolute blast.

I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and good luck winning those prizes in the advent calendar.

Gary Peters

Editor, Cruise Trade News

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Cruise Trade News

The Briefing

THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION FOR CRUISE NEWS

IN BRIEF

CLIA reveals river dates

CLIA UK & Ireland has announced its RiverView Conference 2023 will take place from 12-14 March in Vienna. The event, the 11th to be held, will highlight the latest river cruise ships, information and selling advice. It is open to all CLIA member agents.

ROL charity support

ROL Cruise has raised £12,500 for the charity Macmillan Cancer Support, following a fundraising coffee and cake morning. During the event, colleagues raised £1,250. The ROL management then multiplied the donations, taking the total to £12,500.

APPOINTMENTS



APT has announced the appointment of **Robin Griffiths** as BDM for the Midlands. Griffiths has previously worked in retail and BDM positions for brands such as Kuoni, Emirates and Gold Medal.



Explora Journeys has appointed **Diego Michelozzi** as master of *Explora I*, the first of six ships to join the luxury brand's fleet in 2023. Michelozzi has worked in cruise for more than 20 years, following a period with the Italian Navy.

NEW SHIP

Icon sets record

Royal Caribbean International saw its single largest booking day in its 53-year history when sales opened for the cruise line's first Icon-class ship.

Icon of the Seas, which will become the world's biggest cruise ship when it sets sail in January 2024 and the first in the line's new Icon class, has been described as the "travel industry's first-of-its-kind combination of the best of every vacation".

On board, it will have eight neighbourhoods, as they are called by the line, five that are new to *Icon of the Seas*. These will include Thrill Island, a lost island adventure that will feature Category 6, the largest waterpark at sea, and Surfside, a neighbourhood made for young families.



Icon of the Seas will be the world's biggest cruise ship

Royal Caribbean International president and CEO Michael Bayley said: "The enthusiasm and excitement for *Icon* are undeniable in more ways than one. The incredible response we have received from our loyal guests, vacationers new to cruising, crew members and travel partners continues to come in, and this is just the beginning. We can't wait to share more of what *Icon* has in store."

TRADE

TUI creates new trade team

TUI UK&I has created a new team to enhance training and support for UK travel agents and "drive sales and increase awareness of the Marella Cruises and TUI River Cruises' product offering", a statement said.

Steven Heath has been appointed as senior cruise commercial support manager and will help to deliver the commercial aspirations of Marella and



TUI River Cruises, build relationships and provide strategic direction to trade partners.

Supporting Heath will be two cruise commercial

managers, Jessica Garner and Lynsey Roberts, while Sarah Whitehouse has been appointed as training delivery manager.

Whitehouse worked as a store manager within the retail arm of the business and more recently as a training consultant.

The new team will be reporting to national account manager commercial relations Andrew Isherwood.

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Celebrity Apex will homeport in Southampton for its full 2024 season

OCEAN

Apex to homeport in Southampton

Celebrity Cruises has announced that *Celebrity Apex*, the line's second Edge-class ship, will homeport in Southampton for its full 2024 season.

It will be the first Edge ship to sail out of Southampton, replacing *Celebrity Silhouette* and operating four to 13-night sailings from May through to November 2024. Itineraries include a 12-night Norwegian Fjords and Arctic Circle cruise, as well as voyages to Ibiza and the Mediterranean.

Following agent feedback from travel partners, Celebrity Cruises said it was

announcing its UK deployment two weeks in advance of launch date for the first time. In addition, Celebrity Cruises has committed to hosting 600 agents on board the ship in 2023.

Celebrity Cruises EMEA vice-president and MD Jo Rzymowska said: "The UK has always been integral to the success of our brand, and homeporting *Celebrity Apex* from Southampton underlines our commitment to this market and is testament to the strength of local consumer demand, supported by our formidable travel partners."

OCEAN

New ocean sailings for Riviera

Riviera Travel has launched a new ocean cruise for 2023 and announced three additional 2024 ocean cruise departures due to popular demand.

Next year, the operator will introduce the 11-day Icelandic Adventure, on board *MS Seaventure*. Departing on 29 August, the itinerary will consist of seven guided tours and visits, including Snæfellsnes Peninsula, Dynjandi Waterfall, Goðafoss Falls and Lake Mývatn. Prices start from £4,599pp.

Other cruises available again in 2024 due to positive feedback include the 14-day Mediterranean Odyssey on *Royal Clipper*, the 11-day Aegean Odyssey departing on *Star Clipper*, and the 11-day



Star Flyer will tour the French Riviera and Corsica

French Riviera and Corsica voyage sailing on *Star Flyer*.

Riviera Travel head of product river and ocean cruise Katja Hildebrandt said: "We're thrilled to once again be able to offer tall ship sailings, as these cruises are always incredibly popular with guests. Their classic itineraries allow passengers to take-in the very best of southern Europe."



Stuart Perl, MD of Riverside Luxury Cruises

River line to launch in 2023

A new river cruise line called Riverside Luxury Cruises will set sail next year.

Operated by hotel group Seaside Collection, the line will launch with one ship, *Riverside Mozart*, in April 2023, with guests able to embark in Vienna, Budapest and Passau. The ship was formerly part of the Crystal Cruises fleet.

Stuart Perl, previously UK & Europe managing director at AmaWaterways, has been appointed managing director of Riverside Luxury Cruises, and will oversee the brand's development

"Riverside Mozart will become the leader in true luxury river cruising"

and sales and marketing activities in the UK, Ireland and parts of Europe.

Perl also worked as international sales & marketing director EMEA for Seabourn, and spent time as marketing director EMEA at Cunard and as UK managing director at Peter Deilmann River & Ocean Cruises.

Perl said: "I am so pleased to be part of the leadership team of this exciting new venture. Offering exquisite cuisine and the highest standards of personal service on the rivers, *Riverside Mozart* will become the leader in true luxury river cruising for discerning guests."

"We are looking forward to working with our trade partners who would like to join us on this exciting journey."



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FEELING FESTIVE

It's time to drive demand for 2023, as Fred Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales **Geoff Ridgeon** explains

And here we are – my final column of the year. I am sure by the time you read this some of you will have started your Christmas festivities already, and how well deserved they are after another incredibly busy year.

I thought what better way to see us to a successful end of 2022 than by talking about how to make the most of this year's wave season. December is generally revered as being one of the quieter months in the industry, and this has always fascinated me. Yes, people are caught up with Christmas, and of course it is an expensive time of year, but equally there is never a better time for your customers to get themselves a great deal on a cruise holiday for the following year.

This Christmas, we are of course facing additional pressures with the cost-of-living crisis, but demand is there for 2023. We have been seeing it for sometime, and we continue to see it. This means there is a great opportunity

“There is never a better time for customers to get a great deal on a cruise for the following year”

there to build and drive demand in the run up to Christmas and create a step-change and an exceptionally strong start for 2023.

End of the year

For us at Fred Olsen, we'll have our cruise sale, and we've provided you with lots of information on the value-added opportunities available for your guests, and every cruise line will be offering something to tempt those best suited to them.

Of course, there is still a bit of time to squeeze in those last-minute Christmas bookings too – whether they want to get into the festive spirit by exploring some Christmas markets, escape for some winter sunshine or even get away over Christmas and New Year itself, there will

be a cruise to suit. So, make the most of this time and maximise every opportunity.

As I bid you a final farewell for the year, I'd like to wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and I hope that you enjoy a well-deserved rest with your loved ones, whether that's at home or away.

Many guests will be on-board enjoying all the festivities on a cruise this year too. If you have customers joining us over Christmas, rest assured they will be enjoying all of the festivities we have in store. 🎄



GEOFF RIDGEON

HEAD OF SALES

FRED OLSEN CRUISE LINES

Sales Inspiration

INCENTIVES • ITINERARIES • SPECIAL OFFERS

Azamara to return to Venice

Azamara will once again call at Venice, beginning with *Azamara Journey's* 12-night The Best of The Med voyage in April 2023.

The line's four-ship fleet will visit the Venetian Lagoon ports of Chioggia and Fusina. The line said it will give "guests a more seamless opportunity to marvel at gondolas, stroll the cobblestone streets and explore Venice with ease".

Highlights of upcoming sailings include a seven-night Italy Intensive voyage, with late nights in Ravenna, Kotor and Amalfi and an overnight stay in Rome, as well as a seven-night Amalfi & Dalmatian Coasts cruise.

Azamara director of strategic itinerary and destination planning Mike Pawlus said: "We're thrilled to bring guests back to this historic city, and also let them to discover towns such as Chioggia, which only smaller ships can visit."



Azamara guests can enjoy the delights of Venice and neighbouring Chioggia and Fusina

VISIT

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FOR THE LATEST
INCENTIVES & TRAVEL
AGENT TRAINING
MATERIALS



Cycling enthusiasts can get into gear with Sail Croatia's new bike-focused itineraries

Sail Croatia unveils Cycle Cruises

Sail Croatia has launched new whole-ship charters for its Cycle Cruises, which will depart in April or May next year.

The cruises will "allow bicycle fans to exclusively book one of three grades of ship on a seven-night itinerary", the company said. Voyages will depart from Split or Dubrovnik and visit popular cycling spots in Dalmatia, including Hvar, Dubrovnik, Mljet National Park and Krka National Park.

The cruises are for cyclists of mixed abilities. Guests will be able to hire a bike or bring their own, with electric options also available. Up to 32 guests can join the charter, with a dedicated cycle guide and tour manager also available.

Sail Croatia director, Grant Seuren said: "We're predicting our private Cycle Cruises will be one of our most popular options, and hope this will appeal to groups of friends."



Celestyal has new destinations including Istanbul, with a two-tiered pricing option

Celestyal launches new pricing model

Celestyal Cruises has introduced a new two-tiered pricing model, following feedback from guests and agent partners.

The entry-level inclusive fare offers complimentary dining and select drinks with meals, entertainment, daily activities, port charges and gratuities. For those wishing to upgrade, Celestyal now offers an enhanced tier with an unlimited premium drinks package, a daily hour of complimentary wifi, 25 per cent discount on speciality dining

and a pre-bookable shore excursion discount of £130pp.

In addition, the line has revealed that for 2023, its seven-night Idyllic Aegean itinerary will arrive early in Santorini for an extended stay. In 2024, the line will operate a five-night Legendary Aegean itinerary visiting Santorini, Rhodes, Samos, and Istanbul.

Celestyal chief commercial officer Leslie Peden said: "We are charting a new course for Celestyal."



Over 10 years, prices have been stable for customers

Cruise prices 'consistent', says survey

A study has revealed the cost of a cruise across a range of destinations has remained consistent, or in some cases cheaper, over the past 10 years.

The study, conducted by cruise specialist cruise.co.uk, found the majority of cruises remained cost consistent for sailings from seven to 14 nights – across the Mediterranean, Northern Europe and the Caribbean.

The agency took a series of sample sailings in 2012, 2019 and 2022 from multiple cruise lines. Most were in line with inflation, if not cheaper. In one example, an inside cabin on a 14-night P&O Cruises' Caribbean itinerary was £1,659pp, including flights, in 2012. In 2019 it was £1,503pp, while a matched 2022 sailing was £999.



Windstar is offering major deals for solo travellers on select 2023 sailings

Windstar waives solo supplement

Windstar Cruises has announced a new solo traveller offer featuring no single supplement on select 2023 sailings to destinations including the Mediterranean, Australasia and the South Pacific.

Itineraries include a 13-night Hidden Indonesia & The Great Barrier Reef sailing from Cairns to Benoa on *Star Breeze*, departing 4 February 2023, starting from £4,209pp, and a 12-night Comprehensive Spain

cruise, from Barcelona to Bordeaux, departing 2 May 2023.

