

Your comprehensive guide to selling cruise holidays

cruisetradenews.com

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cruise

TRADE NEWS

WIN

250 prizes including
FREE cruises on
Celebrity Silhouette



In association with

Celebrity **X** Cruises
SAIL BEYOND



CUNARD

Summer at Sea.

Cunard returns to sea this summer
with a collection of British Isles
and Summer voyages.

July – October 2021

A Cunard holiday is a chance to escape and unwind,
free from life's everyday responsibilities, where guests can
choose to do as little, or as much, as they please. Just one of
the amazing experiences they can enjoy this summer, is our
programme of inspiring guest speakers, who will be on
every Cunard Summer at Sea UK staycation voyage.

One of the pleasures of ocean travel is seeing the
scenery gradually change and appreciating the
invigorating sea breezes, our choice of stateroom
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to explore the world in such style.



The British Isles, by Cunard.

Queen Elizabeth's 10 newly unveiled summer 2021 voyages
of 3-12 nights, treat guests to scenic explorations of
Britain's coastline and time ashore in some of the UK's
most picturesque towns and cities.

Early Saver fares
from £369* per person.

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Queen Elizabeth also sets sail on three,
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Early Saver fares
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These voyages are exclusively for UK vaccinated guests only.
All other voyages on sale do not currently require guests to be vaccinated.



For full details on our Summer at Sea programme
visit Shinerewardsclub.com

QUEEN ELIZABETH

*Fares shown are based on two people sharing an
outside stateroom on Q119Q (British Isles voyage) and an
inside stateroom on Q121P (The Sun voyage).

ABTA
Travel with confidence





EDITORIAL TEAM

EDITOR
Gary Peters
gary.peters@realresponsemedia.com

CONTRIBUTORS
Jeannine Williamson
Harriet Mallinson
Vicky Mayer

ART DIRECTOR
Phil Couzens

SUB EDITOR
Caroline Parish

GROUP PRODUCTION MANAGER
Barnaby Moore

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR
Rochelle Streater
rochelle.streater@realresponsemedia.com

COMMERCIAL MANAGER
Zarina Kapasi
zarina.kapasi@realresponsemedia.com

MARKETING DIRECTOR
James Gambling
james.gambling@realresponsemedia.com

CEO
Chris Pitchford
chris.pitchford@realresponsemedia.com

For subscriptions & enquiries:
020 8444 2554
info@cruisetradenews.com
All enquiries
+44 (0) 20 8444 2554

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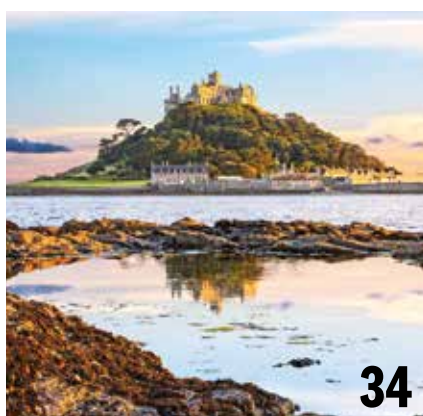


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THE GEM YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

JEWEL OF THE SEAS® SAILING
FROM CYPRUS FROM JULY 2021

Holidays are officially off hold and the waiting was worth it. It's time to enjoy a well deserved break on board our glistening ship, Jewel of the Seas, sailing from Cyprus from July 2021. Soak up the sun, the sights, and the summer nights as you explore the wonders of the Greek Isles. An overflowing itinerary of excitement means you can make up for lost time. Book a holiday worth waiting for today.



RoyalCaribbean
INTERNATIONAL



JEWEL OF THE SEAS

When you're not exploring Greek paradise, you'll never be stuck for things to do onboard Jewel of the Seas.

Catch a movie at the poolside movie screen or work up an appetite on the adrenaline-pumped rock climbing wall, then tuck into some world class cuisine. From steak to sushi, you'll dine like royalty, whatever your choice. This is the holiday you've been dreaming of.

ENDLESS ACTIVITIES

Scale up the adrenaline-pumped rock climbing wall, take a sushi making class or enjoy a game of mini golf on the top deck.



DIALLED-UP DINNERS

Go to foodie heaven with a tender filet at our American steakhouse Chops Grille, a taste of Tuscany at Giovanni's Table, or sushi under the stars at our al fresco sensation, Izumi.



NO LIMIT ON NIGHTLIFE

Pick up some salsa dancing skills at Boleros, be wowed by our standing-ovation worthy performers, or get a slice of Vegas by going all in at the casino.

— 7 NIGHT —
CRUISE + FLIGHTS
+ TRANSFERS

FROM **£799^{PP*}**

ITINERARIES

FLIGHTS

7 NIGHT GREEK ISLES JEWEL OF THE SEAS

DATES

24/07/21 | 31/07/21 | 07/08/21 | 14/08/21 | 21/08/21
28/08/21* | 04/09/21* | 11/09/21* | 18/09/21^ | 25/09/21*
02/10/21 | 09/10/21^ | 16/10/21 | 23/10/21

*Similar 7 night sailings available

*Sailings include return flights from Glasgow

DEPARTURE/RETURN PORT:

Limassol, Cyprus

Athens (Piraeus), Greece | Mykonos, Greece | Santorini, Greece
Chania (Souda), Crete, Greece | Rhodes, Greece

CHARTER FLIGHTS FROM LONDON GATWICK, MANCHESTER, BIRMINGHAM

We have dedicated charter flights to get you to your dreamy destinations. We will be flying from key UK airports: London Gatwick, Manchester & Birmingham. More information to follow on flight times & baggage allowance etc.

Contact sales support via live chat for any queries on the fly cruise programme.

Prices include cruise fare, roundtrip flights from selected UK gateways (Glasgow, London Gatwick, Manchester and Birmingham) and transfers between airport and port for cruise departures between 24th July 2021 and 23rd October 2021 on Jewel of the Seas. Taxes and fees included. All flight details will be confirmed post booking completion and flights will be confirmed as direct flights where possible. Consecutive cruises excluded.

Spring into our 2022 river cruise collection

Still going
strong after

37
YEARS

est. 1984



From the colourful bulbfields of Amsterdam to the tranquillity of Monet's Garden there's lots to choose from when it comes to river cruises next spring. Here are a few of our favourites and with so much included, it's the perfect way to discover Europe.

Amsterdam, Cologne and the Best of Holland & Flanders

8 visits and tours including entry to the **Floriade Expo**, a magnificent exhibition only taking place once every 10 years and is described as 'the greenest day out' and truly a feast for the senses.

Departure on 27 April from £1,779

The Seine, Paris & Normandy

9 visits and tours included

March & April departures from £1,729

Bruges, Medieval Flanders, Amsterdam & the Dutch Bulbfields

8 visits and tours included

Departures in April from £1,149

The Douro, Porto & Salamanca

8 visits and tours included

March & April departures from £1,729

Experience more with so much included

Return flights and transfers | Full board with exceptional dining | Inspiring guided tours and visits

To find out more or to make a booking

Call: **01283 245391**

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





Editor's letter

Welcome to the July/August issue

We're well into the heart of summer and with that comes sunshine (although as I write this the fickle British weather means rain is lashing down against my window). Nevertheless, the brighter days have brightened my mood: there's something very therapeutic about a walk in the summer air. I'm also feeling increasingly buoyant due to the re-emergence of cruise, as more ships take to the water.

There's yet more reason to celebrate with this latest issue of *Cruise Trade News*, as we've joined forces with Celebrity Cruises to create a special prize giveaway, designed to reward your hard work and perseverance in the face of adversity during recent months.

This is a digital and print campaign – as you can see from the front cover of this issue – and there are some great prizes to be won, such as Celebrity stationery gift packs, culinary starter packs, and four very appealing Taste of Luxury cruise prizes to experience the freshly revolutionised *Celebrity Silhouette*. See The Briefing section for more information on how to play.

Looking at the sector as a whole, nothing can take away from the joy felt as more ships return to service, but how can the industry come good on its promise to improve environmental performance?

Industry execs know that those who sit on the sidelines and carry on with the old normal will soon be left behind – technologically and commercially – by



Above: Green is the go-to game plan – CTN Investigates cleaner cruising

those who bite the bullet and invest in developing cleaner operations. We analyse what is happening across the sector in this issue's *CTN Investigates*.

Elsewhere, AmaWaterways and Uniworld discuss their respective river cruise itineraries and we report back from our time on a domestic cruise on *MSC Virtuosa* at the end of May – a joyous occasion for many reasons.

We also go inside Tradewind Voyages' *Golden Horizon*, a near-replica of the 1913-built ocean vessel *France II*.

Enjoy – and until next time.

Gary Peters
Editor, Cruise Trade News

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The Briefing

THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION FOR CRUISE NEWS

In BRIEF

Valiant set for UK debut

● Virgin Voyages' second ship, *Valiant Lady*, will sail three pre-summer cruises from Portsmouth in 2022. The ship's departures will run from 18 March through to 14 May, on a mix of three-night, 11-night and 12-night voyages.

Horizon opens doors

● The Port of Southampton's new cruise terminal Horizon welcomed passengers for the first time in early July, ahead of its formal opening later this year. The £55-million facility – built in partnership with MSC Cruises and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings – is fitted with shore power capability.

Uniworld welcomes new ship

● Uniworld's new super ship, *São Gabriel*, has been christened in a ceremony on the Douro. President and CEO Ellen Bettridge was joined on board by the ship's godmother, Joke De Bruyn – the line's director of hotel operations, who has been with Uniworld since 2009.

THE NEWS YOU NEED

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

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If you're lucky enough to win, please tag [@cruisetradenews](https://twitter.com/cruisetradenews) on Twitter and Facebook to show off your victory

PRIZES

Win 250 prizes, including a cruise on Celebrity Silhouette

This summer Celebrity Cruises and *Cruise Trade News* have teamed up to create the ultimate summer prize giveaway.

This is your chance to win one of 250 exclusive prizes, including some highly sought-after free cruises, and learn more about Celebrity's UK staycation sailings.

As for those all-important prizes, you could win Celebrity-branded stationery gift packs, culinary starter gifts, Celebrity Stay Connected goodies – such as a powerbank and multi charge USB cable – the Celebrity Exhale package (kimono bathrobe), and the Ahh-Inspiring Gift pack, which includes Elemis products.

But there's more. Celebrity is also giving away four Taste of Luxury cruises on *Celebrity Silhouette*.

The prize sailing will be allocated on one of Celebrity Cruises' 2021 *Celebrity Silhouette* sailings departing from Southampton. Winners will be notified of their prize sailing date when they are contacted by Celebrity Cruises to confirm they are a winner.

So, how does it work? This is a combined digital and print campaign. For the digital aspect, go to cruisetradenews.com/register-celebrity-summer/ to sign up to play. You'll receive a daily code, after which you can enter the prize giveaway.

You'll also notice the cover of this issue looks slightly different, as *CTN* has used a unique format that enables you to open the relevant window on the correct date to find the code to enable you to play. Please note this is a weekday-only competition, running in print starting from 19 July.

To play the game, please go to cruisetradenews.com/celebrity-summer/ and enter the correct daily code.

Learn more about Celebrity Cruises' UK staycations – including new dates just announced for September – at celebritycentral.com.

WHEN TO OPEN YOUR WINDOWS

1 open on 19 July	13 open on 4 August
2 open on 20 July	14 open on 5 August
3 open on 21 July	15 open on 6 August
4 open on 22 July	16 open on 9 August
5 open on 23 July	17 open on 10 August
6 open on 26 July	18 open on 11 August
7 open on 27 July	19 open on 12 August
8 open on 28 July	20 open on 13 August
9 open on 29 July	21 open on 16 August
10 open on 30 July	22 open on 17 August
11 open on 2 August	23 open on 18 August
12 open on 3 August	24 open on 19 August



Changes to capacity rulings have been welcomed as a positive step

INDUSTRY DfT updates capacity guidance

As CTN went to press the Department for Transport (DfT) confirmed it was set to increase capacity limits to 50 per cent for ships operating domestic cruises with fully vaccinated guests.

The DfT clarified that “cruise operators with a Covid-19 vaccination policy in place can operate at 50 per cent capacity”.

