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Eligibility and Entry: For the Monthly Prize Draw entrants must be UK Travel Agents that are registered to trade with Fred Olsen Cruise Lines (FOCL). For the Free Car Prize Draw entrants must be Travel Agents based in the UK aged 17 or over (excluding employees of FOCL or any of its subsidiary companies, and their families). Entry to both Prize Draw competitions is by registering each FOCL cruise booking on the FOCL Travel Agent Centre on the FOCL website during the respective Qualifying Period. The Qualifying Period for Monthly Prize Draws is between 1 June 2018 and 31 December 2018 (from the 1st of the month in which the draw takes place). The Qualifying Period for the Free Car Prize Draw is from 1 June 2018 to 14 December 2018. The promoter of this Prize Draw is Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines Limited, 42 Wilde House Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 5LL (registered office 2nd floor, 64-65 Vincent Square, London, SW1P 2NJ). For full terms and conditions of The Big Fred Giveaway Prize Draw visit fredolsencruises.com/agent/giveaway. All bookings are subject to FOCL standard terms and conditions. Information shown is correct at time of going to print (May 2018). E&OE.

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- A CRUISE

6 OF THE BEST ECO-FRIENDLY CRUISE LINES

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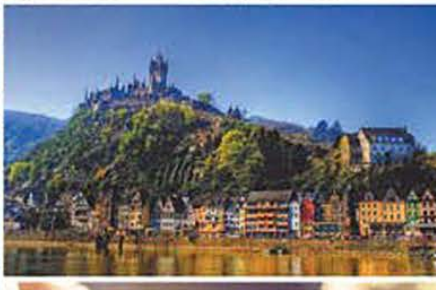

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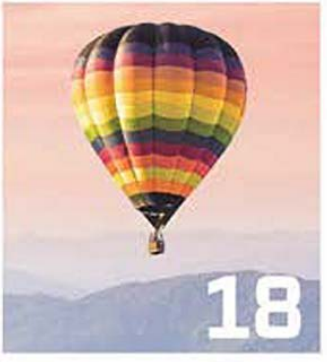

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Letter

Welcome to the new issue...

Travelling solo is on an upward spiral, and cruising has so much to offer those going it alone – as I discovered on a recent river cruise along the **Douro**. Apprehensive at first, I soon made new friends and embraced the fact that I could do what I wanted, when I wanted. I would do it again in a heartbeat. Read my story on page 57 and turn to page 24 where we report on the latest news in the solo sector.

Also this issue, we focus on some key destinations that we know your clients are asking for, namely **Scandinavia and the Baltics**, and the **Dutch waterways**. We've also been in **Palma** for the christening of **Marella Explorer** – along with more than 600 agents. The ship has an informal yet boutique feel which is bound to appeal to a cross-section of clients; see inside (and out) on page 60. With flashing wristbands, fireworks and the ship's Godmothers in attendance, the christening ceremony was pretty epic, too.

Rebecca

Rebecca Barnes
Editor
@RebeccaCTN

WELLNESS

Viking promotes wellness at Hampton Court flower show

Winners of the WAVE Wellbeing Award, the Viking Cruises Nordic Lifestyle Garden at the 2018 RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show (3 July - 8 July), will explore the three dimensions of wellness: connecting with nature, and living and eating well, providing a window into the experience of wellness the Viking way.

The great outdoors plays a profound role in the life of Scandinavians, as it provides a sanctuary for body and mind, and Viking ships have been designed to evoke a serene ambience, with options of active excursions for the health-conscious.

Recent research commissioned by the cruise line reveals that over 60 per cent of 55+ year-olds regularly walk outside, spending time connecting with the outdoors and nature, while 31 per cent specifically like being by the water, whether that is by the ocean or river.

Going green with Viking

Jewel of the Seas returns to Dubai

NEW ITINERARIES

Jewel of the Seas returns to Dubai

Royal Caribbean International has announced that Dubai will be the new home of Jewel of the Seas from December 2019 to March 2020.

The ship is one of Royal Caribbean's most contemporary, intimately sized ships, having recently undergone a $30 million makeover in 2016.

Returning to the region after a two-year break, two different seven-night Arabian Gulf itineraries will be on offer, including maiden calls to Sir Bani Yas, Doha and Bahrain.

Jewel of the Seas will be repositioning from Rome to Dubai on a 16-night Suez Canal cruise from 30 November to 16 December 2019.

MD of Royal Caribbean International UK and Ireland, Ben Bouldin said: "We have seen a surge in interest in Middle Eastern holidays. The enticing new destinations, enhanced by exciting shore excursions, and complemented by our extraordinary ship, will be the talk of the town for agents across the country."

Dubai is emerging as a centre for the global cruise industry.

OCEAN CRUISES

Bookings open for Nieuw Statendam

Bookings are open for the Premiere Voyage and 2018-19 inaugural Caribbean cruise season of Holland America Line's Nieuw Statendam.

While much of the ship's design will be similar to Koningsdam, the first Pinnacle Class ship, Nieuw Statendam will carry 2,666 guests and have exclusive public spaces and its own style created by hospitality designer Adam D. Tihany and designer and architect Bjorn Storbraaten.

Due for delivery on 1 December 2018, the ship is currently under construction at Fincantieri's Marghera shipyard. When Nieuw Statendam departs Civitavecchia on its Premiere Voyage on 5 December, it will spend 14 days crossing the Atlantic Ocean to Fort Lauderdale.

NEW ITINERARIES

Crystal launches Arabian Nights Collection

The 62-guest Crystal Esprit, the award-winning boutique yacht of Crystal Yacht Expedition Cruises, will embark on a new season of voyages through the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Oman and the Holy Land in October through December 2019. Sailings will cruise the Arabian Peninsula, including overnights in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, while a double overnight in Aqaba, Jordan, allows for visits to the legendary Rose City of Petra and Wadi Rum.

Also on the roster of destinations are Doha, Qatar, and Sokhna, Egypt, which offers guests a gateway to the pyramids of Giza, and the soon-to-be-opened archaeological Grand Egyptian Museum. The resort town of Eilat in Israel is also included.

APPOINTMENTS

P&O Cruises has announced the promotion of Rosy Sims to director of trade engagement and on-board sales. Sims will focus on the new 180,000-tonne ship, which launches in May 2020, build on the success of Shine Rewards Club and work with agents.

Amanda Elgie joins MSC Cruises in the newly created position of regional sales manager for the North East and Yorkshire. Amanda previously worked at AMAWaterways as sales manager.

Liz Ryan is now senior regional sales manager at Saga Travel, responsible for managing the trade regional sales team. Liz returns to Saga from Wendy Wu, and has also worked for AffordableCarHire.com, Travel Supermarket and Global Travel Group.

Dawn Quinn takes over from Angela Sloan as head of UK trade sales for Scenic Group.

"Dawn played a very pivotal role last year in helping our UK business achieve record sales growth by quite some margin," the group's managing director UK, Colin Downing, said.

NEW ITINERARIES

MSC Grandiosa to be Christened in Hamburg

MSC Grandiosa

MSC Cruises has announced that MSC Grandiosa will be christened in Hamburg on 2 November 2019.

The new ship will feature two new shows from Cirque du Soleil at Sea, created exclusively for guests as part of a long-term partnership between MSC Cruises and Cirque du Soleil.

MSC Grandiosa will showcase an even larger Mediterranean-style promenade that serves as the social hub of the ship, with an array of shops and specialty restaurants, as well as a new bar and lounge, L'Atelier Bistrot, with lounge seating with a stage and a dance floor, and terrace seating with Parisian Bistrot tables and chairs.

The cruise line will also christen MSC Bellissima in Southampton on 2 March 2019. At the CLIA Conference 2018, all agent delegates were invited to attend.

FOOD & DRINK

Oceania's new dining options

Oceania Cruises is unveiling new dinner menus that are the most expansive and diverse at sea. They feature a spectrum of world flavours, as well as an all-new executive chef's Food & Wine Pairing, featuring the chef's selection of specially curated dishes, and three tasting menus.

The Global Cuisine tastings feature bolder and more adventurous ethnic dishes focusing on a particular region, country or style of cooking.

"These spectacular new menus exemplify our commitment to culinary excellence and offering our guests not just the finest cuisine at sea, but diverse dining choices that surprise and delight the palate," said Bob Binder, president & CEO of Oceania Cruises.

Oceania cuisine

NEW SHIPS

A-ROSA announces new Douro ship

A-ROSA will sail the Douro

A-ROSA has announced it will sail the river Douro for the first time in 2019 with a newly constructed ship. The ship will be built in Portugal and christened in May 2019. This is A-ROSA's first new build since A-ROSA FLORA in 2014.

With a maximum capacity of 126 passengers, the ship will have four decks, spacious cabins and suites, a swimming pool plus spa and a fitness area with a sauna.

A-ROSA will sail the Douro from May to November 2019 with a seven-night itinerary travelling from Porto, calling at Pinhao, Vega de Teron, Barca d'Alva (Salamanca), Regua and Entre-os-Rios.

For the first year, the UK market will be selling selected international departure dates and A-ROSA is currently in discussions with several tour operator partners. More details will be announced in due course.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Strong growth creates new positions at ROL

On the back of a record year, with sales of over £150 million, independent cruise retailer ROL Cruise has announced the creation of brand-new MD positions within its management team to further accelerate growth over the coming years.

Jeremy Dickinson will adopt a more strategic role as chairman, with Sarah Wikevand being promoted to MD, where she will drive cruise sales growth and cruise partnerships still further. Two additional internal-facing MD positions have also been created. They will be taken by Ellie Fielder and Rosie Weir.

"We have ambitious plans," explained Jeremy Dickinson, "and the creation of these new appointments will give us the necessary enhanced infrastructure and focus to accelerate continued growth."

Sarah Wikevand

IN BRIEF

A Morning with the Masters

Uniworld is offering guests a private 'Morning with the Masters' tour of the Hermitage museum in Amsterdam. Guests will receive a crowd-free viewing of an extraordinary collection of Dutch Masters paintings – 30 monumental group paintings from the golden age that have been called 'Cousins of The Night Watch'. Drawn from both the Amsterdam Museum and the Rijksmuseum, these works have rarely been displayed because of their size.

Crystal's 2020 deployment

Crystal has unveiled the 2020 deployment for its ocean-going vessels, including Crystal Symphony, Crystal Serenity and Crystal Esprit. Just two months after the announcement of its 105-day 2020 'Epic Empires & Idyllic Isles' Southern Hemisphere World Cruise aboard Crystal Serenity Crystal released the remainder of its collection of 2020 luxury cruises. Crystal's 2020 itineraries are now open for bookings.

Azamara Club Cruises Football World Cup Cruise

A special experience for 2018, the 12-night Baltic and Russia voyage with Azamara Club Cruises will combine a cruise in the Baltic with the chance to watch one of the FIFA World Cup 2018 matches at St Petersburg's new Zenit Stadium. Departs 27 June 2018 on Azamara Journey.

Princess Cruises 'Three for Free'

Princess Cruises is offering a free bottle of wine, free speciality dining and up to $200 shore excursion credit per person to every guest that books one of over 600 select sailings departing in 2018 and 2019. The deal is available until 2 July 2018. Featured in the offer are the first cruises of Sky Princess, the 3,660-guest ship that will launch in October 2019.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Celebrity Silhouette positions in Southampton

Celebrity Silhouette

Celebrity Silhouette is in Southampton for its first summer season of sailing from the UK. The 2,886-guest ship replaces Celebrity Eclipse, which has moved to Dublin for summer 2018.

Following a two-night sailing to Paris (via Le Havre), Silhouette will offer eight- to 14-night holidays to destinations including the Canary Islands, Spain, Italy, the Norwegian Fjords and Iceland.

Celebrity Cruises sails on every continent in the world and has a fleet of 12 ships. The revolutionary new ship Celebrity Edge will join the fleet in November 2018, ahead of a summer season in Europe for 2019, including a 10-night Iberian Peninsula sailing from Southampton on 15 May 2019.

Jane Atkins, MD, and Matthew Herbert, product and yield director

NEW ITINERARIES

Shearings unveils 2019 brochure

Shearings Holidays has launched its 2019 river cruise brochure, featuring 52 itineraries on sale on board 20 ships. The operator has doubled its capacity with A-ROSA river cruises, and CroisiEurope will be featured again with 11 ships, four of which are new to the programme. Three full-season chartered ships – MV Virginia, MS Serenade, and the MV Esmeralda – will return with various new itineraries, while a full charter departure on the River Douro in June 2019, on board MS Infante Don Henrique, is a new addition.

