

ISSUE 133 • FEBRUARY 2025

THE VOICE OF THE CRUISE INDUSTRY

CR♥ISE

Trade News

cruisetradenews.com

PRINCESS
CRUISES
TAKEOVER



LOVE BOATS

Eight spellbinding European itineraries
to fall head over heels for

INSIDE: CTN INVESTIGATES HOW AGENTS ARE SOLVING THE NEW-TO-CRUISE KNOWLEDGE GAP, P43
INTERVIEW PRINCESS CRUISES' HAYLEY MOORE, P32 • **PORTGUIDE** 24 HOURS IN PENANG, P51



P&O CRUISES

TIME'S RUNNING OUT TO HOLIDAY WITH SHINE!



Make a huge saving with
DOUBLE POINTS towards your
own P&O Cruises holiday* –
up to 3,000 Shine points, on us

BOOK BY 5 MARCH 2025

Find out more at
shinerewardsclub.com



Shine Rewards Club
HELPING AGENTS THRIVE WITH P&O CRUISES

*Terms and Conditions apply; see shinerewardsclub.com.





WELCOME...

TO THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

You may have noticed there's something slightly different about this issue of *Cruise Trade News*. While you'd be forgiven for assuming the pink hue adorning the cover and our heart-speckled masthead was our impassioned tribute to Valentine's Day (14 February, in case you'd forgotten), we at CTN towers simply aren't that lovey-dovey.

What we are passionate about, however, is finding new and creative ways to champion our industry and celebrate the trailblazers that are taking the sector to new heights. So, when we had the idea to launch our first-ever takeover issue, we couldn't think of anyone better to partner with than the 'Love Boat' brand itself, Princess Cruises.

Coinciding with the ocean line's wave season incentive campaign, which sees its sales team delivering pink envelopes filled with prizes to agents up and down the country, this special edition is packed with everything agents could possibly need to grow their Princess Cruises business. Turn to *page 31* to discover the latest ship updates, including the lowdown on the line's next Sphere class vessel (launching this autumn), as well as in-depth fact files and an exclusive trade update from UK and Europe sales director Hayley Moore.

On the cover: Shutterstock



ABOVE Princess Cruises' first Sphere class ship, *Sun Princess*

We're also giving agents the chance to win even more prizes this month, including an afternoon tea for two at The Shard, a Fortnum & Mason hamper and a Ninja Airfryer, with registrations now open at cruisetradenews.com/register-princess-love-boat.

Your usual industry analysis can be found throughout the pages of this issue, including the latest instalment of our CTN Investigates series on *page 43*, revealing why agents must play a vital role in educating the new-to-cruise market.

Jack Carter
Editor

cruisetradenews.com

FOLLOW ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MORE



@cruisetradenews



Cruise Trade News



Cruise Trade News



Cruise Trade News



180° from ORDINARY™



HA LONG BAY, VIETNAM

EXPERIENCE SOUTHEAST ASIA IN PRIVATE-YACHT STYLE

Discover Southeast Asia's best-kept secrets on Star Seeker, our new 224-guest yacht with a private veranda or infinity window in every suite.



Vietnam & Cambodia *Revealed*

10 night Ha Long Bay, Vietnam to
Bangkok, Thailand (or reverse)
FROM £3,900PP
ALL-INCLUSIVE



Tantalizing Thailand & Sparkling Singapore

11 night Bangkok, Thailand to Phuket,
Thailand (or reverse)
FROM £4,064PP
ALL-INCLUSIVE



EAST ASIAN *Legends*

10 night Osaka, Japan to Ha Long Bay,
Vietnam (or reverse)
FROM £3,900PP
ALL-INCLUSIVE

WINDSTAR
CRUISES

[WINDSTARCRUISES.CO.UK/offers/ebo-south-east-asia](https://www.windstarcruises.co.uk/offers/ebo-south-east-asia)
To book call 0808 189 3698 -or email windstaruk@cruiseline.co.uk

CONTENTS

ISSUE 133 | FEBRUARY 2025

CRUISE Trade News

Editor

Jack Carter

Deputy Editor

Will Payne

Contributors

Sarah Freeman, Lisa Hanley,
Sarah Holt

Art Director

Phil Couzens

Sub Editor

Heather Ford

Production Manager

Barnaby Moore

Senior Brand Partnerships Manager

Phabien Thompson

Senior Commercial Manager

Nathan Emtage

Commercial Director

Victoria McQuillan

Chief Operating Officer

Lina Slater

CEO

Chris Pitchford

For subscriptions & enquiries:

020 8444 2554

info@cruisetradenews.com

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

Follow us on Instagram and
Facebook at **Cruise Trade News**
and X at **@cruisetradenews**
cruisetradenews.co.uk

PUBLISHED BY

Real.
RESPONSE MEDIA

Unit 4, Cally Yard, 445 Caledonian
Road, London N7 9BG



18

INSIGHT

6 Cruise Corner

Your essential industry news roundup

10 Sector updates

The latest from river, luxury
and expedition

18 Behind the Headlines

Are refundable deposits good or
bad news for agents?

TRAINING

20 All to play for

Sign up for the 2025 Cruise Challenge!

24 Making Waves

Get the lowdown on *Riviera Rose*

28 What's in It For You?

Fam trips, incentives and more

PRINCESS CRUISES TAKEOVER

31 Welcome

It's all go for the 'Love Boat' brand

32 In conversation with...

Hayley Moore on the line's exciting
trade engagement plans

36 Learn & Sell

Your Princess Cruises sales toolkit

38 Ship of the Month

All aboard *Sun Princess*

40 On the road with...

Sales manager Ellie Webb



38

EXPLORING

51 Port Focus

Uncovering Penang's vibrant street food
and mesmerising natural beauty

54 The Moselle vs the Seine

The European rivers' enchanting
itineraries go head to head

58 The Caribbean

Your in-depth guide to the serene
landscapes of the Leeward Islands

62 Blockbuster cruises

The best worldwide cruises for
movie-loving clients

FINAL WORD

66 The CLIA View

Andy Harmer OBE on why travellers
can't get enough of expedition cruising



62

Cruise Corner



VIRGIN VOYAGES ENJOYS RECORD WAVE

> Virgin Voyages says this year's wave season has delivered the strongest future bookings and revenue growth in the company's history. The adults-only line recorded a 60 per cent revenue lift year-on-year and a 40 per cent jump in new bookings, with available inventory nearly sold out through the first quarter of the year.

The company also reported stronger than anticipated future bookings for its upcoming ship *Brilliant Lady*, which will launch in autumn 2025 with US itineraries from New York City, Miami, LA and Seattle to Alaska.

IN NUMBERS

60%

year-on-year revenue growth

40%

jump in bookings

30

new ports



CLIA SURPRISED BY NICE THREAT TO BAN CRUISES

C LIA has downplayed threats made by the mayor of Nice to ban cruise ships of more than 900 passengers in a bid to reduce the number of 'low-cost' tourists visiting the French Riviera city.

According to reports in *The Times*, Christian Estrosi plans to sign a bylaw banning cruise ships more than 190m long and with a capacity of more than 900 passengers docking in Nice and Villefranche-sur-Mer from

next summer. In response, a CLIA spokesperson said: "We regret the comments made by the mayor of Nice, which unfairly stigmatise both tourism professionals and passengers.

"We are even more surprised given that no large cruise ships are scheduled to call at the port of Nice in 2025. Furthermore, only three large cruise ships and 34 medium-sized ships are expected to anchor off Villefranche-sur-Mer throughout 2025."



SCAN

Explora Journeys' Antonio Paradiso on how the line will work with agents in 2025

WEDDINGS SOAR FOR P&O

➤ P&O Cruises has reported a record number of bookings for weddings at sea, with the line attributing it to the growing appeal for cruising among millennial travellers.

P&O Cruises saw an increase of 12 per cent in weddings and vow renewals in the year to December 2024, with more than 80 per cent of couples bringing friends and family onboard for a collective holiday.

The line says it expects wedding bookings to grow significantly again in 2025, with wedding packages starting at £3,420, which includes hair and makeup, dining for the couple, the ceremony and associated legalities. Speciality dining, meanwhile, costs from £28-a-head for a four-course celebration menu.

“**Weddings at sea could grow significantly again in 2025**”



HARMER JOINS GOVT TASKFORCE

➤ The cruise industry has been included for the first time in a tourism taskforce set up by the UK government which acts as point of contact between ministers and the sector.

CLIA's Andy Harmer will join the Visitor Economy Advisory Council to share the sector's expertise in tourism planning, responsible travel and innovation, while calling for support for the “amazing travel agent community”.

“I am delighted that the government has recognised that the cruise sector is an integral part of the UK tourism offer, playing a unique role in inward, outbound, and domestic tourism,” he said.



Long-haul on the rise, says Williamson

➤ Last year ABTA launched its 2025 Travel Trends report, which highlighted a rising interest among UK travellers for long-haul trips and five-star hotels.

At Princess Cruises, we are seeing this trend first-hand, as our 2025/26 bookings show a notable increase for voyages to far-flung destinations, such as Alaska and Japan.

Another trend for 2025 is the desire for luxury travel, with ABTA finding that 35 per cent of holidaymakers stayed in five-star hotels in the past year, an increase from 30 per cent in 2023. This demand for luxury is being met with an increasing number of ‘ship-within-a-ship’ experiences, such as Princess Cruises’ exclusive Sanctuary Collection on *Sun Princess* and the upcoming *Star Princess*.

With bespoke amenities and private spaces, these experiences meet the demand for all-inclusive luxury and personalised service.

Eithne Williamson is vice president UK and Europe, Princess Cruises

“**There is a growing demand for luxury and five-star hotels**”

The secret to boosting your sales

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' head of sales **Geoff Ridgeon** on how knowledge is power when it comes to securing bookings



The cruise industry is constantly evolving, bringing exciting new trends and opportunities to delight travellers. I mean, who would have thought we'd see a Celebrity ship on a river!

With each cruise line offering unique experiences, staying informed and understanding what sets each brand apart is key to matching the right cruise with the right customer – helping you boost sales and build lasting client relationships.

If you're a seasoned cruise-selling agent then what I am about to say might not be groundbreaking. However, not all of you sell cruises all day long. I completely understand that in this situation our industry could be seen as rather complicated and confusing.

Industry-wide, we're seeing a rise in guests looking for thoughtfully curated, smaller-ship experiences that take them to the heart of a destination. More travellers are prioritising discovery over ticking off traditional hotspots, seeking out the hidden gems of Norway, the lesser-known islands of the Caribbean or cultural deep-dives in the Mediterranean. By staying ahead of these trends, you can tailor recommendations and create unforgettable experiences for your customers.

From a growing demand for remarkable itineraries to a heightened focus on sustainable



ABOVE Travellers are prioritising discovery trips like seeing Norway's hidden gems



Taking your industry knowledge to the next level may be what you need to connect more customers to their perfect cruise line

TOP TIPS

1 Stay informed and understand each brand to match the right cruise with the right customer.

2 By staying ahead of trends, you can tailor recommendations for your client base.

3 Now is the time to boost your expertise. Your knowledge could make all the difference when that enquirer comes calling.

travel, understanding what makes a cruise line stand out is more important than ever.

At Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, we are passionate about delivering hand-crafted, experience-rich cruises that offer something truly special. Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' Academy, our new training portal designed for travel agents, offers bite-sized modules and in-depth insights into our fleet, itineraries and unique selling points.

While the craziness of 2025 is upon us, now is still the perfect time to enhance your expertise with all cruise brands. With the right tools and the right support, your knowledge and expertise could make all the difference.

Taking your cruise industry knowledge to the next level this year could be just what you need to connect even more customers to their perfect cruise line.

**Save up to 15% on Select 2025-6 Cruises & Expeditions
and Up to \$1,000USD per suite shipboard credit**

Seabourn's exclusive Sail of the Year is your clients' best opportunity to sail away in ultra-luxury with savings up to 15% on select voyages. They may explore the globe from pole to pole, visiting the Arctic, Antarctic, or South Pacific aboard our purpose-built Expedition ships where luxury meets adventure. Or sail on one of our intimate Ocean voyages to hidden harbours and off-the-beaten-path ports in the Mediterranean, Asia, the Caribbean and beyond.

The Sail of the Year is extended until 4 March 2025.

Sample Itineraries

**10-Day Italian
& Corsican Coastal Treasures**

27 Apr 2025 | SEABOURN SOJOURN

From £3,849pp | Inclusive Air

Genoa to Monte Carlo

Visits: Livorno (Florence/Pisa); Civitavecchia (Rome);
Trapani (Sicily); La Goulette (Tunis, Tunisia); Cagliari
(Sicily); Bonifacio (Corsica); Calvi.

• Inclusive Air

**10-Day Tyrrhenian
Treasures & Malta**

25* Apr; 7 May^; 21 Jul; 30 Aug; 20 Sep~; 9 Oct 2025
SEABOURN OVATION

From £4,275pp* | Inclusive Air

Monte Carlo to Barcelona

Visits: Porto Santo Stefano (Italy); Capri; Giardini Naxos
(Taormina, Sicily); Valletta (Malta, overnight); Mgarr
(Victoria, Gozo); Ajaccio (Corsica); St Tropez (France);
Palamos (Spain).

• Overnight stay in Valletta

• Inclusive Air

*Lead fare based on 25/4/25

^Seabourn Sojourn. 20/9/25 cruise is 9 days.

7-Day Aegean Treasures

6* Jul; 17 Aug 2025 | SEABOURN ENCORE

From £3,615pp* | Inclusive Air

Roundtrip Piraeus (Athens)

Visits: Mykonos, Crete, Symi,
Kusadasi (Ephesus); Cesme

• Seabourn's Classical Concert at Ephesus

• Inclusive Air

*Lead fare based on 6/7/25. 17 Aug sailing visits different ports



14-Day Exotic Caribbean in Depth

10, 24 Jan; 14, 28 Feb; 21* Mar 2026

SEABOURN OVATION

From £6,119*pp | Fly/cruise – please ask

Roundtrip Barbados

Visits: Castries (St Lucia); Monserrat; St Johns Antigua;
Carambola Beach^ (St Kitts & Nevis); Jost van Dyke; St
Maarten; Sopers Hole (Frenchmans Cay); Carambola
Beach^; St Pierre (Martinique); Port Elizabeth (Bequia);
St Georges (Grenada).

• ^Seabourn's Caviar on the Surf Beach Party

*Lead fare based on 21/03/2026



**11-Day The Great White
Continent Expedition**

16^, 26^ Nov; 6*^, 8, 18 Dec 2025; 5^, 7, 15^,
17 Jan; 6^, 8, 16^; 28 Feb; 10 Mar 2026

SEABOURN VENTURE & SEABOURN PURSUIT^

From £9,859pp | Fly/cruise – please ask

Roundtrip Buenos Aires

Visits: → Fly Buenos Aires/Ushuaia; 5-day Antarctic
Experience, → Fly Ushuaia/Buenos Aires

*Lead fare based on 6/12/25

ALL-INCLUSIVE | ALL-SUITE | ULTRA-LUXURY

Call 0344 338 8615 or visit seabourn.com

Contact your Seabourn Business Development Team | email: salesupport@seabourn.co.uk | Visit GoSeabourn.com.

Your Resource for Selling the World's Finest Ultra-Luxury Travel Experience

*Sail of the Year Terms and conditions apply.

Visit seabourn.com. All prices shown include savings and are subject to availability at the time of booking

NEED TO KNOW



CELEBRITY VENTURES INLAND

Celebrity Cruises has confirmed plans to expand into the river cruising sector in 2027 with 10 new ships. Celebrity River Cruises, which will begin taking bookings this year, will offer a range of itineraries in Europe. The line said it will bring the “elevated design and sophistication” of its Edge series ships to river cruising. “We’re thrilled to announce our entry into the river cruise market through our Celebrity Cruises premium travel brand,” said Jason Liberty, president and CEO of parent company Royal Caribbean Group.