Windstar is also offering a solo supplement of 20 per cent on more than 70 worldwide sailings departing until 4 April 2024, with prices starting from £1,021pp for a 15-night transatlantic sailing from Barbados to Lisbon, departing 29 March 2023 on *Wind Star*.

Agents booking any of the solo fare sailings will receive a £25 gift voucher of their choice. There is no limit to the number of bookings.

TECH TALK

Traveltek chief commercial officer **Cressida Sergeant** explains how to reap the benefits of using an API

Welcome back to the world of travel technology and translating its complex language into something that can really help agents understand the benefits. So, let's take a look at APIs. First, what is an API? It stands for application programming interface. Essentially, it's a technical language that allows communication through asking a request and getting a response.

This language is no different to how we communicate with each other through speech – we ask a question and we get an answer, but the systems must understand the question that is being asked to enable the right response to be received. Think of developers learning this language to allow technical communication, much like learning to speak a new language. A usual transition of this data is between a customer-facing website or desktop application and a database. The database could be all the cruise prices, cabin types and availability, for example.

At Traveltek, and all travel companies who want to distribute their product through the travel trade, this delivery of data will happen via an API. An API will power the data behind a booking desktop solution. It is a set of programming instructions that allows this API software to communicate with your desktop booking tool. This means it is incredibly easy to consume and benefit from this data through a desktop technology solution with no requirements for technical resource to help you at your agency.

Customisation and flexibility

However, some travel companies will choose to utilise an API directly from

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- APIs can sound scary but, once the solution is in place, it can be very easy to manage
- An API can provide flexibility and control over what data you access and use
- Traveltek uses multiple APIs and consolidates this data into something customers can use

technology companies and there can be real benefits from this, including increased flexibility and control over how and what data you access and use, and the ability to create custom applications that meet your specific needs. The downside is that any organisation wanting to have increased customisation and flexibility will need to employ technical resource for the necessary skillset to be able to translate the API data.

The benefits of a technology company such as Traveltek is that we consume multiple APIs from the cruise lines who all build theirs in a very different way. We

then consolidate this data into a single API and pass this to our customers.

Economically this makes sense for any company, but it's also about the ongoing cost to manage and maintain this data. The complexity with an API is also the continued improvements and upgrades that can impact the request and response. This can lead to systems not being able to understand their mutual language when a change is made. There are many API languages out there. At Traveltek we use XML, JSON and now GraphQL. Our aim is to make the process as simple as possible.

An API should be easy to read and will reduce the level of resource an organisation needs to translate the data. It allows a company to be efficient with their development resource and is a powerful tool to customise a website. 📌



CRESSIDA SERGEANT
CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER
TRAVELTEK



An API is a highly efficient way for companies to distribute their product through the travel trade



Alaska, by Cunard.

An Alaska voyage on Queen Elizabeth is an experience beyond compare. Your customers can warm-up with a hot toddy while they admire icy glaciers from the ship's uncrowded decks. Hear from world-famous explorers in our Cunard Insights talks. They can savour Signature Culinary experiences, like our Alaska Champagne Afternoon Tea, and step out for a night of elegant celebration at our legendary Ice White Ball.



We're delighted to confirm that Bear Grylls will be joining Queen Elizabeth's 2023 Alaska voyage (Q320) on 8 June, where he will share his experiences as one of the youngest ever climbers of Mount Everest, bestselling author, TV presenter and all-round adventurer. This will be his first appearance ever speaking on a cruise ship.

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QUEEN ELIZABETH



THE ADVENT CALENDAR

is back

Merry Christmas to one and all, and welcome back to the *Cruise Trade News* advent calendar

There are many festive season traditions, including here at *CTN* with our cruise-themed advent calendar. This special initiative, which is in partnership with Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, offers a large dose of fun as well as a chance to win fantastic prizes and sign the year off in style.

CTN editor Gary Peters said: "As we all know, Christmas is a unique and special time of year, and our advent calendar will hopefully make it that little bit extra special for many of you. So get involved, and good luck winning the prizes."

Every 'door' on the front cover of this issue, numbered from 1-24, contains a code that provides access to that day's competition. The code can also be sent via email. Please use the pre-registration form on the *Cruise Trade News* website to activate this. This code can then be used to enter the competition and discover if you have won.

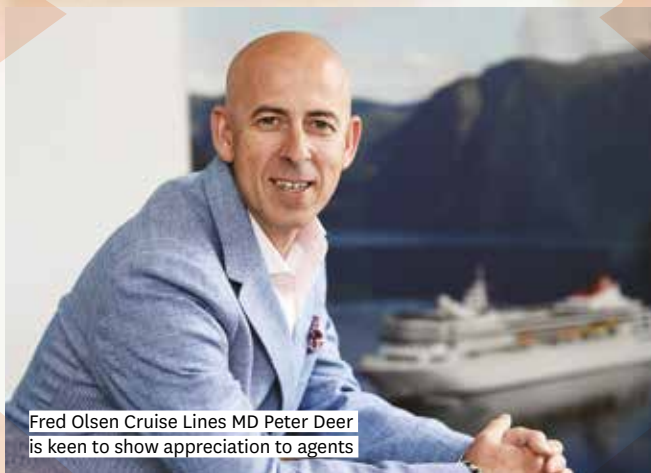
A thank you to agents

So, why is the advent calendar important, and how is agent support evolving? Fred Olsen Cruise Lines MD Peter Deer explains all.

How would you sum up 2022 for Fred Olsen?

It would be very easy to sit here and say it's been smooth sailing, but I think we have all found it to be a challenging year. Of course, there have been many highs – we have three ships sailing again now and, talking to you in the latter part of the year, the world has really opened up for travel again. It's much easier to help our guests explore, whether it's a new destination or returning to a favourite.

We've done incredibly well as an industry to tackle some of the challenges we have faced this year, and that's one thing I really love about being in cruise. It almost seems a distant memory now, but we started the year with a lot of uncertainty around Omicron, followed



Fred Olsen Cruise Lines MD Peter Deer is keen to show appreciation to agents

by the war between Ukraine and Russia and the impact that has had on our itineraries and our supplies, and now we find ourselves in what is being broadly termed as a cost-of-living crisis. But we are a resilient industry.

How have your agent resources and support methods improved?

A big part of our ethos (and one of our Olsen Way principles) is 'it's all about the people', and that is true when we think about our team and the agents we work with. It's important to us that we build relationships that allow us – as the cruise line – and the trade to be successful.

We have really invested in our trade support functions internally. This year we also introduced a new role dedicated to the trade, brand training manager. In this position, Michelle Tingley has done a fantastic job at meeting with many travel agents, from small independent retailers to homeworkers and larger corporations, training them on our brand and sharing everything about The Olsen Way and what makes us special. She works closely with our account managers, and together they have been travelling right across the

country meeting with more agents than ever before.

Michelle's new role follows on from the creation of a new trade marketing team that we introduced last year to help support agents in promoting our brand to their customers. Online, we have our travel agent centre with all of our news and promotions and all the information the trade needs. In addition, this year we created a dedicated training guide exclusive for agents, bringing to life The Olsen Way and what it means to both them and to us.

Why are projects such as the advent calendar important for Fred Olsen to be involved in?

It's key to us that we continue to be involved in incentives like this. We run various incentives for the trade throughout the year, and the advent calendar is a great way to end the year and thank agents for all of their support, particularly in recent years, when this support has perhaps been more important than ever. We hope that together we can be even more successful in 2023. 📌

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COULD
WIN

Cuddly elephant toys

Fred Olsen branded holdalls

Eco refillable coffee cups

Branded water bottles

Vouchers

Fred Olsen backpacks

The big prizes: Two cruises, of up to seven nights, on board *Bolette* or *Borealis*, in suite accommodation, taking place in 2023

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Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines

HAND-CRAFTED, NOT MASS PRODUCED

Fred. Olsen pride themselves on putting their all into their cruise experience.

Their itineraries are created from scratch every year by their skilled team of Journey Planners led by Martin & Clare.

What's more, this extends to our guests on-board experience - our service is genuinely personal and each and every area of their ships is individually designed by hand.

Our itineraries make diversions to explore scenic gems so that the journey remains just as rewarding as the ports themselves.





Balmoral in Maurangerfjord, Norway
(Furebergfossen Waterfall)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

When promoting our cruises, or talking to customers, you can be confident in explaining how our cruise itineraries are not repeated week after week. You can share with them our wide variety of sailings, so your customers looking to experience history, culture and beautiful scenery in some of the world's most exciting destinations can find a cruise which suits.

SAIL THE WORLD A DIFFERENT WAY, THE OLSEN WAY

We are excited to share details of our upcoming cruise sale, which starts on the 6th December 2022. We're offering your customers FREE Drinks Package OR FREE On Board Spend on selected 2023 & 2024 sailings. Plus, offers for Solo Travellers. All you need to know about this campaign, plus access to a range of promotional assets to support your own activity can be found at our Travel Agent Centre from the 6th December.

To learn more, visit our Travel Agent Centre
at fredolsencruises.com/agent

Trade Marketing
trade.marketing@fredolsen.co.uk

Sales Support
cruise.sales@fredolsen.co.uk

Spotlight On

CRUISE CHALLENGE

It's been a very successful year for the Cruise Challenge, and there's more to come in the next 12 months

The Cruise Challenge – organised by *Cruise Trade News* – has been back on the road, visiting cities across the UK, delivering travel agent training with a difference. This unique event, which fuses highly informative presentations from cruise lines with a gameshow format, has travelled far and wide yet again to give agents the opportunity to learn and grow their businesses.

One cruise line that regularly supports the Cruise Challenge is Oceania Cruises. The company's director of sales UK & Ireland Louise Craddock says: "We are a small team, so these events help us engage with multiple agencies at once, which makes great use of the team's time, and there's always a good atmosphere making them a pleasure to be part of. It is a fun way for agents to learn about the brands, catch up in person with key contacts in a relaxed environment, and of course agents have the chance to win some great prizes."

Meanwhile, A-Rosa River Cruises business development manager for the south Joe Lavers says that it's vital for the brand to network, "as agents have a lot of choice to offer their clients and it is so important to keep our products front of mind and communicate our key messages". He continues: "The Cruise Challenge is also a great way to engage with homeworkers, who are harder to visit on a stand-alone basis."

Hays Travel cruise development executive Phoebe Thompson, who attended one of the events in 2022, adds:

"I think events like the Cruise Challenge are important for agents as it gives them an opportunity to further their cruise knowledge in a fun learning environment. I also think it is key to spend time with different suppliers to not only build relationships with them but also have some one-on-one time to ask them anything you might need to know about that cruise line."

Unique and fun

A key difference with the Cruise Challenge compared to other training events is the gameshow element, which has been crafted to provide not only essential cruise knowledge but also entertainment. Prizes are also on offer throughout the evening.

"It's a fun way to learn about the brands, and of course have the chance to win great prizes"

Thompson says: "The fun atmosphere and the gameshow set up makes it so enjoyable. You are learning so much that you don't even realise as you are also having such a good time. I would 100 per cent recommend it to all agents – it was so beneficial. I went away feeling a lot more confident about the cruise suppliers that were there, about what they offer to their guests, what they can expect on board and what their values are. This makes it so much easier when talking to other people about why cruise is so great."

Travel Counsellor Stephanie Rae agrees: "It was such a fun evening, offering something very different. I would recommend to other agents and hope to attend another one soon."

The event also demonstrates the power of face-to-face learning, something that Craddock says is important to Oceania. "Meeting up for training and updates is absolutely key. Many people have taken on new roles during the past couple of years, so opportunities like this to meet up are crucial."