It added: “To count as fully vaccinated, passengers will need to have received both doses... more than 14 days before joining the cruise.”

CLIA UK & Ireland managing director Andy Harmer said: “We welcome the news that as of 19 July, if the next step of the government roadmap goes ahead, the 1,000-passenger limit on domestic cruises can be lifted to enable larger ships to sail at 50 per cent capacity.

“As the cruise industry’s phased return picks up, this is another positive development. We continue to work with the government on the regulations for domestic and international cruising, with a view to ultimately achieving a full return to service.”

ITINERARIES

P&O: ‘Huge demand for Caribbean cruise’

All cabins put on sale for P&O Cruises’ new 40-night winter sun Caribbean cruise on *Aurora* sold out in six hours on the first day it went on sale earlier this month [July], the line has revealed.

In addition, *Aurora*’s 12-night Portugal & the Canary Islands itinerary, which also went on sale on 6 July, had 80 per cent of cabins sold on the first day of booking.

P&O Cruises president Paul Ludlow said: “This is an exceptional response and it clearly demonstrates the desire shown by our guests for international cruising.” Set to depart on 16 February 2022, the



P&O is heading for some Caribbean winter sun on its *Aurora* trip

P&O Caribbean cruise will visit 16 ports of call, including La Coruña, Madeira, St Lucia, Antigua and Tenerife, among other destinations.

The 12-night Portugal & Canary Islands holiday, departing from and returning to Southampton, will call at La Palma, Tenerife, Gran Canaria, and more.

APPOINTMENTS



Norwegian Cruise Line has promoted **Eamonn Ferrin** to the role of vice-president of international business. Ferrin – who joined NCL in 2019 as UK vice-president and MD – will now oversee sales efforts outside the US and Canada.



Azamara has announced a series of new leadership appointments. **Doug Parks** has joined as chief administrative officer, Captain Nico Corbijn as head of marine operations, Laura Krejci as chief information officer, and Rafael Pagliuso as general counsel.



Aurora Expeditions has announced that **Joanna Ruxton** will be its first ocean conservation ambassador. Ruxton, who is the founder of Ocean Generation, has been described as a leading figure in the plastic-free movement.

Proud as punch

Celebrity Cruises vice-president and MD for EMEA
Jo Rzymowska discusses the line's UK return and its pride
at managing to come through the pandemic

How have you coped professionally over the past 18 months?

Professionally, the strength of the team has been incredible. Pride is the word I would use. Pride in how everyone – from Richard Fain, our chairman, to all our management – has come together. The way they've guided us has been phenomenal, and the level of communication has been incredible. The way in which we have put our guests as number one, and our crew at the core of everything, has been outstanding.

What have you been doing while the ships haven't been sailing?

It gave us all, as a team, the time to look at our company and work on our branding. What do we stand for and how do we explain everything we've got? We know we offer the most incredible holidays for those who love the finer things in life. We have looked at becoming all-inclusive before and now



“We have looked at becoming all-inclusive before and now we've said this is the time to do it”

we've said this is the time to do it – it is proving to be the thing to do because the messaging now is so much clearer. Every guest, every room, every sailing – drinks, wifi and tips are included. Yes, there are different packages guests can buy on board but the basic package is very attractive. It is proving to be very popular with guests as well as with trade partners, so we think that is a winner as well.

Which itineraries are you seeing your customers booking?

We're seeing there are no qualms about going long haul next year and splashing the cash. And Europe is very popular too – Brits can't wait to see that again. *Celebrity Silhouette* is doing very well for next year, Alaska is doing well for next year, and the Caribbean too.

Any surprises on the bookings?

We're finding that those who are still working tend to prefer seven to 10-night port-heavy cruises, so we are shortening the cruises. We find it's a better length of time for them. What has pleasantly surprised me is the strength of the demand for 2022 and even 2023. We feel very confident as an industry that cruising is back.

What are the highlights of your programme for the 2022 season?

The launch of *Celebrity Beyond*, and let's not forget *Celebrity Apex*. It will have its naming ceremony in November this year and its first proper season in 2022. We have extended *Beyond* by about 20 metres and that is based on the demand for space, predominantly for the Retreat area – it will be two decks. We'll also have more suites on board, and taking wellness to another level, for example [with] the Goop and Gwyneth Paltrow connection, and we also have a bigger gym and spa facilities on board.

What do you see happening in general for cruise?

The demand is there but the cruise industry needs to have a good season, a safe season. We know Covid will be with us, so we need protocols in place to ensure that our guests feel safe.

How impressed have you been by the trade's resilience over the past 15 months?

They've been amazing. It's been so tough for the trade and we have done everything we can to support agents. Sadly, some of them haven't made it, but that's why we need to get going now, because the whole cruise industry needs it. 🙏



Celebrity Silhouette is proving popular among guests



READY, SET, GO

In his regular column for CTN, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales **Geoff Ridgeon** celebrates the company's return to service

We did it; we have now officially resumed sailing. It has taken 16 months, a lot of chopping and changing, countless square metres of new carpet and a shed-load of coffee for the teams both in the office and on our ships, but we made it.

Setting sail again after such a long pause is a milestone enough on its own, but we at Fred Olsen have also done it with a new ship – and a second to follow very soon.

Borealis set sail on her maiden voyage from Liverpool on 5 July, offering a new type of cruising for our guests – scenic only. Sure, we have offered scenic sailings before, but only scenic? This is new to us, and to our guests.

Of course, we are extremely excited – and extremely proud – to be setting sail with two new ships among the fleet. But it is much bigger than just us. It is great for our industry as a whole. It shows that we have invested in our futures.

The bigger picture

We are not alone on the new ship front, with MSC Cruises sailing with their new

“It is much bigger than just us. It is great for our industry as a whole – it shows we’ve invested in our futures”

ship *MSC Virtuosa*, and P&O Cruises with *Iona*. Together, we all form part of the bigger picture, showing how the industry has evolved.

The industry has bounced back stronger, providing something new for our guests, using this time to take stock and assess every element of what we do.

Using our new ships, *Bolette* and *Borealis*, as an example, we will still offer the small-ship experience that our guests know and love, with our wonderful crew at the heart of it all. But these fantastic new ships will enhance the experience on board even more, and bring new opportunities to our fleet.

Guests aboard *Borealis* right now can enjoy two new speciality dining venues – Vasco and Colours & Tastes – a beautiful two-tiered theatre for evening entertainment, and The Auditorium where we can do live cookery sessions.

We have had great fun refurbishing *Borealis*, adding the little Fred Olsen touches to the decor (did someone say doodle carpets?) and the on-board experience. Every cruise brand will be doing the same right now.

New ships offer a unique sales opportunity. People love a ‘first’ – whether that’s being the first to sail on a new ship, or trying cruising for the first time altogether. It makes people feel special, like they are part of a wider community of people.

So, shout about all the opportunities that we have in the industry this year – new ships, new venues, new sailings. 📣



GEOFF RIDGEON

HEAD OF SALES
FRED OLSEN CRUISE LINES

Sales *Inspiration*

INCENTIVES • ITINERARIES • SPECIAL OFFERS

SAVINGS FOR SCENIC CRUISES

Guests looking to explore Europe's waterways can take advantage of the new spring sale from Scenic.

For a limited time only, guests can save up to £700 per couple for all April and May 2022 European sailings on bookings made before 13 August 2021. Travellers can also save an extra 10 per cent on a future trip by opting to pay for their cruise 12 months in advance. There are also earlybird savings and some complimentary door-to-door chauffeur-driven transfers.

With Scenic's complimentary Deposit Protection Plan and Flexible Booking Policy included, guests can make changes to their booking up to 60 days prior to departure without any fees.



Sailings with Scenic can now be booked at a discount

VISIT
cruisetradenews.com
for more on cruise line
restart plans, agent
training, itineraries
and incentives



Regent's Seven Seas Mariner will be taking guests on the extended Alaska trip

REGENT UNVEILS ULTIMATE ALASKA OFFER

Regent Seven Seas Cruises is giving guests the opportunity to extend their holiday with its latest special offer.

The line said that the Ultimate Alaska offer elevates "the immersive Regent destination experience to new heights with a free three-night land programme".

The pre or post-cruise land programme is free on 17 of the seven-night itineraries cruising between Vancouver and Seward, Alaska, from May to September

2022. A 13-night sailing from San Francisco, California to Vancouver, and a 12-night sailing from Vancouver to Los Angeles, California, are also available as part of the offer. All cruises will be on *Seven Seas Mariner*.

The Ultimate Alaska incentive also offers 10 per cent reduced deposits and applies to new bookings made through to 31 August 2021. Agents should visit rssc.com/Ultimate-Alaska-Tool-Kit for more information.



SEABOURN EXTENDS BONUS PROMOTION

Seabourn has extended its early bonus savings promotion to encourage cruisers to book now and give travel agents more opportunity to earn commission.

Guests who book now and pay for their Seabourn booking in full by 30 September 2021 will receive an additional 10 per cent savings off the base cruise fare. The promotion includes select sailings that depart on or after 1 February 2022 and also includes voyages through summer 2023.

Seabourn vice-president of global sales Steve Smotrys said: "Our early bonus savings promotion offers something rewarding for everyone, with guests

benefiting from additional savings on select itineraries all over the globe, and our travel agent partners scoring the opportunity to receive their commission now.

"As Seabourn gears up for 2022 and 2023, we're happy to add time and incentive for people to take advantage of this great offer."

The early bonus savings can be combined with other promotions to provide even more value. The promotion is available for select voyages and is not valid on world cruises or grand voyages, or individual segments of those holidays.



CLIA SUMMER SCHOOL RETURNS

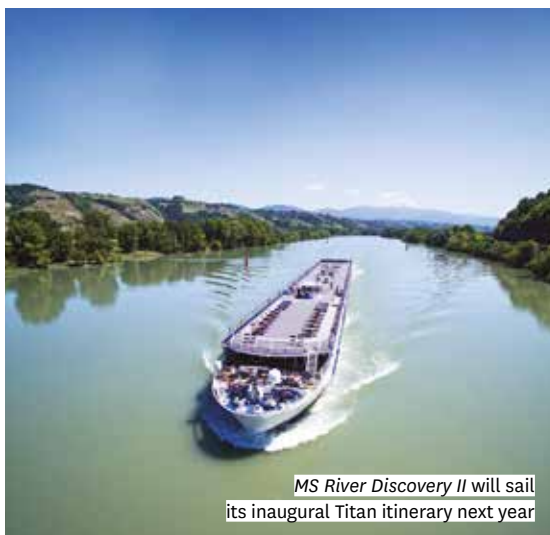
CLIA has announced its trade summer school series will return across this month [July] and August. The hour-long virtual classroom consists of a mix of four cruise lines, destinations and associated suppliers per session.

Sessions will take place on consecutive Thursdays, from 9.30am, until the end of August.

CLIA UK and Ireland director Andy Harmer said: "Our summer school was particularly well received by the trade last year, so we're pleased to welcome it back by popular demand.

"It will be the go-to event for agents looking to get the very latest cruise information, as the industry continues to open up across the UK."

CLIA member travel agents can attend the summer school free of charge via cruising.org.



'DOUBLE BUBBLE' WITH TITAN

Titan has launched a new summer 'double bubble' incentive campaign as part of the company's celebrations for its new and exclusively chartered river cruise ship, *MS River Discovery II*, which is set to sail its inaugural Titan sailing in April 2022.

Agents can claim a £20 lifestyle voucher for each new river cruise booking made up to 31 August 2021. Titan's existing £10 lifestyle voucher for agents per booking will still be honoured for all other new

Titan bookings made during the same timeframe.

All vouchers must be claimed by emailing agentincentives@titantravel.co.uk by the end of the calendar month the booking was made. Visit titanagents.co.uk for more information.

Built in 2012, and now specially refurbished, *MS River Discovery II* will become Titan's largest river cruise vessel. The three-deck ship can accommodate 176 passengers across six cabin grades.



Green cruising

The return of limited cruise operations is, naturally, a cause for celebration. However, as ships once again take to the open waters, how can the industry come good on its promise to improve environmental performance? **Gary Peters** investigates

Looking for any positive in the past 18 or so months is the true definition of searching for a needle in a haystack. The grim, fatal reality of Covid and the economic hardship the pandemic has wrought have dominated headlines.