VIVA EYES UK EXPANSION

VIVA Cruises will dedicate two team members to the UK later this year in a bid to bolster its presence overseas.

Speaking onboard the line's newest vessel, VIVA Enjoy, CEO and co-founder Andrea Kruse highlighted the importance of the company's international source markets.

"Half of our business comes from our international markets, and we can see this increasing to 60 per cent by

the end of the year," she explained.

"Scandinavia is one of our best performing markets, and there's no reason the UK can't be as well one day. Some international markets are faster than others."

Kruse praised the line's global travel agent partners for helping the line increase its reach. "You just need to find the right outlet to sell the product," she concluded.



Riviera enhances commission

Riviera Travel has bolstered its travel agent commission and added a range of enhancements to its long-haul Travel Concierge service, which will now offer the ability to make alternative travel arrangements and upgrades to enhance bookability from regional destinations.

Vicky Billing, head of sales for Riviera Travel, said: "We have implemented this initiative based on valuable feedback from agents.

"We hope these changes will significantly benefit the agents we work with."



TAUCK WAIVES SOLO SUPPLEMENT

Tauck is the latest river cruise line to waive solo supplements, launching a range of offers exclusively for lone travellers in a bid to increase its appeal with the market segment.

In Europe, the brand is waiving the single supplement on its Category 1 riverboat cabins, which applies to more than 250 river cruise departures this year.

The company has also reduced the single supplement by \$1,000 on other cabin categories (typically Categories 4 and 5) on 52 departures of 22 different river itineraries. Tauck CEO Jennifer Tombaugh said: "As much as solo guests appreciate the savings, they also embrace the wonderful sense of assurance and support they feel when traveling with Tauck."

NEED TO KNOW



A SANCTUARY OF SOLITUDE

Princess Cruises is reinforcing its commitment to the luxury market with the Sanctuary Collection on board its new-ship *Sun Princess* and soon-to-launch *Star Princess*. The elevated 'ship-within-a-ship' experience gives guests access to the adults-only top-deck area The Sanctuary Club, complete with plush furnishings, private cabanas and The Sanctuary Restaurant on deck 8. Guests will also benefit from a Princess Premier bundle – which includes unlimited speciality dining, drinks up to \$20, Max Wi-Fi and daily crew appreciation – as well as unlimited fitness classes, including outdoor YogaSix and StretchLab sessions. A seven-night Inside Passage Alaska cruise onboard *Star Princess* starts from £2,835pp based on a Sanctuary Balcony stateroom.



PONANT TAKES OVER AQUA

> Ponant has acquired a majority stake in small-ship specialist Aqua Expeditions with a view to expanding its destination network into new territories.

Francesco Galli Zugaro, CEO and founder of Aqua Expeditions, will remain as a shareholder and will continue to lead the company alongside his senior management team as a stand-alone

entity, continuing to operate under the brand name "Aqua Expeditions".

Zugaro said: "Joining forces with Ponant Explorations Group and having the support of the Artémis Group is a remarkable opportunity for Aqua Expeditions. Partnering with another family-run business maintains a heritage of luxury in our brand."



Panache powers on

> Luxury cruise retailer Panache Cruises has expanded its team following a "record start" to 2025.

It comes after the Chorley-based company saw its turnover grow by more than 50 per cent in 2024 to more than £25 million.

By the end of the third week in January, the business had surpassed its overall sales in January 2024, with luxury ocean cruises up more than 60 per cent, expedition growing in popularity and long-haul river cruises posting triple digit growth.



REGENT DETAILS NEW ENTERTAINMENT

> Regent Seven Seas Cruises has revealed a new lineup of entertainment offerings which will debut across its fleet in 2025.

The six new shows, which have been curated based on guest feedback, range from tributes to female rock artists and British pop acts to celebrations of Motown and a 1940s big band, as well as a music

trivia game show concept. *The Ultimate Music Trivia Experience*, which debuted on *Seven Seas Splendor* in January, blends music trivia with a concert atmosphere, while *Piece of My Heart: A Tribute to Women in Rock* pays homage to the likes of Tina Turner and Stevie Nicks. It launches on *Seven Seas Grandeur* in May.



LEFT Guests can sip cocktails on NCL's shore visits to Jamaica

CALL OF THE CARIBBEAN

If your customers are dreaming of a Caribbean escape, pair them with a Norwegian Cruise Line sailing and make their wildest imaginations come true, says **Will Payne**

For most, a Caribbean cruise is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Therefore, it's vital that agents recommend a line which will ensure customers don't come back from their holiday yearning for more.

That's why Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) should be your go-to pick when a customer is on the lookout for memorable experiences across the pond, thanks to the company's 50+ years' experience in the region.

The Caribbean is such an integral part of the company's DNA that NCL once stood for Norwegian Caribbean Lines – you can't be more dedicated than that.

CULTURAL IMMERSION

Since then, NCL has invested in the region with new ports and itineraries, as well as being the first line to launch a private island, Great Stirrup Cay.

This idyllic paradise is one of the biggest selling points for the brand. Here, guests can take a load off and let the warmth of the beach's white-sand cascade over their feet, or, for the more adventurous, snorkel with sea turtles

and zipline across the island.

Other standout destinations include Costa Maya, where guests can join guided tours to the Mayan ruins or shop in local stores for hand-made goods.

Guests can explore these culture-rich destinations on 14 ships with more than 42 unique itineraries and seven departure ports, including Miami, Orlando, New Orleans and New York.

SHIPSIDE SOIRÉE

Onboard, NCL's ships offer enough amenities to please all travellers. Thrill seekers will enjoy the line's high-octane go-kart racetracks, the largest rope courses at sea and an Aqua Park which rivals the likes of Tenerife's Siam Park.

Then, they can slow it down and enjoy a hot stone massage in the Mandara Spa® before browsing the onboard boutiques for clothing and artwork.

Couple this with exceptional onboard service and the line's More at Sea™ offering, which features premium beverages, speciality dining, Starlink Wi-Fi and excursion credits from £249pp* based on a 7-to-8-night cruise, and your customers' wildest dreams will soon become reality. ●

All aboard Three standout Caribbean itineraries from NCL

- A 7-day Caribbean: Harvest Caye, Cozumel & Roatan cruise aboard *Norwegian Escape*®, return from New Orleans via Cozumel, Harvest Caye, Roatan and Costa Maya, has departures from October 2025–May 2026, from £639pp**.

- A 7-day Caribbean: Harvest Caye, Cozumel & Roatan cruise aboard *Norwegian Escape*®, return from Miami via Cozumel, Roatan, Harvest Caye and Costa Maya, has departures from May–August 2026, from £1,075pp**.

- A 10-day Caribbean: Bermuda & Dominican Republic cruise aboard *Norwegian Escape*®, return from New York via Puerto Plata, San Juan, Philipsburg, Tortola and Royal Naval Dockyard (Bermuda), has departures in August 2025, from £1,435pp**.

**NCL NORWEGIAN
CRUISE LINE®**

Visit NCL's dedicated travel agent platform to find out more
norwegiancentral.com

*More At Sea™ upgrade charge depends on cruise length; from £249 for cruises of 7-8 days; all offers: limits, conditions, restrictions and exclusions apply.
**Lead prices are correct at time of going to print; shown in GBP and based on cruise only, dual occupancy including government taxes, port expenses & fees. NCL reserves the right to correct any errors, inaccuracies or omissions & to change or update fares, fees & surcharges at any time without prior notice. General excise tax (GET), discretionary onboard service charges & gratuities additional. NCL (Bahamas) Ltd, UK Office, Mountbatten House, Grosvenor Square, Southampton, SO15 2JU. ©2025 NCL Corporation Ltd. Terms and conditions apply to all offers, see norwegiancentral.com for details.

NEED TO KNOW



SEABOURN UNVEILS 2026 ITINERARIES

Seabourn has launched its 2026 itineraries to the Northwest Passage and Canadian Arctic. Between August and October 2026, *Seabourn Venture* will offer six voyages ranging from eight to 24 days, traversing The Northwest Passage and Canadian Arctic.

The vessel will offer two 24-day Journey Across the Northwest Passage expeditions between Reykjavik and

Anchorage, departing on 5 August and 29 August, as well as one 15-day Wild Labrador Coast: Missions, Fjords & Wilderness trip departing 20 September.

"The Northwest Passage is one of the most famous and historic routes in the Arctic, and we are excited to give travellers an opportunity to explore this region with Seabourn," said Mark Tamis, president of Seabourn.



CLIA partners with expedition expert

CLIA has partnered with expedition cruise specialists, ExplorEarth, to boost its expertise of the sector.

The online platform, which was founded by former AE Expeditions MD Jos Dewing, is focused on expedition, small-ship and river cruises.

Users can access guides, stories, cruise listings and travel support before being passed over to partners to book.

The partnership will include content published on the CLIA website every quarter, a new 'Ask EE' option and an episode featuring ExplorEarth on CLIA's Cruise Podcast.



AE EXPEDITIONS ENTICES CRUISERS

AE Expeditions is offering a range of savings to entice new cruise customers and drive footfall to its trade partners.

Until 31 March 2025, travellers will receive savings of up to \$6,500 per person on a selection of cruises departing in 2025 and 2026.

"Our wave season offers are designed to inspire travellers to

embrace their sense of adventure and explore the awe-inspiring beauty of the polar regions," said Michael Heath, chief executive officer, AE Expeditions.

"We're making it easier than ever for expeditioners to join us in creating unforgettable memories while also contributing to the preservation of these remote destinations."



VOYAGES



Get up to £318 to spend on board

Book your voyage between 6 January and
10 March 2025, and receive Onboard Credit
to enhance your cruise experience!

Booking period:

6. January - 10. March, 2025

Travel period:

6. January 2025 - 31. March 2026



Book your voyage on **havalavoyages.com**

*The onboard credit will be deposited in NOK (up to 2000 per person (Round Voyage), 1000 per person Voyage South). Max amount per cabin NOK 4000. Exchange rates may vary. Not available for inside cabins (Interior).



THE DEPOSIT DEBATE

Two months after Royal Caribbean unveiled its refundable payment scheme, **Jack Carter** speaks to agents and the line's VP Gerard Nolan to weigh up the pros and cons

It was the final working week before the industry paused for the Christmas holidays and the attendees at the annual CLIA Cruise Forum were understandably in a jubilant mood as they took their seats for a morning of panels and keynote speeches.

On stage that day was Gerard Nolan, Royal Caribbean's vice president & managing director, EMEA, who after six months in the role was now defending the line's controversial decision to introduce refundable deposits. In response, Nolan asked agents who were concerned about a potential increase in cancellations and wasted hard work to wait to see the data before judging the success of the initiative.

Fast-forward to today and Nolan believes the early booking patterns indicate that guests are enjoying the added flexibility. Talking to *Cruise Trade News*, he says: "We've seen slightly different behaviour in the six to eight weeks since the scheme has been in play. If you're sailing closer to home, the take-up on the refundable scheme has been steady, but we're seeing more of these types of bookings come through for those who are going further afield."



Nolan says this isn't a surprise given that long-haul bookings, which might involve a larger number of guests, are more complicated than, say, an ex-UK sailing to the Mediterranean.

"If you look at cruises to long-haul destinations, about five per cent of our business will come through the refundable deposit scheme; for a cruise closer to home, that figure is around one per cent. That doesn't differ dramatically from what we've seen in other markets."

While data on how the UK cruise market is responding to refundable deposits is still relatively low, looking at behaviours in other markets where the scheme has been present for some time could give an indication as to how this will play out in the long-term.

"Take the likes of Germany and Spain, where we've had this scheme for a long time," Nolan says. "If you look at the data, around 92-94 per cent will book using the non-refundable deposit scheme. However, over the past couple of years we've seen a growing trend where more people go for the refundable option."

"What we don't really see, which I think was the concern from the agency community, is people taking this option, holding and then cancelling. When I look at the data from the specific agencies that raised concerns, there isn't necessarily any difference between bookings using non-refundable and refundable deposits. I know it's a small amount of data and we need to see how it plays out, but it doesn't feel like this concern is valid."



What we don't see is people taking this option, holding and then cancelling





AGENT WORRY

While Royal Caribbean argues that refundable deposit schemes don't lead to an increase in cancellations, the reason for this could be that many agents choose to stay clear of these types of bookings altogether.

One such agent is Shona Thorne, managing director of Thorne Travel, who says the heightened risk of cancellations means it's not worth her time. She explains: "We don't promote [Royal's non-refundable deposit scheme] as this doesn't get the customer's full commitment. You can spend a lot of time to find the right ship and then they cancel, despite all your hard work."

"We haven't lost any bookings and I think it mostly impacts direct customers, but we try to keep away from this area. We've had lots of bookings with Royal Caribbean but no one is asking for



the scheme, or booking multiple cruises with the intention of cancelling some."

One agent who has seen cancellations as a result of low deposit schemes, however, is Sarah Bolton, a homemaker for Travel Counsellors. She says January in particular is rife with deal chasers looking to capitalise on low deposits from other cruise lines, which is why she has made a personal decision not to push no-commitment schemes such as Royal Caribbean's.

"I often prepare lots of quotes for people who end up not committing," Bolton explains. "For example, I had one customer last month who booked three different cruises requiring a £50 deposit each, and they openly said they

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Royal Caribbean's Gerard Nolan; the take-up on the scheme has been steady for sailings to the Mediterranean; finding the right ship is a big part of an agent's task; Thorne Travel's Shona Thorne; Nolan hopes customers will be more inclined to book on ships like *Icon of the Seas* using a refundable deposit

wouldn't be doing them all. There was limited availability so they wanted to book all three and then decide which one they wanted later.

"They only lose £50 a head on the ones they cancel, but it creates extra work for me even though I know they won't be traveling on them all. It also reduces the inventory for the cruise line. I don't see why they do it."

In response to the trade turning away from refundable deposit schemes, Nolan says agents should put the customer's interests first. "If you think about the growth of instalment payments and how people currently pay for things, they're less willing to put the whole sum down."

"Giving this option is fundamentally the right thing to do for the guest. Agents need to decide what's right for their business, but we're giving them the choice, so why wouldn't they pass that choice onto the guest?"

“We don't promote the scheme as it doesn't get the customer's full commitment



IN IT TO WIN IT

After a year of fun-filled events, **Will Payne** looks back at the 2024 Cruise Challenge season before revealing what's to come in 2025

Now in its ninth year, The Cruise Challenge, in association with *Cruise Trade News*, will hit the road again in 2025 to deliver fast facts, jazzy jackets and, of course, everyone's favourite industry game show.

This agent training event with a difference offers the chance for trade to boost their industry knowledge while networking with some of the UK's biggest cruise lines and operators. Last year saw the event reach more people than ever, with a host of new regions including Edinburgh, Belfast, Chelmsford and Exeter, as well as a special takeover of Hays Travel HQ.

In 2025 the event will visit cities such as Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and St Albans, as well as special editions with Hays Travel in Sunderland on 18 March and Barrhead Travel in Glasgow on 8 May.

HOW IT WORKS

Each Cruise Challenge begins with welcome drinks before a series of short, interactive presentations invites the evening's cruise line or tourist board partners to share the latest ship and itinerary updates for agents to relay to their clients. After dinner, attendees are split into three colour-coded teams, at which point the evening's main event gets underway.

The game show takes place around a giant board in the middle of the room, with participants taking turns to answer questions based off of the information they gathered from the presentations. Guests who were listening attentively have



the chance to win a host of prizes, including Champagne, luxury chocolates and sometimes even a free cruise holiday.

Real Response Media commercial manager and event host Nathan Emtage said: "I've had a brilliant time with The Cruise Challenge in 2024. It was my first year with the event and I've genuinely had so much fun taking it around the country.

