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TRADE NEWS

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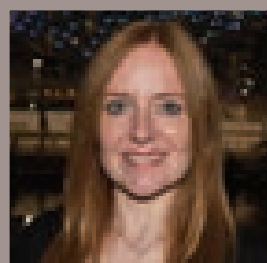


To discuss promotional opportunities email Michelle Daniels, Head of Groups and Partnerships
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Visit VTAExpert.com for online training plus incentives, competitions and ship visit information



A NEW YEAR, A NEW FOCUS ON AGENTS...



Welcome to the first issue of Cruise Trade News in 2017. We hope the year is off to a flyer for you.

Have you managed to keep your new year's resolutions? We've been

busy making a few here at Cruise Trade News – and unlike going to the gym more and eating less chocolate – we know we can keep these ones. Whether you sell two cruises a year or 200, you are the reason we exist and we want to keep you at the heart of everything we do. We've resolved to feature more stories about the frontline of trade sales, celebrate your achievements and arm you with selling tips in an easy-to-read format.

In this issue you'll meet Jan Cross, an award-winning homemaker; you'll find out the three things Celebrity Cruises' Shaun Lyons can't get through the day without; and you'll discover Ben Bouldin's plans for year one at the helm of Royal Caribbean in the UK.

It's going to be an exciting year and we look forward to meeting as many of you as possible, whether it's at our own Cruise Challenge events or other industry functions. And if you have a cruise sales success story or a burning issue relating to cruise to talk about, drop me a line. We'd love to feature your story in a future issue.

Jill Sayles – Editor

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COVER: VOYAGES TO ANTIQUITY

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Swan Hellenic's Minerva

ALL LEISURE COLLAPSE AFFECTS THOUSANDS OF CRUISE CUSTOMERS

By JOHN HONEYWELL

The collapse of All Leisure Group took with it the holiday plans of 13,000 customers with cruises booked through Swan Hellenic and Voyages of Discovery.

Accountants Grant Thornton confirmed the cruise lines had been put into administration on January 4. Five days earlier, passengers booked to sail on a Voyager cruise in south-east Asia and a Minerva cruise from Marseille to the Canaries were told by phone and email that their holidays were cancelled.

The timing of the closure meant that about 400 passengers were able to complete their Christmas cruises and then come home on flights they had already booked and paid for.

Those with holidays booked over the coming months – calculated at 13,000 people and 7,000 bookings – are guaranteed compensation.

CLIA's Andy Harmer said: "In the first

instance, customers who booked through a travel agent should contact them directly for one-to-one advice on how to claim a refund as well as support with booking an alternative cruise holiday."

Any with flights involved will be taken care of under the CAA's ATOL scheme (www.caa.co.uk/atol 0808 0164 8810). About a third are on ex-UK cruises and will be refunded by ABTA (www.abta.com/allleisure 020 3758 8742).

All Leisure has sold tour package operators Travelsphere and Just You to G Adventures. A syndicate of investors headed by All Leisure chairman Roger Allard has purchased Hebridean Island Cruises, which runs The Queen's favourite ship, Hebridean Princess.

Allard, who has been in charge at ALG for 20 years, said the cruise brands were victims of a "perfect storm."

"Since the Arab Spring and as a result of other events, the world has become a smaller place and it was no longer possible for us to take our small ships to Egypt, Libya and north Africa.

"Lebanon, Syria, the Black Sea have all become difficult and even Istanbul and Turkey have now been removed from the map.

"Then we had Brexit and the weaker pound - when all our costs are in dollars, and euros. It was impossible to keep going. We looked for buyers for the cruise lines but nobody is interested in buying a business that is not making money.

"At least we have not left anyone stranded and we have cash in the bank to minimise the impact on creditors."

All Leisure assets including the Voyager will be available for sale by the administrators. Minerva, however, was leased and is not for sale.

AN AGENT'S REACTION

Phil Nuttall, managing director of Blackpool-based Cruise Village, said: "We had quite a few customers due to go on the cruises, most of them single and older so it's a big deal for their holiday to be cancelled. It was totally out of the blue.

"We have spoken in detail to all our clients who have been affected. There are several scenarios but our main focus

was to reassure all clients that they will receive refunds of all money paid.

"We had two imminent departures for January and we have found alternatives for these clients. We understand the upset they must be going through, as they are solo travellers.

"One has decided not to take up the offer and we are in the process of

claiming their money back from the CAA, but the other has accepted our offer and thanked us for being so understanding and accommodating.

"We are trying to secure alternative cruises for those due to travel in summer and some other cruise lines have come forward to offer alternatives at special rates which we are looking into."

VOYAGES TO ANTIQUITY ON THE CREST OF A WAVE

By Katherine Lawrey

Voyages to Antiquity ended last year on a large high, with UK passenger numbers up 45% up year on year. Jos Dewing, managing director, said: "That was a fantastic year for us, and we've now had our strongest start to the wave period in the company's history, helped by a natural migration of Swan Hellenic passengers."

He said all the unique selling points of the Swan Hellenic brand – a small ship, a home-from-home atmosphere, inclusive shore excursions, expert guest lecturers, pre/post hotel stays, no gratuities and wine with dinner – were all benefits offered by Voyages to Antiquity also.

"In terms of a culturally-led, destination-led cruise line, I don't see any other real alternative for Swan Hellenic's former clientele. We have seen a huge volume of interest from past Swan Hellenic customers because we are a close match."

He said the cruise line was in a strong position because it wasn't dependent on a single market. Bookings were split between the UK, Australia and the US.

"We have not been as impacted by Brexit as some as we are not solely reliant on UK business and we do not focus on aggressive pricing policies, we are very much product and service led as a company, but extremely good value for money too," he added.

"We hold our prices, agents don't need discount us, so we are a strong business."

Already 2017 is "well sold", however, agents are able to take advantage of additional capacity because the line does not have full-ship charters this summer, which remove whole itineraries from sale.

The summer 2018 programme is due to launch in the coming months. Reflecting strong demand this year for ex-UK cruises, Dewing said the new programme would offer more opportunities to explore places

of cultural and natural interest from UK ports of call, traditionally a strong area for Swan Hellenic.

Ahead of that, Voyages' ship, the 378-passenger Aegean Odyssey, will head to the Caribbean and Cuba for the first time in November for the winter season.

"We'll be doing it very differently from any other line," Dewing said. "Through stories and history we'll show a side of the Caribbean that you don't normally associate with the region. We've spoken to scholars, authors and PhD students to create the programme. Our planning process is unique in that way."

Opening up the Caribbean would appeal to Voyage to Antiquity's repeat client base, he said. "Fifty per cent of our customers have cruised with us before. Another strong reason for agents to recommend us – our loyalty programme has many generous benefits and there is a good chance of a repeat booking."



Al fresco dining onboard Aegean Odyssey

WHY DID ALL LEISURE GROUP GO UNDER?

By CAPTAIN GREYBEARD

There is some doubt over whether Prime Minister Harold Macmillan actually said it was "events, dear boy, events" that politicians feared the most.

But there is absolutely no doubt that it was events that led to the downfall of All Leisure Group, and the end of Swan Hellenic and Voyages of Discovery.

All Leisure Group's Discover Egypt brand had been in difficulty for some time because Egypt no longer has a tourism industry to speak of.

After the Arab Spring turned most of north Africa, the Red Sea and much of the

eastern Mediterranean into a no-go zone, the Russian conflict in Ukraine effectively closed the Black Sea. More recently, even Turkey shines less brightly on the tourism map.

"Swans" – as Minerva veterans liked to call themselves – and the lecture-hungry Voyagers, had probably seen enough of familiar cities like Rome and Athens over the years and yearned to travel somewhere more exotic without abandoning home comforts.

A few years ago they would have returned to the ships to down stiff G&Ts after excursions to Aleppo or Odessa, Luxor or Leptis Magna. Places that are now more

likely to feature in a war correspondent's dispatch than a history lesson.

Along came Brexit, knocking the pound for six and increasing All Leisure's costs by about 20 per cent. It was able to put up Travelsphere and Just You fares but intense competition in cruise ruled out that option.

Americans are too scared to travel to Europe. Brits who want to cruise to the Canaries or the Baltic can do it in more modern ships than Minerva or Voyager.

Sadly, Swan Hellenic and Voyages of Discovery were squeezed out of business. By events.



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AMAWATERWAYS RAMPS UP AGENT FOCUS

BY KATHERINE LAWREY

AmaWaterways is putting agents at the heart of its business strategy for 2017.

Jamie Loizou, sales, marketing and digital director, said agent education was a key part of the line's refocused trade strategy: "We need to make sure agents have that awareness of what we're all about," he said.

The launch of new ship AmaKristina in March, operating on the Rhine, will be the first milestone for the newly established UK team, which is led by managing director Stuart Perl and is based in Guildford.

AmaWaterways was founded in 2002. Fred Olsen Travel was responsible for distribution in the UK but the decision was taken to build a team last summer, which now numbers 12 including head of sales Jenny Wright.

Loizou explained: "Fred Olsen Travel is still a valued partner and we want that relationship to blossom, but we're actively seeking new accounts too. It's important agents realise we now have a standalone experienced team as there has been a degree of confusion about that in the past."

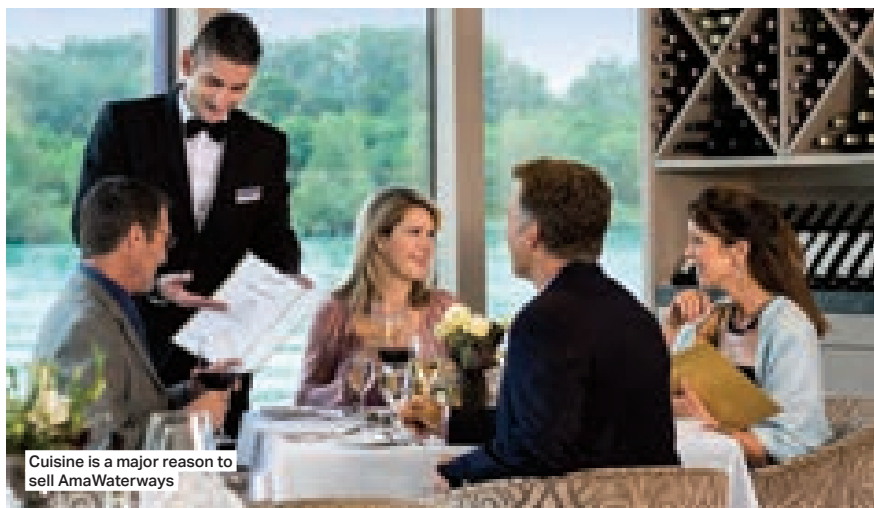
Agents would see an increase in face-to-face training, he said. "We want to put a personality to the brand. It's important to replicate the service we deliver onboard in all areas of the business including trade support."

He said that there was also confusion about where the different river cruise brands stand in the marketplace, and a key priority was to define the line's position.

"Lots of lines claim to be luxury, but there's not a clear definition. We sit in that space but we'd rather talk about what makes us different, which is the quality of our cuisine, our Active Discovery programme, and the ways in which we innovate, both with new destinations such as the Ganges and onboard with our Chefs Table alternative dining concept."

He said the Active Discovery programme, which offers hiking and biking, has grown year by year on account of customer demand. "It makes us more appealing to a younger market," he claimed. "It's one less barrier for agents to overcome."

He added that the line had a good start to the year: "We're happy with where we're tracking," he said. "The Rhine and the Danube, our number one sellers, and the Douro has been astonishingly popular, being virtually sold out. There are pockets of availability but the message is book now or you'll be disappointed."



Cuisine is a major reason to sell AmaWaterways

CROISIEUROPE GEARS UP TO OFFER CYCLING PROGRAMME

Clients happiest on two wheels will be in their element with CroisiEurope's new CroisiBike cruises. Two-wheeled adventures are available on the Danube, Loire, Gironde, Rhone and Rhine rivers. Each cruise features multiple chances to exercise pedal power, and includes the services of an English-speaking tour leader, bicycle hire and on-call maintenance and repair service.

Groups cycle on paved roads and cycle paths and are followed by minivans, so weary

cyclists can take a break if needed. Each bike is also GPS programmed with the day's itinerary so everyone can cycle at their own pace.

Sample itineraries include Biking through the Loire. Guests cycle daily, and routes take in highlights such as the impressive medieval castle of Oudon, the seaside resort of La Baule and wine tasting in Chateau de la Mulonniere.

Departures this year are April 16, July 24 and October 7, and prices start from £1,949 per person.



Pitch CroisiBike to active clients



STEAMING IN WITH A NEW OPTION FOR GÖTA CANAL

Göta Canal Steamship Company, which operates three historical ships on the Göta Canal in Sweden, has announced a new cruise for 2017.

The three-day 'Göta Canal Highlights' cruise, onboard the M/S Wilhelm Tham, will travel along the canal from the city of Mariestad on the shores of Lake Vänern to Norsholm in the province of Östergötland. The ship will go through 44 locks including the Göta Canal's two longest lock staircases.

Other highlights include a guided tour of the Forsviks Bruk – one of Sweden's most interesting industrial communities; a visit to the Motala Motor Museum, Sweden's most visited automobile and adventure museum; the convent church of Vreta and the remains of Sweden's first convent; beautiful Lake Viken; Lake Vättern with its unusually deep and clear water; and the idyllic village of Borensberg.