However, one beneficiary of life in lockdown has been the natural environment. As cars were parked up in garages and planes and ships sat idle, the environment had what can be classed as its first 'mini break' from the never-ending push of modern life. People moved less, travelled less, and as such, their carbon footprint dropped. In many quarters, people's appreciation for the natural world has also increased – that walk in the park has become far more meaningful and impactful.

The Global Carbon Project stated in December last year that 2020 saw carbon emissions decline by 2.4 billion tonnes, while the European Environment Agency reported in a briefing in November that "one of the most evident short-term effects of Covid-19 lockdowns has been the dramatic improvement in air quality, especially in some of the world's most polluted cities".

While it's stretching the truth to state that Covid has reversed the effects of climate change in any way, it has given time to reflect on how industries can play their part and rebuild in a sustainable way. To borrow a phrase from a prominent politician, it's time to 'build back better', and that includes in the travel sector.



"It is crucial that tourism plays a key role in achieving true sustainability for people and the planet"

Getting to work

Dr Dirk Glaesser is the director of sustainable development of tourism at the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). He says that "at a time when the world is facing an interlinked crisis of health, climate and biodiversity, it is crucial that tourism plays a role in achieving true sustainability for people and planet".

"The pandemic has shifted the focus of global tourism to resilience, sustainability and the interconnectedness among diverse stakeholders in the sector," he adds. "There has been a large shift observed in the sector and a strong agreement to transform tourism."

"Decoupling tourism growth from greenhouse gas emissions is one of the

big challenges of our time. The engaged participation of every part of our sector is needed to restart tourism and drive recovery."

In recent years, progress has been made on reducing waste and cutting the use of plastics in the cruise sector. However, there is the continued argument that more needs to be done to offset the industry's impact on the environment.

Over the past year or so, one example of innovation in sustainable cruising is the launch of Havila Voyages, a new line that has talked up its environment credentials.

The line – which will start operations on its first two vessels, *Havila Capella* and *Havila Castor*, this summer – has claimed that its ships will be some of the most



KJELL RABBen
PROJECT DIRECTOR FOR NEWBUILDS
HAVILA VOYAGES

environmentally friendly in the sector, thanks to the use of battery packs.

The ships will operate as part of a 10-year contract with the Norwegian government to sail the coastal route from Bergen to Kirkenes. The 12-day return voyage visits 34 different ports, sailing through narrow fjords and high up into the Arctic Circle.

But just how exactly will the batteries improve performance? The line's project director for newbuilds, Kjell Rabben, says: "There are no emissions when the ships are run on battery power, so if we charge them with electricity from completely clean hydropower generated on shore, we can travel emission-free.

"Our ships can sail up to four hours at a time on battery power. We therefore plan to use the technology when sailing in the World Heritage fjords and also possibly when sailing in and out of ports. This will reduce our total emissions by around 40 per cent. The battery packs will work in the same way as those in an electric car."

A couple of years back, Hurtigruten made waves with its hybrid electric-

powered ships, claiming to reduce CO₂ emissions by more than 20 per cent compared with other ships of the same size. In May this year, Hurtigruten Norwegian Coastal Express, a sister company to Hurtigruten Expeditions, said it will upgrade its seven ships to cut CO₂ emissions by 25 per cent and NOx emissions by 80 per cent.

Reputation matters

One key driver for such innovation is reputation. Businesses know that in the modern age, those who sit on the sidelines and carry on with the old normal will soon be left behind – technologically and commercially – by those who bite the bullet and invest in developing cleaner operations.

Havila's UK country manager, Matthew Valentine, adds that cruise clients "are becoming much more aware of their environmental responsibilities and how the choices they make can have an impact on the wider world". He continues: "Some customers will be more engaged than others, but we all have a role to play, and it is important that travel

agents understand and engage in this discussion with their clients."

This view is backed by Linden Coppel, director of sustainability at MSC Cruises, who says the line is seeing evidence that "holidaymakers and societies at large are more interested than ever in climate change and what industrial sectors do to mitigate their impact".

These are warm words, but what do the figures say? CLIA's 2021 *State of the Industry* report claims that the sector as a whole is investing heavily in new technology and cleaner fuels – as much as \$23.5 billion – to support a commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 40 per cent by 2030 compared with levels in 2008.

According to CLIA, 49 per cent of new-build capacity on order will rely on liquefied natural gas (LNG) fuel for primary propulsion, while 58 per cent of new ships have committed to using shore-side electricity.

For example, P&O Cruises' new ship, *Iona*, described by the line as "Britain's largest and most environmentally friendly cruise ship", will be powered by LNG, while Carnival Cruise Line's *Mardi Gras* and *Carnival Celebration* will also make use of the fuel.

"While we may be only a small part of the tourism sector, the cruise industry wants to play a big part in helping to preserve the heritage and environment of the world's favourite destinations," says CLIA UK & Ireland director Andy Harmer.

"Cruise travellers care about the environment and there are many examples that agents can offer to showcase the environmental performance of cruising.

"For example, the extent of recycling on ships is often superior to that of many

of the cities that the ships visit,” he explains. “Some ships can repurpose 100 per cent of waste generated aboard – removing, reusing, recycling and converting waste to energy.”

From a UK perspective, shore-side electricity is in the spotlight more than ever before. The new cruise terminal at the Port of Southampton, developed in partnership with MSC Cruises and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, will use roof-mounted solar power and will also have shore power connectivity installed to boost sustainability.

ABP Southampton regional director Alastair Welch says: “The cruise industry is rapidly growing, and sustainability is

the social and economic benefits of tourism for residents while safeguarding the long-term sustainability of these popular Greek destinations.”

MSC’s Coppell believes the biggest challenge for some destinations is “usually referred to as unmanaged tourism”, which has been deemed a significant threat. Coppell says that cruise “recognises the need to support efforts to address the challenge”, and highlights how MSC requires the tour operators it works with to “pre-purchase tickets with specific visiting hours so as to reduce waiting times and queues at the most popular sites, which in turn allows better visitor flow”.

“As the debate around cruise ships docking in Venice shows, sustainability is not going to fade into the background”

becoming increasingly important to passengers, as well as being a core value for the ports and cruise lines.

“At each of our cruise terminals, we are able to facilitate alternative fuelling for cruise ships, including the provision of LNG bunkering and shore power,” Welch continues.

Team effort

While the advances in technology are welcomed across the industry, the sector can only do so much without extensive collaboration with destinations and the local communities, and indeed external companies not directly involved in cruise.

CLIA has partnered with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to “help port cities analyse how to manage tourism flows and to map out the future of sustainable tourism”, says Harmer. He highlights work the association has done with Dubrovnik – a very popular cruise destination – to create a destination assessment for the city, conducted by GSTC.

Harmer adds: “CLIA and GSTC are teaming up with the cities and ports of Corfu and Heraklion in Greece. The partnership aims to develop destination assessments that will help the municipalities understand how to capture

MSC says that in 2019, approximately 10 per cent of its excursions were with tour operators certified to GSTC standards, which include two sets of criteria, one for destinations, and one for hotels and tour operators. The line’s aim “as more of our ships return to sea, is that all tour operators used by MSC Cruises at our frequent destinations will be certified to a GSTC certification programme”, Coppell adds.

These extensive standards feature several indicators, such as giving consideration to the size of groups in locations deemed to be under pressure from tourism, supporting local communities, energy and water conservation, and implementing measures to minimise emissions.

Challenges ahead

As the debate around cruise ships docking in Venice shows, sustainability is not an issue that is ever likely to fade into the background. It will be a long, hard slog for the cruise sector to shake off its “dirty” image – as Coppell says, “shipping is recognised as a ‘hard to abate’ sector in finding solutions for decarbonisation”.

The scale of the challenge is also not lost on those at the heart of the action. Harmer says: “Making alternative marine



fuels available at scale will require a massive investment in research and development and infrastructure across the entire value chain.

“Energy efficiency offers part of [a] solution, as it decreases fuel consumption, which reduces emissions footprints and supports innovation. However, the key will lie in developing new, alternative fuels that can be made available at scale.

“Cruise lines are not fuel providers or technology manufacturers, but the industry is instrumental in driving innovation through massive investment, operational experience and knowledge. The challenges with the development of clean marine fuels cannot be overstated, but should not be insurmountable.”

As for clients, a survey by Mundy Cruising late last year found that 69 per cent stated that the development of zero-emission ships is either fairly likely or very likely by 2050. The challenge is on. ❶



LINDEN COPPELL
DIRECTOR OF SUSTAINABILITY
MSC CRUISES



Corfu's old town is a UNESCO world heritage site



Lefkada – one of the easier Greek islands to visit

The incredible IONIAN ISLANDS

Greece is the perfect destination for cruise lovers. Not only are the shorelines of the islands stunning, but there's so much to do and see on land

Greece has attracted British travellers for centuries and with good reason. The ideal destination for both sea and land, the Mediterranean hotspot is brimming with enough culture, gastronomy and outdoor activities to suit holidaymakers of any age.

Cruising Greek islands enables guests to hop off at multiple ports of call, but where is best for tourists to go with so many gems to choose from? This is what jetsetters need to know about just some of Greece's beloved – and beautiful – Ionian islands.

Corfu

The childhood playground of renowned naturalist Gerald Durrell and the birthplace of Prince Philip, Corfu has plenty of claims to fame. The first Greek university (the Ionian Academy), the first Philharmonic Orchestra and the First School of Fine Arts were all founded here.

Corfu boasts a rich multi-cultural heritage, historic monuments, a stunning natural landscape and crystal-clear seas. The beautifully preserved

old town is a UNESCO world heritage site and is well worth a visit.

Trips to the beach should be included in an itinerary, too. Paleokastritsa is the most famous beach resort, while other top Corfu beaches include Agios Gordis, Pelekas and Glyfada. Most are lined with hotels, seaside restaurants, water-sports centres and beach bars.

There's no shortage of traditional food products. These include local honey, extra virgin olive oil and sheep yoghurt. Local recipes such as Pastitsada (pasta topped with meat braised in a spicy tomato-based sauce) and Sofrito (veal with an intense garlic and vinegar-based sauce) are excellent.

Lefkada

Lefkada is found in the heart of the Ionian islands and is connected to mainland Greece by a small bridge, making it one of the easier Greek islands to visit.

The island has everything a holidaymaker could want – idyllic coves lapped by turquoise waters, secluded beaches, picturesque villages, a rich history and welcoming locals. It's also become





Kefalonia has a unique charm that is sure to wow all guests

known as a destination for windsurfing and paragliding, while cycling is a great way to explore.

There are plenty of amazing beaches here. Heading for a swim at Kastro, Gyra, Myloi and Agios Ioannis Antzousis is recommended, while to the east holidaymakers will find numerous beautiful wooded isles. Meanwhile, Kalamos and Kastos are within a short distance and can boast beaches and sea caves of great beauty.

Kefalonia

Fans of the novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* by Louis de Bernières (or indeed the film adaptation starring Nicholas Cage and Penelope Cruz) will be well aware of the beauty of Kefalonia.

The largest of the Ionian islands, Kefalonia features breathtaking beaches, crystal-clear waters and green mountains. The peak of Mount Ainos bristles with pine, cypress and olive trees, while vineyards flourish at its foot. The popular Kefalonian Robola wine variety is produced here.

What's more, foodies are in for a treat. Kefalonia produces yellow cheese, feta cheese, olive oil, honey and local meats. Visitors should be sure to savour the famous meat pie (a lagoto dish cooked with rabbit and a sofogado dish with goat) or the cod pie filled with salted codfish and skordalia (a garlic sauce) made with boiled potatoes in cod broth with lemon or vinegar.

Zakynthos

Zakynthos (also known as Zante) may have carved a reputation for itself as a party island, but the destination offers much more than boozy club nights. The Venetians, who ruled Zakynthos from 1484 to 1797, called the island "Fior di Levante" (flower of the East) thanks to the 7,000-plus species of flowers found on the island.

The verdant destination offers sandy beaches in secluded coves as well as rugged cliffs and a fascinating underwater world. Loggerhead sea turtles or Mediterranean monk seals may also be spotted here.

