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CRUISE

Trade News

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CRUISE Trade News

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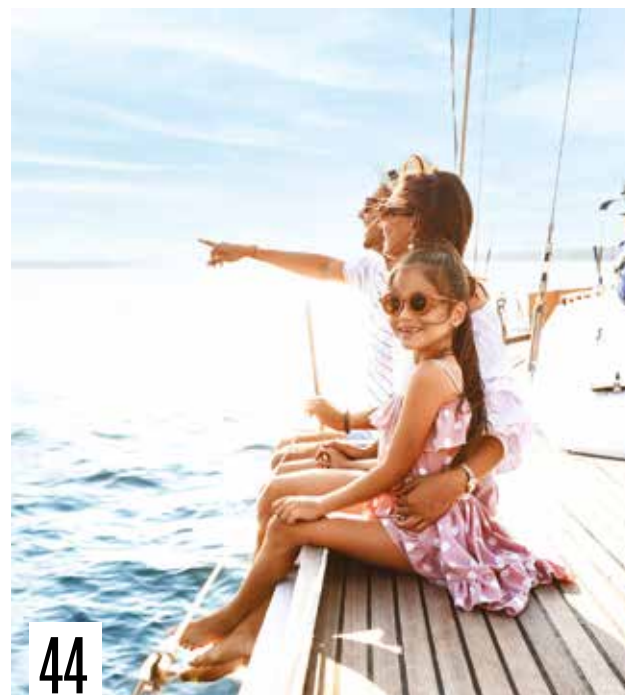
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CUNARD



Thank you for voting for us at the Wave awards 2023 for **'Favourite Luxury or Premium Cruise Line'**. We are delighted to have also won **'Best for Wellbeing & Enrichment'**.

Your ongoing support is really appreciated, especially as we approach five months to go before Queen Anne sets sail. We'll soon be sharing details of how you can be amongst the first to step on board in April 2024. Remember to sign up to Shine Rewards Club to be the first to know.

For more information visit shinerewardsclub.com

QUEEN MARY 2

QUEEN VICTORIA

QUEEN ELIZABETH

QUEEN ANNE



WELCOME...

TO THE DECEMBER ISSUE

Merry Christmas everyone. December is here and with it come the usual trappings of the festive period.

While it's certainly true that during this time we can recharge and look back on successes and experiences during the year, in reality nothing ever stops and it's soon on to the next challenge.

And so, as we look forward to a new year, we analyse if 2024 will be the year of new to cruise and examine what's happening in the wave period. Elsewhere, we focus on the highlights from the Wave Awards 2023, which took place in November at the Dorchester Hotel in London.

This issue also sees the return of the annual *Cruise Trade News* and Fred Olsen Cruise lines advent calendar. You'll see the front cover laid out in a traditional advent calendar format, with codes behind the numbered doors. Open these on the corresponding day in December to win great prizes. Play the game at cruisetradenews.com.

On a personal note, this is also my last issue as editor. I've been with the publication for almost six years and in that time have been lucky enough



ABOVE The Wave Awards, in partnership with Fred Olsen, took place in November

to travel the world and experience some truly memorable moments. Of course, my time as editor also brought with it the pandemic. However, with your support, we were able to continue publishing and now the *Cruise Trade News* brand is ideally placed to grow and go to greater heights.

Thanks for a great journey and all the best for the future.

Gary Peters
Editor

On the cover: Fred Olsen Cruise Lines

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Cruise Trade News



Cruise Trade News



Cruise Trade News

Cruise Corner



'TIS THE SEASON... TO WIN PRIZES

> The December issue of *Cruise Trade News* can mean only one thing – it's time for the cruise advent calendar.

In partnership with Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, this sees a host of prizes up for grabs, including branded items from Fred Olsen and the chance to win an epic cruise holiday.

Every 'door', from 1-24, on the front cover of this issue of contains a code, which provides access to that day's competition. The code can also be sent via email. Use the pre-registration form on the *Cruise Trade News* website to activate this. This code can then be used to enter the competition. Play online at cruisetradenews.com.



IN NUMBERS

24 codes
to reveal

2 cruises
to win

150+ prizes up
for grabs



PANACHE TO DOUBLE WORKFORCE

Panache Cruises aims to invest in more than 100 apprenticeships by 2030 and double its workforce over the next three years.

The agency currently has 11 apprentices working across all areas of its business including marketing, finance, sales and customer service. Those who finish the programme with a 100 per cent success rate will be offered full-time positions and receive further development to become managers and "leaders

of the future". Panache said the apprenticeship package includes a "competitive salary" along with 33 days annual leave, an allowance to spend on personal holidays, private medical cover and more.

The company currently employs a team of more than 50, with CEO and founder James Cole hoping to "at least" double his workforce in the next three years, with apprentices being the biggest recruitment channel.



SCAN TO DISCOVER
MORE CRUISE NEWS
AND FEATURES



NEW WORLD CLASS VESSELS FOR MSC

➤ MSC Cruises has confirmed the order of two new liquefied natural gas (LNG)-powered vessels with French ship builder Chantiers de l'Atlantique.

This sees the two World class options confirmed as firm orders, with the option of a fifth ship. The two new ordered vessels – currently referred to as *World Class 3* and *4* – will be delivered in 2026 and 2027.

They will join the line's other World class vessels, *World Europa* (pictured) and *World America*, offering an evolution of the prototype with solutions to maximise energy efficiency using heat recovery and other technological solutions. The new ships will be ready for a variety of alternative fuels including bio and synthetic methane and green methanol.

“**THE VESSELS WILL MAXIMISE ENERGY EFFICIENCY USING HEAT RECOVERY AND OTHER TECHNOLOGY**



HAYS TRAVEL REWARDS TOP-SELLING HOMEWORKERS

➤ Hays Travel's homeworking division rewarded its top 15 cruise selling agents with an all-expenses paid trip to the US.

The group, which travelled from Heathrow to New York with Virgin Atlantic, visited the Bahamas, Florida and Royal Caribbean's private island Perfect Day at Coco Cay, before sailing on Royal Caribbean's *Oasis of the Seas*.

Tanya Cooper, head of Hays Travel's homeworking division said: "We designed this trip to thank our top 15 cruise selling personal travel consultants."



REFLECTING ON 2023

Princess Cruises UK & Europe vice-president **Eithne Williamson** reflects on a successful year and looks forward to the launch of *Sun Princess*

I can't quite believe what I'm about to say – we are in the last month of 2023. Time certainly does fly by when you're having fun, and it's safe to say we've had lots of fun this year, thanks to our largest trade engagement programme yet.

December is the month for reflection and to celebrate wins, as well as consider learnings for the year ahead. Reflecting on the past 12 months, I feel extremely grateful for the steadfast support of agents and their eagerness to work closely with Princess so we can support one another encouraging holidaymakers to choose cruise.

I also feel proud of our incredible sales team, who have hosted a record-breaking number of agents on our ships – more than 2,600 – a number which we're aiming to smash out of the park in 2024. I feel excited for the year ahead, with the arrival of *Sun Princess*.

Navigating the wave

Fred Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales **Geoff Ridgeon** shares his top tips for steering your way through the wave season



From mince pies to mulled wine, I hope you're enjoying everything that the festive season has to offer. But once all the turkey sandwiches are eaten, we need to turn our attention to the upcoming wave season.

After Boxing Day, many people start planning their holidays for the year ahead. This time of year is loaded with deals, making it one of the best times to offer your customers a wide range of cruising experiences, destinations and unbeatable value.

It's also a perfect time to introduce your customers who have never cruised before to the ease and relaxation of cruising, as a wide range of promotions are available. These are a great boost to your customers' on-board experience and, with many wave promotions already in place, it's an excellent way to hit those end of year sales targets and start 2024 with some awesome sales.

OFFERS ON THE TABLE

Wave brings a wide range of incredible savings, from fare reductions to deals for solo travellers, drinks packages, cabin upgrades, on-board spending and more. It's a fantastic opportunity for agents and customers, whether new to cruising or current cruise lovers.

Cruise lines use wave season to reveal their plans and introduce new ships. For travel agents, this means early access to a



ABOVE The best cabins get snapped up quickly on popular ships like *Balmoral*



Wave brings a wide range of incredible savings, from fare reductions to deals for solo travellers, cabin upgrades and more

HIGHLIGHTS

1 Use wave promotions and industry momentum to entice new-to-cruise customers

2 Take note of cruise lines' itineraries and plans for new ships for 2024 and beyond

3 Cabins are filling up fast; make sure you use wave to convince clients to book early to avoid disappointment

smorgasbord of destinations and experiences for your customers, meaning they get to pick from a variety of cruise options and bag spots on the most sought-after voyages.

In the spirit of making cruising hassle-free, many promotions offer all-inclusive packages, which often cover drinks packages, speciality dining, pre-cruise hotel stays, excursions and flights. It's not just convenient; it's also a peace of mind that many customers find appealing.

By encouraging your clients to book during wave, we make sure they get their pick of the best cabins and itineraries before the rush.

In a nutshell, this is an amazing opportunity to embark on unforgettable journeys, explore diverse destinations and enjoy great savings and exclusive perks. Here's to a happy new year and fantastic sales. See you in 2024. 

THANK YOU

for voting for P&O Cruises
at this year's Wave Awards



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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



EXPLORA NAMES FIRST VESSEL

Explora Journeys has outlined the launch schedule for its planned fleet of six ships after it officially named its first vessel, *Explora I*, in New York.

Executive chair of the cruise division of the MSC Group Pierfrancesco Vago said: "We are looking to attract a wider group of discerning travellers who have experienced the finest luxury land-based resorts but seek more

value, more authenticity, and a deeper connection to the world."

The line's second ship, *Explora II*, will enter service in summer 2024 and operate until April 2025 in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, with *Explora III* and *Explora IV* set to enter service in 2026 and 2027. *Explora V* and *Explora VI* will enter service in 2027 and 2028, respectively.

Appointments



Mark Schmitt

SeaDream Yacht Club has announced that Mark Schmitt has rejoined the cruise line as sales director for UK and Ireland. Schmitt was with the operator between 2015 and 2020, before spells at Tradewind Voyages and AmaWaterways. He succeeds Natalie Read, who has decided to take time off to pursue what she describes as a "lifelong dream".

SEABOURN'S NEW
CULINARY EXPERIENCE

Seabourn has revealed a new fine dining venue that will launch on *Seabourn Quest* in January 2024.

Solis – which will also be rolled out across *Seabourn Encore*, *Seabourn Ovation* and *Seabourn Sojourn* by spring next year – celebrates Mediterranean cuisine inspired by the destinations visited by the line's ships.

The line said it will offer an "array of light, modern cuisine bursting with colour and character, handcrafted and prepared fresh daily". It was developed in collaboration with master chef Anton Egger and senior corporate chef Franck Salein.



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WHERE DO WE SAIL

Our fleet of seventeen ships covers all the main rivers you would expect to cruise throughout Europe, including the Douro, Rhine, Danube, Main, Venetian Lagoon and multiple rivers in France. We do also have a fleet of five ships operating our Exotics programme in Southeast Asia, Egypt, India & Peru.



WHAT MAKES US THE BEST RIVER CRUISE LINE?

Every Uniworld cruise is meticulously crafted to be an experience you won't find anywhere else, filled with exclusive moments that are each more breathtaking than the last. Be immersed in included onshore excursions, or savour from onboard your luxury floating boutique hotel, each uniquely designed and inspired by the very rivers upon which they cruise.

WOULD YOUR CLIENTS ENJOY TRUE LUXURY RIVER CRUISING?
CONTACT A MEMBER OF OUR TEAM TO SET UP AN INTRODUCTION MEETING ON 0808 168 9231

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



LUXURY LINE ADDS TWO RIVERSIDE SHIPS TO EUROPE FLEET

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises has added rival line Riverside Luxury Cruises' *SS Victoria* and *SS Elisabeth* to its fleet, which will begin sailing in Europe in 2024 and 2025 respectively. The luxury river line will take over the ships from Riverside parent Seaside Collection under a three-year charter agreement for each vessel.

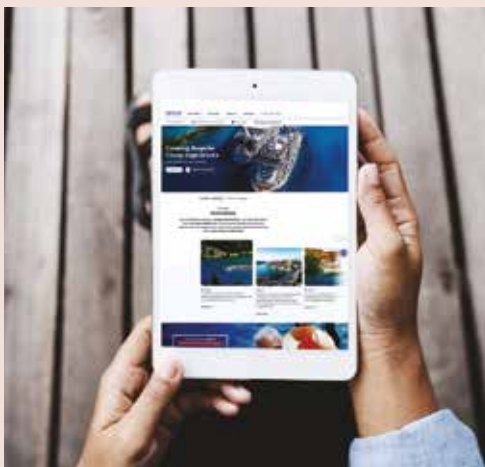
Before joining Riverside, the 110-guest vessels were part of Crystal Cruises' fleet as the *Crystal Bach* and *Crystal Mahler*. *SS Victoria* will be the first to set sail at the start of the 2024 season and *SS Elisabeth* is scheduled to set sail for the 2025 season, with more details to come, according to a statement.

Appointments



Angela Sloan

Uniworld has confirmed several promotions and a new appointment as it looks to further support its trade partners. Angela Sloan will become director of sales, Dawn Quinn and Lee Evanson become national sales managers and new recruit David Broad has joined the company as a sales manager. The changes come as UK and Europe managing director Chris Townson relocates to Australia with his family.



FORMER MARKETER LAUNCHES NEW RIVER CRUISE OTA

A new Manchester-based online travel agent specialising in river cruises has been launched by former On the Beach digital marketer Dan Roche.

