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WELCOME...

TO THE MAY/JUNE ISSUE

Hands up if at the age of 17 you knew what you wanted to be when you grew up. I'm going to assume that, like me, the majority of you didn't have a Scooby. And of those who did have an idea, I wonder what percentage of you realised you were destined for a career in cruise.

The pathways for young people into the cruise industry, particularly those from deprived areas, were near non-existent until Edwina Lonsdale, owner of Mundy Cruising, decided to do something about it. The Cruise Career Springboard – an initiative supported by CLIA and more than a dozen cruise lines – is now in its third year, with 48 students from three sixth-form colleges enrolled in this year's programme.

"I was tired of seeing too many of the same people in the cruise industry," Lonsdale tells me for this issue's interview feature on *page 52*.

Elsewhere, we reveal some exciting changes for the 2025 Wave Awards on *page 20*, including a new date and several enticing new categories. We also investigate the recent hikes in National Insurance Contributions and how it will implicate SMEs across the travel sector. That's on *page 47*.

On the cover: World Navigator, Atlas Ocean Voyages



ABOVE Sixth-form college students get a taste of life onboard

On a personal note, this will be my last issue at the helm of *Cruise Trade News* as I take on the editorship of our sister title, *World of Cruising*. While I look forward to supporting the publication in my new capacity as group editor, I want to extend my gratitude to you all for your support over the past 15 months. I can't wait to see where our new editor takes this wonderful brand.

Jack Carter
Group editor

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17 Aug 2025 | SEABOURN ENCORE

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Visits: Skiathos (Greece); Kavala; Dikili (Pergamon, Turkey); Bodrum; Santorini.

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• **Overnight stay in Valletta**



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COLUMN

The secret to enhancing
your email marketing

Navigator



APT's Douro delight

► When APT Travelmarvel's *MS Estrela* hit the Douro for the first time in April, it marked a key milestone in the river cruise and touring operator's five-year growth plan.

"We've got lots of new ships coming, two more APT vessels later this year and a new

Travelmarvel ship on the Rhine and Danube. We'll also be building another Douro vessel to come in 2028," managing director Paul Melinis tells *Cruise Trade News*.

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



Continued overleaf



Cruise Trade News was in attendance as the ship was christened in Portugal during a ceremony attended by APT Travel Group CEO David Cox and the APT Travelmarvel UK and Ireland team, as well as travel agents, media and local dignitaries.

Managing director of Ponders Travel, Clare Dudley, believes the ship is primed to attract a younger audience on the hunt for group experiences. "The ship's chic decor has been designed to

provide a sense of luxury in every corner, from beautifully appointed accommodations to stylish furnishings," she says.

"The lounge and restaurant feature thoughtfully sectioned spaces, creating intimate areas that are perfect for couples or groups of friends looking to unwind in comfort. One of the standout highlights is the top deck – an inviting retreat with plush seating and a stunning pool area, offering the perfect spot to take in views of the Douro."

“ The ship's chic decor provides a sense of luxury in every corner

Dudley's take is echoed by executive director of Oasis Travel, Sandra Corkin, who is impressed by the ship's "luxurious and relaxed feel". "The cabins were spacious and the furnishings extremely comfortable and modern. I would highly recommend it to my clients. The food and service were excellent and the Douro is a destination that would appeal to those travellers who love city breaks, enjoy beautiful surroundings and fine wines."

Yet with extra capacity comes extra challenges. Melinis relishes this, claiming "there's plenty to go around for all the operators". "We're going after the baby boom market, and there's roughly 14 million in the UK today," he explains. "The UK river market is growing, so it's really important that agents have a strong understanding of different rivers and the different offerings."

IN NUMBERS

2024
launch

120
passengers

60
suites

Carnival Cruise Line to shut UK office

➤ Carnival Corporation has confirmed it is taking steps to close Carnival Cruise Line's UK office in May. The conglomerate said the move comes after "careful consideration" of its strategic objectives and that it is having "individual conversations" with members of the team.

The closure, which is expected to take effect from 12 May, will see the company "sunset" the Seavacations team in the UK.

A Carnival Corporation spokesperson said: "After careful consideration of our strategic objectives for the UK market, we have made the difficult decision to propose the closure of the Seavacations team in the UK and sunset this part of the organisation.

"We are currently having individual conversations with the Carnival Cruise Line team in the UK to discuss potential future opportunities within the wider business."

Several members of Carnival Cruise Line's UK team, including international sales director Luke Smith, confirmed they are looking for work.

The company has also cancelled a travel agent ship visit in Dover.



**SCAN**

Cruise sales remain robust despite industry lull, says Not Just Travel boss



CRUISE SUMMIT ANNOUNCES RETURN

➤ The Cruise Summit is back with a bang with the 2025 edition promising more insightful talks, engaging panels and meaningful networking. Bringing together experts from across the travel, marketing and tech industries, the event will take place on 22 September at the News UK head office near London Bridge.

Last year's edition featured a jam-packed agenda, themed around the future of cruise, with insight from industry leaders, as well as from the likes of Google, Times Radio and Meta. This year's event will focus on what the industry can do to attract more new-to-cruise guests to the sector, with speakers to be announced shortly. Register your interest to attend at cruis Summit.co.uk.

“**The focus will be on how to attract more new-to-cruise guests to the sector**



ROL PROMOTES WIKEVAND

➤ ROL Cruise has promoted Sarah Wikevand to chief commercial officer.

The promotion sees Wikevand take full responsibility for the development and execution of ROL Cruise's commercial strategy, ensuring alignment with the company's business objectives as it celebrates its 30th anniversary.

CEO Rosie Cairns said: “Sarah and I have worked closely together for many years, and her deep understanding of the business, combined with her commercial insight, makes her perfectly placed to lead this area.”

You can read more about ROL Cruise's 30th birthday celebrations on page 22.

SPOTLIGHT

Panache tops £32m turnover



Luxury cruise retailer Panache Cruises has topped £32 million in turnover for the last 12 months, representing a year-on-year increase of 71 per cent.

It comes as the Chorley-based business prepares to launch a new expedition cruise brand specialising in destinations such as Alaska, Antarctica, the Arctic and the Galápagos Islands.

CEO and founder James Cole predicts the majority of the company's future growth will come through Panache Expeditions.

“We're on a mission to become the world's largest luxury cruise retail business,” he says. “The market is growing and we think Panache Expeditions will generate £10m+ of annual revenue in the next three to five years.

“We're just over a month away from the end of our financial year and all the indications are that we'll reach £33m turnover by the end of May.”

“**We're on a mission to be the largest luxury cruise retail business**



AMASINTRA SETS SAIL

Luxury river cruise line AmaWaterways has unveiled its newest ship, *AmaSintra*, which will sail on Portugal's Douro River from March to December annually. The new vessel can carry up to 102 guests across 55 staterooms, most of which include outside balconies and floor-to-ceiling windows. The ship also includes a Sun Deck pool, a fitness room and a main restaurant offering regionally inspired cuisine. A seven-night itinerary will comprise visits to vineyards as well as stops in Porto, Régua and Salamanca.



AND THE WINNER IS...

Riviera Travel held its inaugural travel agent awards ceremony in April to celebrate the achievements of its travel trade partners.

Hosted at The Lookout in London by *World of Cruising TV* presenter Dean Wilson, the Riv Awards recognised agents across regional, national and special recognition categories. Gates Travel was named the top-performing

agent for the North East and Cumbria, with 119 per cent growth in revenue compared with last year.

Andrew Earles Holidays was recognised in the Yorkshire and the Humber category after achieving 20 per cent year-on-year growth, and Fred. Olsen Travel received the Engagement and Marketing Award as part of the special recognition categories.

SPOTLIGHT

Michelle Daniels



Former A-Rosa River Cruises sales director Michelle Daniels has joined European river specialist VIVA Cruises as its new country manager for the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. Daniels, who has previously held roles with Light Blue Travel as commercial director, will spearhead the line's expansion in the UK.

In her new role, Daniels will be responsible for driving the development of VIVA Cruises in these markets, while overseeing the line's sales, marketing and customer engagement strategies.



RESET & REFRESH

Avalon Waterways has announced plans to refurbish its fleet of river cruise vessels.

Over the next two years, several of the operator's ships will receive "top to bottom" enhancements, including new interiors and upgraded outdoor spaces.

Avalon Alegria, *Avalon View* and *Avalon Envision* – the brand's newest ships – will remain

unchanged and act as the model vessels for the fleet-wide refresh.

Upgrades include new decor in every public space, a second Starlink antenna and new furniture.

The ships' Observation Lounges will also be enhanced, fitness rooms will feature Kinesis weight machines and an expanded selection of free weights, while each ship will boast 15 new bikes and four new e-bikes.



SILVERSEA'S SHORESIDE SOIRÉE

Silversea has unveiled the first spaces of The Cormorant at 55 South, its new 150-room hotel in Puerto Williams, Chile, scheduled to open during the 2025/2026 Antarctica season. The name is a nod to the unique location of the property at 55° S – making it the southernmost hotel on the planet – and an acknowledgement of the location's history. The Cormorant rooms will offer two unique perspectives, including forest views and water vistas overlooking the Beagle Channel.



CRUISING WITH QUARK

Quark Expeditions has launched a new contest for its agent partners.

Arctic Sweepstakes offers six winners the chance to experience an Arctic cruise aboard *Svalbard Explorer* on a Best of High Arctic Norway expedition itinerary, taking place 29 May–8 June 2026.

Advisors can earn entries into the contest by booking Arctic voyages for between 7 April–30 June 2025.

Agents must first register by completing a sweepstakes registration form. Each Arctic 2026 booking earns one entry and each Arctic 2025 booking earns three entries.

The more Arctic voyages travel agents book, the more chances they have to win. The six winners will each receive a free cabin for two people aboard *Svalbard Explorer*.



Positive contributions

Guests sailing with HX contributed to more than 30,000 citizen science submissions in 2024.

The findings came from the expedition cruise line's first ESG report, titled *Navigating for a Greener Future*.

The report, which is the first fully independent publication since HX's formal separation from the Hurtigruten Group, outlined that a record-breaking 1,911 cruise nights were dedicated to guest scientists, with passengers contributing to more than 30,000 submissions across 3,425 sessions.



ARANUI BOOSTS FLEET

Aranui Cruises has announced plans to add a second ship to its fleet in 2027. *Aranoa*, which will sail the South Pacific, will accommodate 198 passengers in 93 cabins.

The expedition line's first vessel, *Aranui V*, will continue to transport passengers and cargo to the islands of the Marquesas. *Aranoa* will extend this model and, for the

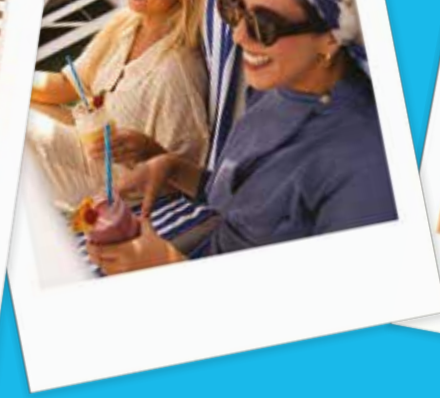
first time, offer a regular series of cargo carrying cruises to the remote Austral islands.

The ship, which is currently under construction at a shipyard in China, will be a mixed passenger/freighter vessel, designed to minimise its environmental impact with a diesel-electric propulsion system.

The ship will also feature two restaurants and two bars.



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“How can I maximise my time during ship visits?”

Kirsty Van Wyk, KVV Luxury Travel, asks how should agents prepare for a show-round and what questions will glean the most valuable insights for her clients. Words by **Jack Carter**

As the green shoots of summer start to appear, for travel agents the clement weather signals the start of ship visit season. Indeed, with most cruise lines positioning their ships in ports across the UK for the peak sailing period, it's an opportunity for the trade to experience a brand-new product or reacquaint themselves with an old favourite.

Being able to step onboard a ship to kick the tyres and slam the doors provides vital insight into what life is like onboard, whether it's understanding the differences between an ocean view or balcony stateroom or discovering which bar serves the best sundowners.

However, the opportunity to experience ships first-hand only come around every so often, which leads Kirsty Van Wyk of KVV Luxury Travel (part of The Holiday Village Group) to ask: “How can agents make the most of their time onboard?”

For Van Wyk, ship visits are a great way to showcase your training and credentials to potential clients, saying it gives confidence to customers that you're not just talking the talk. “You've actually walked on that ship and know how it operates and how it feels,” she says.

Van Wyk says is selective about which ship visits she chooses to attend to ensure she doesn't waste her's or the line's time, revealing that she'll only

accept an invitation if it's a brand she's previously placed a client with or if the line represents a part of her business she's looking to grow. She also supports the move from certain cruise lines to ask agents to take part in their online training before accepting them onto a ship visit programme.

“There's no point in visiting a ship for the sake of it,” Van Wyk adds. “The whole point is so you have the knowledge when an enquiry comes in so you can talk about the cruise line with confidence. You can tell a client that the restaurant is lovely because it's split level or it's got floor-to-ceiling windows, and in this particular part of the ship you can get amazing sushi.”

Another way cruise lines are ensuring they get the best return on investment from their ship visit programmes is by inviting agents to bring prospective clients onboard with them, something Van Wyk has profited from in the past. “I got invited

“
Being able to kick the tyres and slam the doors provides vital insight into what life is like onboard





SCAN

Royal Caribbean hosts
'biggest-ever' Seminar at Sea
on Allure of the Seas



onto *Oceania Marina* in Tilbury last June and I was able to bring some of my clients with me. I got a £35k booking off the back of it. For the cost of having a few extra people onboard, it was a no-brainer."

COMING PREPARED

The importance of gaining first-hand experience of a ship is clear to see. So, what can agents do to ensure they step ashore with as much helpful information as possible? Sabrina Piscioneri, sales, training & event executive at Viking UK, recommends paying attention to the little details that separate one line from another, which can help agents showcase their expertise to potential clients.

"I think it is important while touring a group to be regularly pointing to areas of the ship which set us apart within the market," Piscioneri explains. "Trade partners really value these small soundbite details they can take away and use with their clients, which will display an in-depth knowledge of the product within the wider market."