OCEAN CRUISES

Fred. Olsen considers new ship for fleet

At Fred. Olsen's dedicated trade conference, Closer, held on 1 May 2018 at The Belfry in Sutton Coldfield, the possibility of a new ship was discussed by those present. This would be the fifth ocean cruiser in the Fred. Olsen fleet and the company's first new build.

Its current fleet of four ships is made up of previously owned vessels. However, despite the discussion, the company was keen to stress that no deal had been agreed and that its ships have undergone £40 million of renovations over the past eighteen months.

NEW SHIPS

Extraordinary makeover has everyone jumping for joy

Royal Caribbean unveiled the new-look Independence of the Seas during a two-day sailing for 1,200 travel agents and the media, following an extraordinary multi-million-dollar makeover.

The 10-year-old Freedom Class ship underwent a refurbishment in dry dock for 30 days as part of the cruise line's 'Amplified' programme, which will be rolled out across nine other ships in the fleet.

"We listened to what our guests wanted," says Ben Bouldin, Royal Caribbean's associate vice president and managing director UK & Ireland. "They wanted extra splash, extra flavour and extra views. We've given them that with some extraordinary features we know they will love."

New additions include an escape room, laser tag, panoramic staterooms, dining options, and Sky Pad – a virtual reality bungee-style trampoline. Set in a giant orange ball on Indy's top deck, it soon became something of a maritime mystery.

"A captain of the Queen Elizabeth ship radioed me to find out what it was," commented the ship's captain, Iv Vidos. "I told him it was a secret and he thought it was a giant new type of radar. Everyone's talking about it."

The makeover included refreshing every facet of the 3,600-passenger ship, from new carpets through to wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling windows in some ocean view suites – and even finding space for 107 new cabins.

"It was like a giant jigsaw moving everything around," says Royal Caribbean's International president and CEO Michael Bayley. "We have enhanced the ship but kept the essence of Independence of the Seas as she's so popular. We managed to spend upwards of $100 million."

The SkyPad

The new features join regulars including an ice rink, FlowRiders, and 12 West End-style shows.

The Mariner of the Seas will be the next ship to undergo refurbishment as part of Royal Caribbean's $90million amplification.

APPOINTMENTS

Liz Ryan

Newly appointed senior regional sales manager at Saga Travel reveals how she plans to take sales and agent partnerships to the next level

What are your immediate plans for the regional trade sales team?
As I've only recently joined Saga, my immediate plans are to ensure our amazing regional team have clarity on their areas and objectives. It goes without saying that I also need to ensure we are offering market-leading support to our agent partners through training, visits and events; Saga has so much incredible product I need to make sure agents fully understand our proposition.

You've previously worked for Saga. Have you noticed a change since returning to work for them?
Since coming back to Saga, I have noticed significant changes in the way the business

supports the trade. Most importantly, this is evident from the most senior level. There is a renewed energy and desire to succeed and grow with our trade partners.

Travel agents are clearly very important to Saga. What are the key things you would want them to know about your products?
The key message I would want them to take away is our many differentiating factors when compared with other cruise lines. We have industry-leading inclusions, such as insurance, VIP door-to-door car service, inclusive gratuities... the list goes on!

Saga is building two new ships: Spirit of Discovery and Spirit of Adventure. You must be very excited about the opportunities they present for the trade
Hugely excited – as are the team! The new ships will mark a new direction for Saga Ocean Cruise, redefining small ship luxury cruising. Both Spirit of Discovery (2019) and Spirit of Adventure (2020) will feature all-balcony accommodation with boutique hotel styling, while maintaining dining and service at the heart of the experience. We are all very much looking forward to welcoming our agents and trade partners on board!

Will you continue to offer agent training and incentives?
We are now running some really exciting incentives, with even more to come. We know how important it is to reward agents for their loyalty and support; this certainly won't change. Of course, the team and I are very happy to offer training to any agent looking to learn more about Saga. Just contact your regional sales manager, as we'd love to hear from you.

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ABTA

Movers & Shakers

If you only have five minutes to read the magazine, you'll want to check out our hot picks this month...

1 GAME ON

Our latest Cruise Challenge events in Manchester and Glasgow were a resounding success. Agents from Barrhead Travel Group, Travel Counsellors, Thomas Cook, Virgin Holidays, TUI, Freedom Personal Travel Advisors, Skylord Travel and a2b Travel were in attendance to play the fun quiz game where the best cruise knowledge means the best prizes – including luxury beauty and grooming kits, champagne and even a cruise! "The Glasgow event was the best training, entertaining and fun evening we had experienced by suppliers in years," said Catriona Parsons from Barrhead Travel Group. "Our staff are highly competitive and while learning they also had an amazing evening!" If you'd like to attend a Cruise Challenge near you, visit thecruisechallenge.com.

2 LIVING WELL

We loved Viking Cruises' Wellness Garden, which won a coveted gold medal at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2018. Designed by Paul Hervey-Brookes, the garden explored three dimensions of wellness – eating well, living well and the idea of balance bought about by interacting with the landscape and living in harmony with nature.

3 SEA SWING

Well done Marella Explorer for providing the ultimate in relaxation; we think the ship's balcony hammocks are genius and can't understand why more cruise lines aren't following suit. What could be more relaxing than cruising the ocean with your feet up and a glass of something chilled in hand? Perfection.

4 VIVA BARCELONA

One of the greatest cities in the world has been captured in the Barcelona Sketchbook, which gives an insight into the Catalonia capital and its surroundings, as artist Graham Byfield strolls with his sketchpad through the Ramblas, the city, and its cafes and parks. Accompanying the sketches are notes handwritten by the artist, as well as an introduction to Barcelona and its various areas by heritage expert Marcus Binney. Price: £22. Available from laurenceking.com

5 WHEELIE GREAT

Marella Explorer is also chock-full of quirky design touches throughout the ship. We adore these bike seats (next to the vintage-style Scoops ice cream parlour on deck 11), which face out to sea. For more on this brand-new ship, turn to page 56.

WORDS: REBECCA BARNES AND GARY PETERS

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Your Business

The christening of Marella Explorer, Palma

AmaLea

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What's in it for you?

OFFER

Ship visits with Celebrity Cruises

Celebrity Cruises is offering more than 1,300 agents interactive ship-board training opportunities during 2018.

Visits to Celebrity Silhouette, recently arrived in Southampton, and Celebrity Eclipse in Dublin, where it became the first cruise ship ever to be based in that city, kick off the extensive training programme.

There are 26 agent ship visits on offer across Southampton, Liverpool, Dover, Belfast, Cork, Inverness and Dublin. The popular treasure hunt and riddle-solving training sessions are returning, with six on-board interactive workshops being hosted around the UK. Plus, luxury agents can explore the brand's Suite Class offering on board in Southampton and Dublin.

cruisingpower.com

Samuel Beckett Bridge, Dublin

Coffee time with APT

APT is hosting a series of regional coffee mornings in June and July, aimed at helping homeworkers to learn more about how its products can help grow their business.

APT's on-road sales team will be hosting the events, which are part of a broader APT initiative to help better engage and support homeworkers across the UK to harness the growth opportunities that selling its river cruise and escorted touring can offer.

APT's head of sales and commercial, Angela Waite, said: "River cruising is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the travel industry and it's a great product for homeworkers to offer as it holds such broad appeal. We want to help our homeworking partners to feel confident selling this product, as well as our escorted touring offering, because we know that when clients book with APT they tend to come back again."

EVENTS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- **Manchester** 10am, 13 June 2018. Costa Coffee, Arndale Shopping Centre
- **Edinburgh** 10am, 21 June 2018. Café Rouge, Frederick Street
- **Bristol** 10am 28 June 2018. Costa Coffee, Cabot Circus level 1
- **Birmingham** 10am, 29 June 2018. Café Rouge, The Mailbox
- **Ipswich** 10am, 4 July 2018. Cosy Club, Buttermarket Shopping Centre
- **Amersham** 10am, 19 July 2018. APT Offices, 5 Hill Avenue.

Spaces are limited. To register, email APT at agentclub@aptouring.co.uk.

INCENTIVE

Summer loving from CMV

Cruise and Maritime Voyages is giving agents the opportunity to be entered into a draw to win one of 10 summer prizes till the end of June. These include a Sunrise Hot Air Balloon Flight, a Horse Racing Day for Two, a Hamper with Prosecco, a portable charcoal BBQ with accessories, and an Amazon eReader Kindle with a £10 voucher.

Bookings can be of any nature including overnight festive events, repositioning cruises and all other cruises. All cruises come with good fares and offers to encourage early bookings. Agents should send details of their booking(s) to competitions@cruiseandmaritime.com with their name, ABTA number and booking reference. All entrants must be 18 years and over.

INCENTIVE

Riviera's passage to India

If you book tours as well as cruises, get in line to win one of eight places on the Great India Fam Trip with Riviera Travel. You'll fly in Premium with Virgin Atlantic, expert guides will show you India's Golden Triangle – Delhi, Agra and Jaipur – plus you'll stay in an original Rajasthani fort. You can also win Love2shop vouchers. Simply collect points for every Riviera Travel tour you book up until 8 July 2018.

- 10 points for tours up to five nights
- 20 points for European tours of six nights or more
- 30 points for worldwide tours
- 50 points for selected worldwide tours.

Each booking grants you one entry. For every 100 points earned, you'll be rewarded with three bonus entries plus a £20 Love2shop voucher. To earn an extra 50 points, visit rivieraexpert.com and complete all of the online training modules.

To claim these bonus points, you must email your training certificate to agencysales@rivieratravel.co.uk before 8 July 2018.

INCENTIVE

The big Fred. Olsen giveaway

Fancy winning a car or a cruise? Each time an agent sells a Fred. Olsen cruise they will automatically be entered into a monthly prize draw to win one of seven cruises for two. When the competition closes on 15 December, there will be a further prize draw to win a car. fredolsencruises.com/travel-agent-centre

Down on the River

Mike Evans, head of sales at Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, discusses why trade will always be the main focus of the business, and why brand knowledge is key for sales success

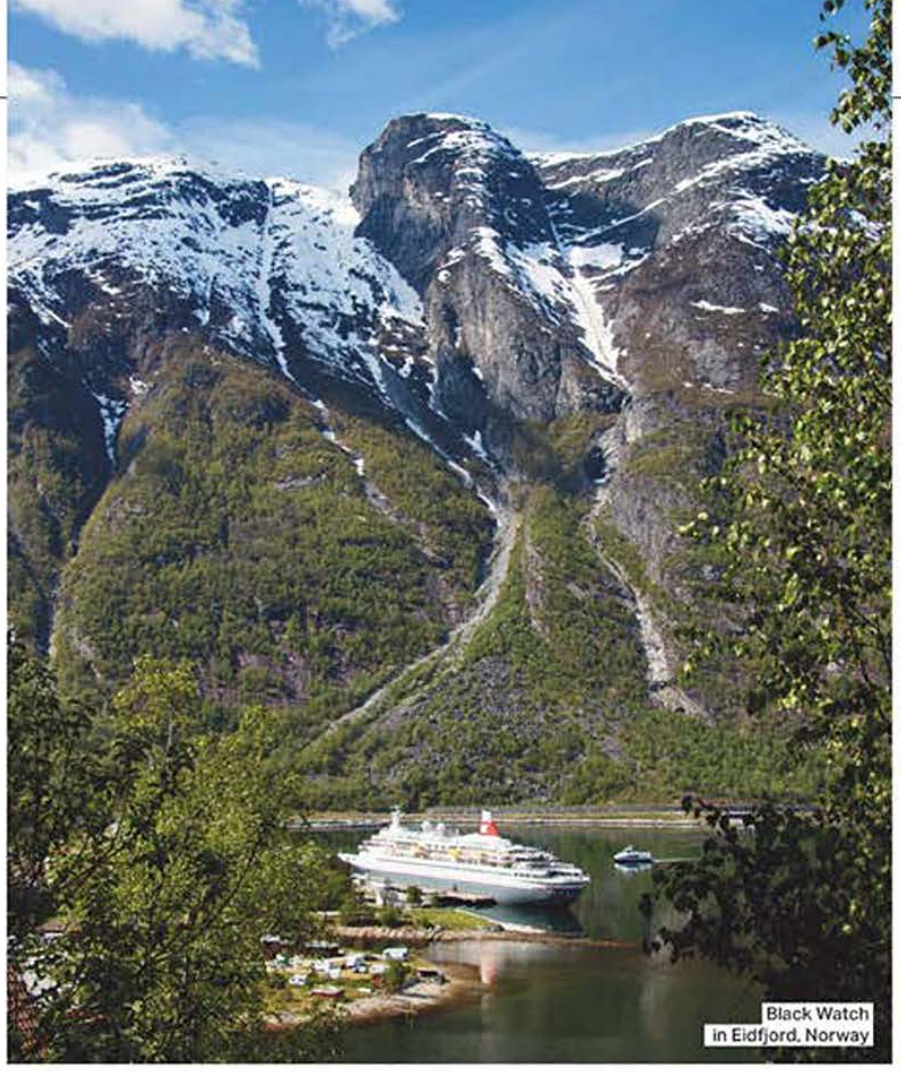
We view our relationship with the trade as our number one focus. The majority of our sales come from the travel trade and this is our main focus going forward. We have always worked with the trade since we first started cruising from the UK in the early 80s and that relationship has only got better over the years. Many of our partnerships with individual agents have been running for over 25 years; it is not just a business relationship, we are genuine friends working together. All agents can earn a good return by selling our cruises. It is a fact that over 55 per cent of clients will return to us, so from an agents' point of view, once they have them they are going to be cruising for a long time in the future. We encourage agents to get their clients to rebook on board as the booking is automatically returned to the agent, and the number of agents proactively pushing guests to rebook on board is increasing every year.

