

THE VOICE OF THE CRUISE INDUSTRY

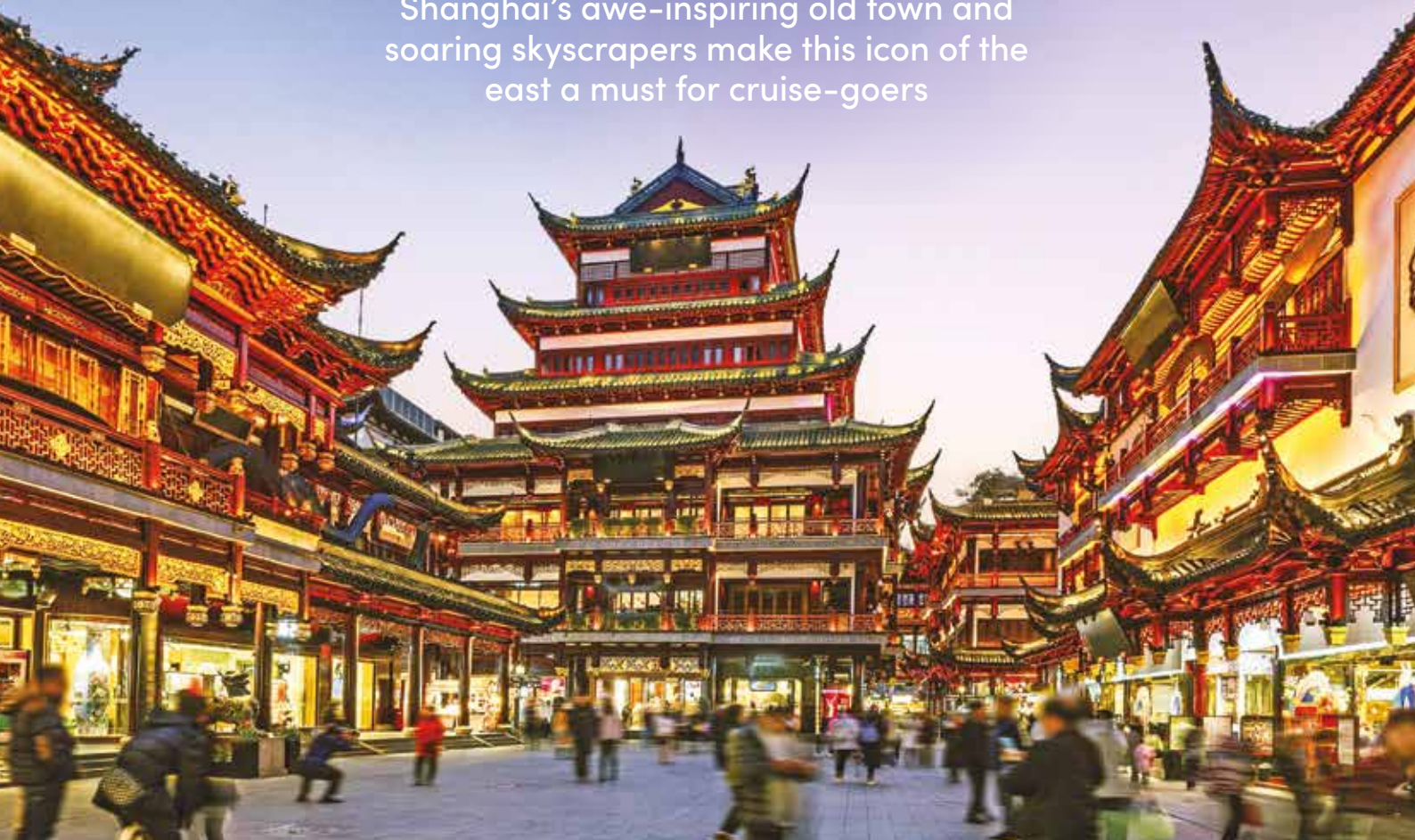
CRUISE

Trade News

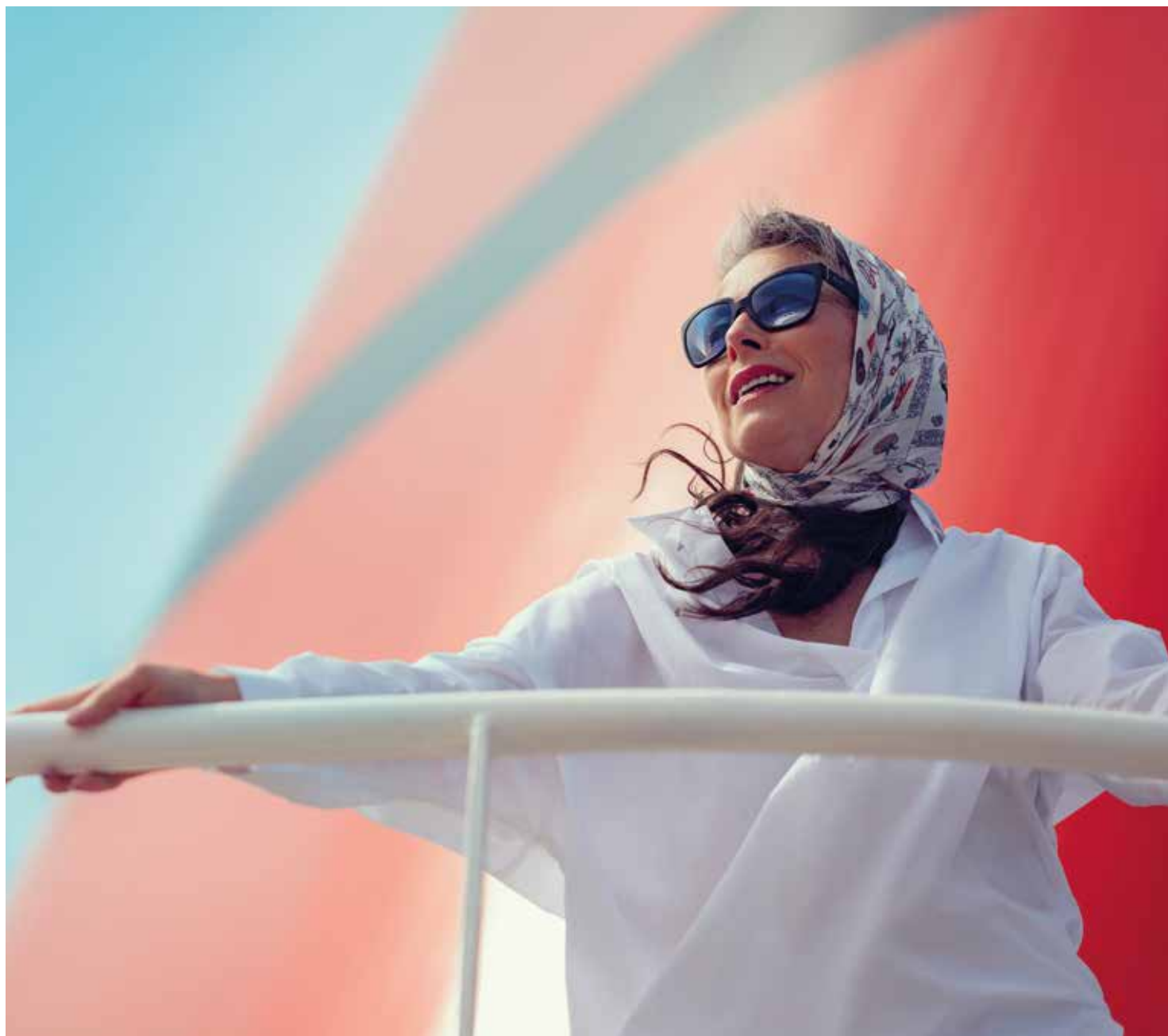
cruisetradenews.com

TEMPLE RUN

Shanghai's awe-inspiring old town and
soaring skyscrapers make this icon of the
east a must for cruise-goers



INSIDE: **CTN INVESTIGATES** WHAT CAN AGENTS DO TO RESTORE FAITH IN THE HIGH STREET? P41
INTERVIEW MEET ALBATROS EXPEDITIONS' NEW CEO, P48 • **REVIEW** VIVA ENJOY, P54



What is the Cunard difference?

It's about iconic voyages, the finest restaurants and bars at sea, unique enrichment and wellness, and distinctive style and White Star Service. It's what makes us who we are, and why our guests love to travel with us.

You'll find more information on each of our differentiators along with marketing copy and imagery for you to use within your own communications on shinerewardsclub.com, enabling you to ask your customers the question

'Why cruise, when you can Cunard?'



CUNARD

QUEEN MARY 2

QUEEN VICTORIA

QUEEN ELIZABETH

QUEEN ANNE



WELCOME...

TO THE MARCH/APRIL ISSUE

It's not that I don't enjoy the sight of London traffic or Pentonville Prison's decaying façade, but if I had to choose between the view from my office window or the one I'm currently enjoying from my stateroom on *TUI Skyla*, it's a no-brainer. In fact, the sight of the immense Buda Castle lit by the morning sun as it paints cream and peachy blotches onto the surface of the Danube River would rival most cityscapes.

I have the CLIA RiverView Conference to thank for this welcome change in scenery, where, along with some 400 agents, I've spent the last three days listening to lines share their ambitious projections for the sector. While some revealed news of their record-breaking wave period sales, others effused about the soaring popularity of the Douro, the Seine and the Mekong.

Evidently, enthusiasm for the river sector is growing, and Celebrity Cruises' decision to launch 10 ships on Europe's waterways in 2027 indicates that demand won't dissipate any time soon. Our latest Behind the Headlines feature on *page 16* shares some useful tips on how agents can take advantage of this growing interest to increase their river sales. Meanwhile, CTN deputy editor Will Payne joins the

On the cover: Shutterstock



ABOVE The Danube is one of several in-demand rivers

inaugural sailing of *VIVA Enjoy* to see how the river product is keeping up with the latest consumer trends. That's on *page 54*.

We also turn our attention to another sector that's experiencing impressive growth in 2025, with our Expedition Special spotlighting the hottest destinations for families and adventure-minded cruise-goers.

Happy reading!

A stylized signature of Jack Carter.

Jack Carter
Editor

cruisetradenews.com

FOLLOW ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MORE



@cruisetradenews



Cruise Trade News



Cruise Trade News



Cruise Trade News



SMALL DETAILS. BIG DIFFERENCE.



AGENT INCENTIVES

We have exciting incentives running from January to March including FAM trips, weekend city breaks, fantastic prizes and more! Simply make a booking with Avalon Waterways between 1 January – 31 March to be in with a chance of winning. No need to email us we'll contact the winners directly.

CRUISING ELEVATED



DANUBE DREAMS

8 Day River Cruise Budapest to Vilshofen
Visit four countries in eight days: Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and Germany.

Prices with flights included from London Heathrow, London Gatwick, Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh.

Deluxe Stateroom price from £1,999pp*

Panorama Suite price from £2,549pp*

Cruise available Apr - Nov 2025; Mar - Nov 2026.



BONJOUR BORDEAUX: CHATEAUX, WINERIES & CHARMING VILLAGES

10 Day River Cruise Paris to Bordeaux
Enjoy a FREE two-night stay in Paris before cruising on the Garonne and Dordogne from Bordeaux.

Prices with flights included from London Heathrow, London Gatwick, Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh.

Deluxe Stateroom price from £1,999pp*

Panorama Suite price from £2,549pp*

Cruise available Mar - Nov 2025; Mar - Nov 2026.

Call 0330 058 8285 | [AvalonWaterways.co.uk](https://www.AvalonWaterways.co.uk)

Join our Facebook page and have access to our best deals, incentive news and much more!



*Prices based on 22 of July 2025 (Danube Dreams) and 13 April 2025 (Bonjour Bordeaux: Chateaux, Wineries & Charming Villages), based on a twin share in a Deluxe Stateroom and includes round-trip economy flights from London Heathrow, London Gatwick, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle and Edinburgh subject to airline availability. Other airports are available at a supplement. Please note this offer has no cash alternative, however, alternate schedules may be available at an additional cost. Limited to new bookings for UK originating travellers and economy class air tickets. Book a select 2025 Bordeaux Avalon cruise and receive the extension portion of 2 nights in Paris for free. Booking must be made, under deposit and discount applied between February 7, 2025 and April 17, 2025. Not applicable to custom tours and charters. Not applicable on TBA space. Applies to new 2025 bookings only. Select departures only. Additional restrictions may apply; see Travel Terms & Conditions for details. These promotions cannot be applied retroactively to existing bookings, offer is not combinable with any other offers aside from welcome-back credits. Offer does not apply to instant purchase air or groups of 8 passengers or more. Promotional discounts do not carry forward on voluntarily changed air bookings; other promotions at time of change may be available. Once ticketed, air reservations are subject to change/cancellation penalties of between £35 per ticket and 100% of ticket value. Flight inclusive cruises available on selected 2025 dates. Flight schedules, routings and air carriers are at the discretion of Globus family of brands. These offers are subject to availability & can be withdrawn at any time. Good Housekeeping Reader Recommended survey of Avalon panoramic views, 150 Good Housekeeping readers, 2023. All the package holidays we sell are covered by a scheme of financial protection; all our flight-inclusive holidays are fully protected by the CAA's ATOL scheme and our non-flight holidays are fully protected by ABTA's scheme of financial protection. (correct at time of print 7 March 25).



CONTENTS

ISSUE 134 | MARCH/APRIL 2025

CRUISE Trade News

Editor

Jack Carter

Deputy Editor

Will Payne

Contributors

Mark Andrews, Kaye Holland,
Sarah Holt, Gilly Pickup

Art Director

Phil Couzens

Sub Editor

Heather Ford

Production Manager

Barnaby Moore

Senior Brand Partnerships Manager

Phabien Thompson

Phabien.Thompson@realresponsemedia.com

Senior Commercial Manager

Nathan Emtage

Nathan.Emtage@realresponsemedia.com

Chief Operating Officer

Lina Slater

CEO

Chris Pitchford

For subscriptions & enquiries:

020 8444 2554

info@cruisetradenews.com

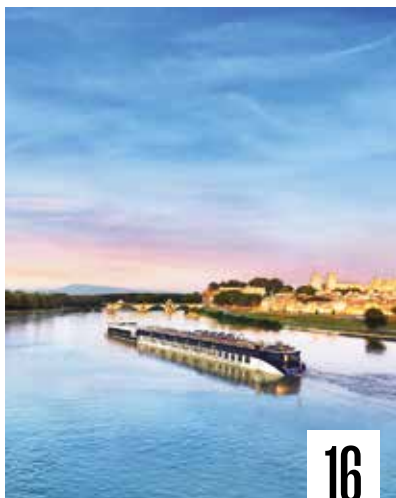
Printed in the United Kingdom by Micropress.
Reproduction is not permitted without the express
written consent of the editor. All efforts are made to
ensure factual accuracy at time of publication.

Follow us on Instagram and
Facebook 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



16



20

INSIGHT

6 Cruise Corner

Your essential industry news roundup

8 Column

Why booking early can pay big

10 Sector updates

The latest from river and luxury

16 Behind the Headlines

What does Celebrity Cruises' launch
into river mean for the sector?

21 Wave Awards 2025

It's time to get your entries in!

TRAINING

28 Learn & Sell

Celebrity Cruises in focus

30 What's in It For You?

Fam trips, incentives and more

37 On the road with...

Celestyal's Jo Reid

FEATURES

38 Ship of the Month

All aboard MSC World America

41 CTN Investigates

Gen Z is turning away from the high
street. How can agents win them back?

46 Trading places

What goes down on a Cunard sales call

48 In conversation with...

Albatros Expeditions' Jakob Lunø

EXPLORING

51 Port Focus

What to eat, see and do on both sides
of Shanghai's Huangpu River

54 Cruise Review: VIVA Enjoy

Will Payne hops aboard VIVA Cruises'
newest ship

60 South Africa

What to expect from a cruise along
the continent's Atlantic coast

64 Rail journeys

Elevate a South Africa cruise with
an escorted train holiday

FINAL WORD

66 The CLIA View

Andy Harmer OBE on why the future's
bright for the river sector



60

Cruise Corner

CARNIVAL SWOOPS AFTER JETLINE FAILURE

> The Carnival cruise brands have come to the aid of passengers left in limbo following the failure of Jetline Travel Ltd.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) confirmed the company ceased trading as an Atol holder on 6 March, impacting potentially thousands of customers.

In response, Princess Cruises, Cunard, Holland America Line and P&O Cruises contacted impacted guests to assist with alternative travel arrangements.

A statement issued by the brands read: "We have contacted our impacted guests and our priority remains in supporting them."