Come prepared with detailed questions about the ship and itineraries to get the most out of a visit

Piscioneri also advises agents, where possible, to make the most of any free time onboard to return to areas that piqued their interest and take photos so they can refresh their memories once they're back at their desk. Perhaps even more crucial than that, however, is doing research beforehand and coming armed with questions for the line's trade-facing team.

"I find that trade partners who come prepared with detailed questions about the ship, our wider product and our itineraries often get the most out of a visit," Piscioneri explains. "I'm able to answer a whole range of questions in person that they may have stored up and these questions often inform or spark ideas with other trade partners too."

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Seeing a ship first-hand gives you confidence when talking to clients; details such as the view from a restaurant can make all the difference when selling a cruise; IntelTravel's River Cruise Conference took place onboard Riviera Travel's *Emily Brontë*



LEFT Make sure to experience as much of the ship as possible, including facilities like the spa

“ Ship visits are especially important to discern which river cruise lines are best for particular clients

Coquard agrees with Piscioneri, advising agents to come to a ship visit with questions tailored to their clients' concerns and interests. “Ask about the different types of cabins, where they're located and what side of the ship has the best views on a particular sailing,” she says. “Whether the cruise line caters for allergies and dietary requirements is a really hot topic right now, and I always make sure to ask about accessibility. Lastly, get a ship map so you can refer to it once you're home.”

Lisa Williams, an independent agent who was also in attendance at IntelTravel's River Cruise Conference, says ship visits are especially important when it comes to discerning which river cruise lines are best for particular clients.

Williams says: “AmaWaterways offers wonderful fine dining so that suits the older generation, while TUI is all-inclusive and adults-only, so there's a fun vibe onboard. A-Rosa River Cruises is pitching itself toward families at the moment so that's where I'd place clients with children. Then you have Scenic and Emerald which have a great spa offering.”

Her advice for agents is to experience as much of the ship as you can, from the variety of restaurants to the spa. “I took a massage and asked someone to video it so my clients can see what it's like,” Williams explains. ●

CONTENT CAPTURE

Independent travel agent Rachel Coquard recently attended IntelTravel's inaugural River Cruise Conference, onboard Riviera Travel's *Emily Brontë*, a three-day event that included a ship tour, several hosted dinners and a morning excursion in Cologne. Coquard says attending the conference represented a clear return on investment.

“I have lots of experience selling ocean cruises and having recently made my first river cruise booking, there's only one way to learn more about it and that's by experiencing it myself,” she says. “That way I can sell future river cruises with more conviction.”

How can I maximise my time during ship visits?



**Sabrina Piscioneri,
Viking**

“Following the tour, it is important for trade partners to be able to spend some time on their own, returning to certain areas that piqued their interest.”



**Rachel Coquard,
independent agent**

“Ask as many questions as possible, such as which side of the ship has the best views on a particular sailing and how they cater to allergies and dietary requirements.”



**Lisa Williams,
independent agent**

“Take as many photos and videos as you can and post them across your social channels. For me, videos attract more interest from my clients than written posts.”

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STAR POWER

With the date now confirmed for the 11th annual Wave Awards, sponsored by Virgin Voyages, new judges and categories aren't the only reasons to get excited

The countdown has started for the biggest night of the cruise industry calendar, with this year's Wave Awards featuring several exciting changes that are set to make it an extra-special evening.

Firstly, you've spoken, and we've listened, which is why the 11th annual Wave Awards has moved from its usual Monday night slot to Wednesday. The ceremony will return to The Dorchester on London's Park Lane on Wednesday 26 November, with the deadline for completed entries on Monday 2 June.

The Wave Awards prides itself on attracting an esteemed group of cruise industry luminaries to judge each entry, and this year will be no different. What

is new, however, are several industry figureheads who will make their Wave Awards judging debut, including CLIA UK & Ireland managing director Andy Harmer OBE.

He will be joined by other new additions in Jonny Peat, senior commercial manager, The Advantage Travel Partnership; Sarah Wikevand, chief commercial officer, ROL Cruise; and Janet Parton, VP business development UK & Europe, Celestyal.

You can purchase tables for your team, as well as individual tickets at thewaveawards.com/buy-tickets.

MORE WAYS TO WIN

Three new categories will give lines and agents more opportunity than ever to come away with a prize. With our Annual Report revealing that 58 per cent of new-to-cruise travellers will book a cruise in the next 24 months, this year's ceremony will recognise those who've gone above and beyond to lure new holidaymakers to the industry. We've also split the always-popular Best PR & Marketing Initiative category into two separate awards to recognise the ingenuity displayed across both disciplines.

With the submission deadline of 2 June fast approaching, now's your last chance to enter, so don't miss out! thewaveawards.com 



Standout categories for 2025

BEST TECHNOLOGY PROVIDER

Here, we are looking for the technology provider who has developed an innovative software or hardware product for the cruise sector that has grown sales and/or improved customer success.

BEST RETAIL AGENT

High street agents are more important than ever. The judges are looking for a retail travel agency who demonstrates how they use cruise line training schemes, industry events and personal development plans to ensure customer satisfaction and smash their sales targets.

BEST NEW SHIP LAUNCH

Building excitement right the way through to the launch day, this award celebrates the ship launch that created the biggest buzz and got the entire travel industry talking.



Scan to enter your team!

WAVE AWARDS 2025



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

Virgin VOYAGES

Subject
Matter

Email for all

Force24 CEO & founder **Adam Oldfield** explains what the incoming European Accessibility Act means for cruise marketers

A quiet but significant piece of legislation is set to make waves across the travel and cruise sectors in 2025: the European Accessibility Act (EAA). If you haven't heard of it yet, now's the time to get familiar, as this comes into play in June. The EAA is designed to ensure that key online services such as websites, apps and e-commerce platforms are accessible to everyone, especially people with disabilities. This includes the way we send and design emails.

What does this mean for cruise marketers? In short: all customer-facing digital content, including promotional emails, booking confirmations and itineraries, will need to be perceivable, operable, understandable and robust for users with a wide range of accessibility needs.

This isn't just a legal tick-box. It's a chance to improve how we connect with customers. Too many brands still send emails that are hard to read with screen readers, use poor colour contrast, or rely on images without alt text.

Under the new rules, that won't be acceptable and brands that fall behind risk non-compliance. But here's the opportunity: accessible email is better



“The EAA is a powerful nudge towards more thoughtful marketing

email. It's clearer, more user-friendly and often performs better across all audiences. What's more, making your emails more inclusive helps you reach a wider customer base, including the 87 million people across the EU living with a disability, many of whom want to travel but often feel excluded by poor digital experiences.

By acting now, cruise lines and agents can lead the way, modernising their email strategies, building trust and positioning themselves as forward-thinking and inclusive. The EAA is coming, but it's not something to be afraid of. It's a powerful nudge towards more thoughtful, inclusive marketing. The brands that get ahead now won't just be compliant, they'll be better connected, more trusted and ready for a more inclusive future. ●

ABOVE Adam Oldfield believes cruise lines should lead the way in modernising their email strategies

IN NUMBERS



90%

of travel and hospitality emails currently fail basic accessibility tests.



71%

of disabled travellers say they'd book more often if communications were easier to understand and access.



87 MILLION

EU citizens live with a disability. That's a huge audience cruise brands can reach with inclusive marketing.

TOP TIP

Start by auditing your current campaigns. Are your templates accessible? Is your language clear? Are your CTAs easily navigable on all devices?





PEARLS OF WISDOM

As ROL Cruise celebrates its 30th anniversary, CEO Rosie Cairns and CCO Sarah Wikevand reflect on what it takes to nurture a successful business. **Will Payne** reports

As I step inside the ROL Cruise headquarters in Lexden House, Colchester for the first time, it's clear to me why the business has not just survived, but excelled through some of the travel industry's toughest times.

There's a buzz around the building; one that can only be emulated when everyone is fully focused on the same mission – to bring exceptional cruise holidays to British travellers.

I'm here to catch up with chief executive officer Rosie Cairns and chief commercial officer Sarah Wikevand amid the company's 30th anniversary – an achievement worth shouting about given the uphill battle that the cruise sector has faced during the past three decades.

“We're stronger than ever thanks to our team – who we now refer to as co-owners

“I think the first word that springs to mind for both of us is proud,” Cairns says as she explains how it feels to have made it to 30 years.

It would be easy for Rosie and Sarah to talk about how business is booming – which, albeit true for ROL Cruise, isn't the most important item on the agenda for the afternoon.

“We're stronger than ever thanks to our employees – which we now refer to as co-owners, having transitioned

to an employee-owned company in November 2024,” Cairns explains. The importance of people to Cairns, Wikevand and the wider ROL Cruise executive team is undeniable. And it goes further than a cliché saying, evidenced by the company's decision to reshape the structure of its business to put its workforce in the driving seat.

The company employs 138 people, with a staff retention rate of 98 per cent and average length of service exceeding seven years. More than half of its employees have been with the firm for more than five years, while 34 per cent have dedicated a decade or more to the brand.

CORE VALUES

Key to maintaining this high level of employee satisfaction, Wikevand



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT ROL Cruise is now employee-owned; Jennie Bond is an ROL Cruise ambassador; Sarah Wikevand and Rosie Cairns outside Lexden House

explains, is staying true to the pillars which the company was founded upon.

“We’re really proud that we still operate with the same core values as when we started,” she says. “We look after our customers from the moment they inquire all the way through till they come home – and this is the same philosophy we implement with our partners and staff.”

Investing in current staff rather than “chopping and changing” teams has helped the company build a strong customer base, Cairns adds.

“Our customers want to know that who they talk to has got experience. A lot of our staff have gone on educational trips so they’ve experienced destinations like the Galápagos and Antarctica, which makes it so much easier when it comes to helping a customer pick a holiday.”

To mark the 30th anniversary celebrations, ROL will host a summer party in the grounds of Lexden House for

its staff, and an afternoon tea with guest speakers for loyal customers.

“Events like these are important for us to meet our customers face to face; being a call centre, it’s great that people have that interaction with our consultants,” Cairns says.

FUTURE INNOVATIONS

While staying true to the company’s founding principles, Cairns and Wikevand are acutely aware of the importance of updating ROL’s product to keep up to speed with the evolving landscape of customer booking habits.

This year ROL will launch its first-ever app, which will make the company the first independent cruise retailer to offer a mobile platform.

The app will support customers with insight and guidance on different cruise operators and itineraries, before prompting users to get in touch with the ROL team to secure their holiday.

The company has also begun the early stages of becoming a certified B Corporation to highlight its commitment to sustainability.

“It’s important to all our co-owners [employees], partners and customers to show that we care about our environmental footprint,” adds Cairns.

Whatever is to come for ROL, it’s clear the people who have put the retailer on the map will continue to play a vital part in the company’s successes.

How to maintain a successful cruise agency

1 TRUST THE PROCESS

The travel industry is unpredictable at the best of times. Stay true to your core values and don’t forget why you started your business in the first place. Don’t sacrifice what your customers and staff know and love for profits.

2 PEOPLE FIRST

Staff are the lifeblood of any successful business, inside or outside of the travel industry. Instead of chopping and changing workforces, invest in your people to grow their knowledge and they will repay your faith in dividends.

3 INNOVATE AND ADAPT

It’s important to evolve with the times, as well as sticking to your core pillars. Purchasing habits have changed rapidly over the past few years, so keep up to date with new innovations and seek the help of experts to see how you can make the most of the latest technologies.



For more information, visit rolcruise.co.uk

30 YEARS OF ROL CRUISE

ROL Cruise starts trading as Reader Offers Ltd, with a team of four selling land-based holidays through regional newspapers.

1995

2025

ROL Cruise celebrates its 30th anniversary.

ROL Cruise – still under the moniker Reader Offers Ltd – partners with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines and Cunard, soon followed by Princess Cruises and Holland America Line.

2002

2024

ROL Cruise officially becomes employee-owned, as managing director Rosie Cairns becomes CEO.

After rapid growth, ROL Cruise outgrows its original office and moves to Lexden House, Colchester where the team remains headquartered today.

2008

2022

Joint managing director Sarah Wikevand is announced as the godmother of Emerald Yacht Cruises' first ocean-going superyacht *Emerald Azzurra*.

The company celebrates the launch of its first cruise show, held at the Weston Homes Community Stadium in Colchester, bringing together leading cruise lines to showcase a wide array of cruise itineraries and ships.

2010

2020

ROL Cruise raises £100,000 for NHS charities by donating £25 from every new booking made.

Jeremy Dickinson takes over as CEO following the retirement of ROL Cruise founder and chairman Peter Beadles.