We work with all agents that want to work with us. We have good relationships with the multiples and the consortia, and a dedicated national accounts sales manager to drive sales through these channels. In addition, we have a team of account managers under our field sales manager who work with our top 100 agents in terms of revenue. Their role is to be in touch with these agents on a regular basis, and to help drive sales through a combination of marketing and promotional opportunities. In addition, our dedicated tour ops team work on a wholesale basis with a number of UK tour operators, as well as overseas resellers. Below this we have three further tiers which all reflect the amount of revenue they achieve for us, as well as how proactive they are in marketing and selling our brand.

A big part of learning about our brand is to experience what we have to offer. All our sales staff are encouraged to experience a cruise to understand the Fred. Olsen difference. Our sales team also train agents to understand what makes us different. Our extensive fam trip programme gives agents the opportunity to experience the product first hand, and learn all there is to know about our product.

Brabant – Fred. Olsen's dedicated river cruising boat

Getting close to the wildlife on Moyenne Island, Seychelles



Black Watch in Eidfjord, Norway

Destination is the priority for Fred. Olsen guests

The big area of growth for us has been the increase in fly cruises in the past two years. This programme is designed to offer people the opportunity to see fantastic places in a 14-day holiday by using the ship as a hotel. We started in late 2017 with a series of Indian Ocean and South Africa holidays, which were designed to show guests that it is not just about amazing beaches. We offer tours to see volcanos and tropical forests while enjoying the culture of these places. In 2019 we go even further with a series of holidays to places like Singapore and Indonesia, and there is also an opportunity to experience New Year's Eve in Sydney. Into 2020 and we have even more exotic holidays available.

Our move into river cruising mirrors our approach to our ocean cruises, whereby we are always striving to take the guest closer to places. The itineraries we offer give guests the chance to see some of the most amazing places in Europe and we operate one vessel along the rivers of the Rhine, Main, Moselle and the Danube. We decided to go for a smaller-size vessel in keeping with our overall philosophy. The vessel takes just over 150 people and the itineraries are planned to give guests plenty of time to explore the towns and cities along the way, with the opportunity to enjoy scenic cruising at its best. We have an understated approach on board, designed to meet sophisticated British tastes. This includes only English being spoken, avoiding the need for announcements to be repeated in multiple languages.

Our research shows that the destination is the number one requirement for guests choosing a particular cruise. Our core destinations like Norway and the Fjords continue to attract new guests, and there has been a fantastic response to our five-night cruises to these destinations. With five regional ports available for guests to choose where to travel from, we are finding we are attracting new guests who in the past would not think of travelling with us.

We are passionate about making sure the right cruise is offered to the right person. We offer a great training facility on our brand new online training module which agents can access and work their way through. There are so many different ships available to guests that for those looking for something specific the chances of being sold the 'wrong' cruise are much greater if the agents don't have the knowledge to steer the client to the right type of cruise for them. It is imperative that a guest's first cruise is everything they wish for, in order for them to return. At Fred. Olsen we make sure that every agent we work with has full knowledge of our ships, as well as the type of guests we have on board in order for them to be certain that our cruises are the right choice. This can only be done through experience and training, which we provide to anyone who wants to know more.

"Cruise revenue is looking healthy – we finished the year around 14 per cent up on the previous year, with figures approaching £200 million"

Travel agent centre:
fredolsencruises.com/agent
Online training: fredolsentraining.com

An inspirational journey, every time

Discover Germany's understated gems along the spectacular Moselle River with Fred. Olsen

A tributary of the Rhine, the Moselle River meanders through picturesque German countryside. Each tantalising twist and turn presents a string of terraced vineyards, sprawling forests, charming towns and fairytale fortresses.

"This is an effortlessly rewarding journey both aboard and ashore"

The ancient city of Koblenz is gatekeeper to the Moselle River, situated at the 'Deutsches Eck', where the Moselle meets the Rhine. Among the highlights of Koblenz are the Prussian Electoral Palace, the 13th century Alte Berg, and the magnificent Ehrenbreitstein Fortress, which can be reached via cable car across the Rhine. At 118m above the city, this slice of history offers the most breathtaking views.

Further along the Moselle Valley is charming Cochem, where romantic squares are lined with pastel-hued townhouses and a jumble of narrow streets that lead to the remains of the old town walls. One of the most iconic monuments along the valley is the Reichsburg Castle; a stroll up to this hilltop fortress offers worthwhile views, too. Also not to be missed is a refreshing glass of the region's renowned local wine in one of the friendly bars or restaurants.

The narrow approach to Bernkastel-Kues offers more lush-green scenery. The fact that this unspoilt route is only accessible to smaller vessels makes the

The picturesque town of Cochem along the Moselle River

journey feel even more special. Once docked alongside this enchanting twin town, there is a range of gems to discover. With the surrounding area boasting world-famous vineyards, a visit to one of the local wineries is highly recommended, as is the medieval market square, Renaissance town hall and the 15th century Spitzhäuschen (Pointed House).

SOMETHING FOR ALL

Whether your customers are river cruising regulars or complete novices, there's sure to be something to entice them. From the dramatic entrance at Koblenz with its mountainous backdrop to the forested hills and quaint towns of the Middle Moselle Valley, this is an effortlessly rewarding journey both aboard and ashore.

Your customers can experience all this on Fred. Olsen's smaller, friendlier Brabant. This elegant and comfortable vessel is in keeping with the British style of Fred. Olsen's ocean-going cruise ships. And with fewer than 80 rooms and suites, Brabant has the intimate, home-from-home atmosphere that Fred. Olsen guests know and love. The spacious public areas, large windows and ample deck space are perfect for savouring the spellbinding views passing by.

Be in with a chance of **WINNING A FIAT 500** with The Big Fred. Olsen Giveaway

Book your customers on a Fred. Olsen River Cruise today

Each river cruise is carefully planned to include daytime scenic cruising, as well as fascinating ports of call, so your customers won't miss the highlights

Smaller-scaled Brabant has the style, ambience and understated quality of a country house hotel

A Fred. Olsen cruise is a typically British experience, where the food, service and shore tours reflect British taste. English is spoken throughout the ship and guests can pay in sterling

Your customers can experience the warmer, friendlier atmosphere Fred. Olsen guests have come to know and love

To find out more about Fred. Olsen River Cruises, visit
fredolsencruises.com/agent

Make shows successful

Thinking about investing in a show or an exhibition? Debbee Dale offers her advice

There are many exhibitions happening all over the country and at various times of the year. Good shows can be exceptional for brand awareness, as well as sales, and travel shows are no exception. There is nothing more motivating for a customer than seeing and being part of an event that brings their holiday aspirations to life, with a specialist on hand to make it happen and book the holiday of their dreams.

I am a particular fan of shows that focus on specific topics and features. They attract more engaged customers – a bonus for those exhibiting and selling. But before investing in a booth, think about your offering: is the feature of the show something you are selling a lot of – or trying to? Can a show help you to build your brand awareness in a particular area and, even better, translate that interest into sales? If yes, go for it – but make sure you're prepared. Here's a checklist:

1 Pick the right exhibition

Do your research and find out the main exhibitions for your sector. Ensure that the right people are going to attend. Ask the organisers to send you information on visitor numbers and demographics, as well as their marketing plan. You can then work out if the people you want to target are going to be there. If not, think hard about where you could better spend your budget.

2 Show marketing and PR

Most exhibitions have a pre-sell period with an intensive marketing and PR programme. This is a good time to introduce yourself to the show's marketing and PR manager, explain what you hope to achieve from the event and provide them with information about you. There's a good chance they'll include you in pre-show PR and marketing. You'd be surprised how many companies miss the chance of being included in previews because they simply fail to email some information.

3 Spread the word

Let existing and potential customers know you'll be exhibiting. Give them an excuse to visit the stand or attend your speaking slot. It could be a prize draw, a product launch, the chance to meet an industry celebrity or just a show-focused visit. Whatever it is, make sure they know you'll be there and have something interesting for them to see, otherwise you may get passed by.

4 Keep it current

Use social and digital media to create a buzz around your stand. Follow the show's Twitter stream so you can add comments and re-tweet. Keep your own social media sites up to date and link in with any new contacts you make at the show.

5 Train your team

How many times have you been to an exhibition and seen people looking bored on their stands? Make sure your people are open, engaging and friendly to anyone who comes by. Invest in some training so your team makes the most of every opportunity to engage with potential customers.

6 Don't forget to follow up

Don't let your sales leads slip away due to poor post-show planning. Contact everyone who visited your stand to thank them for their interest. Finally, keep in touch with any media contacts you've made, as they may want to do a more in-depth feature on your business – or visit your website.

Debbee Dale provides consultancy, training and coaching for businesses, and has designed award-winning online training solutions for ACE (Association of Cruise Experts, now CLIA), Norwegian Cruise Lines and Hurtigruten.

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ASIA

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Independent explorers

Travelling solo has become a much-desired holiday experience, and with cruising offering a safe and secure environment in which to meet new people and visit a new destination almost every day, the number of solo cruise bookings is rapidly increasing

There was once a time when solo cruisers would be hit by an array of penalties: the dreaded single supplement, no dedicated activity programmes, and no single-berth cabins. Things have come a long way since then. Today, solo cruisers can expect tailored activities, dedicated cocktail parties for mingling, and dining companions hand-picked for compatibility.

That said, it remains a fact that single cabins take up almost as much room as twin cabins, yet generate half the revenue. As a result, shipbuilding with solo travellers in mind has never been high on the agenda. Fortunately, the tide has started to turn. The first ship to buck this industry trend was P&O Cruises' Azura, which entered service in 2010 offering 18 dedicated single cabins. Major refits to other P&O Cruises ships swiftly followed, and the 2015 flagship – the 3,647-passenger Britannia – reflected a significant sea-change in attitudes towards the solo cruiser. It boasted the first dedicated single cabins›

River cruises are popular for solo trips

River cruises are fantastic for solo guests, regardless of whether they are craving a peaceful retreat or looking to socialise with like-minded travellers

with balconies and 12 single inside cabins. Single cabins have now been incorporated into most ships in the P&O Cruises fleet, with Britannia featuring 27 dedicated single cabins, 15 of them with a balcony.

Goodbye single supplements

As the trend for solo travel continues to grow, many cruise lines have begun to do away with surcharges. Titan Travel recently announced its number of dedicated solo departure dates has doubled for 2019, featuring 22 itineraries with specific dates for single travellers. Adding to far-flung long-haul destinations such as China, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan and Vietnam are a selection of European countries – from Italy and Switzerland to Portugal, Greece and Germany – all with no single supplement to pay.

Fred. Olsen even scraps the single supplement on selected other room grades on some cruises, while Voyages to Antiquity's sole ship, Aegean Odyssey, often doesn't reach its maximum of 378 passengers thanks to popular pricing for singles. With 35 per cent of the cruise line's UK passengers travelling solo, it now boasts 26 dedicated single occupancy cabins. When these have sold out, low or no-supplement accommodation is offered across selected cruises.