Solomos Square with its architecture and museums is worth a visit while neighbouring coastal road Strata Marina K. Lomvardou street is home to many bars and restaurants. Several remarkable churches can also be found on Zakynthos.



Zakynthos (Zante) offers sandy beaches in secluded coves



Thrill-seekers will not be short of options when visiting Greek islands

Katakolo

Katakolo is a picturesque port near the city of Pyrgos in western Ilia and overlooks the Ionian Sea. The town is one of the most visited ports for cruise ships in Greece and is a major gateway for the archaeological site of Olympia – the most celebrated sacred site of Ancient Greece and the birthplace of the Olympic Games.

A UNESCO world heritage site, Olympia boasts the impressive remains of buildings used by the Ancient Greeks. The Archaeological Museum of Olympia is a must-see, with the opportunity for visitors to see famous exhibits up close.

There's plenty for nature lovers here, too – why not encourage travellers to hike through the beautiful nature surrounding Alpheios River, enjoy a refreshing swim in the small lakes created by the Neda waterfalls, or head to Kato Samikos beach? Extreme sports lovers will also enjoy hiking, bicycling, rafting, kayaking and kitesurfing. 📍



This article was sponsored by Visit Greece.

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In conversation with...

Ambassador Cruise Line

Ambassador Cruise Line chairman **Gordon Wilson** gives Vicky Mayer the inside story on the launch of the new line

Early in May, as the market geared up to restart domestic cruise operations, another piece of news came flying in – and it only reinforced the feeling of positivity circulating within the industry.

A brand-new line, albeit with some very familiar faces: enter Ambassador Cruise Line. “Traditional cruising with style is what we are about – we want to treat our guests like ambassadors,” says Gordon Wilson, chairman of Ambassador.

The line is aimed at the over 50s market and its first ship, *Ambience* – formerly known as *Pacific Dawn* – can carry up to 1,400 guests. Ambassador says the ship will offer a choice of five different restaurants and two cafés, plus nine lounges, a swimming pool and a spa. Fitness and leisure facilities will be



The over-50s market is the company's prime target

complemented by enticing enrichment and lifestyle programmes, and passengers are promised a full schedule of day and evening entertainment.

The line's inaugural 2022/23 season – a no-fly programme from London Tilbury – features 33 voyages covering more than 90 different ports, with itineraries spanning the British Isles, Norwegian fjords, the Baltics, St Petersburg, Greenland, the Arctic, Iceland, the Canary Islands, Cuba, the Caribbean, Cape Verde, and Scandinavia, sailing from 6 April 2022 to 16 May 2023.

The programme – on sale now – begins with an inaugural round-trip four-night cruise to Hamburg, with prices starting from £369pp. Ambassador has assigned 89 of the ship's cabins to solo cruisers and

will also run two multi-generational cruises next summer.

Speaking in late June, chief executive officer Christian Verhounig added: “Demand is beginning to outgrow capacity. There is huge unfulfilled demand for no-fly departures and the type of experience we are offering.”

The new CMV?

Something that has really stirred interest among industry experts is the fact that Ambassador is utilising experience from former employees of CMV, which entered administration last summer.

Ambassador's senior team includes Verhounig, chief commercial officer Christopher Coates, chief information officer Gary Hides and chief financial



Ambassador's
Gordon Wilson



Ambassador will make its debut with Ambience

officer Simon Weeks – all with previous CMV experience.

So, is Ambassador simply the new CMV? “It is a completely different company with a different structure,” Wilson says. “This is very important. We are doing things with Ambassador Cruise Line that CMV didn’t do.

“We are not going to be buying new ships because the waiting list is too long. There is a healthy demand for what we are supplying – ships in the 1,400-passenger range, traditional ocean-going cruises. We have money to take old ships and upgrade them. I can’t give you a specific number on how many ships we will have but clearly, our plan is more than one.

“We are going to use social media and we know that a lot of our target market is on Facebook.

“Yes, we will be offering specific multi-gen cruises. We think that is very important, but also it’s important for customers to know that some of our cruises will be adult-only. We are not going to have the sort of ship that offers rollercoasters on board. We see it

“There is a healthy demand for traditional ocean-going cruises”

as families getting together to do family things.

“We bought our first ship in February. It was in Panama and was going to be made into a floating hotel. But Covid stopped that, so we bought the ship – and fast forward to where we are today.”

A premium-value experience

The Ambassador Cruise Line experience will be rooted in the premium-value space, a decision, says Wilson, to give customers “the option of fully inclusive, [but] we also want customers to be able to pick and mix”.

“So, I don’t want a transfer, but I would like priority boarding and insurance, for instance,” he adds. “We call it premium value, because we want to let customers choose what they want. We think a lot of cruise lines charge customers for things

they don’t actually use. We want to offer value for money.”

In terms of its competition, Wilson explains that the line is not in the same market as the likes of Cunard and Silversea, but “Saga, P&O, Fred Olsen will

be our main competitors and we think our product and offering have similarities to all of those; we will price accordingly”.

“We’ll also be doing a lot of work with the trade – that’s very important to us. We welcome the trade selling our brand.”

As for what the future holds for the industry, Wilson believes “it’s going to be very healthy”.

He continues: “On the assumption that the vaccination programme works, I think the future is very positive. I also think a lot of lines, including us, will take their environmental issues seriously. It may not be the top factor with customers at the moment, but it is moving up the list.

“People buy experiences and that’s what we want to offer. I think there is plenty of pent-up demand and underlying strong demand to travel and see the world. Cruise has a very big role in that.”

Spotlight On

Epic itineraries

AmaWaterways and Uniworld have released longer river itineraries to give guests more time to experience destinations and satisfy more of their wanderlust. Gary Peters speaks to both lines to discover more



CHRIS TOWNSON
UK MD, UNIWORLD
BOUQUET RIVER CRUISES

What are the key highlights on Uniworld's Rivers of the World cruise in 2023?

This itinerary brings together five of our Super Ships, three of which are brand new – the *SS Sphinx* in Egypt, the *SS La Venezia* in Italy and the *SS São Gabriel* in Portugal. Guests on the Rivers of the World 2023 trip will be sailing on some of our newest and most spectacular vessels, each meticulously crafted with the finest attention to detail and with the destinations they are

sailing through in mind, offering the guest a real sense of place. We have also brought together a number of iconic destinations into one trip – Cairo and the ancient monuments in Egypt, romantic Paris, Budapest by night, the music and culture of Vienna, bohemian Porto and the wine country of the Douro valley [among others].

Do you anticipate creating more of these longer itineraries in the future?

Never say never. It has proved incredibly popular so we'll see – we may offer more departures of the same combination of cruises or look to combine other rivers and ships. We also have a new cruise and rail partnership with Golden Eagle trains that could add an extra dimension to an itinerary like this in the future. We'll listen to our guests and agent partners and take it from there.

What's been the reaction from clients and agents?

We think it [has] really struck a chord with those who have missed the joy of river cruising over the past 18 months and want to make up for lost time. We want to thank our agent partners and our loyal guests for supporting this [venture] and can't wait to deliver an amazing experience. Visit uniworld.com for more information.



JAMIE LOIZOU
UK MD, AMAWATERWAYS

Why have you released these Seven River Journeys, departing in 2023?

It's completely driven by our guests. Last year, we saw an increase in demand for our custom "combination" cruises with the optional pre and post-cruise land packages, which showed us there definitely was an appetite for our guests to stay longer and experience more.

What are the highlights on these two itineraries?

In the spring, beginning in the south of France along the Rhône River: this incredible part of the journey highlights idyllic scenery and French delights before taking in all the wonders and delights of Holland and Belgium, including the vibrant tulip fields of the Keukenhof Gardens, near to Amsterdam.

Summer, meanwhile, is a full French immersion – most days of our Seven River Journeys are spent there. Our guests will sail through the relaxing Normandy

countryside, and we'll whisk them over to Lyon, where they will sail the Saône and Rhône rivers into Burgundy and Provence. They'll then enjoy a transition from summer days to autumn foliage while sipping world-renowned wines during the harvest season.

What are the challenges of itineraries of this length?

The choice of cruises for these 46-day journeys was made by our creative president and co-founder, Rudi Schreiner. Taking into account ship placements, itineraries and seasonality, he prepared the best combination of experiences for our guests, whether that is the extended time in Holland and Belgium in the Spring Edition, the extra time in France during the Summer Edition or the beauty of the foliage along the Rhine in the autumn.

Visit amawaterways.co.uk for more information. 





Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines



**PROUDLY INTRODUCING
OUR NEW SHIPS
BOLETTE & BOREALIS**



Borealis at sea

Sailing on the 16th August, *Bolette* will be our newly appointed flagship. *Borealis*, the sister ship to *Bolette*, set sail on her maiden voyage from Liverpool on the 5th July and we are so excited to share more details on our beautiful new ships.

With just 700 cabins, *Borealis* is much smaller than most other cruise ships. However, she is large enough for guests to find plenty of restaurants, lounges and even a relaxing spa with hydrotherapy pools on board so they can enjoy their well-earned rest. If guests want to enjoy a swim during their break, they will find the all-weather pool under a retractable dome which can be opened when it is sunny and closed when the weather is not being kind.

Bolette and *Borealis*, like all Fred. Olsen ships, have their own elegant design touches which guests will see everywhere as they explore. Even the design and weave of our British-made carpets on board our fleet are chosen personally by Fred. Olsen Jnr. and every detail in the design meticulously planned.

The Crows Nest, Borealis



Geoff Ridgeon, Head of Sales, takes you on a tour of our beautiful new ship – to view, please visit our Travel Agent Centre 'new ships' page: www.fredolsencruises.com/agent

Colours & Tastes specialty dining



**For more information please visit our Travel Agent Centre:
www.fredolsencruises.com/agent**



The Indian Ocean Room on *Borealis*

Balcony Junior Suite



Borealis Atrium



Aurora Restaurant, *Borealis*



MAIDEN VOYAGE LAUNCH OFFER

As we set sail again, we are offering guests FREE on board spend on 2021 and 2022 cruises, PLUS saving of up to £250 per person on 2021 cruises.*

To celebrate our return to sailing, and to proudly introduce our new ship, we are giving you the opportunity to enjoy some bubbly...

Simply make a booking between the 5th July and 31st July, on any 2021 departure and you can claim a magnum of Prosecco worth over £33! All you need to do at time of booking is quote promo code BOOK21 and we will do the rest! For full details, and terms and conditions, please visit:

www.fredolsencruises.com/travel-agent-centre/news



*On cruises sailing from the UK, exclusions apply; on board spend and savings amounts vary per cruise, see website for full listing and terms & conditions.



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

WELCOME TO THE OLSEN WAY

In recent years, we have seen a new era emerging in cruising.

There is a trend for everything to get bigger and busier,
and for a cruise to be seen as an alternative to a large luxury
resort, with a limitless flurry of activity.

But this is not for us.

We believe there is another way to cruise. A way that is based
on five generations of seafaring.

Where cabins are called cabins, and ships look like ships.

Where the journey is as important as the destination.

In our world, smaller is better and we believe in keeping the
experience on board uncrowded, warm and civilised – treating
passengers as guests, like the family-run business we are.

It would be easy to follow the trends and go with the crowds.
But we never will.

Because this is our way, The Olsen Way.



Win at Selling World cruises

Oceania Cruises UK & Ireland senior director of sales **Priti Mehta** talks through the key aspects of selling epic world voyages

Booking a world cruise is always an exciting and nerve-wracking experience, no matter how seasoned a traveller the client is, whether they are regular cruisers, or new to cruising.

During a world cruise, clients are welcomed on board to fulfil their dreams, visiting far-flung destinations across the world, as the ship circumnavigates the globe on the voyage of a lifetime.

Every itinerary is carefully crafted to visit a range of destinations, from bustling iconic cities to hidden gems and remote shores waiting to be explored. When guests aren't spending time ashore, the discovery continues on board, where they

“Travel agents play an important role in encouraging new-to-cruise clients to take the leap”

can sample luxury facilities and home comforts throughout their journey. Every day on a world cruise is a new adventure with no day the same as the last.

Part of the family

A key aspect for many guests is that feeling of being part of a family who are on a journey together. With such a long period of time spent at sea, these itineraries offer the perfect chance for guests to form new friendships and communities with fellow, like-minded travellers, which makes the voyage even more special.