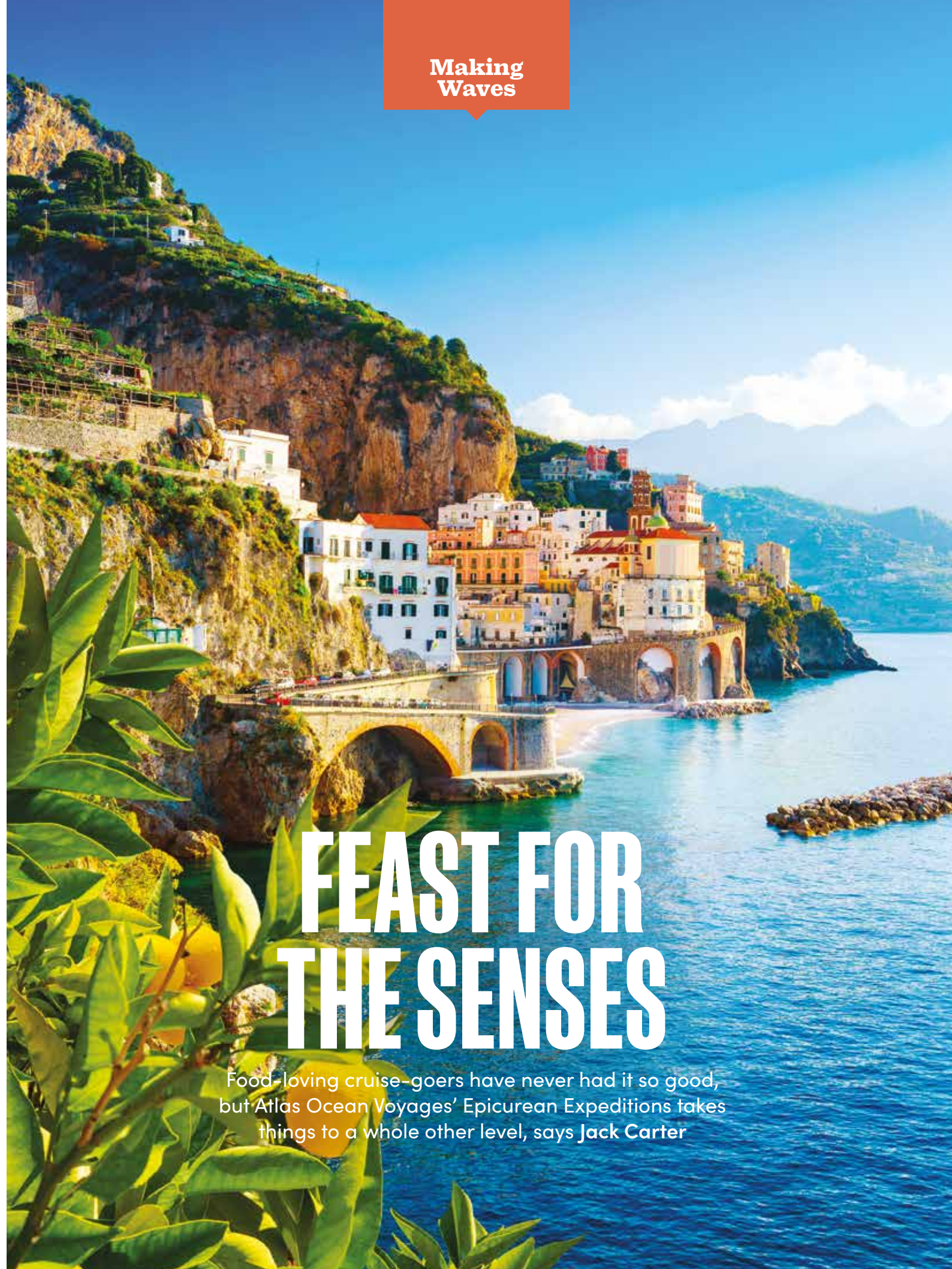
2014

2016

Reader Offers Ltd officially rebrands as ROL Cruise, marked by the launch of new website rolcruise.co.uk.



LEFT TO RIGHT ROL Cruise's original office on East Hill, Colchester; company founder Peter Beadles; as ROL expanded, it celebrated moving to new headquarters at Lexden House in 2008; Jeremy Dickinson took over as CEO in 2014 and then became chairman in 2018



**Making
Waves**

FEAST FOR THE SENSES

Food-loving cruise-goers have never had it so good, but Atlas Ocean Voyages' Epicurean Expeditions takes things to a whole other level, says **Jack Carter**



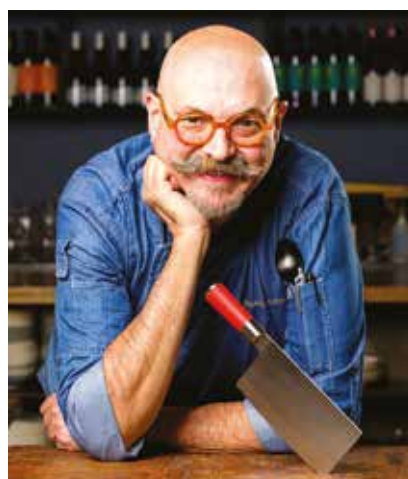
Whether it's slurping freshly shucked oysters on a terrace overlooking the Amalfi coastline or embarking on a tour of Bordeaux's verdant winelands, sometimes letting your appetite be your travel guide is the fastest (and most enjoyable) way of discovering a new destination. Atlas Ocean Voyages understands this better than most, which is why food and wine make up such an integral part of the expedition line's vast breadbasket of experiences.

The luxury yacht-style cruise line has cast its net far and wide to unearth some of Europe's most mouth-watering culinary experiences, all of which are captured within its renowned Epicurean Expedition programme. With activities including food tours of local farmers' markets, private chef-led cookery masterclasses and farm-to-table dining in the peaceful surroundings of a country estate, there's no finer introduction to the continent's cuisine than Epicurean Expeditions.

Each year the programme is led by an esteemed collection of guest chefs and culinary experts who step onboard

to lead a series of afternoon cooking demonstrations and interactive events. Arguably the most highly anticipated of all is the Yachtsman Cook-Off Competition, in which guests compete against one another to create a variety of dishes, before being judged by the chefs. Imagine serving up your very own homemade paella or freshly made truffle pasta to an award-winning chef or leading restaurateur.

Onshore, guests will be able to join local guides on tours of local farmers'



“ Atlas guests enjoy pintxos masterclasses in Bilbao or olive tasting in Olympia

markets where they can sample regional cuisine, and discover the culinary culture of ports firsthand – think pintxos masterclasses in Bilbao or a tour of an organic olive farm in Olympia, where the monumental ruins of the first Olympic Games still stand today.

“Epicurean Expeditions is a central element of our offering and we are incredibly excited to unveil our 2025 programme of chefs and culinary experts,” says Bernard Carter, international sales lead for Atlas Ocean Voyages. “Their expertise is vital to creating the intimacy and immersion that defines an Atlas Ocean Voyages expedition.”

This year's programme will be led by more than a dozen top foodie talents, including Brazilian-British chef Luciana Berry, who was crowned Top



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Vineyard visits are always a major draw; Mediterranean cuisine will tickle your clients' taste buds; Atlas Ocean Voyages has cast its net far and wide in search of the finest food; a balcony offers the ultimate view; renowned cheesemaker Paula Lambert; Italian celebrity chef Massimo Capra



Chef Brazil 2020, and Polish-born Anna Wilamowska, a Michelin-star-trained French pastry chef. They'll be joined by Italian restaurateur and celebrity chef Massimo Capra, renowned cheesemaker Paula Lambert and award-winning cookbook author Paulette Mitchell.

The launch of the Epicurean Expedition 2025 programme coincides with Atlas Ocean Voyages' 'Explorer's Collection' promotion, which will run from 30 June all the way to October 2026. As part of the offer, guests sailing on one of the line's European, Arctic or Antarctica cruises will be able to get up to 20 per cent off their booking. They'll also be able to choose from one of three complimentary amenities, including

“ The programme will be led by more than a dozen top foodie talents

air credit of up to £800pp, a pre-cruise hotel stay or a free upgrade to unlimited Wi-Fi. Meanwhile, suite-staying guests will get to choose two out of three options.

AGENT APPRECIATION

Carter says 2025 is going to be the “year of the agent”, explaining that he plans to engage with more than 400 travel advisors across a range of ship visits and UK roadshow events in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow. The company is also introducing a new trade portal which will feature training modules, marketing tools and brand information.

“In addition to that, we've launched a Facebook page dedicated to the UK travel trade to further enhance our relationships with agents across the country,” Carter continues. “For us, 2025 is the year of the travel agent, because we know that the trade will be responsible for a massive part of our success as we grow.”

Carter has high praise for the line's general sales agent (GSA) in the UK, The Cruise Line, which has boosted its reputation in the market and helped the company to reach new customers.

“More and more agents want to book Atlas and the infrastructure is now in place so they can do everything through The Cruise Line, which is fully bonded and will provide pricing in local currency,” Carter explains.

“Not only am I working directly with more of the trade, I'm also targeting some of the biggest players, such as Hays Travel, Advantage, Travel Counsellors and the Fred Olsen Travel Group, on the commercial and promotional side of things, to help elevate the brand further in the UK.”

A little bit like his guests, Carter has plenty to sink his teeth into as he looks to solidify Atlas Ocean Voyages' standing with the cruise travel trade. ●



For more information, visit
atlasoceanvoyagesuk.com



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SCAN FOR
SPECIAL OFFERS



SCAN

Apex sailing up for grabs in new Celebrity Cruises travel agent incentive

INCENTIVES
SPECIAL OFFERS
ITINERARIES

What's in It For You?



EXTRAORDINARY ENCOUNTERS

> To mark the launch of its new brochure, Fred. Holidays is offering agents the chance to earn up to £1,000 per booking.

Valid from 4 April to 26 June, and applicable to all new Fred. Holidays package bookings made during this period, the incentive rewards agents with One4All vouchers based on the value of their booking.

The new Extraordinary Encounters brochure showcases the operator's

cruising, touring and exploring product and is supported by a mini brochure promoting land experiences with G Adventures and Wendy Wu Tours. The 32-page document features a 26-night Ultimate Japan cruise and tour with a nine-night holiday with Wendy Wu Tours and a 14-night full-board cruise onboard *Azamara Pursuit*.

Tricia Birmingham, director of tour operations at Fred. Holidays, said:

"We are seeing key trends in luxury and immersive travel, sustainability and combining elements such as rail and sail to explore regions more comprehensively."

The new Extraordinary Encounters brochure is being distributed to key partners, and agents can request copies through their Fred. Holidays business development manager. A digital version is also available through the agent portal.

Visit

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



Get up and GoCruise

GoCruise & Travel has introduced a new mentoring programme to help new-to-travel franchisees start their own business.

It comes following a record start to the year for the brand, with sales up 14 per cent on 2024 turnover performance and four new franchisees coming onboard.

The year-long mentoring programme will see experienced franchisees offer one-to-one sessions and events for beginners to help broaden their knowledge,

Colin Martin-Weekes, head of franchise, GoCruise & Travel, said: "As customer demand and expectations grow, educating and supporting our new members will be instrumental to our success."

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

The Advantage Travel Partnership has joined up with Princess Cruises for its 2025 Latitude Cruise Conference. The event will take place on a three-night *Sky Princess* sailing from 14-17 October from Southampton to Hamburg.

John Sullivan, commercial director of The Advantage Travel Partnership, said: "We are thrilled to be working with Princess Cruises for what is our annual hero cruise event and our fourth Latitude Cruise Conference.

"This event has fast become one of the key conferences in the travel calendar, for members and supplier partners alike. We're always looking forward, aiming to support any business wanting to grow further in the sector."

VIRGIN DOUBLES AGENT REWARDS

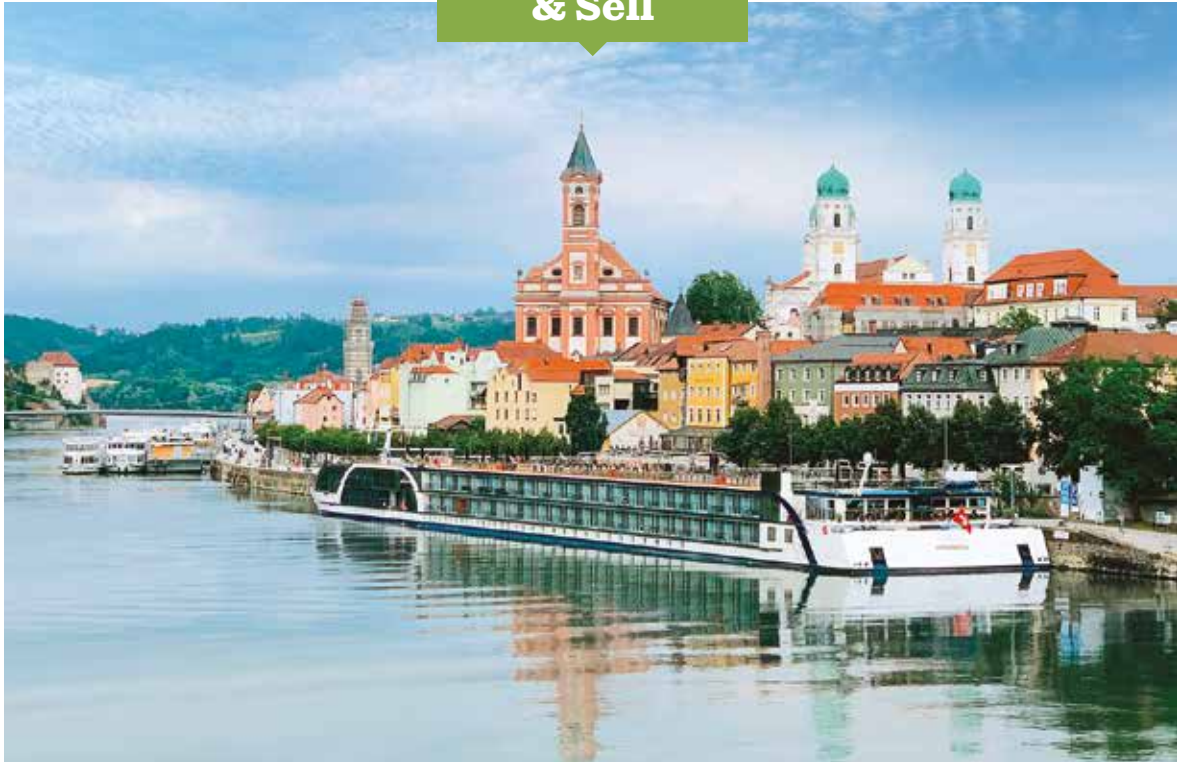
Virgin Voyages is giving its agent partners the chance to earn double points with the enhanced First Mate Loot Double Rewards Campaign.

From 28 March to 29 May, agents can earn double rewards on all 2025 European sailings. Plus, in celebration of *Brilliant Lady's* launch, every booking on a 2025/26

Long Caribbean Voyage aboard the new vessel will earn £10 per booking, double the usual reward.

It comes as the line offers UK travellers a free balcony upgrade on European voyages. This offer is available on select sailings, from five to 12-night European trips departing Barcelona or Athens to 13-night cruises from Portsmouth.





AmaWaterways

Having launched a new ship on the Douro and its first on the Magdalena already this year, there's plenty of opportunity to grow river cruise sales with the luxury brand

IN THE KNOW

For more than 23 years AmaWaterways has been guided by its co-founder and executive vice president Kristin Karst's "Five P's"—passion, positivity, personal interaction, partnership and pioneering spirit. The ultra-luxury river cruise line prides itself on its wellness programme, offering a variety of guided hikes and excursions, as well as onboard fitness classes led by Wellness Hosts. Guests will also find heated sundeck pools, whirlpools, fitness rooms and massage services on a number of vessels.