This year, *Cruise Trade News* also sponsored the Peaks Performance Awards, organised by My Booking Rewards. This event celebrates travel agent success and performance during the peaks period. 📌

For more information about 2023 dates and locations, go to the Cruise Challenge website – cruisechallenge.evessiocloud.com

CARIBBEAN



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STAR PLUS YACHTS

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CRUISES
180° FROM ORDINARY®

” In conversation with...

Seabourn Venture is a hotel at sea that's designed for adventurous travellers



Seabourn's Carly Perkins

Following a short four-day voyage on *Seabourn Venture*, the line's marketing manager **Carly Perkins** speaks to Gary Peters about her experience on board and why it's a new era

Picture the scene. A new ultra-luxury expedition ship, the Caribbean sun shining down. "The weather was warm, so it was a mixture of expedition and sunshine," says Carly Perkins. "It was a great opportunity to see *Seabourn Venture* – it's the most beautiful ship I've ever seen in all the 30 years I've worked in cruise."

That's some statement. However, those who have followed the story of *Seabourn Venture* – from initial conception to launch this year – will not be overly surprised. The first purpose-built luxury

expedition vessel for Seabourn carries all the hallmarks of the line's first-class service and sleek design of its ocean fleet, with touches of its own uniqueness to ensure it stands out among the crowd.

One place on board Perkins enjoyed in particular was the Expedition Lounge. "You've got the faux fire, beautiful furniture with lovely fluffy cushions and things like that," she says. "It becomes a very cosy retreat from the rest of the world where I can imagine guests will sit and talk about their expeditions and what they've been doing during the day."

"There is also lots of deck space to enjoy looking at the scenery, and, in my

case in the Caribbean, enjoy the sunshine. However, in the polar regions, having that deck space is an advantage because guests can get out on deck and see everything for themselves."

Perkins also highlights the people on board, making *Seabourn Venture* more than just pleasing to the eye. She explains: "The 26-strong team of expedition makes all the difference. They are everywhere around the ship to have a chat with, telling guests about the bird life, the history and what can be seen, for example. They have so much knowledge and information, which they are happy to impart to guests in lectures or one-to-one. That really adds to the expedition experience."

Reaching more people

Seabourn Venture will be joined by sister ship *Pursuit*, launching in October 2023, and the two vessels offer the opportunity for the line to expand its reach and attract not only loyal Seabourn clients and other luxury cruise passengers, but also non-cruise travellers.

"We're trying to teach travel agents to go to their expedition guests, people who go on safaris, or adventure holidays, who



Carly Perkins is positive about being able to focus exclusively on Seabourn

“We want to work with new agent partners who sell high-end adventures”

want that learning and that enrichment from going to the polar regions, for example, and seeing remote destinations in the most immersive way possible,” says Perkins. “Our trade marketing is going to be designed around promoting those USPs.

“Long term, expedition is about attracting those people who haven’t thought about cruise yet, who don’t think they want to go on a cruise – they want to go on an expedition and an adventure. Having a hotel at sea, in *Seabourn Venture*, that’s designed for adventurous travellers, is the best way to do that.”

Having only departed for its maiden voyage at the end of July, it’s early days for *Seabourn Venture*, but the initial signs are very promising, with “fantastic” guest feedback, says Perkins. Seabourn has, to



The Atrium’s striking sculpture marks the space as a focal point of *Seabourn Venture*

date, been unable to get many agent partners out to see the ship, but Perkins says agents will be able to get on board in the future. Next spring, the ship will also be in Greenwich and Dublin.

She continues: “This year has been an opportunity to show many travel agents our ocean ships, so we’ve done a lot of fam trips to educate agents and allow them to experience, for themselves, their own Seabourn moments. We can do that with expedition in the future.

“We are looking to work with new agent partners who don’t necessarily have ocean cruise guests but do sell adventure and high-end adventures,” says Perkins. “Our business development team is working hard to attract and talk to those partners.”

New beginnings

Those conversations will no doubt focus on the fact that *Seabourn Venture* and *Pursuit* do very much represent a new era

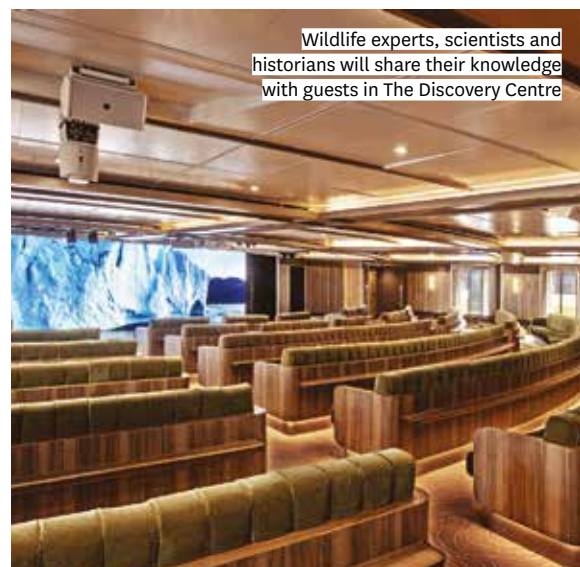
for Seabourn. “We have always been at the front of looking at new markets and new innovations with our products,” says Perkins. “[Our] expeditions we started in 2013 when *Quest* went down to Antarctica, so we have that experience of creating and selling an expedition product.”

Change is also in the air when it comes to the internal processes at the line. The restructure of Holland America Line and Seabourn will see Perkins, and others, take on dedicated roles with Seabourn.

Perkins explains: “It means that the two brands sitting under Carnival Corporation will be separate, so there’ll be more focus and a dedicated team that can help agents to promote those brands. We are looking forward to the exclusive focus on Seabourn and I think that will mean that we can delve deeper. The outlook is looking good. It’s been a good year; we’ve grown and we’re in a good position.”

New beginnings, indeed. ☛

Wildlife experts, scientists and historians will share their knowledge with guests in The Discovery Centre





Fast Facts

Arvia is the latest evolution in the P&O Cruises experience, embodying the newest trends in travel, dining and entertainment, and will be the epitome of a sunshine resort sailing year-round to the warmest climates. *Arvia* is designed to bring guests even closer to the sea, sky and shore, reflecting its name meaning 'from the seashore', and will feature P&O Cruises' first-ever retractable roof SkyDome. New dining options will reflect the ports on *Arvia*'s itineraries, including Caribbean dishes designed by Local Food Hero Shivi Ramoutar and a Mediterranean-inspired menu from José Pizarro.

184,700
TONNES

345m
LONG

5,200
GUESTS

1,800
CREW

10
INFINITY WHIRLPOOL SPAS

ARVIA



1



Mission Control

Exclusive to *Arvia*, Mission Control is a unique immersive experience. Set on board the fictional submarine *Arvia II*, it combines an escape game with multimedia simulation and a live-action story to create an underwater challenge. The 3D surroundings will take guests to the depths of ocean canyons.

2



Greatest Days

Arvia is the only place in the world where guests will be able to watch the stage musical, *Greatest Days – The Official Take That Musical*. *Greatest Days* is an adaptation of the acclaimed West End musical *The Band*, which features the songs of Take That.



3

Green & Co feat. Mizuhana

This new restaurant, exclusive to *Arvia*, will offer guests exquisitely crafted fish and plant-based dishes. Guests will be able to dine at the sushi bar and watch the expert chefs at work, or be seated at tables to enjoy the views out to sea as they cruise along.



4

Grand Atrium

The Grand Atrium will provide a spectacular backdrop to aerial performers who will descend through the triple-height space. It will also have a striking installation of metal champagne-coloured ribbons which frame the great staircase, and host a programme of live events and entertainment.



5

SkyDome

With its retractable glass roof and spacious layout, SkyDome is the ideal location for a relaxed, poolside environment with dining and drinking options for all. Daytime entertainment also includes gameshows, dedicated family production shows, interviews, live music and cooking demonstrations.

NEW YEAR,

The beginning of another year brings with it hopes and dreams for what might come. **Gary Peters** reports

Don't look too far back. The memories of the pandemic are still fresh and painful. The virus is still among us, but regular, daily life has been restored for millions, and many of those people have either returned to cruising or taken one for the very first time, as evidenced in the November issue of *Cruise Trade News* (Spotlight On).

So look forward, says the industry with a quiet confidence, for 2023 has the potential to be great.

"The industry is steadily recovering, with all indications that the number of annual cruise passengers in 2023 will surpass 2019 levels," says CLIA UK & Ireland MD Andy Harmer. "More than 20 new ocean ships are set to launch, which we're eagerly anticipating. From familiar lines to new ones, from luxury to expedition vessels, there will be an incredible range of choice to suit customers."

Harmer is not the only one who thinks that next year could get close to, or match, 2019 – those heady pre-pandemic days when everything was pointing up. Speaking about Cruise Circle and its selling patterns, MD Jason Daniels explains: "I feel quietly confident Cruise Circle will have a strong 2023. We're

getting close to having our river cruise product ready for market in the coming months, our repeat business is as strong as ever, and we've made some key appointments recently, including our first ever dedicated marketing manager.

"I remain convinced there is a cruise for every taste and more importantly every budget. This year's numbers are

"The pandemic acted as a call to make long-standing travel dreams come true"

already looking strong and, as the last remaining markets start to open up, I can only see that improving."

A similar message emerges at Mundy Cruising. "For Mundy Cruising and Mundy Adventures we've already surpassed our pre pandemic numbers, being 20 per cent up compared to the same time in 2019," says sales and marketing director Alex Loizou. "We are expecting this growth to continue into 2023."

From a port perspective, Portsmouth International Port passenger operations manager Andrew Williamson says it is "seeing a positive response, with strong enquiries from the luxury boutique sector of the market from both new and established names in the industry".

Trending itineraries

Much of this growth is fuelled by new ship launches, as Harmer references, and key booking trends, some of which are likely to remain for the foreseeable future as people's travel habits have changed. Windstar Cruises UK & Ireland business development manager Anna Perrott outlines the desire in the UK for "bucket-list itineraries being booked much closer in".

She continues: "There also has been the expectation of grander and longer cruises in the luxury space which is why we are now offering an epic 85-day Grand European Bucket List cruise, taking guests on a brand-new voyage spanning 22 countries. Customers are also spending a lot more money on board



CLIA's Andy Harmer believes 2023 numbers will surpass 2019 levels

NEW H PE



the ships on drinks, spa treatments and shore excursions and this is one of the reasons that we now give our guests the choice to go all-inclusive when they book their cruise.”

For 2023, Windstar has a range of new itineraries, including Red Sea and Persian Gulf voyages that will visit the likes of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Oman, Bahrain and Doha, as well as the Fun & Sun Caribbean cruise, which will call in Anguilla, St. Barts, and Jost Van Dyke, among other destinations.

“We’re also seeing increasing demand for French Polynesia,” adds Perrott. “Interestingly, we are seeing record numbers of guests new to the brand as travellers discover the advantage of small, yacht-like sailing.”

For CroisiEurope, next year brings “new repositioning coastal and ocean cruises from the Moroccan coast and the Red Sea to the Mediterranean”, says UK sales director John Fair. “[We also have] a hotel barge cruise from the Petite Seine to the Yonne, two new hiking cruises in the Canary Islands and Corsica, and a new Christmas Markets cruise between Strasbourg and Basel.”

Celebrity Cruises UK & Ireland director of sales Claire Stirrup says the line is seeing interest in “opportunities for added value, particularly in the current climate”. She adds: “We have newer travelling trends, including a rise in guests thinking much further ahead

to plan those once-in-a-lifetime holidays with all the family. We’ve also seen an increase in closer-in bookings during 2022 as the world began to open back up to global travel, and we predict this trend will continue.”