Agents play an important role in encouraging new-to-cruise clients to take that leap and make a booking, as they can discuss the experience with clients and iron out any concerns over embarking on a world cruise, such as packing for different climates or issues over social distancing on board. It is therefore essential that agents are aware of the latest measures and the benefits of the different ships and itineraries, ensuring the booking is tailored to the client.

At Oceania, there are four mini-world voyages in 2022 and 2023, including a 77-day voyage from Los Angeles to Sydney, taking in Alaska, the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Russian Far East, Japan, Cambodia, Indonesia and much more – good for beginners who want a taste but perhaps are not yet able to take the time to complete a full voyage.

The cruise industry is seeing exceptional demand for people seeking luxury, once-in-a-lifetime world cruises or extended voyages in a post-pandemic



world, with people eager to make up for lost time over the past year by ticking off far-flung destinations. With greater disposable income due to saving over lockdown, cruise-goers are willing to spend more – travel agents can make the most of this.

This demand was shown when Oceania Cruises' 2023 Around the World Voyage sold out in a single day after opening for public sale in January. And, for the first-time ever, all guests signed up to the full 180-day itinerary.

Cruisers are also now willing to travel for longer – that's a great opportunity for all agents. 📌

Selling TIPS

Price is not the only factor and it isn't always the most important when clients are considering a world cruise – some will have been planning and saving for years – not just recently

•

Identify what is important to the client, choosing the right itinerary and ship. For example, some guests may want a relaxed atmosphere while others will want to tick off bucket-list destinations

•

Continue to inspire returning clients who embark on a world cruise every year or every other year. These clients are keen to know what's new, explore fresh destinations or look at places they'd like to revisit



PRITI MEHTA

UK & IRELAND SENIOR DIRECTOR OF SALES
OCEANIA CRUISES

Fast Facts

The largest square-rigged sailing vessel in the world, five-masted barque *Golden Horizon* is based on *France II*, a legendary square-rigged tall ship built in 1913. The ship has been inspired by the magnificent Tea Clippers and Cape Horners but has been given a contemporary twist. First-class service, top-notch dining and elegant cabins, each with a sea view, are all part of the luxurious experience. On board, the ambience is relaxed, casual and elegant, with no unnecessary formality. The environment is geared to allowing guests to share a wonderful trip with friends and family – whether it's listening to the pianist and singer in the main dining room, or taking a more casual meal as they watch the sunset up on deck.

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140

CABINS

272

GUESTS

259

CREW

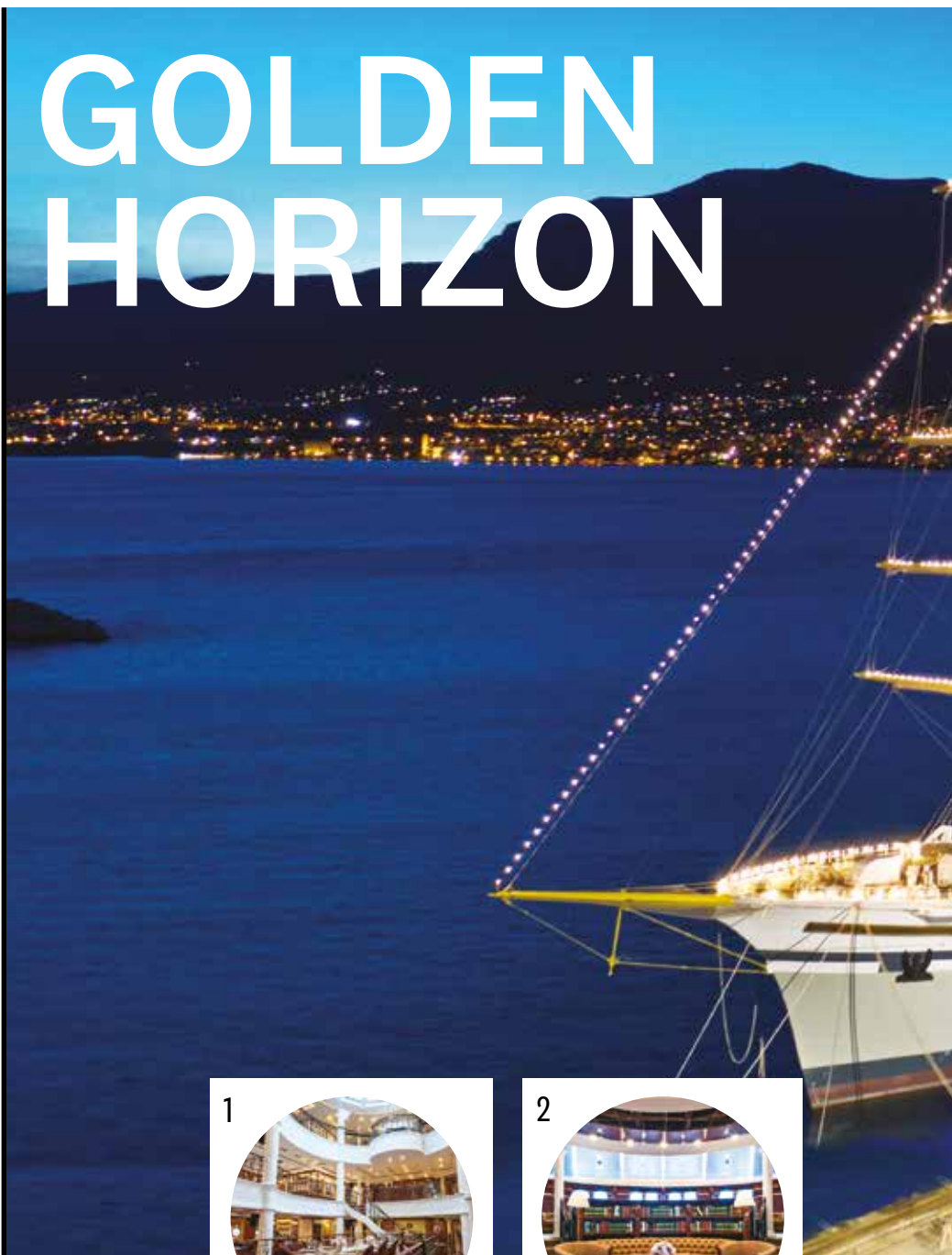
162.2m

LENGTH

8770

GROSS TONNAGE

GOLDEN HORIZON



1



Dining

The spectacular dining room provides a grand experience, with curved wrought-iron balconies sweeping towards the central skylight. Menus are full of 'eat well, be well' recommendations, so cuisine with a healthy and sustainable focus sits alongside many classic favourites.

2



Library

The educational hub of the ship is the library, a serene space to read a book, or spend a few hours playing a board game. Here, the voyage director will chat about upcoming adventures. And in the shop, there's everything from high-end binoculars to top branded clothing.



3



Marina

The marina platform is a focal point on many voyages, providing access to watersport equipment. Guests can expect stops in beautiful locations for swimming and snorkelling, take to the ocean on a stand-up paddleboard, learn to windsurf and test the floating island and over-water trampoline.

4



Spa

The spa on *Golden Horizon* is the ideal spot for a treatment, or for cooling down in the snow room, before taking a dip in the bubbling Jacuzzi. For extra cost, guests can book an indulgent spa treatment and relieve any tension with a massage. They can also opt for the signature algae facial.

5



Bars

Golden Horizon's bars are the perfect place to toast an amazing journey, whether it's outside on the deck with a glass of wine at Horizon Bar, or inside at the Piano Bar, which offers an elegant place to unwind. Debeljak's, in the main hall, also serves up luxurious, elegant drinks.



Regent's cruises are focusing on
expert enrichment programmes

STYLE & SUBSTANCE

With fewer passengers, plenty of space and lots of innovation, luxury ships are poised and ready to set sail in a post-pandemic world. **Jeannine Williamson** reports

Cruising may have been on hold but during the downtime, upmarket lines have been working tirelessly to make a stylish – and safe – comeback. New ships, high-tech upgrades and tempting itineraries are reason enough to attract clients to the luxury cruise sector and that's before the latest health and safety protocols are added to the mix.

With nowhere to go, many people have been saving money during lockdown and are now ready to spend it on the holiday of a lifetime, and this also includes new-to-cruise clients. The trend was graphically illustrated when Oceania Cruises' 180-day Around the World Voyage, with fares starting at £38,059pp, sold out in a single day after going on sale in January.

The line's president and CEO, Bob Binder, said: "The high demand for these voyages showcases the enthusiasm and desire among travellers to make up for lost time over the past year, creating immersive and memorable experiences to destinations across the world, which Oceania Cruises is well positioned for."

"Additionally, while world cruises typically attract legions of loyal repeat guests, Oceania Cruises' 2023 world cruise saw more than one third of all bookings come from first-time, new-to-brand guests, highlighting the strong demand from all types of traveller for once-in-a-lifetime holidays."

Space and service

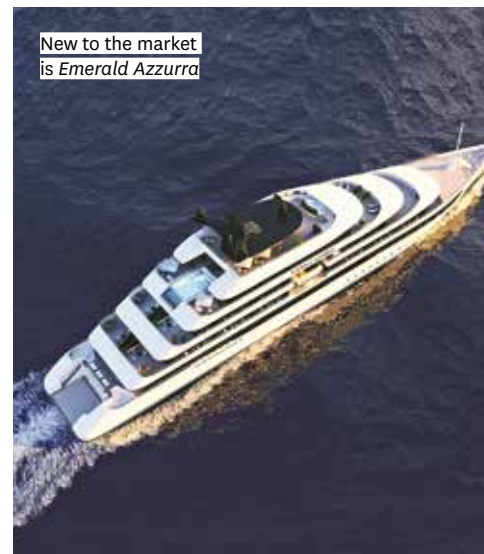
Fewer passengers and more public space mean luxury ships are already very well positioned to adjust to post-pandemic cruising and welcome back guests, says Edwina Lonsdale, managing director of Mundy Cruising.

"What stands out is how little lines need to adjust their operations to remain Covid-safe," she explains. "Plenty of space, table service, private arrangements and personalised trips ashore, small groups, extensive public rooms, spacious, uncrowded dining rooms, carefully planned itineraries away from the crowds, everything is designed to avoid queues and large numbers of people in any one place at any one time. In addition, with their high levels of staff ratios, rigorous cleaning regimes are easily followed. As a result, no holiday destination is going to be safer than a small luxury cruise ship."

Her views are echoed by Seabourn's vice-president of global sales, Steve Smotrys, who says: "There are two items high on travellers' lists right now as they are making their travel plans. First, they want to feel safe when they travel and at Seabourn the health, safety and wellbeing of our guests, team members, and the people and communities our ships visit have always been a top priority. Over the past year, we have taken it several steps further."

"Second, they covet space and privacy when they travel, and this is something that we've

New to the market
is Emerald Azzurra





On Oceania's Allura-class ships there will be two crew for every three guests

always offered and will continue to do. For example, Seabourn's ships deliver space and privacy in a way that a large ship or hotel property may not be able to.

"The ships are entirely all-suite, no inside accommodation, with a generous amount of space when a guest wants privacy. We also know everyone who comes on and off our ships at all times; anyone can typically walk into a hotel lobby or restaurant on shore."

Engaging itineraries

There are also exciting new ships on the horizon. Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Beyond* will feature The Retreat, a members-only resort-within-a-resort for suite guests, with a private restaurant, exclusive lounge and two-storey sundeck. *Celebrity Beyond*, which boasts interiors created by award-winning British designer Kelly Hoppen, will set sail on its inaugural voyage from Southampton in April 2022.

Oceania Cruises recently announced *Vista* as the name of its first ship in the new 1,200-guest Allura-class vessels. Launching in 2023, there will be two staff members for every three guests. Meanwhile, Crystal Cruises is redefining expedition cruising with the imminent launch of its first polar-class vessel, the 200-passenger *Crystal Endeavor*, which has a pair of helicopters and a seven-person electrically powered submersible for deep-water explorations.

The latest itinerary news includes Regent Seven Seas Cruises' collection of 13 Spotlight Voyages sailing in 2021 and 2022. Featuring curated enrichment experiences, the programme includes cruises designed to appeal to culinary and wine enthusiasts, history buffs, and art and music lovers.