THE FLEET

AmaWaterways' fleet of 31 ships sail a range of itineraries across Europe's major rivers, Southeast Asia's Mekong River, Africa's Chobe River, Egypt's Nile River and, as of March 2025, Colombia's Magdalena River. Ships are modern and spacious, welcoming an average



of 150 guests and feature onboard amenities such as a Main Lounge, speciality Chef's Table restaurant, hair and massage salons, sun deck walking track and heated outdoor swimming pools with swim-up bars.

In April the line launched *AmaSintra*, its third vessel on Portugal's Douro

River, to offer itineraries from March to December annually. A seven-night itinerary will comprise visits to vineyards, offering regional wine tastings along the way, as well as visits to Porto, Régua and Salamanca in northwest Spain, with an optional three-night pre-cruise land stay in Lisbon.

SAILING THE MAGDALENA

Earlier this year the line became the first major river operator to deploy a ship on the Magdalena River in Colombia. The 60-guest *AmaMagdalena* was custom designed in collaboration with Colombian craftspeople and woodworking specialists in an attempt to "bring the heart and soul" of the region onboard.

The interiors of the staterooms, which range from 237 to 516 square feet, were built by Marianna Schlegel Donado of Casa Schlegel Donado from Barranquilla and feature AmaWaterways'



FAR LEFT AND ABOVE Passau is a popular stop-off on Danube itineraries
LEFT *AmaMagdalena* is the first ship from a major operator deployed on Colombia's Magdalena River
BOTTOM LEFT Double-width ship *AmaMagna* is the flagship of the fleet

“The luxury cruise line prides itself on its wellness offering

twin-balcony design. The vessel will operate two seven-night itineraries, Magic of Colombia and Wonders of Colombia, which sail between Cartagena and Barranquilla.

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON?

Later this year, AmaWaterways will launch *AmaMelodia*, its second ship on the Magdalena River. *AmaMaya*, meanwhile, will become the operator's second ship on the Mekong River when it launches in 2026, and *AmaSofia*

will follow on the Danube. *AmaRudi*, a second double-width ship similar to *AmaMagna*, will be deployed on the Danube in 2027. The company will also add a new training course focused on France to its AmaAcademy portal later this year.

WHO'S WHO?

Managing director Jamie Loizou, who joined the company in 2016, oversees brand strategy and leads the UK and Europe teams. Sales director Andrea Stafford is responsible for developing new trade distribution strategies and overseeing agent-focused strategy. Business development managers include Bart Rutten, Katrina Latimer, Joanne Smithies, Rachel Simon and Anna Borrer.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Managing director Jamie Loizou on the importance of destination when it comes to selling river cruise

Are there any regions that are performing particularly well?

We're seeing an interesting mix of business, with the 'exotics' selling very well. Asia was slow to come back post-pandemic, but the Mekong has really taken off. We're adding another ship there next year and we brought the sailing season forward for 2026 so we start in July rather than August.

What's driving that desire for destination immersion?

People really want to make travel count. With a river cruise, you get to visit destinations that you can't easily access any other way. You get to see these towns and villages where maybe the infrastructure's not so great, but you're taking your floating hotel with you so you're in your own little sanctuary.

SELLING TIPS

1 With a fleet of more than 30 ships sailing the majority of the world's rivers, AmaWaterways offers a plethora of itineraries for a range of customers, whether they're new-to-cruise or seasoned sailors.

2 The importance of wellness is entrenched throughout AmaWaterways' ethos. If you have customers who are keen fitness fanatics, or on the lookout for some rest and relaxation, the line should make your list of recommendations.

3 Being the first, and only, major river cruise line to sail the Magdalena highlights AmaWaterways' pioneering spirit, making it a great pick for someone who loves cruising and wants to visit South America.



SAVE

UP TO

£500

PER STATEROOM*

Save Big!

Our latest campaign is making it easier than ever to book, with savings of up to £500 per stateroom.

It's the perfect opportunity to offer your guests incredible value on their next getaway - but don't hang about.

Offer ends 30th June.



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TIME TO GET PERSONAL

Force24's **Adam Oldfield** and Real Response Media's **Richard Seal** reveal how cruise brands can use personalisation to transform their email marketing

Did you know there are an estimated 4.4 billion active email addresses globally? Or how about that people spend as little as 10 seconds on average each day reading brand emails? This underlines the issue many travel marketers are experiencing today, where they're tasked with delivering relevant, authentic content to databases populated by potentially hundreds of thousands of email addresses.

Adam Oldfield, founder of email marketing platform Force24, and Richard Seal head of digital at Cruise Trade News publisher Real Response Media reveal how brands can use data to deliver personalised content to an army of consumers.

What does personalisation mean and where do brands tend to get it wrong?

Adam Oldfield: Usually when people talk about personalisation they tend to think 'Hi [first name]', but it goes much deeper than that. Even deciding when not to send an email to someone is personalisation. Deciding whether you want to send an email, direct mail or SMS is personalisation.

Where brands can fall down is when they hold on to their data too dearly.

“People spend as little as 10 seconds on average each day reading brand emails

Imagine, for example, someone bought a cruise to the Mediterranean from an online travel agent in 2019. You'll often see that company only talk to them about Mediterranean cruises moving forward. They miss out on the opportunity to go around the houses and inspire them to try different cruise holidays based on what their interests might be today.

How has Force24 helped *Cruise Trade News* and sister title *World of Cruising* in our own email marketing?

Richard Seal: We've worked very closely with Force24 to look at our data and segment our audience into smaller groups based on their needs, ensuring our users are getting what they want. If they want to learn more about

audiences have engaged, we get them to look at a specific destination or cruise. We do that by using offers, which are a great way to ascertain what kind of cruise someone is interested in. Now we've moved them from new-to-brand into knowing what type of cruise they're interested in, which gives us an opportunity for a sale.

So it's about asking questions to develop a greater understanding of your database?

AO: That's correct. And the thing is, you don't actually have to ask, you can just observe while placing content in front of people. However, one thing I see a lot of travel companies do is overburden their databases with emails. The more I say, the less I get, so say less.

RS: That's why the work we've done to build out these segments is so important, now we know who's interested in articles around the Caribbean and who's interested in a specific cruise line. There's a criteria there that allows that segment to continuously build because they're giving us the answers without us actually needing to ask any questions.

People are inundated every day with emails. Is there a hard and fast rule when it comes to volume?

AO: You need to be looking at the date an email was last opened or the last time they looked at your website; that's the base tier of engagement. Once you've identified someone who ticks either of

LEFT Adam Oldfield is interviewed by *Cruise Trade News* at last year's Cruise Summit

“
It's about trimming the volume down to focus on people who are engaging because they're the ones with high potential

those boxes, that's when the cadence of emails should increase.

In that scenario, 14 days after the web activity you should have reached them six times in that two-week period as a minimum. If they've not engaged with you on the website but they have opened your email in the last, say, 30 days, it should be one or two per week. It's about trimming the volume down to focus on the people who are engaging, because they're the ones with high potential.

How can Force24 help cruise lines and agents develop their marketing strategies?

AO: It feels like there's a lot of work involved but, in fact, a lot of it is automated. The biggest problem we see is marketers looking at their data in its current form, assuming that's all they have to work with and not building an onward strategy to improve it.

What we do is we provide brands with a set of tools that means they can set simple rules and triggers based on what actions they want people to make and as they engage with the emails or the website, the platform automatically guides audiences down the funnel. The technology does everything. ●

Force24™

For more information, visit
force24.co.uk

Mediterranean cruises, for example, we can deliver that content to them.

One recent campaign that worked particularly well was for an ultra-luxury cruise line who wanted to drive sign-ups to its online brochure. We were able to serve its target audience with relevant content that educated them on the types of destinations it sailed to and what the onboard experience was like. The client got a fantastic response as a result.

How do brands execute genuine personalisation when many have enormous databases?

AO: Let's assume nobody knows what we're famous for. Our objective initially is to drive brand awareness, then once



Michelle Ryan

Travelmarvel's country manager for Ireland reflects on her first six months in the role and why the river cruise operator has identified this market as a key growth area

How important is the Irish market to Travelmarvel's growth ambitions?

River cruising is growing significantly in Ireland, and Travelmarvel has adapted quickly. Since launching in Ireland in 2023, the company has doubled year-on-year thanks to the market's strongest sellers, the Rhine and the Danube. Requests quickly came in from the Irish trade for regional flights, which we launched in December 2024 out of Dublin, Shannon and Cork. We now have a dedicated Irish Travelmarvel website, which has been a game changer for agents and the positive impact on booking volumes has been immediate.

What selling points are you focusing on when meeting agents?

Knowledge and training are key. We want to ensure our trade customers understand the Travelmarvel products and know how to engage the best people for the brand. I appreciate that every agent's time is precious, but I also want



to ensure they benefit from each visit, especially when I'm on the road in the busier months. It's not just an update on the latest flash sale or facilities onboard, it's also about listening to who their customers are, understanding what they need to market the brand effectively and helping them to help themselves through specific training programmes.

How important is it to meet with the trade in person?

In short: very. Virtual catch-ups have been a game changer for keeping in touch with agents around the country, as connecting face to face feels more personal than corresponding by phone or email. However, there is no comparison to the greeting

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

River cruising is growing significantly in Ireland; Michelle Ryan is working hard to ensure trade customers understand Travelmarvel's products

you get upon walking into a store. The quality of time you get from a physical meeting is vital for both parties.

What are the current challenges in agent training?

Comparisons to other brands or different holiday types – for example, ocean to river. When people hear “cruise” they think bells and whistles and, in some instances, shy away. However, once you have a grasp on the river cruise concept, you realise just how reliable and straightforward it is as a product.

You've been heading up Travelmarvel's expansion into Ireland for around six months now – how has it been?

It's been wonderful! At first, there were a lot of comments on the move from ocean to rivers, but rivers are where my heart has always been. Having grown up spending weekends sailing with my family up and down the Bandon River in Ireland, tides are in my blood. Getting to sink my teeth into the APT product, which was relatively new to me, has made it such an exciting six months. I'm excited for what the next six months and beyond will bring.



“

Once you have a grasp on the river cruise concept, you realise just how reliable and straightforward it is as a product

Guests can
enjoy a free drinks
package on any
featured sailing

FROM TOP Guests will have the chance to visit Honfleur, France; Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' *Bolette* and *Balmoral* in Olden, Norway



SECRET EUROPE

Help customers unearth the continent's hidden gems on an immersive small ship sailing with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

From Honfleur's picturesque Vieux Bassin (Old Harbour) to the iconic Flemish masterpieces of Antwerp, each of Europe's riverside cities offers something special, whether that's a blend of vibrant art and imposing architecture, or culture embodied by decadent cuisine.

It's vital, therefore, that if you have a customer eager to explore somewhere new that you pair them with a cruise line that's well versed in providing unique European sailing experiences.

Enter Fred. Olsen Cruise Line, a company with a long history in providing memorable holidays across the Channel

and further afield. As well as offering visits to well-known ports, such as Oslo, Riga, Istanbul and Barcelona, the line also offers sailings to lesser-known destinations, including France's St Malo and Belgium's Zeebrugge – famed for its chocolate shop only a short stroll from the port.

Many of the line's sailings have also been designed to immerse travellers in the magic of Christmas, where they can stroll among charming wooden huts and twinkling lights, sample local treats like ginger cookies and browse for handicrafts like wooden trinkets and tree decorations at Europe's traditional festive markets,

What's more, the journey into a port is often as rewarding as discovering the destination itself, particularly along the River Seine, flanked by rolling hills and lush countryside.

Only smaller ships like Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' *Balmoral* can cruise this scenic waterway en route into Rouen – the gateway to the French capital, Paris.

If you have seasoned European sailors in your client database who are on the lookout for something different, offer one of these itineraries to ignite their inner explorer. ●



Fred. Olsen's standout European itineraries

- An 11-night French Rivers with Normandy & Bordeaux cruise on *Balmoral*, round-trip Newcastle via Honfleur, Bordeaux, St Malo and Rouen, departs 28 August, from £1,699pp.
- A five-night Hamburg Christmas Markets cruise on *Balmoral*, round-trip Southampton via Hamburg, departs 27 November, from £649pp.
- An eight-night Festive France, Belgium & The Netherlands cruise on *Bolette*, round-trip Liverpool via, Zeebrugge and Rotterdam, departs 2 December, from £899pp.
- A five-night Exploring the Harbour Town of Honfleur cruise on *Bolette*, round-trip from Liverpool, departs 10 December 2025, from £599pp.
- A six-night River Cities of France & Belgium cruise on *Balmoral*, round-trip from Southampton via Antwerp and Rouen, departs 16 December, from £649pp.



**Fred. Olsen
Cruise Lines**

To find out more, visit
fredolsencruises.com

SHIP OF THE MONTH

BOLETTE

Proudly bearing the name of Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' great grandmother, who was married to one of the line's three founding brothers, Petter Olsen, the 1,338-passenger *Bolette* leads the way as the company's flagship vessel. It was acquired by the Olsen family in 2020 and underwent an exterior and interior overhaul to bring it up to speed with modern cruising. Its crest was inspired by the harbour-side buildings in Hvitsten, Norway, where the Olsen family had an early trading house on the Oslofjord. Onboard, guests will find six restaurants, eight bars and lounges, a pool area and a range of boutique shops. Homeporting in Southampton, *Bolette* offers itineraries to Norway, the British Isles, the Mediterranean and the Canary Islands.

Fast facts

1,338
passengers

690
cabins

642
crew

6
restaurants



1 Cabins

All cabins have a hairdryer, safe and smart TV, as well as a fridge and tea and coffee making facilities. Guests will also find an en-suite bathroom with a walk-in shower, while some include a bathtub. Options range from single interior cabins to the 1,181 sq. ft Olsen Suite.