The M/S Wilhelm Tham was built in 1912 and listed in 2004 by the National Maritime Museum due to its historical importance. There are 25 cabins for 50 guests. The size of the cabins is comparable to a sleeping compartment on a train – most are fitted with bunk beds. There are eight departures in 2017 and cruise-only prices start from £720 per person excluding flights.

PAUL GAUGUIN SETS RECORD FOR UK GROWTH

Paul Gauguin Cruises has had its best year to date in the UK, up 18% year on year for 2016 departures.

Elaine Gillard, senior sales and marketing manager, put the sales spurt down to increased awareness of the product, both among trade and consumers.

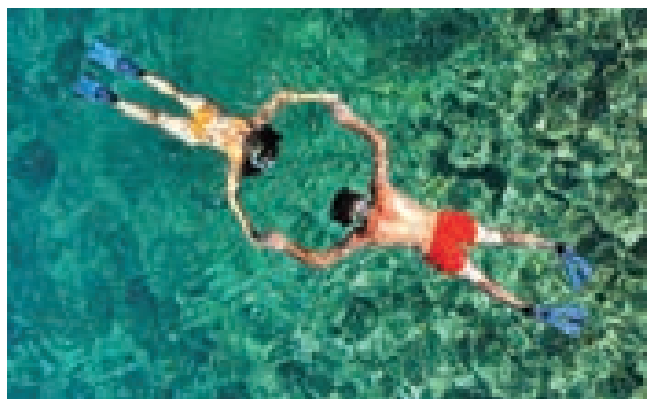
"It is partly a cumulative effect of the work we've done, since the Cruise Portfolio took over as GSA in 2009. We launched online training last year and it's now sinking in who we are. And Tahiti Tourism is doing a great job too."

"We're already well ahead for 2017," she said.

Reruns of a Mighty Cruise Ships documentary filmed onboard the Paul Gauguin, first shown in the UK on Quest in early 2015, continued to have an impact, she added:

"The programme is repeated regularly and we see a spike of online enquiries every time."

"A cruise is the best value way to see multiple islands in the South Pacific in luxurious comfort, when compared with land-based alternatives."



GOOD MORNING VIETNAM: Bhaya Group has reimagined its two luxury level vessels, offering two-night cruises in remote parts of Halong Bay. New facilities include an onboard cinema, a spa and a cocktail bar.

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A WORD FROM CLIA

Andy Harmer, vice-president of operations and director, CLIA UK & Ireland, has advice on resolutions that are worth keeping

As we head into 2017 New Year's resolutions are formulated – and these will inevitably have fallen by the way side by the end of January – at least for me anyway. Every year I make a promise to myself to stick to them and am predictably disappointed. This got me thinking – surely there have to be some changes that we can all make that will ensure a happier, more fulfilling year ahead and that don't involve the cabbage soup diet, a gruelling exercise plan, or taking up a strange hobby?

Last year, the news was full of stories around the importance of achieving a better stress/life balance. Stylist magazine encouraged readers to 'reclaim their lunch break' and Working Families ran a 'National Work Life Week' in October following their research which highlighted that a shockingly low 12 per cent of parents are confident that they have the 'right work/life balance'.

In Clia's own research, it seems that thousands of us are keen to improve our work/

life balance in 2017. Of those we surveyed 37 per cent confessed that having too much on at work causes them a great deal of stress and that a holiday is key to reducing this.

It's important that we work hard to ensure that our messaging around the 'benefits of cruising' mirrors the concerns, wants and priorities of our customers. As an industry, we are very good at shouting about the unbeatable value a cruise holiday offers. While this message is important, why get to know your customers better in 2017. Chances are that spending more time with family and achieving a better stress/life balance will be up there on their list of priorities.

Thanks to a combination of new experiences available ashore, new ships, and new onboard features, there is something for everyone when it comes to cruising. So as well as highlighting the great value that a cruise holiday offers, my advice to you for 2017 is to also make your customers aware of the other benefits that they may not have considered. After all, if you're able to make positive changes to your life by going on a holiday as opposed to cutting out the carbs, surely that's the option we'd all go for?



Wilkinson's WORLD



Happy New Year, and welcome back.

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas season. 2016 flew by and we now find ourselves right in the middle of the peak booking period for cruise - Wave.

Now I know that I have mentioned Wave in a few of my recent columns and this is not unintentional. The sales made during Wave can account for a third of annual sales for some cruise lines, so its importance cannot be underestimated. Hopefully you have already heeded my warnings and got yourselves fully prepared and, armed with the special offers and marketing toolkits, you are already stuck in. If not, do not feel disheartened, and brush up now on all the special fares and value add offers being communicated by cruise lines. Teamed with the amazing itinerary



selections in the marketplace, there is so much opportunity to package up some incredible Wave offers for your customers and get those bookings secured.

It is important, however, to make sure that the quest for sales does not override customer service. It is still vital that we match their needs with the right cruise lines, ships and itineraries - it is not a "one size fits all" product and should not be treated as such. By taking the time to get to know your customers and booking them on a cruise that fits, you can convert them to cruising, creating customers who will return to book time and time again.

I hope that you all benefit from yet another successful Wave season.

Nick Wilkinson, general manager, Northern Europe & MEA, Norwegian Cruise Line



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TOOLS of the TRADE

APT CELEBRATES 90 YEARS

APT is celebrating 90 years of business in 2017 with special savings, incentives and events on offer to mark this achievement.

Celebrations started with the launch of a special 90th Anniversary Sale and deals on some of its cruises and tours.

The company has also launched an agent incentive, awarding Love2Shop vouchers to thank retail partners for river cruise bookings made in January.

Agents who book select APT Luxury river cruises will secure a £50 voucher and those who book select APT Premium river cruises will receive a £25 voucher.

The incentive started at the beginning of this month and ends on January 31.

Throughout the sale, travel agents can offer clients savings across a range of APT's 2017 and 2018 holidays, all of which are valid until February 28 2017 or until sold out.

Anniversary savings of up to £3,000 per couple are available on some of APT's most popular Luxury European river cruises, including the 15-day Magnificent Europe. In addition, a selection of APT's Premium cruises in Europe can be booked at a saving of up to 40 per cent per couple.

aptouring.co.uk/agents



CELEBRITY CRUISES LAUNCHES WAVE OFFER WITH SELLING GUIDE FOR AGENTS

Celebrity Cruises' new sales guide is priming agents to take advantage of offers including up to £200 on ocean view and above staterooms, on selected Europe and Abu Dhabi sailings, plus savings of up to £500 on Suite Class bookings.

Cruises that are booked and confirmed by February 28 this year will also include a classic drinks package at no extra cost. This amounts to £50 per day of added value.

Agents can also offer additional family savings when they book for 2017. The third and fourth guest in each stateroom will save an additional £100 per person, and receive a free non-alcoholic drinks package.

To support the offers, Celebrity has produced a selling guide for agents with trade contact details, specific details on the turn of year offer, rundown of drinks packages as well as top selling tips.

As part of the Wave offer, agents can sell a 14-night Scandinavia and Russia cruise onboard Celebrity Eclipse departing from Southampton from £2,099 per person (based on two sharing an oceanview stateroom). Price includes a £200 saving and free classic drinks package for two people, based on a July 16 departure. Highlights include St. Petersburg and Stockholm.

cruisingpower.co.uk

WIN FOUR NIGHTS ON PRINCESS CRUISES' MAJESTIC NEW SHIP

Princess Cruises is offering 200 travel agents the chance to win a cruise on its newest ship, Majestic Princess, when she launches this year.

The prize is a four-night preview sailing departing on March 31 from Trieste to Venice. Flights and gratuities are included.

To qualify, agents must book guests on a 2017 fly-Europe cruise with the line, then enter their details on online training portal, onesourcecruises.com. The competition runs until January 28. Winners will be chosen at random.

The 3,560-guest Majestic Princess is currently being built at the Fincantieri shipyard in Monfalcone, Italy. It has been purpose built for the Chinese market and will incorporate a blend of international and Asian features.

Tony Roberts, vice-president, Princess Cruises UK and Europe, said: "We're really excited about this incentive as it offers agents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience Majestic Princess before she sails to China."



EARN A £50 LOVE2SHOP VOUCHER FOR OCEANIA BOOKINGS MADE IN JANUARY

Vouchers are available by booking guests into a Penthouse Suite or above on any 2017 or 2018 sailing with the cruise line on any of its six ships.

"The support of our travel partners is instrumental to our mutual success and we want to reward these efforts over the peak-booking period with this

generous booking incentive," said Bernard Carter, senior vice-president & managing director, EMEA, Oceania Cruises.

Included in the incentive are Owner's and Vista Suites, Oceania Suites and Penthouse Suites.

agencysales@oceaniacruises.com

FREE CRUISES UP FOR GRABS WITH VOYAGES TO ANTIQUITY WAVE OFFER

Voyages to Antiquity is celebrating the turn-of-year period with a cruise prize on offer for agents.

To be in with a chance of winning one of the five cruises, agents must confirm a booking for one of the cruise line's Wave 'SailAway' offers before February 10, 2017.

Agents can select one of five dates upon completion of the Voyages to Antiquity Expert online training course (vtaexpert.com).

The online training encourages agents to gain 'luminary status' which unlocks offers, VIP FAM trip invites and notice of new programmes.

Winners will be notified by the end of February 2017. Bookings must have been made between January 3 until February 10.

vtaexpert.com

AZAMARA: BUY ONE GET ONE HALF PRICE PLUS DEAL

Azamara Club Cruises is offering a buy-one, get-one half price plus deal - until March 31 this year, saving 50% of the second guest's cost. Agents who are Club Royal members can benefit too and will receive £40 for every booking made for 2017, when completed before March 31.

The cruise line is also offering free internet for those booking a Club Oceanview room category or above.

The company's Early Booking Benefit also applies alongside the offer, where guests can receive added value in the form of onboard credit towards Land Discoveries shore excursions, when booking at least 10 months prior to departure. azamaracruises.co.uk/bogohoplus

CMV OFFERS AGENTS A BIG DAY OUT

Cruise & Maritime Voyages is offering agents the chance to win a day out as part of a prize draw. Prizes include theatre tickets, spa experiences and champagne afternoon tea. Lisa Jacobs, head of trade sales, said: "Each booking reference on reservations made in January will give agents one entry into our prize draw for a Big Day Out. There are a number of prizes at four locations and each will be hosted by one of our business development managers."



CMV BIG DAY OUT PRIZES:

- Tickets to see Dream Girls at the Savoy Theatre in London on Wednesday, February 22.
- Cream Cakes & Cocktails at Mr Foggs in London's Covent Garden on Wednesday, March 8.
- A spa day at the Club & Spa in Bristol on Thursday, March 16.
- Champagne Afternoon Tea at Bettys of Harrogate on Friday, February 24.

Email details of January bookings to competitions@cruiseandmaritime.com to

enter. Winners will be drawn at random and there is no limit to the number of entries made.

The cruise line is set to welcome more than 700 travel trade partners onboard Columbus, Magellan, Marco Polo and Astoria in 2017. A total of 28 training days will take place in nine regional ports: London – Tilbury, Bristol – Avonmouth, Belfast, Liverpool, Hull, Greenock, Rosyth, Newcastle and Dundee.

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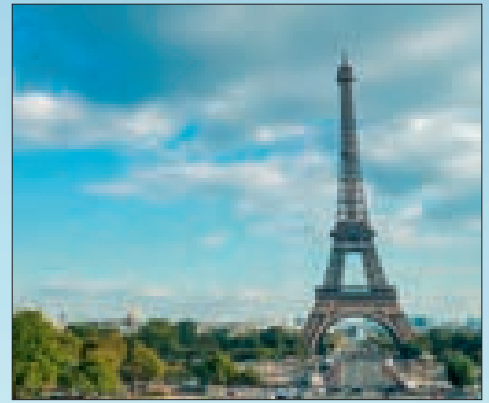
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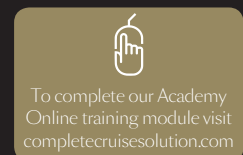
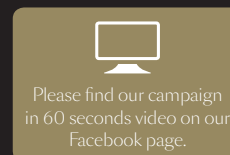
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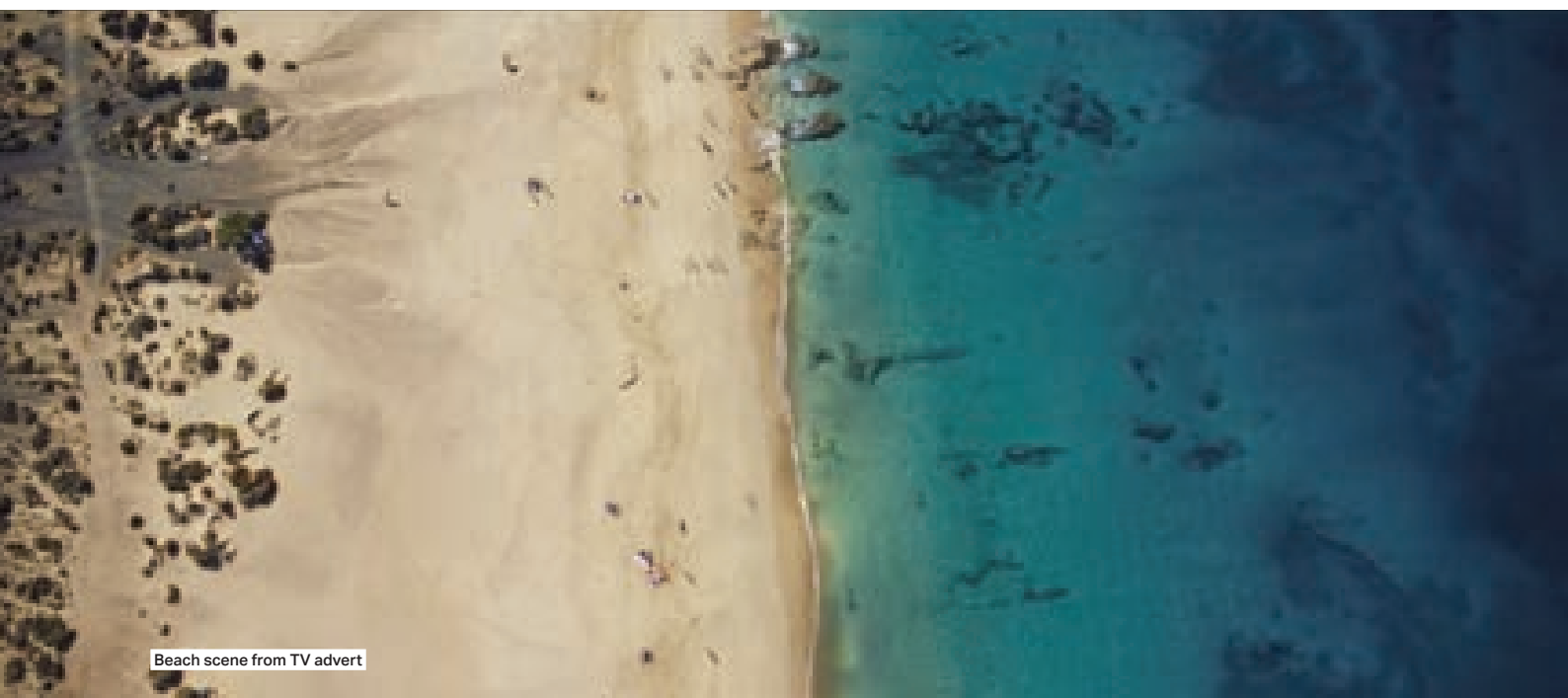
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QUIET YEAR? DON'T BE SILLY