"We pride ourselves on offering our guests culturally enriching programmes and immersive itineraries that go beyond just the destinations that we visit," says Jason Montague, the line's president and CEO. "This new collection of Spotlight Voyages gives discerning travellers the unique opportunity to engage with esteemed experts and ambassadors from the culinary arts, from the world of wine, from public broadcasting and many other areas."

Selling TIPS

Highlight the ultra-inclusive nature of luxury cruises and how much is included in the fare compared with mainstream lines

•

Take time to discover clients' definition of luxury – which can be formal black-tie dining to some and comfortable barefoot luxury to others – to match them to the perfect ship

•

Recommend luxury cruises to honeymooners and clients celebrating anniversaries, birthdays and other special occasions. Emphasise exceptional levels of personal service and a high crew-to-passenger ratio

Long-term confidence

The final word on luxury cruising post-pandemic goes to James Cole, founder and managing director of Panache Cruises, who concludes: "The outlook for cruise, and especially luxury cruise, is looking very positive. We are seeing a lot of new ships and brands enter the market, such as Emerald Cruises, Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, Swan Hellenic and Tradewind Voyages, which clearly demonstrates that there is long-term confidence in the luxury cruise sector."

"During the past year, luxury cruise lines have made significant investment in their fleets to make them safer, more compliant with the demands for social distancing and provide more space than ever before per customer on board."

"Luxury ships provide up to three times the space per customer and have fewer people on board, which means less queuing and more flexibility. It's therefore easier for them to adapt for the time that social distancing exists."

"In terms of consumer behaviour, cruisers are spending more on their holidays and luxury is in demand. Those who regularly travel on luxury cruises are looking for longer duration, bucket-list itineraries and larger suites."

"We are also seeing trends that the market is moving from all-inclusive to ultra-inclusive, where not just drinks packages are included in the price, but also gratuities, shore excursions, speciality restaurants, chauffeur transfers, butlers and lot more. You can literally leave your wallet at home." 📌

"We are seeing trends that the market is moving from all-inclusive to ultra-inclusive"



Crystal Endeavor will take luxury to the coldest regions of the globe





6
OF THE BEST

Multi-gen cruises

Everyone needs some quality time with their loved ones, so don't be surprised if multi-generational cruises prove popular in the near future, writes **Harriet Mallinson**

1 Epic memories

Diversity can often be the key to keeping kids (or indeed, adults) happy on holiday, so visiting a range of fascinating destinations while having plenty of relaxing options back on board is optimal. Norwegian Cruise Line's *Norwegian Epic* has lots to sing and dance about – it has 16 dining options, awesome entertainment and an aqua park at sea. For guests who just want to kick back, the ship's spa offers over 50 speciality treatments. NCL's Mediterranean: Italy, France & Spain cruise is scheduled to depart 24 July 2022. Prices from £944pp.

2 Entertainment central

A plethora of cruise lines, including MSC Cruises, have dedicated spaces on board for families. *MSC Virtuosa* offers 190 family cabins that are adapted to accommodate up to 10 family members. The ship has plenty of play areas for young ones, while round-the-clock entertainment suits multi-generational groups. A 10-night Mediterranean cruise departs from Lisbon on 24 October 2021. Prices for adults start from £749pp.

All itineraries are subject to change and vaccination policies. Prices based on the adult fare

3 Fun house

Making sure children have plenty to busy themselves with so adults can enjoy some grown-up time is key.

Cruises are offering more and more extravagant activities on board and nothing shouts exhilaration more than rides at sea. Carnival Cruise Line's *Mardi Gras* boasts the fastest (and first) rollercoaster at sea. The ship also houses six themed areas packed with brand-new experiences for eating, drinking and having fun. Carnival's seven-day Eastern Caribbean cruise departs Port Canaveral 23 September 2023. Prices from approximately £406pp.



4

4 Happily ever after

Youngsters don't always love the idea of traipsing around cities, so for culture vulture parents and grandparents it's a plus to find a holiday that makes travelling fun for everyone. Uniworld is a great bet for this with its Generations Family Programme on select sailings. These feature unique, fun-filled adventures and are packed with cultural and historical experiences to spark creativity and curiosity. The line's eight-day Authentic Danube itinerary, departing 8 July 2022, gives guests the chance to get off the beaten path. Prices start at £2,879pp.



2

5 Environment matters

A-Rosa's new E-motion ship will use battery propulsion to enter a port emission-free, and the ship will also offer plenty of space for family time. The 20-square-metre standard cabins have a balcony, while the generous family cabins fit up to five people. The A-Rosa kids' club, in its own space, gives grown-ups the opportunity to spend time alone. A Rhine Discovery Amsterdam & Rotterdam 2022 itinerary departs 21 May 2022. Prices from approximately £1,460pp.

6 Wildlife wonders

With whales, grizzly bears and seals, Alaska is an animal-lovers' paradise along with its jaw-dropping scenery. There's also dog sledding, zipwiring and helicopter rides, so there's something for the action-lovers, too. Holland America Line offers all this, plus suites and staterooms with family-friendly options such as sofa beds, pull-down bunk beds and connecting rooms. A seven-day Alaskan Inside Passage sails on 30 July 2022 and is priced from £1,149pp.●



6



5



The Danube winds through famous vineyards,
stupendous terrain and magnificent cities



BEAUTIFUL & BLUE

Flowing through four capital cities and sweeping countryside, the Danube is big on sights and experiences, writes **Jeannine Williamson**

The Star-Ships collection
now includes *Emerald Luna*



Wildlife on the Danube is one of its lesser-known attractions



“They also serve as a great introduction for those new to river cruising, as they include stops in several iconic cities, including Vienna and Budapest. For a true city-break experience, I would suggest booking Viking’s Romantic Danube voyage, which offers overnight stays on board in both.”

A new dawn

With ship launches disrupted by Covid-19, this year will see the debut of several vessels along with the eagerly awaited all-new line, Tui River Cruises.

Arena River Cruises will mark the maiden season of its latest four-star ship, *MS Arena*, with a summer programme on the Danube, including the seven-night Cruise the Danube to Vienna & Budapest cruise, one of Arena’s most popular itineraries.

Emerald Luna joins Emerald Cruises’ growing fleet of Star-Ships to sail on the week-long Danube Delights itinerary between Budapest and Regensburg. The 180-passenger vessel will feature the line’s trademark swimming pool, which converts into a cinema at night, and all-weather cabin balconies. The 166-passenger *Avalon View* also makes its maiden voyage on the Danube and will have an on-board adventure centre equipped with bikes and other outdoor gear.

This year also sees the launch of Travelmarvel’s fleet of 182-passenger Contemporary-class ships, with itineraries including the 14-night European Gems cruise from Amsterdam to Budapest. In addition to the main dining room, vessels offer the casual dining and social area McGeary’s Bar. Wine, beer and soft drinks are included with lunch and dinner, and Travelmarvel’s flexi tours concept allows passengers to tailor their own shore excursions.

Further ahead, *VIVA Two*, VIVA Cruises’ second new-build ship, will sail on the Danube from July 2022. Before that, in May next year, *A-Rosa Flora* is moving from the Rhine to the Danube to become A-Rosa’s second English-speaking ship on the river. Itineraries include a

An abundance of new ships and itineraries on one of Europe’s most popular waterways means there’s plenty in store to satisfy clients’ pent-up demand for river cruising.

Rising in Germany’s Black Forest and winding through 10 countries and four cities – Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade – the Danube offers a wealth of experiences. It can be sampled on all manner of sailings, from short breaks to cruises of two weeks and more, and itineraries cover big-hitting sights such as the UNESCO-listed Wachau Valley or the relatively unexplored Danube Delta.

“With medieval towns, grand cities and hallowed sites all on the route, Viking’s cruise-tours along this fabled river have been some of the most popular itineraries among our past guests,” says Viking UK head of sales Neil Barclay.

ITINERARIES

Titan Travel

- Prices for the 14-night Eastern Europe Explorer with the Danube Delta Budapest round-trip itinerary on *MS River Discovery II* start from £3,099pp, departing 4 May 2022, including flights and door-to-door VIP travel service.

🔗 titanagents.co.uk

A-Rosa

- Prices for the five-night Danube Enchanting Christmas Passau round-trip sailing on *A-Rosa Flora* start from £932pp, departing 23 December 2022.

🔗 arosa-cruises.co.uk

AmaWaterways

- The six-night Celebration of Classical Music: The Danube cruise from Vienna to Budapest, departing 25 March 2023 on *AmaSonata*, is priced from £2,469pp.

🔗 amawaterways.co.uk



Cities en route can include Budapest...

“The Danube is a fascinating destination and gives your customers the chance to visit some of the great European cities”

new five-night Danube Advent Season voyage visiting Vienna, Bratislava and Linz, with an overnight in Vienna. A-Rosa has a new summer 2022 round-trip Vienna itinerary that has been created for the UK market to facilitate pre or post-cruise stays in the Austrian capital.

Themed sailings

Uniworld has unveiled a new Jewish heritage programme on its seven-night Delightful Danube itinerary, between

Budapest and Nuremberg. It will feature dedicated Jewish heritage tours of Budapest, Vienna and Regensburg, such as the poignant Shoes on the Danube memorial in Budapest, the Viennese synagogue that was the only one to survive the ‘Night of Broken Glass’ Nazi persecution, and the opportunity to meet local Jewish residents in Regensburg.

Novel – in every sense – are the celebrity-hosted Storyteller Series cruises from Avalon Waterways. They include two 2022 Danube sailings, *Wild & Whimsy on the Water* and *Gone Girl!* which will be respectively joined by writers Cheryl Strayed and Gillian Flynn.

Avalon Waterways UK CEO Giles Hawke says: “Our new, exclusive Storyteller Series invites travellers to enhance the storytelling tapestry of their lives by embarking on incredible ‘once upon a river’ holidays. On this special series of sailings, Avalon guests get to spend a week in Europe with their favourite storytellers. They’re invited to meet legends in legendary landscapes.”

Titan Travel has a new 14-night Eastern Europe Explorer with the Danube Delta voyage along the eastern stretches of the Danube towards the Black Sea on the 176-passenger *River Discovery II*, which will be the largest vessel in the Titan fleet. It has six stateroom categories, including eight single cabins, and will operate on the Danube this year before two full cruising seasons in 2022 and 2023.

For clients who are music lovers, in 2023 AmaWaterways is introducing an all-new seven-night classical music cruise that will explore the famous music of the Danube including Mozart’s *Linz Symphony* and, of

course, *Blue Danube Waltz* by Johann Strauss. Sailing between Budapest and Vienna, the cruise will showcase live performances and visits to towns and sights linked to famous composers. Additionally for 2023 AmaWaterways is offering a shorter trip, the five-night Majestic Capitals of the Danube, which will follow in the paths of kings and queens on up to five included excursions daily.

Also, all of CroisiEurope’s Danube itineraries will now operate between either Vienna or Budapest and Bucharest, allowing increased flight options from the UK.

Extra perks

There are enhancements at Riviera Travel. The Riviera Plus package will be available to all guests in upper-deck cabins, and deluxe and superior suites. The package includes a range of premium benefits including a smart handset with unlimited calls, text messages, internet usage, local maps, a translator and currency converter.

Perks also include a bottle of sparkling wine on arrival, fruit platter and evening aperitif. Additionally, evening menus are being refined to include dishes themed to the regions visited, such as traditional Hungarian soup infused with smoky paprika.

CLIA UK & Ireland director Andy Harmer says: “The Danube is a fascinating destination and gives your customers the chance to visit some of the great European cities. Vienna is magnificent, and the likes of Belgrade, Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia are must-sees. Travel professionals looking to learn more about the river cruise sector can now take advantage of our RiverView programme, offering tailored advice and guidance on each river, including the Danube.”