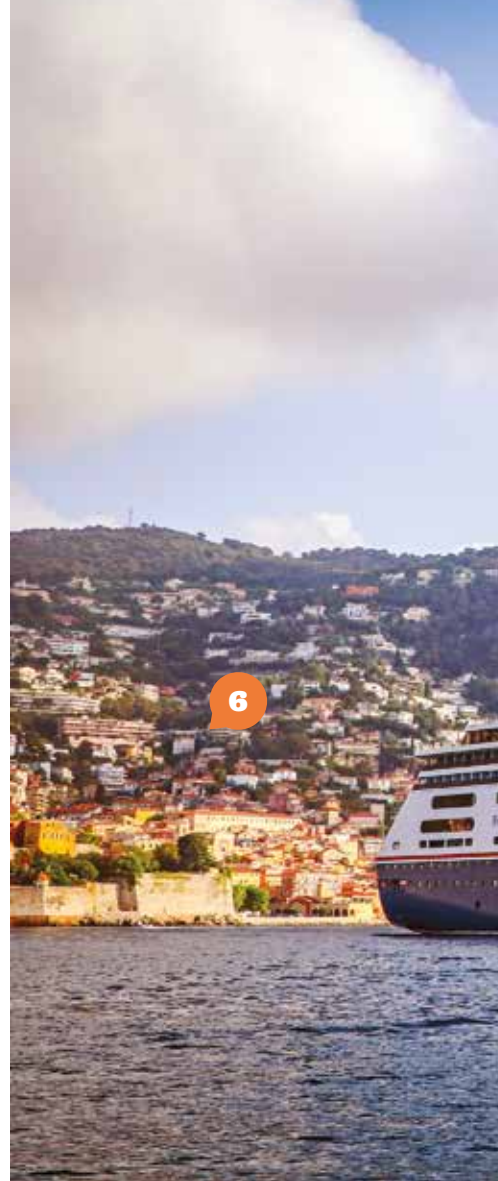
2 Entertainment

The vessel offers a variety of entertainment options, from live music performances and West End-style shows to daytime lectures and a dedicated art studio. Here, guests can let their inner Warhols and Van Goghs flourish under the guidance of onboard artists.



3 The Botanical Room

If you have customers who prefer cruising at a slower pace, recommend The Botanical Room. The space, which celebrates the natural world with plants and vines adorning bookshelves filled with literature on gardening, flowers and plant care, is the perfect spot for a sea day.

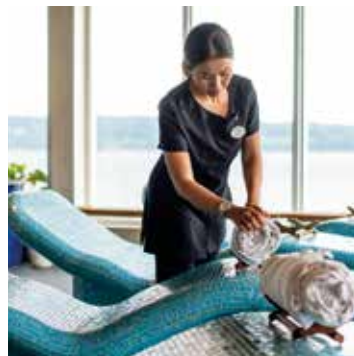


6



4 Speciality dining

With dining options aplenty, guests should ensure they make time for Colours & Tastes, which offers a vibrant Asian-fusion experience. Dishes include a white miso glazed salmon with Japanese buckwheat noodles, as well as tofu with vegetables and peanut sauce.



5 Spa

In the Atlantis Spa, travellers can choose from relaxing facials, deep tissue massages, or beauty treatments, which can be pre-booked up to 13 weeks before departure. The Thermal Suite, meanwhile, offers ceramic relaxation beds and a Turkish bath.



6 Excursions

Guests are spoilt for choice when it comes to shoreside immersion with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines. In Scotland, for example, they can explore the Isle of Staff under expert guidance, or don their glad rags and try their hand at Flamenco dancing in Cadiz.



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

MAKE 2025 YOUR YEAR OF ADVENTURE

Take advantage of our **Free Drinks Package**
on selected 2025 sailings in our **Summer Sale**





Our Summer Sale is the perfect time for your customers to treat themselves to a new adventure this year on board our smaller ships.

Book your customers on a selection of 2025 sailings before 25th June, and we'll include a Free Drinks Package worth £24.99 per person, per night, (or £35 per person, per night on five-night cruises) to give them even greater value and make their time on board even more enjoyable.

So, whether it's a refreshing glass of juice on deck while sailing by awe-inspiring scenery or a crisp G&T to round off a day of discovery ashore, your customers can enjoy an extra drink or two without having to worry about the bar bill at the end of their cruise.

Find out more at fredolsencruises.com/agent



Terms and Conditions apply. Offer applicable to new bookings only, made from 14/05/25 to 25/06/25. The free drinks package offer is applicable on selected five-to-19-night cruises sailing from the UK departing from 27 June 2025 to 22 December 2025. Freedom fare terms and conditions apply. Included sailings and full offer terms can be found on the Travel Agent Centre. E&OE

SHIP OF THE MONTH

AMERICAN PATRIOT

When American Cruise Lines' *American Patriot* launches in June 2025, it will be the first ship in the company's new Patriot class, meaning it'll be better equipped to sail coastal waters. The vessel will usher in a new era for the US brand, with a 15-day Grand New England voyage on 21 June, return from Boston with stops in Plymouth, Portland, Bangor and Boothbay Harbour. The 130-guest ship will also offer a 16-day Grand Florida Coast & Keys itinerary from Amelia Island to St Petersburg and a Chesapeake Bay cruise return from Baltimore. As well as a gym, it will feature a top deck café, while the Chesapeake Lounge at the front of the ship will offer live piano performances.



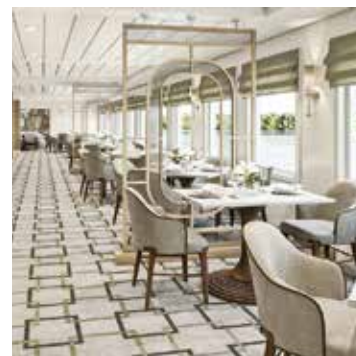
1 Cabins

Accommodation ranges from staterooms for single travellers up to The Grand Suite – a 58sqm space with a separate living room and bedroom, dining table and breakfast bar. All staterooms feature a bathroom with amenities, storage space, a desk and a TV.



2 Fitness centre

Keeping active while cruising – especially in a country known for its delicious yet decadent gastronomy – is crucial. The ship's modern fitness centre offers a selection of free weights and cardio machines, such as treadmills, rowing machines and static bikes.



3 Restaurant

The menu in the ship's main restaurant showcases American specialities such as Maine lobster with Chatham little neck clams and blue mussels. Have clients with a sweet tooth? Recommend the Mount Lebanon spiced apple pudding topped with whipped cream.

Fast facts

2025
debut

130
guests

69
cabins

6
cabin classes



4 Sky Lounge

The Sky Lounge at the front of the top deck offers sweeping views. Customers can sink into plush seating and enjoy a minty mojito while swapping stories with like-minded travellers or enjoy some peaceful alone time by diving into a book.



5 Sun deck

Guests can take a deep breath of fresh air and enjoy their surroundings up on the sun deck. A wraparound walking track is great for staying active during long sailing stretches, while a shuffleboard station allows guests to interact over some healthy competition.



6 Excursions

Shoreside trips include kayaking, bourbon tasting at St Augustine Distillery and a wagon tour of Yorktown, where the last major battle of the American Revolution took place. Fans of the unknown can join a ghost tour at Fort East Martello, which was built in 1862.

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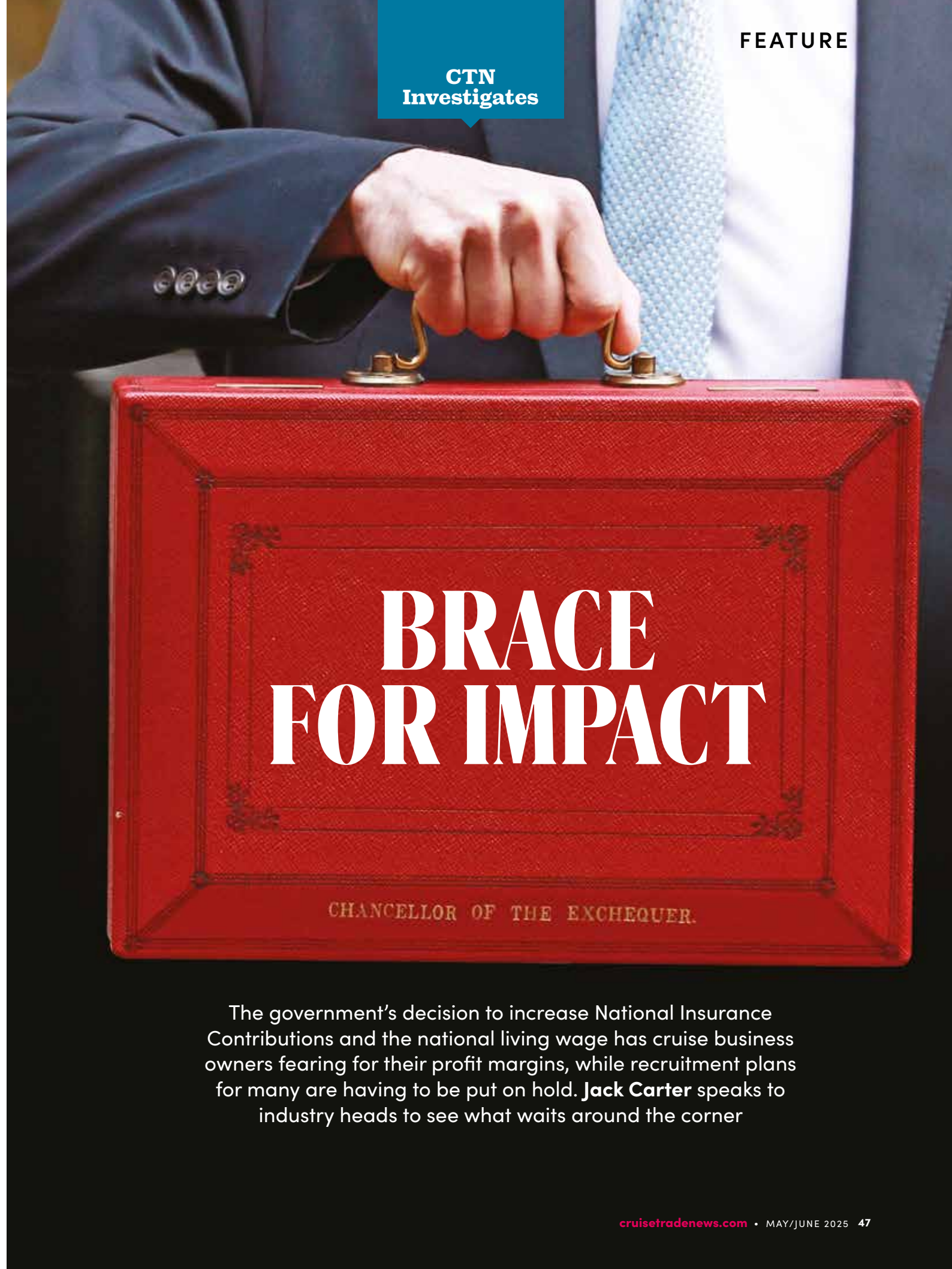
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The government's decision to increase National Insurance Contributions and the national living wage has cruise business owners fearing for their profit margins, while recruitment plans for many are having to be put on hold. **Jack Carter** speaks to industry heads to see what waits around the corner



According to C&M Travel Recruitment, the average salary in the travel industry rose by 8.4 per cent in 2024, to £37,076

When Labour won the General Election by a landslide last July, it was the result many in the cruise industry were hoping for. After years of scandal and leadership changes during 14 years of Conservative Party rule, business leaders across the cruise and wider travel landscape were looking forward to a period of stability.

A statement released by Not Just Travel co-founder Steve Witt at the time read: “If there’s one thing that boosts customer confidence it is certainty and stability. We are looking forward to a period of long-term clarity which provides consumers with confidence to move ahead and feel comfortable in spending on their favourite purchases – holidays.”

Nine months later, the certainty and stability prime minister Keir Starmer set out to deliver has slipped further from his grasp. His promise to resuscitate the financial health of the country has been stunted by the fact that Britain’s coffers appear to be empty, while in January the British Retail Consortium revealed that confidence in the UK economy was at an all-time low.

In an attempt to turn the country’s fortunes around, the government has announced a controversial policy change that’s set to implicate businesses far beyond the travel industry. In chancellor Rachel Reeves’ Autumn Budget, she announced the rate of employers’ National Insurance Contributions (NIC) will increase from 13.8 per cent to 15 per cent from April 2025. Furthermore, the threshold at which businesses pay NICs will fall from £9,100 to £5,000, while business rates relief will fall from 75 per cent to 40 per cent.

For many agents and cruise travel companies, the increase in NIC will have serious consequences on cash flow and profits. According to the Centre for Policy Studies, employers’ NICs for minimum wage employees will rise from £1,617 to £2,583, making 2025 the most expensive year on record for employers of minimum wage workers.

Meanwhile, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) estimates that the changes will add 2 per cent to employers’ payroll costs. It forecasts that in the 2025/26 tax year, firms will pass 60 per cent of the higher costs onto workers and consumers, via lower real wages and higher prices, and absorb 40 per cent themselves in lower profits.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE The economic stability promised by prime minister Keir Starmer has yet to materialise; Steve Witt, co-founder of Not Just Travel; the increase in National Insurance Contributions is likely to impact recruitment

This is hardly the outcome Witt had hoped for following the General Election last summer, who admits Not Just Travel directors have had to adjust their business plan for the year ahead as a result.

“Travel is a slim margin business at the best of times, so [the increase in NIC] does eat into [profitability],” he says. “We’re in a fortunate position where the bulk of our workforce are self-employed homeworkers, but we have a big corporate team so it does have an impact. As directors we’ve had conversations around it and we’re thankful we don’t have a bigger workforce, otherwise it would have made a much bigger impact.”

Speaking to *Cruise Trade News*, Witt says many companies will have to work harder just to hit net zero on their balance sheets. “You might end up working even harder to get the same margins, but at least you haven’t lost any business.”

“

The reality is that extra NIC cost amounts to an extra two to three people that we would have employed but now we can’t



Meanwhile, James Cole, founder and CEO of Panache Cruises, says he’s approaching the rest of the year with cautious optimism, but admits Reeves’ Budget hasn’t helped. “It’s not going to have any impact on our growth ambitions, but it will have an impact on our profitability as a business,” Cole explains.