Crystal Cruises also offers an abundance of special solo travel fares, with a wealth of gratuities thrown in. Elaine Gillard, senior sales and marketing manager for Crystal Cruises, commented: "Solo travellers have always been drawn to Crystal and what we have to offer. From enjoying exactly the same staterooms as they would do if they were travelling with a companion, meaning they are not penalised for travelling solo, to some of the lowest solo supplements in the cruise industry, and from dedicated Ambassador Hosts to serve as professional dance partners on every sailing to hosted Solo Traveller cocktail parties towards the start of a cruise. Crystal really is the perfect choice for travelling solo."

P&O Britannia's single cabin

Guests can holiday at their own pace

River roaming

It's not just ocean cruise lines that have cottoned on to the benefits of waiving the single supplement, however. **CroisiEurope**, Europe's largest river cruise operator, has announced that it is waiving the single supplement on all 2018 departures, including the French canals, European rivers and Adriatic coast, as well as on the Volga, the Mekong and in Africa, when booked by 30 June 2018.

River cruises are fantastic for solo guests, regardless of whether they are craving a peaceful retreat or looking to socialise with like-minded travellers. Everything is guided, making it safe, and **Riviera Travel** even offers dedicated solo tour managers. River cruise lines include a big range of excursions in the price of their solo cruises, meaning customers will never be short of things to do in port. And while river cruise ships don't have staterooms designed specifically for solo travellers, they are often smaller, more intimate vessels, offering plush beds, stunning views, plenty of home comforts, and even butler service. ›

Top tips for selling solo cruises

Make it safe

Solo travellers don't have a built-in trip buddy, so helping them feel comfortable and integrating them into their travel environment is key.

Make it sociable

Ensure small receptions are hosted at the start of a trip to help connect those who are travelling solo. If it's a smaller group, guides should be trained to help solos navigate free time – or even offer to accompany them if appropriate.

Negotiate savings

Use your influence to negotiate savings for customers, from waiving single supplements to group booking discounts.

Have a dedicated programme

A change in recent years has been the increase in people choosing to travel alone, even though they may also be in relationships, so be sure to have a specific programme aimed directly at the solo or single traveller.

Be daring

Years ago, customers travelling independently would play it safe. These days, things couldn't be more different, so include far-flung options, such as Australia, Indonesia, or a meander down the rivers of Asia.

Norwegian Bliss, which began sailing to Alaska and the Caribbean in May 2018, has new studio staterooms with virtual ocean views

Norwegian Epic Lounge, solely for studio guests

Wake up to an amazing view

Norwegian Epic studio cabin

The mature market

The spending power of the over-50s is not to be underestimated. They control more than 75 per cent of all wealth in the UK, travel more than younger holidaymakers and account for the majority of travel and tourism expenditure in the country. In 2012, over-50s households spent £25 billion on travel and tourism, a £14 billion increase from 2002, and the cruise industry contributes significantly to this spending. In 2013, 66 per cent of UK cruise passengers were aged 55. This translates to more than 1.1 million passengers, who spent an estimated £1.6 billion in total.

British-based cruise line Saga, targeted at the over-50s, claims that one fifth of its guests travel independently. Its 720-passenger Saga Sapphire has 44 single cabins in various categories throughout the ship, while its 449-passenger Saga Pearl II has 57

single cabins in total, from two single suites to 18 inside cabins. The new as-yet-unnamed ship – set to launch in 2019 – will boast 81 dedicated single cabins, all of them with balconies.

Cruise & Maritime Voyages specialises in adults-only cruises for the British market and attracts older couples and singles. The 800-passenger Marco Polo has 15 single cabins across two categories, while its latest ship, Columbus has 150 single cabins following a 2017 refit.

Room for one

When the solo supplement was in full swing, it often worked out financially better for solo customers to book a twin room for the same price as a single and make use of the extra space. However, the studio staterooms for solo travellers introduced on Norwegian Cruise Line's Epic ship in 2010 have been so popular that the company has added the staterooms to all of its newer ships. Its newest vessel, Norwegian Bliss, which began sailing to Alaska and the Caribbean in May 2018, has new studio staterooms with virtual ocean views, as well as key card access to a shared lounge where fellow studio guests can meet.

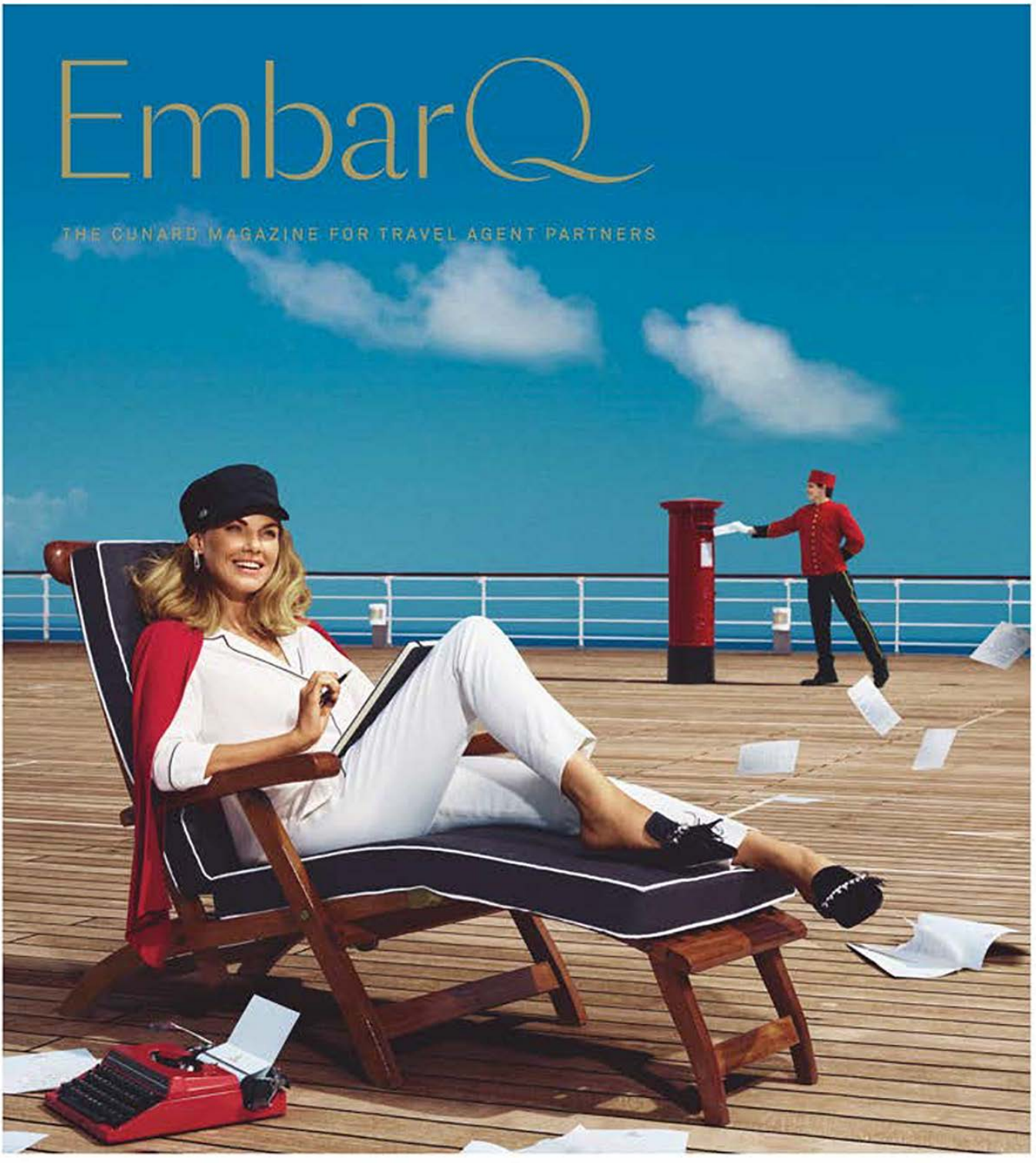
Cunard's Queen Mary 2 came out of a major refurb in June 2017 with 15 single cabins added to the 2,620-passenger vessel, and Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria boast nine new Britannia single cabins each, including eight ocean view rooms with extra-large windows and one inside cabin. Queen Mary 2 is also the proud owner of the only kennels at sea – complete with kennel master – to transport pets in pampered comfort to and from New York.

Barcelona-based Norwegian Epic broke the single cabins mould when it launched in 2010, rebranding them 'studio cabins', clustering them all together (and all interconnecting), and even including a hip lounge for exclusive use of studio guests. Meanwhile, both Cruise & Maritime Voyages and Marella offer single cabins that are actually doubles allocated for single occupancy, meaning customers get all of the space of a double cabin without the equivalent cost.

The increasing demand for solo travel is epitomised by the existence of the Solo Travel Awards, which look to recognise specialty tours, packaged tours, river cruises and ocean cruises that target the solo travel market.

Leigh Barnes, regional director of North America for Intrepid Travel, commented: "As one of the fastest-growing markets in the travel industry, it's time we start celebrating solo travellers, not just accommodating them." ⚓

WORDS: JULIA ZALZTMAN



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CUNARD

PartnershipTeam

We are delighted to introduce our new dedicated Cunard Partnership Team. Here to support you with everything from learning about our brand and cruises through to managing the sales process.

To get in touch with your Cunard Manager please email cunardpartnershipteam@cunard.co.uk.

Gary Anslow
Director, UK Sales

Ali Ahmed
Business Manager,
Sales Partnerships

Amy Williams
Business Manager,
Sales Partnerships

Gemma Scarff
Business Manager,
Sales Partnerships

Fiona Radford
Business Manager,
Sales Partnerships

Lauren McCann
Sales Coordinator

Graham Bishop
Partnership Development Manager,
London and East Anglia

Laura Weston
Partnership Development Manager,
North East and Scotland

Alexandra Patterson
Partnership Development Manager,
South East

Nicky Bird
Partnership Development Manager,
Midlands

Michelle Blake
Partnership Development Manager,
South West

Paul Bullough
Partnership Development Manager,
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Victoria Snelgar
Business Manager,
Sales Operations

Daniel Kar
Sales Partnerships Coordinator

Nicola Berry
Communications &
Events Executive

Carol Cox
Academy Training Manager

Daniel Thomas
Business Manager,
On Board Sales & Direct Partnerships

Sarah Sheppard
On Board Sales Specialist

Your chance to win

Win a Short Break on Queen Elizabeth for you and three friends, with $400 on board spending money and £100 travel expenses. To be in with a chance of winning, simply make a Cunard Fare booking on a Balcony stateroom or above by 30 June 2018.

Visit www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CunardJuneCompetition to enter.

CUNARD

PartnershipTeam

Keep in touch...

Visit completecruisesolution.com

Cunard Travel Agent Sales @CUN_AgencySales

AmaLea

AmaLea, just like her sister ship, the 156-passenger AmaKristina, is inspired by luxury yachts and designed to offer every guest a distinctive river cruise experience. She is the 21st ship to join the AmaWaterways fleet and was christened at the end of May 2018

RESTAURANT
Locally inspired cuisine is offered in a choice of two restaurants and always served with complimentary wine, beer and soft drinks. The Chef's Table speciality restaurant is perfect for a special occasion and features an exquisite taster menu prepared right before guests' eyes.

LOUNGE
The Lounge offers a bar, coffee station and snacks, making it a popular place for guests to meet during the day. At night it hosts an eclectic schedule of on-board entertainment such as traditional Bavarian music or a local quartet.

SWIM-UP BAR
Soak up the sun and watch the world goby in the heated sundeck pool. After a hard day sightseeing, guests can also indulge in a cocktail at the swim-up bar.

HEALTHY ACTIVITIES
With a walking track on the Sun Deck, a fitness room and a fleet of on-board bicycles to use on their own or on one of the many guided bike tours, guests have everything they need to stay active and healthy while on board.

LUXURY ACCOMMODATION
AmaWaterways' signature twin-balcony staterooms feature both a French and an outside balcony, affording guests breathtaking views of the scenery. All staterooms also offer entertainment-on-demand, free high-speed WiFi, Hollywood movies, a music library and a choice of English-language TV stations.

FAST FACTS

443 feet long

38 feet wide

156 guests

51 crew

78 staterooms

4 suites

Q&A

CHARLOTTE BRAILSFORD

Territory manager (central region), Princess Cruises

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

I have been part of the Princess Cruises regional team for just over four years. What attracted me to this role is the variety and number of agents I meet; no working day is the same and sharing information about the wonderful brand I work for is incredibly satisfying.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THE CRUISE INDUSTRY?

There is always something new and exciting happening in the cruise industry. With new ships, new technology and new destinations, the industry is always changing and evolving.

