

THE VOICE OF THE CRUISE INDUSTRY

CRUISE

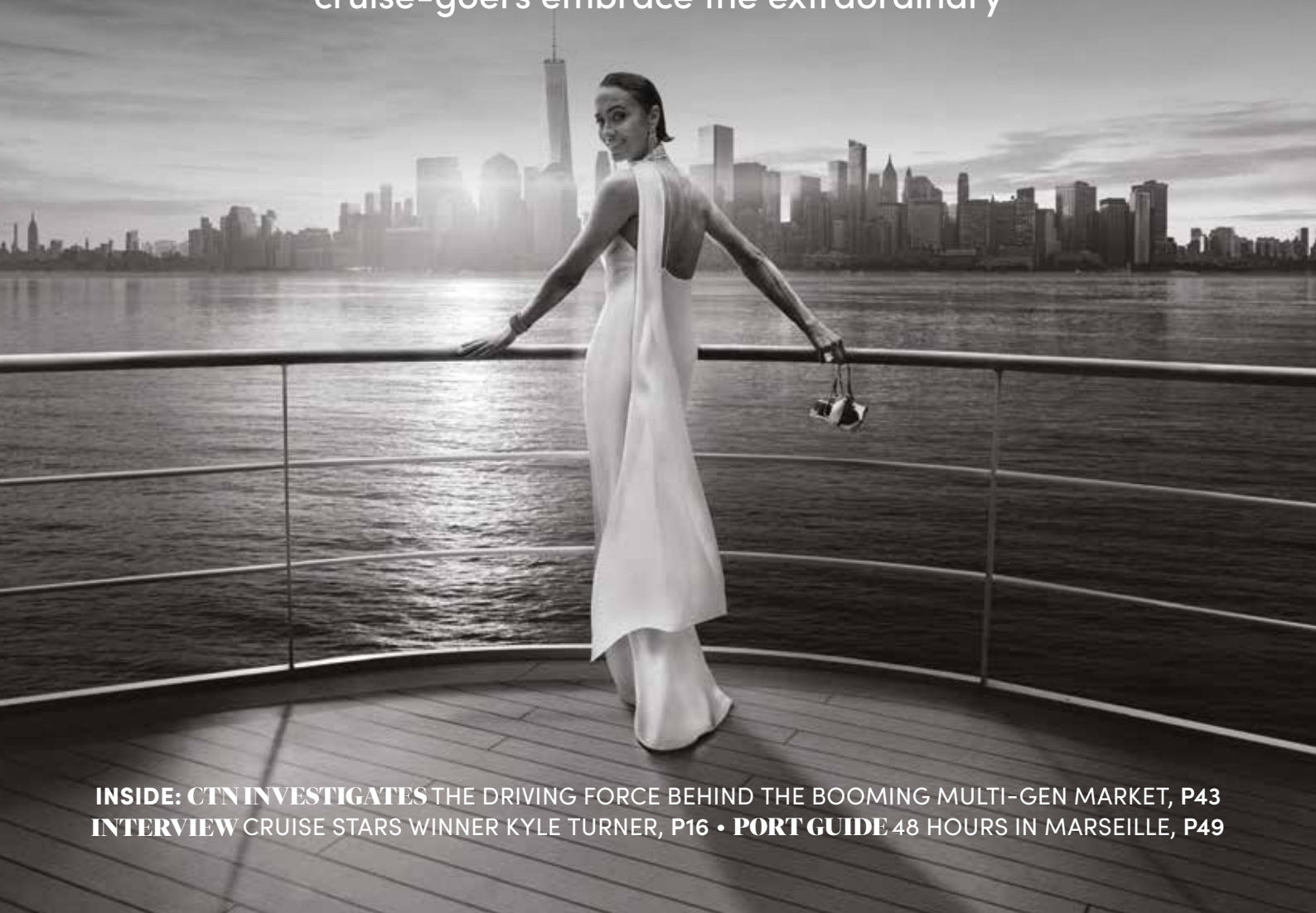
Trade News

cruisetradenews.com

CUNARD
TAKEOVER

ICONIC LUXURY

How industry leader Cunard is helping
cruise-goers embrace the extraordinary



INSIDE: CTN INVESTIGATES THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE BOOMING MULTI-GEN MARKET, P43
INTERVIEW CRUISE STARS WINNER KYLE TURNER, P16 • **PORT GUIDE** 48 HOURS IN MARSEILLE, P49



2026-2027 eight-day
Viking ocean journeys
from £1,795PP

WHAT VIKING OCEAN IS NOT

- No children under 18
- No casinos
- No charge for Wi-Fi*
- No charge for beer and wine at lunch and dinner
- No charge for alternative restaurants
- No inside staterooms
- No formal nights, butlers or white gloves
- No entrance fee for the Spa or Fitness Centre
- No charge for use of launderettes

*Connection speed may vary.



Contact salesuk@viking.com or call
us on 020 8780 7985

Terms and conditions: From price is per person and based on a 10 January 2026 departure date on an 8-day Iberian Explorer itinerary. Single supplements apply.



WELCOME...

TO THE JULY/AUGUST ISSUE



Every journalist dreams of writing their first editor's letter. Most, however, wouldn't fathom the thought of having the opportunity to produce theirs for such a special issue.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to introduce you to this unique edition of *Cruise Trade News*, which also happens to be my first as editor. We've partnered with Cunard to showcase what the brand has to offer as it looks to chart a new course under a refreshed mantra. I'll let my co-editor, David Jones, tell you more about that.

Elsewhere in the magazine you'll find your usual updates from the river (p. 12), expedition (p. 13) and luxury (p.17) sectors, as well as a special feature marking ROL Cruise's 30th anniversary on page 26.

We're also giving agents the chance to win a range of exclusive prizes with Cunard – from a two-night hotel stay in London to luxury hampers – on page 30.

If you're at the start of your cruise sales career, head to page 20 to get insight and advice from sector stalwarts on how to forge a path forward.

Will Payne
Editor



It's a real pleasure to introduce this very special *Cruise Trade News* takeover on behalf of everyone at Cunard.

July marks an exciting point in time for us. We've just launched our new brand campaign, "Why cruise when you can Cunard", and we've seen an outstanding response to the release of our summer 2027 programme, which we know is down to the continued energy and support of our valued travel agent partners.

Working with the CTN team on this issue has been a brilliant experience, and it's been exciting to share the latest Cunard news as part of the special edition.

Inside, there's a fantastic collection of features about the brand and where we're heading. You'll find tips on selling Cunard (p. 36), updates from our business manager John Garbutt (p. 40), a deep dive into our Grills Suite experience (p. 41), and the latest tools and incentives available through Shine Rewards Club.

We hope you enjoy reading it and look forward to hearing what you think.

David Jones
Global vice president, sales
and marketing, Cunard

cruisetradenews.com

FOLLOW ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MORE



@cruisetradenews



Cruise Trade News



Cruise Trade News



Cruise Trade News

WEDNESDAY 28 NOV
@ DORCHESTER -
TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE

WAVE AWARDS 2025



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Virgin VOYAGES

SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED BOOK YOUR TICKETS TODAY

EARLY BIRD OFFER ENDS 31 AUGUST

BOOK NOW



Visit thewaveawards.com

SPONSORED BY



CONTENTS

ISSUE 136 | JULY/AUGUST 2025

CRUISE Trade News

Editor

Will Payne

Contributors

Dave Monk, Gilly Pickup

Art Director

Phil Couzens

Sub Editor

Heather Ford

Production Manager

Barnaby Moore

Senior Commercial Manager

Nathan Emtage

Nathan.Emtage@realresponsedmedia.com

Commercial Director

Victoria McQuillan

Victoria.McQuillan@realresponsedmedia.com

Chief Operating Officer

Lina Slater

CEO

Chris Pitchford

For subscriptions & enquiries:

020 8444 2554

info@cruisetradenews.com

Printed in the United Kingdom by Stephens & George.

Reproduction is not permitted without the express written consent of the editor. All efforts are made to ensure factual accuracy at time of publication.

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

PUBLISHED BY

Real.
RESPONSE MEDIA

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



NAVIGATOR

7 Cruise News

Your essential industry roundup

12 Sector Updates

The latest from the river, expedition and luxury sectors

16 Cruise Stars

Iglu's training and coaching lead
Kyle Turner on what it means to triumph

20 Question Time

How do I improve my sales technique?

26 ROL Cruise

Industry leaders celebrate 30 years with anniversary event

27 Subject Matter

How to secure customers' attention in the age of distraction

30 What's In It For You

Fam trips, incentives and more

CUNARD TAKEOVER

32 In conversation with...

Global marketing and EMEA sales lead
David Jones

36 Learn & Sell

Your guide to selling Cunard

38 Fleet in Focus

How four iconic Queens cater for different travellers

40 On the road with...

Business manager John Garbutt



EXPLORING

49 Port Focus

Why Marseille should be on your customers' cruising hitlists

52 The Danube

Gilly Pickup uncovers hidden gems on one of Europe's most popular rivers

58 Antarctica

Gentoo penguins and humpback whales await in the Frozen Continent

62 Cruise Review – MS Estrela

Take a look inside APT & Travelmarvel's new Douro River vessel

FINAL WORD

66 The CLIA View

Andy Harmer OBE on the booming expedition cruise market



Fly, sail, stay, *explore*

Celestyal Travel is the whole package. Our brand-new, UK-exclusive packaging solution means every element of your customer's holiday is taken care of. Celestyal Travel gives you the tools to create seamless, fully protected holiday experiences that are simple to sell, and even more rewarding. Flights, transfers, hotels, cruise and experiences are all included, not to mention customer bonuses like onboard credit. Plus every trip is **ATOL** and **ABTA** protected. All you have to do is enjoy the extra commission potential.



ATOL and ABTA protection



All flights to and from UK



Hotel stays



All overseas transfers



Celestyal Cruise



For more information on prices and dates available visit our website celestyaltravel.com

Call our contact centre: **0808 531 0811**

Email us: reservations@celestyaltravel.com

7

CRUISE NEWS

TikTok and ITV join Cruise Summit speaker lineup

13

SECTOR UPDATES

Team GB hero to headline Cunard sailing

20

QUESTION TIME

Essential skills to forge a career in cruise sales

27

COLUMN

How to win attention in the age of distraction

Navigator

Cruise bookings buoy agencies

► Several of the UK's largest travel agent networks have praised the burgeoning cruise industry for solidifying their 2025 booking performance.

Co-founder of Not Just Travel Steve Witt tells *Cruise Trade News* the homeworking firm's

year-to-date cruise business is up 25 per cent, reflecting continued consumer confidence and growing demand for holidays-at-sea.

"We attribute this success to our supplier partnerships, increased training and support for our network and targeted marketing efforts that have resonated with both new-to-cruise and repeat customers," he says.

Not Just Travel's most recent figures for May show month-to-date bookings are currently

Continued overleaf



68 per cent ahead of the same time last year, with demand fuelled by families and couples seeking value-for-money packages.

"With new-to-cruise interest climbing and existing cruisers keen to return to sea, our outlook remains exceptionally positive," Witt adds.

He is echoed by Travel Counsellors head of cruise Janet Whittingham, who says sales for the homeworking network's cruise business were up 11 per cent compared with the same period last year.

"Premium and luxury cruising remain particularly popular, with sales up 10 per cent and 17 per cent respectively, while river cruise has also seen a notable 25 per cent uplift year to date," she adds.

"Tailormade cruise holidays that combine land stays or bespoke elements are also resonating well with our customers. While we're still seeing demand for last-minute getaways, we're also securing bookings into 2026 and beyond, suggesting strong forward confidence in cruising."

“Expedition cruise and river itineraries have proven particularly popular

For the Advantage Travel Partnership, expedition cruise and river itineraries have proven particularly popular. The former has seen a year-on-year uptick of 34 per cent while the latter has benefitted from a 24 per cent boost.

"We're currently performing ahead of expectations, maximising the current trends within the river and expedition sector which, for many of our members, remains relatively untapped," says senior commercial manager – cruise, Jonny Peat.

"Within the ocean arena, the volume is being driven by the Mediterranean, in particular the longer durations where multiple destinations can be experienced during one trip."

Seven-night cruises are performing well for the consortium, with customers opting to add pre- and post-cruise land stays in destinations such as Rome, Athens and Istanbul.

IN NUMBERS

34%

boost in Advantage's expedition bookings

25%

uptick in NJT's cruise business

17%

uplift in Travel Counsellors' luxury sales

TIKTOK AND ITV JOIN CRUISE SUMMIT

➤ Meta, TikTok and ITV have joined the roster of expert speakers for the 2025 Cruise Summit, which takes place on 22 September at News UK.

The experts will join a session titled *From Reach to Resonance: The Future of Cruise Marketing*, which will touch on how marketing is shifting from mass to meaningful with an increased focus on

personalisation, storytelling, social media and data-driven experiences.

The one-day event promises insightful talks, engaging panels and meaningful networking, with the agenda building on the insights shared in *Cruise Trade News'* inaugural cruise industry report that was launched during an exclusive event earlier this year.

Last year's summit left off with the question of how to engage new-to-cruise guests amid the myths and misconceptions that continue to misshape first-timers' perceptions of holidays-at-sea. This year's event hopes to answer this question, diving further into how the industry can attract new travellers while keeping returning guests coming back for more.





SCAN
to register your interest to
attend the 2025 Cruise Summit
in London on 22 September



SPOTLIGHT

‘Don’t be afraid to ask questions’



“I’ve been blessed to have so many different roles within the Fred. Olsen Group over my career. I’ve never sat still, and what’s kept me here is the opportunity to grow. I’ve always been challenged to do things that might not be part of what I was currently doing.

That inquisitiveness and that willing to learn has always served me well, and the business has recognised and rewarded that.

Wanting to find out more and being open to learn is the biggest advice I can give to someone starting out in their cruise career. Don’t be shy to ask questions about things that may not necessarily be part of the role that you’ve currently got.

Leaders in business are always looking to see what the succession plan looks like, and that doesn’t necessarily mean the people that are immediately around them.

I’ve done everything from working on the phones, managing yield revenues, booking holidays as a travel agent and a tour operator, and here I am now back again with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines. Don’t be afraid of challenges and trying new things.”

For more advice on starting a career in cruise, head to page 20.

Geoff Ridgeon is head of sales for Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

IS THIS THING ON?

➤ *Cruise Trade News* has launched a new podcast designed to arm travel agents and cruise industry professionals with the latest insights and product information to help them sell cruise holidays with confidence.

The series is hosted by *Cruise Trade News* editor Will Payne and Real Response Media group editor, cruise Jack Carter and can be found on streaming sites such as Spotify and YouTube.

Guests have so far included Regent Seven Seas Cruises and Oceania Cruises’ Steve Odell and Paul Beale, Force24’s Adam Oldfield and The Advantage Travel Partnership’s Jonny Peat.

Carter said: “We’re always on the lookout for unique ways to reach our audience, and The Cruise Corner podcast is just that.”

“**New podcast Cruise Corner will feature the latest insights and product information**



SCHOOL’S OUT

➤ Data analytics, how to build a LinkedIn profile and digital marketing were just some of the topics covered in a special seminar for a group of students from the Cruise Career Springboard, which completed its third year in June.

Real Response Media (RRM), the parent company of *Cruise Trade News*, hosted the educational event for 21 students in London, offering an insight into the workings of the B2B and B2C cruise publications.

The class was led by RRM head of digital Richard Seal, marketing manager Rachel Reilly and marketing executive Jonny Heather, alongside the programme’s founder Edwina Lonsdale.



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

WIN A LUXURY HAMPER

With Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines





When you book your customers on a Fred. Olsen Cruise throughout July, you'll be in with the chance of winning a **luxury hamper worth £100.**

Simply make a booking on any 2025 or 2026 cruise departing before 31st March 2026 and **register your entry** on the Travel Agent Centre for your chance to win.

Find out more and enter at **fredolsencruises.com/agent**



Terms and Conditions apply. Valid for bookings made on all cruise departing before 31st March 2026 (2025 sailings & Q1 2026 sailings), made between 1/07/2025 and 31/07/2025 inclusive. All bookings must be registered by 04/08/2025 as winners will be drawn on 05/08/2025. Entrants must be 18 or over. The winners will be selected at random at the end of the booking period. Full terms and conditions can be found at fredolsencruises.com/agent E&OE.



AMAMAGDALENA CHRISTENED IN COLOMBIA

AmaWaterways has marked the official christening of *AmaMagdalena* in Mompox, Colombia.

The event for the vessel, which is the first luxury river cruise ship to navigate the Magdalena River, was attended by local dignitaries, including the governor of the Bolívar department and the mayor of Mompox, and representatives from ProColombia.