Work to be done

New itineraries are appealing, but there is plenty of road still to be navigated. Mintel director of travel research Paul Davies explains that the organisation does expect the cruise market in 2023 “to continue to recover from the damage caused by the pandemic”, but adds that “the value of the market is unlikely

to return to its pre-Covid level until around 2025”.

“Cruise operators are reliant on affluent consumers, who are in a better position to make up for missed travel opportunities,” he says. “The pandemic has also acted as a wake-up call to make long-standing travel dreams come true. World cruises have the potential to benefit from this, with seven in 10 cruise passengers showing interest.”

He adds: “With demand still falling short of its pre-pandemic level, operators would be wise to focus on ways to increase average selling prices in order to cope with rising costs. Promisingly



CroisiEurope has new offerings in store including a hiking cruise in Corsica



Little Bay, Anguilla's smallest and most private beach, is part of Windstar's new Fun & Sun Caribbean itinerary

for cruise operators, Mintel's research shows that consumers are twice as likely to say they'd prefer holiday companies to increase prices than they are to say they'd prefer them to reduce the quality of their service."

According to Davies, all this suggests "that the cruise market's core customer will be prepared to pay more for a high-quality experience", adding: "Operators that enhance their on-board wellness facilities, sustainability credentials and ways for customers to customise their holiday to their personal tastes will appeal most."

Cruise and tourism researcher Jennifer Holland believes that "2023 will be a strong year for cruise, with all ships back in service and most itineraries at capacity". However, she adds: "I don't think we will see record breaking passenger numbers yet above 2019 levels as I think that will be 2024 at the earliest, and more likely not until 2025 to reach over 32 million passengers globally."



Windstar's Anna Perrott says guests now expect grander, longer cruises

"Research still shows millennials will be a key market to recovery, but I also see a need to tap stronger into the already-cruised market who understand how wonderful a cruise can be, and get them to rediscover destinations or try new brands and itineraries. A really important factor will be how much personalisation the cruise line can offer – travellers want to customise and personalise their holiday and not feel like a number."

"Core customers will be prepared to pay more for a high-quality experience"

At the time writing, however, money – or more specifically the cost of living – is a hot topic for many. People are feeling the pinch in their pockets and economic stability has become headline news. Davies argues that this "will make it more challenging to convert interest from first-timer cruisers into bookings and convince them that a cruise holiday offers value for money".

A challenge, yes, say the experts, but one the industry can overcome with hard work and shouting from the rooftops about the level of inclusions on board and what guests get for their money. Loizou says: "Continued weakening of sterling will see pricing increase in travel, as in other areas, so those who are more price sensitive need to feel they are getting even more value from their purchase, whether this be a longer cruise at a lower per price or simply a better booking experience. We need to continue to offer our clients more."

CroisiEurope's Fair is also realistic, contending that "no doubt the current political and economic landscape will shape the coming months' sales", although, he says, "river cruise is a hugely robust and innovative sector and we can look forward with confidence but not complacency".

Agent advocates

Does, then, the power of travel agents come even more to the fore to help convince those on the fence to book? Daniels says: "My message to cruise lines is to get agents on ships to show them the good stuff, the best cabins, the best shore excursions, get them in the speciality dining restaurants and treat them like royalty. If you do, they will be your biggest advocates."

There's also progress that can be made in the less glamorous admin side of the business. Gareth Arnold, cruise relationship manager at travel technology company Inspiretec, argues: "With all the changes in the world and the impact this had on cruise holidays, agents need the ability to not only support changes and cancellations but also ensure customers stay informed and ultimately continue to rebook again and again. This has been significantly time consuming and hard to protect the margin and the customer."

He adds: "Leveraging technology can really support agents with the tools and information to automate booking changes with a personalised approach, ensuring all touchpoints are captured and no opportunities are missed".

There is also the opportunity for cruise and agents to target those customers who are keen for a holiday that protects the environment. Says Harmer: "Recent data showed the percentage of travellers who say the cruise industry is a leader in responsible travel is at 51 per cent, a nine per cent increase. We cannot rest on our laurels – the industry's advancements in sustainable cruising are critical to our ability to further enhance its reputation, retain loyal passengers and attract new-to-cruise holidaymakers."

The industry's message is clear: no complacency, just hard work. 📌



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This is your moment
to sell Seabourn's
Ultra-Luxury Voyages



Meet the
'Moments'
Team

Why Sell
Seabourn?

What's Hot
for 2023
& 2024

Seabourn's
Ultra-Luxury
Expeditions

What a busy year this has been...



Our five intimate all-suite, all-inclusive ocean ships are once more sailing to worldwide destinations that include Asia, Australasia, Alaska, Europe and the Caribbean. We've launched our first polar-class ultra-luxury expedition ship, Seabourn Venture taking just 264 guests on the most immersive ever journeys to the Polar regions. While the ship features luxurious surroundings including all-veranda suites, Zodiacs, Kayaks and two 6-seater submarines, we've discovered that for our guests,

expedition is all about in-depth and authentic learning opportunities which are provided by a 26-strong team of experts in marine biology, glaciology, archaeology, photography and so much more. A second ship, Seabourn Pursuit will join the fleet in October 2023.

As you will know, we are now a dedicated Seabourn team working to support you, our valued partners in the UK, and we've been delighted to welcome a few new team members recently! Your Business Development team are of course supported by our in-house Marketing and Product team.

Seabourn Moments are the personal, often-unexpected delights that distinguish Seabourn from all other forms of luxury travel, and these have become a recognised part of our cruises. We've been thrilled to host around 100 travel partners on our ships this summer and autumn. Now that they've experienced Seabourn, these agents have become our Seabourn ambassadors, with their own special *Seabourn Moments* to help them sell to their clients.

If you'd like to benefit from selling more Seabourn – and creating some *Seabourn Moments* of your own, please contact us and we'd be delighted to help you!

Wendy

Wendy Lahmich
Director of Sales, UK & Europe



THE SEABOURN UK & EUROPE TEAM



PANORAMA VERANDA SUITE



Meet your 'Moments' team

At Seabourn we value our Travel Advisor Partners and it's our aim to ensure you are equipped with as many resources as possible to sell our luxury brand



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Lynn Narraway



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We welcome Claire, our New BDM

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Hot Destinations and Unique Selling points in 2023

The Caribbean



Why Sell Seabourn's Caribbean?



- Seabourn Ovation, featuring 300 all-veranda suites, sails ex-Barbados from December to April
- Visit idyllic islands where larger ships cannot go, including Jost Van Dyke in the British Virgin Isles and the stunning Iles des Saintes.
- Enjoy complimentary watersports from the ship's own marina and go 'Shopping with the Chef' to local markets where he selects regional products to prepare onboard!



Seabourn Highlight

'Caviar in the Surf' Beach party, Carambola Beach, St Kitts



Relax on a white sand beach, complete with a gourmet barbeque (think fresh lobster!), as crew members wade waist deep through turquoise waters to serve chilled caviar and ice-cold champagne.

The Mediterranean



Why Sell Seabourn's Mediterranean?

- Choose from 7-11-night itineraries that combine marquee cities with less visited picturesque harbours. Think Greek Islands such as Spetses, Skiathos and Skopelos; Glamorous riviera resorts like Amalfi, Elba and Sardinia's Costa Smeralda. Croatia's golden coastline. Morocco's souks and spices.
- Many cruises feature our special 'Shopping with the Chef' experience.



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, features a chamber orchestra, as well as local snacks and drinks.



Hot Destinations and Unique Selling points in 2023

Asia & Arabia



Why Sell Seabourn's Asia & Arabia?

- 14-night itineraries feature the highlights of Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia
- Overnight stays in Laem Chabang (Bangkok) and Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) mean more immersive discoveries
- Caviar in the Surf® at Ko Kood in Thailand!
- Sell our cruises packaged with a stay in scintillating Singapore



Alaska



Why Sell Seabourn's Alaska?

- Only Seabourn offers the combination of immersive, expedition-style adventure and unmatched, ultra-luxury amenities onboard 458-guest Seabourn Odyssey
- Itineraries are custom-designed to offer iconic Alaskan ports and scenery, combined with rarely visited hidden gems



Seabourn Highlight



Our expedition team of experts provide insight into history, ecology, wildlife and culture of the spectacular destinations via optional hikes, Zodiac and kayak experiences that take guests deeper into Alaska.

A message from Robin West - VP & General Manager, Expeditions Greetings to all UK travel partners.

It's easy to offer elements of luxury, but an authentic ultra-luxury product is one that extends throughout everything a ship does. I believe that no one else does it better than Seabourn, as we enter the Expedition market with an ultra-luxury ship and extensive operational experience that will appeal to your adventurous clients, especially those who may typically choose a land-based experience.



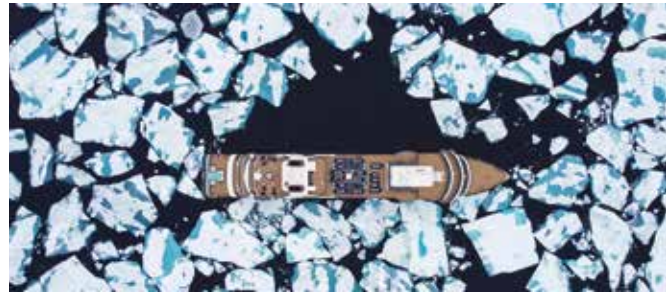
Some remote destinations are best seen or only accessible by ship. Features unique to our expedition ships include a 4K (Gyro Stabilized System GSS) Cineflex mast camera, capable of zooming in on wildlife, such as a polar bear from 4 nautical miles away - and in real time relaying that image to all TV's onboard, for a truly incredible wildlife sighting.

The Bow Lounge on Seabourn Venture serves as a virtual bridge, with monitors displaying in real time the navigational charts, radar screen, bridge wing screen and external cameras, allowing our guests a much greater interaction into the overall nautical operation.

Of course, if this is not enough, we also have an open bridge policy!

Robin

Robin West - VP & General Manager, Expeditions



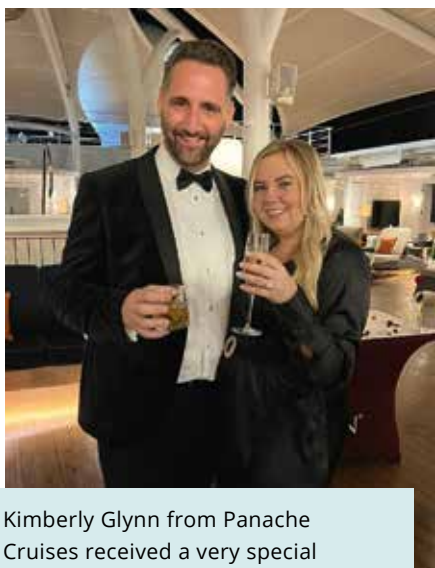
Order your copies of our Extraordinary Expeditions brochure

We can send you printed brochures or even personalise an e-brochure for you to send to your clients.

email: salesupport@seabourn.co.uk



Seabourn Moments with our Travel Partners



Kimberly Glynn from Panache Cruises received a very special Seabourn Moment when her partner John proposed to her onboard Seabourn Ovation. All of us at Seabourn loved the opportunity to make this happen!



'I have NEVER experienced Staff with such a passion and high regard for their clients onboard, and the level of service from the Maintenance Crew right up to Captain Andrew, was simply outstanding. And of course, not forgetting the magnificent food!'

Gaynor Welsby-West
- Travel Counsellors

'First booking for Ovation just going through. So much easier when you can personally recommend!'