IT MAY BE A YEAR WITHOUT THE POMP AND CEREMONY OF A NEW SHIP BUT DON'T EXPECT ROYAL CARIBBEAN TO TAKE A BACK SEAT. NEWLY PROMOTED UK & IRELAND MANAGING DIRECTOR **BEN BOULDIN** TELLS *KATHERINE LAWREY* THIS YEAR IS AS IMPORTANT AS ANY OTHER FOR THE LINE



Beach scene from TV advert

This may be a year without a new ship for Royal Caribbean International but newly promoted associate vice-president and UK & Ireland managing director Ben Bouldin has urged the trade not to lose focus on the brand.

"For the next 10 years we have an incredible pipeline of innovation including the introduction of our new Icon class [powered by liquefied natural gas] so our message to our trade partners is make sure you have the right relationship with Royal now."

"We pride ourselves on our broad distribution and making our holidays easy for all agents to book – not just the multiples, but independents too, Advantage, The Travel Network Group, Global and the rest."

"We're also committed to Club Royal, the best agent loyalty programme in the market."

He also said a year without a ship was a chance for his own team to take stock and ensure it was prepared for the next decade, as he and Stuart Leven, now vice-president of Europe, Middle East and Africa, transition into their new roles.

"I'm comfortable we don't have a new ship to launch this year. We've launched four ships in the last three years and from 2018 onwards we will have a new ship every year for the next 10 years. That extra capacity will be significant and it's incredibly demanding to launch new ships. A break in 2017 ensures we have time to get the building blocks in place and ensure we are in great shape to deliver that pipeline."

Since Bouldin and Leven joined Royal Caribbean International in early 2014 the line's sales team has been restructured and nearly

doubled in size to 18. Resource has been added in marketing, PR, social media and reservations too.

This is the duo's fourth Wave period, with Bouldin claiming: "We've never been so well prepared. Every year we've got better [at executing Wave]."

This year's offers are buy one, get one half price; deluxe drinks packages included (offering a wider range of drinks than a previous select drinks package); £25 deposits to secure cabins; and 50% discount for third and fourth guests.

"That third and fourth offer is the biggest discount we've ever applied in the last few years and it makes us a much more attractive proposition for families," said Bouldin.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO TV

The Wave period kicked off with the premiere of Royal's new TV advert on ITV on Boxing Day, which is being repeated until the first week of February. The TV ad is something of a departure from Royal's more typical commercials where the ship takes centre stage, with destination instead providing the inspiration, building on Royal's strapline: "Where Extraordinary Happens."

"It is a little different from what people expect, and perhaps controversial because we're very proud of our fleet but we expect more stand-out as a result," said Bouldin.

"We know that destination is the number one reason why people choose a cruise, so we're dialling into that in a different way to what we've done in the past," he added. "Everyone can have these extraordinary moments, but they can be very different depending who you are."

Immediately after Wave, Royal's full 2018 season will go on sale in March, including Oasis 4. The ship, yet to be named, will be a sister to Harmony of the Seas, and is rumoured to be spending a season in Europe before heading to the US.

"Deployment details for Oasis 4 are yet to be confirmed. We are hoping we will get a shot at seeing her in Southampton when she comes out the shipyard," Bouldin said.

However, he ruled out the possibility that his established working relationship with Leven could influence capacity decisions in the UK market's favour. He said he could not afford to be complacent on that score, insisting the UK had to prove itself.

"I am confident in our relationship – we started our journey at the same time and we've always been clear in our ambition and goals," he said. "But Stuart is a different beast in his new role. My challenge is to get the right yield and the right rate of growth from the UK to demonstrate that we are the right location to place some of these ships in the future."

It's no secret that the coveted market is new-to-cruise, and observers will be interested to see how that plays out in a year that lacks a headline-grabbing new ship. If the next 10 years are a battle to dominate the travel industry, this is the year that Bouldin puts the finishing touches to his game plan.

"It's not just about winning the cruise market but the travel market in general. We need to build our penetration of that market and convert some of the many thousands of guests in all-inclusive land resorts."

"We have an incredibly inclusive offer, the best product and a team that's capable of winning that battle." ⚓

“Destination is the number one reason people choose a cruise so we're dialling into that in a different way to what we've done in the past.”

Hiking scene from TV advert

Q&A

MICK DUPONT

head of sales UK&I,
Crystal Cruises



HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED IN YOUR CURRENT JOB AND WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THE ROLE?

A: I have worked for Crystal Cruises for a total of seven years and took up the role as head of sales in 2014, attracted to the position by the opportunity to greater influence the promotion of luxury cruising, enhanced by Crystal Cruises' enviable reputation.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE CRUISE INDUSTRY?

A: The constant innovation and evolution of the cruise industry, which continues to whet the appetite and interest of the experienced cruise agents and new-to-cruise agents alike. This alongside a genuine camaraderie and a willingness for all cruise lines to work together for the greater good of the industry.

HOW IS YOUR COMPANY DIFFERENT TO OTHER CRUISE LINES?

A: Crystal Cruises has earned more 'World's Best' accolades than any other cruise line, hotel, or resort in history. A more recent distinction would be ground-breaking development, with the addition of Crystal Yacht Cruises, Crystal River Cruises, Crystal Luxury Air and Crystal AirCruises – exciting times.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB OVER THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS?

A: The continued, and growing, popularity of Crystal Serenity, Crystal Symphony and Crystal Esprit cruises, plus the amazing expansion of the company's luxury portfolio experience, including additions to the Crystal River Cruises fleet and the arrival of the Crystal AirCruises Boeing 777 in the autumn of 2017.



CV

2009 – To date

Crystal Cruises
head of
sales UK&I
(since 2014)
national accounts
manager

1996-2009

Star Cruises
assistant vice
president, sales &
marketing, Europe

1988-1996

RCCL
district; international;
and UK sales
manager

1973-1988

British Airways
management trainee
and sales executive

HOW HAS THE CRUISE MARKET CHANGED IN THE LAST 10 YEARS?

A: The building of some 'game-changing' ships, of all shapes and sizes, along with the exploration of relatively new source markets – particularly in the Asian marketplace, where cruise lines have realised that it is not 'one size fits all' when trying to attract guests from different countries, different regions and different cultures.

WHAT IS THE TARGET MARKET OF YOUR COMPANY?

A: With the creation of a better understanding of the Crystal Cruises value among 'Premium' cruise line travel agents and their guests we provide them with greater opportunities to sell up or move up respectively. Other successful areas that we are nurturing are the extended family group and solo traveller because of our choice of facilities and reasonable price points.

HOW MUCH PERCENTAGE OF GROWTH ARE YOU TARGETING FROM UK & IRELAND CUSTOMERS EACH YEAR?

A: Historically somewhere between 12% and 15% but with the introduction of exciting experiences at sea, on river or in the air I would expect to see this rise.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING CRUISE SALES?

A: For Crystal Cruises it is often the lack of availability, particularly on our more popular sailings. Many of our past guests either book future cruises on board (where their booking is passed back to their travel agent) or book early to take advantage of the saving, leaving those guests who book later with limited options. We try to increase awareness among our trade partners and potential guests that an early booking is beneficial.

HOW DOES THE COMPANY WORK WITH THE TRAVEL TRADE?

A: We sell almost exclusively through the trade, providing them with support and advice from our field and office-based sales teams as well as our reservations team. We also offer online training via our recently upgraded site (www.crystalcruisestraining.co.uk), together with ship visits and familiarisation trips.

WHY SHOULD AGENTS SELL CRUISE RATHER THAN A LAND HOLIDAY?

A: Crystal Cruises offers a greater variety – whether it is the choice of destinations available on a specific sailing, the wining and dining options or the entertainment and enrichment programmes.

TOP THREE SALES TIPS FOR TRAVEL AGENTS SELLING CRUISE

1 Explore and listen carefully to customer's needs and wants and then explain how a cruise can exceed those criteria.

2 Don't assume that customers are not interested, or cannot afford luxury cruising. Explain the greater value-for-money offering.

3 Take advantage of the support offered by cruise lines: knowledge, experience and collateral provided, plus training and ship visit opportunities.



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'Right said Fred, let's party...!'

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines hosted 450 agents for a travel trade party onboard Balmoral in Southampton on Monday December 19. The event kicked off with a champagne reception before Christmas dinner was served and the boat rocked all night with live music and dancing





Star-struck, I asked: "Are you Kylie?"

Shaun Lyons, strategic account manager UK & Ireland, Celebrity Cruises, tells us about his life on the road and at sea



Why is your cruise line the best of all?

My family sailed with Celebrity Cruises last year and it was 100% the best cruise we have ever been on. We went on the Eastern Mediterranean cruise on Celebrity Reflection and the ship itself is incredible. The service is great, the staff are all so attentive, friendly and helpful. The wine is amazing and there is so much choice for food, which all made the holiday such an amazing experience.

If your cruise line was a famous person, who would it be and why?

George Clooney, who represents modern luxury because he's so stylish and cool.

How long have you worked for your cruise line?

I'm nearly at my one year anniversary with Celebrity but I have been in the cruise industry for 14 years and travel for 30.

What was your very first job?

When I was 16, I worked for a business travel agency called Meadows Travel, while also delivering pizzas and working at a video rental shop. I was certainly kept busy.

Which geographical area do you cover?

I cover key strategic cruise specialists in the Midlands and the North; I go all the way from Redditch to Chorley.

What three things can you not get through the working day without?

I'm a real coffee addict; a Starbucks Toffee Latte is my guilty pleasure. I have to be

listening to music so I can have a good sing-a-long in the car – I'm like an older version of Justin Bieber. I always get the munchies and love a packet of Percy Pigs from M&S.

What's the funniest thing that has happened to you on the road?

I once stopped at a service station and met Kylie Minogue. Totally star-struck, I asked: "Oh my God! Are you Kylie Minogue?" – to which she replied: "Yes. G'day sport".

What's the strangest question you have ever been asked about cruise?

One question I always get asked by guests who have never cruised before is: "Are the inside cabins below the water line?" and whether they can see the fish from their window in Ocean View rooms.

Do you have a favourite onboard restaurant?

I love Tuscan Grille because it is really romantic, especially when you can watch the sun kiss the sea through the floor-to-ceiling

windows. I also love Qsine because it's really quirky and fun – it's very popular with our younger guests.

Which port would you always disembark in?

Santorini blew me away. We went on a speedboat around the island and wandered along the cobbled streets of the village Oia where there were little boutiques to shop in.



Which cruise is on your bucket list?

Bora Bora – but it is a nightmare to get to. However, we do a cruise on Celebrity Solstice from Australia to Hawaii going through the Polynesian Islands.

Favourite ship and why?

Celebrity Reflection and Silhouette – the Lawn Club Grill is so unique.

If you didn't work in the cruise industry, what do you think you would do?

We build people's dreams and it's an industry that's all about the nicer things in life, so it's difficult to imagine doing something else. When I was a child I wanted to be a pilot, so even then it was travel related.

If you could name a ship, what would you call it?

I have had help from my family with this question and it was a tricky one. We decided Celebrity Memories because that's what cruising means to us: cruises create beautiful memories that last a lifetime.