Cruise, which is part of Hays Travel, currently employs six people including a cruise consultant, two web developers and three content writers, who bring a combined experience of 30 years in the travel industry.

Roche has 15 years of experience in the digital marketing industry, including four years at On the Beach. "We want to make booking a trip of a lifetime an enjoyable experience and share the excitement of researching and planning the holiday," Roche said.

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



SWAN HELLENIC BOOSTS WELLBEING OFFERING

Swan Hellenic has signed a multi-year partnership with integrative health company Chopra in a bid to boost its wellbeing offering. The two companies have created a new Explore & Restore wellbeing voyage "to foster self-discovery" and cultural immersion. The line said it is "transcending the traditional boundaries of wellness tourism".

Destinations available include Italy, Mexico, the US, South Africa, Greece and Barbados.

The new expeditions, which went on sale last month and feature six journeys ranging from five to nine days in duration, are set to launch in 2024. All Swan Hellenic ships will have a Chopra-certified meditation and yoga teacher on board.



AE unveils sustainable food options

AE Expeditions has rolled out a range of new developments to its dining options in line with its Sustainability in Action Programme.

Passengers travelling on *Greg Mortimer* and *Sylvia Earle* during the brand's 2023/2024 Antarctic season will have access to locally sourced food such as fruit, vegetables and dairy products, free-range chicken and eggs and Argentinian grass-fed beef.

Furthermore, all seafood will be certified by internationally recognised bodies, while tuna and fish eggs will be eliminated from on-board menus.



ECN LAUNCHES NEW TRADE TRAINING HUB

The Expedition Cruise Network (ECN) has launched a new dedicated online training hub for those in the travel trade looking to increase their expedition cruise knowledge.

The new platform, which has more than 100 training videos from the ECN and its cruise line members, comes after findings

from the ECN's inaugural annual survey revealed that 70 per cent of its cruise line members have seen a growth in sales this year.

Webinar topics vary from trends and popular destination summaries to introductions to ECN members' expedition itineraries and ships.

Scaling new heights

Cruise lines and agents alike are confident the upcoming wave period will further boost the industry's booming run of fortune it has seen in 2023. **Will Payne** reports

As the cruise industry prepares to sail serenely into 2024 off the back of a successful 2023, lines and travel agents are optimistic the forthcoming wave period will propel the sector to even greater heights.

At the beginning of the decade, cruise was under constant scrutiny by governments and national media, being placed under the microscope and forced to demonstrate its health and safety protocols as the pandemic ravaged the sector. Fast forward to 2023 and the industry has returned to prosperity, with lines reporting record-breaking sales, plans to launch new ships and recruiting additional trade team members to bolster their ties with agents.

With a raft of new vessels set to launch next year – such as Royal Caribbean's *Icon of the Seas*, AmaWaterways' *AmaMagdalena* and Explora Journeys' *Explora II*, to name just a few – the 2024 wave period presents agents with a vital opportunity to boost their cruise business.

PLAN EARLY

Having launched its sixth vessel *Seven Seas Grandeur* last month, the importance of the peak season is not lost on Regent Seven Seas Cruises. Senior director of UK sales Paul Beale advises agents to make the most of wave by engaging closer with cruise lines through speaking to sales teams to ensure they have all the assets they need to benefit from refreshed marketing campaigns in the new year.

"Luxury travel is an excellent opportunity to earn some of the highest average commissions in the industry, particularly as our booking trends continue to show that travellers are putting more value on their time and prioritising authentic experiences," he explains. "We have tool kits that offer everything



needed – from digital resources to off-line collateral – so that our partners can showcase our wonderful product to their guests."

Elsewhere, AmaWaterways UK and Europe sales director Andrea Stafford urges agents to start planning for wave now to maximise time selling during the peak period. "That includes ensuring their product knowledge is up to date and that they know about new itineraries and destinations that are likely to be popular in 2024," she continues.

It comes after the river cruise line prepares to launch *AmaMagdalena* on the Magdalena river – a new destination for the brand – in March 2024. "We also expect to see continued demand for our European programme, especially the double-width *AmaMagna*," Stafford predicts. The vessel, she adds, remains a popular option with new-to-cruise guests, established river cruisers and those looking to move

“**TRAVELLERS ARE PUTTING MORE VALUE ON THEIR TIME AND PRIORITISING AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES**”



from ocean to river. Stafford further confirms the line has a series of events, competitions and giveaways planned during the wave period to help agents make the most of the key booking period.

UPWARD TRAJECTORY

Meanwhile, Inspiring Travel (ITC) product and travel relationship manager for cruise Denise Walker reports cruise has been “really strong” for the luxury operator so far this year. “I can see this continuing into the new year and the wave period will be really strong,” she adds. “To make the most of wave, agents should be aware of what’s out there and make the most of what the cruise lines are offering.”

This is echoed by Ponders Travel managing director Clare Dudley, who says cruise has been “massive” for the Cambridge-based agency so far this year.



“CUSTOMERS HAVE NO MORE NERVOUSNESS... EVERYONE IS FALLING IN LOVE WITH CRUISE

She explains: “There is no more nervousness among customers, no one mentions the pandemic or health and safety on board – everyone is falling in love with cruise.”

Dudley, who reports an uptick in multi-generational cruise bookings in 2023, believes this positive momentum will continue into 2024. “I 100 per cent think cruise will continue this upward trajectory as we enter the upcoming wave period,” she claims. “There is a lot out there in terms of new ships and sailings, which is good for us, but there is so much more in the market to learn about.”

Solent-based Not Just Travel homeworker Lee Trowbridge says being based on the south coast has “always made cruise bookings important” to his agency. “But certainly, so far this year, cruise has come back in a big way,” he continues. “For next year, and wave, we want to get more into the luxury market and learn more about that side of the industry, as well as expedition.”

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Ponders Travel’s Clare Dudley; *Icon of the Seas* will make quite the splash when it launches in 2024; AmaWaterways’ Andrea Stafford

IN NUMBERS

90%

of companies want to invest in digital

70%

of digital transformations fail due to employee resistance

30%

increase in productivity in digital workplaces



Digitise to survive

As we exit 2023, Traveltek chief commercial officer **Cressida Sergeant** reflects on what has been a transformational year for cruise



After a challenging period, momentum is back with a bang and the staggering numbers in 2023 are a very solid foundation for greater growth as we enter 2024. What is also clear is the need for the industry to simplify and collaborate more in the digital world.

The cruise industry needs to help agents digitise their businesses, invest in future-proofing their technology platforms and blending automation with a human touch. So, do agents spend enough time focused on this area? Did you know that 90 per cent of organisations have an initiative and a desire for digital investment? However, according to McKinsey, 70 per cent of digital transformations fail due to employee resistance. Therefore, having a person or team dedicated to ensuring all voices in the business are heard is an important piece of the jigsaw when implementing any new software. Digital transformation is always better done slowly – never a big bang approach.

INVEST IN THE FUTURE

For 28 per cent of companies, digital transformation is seen as a cost centre. This is not a surprising stat to me, but it's so shortsighted. Think about investing in your systems to go faster. If you could sell just one more cruise booking per agent per month, it would pay for your initial tech investment. You will never scale your business without good technical foundations, so see this as investment in your business and never a pure cost.

“
Digital transformation is always better done slowly”

Also consider the benefits for your workers, too. People in companies with technology that supports them at work are 230 per cent more engaged and 85 per cent more likely to stay for longer than three years. As we look to attract a new and younger generation into the industry, we need to embrace new technologies and modernise systems.

Digital workplaces and online collaboration support can increase productivity by as much as 30 per cent. Perhaps now is a good time to audit systems and review how you are going to embrace technology for 2024. Spending time on executing a digital transformation plan is an investment you can't afford not to make. ●

ABOVE Cressida Sergeant believes the cruise industry needs to help agents digitise their businesses



Thank you for supporting AE Expeditions

AE Expeditions (part of Aurora Expeditions) has been taking people on amazing adventures to the world's most incredible places – Antarctica, the Arctic & beyond, for more than 32 years. Our love for purpose-driven, respectful exploration drives us to think of new ways to help our passengers explore. That's why we create ships with top-notch technology, plan immersive itineraries and put together awesome teams that make travellers feel inspired. As you know, when you're exploring, it's not just about what you see, it's also about how you see it.

We sincerely thank our valued trade partners for your support. We are committed to our mission of being the global leader in sustainable expedition travel and creating life changing experiences for your clients.

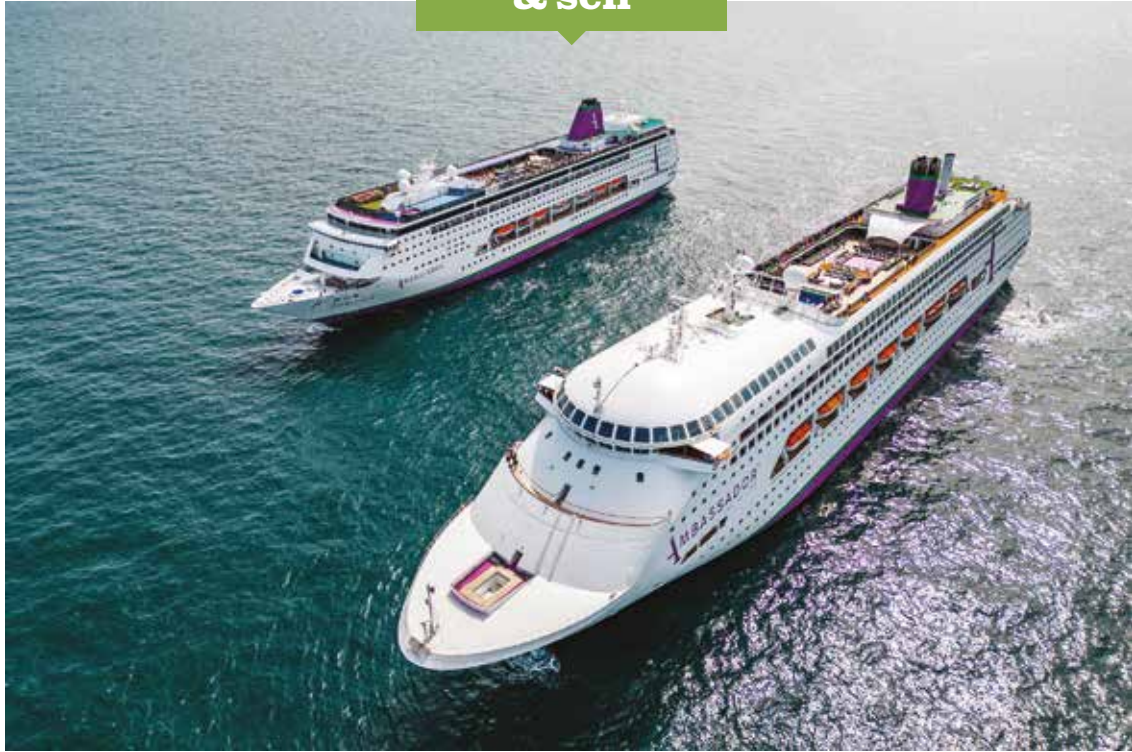


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Ambassador Cruise Line

In this new regular feature, we shine the spotlight on the key, need-to-know-information to make selling easier. This time, we're focusing on learning about Ambassador Cruise Line

IN THE KNOW

Founded in April 2021, Ambassador Cruise Line offers authentic experiences to cruisers aged 50+ and multigenerational sailings. Blending tradition and innovation, Ambassador promises the “warmest welcome at sea”, focusing on exceptional service, cuisine and amazing entertainment. Following the launch of its first ship *Ambience* in 2022, *Ambition* sailed its maiden voyage in May this year, and offers departures from eight regional UK ports: London Tilbury, Newcastle, Dundee, Edinburgh Leith, Liverpool, Belfast, Bristol and Falmouth. Ambassador is looking to grow the fleet and to be in position to have three to five ships in the next three to five years.

SHIPS IN THE FLEET

- **Ambience** – the 1,400-guest ship launched in April 2022 and its size means it can access smaller ports that larger ships cannot. The ship features an intimate atmosphere and a varied entertainment programme
- **Ambition** – the maximum capacity of *Ambition* is 1,200 guests. On board, venues include the Aces &



FROM TOP

Ambassador's two ships, *Ambition* and *Ambience*; enjoy flavours from all over the world when you dine in Borough Market

Eights card room; Brontë's library; a shopping galleria; and the Green Sea Spa complete with a sauna, steam room, hair salon and a range of restoring spa treatments

WHO'S WHO

Following the appointment of Nicola Harper as head of distribution In October 2022, the business split its groups and trade department into two

distinct areas and doubled the head count in the trade team, creating a structure with a north and south geographical split headed up by two divisional sales managers. The full team consists of:

- **Nicola Harper**, head of distribution
- **Karen Cameron**, divisional sales manager – North
- **Louise Tansey**, divisional sales manager - South
- **Ryan Readman**, BDM South
- **Sam Richardson**, BDM North
- **Andrew Santry**, business development executive



“
**OUR SHIPS HAVE A VERY
INTIMATE FEEL WHICH LETS
GUESTS FEEL RIGHT AT HOME**

- **Alan Rennie**, business development manager groups
- **Bethany Barker**, trade support manager
- **Holly Brookes**, trade support

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON

- 120-night Grand Round the World Cruise, on *Ambience*, departing 6 January 2024 – Ambassador's longest voyage to date
- The 2024/25 season will see Ambassador increase the number of regional departures from 32 to 39
- *Ambience* and *Ambition* will sail to 34 countries across six continents in 2024/25, calling at 127 ports

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Head of distribution Nicola Harper

Why is now the time for agents to start selling more Ambassador cruises? The brand is becoming more established with agents and guests, so now is the time to let your customers know all about Ambassador and all we have to offer if you don't want to miss out on bookings. We have ambitious growth plans and we will continue to grow, which offers even more opportunities to agents booking



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Buckingham restaurant offers a sophisticated menu; the Centre Court is the gateway to a wide range of shopping and dining options; head of distribution Nicola Harper

a sailing with us. Agent relationships are very important to us, which is why we offer price parity on our sailings, meaning you can earn very good commission as there's no need to discount.

