

Your comprehensive guide to selling cruise holidays

cruisetradenews.com

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cruise

TRADE NEWS

TIME TO EXPLORE

How Explora Journeys plans to
revolutionise the luxury cruise experience



In association with



Explora
JOURNEYS

CTN INVESTIGATES

How can the cruise industry
attract new talent?

INTERVIEW

In conversation with Advantage
CEO Julia Lo Bue-Said

AT A GLANCE

Inside Celebrity Beyond –
the latest Edge-class ship

Now is the time
for your clients to receive the very
best value on their Seabourn cruise

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OR 2023 CRUISE BY 1 MAR
2022 AND ON SELECT
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- Welcome Champagne and complimentary in-suite bar stocked with guests' preferences
- World-class dining, further enhanced through a culinary partnership with Chef Thomas Keller
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SOME OF OUR EXTRAORDINARY OFFERS

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18 Sep; 16, 30* Oct 2022
Seabourn Encore

Athens to Istanbul

Fly/cruise from £3,499pp*

- 2-Cat Veranda Upgrade
- Inclusive Economy Air
- Seabourn's Classical Concert at Ephesus
- 50% Reduced Deposit

*Lead fare based on 30/10/22

7- Night Italy & the Riviera

26* Jun; 10 Jul; 14, 28 Aug; 11 Sep 2022
Seabourn Sojourn

Rome to Barcelona

Fly/cruise from £3,499pp*

- 2-Cat Suite Upgrade
- Inclusive Economy Air
- 50% Reduced Deposit

*Lead fare based on 26/6/22

7-Night Baltic & St Petersburg

2, 9^, 30 Jul; 6^,
27* Aug; 3^ Sep 2022
Seabourn Ovation

Copenhagen to Stockholm (^or reverse)

Fly/cruise from £3,799pp*

- 2-Cat Veranda Upgrade
- Inclusive Economy Air
- 2-nights in St Petersburg
- 50% Reduced Deposit

*Lead fare based on 27/08/22

CONTACT YOUR SEABOURN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TEAM | CALL 0344 338 8614 | EMAIL: [SALESSUPPORT@SEABOURN.CO.UK](mailto:salessupport@seabourn.co.uk)



Terms & Conditions: *The Suite Life Event Offer is valid through 1/3/22 on select 2022 & 2023 sailings. Offers vary by sailing. Featured prices are per guest based on double occupancy and include Cruise Fare, Taxes, Fees & Port Expenses. Prices are in Pounds Sterling and are based on promo code NV. All savings amounts are included in the fares shown. Complimentary Veranda Suite Upgrades are subject to availability at time of booking. Upgrade will be reflected in fare paid for selected Suite category. Europe & Caribbean Inclusive Economy Class Air (ECA) offer is subject to availability, valid only for guests residing in the UK and applicable to the 1st & 2nd guests sharing a Suite only. Promotional Inclusive Business Class Air (BCA) may be available from £99 each way per guest for select Europe sailings and £999 each way per guest for select Caribbean sailings. In the event that neither promotional ECA or BCA are available (at the sole discretion of Seabourn) or for guests not wishing to utilise the promotional air offer - a cruise credit in the amount of £300 per guest on select Europe and £800 on select Caribbean will be applied to the booking amount, based on promo code NV. Promotional air offers include complimentary transfers between the airport and ship. ECA offer is based on promo code JE and BCA offer is based on promo code JB. 50% Reduced Deposit offer is valid on select sailings that are outside of standard penalty periods. Reduced Deposit amount is taken off the standard deposit policy amounts. ~Subject to weather conditions. All offers are capacity controlled and may be modified or withdrawn at any time without prior notice. Other restrictions may apply. Seabourn reserves the right to correct errors. Ships' registry: Bahamas. ©2022 Seabourn.





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The ultimate big-ship experience on Royal's *Harmony of the Seas*

Adversity is inevitable but our passion pushes us forward.

RISE TO THE OCCASION.





Editor's letter

Welcome to the January/February issue

Just like that, Christmas has come and gone. We're now in that slightly murky, post-festive blues stage of January, when we're back into the swing of things at work (from home, for many) but are struggling to stick to New Year's resolutions – well, that's how I feel, anyway.

No doubt, it was a difficult end to 2021, and – to be frank – a difficult start to this year, but we should not lose sight of the opportunities ahead.

There are several new ships launching in 2022 across all cruise segments, new lines sailing for the first time, and exciting destinations on the horizon for guests. All in all, cruise can continue the positive momentum it built in 2021.

On the topic of last year, it was during the summer that we decided to really push ahead with our plans to put CTN at the heart of long-form investigative journalism in the cruise sector. The launch of the CTN Investigates section has proved very successful, and we have lots planned for 2022. This section will form a key part of our coverage moving forward, alongside more agenda-setting interviews.

For this issue of said section, we take a look at the recruitment challenge in travel, and what needs to be done to attract the next generation of talent. Elsewhere, *Celebrity Beyond* – the newest addition to the Edge series – is the focus of our At a glance feature.



Above: A big welcome for all aboard *Harmony of the Seas*

At the end of last year, I was lucky enough to spend a few days on Royal Caribbean's *Harmony of the Seas*. This mammoth ship is certainly a crowd pleaser, as you'll discover inside.

We also speak to Advantage Travel Partnership CEO Julia Lo Bue-Said, and get the latest reflections from Crystal Cruises UK marketing manager Natalie Dorrington.

Keep pushing and stay positive.

Gary Peters
Editor, Cruise Trade News

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The Briefing

THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION FOR CRUISE NEWS

In BRIEF

APT adds Croatia cruises

● APT Travelmarvel has increased capacity for its forthcoming season in Croatia. *MV Lady Eleganza* – the line's newbuild yacht – will operate a nine-day Islands of Croatia cruise from May to September this year, as well as the eight-day Adriatic Coastal cruise, from April to September.

AQV renames ships

● American Queen Voyages has revealed that *Victory I* and *Victory II* will be renamed *Ocean Voyager* and *Ocean Navigator* respectively. The ships will focus on lakes and ocean cruise experiences for the line.

Hurtigruten adds Galápagos cruises

● Hurtigruten Expeditions has expanded its Galápagos programme for 2023/24. Guests will now be able to choose from a six-night eastern Galápagos Cruise, four-night northern Galápagos itinerary, a four-night western Galápagos sailing, and an eight-night voyage.

THE NEWS YOU NEED

Subscribe to the *Cruise Trade News* newsletter for all the latest in cruise news, features, destination guides, interviews and more.

SIGN UP NOW AT
cruisetradenews.com



NOW LIVE: New CTN website launches

Cruise Trade News is proud to unveil its new website, offering a refreshed design to serve the travel trade better and to help agents sell more cruise holidays.

With its stronger emphasis on news and features, a clearer, simplified layout, and more refined sections, never has it been easier to discover the latest happenings across the cruise sector.

New sections include Analysis, which will act as a focal point for *CTN's* mission to focus on investigative journalism, and a dedicated area for agenda-setting interviews.

CTN editor Gary Peters said: "This new website is a clear statement of our investment in the future, and we are delighted to unveil it to our readers and the wider world."

"Despite the obstacles of recent times, cruise is a fast-moving, fast-growing and innovative sector, and we feel this new website reflects that. With updated sections, concepts, interactivity, and speed, the *CTN* website is the only place travel agents need to visit for the latest cruise news,

features, destination updates, ship reviews, training materials, and many more aspects of the sector.

"Since the start of 2021, we have been committed to placing *CTN* at the heart of in-depth, investigative journalism, and this platform allows us to showcase this work better, particularly through a new Analysis section that will be the main home for long-form feature content," he said.

"We're also placing more emphasis on our interviews with cruise line executives and those working in the travel trade, as well as comprehensive information about the hottest cruise destinations across the globe. We have also optimised the website to be more responsive across different channels, such as mobile, and provide a smoother experience when viewing video content," he added.

Go to
cruisetradenews.com
for more information



Top of the world: Seabourn is taking guests to little-travelled polar regions

ITINERARIES

Seabourn unveils expedition first

Seabourn has announced new voyages for summer 2023 on its two purpose-built expedition ships, *Seabourn Venture* and *Seabourn Pursuit*.

The programme includes the line's first-ever voyages to the Northeast and Northwest Passages in the Arctic. *Seabourn Venture* will depart on 29 July 2023 for a 26-day journey along the Northeast Passage from Tromsø, Norway to Nome, Alaska, followed by a charter flight for passengers to Anchorage, Alaska, with an overnight stay.

Its sister ship, *Seabourn Pursuit*, which is scheduled to launch in March 2023, will

offer a 23-day adventure to the Northwest Passage from Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, to Nome, departing on 26 August 2023.

Seabourn president Josh Leibowitz said: "Our Northeast Passage and Northwest Passage are truly epic itineraries that are perfect for travellers who want to explore regions less travelled, and take in the landscapes, nature and wildlife they never thought they would ever see."

Seabourn Venture will embark on its second year of operation in summer 2023, exploring the Arctic, Scotland, Norway and the Russian Arctic.



New research suggests that cruise customers remain positive about taking a cruise holiday in 2022.

The findings come from Panache Cruises. The agency sent an email to its 15,000-strong customer base asking if they were considering taking a cruise in 2022.

In total, more than 3,000 responses were received, with 70 per cent stating 'yes'. A total of 22 per cent said 'maybe', and only eight per cent 'no'. According to Panache, only a "very small percentage of those saying no [cited] the [Omicron] variant as a major factor in their decision".

Panache Cruises founder and MD James Cole said: "During the time we have been trading we have developed close relationships with our customers, and they have become highly responsive when we ask for feedback," he said.

"It's great that we can very quickly gauge customer sentiment, especially in these volatile times."

A recent *CTN Investigates* feature (December 2021 issue) found a high degree of optimism in the cruise sector, with lines and agencies reporting strong demand for 2022 and beyond.

APPOINTMENTS



Explora Journeys has announced new appointments in global and regional roles. Among them is **Priti Mehta**, who has joined as UK & Ireland head of sales, while ex-Crystal Cruises vice-president of international sales Helen Beck is now head of global sales excellence.



Oceania Cruises has announced the appointment of **David Sanderson** as sales manager for the north of England, Scotland and Ireland. Sanderson joins the Oceania team with more than 10 years' experience in the cruise industry, most recently as BDM Scotland and Ireland at Norwegian Cruise Line.



Aurora Expeditions has named **Hayley Peacock-Gower** as its first chief marketing officer to "drive global growth" for the line. Peacock-Gower has more than 20 years' experience in strategic branding and marketing for Australian and global brands and agencies.



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SARK ISLAND, GUERNSEY

MORE TIME ASHORE See the sights during the day and experience the nightlife after dark with late night (9pm or later), or overnight calls.