"Coming from a travel agent background myself, I had never seen a travel agent training event drive such incredible engagement. The mix of learning, fun and entertainment is unmatched and there is



Prizes include Champagne, luxury chocolates or even a free cruise holiday



nothing like it around. We welcomed more than 500 agents with 21 different partners and I can't wait to see this grow in 2025."

Here, we catch up with supplier partners and agent attendees to get their thoughts on the event.

Leon Hand, training manager EMEA, Celebrity Cruises

"I find the Cruise Challenge events with *Cruise Trade News* to be an ideal way of reaching a large group of travel agents in an engaging and fun way. I love the game that the agents play as it is so much fun and it reinforces the learning that agents take away from the supplier presentations. It is an all-round great night, and I am looking forward to more events in 2025."

Tom Dumbrell, national sales manager, Tauck

"Cruise Challenge events are the first dates in my diary each year. The format is fun and innovative, encouraging great attendance and engagement. The range of locations help to build long-lasting connections nationwide, and the improvement in brand awareness is always noticeable, owing to the lively, competitive nature of the evenings. Well-hosted and well-organised, I would have no hesitation recommending Cruise Challenge."

Muriel Morgan, Travel Counsellor

"I have attended the Cruise Challenge event on many occasions and can honestly say it is one of the best travel events on the annual social calendar to learn and have fun. At each event there has been lovely food and drinks and informative presentations from various ocean and river cruise suppliers. A huge highlight of the evening is the

Cruise Challenge game presented by Pete, who has more energy than an Olympic athlete. I would highly recommend this event to all agents whether you are new to cruise or very much established as there is always something new to learn and what better way than at a fun night out. I'm already looking forward to the 2025 event in Scotland."

Luke Day, global training manager, Virgin Voyages

"Virgin Voyages is thrilled to be part of Cruise Challenge. It's an innovative and dynamic event that perfectly aligns with our brand ethos of making waves in the cruise industry. This unique platform offers an energetic environment where engagement thrives, allowing us to connect with First Mates in a fun and interactive way. By combining industry knowledge with game show-style excitement, Cruise Challenge creates memorable moments that inspire and empower our First Mates to sell with confidence. We're proud to join this creative initiative, strengthening relationships and sharing our passion for reimagining cruising with the incredible people who bring our Sailors' voyages to life."

THE CRUISE CHALLENGE 2025 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Liverpool	13 March
Birmingham	23 April
Edinburgh	7 May
Southampton	21 May
Leeds	12 June
Manchester	10 July
Newcastle	3 September
London	17 September
Belfast	24 September
Cardiff	19 November
St Albans	26 November

Sign up for your place today at
thecruisechallenge.com
Hurry, before spaces run out!

EXPEDITIONS + INDULGENCES,
BLISSFULLY COEXISTING.



ATLAS
OCEAN VOYAGES®

INTIMATE YACHTING EXPEDITIONS™

At Atlas, we have set a new course for expedition cruise travel, curated for spirited explorers, led by expert guides, and enhanced by a genuine and caring crew who share a desire to connect with people, places, and our cherished natural world. From bold adventures in the Arctic and Antarctica to Cultural and Epicurean Expeditions year-round, travellers return to our luxury yachts to savor moments well-lived among new friends in a relaxed, après expedition atmosphere.

Begin exploring at AtlasOceanVoyagesUK.com

**ANTARCTICA / PATAGONIA + THE FALKLANDS / SOUTH AMERICA / TRANSOCEANIC
MEDITERRANEAN / NORTHERN EUROPE / ICELAND + GREENLAND / ARCTIC**

EXCEPTIONAL VALUE - WHERE EVERY SAILING IS AN EXPEDITION



2024 CONDÉ NAST
TRAVELER HOT LIST WINNER
WORLD VOYAGER™

ATLAS ALWAYS INCLUDED

Expedition Guides + Enriching Experiences, Cultural Immersion,
Unlimited Wines + Spirits, L'OCCITANE Amenities, Gratuities and More

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
OUR UK SALES AGENT THE CRUISE LINE LTD
ON 0808 304 7695



THE CRUISE LINE
YOUR LUXURY CRUISE EXPERT

Special offers and inclusions are capacity controlled and may be changed or withdrawn from any expedition at any time without notice. Additional restrictions may apply. For full terms and conditions, contact your preferred Travel Advisor or Atlas Ocean Voyages®. © 2024 Atlas Ocean Voyages. Ships' Registry: Portugal | 3483-06.20.24

Q&A

Hitting the jackpot

Jack Carter catches up with one of the winners of Decembers' Fred Olsen Cruise Lines' advent calendar competition, Jan Cross, to learn more about her free cruise

Congratulations on winning a free Fred. Olsen cruise! What can you tell us about the itinerary? I'll be sailing on a seven-night cruise from Southampton in October called Exploring the Landscapes of Northern Spain which visits three different ports. The voucher is for two people so I'll be taking my husband. The best thing is we're visiting ports I've never visited before, places with amazing food and stunning architecture. And the weather should be nice so that'll be a bonus!

Sounds divine! How long have you been a travel agent for? I've been in travel since I left school. I got my diploma and worked in business travel and worked in high street travel agents before becoming a homemaker 11 years ago. I wanted to do it for a while and being a homemaker gives me so much flexibility and it has opened up so many doors in the travel industry.

Do you sell many Fred. Olsen cruises? I live quite near Southampton, and with Fred. Olson sailing from there means it's advantageous for my clients – especially as the ships are smaller in comparison to other cruise lines, which suits my clients perfectly.



“**My clients love the fact that the Fred. Olsen ships are more intimate**

What do your clients like most about Fred. Olsen? My clients love the fact that the ships are more intimate and they visit lots of different ports, but the main thing that stands out are that the staff onboard. Because the ships are smaller, they get to know the guests much more quickly than other cruise lines which creates a friendly and inviting atmosphere.

It's also great for solo travellers. All cruise lines are, but because of the smaller nature of the ships and the intimate experience onboard, it gives guests the confidence to book a sailing on their own.

Are you selling more cruises now than in previous years? When I started I mostly specialised in holidays to the US, particularly Florida and Disney resorts, but today, 92 per cent of my business is cruise. In fact, last year I won an award from the Travel Network Group for being the top for cruise business.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM With smaller ships, the staff really get to know guests; competition winner Jan Cross; Cross will explore the landscapes of northern Spain on her free cruise

I've started cruising a lot personally and I find that I'm selling to families who didn't originally think it was for them. Since trying it they now cruise every year instead of booking a beach holiday. More and more people realise cruise isn't exclusively for certain types of people.

Finally, why are incentives like the Advent Calendar competition worthwhile for agents? The *Cruise Trade News* and Fred. Olsen Advent Calendar competition is amazing. I also won a Fred. Olsen water bottle which I was really happy about, but to win a free cruise on the last day of the competition was unbelievable. Lots of cruise lines do these kinds of competitions and they give agents a chance to learn about the product. Some require you to do a certain amount of training before you can enter and it benefits everybody. It's the perfect prize, so thank you so much! ●



Ready to board

With *Riviera Rose* preparing to launch this April, we highlight five reasons why this is exciting news for both cruise-goers and agents

With its verdant green landscapes, neatly pleated vineyards and traditional villages of red-roofed houses and church spires, it's no surprise why the Douro is fast becoming one of the most sought-after river cruise destinations. Demand is set to soar even higher this April when Riviera Travel brings its new state-of-the-art ship, *Riviera Rose*, to the Unesco-protected region.

The luxury 80-metre-long floating boutique hotel can host up to 114 passengers for intimate cruises through northern Portugal, with two culture-rich itineraries currently on sale for the 2025/26 season. To bring you up to speed, we've shared five reasons why the launch of *Riviera Rose* is great news for your river cruise-loving clients.

1 GUESTS WILL REST EASY

A variety of spacious cabins are spread over three decks, with each offering individually controlled air-conditioning, contemporary bathrooms fitted with rain showers and either double or twin beds. And with nine categories of cabin to choose from, all tastes and budgets are catered for.

Each of the ship's middle deck cabins boast floor-to-ceiling windows with French balconies allowing guests to watch the Douro's painterly riverside landscapes drift by, while guests eager to cruise in the lap of luxury can treat themselves to a stay in one of the upper-deck suites, the largest of which comes

with its own private balcony and seating area. The inside lounge area boasts the kind of high-quality fittings you'd find in any five-star hotel.

2 THERE'S PLENTY OF WAYS TO RELAX ONBOARD

They say the most enjoyable part of a river cruise is putting your feet up onboard and watching the world go by. Whether your clients like to spend their holiday downtime curled up with a book or with a refreshing G&T out in the sun, Riviera has ensured that both are well catered for.

Riviera Rose's open-air Sun Deck is the spot for some vitamin D replenishment thanks to the splash pool and a selection of comfy chairs and sun loungers – both in and out of the shade.

“**With nine cabin categories available, all tastes and budgets are catered for**”



Riviera Travel will be running a fam trip on Riviera Rose in July 2025 for 'Riviera Experts'. Agents looking to secure their spot can find more information on Riviera's trade Facebook page and regular newsletters.



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

Riviera Rose will cruise the Douro river; the airy Atrium makes the ship feel light and spacious; balcony suites are perfect for sightseeing in comfort



Over in the Diamond Upper Deck, where the ship's balcony suites are situated, guests can gather for after dinner drinks to discuss the highlights of the day in the main social hub where they, accompanied by the ship's live pianist. And those eager to work off the sumptuous meals served in the main dining room can do so in the fitness centre on the Emerald Lower Deck.

3 FOODIES ARE WELL CATERED FOR

The ship's restaurant can be found on the Ruby Deck and, in line with the rest of Riviera's fleet, will serve up regional and international specialties each night. Seasonal menus are paired with wine from a carefully curated list, which always features a selection of regional favourites that are hard to find back home. Riviera prides itself on its ever-changing list of regional dishes, many of which are based on recipes passed down from a local Italian nonna

or a French grand-père. By the end of the cruise, guests will be begging to take those recipes home with them.

4 GUESTS CAN EXPERIENCE THE BEST OF PORTUGAL

Portugal is one of the oldest countries in Europe and its northern region - where you'll find Porto, its second-largest city and the birthplace of the eponymous fortified wine - is where many of the most enriching excursions and sightseeing opportunities await.

Riviera Rose's eight-day itinerary encompasses the best of the city, where guests can explore the port warehouses and take in the palatial baroque architecture of São Francisco Church. After, they can sample Portugal's sparkling wine, *Raposeira*, in Lamego. There's also an opportunity to venture over the Spanish border to the visit historic Salamanca, a Unesco site and one of Iberia's oldest university towns.

5 AGENTS CAN GET ONBOARD TOO

The launch of *Riviera Rose* coincides with the largest investment in digital trade support in the line's history, with Riviera Explorer featuring news, updates and bite-size training modules. Since going online in October last year, the platform has seen more than 1,700 agents sign up, half of whom are new to selling Riviera.

Agents can learn more about the line's latest ships and itineraries, with special modules tailored to those who are new to selling Riviera cruises. Agents can complete the training programme in approximately four to five hours to become a certified Riviera Expert, at which point they can qualify for fam trips and other prizes. 



For more information, visit rivieratravel.co.uk/agents

Ever wondered what a river cruise is like with the *very best?*

Book with us from 1 January to 28 February and you will get a £30 Lifestyle voucher.

PLUS we have a weekly draw where you could **win £1,000 cash!**

UNBEATABLE VALUE

which always includes



Direct flights from 17 airports with no regional supplements, plus transfers



Stay on five-star ships with impeccable on-board service for your entire stay



Spacious cabins with window or French balcony



Delicious full board dining, plus the Chef's or the Captain's Dinner



Free drinks package*



Expert Riviera Cruise Director and Concierge looking after you throughout



Choose from over 60 award-winning itineraries



Which? Recommended Provider for 13 years

EXCELLENT



4.6 OUT OF 5

feefo

Rated Excellent based on over 54,000 reviews

★ Trustpilot



Rated Excellent based on over 4,500 reviews

Our top sellers



The Blue Danube river cruise

8 days from £1,799^{PP}
June to October 2025
and April to October 2026



Rhine Cruise to Switzerland river cruise

8 days from £1,799^{PP}
May to October 2025 and 2026



The Douro, Porto & Salamanca river cruise

8 days from £1,899^{PP}
April to November 2025 and 2026



Rhine & Moselle

8 days from £1,999^{PP}
April to October 2025 and
May to October 2026



The Seine, Paris & Normandy

8 days from £1,799^{PP}
April to October 2025 and 2026



Burgundy, the River Rhône & Provence

8 days from £1,699^{PP}
April to October 2025 and 2026



Cruise the Heart of Europe

15 days from £3,349^{PP}
April to September 2025 and 2026



The Danube's Imperial Cities & Yuletide Markets

6 days from £1,249^{PP}
December 2025



Enchanting Rhine & Yuletide Markets

5 days from £1,099^{PP}
December 2025

To find out more, request a brochure or to book

Call **01283 901 053**

Visit **rivieratravel.co.uk/agents**

Riviera Travel booking terms and conditions apply. *2025 river cruises include an unlimited quantity of drinks at lunch and from 6pm to midnight while on board (selected drinks available), for 2026 river cruises, the free all-inclusive drinks includes unlimited quantity of drinks from 10am to midnight while on board (selected drinks available).



Forever Curious



SCAN

Register to enter *Cruise Trade News* and Princess Cruises' February giveaway!

INCENTIVES
SPECIAL OFFERS
ITINERARIES

What's in It For You?



PRINCESS PINK

Agents have the chance to win a range of prizes from tech gadgets to travel goodies as part of Princess Cruises' wave season incentive programme.

With 30 prizes having already been claimed since the start of the year, there are still 100 left to bag.

Each booking made until the end of February equals one entry into the prize draw, with all bookings being automatically entered each day. The line will host special giveaways via its social channels every Friday.

"Our sales team is hitting the road, visiting you with pink envelopes filled with surprises. Be sure to meet with them to see what they have in store," says Hayley Moore, UK and Europe sales director.

What's more, *Cruise Trade News* readers will also have the chance to win big thanks to an exclusive Princess Cruises giveaway, which includes an afternoon tea for two at The Shard, London, a Fortnum & Mason hamper and a Ninja Airfryer. Agents can register to play at cruisetradenews.com/register-princess-love-boat.

Visit

cruisetradenews.com for the latest incentives, itineraries and training news from across the cruise industry



CLIA opens registration for Svalbard event

Agents can now register for the first overseas CLIA Expedition Showcase in Svalbard.

Taking place from 16-20 July, the event will be in Longyearbyen, a primary starting point for Arctic expedition departures.

The showcase will include ship visits with AE Expeditions, Ponant, Quark Expeditions and Swan Hellenic, as well as business sessions, local excursions, lunches and dinners.

Due to the remote location, CLIA has prepared a packaged registration bundle including return flights from London, airport to hotel transfers and four nights' accommodation. A limited number of places are available.

MARELLA LAUNCHES TRADE PORTAL

TUI UK and Ireland has launched a new trade-focused platform, TUITradeHub, featuring its UK cruise line, Marella Cruises.

The hub has two eLearning sections dedicated to TUI and Marella Cruises, with the latter including modules about the line's trade team, its fleet and onboard experiences.

Agents will also find information on cabins, destinations, onboard extras and dining options, as well as downloadable marketing collateral.

The TUITradeHub is accessible to all agents who are connected with the brand. With 15,813 agents already attending training in 2023/24, the company expects to see a "large uptake" in engagement.

AMBASSADOR WOOS HOMEWORKERS

Ambassador Cruise Line has launched a new training programme designed specifically with homeworking agents in mind.

The Sip & Sea initiative is aimed at reducing the isolation often faced by those working independently, while providing essential training.

Ambassador's business development team will host events

across the UK, each welcoming 15-20 agents, to provide insight on the brand during a bottomless brunch.