How do you define the Ambassador experience for agents new to cruise? Our aim from the very first sailing was to bring back traditional British cruising with no gimmicks. With our guests highly rating our outstanding

cuisine, amazing entertainment, excellent service and range of great destination experiences, which are fundamental parts of the authentic cruises we offer, we are exceeding expectations and delivering some of the very best experiences at sea.

As we operate a small to mid-size fleet, our ships have a very intimate feel, which allows guests to feel right at home from the moment they step on board. In fact, nine out of 10 guests say they'd recommend a sailing with Ambassador, which is a great achievement considering the relatively short time we have been a player in the market. 📍

TOP TIPS

1 Join the Ambassador trade partners group on Facebook to view the latest offers, product updates and incentives. This will keep agents up to date on all things Ambassador and provide the chance to share the offers.

2 Get in touch with Ambassador about fam trips and ship visits. There are preconceived ideas of what the line offers, but many agents say they have missed a trick and, once they are back on land, get busy making bookings.

3 No-fly holiday options offer guests from across the country the convenience of being able to drive to one of the line's eight UK departure ports, avoiding airport queues or potential flight cancellations.

INCENTIVES
SPECIAL OFFERS
ITINERARIES



SCAN THE CODE TO
DISCOVER MORE OFFERS
AND INCENTIVES

What's in
it for you?



FRED OLSEN BACK IN AUSTRALIA



Fred Olsen Cruise Lines has announced plans to return to Australia for the first time since 2020.

As part of its 2024 World Cruise, guests on board *Borealis* will visit destinations such as Hawaii, French Polynesia, Australia, Bali and Oman.

The 101-night voyage includes the opportunity to spend three days on Florida's coast, encounter wildlife in the rainforests of Costa Rica and

experience local cultures and volcanic vistas in Hawaii. The line previously announced plans to return to the Caribbean for the first time in three years with a Classic Caribbean Islands cruise, which calls at nine islands including Bequia and Antigua.

Borealis' 101-night World Cruise, departing from Southampton on 7 January 2024, comes in at £9,999pp.

Sign up

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



CELESTYAL BOOSTS COMMISSION OPPORTUNITIES

Celestyal is implementing a new two-tiered pricing model as well as several new commission-earning opportunities for agents.

The new scheme will feature an entry-level, inclusive fare which offers complimentary dining and select drinks with meals, entertainment, daily activities and more.

For customers looking to upgrade their holiday, Celestyal will offer an enhanced tier. There will also be several additional commission earning opportunities for agents and discounts for guests pre-booking various packages.

AMAWATERWAYS LAUNCHES 2-FOR-1 OFFER

AmaWaterways has announced a two-for-one land package offer for guests booking a six or eight-night land package in conjunction with 2024 and 2025 seven-night river cruises through Vietnam and Cambodia.

Guests booking selected Charms of the Mekong or Riches of the Mekong itineraries can take advantage of the offer until 31 December 2023. Guests not opting for the offer will instead benefit from 20 per cent savings on cruises included in the promotion.

The Charms of the Mekong and Riches of the Mekong itineraries take travellers along the Mekong between Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam and Siem Reap in Cambodia.



MARELLA TO RETURN TO LIMASSOL

Marella Cruises has confirmed it will homeport *Marella Discovery 2* out of Limassol, Cyprus from 7 May 2025 for a series of summer sailings.

The move marks the cruise line's return to the Cypriot port for the first time since winter 2017, with summer 2025 itineraries now on sale.

The new homeport will offer voyages on two itineraries; Aegean Gems, which calls at Kusadasi, Mykonos, Piraeus, Souda, Crete and Rhodes. The Grecian Discovery itinerary will visit Turkey and Greek destinations including Piraeus, Santorini, Crete and Rhodes. *Marella Voyager*, which launched in June 2023, will continue to sail from Palma, Mallorca.



Explora
JOURNEYS



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Welcome to a new era of luxury ocean travel. EXPLORA I leads the way for the Explora Journeys fleet, taking guests on a journey that effortlessly blends celebrated destinations and hidden gems to redefine the notion of adventure.

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FEATURED JOURNEYS

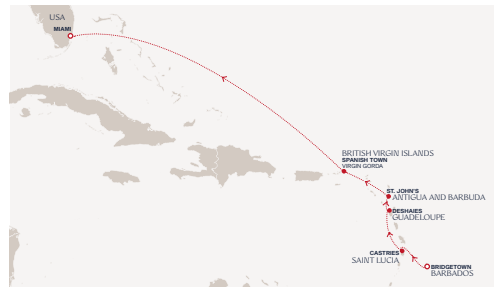
All journeys include access to sophisticated, varied experiences across 18 food and beverage venues, including six restaurants, five lounges and in-suite dining, unlimited beverages, fine wines, premium spirits, a welcome bottle of champagne, access to the spa thermal area, complimentary Wi Fi, on board gratuities and more.*

Spotlight Journeys

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7 NIGHTS | EXPLORA I



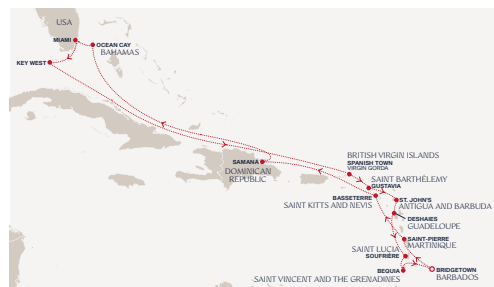
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Ocean Suites fares from GBP 7,600 pp • Solo Ocean Suites fares from GBP 10,250 pp

Fares are subject to availability and subject to change; Terms & Conditions apply. *Experience fee applicable to two venues.

Engage to succeed

In our continued coverage of the 2023 *Cruise Trade News* & CLIA Cruise Summit, we catch up with InteleTravel UK managing director **Tricia Handley-Hughes** and Riviera Travel marketing director **Sarah Fowler**, who both spoke at the event



TRICIA HANDLEY-HUGHES

What were your key takeaways from the CTN & CLIA Cruise summit?

Cruise is increasing in popularity with new ships on the horizon, and artificial intelligence (AI) supported by improved technology support will provide a crucial role in the sector. Agents should not fear that AI is a human replacement – it's how we use it that's important.

What top tips do you have for agents as we approach wave?

Prepare and plan now. Look at your customer communications schedule, plan in dates to start drip-feeding information immediately. Also, use

every communication at your disposal; if you can avoid distractions and focus on this project, your cruise revenues will grow. Start talking about cruise (not offers) but use trends and remember that 72 per cent of non-cruisers are ready to book.

How is Inteletravel preparing for wave?

Dedicated webinars, podcasts, solus emails, Facebook interviews, web promotion, cruise events (live/virtual) and consumer communications will all play a part of our structured communications. Having trialled this during CLIA Cruise Week, we know this focus delivers results.

What could cruise lines do better to help agents during this busy period?

Our ocean cruise partners provide excellent support throughout and I think both river cruise and the expedition sector need to take note. Key messages and creative activity should be on their agenda.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

Tricia Handley-Hughes;
Sarah Fowler; Tricia and Sarah
debate the issues on the event panel



**THE ROLE THAT AI HAS
TO PLAY IN THE CRUISE
SECTOR IS GREAT FOOD
FOR THOUGHT**

IN NUMBERS

72

per cent of non-cruisers
are ready to book

45

per cent growth in
revenue for Riviera



SARAH FOWLER

What were your key takeaways from the Cruise summit?

Cruise is growing, but so is capacity – there’s a massive job for the industry to do to combat negative perceptions of cruise and pull people in from other parts of the holiday market, in order to keep pace with capacity

growth. Also, the role that AI has to play in travel is great food for thought on how we can embrace it as an industry and the value it can add.

How important are events such as these for the industry?

Very important. As an industry, although we’re in competition, we’re ultimately all working together to grow the share of cruise as a first choice for the UK customer. It can be easy to get bogged down in your own data and the hustle and bustle

“

THERE’S A MASSIVE JOB FOR THE INDUSTRY TO COMBAT NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF CRUISE

of day-to-day trading pressures and sometimes miss an opportunity, or not see the wood for the trees. Getting together to share insights and best practices with others in the industry is very helpful.

What are your top tips for agents?

Engage early with cruise lines on your activity plans and your creative/collateral needs – the earlier you’re aligned, the better the cruise lines can support you with the collateral you need. What’s more, understand and align on key messages and objectives with the cruise lines – the more joined up you are with the key brand messages and product focuses, the more you’ll both benefit.

In addition, build your brand and product knowledge – the more you know about the differences between different cruise lines, the more you can explain the experience in your sales and marketing, and add value to the customer, helping them make the right choice for them in a crowded marketplace where on the surface, often one cruise can look very much like the next.

What are your predictions for river cruising in 2024?

We’re predicting a really strong year for river cruise next year. Current demand is outpacing our targets and we’re 45 per cent up in revenue compared to the same time last year. Although river cruise guests are affluent and less affected by the cost-of-living crisis, inclusiveness will continue to be important, as guests seek value for money. Solos are a growth opportunity for lines who can create an attractive proposition for them. ●



Charlotte Hughes

Princess Cruises UK sales development and engagement manager **Charlotte Hughes** looks back on a record-breaking year for the line and what's to come in 2024

What key Princess selling points are you focusing on when meeting agents?

I am concentrating on the Princess Difference, which is our MedallionClass experience, the fantastic value our cruises provide and the wide range of destinations we visit. For Princess, it's all about delivering exceptional, personalised experiences that are typical of small ships, while enjoying amenities only found on a large ship. We can do this through the exclusive Princess Medallion, which is our unique selling point, and allows us to provide a seamless service supported by state-of-the-art technology.

This year has been a record breaker for you when it comes to visiting agents. What does that say about your commitment to the trade?

We are committed to having face-to-face time with as many agents as we can and it has been amazing to meet agents on ship visits, family days, training sessions and at conferences. We know



the importance of getting agents on our ships to help sell our product; by the end of 2023, we will have hosted more than 2,600 agents – a record-breaking number for Princess.

You've also focused on family day ship visits – what's been the reaction to those?

These have been a huge hit with travel agents and their families absolutely loving the experience. Families enjoyed a sneak peek at our on-board entertainment as well as access to our youth centres, hot tubs and swimming pools. Adults were also given free time to explore and relax

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Charlotte Hughes is keen to get agents on board Princess ships; the next-generation *Sun Princess*

in The Sanctuary, child-free. These ship visits provided a memorable experience for the whole family and we've since had agents tell us that they are now securing their first Princess bookings.

Do you intend to go bigger and better for 2024 and break more records?

Absolutely. To say 2024 will be exciting is an understatement. Next year will see the launch of our next-generation ship *Sun Princess*, and we are releasing regular teasers about this new class of ship, so I encourage agents to make sure they're signed up to our newsletter to receive this information, hot off the press. In addition, we will continue our trajectory of getting as many frontline agents on our ships as possible.

How do you think the role of a BDM is changing?

We really need to multitask and change our hats every hour of the day, which I'm sure most people can relate to post-pandemic. With so much choice of product in the market, now so more than ever, we need to ensure our audience truly understand the Princess Difference and our added-value offering. ●



“
**2024 WILL BE EXCITING...
IT WILL SEE THE LAUNCH
OF OUR NEXT-GENERATION
SHIP SUN PRINCESS**



CRUISING FROM MONTREAL OR QUEBEC CITY?

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Book by 31st January and your customers can enjoy
Free Drinks or On Board Spend on selected cruises



175 Years
IN EVERY
SINGLE DAY



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines have a range of exciting sailings planned for your guests to enjoy in 2024/25.

With an expert team of Journey Planners, that hand-craft their itineraries every year, guests will experience not just the most amazing places on earth, but at the very best possible times.

The Azores when the Perseid Meteor shower streaks the night sky, Canada, to witness the famous 'Fall' leaves, and to seek out the mesmerising Northern Lights, when they are at their strongest.

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Terms & Conditions: Free Drinks or Free On Board Spend offer is valid on new bookings from 01/12/23 to 31/01/24 and cannot be combined. All offers are subject to full Terms and Conditions, which are detailed at fredolsencruises.com/agent. E&OE.



SHIP OF THE MONTH

MSC EURIBIA

Launched in June 2023 in Copenhagen by godmother Sophia Loren, *MSC Euribia* takes her name from Euribia, the ancient goddess of the sea. As the 22nd ship in the fast-growing MSC Cruises fleet, she measures in at 331 metres long and can accommodate up to 6,327 passengers. *MSC Euribia* also boasts some serious green credentials. The ship is the lowest-emission vessel in the line's fleet, powered by LNG and equipped with shore power connection. It also has an advanced wastewater treatment system and a noise reduction system to minimise the impact on marine life. To publicise the ship's green credentials, the hull features a striking #SaveTheSea design and theme.