Normal Princess Cruises booking conditions apply. *The Real Holiday Sale is available from 21 Dec 2021-28 Feb 2022, and applies to cruises in this campaign only. Offers are not combinable with any other promotion. Cruise from £699pp based on 7 night Spain & France cruise no. Y227 and is subject to availability based upon 2 adults sharing the lowest available grade of interior stateroom on the all inclusive Princess Plus fare. Price and availability are correct at time of printing, and may go up or down. £50pp low deposit applies to all passengers.

Spain & France

7 NIGHTS

DEPARTURE DATE

Sky Princess 17 Sep 2022

Southampton ▶ Guernsey (St. Peter Port) ▶ La Rochelle ▶ Bilbao ▶ La Coruña ▶ Southampton

CRUISE NO. Y227

PRINCESS PLUS FARE FROM PP

INSIDE	£699
BALCONY	£899
MINI-SUITE	£1,199
SUITE	£1,699

Canada & New England

25 NIGHTS

DEPARTURE DATE

Sky Princess 24 Sep 2022

Southampton ▶ Corner Brook ▶ Sydney ▶ Charlottetown ▶ New York (Overnight) ▶ Newport ▶ Boston ▶ Bar Harbor ▶ Saint John ▶ Halifax ▶ St. John's ▶ Southampton

CRUISE NO. Y228

PRINCESS PLUS FARE FROM PP

INSIDE	£3,249
BALCONY	£4,249
MINI-SUITE	£4,749
SUITE	£7,749



RIDE THE WAVE

In his regular column for CTN, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales **Geoff Ridgeon** urges positive thinking

Happy New Year everyone, and welcome back. This time of year is typically the busiest period for our industry, now we've taken some well-needed time

out to eat mince pies with our loved ones.

I'm not sure that the term 'hit the ground running' has ever felt more appropriate and, before I carry on, it's only right that I address the elephant in the room – the change that the Omicron variant brought with it over the Christmas period. While it is likely that this will cause a shift in consumer sentiment, equally, the start of the month saw some really encouraging sales figures right across the board.

It shows that people are becoming more used to living in a world with Covid-19, and after a rollercoaster two years it's time to look ahead to creating a brighter 2022.

January and February are typically key booking periods for travel, and while

“People are becoming more used to living in a world with Covid-19, and it's time to look ahead”

we're still not quite back to normal, a good first quarter does create strong foundations to build upon for the rest of the year. There are some great deals to be had for clients booking during the wave – or turn-of-year – period, for cruises right across the year, and they may just be enough to sway someone who is sitting on the fence.

Travel ready

There are some phenomenal itineraries setting sail this year too, right across the board, with new cruises and new ships coming into the market. Until now a predominantly ex-UK cruise line, we at Fred Olsen have ships venturing further afield this year. I am particularly excited to see that *Borealis* will be making for Canada later this year, in time to catch the beautiful autumnal foliage.

However, we haven't forgotten our wonderful British Isles – the region we have all enjoyed exploring over the past couple of years – and we will continue to offer several UK cruises for those wanting to get away closer to home. For some, it is simply about a break away and enjoying the cruise experience.

If you can forgive me for putting it so succinctly (let's not forget, simple isn't

always easy) the key will be to focus on two things.

First, reacquaint yourself with the turn-of-year campaigns that each cruise line is running and consider which of those is going to present the best value and the best experience. Second, take the time to research what each cruise line is doing to add that extra bit of reassurance.

At Fred Olsen, we are offering a Travel Ready Service, whereby guests can purchase a package to take care of all the paperwork, including passenger locator forms and NHS vaccination letters, as well as ordering all required tests.

We also have our Plain Sailing Guarantee, while other lines right across the industry will be offering their own policies on flexible bookings. Together, we can ride the turn-of-year wave and build a stronger 2022 for cruise. 🚢



GEOFF RIDGEON

HEAD OF SALES
FRED OLSEN CRUISE LINES

A trip to Canada in the autumn
is on the agenda for *Borealis*

Sales *Inspiration*

INCENTIVES • ITINERARIES • SPECIAL OFFERS

Winning agents will travel in great style aboard the new ship

Celebrity Cruises has unveiled its latest Celebrity Moments campaign, Above and Beyond, which features a chance for travel agents to win a cruise aboard *Celebrity Beyond*.

A total of 100 agents will be able to experience the line's new Edge-series ship on a two-night sailing in April 2022.

Celebrity Beyond will depart on her maiden voyage on 27 April 2022 from Southampton on a 10-night Western Europe cruise.

For a chance of winning, agents need to make as many bookings as they can between now and 28 February 2022 on board any Celebrity ship.

All bookings must be claimed via Celebrity Rewards – accessible through Celebrity Central – and agents can track their progress on the weekly leader boards.

Winners will be announced at the beginning of March.

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INCENTIVES & TRAVEL
AGENT TRAINING
MATERIALS

**GO BEYOND
WITH CELEBRITY**



River cruising is so important in the sector that agents need to have info at their fingertips

BOOST RIVER CRUISE KNOWLEDGE

CLIA has launched a new programme that aims to “enhance agents’ river cruise knowledge and expertise”.

The concept is intended to boost product and destination knowledge, as well as help agents keep up to date with the latest river cruise updates.

To complete the programme, CLIA is encouraging agents to access its river-specific learning tools, such as a new-to-river cruise

guide, and two online training modules, available via the CLIA website.

Agents can also view related videos and past webinars and subscribe to the CLIA RiverView Podcast via the site.

The association added that agents should also engage with the training on offer from river cruise operators and become members of both the CLIA Europe and CLIA travel agent Facebook pages.



The newly launched ship will be heading for Europe in May

Win a cruise on Wonder of the Seas

Royal Caribbean is offering travel agents the chance to win a short stay on its new ship, *Wonder of the Seas*.

The 'Get Me On Wonder' competition, which runs until 14 February 2022, encourages agents to earn points for logging their bookings through Club Rewards and social sharing, and by completing online training modules.

Agents at the top of the leader board will win one of 600 staterooms on board *Wonder of the Seas*' initial two-night European sailings in early May 2022.

The campaign is part of Royal Caribbean's latest sales incentives to drive bookings on the eight ships it will have sailing in Europe during summer this year.



CRUISE CHALLENGE READY FOR 2022

It's the start of a new year and the Cruise Challenge is ready to inform and entertain travel agents once again.

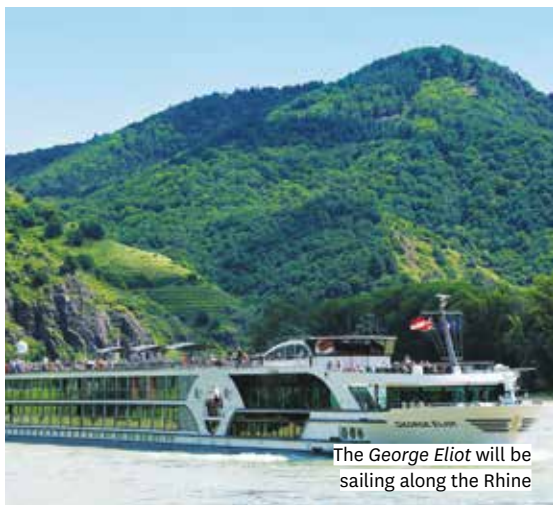
This unique training event – organised by *Cruise Trade News* – will be travelling across the country, visiting a number of cities, including London, Newcastle, Glasgow, Manchester, Southampton, and many more.

CTN editor Gary Peters said: "We were delighted to operate some in-person events toward the end of last year. These demonstrated the strong appetite for face-to-face training and networking.

"This year promises to be even bigger and better, with events taking place around the UK."



For more information on 2022 dates and locations, visit cruisechallenge.evessiocloud.com or contact **Janine Sykes** janine.sykes@realresponsedmedia.com



The George Eliot will be sailing along the Rhine

RIVIERA VOUCHER INCENTIVE

Riviera Travel is giving travel agents the chance to win vouchers.

Agents can earn a £50 lifestyle voucher for every Riviera river cruise booking made on sailings departing in April, May and June 2022. The offer applies to all bookings made up to 28 February 2022.

A total of 14 itineraries are eligible, with cruises covering countries in the region such as France, Italy, Germany, Portugal,

Hungary and the Netherlands.

Voyages include the eight-day Douro, Porto and Salamanca cruise, featuring eight guided tours and visits; the five-day Amsterdam, Kinderdijk and the Dutch Bulbfields itinerary, as well as the eight-day Burgundy, the River Rhone and Provence cruise. To claim the voucher, agents should send their confirmed booking number to agencysales@rivieratravel.co.uk.



Time to **EXPLORE**

Explora Journeys combines centuries-old seafaring experience with European refinement to introduce a bold new vision for luxury ocean travel

The story of Explora Journeys is one that starts way back in 1940s Sorrento, with a Neapolitan ferry captain, Gianluigi Aponte, who – together with the Swiss sweetheart he met when she was a passenger on one of his crossings – went on to create MSC, a global shipping operation and the world’s largest privately owned cruise company. Now this Swiss-Italian seafaring family is fulfilling a lifelong dream and launching Explora Journeys, a modern luxury cruise experience like no other.

Explora Journeys is set to transform ocean travel through chic, stylish ships and the most immersive itineraries, which allow guests to discover further, travel deeper and linger a little longer at each destination. These are enriching holidays for the curious, cosmopolitan traveller who wants to create connections that last long beyond the cruise itself.

The first Explora Journeys ship will set sail in 2023, with three more to follow by 2026

long lunches and vibrant evenings. All this is supported by an industry-leading guest-to-host ratio of 1.25 to 1, allowing for an intuitive, effortless and culturally intelligent service style that makes for perfect hosting.

Each ship in the Explora Journeys fleet will be RINA DOLPHIN certified for reduced underwater noise, while sustainability initiatives include no single-use plastic on board or ashore.

The Explora Journeys team look forward to welcoming guests from May 2023, either on *Explora I's* maiden journey from Barcelona to Athens, or on one of the line's other seven inaugural journeys. 📍

EXPLORA TRAVEL ADVISOR CENTRE

We have designed an online resource just for you, called the Explora Travel Advisor Centre. This tool was created with extensive travel advisor input in order to ensure that it offers seamless management of our shared efforts.

JOIN US TODAY

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📍 explorajourneys.com/traveladvisors

Journeys fleet sets sail in 2023, with three more to follow by 2026.

European elegance characterises every detail, while the 461 ocean-front suites, penthouses and residences – each with sweeping ocean views from their floor-to-ceiling windows and private sun terraces – offer guests comfortable homes at sea, with unrivalled space and privacy.

More than 27,000 square feet of outdoor space includes three swimming pools and 64 private cabanas, while an indoor pool with a retractable glass roof, and 9,700 square feet for the spa and fitness studios, ensure guests can do as much (or as little) as they like.

The nine distinct on-board culinary experiences promise something for every palate and provide the perfect setting for

On sailings of between seven and 44 nights long guests will venture both on and off the beaten track, with the Inaugural Journeys Collection covering the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, Iceland and Greenland, USA and Canada, the Caribbean and South America and Hawaii.