“We’re just at the start of our journey, but we’re really pleased with where we’re at. There’s going to be some bumps in the road, there’s no question about it. We’ve just got to stay focused on our vision and missions, which is what we do every single day.”

HARDER TO HIRE

The very real implications the rise in NIC will have on payroll has left many concerned about the cruise industry’s recruitment targets. “The last thing we want to do is to cut back on our recruitment plans,” says Witt. “The reality is that the extra cost of NIC amounts to an extra two to three people that we would have employed but now we can’t.”

Conversely, Stefan Shillito, founder of luxury retailer Sovereign Cruise Club, says his recruitment plans haven’t been hit and that he is looking to make several hires before the end of the year. However, this was only possible thanks to years of forward planning. “Of course, it’s a concern when fixed costs go up for the business, but we do take a long-term view on it,” he says.

“Booking patterns have never gone back to the predictability we had pre-Covid, so we have to set aside a decent budget for recruitment. We often hire via recruitment companies who have





The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates that the rise in NIC will add 2 per cent to employers' payroll costs

pretty substantial fees these days, especially if you want to work with good quality ones, so it's always important to plan ahead, ensuring we have a sufficient recruitment budget over a three-to-five-year period."

THE WAGE DEBATE

Finding the right talent that aligns with your company culture is challenging at the best of times, but ensuring you have the means to offer a financial package attractive enough to get them through the door in the first place is becoming even trickier.

According to C&M Travel Recruitment, the average salary for a new job in the travel industry rose by 8.4 per cent in 2024 to £37,076, with wages in 2021 amounting to 34.9 per cent less than what they are today. Meanwhile, the number of travel employees commanding jobs in higher wage brackets has jumped significantly since 2022, with candidates securing roles paying at least £40,000 per year rising by 28.1 per cent in 2024, compared to 17.5 per cent in 2023.

"Travel has never offered the best pay so in order for us to be competitive with other industries, salaries had to rise – and this

“**Ensuring you have the means to offer a financial package to attract the right talent is becoming even trickier**

news should be welcomed across the sector," says Barbara Kolosinska, managing director, C&M Travel Recruitment.

Owner of Mundy Cruising Edwina Lonsdale says she plans to make four new hires this year despite the rise in NIC and unpredictable market conditions, although she admits that being a London-based company brings its own set of unique challenges.

"London salaries are of course high, as are rents, not to mention commuting costs," Lonsdale explains. "On the other hand, if your business is based in central London, you have a huge catchment of potential staff."

A lot of travel companies offer on-target earnings (OTE), which can add further complications, says Lonsdale. "Many businesses operate on a salary-plus-commission basis which enables jobs to be offered with OTE salaries.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Rachel Reeves' Autumn Budget will have consequences for many agents and cruise travel companies; James Cole, owner of Panache Cruises



There are lots of homeworking agencies now, which means plenty of opportunities to follow your passion

This can skew market understanding of what salary a travel consultant can command. As a result, starting salaries have been pushed upwards. However, if you are a company investing high sums in training, including paid time out of the office for fam trips, as we are, then your entry salary can look disappointing.”

C&M Travel Recruitment’s research into rising wages in the travel sector tracks with Shillito, who is proud of the fact that Sovereign Cruise Club employees sit in the top percentile when it comes to pay.

“Pre-pandemic we were already paying considerably more than the travel agents on the high street,” he says. “My estimate would be we’re paying 45 per cent more than the average salary rate today. It’s better to have a lower number of team members who are really well paid and very well incentivised than a larger team where that’s not the case.”

FRESH START

Of course, employees themselves could be significantly implicated by policy changes around NIC, too. Companies scaling back their recruitment plans, whether they’re agencies or the cruise lines themselves, means fewer opportunities for those looking to take their careers to the next level. It could also spell bad news for those currently in employment, with shrinking profit margins increasing the threat of redundancy.

Witt says that while the threat of job losses can create uncertainty, it can also be an exciting opportunity for those interested in taking a leap toward entrepreneurship. “Whenever there’s anything like this, people begin to question what they do,” he concludes. “They want security in their lives but suddenly realise that what was once a safe job is no longer a safe bet, so they’d rather take control of their own destiny.

“There are lots of homeworking agencies out there now, which means there are plenty of opportunities to follow your passion and do what makes you happy, rather than look over your shoulder and wonder if you have a job tomorrow.” ●



Average salary of a new job in the travel industry*

£37,076

2024



£34,156

2023



£33,445

2023 H1



£27,635

2022



£24,449

2019
(pre pandemic)

*According to C&M Travel Recruitment

In
conversation
with...



SCAN

Tourism minister praises 'vital role' of cruise in UK's travel ecosystem during CLIA event

Edwina Lonsdale

Can The Cruise Career Springboard solve the industry's diversity issue? **Jack Carter** speaks to the programme's founder to find out

There are very few people in recent times who have done more to entice young people to join the cruise industry than Edwina Lonsdale and her husband Matthew. Having set up The Cruise Career Springboard (formerly The Compass Project) in late 2022 to teach sixth-form students about working in the cruise industry, the programme has gone from strength to strength. As well as a new name to reflect the programme's ambition to get students into tangible jobs, a third college recently came onboard, raising the number of enrolled students to 48.

All three colleges have a strong focus on practical, vocational courses, but the other thing they have in common is that many of their students come from deprived areas. For the sixth formers of St John Bosco College in Battersea, Itchen College in Southampton and North East Surrey College of Technology, getting over the usual preconceptions of cruise is often the first hurdle.

Sitting down to chat with the programme's founder and owner of Mundy Cruising Edwina Lonsdale, she recalls a particular student from last year's intake. "In 2024 we had a student who on day one had their hood up, headphones on and could barely raise his eyes to look at you at all," she says. "By the end of the programme, the hoodie and the headphones were gone, and he was standing at the front of the class speaking to a room full of people – it was just amazing."

This, she tells me, is what the programme is all about: not just educating sixth-form students about a potential career in the travel industry but giving young people the confidence and drive to propel themselves into adulthood.



ON A MISSION

Tired of seeing "too many of the same people" in the cruise industry, Lonsdale's initial goal was to stimulate greater social mobility, diversity and inclusivity throughout the sector. She explains: "We felt there was a need for more inspirational figures to motivate young people from diverse backgrounds to come into the industry, but you can't magic those people out of nowhere. You need to start at the bottom and put them into ambassadorial roles right at the start."

The name change came about when Lonsdale decided they needed to work harder to get students into employment once the eight-week course was complete. She cites apprenticeship schemes from the likes of Royal Caribbean and MSC Cruises as potential avenues into work for those who don't want to go down the university route. "We're aiming to inspire a whole new generation of young people from different backgrounds to join the industry from the age of 18," Lonsdale explains.

The eight-week programme, which runs from April to June, kicked off last month with an introductory

“

We aim to inspire a new generation of young people from different backgrounds to join the industry

What my career has taught me

Don't burn bridges

"Today's employee could be your boss tomorrow, or someone who can have a significant impact on your business."

Work with people you trust

"I am in the fortunate position of being able to pick and choose who I do business with. Life's too short to work with people you don't like."

Look for the superpower

"Debbie Dale taught me that everyone has a superpower. Help people to identify theirs and use it in your business dealings."

day mediated by the renowned trainer Debbie Dale onboard *MSC Preziosa*, in Southampton. It was the first time the kick-off event took place on a ship. A grand finale day will take place on 24 June, where students will give presentations about their experience, what they learned and why they'd recommend a job in the cruise industry to their peers.

Before then, though, students are invited to take part in ship tours and visit cruise line offices to hear from a variety of departments, from law and HR to sales and marketing, to see how each forms a vital part of an organisation's machinery. One session that springs to mind for Lonsdale was when Royal Caribbean's legal team delivered a case study on the White Island tragedy in New Zealand in 2019, where a volcano erupted during a shore excursion. Students were challenged with deciding what legal and moral obligations the line should take. Other times, they get to learn about peoples' personal roads into the

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Programme founder Edwina Lonsdale; MSC Cruises is one of the scheme's partners; the 2024 cohort gets a taste of life onboard

jobs they're doing to see what paths might be open to them.

Lonsdale adds: "Our students really appreciate being spoken to by senior people because it makes them feel recognised in an environment where they often don't have a great deal of self-confidence."

CRUISE INDUSTRY SUPPORT

Lonsdale is quick to thank former Regent Seven Seas Cruises head Graham Sadler, ex-Celebrity Cruises vice president Jo Rzymowska and CLIA for supporting the project from day one. It was the latter who was able to open the door to the UK cruise line community and, as a result, as many as 18 operators are signed on to support this year's intake, including Cunard, Princess Cruises and Uniworld. When asked why more operators are choosing to support the initiative, Lonsdale says that for many of the cruise line employees taking part in the programme, it takes them back to the excitement of being an 18 year old with the world at their feet.

"Graduation day is incredibly invigorating," she concludes. "I return home lit up and excited and the cruise lines have found that too. They've given us huge support because not only did they feel it was the right thing to do, it is also really stimulating and it reminds them how much they love their jobs." ●





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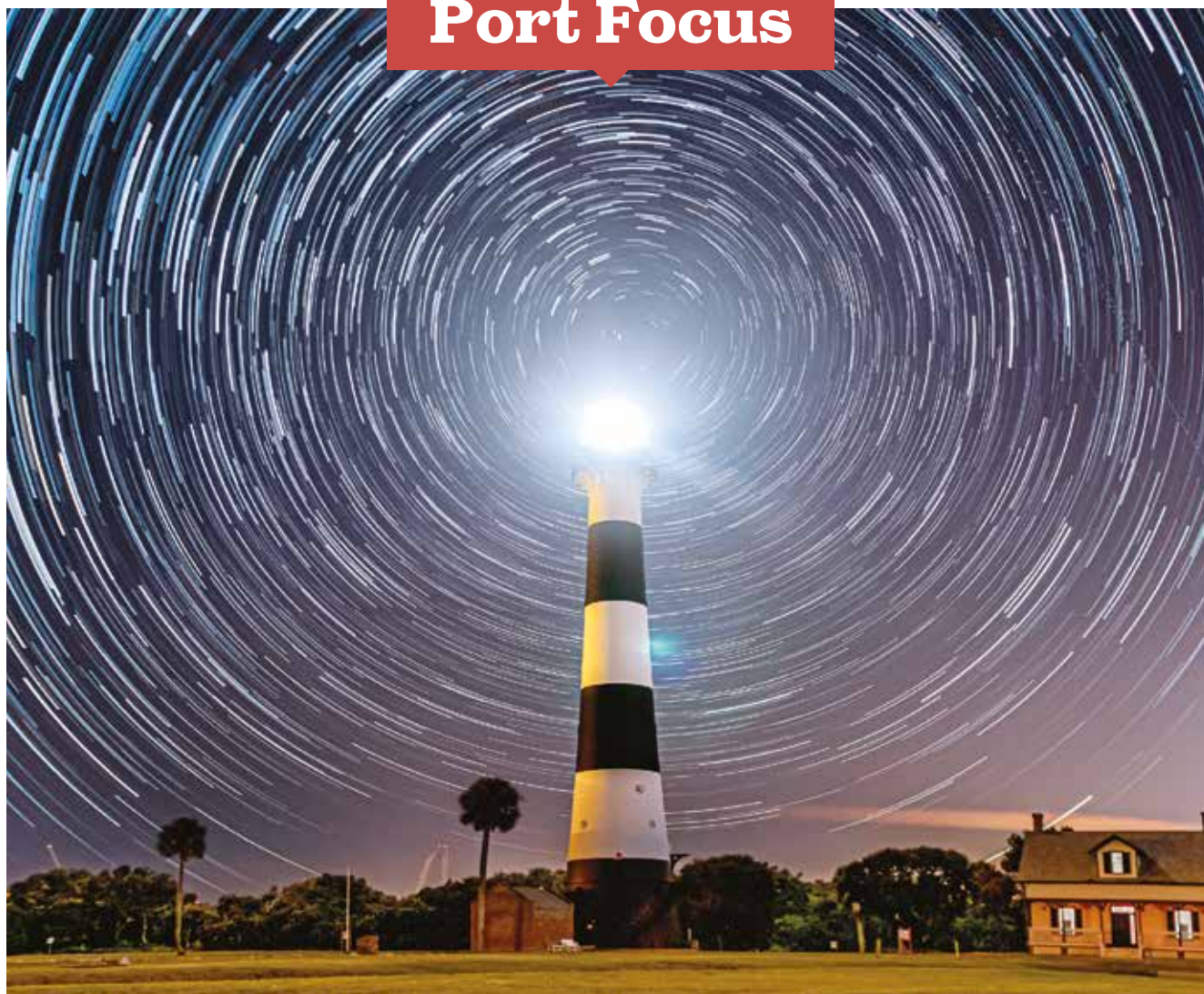
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Cape Canaveral

Few places are home to an interstellar space station,
Wizard of Oz museum and bioluminescent waterways –
but this part of Florida is, writes **Sarah Riches**

Shaped like a shark's fin, Cape Canaveral lies on Florida's east coast, beside the North Atlantic Ocean. A 50-minute drive from its mainland neighbour, Orlando, the area is dubbed 'the space between,' as it is nestled between a string of beaches and a NASA space centre.

Long before the cape was a portal to another universe, native tribes were drawn to its fertile estuaries and moderate climate, as evidenced by the mounds of oyster and clam shells they left behind.

Spanish explorers arrived in 1513 and took control for the next 300 years, naming the region after the Spanish word for reedbed. In the 1950s the coastal

community's fortunes changed once more with the construction of Port Canaveral and, as the epicentre of the US and Russian space race, all eyes were on it in the 60s.

Today the cape is home to the US's second busiest cruise port, after Miami. Those with a day or two to explore will find plenty to keep them entertained.