"Today's christening ceremony in Mompox marks a powerful moment

not just for AmaWaterways, but for the future of river cruising," said Rudi Schreiner, co-founder and chief executive officer of AmaWaterways.

"*AmaMagdalena* represents years of collaboration, vision and trust between our team and our Colombian partners."

Designer Marianna Donado will serve as godmother. She played a key role in the ship's design and helped promote Colombian touches through her infusion of locally inspired craftsmanship.

SPOTLIGHT

VIVA readies for new players



The introduction of new river operators in Europe will help attract more customers to the sector, according to VIVA Cruises' chief executive officer.

Andrea Kruse said the likes of Celebrity Cruises, Trafalgar and Nat Geo-Lindblad Expeditions launching river brands will bring fresh attention to the market.

"These new companies will give a lot of awareness to river cruising, to audiences who may have never considered the sector before," Kruse added.



UNIWORLD GIVES BACK

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises has published its fourth annual impact report, which details the progress in sustainability it made in 2024.

It comes after the river cruise line became one of the first to publish a survey of this kind back in 2022. "Sustainability is woven

into everything we do at Uniworld," said Julie Higgins, the cruise line's sustainability officer.

In 2014 the brand launched a five-year decarbonisation plan, reduced food waste by 41 per cent and hosted several LGBTQ+ cruises, as well as its first women-only itinerary.



UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions will take several travel agents to the Galápagos as part of its first-ever fam trip for the UK travel trade.

The 10-day Showcase at Sea will take place from 28 November to 8 December 2025, and will be hosted by Danielle Bates, head of UK sales.

Nine agencies, including Panache Cruises, Mundy Cruising, Latin Routes, Iglu and Fred. Olsen Travel will join Bates on a 10-day Exploring Galápagos

expedition cruise onboard *National Geographic Endeavour II*.

During the event, agents will have the chance to learn about Lindblad's 60-year heritage in the Galápagos and join excursions by kayaks, paddleboards, glass-bottom boats and Zodiacs.

They will also walk among wildlife such as sea lions and marine iguanas; snorkel with turtles in the Galápagos Marine Reserve; and observe giant Galápagos tortoises.

SPOTLIGHT

HX refreshes Spitsbergen



HX has completed a multimillion-pound refurbishment of *MS Spitsbergen*, unveiling updated spaces and a refreshed exterior in the line's new blue and sand livery.

The overhaul is part of a £6 million investment across *Spitsbergen* and sister ship *MS Fram*, aimed at enhancing comfort, accessibility and operational efficiency across the fleet.

The 220-guest vessel has since resumed service for its summer Arctic season, sailing in and around Svalbard.



POLAR PLUNGE

Read more
on page 56

G Adventures has announced plans to double its small-ship polar expedition portfolio with the relaunch of its Arctic programme.

The move comes ahead of the launch of the firm's new Antarctica expedition ship this October.

The product expansion, slated for a July launch, will see G Adventures

return to the Arctic for the first time since 2019, with further expeditions across the Arctic circle and the Scottish Isles set to debut in the coming months.

Bruce Poon Tip, the founder of G Adventures, said the company's expedition product has "always been a huge selling opportunity" for agents.



‘THE BEAUTY LIES IN THE SIMPLICITY’

Will Payne speaks to Oceania Cruises’ executive culinary director, Alexis Quaretti, to get a taste of life onboard and delve into the evolution of fine dining on the high seas

How does onboard gastronomy enhance the guest experience?

The beauty lies in the simplicity of how we create The Finest Cuisine at Sea; it is the perfect combination of the most innovative culinary team, the freshest ingredients and the best food-centric ships. We have one chef for every 10 guests and galleys that would rival any Michelin-starred restaurant. We believe the galleys are the heart of the ship just like the kitchen is the heart of the home.

Oceania Cruises is a line deeply rooted in the spirit of exploration and destination immersion. The authentic cuisine of the remarkable places we visit is a top priority and lies at the heart of our voyages.

But it’s not just about serving amazing food onboard; we go deeper, offering our guests the chance to learn new skills

and enjoy a truly immersive foodie experience. For example, our small group signature Culinary Discovery Tours offer the chance to get a true feel for the food scene of a destination.

These tours are led by one of the chef instructors from our cooking school, The Culinary Centre, which was launched on *Oceania Marina* in 2011 and can be found on *Oceania Riviera*, *Oceania Vista* and *Oceania Allura*.

“We have one chef for every 10 guests and galleys that would rival any Michelin-starred restaurant

How important is cuisine to a successful cruise holiday?

As a cruise line built by foodies, for foodies, we believe that dining sits at the heart of the holiday. Cuisine plays such an important part in the guests’ experience by bringing people together and, whether you are onboard or on one of our shore excursions, we want guests to experience the very best.

All of our speciality restaurants are included for every guest in the cruise fare. But there are some special additions to be chosen from too. For those who are looking for an exclusive fine dining experience, we offer private dining at Privée for up to 12 guests, and a raft of food and wine pairing events including the Dom Pérignon Experience, a unique menu that pairs a six-course tasting with three exceptional vintages.



What are some of the standout dishes and eateries onboard?

Every dish we offer is carefully considered and all of our venues cater to something different. We have an amazing range of speciality restaurants for guests to enjoy, including Red Ginger, Toscana, Polo Grill and Jacques.

One of my personal favourites has recently been added to The Grand Dining Room menu, a luxurious chocolate mousse called Mamie Huguette, in honour of my grandmother.

I'm thrilled that we are reprising our much-loved French restaurant, Jacques, onboard our two newest ships, *Oceania Vista* and *Oceania Allura*. While the team and I are introducing some new dishes and dining experiences, we are staying true to the heart of the menu created by our culinary godfather and our first ever culinary director, renowned chef Jaques Pépin, with a selection of his popular signature dishes that can't be missed, including beef rossini and duck à l'orange.

How did it feel to be inducted into the Master Chefs of France in 2023?

Being inducted into the Maîtres Cuisiniers de France was one of the highlights of my career. I have been a part of this prestigious organisation for two years now and it truly has been an honour to promote French culinary culture. Since I was young, I have been proud to champion dishes from my home country, it is where I grew up and where I developed my passion for cooking. I look forward to continuing to be an ambassador of French cuisine and at Oceania Cruises I can design new menus with the freshest ingredients, inspired by my home country.

You've been a part of Oceania Cruises' culinary team for 20 years – how has cruise ship cuisine evolved since then?

Guests today are more engaged and curious, they want to know where the ingredients come from and enjoy a variety of cuisines. We have made sure to keep up with demand by expanding

LEFT Chef Alexis Quaretti; *Oceania Vista* off the coast of Santorini; lobster from Tuscan-inspired Toscana; The Grand Dining Room offers classical elegance

the variety of dishes in each venue on each ship. As a result of growing interest in healthy eating, Aquamar Kitchen was created, offering the likes of cold-pressed raw juices and slow-roasted salmon with quinoa tabbouleh and lemon tahini. We want to make sure our guests experience the cuisine of the places they visit, which is why we offer Chef's Market Dinners. These dinners are hosted once or twice per sailing in our relaxed yet refined venue, The Terrace Café.

Our aim is to keep adapting and introducing new dishes to keep up with our guests and the importance they place in a culinary experience. With this in mind, we will be debuting the next evolution of The Grand Dining Room menus, on *Oceania Allura*, launching in July 2025. ●



OCEANIA
CRUISES®

YOUR WORLD. YOUR WAY.®

For more information on Oceania Cruises' culinary offering, visit
oceaniacruises.com



SCAN
to enter the 2025 Cruise Stars
awards, which take place on
12 December in London

CHAMPAGNE SUPERNOVA

Iglu Cruise's Kyle Turner on how his triumph at the 2024 Cruise Stars awards inspired him to take on new challenges and secure a promotion to onboard training and coaching lead

How did it feel to take home the Rising Star of the Year – Travel Agent award?

Honestly? It felt like a punch of pride straight to the chest – but in the best way. You come into a new industry, full of ambition, full of questions and full of uncertainty. To not just find your feet, but be recognised at that level so quickly, it was humbling.

I know what it's like to walk into a room full of seasoned professionals and feel like the rookie, so to hear your name called, it was surreal. This kind of recognition proves that if you're willing to put the work in, it will get noticed. Not immediately, not always loudly – but eventually. And that means something.

How important are events like these to the industry?

Massively important. Look, sales agents are the engine room of this entire industry. We're the ones on the phones,



grafting, guiding customers through the noise and helping them make one of the most exciting purchases of their year. Without us, the ships don't sail full. That's just the truth. So, when there's an event that says, "we see you, we appreciate what you're doing", that matters. It's not just a pat on the back; it's a validation of your contribution. When I stood there being recognised, I wasn't thinking about my own numbers or my name on a trophy. I was thinking about all of the other travel agents back at Iglu Cruise working hard, hitting their targets, staying late, doing callbacks and going above and beyond.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

Cruise Stars gives validation to the agents hard at work behind the scenes; Kyle Turner won 2024's Rising Star of the Year – Travel Agent title

What was the reaction like in the office when they heard of your triumph?

There was a bit of banter at first – "him? Are you sure?" – but it was all in good humour. The reaction from the team was pure class. They were supportive from the nomination all the way to the win. People were genuinely buzzing for me, and that's a credit to the culture Iglu has built.

What do you hope to achieve in the next few months?

My mindset has always been to keep climbing. From day one at Iglu, my aim wasn't just to be a good seller – it was to grow into someone who adds value across the board. I've run businesses before, worked in sales environments, and I knew I had even more to offer.

When the opportunity came up to move into the training and coaching side, I took it. No hesitation. Now I'm part of the team that shapes the next generation of agents and that's a responsibility I take seriously. My goal now is crystal clear: help people unlock their potential – even the parts they don't yet see in themselves. 📍



“

My goal is crystal clear: help people unlock their potential – even the parts they don't yet see in themselves



ON YOUR MARKS

World champion heptathlete and Olympic silver medalist Katarina Johnson-Thompson will headline Cunard's debut Wellness at Sea voyage onboard *Queen Anne*.

Johnson-Thompson will share stories from her athletic career, offering tips on how to maintain mental and physical health.

She commented: "Wellness has always been a huge part of my life and I'm looking forward to sharing my experiences."

The seven-night voyage to the Norwegian fjords departs Southampton on 5 July 2026 and will feature a variety of wellness-themed experiences, from invigorating classes and tailored spa treatments to enlightening talks from expert speakers.

Johnson-Thompson will be joined by editors from the fashion and beauty magazine, *Harper's Bazaar*, as well as a host of other experts to discuss all things wellness.

SPOTLIGHT

Regent's £20k suite



Regent Seven Seas Cruises has revealed a new two-level suite, which will be available from £20,000 per night.

The Skyview Regent Suite will sit atop the brand's new ship *Seven Seas Prestige* and will be one of 12 suite categories available.

Features include a wraparound balcony, two bedrooms, two-and-a-half bathrooms and a living room, as well as a stone staircase and a private in-suite elevator. Guests will also find a gym, sauna, a walk-in closet and a formal in-suite dining area.



CRYSTAL CONFIRMS LUXURY VESSELS

Crystal has finalised a financing agreement for its two luxury ships.

The vessels, each with a gross tonnage of 61,800 and accommodating approximately 650 passengers, will feature all-suite accommodations with private verandas, including single occupancy categories for solos.

Construction is underway at the Fincantieri Shipyard in Italy and the first ship is expected to be delivered in May 2028.

"Securing this financing represents a decisive step forward in Crystal's expansion," said Manfredi d'Ovidio, executive chair of A&K Travel Group, Crystal's parent company.



GO YOUR OWN WAY

If you have solo sailors on the hunt for memorable experiences, pair them with a Riviera Travel adventure to ensure they come back for more, writes **Will Payne**

According to CLIA's 2025 *State of the Industry Report*, the number of cruise travellers choosing to sail solo last year doubled compared to the same period in 2023.

This market sector is ripe for the taking, but it's imperative travel agents place independent explorers, especially those who might be taking their first-ever holiday alone, with an operator who knows what individuals are looking for.

Enter Riviera Travel, which was not only named Best for Solo Travellers at the 2024 Wave Awards, but also Best River Cruise Line and Best Escorted & Specialist Tour Operator.

Whether you have customers who prefer personal comfort, or like a bit of "me time" mixed with the company of like-minded people, options are aplenty on the line's European river cruises.

STRESS-FREE SAILING

Customers will have the chance to relax on deck with a cocktail or two on one of the line's five-star ships with fellow travellers, while they soak in the glorious landscapes along the likes of the Rhine and the Blue Danube.

What's more, solos aren't placed in smaller suites, but instead accommodated in a luxury double cabin with a window or French balcony.

They'll also find complimentary tea and coffee, a welcome dinner to meet fellow solo travellers, an expert tour manager that specialises in solo travelling

as a point of contact throughout the trip, return flights and full-board dining.

If that's not enough, they'll also benefit from a free drinks package and daily excursions with local guides, with port charges and taxes taken care of. You can't get much more relaxed than that.

To entice travellers even more, Riviera has waived solo supplements on a range of cruises for 2025, and next year the line will offer 12 dedicated solo itineraries – up from 11 in 2025 – including an eight-day Medieval Germany via Mainz, Würzburg, Rothenburg, Miltenberg, Wertheim, Bamberg and Nuremberg.



Soak in the glorious landscapes along the likes of the Rhine and the Blue Danube

ALL ABOARD

Cruises range from four to 12 nights in duration and include European favourites such as Amsterdam and Salamanca, as well as hidden gems like Lamengo in Portugal and Germany's Miltenburg and Ochsenfurt.



On a seven-night Bruges, Medieval Flanders, Amsterdam & The Dutch Bulbfields River Cruise for solo travellers, guests will spend an afternoon in Arnhem, synonymous with the ill-fated 1944 aerial assault depicted in the film *A Bridge Too Far*. They'll visit the battle HQ of the British 1st Airborne Division at Oosterbeek, now a museum, and the Commonwealth War Cemetery.

They'll also head to Bruges for a guided walking tour, taking in the city's medieval heart, the Markt, which has served as the main market square since the 10th century, framed by a towering 272 feet Belfry and its 47-bell carillon.

Meanwhile, on a Douro, Porto and Salamanca River Cruise, guests can try the city's namesake tippie while learning about the fortified wine's fascinating history and its close British connections.



For customers who prefer to take in the sites in their own time, there's plenty of free time in Salamanca to explore at their own pace. They can visit the Casa Lis, an Art Nouveau and Art Deco Museum, housing more than 2,500 items, or admire the ornate interiors of its cathedrals – the more recent dates from the 16th century.

It's clear the solo river cruising trend is here to stay. Therefore, it's imperative agents are up to speed with the best offerings in the market to satisfy all types of consumer.

Pairing a solo sailor with a Riviera Travel itinerary will ensure they go home yearning for another holiday. And, thanks to the escorted touring and river cruise operator's vast array of sought-after itineraries, there's plenty to discover and enjoy. ●



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Salamanca Cathedral sits on the banks of the Tormes; solo sailors can meet like-minded passengers onboard; Nuremburg has plenty to offer; Riviera's *MS George Eliot*

Three standout Riviera solo sailings

1 A seven-night Douro, Porto and Salamanca River Cruise for solo travellers aboard *MS Douro Elegance*, roundtrip from Porto via Pinhao, Castelo Rodrigo, Salamanca, Mateus Palace or Regua Douro Museum and Lamengo, departs 2 November 2025, from £2,899pp.

2 A seven-night Medieval Germany: Bavaria and the Romantic Road for solo travellers cruise aboard *MS George Eliot*, from Mainz to Nuremburg via Miltenberg, Wertheim, Wurzburg, Rothenberg, Ochsenfurt and Bamberg, departs 19 August 2026, from £3,499pp.

3 A four-night Amsterdam, Kinderdijk and the Dutch Bulbfields River cruise for solo travellers aboard *MS Oscar Wilde*, roundtrip from Amsterdam via Enkhuizen, Rotterdam, Kinderdijk and Keukenhof, departs 28 March 2026, from £1,799pp.



For more information, visit
rivieratravel.co.uk

“What are the most important skills I need to master to progress my career in sales?”

Henry Livesey, a sales apprentice for Panache Cruises, asks what skills junior professionals should develop to reach the next stage in their cruise professions. **Will Payne** reports

As businesses grapple with rising costs, hikes in National Insurance Contributions and the National Living Wage, recruitment has been forced to take a back seat.

According to C&M Travel Recruitment, the number of candidates being placed in new travel jobs in April dipped by 38 per cent to fall back to its lowest level of the year so far. New vacancies, meanwhile, saw an 11 per cent drop from March 2025 and an eight per cent fall from the same time last year.

It's therefore imperative that businesses recruit effectively and retain the budding and eager talent they already have on the payroll, whether that be a seasoned veteran or a fresh-faced graduate making their first steps toward a career in cruising.