1 Galleria

The beating heart of this ship is the central promenade, known as the Galleria. Here guests will find a wide range of bars, restaurants and shops. Running along the length of the Galleria is an impressive 305-foot LED screen with hourly-changing images and a spectacular light show.



2 Dining

MSC Euribia offers guests the chance to dine at five main included dining spots as well as five speciality restaurants. Guests should look out for Japanese dishes at Kaito Teppanyaki and Sushi, French dining at L'Atelier Bistro and great Mexican fare at Hola! Tacos.



3 Cabins

Inside and Outside cabins (with sea views) are situated in the main part of the ship while Balcony and Suites are located in the MSC Yacht Club, the ship-within-a-ship complex that offers guests the chance to enjoy private pools, lounges and dining areas.

Fast facts

6,327
passengers

331m
length

2,491
cabins

10
dining venues



4 Pools

Guests can splash out on this ship at one or more of the five pools. The pools (four outdoors; one indoors) are spaced out around the ship, with two adjacent on Deck 15. The resort-style main pool has cushioned sun beds and two roomy hot tubs.



5 Fitness & spa

Enjoy a day of relaxation and pampering at the Aurea Spa with a massage or beauty treatment at the Balinese Spa or unwind in the Thermal Area, which boasts a roomy sauna, steam bath and whirlpool. Then get ready for the night at the hairdressers.



6 Entertainment

For those who love live performances, look out for Broadway-style shows in the Delphi Theatre. And to dance the night away, guests should visit the newly designed Carousel Lounge, where the Big Band at Sea plays a wide range of floor-fillers.

SHIP OF THE MONTH

MEKONG SERENITY

T Thoughtfully designed, APT's custom newbuild *Mekong Serenity* heralds a new level of luxury for Mekong cruising in 2024. The spacious ship offers an unrivalled base from which to explore the fantastic highlights, diverse landscapes and cultural wonders of Vietnam and Cambodia. Immersive sightseeing experiences on shore are complimented by the ship's elegant interiors, cutting edge facilities, friendly and gracious on-board service and authentic cuisine, creating the ultimate Asian adventure.



1 Accommodation

Mekong Serenity offers some of the largest entry-level suites of any vessel cruising the Mekong. Each of the 44 suites offer indoor and outdoor balconies, allowing guests to relax and enjoy the ever-changing scenery of Vietnam and Cambodia from the comfort of their accommodation.

Fast facts

88

guests

44

suites

4

decks

1

pool

2023

year built



2 Itineraries

Sailing from Ho Chi Minh to Siem Reap, *Mekong Serenity* serves as a luxurious gateway into the historic, spiritual, cultural and gastronomic wonders of Vietnam and Cambodia. Guests can experience the sun rising above Angkor Wat and journey by speedboat to the Cu Chi Tunnels.



3 Sundeck

The spacious sundeck is a great spot for relaxing or taking a dip in the beautiful swimming pool, one of the ship's foremost design highlights. Guests can recharge from a day exploring in the Serenity Spa & Wellness Centre, which includes a full-service gym.



4 Entertainment

Mekong Serenity offers an exciting and authentic programme of nightly entertainment, hosted in the Harmony Lounge & Bar, a highlight of which is a traditional Apsara dance performance. This classical Cambodian dance was originally reserved for royalty.



5 Authentic experiences

To bring the on-shore experience to life in a more immersive and authentic way, English speaking, expert local guides provide in-depth commentary and personal insights into each region, monument or experience.



6 Cuisine

Whether it is indulgent champagne breakfast or delicious dinner, local dishes or western classics, the cuisine served at the Lemongrass Restaurant is second to none. When it's time to cool off, head to the top deck and enjoy a light lunch at the Horizon Café.

Celebrating CRUISE

Read on for reaction from the Wave Awards 2023

In November, guests gathered at the Dorchester Hotel for an evening of celebration at the Wave Awards 2023. The event – held in partnership with Fred Olsen Cruise Lines – included new categories for travel agents, including Best Independent Agent, as well as a greater focus on technology and how this is changing the cruise sector, through the introduction of Best Technology Innovation and Best Use of Content.

As with previous events, there were a host of cruise line categories, such as Best Ocean Cruise Line, Best River Cruise Line and Best New Ship Launch, as well as on-board categories – Best for Accommodation, Best for Cuisine and more.

There were also special awards on the night, including the Peter Grant Award, recognising someone who has made a lasting and significant contribution to the 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, for the second year, the Women in Cruise Award was handed out on the night, recognising and celebrating trailblazing and pioneering females in the cruise industry. There were a record number of submissions across all categories in 2023, all of which were judged by a panel of cruise and travel experts.



Together with first-class entertainment from Fred Olsen Cruise Lines and Cunard, and an after-party sponsored by Marella Cruises, it proved to be a spectacular evening for all.

Real Response Media chief operating officer Lina Slater said: “It was wonderful to celebrate the achievements in the cruise sector at the Wave Awards 2023. We worked hard to ensure this year’s event was our best yet, at a stunning venue, with new categories and first-class production across all elements of the event. It goes without saying that none of it would have been possible without the support of our judges and sponsors.”

“
**THERE WERE A
RECORD NUMBER OF
SUBMISSIONS ACROSS
ALL CATEGORIES IN 2023**



Cunard vice-president of global marketing and EMEA sales Angus Struthers

“It was an absolute joy to be at this year’s Wave Awards and Cunard is extremely privileged to have been a headline sponsor of such a prestigious event. It also provided Cunard with a fantastic stage to showcase an exclusive preview of one of our new ship *Queen Anne*’s entertainment venues, Bright Lights Society. Matt Henry MBE and Yolanda Brown OBE DL delivered several spectacular performances that really set the tone for an all-round extraordinary evening.”
WINNER of Favourite Luxury or Premium Cruise Line and Best for Wellness and Enrichment

Seabourn UK & Europe vice-president Lynn Narraway

“I have the most amazing team and my family... they made this possible. I couldn’t do my job without them. To be here at the Dorchester with all my friends and the team is truly incredible. It has been a great year for cruise, but I could not do it without my team.”
WINNER of the Women in Cruise Award

Panache Cruises founder & MD James Cole

“It is absolutely amazing to win this award. It is fantastic to be able to go back to the office and show them this amazing award, which really is a team effort. It might have my name on it but this is one for all of us.”
WINNER of the Peter Grant Contribution to Cruise Award

Fred Olsen head of sales Geoff Ridgeon

“It was an honour for Fred Olsen Cruise Lines to be the headline sponsors of this year’s Wave Awards for a second year running. The awards ceremony was an incredible night celebrating the best of cruising with our agent partners and industry colleagues and I am so proud of how our team helped to bring our brand to life on the night.”

Riviera Travel channel director Stuart Milan

“Winning four awards, including the Grand Prix, at the Wave Awards is an amazing achievement. I’m hugely proud of Riviera, and how we keep going from strength to strength. The awards we received are a huge accolade. I’d like to give a special thanks to the whole team.”

WINNER of four awards, including the special Grand Prix

Holland America Line sales & marketing director Karen Farndell

“The Wave Awards are a fabulous celebration of the cruise industry and we were proud to be supporting them once again. It was great to see everyone come together to mark such a positive year for cruise. Congratulations to all the winners.”

Unforgettable Croatia CCO Graham Carter

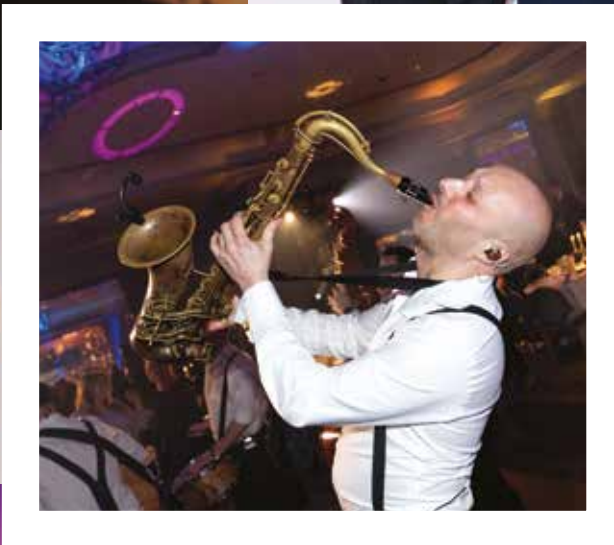
“As a luxury small ship cruise company we’re so honoured to win this award, where we are mixing with some of the best cruise lines in the industry. Unforgettable Croatia launched in 2016 and I know how much this means to our team. It’s recognition for the long hours and hard work they have put in.”

WINNER of Best Specialist Cruise Line



For a full list of winners and more reaction from the event, go to thewaveawards.com and cruisetradenews.com. Stay tuned for more information about the Wave Awards 2024.









On cloud nine

Riviera Travel head of commercial partnerships **Vicky Billing** reflects on the operator's success at the Wave Awards 2023

How did it feel to win four awards at the 2023 Wave Awards? It feels incredible. You always hope to win at an awards event, but you never dare to dream that you will win four awards. We are still pinching ourselves and are just so extremely grateful. We are so thankful to the amazing industry experts and consumers who voted for us.

You scooped the special Grand Prix award – what's your reaction to that? We are still on cloud nine with this one. I remember sitting at the table thinking about what an incredible award it is and imagine winning it; then all of a

sudden, our name was up on screen. We feel truly blessed and know that every employee at Riviera feels the same. We want to do the right thing and provide only the best product and service for both our guests and the trade. We work hard at this every day, so therefore to win the Grand Prix reaffirms that.

What do you attribute your success at the Wave Awards to? First, the hard work across the Riviera team. We really do care so much across all departments – what we like to say is 'we give a monkey's'. We are obsessed about travel excellence and we never stop listening



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The Riviera team celebrating on stage; guests enjoying a Riviera cruise on *Oscar Wilde*





“We never stop listening and learning from our customers and travel agent partners”

and learning from both our customers and agent partners. We live and breathe our company values and try to relate that back to everything we do.

How important are awards such as these for your work with the trade and attracting more guests to book with Riviera? Incredibly important. It builds trust in both the brand and our

Riviera team. What’s more, it solidifies everything that we communicate to our agents and customers. As the saying goes, the proof is in the pudding.

How do you intend to build on these achievements moving forward? We have to constantly evolve and be true to our values. We can’t stop or take anything for granted. There is a lot of

competition out there and we need to stay ahead of the pack. This is one of the reasons we set up our agent engagement committee last year and send out surveys. It’s vital we get feedback from our agent partners and we will always try our best to listen and then deliver.

Next year is your 40th anniversary – what do you have planned to celebrate that milestone? The big 40. We are super excited and we have plenty in the pipeline, including a massive agent incentive as well as a customer incentive that will be available through agent bookings. All will be revealed very soon. ●

THE YEAR OF CRUISE?

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Cruise has become increasingly popular with families; people are keen to explore the world once more

The cruise industry bounced back to (almost) pre-pandemic levels in 2023. Courtesy of larger ships and impressive value for money, 2024 is set to be an impressive year. **Calum Brown** explains why

In the past, terms such as ‘cruise travel’ and ‘youth’ went together like ice cream and gravy. In short, cruises were seen as exclusively marketed to the nouveau riche. It was uncouth to enter the lounge unless you boasted a double-barrelled surname, or find refuge in the gymnasium until you’d cracked your first million. And we aren’t talking about the Victorian era, either.

However, that was then. This is now, and things have changed. Oh, boy, have things changed. Cruising now accommodates everyone from all walks of life. Sure, there are still certain white-gloved services to appease old-money types, but the entire seascape is now open to the young, and the young at heart. Not to mention all budgets.

Now, cruising has never been more popular, a distinction proven by the industry’s renaissance following Covid-19, and the predictions for 2024. CLIA expects no less than 36 million of us, worldwide, to book a cruise next year.

ENGAGING WITH CRUISE

The pandemic certainly caused financial mayhem. As Covid-19 unpacked its bag and settled in, the likes of Cruise & Maritime Voyages



and Pullmantur Cruises became a casualty of war. Carnival suffered a net loss of \$4 billion during the first half of 2020. It honestly seemed as though the cruise industry was done for, with a hefty dose of stigma destined to sink what remained.

Except – that didn’t quite happen. Instead, the cruise industry returned stronger than ever. International tourism receipts breached the \$1 trillion mark in 2022, up 50 per cent in real terms from 2021 and driven by the rebound in global travel. Most cruise ships are back sailing at full capacity, feeding a market growing so fast that experts predict 2024 will literally become ‘the year of the cruise’.

“People are keen to explore the world after so many years of disruption caused by Covid-19, and cruising enables them to do this in a way that delivers choice, value and convenience,” says Bolsover Cruise Club’s Emma Furze.

“Cruising has never been more popular... CLIA expects 36 million of us to book a cruise next year”



“What we are seeing is considerable demand for cruise holidays both in the short and long term, which suggests that Covid-19-related fears have dissipated. The world has opened back up again, so some of the countries that largely remained inaccessible to cruise ships during the pandemic are now open for business – and operators are making sure there are itineraries to take people there.”

Mundy Cruising director of sales and marketing Alex Loizou also follows that mantra, explaining: “With little to no testing required, an end to the bothersome passenger locator forms and no additional requirements of guests on board, cruising is now over the major challenges of the pandemic.”