Jetline and its subsidiaries – which included Jetline Cruises – was covered to carry 4,790 passengers.



CLIA RESPONDS TO TRUMP TAX THREAT

C LIA has detailed the cruise industry's "substantial" contribution to the US economy after newly confirmed US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick said that president Trump will be ordering crackdowns on cruise operators.

Appearing on *Fox News*, Lutnick said: "You ever see a cruise ship with an American flag on the back? They have flags of like Liberia or Panama. None of them pay taxes."

A CLIA spokesperson said: "Cruise lines pay substantial taxes and fees in the US – nearly \$2.5 billion – representing 65 per cent of the total taxes cruise lines pay worldwide, even though only a small percentage of operations occur in US waters."

"Foreign flagged ships that visit the US are treated the same way for taxation purposes as US flagged ships visiting foreign ports, which provides consistent reciprocal treatment across international shipping."



SCAN

The CTN Take: Why Trump's America spells bad news for cruise

ROL DONATES £20K TO MACMILLAN

Independent cruise retailer ROL Cruise has made a donation of £20,000 to Macmillan Cancer Support.

The donation was presented by ROL Cruise chief executive Rosie Cairns and managing director Sarah Wikevand to Alex Rowe, a regional fundraising representative from the charity.

Macmillan Cancer Support provides services for individuals and families affected by cancer, from offering practical advice and emotional support to funding specialist healthcare professionals.

The donation will assist Macmillan in continuing to deliver its work in Essex and across the UK.

Rowe said: "A huge thank you to the truly wonderful team at ROL Cruise for your amazing support."

Macmillan provides a wide range of services for people affected by cancer



SOLO CRUISING ON THE RISE

A new survey has revealed that solo travellers now make up five per cent of the cruise market. The findings, from a survey of more than 8,000 cruise.co.uk and seascanner.co.uk customers, also found that solo cruisers are "highly likely" to recommend a sailing, with 70 per cent stating that they would encourage friends, family or colleagues to embark on a solo voyage.

Price and itinerary ranked as the most important factors for the majority of both sets of travellers, ranging between 60-70 per cent. Meanwhile, cabin selection and onboard facilities are more of a concern to around 50 per cent of those polled.

APPOINTMENT



Frost joins Iglu

Iglu Cruise has appointed former commercial and product lead for The Cruise Line Paul Frost as its new head of tour operations.

Frost, who has also held roles with World Travel Holdings (WTH) and Fred. Olsen Travel, joined the online travel agency earlier this week.

Dave Mills, Iglu Cruise chief commercial officer, said: "We're delighted to welcome someone of Paul's calibre to our team, and are looking forward to expanding our range, thanks to his drive, expertise and passion."

The appointment comes after Iglu's research found that, over the past six years, the Canary Islands has seen a 7954 per cent increase in consumer demand. Cruises to the Mediterranean are also proving increasingly popular, with a 6228 per cent increase. Hawaii posted a 2935 per cent uptick in demand; Antarctica saw a 660 per cent rise.

Over the past six years, the Canary Islands has seen a 7954% increase in consumer demand

Unlocking value

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' head of sales **Geoff Ridgeon** on why booking early is key to securing the best offers and added extras



The launch of a new cruise season always brings fresh opportunities: new itineraries, exclusive offers and plenty of chances to match your customers with their dream voyages. A drive for eco-friendly cruising, all-inclusive pricing and immersive itineraries is taking centre stage, giving you as travel agents more opportunities than ever to match customers with their perfect cruise.

One of the biggest shifts we've seen so far this year is the growing demand for sustainable travel. Many cruise lines, including us here at Fred. Olsen, are investing in eco-friendly initiatives to reduce our carbon footprint. Guests are also becoming more mindful of their impact, favouring cruise lines that prioritise responsible tourism.

All-inclusive cruise fares are increasing in popularity, reflecting growing guest expectations for simplicity and value. The days of complex add-ons and unexpected fees are fading, with many cruise lines moving towards clearer pricing models.

To celebrate the launch of our new Autumn-Winter 2026 sailings, we have made some promises to our guests. Alongside full-board dining, entertainment and enrichment talks, guests will enjoy complimentary guided walks ashore, shuttle buses for ports over a mile away from the ship, fitness centre access and classes.



ABOVE A new cruise season offers fresh destinations and exclusive offers

“All-inclusive cruise fares are increasing in popularity, reflecting growing guest expectations for simplicity and value”

TOP TIPS

1 All-inclusive pricing and immersive itineraries give you more opportunity to pair the right cruise with the right passenger.

2 The days of add-ons and unexpected fees are fading, with lines moving towards clearer, all-inclusive pricing models.

3 Learn about these cruise line launches as soon as they come out.

Port taxes, fees and gratuities are also included. In addition, we are continuing our Freedom Fare Price Promise. This means that if your customers book within the first four weeks of launch and their cruise price is later reduced, we will automatically upgrade them or gift them onboard spend.

With solo cruising being as popular as ever, we have ensured that our single occupancy cabins will be the same as equivalent twin fares in the first four weeks of launch. Plus, we're delighted to share that our new itineraries will include house beer, wine and draught soft drinks with lunch and dinner.

I urge you to embrace and learn all about these cruise line launches and capitalise on all they bring. Ours are just around the corner, so let's make the most of it. ●

New to river cruising?



Try our river cruises
that are perfect for
first time river cruisers

Danube Discovery Cruise

5 days from £1,199^{PP}

March 2026

Paris & Seine Discovery cruise

4 days from £949^{PP}

March 2026

Rhine Gorge & Cologne Discovery river cruise

4 days from £899^{PP}

March 2025 and November 2026

Amsterdam, Kinderdijk and the Dutch Bulbfields

5 days from £1,299^{PP}

April 2025 and April 2026

UNBEATABLE VALUE

which always includes



Direct flights from 17 airports with no regional supplements, plus transfers



Accommodation on a five-star ship with impeccable on-board service



Spacious cabins with window or French balcony



Delicious full board dining, plus the Chef's Dinner



Free drinks package*



Expert Riviera Cruise Director and Concierge looking after you throughout

01283 901 053

rivieratravel.co.uk/agents

*2025 departures include unlimited quantity of drinks at lunch and from 6pm to midnight while on board, 2026 departures from 10am to midnight (selected drinks available).



NEED TO KNOW



UNIWORLD SUPERCHARGES

Luxury river cruise line Uniworld Boutique River Cruises will add three new-build ships to its fleet in 2027, completing the operator's transition to an all-Super Ship fleet. The new vessels will sail the Rhine, Main, Danube and Douro rivers and will feature a host of grand design elements, including additional suites and dining venues, as well as original artworks specially commissioned by Uniworld. Ellen Bettridge, president and CEO of Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, said: "2027 will mark an extraordinary milestone for Uniworld as we complete our transformation into a fully Super Ship fleet with the addition of three incredible new builds."



AMA BEEFS UP TRADE TRAINING

AmaWaterways has added a new course to its trade training platform to help educate agents.

The new module, which focuses on the rivers of France, comes after the river cruise line saw record sales for the destination with bookings up by 134 per cent in 2024 compared to 2023.

The new AmaAcademy unit dives into the details of the company's French

fleet – *AmaDante*, *AmaDolce*, *AmaLyra* and *AmaKristina* – and gives agents an insight into the line's sailings along the Saône, Rhône, Seine, Garonne and Dordogne rivers.

Agents who complete the course will receive discounted fam rates and when they make a new reservation within 90 days of completion, will also be eligible to receive a £25 Love2Shop voucher.



Rowe gets running

A-Rosa River Cruises managing director Lucia Rowe has signed up to participate in the "toughest footrace in the world" in aid of children's charity Reuben's Retreat.

As she approaches her 50th birthday, Rowe will take on the Marathon des Sables in the Sahara this April to raise funds for the organisation.

The race, over six stages, covers approximately 250km, which is the equivalent of running a marathon every day for seven days in the heat of the desert.

Each night, the participants will camp under the stars.



PANDAW ANNOUNCES NEW VESSEL

In response to increasing demand for luxurious, suite-only ships, Asian river cruise specialist Pandaw has announced details of a new vessel on the Mekong.

Tonle Pandaw will have just 14 suites, with a butler assigned to each one.

All the 40sqm suites will have a private deck and French balconies on the ship's port and starboard

sides. Cambodian fabric and repurposed Burma teak panelling will give them an opulent feel.

The vessel will sail a three-night cruise between Ho Chi Minh City in the south of Vietnam and the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, as well as a seven-night Classic Mekong voyage between Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap in Cambodia.

NEED TO KNOW

SEABOURN SELLS *SOJOURN*

Luxury cruise line Seabourn has sold *Seabourn Sojourn* to Japanese travel operator Mitsui Ocean Cruises, with the ship due to be delivered in May 2026.

Seabourn will charter the 458-guest ship from Mitsui Ocean Cruises to complete all published voyages up until 15 May 2026, at which point the vessel will be deployed by its new owners in

a market that is not competitive with its former owner.

The sale is the second time Mitsui Ocean Cruises has purchased a ship from Seabourn, with *Seabourn Odyssey* exchanging hands in March 2023.

Guests and agents with bookings on *Sojourn* after 15 May 2026 will be offered rebooking options.

Promotion



Odell handed expanded remit

Steve Odell will take charge of sales operations for Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

Odell, who is currently senior vice president (SVP) and chief sales officer for Regent, will transition to SVP, international and consumer sales for Oceania and Regent.

He will lead the sales teams as well as the consumer and onboard units at each brand. It's the latest move in a series of executive shake-ups by parent company Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings.

SCENIC BUOYED
BY TRADE SALES

Scenic Group, which includes Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours and Emerald Cruises, has posted its best trade sales week to date.

Sales through the trade in January 2025 outperformed sales from the same period in 2024 by more than 35 per cent, with the week commencing 27 January seeing 15 per cent more sales than the same week in 2024.

The group reported an uptick in popularity amongst UK travellers for Emerald Cruises' Caribbean yacht itineraries thanks to *Emerald Sakara* appearing in two episodes of Channel 5's travel programme *Susan Calman's Cruise of a Lifetime*.

UK sales for Scenic and Emerald Cruises' 2025 river cruise itineraries are up more than 35 per cent on last year's figures.

Helping travel marketers win in the *Attention Economy*

Force24 combines technology with the know-how of automation experts to help your teams deliver high-performing, personalised campaigns that win and keep the attention of your dream customers. Empower your marketing team through innovative technology, strategic insights and expert local support.



Start your journey now.

Take the first step by finding out which inbox your emails are landing in.



Request audit



CUNARD

New Voyages

Sailing April 2027 to January 2028

Available to book from 2 April 2025

2 April 2025 at 2pm

On sale for Cunard World Club members

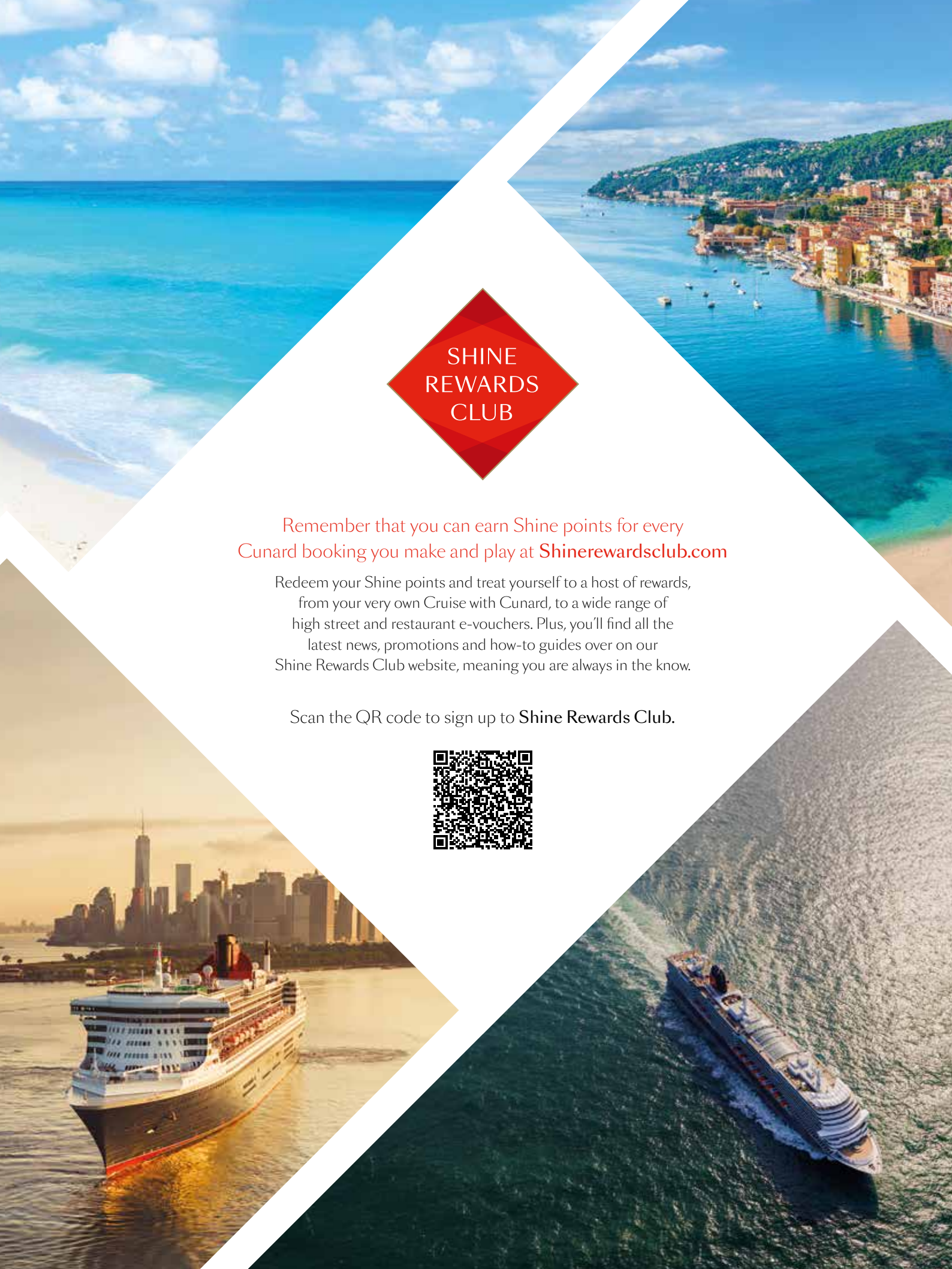
3 April 2025 at 2pm

On general sale

10%
Early Booking
Saving*
*T&Cs apply

Cunard World Club members and new guests can enjoy a 10% Early Booking Saving* on new voyages when booking a Cunard Early Saver or Cunard Fare before 30 June 2025.

*Terms and conditions apply.



SHINE REWARDS CLUB

Remember that you can earn Shine points for every
Cunard booking you make and play at Shinerewardsclub.com

Redeem your Shine points and treat yourself to a host of rewards,
from your very own Cruise with Cunard, to a wide range of
high street and restaurant e-vouchers. Plus, you'll find all the
latest news, promotions and how-to guides over on our
Shine Rewards Club website, meaning you are always in the know.

Scan the QR code to sign up to **Shine Rewards Club**.



HIGH TIDE

With lines and agents reporting a surge in river cruise bookings, the stage is set for a record-breaking year for the sector, writes **Jack Carter**

When Celebrity Cruises announced in February that it would be expanding into the river cruise sector in 2027, with 10 new ships on order, it caught many people by surprise. The Royal Caribbean Group brand, which stars in our Learn & Sell feature on *page 28*, has made no secret about its ambitions to disrupt the ocean cruise sector, pioneering a number of industry firsts, the most recent of which being ‘Xcel Dream Makers’.

Allowing the public to vote on the culinary and entertainment offerings of its newest ship during a live activation in Miami is indicative of the line’s desire to do things differently. Will the line be bringing this disruptive energy to the river cruise sector? Time will tell, but VP of international Giles Hawke gave some indication at CLIA’s 2025 RiverView Conference in Budapest on 8 March.

“We think we’ve revolutionised what happens on the ocean,” he said. “We have a real respect for what happens on the rivers, but we think we can do quite a lot.”

Hawke had previously said during a private press briefing in February that the 10 river ships were part of an initial order, suggesting that more vessels could follow. Evidently, Celebrity is confident that demand is there.

“**Celebrity can reach a whole new demographic... it’s a huge opportunity to get more people onto the rivers**

“We know that over 50 per cent of our customers already either take river cruises or intend to,” he added. “We’ve got 15 ocean cruise ships, so we’re taking over a million passengers every year. If 50 per cent of those people are already saying they want to go on a river cruise, there’s a ready-made market who love what [river] cruising has to offer.”