The series will kick off in Birmingham on 7 February before moving to Liverpool on 18 February. There are also events in Manchester on 20 February and in Exeter, Glasgow and Ipswich on 28 February.





WORLD OF **Cruising**.TV

**TUNE IN FOR EXCLUSIVE
DEALS AND COMPETITIONS!**

FIND US ON SKY, VIRGIN AND FREEVIEW

Visit worldofcruising.tv or scan the QR code to view the TV schedule



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



FEATURING

THE VOICE OF THE CRUISE INDUSTRY

CR♥ISE

Trade News



Welcome to the **PRINCESS CRUISES TAKEOVER**

It's set to be a seismic year for Princess Cruises. The 'Love Boat' brand has the wind in its sails after a hugely successful 2024 that saw the launch of *Sun Princess* – the first ship in its impressive Sphere class. Meanwhile, sister ship, *Star Princess*, is preparing to be unveiled in the Mediterranean before its inaugural season in the Caribbean, with both vessels featuring Princess Cruises' new luxury concept, the Sanctuary Collection. Read on to discover more...

Exclusive

In
conversation
with...

Hayley Moore

Princess Cruises' UK and Europe sales director tells **Will Payne** how the line will "go above and beyond" for its trade partners in 2025

Picture this: you've just picked up the Best Trade Sales Team gong at the 2024 Wave Awards – what do you do next? If you're Hayley Moore, you dance the night away, head back to the office the following day and mount the award in the office for all to see, then aim to go bigger and better next year.

Indeed, the line's UK and Europe sales director had one thing on her mind after celebrating the Oscar's of cruising with her team: "How can we do even better for our trade partners in 2025?" Moore's excitement to discuss these plans exclusively with *Cruise Trade News* is nothing short of palpable.

"This year we have a big opportunity when it comes to engaging agents, with the launch of *Star Princess* this October following an incredible wave period," she explains. "Our trade engagement strategy for 2025 focuses on the different types of agents we work with. It's important that we have sophisticated ways of communicating as a team to ensure each subset of agent is adequately catered for."

ON THE HORIZON

Promoting a new ship in 2025 is no mean feat. With the launch of 15 new ocean vessels from across the sector slated for this year, Moore and her sales team are acutely aware they'll need to find a way to cut through the noise and ensure *Star Princess* remains at the forefront of consumers' holiday plans.

One way they'll achieve this is through the trade. Last October the line relaunched its agent training platform, onesourcecruises.com, to keep agents up to speed. The revamped platform features an



upgraded customer service hub, where agents can access a library of FAQs and guides, reducing the need to contact Princess Cruises' customer service team via phone or live chat.

It also features an expanded training series, which includes updated guides on the line's booking systems, such as POLAR and Plane Sailing, as well as revamped destination content and access to marketing toolkits. To date, the company has seen just short of 9,000 visitors to the site. "We're already seeing agents head to the 'how to book' pages, which is a great sign," Moore says.

One segment Princess is keen to secure is the new-to-cruise market, which it will target by giving agents a taste of the product across several UK ship visits, as well as announcing the return of its popular trade family days.

"For agents to truly be able to sell to someone who has never cruised before, they need to have experienced the product," Moore says. "We had a really successful ship visit programme last year with more agents onboard than ever before, and that was

“

This year we have a big opportunity when it comes to engaging agents

What my career has taught me

Embrace opportunities

Never shy away from opportunities and testing new ideas – it's the best way to learn. Oftentimes growth comes from stepping into different roles or departments, helping you gain valuable experience that is key to development.

Listen and learn

Actively seek feedback from both internal teams and travel agents. Knowledge is power, and feedback is like gold dust. When used wisely, it can create magic. Above all, our guests know our product best, and their expectations drive us to improve and evolve.

Seek mentorship

Having a mentor from inside and outside of the cruise industry can be a game-changer. Mentors help keep you on track and multiple perspectives challenge your thinking and approach to situations.

enabled by the addition of *Sun Princess* in the UK. This year we will have 10 ship visits across the UK and Ireland, as well as the return of our family days, which are back as a result of feedback we received from our agent partners.”

These bookable visits will allow agents to bring up to four family members onboard, offering them a holistic view of how the product translates to different passenger demographics – giving them the edge in securing new business. The first visits will take place onboard *Emerald Princess* and *Regal Princess* in Southampton on 3 and 14 June respectively, with the next taking place in Edinburgh aboard *Sky Princess* on 15 June and on *Emerald Princess* in Liverpool on 1 July.

The final visit will take place in Southampton on 18 July on *Majestic Princess*, before the vessel repositions to Glasgow for the first family day on 20 July. The second family day will take place on 2 August on *Sky Princess* in Southampton. Meanwhile, Irish agents will have the chance to visit *Regal Princess* in Belfast on 7 August, in Dublin on 8 August and in Cork, which will be a family day, on 9 August.

TREND WATCH

The line's plans for enhanced trade engagement come off the back of a successful start to 2025. Despite it being too early to paint the full picture of how bookings have performed during wave, Moore has identified a few key trends.

“We've seen a big increase in demand for fly/cruise bookings, which is a large part of what we offer with 17 ships positioned globally,” she says. “There's a mixture of short and long haul, but it is mainly driven by long haul, as consumers are looking for

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Moore has her sights set on a big 2025; Princess will offer 10 ship visits across the UK and Ireland this year

the big-ticket items and the standout experiences. Consumer habits have evolved since the pandemic. Travellers no longer want to ‘just get away’ – they're on the hunt for culturally-rich itineraries.”

Popular destinations include Alaska, with guests booking further ahead to secure their ideal cabin, excursions and signature upgrades. “These early bookings are naturally bringing the curve forward, with people securing their holidays sooner to make sure they don't miss out,” Moore adds.

“This presents a secondary opportunity for agents in that once people have got their long-haul trip locked in for a year or so's time, they may then opt for a shorter, closer-to-home cruise to test the product and build excitement.”

To help agents secure extra bookings, Princess has launched a Mediterranean Flash Sale which offers customers up to £800 savings on more than 90 fly-Med cruises departing in 2025 and 2026. The offer runs from 18 February-3 March. Agents can earn £50 bonus commission for each fly-Med cruise booking made from 13 February-3 March. ●



Mediterranean Flash Sale

UP TO
£800
INSTANT SAVINGS
PER STATEROOM*

ONLY
£50_{PP}
DEPOSIT*

MUST END 3 MARCH 2025



Exciting rewards from Princess Cruises this February!

This February, Princess Cruises is making waves with an exciting incentive program just for travel agents, “Turning Wave Princess Pink.” With over 130 prizes up for grabs, plus a new bonus commission offer, it’s an opportunity you won’t want to miss!

BONUS COMMISSION

Princess Cruises is offering exclusive bonus commissions for travel agents on selected 2025 Fly Mediterranean cruises. Book by March 3rd to earn extra rewards while booking awe-inspiring Mediterranean holidays for your guests!



WIN BIG WITH BOOKINGS, SOCIALS AND NEWSLETTERS!

Every booking enters you into daily prize draws, with more bookings increasing your chances to win amazing prizes! Enjoy weekly social media giveaways and extra chances by subscribing to the Princess Cruises Trade newsletter.



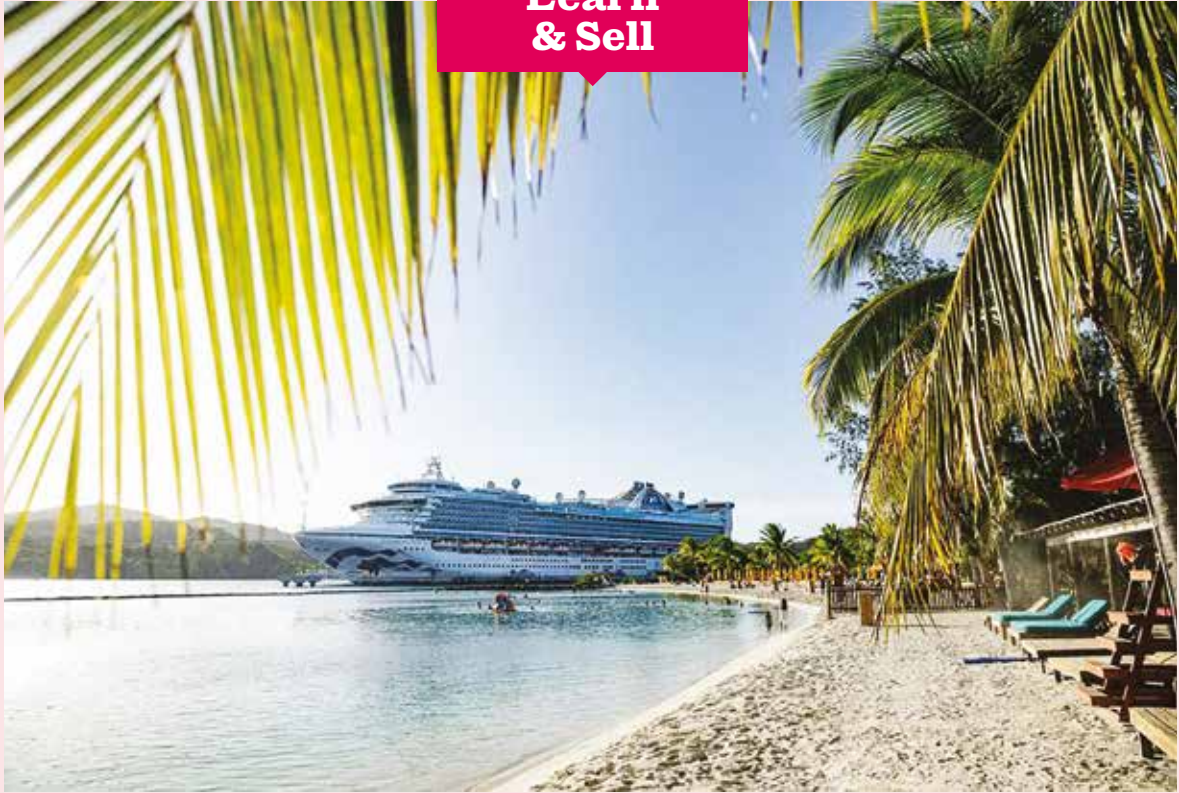
PINK ENVELOPE SURPRISES

Watch out for your sales team—they’ll be visiting agents with special pink envelopes filled with exciting surprises for participants. What’s inside? You’ll have to wait and see! Join the “Turning Wave Princess Pink” campaign and turn your booking success into rewards! Don’t miss out on your chance to win and make this a February to remember!

**Congratulations
you’ve won a...**



**VIEW
NOW**



Princess Cruises

With a second ship launch in as many years just around the corner, now's the perfect opportunity to get your clients onboard

IN THE KNOW

Understanding what sets one ocean line apart from another can prove a little tricky. For Princess Cruises, however, there are several standout features that separate it from the pack.

Firstly, the line's MedallionClass Technology, which allows guests to enjoy keyless room entry, expedited boarding and enhanced service via smart wearable devices, ensures a seamless onboard experience. This is further enhanced by an impressive selection of award-winning entertainment options, which include theatre performances overseen by West End directors and choreographers.

Just as enticing, however, is the value on offer to guests who book the line's Plus and Premier packages, with the latter offering unlimited drinks, speciality dining, fitness classes, reserved theatre seating, Wi-Fi, crew appreciation and more for just £75 per day per guest.



THE FLEET

You may have heard Princess Cruises reference 'The Love Boat' in the past and if you're wondering if it has anything to do with the famous American TV show, then you'd be correct. The line's affiliation with the sitcom began in the

mid-70s, when Princess was one of the stars of the show and the line continues to celebrate this connection today across its fleet of next-generation Love Boats. The latest (and largest) addition is *Sun Princess*, which launched last February. The 4,300-guest ship (which you can read all about on [page 40](#)) includes several exclusive features, such as The Dome entertainment venue and Victorian-themed bar Spellbound. The fleet will be strengthened again when *Star Princess* launches this autumn.

UK cruise-goers will be familiar with *Sky Princess* thanks to its homeport in Southampton, while the rest of the fleet sales to popular fly/cruise destinations across the Caribbean, Alaska and the South Pacific.

WHO'S WHO?

The Princess UK & Europe sales team is led by sales director Hayley Moore. She is supported by senior UK sales manager Yasmin McKechnie and senior



“ With cruises to over 330 ports, guests have the chance to explore somewhere new

Europe sales manager Marc Bellows, as well as four UK sales managers and two senior sales executives. The team also includes three sales engagement and development managers. The sales operations function is overseen by Millie Spicer, who has support from a senior sales operations executive and a sales operations executive.

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON?

October 2024 saw the launch of new luxury concept The Sanctuary Collection on *Sun Princess*, which is set to be a

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Princess Cays boasts sugar-white beaches; explore the Norwegian fjords on *Sky Princess*; the inviting Piazza-style Atrium

standout feature on *Star Princess* later this year. The exclusive area offers 215 luxury staterooms, including 80 suites and 123 mini suites, as well as private cabanas, a private bar area and exclusive access to The Sanctuary Club, as well as a high-end private restaurant

Elsewhere, Princess also recently revealed plans for its 2025 ship visit programme, with 10 opportunities for agents to get onboard across the UK and Ireland. While onboard, agents can attend training sessions and workshops to enhance their product knowledge and, ultimately, boost their sales. A host of additional trade updates includes the new-look Academy@Sea, with not one but two opportunities to join the line's renowned familiarisation trips.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Princess Cruises'
Hayley Moore on the line's
new luxury enclave

Why do spaces like the Sanctuary Club resonate with guests?

These exclusive guest areas are proving increasingly popular today because they cater to travellers who are seeking a heightened sense of relaxation. The Sanctuary Collection is where guests can unwind, relax and enjoy personalised pampering through a soothing massage, refreshing cocktails and peaceful surroundings.

Where can agents go to find more information on the line?

OneSource is our dedicated agent platform where agents can find the latest updates, training materials and sales tools. Be sure to subscribe to our newsletters to stay up to date on promotions, news and events.

SELLING TIPS

1 Take advantage of ship visits to enable you to experience Princess Cruises first-hand. The more you know about ships and their itineraries, the better you can tailor your recommendations to guests.

2 Emphasise Princess's premium onboard experiences, such as exclusive dining, entertainment, packages and its MedallionClass technology, which elevates the guest experience and sets the line apart from competitors.

3 Keep up to date with the latest promotions, ship launches and itineraries through the line's online sales tools. Engaging with the team face-to-face will also ensure you offer the best options to clients.

SHIP OF THE MONTH

SUN PRINCESS

Since its launch in February last year, the line's first Sphere Class ship has been making waves throughout the cruise-going community with a host of groundbreaking additions setting new standards across the sector. A focus on experiential and speciality dining saw a first-of-its-kind collaboration with renowned artist Romero Britto and chef Rudi Sodamin to offer an art-inspired seven-course tasting menu. Another striking innovation is The Dome, a glass-enclosed entertainment venue with a day pool that transforms into an arena for spectacular acrobatic performances. The heartbeat of the ship is The Piazza, a stunning atrium space inspired by Europe's effervescent squares.



1 Dining

Gastronomy remains integral to Princess Cruises' onboard offering. The ship's main Horizon Dining Room sprawls across three stories, offering a diverse à la carte menu, while Sabatini's Italian Trattoria and Kai Sushi serve up braised short rib over penne and mongo ika sashimi.



2 Sanctuary Collection

Guests are invited to a new world of bespoke amenities, private spaces and premium service with the Sanctuary Collection. Those staying in a Suite, Sanctuary Mini Suite or Sanctuary Balcony will enjoy upgraded amenities, a tranquil top deck space and a private restaurant.



3 Entertainment

Princess Cruises has partnered with Cirque Éloize to create breathtaking circus performances in The Dome, a geodesic, glass-enclosed structure that transforms from a relaxed space with its own indoor and outdoor pool during the day to a spectacular entertainment venue at night.