Whether that's treading the cobbled streets of Europe's capitals and exploring the ancient Acropolis in Athens; navigating the cool of the Norwegian fjords and sailing in the shade of Svalbard's soaring cliffs; or savouring French chic in Saint Barts, lolling beneath Hawaiian waterfalls and soaking up the sun-kissed shores of Brazil's buzzing Buzios, Explora Journeys promises exclusive access that goes far beyond the classic luxury cruise experience.

A fleet of luxury ships

Designed in partnership with the world's foremost superyacht specialists and harnessing cutting-edge maritime technology, the first ship in the Explora



Explora
JOURNEYS



Explora

JOURNEYS



INTRODUCING A BOLD NEW VISION FOR OCEAN TRAVEL

Explora Journeys combines centuries-old seafaring experience with superlative European refinement to deliver enriching ocean journeys that inspire exploration in all its forms.

Designed in partnership with the world's foremost superyacht specialists, EXPLORA I – the first of four ships in the Explora Journeys fleet – sets sail in May 2023.



”
In conversation with...

Advantage Travel Partnership

Julia Lo Bue-Said recently celebrated 26 years with Advantage Travel Partnership. Much has changed in that time – not least since the start of the pandemic – but as she explains, her passion for travel remains as strong as ever

“We have no stakeholders... other than our members”



Julia Lo Bue-Said:
“We can be very honest”

There’s been a common feeling throughout the pandemic – the sinking of the heart as the government reveals yet more changes to red lists, testing regimes and travel restrictions. The stop-start nature, the ups and downs:

this new reality has become an unfortunate guarantee of the times.

Something else that has become commonplace is the presence of high-profile travel industry figures speaking through mainstream media outlets, most often following these government announcements. One such voice is Julia Lo Bue-Said, CEO of Advantage Travel Partnership.

“I like to think we’ve been able to speak with authority right the way through,” she tells *CTN* editor Gary Peters. “Having a network of independent agents... we are very close to our members and we really immerse ourselves in making sure we understand the impact [the pandemic] has had on their businesses.

“We can be very honest – we have no stakeholders to try to appease, other than our members. It enables us to give

opinions with clarity; no beating around the bush, so to speak. That’s helped us become that clear voice. I’m never afraid to answer any questions.

“The more coverage we can command, the more that will serve the message of always booking with a travel agent. Without question, I see that the travel agent share of sales moving forward is going to be increasing through all the different demographics. Sometimes, you have to put a stake in the sand and say, ‘We’re going to have to be very bullish’.”

Closer than ever

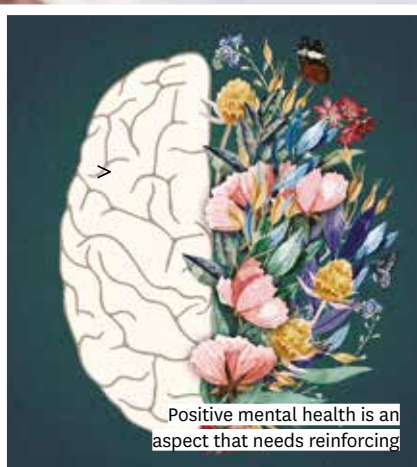
This honesty – not to mention expertise – has struck a chord with many in the travel sector, as agents seek to highlight the need for sector-specific support and the very harsh realities of trading when circumstances are pitted against them.

Conversely, this feeling of a lack of understanding from government has brought agents and the wider travel sector closer together, and it’s something Bue-Said highlights.

“Our engagement with members is now greater, even though we haven’t been able to meet physically more



Agents need to help their customers in the coming months to make the right travel decisions



Positive mental health is an aspect that needs reinforcing

“We help our agents... hold their hands as much as we can”

often,” she explains. “You cannot have that major activity or even business as usual unless you understand what people require, their needs and wants. You have to stay close to that and be really aware of what’s happening from members’ points of view.”

This coming together has also created a more emotional relationship; ties now run deeper than ever before, and the concept of ‘we’re all in it together’ has never been more apt.

Bue-Said says: “[We’ve] been in our own little bubbles and experienced some really tough times and it’s personally draining. It’s about the human side in all of us – we’re in the business of human happiness, so it’s about how do we make sure we can we help members through

[difficulties]? How can we help them have a clear head, get motivated, feel inspired? We hold their hands as much as we can.”

This point on emotional relationships also feeds into the importance of positive mental health, and the role that travel plays in this. Travel has “always been about inspiring people”, Bue-Said continues, adding: “We must not forget that. To me, there’s more risk in people not going away, not meeting friends and family. We have to remember why we’re in this business – to inspire and to enable them to realise their dreams and aspirations.”

Entrepreneurial spirit

On the topic of aspirations, cruise has big plans for 2022 and despite the threat of setbacks to come, Bue-Said is confident



Direct contact with customers is still an important part of an agent's job

"Most agents have some degree of digitalisation, whether that's online or in their processing and procedures, and self-booking tools. There are different tools and solutions out there that we certainly always look at to ensure that our members can offer that to consumers. Unfortunately, it does require investment to digitalise. Right now, for many in the travel agent community it is probably not the right time. I think a hybrid solution is absolutely the right thing to be delivering."

"I think one thing cruise lines did incredibly well was to reinvent the staycation side"

that the sector will be able to weather the storms and push forward with confidence.

She says: "I think one thing that cruise lines did incredibly well was to reinvent themselves on the staycation side – that was phenomenal for consumers, but also for the

trade, as our members had product to sell on a cruise ship.

"Cruise lines were able to demonstrate that people could cruise safely with all the protocols that were in place and, arguably, before the rest of the industry caught up. They were exceptionally entrepreneurial."

This entrepreneurial spirit has been brought into sharp focus recently, with certain experts predicting a rise in the use of digital solutions and platforms for travel – including the booking process and general travel information.

Bue-Said believes that the best results will come from a complementary approach between the new and the traditional approach, offering the best of both worlds, as "consumers do expect to be able to pick up their phone" as well as to access all their travel documents and support digitally.

A three-year plan

As for the future at Advantage Travel Partnership, the consortium recently launched a three-year strategy, a key component of which is "footprint expansion" to provide greater support to members but also attract new ones to the organisation.

"We've brought on new members during the pandemic and we have a pipeline of new members about to join – that's right across our whole demographic of membership, from homeworkers and managed services to traditional membership," says Bue-Said.

"Operational digital transformation is another part of our plan. This is about making sure that we can be as easy to do business with as possible.

"Life is difficult, so we want an organisation where our members can work with us in a really easy manner," she says.

It's a busy time, then, for Bue-Said and her colleagues, but her passion – and that which runs through Advantage – shows no signs of fading.

"I think that what's come out of pandemic, certainly for us, is the voice of the independent travel agent," she continues. "I passionately believe in the sector, and I believe in independent travel agents. I absolutely can see a bright future ahead." 🗨️



The Advantage team are committed to demonstrating support for agents

Spotlight On

Late-night excursions

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises UK & Ireland MD **Chris Townson** explains how the line's Nights Out programme will showcase some of Europe's finest cities after dark

At Uniworld, we take a unique approach to evenings. From an on-board perspective, we are leaders in the industry, with live entertainment from the very best performers, such as soul-stirring opera on board the new Super Ship *La Venezia* in Italy or the fun and energy of the can-can on our cruises in France.

Now – with the recent launch of our Nights Out programme – we have gone to the next level to immerse our guests in evening activities off the ship. The programme is designed to showcase the romance, culture, history and traditions of the towns and cities that we visit by night. It began following the success of our evening outings in Venice and Vienna.

For example, as part of our Venice cruise, guests are taken through a private entrance to St Mark's Basilica after dark and have the opportunity to see this incredible building by themselves.

In Vienna, we take guests to an intimate evening concert discovering the famous works of two of history's most legendary composers, Mozart and Strauss, who spent much of their lives in the city. It is held in the city's Albert Hall, known for its acoustics and stunning architecture. These evenings are also the perfect vehicle for showcasing the talent of some of Vienna's finest dancers.

An experience evolution

Based on the feedback we've had for these experiences, our product team has worked with our local connections to develop this into an immersive portfolio that will bring the destinations to life in ways we haven't offered before.



Evening excursions in Venice are the starting point for the new Uniworld scheme

“Uniworld guests will learn about the tradition of Swiss beer making... while sampling brews along the way”

In 2022, on our Remarkable Rhine and Historic Holland itinerary, Uniworld guests will learn about the tradition of Swiss beer making at Feldschlösschen Brewery, one of the oldest factories in Europe, while sampling brews along the way.

In Cochem in Germany, they will enjoy a private reception in the town's baroque-era castle featuring a musical performance and local wines, while in Amsterdam, they will take a boat ride along the canals, with surprise entertainment along the way.

We will expand the programme beyond this initial selection, so that there is a Nights Out option in as many suitable overnight stops as possible.

River cruising is primed for this kind of experience. We dock in the heart of the town or city centre, with all the culture,

energy and entertainment that brings, just a stone's throw from the ship. While guests are free to explore at leisure, we know that they are also looking for the insight,

access and ease that comes with a programme like this.

For us it's all about listening to our guests and offering more authentic connections to the destinations. I can't wait to see what comes next. 🍷



CHRIS TOWNSON
UNIWORLD UK & I MD



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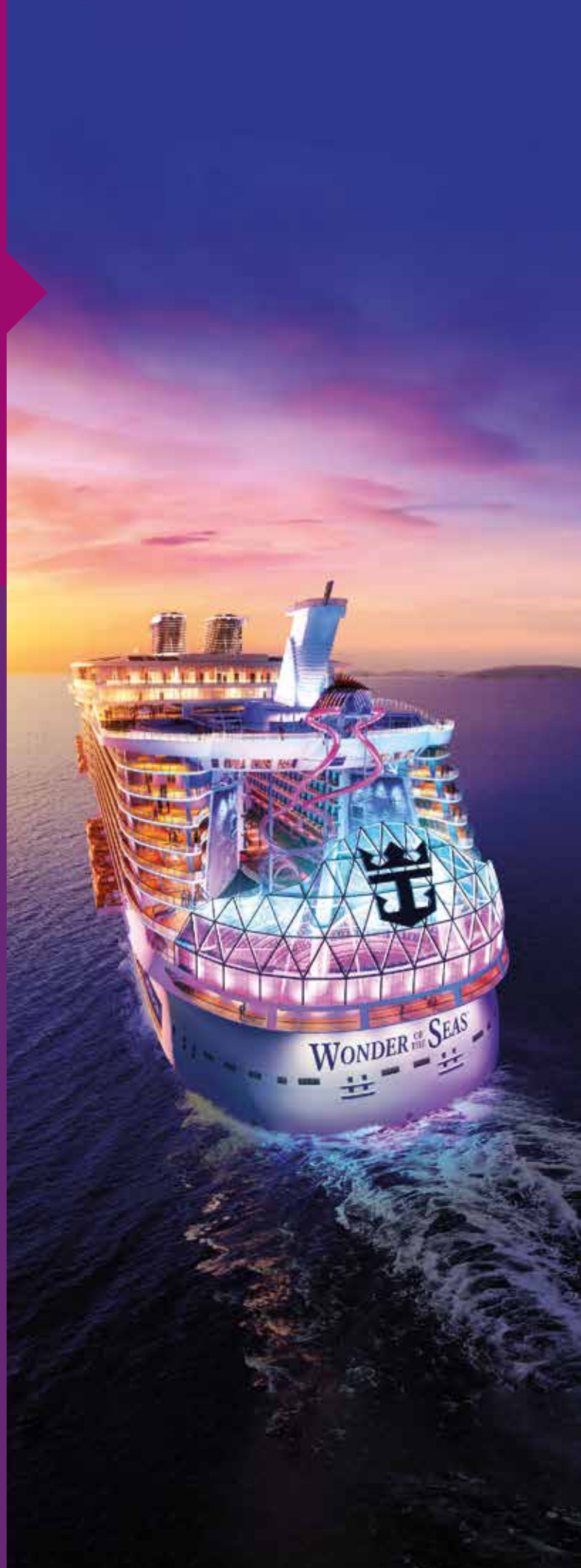
50 POINTS
WONDER OF THE SEAS
BOOKINGS