By Hawke’s admission, Celebrity spends a “huge amount” of marketing spend on attracting new customers to cruise, which could spell good news for agents who are looking to grow their river business. “It will disrupt the market, but it’ll bring a whole new clientele to river cruising,” says Anna Perrott, senior partnerships & marketing director, Panache Cruises. “We know Celebrity’s marketing is fantastic and they can reach out to a whole new demographic, so for us it’s a huge opportunity to get more people onto the rivers.”





Competing river cruise lines will understandably be concerned about the impact a new kid on the block could have on their business. However, for AmaWaterways' managing director Jamie Loizou, he sees this as a positive for the sector. "The

ocean cruise market is migrating to river, but if you look outside of that, you've also got guests who traditionally tour or city break. There's a huge market there and therefore there is a place for everyone.

"Celebrity will differentiate itself from everyone else – it will have to – but there is a river cruise product for everyone. It's great that Celebrity understands what a fantastic sector this is. We've known it for a long time."

WAVE SUCCESS

It's been a positive start to the year for AmaWaterways, with Loizou revealing that January was an all-time record month for bookings out of the UK and Europe. Loizou feels that there is an excitement for river cruising that hasn't been present in recent years.

“River was slow to come back after the pandemic, but last year the sector was absolutely flying

"I felt at last year's CLIA RiverView Conference that there was a real buzz around the sector for the first time since 2018/19," he says. "River was quite slow to come back after the pandemic, but last year the sector was absolutely flying and that momentum has continued. There are agents out there that are actively encouraging their teams to sell river. As a result, we increased our agent distribution by around 20 per cent last year."

Loizou says the enthusiasm for river is in large part thanks to the investment that's gone into educating the trade who are passing that knowledge onto their clients. "The lines and agents are doing a really great job of articulating the benefits of river cruise."

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE AmaWaterways hit an all-time record for bookings in January; the tranquility of a river cruise is a major part of the draw; Panache Cruises says an exotic destination like the Mekong has a great deal of potential to attract new-to-cruise customers



BACK TO SCHOOL

While there's no denying that interest in the sector is on the rise, certain barriers and confusion around the product still persist. According to Kirsty Van Wyk, travel consultant, The Holiday Village, some clients have a perception that they're either "way too young" for river cruising or that it'll be boring once onboard. The best way to breakdown these misconceptions, Van Wyk argues, is through education.

"River is growing faster than a lot of agents realise. The commissions are really high and it's a solid product. That's why I've invested a lot of my time to understand the sector."

Van Wyk says that since her first river cruise booking in February last year, she's since confirmed another 12 clients across seven different lines, explaining that the level of consistency means she is comfortable placing customers on different operators. She adds: "If my client is happy with one river cruise line then I have peace of mind that I can put them on another. I wouldn't have that same level of confidence with a hotel brand."

So where should agents turn to in order to grow their river cruise knowledge? "The CLIA RiverView Conference is great for new-to-river agents," Van Wyk says. "It's really useful when you have somebody stand up and talk about their product. You can read all the paraphernalia but when you've got somebody who knows the product really well and can bring it to life, you understand what it really means to sail through that destination."

“
The sector is growing faster than agents realise... the commissions are high and it's a solid product

At Panache Cruises, Perrott says the luxury retailer has invested heavily in sending its front-line staff on fam trips to exotic destinations, such as the Ganges, the Nile and the Mekong, due to their potential to attract new-to-cruise customers. "Those destinations are perfect for people wanting some form of adventure who don't want to take the step into ocean cruise. It doesn't feel as daunting if you're twinning a land tour with a cruise, they're both such a natural fit."

This is one of the reasons why Perrott is so excited about AmaWaterways' imminent launch onto the Magdalena in Colombia, which will make the river line the first operator to sail the region for more than 60 years. It just goes to show that the most exciting product updates aren't limited to ocean and expedition. "It's exciting talking about new ships, but new destinations are even more exciting," she says. ●

ABOVE Celebrity Cruises aims to take guests to historic cities on iconic rivers, beginning in Europe

CRUISE SUMMIT

Brought to you by

CRUISE
Trade News

**Date, location and agenda to be announced soon.
Register your interest to be the first to hear.**

cruis summit.co.uk

SCAN ME TO REGISTER



**What topics do you want to see our expert speakers
cover at this year's Cruise Summit?**

**Let us know at
ctn@realresponsemedia.com**



Up to US\$2,000 per suite shipboard credit | Two-category Veranda Suite upgrade

FOR YOUR CLIENTS

For a limited time only, until 30th April, Seabourn's exclusive 'A Sail Beyond Event' is your clients' best opportunity to enjoy value beyond their expectations.

FOR YOU!

Make and confirm a new booking in a Premium Suite by 30th April 2025. And enjoy up to £150 of **amazon** vouchers per booking[^].
Simply Email salesupport@seabourn.co.uk with confirmed Seabourn booking reference and your details to claim your prize



SAMPLE ITINERARIES

7-Day Aegean Treasures

6 Jul 2025 | SEABOURN ENCORE

Roundtrip Piraeus (Athens)

Cruise from £3,799pp | Inclusive Air

VISITS: Mykonos, Create, Syri; Kusadasi (Ephesus); Cesme

- Seabourn's Classical Concert at Ephesus
- Two Cat Veranda Suite Upgrade
- Up to US\$2,000 per suite credit

10-Day Mediterranean Magic

11 Jul; 20 Aug*; 29 Sep 2025 | SEABOURN OVATION

Barcelona to Monte Carlo

Cruise from £5,499pp | Inclusive Air

Visits: Palma de Mallorca; Mahon, Cagliari (Sardinia); Bonifacio (Corsica); Portoferraio (Elba); Portovenere; Cannes; La Ciotat

- Two Cat Veranda Suite Upgrade
- Up to US\$2,000 per suite credit
- *Lead fare based on 20/08/25

12-Day Circumnavigation of Japan's Foliage

12[^], 24* Oct 2025 | SEABOURN ENCORE

Kobe to Yokohama

Cruise from £9,349pp | Fly/cruise - please ask

VISITS: Tokushima (Japan); Takamatsu; cruising Kanmon Strait; Busan (Pusan, South Korea); Sakaiminato (Japan); Tsuruga; Niigata; Akita; Hakodate.

- Two Cat Veranda Suite Upgrade
- Up to US\$2,000 per suite credit
- *Lead fare based on 24/10/25

7-Day Dominican Republic Delights

18 Nov 2025 | SEABOURN SOJOURN

Roundtrip Miami

Cruise from £2,699pp | Fly/cruise - please ask

VISITS: Grand Turk (Turks & Caicos); Amber Cove (Dominican Republic); Isla Catalina.

- Two Cat Veranda Suite Upgrade
- Up to US\$2,000 per suite credit

SEABOURN EXPEDITIONS

23-Day Northwest Passage

6, 23[^] Aug 2025 | SEABOURN VENTURE

Reykjavik to Anchorage

Cruise from £29,799pp | Inclusive Air

Visits: ✦ Fly to Reykjavik (overnight). ✦ Fly to Kangerlussuaq (Greenland); Ilulissat (Jacobshavn); Sisimiut (Holsteinsborg); Pond Inlet (Nunavut, Canada); Dundas Harbour (Devon Island, Nunavut); Croker Bay; Northwest Passage (4 days); Cambridge Bay Village; Northwest Passage (3 days); Herschel Island; Nome (Alaska, overnight). ✦ Fly to to Anchorage & UK

- Two Cat Veranda Suite Upgrade
- Up to US\$2,000 per suite credit
- Full Laundry Service

[^]Itinerary in reverse



ALL-INCLUSIVE | ALL-SUITE | ULTRA-LUXURY

Discover the Extraordinary at seabourn.com

Contact your Seabourn Business Development Team | email: salesupport@seabourn.co.uk | Visit GoSeabourn.com.

Your Resource for Selling the World's Finest Ultra-Luxury Travel Experience

[^]A Sail Beyond Terms and conditions apply.

Visit seabourn.com. All prices shown include savings and are subject to availability at the time of booking

Amazon Incentive: [^]Book a Penthouse (PH) Suite and receive £100 per booking in vouchers, book Owners Suite and above to receive £150 per booking in vouchers. New bookings (made 5 Mar-30 Apr 2025 only) must be confirmed to qualify for the Amazon Voucher incentive

WAVE AWARDS

New categories for 2025

1

BEST INITIATIVE FOR ATTRACTING NEW-TO-CRUISE

This award recognises the lines and agents who are finding new, innovative ways to attract first-time cruisers to the sector, with entrants needing to demonstrate how they are tackling the barriers to the land-based market.

2

BEST PR TEAM

A new award to recognise the most dynamic and effective PR teams who strive to create compelling stories that resonate with audiences and generate buzz for the wider industry.

3

BEST TECHNOLOGY PROVIDER

We are looking for the technology provider who has developed an innovative software or hardware product for the cruise sector, growing sales and/or improved customer success in the process.



Scan to enter your team into
the Wave Awards 2025

WAVE AWARDS 2025



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Virgin
VOYAGES



TOP TO BOTTOM Last year's worthy winners; the coveted Wave Awards are up for grabs again

IN IT TO WIN IT

Entries for the 11th annual Wave Awards, sponsored by Virgin Voyages, are now open for lines and agents. Here's everything you need to know

Taking place this November at The Dorchester on London's Park Lane, the biggest night in the cruise industry calendar returns with a host of new categories and sponsors as the Wave Awards enters its second decade in style.

A one-off Early Bird offer will run until 30 April, while those who enter four categories will get the fifth for free. To obtain the Early Bird price, entrants simply need to select which categories they wish to compete in and navigate to the 'pay now' page. If you're strapped for time, not to worry: answers to the category questions won't need to be

submitted until 2 June, so you have plenty of time to perfect your entry.

MORE WAYS TO WIN

Three new categories will allow us to celebrate outstanding work throughout the sector. With *Cruise Trade News'* Annual Report revealing a surge in new-to-cruise travellers, this year's ceremony will ensure those who've gone above and beyond to lure new holidaymakers to the industry will be recognised. We've also made the decision to split the Best Advertising, Marketing or PR Campaign category into two separate awards to celebrate the hard work and ingenuity displayed across both disciplines.

Last year the Wave Awards celebrated its 10th anniversary, with Chris Pitchford, CEO of *Cruise Trade News* publisher Real Response Media, recognising the enduring importance of promoting the sector's achievements after a difficult start to the decade.

"We are all here due to a mutual passion for cruise – and the Wave Awards is about celebrating success in our industry, which thanks to you all is shipshape yet again."

Entries for the Wave Awards 2025 are now open at thewaveawards.com.





MORE TO EXPLORE

Pair your customers with a Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) European adventure this summer to ensure rave reviews and repeat business

The feeling of excitement and anticipation that comes from nailing your holiday plans is hard to replicate. Help your customers capture this sense of jubilation by offering a summer European getaway with Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL), which has sailed the continent for almost 60 years.

With more time in marquee ports such as Reykjavik and Bergen and a variety of elevated onboard experiences like *Norwegian Prima's* Surfside Café & Grill or the fleet-wide Mandara Spa®, guests will be swept away by the number of options they'll have at their fingertips. NCL's 12-day Barcelona & Florence

cruise aboard *Norwegian Epic®* from Rome (Civitavecchia) to Lisbon calls in Messina (Sicily), famed for its baroque architecture which miraculously survived a devastating earthquake and tsunami in 1908.

After finding out more in the Regional Museum of Messina, visitors can stroll through Piazza Cairoli as they let the scent of warm dough and fresh tomatoes inspire their lunch choices.

ALL ABOARD

Up to 20 dining options await onboard the NCL fleet, including speciality Brazilian and Japanese restaurants, and a selection of bars and lounges that are ideal for some pre-dinner relaxation.

Layer this with NCL's exceptional onboard service and its More at Sea™ offering, which features premium beverages, speciality dining, Starlink Wi-Fi and excursion credits from £299pp* based on a nine-to-ten-night cruise, and your customers' wildest dreams will soon become reality.

If you have new-to-cruise customers or experienced sailors yet to secure their summer holiday plans, offer an NCL itinerary to make sure they go home with a spring in their step. ●



FROM TOP Guests can stop for a bite to eat after walking around Messina in Italy; *Norwegian Prima* will sail a 10-day cruise calling in Flåm and Bergen this summer

Three standout European sailings with NCL

1 A 10-day Athens & Salerno cruise aboard *Norwegian Pearl®*, from Istanbul to Barcelona via Kusadasi, Athens (Piraeus), Catania, Salerno, Rome (Civitavecchia), La Spezia, Cannes and Provence (Marseille), departs 24 October 2025, from £969pp**.

2 A 10-day Iceland, Norway & Belgium cruise aboard *Norwegian Prima®*, from Reykjavik to Southampton via Isafjörður, Akureyri, Alesund, Flåm, Bergen, Amsterdam and Brussels/Bruges (Zeebrugge), has departures in June and July 2025, from £1,515pp**.

3 An 11-day France, Spain & England cruise aboard *Norwegian Sky®*, from Lisbon to Copenhagen via Oporto, La Coruna, Bilbao, Bordeaux (Le Verdon), Paris (Le Havre), Tilbury, Brussels/Bruges (Zeebrugge) and Amsterdam (Ijmuiden), departs 23 July 2025, from £1,255pp**.

NCL NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE®

Visit NCL's dedicated travel agent platform to find out more
norwegiancentral.com

*More At Sea™ upgrade charge depends on cruise length; from £299 for cruises of 9-10 days; all offers: limits, conditions, restrictions and exclusions apply.
**Lead prices are correct at time of going to print; shown in £GBP and based on cruise only, dual occupancy including government taxes, port expenses & fees. NCL reserves the right to correct any errors, inaccuracies or omissions & to change or update fares, fees & surcharges at any time without prior notice. General excise tax (GET), discretionary onboard service charges & gratuities additional. Terms and conditions apply to all offers; see norwegiancentral.com for details.



CRUISE CHALLENGE

PRESENTED BY
CRUISE
Trade News

Boost your knowledge of the latest
ship launches, itineraries and travel
trends by signing up to our 2025 Cruise
Challenge roadshow



UPCOMING 2025 DATES

Birmingham . . . April 23rd	Southampton ..May 21st
Edinburgh May 7th	Leeds June 12th
Manchester . . July 10th	

"HAVING ATTENDED THE LIVERPOOL CRUISE CHALLENGE LAST NIGHT, I WOULD ABSOLUTELY RECOMMEND YOU GET TO ONE OF THEIR FABULOUS EVENINGS, FROM START TO FINISH THE EVENT WAS WELL ORGANISED, THE SPEAKERS WERE INFORMATIVE ON THE PRODUCTS AND ALSO FUN, THE CRUISE CHALLENGE QUIZ WAS ONE OF THE BEST GAMES I HAVE PLAYED HAVING TO USE THE KNOWLEDGE WE WERE GIVEN TO GET US AROUND THE BOARD GAME, THE HOST -PETER- WAS JUST BRILLIANT. THANK YOU FOR A FANTASTIC EVENING OF LEARNING AND FUN"

Juli Hodson
Travel Counsellor



JOIN OUR EXCLUSIVE AGENT FACEBOOK GROUP

Test your knowledge to win some amazing prizes!

Sign up today at thecruisechallenge.com
or visit cruisetradenews.com for more information

✕ @cruisetradenews f #CruiseChallenge ✉ Nathan.Emtage@realresponsemedia.com

Exclusive

‘WE ARE BEYOND PROUD’

“Ecstatic”, “overjoyed”, “elated” – the winners of the UK Cruise Awards 2025 share their reactions exclusively with *Cruise Trade News*. **Will Payne** reports

In February, travel agents and cruise industry executives from across the UK descended on Canary Wharf’s The Pelligon for the UK Cruise Awards 2025 hosted by Carnival Corporation brands Carnival Cruise Line, Cunard, Holland America Line, P&O Cruises, Princess Cruises and Seabourn.

Each line recognised two standout travel partners, presenting Partnership Achievement Awards for exceptional collaboration and Outstanding Contribution Awards for long-term dedication to their brands. Additional accolades were also awarded to travel partners and individuals who “demonstrated excellence” in specific areas. BBC Radio 2 DJ Sara Cox hosted the event.



Carnival UK & P&O Cruises president, Paul Ludlow said: “The UK Cruise Awards underscore the vital role that our dedicated travel partners play in driving the cruise industry forward. It was inspiring to be surrounded by so many people who share a joint passion for delivering the very best cruise holidays.”