Fast facts

4,300
guests

2,150
cabins

1,150
crew

29
restaurants



4 Kids' clubs

Tots and teenagers are spoiled for choice onboard, with teen areas equipped with the latest video games and movies, foosball tables and jukeboxes. Meanwhile, kids' karaoke, pizza parties and pyjama nights will be sure to keep little ones stimulated.

COMING SOON

Star Princess

Launching in autumn 2025, *Star Princess* will be a significant addition to the line's fleet, enhancing its presence in the Caribbean before repositioning to Alaska in 2026.

The 4,300-guest ship will feature 2,157 staterooms, including 80 suites, 123 mini suites and more than 1,000 balcony cabins, as well as the new Sanctuary Collection which recently debuted on *Sun Princess* at the start of the year.

The ship will also include several enhanced features that will be brand new to Princess

Cruises' growing Sphere Class fleet. This includes an expanded non-smoking casino area complete with 68 additional slot machines; an expanded O'Malley's Irish Pub, offering live music and a selection of beers and whiskeys from the emerald isle; and an expanded Love by Britto. The dining venue – the aforementioned collaboration between Romero Britto and Rudi Sodamin creating an art-inspired dining experience – will add an extra 20 seats for food lovers to savour the venue's seven-course fusion menu.

On the
road with...

Ellie Webb

Princess Cruises' sales manager on why getting on the road and engaging with agents face to face is vital to the line's 2025 trade strategy

What messages are you focusing on when visiting agents?

Throughout 2025 the Princess Cruises business development and engagement team will be out on the road bringing to life the Medallion Class experience alongside promoting our amazing fly-cruise proposition. As we are seeing the appetite for fly/cruise holidays – whether this be the Caribbean, Alaska or Japan – we want to ensure our travel agent partners are aware of what we have to offer and to think of Princess when customers ask for a fly holiday.

Why is it important for you to get out in front of agents?

It is vitally important to us that our agent partners spend time with the team, whether this be at conferences, meetings or store visits. This will give agents the opportunity to further understand our proposition and the broad array of global destinations we visit on our amazing fleet of Love Boats,



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Ellie Webb joined the line in February 2019; the Princess Cruises business development team

How important are agents to the success of Princess in 2025?

Our agent partners have always been a key part of our DNA within the UK market and this will only become more important over the course of the coming year. Being the Love Boat brand that we are, we need all our valuable partners to share this love far and wide, and we will support them along the way. Our journey together will continue to be an exciting one that's for sure.

How will Princess Cruises support UK agents in 2025 and beyond?

We have a fantastic team of business development and engagement managers here to support our trade partners, bringing more than 50 years of combined experience in the travel industry. You'll find Andrew in Cardiff, Josh in Warwickshire and Charlotte in Lancashire. Together, they provide unwavering support for our up-and-coming accounts. They also attend travel agent engagement events and consumer shows, always dedicated to creating strong, personal connections with our partners. ●

which includes the stunning new Sphere class. Our ships are a destination within themselves and there is no better team to bring life onboard to the forefront of our agents' minds.

Why should agents consider pitching Princess to their clients?

It is essential for our agents to understand what their guests are looking for from their holiday and why there are so many ways Princess Cruises can suit their tastes. This could be through our elevated premium service and value-for-money offering, the ease of holidaying with our Princess Plus and Princess Premier packages, or our amazing crew on board all of our ships – the list is endless.



“

Agents have always been a key part of our DNA and this will only become more important in 2025



What's new with OneSource from Princess Cruises!

The OneSource platform is your ultimate resource for growing your business with Princess Cruises. Here's what's new and exciting:

NEW MARKETING MATERIALS - Access fresh digital assets, including banners and videos, to help promote Princess Cruises effortlessly.

DESTINATION TOOLKITS - Explore up-to-date toolkits with all the key details and marketing materials to sell popular cruise destinations.

BOOKING SUPPORT VIDEOS - Streamline your bookings with easy-to-follow system support videos.

WEBINARS & TRAINING - Stay informed with regular webinars covering the latest updates, itineraries, and selling tips.

EXPANDED IMAGE LIBRARY - Inspire your guests with a broader selection of stunning, high-quality images of ships and destinations.

LATEST NEWS & SHIP VISIT INFO - Get timely updates on new ships, itineraries, and our upcoming ship visits.

With OneSource, you have everything you need to drive sales and stay ahead with Princess cruises.



VIEW
NOW



up to **25%**
BONUS SAVINGS

plus

**YOUR WORLD
by CHOICE**

choose one:

Unlimited Wine, Beer & Spirits
Shipboard Credit up to ^{US\$}1,000

on select sailings

**YOUR WORLD
INCLUDED™**

Gourmet Speciality Dining

Shipboard Gratuities

Unlimited Starlink® WiFi

And so much more



ULTRA-PREMIUM EXPERIENCE, *exceptional savings*

Take advantage of our limited-time offer of up to 25% Bonus Savings on select sailings
plus select one with Your World by Choice: Unlimited Wine, Beer & Spirits or Shipboard Credit
up to US\$1,000. Combined with the always free amenities of Your World Included™,
you'll discover small ship luxury for less.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL **0345 505 1920**
OR SPEAK TO YOUR **REGIONAL SALES MANAGER**



Scan this QR code with
your smartphone camera
to view voyages.

**OCEANIA
CRUISES®**

YOUR WORLD. YOUR WAY.®

THE FINEST CUISINE AT SEA®
AWARD-WINNING ITINERARIES
SMALL SHIP LUXURY™

Terms, conditions, restrictions, and capacity controls apply. The Your World by Choice Sale expires 31 March 2025 and is available on select categories, select sailings, and is capacity controlled.
Mention Code: YWC. Promotion may be withdrawn at any time without prior notice. Please visit OceaniaCruises.com for complete Terms & Conditions. FEB250199





DOWNLOAD
Scan the QR code to
download *Cruise Trade News'*
Annual Report 2025



AT YOUR SERVICE

From old-fashioned bricks and mortar to online booking platforms, the agency landscape has arguably never been so diverse. With *Cruise Trade News'* Annual Report 2025 revealing that consumers remain unclear about the fundamentals of the sector, **Jack Carter** asks how different agents are helping bridge the knowledge gap



Did you know more than half of new-to-cruise travellers say they're either "not very knowledgeable" or "not at all knowledgeable" about what separates one cruise line from another? A similar percentage say they're equally unclear about cabin types and onboard entertainment while an alarming 67 per cent of new-to-cruisers say they're unsure over what's actually included in the price of a cruise.

This is according to *Cruise Trade News'* inaugural Annual Report 2025, produced in partnership with Mail Metro Media, which you can download by scanning the QR code on page 43. While this is concerning news for cruise lines, it represents a fantastic opportunity for agents whose service and expertise mean they're perfectly placed to bridge the knowledge gap.

Cruise Trade News reached out to a mix of high-street agents, homeworkers and online travel retailers to find out what they're doing to educate consumers and ensure they remain an essential resource.

“The holidays are often complex and clients are worried about navigating the internet and booking the wrong thing

“HAVING SOMEONE TO TALK TO IS A REALLY BIG DEAL”

One of the obvious benefits of booking with an agent is being able to give customers peace of mind that their travel plans are in safe hands. Sam Ballard, founder of Leicester-based Club Voyages, opened his first high-street store in September last year, before having what he described as an “unbelievable” October and November for bookings. Offering clients a second pair of eyes over their holiday has proven invaluable.

“The holidays that we’re booking in the store are often a bit more complex, and even when the client knows pretty much what they want, they want someone else to make sure it’s booked.

“They’re particularly worried about navigating the internet and booking the wrong thing. When you book through an agent, there is an element of consumer protection, so having someone to talk to that they can rely on is a really big deal.”

However, what’s been surprising to Ballard is how many hurdles customers are still confronted



“
Most people book online these days, but those who’ve booked with us in store have enjoyed the process a lot more



BELOW LEFT Club Voyages’ Sam Ballard
ABOVE Ashley Hunt and Shaun Jones from Swindon Travel Hub

with when it comes to booking a cruise and how simple it is to help them overcome them in a single conversation.

“Some of the worries people have about cruising are so easily put to bed,” he explains. “Customers will ask questions like, ‘How safe is it for my kids to be on a cruise?’ or ‘Can I get off the ship?’. It’s such an obvious thing for us, but peoples’ understanding just isn’t there.

“If they’re booking a cruise for the first time, they can come into the store, have a chat with an expert and ask questions that they couldn’t ask online and get an honest response. It’s about getting that trusted advice from someone who can confidently answer the question of, ‘Is a cruise for me?’”

“OWNING A STORE BUILDS A WEALTH OF TRUST WITH CUSTOMERS”

For Ashley Hunt, founder of Swindon Travel Hub, not only should the ritual of stepping inside a high-street travel agent to book a holiday be celebrated, but it should be seen as an integral part of the whole experience.

“Our hashtag in the store and on our website is #holidaystartsnow. The reason we say that is because we as agents don’t influence the experience on the flight, in the hotel or on



the cruise ship. The part we can influence is making the booking experience better. There’s no doubt that we will be targeting consumers online but it’s about that experience. Having a store builds a wealth of trust with our customers; it gives us a face.”

One way Hunt nurtures rapport with his clients is by gamifying the booking experience. One game he likes to play with customers is asking them to choose their criteria for a cruise holiday, whether it’s free onboard Wi-Fi, outdoor pools, five-star service or good reviews. “That leaves us with ten options, which we sort by price to give us a bracket of affordability,” he explains. “Then we present the first option and ask them for their feedback. Then we show them another option and they have to tell us if it’s better or worse than the first option.”

Hunt says he does this three or four times in a game he compares to playing ‘higher or lower’ with a deck of cards. “It creates a fun environment, especially for couples because they can fight it out between them to come up with an answer.

“Most people book online these days, but the people who’ve booked with us in store have enjoyed the process a lot more and they trust us as a result. They often pop in to tell us how their holiday went.”

“WE DELIVER SERVICE AND BRAND LOYALTY IN WAYS PHYSICAL STORES CANNOT”

“When the excitement of booking a holiday strikes, the process should be as frictionless as possible,” says Sefton Monk, founder of cruise booking app My Kind of Cruise, which launched





in 2020. Being an online-only platform enables him to reach a wider audience and streamline the booking process.

“Online platforms offer real-time updates, personalised deals and instant customer support via chat or email, while automation improves efficiency. Additionally, online reviews and recommendations help build trust and attract new customers.”

Monk proudly states that users can compare and book cruises in as little as 60 seconds within the app. It can also fetch loyalty points from certain cruise lines with discounts automatically added to pricings.

However, owners of high-street stores would argue that online booking platforms can’t compete with their levels of customer service, although Monk believes that offering

“Online platforms offer real-time updates, personalised deals and instant support, while automation improves efficiency

a streamlined experience, tailored rewards and competitive pricing makes up for a lack of face-to-face interaction.

“Our app offers 24/7 and customer support seven days a week via email and chat. By leveraging technology and customer insights, we deliver excellent service quality and foster strong brand loyalty in ways physical stores cannot.”

“CLIENTS KNOW WHEN THEY CALL, THEY’RE ONLY GOING TO GET ME”

Sarah Bolton has been a homeworking agent under the Travel Counsellors umbrella for the past 20 years, and she believes the one-to-one customer service offered by this subsection of the trade is her main point of difference from other industry professionals. However, with the barrier to entry now at an all-time low, it’s getting harder to differentiate herself from inexperienced agents who view being a travel agent as little more than a side hustle.

“One of the biggest issues we’re finding is that all homeworkers are being lumped together. Before I joined Travel Counsellors, the stipulation was that you had to have a minimum seven



ABOVE Sefton Monk, founder of booking app My Kind of Cruise



“**We provide people with lots of content and inspiration, so when they are in the market to book a cruise, they come to us**

years’ experience within the industry, meaning you had to have a proven track record. That’s very different from, say, a dentist who has no experience or professionalism.

“Unfortunately, the general public can’t see the difference between the two because they don’t know there would be a difference without actually enquiring about someone’s experience.”

Bolton prides herself on always being available for her clients, saying that looking after people is “100 per cent my top priority”. She continues: “It’s not like I’m a high-street shop that’s only open for a certain number of hours. It’s basically a one-to-one service because they know that when they ring up, they’re only going to get me.

“I’ve had most of my clients for years because the service has to be top. Otherwise, you lose the client and it’s a lot harder to find new clients than it is to look after existing ones.”

While Bolton’s customers enjoy the ease of dealing with a small operation, being under the auspices of Travel Counsellors means they get the best of both worlds. “Travel Counsellors is one of the largest travel companies out there, so we have the same access to rates and deals as everyone else. As a homemaker, I’m also able to be nimble and be a personal travel consultant.”



“WE’RE A SOCIAL MARKETING BUSINESS THAT HAPPENS TO SELL CRUISE HOLIDAYS”

Having launched in 2020 during the height of the pandemic, Panache Cruises was able to establish itself by doing things slightly differently. As an online retailer with expertise in digital marketing, the Chorley-based agency opted against taking bookings through its website and instead invested in a team of ‘travel connoisseurs’ to foster more rewarding relationships with its clients.

“We’re a social marketing business that happens to sell cruise holidays,” says founder and managing director James Cole. “The paradox is that we take customers offline to make the transaction, introducing them to somebody who has great levels of experience in cruise and has been on a number of ships to guide them through the booking journey.”

Last year Panache turned over £25 million, with Cole now overseeing a team of 62 in the UK, as well as a growing operation in Florida that sells exclusively to the US market. What’s also novel about Panache’s approach is that it often doesn’t target consumers who are ready to book. Instead, the focus is on finding people with an interest in luxury experiences and nurturing them toward cruise.

“We’re patient marketers,” Cole explains. “We find people who might not want to book their next cruise for another 12 months, but over that period, we provide them with lots of content and inspiration, so when they are in the market to book a cruise, they come to us.”

In doing so, it ensures customers come back again and again, evidenced by the fact that Panache’s top 40 customers have booked 400 cruises in the last four years, spending more than £6 million in the process. ●





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Guests can enjoy a range of entertainment options onboard; Virgin Voyages prides itself on its destination-rich itineraries

TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Virgin Voyages is kickstarting 2025 with a raft of new offers for its First Mates and their Sailors. **Will Payne** reports

As cruise lines continue to vie for space in an increasingly crowded market, there's one firm that continues to cut through the noise with deals so good, you'll want to book it yourself. Virgin Voyages is on a mission to make 2025 the year of the First Mate [travel agent] with a raft of new incentives.

The company is acutely aware of the importance of both consumer-focused and trade-facing incentives. The former is to help drive footfall to agencies and boosting new-to-cruise sales, and the latter to reward First Mates for their unwavering dedication to the brand.

Here, we outline three of Virgin Voyages' wave season offers to help First Mates make the most of the turn-of-year bookings rush.

RIDING THE WAVE

Virgin Voyages' wave season offer, which runs until 27 March, will help you score your Sailors [customers] a postcard-perfect holiday with 80 per

“
Send your clients packing to a gorgeous getaway without breaking the bank

cent off a second Sailor and up to \$300 in free drinks.

With more than 150 destinations and four ships to choose from, you can send your clients packing to a new gorgeous getaway without breaking the bank – the perfect remedy to chilling mornings and long evenings.

The offer applies to all vessels – including the line's newest Lady ship *Brilliant Lady* – and regions including the Caribbean, North America and the Mediterranean, as well as transatlantic and repositioning cruises.

What's more, all itineraries include Virgin Voyages' Always Included Luxuries: Wi-Fi, tips and gratuities, all dining, soda and water, fitness classes and entertainment.

FIRST MATES APPRECIATION

For Virgin Voyages, a new year means new opportunities for its First Mates to boost sales and secure new customers.

To help with this mission, the line is offering 5x more First Mate Loot on select bookings made through to the end of February as part of its agent reward programme. This equates to £25 per booking for European departures – up from the previous £5.