For Henry Livesey, securing his first full-time role with Panache Cruises last year was the beginning of a profession in cruise sales and partnerships. “I've thoroughly enjoyed my time at Panache,” the sales apprentice says. “I've gained a huge variety of industry knowledge and understanding thanks to the amazing support I've received from my brilliant colleagues there.”

As part of Panache's internship scheme, Livesey has received a beginner's skillset of sales and service techniques. “I'm confident I will continue to build on this,” he adds. “I have many career aspirations for the

future, including growing within the cruise industry and building on my knowledge and experience with the product.

“I enjoy my current role of supporting sales and I aspire to work on this more. Having capable sales skills motivates me to become better and helps massively with conversion.”

So far, Livesey has built rapport with customers and delved into the nuances of adapting his sales approach depending on the type of client he is faced with. He is now keen to develop his understanding of the booking process and continue to learn more about the intricate workings of the cruise industry.

“

Try and learn about your client's passions and interests: what is it that makes them tick?




SCAN

Panache Cruises tops £32 million ahead of expedition brand launch



LEARNING THE ROPES

The importance of developing your skillset to grow as a professional in any industry is clear. So, what skills should Livesey prioritise on his 'development to-do list'? AmaWaterways'

managing director Jamie Loizou believes the ability to succeed in cruise sales requires an individual to develop a "deep understanding" of their clients and their motives for travel.

"With so many different products on offer, this will ensure you match the right client with the right cruise," he says. "Try and learn about their passions and interests: what is it that makes them tick? Are they particularly interested in history, do they want to interact with the locals or are the wellness programmes a deal breaker for them? Do they consider themselves a foodie?"

Loizou believes asking targetted questions will set a salesperson apart from their competitors and leave a lasting and positive impression in a customer's mind, helping to drive business.

“My team are committed to building relationships with guests and trade partners - trust counts for a lot in sales

David Jones, global vice president of sales and marketing for Cunard, admits he is still learning about sales every day. "But I'd say this: find a product you love, get to know your customer and always act with integrity. My team are incredibly passionate about Cunard and they're committed to building trusted relationships with our guests and trade partners - and trust counts for an awful lot in sales."

For P&O Cruises' sales director Ruth Venn, the most important skill to develop for a long-term career in sales is the ability to build strong relationships and trust. "Sales is all about people; understanding your customer, your brand, and being able to communicate clearly and consistently," she says.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT There is a lot to learn about the intricate workings of the cruise sphere; clear and consistent communication is key to a long-term career in sales; Henry Livesey is keen to build on his beginner's skillset of sales and service techniques ►



LEFT With recruitment numbers dropping, it's imperative that businesses retain their budding and eager talent through training and incentives

“ When guests feel understood, they are more likely to return and recommend you to others

saying. For me, the other key skill to develop is communication,” he explains.

“Keeping clients abreast of developments or letting them know you’re waiting on a supplier for a quote is crucial.” Ballard says some of his customers have reported negative experiences with agents who have “disappeared” after they secured a booking. “This is ludicrous,” he adds.

“The first sale is the hardest. An agent has gone to the hard work of converting a new client and have then become hard to reach, just when now is the chance to prove that you can offer a level of service that differentiates you from other agents – and the online players.”

Robbie O’Grady, co-founder of The Cruise Room, says the “art of listening” is crucial to a successful career in cruise sales. “Guests have multiple requirements, valid concerns and many questions.

“The ability to listen to a guest and really understand those requirements results in quotations, and because guests feel understood, they are more likely to return and recommend you to others because they’ve developed that connection with you.” ●

“My own journey into sales started with a two-week admin support role after moving from the contact centre. It was a brave step into the unknown, with no guarantee of what came next, but I believed in my own potential. I used that opportunity to observe, learn and ask for feedback.”

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

Communication is an important skill for founder and managing director of Club Voyages, Sam Ballard. “Knowing your product is obviously absolutely fundamental to sales but that almost goes without

What are the most important skills I need to master to continue my career in sales?



Ruth Venn, P&O Cruises

“Say yes to things that stretch you, such as presenting or job shadowing. They help build skills, confidence and connections that will last. Sales is all about people; understanding your customer, your brand and being able to communicate clearly and consistently.”



David Jones, Cunard

“I’m still learning about sales every day, but I’d say this: find a product you love, get to know your customer and always act with integrity. It’s so much easier to sell a product you truly believe in, as people can really feel it when that’s the case.”



Robbie O’Grady, The Cruise Room

“Listening to a guest and being able to understand their requirements is possibly the most important skill above all. Ultimately, it is that which will lead to your success as a sales person. It has certainly been a key part of our growth over our first four years.”

Never miss an
opportunity
by spotting
buyers in-market.

Force24™



Meet Force24, the go-to
Marketing Automation
partner for UK Travel and
Leisure brands.

force24.co.uk



LUXURY TRAVEL, REDEFINED

Regent Seven Seas Cruises® is reshaping ultra-luxury cruising with the launch of its newest vessel, *Seven Seas Prestige™*.

Sofia Gonzalez takes a closer look

Ideal for adventurous travellers, first-timers and seasoned cruisers alike, Regent's new ultra-luxury ship, *Seven Seas Prestige*, will hit the high seas in December 2026 with its debut itineraries on sale now.

Ushering in Regent's first new class for a decade, the ship combines the luxury aesthetic the brand is known for with new accommodations, expansive space and an elevated all-inclusive offering – like unlimited excursions and beverages – to satisfy all guests.

Seven Seas Prestige will debut with a transatlantic sailing from Barcelona to Miami for a season in the Caribbean, Mexico and the US. In May 2027, the vessel will return to Barcelona for voyages along the Iberian Peninsula.

“**The cuisine is a heavenly tribute to the Mediterranean – think citrus-laced seafood**”

LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

With 822 guests and 630 crew members, the vessel offers ample space and welcomes discerning travellers with The Starlight Atrium – a captivating blend of old-world elegance and modern sophistication, adorned with twin spiral staircases and panoramic glass lifts. This space connects the ship's bars and lounges, as well as Coffee Connection, the concierge desk and reception.

Customers will also find Gailileo's Bar, serving both the Prestige Lounge and the adjacent casino. The bar's ceiling is a canvas displaying a contemporary masterpiece styled like an oil painting for maximum impact and the base of the bar features fluted marble while the bold, striped floor creates a focal point.

Azure, a new restaurant styled with subtle simplicity, immerses guests in the Mediterranean's rich cultural tapestry through a thoughtfully curated palette of cerulean mosaics and graceful arches. The cuisine is a heavenly tribute to the Mediterranean – think citrus-laced seafood, fragrant herbs and succulent olives.

Regent's all-inclusive trips allow cruise-goers to kick back and relax



without worrying about hidden fees, giving one clear upfront price when they book. Regent's All-Inclusive fare means the price includes unlimited shore excursions, all speciality dining experiences along with unlimited drinks, unlimited access to spa facilities, pre-paid gratuities, unlimited Wi-Fi, laundry services and 24-hour in-suite dining.

LEGACY OF ELEGANCE

The concierge level and higher suites include a one-night pre-cruise hotel stay; penthouse suites and higher receive a personal butler for an elevated in-suite experience.

New suite categories will be introduced on *Seven Seas Prestige*, adding more opulence to the ocean-going experience with 12 ultra-luxury accommodations to pick from.

Boasting nearly 9,000 sq ft of space, the Skyview Regent Suite has two levels with a wraparound balcony, a private in-suite lift and a living room with an adjoining dining area. Highlights include a free-standing bath, a spa-inspired bathroom, a gym, sauna and a guest suite with a bathroom.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Guests are welcomed by the Starlight Atrium; the Constellation Theatre hosts a range of shows; loft suites offer floor-to-ceiling windows for uninterrupted views; Coffee Connection is ideal for a chat and a pastry

Three Skyview Loft Suites, Aura, Luna and Sola, meanwhile, offer their own layouts, character and connections, while providing the same elevated experience. Grand Loft suites offer floor to ceiling windows to showcase ocean views and fill the space with natural light. The Horizon Penthouse suite includes an oversized balcony, measuring 263 square feet.

LEGACY OF DISCOVERY

Entertainment options include the Prestige Lounge, offering live music and a dance floor, and the Constellation Theater, where showstopping performances take place for a night to remember. Decks 12 and 14 feature a large pool and sports area, perfect for relaxation or burning off dessert.

The vessel also features a culinary arts kitchen for guests who wish to learn about local flavours and techniques. Master-level instructors help guide budding chefs through this immersive cooking experience.

Regent has been providing luxury cruising experiences for decades, and *Seven Seas Prestige* is ready to continue that legacy with more immersive experiences that surpass expectations. Guests will be taken care of while onboard and left yearning for more, already planning their next trip with this recognised leader in all-inclusive, ultra-luxury holiday experiences. ●

Three standout Seven Seas Prestige™ itineraries

Inaugural
sailing

1 A 14-night Felices Fiestas cruise from Barcelona to Miami via Malaga, Funchal and Tortola, departs 13 December 2026 from £6,259pp.

2 A 12-night Sapphire Sojourn cruise from LA to Panama City via Cabo, Mazatlan, Acapulco, Puerto Quetzal and Puntarenas, departs 10 February 2027, from £6,259pp.

3 A 12-night Regal Shores cruise from Southampton to Lisbon via Paris (Le Havre), St. Peter Port, Cherbourg, Pauillac, Gijon, La Coruna, Vigo and Oporto, departs 27 May 2027, from £10,939pp.



To find out more, visit **RSSC.com** or contact your Regent sales manager



THREE DECADES OF COLLABORATION

As ROL Cruise celebrates 30 years since first opening its doors, industry leaders share heartfelt messages of support and congratulations as the firm looks ahead to the future



Sarah Wikevand is flanked by industry colleagues Iain Baillie and David Jones

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines Samantha Stimpson, CEO

“On behalf of everyone here at Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, we’re delighted to congratulate ROL on their 30th anniversary and are proud to have worked alongside them for nearly all of these amazing years.”

APT & Travelmarvel

Paul Melinis, managing director, UK

“I have had the pleasure of collaborating with ROL for over seven years, and they consistently impress me with their outstanding business model and dedication to genuine partnerships, something that is becoming increasingly rare in today’s landscape.”

Scenic Group UK

Nichola Absalom, managing director, sales and marketing

“Congratulations to ROL on an incredible 30 years! We are so proud to

be part of your journey and deeply value the partnership we’ve built together. A true highlight of our relationship was naming Sarah Wikevand as the Godmother of *Emerald Azzurra*.”

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises

Chris Townson, managing director UK and Ireland

“We have a super relationship with ROL. The whole team are so professional and everything they do is centred around their guests. They’re real experts in cruise and we wish the team all the very best for their 30th anniversary.”

Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Paul Beale, vice president of sales UK and Ireland

“We have worked with ROL for many years, and they continue to be a key partner for Regent Seven Seas Cruises, delivering exceptional service before and after the cruise – perfectly complementing our ultra-luxury experience onboard.”

Ambassador Cruise Line

Christian Verhounig, CEO

“I have had the pleasure of working with ROL Cruise for the past 15 years and I and the whole Ambassador team are incredibly proud to be part of their journey. As we celebrate this milestone together, we look forward to strengthening our partnership and sailing towards even greater success. Here’s to the next 30 years.”



Key moments in ROL’s history were marked

Celebrity Cruises

Giles Hawke, vice president and managing director, UK, Ireland and EMEA

“I have worked with ROL for over 20 years and always found them to be professional and deliver what they say. The way ROL work with us as a partner and focus on their customers and what they can do to deliver excellent service is exemplary.”



(L-R) Isabelle Murray, Lynn Narraway, Wendy Lahmich and Kathryn Beadles enjoying the anniversary celebrations

Listen up!

Force24's head of marketing **Sam Holmes** on how cruise brands can win attention in the age of distraction

Attention has become the most valuable resource in marketing, especially in cruise. With more brands than ever fighting to be seen, clicked and remembered, standing out requires more than just good creative.

The rules of engagement have changed. The average attention span has not just shortened, it has fragmented. For cruise brands, this presents a challenge and an opportunity. Because in such a distracted world, those who can meet customers with the right message, at the right time, in the right way, are the ones who will win.

This is where attention marketing comes in. It's not a gimmick or the latest buzzword. It's a response to a clear shift in consumer behaviour.

RELEVANCE BEATS REACH

The traditional approach to marketing in travel has often focused on volume. Big lists, big pushes, big creative. But this is now less effective. If your messaging isn't grounded in relevance, even the most beautiful campaign will fall flat.

The first step is understanding where your customer is in their journey. Your communications should reflect that context. Relevance isn't just about using a first name. It's about speaking to what your audience is feeling.



“**The average attention span has fragmented**”

PROS OF PERSONALISATION

Personalisation is one of marketing's most overused terms. It's not about gimmicks. It's about usefulness. That means showing people content they actually care about, when they're most likely to act on it.

For cruise lines, this might mean highlighting destinations a customer has searched for multiple times. It could mean offering an upgrade to someone who abandoned their basket last week.

KEEP THINGS SIMPLE

The power of marketing automation is that it simplifies the day-to-day. When you're no longer bogged down in execution, you have more time to focus on what actually moves the needle: story, timing and experience.

Don't worry about building everything at once. Choose one or two key journeys for your business, like first-time cruisers or lapsed customers. Map out a few messages that align with each step in that journey and build from there. ●

ABOVE Sam Holmes says attention marketing is essential for cruise lines



IN NUMBERS


28%

of Brits' waking hours are spent on mobile phones


85%

of online ads fail to make a lasting impact on consumers' memories


300

metres is scrolled by the average consumer every day, which is equivalent to the height of the Eiffel Tower

TOP TIP

Attention marketing isn't about perfection. It's about progress. Small, well-timed changes to how you communicate can have a huge impact on how your brand is experienced



SPOILT FOR CHOICE

From three-night themed cruises to 21-night adventures taking in some of the world's most sought-after destinations, Marella Cruises has something for everyone, writes **Will Payne**

Cruise apathy is a real thing. After taking dozens, if not hundreds of cruises, seasoned sailors will eventually get

tired of the same thing. Luckily, “rinse and repeat” isn’t in Marella Cruises’ DNA.

The brand prides itself on its vast array of itinerary options. These include Cruise & Stay packages with pre- and post-hotel add ons through parent company TUI and roundtrip itineraries in Europe, the Caribbean and more. Taster cruises ideally suited for first timers and repositioning sailings to and from iconic ports, meanwhile, allow customers plenty of time to explore what’s on offer onboard their vessel.

Here, we shine a spotlight on Marella Cruises’ rich tapestry of itinerary types to help you pair the right holiday with the right customer, ensuring repeat bookings and stellar reviews.

CRUISE & STAY

The highlight in Marella’s holiday arsenal is its Cruise & Stay offering, where guests can tack on three-, four- or seven-night pre- and post-cruise land stays depending on the cruise they choose. Being a product of TUI means the line can tap into its portfolio, benefitting from the hotels, flights and transfers – all included in the cruise price – to elevate the customer experience.

With five ships and more than 200 hotels to choose from, including adults-only and family-friendly options, guests are spoilt for choice.



The highlight in Marella’s holiday arsenal is its Cruise & Stay offering

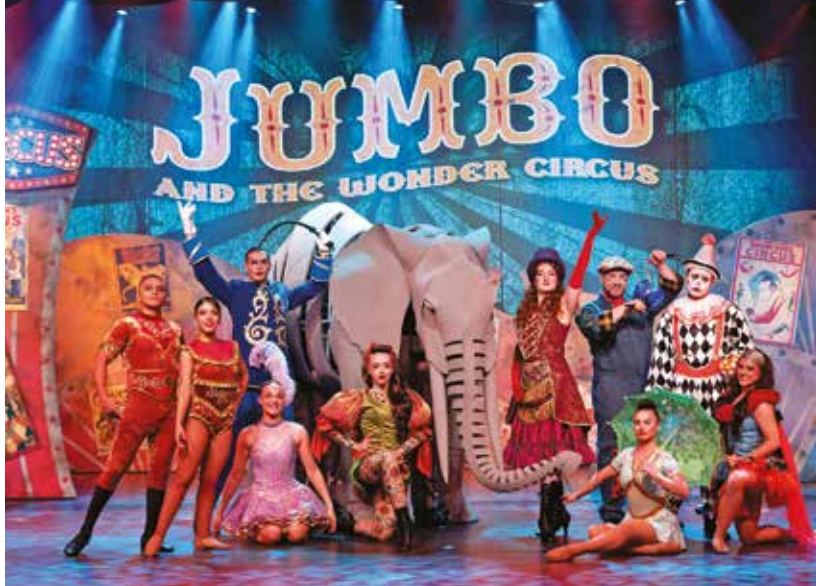
Available hotels include the four-star Savannah Beach in Barbados and the adults-only RIU Arecas in Tenerife, which offers an infinity pool, wellness spa and buffet-style restaurant.