Marie Prideaux - Barrhead Travel

"Thank you for being such wonderful hosts and giving me this amazing opportunity. I've had the best time, made some incredible memories and met some unforgettable people."

Louise Walker - Barrhead Travel



Claire
escorting
partners
on her first
Seabourn fam
trip on Ovation



'The ship itself is absolutely beautiful and we really couldn't fault the experience in anyway. We were really impressed with how smoothly everything is up and running once again and particularly with how happy all the staff seemed and how everyone appeared to be working so well together on board. A really great crew helping to create such a very memorable experience. I will certainly feel really confident to recommend Seabourn to our clients after this experience.'

Alison Nicolle, Wexas Travel



Partners enjoying the Chef's Dinner





THE SEABOURN ALL-INCLUSIVE DIFFERENCE

- Intimate ships with a private club atmosphere
- Intuitive, personalised service provided by staff passionate about exceeding guests expectations
- Curated voyages to all seven continents delivering award-winning experiences
- All ocean-front suites, luxuriously appointed
- Complimentary premium spirits and fine wines available on board at all times
- Welcome Champagne and complimentary in-suite bar stocked with your preferences
- Tipping is neither required, nor expected
- Finest resort at sea that is masterfully designed
- World-class dining, further enhanced through a culinary partnership with Chef Thomas Keller
- All dining venues are complimentary, dine where, when and with whom you wish
- Seabourn Conversations, connecting with visionary experts
- Ventures by Seabourn™, optional shore excursions, enhance and extend destination experiences
- Spa & Wellness with Dr. Andrew Weil, featuring an exclusive mindful living programme
- An evening entertainment experience in collaboration with Sir Tim Rice
- Committed to environmental stewardship and sustainability



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Win at Selling

Ship-within-a-ship concepts

Exclusive areas on ships, offering elevated luxury and other private amenities, have grown in popularity, so how can you sell them?

MSC Cruises and Norwegian Cruise Line were among the first to develop ship-within-a-ship concepts, designed to provide guests with luxury amenities without sacrificing on the big-ship experiences, activities and entertainment.

As MSC's UK & Ireland MD Antonio Paradiso explains: "The MSC Yacht Club offers unparalleled dedicated service that includes complimentary dining and drinks, 24-hour butler and concierge service, priority embarkation and disembarkation, plus access to private pools, deck and lounges, which makes the overall cruise experience much more appealing to customers that want a premium experience, easy planning, relaxing spaces and plenty of privacy."

For NCL, it is The Haven, which made its debut on *Norwegian Epic* in 2011. With



The Haven Deluxe Owner's Suite meets growing demand for VIP spaces

the Yacht Club capacity onboard our flagship *MSC World Europa*, in response to demand."

It's a similar story for NCL. Anslow pinpoints "increased demand for premium cabins, suites and our VIP spaces", fuelled by "travellers making up for lost time". He explains: "People are returning to travel after a few years' break due to the pandemic and are looking to elevate their trip and indulge in luxury. Nearly 20 per cent of bookings are for our Haven suites, indicating the desire for top-of-the-line experiences."

Areas such as The Haven and Yacht Club are also being upgraded and refined. As Paradiso mentions, capacity has been increased. Meanwhile, NCL has re-energised its offering on new ship *Norwegian Prima*.

"For the first time, we've relocated all 107 Haven suites to the aft, with private elevators exclusively reserved for The Haven by Norwegian guests," says Anslow. "We've also ensured that every public area offers stunning sea and destination views. Suites in The Haven allow guests to enjoy panoramic ocean views from spacious balconies." 📍

SELLING TIPS

Anslow says: "Remind travellers that it [The Haven] is home to our most luxurious, well-appointed and spacious accommodations."



"We always advise our travel agents to educate their clients accordingly and encourage them to book early to secure their favourite itinerary and suite, as these do tend to sell out quickly", adds Anslow



Paradiso says: "It's all about personalised service and understanding customers' needs and wants better than ever before."

"People are returning to travel and are looking to elevate their trip and indulge in luxury"

The Haven by Norwegian, guests are offered the opportunity to enjoy exclusive amenities, but are also "free to enjoy the many perks only on offer on larger ships at sea", says NCL UK & Ireland senior sales director Gary Anslow.

This, he adds, includes: "Broadway entertainment, adrenaline-fuelled activities like Prima Speedway, and the luxury of the spa, which offers the first charcoal sauna at sea. It's this bringing together of the two offerings that make ship-within-a-ship concepts so popular."

Exceptional sales

While these concepts proved relatively popular from the off, the lure of a ship within a ship seems to be getting stronger. Paradiso says the Yacht Club "is doing exceptionally well in terms of sales", adding: "We have doubled the capacity of our Yacht Club since we launched the experience in 2008. It has been one of our best-selling experiences on board *MSC Virtuosa* sailings from the UK, and we plan on further increasing



The lovely infinity pool, reserved for The Haven guests

Lumière pairs an elegant atmosphere with contemporary French cuisine

Discovering ECLIPSE

Kaye Holland joins travel agents on board *Scenic Eclipse* to discover if the six-star ship lives up to the hype



The agents on board putting *Scenic Eclipse* through its paces



Even the little touches matter when it comes to ultra-luxury cruises

The £180 million, ultra-luxury, 550ft-long *Scenic Eclipse* – which can carry 228 passengers – departed on its inaugural Mediterranean voyage from Lisbon in June, calling at Porto, Vigo, Douarnenez and Fowey. CTN's Kaye Holland was on board and asked travel agents whether Australian-owned Scenic's first ocean ship delivers. Here's what they had to say.

Fay and Andy Boyd, Classic Travel Collection (part of Holiday Village)

“We had an idea of what to expect because we specialise in selling luxury cruises and have been fortunate to have sailed with a lot of luxury cruise lines, but this has just blown all expectations out of the water. The food is on par with Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises. Scenic is also similar in some respects to Seabourn when it comes to staff and attention to detail.

“We have clients who adore Seabourn and Silversea Cruises and, if they like these lines, then they are guaranteed to love Scenic. On a cruise, you usually have a highlight or two but here every day has been a highlight.”

Danni Martin, Scotland's Cruise Centre

“The easiest people to sell *Scenic Eclipse* to, in my opinion, are those who tend to book ultra-luxury cruises – having moved away from ocean cruising

because it wasn't intimate enough, it wasn't destination-focused enough. The ship offers everything that appeals to passengers who have moved over to river cruising: there are very small numbers on board, it's very destination-orientated, and it can access ports of call that bigger cruise ships can't.

“The second big selling point is that *Scenic Eclipse* offers a six-star experience where almost everything is included. The standout though is the ship itself, how sleek it is, how chic it is, and the service, which really has been second to none.”

Laura Strowger, ROL Cruise

“It's been fantastic to see *Scenic Eclipse* in the flesh. I've been able to understand the elements of six-star cruising. I work in marketing and, from my perspective, I can now look at different ways to promote *Eclipse*. I will be telling our top spenders that they need to book a *Scenic Eclipse* expedition. The ship is phenomenal. A particular

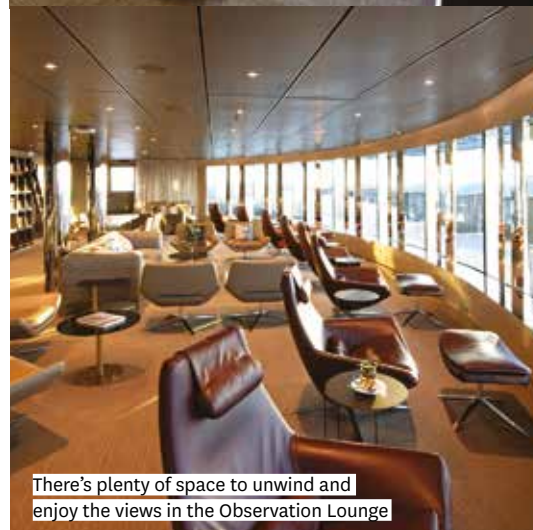




The purpose-built climate-controlled mud room simplifies changing for expeditions



Eclipse offers a diverse range of cuisine with up to 10 dining experiences to choose from



There's plenty of space to unwind and enjoy the views in the Observation Lounge

The design of *Scenic Eclipse* is inspired by the sleek contours of a sailing yacht

highlight [for me] is the marina. Being able to dock and go out on a paddleboard and enjoy the views has been brilliant – you can't do that on a big cruise ship, can you?"

Helene Hammerstein, The Travel Club

“At The Travel Club, we sell luxury holidays and cruise travel is always popular. I have found *Scenic Eclipse* to be amazing. However, there is a but – there have been a few teething problems. For example, I ordered eggs for breakfast to my room and they arrived, but the bread I also ordered was missing. It was delivered eight minutes later so it wasn't a big problem but, on a six-star ship, I'd expect an order to arrive together.

“That's a minor complaint, though. Overall, I love the atmosphere on board, and I think the food is fantastic. Passengers also have a lot of freedom, which is very good. The excursions too are extraordinary – the quality is top-notch, and the guides are experts.”

James Pettitt, Curated Escapes

“*Scenic Eclipse* is ideal as an expedition vessel and would suit clients who are looking for a unique experience where personalised service is the order of the day, without being overly formal. The ship is for someone who wants to experience a destination that is rich in interest, such as Antarctica or the Arctic. I don't think it would appeal to a mainstream cruiser or someone who wants to cruise around the Caribbean. That's not *Eclipse's* market.”

Karen Thornton, Travel Counsellors

“I like the discovery side of *Scenic Eclipse* – I think that's what makes the ship so different and helps it stand out. Also, the fact that it is a smaller ship and can therefore get into smaller ports and visit some fascinating places. What's more, it's easy to find your way around – I have been on others where it takes days to get to grips with the ship. It's a thumbs up from me.”

Spring River cruises



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While Europe is a year-round destination, there's nothing quite like a rejuvenating spring holiday to shake off the seasonal blues as the snow finally starts to melt and nature bursts into life. After winter's chill and long dark nights, a relaxing river cruise could be just what you need.



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WAVE
AWARDS 2022



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



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Celebrating CRUISE

In November, the cruise industry came together to crown the winners of the Wave Awards 2022

Bigger and better. Two words that perfectly sum up the Wave Awards 2022. Held at the Pan Pacific London for the first time, it was a fantastic night, filled with joy and celebrations. With numerous awards on offer across categories covering every area of the industry, as well as those voted for by the public, there was no shortage of excellence on display on the night.

This year, there were a record number of entries and record number of votes cast in the passenger favourite categories, demonstrating the strength and breadth of the innovation and hard work across the sector.

There were also some special awards on the night. Introduced last year, the Peter Grant Contribution to the Cruise Industry Award recognises someone who has made a lasting and significant contribution to the

“The sector is in full flow and our winners showcase how forward-thinking cruise is”

industry, and is awarded in memory of Peter Grant, former Real Response Media director and *Cruise Trade News* and *World of Cruising* publisher.

In addition, new for 2022 was the Women in Cruise Award, recognising and celebrating trailblazing and pioneering females in the cruise industry.

Cruise Trade News editor Gary Peters says: “Every previous edition of the Wave Awards has had its own sprinkling of magic, but there was something unique about this year. The cruise sector really is in full flow, and our winners – and indeed all who entered for 2022 – showcase how forward-thinking cruise is.

“Well done to all who were shortlisted and of course the

winners on the night. Thank you to all who joined us at the Pan Pacific, as well as those who helped us to organise and deliver a memorable event. Such occasions are also not possible without the support of our sponsors – we truly appreciate your encouragement, ideas and support for the Wave Awards.”

The Wave Awards are organised by Real Response Media, which publishes *Cruise Trade News* and *World of Cruising* magazines and their websites.