In fact, wherever you go and whomever you ask, the answer is the same. The cruise industry has conquered the ripple effect caused and arguably capitalised on the situation. Vast improvements have been implemented across the cruising

“Plentiful promotions offered by cruise lines will drive new-to-cruise passengers to consider the options available”

landscape to attract those new to cruise, with upgraded and burgeoning itineraries between brands fighting for attention. Not to mention a slew of new vessels. It’s an amazing time to engage with the cruise lines and people know it; especially when browsing the cost.

AN AFFORDABLE HOLIDAY

When delving behind the travel headlines, inflated prices for both flights and hotels have created an affordability crisis. The cruise industry exploits that rather neatly, offering excellent value in place of blatant extortion – providing an all-inclusive holiday in a safe environment. That sentiment hasn’t gone unnoticed.

“Value for money combined with the vast choice of offers to entice new guests is set to attract those who have never sailed before. Plentiful promotions by the cruise lines will drive new-to-cruise passengers to consider the options available”, says IntelTravel UK MD Tricia Handley-Hughes.

Furze adds: “At a time when household budgets continue to be squeezed, holidaymakers will be looking for breaks that provide just that. When you break down the cost of a cruise on a per person, per night basis – and you consider

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Cruise makes for a relaxing getaway; Mundy’s Alex Loizou; Virgin’s *Scarlet Lady* offers adults-only cruises; *Icon of the Seas* from Royal Caribbean will be the largest ship at sea; an end to testing has been a boon for the cruise industry



what is included, from the accommodation to the food and entertainment – there really is very little competition.”

Loizou also points out that “realising the quality equals or exceeds that of many ultra-luxury hotels” plays a big part in the recent spike in cruise bookings for 2024. “New players in the market, such as Ritz-Carlton, have helped raise the profile of cruise. The new ships of Silversea, and new brands like Explora Journeys, demonstrate a forward-thinking sector that is throwing off an unfair image that it’s a stuffy environment in which to travel.”

Harking back to the notion that ‘high-quality’ was reserved for old-school passengers has been burned away by the radical post-pandemic changes. And when the market is suddenly starved of sensibly priced holidays, the cruise option suddenly feels like common sense.

And, as Kieran Eccles-Miller of Magical Traveller highlights, why pay for cotton when you can have silk? “Travel has always been high on people’s priority list. Luxury holidaymakers are keener than ever to explore the world in the utmost comfort. The increased focus on the destination experience has helped attract even more people to cruise.

“Superb programmes and itineraries mean that whether guests are looking for an expedition voyage to explore Antarctica, the Arctic or Galápagos, or want to visit local growers and producers to gain an unrivalled insight into the local cuisine, there’s a luxury cruise to suit.”

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE IN 2024

So, cruising is back in fashion, offers incredible value for money, and the luxurious experience is second to none. And that’s great – but there’s more. With new ships entering the



market possessing the capacity of a small city, those cabins need to be filled – creating fierce competition between suppliers. As the deals keep ships packed with holidaymakers, it’s expected to attract more people than ever for 2024.

Throw in a range of new and ground-breaking itineraries, voyages to lesser-known ports in lesser-explored parts of the world, alongside fresh £100 million refits (here’s looking at you, *Queen Mary 2*), and there’s enough to appease both seasoned cruise guests and newbies.

“The best part is, there really is a sailing to suit everyone. From thrill-seeking families, to adventurous solo travellers, to couples looking for a relaxing getaway, they’ll all find an escape they love,” Cruise.co.uk’s Tony Andrews tell us. He also summarises three big factors in 2024’s expected growth curve.

“Firstly, the number of newcomers sailing on a cruise has more than doubled compared to last year. Secondly, the boom in solo holidays continues apace. Thirdly, we’re still seeing an uplift in demand for ‘cruise and stay’ breaks, with North American holidays proving most popular.”

Then there’s the age thing. Gone are the days of enforced shuffleboard and an overbearing aroma of potpourri. Modern cruise ships offer sailings for 2024 with an active and vibrant opportunity to blend adventure with nightlife.

And so, the renovated and well-oiled cruise industry is ready and willing to accommodate thousands of extra people for brand new itineraries. The past two years have demonstrated that guests can’t get enough cruise action, but 2024 should prove that a cruise package increasingly bought by the heart can also be justified by the head. ●



In
conversation
with...



SCAN TO DISCOVER
MORE INTERVIEWS

Karen Farndell

Holland America Line's Karen Farndell chats to
Gary Peters about a record-breaking year for agent
engagement and sailing from the UK in 2025

“An exceptional experience” is how Karen Farndell describes her time so far at Holland America Line. Formerly senior sales manager at Princess Cruises, Farndell joined HAL in summer last year as UK director of sales and marketing, following the change in structure that saw the HAL and Seabourn teams separate in the UK.

“One of the highlights [of my time so far] was our 150th anniversary celebration, which we shared with some of our travel partners in Rotterdam,” Farndell tells *Cruise Trade News*. “We’ve built up a fantastic team that I’m extremely proud of.”

Clear evidence of the line’s commitment to the UK came earlier this year, when it announced a full season of cruises out of Dover in summer 2025 – the first time it will homeport a ship in the UK in 10 years.

The cruise line is basing Pinnacle-class ship *Nieuw Statendam* out of Dover for 10 departures, ranging from 14 to 42 days and visiting the likes of the Canary Islands, British Isles, Norway, Iceland, Greenland, Iberia and the eastern Mediterranean.

**“WE HAVE RECEIVED
AN ABUNDANCE OF
POSITIVE FEEDBACK
FROM UK AGENTS OVER
HOMEPORTING IN DOVER**



Also, in July this year, HAL reported its best sales week for the UK market since 2019. The line attributed the success to a three-day £1 deposit event. Customers were able to pay a £1 deposit for sailings from winter 2023 to spring 2025. The majority of bookings for the UK sales success were for cruises departing in 2024 and 2025, with the most popular destinations being Alaska, Asia and Europe.

“We have received an abundance of positive feedback from UK agents who share our enthusiasm over homeporting in Dover for the 2025 season,” explains Farndell. “We wanted to offer a convenient embarkation point in England for our British guests, allowing them easier access to explore several regions around Europe on a variety of itineraries.”



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Karen Farndell; the line is sailing into a strong 2024; HAL has made an extra effort to run ship visits this year for agents

AGENT FOCUS

Alongside that positive news is the fact that 2023 has been a record-breaking year for the line in terms of agent engagement. The line hosted 50 agents on three Alaska fam trips, as well as 48 on an 11-day Iberian Adventure cruise. What's more, hundreds of others were able to experience HAL ships at various visit days across the UK.

"I've been overwhelmed at the fam trip feedback we've received from travel agents and this shines through in the survey results where agents tell us that their knowledge and confidence has significantly increased," explains Farndell.

For next year, Farndell says it "hopes to get close to that number... but we'll likely be a bit more selective in 2024", adding: "We'll continue to maximise our sales with agents first and then find opportunities for fam space to showcase

“WE’VE MADE A CRUISE TOUR FINDER TO HELP AGENTS DETERMINE THE BEST LAND TOUR OPTIONS TO ADD TO AN ALASKA CRUISE

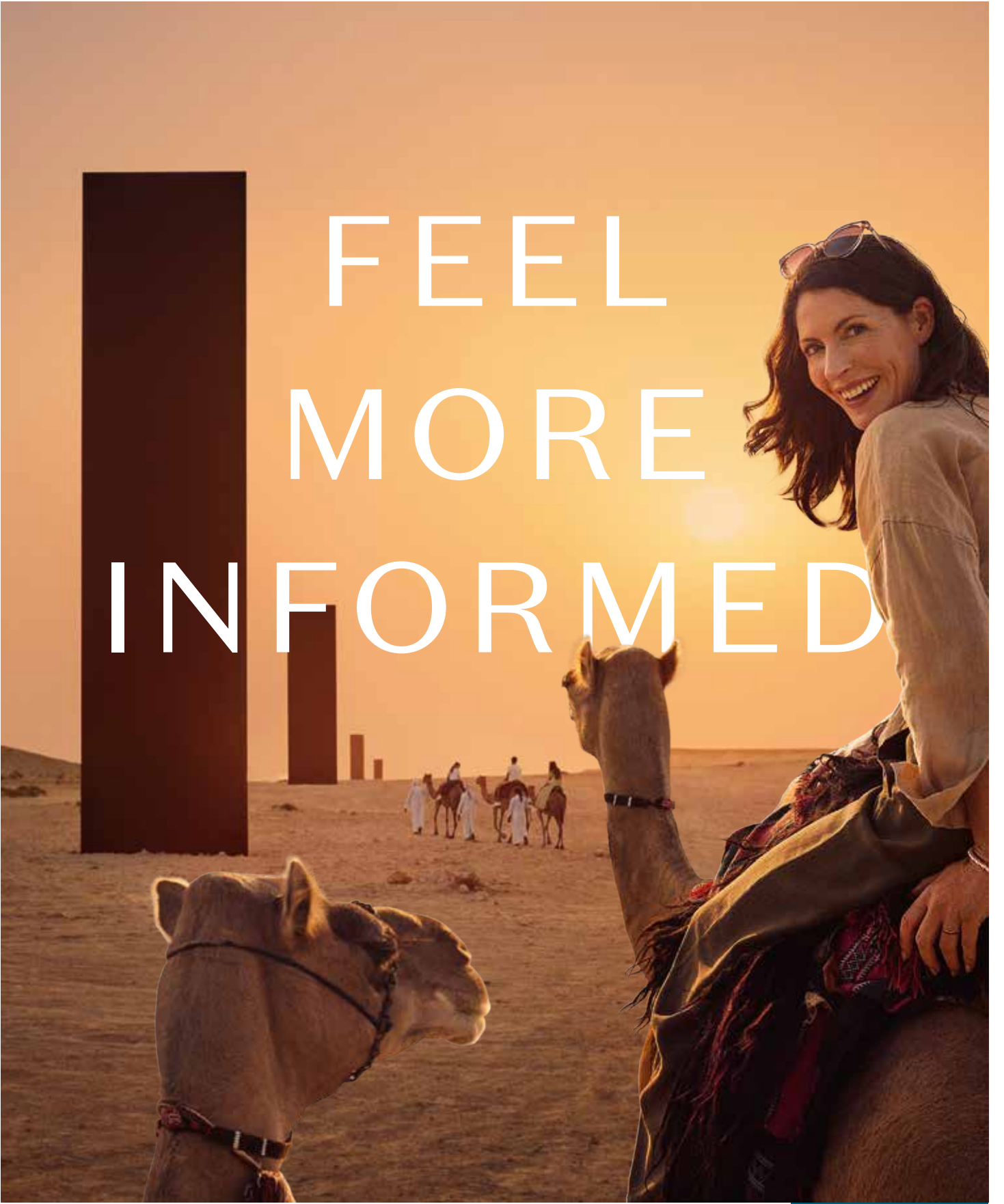
our product and new destinations. But we'll have a programme in place so that agents can learn about our product to increase sales.”

Improvements are also in the pipeline for agent resources, confirms Farndell. "Throughout this next year, we'll continue investing in support tools for our agent partners," she says. "For instance, we've made a new resource – the cruise tour finder to help agents determine the best land tour options to add to an Alaska cruise. We also regularly refresh resources on GOHAL.com, our agent-specific site providing marketing tools, info on campaigns and training opportunities.

"Another training resource we will enhance is HAL Academy, which is designed to increase agents' knowledge and confidence in the Holland America Line brand. And our latest offerings and breaking news will be shared on our social channels, which I encourage our agents to also use as a resource."

With the UK team now running at "full complement, which means we are in a great position as we enter 2024", Farndell believes the future for HAL could very feasibly see more records broken. ●



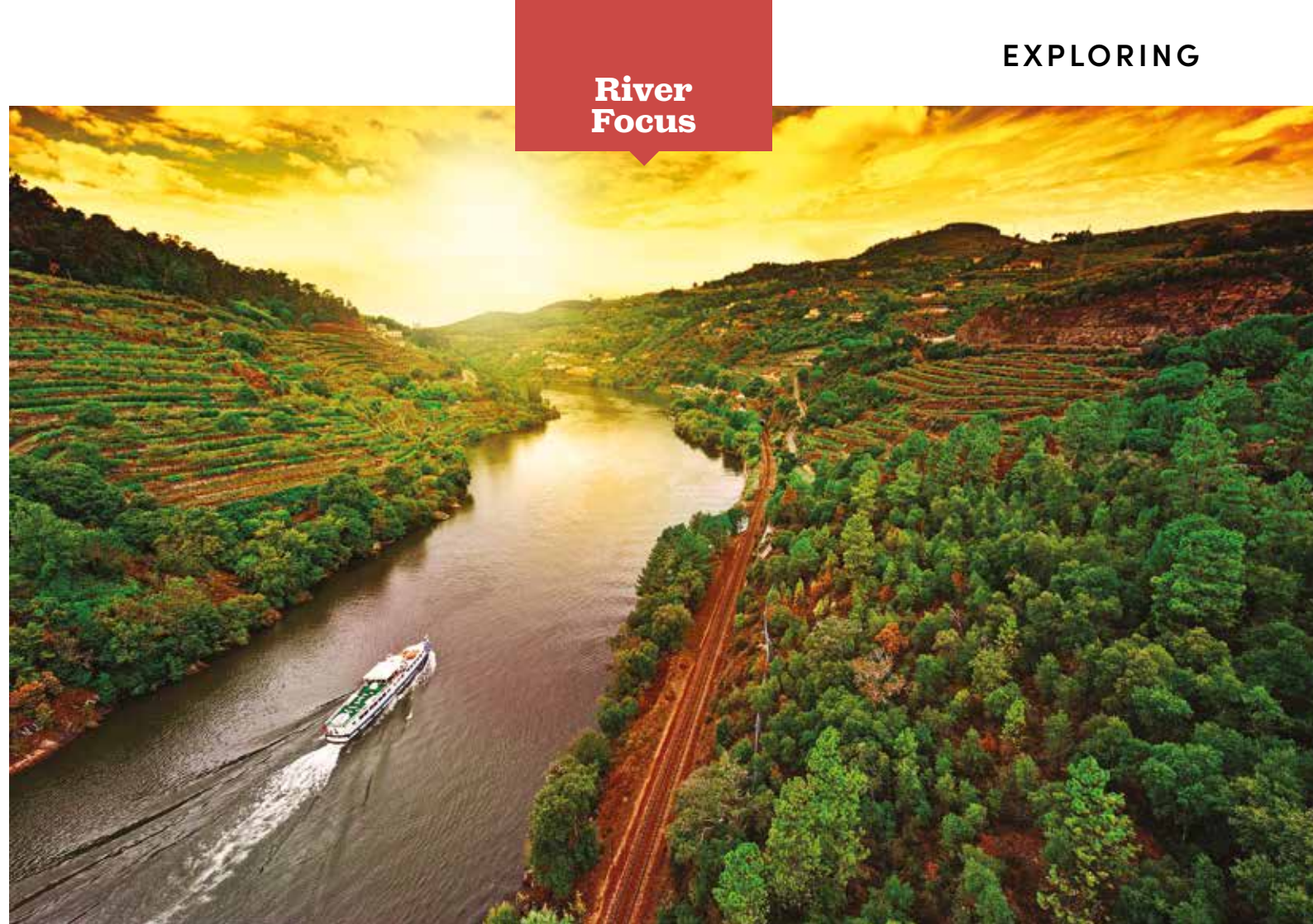


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A hot ticket

Portugal's Douro is the one to watch for 2024 – not just because of a micro-climate that virtually guarantees almost year-round sunshine but also because cruise lines are launching new ships and extending the season. **Deborah Stone** reports