Get on board

A seven-night Highlights of the Mediterranean cruise aboard *Marella Discovery*, roundtrip from Palma via Ajaccio, Civitavecchia (for Rome), Livorno (for Florence and Pisa), Saint-Raphael (for St Tropez and Cannes) and Barcelona, departs 2 September 2025 followed by a three-night stay in Majorca, from £1,815pp.

ROUNDTRIP CRUISES

No cruise line is complete without a range of itineraries taking in multiple destinations in one holiday, with the added convenience of embarking and disembarking in the same port.



What's more, cruises with Marella are all-inclusive. The standard package includes selected draught beers and ciders – plus bottles and cans – selected wines by the glass and standard spirits and aperitifs. Cocktails like Mai Tais and Long Island Iced Teas are on the menu, too, as well as soft drinks.

Cruises are seven- or 14-nights in duration and sail to the likes of Athens, Dubrovnik, Aruba, St Lucia and the Dominican Republic. Marella also offers Canary Islands itineraries and Western Mediterranean sailings featuring Marseille, Malaga, Lisbon and Livorno.

Get on board

A 14-night Grecian Discovery followed by Aegean Gems cruise aboard *Marella Discovery*, roundtrip from Limassol via Piraeus (for Athens), Thira, Bodrum, Heraklion, Rhodes Town, Souda (for Chania), Kusadasi (for Ephesus) and Mykonos Town, departs 1 April 2026, from £2,002pp.

TASTER CRUISES

Shorter itineraries are one of the best ways to get someone to try a cruise for the first time. Couple this with Marella's series of themed mini itineraries and new customers will be hard-pressed to consider holidaying elsewhere.

For three nights in November 2025, acts and DJs like *B*Witched*, *The Honeyz* and *DJ SASH!* will join *Marella Voyager* for the return of the line's Electric Sunsets 90s vs 00s cruise. There will be plenty of fancy dress nights, too, so remind your customers to dig out their denim jackets and mesh tank tops.

In between nights of old school anthems, guests can take their pick of 10 bars and 18 restaurants, where they can sample Mexican flavours at Abuela's and Italian in Vista. They'll find bubbly at the push of a button in Flutes, fruity cocktails next to the pool at the Pool Bar and beer on tap at the Squid & Anchor.

ADVERTORIAL FEATURE

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Guests can explore a range of Caribbean islands; West End-style shows await in the onboard theatre; Marella offers immersive itineraries across its entire fleet

Get on board

A three-night Electric Sunsets 90s vs 00s cruise aboard *Marella Voyager*, from Palma to Majorca via Valencia and Cartagena, departs 1 November 2025, from £800pp.

REPOSITIONING CRUISES

Unlike standard cruises, repositioning cruises are one-way – they start in one port and end in another. With some cruise lines, flights and transfers aren't included in these itineraries. But with Marella, everything is taken care of under the TUI umbrella.

The line offers a range of durations, from short, five-night journeys from one Mediterranean port to another, to longer 21-night combinations with a transatlantic crossing.

On these sailings, guests will have the chance to tick off standout European ports like Cyprus and Montenegro and Caribbean highlights like Barbados and Bonaire in the same holiday. In-between, they'll discover onboard features such as the jogging track and spa, nightclub, casino and West End-style shows.

Get on board

An eight-night Autumn Affair cruise aboard *Marella Explorer 2*, from Dubrovnik to Tenerife via Valletta and Cartagena, departs 30 October 2025, from £1,448pp. ●



**MARELLA
CRUISES**

To find out more, visit
tui.co.uk/cruise

**SCAN**

to be in with the chance of winning a range of exclusive prizes with luxury line Cunard

What's in It For You?



MAKE IT ON MARELLA RETURNS

➤ Marella Cruises has confirmed it is bringing back its trade-wide incentive, Make it on Marella, for a second year.

The 25 travel agents who make the most bookings for the ocean cruise line will win a place on a *Marella Discovery* sailing to the Caribbean islands in 2026.

The incentive, which runs until 31 December 2025, will see the top

20 agents, plus five wild card places (which are selected at random), win a trip onboard *Marella Discovery*, sailing from its homeport of La Romana, Dominican Republic on the seven-night Tropical Isles itinerary on 3 March 2026.

The winners will enjoy a full itinerary calling at several Caribbean hotspots, including the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.

PROMOTION



Win dinner for two with Cunard

As a *Cruise Trade News* reader, you have the chance to win a range of exciting Cunard prizes as part of an exclusive giveaway.

From dinner for two and a two-night stay at The May Fair hotel in London to a Cunard dressing gown to enjoy at home, you can register to play by scanning the QR code at the top of this page. The competition runs from 21 July to 4 August.

The line is also encouraging agents to sail on one of its vessels by utilising their Shine points via the Shine Rewards Club. With the Cruise with Cunard scheme, agents can pay off the balance by using points as they earn them. Agents can also benefit from a 10 per cent member saving.



BAG A CRUISE WITH AMAWATERWAYS

➤ During the first two weeks of July, AmaWaterways' regional sales team gave out 'lucky luggage tags' to agents across the UK to mark the launch of its new 2026 brochure.

All agents who make a 2026 booking can scan the QR code on

their luggage tag and enter the booking details by 31 August 2025 to automatically receive a £50 Love2Shop or Amazon voucher.

Plus, one agent's 'lucky luggage tag' will unlock a complimentary seven-night European river cruise for two people in 2025.

THE VOICE OF THE CRUISE INDUSTRY

CRUISE

Trade News

cruisetradenews.com



Welcome to the **CUNARD TAKEOVER**

The last few years have been nothing short of spectacular for Cunard. Hot on the heels of the launch of its first new ship in 14 years, the luxury brand known for its White Star Service has partnered with some of the world's best-known brands, including Abbey Road Studios and the Tony Awards, and revealed a new brand positioning. So, when speaking to clients, the message you should share is: Why cruise when you can Cunard. Read on to find out more...

David Jones

Will Payne speaks to Cunard's global vice president of sales and marketing for an insight into the luxury line's short and long-term aspirations, and how agents will play a part

It's not often an opportunity arises to lead the global sales and marketing efforts of one of the cruise industry's most recognised names. So, when David Jones answered the call to do just that, his response was a straightforward one.

"It's been an incredible year," he tells me as we sit down to catch up. "Cunard is unlike any other brand I've worked with. There's such a rich legacy and an emotional connection that our guests and travel agent partners have with us, and you feel that responsibility the moment you join."

It's been a busy 12 months for the line, having launched its first new ship in 14 years, *Queen Anne*. The company also debuted its new global brand campaign, "Why cruise when you can Cunard", and reshaped its trade team with the appointment of industry stalwart Iain Baillie.

"As a brand, we are always trying to evolve, whilst respecting our heritage and celebrating everything that makes Cunard extraordinary," Jones says. "I feel like we're just getting started and have been really pleased by the response so far to our new creative – but we have lots more to do to tell the Cunard story."

LOOKING AHEAD

The brand repositioning, Jones says, is a springboard for the line to introduce more people to the Cunard way of life.

"Guests and travel agents often tell us that the experience is different from other cruise lines, so we need to leverage that," he continues. "We also know that guests who try Cunard for the first time really enjoy it, so it's important that we're clear

“
Travel agents often tell us the experience is different from other cruise lines



and confident about what we stand for. Our new advertising campaign and visual identity will play a key role in bringing that to life."

As a luxury brand, Jones continues, it's vital that Cunard effectively articulates what sets it apart from its competitors, helping to broaden its reach and deepen guest loyalty. "That means delivering consistently exceptional experiences across every touchpoint – from our ships and crew to our trade communications and digital presence."

This includes the launch of the line's 2027/28 voyage programme, which features 195 new itineraries, 115 destinations across 32 countries, and no fewer than 93 Unesco World Heritage Sites.

Queen Mary 2 will undergo a major refurbishment in early 2027, and *Queen Anne* will sail a mix of Mediterranean and Nordic voyages, including a special New Year's Eve call in Madeira. Elsewhere, *Queen Elizabeth* returns to Europe for a series of Mediterranean itineraries and *Queen Victoria* brings intrepid explorers to Northern Europe with Iceland and Scandinavia sailings.

What my career has taught me

Understand your product

"Not all companies are the same, and guests notice the smallest details, so take the time to know what sets each brand apart."

Invest in relationships

"This is a people-first industry. The connections you make with colleagues, agents and guests are important and there are some great opportunities to learn from others."

Enjoy the ride

"Trends evolve, guest preferences shift, curveballs happen and new opportunities emerge all the time. Ask questions, listen closely and never assume anything!"

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT

David Jones leads the global sales and marketing efforts for Cunard; the Queens Room is the perfect place to meet new people; decadent delights await onboard



"It's a programme that blends the familiar and the new, offering something for guests who have travelled with us before, alongside newcomers with shorter break and week-long options on *Queen Anne* that they will find particularly appealing," Jones says.

WHAT'S TRENDING?

Jones reports a "clear move" from consumers towards more immersive and purposeful travel, "and it's been that way for some time now". He continues: "People want to connect with the places they visit – whether that's through culture, food, history, or time to explore. They're also seeking space and enrichment – which Cunard is perfectly set up to deliver."

The Mediterranean, unsurprisingly, remains hugely popular for the brand, with Northern Europe itineraries, including the Norwegian fjords and Iceland, seeing increased demand too. "Bookings are coming in earlier – especially for peak dates and unique itineraries," Jones continues.

The increased popularity, in large part, is down to the "absolutely essential" role the trade plays in Cunard's ongoing successes. "They are trusted advisers, brand advocates and often the

first touchpoint a guest has with Cunard. Their knowledge, passion and professionalism are critical to helping guests choose the right voyage, and we're so very grateful for how much love there is for the Cunard brand across the travel agent community," Jones continues.

"We've worked hard to strengthen our trade relationships. That includes constantly evolving training, updating the tools that agents tell us are important, improving our communications and ensuring we're responsive and visible."

In-person engagement will play a key part of Cunard's trade strategy throughout the rest of the year and beyond, with the line planning several ship visits and face-to-face trade training events in the near future.

"We had more than 100 travel agents visit us for a day onboard *Queen Anne* in June," Jones adds. "That's so important and it's not just about driving bookings – it's about building lasting partnerships."

For Cunard training modules, updates and sales tools, visit shinerewardsclub.com



CUNARD

Shine Rewards Club is our travel agent loyalty and reward programme and is all about rewarding you for your hard work.



Once you become a member, you can earn 'Shine points' for every booking you make, plus you can also earn Shine points by completing quizzes or joining and engaging with webinars.

Shine points can be put towards your very own Cunard voyage, or redeemed for a wide range of high-street vouchers.

Are you a member yet?

Scan the QR code to sign up to Shine Rewards Club
or visit shinerewardsclub.com.



QUEEN MARY 2

QUEEN VICTORIA

QUEEN ELIZABETH

QUEEN ANNE



Looking for your very own Cruise with Cunard?

With Cruise with Cunard, you can use any amount of Shine points to book your Cunard voyage. You can also pay off the balance due for your booked voyage using Shine points, as you earn them.

Plus, with our Shine Member Saving, you can benefit from a 10% saving* on all sailings up to December 2026 booked through Cruise with Cunard.

Looking for inspiration?

Take a look at this 12-night Queen Elizabeth voyage, sailing roundtrip from Miami.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Eastern Caribbean

Q606

19 February – 03 March 2026

12 nights

Inside stateroom (IF grade), cruise-only Saver Fare
from 3,145 Shine points per person*

Visit the [Cruise with Cunard](#) section on Shine Rewards Club to find out more, including information on how to book.

*Terms and conditions apply. Please visit shinerewardsclub.com



Cunard

With refreshed ships and collaborations with some of the world's most iconic brands, there's plenty of reasons why agents should brush up on their knowledge of this leading luxury cruise line

IN THE KNOW

For 185 years, Cunard has been redefining what it means to explore the world in style and comfort. During what is widely referred to as the “golden age” of cruising, many of Hollywood's biggest names – like Cary Grant, Elizabeth Taylor and Charlie Chaplin – travelled the seas in style with Cunard.

Since its inception the brand has been famed for its White Star Service, ballrooms that are inspired by the palaces of Vienna and itineraries to the four corners of the globe. Over the years, the line has sailed a vast array of cruises on a staggering 249 ships.

This rich heritage runs through the DNA of the cruise line, and its fleet today has been inspired by its past but reimagined for the future. Alongside classic, art deco stylings, guests will find splashes of bold colour and contemporary comforts.



One of its key selling points is the Grills Suites, which you can read more about on page 41. Combining the personal service of a boutique hotel with the variety offered by a larger ship, guests enjoy spacious accommodation, a private restaurant and lounge, plus priority boarding and a dedicated concierge or butler service. David Jones,

global vice president of sales and marketing for Cunard, says: “Cunard is iconic. We are a British brand that blends classic heritage with modern luxury elegance in a way no other cruise line does. We're also known for our unique onboard enrichment, distinctive style and, of course, our incredible White Star Service.”

A NEW LOOK

Ahead of its debut season from Miami and its inaugural Alaskan voyages from Seattle, *Queen Elizabeth* completed a transformative three-week makeover at Seatrium's Admiralty Yard in Singapore.

The vessel's signature spaces, such as the Commodore Club, Queens Room, Garden Lounge and The Pavilion, have each been revitalised, as well as additions to outdoor spaces such as more sunshades to accommodate warmer weather.



“ A British brand that blends heritage with modern luxury

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON?

Next year, Cunard will partner with several well-known brands for its series of Event Voyages, which will take place over two phases onboard *Queen Mary 2* and *Queen Anne*.

From May to November 2026 the luxury line will offer five seven-night voyages, including a London Theatre at Sea with the Olivier Awards itinerary, curated by Julian Bird OBE and featuring performances from an illustrious line-up of theatre talent.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Glamour and elegance go hand-in-hand on board; guests can cool off on the top deck; Cunard's David Jones; classical elegance is woven throughout vessels; the Commodore Club offers panoramic ocean views

Jones adds: “Following our extremely successful World Voyages earlier this year, we’ve started to see a surge in demand for our 2026 and 2027 World Voyages. We’re also seeing growth in Northern Europe and Med sailings, and *Queen Mary 2* continues to perform very well – especially her Transatlantic Crossings and Caribbean sailings.”

WHO'S WHO?

Cunard is spearheaded by its president Katie McAlister, with David Jones heading up the company's global marketing and EMEA sales efforts. Iain Baillie, who joined the line in June, looks after the company's UK and EMEA trade output, including Cunard's on the road trade sales team. Led by John Garbutt, who we catch up with on page 40, the team is comprised of James Atherton, Savannah Fryer and Nicola Berry.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

David Jones, global VP sales and marketing, on who would suit a Cunard cruise and where agents can go to find out more

Who might like a Cunard voyage?

Our guests tend to be discerning travellers who value unique experiences and effortless luxury; however, a much broader demographic than you might expect find the Cunard experience appealing. I think that's in part due to the iconic nature of the brand, and the fact that people know we offer something a little different to other cruise lines.

Where can agents find more support to sell Cunard?

On shinerewardsclub.com all the expert support you need to sell Cunard is right at your fingertips, from how-to guides on the booking process to the latest offers and window cards. Our training webinars are also a great way to increase your brand knowledge and confidently recommend Cunard.

DAVID JONES' SELLING TIPS

1 “Get to know the brand. Nothing beats experiencing it first-hand. Ship visits, meeting our team and training are a great place to start. If you can recall your experience to a customer, it'll go a long way.”

2 “Use Shine Rewards Club. It's packed with resources, updates and incentives – all designed to help you sell with confidence. Our team is on hand to answer questions and offer support in finding the right customer.”

3 “Qualify your client. If someone values space, service and unique experiences with real depth and a sense of occasion, Cunard will be a great fit. It's all about matching the right guest to the right voyage.”

FLEET IN FOCUS

Cunard's luxury vessels have come a long way since its inaugural ship the *RMS Unicorn*, a transatlantic paddle steamer built in 1836. Yet despite the evolution of hardware and technology, Cunard has stayed true to its roots and still offers the same White Star Service today that customers enjoyed 185 years ago.

It's four vessels offer Iconic Voyages – one of the four pillars which encompass the Cunard difference – with *Queen Mary 2*, the line's flagship, giving guests the freedom to pass the time as they please during its renowned transatlantic itinerary.

In addition to its Iconic Voyages, Cunard offers The Finest Restaurants and Bars at Sea, Unique Enrichment and Wellness, Distinctive Style and White Star Service, which flow throughout each vessel with a warm bellhop welcome and crew remembering how guests take their coffee. Here, we take a closer look at each ship's standout features.