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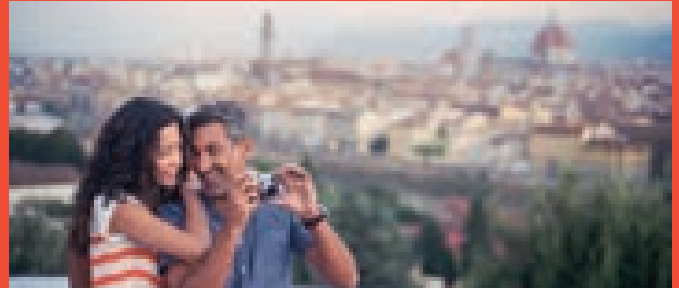
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Jan Cross ticks all the right boxes

The Travel Network Group awarded their cruise homemaker of the year prize to **Jan Cross** from Independent Travel Experts. She shares her strategy for maximising her cruise business with *Katherine Lawrey*

Jan Cross was a worthy winner of The Travel Network Group cruise homemaker of the year last November. Not only did she increase her own cruise business by 10% in the year prior, but she also acts as a business development manager for Independent Travel Experts (ITE), motivating new-to-cruise colleagues to start selling cruise. Cruise is now about 25% of her overall turnover, up from 15%, and she's targeting 30% this year.

"I have a lot of repeat customers," she said. "And I am starting to book more families now. I did a lot in the Med last summer and also three-or-four-night Bahamas cruises with a Florida break."

Jan has worked in travel for 27 years; she started on a YTS scheme with an independent when she left school, and three years ago became a homemaker, joining ITE in January last year.

"I can be much more independent and work when the client needs me," she said. "I make appointments with my customers and if they want a home visit in the evening, then I'll take time off during the day."

As Independent Travel Experts is a member of TTNG, she benefits from the consortium's Cruise Club. "It's on offer for all members, and it's really beneficial. If you lack experience in selling cruise, it gives you confidence, and they can help put together more complicated cruise and stay itineraries."

She can also take advantage of TTNG's marketing support, in the form of weekly e-shots and printed mailshots at set times of the year. "These can be produced with my personal details," she explained.

These marketing communications provide a contact point with her existing customer base – the primary way she builds her business is through referrals. The personal touch is her top tip for securing those referrals. "I always treat customers how I would like to be treated. They all know they are dealing with me personally, not some faceless



"I booked my mum and dad to fly out on Concorde from Bournemouth to Venice to join P&O's Oriana. It was nice to help them realise that ambition."

company. I contact them just before they depart on holiday, and when they come back."

She also makes use of social media. "I'm on Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google Plus and Pinterest, and I have two Facebook pages. One is more general, the other devoted to Disney."

"I post deals, and give warning before they land if I can. I also post lots of pictures, either my own from ship visits or interesting snaps of cruise ships docking, or Disney's Castaway Cay – that usually gets a lot of interest."

The nature of her referral-led business means she escapes the bloodbath of cruise discounting. She is able instead to highlight the value message of cruising, particularly

when it comes to luxury lines. "There's a lot more included on luxury lines such as excursions and drinks," she said.

She's also reaping the rewards of long-term customers falling deeper in love with cruising the more they do. "I have clients who work their way up the different cruise lines and cabin grades," she said.

Living close to Southampton, she finds the stress-free aspect of ex-UK cruises an enticing proposition, and families easy to convince once they realise the extent of the onboard facilities and the ability to tick off multiple destinations after unpacking once. Her next growth ambition is river cruise, having been introduced to Uniworld's floating boutique hotels. "I see a lot of potential there. I could use a hook like Christmas markets to get customers interested," she said.

"I find cruise a really rewarding product to sell, especially when they're new to it. I had a family this summer who had never thought about cruising before, but they absolutely loved it, and came back to book again." ⚓

Viking's warrior

Paul Tavener, sales performance manager at Viking Cruises, was the overall winner for cruise line categories in Cruise Trade News' Rising Stars. He speaks to Katherine Lawrey about his career



Paul was desperate to get a job in travel when he left school. But an interview at Fast Track Holidays posed a challenge: "I had no sales experience, so I sold my passion for holidays instead."

The approach worked and he got the job with the Swindon-based company, which sold holidays via Teletext.

Paul focused on cruise, so he was in the right place at the right time, when the company was bought by Virgin Holidays and he made the transition to Virgin Holidays Cruises.

This merger gave him the best of both worlds: an entrepreneurial family business environment provided by Fast Track and the more corporate input of Virgin Holidays, which still retained "brilliant characters".

Under Virgin's ownership he gained experience across the business, including the product and commercial department.

Then one day a phone call out the blue changed his tack: "I was told 'wear a white shirt, we're seconding you to sales.'"

He was given an underperforming team to manage, and in just one day, he turned them into one of the highest converting teams in the call centre.

"I combined my product knowledge with my sales experience, and I spent all day with the team talking to them, listening to their calls and pitching in with advice and coaching so they offered the right products," he said.

"They were a really demotivated team so I made a conscious effort to give them lots of praise."

Thrown in at the deep end, he had no option but to learn on the job, but over time he also benefitted from Virgin Holidays' training and coaching programmes.

"I had to think on my feet, and I wasn't afraid to try new things," he said.

Paul spent four and a half years at Fast Track Holidays and Virgin Holidays Cruises, the latter two in a senior sales manager role. He then moved to London and spent a couple of years outside travel and tourism, working in catering and hospitality.

The role draws on his key strengths of people management and coaching.

"I enjoy selling and I can still dip in and out of it," he said. "But I wouldn't want to do it permanently. I prefer the leadership side, and helping someone develop the confidence they need to make it as a sales person."

A Euro themed sales incentive is just one example of his fresh thinking. "We had a live draw. We split the call centre into four groups, and for the first round, everyone had to collect as many points as possible.

"Paul turned an underperforming team into one of the highest converting teams in the call centre in just one day."

"I picked up some new skills but I missed the buzz of travel and looked for the right opportunity to return," he said.

In December 2012 he joined Viking Cruises as sales team leader. At first he managed a team of reservations consultants, now he manages the team leaders.

"I didn't know much about river cruising when I spotted the role," he admitted.

"But I did my research and when I found out Viking was expanding into ocean cruising, I knew it would be an exciting time to join."

"Then we progressed to the knock-out stages and consultants went up against one another for the elimination rounds.

"It really worked to encourage people to go the extra mile," he recalled.

"They were even coming in early to try a get a head start on those bookings."

With a love for the people and products at Viking, he sees a long-term future with the company. "They really value their team," he said. "I'm hungry to grow myself and they like to grow their people." ⚓

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RISING ON UP IN THE INDUSTRY

Cruise Trade News held its first annual Rising Stars event in December, awarding seven high fliers under the age of 35 in the cruise industry with the accolade. Of those seven winners, two were crowned 'agent' and 'cruise line' overall winners



Cruise Agent Overall Winner and Cruise Agent Sales Winner Rebekka Gale, cruise consultant, Cruise 118 with Royal Caribbean's Stuart Leven and Cruise Trade News' Katherine Lawrey



Cruise Agent Management Winner Ami Fargher, assistant franchise manager, GoCruise



Cruise Agent Marketing Winner Alex Loizou, director of sales and marketing, Mundy Cruising and Mundy Adventures



Ports winner Rebekah Keeler, commercial manager, ABP Southampton, with Cruise Ports & Destinations editor Lesley Bellew (left)



WHERE EXTRAORDINARY HAPPENS



Cruise Line Marketing Winner Lauren Burrill, brand manager, Royal Caribbean International



Cruise Line Overall Winner and Cruise Line Management Winner Paul Tavener, sales performance manager, Viking River Cruises, with World of Cruising editor Louise Robinson (left)



Cruise Line Management Highly Commended James Langley, cruise creator, Saga Cruises



Cruise Line Marketing Highly Commended Heather Loyd, senior marketing executive, Viking River Cruises

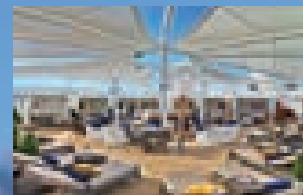


Cruise Line Sales Winner Katie Brickell, assistant business development manager, Holland America Line and Seabourn



SEABOURN ENCORE

The christening of Seabourn's new arrival took place on January 7 in Singapore. The 600-guest ship then departed on a 10-day inaugural Gems of the Java Sea itinerary, where guests were able to experience Seabourn's signature touches, including Caviar in the Surf, watersports from the stern of the ship and market tours led by a Seabourn chef.



BEAT A RETREAT

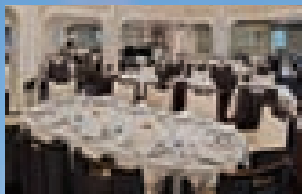
Step onboard and feel those cares drift away by taking full advantage of The Spa at Seabourn (deck 10), which has a thermal area with steam and sauna rooms, plus a Serene Area. Treatment rooms use Skinceuticals® facial products and technicians offer a range of massages, detox, cleansing and wrap therapies. Feel the burn in the ocean-view gym before winding down with yoga on deck and taking the plunge in a choice of two pools. The Retreat makes its debut on Seabourn Encore (deck 12). A tranquil setting housed in a flower-shaped canopy around a central whirlpool, The Retreat is ringed with 15 private cabanas designed as individual luxury living rooms that each feature a large HD flat-screen television and a refrigerator stocked with drinks. Time for a champagne cocktail, you say?



SIP BACK AND RELAX

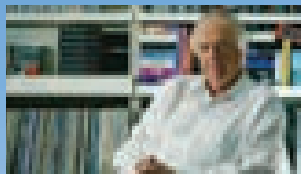
Drink in the panoramic views from the Observation Bar or savour an expertly crafted cocktail in the Sky Bar. Want a brew, a book and a chat? Seabourn Square (deck 7) is a concierge lounge, inviting guests to access shipboard services. It includes a library, a computer centre, and a coffee bar, where the gelato could prove hard to resist.





SET THE TABLE

Seabourn Encore's guests will be treated to some unforgettable cuisine, courtesy of the line's partnership with Michelin-starred chef Thomas Keller. The Grill (deck 8) showcases updated versions of classic dishes; Encore (deck 8) will have Seabourn's first dedicated Sushi venue; The Colonnade (deck 9) balances bountiful buffets with a la carte; The Restaurant (deck 4) offers a variety of fine dining choices for breakfast, lunch and dinner in an open-seating venue; and The Patio (deck 9) serves salads, soups, pasta, pizza and a grill in a casual poolside setting.



IT'S SHOW TIME

Broadway fans will rejoice in An Evening with Tim Rice, an exclusive new production created for Seabourn by the composer himself. Piano recitals, regionally sourced entertainment, al fresco movie screenings and enrichment lectures – in the form of the diverse and fascinating Seabourn Conversations – complete the evening programme.

FAST FACTS

600

Guests (based on double occupancy)

12

Decks

40,350

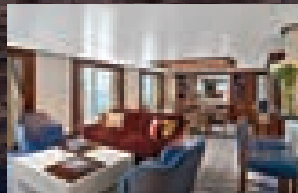
Tonnes

690 feet

Length

92 feet

Width



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Inviting beds, well-stocked-in-suite bars, top-of-the-range entertainment and thoughtful, unobtrusive service are guaranteed across the portfolio of 300 suites. Want the absolute best? The sumptuous Wintergarden Suite has a glass-enclosed solarium with tub and day bed, plus space to seat six for dinner.

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FROM BARCELONA
NORWEGIAN EPIC • 7 DAYS
Dates: 23 Apr – 1 Oct 2017

NORWEGIAN'S
FREE AT SEA
FLY & CRUISE



This itinerary is also available as a round trip from Civitavecchia (Rome).

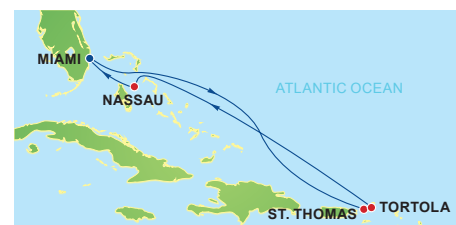
CHOOSE 1 OFFER:	CHOOSE 2 OFFERS:	GET ALL 4 OFFERS:
Inside from only	Balcony from only	The Haven [™] from only
£ 889 pp*	£ 1,069 pp*	£ 2,459 pp*

Prices valid on 23 Apr 2017 dep.

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FROM MIAMI
NORWEGIAN ESCAPE • 7 DAYS
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NORWEGIAN'S
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£ 1,563 pp*	£ 1,723 pp*	£ 3,673 pp*

Prices valid on 04 Mar 2017 dep.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 0333 241 2319
OR VISIT WWW.AGENTS-UK.NCL.EU.**

*Except where indicated, all fares are per person based on £, double/twin occupancy including government fees and taxes in the mentioned stateroom category. Norwegian's Free At Sea is applicable to new bookings only made between 1 December 2016 and 7 April 2017 for selected sailings of 3+ nights departing on or after 1 December 2016 across selected stateroom grades. For a Studio or Inside Stateroom customers can choose one offer, for Oceanview and above customers can choose two offers and by booking a Suite or The Haven customers receive all four offers. Offer is not applicable to Hawaii (Pride of America) and Norwegian Sky sailings. Full terms and conditions apply to all packages – please see ncl.co.uk for details. Fares and offers are subject to availability and change and applicable only to bookings made through the Norwegian Cruise Line Southampton office. ^Offer is per stateroom. NCL (Bahamas) Ltd. | Southampton UK Office | 4th Floor | Mountbatten House | Southampton | SO15 2JU | UK ©2016 NCL Corporation Ltd. Ship's Registry: Bahamas and United States of America. 6517.43.01.17.