Ludlow presented the Outstanding Contribution Award to Michael Wilson of Bolsover, recognising his long-standing reputation for excellent customer service and dedication to innovation. Meanwhile, Barrhead Travel took the Innovative Marketing Campaign Award for its social media strategy, presented by Cunard president, Katie McAlister

and UK and Europe vice president Princess Cruises, Eithne Williamson. Trailfinders was recognised for its Outstanding Customer Care, presented by Holland America sales and marketing director Karen Farndell and Seabourn sales director Tom Andrews.

Nick Watts of Cruise.co.uk received the final gong of the night: the Rising Star Award, presented by Carnival Cruise Line vice president of international sales, Iain Baillie and P&O Cruises vice president of sales, brand and marketing, Robert Scott.

On the night, *Cruise Trade News* was granted exclusive access to interview a selection of the winners. Here’s what they had to say...



**World Travel Holdings UK (WTH UK),
Connell Blackburn-Green**

“We are ecstatic and so proud. Cunard has been a brand we have worked with for years and we have loved every minute of it. Events like this are extremely important. It brings all the brands together and, while Cunard is important to us, we work with all of them, and they are all great. It is so significant to be recognised, it really does mean so much to us.”

WINNER of Cunard Partnership Achievement Award

The Cruise Line, David Smith

“We are absolutely thrilled to receive this award. It is a testament not only to our team’s hard work and dedication but also to our valued partnership with Seabourn, which continues to go from strength to strength.”

WINNER of Seabourn Partnership Achievement Award

Cruise.co.uk, Nick Watts

“It feels unbelievable, it’s not something you expect. To get two awards is amazing. We have fantastic relationships with the brands. The team mean a great deal to me, we have a great group at the office and the support is massive. The team push me to want to do better so a big

thanks to them. I want to grow, I want to build on the success; so far we are having a great year and long may that continue.”

WINNER of Rising Star Award

Viva Holidays, Shubhang Gupta

“This award is incredible and reinforces all our efforts. First of all, we can bench mark our achievements against our competitors and it gives a lot of inspiration to the team as well. It’s now about trying to improve on this for the coming year. We had a great year in 2024 and this year is already looking really positive.”

WINNER of Carnival Partnership Achievement Award

Hays Travel, Laura Yates

“We are ecstatic and very proud. The team have really pulled together to help us win this award and we are so proud of them. We love working with Princess and our customers cannot get enough of them. All of the brands are a pleasure to work with. It is massively important to have events like these in the calendar. And Princess has something for everyone, they have budget options all the way up to the Sanctuary for customers looking for a more premium experience.”

WINNER of Princess Cruises Partnership Achievement Award

“It’s massively important to have events like these in the calendar

**UK Cruise Awards
2025 winners**

Carnival Cruise Line:

Partnership Achievement

Award: Viva Holidays

Outstanding Contribution:
Cruise.co.uk

Cunard:

Partnership Achievement

Award: WTH UK

Outstanding Contribution:
Reader Offers Ltd

Holland America Line:

Partnership Achievement

Award: Stewart Travel

Outstanding Contribution: Iglu

P&O Cruises:

Partnership Achievement

Award: TUI

Outstanding Contribution:
Hays Travel

Princess Cruises:

Partnership Achievement

Award: Hays Travel

Outstanding Contribution: Iglu

Seabourn:

Partnership Achievement

Award: The Cruise Line

Outstanding Contribution:
Sovereign Cruise Club



A CUT ABOVE

With the launch of *Allura* fast approaching, Sarah Holt reveals how Oceania Cruises is taking its elevated dining offering to a whole new level

Ink the date into your diaries. On 18 July, Oceania Cruise's newest ship *Allura* will make its debut voyage. Gliding from Italy's 'City of Coffee', Trieste, to Greece's Acropolis-crowned capital, Athens, the inaugural cruise promises passengers everything from Unesco World Heritage Sites to vineyard visits.

Yet, it's not just the itinerary that stands out about this cruise and those that will follow. Sailings on the 1,200-guest *Allura* will introduce clients to a new cut-above level of cruising that Oceania Cruises is calling its 'enchanted evolution'.

Front and centre will be the ship's culinary experiences. With one chef for every 10 guests, the line's eighth ship dedicates half its onboard crew to food and drink, taking its commitment to its 'Finest Cuisine at Sea®' to the next level. As such, Oceania Cruises has

created more than 260 new recipes for *Allura*'s Grand Dining Room – the ship's signature restaurant with its white linen tablecloths, high-shine glasses, and soft chandelier lighting.

ALL-DAY DELIGHTS

At breakfast, passengers will be able to order from a new signature eggs benedict section as well as pick from a selection of imaginative daily specials, such as breakfast sliders and zucchini waffles with smoked salmon and yoghurt sauce.

“With one chef for every 10 guests, half of the crew is dedicated to food and drink

Lunchtime will present passengers with a new menu of French bistro-inspired dishes, from artisanal cheese and charcuterie boards to unctuous bowls of coq au vin.

Evenings in the Grand Dining Room, meanwhile, will see elite ingredients made into innovative dishes like scallop panna cotta with caviar and slow-cooked Korean BBQ beef short rib.

The Crêperie will be another first for the line. Open from mid-morning to afternoon, this sugar and cinnamon-scented eatery will serve French crêpes, Belgian waffles and bubble waffles, slicked in sauces and crowned with quiffs of cream. The highly regarded Jaques restaurant will also make its return on Oceania Cruise's new ship.

Paying homage to the line's first executive culinary director, Jacques Pépin, the menu will pair favourites from the Jaques restaurants

DESTINATION IMMERSION

Guests on *Allura* will be able to choose from hundreds of enriching shore excursions, too. On the inaugural cruise, the A to Z of options for passengers include visiting Hum, the smallest town in the world, stepping into the Republic of San Marino, sampling Dalmatian wine in the cypress tree-speared hills of Konavle Valley, and discovering how olive oil is made in the groves of Montenegro's Luštica peninsula.

Onboard activities, meanwhile, include painting, drawing and sculpture classes, led by artists in residence in the light-flooded Artist Loft, and at least one session from a guest speaker on every cruise.

Allura caters to downtime as well as it encourages activity. The new ship takes Oceania Cruise's library concept and elevates it, pairing its equestrian estate-style reading nook with new panoramic floor-to-ceiling windows that showcase seascapes as stirring as the stories.

The staterooms offer guests the ultimate place for pause. With their ivory and light tan colour schemes, they're serene spaces. Plus, at 291 square feet, the standard rooms are the most spacious at sea. ●

Get on board

Allura's six-day maiden voyage sails from Trieste to Athens, via Rijeka, Ravenna, Dubrovnik and Kotor, on 18 July. Visit oceaniacruises.com for prices

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Dubrovnik will star on *Allura's* inaugural sailing; the line prides itself on having the finest cuisine at sea; the Pool Deck mirrors the beauty of the surrounding sea

Three reasons to get on board

1 A MOVEABLE FEAST

Restaurants like Toscana and Red Ginger transport clients to Italy and Asia without them having to leave the ship. *Allura* will also welcome The Crêperie, the return of guest favourite Jaques and the shake-up of The Grand Dining Room menu, which includes the addition of 260 new recipes.

2 SERVING YOU RIGHT

Allura's 1,200 guests are looked after by 800 crew members, making a ratio of two crew members for every three guests. Passengers will also be able to rest easy on their Ultra Tranquillity beds while suite guests can benefit from 24-hour butler service.

3 NEVER A DULL MOMENT

There's as much to do onboard as there is ashore. Take a cookery class in *Allura's* state-of-the-art Culinary Center, spoil yourself with a sommelier-led wine pairing lunch, or kick back in the expanded library with its country estate looks and floor-to-ceiling windows.

OCEANIA
CRUISES®

Find the latest prices at
oceaniacruises.com



Celebrity Cruises

A new Edge series ship and a move into the river sector will give agents more opportunities than ever to grow their business with the ocean line

IN THE KNOW

With a focus on revolutionary entertainment, wellness experiences and longer stays in-port, Celebrity Cruises frequently looks to push the boundaries of the ocean cruising experience. The Royal Caribbean Group brand has pioneered a number of industry firsts, from its cantilevered floating platform, dubbed the Magic Carpet, to Xcel Dream Makers – a newly launched initiative in which guests were invited to test, sample and vote on new experiences, with their selections launching on *Celebrity Xcel* in November 2025.

THE FLEET

Celebrity's fleet of 14 ships, which includes its award-winning Edge series, sail to more than 300 destinations across all seven continents of the world, exploring everywhere from the Galápagos Islands to the Mediterranean and the Caribbean.



This April sees the line welcome *Celebrity Xcel*, which will homeport in Fort Lauderdale and will feature seven new experiences, including The Bazaar – an immersive venue that changes and evolves to reflect the different destinations on the ship's itinerary. The fleet will increase once again when *Xcel 2*, the line's sixth Edge vessel, sets sail in 2028.

Celebrity Cruises will have six ships sailing in Europe during the summer months, including the award-winning *Celebrity Apex* sailing out of Southampton and *Celebrity Ascent*, offering cruises from Athens, Barcelona and Rome.

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON?

It's shaping up to be an incredibly exciting year for the line, with the first quarter of 2025 welcoming a number of major announcements. Recent changes to the leadership have seen Giles Hawke step into the newly created role of VP of international, where he will be responsible for overseeing international strategy and the APAC, LACAR and UK/EMEA markets. Meanwhile, Claire Stirrup has been promoted to managing director of UK/EMEA.

However, the most significant news came last month when Celebrity sent shockwaves through the industry by announcing that it would be expanding



“ Celebrity will expand into the river sector with 10 new ships

into the river cruising sector in 2027 with 10 new ships on order. Celebrity River Cruises, which will begin taking bookings this year, will offer a range of itineraries in Europe, with the line saying it will bring the “elevated design and sophistication” of its Edge series ships to river cruising.

AGENT SUPPORT

There will undoubtedly be a lot for agents to keep up to date with throughout the year, and they can do

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT *Celebrity Apex's resort deck is spectacular by day and by night; the Magic Carpet floating platform offers breathtaking views; The Bazaar on *Celebrity Xcel* evolves to reflect the ship's destinations; suites in The Retreat offer the ultimate in luxury*

so by joining Celebrity's dedicated Meta group, Celebrity Loves Agents, for the latest updates, as well as information on new trade competitions and incentives.

Agents can also access a wealth of information, including in-depth training modules, sales kits and image assets at celebritycentral.co.uk.

WHO'S WHO?

Stirrup, who joined Royal Caribbean Group in 2013, currently oversees all sales, marketing and commercial activity across the region. The line says the EMEA sales structure for Celebrity has transformed how the brand conducts business in key international markets as it attempts to improve efficiency and effectiveness.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Managing director, EMEA, Claire Stirrup looks ahead to the launch of *Celebrity Xcel*

How will the shake up to the management team set the line up for growth?

As part of the role changes, Giles Hawke has been appointed VP of international. This is a new role for the business and will help us to further integrate teams working across Celebrity's international markets and ensure a cohesive global approach to our international market strategy.

What training initiatives are you offering ahead of the launch of *Celebrity Xcel*?

We offer an industry-leading training programme and suite of tools via our online hub, Celebrity Central, that allow agents to gain an in-depth knowledge of our offering. As well as our training platform, we also have the Celebrity Loves Agents Meta group where agents can engage with us as well as find all the latest updates, competitions and incentives.

SELLING TIPS

1 With a fleet of 14 ships travelling to nearly 300 destinations across 70 countries spanning all seven continents, Celebrity offers a plethora of itineraries and prioritises longer days and overnight stays in port.

2 Celebrity invites guests to enjoy up to 32 different food and beverage experiences on each sailing. On its Edge series ships, guests have the choice of four main restaurants – Normandie, Tuscan, Cosmopolitan and Cyprus.

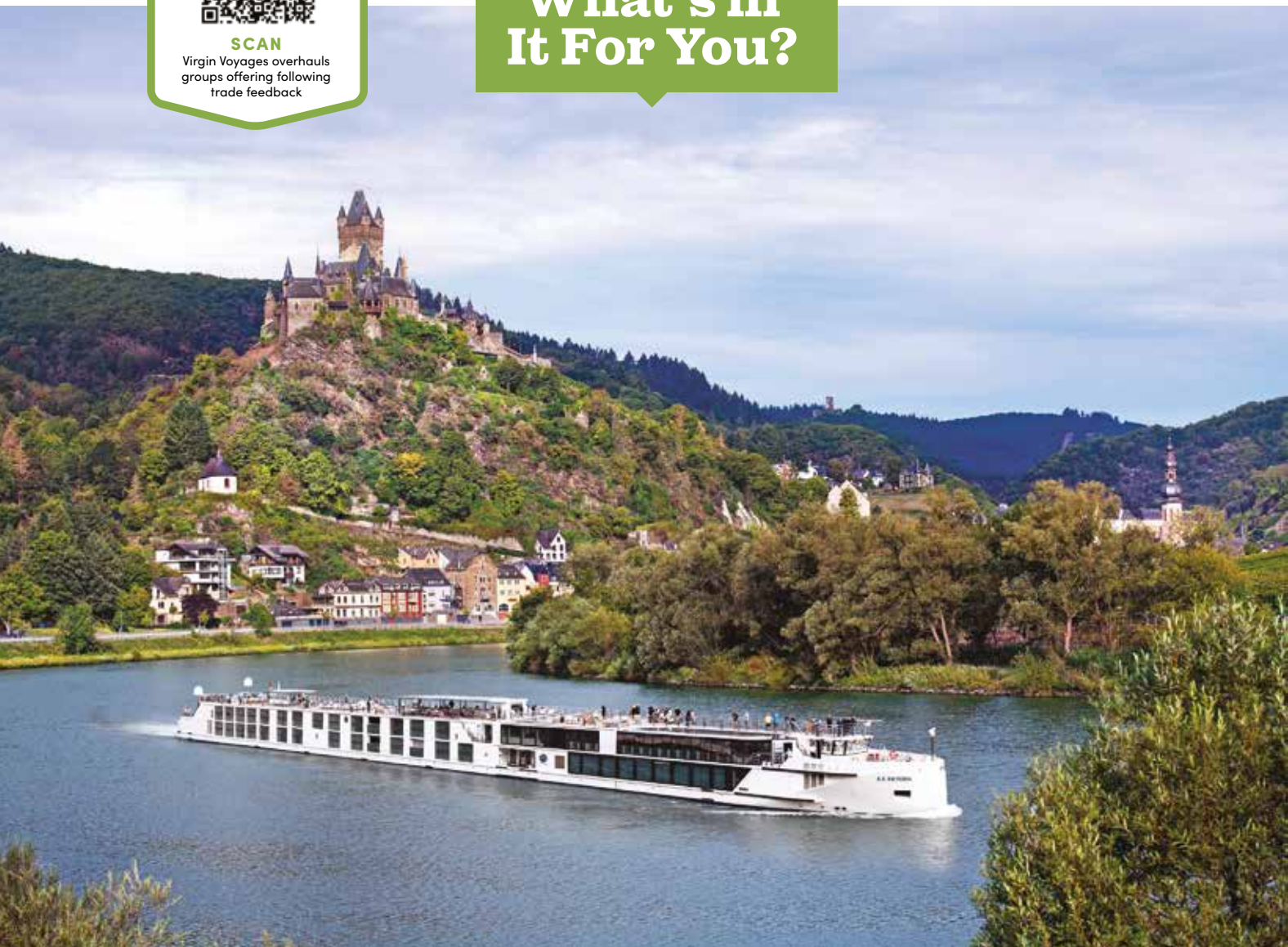
3 Following feedback from guests and travel partners, on select sailings to the Caribbean, guests can visit Perfect Day at CocoCay – Royal Caribbean's award-winning private destination in the Bahamas.



SCAN
Virgin Voyages overhauls
groups offering following
trade feedback

INCENTIVES
SPECIAL OFFERS
ITINERARIES

What's in It For You?



EUROPE GETAWAY

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises has launched a new trade incentive offering 50 agents an overnight stay on *SS Victoria* this summer.

To enter the competition, agents need to make a Uniworld booking and email the reference to agency.sales@uniworld.com.

Every booking made represents a separate entry into the draw, meaning agents can enter multiple times. All bookings must be made before 30 April to qualify.

The trip will take place from 20-21 June, starting in Amsterdam and ending in Brussels, during

which agents will experience Uniworld's onboard and shoreside offerings.

Angela Sloan, director of sales for Uniworld, said: "*SS Victoria* launched last year and has fast become one of Uniworld's most beloved vessels.