HOW IS YOUR COMPANY DIFFERENT TO OTHER CRUISE LINES?

Because Princess Cruises really focuses on the destinations we visit. Our partnership with the Discovery Channel means we are truly immersive and are able to enhance guests' experiences of the destinations they are visiting.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

There is so much to look forward to with Princess over the next 12 months. For me, two dates that definitely stand out are the launch of our newest ship, Sky Princess, later on next year, plus our first-ever Canada and New England round-trip cruise departing from Southampton in September 2019.

CV

2014- present
Princess Cruises
Territory manager (central region)

2012-2014
Virgin Holidays
2012 - Retail manager
2013-2014 - Cruise champion for the north region, supporting 42 stores

2007-2012
Tui Travel
2007 - Apprentice
2008 - Assistant manager
2010 - Store manager and cruise expert

IF AGENTS ONLY SELL ONE PRINCESS ITINERARY THIS YEAR WHICH ONE SHOULD THAT BE?

The Canada & New England round-trip voyage from Southampton in September 2019. It's the first time we've sailed this itinerary ex-UK and will give guests the opportunity to not only see Canada, but also stay overnight in New York as well as visit my favourite city, Boston.

CAN YOU GIVE US A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPICAL PRINCESS CUSTOMER?

If destinations and experiencing new cultures, creating memories, incredible food, first-class entertainment and service are part of a holiday wish list, then you have a Princess customer!

TELL US ONE THING ABOUT YOUR LIFE OUTSIDE OF PRINCESS THAT PEOPLE MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT?

I am a keen baker. I'm not the greatest cake decorator, but on a Sunday you will always find my daughter and I in the kitchen creating some sort of sweet for the week ahead. Banana loaf is her favourite.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING THE CRUISE SALES?

Getting those who haven't cruised before to take their first steps. With the cruise industry growing and so much choice now for consumers, making sure first-time cruisers are matched to the correct brand is probably the biggest challenge.

HOW DOES THE COMPANY WORK WITH THE TRAVEL TRADE?

I'm part of a team of five territory business managers who support our agent partners across the UK and Ireland. The contact details of each territory manager can be found on our dedicated online agent portal, www.onesourcecruises.com

WHY SHOULD AGENTS SELL CRUISE RATHER THAN A LAND HOLIDAY?

Selling a cruise over a land-based holiday gives your customers the opportunity to see more destinations in a short space of time. With premium accommodation to whisk you between multiple places on your itinerary, teamed with incredible facilities, entertainment and service, why settle for just visiting one country or city? Princess Cruises offers 380 destinations to choose from worldwide.

TOP THREE TIPS FOR AGENTS SELLING CRUISE...

1 Know your customer – when someone enquires about a cruise, make sure you ask lots of questions to ensure you get the right customer on the right ship. Once you have someone hooked on cruising they become a customer for life!

2 Take the time to learn about the different cruise companies with online training and ship visits, as there are so many across the UK. Also, contact your local representative, who can support you with additional training either via the phone or in your branch.

3 Always know your launch dates for the cruise lines and look at a pre-registration log to avoid disappointment. The majority of previous cruise customers will look to secure their holiday a year in advance as popular itineraries tend to book early.

We're rewarding talent in cruise

Cruise Stars Awards 2018

The Cruise Stars Awards has been created to reward industry talent across the country – have you entered yet?

With high profile sponsors including Oceania, Saga, Fred. Olsen, Silversea, Cruise & Maritime Voyages, Royal Caribbean, AmaWaterways and MSC, the Cruise Stars Awards is fast becoming the industry awards to enter.

Open to talented travel agents who sell cruise holidays, as well as the cruise lines and brands themselves, categories include sales, marketing and management.

2018 CATEGORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Nine regional travel agent awards, designed to recognise and honour cruise talent across the country
- New to Cruise Champion: This category is open to individuals who are working within travel agency businesses in the UK. Entrants need to demonstrate how they have increased their new-to-cruise customers within their business
- Rising Star under 35s (Cruise Line and Travel Agent categories): Our Rising Star will be someone aged 35 or under on 15 September 2018 and making a significant contribution to their organisation. They should display the potential to be one of the leaders of tomorrow or, at least, help to shape the industry in the future
- The winner of the Overall Travel Agent Rising Star award will win a seven night European river cruise for two, plus £1500 in cooperative marketing funds for the winner's agency, courtesy of AmaWaterways.

Finalists will be invited to a prestigious lunchtime event at London's Grand Connaught Rooms on 17 November 2018, with our winners receiving industry-wide recognition, as well as the opportunity to be featured in Cruise Trade News in 2019.

With 21 categories in total, there's something to suit everyone, no matter what your experience or role. It's free to enter and you can either enter yourself or be nominated by a colleague.

So, what are you waiting for? You'll find easy to follow entry guidelines at **www.cruisestarsawards.com** – get ready to propel your career to the next level!

www.cruisestarsawards.com

Mike Evans, head of sales, opens the conference

Delegates get ready for a business session

Sales services & communications manager Kate Wooldridge moderates

FRED. OLSEN CLOSER 2018 TRADE CONFERENCE

The Belfry Hotel & Resort in Sutton Coldfield was the venue for Fred. Olsen's first dedicated trade conference in over a decade. 'Closer 2018' provided a detailed understanding of the cruise line – its product, mission, USPs and developments. Over 150 delegates from a range of travel agents and tour operators across the UK attended, as well as a number of non-UK resellers. The conference was led by Mike Evans, Fred. Olsen's head of sales, supported by event specialists Dellar Davies and the cruise line's directors and senior management team. Business sessions included looks at how Fred. Olsen specialises in 'bringing the world closer' to its guests and the destination, while Feel The Real outlined the authenticity of Fred. Olsen's cruises and gave delegates a detailed look at how these itineraries are developed. The Fleet Renewed session showcased the multi-million-pound investment that the cruise line has made across its ocean fleet to enable it to continue to provide facilities that meet – and exceed – expectations. Fred. Olsen's five directors also took part in a discussion to provide delegates with answers to their burning questions, including the future direction of the cruise line and the role of the trade in its sales strategy. Guest speaker Debbie Marshall, MD of Silver Travel Advisor, also gave an insightful presentation on the trends and consumer habits of the 50+ travel market.

"We have learned so much and are really looking forward to promoting Fred's ocean cruise programme and especially the Brabant river cruise product"

Jane Wakefield, personal travel agent, The Midcounties Co-operative

Delegates attend a workshop

From left to right: Pete Deer, commercial director; Justin Stanton, sales & marketing director; Clare Ward, director of product & customer service; Thomas Rennesland, hotel operations director; Mike Rodwell, managing director

"I just wanted to say a big thank you. It's safe to say it was a huge success. We learned so much about Fred. Olsen and feel incredibly positive about the product and support available – and I am still in shock about winning a cruise!"

Lindsay Coleman, Wowcruise

The first batch of agents to win a cruise for two at the conference

Agents being hosted at the gala dinner by reservations team leader Jamie Rudland (bottom right)

Fun golf on the Ryder Cup mini golf course

"The 'Closer' conference was excellent – and so good to see so many faces and reinforce the loyalty so many have for Fred. Olsen"

James Hill, Go Cruise franchisee

LOYALTY ROCKS CLUB

A SPA DAY? YOU'VE NAILED IT...

GET YOUR MANICURED HANDS ON A FABULOUS SPA DAY FOR THE ULTIMATE WAY TO UNWIND. JOIN OUR LOYALTY ROCKS CLUB AND BENEFIT FROM OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH RED LETTER DAYS.

Throughout the month of June we're offering £10 per booking.
Which can be redeemed on our Loyalty Rocks Club app.

loyaltyrocksclub.com

#TRAVELAGENTSROCK

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TRAVEL AGENTS ROCK! | Carnival

Terms & Conditions: Full Loyalty Rocks Terms and Conditions apply, these can be found on our website (www.loyaltyrocksclub.com). Carnival Cruise Line reserves the right to increase and decrease points awarded through this incentive scheme without notice at any time. The claim must be submitted by the end of each month in order for correct points to be allocated. Bookings submitted through Loyalty Rocks Club from 1st June until 30th June 2016 will earn 10 points per booking, which equals £10 per booking through the Loyalty Rocks Club scheme. Full terms and conditions apply these can be found at www.loyaltyrocksclub.com

17 PAGES OF MARKETABLE ITINERARIES, SHIP REVIEWS & DESTINATION INSPIRATION

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CroisiEurope's Gil Eanes

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6 of the best... Eco-friendly cruise lines

THE POLLUTION OF OUR OCEANS IS A HOT TOPIC, FORCING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO THE FOREFRONT. KUDOS, THEREFORE, TO THE CRUISE LINES THAT ARE AHEAD OF THE GAME WITH THEIR SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

The Ice Breaker

PONANT

From the design stage of its ships to how landings are organised to helping preserve communities, everything at **PONANT** is done to reduce the company's environmental impact.

Launching in 2021, the PONANT Ice Breaker will be the first-ever PC2 Polar Class luxury cruise ship and will be powered by liquefied natural gas (LNG). It will have an energy optimisation system and a waste heat recovery system as well as an advanced wastewater treatment system.

PONANT undertakes regular audits, excelling in health and safety management, taking care of its staff, and applying good practices to its supply chain. As its ships are cruising in sensitive areas, PONANT is dedicated to obtaining a CLEANSHIP notation (relating to controlling and limiting the emission of polluting substances) for each new ship, and fully complying with environmental regulations.

AVALON WATERWAYS

Avalon Waterways is committed to minimising its impact on the environment by following all relevant legislation and/or regulations in the sector. It supports local communities and has policies in place to support this mission

Avalon sources local produce where possible and helps local businesses – for example by taking guests to small family-owned wineries. Avalon recycles as much as possible: used water is cleaned and filtered so that it is safe to be put back in the river, while food waste is turned into biofuel. To reduce emissions, local transport companies are used for excursions at each port of call.

To ensure that no natural or cultural artefacts are removed and that the environment functions the same before and after a visit, Avalon has a policy of "Leave Only Footprints and Take Only Photos". Crew and passengers also follow a "do no harm" code of conduct.

Celebrity Flora will be one of the most energy-efficient ships in its class

CELEBRITY CRUISES

Recognising its responsibility to guests, staff, the communities its fleet visits and the oceans, **Celebrity Cruises** takes its duty of care for the environment very seriously. Celebrity Flora, set to launch in 2019, will be one of the most energy-efficient ships in its class. The ship will boast a 15 per cent reduction in fuel consumption and equivalently lower emissions. This is thanks to the introduction of an advanced propulsion system, hull configuration and specially designed diesel engines. The ship can stay in position without using an anchor, which significantly reduces damage to the seabed. Celebrity Cruises is continuing to make a concerted effort to cut down on plastics by adding water filtration systems on board. These convert seawater and air conditioning condensation into pure, fresh water, reducing the need for guests to buy plastic water bottles. Also, each stateroom will have its own water filtration stations.

ROYAL CARIBBEAN

In 2016, **Royal Caribbean** announced the order of a new class of ships. Named Project Icon, the two ships will be largely powered by liquefied natural gas (LNG), which has been making inroads into the maritime industry as a cleaner energy source.

The cruise line has challenged itself to find new energy uses. In the case of Project Icon this is fuel cells, which convert hydrogen to electricity and produce only water as a by-product or waste. As this technology becomes more efficient, the possibility of using fuel cells in a significant way to power the ship's hotel functions increases. RCCL will be testing those possibilities on existing ships in the next few years.

A total of 30 of RCCL's fleet can also repurpose 100 per cent of operational waste. A 2020 goal has been set to reduce waste-to-landfill by 85 per cent from the operator's 2007 baseline.

AURORA EXPEDITIONS

Aurora Expeditions' new world-class expedition ship, the Greg Mortimer, is a state-of-the-art vessel that will redefine expedition cruising as the first expedition cruise ship to feature the patented ULSTEIN X-BOW®. The 104-metre ice class 1A expedition ship will use the latest advancements in naval design and technology to make exploring remote destinations even easier, and to create a more enjoyable experience for passengers. The main advantage of the ULSTEIN X-BOW® is its ability to pierce waves with much greater stability than a traditional bow while maintaining speed. It uses less fuel to get through the waves, thereby improving fuel efficiency and reducing air emissions. Safety is a core principle for Aurora Expeditions and the Greg Mortimer will feature the latest 'return-to-port' technology and virtual anchoring and dynamic positioning to ensure the protection of the Poles' delicate sea floors.