QUEEN ELIZABETH

Having entered service in 2010, the 2,081-guest *Queen Elizabeth* was refitted in March 2025. Highlights include the Lido Pool Club, a new venue with canopies, a rum and tequila-filled bar menu, and reimagined spaces in the Commodore Club, Queens Room and Garden Lounge. The ship offers a series of fly-Caribbean itineraries, as well as cruises to the USA, Canada, Alaska and the Panama Canal.



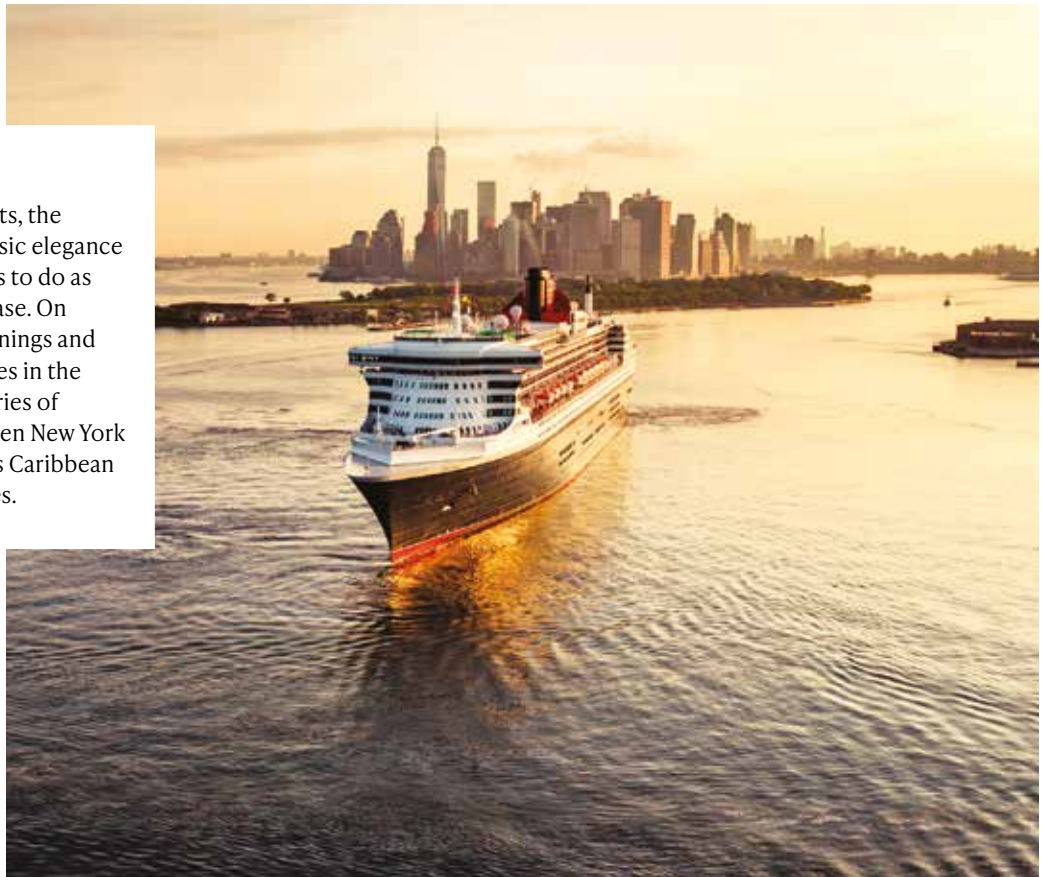
QUEEN VICTORIA

Similar in size to *Queen Elizabeth*, *Queen Victoria* offers a warm feel thanks to its Winter Garden – a relaxed room with floor-to-ceiling windows – and the Chart Room, a celestial-themed cocktail bar. Itineraries include fly-Mediterranean cruises, Northern Europe sailings and Norwegian fjords trips, as well as Iberia, Atlantic Coast, Canary Islands, Caribbean and world voyages.



QUEEN MARY 2

With capacity for 2,691 guests, the Cunard flagship exudes classic elegance and enough space for sailors to do as much or as little as they please. On board, they'll enjoy gala evenings and show-stopping performances in the Royal Court Theatre on a series of transatlantic voyages between New York and Southampton, as well as Caribbean and Northern Europe cruises.



QUEEN ANNE

The newest addition to the Cunard fleet – and the first for 14 years – is inspired by the company's heritage, with additions reflecting the line's striking new design direction. On board, guests will find a range of dining venues, including Japanese flavours at Aji Wa and Mediterranean in Tramonto. The Mareel Wellness & Beauty Spa features a unique studio and café, while the Bright Lights Society offers intimate entertainment options. Destinations include Northern Europe, Atlantic Islands, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean, making it the perfect pick for new cruisers.



On the
road with...

John Garbutt

Cunard's business manager for development and engagement on how to sell the luxury line and what it's like working for one of the UK's most historic cruise companies

What selling points are you focusing on when meeting agents?

We always lead with the Cunard difference. We focus on our four brand pillars: our Iconic Voyages, the Finest Restaurants and Bars at Sea, Unique Enrichment and Wellness, and of course, our Distinctive Style and White Star Service. These are the elevated elements, along with Cunard's famous gala evenings and Grills suite proposition, that make Cunard truly unique. We also talk a lot about guest profiles, as Cunard appeals to a broad audience.

How important are in-person visits?

It's the best way to build strong relationships. Whether it's learning about challenges or celebrating successes, I find they're a great opportunity to listen to what matters to agents. It's also about making sure they have all the tools they need to take advantage of key moments in the sales calendar, such as new season launches. It's the little things that can



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

Meeting with agents is a key part of Cunard's trade engagement strategy; Garbutt joined Cunard in 2018

What opportunities does Cunard's new ship present to agents?

The launch of *Queen Anne* was a huge moment for Cunard and her arrival is a great opportunity for travel agents to re-engage with customers. She's a real leap forward for Cunard in terms of her elegant design and elevated on board experiences. From all-new dining concepts such as the Japanese-inspired Aji Wa and Indian-themed Aranya restaurants to standout wellness and entertainment venues including The Pavilion and the Bright Lights Society, *Queen Anne* is what modern luxury is all about.

You've worked in various roles with Cunard since 2018. How has it been?

It's been brilliant. I spent four fantastic years working at sea, so I've seen firsthand what makes a Cunard voyage so special and why our guests come back time and again. And that insight shapes how I support agents today. I'm lucky to be part of a team that's passionate about the Cunard brand and supporting the trade. We're not just selling cruises, we're offering once-in-a-lifetime experiences that guests will remember forever.

make the biggest difference, like showing agents where they can find our updated window cards on Shine Rewards Club, Cunard's trade rewards scheme and information hub.

Where should an agent start if they've never sold Cunard before?

Cunard's Shine Rewards Club is the perfect place to start. It's filled with training, marketing materials and rewards. It also includes a 'New to Cunard' area designed to support agents who are learning about Cunard or would like a refresher. There's information on fare types and global destinations to example food and drinks menus, and the world-leading variety of onboard entertainment.



“

It's about making sure that agents have all the tools they need to take advantage of key moments in the sales calendar

DINING

When it comes to dining, a dedicated table is always reserved and flawlessly set, so guests can eat wherever their impulse takes them. Diners will experience culinary wonder and a unique level of service in the Princess and Queens Grill restaurants, or they can order from an in-suite menu.



SPACES

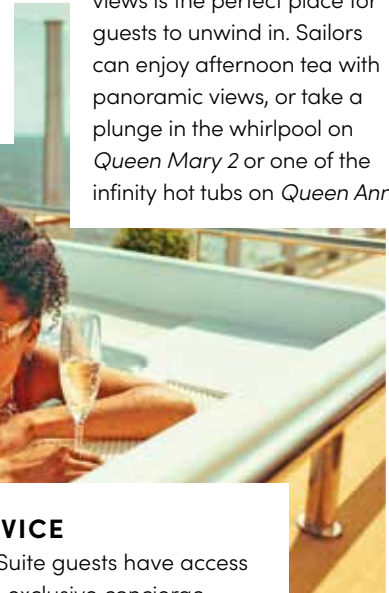
Tucked away from the bustle of the ship, the Grills Lounge is a private retreat for guests staying in Queens Grill and Princess Grill Suites. The area offers a dedicated space to enjoy a drink, and in the evening it transforms into an ambient bar, ideal for a pre- or post-dinner cocktail.

ULTRA-LUXURY,
UP CLOSE

Take a look inside Cunard's Grills Suite experience, where discerning clients can elevate their luxury sailing experience even further with private lounges, restaurants and attentive service

TERRACE

This outdoor sanctuary with cushioned sun loungers, drinks service and sweeping sea views is the perfect place for guests to unwind in. Sailors can enjoy afternoon tea with panoramic views, or take a plunge in the whirlpool on *Queen Mary 2* or one of the infinity hot tubs on *Queen Anne*.



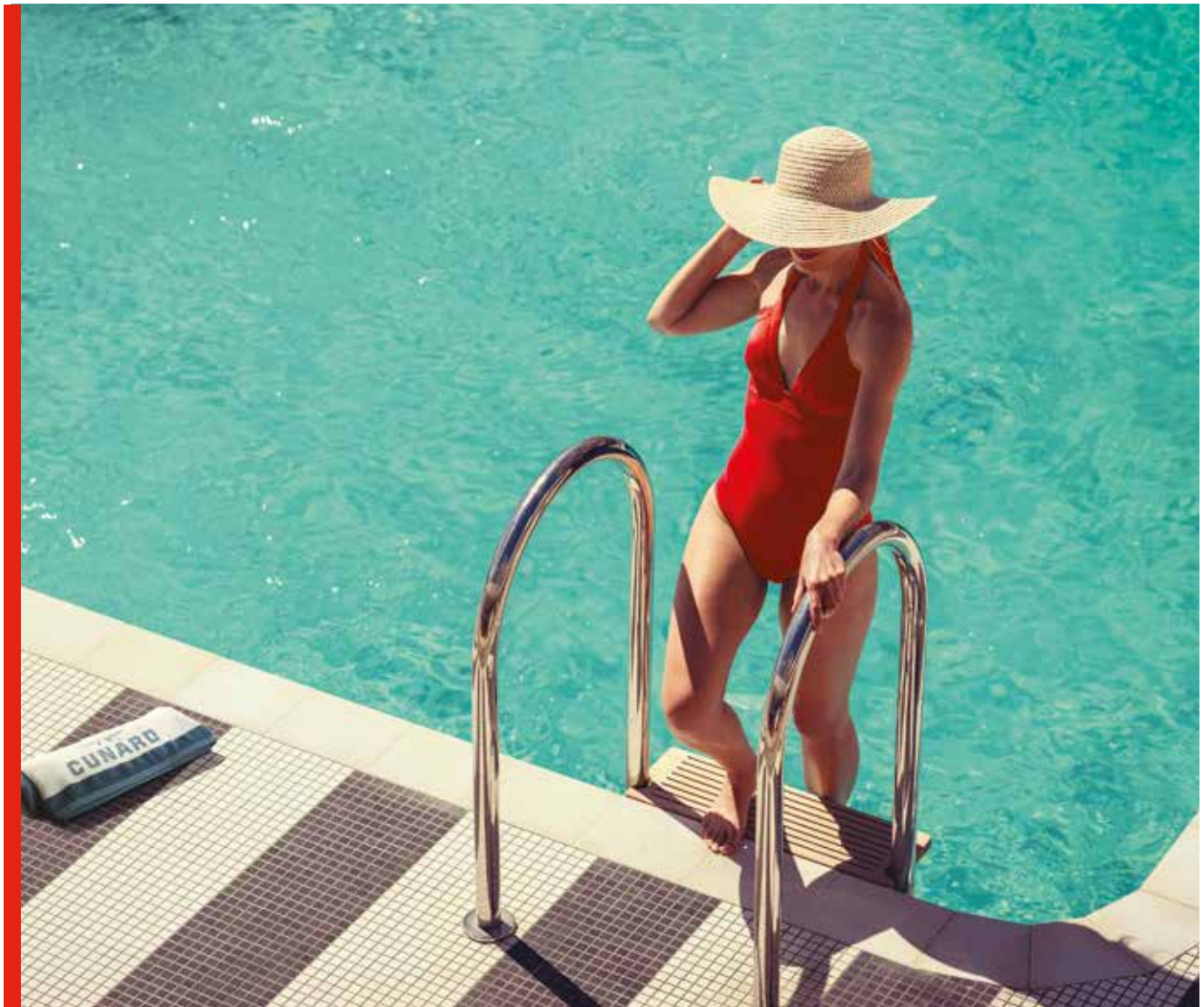
SUITES

From priority boarding at the terminal to the use of the exclusive Grills Lounge and Terrace, Grills guests experience cruising at its finest. Spacious living areas and sweeping balconies await in both Princess Grill and Queens Grill Suites.



SERVICE

Grill Suite guests have access to an exclusive concierge service, with someone on hand to help with any special requests they may have while onboard or ashore. What's more, for *Queen's Grill* guests, a butler is on hand at all times to help with clients' needs.



2026 and 2027 14-night voyages with up to
\$580 on board credit
per stateroom*

Your customers can enhance their holiday with additional on board credit when they make a Cunard Fare booking on selected Cunard itineraries sailing between December 2025 and April 2027. Plus, they can choose their stateroom or suite and secure their booking with just a 15% deposit.

Book before midnight 1 September to receive this offer.



Visit cunard.com

*T&Cs: Applicable to new Cunard Fare bookings on selected voyages between 7 and 67 nights.
Amounts vary by stateroom grade and voyage duration. Visit Cunard.com for full T&Cs.

GENERATION Z Sea

As more young people turn to cruising to satiate their desire to travel the world, cruise lines and agents across the UK are noting a sharp uptick in the popularity of multi-generational bookings. **Dave Monk** takes a closer look



Generation Z is turning into Generation Sea as more young people are opting for a holiday on the high seas. They're the driving force behind a rise in multi-generational travel, with CLIA finding the average age of cruisers in Britain and Ireland has fallen to 54.3 from 55.1 in 2023 and 57 in 2019. Globally, 28 per cent of passengers are travelling with three or more generations.

The trend has been noticed by agents, too, who are booking many more families looking to sail together, sharing some activities and dining while being free to do their own thing at other times. Cruising is an especially stress-free option, with an array of amenities – like kid's clubs and multiple dining options – close to hand.

After surveying nearly 5,000 customers, Iglu Cruise found that grandparents often pick up the bill for multi-generational cruises, particularly for special occasions, such as celebrating retirement.

The older members of the family also come in handy as free childminders when parents want to enjoy a bit of 'us time'. The agency's chief commercial officer, Dave Mills, says: "We have a handful of customers over 100 so we're keen to take a four-generation booking soon."

FUN FOR ALL

For years, the big cruise lines have been attracting a wider range of ages with children's clubs, connecting cabins, special shore excursions, a broad range of entertainment and even whole neighbourhoods dedicated to families.

Destinations have increasingly involved islands where everyone from babies to centenarians can have a good time. Major player Royal Caribbean has done its own research, polling 1,000 British children aged between six and 11, finding nearly half enjoy holidays more when grandparents join in. Youngsters' favourite activities include swimming, visiting a waterpark and trying different foods – all catered for by Royal's ships, especially the new Icon class.

Gerard Nolan, vice president for Europe, Middle East and Africa, says: "From racing waterslides and ziplines, to relaxing moments, incredible entertainment and dining options to suit every palate, every member of the family can enjoy their perfect holiday, both together and in their own way."

Over at MSC Cruises, Antonio Paradiso, vice president of international sales, says they have seen "a notable shift" over the past five years, with more younger travellers and families choosing cruise holidays. "Families and multi-generational groups are a rapidly increasing part of our guest base, with 50 per cent growth in the last three years."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT More and more young people are opting for a holiday at sea; MSC Cruises' Antonio Paradiso has seen a notable rise in families choosing to cruise; destinations like Alaska make for an unforgettable experience for the whole family; larger suites are ideal when catering for multi-generational family groups



SCAN

Cruise Corner podcast: Is luxury cruising about to change forever?

MSC Cruises, which has a partnership with Lego, offers free children's clubs. Its latest ship, *World America*, also has areas designed specifically for kids and teens, adults-only zones and shared spaces for all generations. "Many of our ships offer interconnecting cabins, ideal for families who want to stay close while giving teens their own space," Paradiso adds.

One cruise line with a large family attraction is Disney, which offers favourite characters, themed dining, fireworks at sea and child-friendly resorts of Castaway Cay and now Lighthouse Point. Cruises can also be tied in with stays at Disney World in Florida.