It's not something most people would realise until they visit, but Portugal's UNESCO-listed Douro Valley has a microclimate with a warmer spring and autumn than virtually any other European river cruise destination – plus often sunny winters – making it an increasingly popular destination.

This, and growing interest in exploring what is still a relatively unknown region, means cruise lines are expanding their

Douro fleets and extending the season from early March into December.

It was little more than a decade ago that today's well-known cruise lines began offering itineraries along the 'river of gold' and most still only have one or two ships based in Porto – the fascinating city where all Douro cruises begin and end.

That's because cruise ships sailing on the once-wild river need to be specifically built to deal with the high

but narrow locks that, along with a series of dams, now make the river safely navigable.

These ships are shorter than those on most European waterways and take fewer passengers – around 106 – which is one of the reasons that demand is beginning to outstrip supply along this 567-mile river that flows from central northern Spain into northern Portugal, flowing out into the Atlantic Ocean a few miles west of Porto.



SCAN THE CODE TO
DISCOVER MORE RIVER
CRUISE DESTINATIONS

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

The exquisite Salamanca Cathedral; vineyards line the lush banks of the Douro; Porto is a hub of history and culture

“Demand for the Douro is so strong that we are cruising even longer this year with departures throughout December”

Only the 130-mile Portuguese section between Porto and Barca d’Alva, or Vega de Terron just inside Spain, is navigable by river ships, which pass mile upon mile of intricate terraced vineyards that rise sharply from the riverbank to create dramatically sculpted hills.

Other European rivers may be known for their vineyards, but none have such other-worldly views, book-ended by two UNESCO world heritage centre cities – Porto and the Spanish university town of Salamanca – as well as numerous quintas to visit for port and wine tastings.



BOOKINGS ‘SOARING’

So it’s no surprise that lines can hardly keep up with demand, and Tauck is not the only one to report that the Douro has nearly sold out for 2024 already. “More and more people are discovering this beautiful river, bookings are soaring and availability is becoming a bigger issue,” says Tauck vice-president, global sales and reservations Steve Spivak.

The arrival of more cruise ships built for the Douro should help ease the pressure. Riviera Travel’s new ship, *MS Porto Mirante*, starts in July and APT introduces *MS Estrela* in June, while Avalon Waterways makes its Douro debut with *Avalon Alegria* in March.

CroisiEurope has one of the biggest presences on the river with six ships, while Viking has four, but Riviera’s *MS Porto Mirante* brings its Douro total up to three. Meanwhile, AmaWaterways is one of the first lines to extend its cruise season from late March into mid-December, when winter temperatures are still an average of 15°C and the days are bright, if a little chilly.

“Demand for the Douro is so strong that we extended our season last year and are cruising even longer this year with departures throughout December,” says AmaWaterways managing director

Jamie Loizou. “In 2025, *AmaSintra* will become AmaWaterways’ third ship on the Douro, offering two highly sought-after seven-night itineraries – the Enticing Douro, a roundtrip journey from Porto, and the equally exciting Flavours of Portugal & Spain, sailing from Porto to Vega de Terron.”

Although several cruise lines have announced new itineraries, the truth is there are only really two small towns along the river between Porto and the border – Peso da Régua and Pinhão – so it’s the add-ons to excursions that make all the difference when choosing which line to sail with.

For instance, Tauck, which has occasional family-centred itineraries in addition to regular itineraries, offers kayaking and cycling excursions as well as Tauck-exclusive experiences. “These include a private dinner with wine pairings at Quinto do Portal, a Douro Valley wine estate,” says Spivak. “Two

Selling tips

1 The Douro is good for clients who have already experienced the more ‘classic’ rivers like the Rhine and Danube, or the Seine and Rhone in France

2 It’s crucial for travellers to plan ahead. Although new ships have been launched on the Douro in recent years, supply hasn’t yet caught up with demand

3 If clients have the time, they should add a pre or post-cruise trip to Porto, Lisbon or Milan



other Tauck exclusives are a fun port wine cocktail-making workshop and a guided bicycle tour through Vinho Verde wine country.”

Most other cruise lines will also offer an afternoon or evening at a vineyard – often with a meal – but Riviera Travel’s head of trade Tom Morgan says: “More immersive experiences are on offer than ever before. Earlier this year Riviera launched a three-night city stay extension in Porto, which offers guests the chance to experience guided tours of Braga and Guimarães, visits to Clérigos Tower, plus a boat ride down the canals of Aveiro.”

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING NEW

For AmaWaterways, Loizou says demand for the Douro is growing every year.

“It may not be as well known as some other rivers, but it travels through one of Europe’s most unspoiled regions and is a great option for guests looking for somewhere new to explore,” he explains. “We are finding particular interest in our wine cruises. Guests can visit a variety of wineries and famous port houses in the oldest demarcated wine region in the world.”

Most excursions are largely by coach, such as Vila Real’s Mateus Palace and the historic town of Lamego. Some are quite a distance from the river including the medieval village of Castelo Rodrigo and Paleolithic rock art of Museu do Côa, while the ancient university town Salamanca, with its two exquisite cathedrals and massive baroque plaza, is two hours away – but well worth the journey through the wilderness of Spain’s Duero Natural Park.

Apart from Porto, only Régua, which has a good museum on wine making, and Pinhão, a small town with a charming railway station decorated in traditional blue and white tiles, are right on the river.

Porto is the stand-out star, with such an attractive historic and cultural hub that it’s hard to see everything on offer during the full day and two nights usually moored there. But as such a lot of time is spent simply sailing on the river, the ships themselves are an important consideration.

It can be up to 10°C hotter in the river valley than elsewhere, because of its micro-climate, so a sun deck with a good pool, sun loungers and shaded area is the bare minimum required.



EXPERT VIEW

“Cruises along the Douro can be great for clients who might prefer a slower pace. Travel is prohibited at night and the ship has to sail during daylight hours, so there are fewer day-long excursions away from the ship and more time to be savoured on board – time that’s well spent enjoying views of the landscapes with a refreshing local wine from the ship’s sun deck.”

Steve Spivak, vice president, global sales and reservations Tauck

While most people usually associate the Douro with the world’s best port and wines such as Vinho Verde, food lovers will also find plenty to enjoy sampling the local cuisine. Loizou says: “This region is a great option for foodies. As well offering our award-winning fine dining on the ship, AmaWaterways also arranges for guests to dine ashore in local quintas, which are historic houses or palaces, for a very special experience.” ●

Itineraries

Tauck

Prices for the eight-day Villages & Vintages: Cruising the Douro Valley, roundtrip from Porto on *MS Andorinha*, start from £4,390pp, departing 5 July 2024.

tauck.co.uk

Riviera Travel

Prices for the eight-day Douro, Porto and Salamanca River Cruise, roundtrip from Porto on *MS Splendour*, start from £2,149pp, departing 28 April 2024.

rivieratravel.co.uk

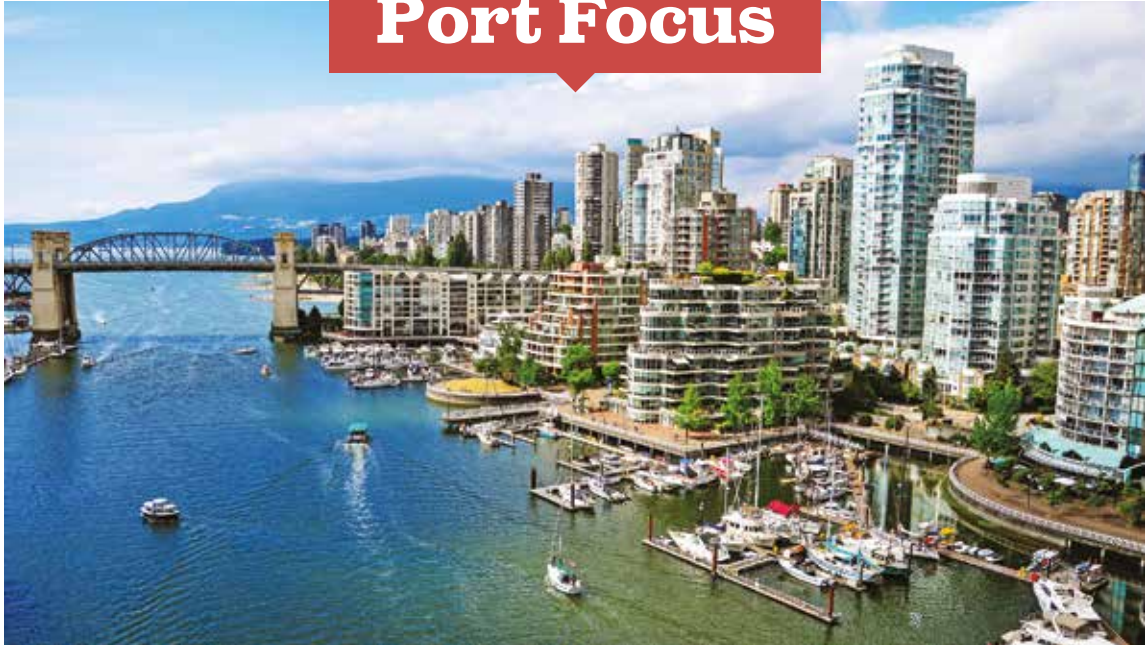
AmaWaterways

Prices for AmaWaterways’ seven-night Enticing Douro voyage on *AmaDouro*, sailing roundtrip from Porto, start from £2,874pp, departing on 23 March 2024.

amawaterways.co.uk

HIGHLIGHTS • FOOD & DRINKS
SHOPPING • ITINERARIES

Port Focus



VIBRANT VANCOUVER

Vancouver is surrounded by mountains so guests can sightsee in the morning and take a hike in the afternoon, as **Nicole Carmichael** discovers

Crystal clear, clean fresh air breathes a pulsing energy into the coastal rainforest region of Vancouver, the largest city in Western Canada. Surrounded by mountains, with a sprawling urban wonderland to explore, there's almost too much to see, do, taste and experience. Nature lovers are spoiled for choice with the number of stunning national parks, botanical gardens and hiking opportunities to uncover and foodies won't know where to turn next as Vancouver's vibrant culinary scene rivals the world's greatest capitals. For every age there's fascinating cultural history to discover, from the stunning reimagined Museum of Anthropology and the vibrant totem poles in Stanley Park, to whale watching off the coast of the city, and Vancouver's emblematic sea-foam green architecture.

“
**NATURE LOVERS,
CULTURE SEEKERS
AND FOODIES WILL
FIND PLENTY TO
KEEP THEM HAPPY**

Highlights STANLEY PARK

At over 1,000 acres, Stanley Park is one of the world's largest urban parks. Teaming with stunning trees and boasting beautiful views of the city, the park has a smart network of walking and bike paths, an aquarium, beach areas, an enchanting lost lagoon and other iconic sites such as the beautiful Rose Garden and Shakespeare Garden. Wrapped around the park is the incredible Vancouver Seawall, which at 28km is the world's longest uninterrupted waterfront path.



GASTOWN

Although indigenous settlement of Vancouver began over 10,000 years ago, it's a relatively new city, established in 1886 through a deal with the Canadian Pacific Railway. Gastown is thought to be the oldest neighbourhood in the city, taking its name from John 'Gassy



Jack' Leighton, believed to be one of the earliest settlers in the area in 1867, who promised unlimited whiskey in exchange for a saloon building.

CAPILANO SUSPENSION BRIDGE

Originally built in 1889, the 450ft long treetop bridge is a magnet for rainforest lovers with a head for heights. Swaying at 130ft above the ground, the bridge is lit from end to end during the winter months, illuminating the forest into a magical canyon. The park's newest attraction, the heart-stopping Cliff Walk, juts out from the granite cliff face above Capilano river.