Three unmissable things to do

HIT THE BEACH

Cape Canaveral is fringed with swathes of silvery sands. Jetty Park Beach is the closest, as it's just a 30-minute walk to the Royal Caribbean International cruise terminal. Sheltered by a pier and tufts of marram grass swaying in the breeze, the dunes attract nesting sea turtles from March to October, as well as herons, white ibises and pelicans that dive for fish. Visitors can rent bikes or metal detectors from A1A Outdoors or sign up for paddleboarding on boards designed for up to six adults.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Watersports are a popular pursuit for locals and visitors alike; enjoy the majestic sight of pelicans diving for food; there's a wealth of space travel-related attractions to suit the whole family

“Visitors can meet astronauts, see the Atlantis shuttle and ‘ride’ through the solar system



LEARN ABOUT SPACE

Space enthusiasts can admire rockets and delve into US space travel history at Cape Canaveral Space Force Museum. On neighbouring North Merritt Island, visitors can meet astronauts, see the Atlantis shuttle in mid-air and ‘ride’ through the solar system at Kennedy Space Center. They can also experience a simulated launch – which NASA astronauts say is akin to the real thing. The centre’s chief operating officer, Therrin Protze, says his favourite exhibit is The Gantry at LC-39. “It tells the story of NASA’s mission to protect Earth through space exploration and doubles as a viewing location for rocket launches.”

BANANA RIVER AQUATIC PRESERVE

Established in 1970, this nature reserve is situated in the waterway between the cape and North Merritt Island. As well as being a significant habitat for alligators and diamondback terrapin turtles, the area also claims the largest pelican rookery on the Atlantic coast. Its northern section is home to up to 500 manatees, and there are opportunities to spot herons, egrets and osprey too. Cruise-goers can visit early in the morning or late in the afternoon to increase the chance of seeing wildlife.



TOP TO BOTTOM Savour a wide selection of fresh seafood; fish tacos are a local speciality

Three places to eat BUDGET

Rusty's Seafood and Oyster Bar is a laidback joint with an al fresco terrace at the back that's perched on stilts above the water. Guests can bag a table on the deck and order plates of scampi, jumbo scallops and snow crab legs, saving space for a slice of key lime pie. Live bands play as diners sit and watch cruise ships sail by while the eagle-eyed can spot for dolphins and pelicans splashing about in the waves.

MID-RANGE

Neon signs, live bands and surfboards on the ceiling give Grills Seafood Deck an easy-going atmosphere. Whether sitting indoors or on the outdoor deck

“Rusty's is a laidback joint with a terrace perched on stilts above the water

by the tiki bar, guests can admire the glittering water and docked cruise ships. Founded in 1997, Grills Portside is now one of a trio of similar venues in the region which, as the name suggests, specialise in seafood. Order the chowder, fish tacos or seared tuna over sticky coconut rice.

PREMIUM

Those looking for a fine dining experience can swap the cape's more casual spots for Heidi's, which has fresh flowers, candles and white tablecloths. Going strong since 1992, the restaurant in the Cocoa Beach neighbourhood serves traditional Austrian and German recipes, such as breaded chicken escalope with roast potatoes, homemade pork sausage with fermented cabbage, and beef and paprika goulash with spaetzle egg pasta. Desserts are just as classic – think warm apple strudel or Malakoff, an almond cream trifle encased in sponge fingers. For afters, visitors can enjoy a glass of wine and linger in its jazz and blues club.

Local insight



“Jetty Park has a large playground, and you can have picnics, walk on a sandy beach and watch cruise ships in port. You can also see rocket launches and watch Falcon boosters on barges.”

LAURA SARGENT
Space industry engineer



“Cape Canaveral has local charm and big sustainability goals. My favourite place to eat is the Tiny Turtle, an eco-friendly takeout pioneer that supports local non-profit organisations. It serves the best island cuisine I have had outside of the Caribbean.”

ASHLEY BRITT CHELBERG
President of Stella Maris
Environmental Research

Get on board

MSC Cruises

Four-night Bahamas and Caribbean cruise aboard *MSC Seashore*, return from Port Canaveral (Orlando) via Nassau, Bahamas, and Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve, Bahamas, departs 7 September 2025, from £299pp. msccruises.co.uk





BEYOND OCEANS

If you have customers looking to squeeze more out of their cruise holidays, look no further than Wendy Wu Tours, the fully inclusive touring specialist renowned for its destination-rich experiences

Have you ever had clients return home from a cruise wishing they had more time in port to truly immerse themselves in a particular destination?

If this sounds familiar, then we have just the company for you. Introducing Wendy Wu Tours, which finds itself at the forefront of the shift toward land-and-cruise holidays, which experts predict will be a defining trend in 2025.

Having launched in 1994 when its founder and namesake took 28 passengers on a tour of China, the company has since expanded its remit to offer a range of holidays in Japan, India, Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, Antarctica and South America.

Wendy Wu Tours has also turned its focus to the world's waterways by partnering with the likes of Royal Caribbean, Celebrity Cruises, Azamara, Norwegian Cruise Line and HX Expeditions to give travellers the opportunity to extend their trip with an adjoining land holiday. The company offers culturally immersive solo, group and rail tours, and travellers who are used to the value offered by cruising will appreciate included flights, hotels, meals, sightseeing and visas. Solo

“
Wendy Wu guides offer unrivalled knowledge, passion and expertise

travellers can opt to stay in their own room while touring, or they can share with a like-minded explorer, whatever they prefer. Rail tours, meanwhile, include a Legends of the Silk Road trip in China, which takes in Kashgar and the Ruins of Milan.

A tour isn't complete without an expert guide. Wendy Wu's National Escorts, which offer unrivalled knowledge, passion and expertise on their respective destinations, lead all group tours and have a minimum of five years' experience in guiding.

Here, we break down some of the brand's most popular holidays.

JAPAN

Wendy Wu Tour's Japan by Land & Sea itinerary offers the chance to discover the etiquette of making sushi with a



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT The Great Wall of China is a must-see; Royal Caribbean's *Spectrum of the Seas* sails an eight-night Japan cruise; Geisha in Kyoto

hands-on lesson from chefs, before they sit down to enjoy their creations.

Guests will also have the chance to take an in-depth exploration of Tokyo, Kyoto and the Japanese Alps, where they might be lucky enough to spot a family of snow monkeys foraging for dinner. After eight days of land-based exploration, they'll board Azamara Cruises' *Azamara Pursuit* for a 13-night voyage around the land of the rising sun.

Get on board

The Japan by Land & Sea tour, which offers two nights of fully-inclusive touring in Tokyo, one night in Nagano and three nights in Kyoto, as well as a 13-night cruise aboard *Azamara Pursuit* from Kobe to Tokyo via Hiroshima, Kitakyushu, Nagasaki, Busan, Sakaiminato, Kanazawa, Niigata, Akita, Aomori and Hakodate, departs 3 April 2026, from £12,240.

CHINA

Another way clients can immerse themselves in the continent is on a journey from China to Japan and back on a Far Eastern expedition. On this trip, guests will enjoy 11 days shoreside and an eight-night cruise aboard Royal Caribbean's *Spectrum of the Seas*.

Before sailing, they'll travel by bullet train and explore the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Great Wall, Xian and the Terracotta Army, Chengdu's Panda sanctuary and the little visited historic city of Pingyao, with immersive experiences along the way like acrobatic performances and dumpling tasting.

Get on board

The China by Land, Japan by Sea tour, which offers three nights in Beijing, one night in Pingyao, two nights in Xian, two nights in Chengdu and one night in Shanghai, and an

eight-night cruise aboard *Spectrum of the Seas* return from Shanghai via Tokyo, Shimizu and Osaka, departs 12 May 2026, from £4,665.

INDIA

Combine history and romance, dynamic cities and culture laden coastlines on Wendy Wu Tours' India by Land, Southeast Asia by Sea tour. Visitors will explore India's Golden Triangle – a route which connects the cities of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur – then search for tigers in Ranthambore National Park, be starstruck by the romance of the Taj Mahal or explore the remnants of past empires from the Moghuls to the British Raj. Then, they board *Celebrity Solstice* to cross Southeast Asia to Hong Kong.

Get on board

The India by Land, Southeast Asia by Sea tour, which offers two nights in Delhi, one night in Agra, two nights in Ranthambore, two nights in Jaipur and two nights in Singapore, and a 12-night cruise aboard *Celebrity Solstice* from Singapore to Hong Kong via Koh Samui, Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh City, Nha Trang, Hue and Hanoi, departs 11 December, from £8,090. ●



Book any tour listed by 30 May 2025 and your client's partner flies for free (included in the price shown)



To find out more, visit wendywutours.co.uk



The
Seine

Sleigh bells on the
SEINE

Festive markets, mulled wine and fairy
light-lit squares: there's a lot to love
about a yuletide cruise along the River
Seine, writes Lucy Abbott





“
**Vernon is like stepping
into a winter dream
thanks to its medieval
timbered houses and
dormant hillsides**



It's not what you expect to hear on day one of your first-ever river cruise. “We have a naked trampolining contest scheduled for tomorrow,” the cruise director announces, causing everyone to break out in raucous laughter.

It's my first evening on Viking's Christmas on the Seine itinerary aboard *Viking Skaga* and everyone's in good spirits as they sip Champagne and exchange travel stories. Sailing to and from Paris via Vernon, Honfleur, Caudebec-en-Caux, Rouen and Les Andelys, the itinerary encompasses the very best of the River Seine.

THE CITY OF LIGHTS AND LOVE

I get my first opportunity to imbibe the French capital's iconic sights on Panoramic Paris at Christmas, an included excursion that takes place on foot and by coach. Ignoring the honk of passing scooters, I crane my neck to admire the Eiffel Tower's iron latticework glowing in the sunrise.

Our coach makes for the Champs-Élysées Avenue, where shopfronts glitter with Christmas decorations. As we drive past Arc de Triomphe I press my face against the coach window to marvel at the architectural masterpiece. Next, we wander the city's cobbled streets and come across an Egyptian obelisk. Our local guide explains that it was a gift from Luxor Temple, and took a staggering six years to get here from its home in North Africa.

After a three-course lunch, I hop back on the coach to explore Montmartre, a neighbourhood in the north of the city. We board a funicular to ascend Montmartre Hill to Sacré-Coeur Basilica, its white domes shimmering in the crisp December sky.

The inside of the church is bathed in flickering candlelight as the winter sun streams through stained glass, casting vibrant patterns on the marble floor, while above me the domed ceiling's 475m mosaic of Jesus Christ dressed in white, arms open is a jaw-dropping sight.

CANDY CANES IN VERNON

Midway between Paris and Rouen sits the painterly Normandy town of Vernon, which feels like stepping into a winter dream thanks to its medieval timbered houses, set against dormant hillsides. However, it's Vernon's maze of Christmas market stalls which I declare are my highlight, as I clasp a velvety hot chocolate handed to me by one of the genteel locals.

We take part in another included excursion: Vernon by Foot and Organ Recital. After strolling past an old mill perched precariously on the ruins of a medieval bridge over the Seine, we end our walk at the Collegiate Church of Notre-Dame. Sitting inside the Romanesque and Gothic landmark, beautiful organ music washes over us.

DISCOVERING HONFLEUR

At our next stop, Honfleur, the scent of freshly baked pastries wafts through the air of the café as I sink into a leather booth. In a co-ordinated dance, waiters



FROM FAR LEFT The stunning white domes of Montmartre's Sacré-Cœur Basilica; Christmas markets are a key part of the trip; Rouen's calling card, Notre Dame Cathedral; Viking Skaga glistens at Christmastime

“ Onboard, the festive spirit is in full flow with Christmas trees and a gingerbread decorating contest

appear with plates of warm, artfully folded crêpes balancing up their arms before carefully placing them on the table. I dive in and, as the syrup coats my mouth, I look out of the window at pastel-hued harbourside buildings which reflect a scene straight from a Christmas card.

With a belly full of crêpes and mulled wine, I explore Honfleur's cobbled streets. Turning a corner into a square, the striking Saint Catherine's Church, France's largest wooden church, commands my attention with its façade covered entirely in chestnut shingles.

CATHEDRALS AND CHATEAUX

Caudebec-en-Caux, Rouen and Les Andelys share a rich history, showcased through their architecture, which takes on a festive twinkle in December. Our guide on a Caudebec-en-Caux by Foot excursion helps us envision the half-timbered houses lost to Viking invasions, religious wars and a 1940 bombing.

Rouen's calling card is Notre Dame Cathedral, famous for the ornate gold face of its Gros Horloge astronomical clock. Exploring on my own, I stumble upon the 14th-century abbey where Joan of Arc was sentenced for heresy, a haunting yet powerful site given that she was proven innocent 25 years after her death.

Finally, the Château Gaillard Walking Tour in Les Andelys offers a rewarding climb to a 12th-century fortress built for Richard the Lionheart, overlooking the Seine Valley in all its medieval grandeur.

SKAGA BELLS ARE RINGING

Onboard *Viking Skaga*, the festive spirit is in full flow, with three Christmas trees and a gingerbread decorating contest. Classical music plays in the corridor, while the line's famously moreish freshly baked cookies are available throughout the day.

Stepping into my veranda stateroom, the queen-size bed is a welcome site after a day on my feet. There are several little touches that make my stay more comfortable, from the bathroom's heated floor to the anti-fog mirror. With a glass of bubbly in hand, I slide

open the door to my private balcony – a real treat on a river cruise ship – and enjoy watching the Christmas lights of the Seine's towns and villages drift by.

Exploring the ship's four decks, I discover a terrace with a shaded sitting area and padded loungers for warmer days that provides 360-degree views of the river. Walking 10 or so laps of the track makes me feel less guilty about last night's double helping of dessert.

Speaking of dessert, it's pleasing to pick from a menu each day that uses local ingredients and recipes. Breakfast is a mix of buffet and waiter service, while lunch and dinner are served by waiters. One of them explains: “We all trained at the same school in Basel, so you'll receive the same quality service across all Viking ships.”

I particularly like how the dinner menu is split into classic, always-available dishes and regional specialties such as braised duck leg.