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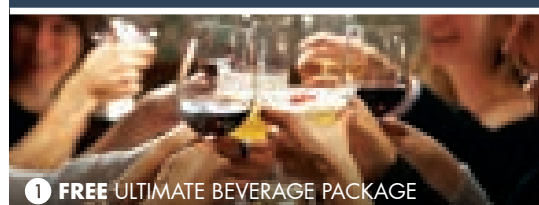
Dates: Jul 30



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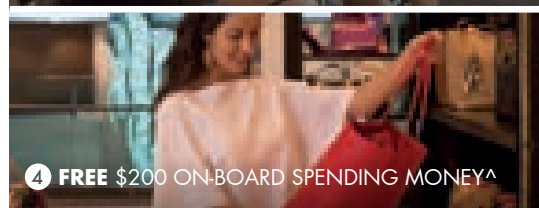
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WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS AT SEA

WHETHER CLIENTS WANT TO SAY "I DO" AT SEA, OR JUST SAIL INTO THE SUNSET ON HONEYMOON, WE'VE FOUND THE PERFECT MATCH



1. STAR CLIPPERS CLIPPER ART

Combining billowing cream sails with a tranquil ocean setting, couples can have a sun-kissed marriage blessing on the upper deck of Star Clippers' five-masted flagship **Royal Clipper**. Conducted by the ship's captain, and attended by uniformed crew, blessings can be arranged in the Caribbean, Mediterranean and Central America. The romance starts when the couple and guests are welcomed on board with Champagne. Wedding packages are available on all vessels in the fleet.

0845 200 6145 • starclippers.co.uk



2. PAUL GAUGUIN CRUISES FLOWER POWER

Surely the South Pacific is synonymous with a lovers' paradise? The **Paul Gauguin** is renowned for extra touches and attention to detail. The line offers a complimentary honeymoon package featuring a Polynesian blessing ceremony performed by Les Gauguines, the ship's own troupe of Polynesian entertainers, and hosted by the cruise director. Couples receive a photo portrait, a celebratory bottle of Champagne in their stateroom and an exclusive pillow gift.

0207 399 7668 • pgcruises.com



3. AURORA EXPEDITIONS

WHITE WEDDING

Penguins and polar bears are typical guests when **Polar Explorer's** captain performs wedding ceremonies against the backdrop of icebergs and spectacular sunsets in Antarctica, South Georgia, the Arctic, Iceland and Greenland. Afterwards newlyweds can discover polar snorkelling, kayaking through icebergs and ice camping. Suggested itineraries include the Antarctic Explorer, for penguin colonies and whale-spotting opportunities, and the Jewels of the Arctic,

020 7978 4534 • auroraexpeditions.co.uk



5. FRED. OLSEN CRUISE LINES

MILESTONE MOMENTS

Particularly suited to mature couples, Balmoral, the largest ship in the **Fred. Olsen fleet** provides a classic setting for the renewal of wedding vows. The ceremony is conducted by the ship's captain and includes a bouquet and buttonhole, a professional photographer, a celebration cake and a bottle of Champagne. Conducted on sea days, vow renewals are also available on its other vessels, and additional extras can be booked such as a welcome aboard package with Champagne, flowers, chocolates and fruit.

01473 764164 • fredolsencruises.com



4. NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

TOTALLY TROPICAL

Say 'aloha' to a Hawaiian wedding and honeymoon on **Pride of America**, NCL's only cruise ship that sails year-round from Honolulu. The line offers weddings on harbourside locations and at sea, with wedding coordinators. Packages include the ceremony, bridal bouquet, Champagne toast and wedding cake. Additional options include pre-wedding pampering, photography and reception. Honeymoon packages offer a romantic dinner, a dozen red roses and a souvenir photo.

0333 241 2319 • ncl.co.uk



6. ROYAL CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL

A ROYAL WEDDING

Fun-loving couples can enjoy thrilling weddings and honeymoons with **Royal Caribbean International**. The line offers both onboard weddings and shore side ceremonies. Couples can celebrate with a drink served by a robotic bartender or take in the views from the North Star observation capsule. Friends can give presents through an online wedding list covering shore excursions, wining, dining and more. Book the Royal Proposals package for help popping the question.

0844 493 4005 • royalcaribbean.co.uk

GEMS OF THE DANUBE

BY JILL SAYLES

THE DANUBE IS A POPULAR CHOICE FOR RIVER CRUISERS, WITH MANY OPTING FOR THE GERMANY-HUNGARY ROUTE. BUT FOR MORE INTREPID CLIENTS, AMAWATERWAYS' GEMS OF SOUTHEAST EUROPE ITINERARY OFFERS A LESSER-CRUISED ROUTE FROM HUNGARY TO ROMANIA.

I board AmaSonata, AmaWaterways' 164-passenger ship, in Budapest, Hungary for the start of the cruise. I've travelled the Danube before from Vienna to Budapest, but never ventured further south on the river, so I'm looking forward to seeing what this stretch – which covers Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania – has to offer.

I'm particularly keen to see the Iron Gates, a beautiful narrow gorge with Serbia on one side and Romania the other. Along the way, however, I will discover many more 'gems' – and a few surprises. I will also be reminded of the region's recent troubled history in the form of the Balkan Wars of the 1990s.

The itinerary begins with free time to discover Budapest before embarking on an evening Budapest Illuminations Cruise. We continue travelling overnight until we reach Mohacs in Hungary. From there the morning coach excursion is to the town of Pecs, originally a Roman wine-producing colony and an early Christian centre. The tour includes a visit to the Christian Necropolis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A wine-tasting trip to the village of Villany is also on offer.

Each day there are around three optional tours – all included in the price and all graded according to their level of difficulty. There's a selection of walking and coach tours, led by an English-speaking local guide or the cruise manager. Guests are informed of the days' tours through daily port talks and a daily cruise newsletter. There's usually a morning tour and further choices for the afternoon.

By day three we've reached Vukovar in Croatia, where guests can opt for morning tours: either a Yugoslav Civil War tour or (on a much less serious note) wine tasting in Ilok, before boarding again for the

cruise to Serbia.

Our next stop is Novi Sad (the second city of Serbia), where we moor for a walking tour of the city, and at night we take a short coach journey to the Petrovaradin Fortress, with its quirky clock tower and labyrinth of underground tunnels. The next day we're in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, for a walking tour. It was badly bombed in the 1990s by NATO, when many of its bridges were destroyed. Today, it's a thriving modern city with a population of more than one million.

As we continue the cruise, the scenery changes from forests to farms. There are villages spread across the river banks – and the occasional sobering sights of war-damaged buildings.

Day five is a full day cruising. I take advantage of the sunny weather to sit on deck and enjoy the scenery. Today we cruise the Iron Gates, a narrow gorge offering stunning views. This stretch of the river became navigable after a hydraulic power plant was built there in 1971. Going through the Iron Gate National Park we cruise past a small picturesque church and an impressive rock sculpture, the 40-metre rock carving of Decebalus, the last prince of the Dracians (87-106).

There are also two lock gates to pass through. The first of the Derdap Locks is the largest; it has a 34-metre lift, and is 310-metres long and 30-metres wide. Not surprisingly it takes 90 minutes for boats to clear it. While we enjoy the beautiful scenery, the crew prepares a barbecue on the Sun Deck for lunch.

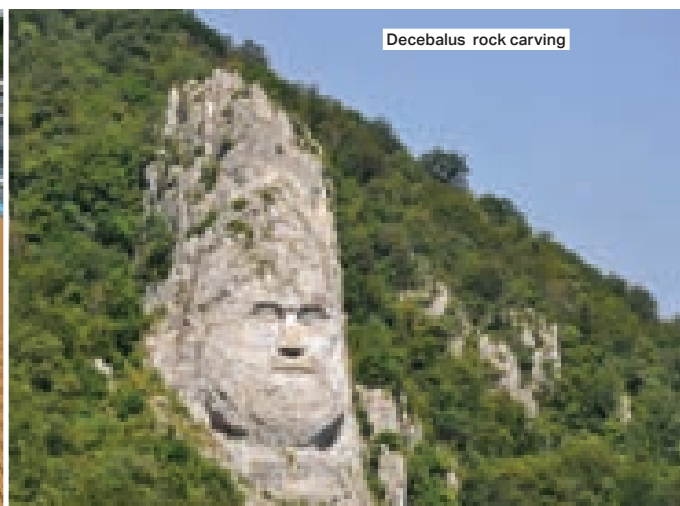
Today is also the ideal time to make use of AmaSonata's facilities. On the sun deck, there's a lovely swimming pool with a 'swim-up' bar and just enough space for very short lengths, but big enough so as not to be just a plunge pool. Other features and facilities include a fitness centre and spa;



Church on the Iron Gates gorge



Barbeque on the Sun Deck



“This is an ideal cruise to suggest to clients who have enjoyed other itineraries on the Danube but have never ventured this far south on the river.”

complimentary ship-wide WiFi; and in-room internet, films and music. A fleet of bicycles is carried onboard for passengers to use on their own or on guided bike tours. The Main Lounge incorporates a bar, and is the venue for entertainment. There's also a library and an all-day tea and coffee station.

AmaSonata, built in 2014, has 82 staterooms including four suites.

My 210 sq ft stateroom has a French balcony and an outside balcony, a large window, floor-to-ceiling mirror, desk/dressing table, internet access, flat-screen television, spacious wardrobe, safe, bathroom with shower, and a double bed. It's more than comfortable and it's great to have the outside balcony for a private outdoor space.

The quality of food is excellent, with interesting choices. All meals are included in the price for guests. Three-course evening meals are served in the Main Restaurant, with fine wines, soft drinks and beer included (outside of meal times, soft and alcoholic drinks are at an extra charge). Dining is on a free seating basis with no reservations. There are dishes from each country visited with locally sourced ingredients, and also regular choices served every day. On one evening of the cruise there's a *Chaîne des Rôtisseurs* dinner. Guests can also book a meal at the Chef's Table, a smaller restaurant offering a special tasting menu with its own private chef. Breakfasts and lunches are buffet style and served in the main restaurant. Afternoon tea is served in the Main Lounge.

By day six we reach the port of Vidin, Bulgaria and I opt for the excursion to Belogradchik (30 miles away

by coach), a small town located in the foothills of the Balkan Mountains. This is one of the trip's unexpected gems. On arrival, we take a 15-minute, easy hike to the top of the Belogradchik Fortress built into rocks. From the top, the view reveals beautiful russet sandstone rock formations covering a vast area. A spectacular sight and a real highlight for me.

By the penultimate day, we're in Romania. I opt for the two-hour coach journey from the port through Romanian countryside to Bucharest. Here we visit the hideously opulent Palace of the Parliament, built by Ceausescu. It's the second largest building in the world after the Pentagon, with 1,100 rooms and six storeys. The next part of the tour is to an open-air museum showcasing Romanian village life, including buildings from the country's three traditional regions (Wallachia, Moldova and Transylvania).

Here the cruise ends with guests disembarking on day eight from Rousse port. This is an ideal cruise to suggest to clients who have enjoyed other itineraries on the Danube but have never ventured this far south on the river. It will also suit new-to-cruise clients who enjoy history, culture and good food, and who are looking for something a bit out of the ordinary. Guests from the UK will be onboard alongside multiple nationalities; my cruise has mainly Brits, Americans and Mexicans. The crew, most of whom are from Eastern Europe, all speak English well.

I enjoy the variety of destinations we visit in a relatively short space of time, and because they are less familiar to me, I come away from the cruise with a newfound appreciation for the lesser-known Danube. ⚓

SAMPLE PACKAGE:

AmaWaterways' Gems of Southeast Europe cruise costs from £2066 per person. Prices include flights and transfers, wines, beer and soft drinks with all meals, all shore excursions, bicycles and WiFi. Flights are available on request.