"We're looking forward to welcoming 50 of our valued agent partners on a one-off overnight trip because we know that experiencing our ultra-luxury onboard service is the best way to understand what makes Uniworld stand head and shoulders above the rest. It's also going to be lots of fun."

Visit

cruisetradenews.com for the latest incentives, itineraries and training news from across the cruise industry



AMBASSADOR UNVEILS TRADE PORTAL

> Ambassador Cruise Line has launched a new trade portal ahead of the debut of its first-ever Caribbean season.

The platform, which is hosted on digital management site DASH, offers access to a library of sales materials including campaign assets, logos and branding.

This includes images of the line's fleet of three ships; *Ambition*, *Ambience* and *Renaissance* – which recently joined the Ambassador fleet following the merger of Ambassador Cruise Line and Compagnie Française de Croisières (CFC) – as well as destination images and up-to-date logos and branding.

To access the portal, agents must log onto the trade partner area of the Ambassador website where all assets are available to be downloaded.



Cunard to host 'hundreds' of agents

Luxury cruise line Cunard has announced its 2025 schedule of travel agent ship visits and familiarisation trips. The line will host an initial wave of four ship visit events onboard *Queen Mary 2* and new ship *Queen Anne* in Southampton and Liverpool this year, starting from 16 May and running to 19 September.

Agents can register for one of 220 places via the Shine Rewards platform. A second wave of ship visits will be announced in the autumn. The visits will focus on how agents can "communicate the Cunard difference" to customers, while inviting trade to experience the dining and entertainment options.

AMAZON VOUCHERS UP FOR GRABS

> Agent partners can earn up to £150 in vouchers per Seabourn booking as part of the line's latest campaign, 'A Sail Beyond'.

Agents who book and confirm their clients in a Premium Suite between 5 March and 30 April will receive up to £150 in Amazon Vouchers, while for guests booked

in a Penthouse Suite the reward will be £100 in Amazon vouchers.

For Premium suites (Owners Suites and above), the agent partner will enjoy £150 in gift cards for the online vendor.

Seabourn will provide full details about how agents can claim their rewards once the booking has been confirmed.



Shine bright

The P&O Cruises Shine at Sea trade incentive is back for another year. Here's why it's exciting news for agents

Attention travel agents: if you're looking to boost your cruise business while being in with a chance of winning a once-in-a-lifetime training experience to Europe's most sublime winter sun hotspots, then you're in luck. That's because the P&O Cruises Shine at Sea trade incentive is here for 2025, offering a marvellous opportunity to experience the line's award-winning fly-cruise product in person.

Up to 80 agents will be invited to fly from London or Manchester to embark on one of two seven-night cruises onboard the stunning *Azura*, fresh from its refit. The first itinerary, which sets sail from 2-9 October 2025, will incorporate visits to the Mediterranean's most iconic coastal gems, including the spectacular French Riviera and the storied cities of Pisa and Florence. The second sailing, meanwhile, will take in the breathtaking landscapes of Lanzarote and charming island towns of Madeira as *Azura* makes its way around the Canaries from 1-8 November 2025.

Each sailing will give agents the chance to explore the ship's new-look guest areas and embark on an exciting shore excursion programme, while taking part in a series of immersive training experiences. And there'll be plenty of surprises along the way too, courtesy of the Shine team.

To win, simply register your interest via the link at the end of this article and start logging your P&O Cruises bookings on the Shine Rewards Club

“
Each sailing will give agents the chance to explore the ship's new-look guest areas

website between now and 27 April. And because there's no limit to the number of entries you can make, each new sale will increase your chances of winning. What's more, you can also nominate your colleague to join you onboard and share a cabin with, so if one wins, the other agent gets to come along too. Solo travellers are also invited to enter and share a cabin. Be sure to keep an eye on Shine Rewards Club emails, social media and the hashtags #ShineAtSea and #SurprisesByShine for more ways to win.



MEET THE WINNER

Cruise Trade News caught up with one of the winners of last year's Shine at Sea programme, Ian McCaughan, manager of Co-op Travel in Melksham, Wiltshire, to find out what's in store for this year's batch of lucky agents.

What initially attracted you to P&O Cruises' Shine at Sea programme?

I've been booking P&O Cruises for years, and while I've attended ship visits





Sign up

for the P&O Cruises 2025 Shine at Sea programme at shinerewardsclub.com/shineatsea to win one of two seven-night training experiences onboard Azura. Competition expires 27 April. T&Cs apply

in the past, I've never enjoyed the full experience so I thought it would be beneficial. We sailed on *Iona*, which is one of the largest ships in the fleet. Even though there were more than 5,000 people onboard, never at any time did it feel busy.

I can safely say that the Shine at Sea programme was brilliant for me and more bookings have come in as a result. In fact, I have a client on a P&O Cruises holiday at this very moment as a direct result of the Shine at Sea programme.

What key insights did you takeaway?

During the cruise we had a couple of fun and informative training sessions on the P&O Cruises' fleet, the Shine Rewards Club and the other benefits of cruising with the line. I learned that *Iona* really is a ship for everyone, whether you're a first-time cruiser or a well-travelled veteran. Food is great and the speciality restaurants are really worth the small supplement to have an enhanced dining experience. The P&O team who were with us were knowledgeable, friendly and just a great bunch of people who clearly loved their product.

“ Shine at Sea was brilliant and more bookings have come in as a result

Why is it important for an agent to experience the product first-hand?

It's so powerful. I've had customers come into the store and ask what the restaurants were like. Because I had dined in them, I could say, for example, “this particular venue would be a great place to celebrate your birthday or anniversary” and the customers have gone ahead and booked it.

What type of agent would benefit most from the Shine at Sea programme?

I would encourage all agents to take part. I was one of the more experienced ones on the trip but there were some agents who didn't have a great deal of knowledge and you could see it on their faces that they were completely wowed by what they saw, and so was I.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

Azura will soon welcome guests after a stunning refit; Malta is a beloved cruise call for Mediterranean-bound guests; last year's lucky Shine at Sea winners

We are dealing directly with customers and sometimes guides and websites don't do it justice. You need to see it, feel it and do it because first-hand experience is always the best. Put it this way: I watch my football team on TV, but it's always a much better atmosphere when I watch them live, and it's the same when going on a cruise ship. It makes all the difference. 📍



For more information, visit shinerewardsclub.com/shineatsea



P&O CRUISES

SHINE

AT SEA IS BACK!

YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A TRAINING EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER*

After last year's phenomenal success, Shine at Sea is back for 2025.

You could fly from London or Manchester to meet Azura in the sunshine. **Two 7-night itineraries are on offer** – to the Canary Islands or the Mediterranean – and there'll be immersive training experiences to join in, plus plenty of **#SurprisesByShine** along the way.

ARE YOU READY TO SHINE AT SEA?

Book and spin your Select
Price bookings by 27 April 2025
for your chance to win a place
on board Azura*



“ I felt I truly benefitted from the whole Shine at Sea experience! I’d only ever cruised for two or three nights before. So, having spent seven nights on this beautiful ship, seeing the facilities she offers and trying out shore experiences, I now feel 100% confident in selling this product, helping clients with any questions prior to travel, and making personal recommendations. ”

**Shine at Sea
participant, 2024**



Book and spin for a chance to win.*
Scan above to find out more.



Shine Rewards Club

HELPING AGENTS THRIVE WITH P&O CRUISES

*T&Cs available on shinerewardsclub.com





VOYAGES

1 October - 31 March

Northern Lights Promise

We promise Northern Lights

No lights, no problem. We'll give you
another chance for free!



Learn more at havalavoyages.com or
contact agents.voyages@havila.no

 **ABTA**
Travel with confidence
ABTA No. Y6780



From 1 October to 31 March, you get a new voyage for free if you don't see the Northern Lights on your 12-day Round Voyage. T&C on www.havalavoyages.com

On the
road with...

Jo Reid

Celestyal's country manager on how agents will help the line on its mission to becoming the number one operator in the Arabian Gulf

How would you describe the line's relationship with agents?

Agents are the lifeblood of everything we do and it's only by working closely with the trade that we have been able to significantly grow the brand and take Celestyal to new heights. Since we launched our itineraries in the Arabian Gulf, the trade have been nothing short of brilliant. They immediately understood our overarching aims as a challenger brand and have been fundamental in attracting both repeat and new-to-cruise guests to sail in this part of the world.

How important is in-person engagement with the trade?

Maintaining and growing trade relationships is vitally important to us at Celestyal. While we know that virtual briefings are valued by agents, as they provide a degree of flexibility in people's busy work calendars, face-to-face events are the bread and butter of engagement. Our business development managers are



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

The friendly atmosphere onboard *Celestyal Journey* is a key selling point; Reid is the country manager for UK, Ireland and Germany

What are the current challenges in agent training?

It might sound like a cliché but one of the biggest challenges is time. We appreciate that agents have finite resources and it's not always possible to make every training briefing or read about the latest brand updates. That's why we ensure our trade team is as flexible as possible and puts the needs of the trade first. We're always on hand to provide support with whatever agents need.

Celestyal recently launched a new online trade portal. How has this performed for the brand?

Our new trade portal, Celestyal Compass, represents a new era in how we engage and support the trade. It incorporates a learning platform which includes training modules on areas such as the brand, life onboard, key itinerary information, shore excursions and advice on how to grow sales. Celestyal Compass is also a reference point for agents to find marketing assets and information on offers and campaigns. Feedback shows that agents love the ability to access all they need in one place. ●

regularly out on the road to provide that essential face-to-face support, and we do all we can to ensure we visit as many agents as possible. The brand has been very busy in recent times, so it's crucial we keep the trade up to date.

What key points should agents focus on when selling Celestyal?

Agents should highlight that we deliver unmissable moments at sea and ashore, all at unbeatable value. *Celestyal Journey* and *Celestyal Discovery* both enjoy a welcoming atmosphere, while our excursions focus on bringing destinations to life, where guests can tread like a local and discover the authentic stories of the region.

“

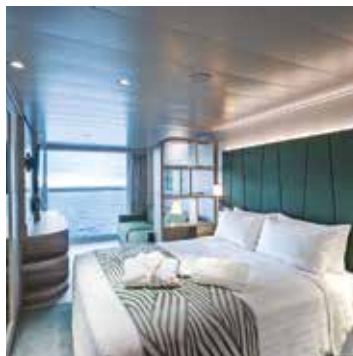
The trade have been fundamental in attracting both repeat and new-to-cruise guests to sail in the Arabian Gulf



SHIP OF THE MONTH

MSC WORLD AMERICA

M SC Cruises' upcoming flagship *MSC World America* will set sail on a series of Eastern and Western Caribbean cruises from Miami when it launches this April. The 6,762-passenger vessel will be the second addition to the line's World class series, following the launch of sister ship *MSC World Europa* in 2022. The ship will feature seven onboard districts, including Family Aventura, a multi-level adventure zone designed for kids and teens, while the Terraces district will offer the line's first comedy club, The Loft. Itineraries include a seven-night Caribbean cruise return from Miami via the Dominican Republic and The Bahamas.



1 Cabins

Accommodation options on *MSC World America* range from studio interior cabins to high-end luxury stays in the MSC Yacht Club Owner's Suite. The latter comes with a private terrace, a king-size bed and a complimentary minibar. All cabins come with a TV, hairdryer and ensuite bathrooms.



2 Cliffhanger

Those looking to step outside their comfort zone can head to the Family Aventura District for an experience like no other, where the Cliffhanger – a large swing with a twist – dangles over the edge of a 20-deck drop. Definitely not recommended for the faint of heart...



3 Dining

With 19 restaurant options, there's plenty for guests to savour. Standout options are Eataly (pictured), offering authentic Italian cuisine, and Paxos Greek in the Promenade District, which will transport guests to the Mediterranean with its fresh, seafood-forward menu.

Fast facts

6,762
passengers

2,614
cabins

2,138
crew members

19
restaurants



4 Luna Park Arena

This futuristic 300-seat multi-purpose venue will be the setting for extravagant parties, game shows and movie nights. During the day the spot is the perfect place for little ones, with interactive games and child-friendly programmes.



5 Masters of the Seas

Keen brewers will enjoy spending an evening or two in the signature British pub Masters of the Seas. The spot will feature MSC's second micro-brewery at sea, offering a range of signature beers, such as an American lite beer and a Pilsner made from distilled sea water.



6 World Theatre

The ship's headline entertainment venue, the World Theatre, will feature the first-ever *Dirty Dancing in Concert* at sea. The 1,150-seat theatre will also show *Momentous*, an illusion show overseen by the brains behind the *Back to the Future* musical.



Drinks on the deck



Sipping smoothies on-board



TWO FOR ONE

SECOND GUEST GOES FREE OF FARE*

PLUS

KIDS GO **FREE OF FARE***

*PAY ONLY PORT FEES



Camel riding in Dubai



Cruising the canals in Venice



Earn even more commission on guest offers after booking



Buy 2 Shore Excursions, get 1 free
(on select packages)

Ts&Cs apply

**Up to €250 in free beverages
& specialty dining**



Join us on
Facebook for the
latest information,
promotions and more.



Visit our new Trade Portal
'Celestyal Compass'
to download our
Marketing Toolkit today.
celestyalcompass.com

Opportunities to earn even **more**
commission on your bookings by selling
shore excursions, stateroom upgrades and
CelestyalPay credit in advance ensuring
the very best value for you and your guests.

CTN
Investigates

THE GEN Z DILEMMA

Cruise Trade News' inaugural industry report found that 18-34-year-olds lack confidence in booking cruises in person. Will Payne speaks to lines and agents to find out how the trade can restore the next generation's faith in the high street



51%

of yet-to-cruisers say watching a video tour of a ship would help them pick a cruise



Despite the industry's best efforts, the value of booking with a travel agent doesn't appear to be landing with the younger demographic. That's according to *Cruise Trade News'* 2025 Annual Report, released in February in partnership with Mail Metro Media.

Our survey of 763 previous cruisers and new-to-cruisers found that only a third (33 per cent) of 18-34-year-olds say they are confident booking a cruise in person, compared to 58 per cent of those aged 55-64. Even more alarming than that, however, is that if that age bracket were to book a cruise tomorrow, only six per cent would do so using a high-street agent.

As an industry, we recognise the importance of the travel agent community, especially when it comes to attracting Gen Z and millennial holidaymakers to the sector. However, whether it's because younger generations feel more fluent interacting online or the collapse of the high street in general, the benefit of booking with an expert travel advisor is becoming increasingly lost with the 18-34-year-old age bracket (i.e. Gen Z and young millennials).

"Travel agents are incredibly important when

it comes to encouraging new-to-cruise guests to book," says Luke Smith, UK and international sales director, Carnival Cruise Line. They are the true experts and can tailor a cruise experience to suit the exact needs of their clients."

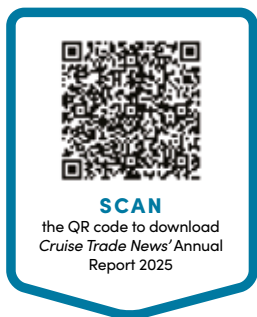
With the trade needing to fight harder for its place in the minds of younger travellers, we take a look at some of the ways high-street agents can promote their value to online travel bookers.

THE TRUSTED VOICE

According to our report, 28 per cent of yet-to-cruise respondents say friends and family are the greatest source of inspiration when thinking about cruise holidays. Trust, therefore, is still a key factor in the research phase of a holiday, with consumers either turning to people they know well or people they believe know what they are talking about. What is often missed in analysis of this sort is that every in-person agent is also a friend or family member, putting professional retailers with first-hand cruise experience in a strong position.

"The best travel agent is the consultative travel agent," says Atlas Ocean Voyages international sales lead Bernard Carter. "The great thing with our travel agent community is that we've got some brilliant, empathetic travel advisors that

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT High octane onboard entertainment can be a big draw for younger clients; Atlas Ocean Voyages' Bernard Carter; Gen Z and millennials put a lot of emphasis on their wellbeing; cookery demonstrations by famous faces like Michel Roux are popular with a wide demographic



know and understand their customers. And it's those travel agents that we're looking to reach out to, because understanding and providing that concierge style service fits with the way that Atlas Ocean Voyages operates.

"My advice to agents is to ask the questions, get the guests talking and get them to give you the information you need to help you place them on the right cruise."

According to Nicki Tempest-Mitchell, managing director of Barrhead Travel, cruise is beginning to appeal to a "much wider" audience as lines ramp up advertising spend on mainstream platforms, such as newspapers, TV and radio. While Gen Z and millennial consumers might not be turning to agents in the same way as older generations, Tempest-Mitchell believes that having more eyeballs on the sector can only be a good thing for travel partners.