Selling TIPS

Suggest Christmas market sailings and special interest cruises, such as classical music or golf, to first-timers, as these themed itineraries are a great introduction to river cruising

Served by all the main river lines, there’s a cruise to suit all tastes and budgets on the Danube, plus the choice of air, rail or coach travel to make it just that little bit easier

Recommend itineraries on the lesser-known Danube Delta to repeaters and wildlife enthusiasts

Remind clients that they can visit four cities in one trip without the need to change hotels – highlight the ease and beautiful simplicity of a river cruise on the Danube

...and Bratislava, capital of Slovakia



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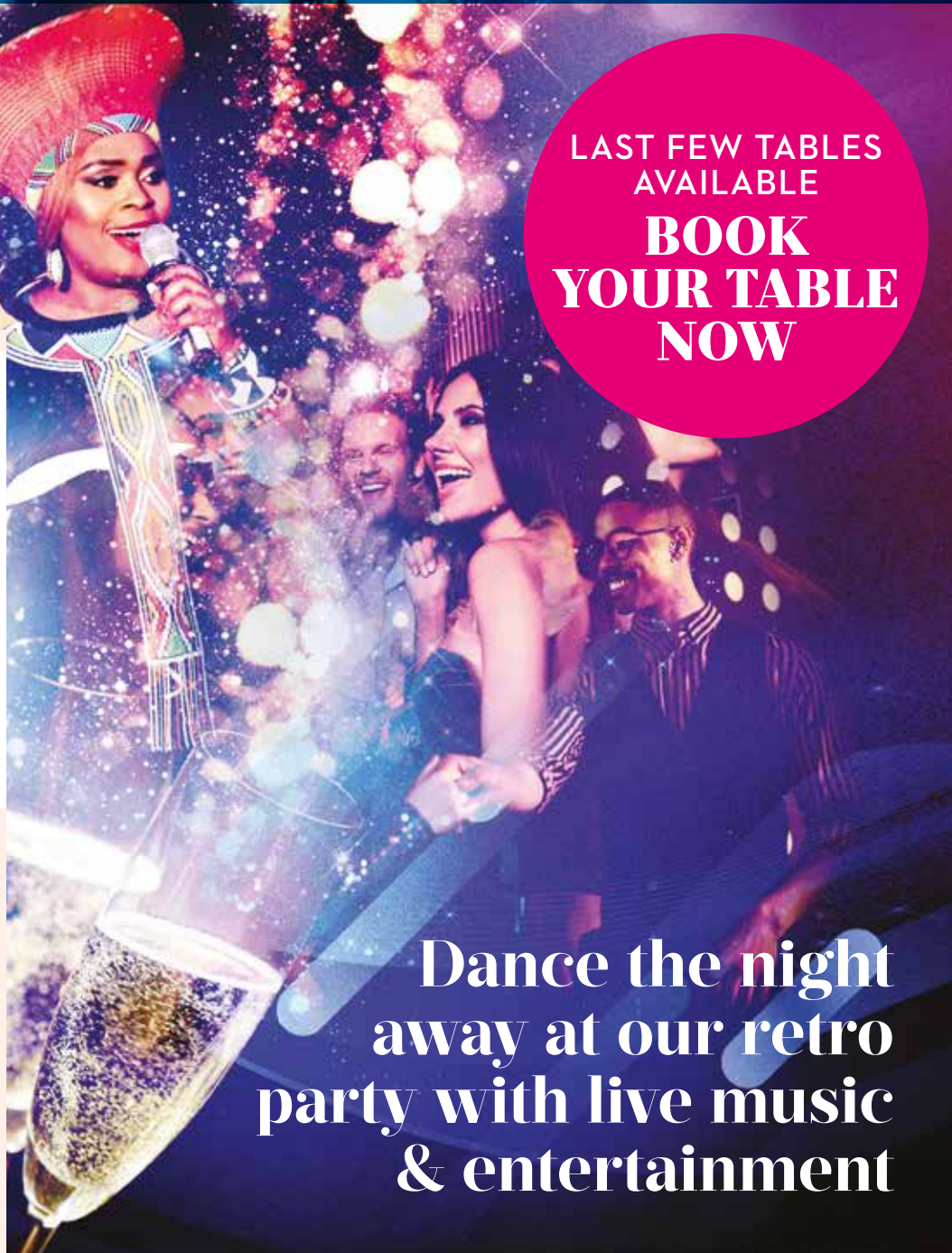
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Durdle Door, one of the south coast's astonishing cliff formations



Beside the SEASIDE

A sailing close to home is the perfect way to get clients back on the water and attract new-to-cruise business, writes **Jeannine Williamson**



Cunard's famous *Queen Elizabeth* will depart from Southampton this summer



and, to provide reassurance to guests, Viking is the only line to have an on-board Covid laboratory with all passengers and crew taking a daily non-invasive test.

Another very different adult line is Virgin Voyages, with the bright and breezy *Scarlet Lady*

also sailing from Portsmouth on three and four-night cruises. There are no ports of call, providing plenty of time for guests – or sailors as they are called – to get a taste of the Virgin cruising concept: this includes a large nightclub, free fitness classes and a tattoo parlour.

MSC Cruises, the first line to restart sailing in May, has week-long stopping voyages from Southampton aboard its new flagship, *MSC Virtuosa*, where novelties include Rob, the first-ever robotic bartender at sea (see page 38).

Iona, the largest-ever ship built for the UK market, has been unveiled by P&O Cruises. Featuring the new glass-roofed SkyDome lounge and a gin distillery, *Iona* and *Britannia* both sail from Southampton on a variety of itineraries of between three and seven nights.

The newly revamped *Celebrity Silhouette* is cruising from Southampton on six to eight-night itineraries with calls at Portland, Belfast and Liverpool. Luxe line Cunard is also departing from Southampton, with a mixture of coastal sailings and itineraries of up to 12 nights, including ports of call, on *Queen Elizabeth*. The seven-night unscripted Sun Voyages will head to wherever the UK sun shines brightest.

Expedition line Hurtigruten has two voyages on *MS Maud* exploring the natural wonders of the British Isles, with a call at Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland's largest seabird colony. Princess Cruises, meanwhile, is offering a choice of scenic itineraries and cruises with port calls on its MedallionClass ships, *Regal Princess* and *Sky Princess*.

The summer of 2021 will be remembered as the year that cruise lines converged on the British Isles to offer a season of coastal sailings and kick-start the return to cruising. These itineraries, several of which run through to late autumn, offer a golden opportunity for repeat cruise clients to experience all-new ships – where the original launch dates were delayed due to the pandemic – and lines they haven't sailed with before. It is also an ideal way to introduce new-to-cruise customers to cruising, with both the convenience of sailing from the UK and shorter itineraries that allow them to test the proverbial water. The range of ships and lines means there is a cruise for every taste and budget.

New ships include *Viking Venus*, which recently announced two new round-trip sailings from Portsmouth to extend its UK season to the end of August. The Scandi-cool ship is just for adults

ITINERARIES

Disney Cruise Line

- A three-night UK staycation round-trip from Tilbury sailing on *Disney Magic* is priced from £708pp, departing 1 October 2021.

🔗 disneycruise.disney.go.com

Cunard

- Prices for a seven-night British Isles round-trip Southampton cruise on *Queen Elizabeth* start from £579pp, departing 3 September 2021.

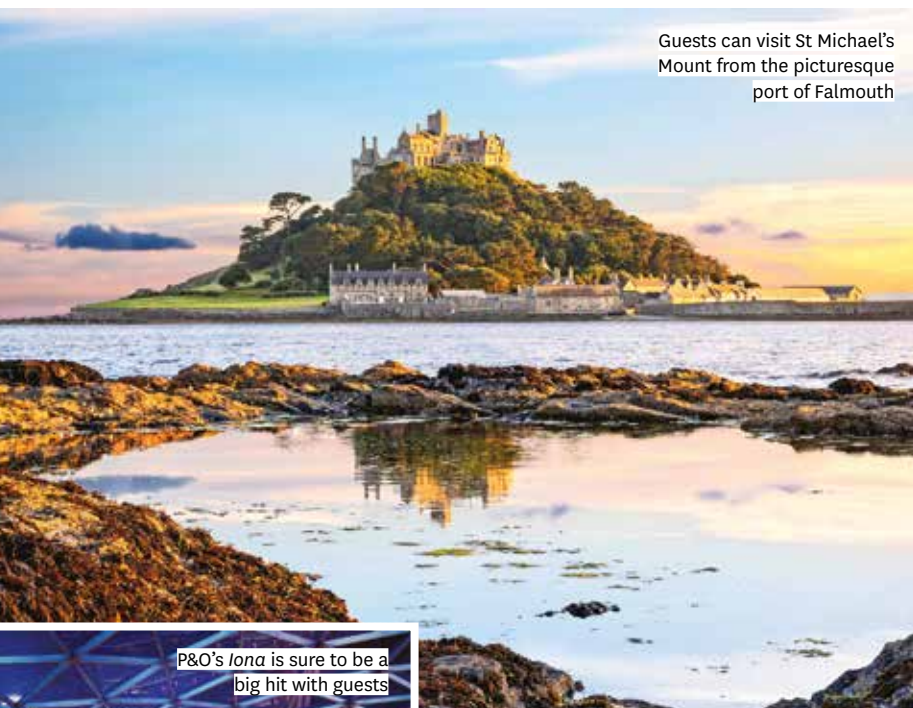
🔗 cunard.com

P&O Cruises

- The seven-night Southern Short Break Southampton round-trip sailing on *Iona* is priced from £579pp, departing 18 September 2021.

🔗 pocruises.com

Destination focus: Domestic ports



Guests can visit St Michael's Mount from the picturesque port of Falmouth



P&O's *Iona* is sure to be a big hit with guests

HERE ARE SOME OF THE PORTS OF CALL ON UK SAILINGS:

Liverpool

The city is best-known as the birthplace of the Fab Four, so a visit to Liverpool always includes an excursion following the Beatles' trail showing places that inspired their songwriting, such as Penny Lane and Strawberry Fields, and the Cavern Club where they first played. A 20-minute stroll or short bus shuttle from the port area leads to Albert Dock, now a lively waterfront with attractions including the National Maritime Museum. Iconic buildings include Liverpool Cathedral, Britain's largest Anglican cathedral.

Falmouth

Shaped and influenced by the sea, this pretty Cornish harbour town is the gateway to the landmark sight of St Michael's Mount, an island topped by a castle that is reached by a causeway, usable during low tide. Tours cover the region's fascinating tin and copper mining heritage, while green-fingered passengers can take excursions to the Lost Gardens of Heligan, the site of England's largest garden restoration. For almost 70 years the gardens disappeared beneath undergrowth before being rediscovered in 1991.

Portland

Famous for its stone and the 18-mile sweep of Chesil Beach, the Isle of Portland occupies a prime spot on Dorset's UNESCO-listed Jurassic Coast. Shore tours include a coach drive to see

the natural archway of Durdle Door before a guided beach walk in the footsteps of dinosaurs to search for fossils. Nearby Abbotsbury Swannery is the only place in the world where you can walk through the heart of a colony of beautiful free-flying mute swans.

Belfast

Belfast was the birthplace of the *Titanic* and Titanic Belfast is a fascinating six-storey attraction next to the slipway where the doomed liner was built. A tour can be combined with a look at SS *Nomadic*, Titanic's tender and the world's last remaining White Star Line ship. Other shore excursions visit the Giant's Causeway, a geological phenomenon caused by volcanic eruptions – although some say that the coastal basalt columns were the work of a giant called Finn McCool.

Newcastle

Nine miles from the Port of Tyne is Newcastle, joined by seven bridges across a spectacular riverscape to Gateshead on the opposite bank. Of interest to cruise passengers at the Discovery Museum is the steam yacht *Turbinia*, launched in 1897 and the world's first-ever turbine-powered ship. Art lovers can see displays in the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and longer trips visit Alnwick Castle, which was used as the setting for scenes in the Harry Potter films.

The Scilly Isles

Lying off the Cornish coast, these beautiful islands are renowned for a warm micro-climate created by the Gulf Stream. Sub-tropical plants collected from around the world thrive in the 17-acre Tresco Abbey Gardens. Nature lovers can take trips in small boats to explore the waters around the islands to spot seals and puffins. Other options include a walk on St Mary's to Buzza Hill to see a Bronze Age burial chamber and take in panoramic views. 📍

All information and experiences described are subject to change due to current restrictions

Remember insurance

Even though they are not travelling overseas, remind clients that they will need travel insurance with Covid-19 cover. Failure to produce this can result in delays, having to purchase expensive insurance through the cruise line on the day or, in a worst-case scenario, not being allowed to board. Most online insurance companies provide short-term policies for the duration of the cruise with the required Covid protection.