0800 520 2250

amawaterways.co.uk

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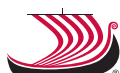
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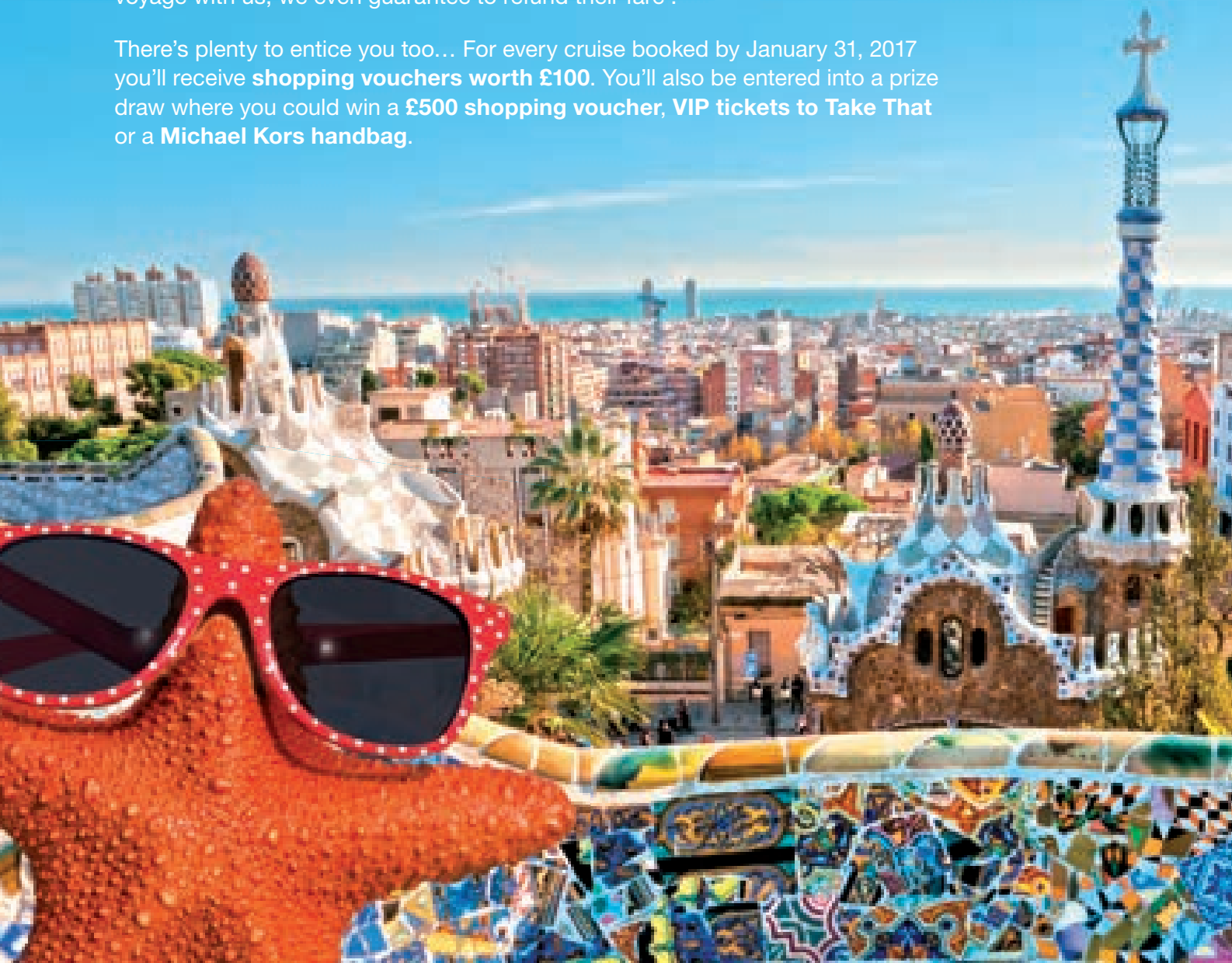



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[^]A reduction of £95 applies to both of the above cruises if you do not need the optional travel insurance and additional cancellation rights - call for details. [†]Fare is per person based on two people sharing an Inside Guarantee where you will receive your cabin number at embarkation or shortly before sailing and not at time of booking. Your cabin may be located anywhere on the ship and twin cabins may have two single beds or one double, further terms and conditions apply. Fare was correct at the time of going to print and is subject to availability and change. [^]Up to £200 per person On Board Credit when booking on or before February 12, 2017: As a newcomer to Saga Cruising, book any Standard Inside cabin and receive £100 per

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Azores and Canaries in Spring

March 22, 2017 • 20 nights aboard Saga Pearl II

There's no better time to visit the islands of the Azores and Canaries than in spring, when their colourful flowers are in full bloom. Look forward to discovering some of the lesser explored Canary Islands, enjoy long days exploring ashore and admire the dramatic coastline of Brittany.

Up to £200 per person On Board Credit

- book by February 12, 2017[^]

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Including return chauffeur service to the port, or free car parking • Optional travel insurance and additional cancellation rights, or a reduction if not required[§] • A choice of wines at lunch and dinner • All gratuities on board • 24-hour room service • Complimentary Wi-Fi – please call for details.

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GO WEST

Clients can now enjoy longer Mediterranean cruises onboard Holland America Line's ms Westerdam. A 12-night Adriatic Dream cruise departing April 27, featuring overnight calls in Valletta and Venice, starts from £2,799pp. Westerdam will debut the new Explorations Central (or EXC) in April. The resource centre will be rolled out fleetwide by the year end. hollandamerica.com

START FROM THE TOON

For those looking to sail out of Newcastle, Fred Olsen Cruise Line is offering a 15-night Authentic Andalusia cruise from the port, departing July 1 onboard Balmoral. Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar are on the itinerary, which factors in the Alhambra Palace, Santiago de Compostela, and plenty of opportunities to munch on tapas. fredolsencruises.com

CELEBRATE WITH SAGA

Saga will be celebrating 20 years of Saga cruising with a special itinerary onboard Saga Sapphire visiting its most popular ports. They include Lisbon, Malaga, Livorno and Civitavecchia, visited by Saga Rose on the inaugural Saga cruise. Corsica and the Cote D'Azur also star on this 17-night itinerary, which leads in from £2,883pp. travel.saga.co.uk

POP THOSE CORKS

A representative of the famed Tattinger dynasty will be onboard SeaDream II's Tattinger voyage, departing Athens on September 23. Clovis Tattinger will offer premium tastings of his family's champagne, alongside other guest winemakers. A transit of the Corinth Canal and an overnight in Amalfi add extra sparkle to this itinerary. seadream.com



MED TASTER

Azamara Club Cruises is offering a three-night taster voyage departing June 9 (from £822), sailing from Nice to Portofino and Saint-Tropez – ideal for new-to-cruise, it'll also work well for clients looking to combine a city and a cruise break. Azamara Quest will stay in both ports until 10pm, allowing time for dinner ashore.

azamaraclubcruises.co.uk

A SHORTER CLASSIC

Voyages to Antiquity has introduced four shorter fly-cruise itineraries to appeal to time-pressed holidaymakers. Shortened versions of existing itineraries, they include the 11-day Madeira, Morocco and Seville from £1,995pp, departing May 3. Guest lecturers bring shore excursions to places such as Marrakech up a level.

voyagestoantiquity.com

TIME TO MUSE

Silversea has a brand new ship, Silver Muse, which will set sail in the Med this summer. There are four extended overnight stays in ports including Ibiza, as part of a Barcelona to Rome itinerary, departing June 9, from £8,450pp based on a Classic Veranda Suite. 12 days might not be long enough for your customers, who are likely to fall in love with the Silversea all-suite experience.

silversea.com

REGENT TAKE TWO

Your most discerning customers have another chance to sail Regent Seven Seas Cruises' newest ship, dubbed the most luxurious ship ever built, when she returns to Europe for a second season. A 10-night Autumn on the Adriatic itinerary sailing from Barcelona to Venice on October 4 calls at Monte Carlo, Sorrento and Dubrovnik, from £5,149pp.

rssc.com

FRESH PORTS OF CALL

Stylish, sophisticated, intimate and full of history, Palma de Mallorca is a new port of call on Norwegian Epic's summer-round-trip voyage out of Barcelona, which also features other Med staples such as Naples, Civitavecchia for Rome, Livorno and Cannes. Lead-in price is £969pp for an inside cabin, based on flights from London departing April 23. Norwegian Spirit is also redeploying to a new seasonal homeport of Civitavecchia in May.

ncl.co.uk

FRENCH LOVE

Celebrity Cruises' guests have the chance to become acquainted with Sete in France, a charming fishing town that also boasts eight miles of beaches. Strolling along its canals, you could be forgiven for thinking you've stumbled across a French Venice. This port appears on Celebrity Constellation's 10-night French Riviera fly-cruise from £1,799pp. Price includes return flights from Gatwick and a classic drinks package.

celebritycruises.co.uk

RAIL & SAIL

When clients are wary of flying, promote Star Clippers' new rail and sail holidays, which combine train travel from London to Cannes, one-night pre-cruise on the French Riviera and a week onboard Royal Clipper, the largest full-rigged sailing ship in the world. Prices start from £1,849pp for an eight-night break, available between May and October, inclusive of rail travel and port transfers. Port calls include Sardinia, Corsica, Elba and the Italian coastline.

starclippers.co.uk

IT'S ALL GREEK

Clients can discover the best-kept secrets and smaller harbours of Greece, with a new itinerary from Celestyal Cruises onboard Celestyal Nefeli. The seven-day Europhoric Aegean cruise starts in Athens and sails on to Nafplion, Souda, Mykonos, Rhodes and Cesme, ending on a high with the jaw-dropping sunsets of Santorini. The itinerary starts in April and runs throughout the summer until October, from £772pp on a full-board basis.

celestyalcruises.com



“

For clients wary of flying, promote Star Clippers' new rail and sail holidays to soak up the beautiful French and Italian coastlines

”

The Amalfi Coast



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- Overnight stays in St Petersburg, Stockholm and Copenhagen

12 NIGHT - MEDITERRANEAN DREAM

Departs: 23 May*, 10 Jul,
14 Oct 2017

ms Westerdam

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£1,399*
per person

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Departs: 4 Jun*; 2, 30 Jul;
27 Aug 2017

ms Koningsdam

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per person

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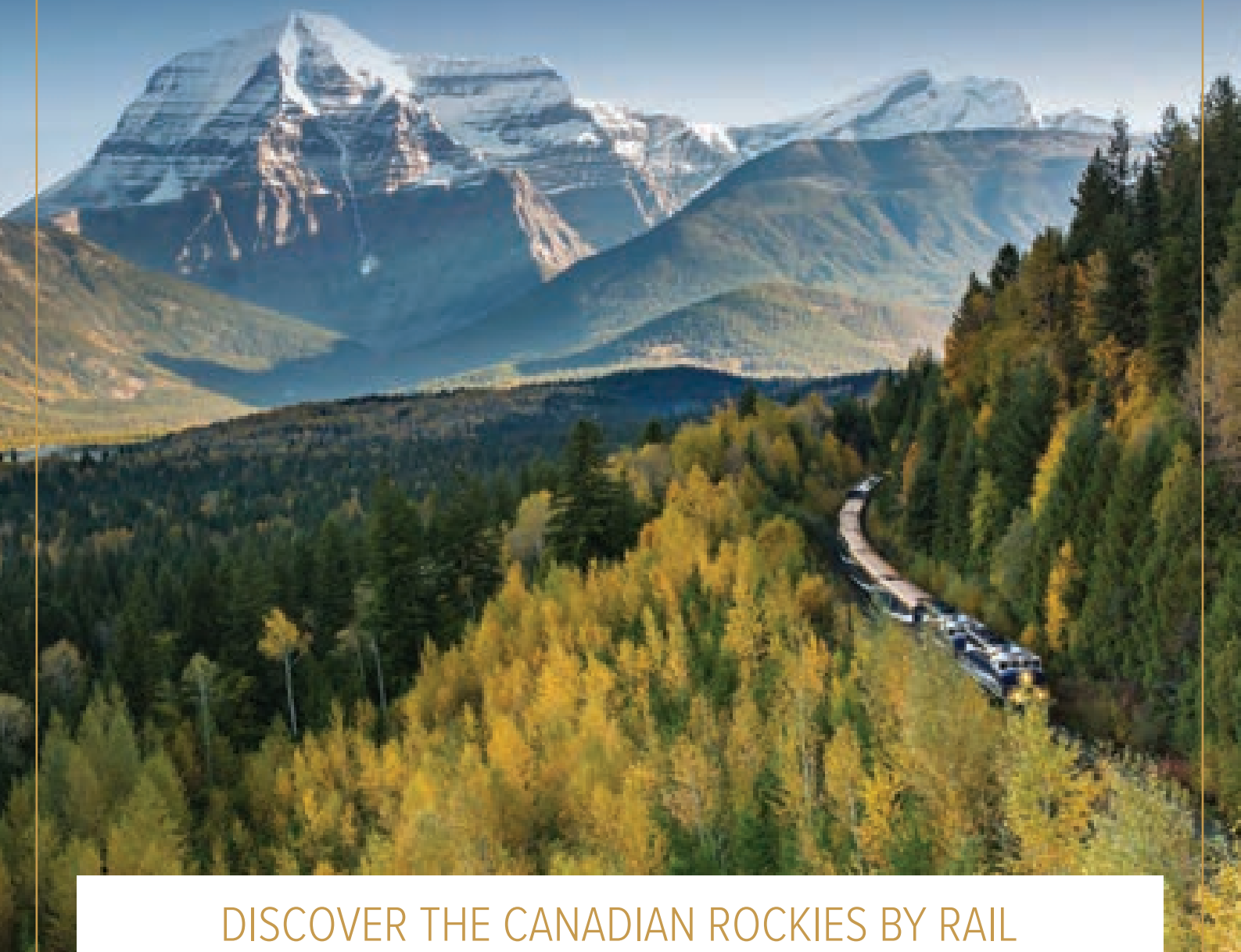
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ALL ABOARD AMAZING



EXPEDITION CRUISING FOR WOULD-BE EXPLORERS

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN NATURE AND WILDLIFE, WHO PREFER SMALL SHIP CRUISING AND PURSUITS SUCH AS HIKING AND KAYAKING, EXPEDITION AND ADVENTURE CRUISING FITS THE BILL

BY GILLY PICKUP

Expedition cruises are ideal for those who have cruised before but are looking for something different, or for first-timers hankering for a taste of adventure. You can sail to the wildest of far-flung places such as the Arctic and the rare wilderness of Antarctica – surely the ultimate adventure destination. The Galapagos too, the cluster of islands where animals have no instinctive fear of humans, is on many a wish list. “Expedition cruises are perfect for reaching off-the-beaten-track destinations,” said Simone Clark, managing director Iglu Cruise, adding, “The Amazon, Arctic, Antarctica, Galapagos and the Sea of Cortez are all popular.”