Between 1 January-28 February, agents can sell their way to winning a seven-night voyage aboard *Scarlet Lady* in a Sea Terrace cabin plus a \$300 Bar Tab, as part of the line's Bring on Ibiza incentive. The more voyages you sell and log with FirstMateLoot.co.uk, the more chances you'll have to win – it's that simple.

If you have Sailors on the fence about their 2025 travel plans, offer a Virgin Voyages itinerary to set them off on a sailing of a lifetime. ●



Virgin VOYAGES

For more information, visit
firstmates.com

with *Love* *from* THE MED

80 %
OFF 2ND
SAILOR

PLUS UP TO USD

\$300

IN FREE DRINKS

Make the Mediterranean the backdrop of your Sailors' next unforgettable holiday. They can sip vino at coastal vineyards, dance under the island stars in Ibiza, and soak in the stunning seaside scapes aboard our award-winning lady ships.

Book their luxurious getaway now and receive 80% off their Second Sailor + free drinks up to USD \$300.

LEARN MORE AT [FIRSTMATES.COM](https://firstmates.com)



Brilliant
For You

SPACES LIMITED

CRUISE SUMMIT

Brought to you by

CRUISE
Trade News

**Date, location and agenda to be announced soon!
Register your interest to be the first to hear.**

cruis summit.co.uk

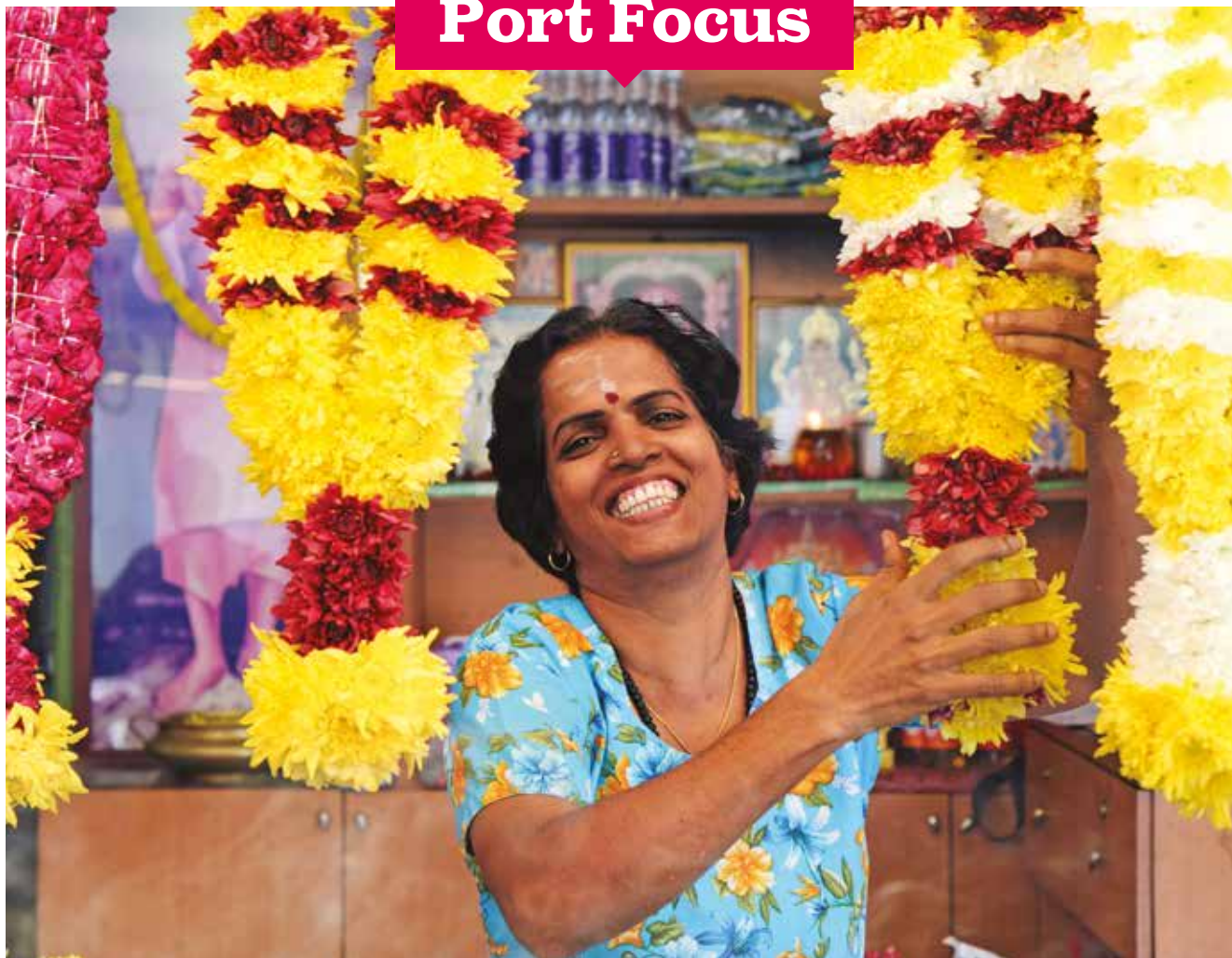
SCAN ME TO REGISTER



**What topics do you want to see our expert
speakers cover at this year's Cruise Summit?**

Let us know at

ctn@realresponsemedia.com

HIGHLIGHTS • FOOD & DRINKS
SHOPPING • ITINERARIES**Port Focus**

Penang

Vibrant street food, layers of cultural influences and abundant natural beauty are some of the reasons why Malaysia's island state is such a mesmerising cruise call, writes **Raphael Giacardi**

Nestled on Malaysia's northwest coast, Penang leaves a mark on every traveller who visits. Known as the Pearl of the Orient, the isle blends heritage with hedonism in a way few destinations do. Its beating heart, George Town, is a Unesco world heritage site. History oozes from every corner, from Khoo Kongsi Clanhouse's carvings

to the grandeur of Fort Cornwallis, built by the British. Wandering its streets, you'll hear the rhythmic clang of trishaws and melodic chants from ancient temples as you inhale the aroma of sizzling street food.

Penang is synonymous with food, earning its place as Malaysia's culinary capital. Gurney Drive Hawker Centre is a foodie's pilgrimage site, offering

fragrant nasi kandar and the tangy fish soup asam laksa, while boutique cafés in George Town's Hin Bus Depot showcase Penang's evolving culinary scene.

Beyond George Town's urban allure, Batu Ferringhi's beaches are perfect for unwinding, while Penang National Park has a canopy walkway. But what truly sets Penang apart is its laidback yet dynamic vibe, as old and new intertwine.



Three must-see sites

GEORGE TOWN

The island state's capital is lined with elegant British colonial architecture and traditional Chinese shophouses. Guests can stroll its lanes to find temples, mosques and Cheong Fatt Tze, a heritage hotel also known as the Blue Mansion. Absorb the city's lively atmosphere on Armenian Street, which is a must-visit for its striking murals by international and local artists, all telling stories of Penang's past. And those that love quaint boutique cafés will be spoilt for choice.

PENANG HILL

For panoramic views, visitors can hop on the Penang Hill Funicular Railway and travel to the top of Penang Hill. This cool, breezy retreat offers more than

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Boutique hotel Cheong Fatt Tze, AKA the Blue Mansion; Gurney Drive Hawker Centre is the spot for authentic Malay cuisine; Penang Peranakan Mansion; Malay favourite laksa soup is an absolute must; the Habitat Penang; Kek Lok Si temple is a must-visit

“
Visitors can eat well for very little all over Penang, but George Town is the island's foodie epicentre



sensational vistas, however; it's also home to David Brown's hilltop garden restaurant, an ideal spot for afternoon tea in a colonial-style setting. With its historic bungalows and nature trails, the area makes for an active day out. Treetop walks and eco-experiences at The Habitat Penang Hill nature reserve also connect you to the island's diverse flora and fauna.

KEK LOK SI TEMPLE

Located in the Air Itam neighbourhood, Kek Lok Si is Malaysia's largest Buddhist temple complex. Its towering pagoda combines elements of Chinese, Thai and Burmese architecture, while its serene garden, scented with smouldering incense sticks, provides a peaceful escape and a sense of calm. The temple is also home to turtles, a 30m-tall bronze statue of the goddess of mercy and a tree where visitors tie ribbons inscribed with their wishes. Kek Lok Si feels particularly special during Chinese New Year, when it's illuminated by thousands of lanterns.

Three places to eat

BUDGET

Visitors can eat well for very little all over Penang, but George Town is the island's foodie epicentre. Start by walking down Siam Road or Chulia Street, where the scent of smoke and spices from hawker stalls fills the air. Settle down at Siam Road Charcoal Char Koay Teow for its eponymous dish – a smoky plate of



Three of the best Princess excursions in Penang

1 Entopia by Penang Farm
A peaceful haven, Penang's butterfly farm is home to over 100 species of live butterflies. Guests can walk through their covered aviary and landscaped gardens, which boast waterfalls, wooden bridges and ponds.

2 Penang Museum
Built in 1821, this impressive museum occupies the original Penang Free School, and its extensive collections include old photographs, maps and charts, as well as Southeast Asian art and artifacts.

3 Khoo Kongsi
Boasting intricate carvings, Khoo Kongsi is one of the finest examples of a traditional Clan House found outside of Mainland China. Located in the oldest part of the city, it dates back to 1906.

“Penang Hill Funicular Railway offers more than just sensational vistas

PREMIUM

The Peranakans settled in parts of maritime southeast Asia between the 14th and 17th centuries, and Penang is one of the world's best places to try their cuisine. A blend of ingredients and techniques from China and Malaysia, this style of cooking has no better introduction than a meal at Auntie Gaik Lean's Old School Eatery in George Town – one of only two Michelin-starred restaurants in Penang. Try otak-otak, a grilled, spiced fish cake that's wrapped in a leaf.



stir-fried flat noodles with a burst of chilli – and you'll pay less than £2 to feast like a king. Alternatively, for another Malay favourite, the laksa soup at Penang Road Famous Laksa is an absolute must.

MID-RANGE

Nestled in the heart of George Town, Mews Café blends modern decor with traditional flavours. The menu features a range of freshly prepared Malaysian and Western dishes, including nasi lemak, char kway teow, burgers and pasta. The soothing atmosphere and stylish interiors make it an inviting spot for a casual meal, whether you're stopping by for breakfast, lunch or dinner. And the al fresco area is the perfect pitstop for a short break while exploring George Town.

How to travel responsibly

Penang is making great strides toward becoming more sustainable through the efforts of organisations such as the Penang Green Council, which promotes environmental education, waste reduction and green living. Visitors can support these initiatives by exploring eco-friendly attractions such as The Habitat Penang Hill or Tropical Spice Garden. The city also encourages visitors to use public transport, trishaws and bicycles to reduce their carbon footprint.

Get on board

Princess Cruises' 17-day Asia & Australia cruise aboard *Royal Princess*, from Singapore to Brisbane, via Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Langkawi, Lombok and Darwin, departs 6 November 2026, from £1,219pp.



European
rivers

THE MOSELLE VS THE SEINE

Wine tasting in the German hillsides or
imbibing the hometowns of France's
world-renowned artists? Two of
Europe's most enthralling rivers go
head to head. Words by **Sarah Holt**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The inimitable Paris skyline with the iconic Eiffel Tower; Normandy's ancient Mont Saint Michel abbey; the Moselle Valley's celebrated vineyards will delight wine connoisseurs; Paris comes alive at night with classic cabaret like Moulin Rouge

While both Moselle and Seine cruises sweep passengers through France, the rivers deliver experiences that are as different to each other as sand and snow. Cruises to the former introduce clients to north-eastern France, with its vineyard quilted hillsides, as well as Germany's storybook castles and timbered market towns. Sailings on the Seine, meanwhile, serve up châteaux stops, garden tours and time in France's inimitable capital city. Here, we spotlight four itineraries on both waterways so you can help your clients decide which is the right cruise for them.

The Moselle FOR WINE LOVERS

Corrugating more than 9,000 hectares of the Moselle Valley, the vineyards in this region produce some of the world's very best rieslings. TUI passengers can put them to the test during a visit to Bernkastel-Kues Wine Museum and Boppard's Hammes Winery, which has been producing wines since the mid-19th century. The views, meanwhile, come courtesy of attractions like Koblenz cable car, which ascends 112 metres to the city's hilltop fortress, and the chairlift at Boppard, which levitates passengers 240 metres to take in a vista called Four Lakes View.

“The Moselle Valley vineyards produce some of the world's very best rieslings

Get on board

The seven-night The Moselle Valley: Views & Vines cruise, sailing roundtrip from Frankfurt, Germany aboard *TUI Ria*, via Rudesheim, Trier and Koblenz, on 28 March 2026, from £1,430pp (£2,860 based on two people sharing a cabin). Price includes flights from London Heathrow to Frankfurt. tui.co.uk

FOR FAIRYTALE BACKDROPS

The Moselle Valley looks like it belongs in a Brothers Grimm story. The landscape is bearded by Hansel & Gretel-esque forests and speckled by turreted Rapunzel-worthy castles. Passengers sailing with Amadeus get to see two of the latter up close – excursions are available to Reichsburg, which towers above the town of Cochem, and Landshut, which is one of the oldest in Germany. Elsewhere, the eight-day itinerary, which starts and ends in Cologne, woos with vineyard tours and tastings, plenty of panoramic cruising, and the chance to visit Luxembourg, aka The Gibraltar of the North.

Get on board

The seven-night Saar & Moselle Fairytales cruise aboard *Amadeus Brilliant*, sailing roundtrip from Cologne via Saarburg, Bernkastel-Kues and Cochem, on 24 August and 7 September 2025, from £1,663pp. amadeus-rivercruises.co.uk

FOR GO-GETTING GOURMANDS

A guided tour of the Lindt Chocolate Museum, a crawl through the brew houses in Cologne and riesling wine tasting in a timber-framed cellar in Bernkastel make this cruise the ultimate voyage for foodies. There's also the chance to enjoy a self-guided tour of the Wine and Sparkling Wine Museum, which burrows beneath the streets of Koblenz. The culinary delights continue onboard with Riviera offering German buffet spreads of lye bread, leberkäse and sauerkraut, a chef's dinner and a Rudesheimer coffee tasting session, where guests can sample Rudesheim's signature brandy.

Get on board

The seven-night Gastronomy of the Rhine & Moselle cruise on *MS Emily Brontë*, sailing roundtrip from Cologne via Cochem, Trier, Bernkastel, Koblenz and Rudesheim on 10 October 2026, from £2,299 based on double occupancy in a Standard Suite cabin. rivieratravel.co.uk



“
**From Monet’s gardens
 to the beaches of
 Normandy, every stop
 is rich with storytelling
 and significance**

terraced vineyards in one of the world’s top wine regions.

“Our clients love visiting the vineyards, learning about winemaking and, of course, sampling the varieties for themselves. The main reason for many is the chance to combine food, wine and stunning views, which is why gastronomy cruises are so popular.

“With so much to explore, choosing the right date and cruise line is essential to ensure your clients make the most of their trip and find the perfect experience for them.”

FOR CHRISTMAS CHEER

The Moselle becomes even easier on the eye at Christmas time, when fairy lights illuminate the region’s timber-framed buildings and cast its cobbled streets in a 24 karat-coloured glow. Highlights of Viking’s 12-day itinerary, which is bookended by land stays in Paris, Reims and Zurich, include exploring the Christmas market of Trier, Germany’s oldest city, seeing the advent calendar that takes over the entire façade of a pharmacy building in Bernkastel. There’s also white mulled wine tasting in Cochem and shopping for nutcrackers, candles and herrnhut stars in the multi-site market of Koblenz.