HAPAG-LLOYD

Ahead of its time when it launched in 2013, **Hapag-Lloyd's** Europa 2 was an early front runner in its ecology focus. Its engines are fitted with SCR (selective catalytic reduction), which reduces nitrogen oxide emissions by almost 95 per cent. Europa 2's hull shape optimises glide through the water, which reduces fuel consumption by 18 per cent. Ballast water is purified so that endemic flora and fauna are not transported to other regions. The ship has 100 per cent fresh air on board. A sensor in every suite gauges CO_2, and there is a gap under toilet doors to allow air from the room to flow in. Joining the fleet from 2019, HANSEATIC Nature and HANSEATIC Inspiration will be fitted with cutting-edge equipment and environmental technology. The hulls will be optimised to achieve the maximum reduction in fuel, cutting overall bunker consumption. A Promas integrated rudder and propeller system will reduce fuel consumption and lower emissions.

Europa: ahead of its time

WORDS: LYNN HOUGHTON

Introducing The Club by Jools Holland... a new partnership for Spirit of Discovery

We're delighted to announce music legend Jools Holland will be the face of an exciting new venue on Spirit of Discovery. Inspired by the great music lounges of the 1950s, The Club by Jools Holland will be a place where your customers can enjoy live music, cocktails and fine dining, with resident and guest musicians entertaining until late. Jools will perform live during the following cruises sailing from Dover: they're sure to sell fast so start spreading the news today!

A Channel Island Hop
4 nights departing July 23, 2019
from Dover. Cruise code: SD002

Gourmet Spain
14 nights departing August 3, 2019
from Dover. Cruise code: SD004

Natural Scandinavia
15 nights departing August 17, 2019
from Dover. Cruise code: SD005

Spirit of Discovery, launching Summer 2019

A sophisticated music venue, restaurant and cocktail bar

The Club will be our first-ever celebrity endorsed venue

Inspired by the great cabaret lounges of the 1950s

Call **FREE** on **0800 074 8021** or visit **saga.co.uk/agents**
Or call Agency sales **FREE** on **0800 068 8732**
Find us on social media **Saga Trade Team**

SAGA
keep doing

ABTA

Saga's holidays and cruises are exclusively for the over 50s. A travel companion can be 40+. NHA-SC0041

Why Aurora Expeditions?

aurora expeditions

For over 25 years we've pioneered expedition travel to the heart of nature.
We invite you to discover why your clients should consider traveling with Aurora Expeditions' on their next expedition voyage.

Small ships, small groups

We believe that small groups are best. With a maximum capacity of 120 passengers in the polar regions and 160 to our other destinations, this will allow our passengers:

- Multiple landings, 2-3 times a day
- Flexibility/access to remote spots others can't access
- Group sizes of only 10 people aboard zodiacs
- Maximum time spent exploring ashore

Our guides are experts

Our highly acclaimed expedition specialists are some of the best in the business. Many are the recognised world leaders in their fields from historians to scientists, naturalists to geologists. Let our expedition specialists enhance your expeditions even further with their knowledge and passion of the region.

Flexibility and freedom

We stop for breaching whales! Our itineraries are designed with flexibility in mind. If weather or sea ice block our way, we always have a Plan B, C and D! We are always on the look out for new places to explore and we are not afraid to adjust our schedule if we stumble upon an unexpected wildlife display.

Our spirit of adventure

We are not only the first Australian owned polar operator but we've pioneered a number of activities such as Polar Kayaking, Polar Snorkelling, Climbing and more! In 2019, Aurora Expeditions will re-define expedition cruising with a new purpose-built vessel, the *Greg Mortimer* encompassing a revolutionary design, the patented X-bow® which will ensure faster and smoother sailings.

We welcome solo adventures

For many years Aurora Expeditions have provided a 'No Single Supplement' option, allowing our passengers travelling alone the opportunity to join our voyages in a shared cabin without the added expense. If you're a solo traveller and would like your own cabin, we also have limited Porthole and Balcony cabins available aboard the *Greg Mortimer* at only a 25% surcharge. Traveling solo has never been easier!

Our destinations

We travel to a wide range of remote destinations including:

- The Arctic
- Antarctica
- South America
- Central America
- Caribbean
- Kimberley Coast

If you would like more information or how to work with Aurora Expeditions, please contact Craig Upshall :

E: craig@auroraexpeditions.co.uk
P: +44 (0) 7824 305232

Craig Upshall
Sales Director
UK / Europe

25 YEARS OF EXPLORATION

aurora expeditions

antarctica | south georgia | greenland | svalbard | jan mayen | franz josef land | norway | kimberley coast | patagonia

Bliss Ocean Palace

Thermal Suite

Norwegian Bliss

With room for 4,000 guests, this custom-built ship is all about incredible experiences. Some of the features guests will experience include the largest racetrack at sea, an open-air laser tag course, Aqua Park and Splash Academy. With a social space for solo cruisers, world-class entertainment, Mandara Spa and the exclusive The Haven, every type of traveller is catered for. Homeporting in Seattle, Bliss will offer seven-day Alaska cruises throughout the summer. ›

A Bliss cabin

Barber Shop

Casino Skyline Bar

Cagney's Waterfront

Balcony Spa Cabin

La Cucina

The Spa Hair Salon

Haven Lounge

White Nights and Northern Lights

Taking in cosmopolitan cities, impressive fjords and breathtaking natural phenomena, demand among Brits for Scandinavia and Baltic cruises is hotting up

There are many reasons why a cruise taking in Scandinavia and the Baltic appeals to Brits. We're on the same continent, so there's less of a culture shock – although that's not to say visitors won't be blown away by sights and experiences popping up alongthe way.

For people who prefer notto fly, these cruises are ideal, as many leave from the UK, with a choice of different departure points, such as Newcastle, Dover, Hull or Bristol.

A 'typical' Scandinavia/Baltic cruise would take in some of the region's capitals, including Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki and Oslo, as well as newer-to-tourism destinations such as Estonia's capital Tallinn and Latvia's 813-year-old capital, Riga.

They're all relatively small and easy to walk around – explorers will discover cultured, cosmopolitan cities, cobbled streets, medieval walls, fascinating turrets and awe-inspiring scenery.

Other cruises may take in Gothenburg, Sweden's hip city that's nicknamed 'Little London', which is best explored on a guided kayaking tour or sightseeing boat.

There's also the opportunity to venture north of the Polar Circle to experience the Midnight Sun in summer or see the Northern Lights in Norway, between September and April.

ST PETERSBURG

The highlight of a Baltic cruise has to be St Petersburg. Russia's second city has a long must-see list, including the Hermitage museum, Winter Palace, Nevsky Prospect shopping area and the ballet. Many cruise itineraries include at leastone overnight here, so passengers can fit in as much as possible.

Smaller ships, such as those in the Silversea fleet, can dock on the river right in the heart of St Petersburg while the bigger ships dock on the outskirts of the city.

Silversea UK and Ireland managing director Peter Shanks said: "Scandinavia and Baltic cruises remain very popular – they offer an immersive cultural experience and are therefore very different to a Mediterranean cruise experience.

"Stockholm, Copenhagen and Helsinki provide a real flavour of the relaxed Scandinavian way of life – with beautiful summer scenery surrounding the famous cities and their famous attractions.

"St Petersburg remains the real draw for the region – the museums and palaces really are spectacular and most itineraries will spend two or three days there."

For the repeat Scandinavian cruise traveller, cruise lines are offering more opportunities to visit less-frequented but equally breathtaking ports.

Saga Cruises, for example, has introduced an Islands of Bothnia cruise taking in Ornskoldsvik in Sweden, from where clients can explore the magnificent UNESCO-designated Hoga Kusten shore, which is the highest and steepest coastline around the entire Baltic region.

The cruise also calls at Sassnitz, a Baltic port on Germany's largest island, which is almost entirely a designated national park.

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, meanwhile, is making the most of its smaller ships, which can sail right into the heart of the Scandinavian and Baltic region.

New in the operator's 2018/19 programme are Erfjorden, Hjorundfjord and Josenfjord in Norway. ›

SELLING TIPS

1

The main cities such as Copenhagen are small, pedestrian-friendly and easily explored on foot.

2

Suggest passengers on Gothenburg itineraries book a scenic tour around Sweden's 'sunshine coast', an archipelago of the country's northern islands.

3

In Tallinn, suggest clients order the local Saku beer and watch the world go by at an al fresco café.

4

See a Russian ballet at the world-famous Marlinsky, Alexandrinsky or Mikhailovsky theatres, among other venues in St Petersburg.

5

For an extra-special touch, some Silversea Scandinavian and Baltic cruises depart from Tower Bridgein London – an iconic way to start an iconic cruise.

Lofotens Islands

SAILAWAY TO NORWAY

Norway's Bergen and Alesund are highlights on Saga Cruises' 16-night Norway and Iceland Exploration on Saga Pearl II from Dover, setting out on 16 September 2018. It also visits Iceland, Belfast, and Tobermory on Mull, Scotland. Prices start at £2,753pp, including transport from mainland UK addresses to and from Dover.

saga.co.uk/cruises

FORTNIGHT WITH FRED

Fred. Olsen's 14-night Cruising to the Heart of the Baltic, on board Braemar, on 14 September 2018, takes in key cities, including Copenhagen, Helsinki and Riga, as well as an overnight in St Petersburg, and the German attractions of Travemunde and cruising the Kiel Canal. Prices start at £1,499pp, from Southampton.

fredolsencruises.com

STAY OVERNIGHT

Crystal Cruises' 10-day Copenhagen to Stockholm sailing begins with an overnight in Denmark's capital city and visits Warnemunde for Berlin, Helsinki, St Petersburg (for two nights) and Tallinn. The itinerary ends with an overnight in Stockholm. Cruise-only prices start from £4,212pp, departing Copenhagen on 10 July 2019.

crystalcruises.co.uk

EXCURSIONS INCLUDED

Voyages to Antiquity's Aegean Odyssey sails the Baltic for the first time on its 14-day Baltic Capitals and St Petersburg cruise on 3 July 2019. Ports include Stockholm, Helsinki, Estonia and St Petersburg (two nights) – where guests can see Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. Prices from £2,995pp, including nine excursions.

voyagestoantiquity.com

St Petersburg – the highlight of a Baltic cruise

ON THE SCENE

The launch of Scenic Eclipse this year – and her sister ship in 2020 – sees Scenic offering new Baltic and Scandinavia cruises. A 26-day Copenhagen to Tromso trip in June 2020 visits Oslo, Bergen, Flam and Trondheim, as well as Bodo on the Kystriksveien Coastal Route, Lofoten Islands and Alta. Prices from £18,975pp.

scenic.co.uk

CAPTIVATING CLASSIC

Hurtigruten's six-day Classic Voyage South begins in Kirkenes, close to the Russian border. En route to Bergen, passengers call at the Lofoten Islands, Vardo, Hammerfest, Trondheim, Bronnoysund and along Helgeland's magnificent coastline. There are daily departures year-round from £578pp.

hurtigruten.co.uk

SILHOUETTE'S HOME

Celebrity Silhouette's homeport from summer 2018 is Southampton, and will offer Baltic and Scandinavia cruises. A 14-night Scandinavia and Russia trip calls overnight at Copenhagen, then to Tallinn, overnight in St Petersburg, Helsinki, Nynashamn and Berlin (Warnemunde) in May and June 2019. Prices start at £1,799pp.

celebritycruises.co.uk

HIGHLIGHTS FROM HULL

The 14-night Baltic Cities and St Petersburg round trip with Cruise and Maritime Voyages, on board Astoria, sails 20 September 2019 from Hull. The cruise transits the Kiel Canal before calling at Warnemunde for Berlin, Tallinn, overnight in St Petersburg, Helsinki, Nynashamn and Copenhagen. Prices start at £1,050pp.

cruiseandmaritime.com

WORDS: LISA JAMES

VTA

VOYAGES TO ANTIQUITY

Aegean Odyssey

STILL IN A CLASS OF HER OWN

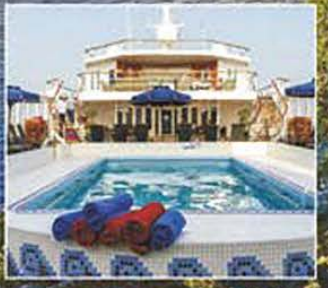
- A more intimate cruise experience featuring overnight stays in less crowded ports
- The ability to cruise inland rivers and estuaries that are off limits to larger vessels
- Award-winning excursions accompanied by expert local guides
- A renowned guest speaker programme designed to complement upcoming destinations and enrich time ashore
- **INCLUDED IN THE FARE:**

Shore Excursions
Wine with dinner
Onboard gratuities
Flights & transfers
Hotel stays where applicable

Sailing with just 350 like-minded passengers and only last year being voted 'Best for Small Ship Cruising' at the British Travel Awards, VTA's elegant small ship continues to deliver an unparalleled cruise ship experience to the world's most culturally discerning and naturally inquisitive travellers.