These voyages are very different from traditional cruises with their multiple dining experiences and Broadway-type shows. Expedition cruising is all about exploration; you might travel ashore by inflatable Zodiac, while evening entertainment could be a talk from a guest lecturer or destination specialist, perhaps on the destination's flora and fauna or geology. Andy Harmer, director, Clia UK & Ireland, said: “There are cruise options out there that appeal to all, including the growing breed of intrepid travellers. Cruise lines offer a great choice of immersive-style excursions such as hiking in Alaska or seeing wildlife up close on a Zodiac tour.”

Silversea's Silver Cloud will soon be part of the line's luxury expedition fleet. Destined mainly for polar waters, >



“Sailing closer to the Antarctic Peninsula means the chance of seeing seals basking on ice floes, orca whales and macaroni penguins with their extraordinary, flamboyant head feathers.”

the ship will be converted into an ice-class ship during extensive refurbishment in 2017. Spacious suites – 80% have verandas – and five dining options mean that whale watching or following the antics of cavorting penguins has never been so comfortable.

Akvile Marozaitė, Silversea regional sales manager expeditions, UK & Ireland, said: “Expedition cruising has opened up destinations that are only accessible by sea, attracting both new and seasoned cruisers looking for an authentic travel experience. We are delighted to introduce Silver Cloud to our expedition fleet in response to increased demand for expedition voyages.”

The 260-guest ship will also sail on itineraries to non-polar regions augmented by a fleet of 18 Zodiac crafts for up-close explorations. On the ship’s 10-day expedition to Ushuaia departing December 1, 2017, guests will traverse the Drake Passage – a must for any explorer. Guests should have binoculars and cameras ready, as sailing closer to the Antarctic Peninsula means the chance of seeing seals basking on ice floes, orca whales and macaroni penguins with their extraordinary, flamboyant head feathers.

The latest collaboration between expedition cruise operator One Ocean Expeditions and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society provides a polar education programme presented by wildlife, history and conservation experts. The team already turns classics such as their 10-night Antarctic Peninsula Adventure into expedition voyages of discovery.

But it is the focus on education that makes all the difference, as Andrew Prossin, managing director, One

Ocean Expeditions, explained. “The Frozen South is the ultimate open-air classroom where, in the right hands, everything from whale biology to glaciology literally come to life. Discovering this remote corner of the world in the company of experts is quite an experience. This partnership enables us to offer the kind of trip that changes people’s lives.”

The successful completion of Crystal Serenity’s Northwest Passage voyage this summer, along with the volume of guests seeking luxury adventure travel, not to mention extensive research over the past three years revealing that close to 70% of current Crystal guests have a strong interest in expedition cruising, have prompted Crystal to rebrand its current Crystal Yacht Cruises as Crystal Yacht Expedition Cruises.

The new banner will encompass three new purpose-built polar-class expedition mega yachts which will navigate ‘first year ice’ and be outfitted with submarines, helicopters and remote-operated vehicles, as well as spacious penthouses and villas. Crystal’s expedition ships will cruise in the Arctic.

They will then follow the route of migrating whales along the coast of the Americas and Europe to Antarctica during winter. Crystal is scheduled to take delivery of Crystal Endeavor in mid 2019, with the additional two expedition vessels debuting the following years.

Crystal’s recently launched experiences have already broadened the company’s reach. With Crystal Esprit’s voyages and extreme water toys – including the cruise industry’s first-ever submarine – appealing to intrepid and adventurous travellers, the 62-guest capacity yacht has

BOOK IT

SILVERSEA

offers a seven-day Baltra, Galapagos, to San Cristobal voyage on Silver Galapagos departing June 17, 2017. Ports of call include Isla Daphne Grande, Bahia Darwin, El Barranco, Seymour Norte and San Cristobal. Price from £5,350pp in the Explorer Suite. The all-inclusive package includes flights between Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, transfers, pre and post hotel (for guests with flights after 10pm) and National Park fees.

0844 251 0837
silversea.com

TAUCK

offers a six-night Galapagos cruise on Isabela II plus two nights’ accommodation in Guayaquil, Ecuador, departing August 14, 2017. The flexible itinerary allows the ship to access remote islands en route. Price from £4,160pp.

0800 810 8020
tauck.co.uk

AURORA EXPEDITIONS

offers a 14-day ‘Across the Arctic Circle’ cruise on Polar Pioneer departing Aberdeen on June 23, 2017.

Calls include the Orkney and Shetland Islands, Bear Island and Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen. Price from £3,250pp, including full board on ship, shore excursions, lectures, tour in Longyearbyen.

020 72281230
auroraexpeditions.co.uk

INTREPID TRAVEL

offers a 12-day Antarctic Explorer voyage on the Ocean Endeavour expedition ship, departing Tierra Del Fuego on February 23, 2017. The route travels through the Beagle Channel and the Drake Passage to the South Shetland Islands. Price from £5,240pp, excluding international flights.

0808 274 5111
intrepidtravel.com

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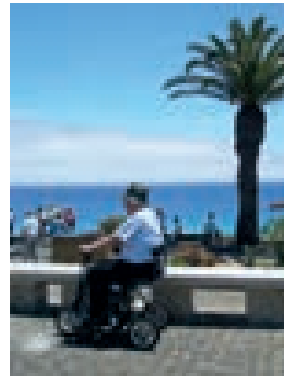


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“Expedition cruises attract increasing numbers of first-time cruisers. What has long been considered a holiday option catering exclusively for older generations is appealing to younger audiences.”



attracted nearly 50% 'new to Crystal' guests in its first year of deployment.

"This is really what might be called the golden age of expedition cruising, with new destinations and a host of purpose-built expeditionary ships coming on line," said Katharine Bonnor, Tauck's senior vice-president river and small ship cruising. "The idea that you have to 'rough it' when cruising to the world's wild places is now completely outdated, opening up expedition cruising to a wider audience of potential first-timers."

No 'roughing it' is necessary on the new all-suite, all-inclusive Island Sky either; it's the only ship in Antarctica where the all-inclusive voyage price includes flights from Santiago or Buenos Aires.

"The Island Sky is a small polar adventure ship that will be a game-changer in the fly-cruise market," said Andrew White, president of Quark Expeditions.

"Our passengers rank comfort and value high on their list of adventure priorities. Premium cruise amenities and flight accessibility now allow us to offer the same depth of Antarctic exploration as on our more classic voyages.

"Island Sky is a superior cruise option – along with classic adventure ship Sea Adventurer – to experience

Antarctica in a shorter period of time than traditionally required."

Celebrity Cruises will have two ships, Xperience and Xploration, sailing the Galapagos from March 2017, allowing guests to get up close not only with the wildlife but also with those who reside in the islands' communities.

Meanwhile Hurtigruten is offering 32 new destinations for its 2018 explorer programme on the world's first hybrid expedition vessel, Roald Amundsen. The Norwegian company highlights the importance of balancing growth in adventure tourism with environmental concerns.

Chief executive Daniel Skjeldam commented: "All operators must commit to the highest environmental standards to relieve strains on nature and wildlife in these pristine areas. Hurtigruten offers responsible adventures based on more than 120 years' experience."

"Expedition cruising is a relatively new avenue for us but we're already seeing a popularity surge," said Nicola Defty, CruiseDeals.co.uk.

"What has long been considered a holiday option catering exclusively for older generations is appealing to younger audiences. Expedition cruising has a huge part to play in that." ⚓

SALES TIPS

1

Understand the needs of your clients. Those who live an active lifestyle, who are keen to learn and who enjoy enriching experiences, wildlife and the outdoors, may be ideal for this kind of cruise experience.

2

Find out from your clients exactly what they are looking for on an expedition/adventure cruise. Perhaps they want to see icebergs or photograph penguins. Maybe they don't know that they probably have to reach shore by Zodiac. Perhaps they just want to sit in a jacuzzi and watch ice floes through the windows. Discover their aspirations to sell them their perfect voyage.

3

Make sure your customers understand what is included in the expedition cruise fare. If they think it is too expensive, explain exactly what is included in their trip and also point out that smaller ships tend to have higher prices because they hold fewer guests.

4

Expedition cruises are destination-led, so make sure you know enough about the destination for your sales pitch.

5

It's not all rugged and basic in the world of expedition cruises. Explain the onboard luxuries available on certain ships to those clients unsure that expedition/adventure cruises would suit them.



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THE RHINE

THIS TIME WE COMPARE SIMILAR LAND AND WATER
HOLIDAYS IN GERMANY



Cologne, Germany

The Rhine river package has been provided by The River Cruise Line and compares a four-night cruise through one of the most picturesque parts of Germany with a five-night rail journey, with hotel accommodation, through the same region with Diamond Rail Holidays.

Taking into account the extra night on the land-based itinerary, the per diem rate for Diamond's Great Little Trains of the Rhine Valley tour is £99.80, and the Rhine Discovery cruise is slightly less at £91.80.

While a land itinerary is a good option, agents should consider selling a river cruise as a different way of seeing and experiencing the destination, particularly for city break clients who might be new to

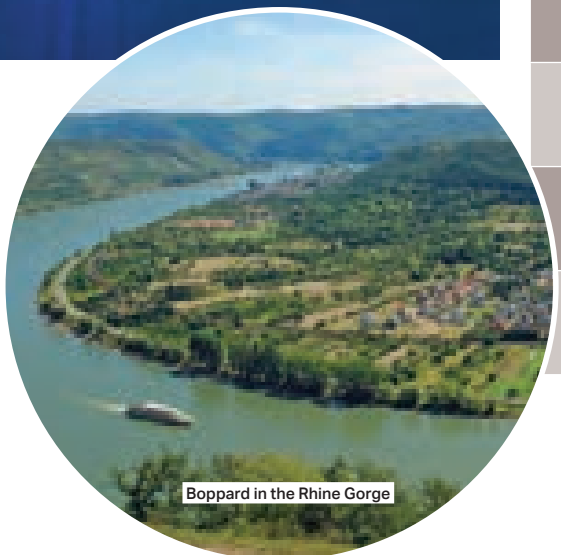
cruise. The lead-in prices are similar, but there are different inclusions and options that agents can highlight. The rail tour is on a half-board basis, so clients will need extra spending money for coffee and lunch, whilst all meals are provided on the cruise, plus early and mid-morning tea and coffee. The cruise, onboard the Lady Anne, also includes nightly entertainment and travel options. All excursions are included with the rail tour and are available as optional extras on the cruise. However, the cruise would suit independent clients who like to explore by themselves as the ship always moors in the centre of towns and villages.

Tim Fleming, sales and business development manager, The River Cruise

Line, said: "A river cruise through the Rhine Valley puts visitors right at the heart of this incredible destination and allows them to view its dramatic scenery at a leisurely pace and from a perspective that land-based tours just can't offer. In each destination, the ship will berth right in the centre and be only a stone's throw from highlights such as Cologne's impressive cathedral and the medieval heart of Koblenz, leaving passengers with more time to explore in the evenings as well as the daytime. Passengers on a river cruise only need to unpack once, but wake up each morning with a different view. A range of additional excursions means that passengers have the option to explore further afield."



Vulkan Express



Boppard in the Rhine Gorge



KEY POINTS	RHINE TRAINS	RHINE CRUISE
Itinerary	Great Little Trains of the Rhine Valley	Rhine Discovery
Number of nights	5 nights	4 nights
Number of destinations visited	5 (Remagen, Cologne, Ahr Valley, Engeln, Rudesheim)	5 (Koblenz, Rudesheim, Boppard, Bonn, Cologne)
Transport from UK	Return Eurostar from London to Brussels and onward rail travel included	Return coach from chosen departure point and ferry crossing included
Additional transport option	N/A	Eurostar or flights
Transfers from hotels and airports	N/A	N/A
Included meals	Breakfasts and dinners, remaining meals up to £20pppd	All breakfasts, lunches and dinners
Non-alcoholic beverages, beer, select wines and spirits	Up to £20pppd	Early risers and mid-morning tea/coffee included, remaining drinks up to £15pppd
Entertainment	N/A	Daily entertainment included
Excursions	Included	Optional from £17pppd or £99 package (saving £31pp)
Basic per diem rate	£99.80	£91.80
ADDITIONAL CHARGES	From £120 per person	From £75pp
TOTAL	£839pp	£534pp

SAIL OF THE CENTURIES

BY DAVE MONK

CRUISES ALONG THE DANUBE LET YOUR CLIENTS EXPERIENCE EUROPE'S
BAROQUE PAST IN MODERN LUXURY

Spanning ten countries, the Danube is a popular destination for river cruisers, allowing lovers of city breaks to visit the historic capitals of Budapest, Vienna, Belgrade and Bratislava from the comfort of a floating hotel.

Some operators combine the delights of Europe's second-biggest river with itineraries on the Rhine and Main, allowing travellers to sail from Amsterdam to Budapest on journeys of up to 19 days.

This year there is a variety of themed cruises to pique customers' interests. Golf lovers will have to go a fairway to beat AmaWaterways' package that combines a seven-night cruise, three nights in Prague and the chance to play on five championship courses, including the venues of the Czech, Slovakian and Hungarian Opens. The golf package is available on every Danube sailing this year.

Jamie Loizou, sales, marketing and digital director for AmaWaterways, said: "The quality of these hand-picked courses means we have created a truly unique product, which we feel is unsurpassed by anything that is currently in the marketplace. This gives huge potential to harness a new emerging market, not to mention a fantastic opportunity to encourage new-to-river-cruise customers. A non-playing partner also has all the choice that our shore excursions offer, making our golfing packages even more appealing."