25 POINTS
ODYSSEY & ANTHEM OF THE
SEAS BOOKINGS OR COMPLETING
THE WONDER LEARN MODULE

20 POINTS
BALCONY/SUITES
BOOKINGS

10 POINTS
SOCIAL SHARING
(ONCE ON FACEBOOK/
TWITTER)

10 POINTS
PHOTO UPLOAD
TO WONDER WALL



Fast Facts

Joining the Celebrity Cruises fleet in April 2022, *Celebrity Beyond*™ is the newest addition to the award-winning Edge Series and will be like nothing seen before at sea. Imagined by a team of world-famous designers, including Nate Berkus and Kelly Hoppen CBE, the new spaces and Celebrity Cruises' innovative outwards-facing design will bring guests closer than ever to each destination. *Celebrity Beyond* redefines the art of new-luxury travel, with an unrivalled collection of culinary experiences and a holistic wellness journey that encapsulates the best-in-class fitness concepts and wellbeing programmes.

3,260

GUESTS

1,400+

CREW

140,600

TONNAGE

1,073FT

LENGTH

CELEBRITY BEYOND



1



Wellness

Celebrity Beyond's wellness offering will rival the best spa resort on land. The Spa offers 120 treatments, relaxation rooms, and first-at-sea technologies for holistic health. There is also the Women in Wellness programme – featuring wisdom from female leaders in the wellness industry.

2



Food & drink

Celebrity Beyond will take culinary excellence to the next level with two Michelin-starred chef Daniel Boulud's first restaurant at sea, Le Voyage. A travel-inspired menu will immerse guests in the flavours of each global destination. There will also be a new partnership with drinks experts Diageo.



The Magic Carpet

The Magic Carpet is a destination in itself. The world's first cantilevered floating platform, reaching 13 storeys, will allow guests to both touch the water's edge and soar above it, taking in panoramic views of the glistening water. The Magic Carpet holds a full bar space with musical performances.



Edge Villas

Celebrity Beyond's Edge Villas offer transformed living for the modern traveller. These two-storey villas boast infinite verandas. For the closest connection with the sea as they sail, guests in Edge Villas will also find complete bliss in their own outdoor private plunge pools.



The Retreat

Reimagined by designer Kelly Hoppen CBE, The Retreat on *Celebrity Beyond* is an exclusive area for suite guests. It will include spaces to unwind, including the Retreat Sundeck for more ways to rejuvenate. Guests will also find secluded cabanas plus their own private Retreat Lounge and restaurant.



WAVE AWARDS 2022



Get ready to CELEBRATE

This year, the Wave Awards will wow
the cruise industry like never before



The Wave Awards – called the Oscars of cruising – will make its biggest splash yet in 2022.

Primed and ready to honour once again the highest achievements in the cruise industry – across a plethora of categories such as best ocean cruise line, best luxury operator; plus dedicated travel agent-specific awards – there is no event like it on the cruise calendar. So, prepare for an evening of entertainment, awards, celebration, a few special surprises on the night, and much more.

Information regarding the entry process, date and venue will be coming very soon.

Cruise Trade News editor Gary Peters said: “Last year, the return of the Wave Awards was a true highlight, bringing the cruise industry together once again. This year, we have exciting plans in the pipeline, and 2022 promises to be our best and biggest event yet. Stay tuned for information coming soon. It’s an evening you will not want to miss.”



STAY IN THE LOOP

visit thewaveawards.com and keep your eyes peeled for announcements

Win at Selling

The Amazon

Aqua Expeditions global director of sales
Milly Alva Haimberger explains how a river cruise is
the best way to explore the very best of Peru's nature

After 20 months of waiting, we have finally started to see the light at the end of the tunnel as customers are looking to reschedule past trips, cancelled due to the pandemic, and start booking new ones. Our bookings are certainly seeing an increase, with clients planning in advance and looking towards late 2022 and 2023 for their long-haul holidays.

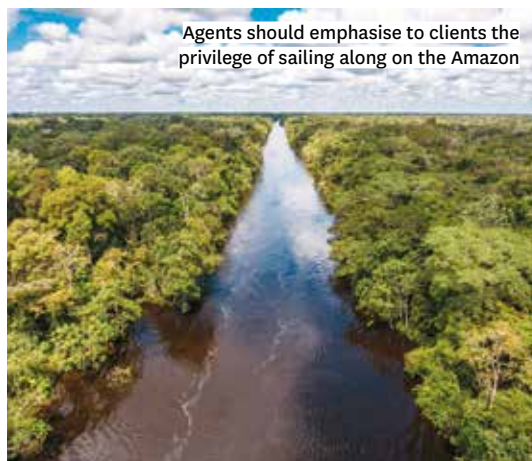
With travel being limited for so long, the demand for special trips has been on the rise, and Peru and the Amazon river are certainly among such destinations. Now is the time to capitalise on this, learn about the wildlife that inhabits the world's longest river and explain why this beautiful country should be first on the list for travellers booking this year.

Selling TIPS

The incredible nature is a huge part of an Amazon river cruise. As the world's largest rainforest, it offers countless opportunities to see flora and fauna in their natural habitat

- With sustainability remaining important to many consumers when booking a holiday, it is essential to be aware of green credentials. Small river cruises have a much smaller environmental impact than larger cruise liners, so make sure you highlight this

- Explain how guests can have personally planned excursions, directly from a very comfortable small ship. Activities can be highly customised and adapted to their interests and needs



Agents should emphasise to clients the privilege of sailing along on the Amazon

"Small-ship expeditions are one of the best ways to re-engage with loved ones while travelling"

From the great on-board dining and the knowledgeable tour guides, to the unmissable once-in-a-lifetime experiences such as spotting pink river dolphins swimming by, small river cruises allow for exploration at guests' own speed. Small-ship expeditions are also one of the best ways to re-engage with loved ones when travelling.

The river is the focus

Not only are they boutique and therefore more personal and private, but the river is very much the focus, rather than crowded city centres or bustling beaches. [At the time of writing] Peru remains open with no major restrictions in place since the beginning of 2021, so travelling should be easier for UK clients.

River voyages are a great way to see the Amazon at its best, as opposed to day trips or tours. Accompanied by hand-picked local guides, all clients have to do is step on board – where they will be totally looked after from start to finish. It

is an opportunity for guests to get under the skin of the destination, learn the stories behind it and engage with the local communities.

The Amazon can really feel like an 'off-grid' adventure – in fact, Iquitos, the largest city on the Peruvian Amazon, is an island totally disconnected from main roads.



Small ships such as Aqua Nera allow exploration at guests' own speed

Travelling with Aqua Expeditions guarantees a personalised luxury travel experience with 1:1 crew-to-guest ratio on state-of-the-art designed vessels. *Aqua Nera* or *Aria Amazon* offer an authentic, tailor-made sailing packed with wildlife, adventure and culture, with world-renowned chefs in charge of the gastronomic experience on board. ①



MILLY ALVA HAIMBERGER
AQUA EXPEDITIONS
GLOBAL DIRECTOR OF SALES



CTN *investigates*



TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE

The cruise industry had a relatively successful 2021, with sailings restarting in many destinations. However, with the pandemic still causing severe challenges, what is the state of play when it comes to recruitment and apprenticeships? **Lucy Abbott** investigates



Recruiting the right personnel could be crucial for the travel industry in getting over the pandemic

The pandemic has brought many things to the fore, but significant among them is realising that success is all about people. Without good, skilled people, ambitions rarely become reality; plans often fail to come to fruition.

An unfortunate consequence of the past two years has been a loss of talent in the travel sector. Estimates suggest 140 jobs were lost per day in the UK when cruising was suspended, according to a study by Statista Research Department. The sector is, undeniably, feeling the effects, with Barrhead Travel president Jacqueline Dobson calling for a “collective effort” to “build back the image of travel and its reputation”.

The good news? This collective fightback is underway, with many travel companies actively bolstering their ranks to cope with increased demand from consumers. In cruise, there is also a clear desire to entice the next generation of talent to join the sector.

A knowledge gap?

“Sadly, we lost some really great people throughout the course of the pandemic,” says Dobson. “Some people who have been in the industry for years have changed careers, so there’s not the same volume of existing talent available.”

The causes of such a talent drain are a combination of things, primarily the lack of money

“Some people who have been in the industry for years have changed careers”



Barrhead's Jacqueline Dobson: “Sadly, we’ve lost some really great people”

coming into businesses when travel is hit by restrictions. ABTA education manager Vicki Wolf says the situation is “decreasing the confidence of talented people in this industry... as a result, they opt for sectors that feel more secure”.

Travel Trade Recruitment sales director Claire Muge states that this issue of retaining staff could be holding back the cruise industry from recovering further. “When we came back [from furlough], the online cruise travel agencies were the first that started recruiting,” she says.

“The feedback we were getting from them was that the demand and money were there for the onward bookings but because they hadn’t been able to retain staff who were on furlough, or hadn’t kept people, it meant that the demand was there and now they’re short-staffed.”

While this still may be the case across many agencies, stats from C&M Travel Recruitment show a 500 per cent increase in vacancies in the industry between July and November 2021 when compared with the same months in 2020.



C&M Travel Recruitment team leader Rachel Elmore, therefore, sounds a positive note: “Recruitment for the cruise industry came back from the pandemic quicker than any other sector in travel – and that is probably because you can book a cruise so far ahead. Our cruise clients are saying that they are really busy at the moment.”

Hammer home the message

With millions of passengers (plus crew) having sailed in more than 10 major cruise markets across the world since July 2020, it is clear that the demand for cruising is back, and so now one key task is to extend this success to recruiting cruise experts.