Each of our programmes has been carefully designed to offer inclusive pre and post-cruise stays in 4 & 5-stor hotels, alongside highly-focused award-winning shore excursions and exciting mid-cruise land tours. With an overage 98% of customers saying they would travel with us again this season, our formula continues to exceed expectations, moving from strength to strength. So why not contact us day to find out more about our excellent commission opportunities.

GREAT FOR GROUPS



WINNER BRITISH TRAVEL AWARDS 2016 BEST SPECIALIST CRUISE LINE/OCEAN

WAVE AWARDS 2016 WINNER

SILVER BRITISH TRAVEL AWARDS 2017 BEST SPECIALIST CRUISE LINE/OCEAN

WINNER BRITISH TRAVEL AWARDS 2017 BEST SMALL SHIPS CRUISE LINE

UK CRUISERS' CHOICE CRUISE CRITIC 2017

WAVE WINNER

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Going Dutch

Glorious gardens and iconic windmills are waiting to be discovered on the waterways of the Netherlands

Windmills, clogs, bicycles, canals and cheese are among the images that come to mind when thinking about Holland, but the most iconic vision of all is the incredible spectacle of the springtime bulb fields.

With more than three billion tulips grown each year, creating a vast patchwork of vibrant colour, it's a breathtaking horticultural display and a highlight of early season river cruises. New ships and itineraries for 2018/19 are adding even more appeal to cruises to the bulb fields and beyond.

"A cruise on the Dutch waterways is a great way to entice first-timers to the river," said Andy Harmer, director of **CLIA UK & Ireland**. "Holland is a simply spectacular destination, known predominantly for the famous displays of tulips in the springtime and picturesque riverside windmills. Going to see the beautiful bulb fields is on many people's must-see travel list, not just keen gardeners, and a river cruise is perhaps one

of the easiest and most relaxing ways to see them, coupled with the opportunity to visit some wonderful cities along the way."

NEW ITINERARIES

A new short cruise is being introduced by **Shearings Holidays for 2019**. With a choice of two departures in April, the itinerary sails from Antwerp, calling at Rotterdam, Utrecht and Amsterdam. It includes a visit to the world-famous Keukenhof Gardens, the world's largest floral park with a display of seven million blooms covering 80 acres.

The recently launched **U by Uniworld** brand, aimed at the "young and young at heart", offers a trip to the gardens for passengers on April and May departures of the Rolling on the Rhine itinerary aboard its striking black ship, The A. For clients looking for something more adventurous, optional excursions include 'blokarting' on the beach on sail karts that can reach speeds of 60mph.

Riviera Travel is adding a visit to UNESCO-listed Kinderdijk to its Amsterdam and Dutch Bulbfields itinerary. The rustic village is home to 19 windmills dating back to the 18th century; the largest ancient collection of windmills in the Netherlands. Departures for 2019 lead in from £699pp, and clients can opt for flights from 15 regional airports or travel by train.

SALES TIPS

1
Springtime tulip sailings start at three nights – an ideal recommendation for clients new to river cruising

2
Arnhem, scene of the battle immortalised in the film, A Bridge Too Far, is included on many itineraries and will fascinate anyone interested in wartime history

3
Switch sell cruises taking in Amsterdam, Bruges and other cities to customers that normally take land-based breaks

4
A choice of air, rail, ferry and coach travel provides flexible transport options

5
Dutch-themed cruises are great for groups of friends or organisations such as gardening clubs

EXCITING EXCURSIONS

Aside from sailing on the Rhine, cruises in Holland also take in smaller rivers and waterways such as the Ijsselmeer, with a stop at the ancient shipping village of Hoorn, and the Nieuwe Maas and Nederrun rivers leading to the fascinating port city of Rotterdam. Itineraries sometimes dip into neighbouring Belgium with stops at medieval Bruges, Antwerp and Ghent. Itineraries typically start in the vibrant Dutch capital of Amsterdam with time to visit attractions such as Anne Frank House, where the teenage diarist hid with her family during the Second World War, or the Rijksmuseum, with masterpieces such as ›

Kinderdijk

The A interior

Amsterdam

European Waterways La Nouvelle Etoile

Rembrandt's The Night Watch.

Passengers can travel around Amsterdam like locals on a cycling tour, one of the more active excursions available on **Emerald Waterways'** seven-night Charms of Holland & Belgium cruise, which is new for 2018. Current deals include savings of up to £1,250pp, and an open bar, for clients booked into balcony suites on the 18 October sailing. The offer is valid until 31 July.

CroisiEurope has a new excursion to the lakeside town of Giethoorn, which also includes a one-hour canal cruise past pretty cottages surrounded by humpback bridges. It is available on the line's six-day cruise on the IJsselmeer, which starts and finishes in Amsterdam.

SMALL SHIP CRUISES

For 2019, The River Cruise Line introduces a 'Captain's Choice' Heart of Holland cruise on its heritage vessel, Lady Anne. The seven-night itinerary, departing on 12 and 19 May and leading in from £929pp, includes visits to Deventer, one of the oldest cities in Holland, the cheese town of Gouda and an excursion to a bakery to learn about bread making.

Tim Fleming, the line's sales and business development manager, said: "Outside the bulbs season and aside from the top-name attractions and major cities, Holland isn't a destination that's especially well-known. Following on from the success of our first Captain's Choice cruise, which was introduced a few years ago, we've worked closely with Captain Wido, of the Lady Anne, to devise a new itinerary that takes visitors to little gems and places that are overlooked by most cruises."

For an even more intimate experience, **European Waterways** has completed a major refit on the hotel barge La Nouvelle Etoile, which sails in Holland in April and May.

Marketing manager Paul Newman said: "The 12-passenger Panache and the eight- passenger La Nouvelle Etoile offer cruises in the spring, when the flowers are in full bloom. The Netherlands is famous for tulips; however, as a land with a rich artistic and cultural history, it has a lot more besides. European Waterways' barging holidays uncover some of the hidden gems and are the perfect way to experience the best the country has to offer."

SELL IT

AMADEUS RIVER CRUISES' seven-night Tulip Serenade Amsterdam round-trip cruise aboard the new Amadeus Queen is priced from £1,439pp departing 4 April, 2019, including flights and transfers.
0808 115 8312
amadeus-rivercruises.co.uk

SHEARINGS HOLIDAYS' three-night Holland in Springtime itinerary on CroisiEurope's Leonardo Da Vinci is priced from £746pp departing 7 and 11 April 2019, including flights. It is also available by rail.
01942 410805
shearings.com/login-agent

AVALON WATERWAY'S seven-night Tulip Time cruise, including an excursion to Keukenhof Gardens, is priced from £1,743pp for departures in March and April 2019. Fares include flights and VIP home pick-up service.
0800 868 1843 avaloncruises.co.uk/agent-login

WORDS: JEANNINE WILLIAMSON

Going solo on the Douro

A river cruise is perfect for adventurous clients looking to travel alone. It's safe, it's enriching – and they'll meet like-minded new friends...

In the past few years, the number of Google searches for solo travel has more than doubled. While it may seem like a daunting prospect, travelling alone is one of those life-affirming experiences that everyone should do at least once in their lifetime. Plus, you get to make all the decisions, and go at your own pace.

So when my partner had to pull out of a forthcoming Douro river cruise at the last minute, we both agreed that there was no question about it – I would go on my own.

Just 24 hours later, I was boarding CroisiEurope's three-year-old ship Gil Eanes at the cruise line's very own terminal in Porto. While most of the other river ships dock right in town at the famous Cais de Ribeira, CroisiEurope's terminal is a 10-minute shuttle boat ride from the spot. On the plus side, it's private and guests feel rather special upon arrival.

Gil Eanes is a four-deck new generation premium ship, meaning its facilities and cabins are of a higher standard than some of the other CroisiEurope ships. First impressions were excellent – the reception area was modern and stylish, ditto the lounge bar, and everything was immaculate. My seven-day cruise included two nights in Porto, sailing on to Regua, Vega de Terron, Salamanca and Ferradosa, then back to Porto.

The ship has 66 cabins and a maximum capacity of 132 passengers. My mini suite featured a flat screen TV, two twin beds which can be pushed together, plenty of storage and wardrobe space, and a bathroom I'd quite like in my own home. The shower, in particular, was heavenly.

The floor-to-ceiling window with French balcony could be opened partly but not fully. I'm not sure if it was due to the position of my cabin at the back of the ship, but there was some vibration and engine noise when we were sailing.

If your client wants to push the boat out, they should book one of the two suites at the back of the ship; these are very spacious and have their own terraces.

Two of the hardest-working people I've ever met work on this ship: Ana the entertainer and Mathieu, the cruise director. Announcements are in French and English (courtesy of Ana and Mathieu). There is also an English channel showing the daily programme and dining room menus. ›

THE ITINERARY

PORTO

The ship overnights for two nights in Porto, which gives guests ample time to explore one of the oldest cities in Europe. Highlights include the bustling Cais da Ribeira waterfront promenade and the Sao Bento train station with its stunning ceramic-tiled interior.

GUIMARAES

This historically significant university town is often referred to as the birthplace of Portugal. Don't miss the Praca de Santiago square and the Palace of the Dukes of Braganza, a 16th-century medieval estate that features striking architectura.

VILA REAL

The town of Vila Real is where aristocrats built grand palaces during the 16th and 18th centuries. Mateus Palace is well worth a visit; behind the manor is a beautiful formal garden with box hedges, and a 115-foot cedar tunnel.

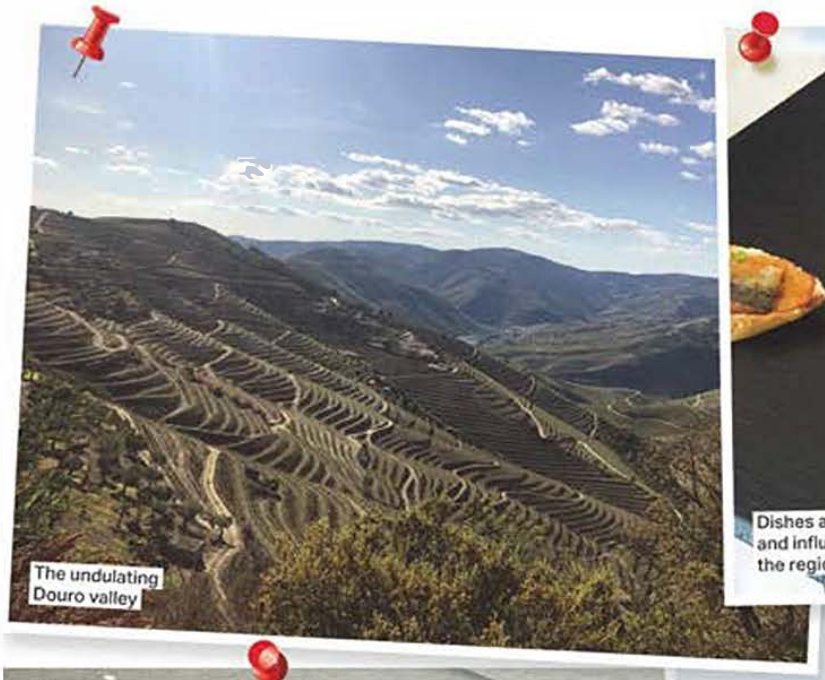
SALAMANCA

With a huge international student population, the old town of Salamanca has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1988. Highlights include the Cathedral, Plaza Mayor square and Casa de las Conchas, a shell-covered Spanish Gothic palace.

LAMEGO

The elegant town of Lamego sits inside the Douro valley wine-growing region. The church, which overlooks the town, dates back to the 18th century – the staircase leading to the church features 700 steps and is decorated with azulejos (glazed tiles).