As for the British market, Rob Scott, P&O Cruises vice president brand, marketing and sales, says: "There is something very special about watching three generations of a family come together on a cruise – grandparents sharing stories over dinner, parents finally getting a moment to relax, and kids making new friends in the clubs."

Marella has age-specific clubs catering for children aged from six months to 11 years, while teens can enjoy their own dedicated hangout space, complete with video games, air hockey and more.

Greece-based Celestyal, which now offers Middle East cruises in the winter, has an average age of 44. In the last 12 months, one in five passengers has travelled as a family, with ages ranging from three months to 101 years old. ▶

“Multi-generational groups are a rapidly increasing part of our guest base, with 50 per cent growth in the last three years



Selling tips

“Highlight the onboard entertainment that's perfect for families looking to create shared memories, as well as flexible dining times in specialist restaurants that allow all ages to eat together at their own pace.”

Chris Hackney, managing director, Marella Cruises

“Most questions from customers in this category are about bed layouts in cabins, interconnecting cabins and the availability of kids' clubs, so be prepared. The rise of the 'ship within a ship concept' is also helping to bolster this trend,”

Dave Mills, chief commercial officer, Iglu Cruise

“My advice is don't be shy when it comes to highlighting small-ship cruising. Many families and groups want immersive holidays that visit hidden gem destinations and showcase real local culture in its most authentic form.” **Graham Carter**, co-founder, Unforgettable Croatia.





Janet Parton, the line's vice president of business development, says: "Late-night and overnight stays in ports like Santorini and Mykonos provide the flexibility for families to explore at their own pace. Our shorter cruise durations – typically three, four and seven nights – also make it more manageable for younger cruisers."

DIFFERING TASTES

Bigger ships with plenty of space and dedicated facilities are easy picks for families. But what about luxury lines with small ships and generally older clientele?

Luke Smith, vice president sales for UK and EMEA at Crystal, says: "With accommodations ranging from solo rooms to suites with sofa beds, Crystal offers more space per passenger than any other cruise line, giving you plenty of room to all socialise together."

"Crystal also provides several entertainment options and activities, from talks to Broadway-style shows, as well as golf and pickleball, children's activities on select voyages, and an inspiring selection of shore excursions."

Unforgettable Croatia operates a series of ships along the Dalmatian Coast with no more than 38 passengers. Co-founder Graham Carter says: "We've had an 18-strong family group aged from 30 to 80 join us for a cruise from Split to Dubrovnik, as well as 17-year-olds travelling with their parents and grandparents."

"Small-ship cruising is not just about the onboard amenities but the quality of the shore

“We are increasingly seeing multi-generational families choosing our cruises as a way to celebrate life events

experiences and a highly personalised journey that encourages people to savour the moment.”

Meanwhile, Lynn Naraway, vice president UK and EMEA for Seabourn, reports an increase in multi-gen families with older or adult children booking with the ultra-luxury line. "Our expedition ships are ideal for a family group looking for immersive soft adventure experiences," she adds.

Agents can set up group spaces with Seabourn with as few as five suites, with no deposit required, with benefits including onboard spend and complimentary events such as a private drinks party onboard.

National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions, meanwhile, is seeing a greater mix of ages from babies to 90-year-olds, with up to 20 people travelling together.

Chief commercial officer Noah Brodsky says: "Alaska, the Galápagos, Baja California, Iceland and Antarctica are particularly popular with families. In these destinations, kids and teens can participate in our National Geographic Explorers-in-Training programme which connects young travellers with nature to discover the world like scientists and tell the story of their surroundings."

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Disney's themed dining and favourite characters make it a popular choice for families; small-ship cruising offers quality shore experiences; A-Rosa River Cruises' Lucia Rowe says grandparents, parents and children enjoy sharing experiences on and off the ship; an Alaskan cruise can provide fascinating scientific insights for curious children and teenagers



“They can also join their parents and grandparents on activities such as snorkelling over tropical reefs, hiking across the Arctic tundra, kayaking among icebergs, ziplining through a rainforest canopy and paddleboarding along wildlife-stuffed shores.”

INSIGHTS AND ADVICE

Among river lines, one of the most family-friendly is German-based A-Rosa River Cruises which offers many fully bilingual cruises. Its ship *Sena* has one

deck dedicated to 12 cabins that sleep parents with up to three children – two in a bunk and one on the sofa. Youngsters also have a large pirate-themed playroom called Treasure Island.

Managing director Lucia Rowe says: “Grandparents, parents and children enjoy sharing experiences both on and off the ship and learn a little too while exploring all the cities and towns along the way. Our excursions include chocolate museums, zoos, bike tours and jeep safaris.”

Riviera Travel tends to attract adults in their late 30s or mid-40s travelling with their parents, especially for milestone birthdays. Product director Will Sarson says: “We’re increasingly seeing multi-generational families choosing our cruises as a way to celebrate life events or spend meaningful time together.”

From an agent’s perspective, the ever-evolving “ship within a ship” concept from the likes of NCL with The Haven, Celebrity’s Retreat or the MSC

Yacht Club, is a good way to convince grandparents to book a holiday with the whole family.

Emma Otter, of Travel Counsellors, says: “It helps reassure them that they can enjoy peace and quiet – and time out! – even when holidaying as a family.”

Clare Dudley, managing director of Ponders Travel, adds: “I have noticed so many more grandparents wanting to take their family on holiday. For us as agents, we tend to look to cruise lines with lots of wow factors and where there are an array of things to do so all the family is kept happy.”

The combination of the older generation wanting to spend their savings on memorable holidays with younger travellers eager to explore the world has opened the door to a new strain of client and boosted commission earnings on big-ticket trips for travel agents.

To maximise this opportunity, it’s crucial to understand the differing product types in the market and how each cruise line caters for different ages onboard. ●

Get on board

P&O Cruises’ seven-night Norwegian Fjords cruise aboard *Iona*, round-trip from Southampton via Stavanger, Olden, Alesund and Haugesund, departs 4 April 2026, from £849pp, including children’s clubs.

A-Rosa River Cruises’ seven-night Rhine Experience Amsterdam and Rotterdam cruise aboard *A-Rosa Sena*, roundtrip from Cologne via Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp (overnight), Nijmegen and Dusseldorf, departs 15 April 2026, from £4,496, including flights and a family cabin on an all-inclusive basis.

Seabourn’s 10-day Wild Scottish Isles & Iceland cruise aboard *Seabourn Venture*, from Dublin to Reykjavik via Calf of Man, Isle of Man, Isle of Bute, Mull, Eigg, Lewis and St Kilda, departs 6 July 2026, from £7,423pp for a veranda suite.



HURRY SPACES LIMITED

CRUISE SUMMIT

Brought to you by

CRUISE
Trade News

Monday 22nd September

News UK, London

SPEAKERS CONFIRMED:



TikTok

Google



Meta

News UK

MORE TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON

SCAN TO VIEW AGENDA & REGISTER YOUR INTEREST



cruisesummit.co.uk

SPONSORED BY



Celestyal



Fred. Olsen
Cruise Lines

CRYSTAL
EXCEPTIONAL AT SEA

Force24™



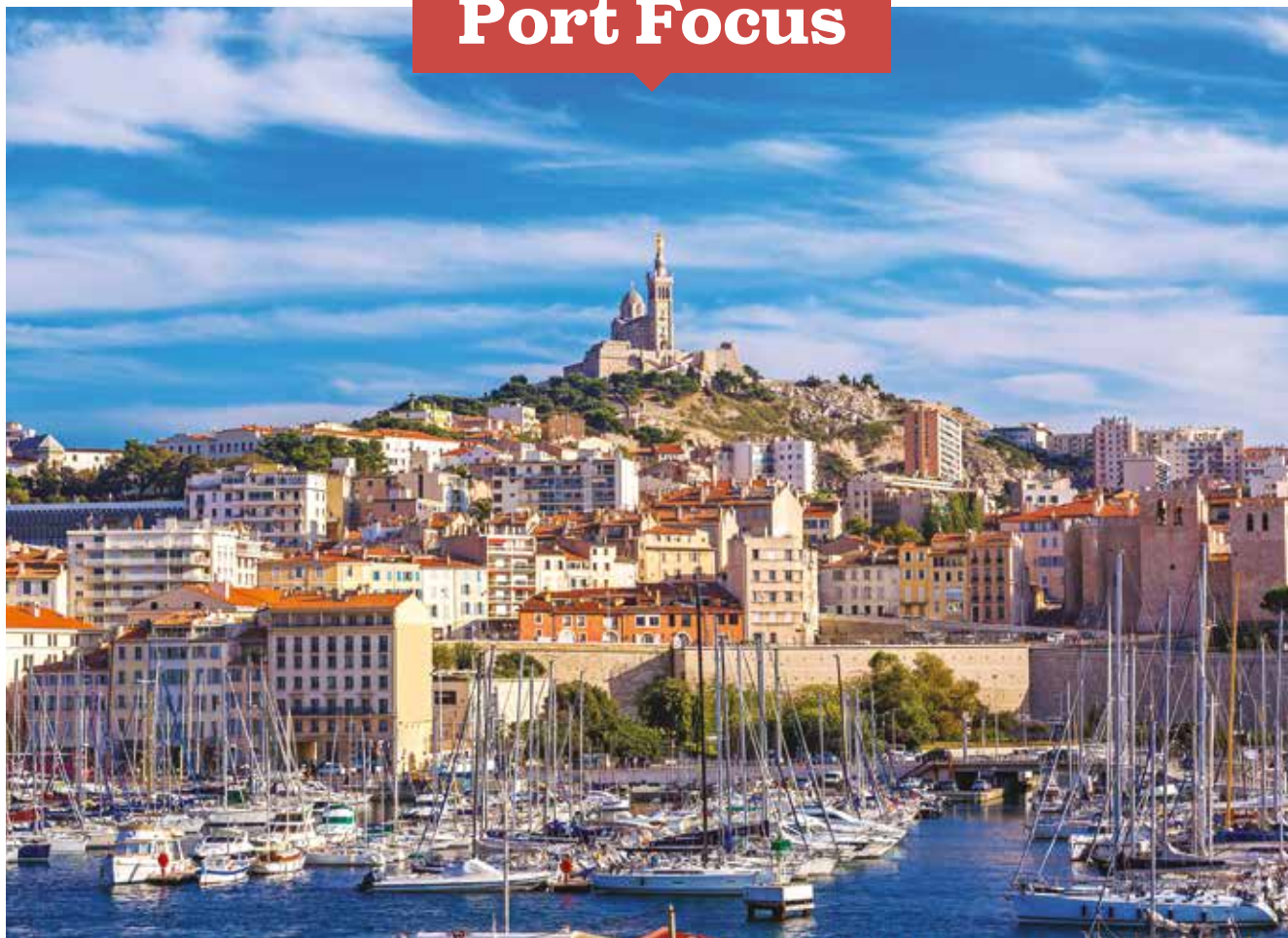
TRAVELZOO™



TUI river cruises

HIGHLIGHTS • FOOD & DRINKS
SHOPPING • ITINERARIES

Port Focus



Marseille

Once dubbed the French Chicago, Marseille has long carried a reputation for grit. But this sun-drenched port city is now one of the most exciting places in the Mediterranean, says **Raphael Giacardi**

Framed by the shimmering Mediterranean and backed by the jagged hills of Provence, Marseille's coastal charm is undeniable. And while its past as a hub in the global drug trade is part of its story – immortalised in the movie *The French Connection* – it no longer defines it.

This is France's oldest city, founded by Greek settlers in 600BC, and its location makes it unique. The port – still the largest in the country – has brought

a constant influx of people, goods and ideas. Over time, that's shaped a city that looks south as much as it does north, with ties to North and West Africa, Italy and the Levant.

By the early 2000s, Marseille had slipped under the tourist radar – partly due to its gritty image and lack of investment. But everything changed when it was named the 2013 European Capital of Culture and began the biggest regeneration project in its history.

The Old Port was pedestrianised and reimagined by Norman Foster, with a mirrored canopy and wide-open walkways. The MuCEM, a bold museum dedicated to Mediterranean culture, rose beside the 350-year-old Fort Saint-Jean. Once-derelict docks in La Joliette were transformed into cultural venues, boutiques and office spaces.

In the years since, Marseille's appeal has grown, with visitors falling in love with its traditional neighbourhoods. ►



Three unmissable things to do

NOTRE-DAME DE LA GARDE

This 19th-century basilica sits on Marseille's highest point, offering wide views over the city and coastline. Built on the site of an old fort, it's topped with a 10-metre gilded statue of the Virgin Mary. Locals refer to it as "La Bonne Mère" – the Good Mother – as it is said to watch over the city's fisherman and sailors. The church is accessible by bus, tourist train or on foot via a steep but very popular walking route from the city centre.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

One of Calanques National Park's many inlets; the Virgin Mary looks out from Notre-Dame de la Garde; Le Petit Nice offers superb sea views; enjoy the traditional biscuits from Le Four des Navettes bakery; Fort Saint-Jean's lantern tower

“
Notre-Dame de la Garde offers wide views over the city and coastline



MUCEM

Opened in 2013, the Museum of Civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean explores how the region's culture has evolved through migration, trade, conflict and religion. Its permanent collection focuses on anthropology and social history, while temporary exhibitions often feature contemporary art. The building itself, designed by Rudy Ricciotti, connects the 17th-century Fort Saint-Jean with a modern cube structure overlooking the sea, which is linked by footbridges. Entry to the outdoor walkways and fort is free, so a perfect option for multi-generational bookings.

CALANQUES NATIONAL PARK

The Calanques National Park stretches across land and sea between Marseille, Cassis and La Ciotat. The limestone cliffs and narrow inlets are accessible by boat tours, kayak or hiking trails, which can be taken independently or with a guide. Swimming is permitted in certain areas, and the park is home to rare marine life, like sea horses, groupers and seabreams, as well as swathes of plants and fauna. However, access to some calanques is restricted in summer due to fire risk, so encourage your customers to check the official website for real-time information before they set out.



Three places to eat

PREMIUM

Marseille's only three-Michelin-star restaurant, Le Petit Nice Passedat overlooks the ocean in the Endoume neighbourhood. Chef Gérald Passedat, who specialises in Mediterranean seafood, makes use of many lesser-known local species in his cooking. One of his signature dishes, the bouillabaisse, is a gourmet twist on the traditional Marseille fish stew. Menus are altered depending on the season and reservations are required.

“A visit to Marseille isn't complete without tucking into a seafood platter

MID-RANGE

A visit to Marseille isn't complete without tucking into a plateau de fruits de mer – seafood platter. The content of the platter varies with the season, but you can expect prawns, oysters, scallops and mussels, whelks, sea urchins and more. Visitors won't struggle finding a restaurant offering seafood. And they can also find kiosks offering takeaway platters to enjoy al-fresco.

BUDGET

Founded in 1781, Le Four des Navettes bakery near Abbaye Saint-Victor is known for its orange-blossom biscuits shaped like boats. Navettes are dense and dry, traditionally eaten during religious festivals but now available year-round. The bakery is Marseille's oldest and continues to use a wood-fired oven. Customers can buy biscuits by weight or in gift boxes. It's worth a stop for something inexpensive and hyper-local.



Cunard's Marseille marvels

What better way to arrive in port than by Cunard's *Queen Victoria*?

France and Italy, seven nights, 13 July 2026

Guests can sail the French Riviera on this week-long France and Italy voyage, calling at Marseille, Villefrance, Genoa and La Spezia.

Western Mediterranean, 14 nights, 10 Aug 2026

This two-week Western Mediterranean roundtrip features calls to ports in France, Spain, and Italy – with some island calls, too. Guests can enjoy a late evening visit to bustling Ibiza to explore by day and at dusk, as well as a stop in Cagliari to experience the unique Sardinian culture.

Greece, Adriatic and Western Mediterranean, 21 nights, 29 June 2026

Sailing from the Italian port of Civitavecchia, on this 21-night voyage guests can marvel at the architectural wonders of Split, stroll through the charming streets of Villefranche, and uncover Malta's Valletta, alongside their call at Marseille.



The
Danube

Hidden delights of the Danube

From mountains dissected by walking trails to the “paprika capital of the world”, there’s plenty on offer to reignite your clients’ desire for another adventure on one of Europe’s most storied waterways. Words by Gilly Pickup





This is a river of superlatives. Flowing 1,785 miles from the Black Forest to the Black Sea, the Danube is the only waterway to pass through, or form part of a border with so many countries. Ten in fact. The longest river within today's European Union passes more capital cities than any other river and over the centuries it has provided inspiration for artists and writers. It even has a waltz named after it. Just one thing though: it isn't blue like Strauss said, more a greyish-brown colour. This lauded waterway is one of the most popular river cruise options and, since it isn't too far from our doorstep, it's easy to reach too.