Stay tuned for more information about the Wave Awards 2023 but, for now, please see inside for pictures from the night. For a full list of winners and more reaction from the event, go to thewaveawards.com and cruisetradenews.com.



Andy Harmer Managing Director, CLIA UK & Ireland



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines



ICON OF THE SEAS ARRIVES 2021



Princess Cruises







‘WHAT A NIGHT’

Discover what the sponsors and winners at the Wave Awards 2022 had to say

A-Rosa River Cruises regional sales manager Joe Lavers

“This year’s Wave Awards were a roaring success and I’d like to congratulate all the winners on their incredible achievements. It was so nice to be in a room full of the best of the cruise industry and see everyone having a great time. Stephen Mangan was an absolutely brilliant host, and it was a pleasure to stand on stage with him when I handed out an award. His opening story had our table in hysterics, and I loved how he encouraged us all to celebrate each and every award win.”

CLIA UK & Ireland MD Andy Harmer, winner of the Peter Grant Award

“It’s a huge honour to be recognised with such a prestigious award. It makes it even more important to know that such a talented and well-regarded industry nominated me.”

Holland America Line director sales and marketing Karen Farndell

“It was fabulous to be back at the Wave Awards and seeing so many of our agent partners for an evening of celebration of our wonderful industry. All of us at Holland America Line feel extremely proud to have been awarded Best Premium Cruise Line, Best for Enrichment and also highly commended for Best for Entertainment.”

Imagine Cruising group MD Steve Morrish

“We are thrilled to have received this year’s Wave Award for Best Innovation. This will mean a great deal to everyone at Imagine Cruising, serving as brilliant recognition of all the hard work our staff continue to put into curating new, unique and exciting holiday experiences. We are truly grateful for this award.”

Seabourn senior marketing manager UK & Europe Carly Perkins

“What an amazing venue and event, with a great atmosphere and such professional organisation. The Wave Awards has now become a major, must-attend fixture in the travel industry calendar. All of us at Seabourn were so proud to be recognised four times last night, including the gold Grand Prix Award. The Seabourn team has worked so hard over the last year and to be awarded by the industry was just so emotional and heart-warming.”

Royal Caribbean sales director UK, Ireland & Spain Stuart Byron

“It was great to be back at the Wave Awards with so many incredible brands and industry experts in the room, celebrating the many achievements within the cruise industry.”

Traveltek head of account management Hayley West

“Traveltek was delighted to be a sponsor for the Wave Awards 2022.

The awards are always a highlight in our calendar and it's a joy to see the industry grow. Cruise has certainly come back bigger and better than ever with some amazing new ships launched. It's a privilege to be part of the Wave Awards, recognising and rewarding our industry colleagues.”

Fred Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales Geoff Ridgeon

“It was a real honour to be headline sponsors as we came together as an industry and reflected on a year that has seen us champion diversity, resilience, strength and individuality. I would like to thank the team at Real Response Media for putting on an incredible night for us all, but most importantly I'd like to thank you, as agents, operators and supporters, of our incredible industry.”

Association of British Ports head of cruise Rebekah Keeler

“It's fantastic to win the Best Port at the Wave Awards. There's been a huge amount of work from many stakeholders and the fantastic team at Southampton. This Wave Award recognises the years of investment.”

Cruise118 MD Alison Earnshaw

“We're delighted to win Best Online Agent at the Wave Awards, particularly as it is an accolade we've achieved for a number of consecutive years now. It is testament to the hard work and dedication of our talented, passionate and tenacious team, and I'm incredibly proud of what they have achieved in the past 12 months.”

Princess Cruises marketing and communications director Suzanne Korff

“We're absolutely delighted with our double win, Favourite Luxury Premium Cruise Line as voted for by the public and also Best Ocean Cruise Line. It is a testament to the Princess teams and how the brand has gone from strength to strength. The Wave Awards this year was a spectacular event and it was great to have the cruise industry together again, celebrating its achievements.”

Saga Cruises account manager Natasha Jones

“Saga Cruises was thrilled to once again be a sponsor of the prestigious Wave Awards and what a fantastic night it was. Congratulations to all winners, it was a brilliant evening celebrating the innovation and excellence which drives our industry forward. Saga Cruises is very proud that our two sister ships, *Spirit of Discovery* and *Spirit of Adventure*, alongside our bespoke river ships, *Spirit of the Rhine* and *Spirit of the Danube*, continue to delight guests with a luxury boutique cruising experience. Thank you for your continued support throughout this year and here's to a successful 2023.”



For all seasons

The Danube is the perfect introduction to river cruising but, as one of Europe's mightiest waterways, it is also ideal for the longer itineraries now in demand. **Deborah Stone** reports

There's a reason the Danube is the first river cruise of choice for many. It flows through 10 countries and four capital cities, plus numerous historic small towns and interesting villages. Passing through countryside so scenic that some of it is UNESCO-listed, the Danube is fundamental to European history. It is one of the continent's oldest trading routes and littered with ancient ruins – from Roman times to the Middle Ages.

The ideal first timers' cruise is the popular week-long stretch from Germany to Hungary, often starting or finishing at Nuremberg. Its picture-perfect medieval old town was rebuilt virtually brick by brick after the Second World War and a visit to the cathedral is especially moving, while the town's Christmas market is one of the biggest and best in the country.

Once on the Danube proper, ships sail through Bavaria to handsome Regensburg and on to Passau, where the river's tributaries meet. Gill Williams, personal travel consultant for The Cruise Village, experienced her first river cruise on the Danube. She says: "It's interesting to see the different colours of the river at Passau. The town also boasts the largest Catholic church organ in the world at St Stephen's Cathedral with its 17,974 pipes."

Jaw-dropping scenes

The bends of the Wachau Valley are so beautiful, with forested river cliffs and vineyard terraces, that it is under UNESCO protection. A-Rosa River Cruises UK & Ireland MD Lucia Rowe describes the valley – one of Austria's finest wine regions – as "jaw-dropping" and "topped with ruined castles". The valley runs through pretty medieval

towns and villages for 24 miles between Melk and Krems.

Melk is tiny but important because of the imposing Melk Abbey, which CroisiEurope UK sales director John Fair lists as a must-do. Also along this stretch is the picturesque waterfront village of Durnstein, surrounded by vineyards that stretch up towards the ruined castle where Richard the Lionheart was imprisoned while returning home from the Crusades.

And then there are the magnificent capital cities along this stretch – Austria's imperial Vienna, tiny Bratislava in Slovakia and Hungary's elegant Budapest. Riviera Travel head of product river & ocean Katja Hildebrandt recommends strolling through Bratislava's baroque old town to "soak up the captivating ambience" and highlights Vienna's leafy boulevards, and refined cafe culture.

Spend an uplifting evening listening to the choir in Belgrade's Saint Sava Cathedral

of untamed nature and bountiful wildlife. It is here that the Danube flows into the Black Sea."

Unfortunately, this route through the far east of Europe – and especially the Black Sea – has seen fewer bookings in 2022 than normal, partly because this has been a transitional year for all cruise travel after the pandemic but also because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

However, Fair says: "We should see the Danube return to stability in 2023, as well as an increase in popularity. While the conflict in Ukraine affected confidence this year, autumn departures have been stronger and we're positive for next year."

Indeed the outlook for 2023 appears to be very upbeat, with TUI introducing a new Oktoberfest cruise that sails partly on the Danube – Bavarian Discovery from Frankfurt to Passau – and Uniworld unveiling new experiences on its Danube cruises. Among them is a Bavarian Evening of traditional music and beer in Passau, available on its Portraits of Eastern Europe itinerary, and a night out at Saint Sava Cathedral in Serbia's capital Belgrade, listening to the choir followed by wine tasting.

A-Rosa's Rowe says: "For 2023 we've made our two itineraries that sail down to this region two days longer, allowing even more time to experience this incredible area. Our longest cruise, the 18-night Danube Delta itinerary, starts in Austria and travels through six

Williams says Vienna and Budapest were the highlights on her Danube cruise: "In Vienna, we got to experience a wonderful city tour that took in the famous palaces of the Hapsburgs – something that took me back to my school days – and a must is to experience the concert arranged by several cruise lines, an evening of Schubert and Mozart featuring wonderful dancing. It's truly immersive."

Budapest is famous for its Parliament building, based on London's Houses of Parliament, on the Danube's left bank. This side of the city is Pest and has many art nouveau buildings, while the right bank, Buda, is home to St Matthias' Cathedral and the original capital of Hungary. These two separate settlements were united by the 1849 Széchenyi Chain Bridge and river ships often moor opposite the Parliament building.

Andy Hawke, sales and product manager for river at Fred. Holidays, which sells Amadeus River Cruises in the

UK, explains: "I'd recommend a city tour taking in both sides of the river as well as an evening sailing to see the illuminated Parliament buildings and bridge."

TUI Skylar was based permanently at Budapest in 2022, doing weekly turnarounds, and TUI River Cruises' other two ships, *TUI Isla* and *TUI Maya*, completed longer itineraries from Amsterdam to Budapest and further down the Danube, so the river played a large part in its overall programme.

TUI River Cruises senior cruise commercial manager Mark Sage says: "Following the success of 2022, we will have a few more sailings on the Danube in 2023. For example, we've just added in a further date for mid-March. We have a great choice of itineraries covering the entire navigable Danube, from the Main-Danube Canal all the way to Constanta at the Black Sea.

"We will always look to refine and adjust our itineraries based on our experience in each port and how the overall itinerary performs. We're therefore only looking to make slight adjustments to our schedules for 2023."

Positive vibes

On the subject of cruising east of Budapest, Rowe says it's ideal for those with more time to explore: "It is possible to cruise all the way down to the Danube Delta, a UNESCO world heritage site and a spectacular place which is a paradise

Passau has the world's largest Catholic church organ, with an amazing 17,974 pipes



Expert VIEW

"We need to stress the extended season for Danube cruises, with its Christmas markets, when we talk to our valued clients."

GILL WILLIAMS
The Cruise Village



One of Germany's best preserved medieval towns, Regensburg has world heritage status



Prague's astronomical clock, installed in 1410, is the oldest of its kind in operation

countries past the Iron Gates, the most awe-inspiring gorge in Europe, to Tulcea in Romania, the gateway to the Danube Delta. It's pure bucket-list stuff."

Hawke agrees that sailings to the Danube Delta and the Black Sea had been increasing in popularity before the Covid pandemic and Ukraine war, although most bookings were still the Nuremberg/ Passau to Budapest route. "Aside from that," he adds, "we see customers wanting to package their cruise with extra stays in Budapest, Prague, Berlin or Poland." As a result, in 2023 Fred River Cruises will offer air and rail access to the Danube as well as new land packages in Berlin, Prague, Warsaw and Krakow.

ITINERARIES

Avalon Waterways

- Prices for the eight-day Danube Dreams, from Budapest to Deggendorf, start from £2,075pp, cruise only, departing regularly from 4 April 2023.

↳ avalonwaterways.co.uk

Uniworld

- The 10-day Highlights of Eastern Europe from Budapest to Bucharest on SS *Beatrice*, starts from £3,509pp, including flights and transfers, departing regularly from 5 April 2023.

↳ uniworld.com

TUI River Cruises

- A seven-night Magical Danube return from Budapest, starts from £1,399pp, including flights and transfers, departing 7 August 2023.

↳ tui.co.uk

Excursions evolving

While the towns and cities visited on the Danube are unlikely to change, more active excursions such as canoeing, cycling and guided walks are fast growing in popularity. CroisiEurope has a hiking-themed cruise from Austria to Hungary via Slovakia that Fair describes as having "breathtaking views and destinations steeped in history".