"Young families, couples, groups of friends and even Gen Z are turning to cruise as it becomes a mainstream holiday option," she says. "For 18-34-year-olds, there's a lot of opportunity to get them booking with agents – it's all about how we engage with them. We've seen success in investing in Instagram, for example, as well as hosting events that are really targeted to that specific age group."



A lot of brands are working with younger influencers or celebrities, helping pique the interest of Gen Z and millennials



CONTENT CAPTURE

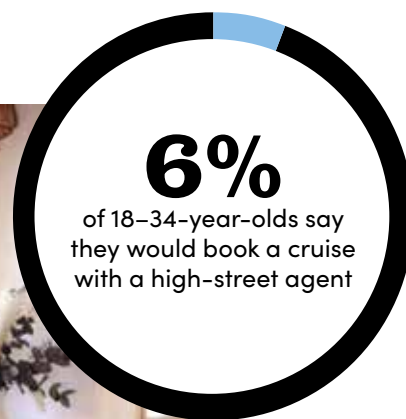
The role of a travel agent has evolved greatly in recent years, with many becoming mini-influencers in their own right as travellers become increasingly reliant on video content for holiday inspiration. Selfie sticks, gimbals and remote microphones are an increasingly essential part of a travel agents' toolkit while on ship visits, with advisors recognising the power of video content to help them bring the cruise product to life for their clients. According to our survey, more than half (51 per cent) of non-cruisers say that watching a video tour of a ship would help them pick a cruise.

Owner of Grazeley-based The Sovereign Cruise Club, Steffan Shillito, is acutely aware of the importance of utilising different marketing strategies to attract a broader range of clientele. "In today's world where communication is free and easy to access across countless platforms, it's important for agents to diversify," he says.

"We've been a market leader in luxury cruising for 26 years, so our clients expect us to have access to up-to-date product information and the latest in cruise enhancements. We need to communicate that effectively to remain at the top of our game by retaining current clients and attracting new ones."

Tempest-Mitchell, meanwhile, highlights how cruise line collaborations with influencers and celebrities has helped attract a younger cruise audience. "A lot of cruise brands are working with younger influencers or celebrities, and their content is helping pique the interest of Gen Z and millennial customers."





In order to promote the value of travel agents to younger consumers, it might help to know which platforms they use most when it comes to researching holidays. A fifth of 18-34-year-old respondents of our survey say TikTok and Facebook are the platforms they turn to most, while just under a quarter (24 per cent) opt for print newspapers and in-person travel agents. The majority use review websites (43 per cent) and a third look to friends and family for guidance (31 per cent).

It's clear this demographic is consuming travel content in myriad ways, but with our report finding that confusion around cruise is on the rise, being able to educate the new-to-cruise market in a concise and engaging way should be the focus for agents moving forward. Oasis Travel

“ Being able to educate the new-to-cruise market in a concise and engaging way should be the focus for agents

executive director Sandra Corkin believes the key to this lies in face-to-face marketing.

“When we hosted the Northern Ireland Cruise Show last year, we invited new-to-cruise travellers to a series of sessions on luxury, family and river cruises so we could talk them through the fundamentals of each sector,” she says. “We’re seeing an appetite from younger people who want to learn more about cruise. We have lots of younger people coming along and asking loads of questions, showing an interest in it.”

PUTTING THE EXPERIENCE FIRST

When it comes to what attracts people to cruise, our report found that dining experiences were the runaway favourite, with 38 per cent of our survey citing onboard cuisine as the most appealing part of a holiday at sea. This tallies with the rise in celebrity chef partnerships that have seen Cunard collaborate with Michelin-starred celebrity chefs Nathan Outlaw and Michel Roux. It's apparent in the river sector too, with Uniworld Boutique River Cruises offering sailings with Tom Kerridge, Monica Galetti and Raymond Blanc OBE.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Celebrity chef Nathan Outlaw's collaboration with Cunard's Gareth Bowen creates intriguing foodie experiences; Carnival Cruise Line's Luke Smith; exclusive destinations such as Carnival's Celebration Key can really set a cruise apart; 38 per cent of those surveyed cited onboard cuisine as the most appealing part of a holiday at sea





The luxury river line's managing director Chris Townson says securing these names has helped the brand reach a new strain of clientele. "We often see more first-time cruise-goers on these itineraries. A lot of the guests joining a cruise with Tom, Monica or Raymond probably wouldn't have booked a river cruise without their name being attached to it."

Sarah Wikevand, managing director of ROL Cruise, argues that advertising cruise as a gateway to incredible destinations and memorable gastronomic experiences is the most powerful way to entice younger people to the sector. "Many first timers assume cruises are only for a certain type of traveller, but with everything from ultra-luxury ocean voyages to cultural river cruises, there really is something for everyone," she says.

However, one of the biggest challenges for the industry continues to be the misconceptions around cruise, with Wikevand saying travellers still have concerns about feeling 'stuck' at sea or thinking cruising is only for retirees. "We focus on showcasing the freedom, flexibility and immersive experiences available, from overnight stays in iconic cities to off-the-beaten path destinations that larger ships can't reach," she adds.

Tempest-Mitchell agrees, saying that Barrhead has seen good results with the new-to-cruise market by focusing on selling cruises as a holiday,

rather than emphasising time onboard. "There are still quite a lot of misconceptions about cruise," she admits.

"Putting the destinations or experiences at the forefront of marketing can often help combat this for those who have never cruised before. Similarly, spotlighting the incredible value for money that can be enjoyed by booking a cruise is also a great tool for this market."

Whatever shape your marketing strategies take in 2025 and beyond, it's crucial to stay abreast of new developments – like social media and AI – as well as bearing in mind the classics to ensure full and impactful coverage. ●

Key takeaways

1 Be bold

Highlight the very best experiences someone can have on a cruise to cut through the noise. Think robotic bartenders, butler service and 40mph go-kart tracks. Customers will be hard-pressed to find a hotel which can offer all three of these things.

2 Don't ignore the classics

Despite social media becoming one of the most popular forms of content consumption, classic media like television and newspaper are still cutting through to consumers. If you're an agency, a small advert in your local paper could lead to a multi-gen cruise booking.

3 Word-of-mouth is king

For the inexperienced, a cruise can appear complex. Do what you do best and put your expertise and customer service first to turn a holiday at sea into a palatable and rewarding experience.





CRUISE CALLS

Will Payne joins Cunard's sales team on the road as they visit three travel agencies in the south of the UK to share the line's latest developments and activations

Having spent most of my career writing about how cruise lines engage with travel agents, I've never experienced it first-hand. So, when *Cruise Trade News* was invited by Cunard to join its sales team on a sales blitz visiting Sovereign Cruise Club in Reading, Fred. Olsen Travel in Ringwood and Hays Travel in Romsey, I leapt at the opportunity.

After meeting sales director Tom Mahoney and business manager for development and engagement John Garbutt in Reading, we hit the road for Sovereign Cruise Club. The messaging for Mahoney and Garbutt is clear – to share Cunard's new brand proposition as it looks to distance itself from being categorised as a “luxury” or “ocean” cruise line.

“We're not one or the other,” Mahoney says. “We're Cunard. And that's what we

need to get across to our agent partners, so they are well equipped to sell a Cunard holiday. “Our mission today is to communicate the Cunard difference – what sets us apart from other brands. Throughout the rest of the year, we'll be refining our assets and giving our trade partners a lot more tools around communicating what that difference is.

“Whilst there is a cruise for everyone – and we have an amazing industry with lots of different types of cruises – we genuinely believe that within Cunard, we have so many passion points that appeal to all types of travellers.”

“Within Cunard, we have so many passion points that appeal to all types of traveller

Mahoney explains how the line caters for each type of guest through its West End theatre-style shows, immersion-focused itineraries, partnerships with Michelin starred chefs like Michel Roux and Nathan Outlaw and its wellness offering in Mareel Wellness and Beauty Spa.

IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

As we arrive at Sovereign Cruise Club's head office, it's clear that Cunard is a popular choice amongst the agency's customers. The line's artwork adorns the walls and 10 per cent off balloons – referencing the company's consumer promotion – are scattered across desks and sideboards. While Mahoney and Garbutt run the staff through a presentation on the Cunard difference, Sovereign managing director Stefan Shillito shares his thoughts on the line's new marketing drive.

ROLLING OUT THE RED CARPET

Our next stop is Fred Olsen Travel's Ringwood branch, which opened last year as Carnival UK's first concept store, showcasing each of the brands' logos and brochures behind different desks. The red wall dedicated to the line I'm travelling with is located opposite the main entrance and screams "Cunard" – much to Mahoney's delight.

"Sometimes potential customers will assume that we only sell Fred Olsen or we only sell Cunard or Carnival," branch manager Rose Price admits. "So, it is really beneficial when teams come to visit us as it gives us an insight into the brand and the chance to discuss ideas as to how we can market the store more efficiently to reach more customers."

Cunard business has been "a little bit on the slow slide" for the agency, Price continues, largely due to public misconceptions about the store and a slower start to the wave season. "But we have a lot of exciting activations planned with Carnival and other companies which will certainly boost our standing with the locals."

ON THE HORIZON

Our final stop is Hays Travel in Romsey, where staff listen to a short presentation from Mahoney and Garbutt before diving into the line's Shine Rewards Club trade incentive platform. Here, agents can download a range of Cunard marketing materials for window and desk displays, as well as benefit from incentive rewards like Just Eat vouchers and cruise credits.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Cunard sales director Tom Mahoney (*left*) with staff at Fred Olsen Travel Ringwood and Cunard development & engagement business manager John Garbutt (*right*); Cunard adopts the personal touch; Garbutt addresses Sovereign Cruise Club

Garbutt says: "For agents to come off the phones and really take in the information from a cruise line is so important. An online training platform may not be the right fit for everyone, and face-to-face immersion gives younger staff members the chance to ask us questions."

If one thing is clear from my time on the road with Cunard, it's that the brand's dedication to its trade partners is woven throughout every aspect of the company's DNA. And travel agents drink a lot of tea. 🍵

Three reasons why face-to-face training remains vital

1 Cruise line representatives visiting agents not only helps educate the trade, but vice versa. While on the road, Mahoney and Garbutt took away dozens of learnings which can help them better tailor Cunard's trade training strategy moving forward.

2 In-person training events give junior members of staff a platform to ask cruise lines the questions they may not be able to find online. These initiatives are critical in shaping the next generation of travel agent talent.

3 Having executive team members on the road shows a line's dedication to trade partners, taking time out of their busy schedule to sometimes travel cross country to provide in-person training, which in most industries would be carried out online.

"This is the best relationship we've ever had with Cunard," he says. "The team coming out on the road has built even more of a bond, and I think it's useful for both them and for ourselves."

"Cruise lines are very good at telling us what their latest prices are, but not always quite so efficient at telling us about product enhancements or plans for the future, and coming here is a more personal way of doing it than them sending an email."

Shillito reports that Cunard business so far in 2025 is off to a "very good" start. "We've seen a large increase in our average sales for them and an increase in business overall, which we're really pleased with."

He puts this increase in popularity down to the introduction of *Queen Anne* in 2024 giving the brand a "fresh impetus" amongst British travellers.

In
conversation
with...



SCAN

Geoff Ridgeon on Fred. Olsen
Cruise Lines' new travel agent
training academy

Jakob Lunøe

Albatros Expeditions' new CEO shares
his plans to capitalise on the exploration
cruise boom. **Jack Carter** reports

When I joined the travel industry as a journalist nearly 13 years ago, I remember a colleague telling me that now I was in, I'd never leave.

The network of relationships that seamlessly evolve from professional to personal combined with the opportunity to see the world is what makes this one of the most rewarding sectors to work in.

Still, the idea that my future was predetermined always felt somewhat unsettling, until I met Jakob Lunøe, who encapsulated it perfectly. "The travel industry is like Hotel California. You can check out, but you can never leave."

It's an early start, but I've managed to catch Lunøe, Albatros Expedition's new CEO, for breakfast before he catches his flight back to the line's HQ in Copenhagen. Having got his start as a safari guide in East Africa, Lunøe did what my former colleague thought was impossible and left the travel industry to go to business school in Denmark, before spending the next two decades working in the IT sector.

"During those years, I kept searching around the travel industry trying to find a role that was the perfect fit," he says. "After joining Albatros Expeditions in November, I can confidently say that it's exactly what I was looking for."

Lunøe immediately recognised the similarities between expedition cruising and safari travel, saying it's the kind of experience that's difficult to comprehend until you've been and done it. "When you go on a high-end safari, you live in luxury accommodation, you get four-course meals and nice wine, then the next day you wake early to go out on a dusty bumpy road. Our expedition cruises are almost the same."

“

We're in the medium price range, but we deliver high quality when it comes to expedition activities



"You live in a premium setting, and then you climb out the door of the ship and into a Zodiac and you're met by raw nature, where the water is cold and you see penguin colonies and glaciers. The product is magic."

GROWING THE BRAND

The expedition sector is booming, with the Expedition Cruise Network (ECN) revealing that more than two-thirds of its members saw a rise in bookings during the first half of 2024. However, small-ship operators like Albatros have a fight on their hands to stand out in what's becoming an increasingly crowded marketplace.

"We're fighting against a lot of other expedition lines and trying to find where we sit in the mix," Lunøe explains. "We're in the medium price range, but we deliver high quality when it comes to expedition activities. In that sense, we're batting above our league."

Communicating these differences to the trade will be crucial if it's to increase its brand awareness in the UK leisure travel marketplace. To that end,

What my career has taught me

Find your passion

"I spent too many years working on things that other people wanted me to do. This is the first time I'm doing something I want to do. It's still long hours and lots of hard work but it's my job. It's an amazing feeling."

Be humble

"As a young leader, I was a bit hot-headed until my boss told me to be kind. It's a small world and you will need the people around you. I'm still firm with what I want, but I focus on being kind first and foremost."

Be curious

"Ask questions; learn peoples' stories and why they do what they do. If you're being curious, that generates network."

the line has now joined both CLIA and the ECN to benefit from the associations' year-round events and learning programmes.

Albatros will be one of six lines exhibiting its product at CLIA's inaugural Expedition Showcase in Svalbard this July. Before that, however, the line will be hosting a familiarisation trip for UK trade and a ship visit in Portsmouth in April and May, respectively. This year the line anticipates that more than 100 agents will step onboard to experience its product first-hand, a significant increase on last year's total of 40. Albatros is also searching for a UK business development manager, with Lunøe hoping to make an appointment by the summer. The goal, he says, is for them to hit the road and target a pool of agents whose clients fit the expedition passenger profile, even if they don't know it yet.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT New CEO Jakob Lunøe is hard at work making Albatros more guest-focused; an expedition cruise allows you to get close to raw nature; the line operates specialist ships like *Ocean Victory*

"Some agents still don't know who an expedition customer is, but they've got them in their databases. They may not necessarily be cruise-goers; they might be land-based holidaymakers simply looking for their next adventure."

CULTURE CLUB

When Lunøe took on his new role last winter, he said he wanted to make the line more "guest-focused", and I'm eager to find out what he meant by this.

"When you sit in an HQ in Copenhagen 15,000km away from our ships," he explains, "it's very easy to spend your time looking at spreadsheets and losing sight of what's important." Most of the line's expedition guides are freelance, which Lunøe says can make it difficult to offer a consistent guest experience. "I want to eliminate some of that randomness and create a strong service concept."

Being a small company that can be light on its feet means Lunøe is empowered to make changes quickly, whether it's increasing guide capacity to maximise guests' time on land or offering the line's first ever Halal cruise. If it all goes to plan, Lunøe might just stick around for good this time. ●



NEW AWARDS ADDED!

WAVE AWARDS 2025



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
Virgin VOYAGES

NOW OPEN FOR ENTRIES

Early Booking Offer ends 30th April

SCAN TO ENTER



Visit thewaveawards.com

SPONSORED BY



HIGHLIGHTS • FOOD & DRINKS
SHOPPING • ITINERARIES

Port Focus



Shanghai

China in your hand: discover markets, museums and old neighbourhoods with traditional restaurants, writes **Mark Andrews**, a former resident who lived in Shanghai for 19 years

One of Shanghai's nicknames is Paris of the East and, like the French capital, it's carved in two by a river. The divide neatly separates old and new, as the gleaming skyscrapers in Pudong on the river's eastern banks are illuminated at night in an LED symphony. The cityscape represents Shanghai's future

and that of the country as a whole; when the city developed in the 1990s, the rest of China followed.