Get on board

The eleven-night Cities of Light on the Main, Rhine, and Moselle cruise on *Viking Idi*, sailing from Paris to Prague via Reims, Trier and Würzburg, on 22 October 2025, from £2,995pp based on double occupancy in a standard stateroom.
vikingrivercruises.co.uk

EXPERT VERDICT

Shona Thorne, Thorne Travel

“The Moselle River is a favourite for many of our clients, with the river winding through a beautiful landscape of castles, charming villages, and

The Seine

FOR FRENCH FANCIES

Sailing from Paris to Le Havre, this itinerary promises a feast for both the eyes and the stomach. For the former, there are excursions to see the water lilies at Monet’s Giverny gardens, the Château de Bizy (once known as the Versailles of Normandy), the Rouen square where Joan of Arc was martyred, and the sweeping Normandy beaches. For the latter, meanwhile, there’s a visit to Paris’s Musée du Vin, a tour of a French bee farm, calvados and cheese tasting, and a guided tasting of local delicacies at a boulangerie in Le Havre.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Marvel at Cologne's famous twin-spired cathedral and its colourful architecture; Reichsburg Castle towers above the town of Cochem; explore 800 years of history at Fontainebleau Palace

FOR PARISIAN DELIGHTS

Shimmying passengers from Paris to Le Havre, this week-long cruise calls in at Conflans, Rouen, Caudebec-en-Caux, Les Andelys, Vernon and Mantes-La-Jolie. This part of the world was the muse for impressionist masters like Monet, Cezanne and Van Gogh and passengers can see some of the sites that inspired their work, from the Château d'Auvers to Monet's gardens. The itinerary dedicates a full final day and night to the French capital, giving passengers the chance to put their own artistic skills to use in painting the town red.

Get on board

The seven-night La Belle France: Paris, Normandy & the River Seine cruise on *Amadeus Diamond*, sailing roundtrip from Paris via Conflans, Le Havre and Rouen, departing 16 April 2025 from £1,221pp. Price includes all meals, wine and beer with lunch and dinner, onboard entertainment, use of bicycles for independent exploration, Wi-Fi and port fees.

amadeus-rivercruises.co.uk

EXPERT VERDICT

Sarah Wikevant, ROL Cruise

"The Seine is one of Europe's most iconic river cruise routes. Sailing through the heart of Paris is a major draw, but the journey beyond the capital is just as rewarding.

"From Monet's gardens in Giverny to the historic D-Day beaches of Normandy, every stop is rich with storytelling and significance. The Seine's well-established cruise infrastructure and strong appeal to both first-time and experienced cruisers make it a fantastic choice for a relaxing ride through picturesque France."

Get on board

The seven-night Impressions of the Seine & Paris Wine Cruise sailing from Le Havre to Paris on *AmaDante*, via Vernon, Rouen and Caudebec-en-caux, departing 5 April 2025, from £3,408 based on double occupancy in a Cat. E Window stateroom.

amawaterways.co.uk

FOR ART ENTHUSIASTS

This seven-day cruise between Paris and Honfleur casts the Seine in its best light. Optional excursions take passengers to sights like Fontainebleau Palace, the sweeping seat of 34 kings and two emperors over the past 800 years, as well as Claude Monet's home and gardens at Giverny. Guests can also tour the pastel-painted buildings of Honfleur that inspired the impressionist art movement, and the Côte Fleuri with its croissant-coloured beaches and calvados distilleries. If the water level

on the Seine is right, the itinerary will also include a scenic sail along the waterways of Paris, so passengers can see the City of Light illuminated.

Get on board

The six-night The Meandering Seine cruise on *MS Botticelli*, sailing from Honfleur to Paris via Rouen and Mantes-la-Jolie, departing on 8 April and 20 October 2025, from £1,221pp. Price includes all meals and drinks, Wi-Fi and port fees.

FOR OFF-THE-BEATEN-TRACK EXCURSIONS

Alongside classic Seine activities, such as a guided tour of the Normandy beaches and a walking tour of Rouen, Avalon Waterways' Active Discovery itineraries include a variety of exhilarating excursions in lesser-known ports of call. On this cruise, which sails round trip from Paris, clients can kayak through Vernon, take a bike tour through the French capital, learn how to make Chantilly cream at the castle that gave the sweet treat its name, and take part in a cocktail making class at Palais Benedictine where Benedictine liqueur is made.

Get on board

The seven-night Active Discovery on the Seine cruise on *Avalon Tapestry II*, sailing round-trip from Paris via Rouen, Les Andelys and Conflans, departing 5 May 2025, from £3,419pp based on double occupancy.

avalonwaterways.co.uk



**The
Caribbean**

Caribbean queens

Embrace the coral beaches, subtropical rainforests
and slower pace of life in the Leeward Islands,
writes **Lisa Hanley**



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Anguilla promises an unparalleled escape; guests can savour the unspoilt beauty of the Virgin Islands; delicious seafood is a key component of Caribbean cuisine



Known for their pristine beaches and volcanic landscapes, the Leeward Islands are nestled among the Lesser Antilles in the northeastern part of the Caribbean Sea. Stretching south of Puerto Rico, the Leeward Islands were named by sailors due to their sheltered position relative to the trade winds that blow across the Caribbean.

Thanks to the islands' rich cultural heritage, deep-rooted traditions and slow pace of life, a typical day here sees guests kick back in a beach bar, listening to stories and folklore over potent rum cocktails and freshly grilled seafood.

Every island offers its own unique blend of indigenous culture and colonial history, but while these have left their mark in the form of different languages, architectural styles and currencies, the islands' shared African heritage is the thread that binds them together.

THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Divided between the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) and British Virgin Islands (BVI), the Virgin Islands offer an

“Anguilla is renowned for its pristine beaches, ranked among the best in the world

irresistible blend of new and old world culture, scattered across the western reaches of the Leewards like precious jewels. Blessed with year-round sunshine, the archipelago is famed for its miles of sandy coastline.

Arawaks and Caribs inhabited the islands before the arrival of Dutch, Danish, Spanish, British and French colonists in the 15th century. Their legacy can still be found at sites such as the bright red Fort Christian, the oldest Danish fortification, which dates back to 1672 and is now run as a museum of indigenous artefacts.

The three main US islands of St Thomas, St John and St Croix offer high-end shopping, dining and the best excursions in the Leewards. St Thomas has more than 40 major beaches and is a hotspot for scuba diving. St John's unspoiled beauty and Virgin Islands

National Park offer a tranquil escape for nature enthusiasts. St Croix showcases a unique blend of Danish colonial history and Afro-Caribbean culture.

ANGUILLA

Tiny yet extraordinary, Anguilla promises an unparalleled escape. Unlike its neighbour Saint Martin and Sint Maarten, the island is not a popular tourist destination, meaning guests can enjoy its serene atmosphere without crowds.

Measuring just 26km long and five kilometres wide, this British Overseas Territory is renowned for its 33 pristine beaches, which are ranked among the best in the world. Powdery white sands such as Shoal Bay and Meads Bay meet pure waters in shades of turquoise and aquamarine, creating a postcard-perfect setting. Beyond its idyllic coastline, Anguilla boasts a fascinating history, from its Arawak roots – evident in ancient petroglyphs at Big Spring Cave – to its colonial past as a British stronghold.

Known for its hospitality and slower pace of life – even by Caribbean standards – Anguilla offers a bespoke blend of music, cuisine and annual events. As well as the seafood festival –



the biggest of its kind in the region – it's also famous for Anguilla Summer Festival, which showcases the island's national sport of traditional boat racing.

SAINT MARTIN & SINT MAARTEN

Tucked away six kilometres south of Anguilla, Saint Martin and Sint Maarten are two nations that share a single tiny landmass. The 96sqm rock – which is roughly the size of the UK's Forest of Dean – is divided between the northern French side, Saint Martin, and the southern Dutch side, Sint Maarten. Each has its own character, offering a captivating blend of contrasting European cultures.

The Dutch side, Sint Maarten, is famous for its nightlife, duty-free

“ St Kitts and Nevis is bursting with history, natural beauty and charm

shopping and bustling capital, Philipsburg, where you can stroll along its seafront promenade, Boardwalk, and visit historic Fort Amsterdam. Meanwhile, the French side exudes a more tranquil charm, with gourmet restaurants, boutiques and beaches such as Orient Bay and Anse Marcel. The island is home to 37 beaches and there's one to match every mood – from the secluded serenity of Happy Bay to the lively Maho, where planes land dramatically close to the shore.

Foodies will delight in the island's reputation as the culinary capital of the Caribbean, thanks to its array of flavours influenced by French, Dutch and Creole traditions. On the French side of the isle, Doyle Guides author Lexi Fisher recommends trying the signature cocktail Ti'Punch.

ST KITTS & NEVIS

St Kitts and Nevis is the land of my ancestors and the smallest sovereign nation in the western hemisphere. This twin island paradise is bursting with history, natural beauty and charm but each island offers a different

experience. St Kitts, the largest of the two, is known for its lush mountains, golden beaches and energy.

Home to Mount Liamuiga, a majestic dormant volcano that rises 1,156m above sea level, it's heaven for adventure lovers, who can follow hiking trails through the rainforest to the volcano's peak. Colonised by the English and French in the 16th century, the island was once dominated by sugar plantations. Their legacy is still evident in the historic St Kitts Scenic Railway, a narrow-gauge train that once transported sugar and now offers breathtaking island views.

Affectionately called the Queen of the Caribbean, Nevis offers a more tranquil escape, with hikes to volcano Nevis Peak, charming boutique hotels and pristine Pinney's Beach. Celebrate the islands' 44 types of mango at a summer mango festival, or dive along coral reefs and finish the day relaxing at a hot spring.

ANTIGUA & BARBUDA

The serene twin islands of Antigua and Barbuda combine to form one of the Caribbean's most prosperous nations. United by history and proximity, they offer incredible coastlines, tranquil beaches and an old-world charm. From bustling markets and annual festivals to historic landmarks, the nation is steeped in stories that will pique the interest of enthusiastic explorers.

The land was inhabited by indigenous Arawak and Carib tribes before being spotted in 1493 by Christopher





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The intriguing architecture of Sint Maarten; there are many ways to explore Anguilla's captivating coastline; foodies will delight in the array of flavours available to sample; the Leeward Islands are home to a wide range of flora and fauna

Columbus, who renamed it Antigua after a church in Seville, Spain. In the early 17th century, the island was colonised by the British and became a centre for the sugar trade.

Between them, Antigua and Barbuda offer 365 beaches – one for every day of the year, say the locals. Popular spots include Dickenson Bay, which is ideal for sunbathing, and Half Moon Bay, a more secluded retreat perfect for snorkelling.

For history buffs, the Unesco World Heritage site of Nelson's Dockyard offers a glimpse into the island's past as a British naval base. Explore the dockyard, filled with quaint shops and restaurants serving fundee – a delicacy of the early colonial period made from cornmeal and okra – and ducana, a traditional sweet dish of grated sweet potato and coconut.

With extensive wetlands, coral reef ecosystems and abundant forests, the islands are home to rare fauna such as the largest frigate bird colony in the western hemisphere.

MONTSERRAT

With its rolling green hills and Irish-influenced heritage, this British Overseas Territory is dubbed the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean. Despite its small size – little more than a quarter of the UK's Isle of Wight – Montserrat offers rainforests, black sand beaches and volcanoes.

Unfortunately, the latter proved the island's undoing, with a series of catastrophic eruptions in the 1990s destroying the capital, Plymouth, displacing two thirds of the population and devastating large tracts of landscape. Even today, half the island is in an exclusion zone, closed to visitors, although the remains of Plymouth – a modern-day Pompeii – can be visited with a certified guide.

Today, Montserrat is a testament to survival and renewal. Its northern region, untouched by volcanic activity, is home to villages, luxury villas and hiking trails where visitors can spot the island's national bird, the oriole.

Less visited than other Caribbean islands, Montserrat offers an authentic experience, as well as untouched coral reefs, ripe for diving. You can also join in festivals such as St Patrick's Week in March – a memorable celebration of the island's Irish and Caribbean traditions. ●

Three reasons to sail the Caribbean with Princess Cruises

1 New for the 2025/26 programme, Princess will have more ships than ever in the Caribbean, including its latest vessel *Star Princess*.

2 Princess' year-round itineraries mean there's a cruise for every type of guest, whether it's family fun during the school holidays, or enjoying the slightly cooler climes of autumn making the islands perfect for outdoor adventure. Winter, meanwhile, comes to life when festival season arrives.

3 With Princess Cays, the line's private island resort in the Bahamas, guests can relax on their very own beach playground, where 40 acres of white sands, bungalows, local crafts and a complimentary barbeque await.

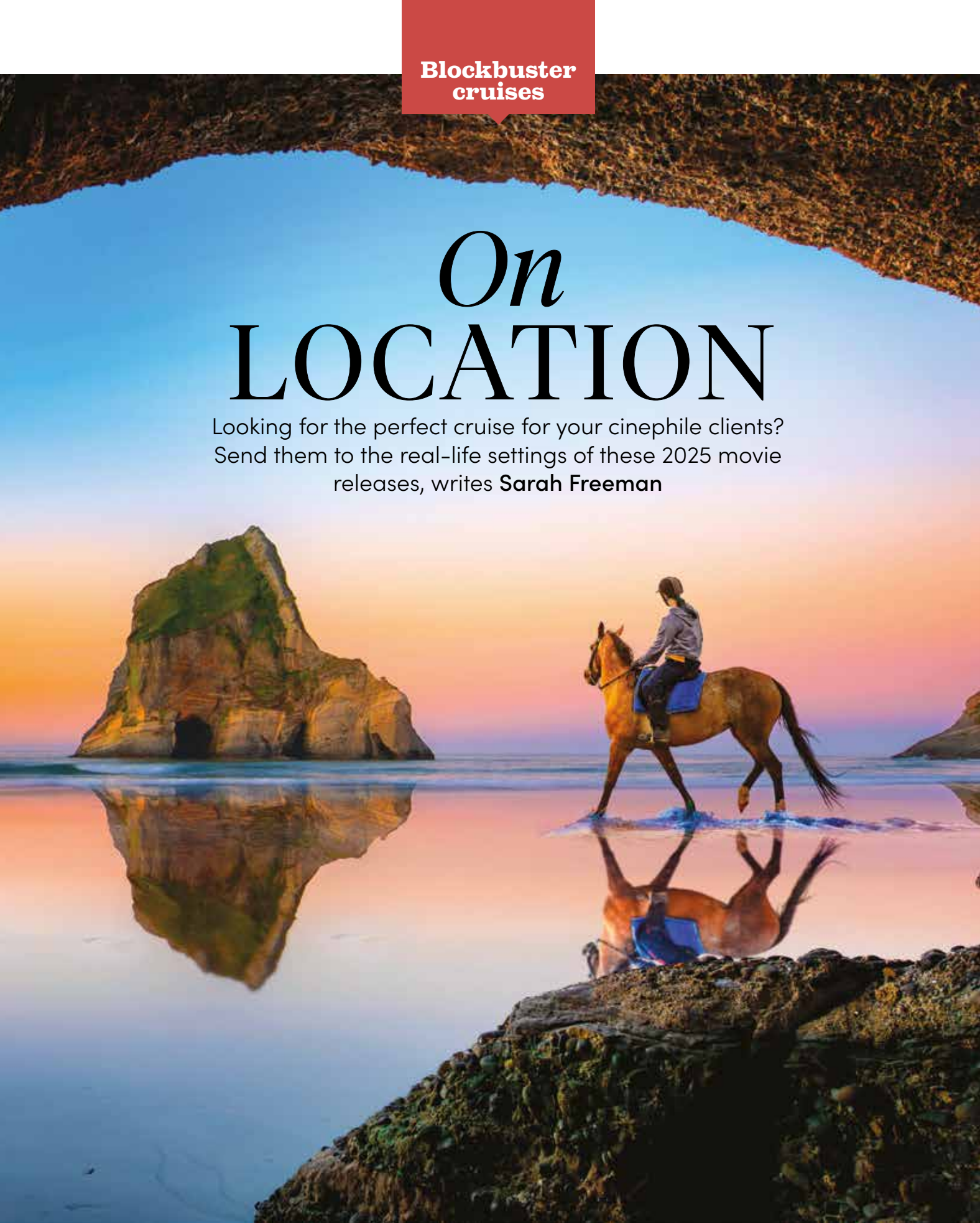
Get on board

Princess Cruises' seven-day Eastern Caribbean with St Thomas cruise on *Sun Princess*, sailing roundtrip from Fort Lauderdale via Princess Cays, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, departs 16 November 2025, from £499pp.