AmaWaterways is teaming up with LGT Golf on the

itineraries. Its managing director, Nicholas Boekdrukker, said: "Everything will have been arranged in advance for the guests – their tee time, practice balls for their warm-up and pull trolleys. After their round, they will enjoy lunch in the clubhouse while their clubs are cleaned by our staff. We then return the guests to their river cruise ship by private transportation – even if the ship has moved on to its next stop."

If cruisers prefer music, Scenic has two eight-day trips from Budapest, one with Welsh singer Aled Jones in April and the other with Britain's Got Talent winner Paul Potts in June. Each will give a private performance in Vienna's Arsenal, with Aled singing a collection of popular classics from his recent No.1 album One Voice. Both stars will also hold an exclusive question-and-answer session on board.

Or travellers might enjoy The Sound of Music cruise from APT with 66-year-old Nicholas Hammond, who played eldest son Friedrich von Trapp in the classic film. He'll be talking about a few of his favourite things on a special 15-day sailing from July 9. The package includes three exclusive VIP events: a piano recital at Nymphenburg Castle, a private rail journey on the Majestic Emperor from Passau to Linz, and a private concert at the Liechtenstein City Palace, Vienna.

APT also caters to more active passengers with a 15-day Cycling Magnificent Europe journey from Amsterdam to Budapest with seven excursions by bike, including around the historic streets of Cologne and Vienna. >

SALES TIPS

1

Sell pre- or post-cruise extensions

2

Customers can be sold a variety of trips from five to 19 days

3

The Danube is only a 90-minute flight from the UK and can be reached by rail from St Pancras via Brussels and Frankfurt

4

Danube cruises tend to appeal to the over-50s, who enjoy city breaks, spectacular scenery and a good ship experience

5

Encourage passengers to travel with friends or in a group



"First-time river cruisers like the fact [the Danube] takes in so many countries in a short space of time - Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Germany can all be experienced in just over a week."

APT's UK sales and commercial manager Angela Waite said agents find the Danube is a versatile option for a range of clients. "First-time river cruisers like the fact that it takes in so many countries in a short space of time - Hungary, Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Germany can all be experienced in just over a week. For those who are looking to spend more time cruising, it links seamlessly via the Main-Danube Canal to Amsterdam. The versatility means agents can secure sales across a much broader client base, securing more commission in the process."

Saga claims to offer more variety than anyone else, from starter cruises of five nights to grand voyages to the Delta. It also has sailings that explore the tributaries of the Sava and Drava. Saga's In The Wake of the Ottomans nine-night cruise includes the dramatic Iron Gates gorge as well as passages on the smaller rivers.

This year, Crystal launches its second river ship, Crystal Mahler. The new addition, with butler service for every suite, will offer 16-day trips between Amsterdam and Budapest along the Danube, Main and Rhine.

CroisiEurope is entirely renovating MS Symphonie, to be rechristened MS Symphonie II. Another of its ships, MS Beethoven, offers an eight-day Biking along the Danube round trip from Vienna.

Travellers who want to reach the Black Sea can take

a 16-day round trip from Passau with Amadeus River Cruises on a selection of ships and dates.

For those who don't like to fly, Shearings offers coach, rail and ferry transfers to explore the Danube on the MS Serenade 2.

Alternatively, Great Rail Journeys is offering ten-day cruises on the A-Rosa Donna, travelling by Eurostar from St Pancras to Brussels then high-speed train to Nuremberg and on to Passau to join the ship, travelling back via Cologne.

Hebridean has only one cruise on the Danube this year - ten nights on the Royal Crown. ⚓



The Savor sails past Durnstein (Picture: Tauck)



An aerial view of Durnstein (Picture: Tauck)

BOOK IT

VIKING

offers a 15-day Grand European Tour from Amsterdam to Budapest - taking in the Danube, Rhine and Main - from £2,695, including 12 guided tours, free wi-fi and drinks with onboard lunch and dinner service.

0800 319 6660
vikingrivercruises.co.uk

TAUCK

has a 12-day cruise from Budapest to the Black Sea from £3,680, including gratuities, shore excursions, hotel accommodation and unlimited drinks.

0800 810 8020
tauck.co.uk

THE RIVER CRUISE LINE

offers a ten-day Cruise The Danube to Vienna and Budapest trip over 11 departure dates from £1,099 including return coach travel, ferry crossing from Dover and overnight hotel stays. The journey is also available by air as an eight-day itinerary from £1,149.

0844 544 7580
rivercruiseline.co.uk

OTHER LINES OFFERING DANUBE CRUISES:

Avalon Waterways
avaloncruises.co.uk

Emerald Waterways
emeraldwaterways.co.uk

Noble Caledonia
noble-caledonia.co.uk

Riviera Travel
riviera.co.uk

Uniworld
uniworld.com

Vantage Deluxe World Travel
vantagetravel.com

Brain teaser



1

A cocktail of rum, lemon or lime juice and sugar?



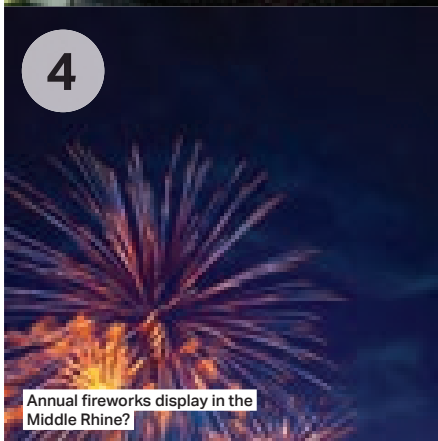
2

Tallest waterslide at sea, found on Harmony of the Seas?



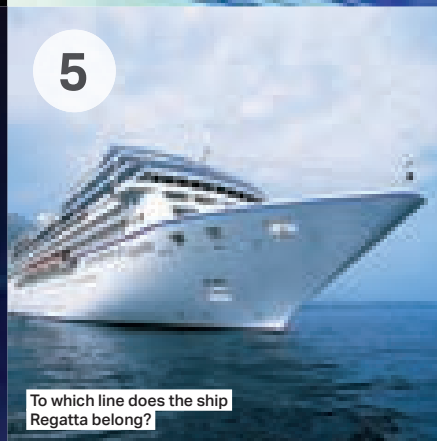
3

Largest ship in Fred. Olsen fleet?



4

Annual fireworks display in the Middle Rhine?



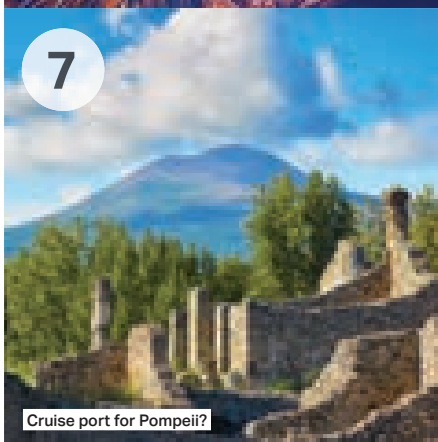
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To which line does the ship Regatta belong?



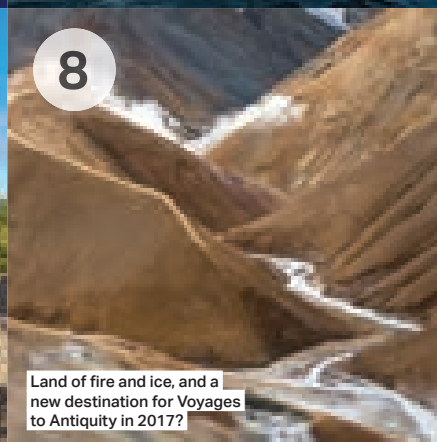
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Torstein Hagen is the founder of which line?



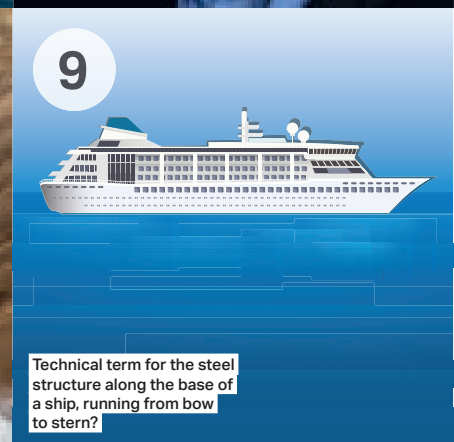
7

Cruise port for Pompeii?



8

Land of fire and ice, and a new destination for Voyages to Antiquity in 2017?



9

Technical term for the steel structure along the base of a ship, running from bow to stern?

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A They will form the name of a city on the Adriatic Sea.

Email the name of the city to Katherine.lawrey@realresponsemedia.com by January 31 to enter the prize draw. Include your full name and cruise agency details, plus a contact telephone number.

NEW YEAR — NOT SO NEW DISCOUNTS

John Honeywell takes a look at the tactics used by some of the biggest names in cruising to encourage customers to book their holidays during the so-called Wave season



Consumers like me, who maxed out their credit cards in the run-up to Christmas, can't start to think about planning the summer holiday until Easter at least.

But there must be people with cash to spare, otherwise cruise lines would not find it worthwhile to place so much emphasis and reliance on the so-called Wave season to kick-start their sales.

There are so many discount deals, two-for-one offers, included drinks packages, onboard credit and other incentives, it's difficult to work out which offers the best value.

The same sort of high-pressure selling is also packed into the annual National Cruise Month, and can be found at cruise show events up and down the country.

You might wonder whether customers will one day realise that there is no point booking at any other time of year unless money really is no object.

But the fact is that cruise lines are little different from the furniture stores advertising every week on television. There's always a sale. Every. Single. Week.

Come on! Does anyone really rush out to Oak Furniture Land or DFS because they believe the sale 'must end' on Monday? We all know that more cut-price deals will be on offer from Tuesday.

And it's the same with cruises. If interest starts to flag, it's been a quiet week with sales failing to match the targets, or a particular itinerary looks like it's failing to generate excitement, out will come the flash sales and more bargain offers.

Talking about television though, at

least the Wave season brings a new batch of cruise advertising commercials to our screens and onto our laptops.

And they are all so different.

P&O continue to rely on roguish Rob Brydon, who you might think has been on one long cruise since Christmas Day 2014. Talk about This is the Life!

He keeps going back for a refresher though, and the latest versions see him soaking up Greek culture, embarrassing himself by smashing a plate, and being greeted by P&O's pin-up captain, Robert Camby.

Royal Caribbean has crafted an

“Does anyone really rush out to DFS because they believe the sale 'must end' on Monday? We all know that more cut-price deals will be on offer from Tuesday.”

artfully-shot travelogue which looks beautiful but says little. There's no voice-over and only a brief view of anything related to cruising – an aerial shot of the stern of Navigator of the Seas.

The beautiful images are identified only by their geographical coordinates. For the record, they include a deserted beach in Tenerife, a stained glass rose window in Barcelona, a rocky coastline in Lanzarote, a waterfall in Croatia's Krka National Park, and a speedboat and parasail off the coast of Santorini.

Cunard has gone to town with a new brand promotion titled 'Everything you wanted,

nothing you expected'.

Two versions have been produced; the 30-second edit has a voiceover from Emilia Fox, star of TV's *Silent Witness* and Sky's *Delicious*, while the full one-minute-43-second version relies only on a sotto voce "Welcome aboard", drowned out by a big-band soundtrack.

I'm not sure whether there are any potential customers who would not have expected a Cunard cruise to come with views of the ocean, Champagne by the bucket-load, afternoon tea, massages, more sea, jogging on the Promenade Deck, beer in the Golden Lion pub, fine dining, a night at the theatre, yet more Champagne and finally an arrival in New York.

It all looked very familiar to me, but then I have been fortunate to cross the Atlantic with Cunard a number of times.

What do the commercials say about the brands? What's the hidden message behind the high production values?

P&O's happy smiley approach makes me think they want to come over all *Love Actually*. Let's just hope they are never tempted to replace the lovely Rob with the dastardly Hugh Grant.

Royal Caribbean treats us to some stunning images, but it's a bit like a show reel from *Planet Earth* with the David Attenborough commentary edited out.

By contrast, Cunard's tale of the unexpected looks like a modern-day *Downton Abbey: The Director's Cut*.

Wouldn't it be fun to see all three occupying prime-time slots during the current series of ITV's documentary series *The Cruise*, filmed onboard *Royal Princess*? ⚓



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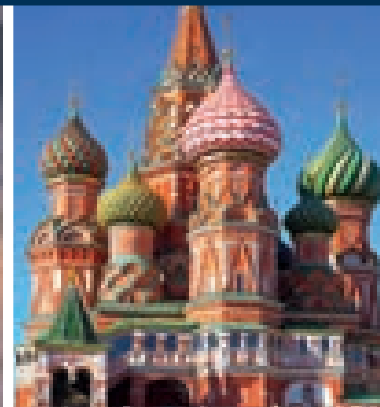
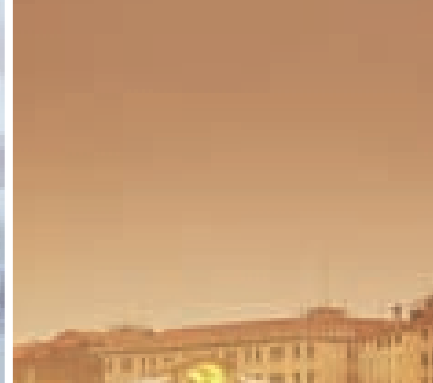


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