Immediately west of the Huangpu lies the architectural splendour of the city's colonial past, when Shanghai was pulled apart by foreign powers during China's Century of humiliation which began in the 1840s. Edifices such as the former

HSBC headquarters and the old Customs House line the waterfront. The remnants of historic buildings and traditional shikumen dwellings – terraced homes that blend Eastern and Western styles – radiate out on the streets around them.

Whether exploring east or west, one thing's for certain: Shanghai certainly likes to entertain.



Three must-see sites

THE BUND

If there is one image that has iconified modern-day Shanghai, the Bund is surely it. Although promenades now stretch along both sides of the river, Puxi or the Bund on the west side is the best place to gain a classic view of the city. Here, visitors can gaze across the waterway to Shanghai's tallest buildings or swivel to see old colonial-era architecture stretching to the west. A walk up to the 117-year-old Garden Bridge to see where Suzhou Creek joins the Huangpu is a must.

YU GARDEN

Yu Garden is the best place to buy Chinese souvenirs. While it's often popular among tourists, persistent

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

Yu Garden, dating back to the Ming Dynasty, is a must see; browse the fascinating range of work on display at Propaganda Poster Art Centre; the Garden Bridge offers spectacular views of the city

“
Beyond the busy bridge and teahouse of Yu Gardens lie tranquil temples balancing on rocky landscapes

shoppers will be rewarded with quintessential views and experiences. A zigzag bridge and the teahouse in the centre of it appears to be the focal point, but those who go beyond into the actual gardens will escape the bustle to find temples balancing on rocky landscapes. Rumbling tummies can be sated with a bowl of soup spurring dumplings in Nanxiang Steamed Bun restaurant – although it doesn't have the best xiaolongbao in town, it has the most atmospheric location.

PROPAGANDA POSTER ART CENTRE

An almost surreal foil to the bright lights of modern Shanghai, Propaganda Poster Art Centre is a cross between a museum and a shop. Its posters range from product adverts from Shanghai's 1930s heyday to more recent propaganda pieces extolling the populace to unite behind the Chinese Communist Party and fight the country's enemies. During Mao's China in the 60s and 70s, the flyers were one of the main ways the government communicated with the people, so they hold a historical and artistic interest.

Three places to eat BUDGET

Da Hu Chun serves working class shengjianbao soup dumplings which come complete with a crispy fried bottom. A Shanghai institution on Middle Sichuan Road, it is still largely





TOP TO BOTTOM The delectable dumplings at Da Hu Chun are a well-kept local secret; there's a plethora of restaurants to choose from, with many offering a twist on traditional Chinese fare

only known by locals who give those who venture in a knowing smile – visitors might end up sharing a table with one. Pork or prawn dumplings with a bowl of beef curry soup comes to around £3.

MID-RANGE

Visitors have a plethora of restaurants to choose from, but Jianguo 328 nestled in the Former French Concession stands out for its blend of good food,

“ Jianguo 328 stands out for its blend of good food, welcoming service and beautiful decor

welcoming service, and beautiful decor. Large groups can make a reservation a few days in advance for its signature dish, eight treasure duck, or walk in and try regular dishes such as braised pork. Guests won't be disappointed.

PREMIUM

The Contemporary French restaurant Mr & Mrs Bund in one of the old Bund buildings might be upmarket, but its views rather than its prices are what will make your eyes water. Many dishes have an Asian influence such as king prawn steamed in a jar with the tart flavours of lemon, orange and pomelo and then dipped in soy sauce. A table overlooking the river is a must.

Local tips



“Shanghai is safe, clean and full of energy. It has food from all over the world, and there are always hidden gems waiting to be found, whether they're historical sites, museums, gardens or ice cream stands.”

ALBERT WANG

Partner at China-based law firm East & Concord



“Together with its deep-rooted history and distinctive culture, Shanghai is a shopper's paradise. Nanjing Road offers everything from luxury brands to affordable local products. The city's diversity and dynamism make it a great destination for international travellers.”

SELINA YIN

Business development manager



Get on board

Viking Cruises

The 13-night Coastal Jewels of China itinerary aboard *Viking Yi Dun*, from Tianjin to Shenzhen via Dalian, Qingdao, Shanghai, Dongtou, Pingtan and Xiamen, departs 19 September 2025 from £6,495pp, inc. flights.
viking.com

Oceania Cruises

The 13-night Graceful Pagodas itinerary aboard *Regatta* from Seoul to Shanghai via Busan, Kanazawa, Sakaiminato, Fukuoka, Nagasaki, Jeju and Beijing, departs on 21 February 2026, from £3,170pp.
oceaniacruises.com

A full-page background image showing a sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with orange and yellow light, with silhouettes of birds in flight. The foreground shows reeds and their reflection in the water.

VIVA
Enjoy

A winter's **TALE**

Following plans to bolster its presence in the UK following impressive international sales, **Will Payne** boards VIVA Cruises' newest ship, *VIVA Enjoy*, to find out what's on offer for British cruise-goers

The eerie stillness of a morning on the Rhine could inspire a Stephen King horror. As fog hangs above the water's surface, I hope I'm not the inspiration for his next novel as rows of eyes stare back at me. Peering closer, I spot tiny water rail birds on the banks of the river in the German town of Koblenz. Beyond them, I hear the kettles of sleepy residents whistle from inside their wooden-clad houses.

I'm onboard VIVA Cruises' newest ship, the 190-guest *VIVA Enjoy*, sailing from Dusseldorf to Frankfurt. Fortunately, the birds and residents of Koblenz are undisturbed thanks to noise-cancelling technology, designed to silence the ship's engines. The vessel cuts through the water without a peep.

Headquartered in Germany, VIVA Cruises has leant on its northern European heritage to produce an elegant river vessel bolstered by the high-level engineering that our Bavarian neighbours are known for.

ELEGANT BY DESIGN

Following the ship's christening in Dusseldorf – in which its godmother, the UK cruise journalist Jeannine Williamson, blessed the vessel during an intimate ceremony – I step onboard my home for the next two nights. The atrium, which is stylish and spacious, features a boutique packed with jewellery and designer clothing. The mezzanine balcony makes the space feel larger than it is and a colourful floral centrepiece is a nice welcome after a long day of shoreside adventure.

Two smiling faces await me at the main desk with all the information I need ahead of my cruise south to Frankfurt. Armed with my keycard and a sense of anticipation, I head to my cabin down the oak panelled corridor adorned with stylishly lit artwork.





“ My cabin’s colour scheme evokes the feeling of waves lapping against your feet on a beach

My ensuite cabin features a large double bed, a walk-in shower and a colour scheme which evokes the feeling of waves lapping against your feet while you take in the rays on a beach. It also has ample storage, a desk and enough amenities – like a packed minifridge and luxury toiletries – to ensure I don’t need to make a frantic shoreside dash to grab missing essentials.

After unpacking, I peer out of my French balcony to get a sense of my surroundings and spot a cyclist whizzing by in the direction of the 9th-century Basilica of St Castor, which I can see in the distance. A chill prickles the hairs on my arms to attention. After all, I’m sailing

Selling tips

1 *VIVA Enjoy* has three restaurants – a lot for a river cruise – so if you have customers on the lookout for culinary experiences, this ship is a great pick.

2 A well-stocked gym, massage room and yoga studio make this an appealing option for travellers who enjoy wellness experiences while on holiday.

3 Spacious rooms and friendly staff makes the ship a great options for solo travellers and couples alike.

in the middle of January, so I crank up the heat on the air conditioning system.

Sliding shut the door I turn my attention to my devices. Wi-Fi is crucial in this day and age, but I discover that I have to take my phone and laptop to reception and ask a crew member to connect them one by one to activate it, which seems needlessly complicated. However, once I’m online, the connection is stellar.

ALL ABOARD

The Bistro, towards the rear of the vessel, is the perfect spot for some light afternoon reading as a wake forming at the back of the ship signals the maiden voyage is underway. Hushed tones and warm, golden lighting make me feel as if I’ve stepped into a high-end restaurant off the cobbled streets of Paris.

This is where I catch up with *VIVA Cruises’* managing director Andrea Kruse. “The third new build in our fleet gives us new scope again, not only with regard to our routings, but also with regard to our international guests,” she says. “We



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Frankfurt juxtaposes the old and the new; Europe's waterways are dotted with stunning architecture; *VIVA Enjoy* offers the ultimate in comfort; guests can keep an eye out for the water rail bird along the riverbanks; the ship offers three tantalising restaurant options; there's a lot of history to explore in Dusseldorf

“
The gym offers facilities rarely found on river ships, such as a yoga room and massage studio

have grown over the past five years, as has our customer base and the demand from international guests.” It's safe to say there are no signs of stagnation from VIVA.

The bistro serves snacks, lunch and dinner throughout the day. The menu offers decadent plates, such as smoked salmon tartare blinis, beef rib-eye steak and banana foster with vanilla ice cream. I opt for a hearty oxtail terrine, minty herb-infused veal tenderloin and zesty cinnamon-infused orange tart.

Afterwards, I spend the evening enjoying negronis and nibbles in the mezzanine bar at the front of the ship, which connects to the main restaurant, Riverside. Then I hit the hay to prepare for day two.

FITNESS FOCUS

It's too chilly to make use of the free rental bikes and pool on the sun deck, so the first thing on my list is to head to the gym on deck one to burn off last night's dinner.

The gym offers facilities rarely found on river ships, such as a yoga room and massage studio. Revitalisation was clearly the aim when the Swiss

designed the vessel. As well as a wide range of dumbbells, I spot a rowing machine, a static bike and a treadmill that for some reason directly faces the wall rather than the window with a stunning river view just to my right.

After freshening up I visit the Panorama Salon, a bar above Riverside with plush sofas, uninterrupted river views and waiter service. Then it's time to head to the ship's main restaurant, Moments, where terracotta tiles and vine leaves suspended from wooden planters instantly transport me to Tuscany. As I'm guided to my table, I note the kitchen's stone pizza oven, which confirms my decision on what to order. I smell the aroma of melted cheese even before my dish arrives. It's huge, so much so I can't clear my plate, despite it being mouth-wateringly tasty.

As we sail into Frankfurt, the cruise is over all too soon. My experience on *VIVA Enjoy* is short and sweet, but it's clear VIVA Cruises has found a way to keep their loyal customers happy while offering the sleek, no-nonsense design the British river cruise market relishes. Next time, I hope to stay for longer. ●

Get on board

VIVA Cruises' four-night Canals and Culture cruise aboard *VIVA Enjoy*, return from Dusseldorf via Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Dordrecht and Nijmegen, departs 15 January 2026, from £695pp. viva-cruises.com

Fast facts

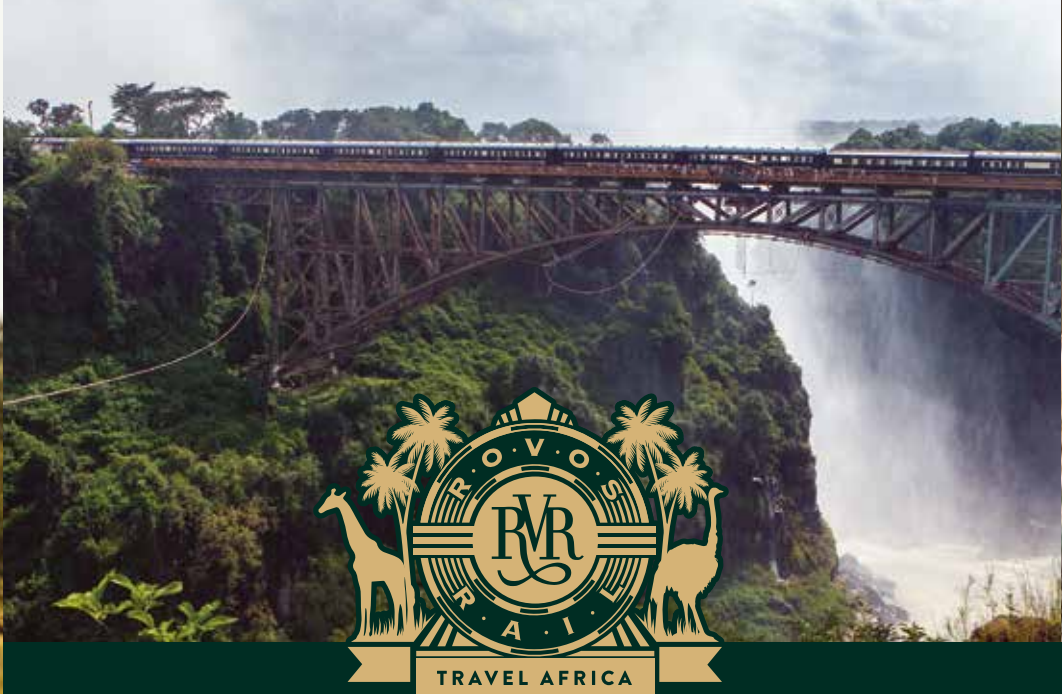
190
guests

95
cabins

52
crew

3
restaurants





The GOLDEN AGE

Since its establishment in 1989, Rovos Rail has earned an international reputation for its truly world-class travel experiences. Bespoke train safaris through the heart of Africa combine magnificent scenery with the glamour and excitement of the golden age of leisure travel. In a series of journeys lasting from 48 hours to 16 nights, Rovos Rail links some of the continent's greatest destinations with a variety of off-train excursions.

Great Southern Africa



CAPE TOWN • DURBAN SAFARI • VICTORIA FALLS • GOLF SAFARI • NAMIBIA SAFARI • SOUT



of LEISURE TRAVEL

The beautifully rebuilt wood-panelled trains each carry up to 72 passengers in 36 superbly appointed suites and are also available for charter, while the Events Train caters for up to 250 guests and is suitable for daytime journeys. Create itineraries by combining our short and long journeys and receive a 5% discount or explore our specials and collections that link our journeys with other entertaining products. **rovos.com**

Train Adventures



THE SOUTHERN CROSS • AFRICAN COLLAGE • AFRICAN TRILOGY • COPPER TRAIL • DAR ES SALAAM

South
Africa

Rise & shine

Whether you're searching for powder-white beaches or once-in-a-lifetime animal encounters, a cruise to South Africa and beyond offers the ultimate combination of exploration and tranquillity, writes **Gilly Pickup**





There's no doubt that Africa is one of the most spectacularly diverse continents on the planet and a cruise to its most southerly point is an adventure for all travellers, whether first timers or old hands. Not only does it offer the chance to embark on exhilarating excursions in cities such as Cape Town, Durban and Gqeberha (formerly known as Port Elizabeth), but they can also be combined with visits to paradisiacal destinations like Mozambique, Mauritius and Namibia.

This part of the world is where to see some of the most incredible sights imaginable, from upside-down trees and penguins that bray like donkeys to the world's highest sand dunes. Much more than simply a cruise, this is a sensory experience, an immersion into countless different cultures, intriguing landscapes and unforgettable wildlife encounters that define this region. A voyage here fires the soul.

"While South Africa more commonly appears on a world cruise itinerary, it now features as a destination in its own right," explains Dave Mills, chief commercial officer at Iglu Cruises. "We're seeing new interest in East and South Africa, as ports invest in new facilities and cruise lines pick up momentum to show off these destinations."

ZULU TRADITIONS

Most cruise ships call at ports including Africa's busiest, subtropical Durban. Affectionately known as 'Durbs' by locals, the city is awash with a colourful mosaic of cultural enclaves and excellent beaches. Guests can tap into folklore and a hybrid of history in Richards Bay, the country's second largest port and gateway to Zululand, once the mightiest of mighty sub-Saharan African Kingdoms.

Silversea's Cape Town to Mahe *Silver Cloud* expedition voyage calls here, where excursions include a sunrise safari with bush breakfast and the chance to visit Dumazulu Cultural Village for an insight into Zulu traditions. Of these there are many, from basket-weaving, spear-crafting and pot-making to bone-throwing by a 'sangoma', a traditional healer who communicates with ancestral spirits on guests' behalf. Then there's the spectacular Zulu dancing, pronounced by heavy stomping, rhythmic chanting and beaded, brightly coloured attire.



Further south along the coast, East London is a new port of call for Viking. Neil Barclay, the line's head of sales, explains: "Some new stops we've introduced in South and East Africa are off the beaten track and would be relatively difficult for the average traveller to visit independently.

"East London is a highlight, where we offer privileged access to learn the traditions of the Xhosa people in the rural village of Ngxingxolo." Also of note is the port's East London Museum, which contains the world's only dodo bird egg as part of its collection of unique ecological specimens.