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: VISIT BRITAIN



Virgin's first ship, *Scarlet Lady*, is sailing from Portsmouth



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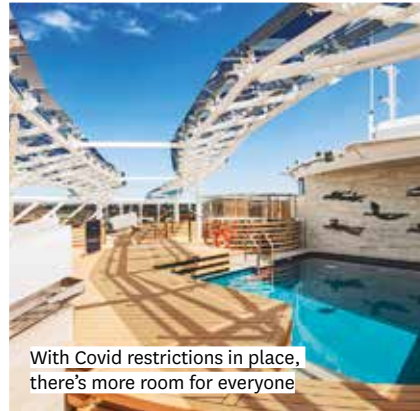
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One very big attraction is Rob the robot bartender
- he makes conversation as well as cocktails

SMOOTH SAILING

At the end of May, before MSC Cruises changed its vaccine policy, **Gary Peters** joined the line for a domestic cruise on *MSC Virtuosa*



With Covid restrictions in place, there's more room for everyone



Excursions to British beauty spots such as Portland have to be tightly organised

Standing on a staircase for a photo opportunity is not particularly ground-breaking or even mildly exciting. Not in ordinary times.

However, this is no ordinary staircase. No, it's the famous MSC Cruises staircase, sparkling in all its glory in the atrium on the brand-new *MSC Virtuosa* – incredibly, there are 80,000 Swarovski crystals in all the stairs of this kind across the ship.

I'll toot my own horn and add a few to that number, as my shoes for the evening on what is the second night on board are rather glitzy. Let's just say I've waited many, many months to showcase these shoes to the world – well, to 1,000 other cruisers.

And this, of course, is what this article is all about – not just shoes, but cruising. I'm on board for *MSC Virtuosa's* second domestic cruise out of Southampton, sailing for four nights, with two full sea days and one quick stop in Portland for a socially distanced and MSC-organised shore excursion.

Ready to depart

Rewinding back to before the cruise and in the days leading up to embarkation, my mind is working overtime worrying about the necessary documentation – evidence of a negative lateral flow test taken within 72 hours of departure; cruise ticket with health questionnaire completed, and – the one that seems to be causing the most confusion among fellow guests and I – evidence of travel insurance with Covid-19 cover.

This is the critical thing to remember. Check, check and check again that it lists Covid-19 cover as part of the policy. Without it, things might get tricky.

Despite all the pre-cruise nerves and panic, I have no need to worry. What I thought was my big head-in-hands moment – the one I had bored people to tears with stressing about – is over in a flash. My insurance has the right Covid-19 cover, my health questionnaire is all in working order and my cruise ticket has survived being bashed about in my bag.

This is where it pays to rely on old technology. A trusty print-out has gotten me out of many pickles in my time and it

shows its worth again when boarding a ship during these current times – print it, stick it in a folder and have it ready.

It is after the usual security checks where things get a bit different: guests get a lateral flow test before going off to do the official check-in procedure to get the cruise card and MSC wristband (this traces passengers' movement and contacts for safety reasons and

THE PASSENGER VIEW

DEREK & ANNETTE MILLS:

"It's fabulous to be back and it's a unique experience. We've been living with protocols for a long time, so we're used to wearing masks. We've had no issues [with the health and safety protocols] and we felt safe on board."

JULIE BAKER:

"It's been really good fun and nice to get away. I was gobsmacked [by the ship]; it's very elegant, very clean – they are 'on' it, safety wise."

EDDIE HELLON:

"I was nervous at the start but [the new protocols] haven't ruined the experience. The staff members are good, as is the service, and I like the number of people on board."



Family fun comes in many shapes and sizes



Virtuosa's crew play a huge part in ensuring that the new sailing protocols work smoothly



The Galleria ceiling takes shopping to another level

Selling TIPS

MSC has gone all out for its return to service in the UK. With months of sailing according to new protocols in the Mediterranean under its belt, the line has worked through any kinks in the new systems, so guests should not feel that the experience is diminished in any way

• There's plenty to keep guests entertained while on the ship, particularly in the Sportplex, which has an array of games – some of which use virtual reality technology for next-level fun

• For any land-based clients unsure if a domestic sailing can offer a true cruise experience, talk up the fact that MSC's protocols are tried and tested, and with a reduced capacity on board now, it's the ideal time to hop on for big-ship experiences without the crowds

must be worn at all times on the ship), and then wait patiently for the test result. Negative – hurrah. After a short time in the waiting area, it's time to get this show on the road.

Back on the open sea

It's all oddly familiar, being back on board. No doubt this is thanks to a very welcome reunion with some cruise friends. All those I have spoken to so far have reported similar feelings – after so many months on land it feels surreal to be on a ship, yet also like we've never been away.

On board, the first thing I'm greeted by is the mesmerising sight of the LED dome – on Galleria Virtuosa (the main promenade) – which is the largest of its kind at sea, the heart of the ship, and which plays different productions throughout the day. This is masterful and it's common to see guests ambling around, phones in the air, trying to capture whatever is playing out above their heads.

It's encouraging to see so many families and younger people cruising. With just 1,000 passengers on board because of current restrictions, *MSC Virtuosa* does feel empty, but seeing kids exploring – and parents amazed at the choice on offer – is great to witness. The other benefits of having fewer people on board are no waiting in long queues, no struggle to find somewhere to sit by the pool, no fight at the buffet to grab a table.

This sense of fun and freedom means it's easy to forget that as *MSC Virtuosa*

sails along the south coast, it was only a week before that the green light was given for domestic operations to resume, and then on 20 May that MSC took the plunge, lifted anchor and officially kicked off the UK cruise season.

The sheer work that has gone into these sailings makes the mind boggle. In fact, even discussing the complexities of getting everything in order and ready for paying passengers is enough to increase my own stress levels, let alone those of the people who are rushing around the ship making sure everything goes according to a very detailed plan.

On that point, the crew is first class. Yes, service is quicker than usual considering the numbers on board and that helps with the experience, but the happiness that emanates from all working on the ship is clear to see.

It's very easy to adjust to the new health and safety protocols in place. The MSC wristband is swiped when ordering food and drink and entering the cabin, and despite a couple of very small hiccups here and there, the process is smooth,



French-Vietnamese fusion is the theme at Indochine

DETAILS

Eight-night Northern Europe cruise on *MSC Virtuosa*, departing Southampton on 14 September 2021. Prices from £599pp.

the most compelling, as it is home to Rob, the first-ever humanoid robotic bartender. Rob is fully functional, mixing and serving cocktails while engaging in conversation with his customers. Rob makes it all look easy, but a five-year development process demonstrates it was anything but simple to take it from idea to reality.

After a drink in the Starship, it's off to dinner. *MSC Virtuosa* has 10 restaurants in total – five complimentary and five speciality. I'm lucky enough to sample a number during the four days. The Butcher's Cut – the steakhouse on board – definitely takes top prize for me, but the choice is endless and every taste is catered for. Indochine, a beautiful and elegant French-Vietnamese restaurant, is another win.

New for *MSC Virtuosa* is Hola! Tacos, a casual street-food dining concept offering Latin American and Mexican-inspired dishes and drinks – on day two I take part in a mezcal tasting. Let's just say I did not attempt to write this review until the day after.

There's also MSC Yacht Club, the private area on deck 18. Here, guests have their own facilities, 24/7 butler service, pool area and a lavish restaurant with expansive views overlooking the ocean. There's also another Swarovski staircase in the lounge.

As for the shore excursion in Portland on day three of the cruise, it's more regimented than before, with guests asked not to wander off into shops and the like. However, despite being low key, it's genuinely nice to be back out and about exploring and I overhear some locals commenting how good it is to have cruise ships back in port.

This is a common feeling for all on board and indeed many more ashore. MSC's domestic cruises represent far more than the physical act of sailing a ship – they are the rebirth of the UK cruise sector.

As MSC UK & Ireland MD Antonio Paradiso says: "This is a historic moment for the UK cruise sector. We have been overwhelmed with support. We all know what we've been through – now it's time to start enjoying cruising again."

Amen to that. 🍷

Staircases – and crystals – are big on board *MSC Virtuosa*

Everyone knows the rules and it's very much about being sensible and staying in bubbles

quick and easy. Cruise cards can also be used for this.

Masks have to be on while walking around the ship but can be removed when sitting down for drinks and food and in other venues. Temperatures are taken during the day, social distancing is not an issue – the reduced capacity helping with that – and hand sanitiser is available throughout the ship. Even the TV remote in the cabin comes in its own envelope. Everyone knows the rules: it's very much about being sensible – and staying in bubbles. It all really becomes second nature very soon after boarding.

The future is here

While it is undoubtedly a different experience, the ship still feels alive with action. When the sun comes out, guests are relaxing by the pool; a few dedicated souls are in the gym burning off those cruise calories; the restaurants are a hive of activity; the evening entertainment is diverse and, on the whole, hits the right spot. A particular personal highlight is the show *Soul Sisters* in the Carousel Lounge, an upbeat 40-minute Motown-inspired performance that has everyone tapping their feet.

The Le Grand Theatre is home to a variety of shows, such as *Le Ciel de Paris* – Parisian cabaret – and *The Big Apple*, dedicated to all things New York. For the pop and rock stars on board, there's karaoke in the TV & Studio Bar (I'm not brave enough to give it a go), and dance lessons, among several other activities throughout the day, such as pub quizzes, aerobics classes and more.

However, despite the fact that Covid restrictions have not restricted MSC in what it can offer, there is one place that garners more attention than anywhere else – the Starship Club. Of the 21 bars and lounges on *MSC Virtuosa*, it is by far

After the pause in operations, it's time to start cruising again

The last **word**

SHAKEDOWN ON ANTHEM

CTN was recently on Royal Caribbean International's *Anthem of the Seas* for a shakedown sailing, as the ship begins its series of British Isles cruises

The time has come – Royal Caribbean is once again sailing from the UK, with a promise to deliver an “adventure-filled summer for UK families who have long missed making memories while on holiday”. And CTN is joining in.

It's another milestone ticked off, as more and more companies inch over the line and return to service, confident in the knowledge that cruise ships provide safe havens away from land-based worries.

As is becoming common across the sector, Royal Caribbean is placing a lot of emphasis on its app, which guests are required to download prior to the cruise to run through safety questionnaires and check-in online. From start to finish, all safety protocols are followed without fail and not once did the assembled guests feel unsafe during the shakedown.

Once the admin part is over, the first thing guests will notice about *Anthem of the Seas* from the outside is the sheer size of the ship. However, once on board, the ship feels surprisingly intimate. It's easy to navigate, the flow is excellent, and guests are never very far from one of the many attractions.

Speaking of which, as to be expected from a ship of this scale, there are plenty of top restaurants on board. During a short shakedown it's not feasible to try

“It's marvellous to see how seamlessly the crew have fitted back into their day-to-day jobs”



Children are sure to have a great time on *Anthem of the Seas*

them all, but one that is sure to be a favourite is Izumi, an authentic Asian-inspired dining experience that is well worth the supplement necessary.

Non-stop entertainment

Entertainment is everywhere on *Anthem* and it's easy to see how the ship will cater for a wide variety of guests. Whether it's a family cruise or a romantic voyage for two, there's somewhere to go and

something to do all the time. There are plenty of pools – for all ages – and the very popular surf simulator, FlowRider.

Other areas include North Star – the all-glass observation capsule that offers 360-degree views of the open ocean – SeaPlex, said to be the largest indoor active space at sea, and RipCord by iFly, a skydiving experience.

Two70 is also a very enjoyable space, and it's used for cabaret and daytime shows, as well as having a large set of screens on to which are projected everything from cartoons and orchestral recitals to fireworks.

As for the crew, it's marvellous to see how seamlessly they have all fitted back into their day-to-day jobs.

So, who is the ideal client to match to *Anthem of the Seas*? Really it could be argued all of them, but multi-gen families, in particular, will have a great time as the ship caters for each group individually, while allowing guests to get together for family time for as long – or even as little – as they wish. 📍



The ship is a fun palace, so all guests can have their own space

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