YALETOWN

Among the newer Vancouver must-sees, Yaletown is a recently renovated warehouse district that's become the trendiest area in town. Like New York's SoHo area, its streets are lined with fantastic cafes, restaurants and cocktail bars, indie fashion and unique decor boutiques. There's also a wonderful lawned waterfront for people watching and skyline basking.

Food & drink CHINATOWN

Chinese immigrants arrived in Vancouver in the 1870s to work on the railroads and mining operations and the area grew into one of North America's largest Chinatowns. Head here for traditional and authentic Chinese specialties. The city also boasts some of the world's best Japanese restaurants including Maruhachi Ra-Men (formerly called Marutama), flame cooked sushi at Kiku and Kissa Tanto (meaning House of Plenty).

GRANVILLE PUBLIC MARKET

Vancouver's food scene is legendary so stick to small local restaurants for the best prices and often the best food. Head to foodie paradise Granville

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Surrounded by mountains, there's a great deal to do in and around Vancouver; Stanley Park's fascinating collection of totem poles; there's a wide range of shops to browse; for value and variety, Richmond Night Market can't be beaten

Public Market which boasts seafood, fresh produce and gourmet treats from Asia, Mexico, Greece and more.

RICHMOND NIGHT MARKET

With street food dominating the foodie headlines, save some time for the Richmond Night Market. For starters, it's the biggest food market in North America, but even with its sheer size, it's always busy. For value and variety, it can't be beaten; Afghan dumplings, matcha cheesecakes, Canadian poutine and more.

Off the beaten track KITSILANO

In recent years, Kitsilano has emerged as a go-to district for lifestyle boutiques. Its wealth of outdoor festivals and events draw the shoppers to the great range of athletic and sporty shops, sustainable fashion labels and quirky designer stores. It's also a fantastic place to eat. 🍷

Itineraries

Royal Caribbean

The line's seven-night Alaska Experience cruise on *Ovation of the Seas* from Seattle to Vancouver, via Washington, Juneau, Alaska, Skagway, Sitka and Victoria, departs 27 September 2024, from £649pp.

royalcaribbean.com

Celebrity Cruises

A six-night cruise along the Pacific Northwest coast on *Celebrity Summit*, sailing from Los Angeles to Vancouver, via Catalina Island, San Francisco and Victoria. Departing 4 May 2024, with prices from £529pp.

celebritycruises.com

Cool cruising

Gilly Pickup explores the itineraries and experiences on offer in the Arctic Circle, one of the most rewarding travel destinations on the planet



SCAN THE CODE TO
DISCOVER MORE OCEAN
CRUISE DESTINATIONS

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Arctic cruising is ideal for wildlife lovers and adventure seekers; Longyearbyen in Norway, generally regarded to be the northernmost town in the world

The Arctic Circle, a magical, eerily mysterious place is shifting. As Elias Andersson, head of the Arctic Circle Centre, explains: “Most people don’t know that the Arctic Circle is actually moving. Each year it shifts about 14 metres.” According to scientists, this means that Grimsey Island won’t be inside the Circle by around 2050.

For wildlife lovers, adventure seekers or those who simply want to travel somewhere that bit different, this mesmerising region of gigantic glaciers, pristine landscapes, indigenous communities and huge icebergs fits the bill. This is the realm of the beluga whale, walrus and Arctic hare, somewhere the musk ox, caribou and polar bear also call home.

INSPIRATIONAL ITINERARIES

Those sailing with Quark Expeditions can have fun kayaking and heli hiking and the company also offers flightseeing excursions in the Canadian High Arctic and Greenland. A helicopter flight to the Greenland Ice Sheet means guests can take a walk on the world’s second largest body of ice.

“For our Arctic 2025 season, we invite travellers to explore remote Arctic destinations like Svalbard, Greenland or the Canadian High Arctic. We want to inspire people to rethink their bucket-list dreams, get off the beaten track and return home with travel stories no other destination can provide,” says Quark Expeditions BDM UK & Ireland Sarah Schlederer.

Havila Voyages offers a range of excursions which include Arctic coastal walks, rib boat adventures and snowmobiling, while their Arctic crossing ceremony marks the moment guests cross the Arctic Circle for the first time. Elsewhere, Viking is one of many cruise lines passionate about supporting local communities, giving guests the opportunity to meet and interact with the indigenous Sami people on several of their Arctic circle itineraries.

AMBASSADORS FOR CHANGE

A big question for many these days is how can remote, precious areas like this be protected from tourism’s dangers? Swan Hellenic chief commercial officer Patrizia Iantorno says: “Our expedition leaders explain how everyone should behave – don’t touch, walk the same path as the leaders, don’t leave food and pay attention to mother nature. Basic, certainly, but absolute key to protecting areas like this.” On the same subject, Hans Lagerweij, CEO of Albatros, a Danish family company operating two vessels in polar regions, agrees that remote areas can be protected but emphasises how essential it is to follow the strict guidelines set by the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), which manages ship schedules to prevent overtourism at sites.

Over at Havila Voyages, the line’s UK head of sales Matthew Valentine adds: “We are considered vital infrastructure by the local government and take our responsibilities to these communities very seriously. We need to support them and add value, whether by creating jobs or buying their goods and services.”





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT The Aurora Borealis is a major draw for Arctic cruises; clients can look forward to the amazing wildlife dotted all over the region

In addition, Denise Walker, Inspiring Travel product and travel relationship manager adds: “When taking passengers to delicate, remote parts of our world like the Arctic Circle, the aim is for them to not only learn something new, but to alter behaviours long term towards sustainability and become ambassadors for change on return.”

SUSTAINABLE SAILING

Digging further into the sustainability question, Lagerweij says: “Although we aim to become a carbon neutral industry, the truth is we don’t know how at this moment. Technologies are still in development. In the meantime, we have to use what is available to lower our footprint as far as possible. Albatros Expeditions only operates vessels with an X-bow for more stability and less fuel consumption. This means we are amongst the lowest greenhouse gas emissions per guest in the industry.”

Over at Scenic, the line’s director of discovery operations Jason Flesher highlights that *Scenic Eclipse II* only

Selling tips

1 Typically cruises to the Arctic Circle operate from May to September. There are cruises during winter for those clients hankering after the Norwegian coast

2 Find out everything you can about the product including size of vessels, ice-class rating – the higher the rating the tougher the conditions it can cope with

3 When selling, agents need to emphasise to clients that expedition voyages are adventurous, educational and sometimes physically challenging



EXPERT VIEW

Dr Sylvia Earle, oceanographer and namesake of AE Expeditions’ second purpose-built ship, emphasises the importance of exploring the natural world. On travelling with AE Expeditions, she says: “It is an incredible opportunity to learn about these marine habitats in situ, and become ambassadors for protecting them.”

uses marine diesel, “the lightest fuel, reducing emissions by 95 per cent”.

So, is the future bright for cruising in the region? Valentine thinks it is. He says: “We are seeing real interest in our environmental initiatives from passengers and believe this trend will continue. Our guests want to explore but also need to know that they are choosing a more responsible option when booking.” It’s a similar train of thought at AE Expeditions. Hayley Peacock-Gower, the line’s CMO, suggests that “small ship, light footprint, citizen science and ocean conservation are key factors for the future of expedition cruising”. ●

Itineraries

Swan Hellenic

A 13-night Arctic Islands Hopping Cruise sailing from Reykjavik to Longyearbyen on *Vega* is priced from £15,963pp, departing 24 June 2024.

swanhellenic.com

Scenic

A nine-night Eastern Greenland & Iceland Expedition sailing from Reykjavik to Reykjavik visiting the Arctic Circle en route is priced from £7,835pp, departing 14 August 2024.

scenic.co.uk

Saga

Saga has a 15-night Magic of the Northern Lights cruise sailing round trip from Portsmouth on *Spirit of Discovery* priced from £4,349pp, departing 2 March 2024.

travel.saga.co.uk

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INDULGE

Cruise Jamaica







CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Queen Anne will set sail from Southampton in May next year; Inger Thorhauge, the line's first-ever female cruise captain

Amazing Anne

With only a few months to go to the launch of Cunard's exciting new ship *Queen Anne*, **Will Payne** takes a look at what's in store

All eyes will be on *Queen Anne* when she sets sail from Southampton to Lisbon on 3 May 2024. Cunard has a lot riding on this launch – it has to retain the heritage of its iconic brand while building a modern ship that will appeal to all ages. With six months to go until the launch of the line's 249th vessel, there's a lot of buzz about this new ship.

First up is the news that Inger Thorhauge, the line's first-ever female cruise captain will be at the helm for *Queen Anne*'s maiden voyage next spring. Inger will be captaining the 1,200 staff on board as they sail around the Mediterranean on their first season at sea.

LIGHT AND CONTEMPORARY

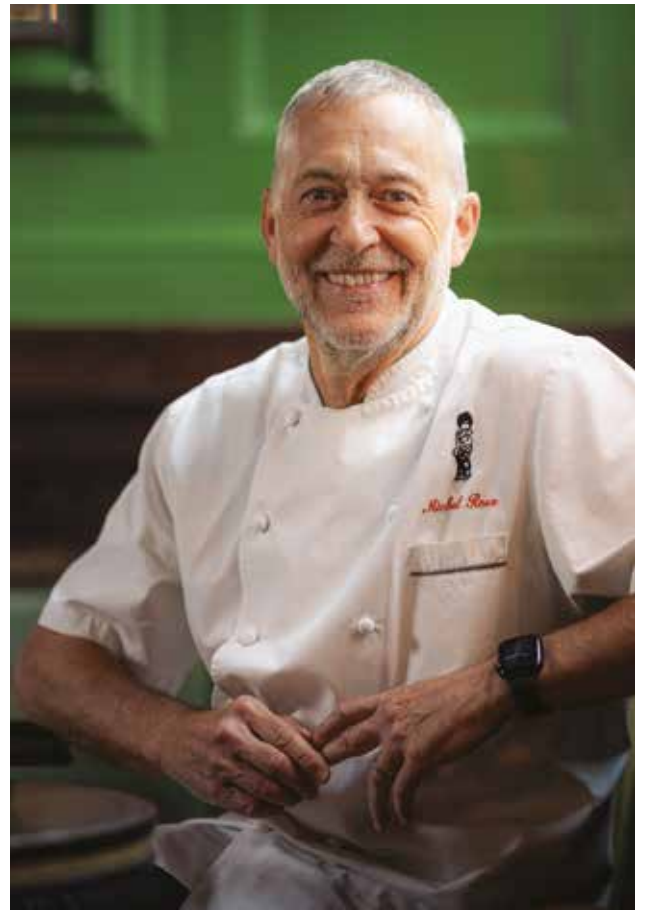
The overall design of the ship will be light and contemporary. Designers David Collins Studio, Sybille de Margerie and Richmond International have worked with creative

director Adam D Tihany to design the ship, taking the classic Cunard style and updated it with many new touches.

One of *Queen Anne*'s most striking areas will be the three-deck atrium centred around the Grand Lobby which boasts a constantly changing contemporary art sculpture, a bar and a sweeping staircase.

Other new spaces to look out for are The Pavilion, an open-air area on the top deck featuring a specially designed glass dome roof which retracts in warmer climes, and the top deck Wellness Studio – a retreat for fitness fanatics which will be open from sunrise to sunset. Look out too for the Wellness Cafe, a healthy eating spot that will offer great plant-based foods and sustainably sourced meat, dairy and fish options.

The wellness theme continues with the widest selection of fitness, beauty, thermal and spa facilities ever offered on board a Cunard ship, with guests invited to relax and enjoy treatments at the Mareel Wellness and Beauty spa.





CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT The Mareel Wellness and Beauty Spa; Michelin-star chef Michel Roux Jr will curate speciality menus for diners; travel in luxury in a Princess Grill suite; the ship's signature Britannia Restaurant; relax and soak up the sun at the Panorama Pool Club

restaurant as well as a revamped menu of modern pub fare for the Golden Lion.

Guests will find 15 dining options on board the ship including the signature Britannia Restaurant, which will be designed in colours of the four seasons, offering a menu of dishes and wines to match. Look out too for alternative dining options, including a Mediterranean restaurant, a Pan-Asian eatery, a steakhouse and grill and a tapas-themed bar.

For guests who enjoy a classy bar, they'll love the Golden Lion Pub, which serves craft beers, wine and spirits, while cocktail lovers should head to The Champagne Lounge, The Commodore Club, Jin &

"For more than 180 years, Cunard has constantly refined the definitive experience of luxury ocean travel," says Cunard president Katie McAlister. "I know that guests around the world are looking forward to sailing with our new Queen and we are counting down the days until we can welcome them aboard."

HOME FROM HOME

As to be expected of a ship this size, *Queen Anne* will offer guests a wide choice of accommodation. Each of the 1,397 staterooms – made up of 192 suites, 744 balcony cabins, 74 Oceanview rooms, 348 inside rooms and 27 wheelchair accessible staterooms – come with a king-size bed, safe box, writing desk with chair, fridge, tea and coffee-making facilities, 24-hour room service, USB charger points and Europe-UK-USA power sockets. Those staying in a Queens Grill Suite or the Penthouse will also have the services of a 24-hour butler plus access to the exclusive Queens Grill restaurant.