Travel Trade Recruitment’s Muge observes that cruise is “very much hammering home the message that these companies are recruiting, they are secure, they are committed to getting through any blitz and it is the right time to get back in as soon as we go into what is traditionally a big booking period of January and February.”

This message is seconded by Hays Travel head of recruitment and people services Victoria Hill, who states the company has been “actively recruiting throughout the past 20 months, [and] at the moment we have over 590 live roles in our retail branches across the UK and also in our head office in Sunderland”.

So, recruitment is underway, but what type of people are entering the sector – are they experienced cruise sellers, or those looking for a new career entirely?

“Some clients want candidates who have worked for a competitor or who have only sold cruise”



Christian Verhoung of Ambassador is offering an apprentice scheme...

C&M Travel’s Elmore outlines that it’s “a mixture”, adding: “The type of candidate that we search for will depend on the client and what training they can offer. Some clients want candidates who have worked for a competitor or who have only sold cruise, whereas other companies will look at candidates from a retail background who haven’t specialised in cruise but have a general knowledge of selling.

“There are also some companies who will consider candidates who have not sold any cruises and may not have even worked in travel, but will be providing a high level of training to turn those candidates into cruise specialists,” Elmore continues.

The next generation

What about new-to-cruise apprentices? There are often debates around how to attract younger, new-to-cruise passengers, so what about when it comes to recruitment?

“I do think as an industry we need to have a plan in place right now, to not only recruit but also fast track the training of a new generation of travel consultants,”

Illustrations: Phil Couzens



comments Baldwin's Travel branch manager Trevor Ridler. "[We need] not only to ensure people become good all-rounders, [but also] encourage them to have one or two specialities they can become experts in."

Ridler is not alone in his thoughts, with a new-found desire to spread the word about apprenticeships in the travel and cruise sectors clearly apparent.

Hays Travel operates an access to travel programme to allow "those with a passion for travel but no industry experience to complete a six-month intensive training schedule that will equip its participants with top knowledge and insights to become a successful travel consultant", according to Hill.

...and knows that next-gen travel agents will have "passion, energy and enthusiasm" for the sector

"We want to nurture and support new talent and be open to suggestions from these 'new eyes' "

Over at Ambassador Cruise Line, the new operator has unveiled an apprentice scheme – a level 3 in travel qualification, the equivalent of A levels – to "give three successful candidates time in each of our company departments to offer them a variety of experiences", says CEO Christian Verhounig.

Each apprentice will work in marketing, sales, guest experience, finance and destination management while training for their apprentice qualification. In addition, Ambassador apprentices will experience life on board its ship *Ambience* once it launches in April this year.

Verhounig continues: "We believe there is a lack of awareness and understanding about apprenticeships in the travel industry and more specifically cruise. It's such an exciting time to join the industry.

"We understand that it might be difficult for young or less experienced

people who have passion, energy and enthusiasm for our sector to get their foot in the door. There is a significant number of experienced people applying for limited cruise-related positions, but we want to nurture and support new talent and be open to

suggestions from how these 'new-eyes' see our industry."

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that recruiting those with past experience is, in the short-term at least, a quick win-win for operators. As Travel Trade Recruitment Claire Muge explains: "By and large, the industry wants people who have been there, done that and bought the T-shirt. The focus initially has been on getting people who have got that experience... which makes them easy to train – they have a certain level of commitment to and passion for the product."

Figures published by the National Statistics Office in November 2020 (updated in January 2021) show that leisure, travel and tourism apprenticeships dropped from 7,200 starts in 2018/19 to 5,100 starts in 2019/20, and then to only 2,900 starts in 2020/21.

However, Northern Training Academy travel apprentice ambassador Chloe Lee believes that "younger people are starting to see a career in travel, with social media having a big impact".

Lee adds: "Apprenticeships can help employers make real improvements to businesses by reducing training and recruitment costs, developing a skilled, motivated and qualified workforce and improving customer satisfaction. I think we have found more companies are wanting to take on apprenticeships as they have found new ways of working and things are changing – they can see how having an apprenticeship can help businesses in this hard time."

The challenge remains, however, to bring more companies on board with the idea, as ABTA's Vicki Wolf explains: "Businesses often don't know how to take on an apprentice. They think it is very difficult, but there are many fantastic apprenticeship training providers that are all geared up to make it easy."

Cruise has high ambitions for the future, and without question "offers incredible opportunities – both personal and professional", says Dobson. The task now is to showcase these opportunities, especially to the next generation. 📌

Qatar IN FOCUS

This innovative country offers plenty
for cruise passengers to admire during
a 48-hour pre or post stay

Persian Gulf state Qatar is an extraordinary destination for cruise guests, featuring an abundance of museums, galleries, restaurants, and markets, all begging to be explored on a pre or post package. There are beautiful beaches, cultural activities, fun-filled watersport experiences, and UNESCO world heritage sites, but what are the top highlights travel agents should focus on?

BEACH LIFE

With more than 348 miles of coastline, Qatar is an idyllic spot for a beach getaway. Many of these beaches are only a short drive away from Doha city centre, so guests can take advantage of having culture-packed city centres as well as peaceful beaches nearby.

Travel agents should encourage guests to visit one of the most popular, Sealine Beach in Mesaieed. This is particularly suitable for those travelling as a family or in a large group, as they can be sure there is an activity for everyone, from dune bashing to safari tours. Sealine Beach is in the southern part of Qatar – a 35-minute drive from Doha International Airport and 40 minutes from the city of Doha.

If guests want to experience a truly unique beach, Inland Sea is the place to go. A short drive away from Sealine Beach through mesmerising sand dunes brings guests to this UNESCO-recognised natural reserve, with the option of camping overnight to admire the dazzling stars.

**A short drive through
mesmerising sand dunes
brings guests to a
UNESCO-recognised
natural reserve**

AL ZUBARAH FORT

No stay in Qatar is complete without a visit to the UNESCO site of Al Zubarah Fort, which is easily accessible by car or taxi.

This 20th-century fort is an impressive example of Arab architecture and has extremely thick walls – in days gone by, such walls helped to ward off invaders; today they help to keep out the heat.

The fort overlooks the ruins of a former pearling and trading town, which was at the centre of tribal battles back in the 18th century. Today, it acts as a museum where guests can explore intriguing findings from the pearl-diving period. It is also home to mosques, a harbour, a canal and residential palaces, offering numerous places for visitors to explore.

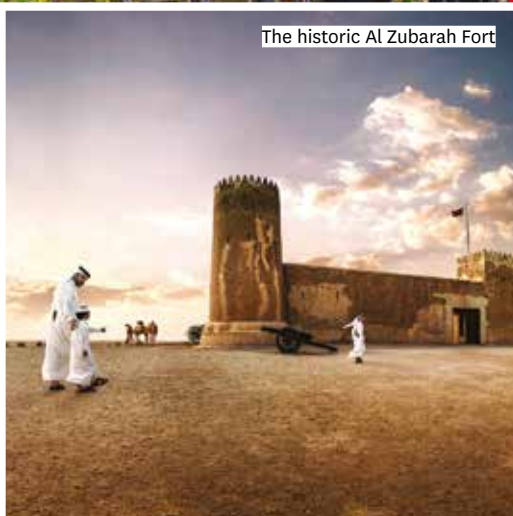


Reconnect with nature with a kayaking
experience at Purple Island





The historic Al Zubarah Fort



Guests should take time to wander through the old Souq Waqif market

WONDERFUL WATERSPORTS

A big plus for those who like to get their feet wet is that Qatar is an ideal location for watersports. With year-round sunny weather and clear blue waters, the country is a watersports lover's paradise.

Even in the winter, temperatures average out at 26 degrees, meaning guests can take the plunge no matter which season they visit. There are the flora and fauna-filled natural reserves, best viewed from a kayak, or the sunrise and moonlight trips at the Al Thakira Mangroves, an aspect of Qatar's natural beauty that's really worth seeing.

Alternatively, guests can don diving gear and swim in the crystal waters at one of the world's top pearl-diving areas – the Poseidon Dive Centre. The opportunity to explore boat wrecks and fascinating limestone formations is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Kite surfing, or kite boarding, is also popular in Qatar, and many local tour operators and hotels offer the experience. The thrills continue with the option to parasail up to 100 metres in the air on a parachute tied to a speedboat.



The Persian Gulf offers visitors amazing beaches to explore

SOUQ WAQIF AND NATIONAL MUSEUM OF QATAR

A hub of bustling market stalls welcomes guests to Souq Waqif, a true taste of traditional street life in Qatar. Travel agents can suggest the unique buying opportunities that this market offers, such as the Souq Waqif art centre, which features an array of authentic work. The Souq is also the perfect place to learn more about Qatar's time at the heart of the pearl industry.

The National Museum of Qatar takes guests on a visual journey through the country's history. Exhibitions mix historic objects and contemporary influences, tangibly demonstrating the huge change that Qatar has witnessed over time.

NEW GRAND CRUISE TERMINAL

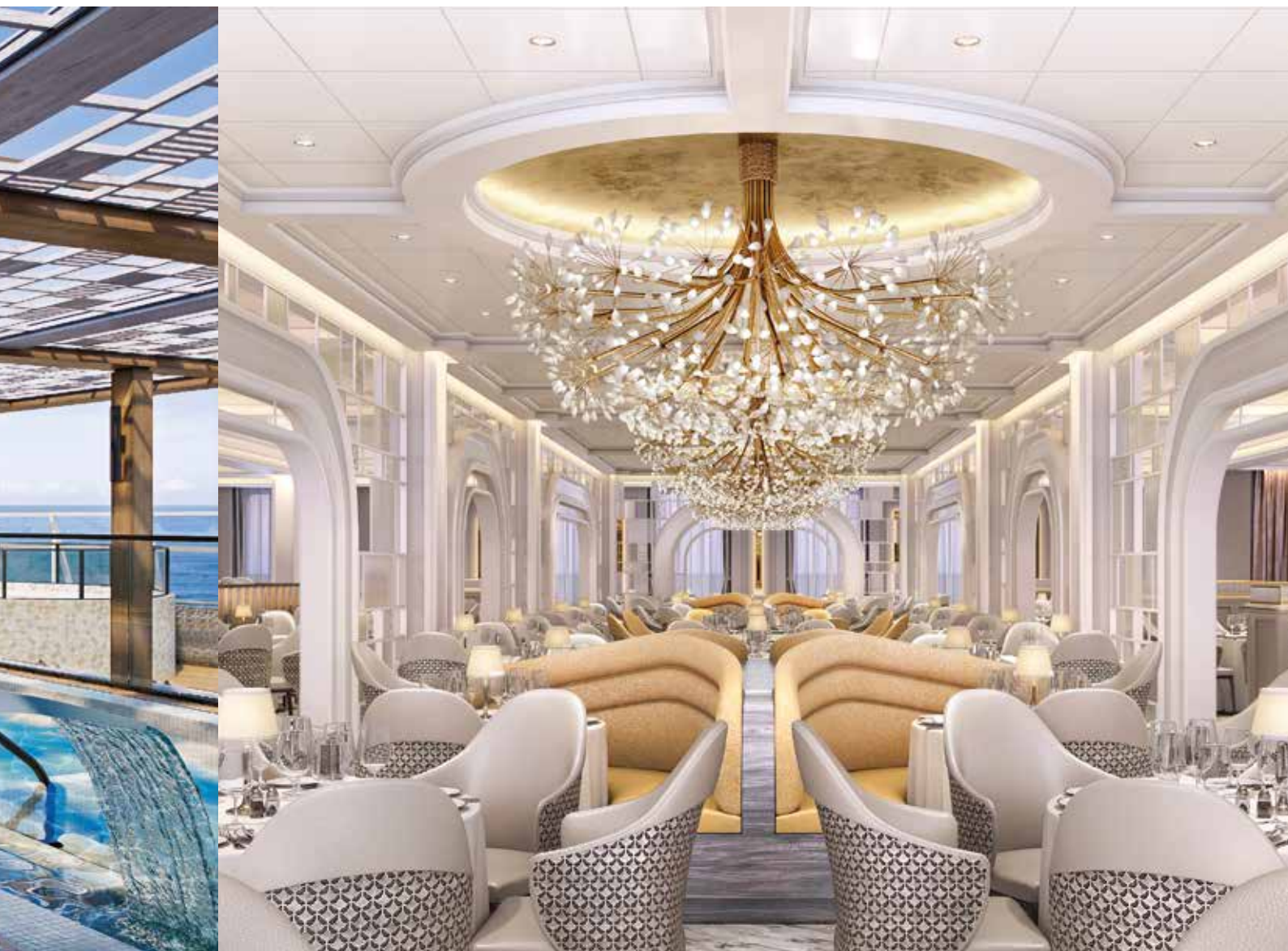
Qatar's cruise season runs from October through to April, welcoming season-long cruise line visits from the likes of MSC Cruises and Costa, along with regular calls from Silversea, Seabourn and many more.