TUI's Sage says its shorex programme is evolving and expanding, with the possibility of more options for people who want to explore more independently. "We have trialled a number of experiences recently, including a cooking and tasting experience in Bratislava, and we will have some cycling options available for 2023."

Executives from all cruise companies will explain they spent lockdown brainstorming how to improve their products and Sage adds that 2023 will be a year of consolidation with some minor changes to reflect passenger feedback. "What will change more is the offering in each destination to give greater choice of things to do, which is something we are working hard on at the moment," he says.

A fresh approach to activities is also on the cards at A-Rosa, says Rowe: "For 2023, our Danube cruises are getting a refresh. We're making them more immersive and authentic than ever before, through excursions, our culinary offering and on-board performance. Our premium all-inclusive offering will be more flexible than ever before, giving guests the option to enjoy dinner served waiter-style or from the ship's extensive gourmet buffet.

"Every seven-night cruise will also include an excursion with a special dining event plus two cultural performances on board. From 2023, guests will also be able to use the on-board bikes at their leisure

SELLING TIPS

Agents can sell A-Rosa by booking a packaged product with the company or through a tour operator partner such as Newmarket Holidays

Avalon offers four-day taster cruises for guests who are short for time, which take in the three capital cities of Budapest, Bratislava and Vienna, and longer holidays up to a 17-night cruise to the Black Sea

Agents should focus on the cultural aspect of the beautiful capital cities with their long and fascinating history and stunning architecture

if they do not wish to join an organised bike excursion. We have also made some of our journeys even longer for 2023 by adding two extra nights, so there is even more time to experience this incredible journey along the Danube."

Rowe continues: "The 18-night Danube Delta itinerary travels even further, all the way to the Delta, and includes extended stays in Vienna and Budapest, plus Tulcea to allow for more time to explore the Delta on optional excursions. For those who like to learn more, we also have new themed voyages in 2023 on the Danube including a photography option and a meditation option."

The Danube may be the perfect first-time river cruise but, with demand for longer holidays with more active excursions, it is set to be the second and perhaps even third cruise of choice for many in 2023 and beyond.📍

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CARIBBEAN CALLING

With a rush of new ship launches, itineraries and excursions, there's never been a better time to visit the Caribbean.

Sarah Holt reports

Promising bombshell blonde beaches, warm waters and cloudless skies, the Caribbean has always been what Peter Shanks, managing director for UK & Ireland at Silversea Cruises, describes as a "sure-fire winner for British cruisers".

In 2023, the region's lure is only set to get stronger as a flurry of new ships set sail around its islands and a clutch of new products launch onto the market.

"The Caribbean continues to be a popular, thriving cruise destination that boasts a complex and fascinating history, not forgetting plenty of sun," Shanks continues. "With its lush green rainforests and dazzling crystal-clear

coastline, it's no wonder that Caribbean cruising features prominently on people's travel wishlists this year and beyond."

The Caribbean is freckled with more than 700 islands, so itineraries vary greatly. In general, cruises can be split into three categories – eastern, western and southern sailings. Eastern cruises take in places like the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos, the Dominican Republic, the British Virgin Islands and St. Maarten. Western itineraries introduce passengers to the coasts of Mexico, Belize, Honduras, the Cayman Islands and Jamaica.

Southern sailings, meanwhile, showcase destinations such as St Kitts, Antigua, St Lucia, Guadeloupe, Barbados, Grenada, Bonaire and Aruba. Departure ports also vary, from Southampton in the UK to Fort Lauderdale in Florida and Galveston in Texas.



A flurry of activity

The Caribbean will be flush with new ships in 2023 and 2024. Royal Caribbean's new *Wonder of the Seas* made its debut in the region in March 2022 and, following a summer in the Mediterranean, it returned to Port Canaveral, Florida, in November this year to pick up its Caribbean and Bahamian itineraries.

Currently the world's largest ship, the vessel features eight neighbourhoods, filled with entertainment spaces, bars, restaurants and USPs like the tallest slide at sea, the AquaTheatre and the ice rink where ice shows are performed.

Hot on its heels in late 2023 will be the line's first Icon-class ship, *Icon of the Seas*. This will be the first of three ships to be powered by liquefied natural gas and Royal Caribbean says the vessel will be "unparalleled" when it sets sail.

Norwegian Cruise Line's new *Norwegian Prima* started offering Caribbean sailings in October. Infinity pools, a three-level racetrack, a food hall and a spa with a two-storey waterfall are just a few of the tricks up this ship's sleeve.

Following an inaugural season in the Mediterranean in summer 2022, Silversea's new *Silver Dawn* will spend winter 22/23 cruising around the Caribbean. A year later, in winter 2023/24, it will be joined by its newly minted sister ship *Silver Nova*.

Both of these ships will offer guests the opportunity to experience the line's new Sea and Land Taste (S.A.L.T) culinary programme, which gives passengers access to talks and destination-centred cookery demos in the S.A.L.T Lab, foodie-based shore excursions, and regionally inspired menus in the S.A.L.T Kitchen restaurant.



Expert VIEW

“There's an enduring sense of escapism offered by the Caribbean that provides something unparalleled in the minds of travellers. It's one of those rare locations that people visit once and begin planning when next to return, probably because the Caribbean is almost a shorthand that says 'guaranteed fantastic holiday'. Rightly so, when you consider the beautiful landscapes and experiences unique to the region.”

GARY ANSLOW

Norwegian Cruise Line senior sales director UK & Ireland

SELLING TIPS

Lock in sales by telling clients how they can be among the first to see the Caribbean on board some of the biggest and most cutting-edge ships at sea

Stress how Caribbean cruising makes it easy to get to destinations like Martinique and Eleuthera, which are tricky to reach by land or air

Emphasise how different Caribbean itineraries can be from one another. A cruise in the eastern Caribbean will offer different experiences to one in the south

Destination focus: Caribbean

P&O Cruises' *Arvia* will also sail its first Caribbean season in winter 2022/23, with Bridgetown in Barbados as its homeport. Highlights of the 5,200-passenger ship include the Altitude Skywalk, a high ropes course set 52 metres above the sea, *Greatest Days*, the Take That musical that's exclusive to *Arvia*, and a collection of new restaurants like the fish and plant-based Green & Co feat. Mizuhana and the traditional lunch eatery Roast at The Quays.

“The Caribbean remains very popular with our guests, with each island offering its own different vibe, charm and the opportunity for some winter sun,” says P&O Cruises president Paul Ludlow. “We're looking forward to introducing our newest ship *Arvia*, which will give guests even more opportunity to explore this fantastic region.”

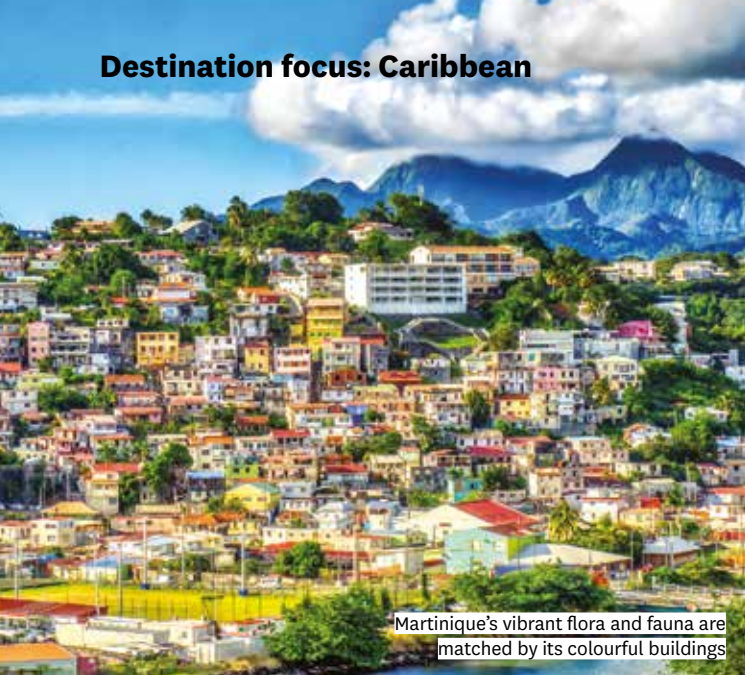
Looking a little further ahead, Regent Seven Seas Cruises' *Seven Seas Grandeur* will make its Caribbean debut in November 2023. Passengers on the ship will have the opportunity to sample the line's new Eco-Connect excursions concept, which has been designed to help guests engage with local conservation and environmental organisations.

On Bonaire, for example, visitors will be able to take a Mangroves Info Centre & Kayaking excursion, in which they'll learn about the benefits of the mangroves in Lac Bay before kayaking through an environmentally protected area of mangrove forest.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises senior vice-president and UK MD Graham Sadler explains: “We are delighted that our



There's a wide variety of itineraries available on *Caribbean Princess*



Martinique's vibrant flora and fauna are matched by its colourful buildings



Sun Princess embarks on its first Caribbean season in autumn 2024

newest ship, *Seven Seas Grandeur*, will be spending her first season in the Caribbean, as the ever-popular region provides many wonderful experiences and ports of call for our valued guests.

"*Grandeur*'s inaugural itineraries discover some of the best-kept secrets of the Caribbean, from the dazzling diving spots of Kralendijk, Bonaire to the Dutch-Caribbean Island paradise of Curaçao, while remaining true to the region's more famed gems. It is this variety, and the opportunity to visit the more undiscovered destinations, that makes the Caribbean so tantalising for travellers year on year."

Finally, in autumn 2024, *Sun Princess*, from Princess Cruises, will embark on its first Caribbean season, sailing out of Port Everglades, Florida.

Itinerary plans

In addition to the influx of new ships, there's a shower of new itineraries launching in the Caribbean in 2023 and beyond. In May 2023, Marella Cruises will begin offering a new range of itineraries from Port Canaveral in Florida. Options include Sunshine State and Sands 1, which calls in at Amber Cove in the Dominican Republic, Grand Turk in the Turks and Caicos Islands and Key West and Miami in Florida.

In winter 2023, Windstar will begin running its new seven-night Beach, Fun & Sun itinerary that's been designed specifically for people who like to spend time enjoying some of the best tropical beaches, swimming and watersports activities. These cruises call in to St. Maarten, Antigua, St. Barts, Anguilla, Virgin Gorda and Tortola and include

an overnight in Jost Van Dyke. The Caribbean is awash with world-famous sights – places such as the Mayan ruins of Mexico, the Piton mountains of Saint Lucia and the unblemished beaches of Barbados' Platinum Coast. However, these guidebook blockbusters are just the start of the sightseeing story in this part of the world. Caribbean cruising also gives passengers the opportunity to call at lesser-known destinations that aren't as easy to access by other modes of travel, such as land or air.

"Ports of call less accessible by air are becoming more and more popular as guests want to explore off-the-beaten-track destinations more than ever before," says Star Clippers general manager Fay McCormack.

Champagne beaches

Take, for example, Martinique. Champagne-coloured beaches, waterfall-streaked rainforests and botanical gardens filled with orchids, hibiscus and bird of paradise flowers await visitors to this French island. History lovers will want to visit the birthplace of Empress Josephine, wife of Napoleon, which is located near Les Trois Îlets, half an hour from Fort de France, where cruise ships dock.

Meanwhile, the British Overseas territory of Montserrat is an island of two halves. The south side, which is off-limits to tourists, is home to the smoking Soufrière Hills volcano and the lavascape left behind by the eruptions of the 1990s and early 2000s. The perfectly safe north side, where cruise ships call, is fleeced with greenery, laced with walking trails and hemmed by rugged beaches.

Both Montserrat and Martinique can be visited on Saga's Springtime in the Caribbean itinerary.