Princess Cruises' eight-day Southern Caribbean with ABC Island cruise on *Regal Princess*, sailing roundtrip from Fort Lauderdale, via Curacao, Aruba and Bonaire, departing 12 December 2026, from £524pp.

On LOCATION

Looking for the perfect cruise for your cinephile clients?
Send them to the real-life settings of these 2025 movie
releases, writes **Sarah Freeman**





CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT New Zealand's sweeping landscapes are perfect for film locations; the spectacular Wat Arun temple in Bangkok, Thailand; the lakeside city of Cleveland, Ohio, aka the rock 'n' roll capital of the world



**BRIDGET JONES:
MAD ABOUT THE BOY**

Where: London

Expected UK release date:
14 February 2025

Hitting the big screen on Valentine's Day, this British rom-com is the much-anticipated fourth instalment of the Bridget Jones franchise. Directed by Michael Morris, it sees leading lady Renée Zellweger join fan favourite Hugh Grant and newcomer Leo Woodall of TV's *White Lotus* fame.

Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy was shot across London at locations including the vibrant borough of Camden and Notting Hill's Portobello Road, site of the city's largest antiques market. Steeped in history, the UK's Big Smoke offers St Paul's Cathedral, which survived the Blitz; 2,024 hectares of royal parks where you can picnic or paddleboat; and the Science Museum, which hosts child-friendly live shows in its interactive Wonderlab.

Get on board

Ambassador Cruise Line's seven-night *Prima Crafting* at Sea cruise aboard *Ambience*, return

“Dubbed ‘Land of a Thousand Smiles’, Thailand makes for a steamy backdrop

from London Tilbury via Honfleur, St Mary's (Isles of Scilly) and Cork (Cobh), departs on 17 April 2025, from £699pp. ambassadorcruise.com

**MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE –
THE FINAL RECKONING**
Svalbard, Norway

Expected UK release date:
21 May 2025

Tom Cruise reprises his role as the legendary character Ethan Hunt in the eighth instalment of this action-spy franchise, which is directed by Christopher McQuarrie.

The remote Arctic outpost of Svalbard – halfway between mainland Norway and the North Pole – served as a major filming location. During the polar summer, from mid-May to late September, its ice-capped peaks, arctic deserts and widescreen fjords flecked

with icebergs are primed for expedition cruising. Wildlife lovers are in for a treat, too, as the archipelago and surrounding waters are home to walruses, arctic foxes and nine species of whale.

Get on board

Hurtigruten's 14-night The Svalbard Line cruise aboard *Trollfjord*, return from Bergen via Andalsnes, Traena, Reine, Tromsø, Honningsvåg, Longyearbyen, Ny-Ålesund, Senja, Stokmarknes (Lofoten), Bronnoysund and Ålesund/Hjørundfjord, departs on 3 June 2025, from £4,252pp. hurtigruten.com

JURASSIC WORLD REBIRTH
Thailand

Expected UK release date:
2 July 2025

Set five years after the events of *Jurassic World Dominion* (2022), director Gareth Edwards' sci-fi blockbuster stars Scarlett Johansson and Rupert Friend.

Dubbed 'Land of a Thousand Smiles', Thailand makes for a steamy backdrop. Some scenes were shot in the capital, Bangkok, where more than 400 gilded wats (temples) and muay Thai boxing



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Tenerife boasts dramatic terrain; the glorious beaches of Tauranga in New Zealand; Budapest's baths offer the ultimate in therapy; California is a popular cruise call

stadiums sit among high-rise supermalls and stellar street food stalls.

The jade-hued shores and bridal-white beaches of Phuket – a major port of call on Asian cruises – are also in the frame, as is Krabi's jungle-wrapped, five-tiered Huay To waterfall.

Get on board

Celebrity Cruises' 12-night Vietnam & Thailand cruise aboard *Celebrity Solstice*, from Hong Kong to Singapore via Hanoi, Hue, Danang, Ho Chi Minh City, Bangkok and Ko Samui, departs on 15 March 2025, from £2,313pp. celebritycruises.com

SUPERMAN: LEGACY

Cleveland, USA

Expected UK release date:

11 July 2025

Starring *X-Men: Dark Phoenix*'s Nicholas Hoult and newcomer David Corenswet, this Superman reboot – written and directed by James Gunn – sees the Man of Steel return to his roots.

Better known as the rock 'n' roll capital of the world, the lakeside city of Cleveland, Ohio, is the birthplace of Superman and the superhero's co-creator, comic book writer Jerry Siegel.

Its soaring skyline presides over Lake Erie, whose shores are studded with more than 30 sandy and swim-friendly beaches. The city also has a world-class orchestra, four hectares of botanical gardens and West Side Market, an indoor food hub with 70 vendors that dates back to 1840.

Get on board

Viking's 14-night Great Lakes Collection cruise aboard *Viking Polaris*, from Toronto to Duluth via Niagara Falls, Cleveland, Detroit, Alpena, Mackinac Island, Fathom Five National Marine Park, Georgian Bay, Silver Islet and Thunder Bay, departs on 16 June 2025, from £11,995pp including flights. viking.com

MICHAEL

California, USA

Expected UK release date:

3 October 2025

Director Antoine Fuqua's Michael Jackson biopic marks the acting debut of the pop superstar's nephew Jaafar Jackson. The King of Pop

drama was mostly shot in California, home of the silver screen, world-class wineries and 148 of the USA's National Historic Landmarks.

Nestled along the Golden State's 1,352km coastline, Los Angeles is a major cruise port that's also famed for its sun-drenched beaches and studio tours. Some scenes were filmed in the city's landmark hotel, The Biltmore Los Angeles, as well as further north in Santa Barbara, which is known for its Mediterranean climate and Spanish-style architecture.

Get on board

Holland America Line's seven-night Classic California Coast cruise aboard *Zaandam*, return from San Diego via Ensenada, San Francisco and Santa Barbara, departs on 19 April 2025, from £839pp. hollandamerica.com

AVATAR: FIRE AND ASH

New Zealand

Expected UK release date:

19 December 2025

Sam Worthington and Zoe Saldana reprise their roles for the third instalment in director James Cameron's box-office-breaking sci-fi-action saga. Those Oscar-winning special effects get all the attention but there's plenty



of live action too, much of it shot in New Zealand.

The franchise's fictional world of Pandora draws inspiration from North Island's mist-cloaked forests, such as the bird-filled Waipoua Kauri, which is handy for the popular cruise call at Bay of Islands.

Avatar: Fire and Ash footage was also filmed in the cinematic Coromandel Peninsula, home to glorious trails and golden beaches where you can take advantage of the geothermal waters to dig your own hot tub. Cruisers can dine at waterfront restaurants and gallery-hop in the nearby harbourside city of Tauranga – the gateway to North Island's aptly named Bay of Plenty.

Get on board

Royal Caribbean International's 14-night New Zealand Cruise aboard *Quantum of the Seas*, return from

Brisbane via Bay of Islands, Tauranga, Napier, Wellington, Lyttelton, Dunedin, Dusky Sound, Doubtful Sound and Milford Sound, departs on 14 March 2025, from £2,455pp. royalcaribbean.com

NOW YOU SEE ME 3

Budapest, Hungary

Expected UK release date:

To be confirmed

Due to be screened in US cinemas on 14 November, the third instalment of this heist thriller franchise – directed by *Zombieland*'s Ruben Fleischer – will reunite the group of thieving illusionists played by Isla Fisher, Woody Harrelson, Dave Franco and Jesse Eisenberg.

A mainstay of European river cruises, bold and beautiful Budapest serves as one of the film's main backdrops. The Hungarian capital is bisected by the Danube, which separates green and hilly Buda on the river's western banks from the livelier Habsburg-era and flat-as-a-pancake Pest. Nicknamed Europe's spa capital, the city has 123 healing thermal 'fonts' that feed public baths, including the famous Szechenyi.

Get on board

Avalon Waterways' five-night Danube Symphony Westbound cruise aboard *Avalon Impression*, from Budapest to Vilshofen via Bratislava, Vienna, Krems and Linz, departs on 13 April 2025, from £2,428pp including a hotel night in Budapest. avalonwaterways.co.uk

IN THE GREY

Tenerife, Canary Islands

Expected release date:

To be confirmed

Runner-turned-director Guy Ritchie cast Jake Gyllenhaal and Henry Cavill as the leads in this action adventure, but Tenerife's dramatic terrain, cliff-clinging towns and black sand beaches also play a starring role.

The volcanic Mount Teide looms over the largest of the Canary Islands, a 3,715m reminder of the region's fiery past. The island is also a stargazing hotspot and has been described by NASA as a window on to the universe.

Outdoor lovers can kitesurf, whale-watch, make a pilgrimage to mysterious lava rock pyramids or hike in ancient forests as dark as caves. Meanwhile, Tenerife's delicious Malvasia vintages recall the Canaries' 15th-century winemaking tradition.

A heady selection of buzzy bars and resorts to the south of the island provide ample opportunity to luxuriate in the warm Atlantic sunshine, while families with time on their hands should pay a visit to Siam Waterpark.

Get on board

P&O Cruises' 14-night Spain, Portugal and Canary Islands cruise aboard *Britannia*, return from Southampton via Madeira, La Palma, Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Arrecife de Lanzarote, Cadiz and Lisbon, departs on 4 April 2025, from £1,439pp. pocruises.com



The CLIA View

Andy Harmer OBE on how agents can utilise the booming expedition cruise sector to secure repeat bookings and attract new clients

While there's no denying that demand for cruise holidays is growing, one area that is generating particularly high levels of interest is expedition cruising.

From the wonders of the Arctic and Antarctica to the incredible Galápagos Islands, an expedition voyage allows guests to travel to some of the world's most remote and stunning locations, see wildlife up close in their natural habitat and experience unique shore excursions led by experts with unrivalled knowledge of the area.

Our research in to the UK and Ireland holiday market shows that in 2023, exploration destinations saw a 53 per cent increase in passenger numbers year-on-year. Looking at the global picture, the number of passengers sailing on expedition cruises has more than doubled since 2016.

This demand opens up a wealth of opportunities for agents, both for experienced cruise sellers and those who are taking their first steps into the



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

Expedition voyages allow guests to experience unique shore excursions; CLIA's Andy Harmer; specially designed ships can navigate icy waters with ease

sector. An expedition sailing is perfectly suited to repeat cruisers who are looking for something different, but equally so to new-to-cruise passengers who want to explore land-based alternatives.

As for sustainability, the industry is fully focused on protecting and supporting these environments and communities – whether it be through using cleaner fuel sources, reducing waste, improving water treatment processes, or supporting projects to monitor the ecosystems of a destination.

At CLIA, we're committed to helping agents on their expedition journey. Our extensive experience and wealth of in-person and online training options ensure the trade is primed to maximise every opportunity that comes their way – but we're not resting on our laurels.

Later this year, we'll hold our first-ever Expedition Showcase, from 16-20 July, in Longyearbyen, Svalbard. The event will include everything agents need to embrace expedition cruising, including ships visits on AE Expeditions, Albatros Expeditions, Atlas Ocean Voyages, Ponant, Quark Expeditions and Swan Hellenic, as well as business sessions, shore excursions, lunches and two hosted dinners. Combine that with a new one-day, in-person Expedition Forum, taking place in London in March, and the return of the Expedition Champion hybrid learning programme.

Now is the perfect time for agents to seize this fantastic learning opportunity and chart their course into the world of expedition cruising.

Andy Harmer OBE is managing director of CLIA UK & Ireland ●



“

In 2023, exploration destinations saw a 53 per cent increase in passenger numbers year-on-year



Make vacation dreams come true

3 nights Iconic Arabia

Celestyal Discovery Sailings 2025 - 2026 - 2027
Itinerary Sailing Round-trip from Abu Dhabi
Doha • Sir Bani Yas Island • Abu Dhabi

2025: Dec 12
2026: Jan 2, 9, 16, 23, 30;
Feb 6, 13, 20, 27; Dec 11
2027: Jan 8, 15, 22, 29; Feb 5, 12, 19, 26

Was ~~£540~~ pp
Now from only **£279*** pp

4 nights Iconic Arabia

Celestyal Discovery Sailings 2025 - 2026 - 2027
Itinerary Sailing Round-trip from Abu Dhabi
Fujairah • Muscat • Khasab • Abu Dhabi

2025: Dec 15
2026: Jan 5, 12, 19, 26; Feb 2, 9, 16, 23; Mar 2;
Dec 7, 14
2027: Jan 4, 11, 18, 25; Feb 1, 8, 15, 22; Mar 1

Was ~~£690~~ pp
Now from only **£349*** pp

7 nights Iconic Arabia

Celestyal Journey Sailings 2025 - 2026 - 2027
Itinerary Sailing Round-trip from Abu Dhabi
Doha • Sir Bani Yas Island • Abu Dhabi
Fujairah • Muscat • Khasab • Abu Dhabi

2025: Dec 12
2026: Jan 2, 9, 16, 23, 30; Feb 6, 13, 20, 27; Dec 11
2027: Jan 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; Feb 5, 12, 19, 26

Was ~~£1120~~ pp
Now from only **£569*** pp

7 nights Heavenly Venice, Greece & Croatia

Celestyal Journey Sailings 2025 - 2026 - 2027
Itinerary Sailing
Athens • Kotor • Split
Venice (Marghera) • Katakolo Athens

2025: Jul 26; Aug 9, 23
2026: Aug 1, 15, 29

Was ~~£1400~~ pp
Now from only **£569*** pp

LOVE2SHOP

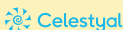
**£50 Love2Shop voucher for any bookings made
between 7th and 14th of February.**

Don't forget if you sell three Arabian Gulf bookings you sail free

**Visit our new Trade Portal 'Celestyal Compass'
and download our Marketing Toolkit today**
celestyalcompass.com

You just have to be there.



 **Compass**

* T&Cs apply. # £50 Love2shop voucher is for bookings made between 7th and 14th February and deposits need to be paid in full. Agents must send their qualifying booking reference to tradesupport@celestyal.com to apply. Vouchers will be sent out at the end of the booking campaign. Applicable to new FIT bookings only.



Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines

WIN A PLACE ON A VIP MEDITERRANEAN EDUCATIONAL



**We have ten places
available to win on our VIP
educational this September.**

To be in with a chance of winning a place, simply register all bookings you make on 2025 sailings in our TOY campaign on the Travel Agent Centre by 3rd March 2025.

THE ITINERARY

Sat 27 Sep	•	Valencia, Spain
Sun 28 Sep	•	Cruising by Benirras Beach at sunrise
Mon 29 Sep	•	Mahon, Spain
Tue 30 Sep	•	Propriano, France
Wed 01 Oct	•	La Spezia, Italy
Thu 02 Oct	•	Cruising
Thu 03 Oct	•	Salerno, Italy

Find out more and register your bookings at fredolsencruise.com/agent

Terms & Conditions: Competition valid for bookings on sailings featured in our February campaign between 03/02/2025 and 28/02/2025 inclusive. All bookings must be registered by 03/03/2025, winners will be drawn at random at the end of the booking period. Full Terms and Conditions are detailed at fredolsencruises.com/agent. E&OE.