Operators including Viking, Riviera, AmaWaterways and Saga offer Danube itineraries, but if your clients have already "done the Danube", think they've seen it all and roll their eyes at the thought of a repeat performance, fire their enthusiasm by highlighting the chance to discover some of the many lesser-known Danube destinations. These are often overlooked in favour of their counterparts.

As John Fair, CroisiEurope's UK sales director, says: "The lower Danube makes for a fascinating journey between Eastern Europe and the Black Sea, taking in lesser-known towns and cities previously hidden behind the iron curtain."

Here, we highlight four of the Danube's best kept secrets to help entice repeat customers to a fresh adventure on one of Europe's most surprising waterways.

SPITZ AUSTRIA

Spitz an der Donau, better known as Spitz, is a pleasing-on-the-eye small town in Austria's Unesco-listed Wachau region. Surrounded by mountains cobwebbed with walking trails, Spitz is celebrated for Riesling and Grüner Veltliner wines as well as Wachau apricots which are used in jams, liqueurs and strudels. The town has several museums that are worth a look. One, a small maritime museum, provides insight to those interested in the history of shipping on the Danube, while Mühldorf Bakery Museum, full of all manner of gadgets, also houses a historical shop awash with antique toys and games.



AmaWaterways' *AmaMagna* calls here on its Magna on the Danube and Grand Danube itineraries. From early 2026, Trafalgar, part of TTC Tour Brands, will also highlight Spitz on its Best of the Danube itinerary, an eight-day Budapest to Passau cruise on *Trafalgar Reverie*, owned by sister-brand Uniworld. The first sailing leaves on 18 April 2026, followed by regular departures until October.

Kelly Jackson, managing director EMEA of TTC Tour Brands, says: "The Danube is a holiday worth experiencing again and again, each sailing unlocking new experiences. Our new Best of the Danube cruise visits Spitz and surrounding Wachau Valley. While here, guests can dine with the local family who run Austria's oldest winery as part of Trafalgar's Be My Guest programme. Agents can use immersive events like these to offer a richer experience for repeat travellers who are considering discovering much more of the Danube."

KALOCSA HUNGARY

"It's no surprise that our Danube Waltz cruise proves popular, with a carefully curated itinerary that balances our customers' desire to visit the must-see attractions, while also enjoying off-the-beaten-track experiences," says Debbie O'Neill, managing director of Jules Verne.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The Wachau Valley's vineyards; Kalocsa's St Mary Cathedral; the picturesque sunset on the Danube; musicians performing in medieval costumes; cycling lets visitors explore off the beaten track

Selling tips

1 It is worth emphasising to those customers who have previously sailed the Danube that this interesting region always has something new for those who return to take another look, like Esztergom and Pecs in Hungary.

2 For clients interested in culture and history, stress that since the Danube is historically important as a trade route, there are plenty of ancient ruins, castles and Unesco sites to explore.

3 Stretches of the Danube may sometimes be affected by low water levels. Familiarise yourself with this so that you can answer customers' questions about potential issues.

"Cruising through Austria, Hungary and Slovakia, standout experiences away from the crowds include sailing to Hungary's Kalocsa with its grand cathedral and visiting a local ranch to see a show of traditional horsemanship."

Founded in the 11th century, Kalocsa is one of Hungary's oldest towns, offering a certain detachment from the modern world. Nicknamed "paprika capital of the world", it is home to one of the region's most unusual museums thanks to its dominant crop, known locally as "red gold". Paprika is the reason that goulash, the country's hale and hearty national dish, has such a distinctive flavour.

Step into a bygone era by visiting the splendidly gilded Assumption Cathedral with its colourful stuccoed interior. Its 4,668-pipe organ is said to be Hungary's finest and was played by Franz Liszt on his visits to Kalocsa. Most tours here also take in the Folk Art Museum, otherwise known as the Regional Folk Art House, which celebrates the art of traditional painting and embroidery while also showcasing antique farming implements and rustic furnishings.

CESKY KRUMLOV CZECHIA

A visit to this comely southern Bohemian town feels like going back to a less hurried, more innocent age thanks to its Renaissance houses, Minorite monastery and Unesco-listed medieval district, all reflecting life in times gone by.



“ As a historic trade route, the Danube has lots of ancient ruins and castles to explore

Festivals provide extra tempo and the town hosts several during the summer. One is the International Music Festival, showcasing mixed sounds from jazz and chamber music to everything in between, which takes place over four weeks in July and August. Highlights include experimental performances in the town's Baroque theatre, the oldest in the world.

A 'Grimm's fairytale' castle made up of 40 separate buildings dominates the town, while the marionette museum, housed in a building said to be haunted, showcases a whimsical puppet collection as well as an interactive theatre where guests can try their hand at puppeteering.

Operators including AmaWaterways, Avalon, Tauck and Scenic visit the town. Jonathan Davies, head of sales at Scenic UK, says: "Our Gems of the Danube itinerary is the ideal option for second time cruisers on the Danube, combining renowned, much-loved locations, such as Budapest and Vienna, along with lesser-known destinations.

"We have a full day excursion to Český Krumlov, considered one of Europe's best-preserved medieval towns with its vast array of well-preserved Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture."

NOVI SAD SERBIA

Neil Barclay, Viking's head of sales says: "On our Capitals of Eastern Europe cruise sailing from Vienna to Bucharest, guests visit five capital cities alongside lesser-known destinations. The itinerary includes a visit to former European Capital of Culture Novi Sad, Serbia's second largest city and home to the Museum of Vojvodina, which houses collections and exhibits

showcasing Serbian culture and life."

Although Novi Sad was pretty much wiped out in the 1999 war, this easily walkable city lying between Budapest and Belgrade has been pleasantly rebuilt in recent years and offers plenty for visitors to feast their eyes on. The main square and city's heartbeat, Trg Slobode, hemmed with cafés, quirky shops and open-air market stalls, sells all sorts of things from local honey and embroidered goods to vintage clothes and vinyl records.

Another must-see is Petrovaradin Fortress, Novi Sad's most iconic landmark and venue for major cultural events including an annual music festival. It also has an interesting tower with a 'reversed clock' where the small hand shows minutes, and the big hand shows hours. The reason behind this was to enable sailors and fishermen on the Danube to see the time from a distance. ●

Get on board

CroisiEurope's 11-night Danube, Budapest and Balkan Peninsula cruise aboard *MS Vivaldi* from Romania to Hungary via Bucharest, Predeal, Sighisoara, Brasov, Sibiu, Bran, Sinaia, Ruse, Belgrade, Novi Sad, Osijek, Mohacs and Budapest, departs 25 September 2026, from £2,921pp.



Save the date!

Join a day ship visit onboard *Expedition* on 27 April 2026.

Register your interest by emailing outsidesalesuk@gadventures.com



LEADER OF THE PACK

With an updated ship, refreshed itineraries and a new line-up of Arctic cruises, G Adventures is poised to take your customers on a polar exploration of a lifetime. Words by **Will Payne**

It used to be the case that a polar cruise was a once-in-a-lifetime investment, where the cost of traversing to these glacial wonderlands would prohibit many travellers from turning their dreams into reality.

Thankfully, this is no longer the case, with regional experts G Adventures offering cruises to the Arctic's icy fjords and Antarctica's penguin-packed shores for far less than in years gone by. Indeed, travellers today can embark on an 11-day expedition itinerary to Antarctica for just £5,249pp.

Designed to get sailors into the heart of the action, G Adventures' small-group polar expeditions are expert-led, with historians, biologists, ornithologists and geologists joining guests on board to bring every frosty glacier, hidden rookery and dramatic fjord to life.

“Experts bring every frosty glacier, hidden rookery and dramatic fjord to life

What's more, a trip with G Adventures includes Zodiac cruises through towering icebergs, visits to abandoned whaling stations and, for braver guests, polar plunges in freezing waters.

IN WITH THE NEW

To enhance its offering in these regions, G Adventures has introduced a new, more fuel-efficient expedition vessel for its upcoming Antarctica and Arctic seasons.

The ship, which will replace and take the name of the company's current vessel, *Expedition*, will embark on its

first Antarctica cruise in October 2025, having undergone major renovations to its engine to make it more fuel-efficient than its predecessor.

This played a critical role in G Adventures' decision to change ship operations as the line strives to reduce its environmental footprint across all operations. The company's founder, Bruce Poon Tip, says the new ship marks an exciting step for the company's polar programme, securing the future of its small-ship expeditions and allowing room for expansion.

“While we all wanted to continue to operate our little red ship, it became apparent that doing so would not be good for the environment,” he explains. “We are always looking for ways to evolve, so when the opportunity for this new ship presented itself, we knew we had to take it.”



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT The small-group expeditions get sailors into the heart of the action; the new ship is more fuel-efficient to reduce its carbon footprint; Zodiac excursions allow travellers to experience unforgettable moments

Initial calculations by the firm estimate that the overall carbon footprint per person per day will drop by up to 30 per cent with the new ship. The 102-metre vessel has capacity for 128 guests and features a restaurant and bar, a presentation lounge, a library and fitness studio, as well as observation and sun decks and outdoor jacuzzis. The 70 cabins on board offer either an ocean-facing porthole or larger windows and ensuite bathrooms.

NEW ADVENTURES

The ship will operate five Antarctica itineraries and mark the company's return to the Arctic for the first time in five years, with four newly reimagined sailings in 2026.

"This is huge news for us," Poon Tip adds. "Our travellers and agent partners have been asking when we will return to the Arctic, and I'm delighted to say the time is now."

"We've been leading the way in small-ship expeditions for more than 25 years and, in true G style, we're not only going

back - we're going beyond - with the addition of completely new itineraries, packed with wildlife and natural history."

On a southbound Arctic cruise, guests will have the chance to spot humpback whales, which are known to feed in the Greenland Sea in the summer months, as well as orcas, minke and walrus. Back on board, cruise-goers can enjoy lectures by expedition staff in the lounge before heading to the observation deck to take in the spectacular landscapes.

Elsewhere, on the Beyond the Arctic Circle: Tromsø to Svalbard cruise, millions of seabirds, including black-legged kittiwakes, puffins and little auks, beckon on Bear Island. The cruise then sails along the coast of Svalbard, where dramatic fjords tumble into the icy iridescent waters.

As cruising to the world's most enchanting regions becomes more and more accessible, G Adventures is perfectly positioned to help a new strain of customer reach these remote utopias in style and comfort. ●

Get on board

G Adventures' standout polar cruises

- An 11-day Antarctica Classic cruise aboard *Expedition*, roundtrip from Ushuaia via the Drake Passage, South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic Peninsula, departs 13 March 2026, from £5,249pp.
- A 15-day Arctic Highlights Southbound cruise aboard *Expedition*, from Longyearbyen to Reykjavik via Svalbard and Greenland National Park, departs 3 August 2026, from £6,549pp.
- A 21-day Spirit of Shackleton cruise aboard *Expedition*, roundtrip from Ushuaia via the Drake Passage, South Shetland Islands, the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands, departs 11 January 2026, from £14,319pp.

Prices don't include international return flights



For more information, visit
gadventures.com

A close-up photograph of a rocky, brownish-grey landscape in Antarctica, showing textures of lichen and rock. A solid red rectangular box is positioned at the top center, containing the word "Antarctica" in white.

Antarctica

THE FROZEN CONTINENT

Ever more adventurous options are opening up to cruise-goers eager to explore the stellar wildlife and gritty history of Antarctica's forgotten corners, says **Mark Stratton**



“Antarctica is out of sight and out of mind,” says Marty Garwood, expedition leader for Polar Latitudes, during a recent cruise on the small ice-class vessel, *Seaventure*. With an icecap up to 4.8km deep, the sheer magnetism of snowy mountains and bays choked by blue-tinged bergs – not to mention the constant wildlife interactions – makes a cruise to the frozen continent an experience of a lifetime. Earlier in a season that runs from November to March, penguin rookeries thrill visitors as the new-born chicks battle for survival. By late season, before 24-hour darkness descends, whales leap out of the water, energised by their full bellies after feasting all summer on krill.

A FIRST-TIMER'S GUIDE TO ANTARCTICA

Onboard AE Expeditions' *Greg Mortimer*, on my first morning on the Antarctic Peninsula, I awake in Paradise Harbour. It is snowing and -3°C. Gentoo penguins porpoise through the brash ice and humpback whales' rasping blows merge with the gunshot ricochets of calving glaciers. It is everything I imagined Antarctica to be.

For 75 per cent of travellers, the peninsula is the first exposure to Antarctica. It rises like a crooked witch's finger pointing towards South America, to Ushuaia, two-days' sail away across the Drake Passage. This is the quickest and cheapest way to see Antarctica, with trips lasting roughly 11 days. Voyages explore the fractured archipelago of the peninsula's western Bellingshausen Sea side, with some vessels taking guests as far as the Antarctic Circle.

Typically, guests get to enjoy twice daily excursions via Zodiacs to cruise around icebergs or head onshore to visit penguin colonies or historic British bases maintained by the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust. The quirkiest offering by far is Port Lockroy base's Penguin Post Office, where guests can mail a postcard to friends and family (given that it's the southernmost post office in the world, don't be surprised if they beat it home).

Nowadays, peninsula trips are more multi-faceted. They feature citizen science projects that help analysts learn more about everything from clouds and birdlife to phytoplankton. ►



“Citizen science adds value to your voyage by collecting data for researchers who do not have the financial resources to come here to study,” says Polar Latitudes’ science coordinator Dr Annette Bombosch. Meanwhile, other commonplace activities include kayaking, dry-suit snorkelling, helicopter flights and spending a night on the ice in durable bivouac bags.

THE WEDDELL’S FEARSOME ICE

Don’t be deterred by the tales of woe and shipwrecks of the magnificently remote Weddell Sea. Just a small percentage of voyages sail down the Antarctic Peninsula’s eastern flank into the Weddell. Historically, it was notorious for trapping ships in a huge circulatory clockwise gyre of ice, most notably Shackleton’s vessel, *Endurance*, which sank there in 1915.

Yet voyages into it feel special and unique. When I first entered the sea to the southernmost limit ships typically reach, an area named Snow Hill Island, our vessel was only the sixth to make it there that season. “The Weddell has certainly been overlooked due to the challenges of shifting ice,” says Alex Mudd of Swoop Travel. “But venturing into it is expedition

Selling tips

1 Guests can enjoy countless shoreside excursions on an Antarctica cruise, each offering wildlife encounters they’ll be hard pressed to experience anywhere else in the world.

2 The best – and in some cases only – way to see Antarctica is via a cruise. Sailings to the White Continent can open the door to a new strain of high-net-worth clients who may not have cruised before, but have dreamt of an adventure to the end of the world.

3 Citizen science experiences offer travellers the opportunity to give back to the delicate environments they’re visiting, which will resonate well with climate-conscious travellers.

cruising par excellence, with the added excitement of following in Shackleton’s footsteps.”

Expect to see huge quantities of drifting ice shelf and massive Adelie penguin rookeries. And while the history of Shackleton’s travails are revealed during lectures, Snow Hill tells the gripping yarn of Otto Nordenskjold, trapped there from 1901 to 1904. You can visit a perfectly preserved hut where the Swedish scientist overwintered while awaiting rescue. The most ambitious activity is visiting the peninsula’s only accessible colony of emperor penguins, which involves a helicopter flight off your vessel.

EXPLORERS AND EMPERORS

Comparatively few expedition ships make the Ross Sea. Midway along southern Antarctica’s shoreline, the Ross Ice Shelf is the world’s largest extent of floating sea-ice (the size of France) located at the head of the Ross Sea. It’s inaccessible apart from a few Austral summer months (from late December to early March) and typically accessed from New Zealand.

Heritage Expeditions offers a 28-day cruise each January. “Our voyage sails further south into the frozen continent than any sea route and into the realm of

Images: Mark Stratton

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Kayaks and Zodiacs get you closer to the breathtaking scenery; penguins are a frequent sight all over Antarctica; the beaches of the Falkands are unspoilt and a haven for wildlife; citizen science allows passengers to do their bit for research

“ South Georgia presents one of the most thrilling wildlife spectacles on Earth

24-hour daylight during the 10-12 days we spend in the region,” says expedition leader, Aaron Russ. “The itinerary is dictated by nature, so guests may enjoy Zodiac safaris under the midnight sun, visit the world’s largest Adelie penguin colony at Cape Adare at 2am or watch pods of Orca hunting Toothfish along the edge of the Ross Ice Shelf at any hour of the day or night.” The world’s tallest penguin, the emperor, has an ice-shelf breeding ground at Cape Washington in Terra Nova Bay, where 20,000 males brace for winter.