Then there's Bequia. Covering an area of just seven square miles, this lozenge of land is the second largest island in the Grenadines. On some of its new *Silver Dawn* and *Silver Nova* itineraries, Silversea Cruises will offer a new Scenic Bequia and Grenadine Sea Salt excursion, which gives passengers the opportunity to visit the historical Mill building to discover how artisan Grenadine Sea Salt is made and to take part in expert-led tastings. ☎

ITINERARIES

Norwegian Cruise Line

A six-night Caribbean: Great Stirrup Cay & Cozumel cruise on *Norwegian Prima*, on 16 December 2023, is priced from £1,083pp.

📍 [ncl.com](https://www.ncl.com)

Silversea Cruises

Silversea has an eight-night San Juan to Bridgetown voyage, sailing on *Silver Dawn*, on 30 January 2023, priced from £5,400pp.

📍 [silversea.com](https://www.silversea.com)

Royal Caribbean

A four-night Bahamas & Perfect Day Cruise on *Freedom of the Seas*, sailing from Miami, departs on 6 March 2023 and is priced from £375pp.

📍 [royalcaribbean.com](https://www.royalcaribbean.com)



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Enchanting TIMES

Rachel Reilly relaxes in the serene surroundings of Ponant's *Le Bougainville* on a sun-filled voyage around Corsica

My eyes skim over the tangerine and terracotta-coloured buildings of Nice as the taxi approaches Port Lympia. I look out the window, getting lost in the masts of the sailboats anchored along the harbour. I try to read the names of each bow I pass, in a poor attempt at some last-minute French

practice before boarding *Le Bougainville*, Ponant's third Explorers-class ship, named after famous French explorer and admiral, Louis Antoine de Bougainville.

My fellow explorer and fiancé Antoine and I are thrilled to start our very own adventure on board *Le Bougainville*, as we journey around the island of Corsica. Having sailed on large passenger ships in the past, with a guest capacity of up to 2,000 passengers, we are eager to see what the ship has to offer and experience the intimacy and cosiness of a smaller ship.

Despite my crash-course in French before boarding, I admit I feel quite apprehensive pre cruise. I assume I may need to rely heavily on Google Translate, which wouldn't be a problem with the complimentary wifi. However, those feelings quickly disappear once I take my first steps on board.

All briefings and public announcements are done in both French and English, so there's no need to worry about missing out on the important details. Plus, all the staff, officers and naturalist guides are bilingual, so guests can enjoy day-to-day activities and expeditions without getting lost in translation.

Let the adventure begin

The interior of *Le Bougainville* is chic, yet relaxed, and the calming neutral tones and light wood panels that decorate the ship's interior make for a welcome and refreshing retreat, perfect after a day of excursions out in the rugged Corsican terrain.

As soon as I enter the cabin, I'm tempted to jump on the plush king sized-bed, but am discouraged to ensure I do not spill the glass of welcome champagne

The sophisticated, fully equipped rooms offer superb views. Photo: Ponant-Nicolas Matheus

A well-stocked library offers plenty of reading material for guests. Photo: Ponant-Nicolas Matheus

The on-board shop sells a wide range of gifts and essentials. Photo: Ponant-Nicolas Matheus

Le Bougainville combines exploration with luxury. Photo: Ponant-Clement Louineau



Chic yet relaxed interiors create a welcome and refreshing retreat. Photo: Ponant-Nicolas Matheus

in my hand. The room is sophisticated and functional, with ample storage space. Fully equipped with a flat-screen TV, mini-bar, Nespresso machine and luxury Hermès toiletries, plus a private balcony, it is perfect for taking in the panoramic views of the coastline while enjoying some room-service breakfast.

As an avid David Attenborough fan and nature documentary binge-watcher, I am really looking forward to Ponant's expeditions. The trained naturalist guides specialise in an array of sciences from fauna, marine biology and more, which make the expeditions the perfect way to take in the natural beauty of the destination and maybe spot some wildlife.

Each day, guests can board one of *Le Bougainville*'s nine zodiacs and embark on an adventure led by a naturalist guide,

where they can explore at sea level and discover striking landscapes and remote areas unreachable by ship.

Despite not having any exciting animal sightings during our expedition (I was really hoping to see a shark) our naturalist guide's ability to keep everyone engaged is impressive. Not only does he have plenty of interesting facts about the area, but his stories of his adventures, scuba diving in underwater caves and being confronted and nearly attacked by a giant spider crab are compelling, and definitely make up for the lack of sharks.

For those who want the educational experience but wish to avoid zipping through the choppy waves in a zodiac, there are naturalist specialist lectures in the theatre every evening. These prove to be just as informative as I learn, to my surprise, that peeing on a jellyfish sting to ease the pain is a myth.

There are many notable stops on our journey and a healthy mix of awe-inspiring places full of culture and natural wonders. For history buffs, Ajaccio is the place to be. Corsica's capital city, famously known as the birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte, is full of historical attractions including Maison Bonaparte, the ancestral home of the Bonaparte family.

Another major hot spot on our tour is the fortress town of Bonifacio. Located on the southern tip of the island hanging over brilliant turquoise waters on limestone cliffs, the bustling town consists of winding streets full of stylish boutiques.

Glamorous dining

With my lust for adventure satisfied, it's time to test out the cuisine on *Le Bougainville*. Wine glasses glisten on top of crisp white tablecloths as the sunset lingers over the horizon,

SELLING TIPS

Le Bougainville gives guests the opportunity to feel as though they're sailing on their own private yacht.

The atmosphere is intimate and relaxed, and the ship's small size allow for more attentive, personable service compared to a larger ship

The high culinary standard on board and unique dishes make each meal an unforgettable treat. Guest will not be bored at mealtimes

Sell the Blue Eye as a completely different and unique cruise innovation. It's something that has to be seen to be believed



Discover striking landscapes and remote areas unreachable by ship. Photo: Ponant-Olivier Anrigo



Outdoor seating offers the ultimate view as guests relax. Photo: Ponant-Nicolas Matheus



Every meal is a feast for the eyes

The Blue Eye, *Le Bougainville's* multisensory underwater bar, offers a truly immersive experience

while Antoine and I polish off our third helping of octopus carpaccio. Our table sits outside, perfectly positioned to take in the panoramic view as we eagerly await the arrival of our main course and the on-board sommelier with her wine recommendations for the evening. In my humble opinion, nobody does food better than the French, and Ponant goes above and beyond to deliver the finest food.

Each dish is carefully crafted and overseen by three-star Michelin chef Alain Ducasse's consulting firm, Ducasse Conseil. This collaboration guarantees a high culinary standard, and allows guests to indulge in a refined dining experience while discovering carefully curated ingredients and flavours.

Every meal is a feast for the eyes and the palette. Guests are spoilt for choice from morning to night and can dine on a

bountiful spread of fresh cheeses, seafood, fruits and more. Dinners are especially exciting as the menu features an array of contemporary French dishes that use local ingredients and flavours. From octopus carpaccio to escargot in garlic butter pastry shells, each course is unforgettably unique.

While the food on board is considered "haute gastronomy", the atmosphere around mealtime is relaxed, so there's no need to wear my haute couture every time I want to grab a bite. There's also no assigned seating, and plenty of space to accommodate, so it's possible to dine whenever and wherever.

Underwater wonders

As the cruise reaches its end point, there's one more surprise in store. As Antoine and I wander out of an elevator

and enter a dimly lit room, the only source of light is the soft blue glow overhead. Ambient music plays as we make our way down the winding staircase deeper below deck into the lounge – Ponant's multisensory underwater bar, the Blue Eye.

It feels as though I have stepped into an underwater world, and I struggle to remind myself that I'm in the hull of *Le Bougainville*. The interior is dripping in soothing blue light, and animated jellyfish gracefully float across the large screens along the wall of the bar. Two large windows resembling the eyes of a whale look out to underwater seascapes, and small sofas dotted on either side of the room make it the perfect place to relax with a cocktail in hand while watching marine life swimming by.

The furniture is not only stylish, but a major functional part of the multisensory experience, as guests can feel the vibrations in tandem with the sounds through the 'body listening sofas'. Innovative hydrophones (underwater microphones) attached to the ship also allow guests to feel even closer to the underwater world as they listen to a symphony of the seas, while watching live footage filmed by the ship's underwater cameras.

What makes it even better is that the Blue Eye can be found on all of Ponant's Explorers-class ships, making it possible for even more people to take part in what is a truly immersive experience. I've been enchanted every step of the way.👁️

DETAILS

● Prices for the Corsica & Iberian shores voyage on *Le Bougainville*, departing 21 August 2023, start from £3,130pp.

The last word

It has been a time of recovery and regeneration, says
ABTA director of industry relations **Susan Deer**

This year, we've seen a very welcome resurgence in international travel, as the steady removal of restrictions in the UK and overseas unleashed the nation's pent-up desire for overseas breaks.

ABTA's Holiday Habits 2022 report reveals that 45 per cent of people travelled abroad in the 12 months to August 2022. That is equivalent to 70 per cent of the levels reached in 2019. People's appetite for cruise holidays has also seen a significant rebound this year, kicked off in earnest by the lifting of the 16-month ban on international cruises in August 2021. In the 12 months to August 2022, nine per cent of people said they went on a cruise, just shy of the 10 per cent who said they did so in 2019.

The biggest growth market over the past five years has been young families, with half (49 per cent) of this group having now been on a cruise, compared with less than a third in 2018. Many of these families were introduced to cruise by last summer's hugely popular domestic sailings and it's easy to see the appeal.

Indeed, it seems that young families have been well and truly won over by their recent experiences with cruising, as almost two-thirds (64 per cent) of them say they are interested in going on a cruise in the future – the highest of any age group.



Almost two-thirds of young families say they're interested in a cruise in the future

“Despite increasing pressures on household finances, holidays remain a spending priority”

Holidays still a priority

As the travel industry continues to recover and rebuild from the pandemic, the new challenge to overcome is, of course, the cost-of-living crisis – the impact that high inflation, increasing interest rates and rising energy bills are set to have on people's appetite for holidays.

Encouragingly, our latest research suggests that despite the increasing pressures on household finances, holidays remain a spending priority, with most expecting to make adjustments to their plans rather than drop their holidays entirely. Only 14 per cent of people say they won't go away at all, which drops to just four per cent of those who travelled in the last year. However, securing good value for money is set to take on increased importance for customers of all budgets, so the excellent value that cruise represents will be a key selling point.

The cruise industry's work to be more sustainable is also taking on increased importance among consumers. As revealed in our latest research, 38 per cent of people agree that they are conscious about the impact of cruise

ships on the environment when making choices about their holidays. It's important that cruise lines continue to work with destinations to help

ensure that the local people and economy are benefiting when ships and their passengers visit.

ABTA has a range of resources, including a new Climate Action Guidebook, which was developed with Deloitte and is free to download. It includes insight on current carbon reporting and reduction targets, and guidance to help businesses measure their carbon footprint. With the industry taking steps towards a sustainable future and an ever-growing market for cruise holidays, there are many reasons to be cautiously optimistic for 2023. 🌱



SUSAN DEER
DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRY RELATIONS
ABTA



ABTA has developed guidance to help businesses measure their carbon footprint

Adversity is inevitable but our passion pushes us forward.

RISE TO THE OCCASION.





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Explora Journeys combines centuries-old seafaring experience with superlative European refinement to deliver enriching ocean journeys that inspire exploration in all its forms. Designed in partnership with the world's foremost superyacht specialists, *EXPLORA I* - the first of six ships in the Explora Journeys fleet - sets sail in Summer 2023.

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*Experience fee applies to two venues

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