At Doha Port, the new Grand Cruise Terminal offers a duty-free shop, cafe and tourist information areas, along with an aquarium and an art gallery, to be open year-round for the public to enjoy. A smooth disembarkation process enables visitors to set off quickly, accessing Doha city centre and the main attractions in just 15 minutes. It also provides for easy access to experiences beyond Doha. 📍





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Modern river boat *American Melody* launched last year...



Living the **AMERICAN** *Dream*

Despite current difficulties, exciting new ships and itineraries mean American river cruising will return bigger and better than before, writes **Jeannine Williamson**



Music can be the focus of a cruise on America's waterways



Viking Mississippi is set to launch in August this year

Sailing on one of the world's most famous waterways and following in the wake of early pioneers make America's rivers an unforgettable destination for a cruise.

The mighty Mississippi, immortalised in books and films such as *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, transports passengers on a voyage of discovery that takes in vibrant music cities, grand antebellum homes, sweeping cotton plantations and Civil War sites that shaped American history. The most popular itinerary is a seven-night sailing on the lower stretch of the 2,340-mile river, between the blues capital of Memphis and jazz city of New Orleans.

There are also leisurely holidays of up to 20 nights and cruises that venture into the Upper Mississippi, St Louis and Minneapolis, or branch into the Ohio, Tennessee and Cumberland rivers with visits to famous-name cities such as Savannah, Chattanooga, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh.

Alternatively, clients can become modern-day adventurers and follow the journey of 19th-century pioneers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark along the lesser-known Snake and Columbia rivers in the Pacific northwest.

New ships, new horizons

Although American rivers conjure up an image of stately paddlewheelers, which remain a unique draw for many clients, there are increasing options to travel on contemporary-style vessels. In both

instances these ships are much larger than European riverboats – while carrying about the same number of passengers – and offer more amenities and public areas.

The two main operators are American Queen Voyages – the new name for the American Queen Steamboat Company and its sister company Victory Cruise Lines – sold in the UK through Light Blue Travel, and American Cruise Lines, available through Fred. \Holidays.

American Queen Voyages has four luxurious paddlewheel riverboats. *The American Queen*, the all-suite *American Duchess* and the *American Countess*, newly launched in 2021. All cruise the

Mississippi, and the *American Empress* sails on the Snake and Columbia. In addition, the line has renamed its Lakes & Ocean vessels.

Formerly known as

Victory I and *Victory II*, the small ships will take on the names *Ocean Voyager* and *Ocean Navigator*.

With a distinctive red paddlewheel, from the outside, the 245-passenger *American Countess* looks very similar to her sister vessels. However, in contrast to their palatial retro interior decor, the latest vessel has a sleek and modern new-look design for its staterooms and public spaces.

Light Blue Travel managing director Rupert Thomson says: "Cruising the rivers of America is a perfect suggestion for clients who have already 'done' European cruises and want something different. Equally, it could be a first-time cruiser who loves the USA, American history, Deep South cuisine or music. The iconic musical cities of New Orleans, Memphis and Nashville are all featured on our Mississippi itineraries for 2022, and visiting Graceland is surely on most wish-lists?"

"Or, perhaps it's a client who is put off by mass

In contrast to the previous retro interiors, the latest vessel has a sleek and modern new-look design



...complete with public spaces that are stylishly designed

River cruising



Traditional entertainment features on board American Queen ships

Selling TIPS

The growth in popularity of American river cruising means more ships are launching. As such, clients have a choice of classic paddlewheelers or modern-style vessels, satisfying all needs

American river vessels are large and offer plenty of public space and amenities, so it is wise to target ocean cruisers who perhaps have been wary of taking a river cruise in the past because they deem the ships too small

There's no better way to take in the numerous sights and attractions in the US, and a river cruise is far less tiring than a land tour

The extensive choice of rivers, including lesser-known waterways, adds yet more appeal to a river cruise in the US. What's more, these itineraries are a great way to add pre or post-cruise stays in vibrant cities

ocean cruising and wants something more personalised, where the staff will call them by name and remember what they like to drink. River cruising in America is very laid back, but that doesn't mean guests can't dress up, although equally, they can go casual. Then of course there's the earning potential. American cruising packages are higher value than European, so there's good commission to be made."

The future is bright

In August 2022, Viking will join the line-up with the 386-passenger *Viking Mississippi* that will feature the line's trademark Scandinavian design and offer a choice of five seven-to-14-night sailings between New Orleans and St Paul. Several sailings through the 2023 sailing season have already sold out and this strong demand has led Viking to open 2024 sailing dates sooner than planned.

Viking chairman Torstein Hagen said: "Our guests are curious travellers, and they continue to tell us that the Mississippi is the river they most want to sail with us. No other waterway has played such an important role in America's history, commerce and culture. We are pleased with the continued response and support we have received from loyal guests and valued partners ahead of our new Mississippi sailings."

In addition to American Cruise Lines' four paddlewheelers – all completely redesigned in time for the start of the new season in March 2022 – the company had already introduced *American Song* in 2018, the first-ever modern riverboat in the US, followed by the second contemporary vessel, *American Harmony*, in 2019. American is the only line to offer both traditional and modern-day ships on the Mississippi and the Columbia and Snake rivers.

In 2021, the growing fleet was joined by 190-passenger *American Jazz* and 175-passenger *American Melody*, both modern



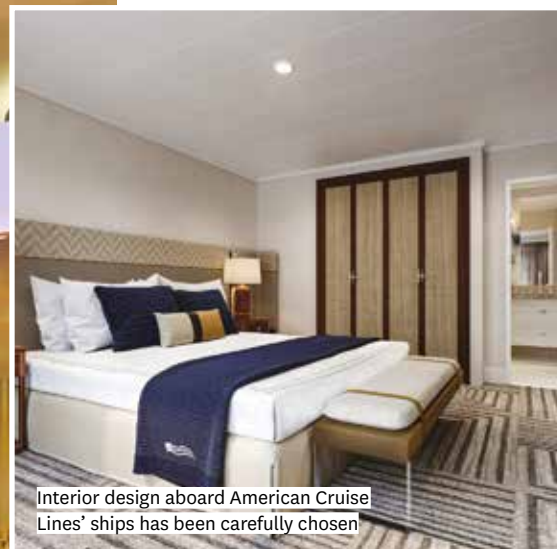
The Mississippi is a river that Viking passengers are particularly keen on

riverboats for the Mississippi. In 2022 American will launch two more 175-passenger contemporary ships, *American Symphony* and *American Serenade*. In total, the company will have 15 small ships exploring 30 US states, sailing along both coasts and taking in all the major rivers in between.

The company partnered with leading Miami-based design company Studio DADO to create the interiors of *American Melody* and its future ships. Three of American's four classic paddlewheelers have also been renamed for the 2022 season, so all vessels carry the American moniker. *America*, *Queen of the Mississippi* and *Queen of the West* will become *American Splendor*, *American Heritage* and *American West*.

The line's president and CEO, Charles B Robertson, said: "Studio DADO's interior design vision closely aligned with our mission to provide personalised experiences on elegant, modern small ships. In 2022 all four of our classic paddlewheelers will also be remodelled to the sophisticated new bar we set for US river cruising with our ground-breaking new modern riverboats."

With the addition of two more modern riverboats, 2022 will be American's biggest-yet



Interior design aboard American Cruise Lines' ships has been carefully chosen

Trips to Nashville, New Orleans and Memphis mean three musical cities in one journey

season. New itineraries include the seven-night Music Cities cruise between Nashville and Memphis. The line has also added more than 50 new shore excursions, including 15 focused on culinary and active shore tours, a new fleet of coaches, and new on-board enrichment programmes such as musical shows. All the river cruises include pre-cruise hotel stays and transfers to the ship.

"The US river cruise outlook is tremendous, with strong demand for small-ship cruises, and American is responding to that by building new ships and expanding the possibilities for exploration," added Robertson.

A package deal

More new itineraries can be found with American Queen Voyages, with trips to Nashville back for the first time in three years. These, with New Orleans and Memphis, will

enable passengers to visit three iconic musical cities in one trip. Excursions include Graceland, the home of Elvis. There are also special event sailings including wine and culinary sailings and an Autumn on the River itinerary to see the famous fall colours.

Thomson adds: "The ever-popular Lower Mississippi cruise, between Memphis and New Orleans, is a joy for agents to package with city stays at either end of the cruise. To extend the trip, Mississippi cruises can easily be packaged with a Florida break, Nashville, New York and Chicago stopovers.

"The *American Empress* cruises on the Columbia and Snake rivers take in a landscape that's completely different from the Mississippi. Rugged and beautiful with gorges, waterfalls, mountainous snow-capped terrain and interesting communities to visit. All cruises either start or finish at Portland, Oregon, which is ideal for a city break.

"For any agents who like to put together tailor-made itineraries, we can provide all the elements, from private airport transfers, additional hotel nights and city stays with guided tours to museum passes and premium shore excursions," Thomson says. 📍

ITINERARIES

Light Blue Travel

- The nine-night The River of Legends itinerary from New Orleans to Memphis on *American Queen* is priced from £3,495pp, departing 26 November 2022, including flights, two-night stay in New Orleans, unlimited on-board drinks package and gratuities.