"Sailing afternoons were spent literally ducking under low bridges, traversing through 32-metre locks and soaking up the sunshine when it made an appearance"



The undulating Douro valley

Dishes are inspired and influenced by the region

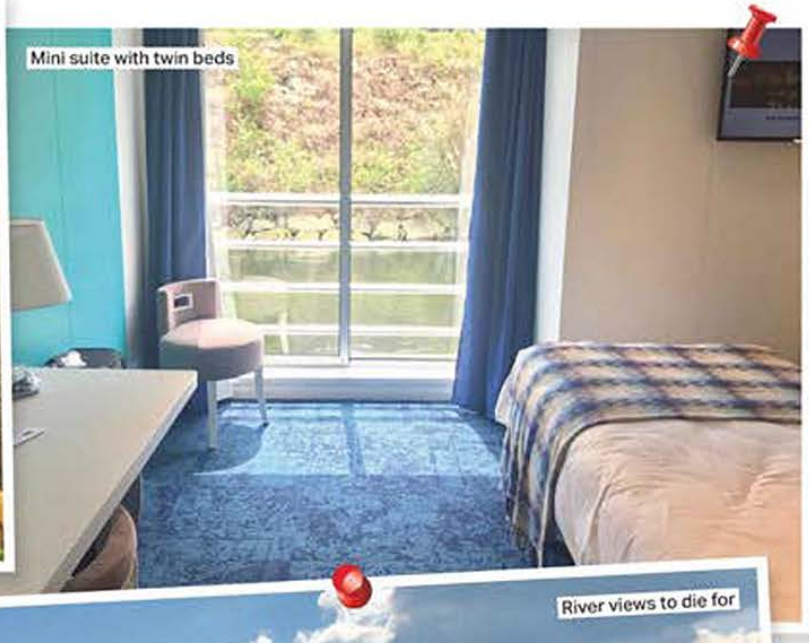
The lounge bar

Lunch and dinner are taken in the dining room and both are full service. You are assigned a table at the beginning of the cruise, which means you will be sitting with the same people throughout – and you will almost certainly make some new friends. Breakfast is buffet-style, and again you sit at the same assigned table.

As the majority of passengers are French, I was seated with some American and Canadian guests who had booked individually. These well-travelled people were very welcoming to this lone ranger, and we had many interesting conversations throughout the week.

Food and drink is included in the cruise price (except for premium choices), and in the main is very good. Put it this way, you will never go hungry. You'll eat dishes inspired and influenced by the region you are visiting, and paired wine is free-flowing at lunch and dinner.

Mateus Palace


Mini suite with twin beds

Salamanca old town

River views to die for

Paella on Spanish night

Roughly translated as the 'River of Gold', the Douro is beautiful and diverse – when the sun is shining it literally sparkles. It's dotted with UNESCO world heritage sites – and constantly changing. One minute you're surrounded by rows upon rows of perfectly aligned vineyards, the next, huge river rocks that need skilful navigation to sail around.

Sailing afternoons were spent literally ducking under low bridges, traversing through 32-metre locks and soaking up the sunshine when it appeared on day four.

Excursions are not always included in the total cruise price and should be purchased separately. There is a choice of one excursion a day from two packages – Classic and Discovery (for those who are a little more adventurous).

We particularly enjoyed the port wine tasting sessions (when in Porto...) and discovering arguably the world's most photogenic railway station in Pinhao.

Again, commentary is given in French and in English, and the speakers were very informative and knowledgable. As our English-speaking group was smaller than the others, we had the advantage of touring various places in a small group.

Unlike other river cruises, there is a full entertainment schedule each evening; on our cruise this ranged from a flamenco evening to a crew show. The lounge bar is the venue and while most people seemed to gravitate towards entertainment and an aperitif post-dinner, they were still in bed by midnight.

The final day dawned and we all said our goodbyes before undertaking our onward journeys. I'd had a great time; my schoolgirl French had improved. I'd made some lasting memories, and I'd received personal invites to Miami, Portland and Vancouver from my new-found friends. ⚓

SELLING HIGHLIGHTS

1
A great cruise option for solo travellers as new friends are guaranteed

2
If your client likes great food, the full service lunches and dinners can't be beaten

3
WiFi is free and unlimited for all passengers

4
The atmosphere is fun and relaxed

5
A daily entertainment schedule is included in the price

BOOK IT

The eight-day Portugal to Spain – Porto, the Douro Valley and Salamanca – cruise on Gil Eanes costs from £1,275pp, based on departures in July and August.

WORDS: REBECCA BARNES

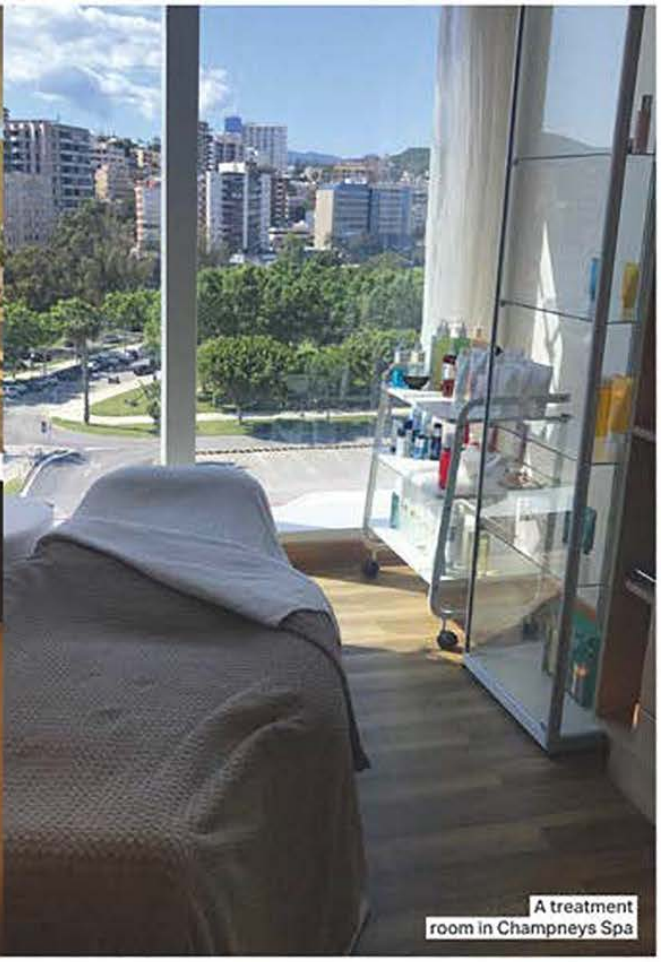
Marella Explorer

The 13-deck, 1,924-passenger Marella Explorer has now started her sailing season. Having undergone a major renovation, the ship boasts 10 restaurants, 10 bars, a 900sq ft Champneys Spa (Marella Cruises' largest on-board spa) and flagship venue Indigo, which features a bar, club and casino space with widescreen windows. Homeporting in Palma this summer, Marella Explorer will offer four Mediterranean itineraries before heading to Barbados this winter

The Lounge bar

Outside balcony cabin

The pool deck



A treatment room in Champneys Spa

The Dining Club desserts

The Veranda adults-only area

Indigo bar

Surf & Turf Steakhouse

"It's just like turning left on a plane!"

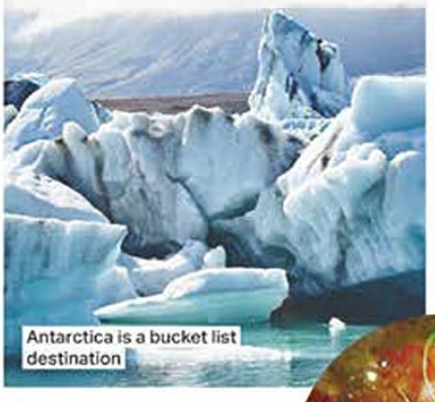
Natalie Read, regional sales manager – south for **Crystal Cruises**, talks Asia, Antarctica, and why you should always travel with a spare pair of shoes...

Why is your cruise line the best of all cruise lines?
Crystal offers more space, choice and service than any other cruise line, and that's why we've received more awards than any other cruise line in the world. It's just like turning left on a plane!

If your cruise line was a famous person who would it be and why?
Julie Andrews. She is the Godmother of Crystal Serenity and represents the class and style of our West End and Broadway shows on board.

What's the funniest thing that has happened to you on the road?
Driving for three hours to an important meeting, only to realise I'd driven in my comfy trainers and not brought my posh shoes... hooray for Sainsbury's! I now always keep a spare pair of shoes in my car.

What's the strangest question you've ever been asked about cruise?
I was asked if the staff stay on board our river ships every night. I know we have the highest crew ratio, but yes, they do all get to stay on board.



Antarctica is a bucket list destination

How many of your ships have you sailed on and do you have a favourite?
I love our ocean ships and Crystal Symphony is still my favourite as she was my first-ever Crystal experience. However, our new river ships take my breath away every time I step on them. I'm lucky enough to be travelling on the brand-new Crystal Ravel, which has just launched, and I'm so excited. As for the future, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that I get to experience our upcoming expedition yacht, Crystal Endeavor, which will be the largest, most spacious purpose-built polar class expedition yacht in the world, accommodating just 200 guests and boasting all the luxurious amenities and special touches for which Crystal is known.

Do you have a favourite on-board restaurant and why?
That's easy... it has to be our Nobu restaurant. Nobu's Japanese-Peruvian fusion has been part of the complimentary service on board every Crystal Symphony and Crystal Serenity sailing since 2003 and 2008, respectively, and will also feature on Crystal Endeavor.

Which port would you definitely disembark in and what would you do there?
Any city in Europe. I fell in love with Budapest when I was on Crystal Mozart.

Which port would you stay on board in and why?
I'm a traveller at heart, so I always like to get off and explore. However, I have been to Monte Carlo numerous times, so I'd probably give that a miss and stay on board enjoying everything the ship has to offer.

Which cruise is on your bucketlist?
Antarctica. Having seen a sneak preview of the launch of our new expedition yacht, Crystal Endeavor, this has to be on anyone's bucket list.

If you didn't work in the cruise industry, what do you think you'd do?
I'd be a marine biologist so I could get a job on Crystal Endeavor! ⚓

Budapest is a firm favourite

Julie Andrews - the Godmother of Crystal Serenity

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WHO SHOULD ENTER?

The awards are open to **travel agents** who sell cruise holidays, as well as the **cruise lines** and **brands** themselves. Categories include **sales**, **marketing** and **management** and this year the awards will also recognise and reward outstanding **regional travel agents** across the country.

WHY ENTER?

- ★ Receive recognition from across the cruise industry
- ★ Celebrate your achievements
- ★ Get rewarded for your work
- ★ Being a finalist shows you are an industry leader
- ★ Finalists are invited to the awards presentation lunch on 16th November 2018 at the De Vere Grand Connaught Rooms in London
- ★ The overall Travel Agent Rising Star will win a 7 night 2019 European River Cruise for 2 people and £1,500 in cooperative marketing funds for the winners agency provided by AmaWaterways.

FREE TO ENTER!

To view the categories and criteria and enter online visit

www.cruisestarsawards.com

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CLIA UK & IRELAND

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We are a member of ABTA and our flight inclusive holidays are protected by the ATOL scheme. From price of £2,333pp based on the Active Discovery on the Rhine cruise departing 5th August 2019 from London Heathrow. VIP private home pick-up service is available if your customers live within 100 miles of their departure point. All meals are included on board the cruise. Hotel nights before and after may not include meals; details of included meals can be found online at www.avaloncruises.co.uk. The winner of the Fitbit Alta HR Wristwatch will be contacted on 2nd July 2018 via email. Multiple entries are allowed. By entering this competition you agree to partaking in photos and promotion of Avalon Waterways. All pricing and offers are subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time. Correct at time of print (18 May 2018).

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Eligibility and Entry: For the Monthly Prize Draw entrants must be UK Travel Agents that are registered to trade with Fred Olsen Cruise Lines (FOCL). For the Free Car Prize Draw entrants must be Travel Agents based in the UK aged 17 or over (excluding employees of FOCL or any of its subsidiary companies, and their families). Entry to both Prize Draw competitions is by registering each FOCL cruise booking on the FOCL Travel Agent Centre on the FOCL website during the respective Qualifying Period. The Qualifying Period for Monthly Prize Draws is between 1 June 2018 and 31 December 2018 (from the 1st of the month in which the draw takes place). The Qualifying Period for the Free Car Prize Draw is from 1 June 2018 to 14 December 2018. The promoter of this Prize Draw is Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines Limited, 42 White House Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 5LL (registered office 2nd Floor, 64-65 Vincent Square, London, SW1P 2NU). For full terms and conditions of The Big Fred Giveaway Prize Draw visit fredolsencruises.com/agent/giveaway. All bookings are subject to FOCL standard terms and conditions. Information shown is correct at time of going to print (May 2018). E&OE.

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