Its relative geographical proximity to the South Pole has also left a fabulous legacy of historical sites, as a result of

epic early 20th-century expeditions. You can visit Shackleton’s hut at Cape Royds in McMurdo Sound, built for his 1907-09 failed Nimrod Expedition to the South Pole. There’s also Robert Falcon Scott’s Hut at Cape Evans, constructed in 1911. Kitted out with bedding, maps, kitchen utensils, and clothing, it looks as if his Terra Nova Expedition crew upped and left just yesterday. Scott reached the pole in 1912 only to tragically perish on the return journey.

WILDLIFE WONDERLAND

If spotting Antarctic wildlife is your customers’ primary reason for booking a cruise to this enchanting region, think about a longer three-week voyage incorporating the Falklands and, most notably, South Georgia. The latter is Antarctica turned up to 11. After recovering from wholesale slaughter by sealers and whalers that ended by the mid-1960s, South Georgia presents one of the most thrilling wildlife spectacles on Earth today.

“It feels like you are in a David Attenborough documentary, where you’re completely surrounded by wildlife that doesn’t care about your presence,” says Dan Brown, Polar Latitudes’ naturalist onboard *Seaventure*. Major sights include St Andrews and Gold Harbour to see King penguins numbering several hundred thousand and beaches wriggling with fur seal pups.

South Georgia also witnessed the denouement of Shackleton’s epic escape from Antarctica. In 1916 he arrived on the island in a flimsy lifeboat

after a death-defying sea crossing. He then traversed the island’s glaciated spine on foot to find safety at Stromness whaling station on the east coast. At Grytviken’s ex-whaling station, travellers can visit the site of his grave where he was buried after passing away in 1922. Trips sometimes offer guided hikes following his cross-island journey, the best of which is a four-hour yomp from Fortuna Bay to Stromness.

TRANS-ANTARCTIC AMBITION

In 1914 Shackleton launched an ambitious plan to cross Antarctica. It ended very badly. In recent years such ambition has been mirrored by ever more adventurous and extensive expedition voyages tracing rarely visited corners of Antarctica. These voyages may involve 30-40 days at sea, typified by crossings between the eastern to western reaches of the 7th continent – Australasia and South America.

Only a few thousand people make these expensive and infrequent voyages each year, costing between £35,000 and £50,000. From 2026, AE Expeditions’ *Douglas Mawson* will make a 34-day trans-antarctic traverse from Dunedin to Ushuaia, while Ponant’s *Le Commandant Charcot* is at sea for 29 days following a similar route. ●

Get on Board

Polar Latitude’s 14-day Crossing the Circle cruise aboard *Ocean Albatros*, return from Ushuaia to the Antarctic Circle, departs 22 December 2026, from £11,310pp.

Swan Hellenic’s 10-day Antarctic Peninsula Odyssey cruise aboard *SH Diana*, return from Ushuaia to the Antarctic Peninsula, departs 9 January 2026, from £12,100pp.

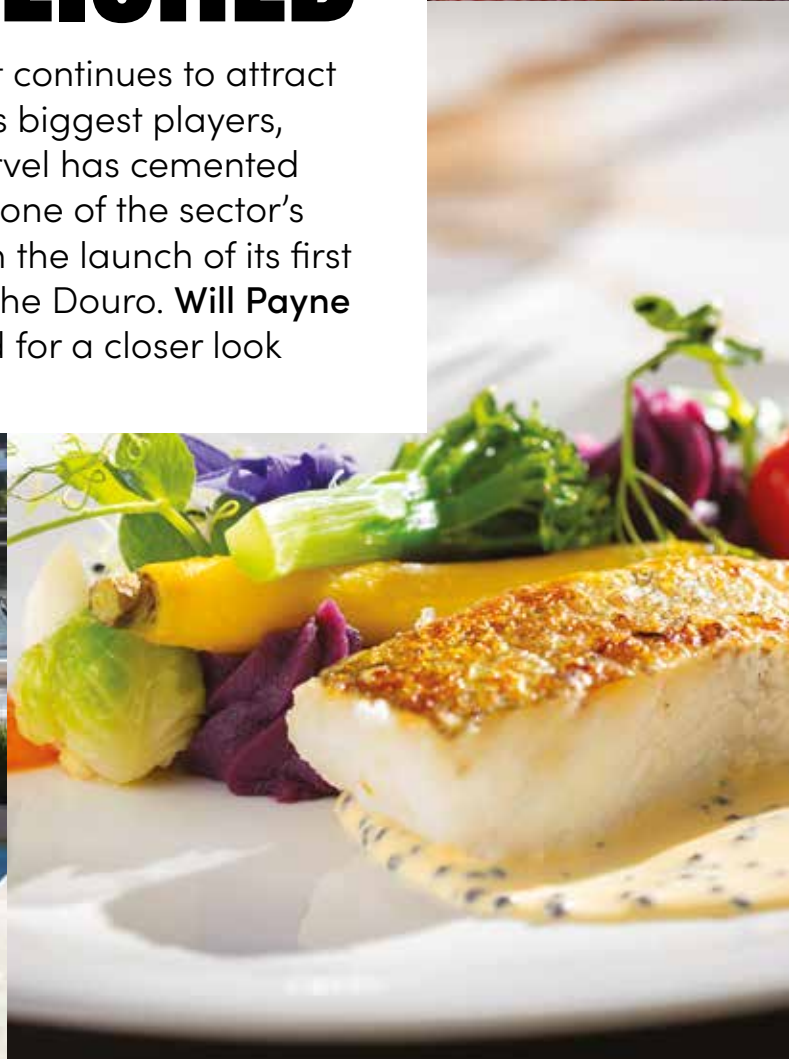


MS
Estrela



ELEGANCE EMBELLISHED

As the river market continues to attract some of cruise's biggest players, APT & Travelmarvel has cemented its reputation as one of the sector's leading names with the launch of its first new-build ship on the Douro. **Will Payne** heads onboard for a closer look





I never fancied myself as a professional grape crusher. But according to my tour guide, Francisco, once upon a time I would have fit in just fine at Quinta da Pacheca in Lagares thanks to my inability to stand still.

His interesting observation comes during an excursion to the port and wine vineyard as part of *MS Estrela*'s four-night naming ceremony along the Douro River, which I'm lucky to be a part of.

This method of smashing grapes with your feet was once the only way to produce Port and similar wines, but today mechanical alternatives are often used to speed up the process. However, some vineyards still use the tried and tested method of stomping to create their very best wines "as you can't beat tradition", Francisco ensures.

“Options to entice new cruisers include a putting green and sunken top-deck BBQ

It's clear that this mantra also ran true for the APT Travel Group when designing *Estrela*. Having taken inspiration from its home waterway, the ship is the embodiment of classical elegance with touches of modernity.

While offering a range of options to entice new cruisers, like a putting green and sunken top-deck BBQ area, the 120-passenger ship also has familiar touches like shared dining, sail away parties and guided touring options for fans of tradition.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Cabins are very spacious; travellers are encouraged to relax and unwind; *MS Estrela* is the embodiment of classical elegance; the restaurant showcases Portuguese and international flavours; the Sun Deck boasts a sizeable swimming pool

ALL ABOARD

The ship is sleek and simple throughout – think emerald green monstera plants and wicker furniture paired with beige tones – and encourages travellers to relax and unwind, which makes it a great option for the over-60s market.

Cabins range in size from 144-250 square feet, allowing for ample room to move around. Beds are large and each room has a seating area. Bathrooms are stocked with enough amenities to last ►



the duration of a cruise, and there is enough storage space for two travellers.

The vessel's main restaurant serves breakfast and lunch buffet style and dinner is à la carte. I opt for prime beef medallion with foie gras and red wine jus, which is portioned well and full of minty flavour, followed by an almond tart with vanilla ice cream and raspberry sauce. This is a somewhat traditional river cruise meal, but the vessel also offers octopus rice, spicy chicken thighs and BBQ beef skewers if guests prefer something a bit different.

For breakfast, travellers will find an omelette station as well as cooked and cold options. In the lounge bar, snacks like biscuits, fruit and finger sandwiches are available throughout the day. Cruisers will struggle to go hungry.

Drinks, meanwhile, include top-shelf liquors, Super Bok beer, wines, soft drinks and tea and coffee, all of which are included in the cruise price. There's a self-serve coffee machine in the lounge, as well as a fountain which offers still and sparkling water.

While the food and drink options stand their ground as a highlight of the trip, they wouldn't be the same with the stellar service provided by the crew, who are attentive, friendly and helpful.

“ With *MS Estrela*, Travelmarvel guests experience a five-star ship at a lower rate

Evening entertainment options range from live music and Portuguese folk dancing to expert-led wine and food tastings. During the day, workshops and cultural presentations take place in the ship's lounge.

SHORESIDE SOIREE

As well as a range of onboard amenities, *MS Estrela* offers several immersive excursions thanks to the APT Travel Group's rich history in guided touring.

One of those is a visit to the Quinta da Pacheca vineyard in Lagares. The property dates back to the 16th century when it was a mere collection of vines which belonged to the Monasteries of Salzedas and St João de Tarouca. In 1903, the building changed ownership and began the process of modernisation.

Today, the 75 hectare site is one of the most visited estates in the Douro Region and offers guided tours, tastings and a gift shop with hundreds of varieties of

port and wine available for purchase. If visitors spend a certain amount, any crates they purchase will be shipped to their home address at no extra cost.

Other tours include a guided visit to the Gardens and Palace of Mateus in Pinhão. The museum is owned by the Count of Vila Relá and guests can discover the 18th-century palace's connection to Mateus Rose wine, with the chance to try a glass or two.

As part of the company's Insider Experience, travellers will also enjoy a flamenco show and lunch in Salamanca after they've had the chance to tour the city's sunlit sandstone buildings and palace-like university.

“THE TRADE IS AT THE HEART”

While onboard, I catch up with APT & Travelmarvel UK and Europe managing director Paul Melinis and head of sales UK & Europe Brad Bennetts to find out how the company intends to position the vessel in the UK market.

“We've got really ambitious growth plans; we want to double the business within five years. As we go further into that journey, it becomes more challenging, but we've done extremely well over the last three years,” Melinis says.



"*MS Estrela* is a different proposition and a first of its kind, where we operate APT and Travelmarvel guests on the same vessel, giving APT guests more inclusions and Travelmarvel guests more freedom and options."

Melinis highlights *MS Estrela*'s value proposition, with Travelmarvel guests experiencing a five-star ship at a lower rate. "There's a huge opportunity there for our trade partners," he adds.

Bennetts touches on the importance of agents to the success of the vessel. "The trade is at the heart of what we do," he says. "We have a team that is focused on our partners, which helps us drive our distribution and market share."

Three standout *MS Estrela* sailings

1 A seven-night Douro Discovery cruise, round-trip Porto via Régua, Vega De Terrón, Salamanca and Pinhão, departs 2 July 2026, from £2,795pp.

2 A 10-night Lisbon with Douro Discovery tour and cruise, from Lisbon to Porto via Régua, Vega De Terrón, Salamanca and Pinhão, departs 1 June 2026, from £4,495pp.

3 A 13-night Essence of Portugal and Douro Discovery tour and cruise, from Lisbon to Porto via Sintra, Obidos, Aveiro, Régua, Vega De Terrón, Salamanca and Pinhão, departs 3 April 2026, from £5,695pp.



EXPERT VERDICT

Clare Dudley, managing director, Ponders Travel

"With its modern boutique style, *MS Estrela* is set to attract a younger audience to the stunning River Douro. The ship's chic décor has been meticulously designed to provide a sense of luxury in every corner, from beautifully appointed accommodations to stylish furnishings. *MS Estrela* is ideal for milestone celebrations, making it the perfect choice for group trips in your 30s, 40s, 50s, or 60s. Onboard entertainment includes hosted parties, where you get the chance to meet fellow passengers, live music from local performers, presentations from experts and engaging quizzes."

APT & Travelmarvel has developed into a leading river cruise and touring company since its inception in the 1970s, but its methods of ensuring a ship is a success remain rooted in tradition, with agents playing a key role. And despite drawing these conclusions from my time onboard *MS Estrelan*, I can't help but wonder if I've missed my calling as a professional grape stomper. 🍇

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Enjoy panoramic views in comfort in the lounge; the omelette station offers a wide choice of fillings made to order; balcony suites have electric slide-down windows; all bathrooms come loaded with amenities

The CLIA View

Andy Harmer OBE takes a closer look at expedition cruising and how agents can use this growing sector to bolster sales and attract new business

Cruise is evolving – and with it, new horizons are opening for agents eager to expand their product offerings and meet shifting traveller expectations. Among the fastest-growing sectors is expedition cruising: a blend of adventure, exclusivity and once-in-a-lifetime experiences that is capturing the imagination of travellers.

Whether it's the icy majesty of Antarctica, the pristine wilderness of Alaska or the unique ecosystems and warming waters of the Galapagos, expedition voyages are redefining what it means to explore the world by sea.

Guests no longer want to simply visit a destination – they want to immerse themselves in it. This growing appetite for authentic, off-the-beaten-path experiences is translating into strong market growth.

Globally, the sector has more than doubled in size since 2016 thanks to the launch of a raft of new ships that blend adventure with onboard comforts, education areas and observation spaces.



Expedition voyages appeal across a wide customer base. For seasoned cruisers, they represent a bold progression from more traditional itineraries. For newcomers – particularly those who see themselves more as land-based adventurers – they offer a compelling alternative to standard package holidays.

The sailing itself goes far beyond the ship. Expedition cruises are shaped by expert-led excursions, close encounters with wildlife and immersive cultural insight – often in places so remote they can only be reached by specialist vessels. These are bucket-list adventures like no other.

And sustainability remains a key priority for the sector, with a strong focus on safeguarding local environments and supporting destination communities. From adopting cleaner fuel technologies

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

Expedition cruises let travellers see wildlife with a wow factor; Andy Harmer says these types of cruises appeal to a wide customer base

and enhancing waste reduction to improving water treatment and investing in ecosystem projects, the industry is committed to responsible exploration that leaves a positive impact.

To ensure agents are equipped to thrive in this market, we continue to expand our support and training. For instance, we recently hosted our inaugural CLIA Expedition Showcase in Longyearbyen, Svalbard. Attendees had the rare opportunity to explore a range of ships from leading expedition brands including AE Expeditions, Albatros Expeditions, Atlas Ocean Voyages, Ponant, Quark Expeditions and Swan Hellenic, while taking part in business sessions, excursions and seminars.

The Showcase followed on from our one-day Expedition Forum and complements the Expedition Champion learning programme, which is open again for applications from September, giving agents practical tools and insight.

For agents ready to broaden their horizons and cater to a fast-growing group of experience-driven travellers, expedition cruising represents an ideal next step. CLIA is here to guide the way, with resources, knowledge and opportunities to match your ambition.

Andy Harmer OBE is managing director of CLIA UK & Ireland 



“

Expedition cruises are shaped by expert-led excursions, close encounters with wildlife and immersive cultural insight



WORLD OF **Cruising**.TV

**SERIES 3 COMING TO YOUR
SCREENS IN SEPTEMBER!**

TUNE IN FOR EXPERT ADVICE
FROM **SIMON CALDER**, EXCLUSIVE
CRUISE DEALS AND COMPETITIONS

VISIT WORLD OF CRUISING.TV OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE.



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

 **INDEPENDENT**


ATLAS
OCEAN VOYAGES®


RIVIERA
TRAVEL

FEATURING

 **HAVILA** VOYAGES

 **PRINCESS**


MARELLA
CRUISES

 **Virgin**
VOYAGES

Explore Your Next Adventure with Exclusive Savings



AIR CREDIT
UP TO £1,600
PER STATEROOM



2-NIGHT
HOTEL
STAY



ENHANCED
UNLIMITED
WIFI PACKAGE



ATLAS
OCEAN VOYAGES®

INTIMATE YACHTING EXPEDITIONS™

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



ARCTIC



BARCELONA



ANTARCTIC

HIGH ARTIC EXPLORER LONGYEARBYEN ROUNDTrip

26 AUGUST 2025 | 9 NIGHTS

BEST AVAILABLE FARE PER GUEST **£4,499**

Add flights, hotel & transfers from **£299pp**

PASSION OF SPAIN BARCELONA TO LISBON

7 OCTOBER 2025 | 8 NIGHTS

BEST AVAILABLE FARE PER GUEST **£2,499**

Add flights, hotel & transfers from **£299pp**

ANTARCTIC DISCOVERY USHUAIA ROUNDTrip

28 NOVEMBER 2025 | 9 NIGHTS

BEST AVAILABLE FARE PER GUEST **£5,599**

Add flights, hotel & transfers from **£999pp**



ALWAYS INCLUDED BY ATLAS

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

TO BOOK, CALL OUR VOYAGE SPECIALISTS AT **0808 304 7550**
VISIT **WWW.ATLASOCEANVOYAGESUK.COM**



VIEW SPECIAL
OFFERS