Foodies are in for a treat on *Queen Anne* with the news of an exclusive culinary partnership with two Michelin-star chef Michel Roux Jr. He will design a new Gala Evening menu for the Queens Grill

Look out for the striking three-deck atrium around the Grand Lobby, the top-deck Pavilion with retractable glass dome and the Wellness Studio

Fast facts

3,000
capacity

1,225
crew

2024
year of launch

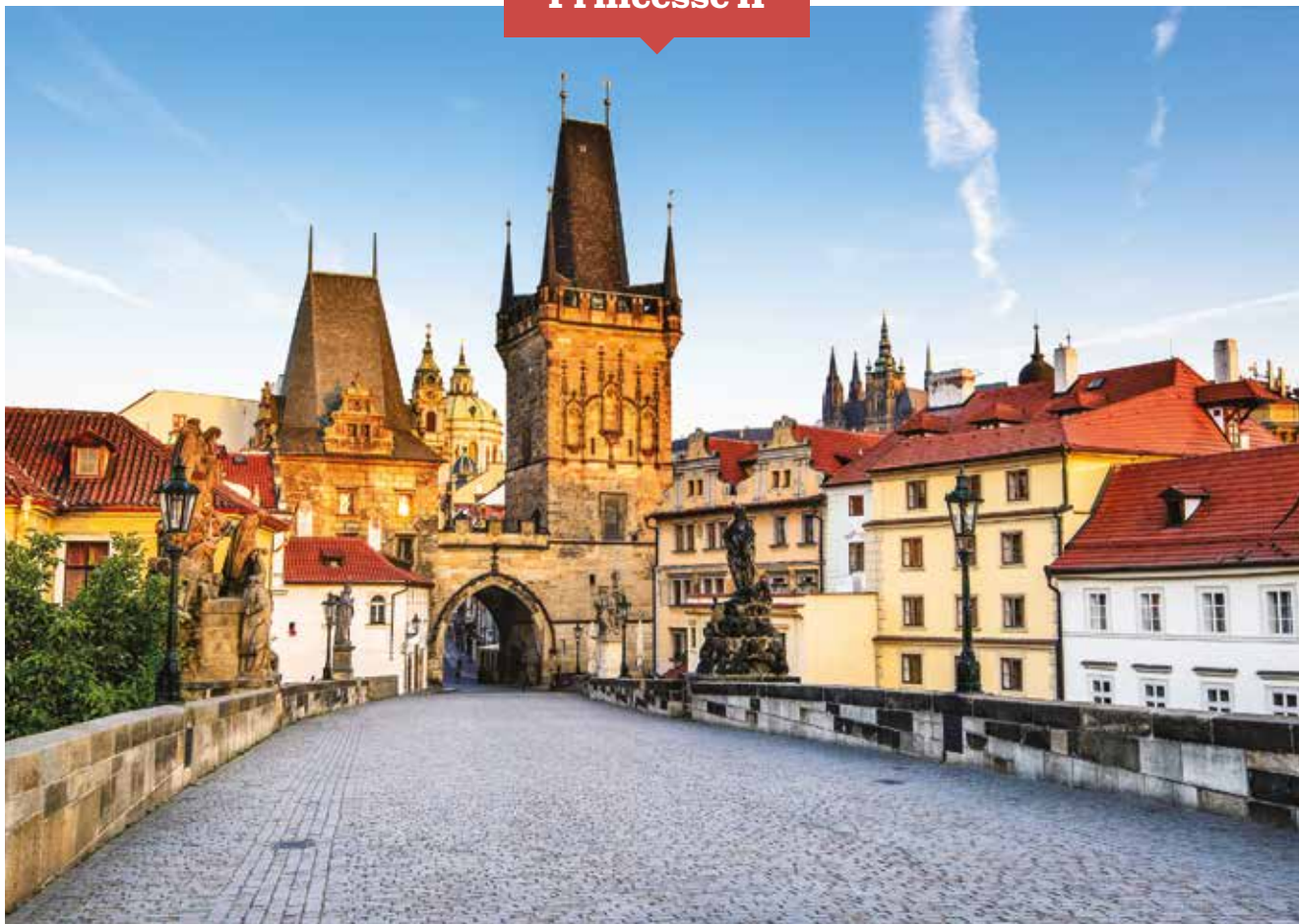
1,397
staterooms

Fizz Bar or Grills Lounge & Bar.

A lot of thought has been put into the entertainment programme on board the ship with the evening programme that will take place at the 825-seat The Royal Court featuring musical productions and shows including *A Slice of Saturday Night* by Heather Brothers and performances by the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Agents will also be able to experience *Queen Anne* next year. Cunard will host up to 500 of its most engaged travel agent partners on board within the first month of the ship's launch.

Around 200 agents will have the opportunity to board the vessel at the 2024 CLIA UK and Ireland Conference between 23-25 May 2024. The line will also host agents on two overnight experiences from Southampton. ●



Magical memories

The beauty of Prague and fairy-tale castles on the banks of the Vltava await on a memorable CroisiEurope cruise. **Elle Flynn** reports

Prague has never been on my bucket list – and neither has a cruise on the Vltava river. But when the opportunity comes to join a mini cruise on CroisiEurope's *MS Elbe Princesse II*, I jump at the chance.

Built in 2018, *Elbe Princesse II* is a five-star medium-sized ship that can carry up to 81 passengers in 40 cabins. Decorated in a contemporary style, the

ship is light, airy and spacious – making it the perfect base for a river cruise.

When I arrive in the Czech Republic, Prague is in the middle of an unprecedented heatwave, so entering my cool air-conditioned cabin is a welcome relief. The room is inviting and designed with comfort and functionality in mind, offering an ensuite shower room, plenty of storage space and a handy seating area. The expansive balcony provides sweeping views of

the river, allowing me to absorb the hypnotic charms of river cruising. This is my kind of luxury.

DISCOVERING PRAGUE

After a quick freshen up, I head into the sun-drenched streets to enjoy the sights and landmarks of Prague's Old Town. Located on the right bank of the Vltava, the Old Town is characterised by its exquisite architecture, narrow cobblestone streets and beautiful



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Savour the sights of Prague; *MS Elbe Princesse II*; The Church of Saint John of Nepomuk in Stechovice; dining on board offers sweeping river views



squares. It's here that I stumble across the city's famous Astronomical Clock. Looking up, I am in awe of this medieval masterpiece that dates back to the 15th century and exemplifies Prague's history and architectural brilliance.

As I feel myself begin to wilt from the heat, I head to the nearby Coda Restaurant for refreshments. An inviting selection of canapés are served on the elegant roof terrace which provides an enchanting backdrop to the panoramic city views.

After my last mouthful of a zingy summer berry salad washed down with a chilled glass of champagne, I feel rejuvenated enough to walk across to the world-famous Charles Bridge. Spanning the Vltava, this bridge connects the Old Town with the Lesser Town, and is famous for its stunning Gothic architecture and rich history. The bridge offers breathtaking views of Prague Castle, the river and the picturesque cityscape.

CASTLES AND CULTURE

Sightseeing makes me feel hungry so I'm eager to see what culinary delights await me back on board *Elbe Princesse II*. The main restaurant offers sweeping views of the river, making it the perfect backdrop for mouthwatering meals that fuse

French cuisine with seasonal influences. I savour each bite from the set menu, while enjoying the added bonus of unlimited French house wines, making this dining experience both indulgent and great value for money.

The following morning brings with it an early awakening, as the gentle hum of the boat's engine and the soothing lull

of the waves ease me into the day. We cruise gently along the Vltava, making our way towards the enchanting Slapy Dam before arriving at picturesque Stechovice. Here, we embark on a visit to the imposing Konopiste Castle, which served as the residence of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, whose assassination in 1914 triggered the start of World War I.

There's plenty of culture and history in store the following day too with visits to see Prague's St Vitus Cathedral, the historic Old Royal Palace and the charming Golden Lane. Each stop along the journey unveils a new layer of beauty and history, leaving me in awe of the rich tapestry of this region.

On the final day, we cruise to the charming town of Melnik, where we explore Nelahozeves Castle, which boasts a superb art collection and spellbinding views. As the trip draws to a close, I realise I've seen so much in such a short space of time and I can't wait to return to this magical part of Europe. ●

Selling tips

1 Suggest a cruise along the Vltava for river customers who are looking for something a little different from their next voyage

2 History and culture are the order of the day on CroisiEurope's Vltava itineraries, with castles aplenty

3 Highlight the great value for money of cruising with CroisiEurope and the quality of the cuisine on board

Fast facts

81

guests

25

crew

40

cabins

1

restaurant

Oliver Asmussen



Details

A six-night Castles of Bohemia cruise on *Elbe Princesse II*, round trip from Prague via Slapy, Stechovice, Melnik and Dresden, departs 14 May 2024, with prices from £1,544pp.

The challenge awaits

It's been a record-breaking year for the Cruise Challenge event, with much more to come in 2024

What a year it has been for the Cruise Challenge. In total, 700 travel agents have attended a Cruise Challenge event over the course of 2023. The event – organised by *Cruise Trade News* – travelled the length and breadth of the country, visiting cities across the UK, delivering travel agent training with a difference.

The unique format, which fuses informative presentations from cruise lines with a gameshow, gave agents the opportunity to learn and grow their businesses. In total, 14 events were held in 2023, featuring cruise lines from across the industry, whether that be ocean, river, expedition, or luxury.

In total, Fred Olsen Cruise Line gave away five cruises to five lucky agents and Princess Cruises had four fantastic opportunities for ship visits. There were many more prizes, courtesy of cruise lines and *Cruise Trade News*, also won at every event.

“WITH ITS UNIQUE FORMAT, THERE REALLY IS NO OTHER TRAINING EVENT LIKE IT”



MORE TO COME

However, there is much more to come in 2024. While dates and venues are still being confirmed, there are 15 Cruise Challenges planned, once again across the country in cities such as Leeds, Belfast, Southampton, Manchester, London, Edinburgh and many more. Attendance is free.

Real Response Media commercial director Tracy Clenshaw said: “We are delighted with the feedback from the Cruise Challenge. While the event has been in existence for a few years now, we feel that 2023 really saw it come into its own, with more partners and agents than ever before.

“We’ve been so impressed with the desire from agents to come along, have some fun and learn about all that is happening in the industry. With its one-of-a-kind format, there really is no other training event like it. I’d like to thank all our cruise line partners for their support and every single travel agent who attended. We hope to see you all again in 2024.”



SCAN THE CODE TO
DISCOVER MORE ABOUT
THE CRUISE CHALLENGE



IN NUMBERS

700

agent attendees
in 2023

5

cruises won
by agents

15

Cruise Challenge events
planned for 2024



Brought to you by

CRUISE
Trade News

2024 is set to be a bumper year for ship launches and new itineraries, meaning there's never been a better time to join the Cruise Challenge.



2024 DATES

Liverpool	March 21st	Belfast	June 6th
Leeds	April 11th	Edinburgh	June 26th
Maidstone	May 9th	Glasgow	June 27th



"The Cruise Challenge events give you the opportunity to learn in an interactive and fun environment. They are very enjoyable"

Carol Smith - Personal Travel Advisor

Stay tuned to cruisetradenews.com & cruisechallenge.evessiocloud.com for more information

📞 @cruisetradenews 📱 #CruiseChallenge 📧 Nathan.Emtage@realresponsemedia.com



EXPLORE THE ARCTIC CIRCLE WITH CELEBRITY CRUISES® SAILING FROM SOUTHAMPTON IN 2025



Celebrity Apex® will return to Southampton for her second season, with more Arctic Circle and Norwegian Fjords itineraries than before, giving guests even more opportunities to visit the land of the midnight sun and breathtaking historic fjords. Travellers can also discover Celebrity's newly added port, picturesque Trondheim in Norway, a Medieval town with epic fjords, centuries of history and a thriving food scene.



ARCTIC CIRCLE

12-NIGHT NORWEGIAN FJORDS & ARCTIC CIRCLE CELEBRITY APEX®

5TH JUNE 2025

Southampton, England; Bruges (Zeebrugge), Belgium; At Sea; Flåm, Norway; Arctic Circle (Cruise); Tromsø, Norway; Honningsvåg, Norway; Arctic Circle (Cruise); Geiranger, Norway; Ålesund, Norway; Haugesund, Norway; At Sea; Southampton, England.

12-NIGHT NORWEGIAN FJORDS & ARCTIC CIRCLE CELEBRITY APEX®

5TH JULY 2025

Southampton, England; At Sea; Haugesund, Norway; Flåm, Norway; Olden, Norway; Arctic Circle (Cruise); Tromsø, Norway; Honningsvåg, Norway; Arctic Circle (Cruise); Molde, Norway; Stavanger, Norway; At Sea; Southampton, England.

14-NIGHT NORWEGIAN FJORDS & ARCTIC CIRCLE CELEBRITY APEX®

7TH AUGUST 2025

Southampton, England; At Sea; Stavanger, Norway; Olden, Norway; Molde, Norway; Trondheim, Norway; Arctic Circle (Cruise); Honningsvåg, Norway; Tromsø, Norway; Arctic Circle (Cruise); Geiranger, Norway; Flåm, Norway; At Sea; Rotterdam, Netherlands; Southampton, England.

12-NIGHT NORWEGIAN FJORDS & ARCTIC CIRCLE CELEBRITY APEX®

25TH AUGUST 2025

Southampton, England; At Sea; Molde, Norway; Ålesund, Norway; Flåm, Norway; Arctic Circle (Cruise); Tromsø, Norway; Honningsvåg, Norway; Arctic Circle (Cruise); Trondheim, Norway; At Sea; Bruges (Zeebrugge), Belgium; Southampton, England.

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