📍 americansteamboatcruises.co.uk

Fred.\Holidays

- A 10-night Northwest Pioneers Cruise on the Columbia and Snake Rivers cruise from Portland to Clarkston on *American Pride* is priced from £4,965pp, departing 28 June 2022, cruise only, including shore excursions and gratuities.

📍 fredholidays.co.uk

Viking River Cruises

- The 14-night America's Great River land-cruise itinerary on *Viking Mississippi* from New Orleans to Minnesota is priced from £9,590pp, departing 6 August 2022, including flights, one complimentary excursion in every port, drinks with lunch and dinner and gratuities.

📍 vikingrivercruises.co.uk



Iconic CHARM

Scandinavia and the Baltic region represent a hotbed of trendy cities, historic museums and unspoiled landscapes, as **Lucy Abbott** discovers

Scandinavia offers guests the chance to explore culture-filled countries such as Norway, Sweden and Denmark, while the Baltic features intriguing, less-travelled destinations such as Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Russia. Many major cruise lines visit the area, such as Viking, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines and Norwegian Cruise Line.

Travel agents have a wide range of resources to draw upon when it comes to selling the region, as a CLIA spokesperson told *CTN*: “CLIA offers a wealth of information including ‘cruising the Baltic’ and ‘cruising Norway’ destination modules in the CLIA learning academy; ‘Northern Europe and Baltics’ and ‘Norwegian Fjords and Svalbard’ factsheets, and a range of resources via its associate partner Cruise Norway.”

Selling Scandinavia

When it comes to selling Scandinavia, a key focus is often the stunning coastal scenery, as well as its rich Viking background. Norway features a range of characterful cities, not least enchanting Oslo, which is full of museums and has a booming contemporary art scene.

Cruisers conscious of the environment will be pleased to know that Oslo was recognised as a European Green Capital for 2019, and plenty of expansive parks await visitors there. After dark,

Selling TIPS

Ensure guests are aware of the shopping opportunities that await in Scandinavia, from the quirky boutiques in Copenhagen to the expansive major retailers in Stockholm

•

Highlight the amazing opportunity of exploring Russia via a cruise, with organised excursions minimising any official procedures

•

Cruises visiting Scandinavia and the Baltic vary from mini-cruises to longer, two-week cruises, so guests can spend as little or as much time as they would like in exploring the region



The old waterfront in Bergen is partly a reconstruction, but it retains much of its medieval atmosphere

the city is transformed into a party hot-spot with plenty of live music venues and wine bars begging to be enjoyed.

Elsewhere, Bergen is a great destination for guests to discover. This relaxed town has a bustling main harbour, where fishing is the constant occupation, and also the Bryggen Museum, which depicts life there in medieval times.

Viking head of sales Neil Barclay explains: “One of the extensions (pre/post-cruise stays) we offer, which is particularly popular with UK guests, includes a visit to Oslo and a trip on the Bergen Railway, over Europe’s highest mountain plateau, which is considered to be one of the most beautiful railway journeys in the world.”

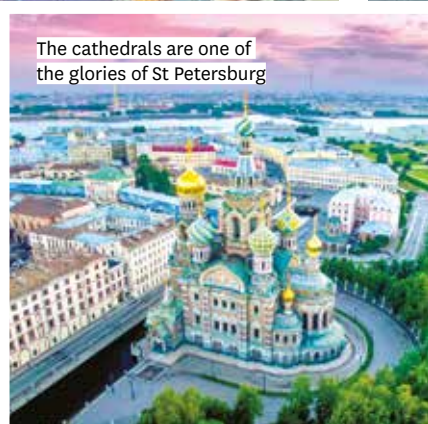
In Stockholm, fashion, technology and delicious food are wrapped up into one



In Norway, cruising the fjords is one of the must-dos for guests



The cathedrals are one of the glories of St Petersburg



“The Bergen Railway, over Europe’s highest mountain plateau, is considered one of the most beautiful rail journeys”

delightful package. Abba aficionados will of course want to head straight to the Abba Museum, where they can snap a selfie with life-sized statues of the band members. Another highlight is the famous Old Town, Gamla Stan, which dates back to medieval times and where multicoloured houses line the cobbled streets.

Fred Olsen head of sales Geoff Ridgeon explains the allure of the region: “Our guests want to have authentic experiences as travellers in the destinations we visit, rather than as tourists. There is a fascinating Nordic-Baltic culture to be explored. For example, on our Scandinavian and Baltic sailings, guests will find opportunities to explore the royal palaces of Copenhagen.”

The bold Baltic

With cruise lines such as NCL and Viking releasing new ships soon to sail in the Baltic, clients will have plenty of options to choose from.

Norwegian Cruise Line UK & Ireland senior sales director Gary Anslow explains that travel agents can offer alternative ships for different guests’ needs: “For guests focused on the destination experience, our ships *Norwegian Dawn* and *Norwegian Jade* are a perfect fit. For families or those looking for more on-board amenities, ships such as *Norwegian Escape*, *Norwegian Getaway* and *Norwegian Prima* offer plenty of unique experiences on board as well as ashore.”

Baltic itineraries include fascinating cities such as St Petersburg. Guests can marvel at the grand buildings such as Saint Isaac’s Cathedral with its golden domes, as well as the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood, said to be the most elaborate church in the city.

Over in Tallinn, Estonia’s capital city, there’s a captivating blend of old and new architecture: the Old Town is one of the best preserved of the 13th-century Hanseatic towns. Elsewhere – like many of the Baltic capitals – Riga, in Latvia, is small but offers a feast of beautiful architecture and edgy art. A top spot for exploration is Andrejsala, the city centre port area, where public art installations dominate the scene. 📍

ITINERARIES

Norwegian Cruise Line

- Prices for a 10-day Baltic: Germany, Russia & Sweden cruise on *Norwegian Prima* start from £1,900pp, departing Amsterdam on 3 September 2022.

📍 [ncl.com](https://www.ncl.com)

Fred Olsen

- Prices for a six-night Scandinavian City Break on *Bolette* start from £899pp, departing 21 September 2022.

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

Viking Cruises

- Prices for the eight-day Viking Shores & Fjords voyage from Amsterdam to Bergen on *Viking Jupiter* start from £3,090pp, departing 5 May 2022.

📍 [vikingcruises.co.uk](https://www.vikingcruises.co.uk)



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A giant slide, Ultimate Abyss, and two FlowRiders feature on the top deck



HARMONY ALL AROUND

There are big ship experiences, and then there's *Harmony of the Seas*. **Gary Peters** reports from a short three-night sailing on the Royal Caribbean ship



Eye-opening skating shows are on the programme in Studio B

Dancing is the perfect antidote to stress. I'm no professional – and if there ever were a cruise-themed series of *Strictly Come Dancing*, I'd probably be voted out in week one. However, after many years of practice, I have perfected the air guitar, and it's this trusty move that I rely on during my second night on *Harmony of the Seas*.

And no, I'm not alone in my stateroom jamming with zero spectators, but rather enjoying an impromptu stag-style celebration – because, at the time of writing this, it is only one week before my wedding day. It wasn't planned, but *Harmony of the Seas* turns out to be the ideal place for a final, big party before I tie the knot. For one thing, there's no expensive taxi journey home or rushing to get the last train. Not to mention it feels like an experience – much more so than an ordinary Friday night out.

I commit to seeing as much as possible – at least I'll hit my 10,000 step count with ease

However, to the serious business. Launched in 2015, Royal Caribbean's *Harmony of the Seas* is part of Royal Caribbean's super-successful Oasis class, which perfectly defines how ships can be holiday resorts themselves.

As I step on board in Rome part way through the ship's seven-night western Mediterranean cruise, this behemoth is my first big-ship experience in some time, and it's no exaggeration to say I'm completely lost within 10 minutes. Everywhere I turn there is a new bar, restaurant, or some whacky feature that demands attention.

This, I expected. However, with only two full days on board, I do feel slightly overwhelmed, knowing that I will not be able to take everything in. Alas, such an attitude will not help, and therefore I commit to seeing as much as humanly possible – at least I'll be hitting my 10,000 daily step count with ease.

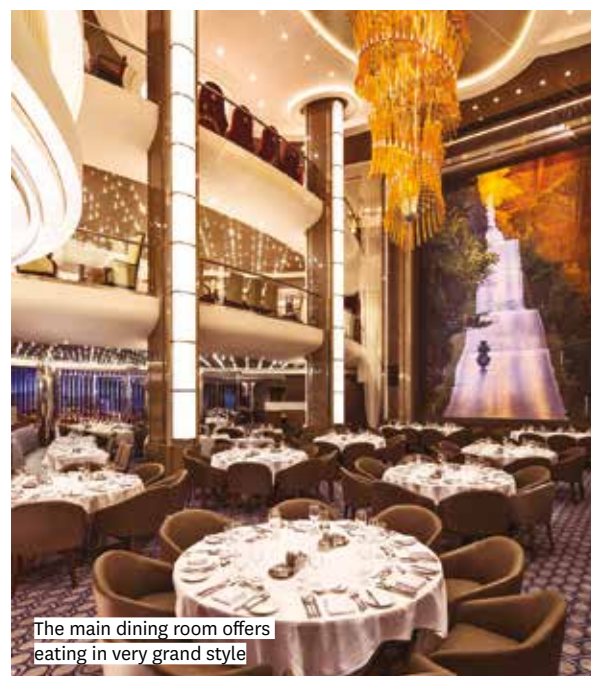


Cocktails go to the next level in the Bionic Bar

Into the abyss

From a visual perspective, the Ultimate Abyss waterslide is a showstopper. Ideal for thrill seekers – or those with more courage than I and without a fear of heights – this is 150 feet above sea level, on the top deck, and passengers launch themselves down against the backdrop of lights, sound effects and music. The average time from top to bottom is just 13.14 seconds, and Royal Caribbean says those who dare to try it hit an average G force of 1.46.

If that wasn't enough, on the same deck is not one, but two FlowRider surf simulators – which whenever I check appear to be in use by some serious professional surfers with no



The main dining room offers eating in very grand style

The scale of the ship can be appreciated when you stand on the deck in Central Park



Chops Grille is the venue for meat-eaters and fish fans

Selling TIPS

Suggest to clients they book at least a seven-night itinerary to ensure they can appreciate every little detail on *Harmony of the Seas* and other Oasis-class ships in the Royal Caribbean fleet.

•
Harmony of the Seas is ideal for clients who want to pack in plenty of fun – the slides and Ultimate Abyss will please those looking for an adrenaline rush, while options like FlowRider provide the chance to try something new.

•
Those used to a more relaxed style may be overwhelmed by the number of fellow guests, so focus attention on clients who are not put off by the big-ship experience.

You've Been Framed moments on the horizon; the 'perfect storm' of slides – Typhoon, Cyclone, and Supercell – to get the adrenaline pumping – and a zip line, nine decks above the Boardwalk.