WILDLIFE THRILLS

Gqeberha, sometimes still listed as its former name, Port Elizabeth, is a popular stop for cruise-based safaris. Some lines offer visits to smaller family-owned reserves such as Schotia Private Game Reserve, the oldest private game reserve in the Cape Province. Addo Elephant National Park is also nearby, possibly a slight misnomer because not only do visitors have the chance to see elephants here, or indeed, the fabled bucket list Big Five, they can, if they're lucky, actually see the Big Seven: elephant, lion, leopard, rhino, buffalo, great white shark and southern right whale.

Local travel companies like Rovos Rail give cruise-goers the opportunity to extend their holiday with an exhilarating

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Cobalt-blue waters lap Mozambique's tropical coast; wildlife lovers will relish the region's many game reserves; take the chance to learn more about Zulu traditions; South Africa's wine country is world-renowned

Selling tips

1 As this part of the world offers such a wide range of unique adventures, cruises to South and East Africa truly are a holiday of a lifetime.

2 For first-timers to the region, stress the benefits of going on a cruise ship over a land-based trip, highlighting the opportunity to comfortably visit multiple countries in Africa.

3 Cruising during the summer season between December and March generally means clients can combine safari viewing with the harvest season in South Africa's wine country.

pre- or post-tour by luxury train, which, as well as visits to Addo Elephant Park, includes hiking along the foothills of the Maluti Mountains and tasting reds, whites and rosés in the Cape Winelands.

"Our guests are eager to discover the magic of this continent," says Stephen Joyner, senior sales manager UK & Ireland, Crystal Cruises. "Being part of the A&K Travel Group with deep roots in Africa allows us to craft truly authentic and immersive experiences."

Ships generally overnight in South Africa's effervescent capital Cape Town, lorded over by the impressive Table Mountain. While there, it is well worth taking a cable car ride to the summit for the chance to take in the jaw-dropping Atlantic views.

Known as the Garden City, Cape Town has a heady dose of parks and botanical gardens providing pockets of shady peace, while visitors shouldn't miss the imaginatively landscaped Victoria and Alfred Waterfront beside Cape Town's cruise port. Linked by a series of bridges, it overflows with quirky shops, handicraft stores, sea-view cafés and restaurants.

Just outside town, the 10,000-hectare Aquila Game Reserve offers more wildlife-based thrills via drives in traditional safari vehicles, on horseback or quad bikes. Speaking of wildlife, CroisiEurope's eight-night safari cruise is just the ticket for nature and wildlife



“ Demand is rising for South Africa’s unique landscapes and exceptional excursions

lovers. The trip, combining Botswana and Zimbabwe, also features four days on Lake Kariba onboard *RV African Dream* or *RV Zimbabwean Dream*, a luxury lodge stay and both water and land safaris.

Antonio Paradiso, VP of international sales at MSC Cruises says: “To sell this region effectively, it’s important to highlight its diversity, from thrilling safaris and wine tours to vibrant city experiences. There’s truly something for every type of traveller. Of course, for Brits and Irish, the weather is a huge selling point, especially when they’re seeking a winter escape.”

PICTURE-PERFECT ESCAPES

The cobalt-blue waters that lap Mozambique’s palm-fringed beaches showcase an entirely different side to this spectacular corner of the world. *Norwegian Dawn*, *Azamara Quest* and MSC’s *Musica* and *Opera* venture to Mozambique, a top destination for snorkelling and ecotourism, while Crystal Cruises’ new December 2025 voyage on *Symphony* will also head there as part of its Cape Town to Mombasa cruise.

Mozambique’s five island Bazaruto Archipelago, which lies between the mainland and Madagascar, is home to the world’s largest population of the elusive dugong, the massive sea cow creature which inspired ancient seafaring tales of mermaids. Passengers can go on authentic dhow safaris, sailing past a wide range of sights from mangroves and opulent waterfront properties to the thought-provoking slave memorial garden. It is a bucket list experience like no other and guests have the satisfaction of knowing that their visit is providing real benefits to local sailors and fishermen. In Maputo, Mozambique’s bustling capital, those who prefer to stay on dry land can experience a fusion of African, Portuguese and Arabic influences through architecture, music and cuisine, while seafood lovers might want to try the city’s legendary peri-peri prawns.



EXPERT VERDICT

Antonio Paradiso,
VP of international
sales, MSC Cruises

“Having overseen South Africa as one of my key regions for the past year, I have certainly noticed a growing interest from UK and Irish guests. South Africa is becoming an increasingly popular destination, with demand rising for its unique landscapes and exceptional excursions.

“With MSC Cruises, guests can experience South Africa through our World Cruises in 2026 aboard *MSC Magnifica*, and again with *MSC Opera* in the winter of 2025/2026, allowing them to explore its stunning natural beauty and rich culture.”

Oh, and if you’re wondering where you can see those penguins that bray like donkeys, they are ‘jackass penguins’, which make their home along the southwestern rocky coast of Africa from Namibia to Gqeberha. As for the ‘upside-down trees’, plains studded with these mighty baobabs stretch across South Africa and Madagascar. ●

Get on board

MSC Cruises’ four-night South Africa cruise, from Durban to Maputo, Mozambique, onboard *MSC Opera*, departs 9 February 2026, from £329pp.

Silversea’s 20-day Cape Town to Mahe cruise, via Port Elizabeth, South Africa; Bazaruto Island, Mozambique; and Zanzibar, Tanzania; on *Silver Cloud*, departs 27 March 2026, from £11,500pp.





GET ON TRACK

Experience the best of the region by pairing a South Africa cruise with a Rovos Rail escorted train holiday, says **Kaye Holland**

Rather like cruising, an escorted rail holiday is an exciting way to travel – where the journey becomes as much a part of the experience as the destination. Passengers are invited to sit back, relax and admire the scenery, before experiencing the destination’s landscapes, discovering its history and getting to know its culture, food and traditions first-hand via a carefully curated selection of excursions.

Yet, while shore excursions are perfect for giving a flavour of each port of call, having that little bit more time on land – which is what an escorted rail tour offers – gives customers a different perspective and a deeper understanding of their destination. So, if a South or East Africa cruise – with its promise of rolling grasslands, vibrant cities and beautiful beaches – is on your client’s bucket list, why not suggest they add an escorted train journey either pre or post-sailing for the ultimate holiday adventure?

When it comes to escorted rail journeys in southern Africa, Rovos Rail,

owned by the Vos family, is the company to get on board with, hitting all the highlights – from the mighty Victoria Falls to enormous Etosha National Park. Its beautifully restored locomotive trains include air-conditioned royal suites, which take up half a carriage each, as well as four-course gourmet dinners and world-class wines served in wood-panelled carriages. Itineraries range from three to 15 days in length and venture as far as Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and Swakopmund in Namibia, although the most popular route is between Cape Town and Pretoria. Yet no matter which rail tour your clients choose, they’ll soon discover that the greatest pleasure is the journey itself.

“**An escorted rail tour offers a different perspective and deeper understanding**

Five reasons to book a Rovos Rail journey

1 HIT THE CAPITAL

Want to tick off two capital cities in a single trip while only having to unpack once? Rovos Rail’s three-night Cape Town to Pretoria (or vice versa) itinerary allows your clients to do just that. After seeing cosmopolitan Cape Town and Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned during apartheid, recapture the romance of a bygone era by hopping on a train journey via the Cape Winelands to Pretoria, South Africa’s executive capital.

Time your journey right and the jacaranda trees will be in bloom creating lilac canopies across the city. Guided outings at Kimberley, home to the country’s biggest diamond mine, and the village of Matjiesfontein – once a Victorian health spa – are also included.

2 STEP INTO THE WILD

Nothing beats the thrill of seeing Africa’s big five – lions, leopards, elephants, African buffalo and rhinoceros – in the wild. Rovos Rail offers several

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Rovos Rail's beautifully restored trains will transport you back to yesteryear; South Africa is one of the world's top spots for a golfing holiday; travelling by rail allows guests to enjoy the region's constantly changing scenery

thrilling safari excursions that will live long in your clients' memories. Named after a local Nhanzwa chief, Hwange National Park is renowned for its big cats and large herds of elephants. Elsewhere in South Africa, Nambiti Game Reserve guarantees a safari experience that should have clients purring. Led by knowledgeable guides, they'll bond with a maximum of six people over extraordinary wildlife experiences with a few choice luxuries along the way.

3 DISCOVER THE WORLD'S BEST WINES

South Africa is the southern hemisphere's oldest wine-producing country and the good news for oenophiles is that they can enjoy wine pairings with both lunch and dinner.

Even better? The food and wine pairings are included in the costs of a Rovos Rail land tour, as are other top-shelf South African offerings, such as gin, rum, whisky, beer, cider and non-alcoholic options. Meanwhile, professional sommeliers are onboard to educate guests about the different regions and styles.

4 GO OFF GRID

Most Rovos Rail departures are from the outfit's 60-acre, colonial-style private station at Capital Park in Pretoria. Here clients will be welcomed by a Vos family member – and a glass of chilled Champagne – and taken on an

Three ways Rovos Rail can support agents

1 Rovos Rail offers a robust document directory featuring itineraries, detailed journey binders, suite layouts and more to equip agents with the tools to customise trips according to client preferences, while sharing precise information.

2 Rates and schedules for all departure dates can be found online, along with rates per suite (including single supplement/occupancy) and a breakdown of what is and isn't included.

3 A media gallery allows agents to showcase the luxurious onboard experience to potential clients via maps, imagery, videos and logos.

informative and engaging 30-minute tour to learn how the carriages are built and how the semi-retired steam locomotives are maintained.

The private station also marks the last place to connect to the internet because, in keeping with its theme of yesteryear, there is no Wi-Fi access on board – while mobile phones and laptops can only be accessed in individual suites.



It's an excuse to ditch the tech, sit back and enjoy the constantly changing scenery, while taking another sip of fine wine.

5 HIT A HOLE-IN-ONE

Every golfer knows that South Africa is one of the world's leading destinations for a golfing holiday, with top-notch championship courses to test your swing around every corner.

White River in Mbombela, Nkonyeni in Royal Swazi and Durban Country Club are just some of the golf courses that feature on selected Rovos Rail land tour itineraries – and all are far above par.



ROVOS RAIL

For more information, visit rovos.com or email gareth@rovos.co.za



The CLIA View

Andy Harmer OBE highlights the strength of the river cruise sector and why now is the perfect time to enhance your knowledge of the world's waterways

River cruise has gone from strength to strength in the past few years, which was highlighted once again at our recent annual RiverView Conference. Delegates from a wide range of agencies joined us in Budapest, as we hailed another successful 12 months for both the sector itself and those in the trade who sell it.

What continues to stand out is the sheer amount of choice available to river cruisers, which is now wider than ever. The type of ship, wealth of itineraries, price points and departure destinations offer a fantastic number of options to passengers.

With so much variety, river sailings offer an ideal alternative to land-based holidays, as ships call into the heart of city centres across Europe and further afield. We continue to see the Seine, Rhine, Rhone, Danube and Douro consistently appeal to UK and Ireland passengers, as witnessed by new ships being launched there this year.

That choice of destination now goes way beyond Europe, to include the Nile,



Mekong, Ganges, Amazon and now, for the first time, the Magdalena River in Colombia.

Encouragingly for agents, we also heard at RiverView how operators are committed to evolving and innovating. Celebrity Cruises, a mainstay of ocean cruise, will bring its unique style to the sector from 2027 as it sails rivers for the first time via a fleet of 10 ships. Meanwhile a host of new river vessels are entering waterways this year, as cruise lines grow their fleet, becoming ever more innovative and appealing.

It was made clear that river cruise holidays have changed and evolved, and that one element that has seen the biggest change is the opportunity for holidaymakers to extend their river cruise with land elements. River cruise operators are adding

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

European rivers like the Danube consistently appeal to passengers; Andy Harmer is encouraged by the level of choice available; the Rhine's magnificent scenery is a major draw

the chance to experience luxury trains, outstanding hotels and incredible sightseeing options to add even more value to the river cruise experience, and this is appealing to customers who are looking to make the most of their overall river cruise holiday and fully explore the destination.

As river cruise continues to grow, and the choices that come with it further open up, there has never been a better time for agents to develop their understanding and expertise of selling this unique sector. With innovation, new destinations and an ever-expanding audience, river is not just thriving – it's also charting an exciting course for the future.

Andy Harmer OBE is managing director of CLIA UK & Ireland ●



“

With innovation, new destinations and an ever-expanding audience, river is charting an exciting course for the future

BLOOMIN' GREAT SPRING DEALS

30% OFF 2ND GUEST*
ON SELECTED 2025/26/27
SEASON SAILINGS

15% OFF SOLOS*
ON SELECTED 2025/26/27
SEASON SAILINGS

13 FEB - 02 APR 2025

*Terms & Conditions apply

DISCOVER OUR WORLD OF SAILINGS ON BOARD OUR 2025, 2026 AND 2027 SAILINGS

We are an authentic, affordable quality, no-fly cruise line, where our onboard service is of the highest standard and quality. Plus, with our onboard currency in GBP£, your customers can avoid exchange rates and wasted money, to enjoy the warmest welcome at sea.



**8 REGIONAL
PORTS**



**NO FLY
CRUISES**



**ADULTS
ONLY**



**AFFORDABLE
QUALITY**



**FRIENDLIEST
WELCOME**



**AMAZING
ENTERTAINMENT**



**EXCEPTIONAL
CUISINE**



**SMALL - MID
SIZED SHIPS**



**94% OF GUESTS WOULD
RECOMMEND US**



Discover our
flagship,
Ambience



**BEST CRUISE LINE
FOR
NO-FLY CRUISE HOLIDAYS**



THE BEST VALUE AT SEA

SAY HELLO AT
ambassadorcruiseline.com
Call **0808 258 6729**



Fares subject to availability and may be withdrawn or changed without notice. For full terms and conditions visit www.ambassadorcruiseline.com. 30% off second guest is valid on new bookings only on specific sailings from 08:00 13th February 2025 until 23:59, 2nd April 2025 inclusive. See website for full list of sailings. Offer is valid for up to two adults paying the Saver or Ambassador fare (cruise fare only). 3rd/4th berth are not eligible for the 30% discount. All offers are capacity controlled and subject to availability and may be withdrawn without notice at any time. Promotion is structured as first guest paying full Saver or Ambassador Fare and second guest, sharing the same cabin, gets 30% off full saver or Ambassador fare (cruise fare only). Both booked fares must be the same to get the promotional offer. The 30% discount has already been applied to the cruise fare price for the second guest. Guests booking the Ambassador fare will also get 15% off our Expedition drinks package, the discount has already been calculated into the overall Ambassador fare price. Please note this promotion is not applicable to any festive/in port events or any booking made outside of the promotional dates. It is only applicable to the lead booked guest and secondary guest in each cabin over the age of 18 and is not applicable to any 3rd/4th berth guest or any child under 18 travelling. Solo travellers will get 15% off the applicable full single saver or Ambassador fare over the same period on the selected sailings. See website for full list of sailings. The 15% discount has already been applied to the cruise fare price for the solo fare. Solo Fares are subject to availability and may be withdrawn or changed without notice. Extras not included: Travel insurance, travel costs to/from the port of embarkation, port parking, onboard gratuities and service charges where a package has not been purchased (automatically billed to the onboard account), optional shore excursions, discretionary expenditure of a personal nature including hot and cold alcoholic & non-alcoholic drinks, gifts, shopping, laundry, WiFi & communication, and any visa & health certificate charges that may apply. Ambassador Cruise Line reserves the right to cancel, change or amend any theme cruise activities/speakers/acts at short notice. In the event of your cruise being cancelled, you will be guaranteed a full refund. Cruise holidays booked with Ambassador Cruise Holidays Limited, trading as Ambassador Cruise Line, are financially protected in accordance with the Package Travel and Linked Arrangements Regulations 2018.

MARELLA
CRUISES

Adventure awaits...

Flights? Check. Transfers? Yep.
Cruise? All Inclusive.



Please see www.tui.co.uk/cruise or the relevant brochure for full booking terms and conditions that apply. Some of the flights and flight-inclusive holidays are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. But ATOL protection does not apply to all holiday and travel services listed that we offer. Our website and brochures will provide you with information on the protection that applies in the case of each holiday and travel service offered before you make your booking. If you do not receive an ATOL Certificate, the booking will not be ATOL protected. If you do receive an ATOL Certificate but all the parts of your trip are not listed on it, those parts will not be ATOL protected. Please see our booking conditions for information or for more information about financial protection and the ATOL Certificate go to: www.caa.co.uk. Marella Cruises Limited are members of TUI Group. Registered Office: Wigmore House, Wigmore Lane, Luton, LU2 9TN. Registered in England, for Marella Cruises Limited No: 12562788. ABTA No: Y6722 and ATOL No: 11878.