For all the innovations and big-ticket rides and entertainment, however, one thing that catches my eye is the Harmony Dunes, a small mini-golf course up on deck 15, in the sports zone. I'm no Tiger Woods in his prime, but I post a performance that would make many keen golfers proud – or so I convince myself... perhaps it's wise not to give up the day job.

Of course, the size of *Harmony of the Seas* and its attractions will not suit every cruiser, but the number of kids on board tells its own story – the ship is perfect for a family adventure.

Ice, ice baby

Speaking of adventure, on the first night, I and a few other media guests take in the ice show, *1887*, in Studio B. After many years of watching *Dancing On Ice*, it's eye-opening to see up close the skill required to glide across the ice with panache, all while remaining in character. Passengers can also step out on to the ice – not in the show, of course, but at designated time slots.



Dining, like everything else, feels supercharged, with plenty of restaurants – complimentary and speciality – and smaller snack bars for the quick bite on the go. On the agenda on the first night is 150 Central Park. Labelled a 'farm to ship foodie favourite', this intimate venue features a menu of dishes with locally sourced, artisanal ingredients.

I stick to my habits and plump for braised ribs, followed by lamb wellington, but the star of the show – or at least the dish that gets the most attention – is the dessert of fried cheesecake ordered by a fellow guest. It's not everyone's cup of tea, but sure is funky.

I also eat in the main dining room, followed by Chops Grille on the final night. For me, this is the sort of dining that puts a smile on my face – nothing too pretentious, and simple yet effective. The



Chic staterooms are a given, even on board this mega-ship

can pick up their favourite hot drinks. Just a builder's tea for me, thanks. A hidden spot is the Vitality Café, just next to the huge fitness centre, which serves up delicious juices and smoothies.

Eye on the environment

Among all this eating, drinking and general merriment, while I'm on board, Royal Caribbean Group reveals a new concept called Destination Net Zero, described as a "comprehensive decarbonisation strategy that includes pledging to establish science-based targets and achieving net zero emissions by 2050".

As part of this journey, the group aims to deliver net zero ships by 2035, with 13 new "energy-efficient and alternatively fuelled vessels", including Silversea's Project Evolution concept, which will feature the industry's first hybrid-powered ship, set to debut in summer 2023.

The company has also pledged to invest in energy efficiency programmes for the whole fleet, including energy-saving technologies, enhanced data systems and digitalisation. There is also a drive to work on alternative and accessible fuels through partnerships with governments, suppliers and shipyards.

All in all, it should add up to more of the same harmony on board, but a great deal more harmony for the seas. ①

Windjammer Marketplace is another winner – particularly at lunch with a vast array of choice and a special Mongolian cooking station on day two.

Bars are also ubiquitous, from Boleros, to Boot & Bonnet, Dazzles, the Schooner Bar, and Vintages. Two that stand out are the Bionic Bar – with its robotic arms that mix pre-made cocktails or customised creations, including non-alcoholic versions (mine takes approximately 1 minute to complete, although this was during the day and not in the peak evening rush) – and the Rising Tide, which is – for want of a

better phrase – a spaceship-like moving bar, which takes guests up and down decks.

Cafes are also dotted around – including a Starbucks – and here guests

This sort of dining puts a smile on my face – nothing too pretentious, simple yet effective

DETAILS

A seven-night Western Caribbean & Perfect Day itinerary on *Harmony of the Seas* is priced from £632pp, departing 14 August 2022.

🔗 royalcaribbean.com



The Cruise Challenge

Get ready for the travel agent roadshow with a difference

Cruise Trade News is delighted to officially launch the next season of Cruise Challenge events.

This very special training roadshow will tour the country in 2022, bringing travel agents and cruise lines together for networking, learning and the chance to win some fantastic prizes. So, get

the dates in the diary and be prepared for an unforgettable evening of entertainment and education.

CTN editor Gary Peters said: "We cannot wait to travel the country to meet travel agents and provide a platform for them to connect with cruise lines and learn more about the cruise industry."



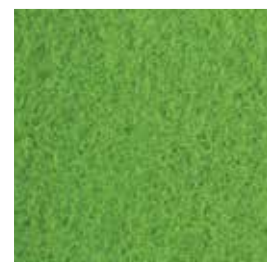
2022 LIVE & IN PERSON DATES

SEASON 1 JAN - JUN

London..... 22-Mar
Nottingham..... 26-Apr
Manchester..... 10-May
Ipswich..... 24-May
Leeds..... 07-Jun
Chester..... 21-Jun

SEASON 2 JULY - DEC

Edinburgh..... 12-Jul
Glasgow..... 13-Jul
Exeter..... 14-Sep
Newcastle..... 27-Sep
Cardiff..... 11-Oct
Southampton... 25-Oct
London..... 01-Nov
Essex..... 22-Nov
Sheffield..... 6-Dec



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For more information on dates and how to get involved, go to the official Cruise Challenge website or contact janine.sykes@realresponsemedia.com

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11-Night Denali & Alaska Cruisetour (D2L)

INCLUDES:

1-Night: Anchorage, **3-Nights:** Denali with Tundra Wilderness Tour.

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7-Night Glacier Discovery Cruise

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Fly to Anchorage+ for an overnight stay in this cosmopolitan city.

Day 2 - Anchorage/Denali

Travel by motorcoach through Alaska's vast terrain and arrive in style for your incomparable three night stay and an inviting Lodge.

Day 3 - Denali Tundra Wilderness Tour

Take full advantage of wildlife and Mt Denali viewing on a guided Tundra Wilderness tour, watching for caribou and grizzlies.

Day 4 - Denali at Leisure

You may choose to hike, river raft, take a flight seeing tour – or simply relax in your comfortable lodge and enjoy the scenery.

Day 5 - Denali/Whittier

Thrill to spectacular sights and gracious service aboard your luxury domed railcar on your way to Whittier to meet your elegant Holland America Line ship.

Day 6 - Hubbard Glacier

Enjoy a full day onboard – fine dining, gracious service, spacious accommodation – and the stunning scenery of Hubbard, North America's longest tidewater glacier.

Day 7 - Cruising Glacier Bay

From your ship you have a front view of the spires, pinnacles and pillars of ice, surrounded by an immense quiet, broken only by the muffled thunder of icebergs being born.

Day 8 - Skagway

Once turbulent staging point for gold prospectors hell-bent on getting to the Klondike, you can now stroll weathered boardwalks and drop in at old-time saloons at Skagway.

Day 9 - Juneau

From Alaska's scenic capital, take an excursion to the mighty Mendenhall Glacier, opt for salmon fishing or a wildlife cruise.

Day 10 - Ketchikan

Once a fishing village, clinging to the shore, visit a park of stately totem poles, or go flight-seeing to the spectacularly scenic Misty Fjords and enjoy a lunch of fresh salmon.

Day 11 - Cruise Inside Passage

Sail through this incredible waterway where massive mountains rise almost vertically from deep fjord-like waters, and watch for seals, porpoises, eagles and whales.

Day 12 - Vancouver/UK

Disembark and transfer to the airport for your flight to the UK.

Day 13 - Arrive UK

D2 can be taken in reverse cruise first, then tour (D2C)

D2 - DEPARTURE DATES 2022

Nieuw Amsterdam

D2L: 25 May; 8, 22 Jun; 6, 20 Jul; 3, 17, 31 Aug

D2C: 7, 21 May; 4, 18 Jun; 2, 16, 30 Jul; 13, 27 Aug

Noordam

D2L: 18* May; 1, 15, 29 Jun; 13, 27 Jul; 10, 24 Aug; 7 Sep

D2C: 14, 28 May; 11, 25 Jun; 9, 23 Jul; 6, 20 Aug; 3 Sep

LEAD IN FARES (including air from London)

	From pp*
Interior Stateroom	£2,759
Ocean-view Stateroom	£3,289
Verandah Stateroom	£3,289
Neptune Suite	£4,049

*Lead fare based on Noordam 18 May (D2L). D2 can be taken in reverse cruise first then tour (D2C). D2C dates shown include a pre-cruise hotel night in Vancouver

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With 'Have it All' we are adding some incredible inclusive **extra value** to your clients' holiday, as for one simple fare they'll receive four inclusions they would typically purchase later – a drinks package, speciality dining, WI-FI and one or more shore excursions – and will save 50% or more on those extras versus buying them separately. 'Have it All' amenities are only available on the cruise section of the cruisetour. Book your clients by **28 Feb 22** and they'll also enjoy a free stateroom upgrade.



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WAYS TO BOOK:

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Contact the Sales Team on salesupport@hollandamerica.co.uk

Terms & Conditions: Fares are based on Promo(s) Nt/Ut. Featured fares are pp based on double occupancy, cruise only including taxes, Fees & Port Expenses. Have it All amenities are subject to availability, available for new bookings only, available for 1st/2nd guests only, apply only to the cruise portion of Alaska Cruisetours, are not combinable with any other discounts and are not transferable or refundable. Have it all fares are applicable on select 2022 & 2023 departures and exclude Grand Voyages and any voyage 5 days or less. Signature Beverage Package has a daily limit of 15 beverages, which includes all beverages priced at US\$11.00 or lower and includes gratuities. Beverage packages include non-alcoholic beverages such as sodas and specialty coffees. Guests must order beverages one at a time and must be 21 years or older for alcoholic beverages. Sharing not permitted. Package excludes purchases made in Signature Shops, Mini Bar and In-Room Dining. Speciality dining is based on cruise duration and ship type. Offer excludes Speciality Dining Events in the Pinnacle Grill such as Sel De Mer, De Librije and Sommelier Dinner. Reservations and dining times will be available to pre-reserve. Shore excursion offer is based on cruise duration. For 6-9-day voyages, guests can choose one excursion (up to US\$100 value) or apply US\$100 off any one tour. For 10-20-day voyages, choose two excursions (up to US\$100 value per tour) or apply US\$100 off each of any two tours. For 21+ day voyages (excluding Grands), choose three excursions (up to US\$100 value per tour) or apply US\$100 off each of any three tours. WI-FI Surf Package. All onboard Internet usage is subject to HAL standard policies, which may limit browsing of some sites due to network security and bandwidth usage. Offer applies to guests 1 & 2 only in a stateroom. Have It All+ (Wave) Offer: Unless otherwise noted, all elements of the Wave Offer are available only on Summer 2022 - Winter/Spring 2023 cruises/cruisetours, excluding Grand Voyages and any voyage 5 days or less ("Eligible Cruises") booked between 14 Dec 2021 - 28 Feb 2022 ("Booking Period"). **Stateroom upgrades** are available in select stateroom categories and are subject to the availability of the staterooms in the next higher category. Entire Wave Offer has no cash value, is subject to availability, is capacity controlled and may be modified or withdrawn at any time, is available for new bookings only, is not combinable with any other discounts, is not transferable or refundable, and is not combinable with concessioned groups, casino rates or industry rates.