Back in the lounge for evening tipples, the cruise director proudly announces that 83 of the 168 guests are repeat cruisers. That's impressive, though I'm still wondering: who won that naked trampolining competition? 🍷

Get on board

Viking's seven-night Paris and the Heart of Normandy itinerary aboard *Viking Kari* return from Paris via La Roche-Guyon, Vernon, Rouen and Les Andelys departs on 23 November 2025 from £2,545pp. [viking.com](https://www.viking.com)

Fast facts

168
guests

84
outside staterooms

46
crew

4
decks



The
Mediterranean

MED FOR ALL

Whether you have customers on the cusp of taking their first-ever cruise or seasoned sailors who have “been there, done that”, a Mediterranean adventure has something for everyone, writes **Gilly Pickup**

The Mediterranean never fails to captivate and inspire cruise travellers and it's easy to see why. A blend of diverse destinations, great weather and seamless accessibility via ex-UK cruises along with a strong uplift from regional airports make sailing this region a viable year-round option for stress-free, yet adventure-packed holidays. No wonder it remains firmly at the top of the list for cruise passengers, whether first timers or old hands.

According to the *Cruise Trade News* 2025 Annual Report, in partnership with Mail Metro Media, 50 per cent of respondents cite the Mediterranean for their next – or indeed, first – getaway at sea. The data also highlights that the Med's universal appeal hits the spot with different client categories from millennials, couples and solo adventurers to multi-generational families.

Generally speaking, cruises here are split into two main zones, Western and Eastern Mediterranean. Both offer UNESCO World Heritage sites, eye-catching landmarks, plenty of culinary adventures and a merry hub of shopping opportunities.

Admirers of France, Spain, Italy and their islands may favour the Western Med, visiting classic ports such as Barcelona, Rome (via Civitavecchia) and Cannes, all offering a wealth of shore excursions. Meanwhile, the Eastern Med's timeless charm and swathe of sun-soaked beaches typically cover Croatia, Turkey, Cyprus, a pot pourri of Greek Islands and Athens, the backbone of western civilisation. This region is a haven for culturally curious clients drawn to a treasure trove of archaeological wonders and picturesque islands.

Whichever route your clients favour, a Mediterranean cruise offers the chance to get under the skin of this enticing region in a short space of time. Whether customers are rediscovering old favourites or looking for something new which may be more off the beaten path, this part of the world offers endless potential for you to inspire and sell with confidence.

ALL ABOUT VALUE

While many travellers recognise the value of cruise holidays, data from our Annual Report shows that more than half of new-to-cruise travellers say price is their main barrier to booking.

Only 26 per cent believe that cruises are more cost-effective than land-based holidays and a fairly substantial 34 per cent of those who said it is unlikely they will book a cruise in the next two years



say the reason is that they can no longer afford to. However, it's not all doom and gloom and it seems that to a large extent consumers are prepared to protect their travel spend for fairly priced holidays.

"Even when budgets are under pressure, the Mediterranean offers an accessible way to enjoy cruising with shorter flight times, wide choice of no-fly options and often lower starting prices than Caribbean sailings," says Sarah Wikevand, chief commercial officer for ROL Cruise.

"We're definitely seeing that Mediterranean cruises appeal to customers that are seeking value without compromising on experience and for many new-to-cruise guests, it's the perfect introduction to cruising, with the added bonus of sunshine, culture and iconic ports all wrapped into one holiday."

LESSER-KNOWN DESTINATIONS

"Been there, done that," repeat cruisers may cry. But this region isn't a one-trick pony and if you're looking to sell somewhere different to second-time visitors or even those who think they've seen it all, this part of the world has

Selling tips

1 Highlight the fact that new-to-cruise clients can take in not one, but several destinations during one Mediterranean cruise, unlike a land-based single destination holiday.

2 When tighter holiday budgets are a problem, emphasise that clients' money could stretch further by opting to travel in the shoulder seasons when weather is still reliable and attractions are gently touristy instead of overcrowded.

3 Upsell with excursions and recommend pre- and post-cruise stays in, for example, Rome, Barcelona, or Athens, to maximise the experience.

plenty to offer, from off-the-beaten track ports to lesser-visited cities.

"We find more clients want to explore smaller, more intimate Mediterranean ports," affirms Clare Dudley, managing director of Ponders Travel. "An example is Croatian cruises with the likes of APT and Riviera Travel where, on smaller vessels, voyages take you to exquisite ports such as Vis, Sibenik and Korcula."

From Catania (Sicily), Zadar (Croatia), and Kotor (Montenegro), to Koper (Slovenia) and Bonifacio (Corsica), there are certainly no shortage of lesser-known destinations crammed with immersive, authentic experiences which are sure to fire the soul of return cruisers.

"We've always been focused on visiting smaller destinations that suit our yacht-style cruises," says Augustus Lonsdale, head of UK sales, Windstar Cruises, "which in turn means our guests don't experience potential overcrowding and get a more authentic view on the countries they visit."

It's true, those hidden treasures often inspire seasoned cruisers to make a return visit, enabling them to experience the Mediterranean from a fresh perspective.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Visitors can discover hidden treasures such as the historic town of Korcula in Croatia; even in a familiar city like Rome, there's always a fresh angle to explore; the eastern Med's beaches are second to none; the historic Malta Carnival is a dazzling spectacle

cruise for under £1,000 per person this summer. Two-person cabins are still available for July/August, though family and solo cabins are in short supply now. One tip is to travel in shoulder seasons when bargains can be had for around £675 per person."

Antonio Paradiso, managing director of MSC Cruises UK, Ireland and Australia, says: "Our Save and Sail packages are an excellent option for first-time cruisers. They offer guests the chance to sail to Mediterranean destinations directly from Southampton, offering convenience. I'd also encourage holidaymakers and agents to look into last-minute sailings with us, as there are some excellent deals on offer."

Juliet Archer, managing director of Cruising Holidays, agrees. "There's never been a better time to persuade new customers to try a Mediterranean cruise," she says. "Most destinations offer better value for money onshore than the likes of the Caribbean, for example, so it's possible to explore ports of call without worrying about blowing budgets."

For agents looking to introduce cruising to those who have yet to enjoy this type of holiday – perhaps those cautious about cruise in general or others who prefer not to spend too many days at sea – the Mediterranean is the ideal choice. ●

Get on Board

Marella Cruises' seven-night cruise Cosmopolitan Classics round trip from Palma, Majorca on *Marella Discovery* departs 29 July 2025, from £1309pp on an all-inclusive basis.

Fred. Olsen's 10-night Bays, Mountains and Islands of the Dalmatian Coast fly-cruise, from Civitavecchia (Italy) to Dubrovnik (Croatia) on *Balmoral*, departs 7 October 2025, from £1,599pp.

“ Few cruise destinations are as rewarding or as dependable for agents as the Mediterranean

Director of Azamara sales UK & Ireland, Stuart Pearce, maintains the lesser visited Greek Islands such as Nisyros, Syros and Amorgos have enduring appeal. He says: "A great option for those new-to-cruise, as well as regular cruisers seeking a more in-depth travel experience, is our Greece Intensive itineraries. Azamara Cruises gives travellers more time in port than anyone else, so even the most seasoned cruisers can discover something new."

There's the punch-packing sun-drenched Maltese archipelago too, famed for its UNESCO sites, glorious

beaches and warm hospitality.

"The cruise sector is important to our economy and a vital support of Maltese communities," says Tolene van der Merwe, director UK & Ireland for Visit Malta.

"With more than 940,000 passengers and 357 ship calls to Valletta last year, Malta continues to strengthen its position as a Mediterranean cruise hub. At Visit Malta we're proud to promote not only the island's rich cultural heritage, breathtaking landmarks and unique gastronomy, but also sustainable tourism. Malta is the first Mediterranean port to introduce shore-to-ship power infrastructure with capacity to power up five cruise liners simultaneously."

A great time to visit is during Malta's three-day carnival from 22-24 August, promising colourful costumes, street festivities and live music.

LAST-MINUTE 'LATES'

Few cruise destinations are as rewarding or dependable for agents as the Mediterranean. Cruising this region can be a smart move budget-wise with last-minute cruise deals offering significant savings, particularly for those flexible on dates and destinations, plus prices drop considerably out of season when cruise lines look to fill their ships.

Dave Mills, chief commercial officer, Iglu Cruise, comments: "It is possible to secure a seven-night Mediterranean



Cruise
review

NEXT-GEN CRUISING

From luxury wine bars to the world's first waterslide-rollercoaster, Norwegian Cruise Line's latest ship is primed to keep all members of the family happy, no matter their pedigree when it comes to cruising. **Will Payne** takes a closer look



As I board *Norwegian Aqua* in Southampton for a taster cruise to Zeebrugge and back, it's clear NCL is on a mission to redefine what it means to holiday at sea.

As cruise passengers get younger and more people identify holidays-at-sea as the best way to travel the world, lines are under increasing pressure to ensure they are catering for all types of holidaymakers.

However, balancing new innovations like waterslide-rollercoasters and augmented reality darts with traditional offerings like set mealtimes and formal evenings can be tricky. After all, ships can fall foul and become a jack of all trades yet master of none.

Aqua can accommodate up to 3,571 guests with a 10 per cent size and capacity increase on its sister ships *Norwegian Prima* and *Norwegian Viva*.

I caught up with some of the agents onboard to get their thoughts on the new Prima Plus class vessel and how they'll sell it to their customers.

“The variety on board ensures that there really is something for everyone

“We will definitely be marketing this to multi-gen families,” says Oasis Travel executive director Sandra Corkin. “The variety of offerings on board ensures that there really is something for everyone, from entertainment to dining options.”

Here, we break down five of *Aqua*'s key selling points to help you convince your clients to try a holiday-at-sea for the first time.

LUXURY AESTHETIC

Aqua is an art collector's dream. Unique designs, which are available to purchase onboard, adorn the walls around every turn, while on deck 7, guests will find Ocean Boulevard, a wraparound outside area with plush seats and large handmade sculptures.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The Game Zone has activities to entertain every age group; enjoy fine Thai cuisine at Sukhothai; take a dip or lounge by the main pool; the airy Belvedere Bar is a great spot to unwind; even the accommodation features unique artwork; *Aqua* boasts a striking sea-themed selfie sculpture





They'll also find high-end brands like Breitling and Dolce & Gabbana in the boutiques. The Haven, meanwhile, is a luxury hideaway with an exclusive pool area, restaurant and lounge and embellished with sleek interiors and subtle lighting.

Corkin identifies the premium offering as her favourite part of the ship. "The enhancements from previous ships to this area, with more space and outdoor cabanas, ensure that client's get a luxury experience on board this premium ship."



“ The Haven is a luxury hideaway with sleek interiors and subtle lighting

ONE FOR ALL

On the flip side, families will find plenty onboard to keep adults and children stimulated. Entertainment options include NCL newbies such as beer pong, an augmented reality basketball court and minigolf, as well as improv comedy nights and West End-style tributes to the likes of Fleetwood Mac and Prince in the Aqua Theatre.

The Aqua Slidecoaster – the world's first hybrid waterslide/rollercoaster – is also ideal for all ages. Guests sit in a dinky which is then propelled skywards – like Thorpe Park's iconic coaster, Stealth – before cascading down multi-coloured tunnels and splashing to a stop at the bottom. Not recommended for a post-dinner visit.

Jonny Peat, senior commercial manager for The Advantage Travel Partnership, admits the family holiday market "has been relatively tough" so far this year.

"Therefore, you want to ensure you nail your cruise recommendation the first time," he adds. "We have about 50 Advantage members on board and, after hearing their first impressions, we are confident this vessel will attract families."

"There is a lot of product out there, but there's real confidence to be able to go back to our clients and say this is a real premium family product."

GASTRONOMIC DELIGHTS

Onboard, customers will find 16 dining choices, including traditional à la carte restaurants and a re-imagined buffet-style eatery, the Indulge Food Hall. Here, guests can order dozens of dishes from an iPad at their table, which is a great choice for multi-gen bookings with different palates.

The evolution of the classic self-serve food hall found on most cruise ships highlights NCL's intention to adapt its offering. Guests can wander through the hall to watch each station's expert chefs as they whip up a range of dishes like chicken tikka skewers, BBQ ribs and nachos before taking a seat and ordering as much of whatever combination of dishes they like.



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Planterie offers plant-based dining; *Norwegian Aqua*'s exterior features a vibrant and colourful hull; Swirl is the line's first wine bar; get sporty on the high-tech LED floor of Glow Court; the bedrooms are spacious and comfortable

Three standout Norwegian Aqua sailings

1 The seven-day Bermuda: Royal Naval Dockyard cruise, return from New York via Bermuda, has departures in September 2025 and April-August 2026, from £738pp.

2 The seven-day Caribbean: Harvest Caye, Cozumel and Roatan cruise, return from Miami via Roatan, Costa Maya and Cozumel, has departures from October-November 2026, from £958pp.

3 The four-day Bahamas: Great Stirrup Cay & Nassau cruise, return from Miami via Nassau and Great Stirrup Cay, has departures in April 2026, from £734pp.

Barrhead Travel managing director Nicki Tempest-Mitchell believes additions like these make *Aqua* the perfect pick for the family market.

"We love a holiday with our children and in-laws, and this ship is perfect for that multi-gen experience as I can imagine us really connecting and playing games together here," she says. "From my observations in my first 24 hours [on board], it ticks the box for all of us."

ENTHRALLING ENTERTAINMENT

Aside from the standout entertainment features like the Aqua Slidecoaster and Aqua Theatre, guests will find a few hidden treasures to keep sea day boredom at bay.

The line's first wine bar, Swirl, offers a tasting experience where a

sommelier pairs reds, whites and fizz with chocolate made exclusively for the bar. The expert host then talks guests through the line-up of wine and nibbles before they head off for dinner.

Head of marketing for ROL Cruises Poppy Ellis says these sorts of nuances open the vessel up as a viable holiday option for more customers, especially those who may have previously sailed on a smaller, boutique vessel.

"For guests who typically travel on smaller ships, The Haven is perfect. It's an exclusive, suites-only area offering a more private and luxurious experience. On *Aqua*, You get all the benefits of a larger ship, like incredible dining options and world-class entertainment, while being able to retreat to the calm and comfort of The Haven at the end of the day."

REST AND REFRESH

Ellis is also impressed by the ship's Mandara Spa, a three-deck wellness facility equipped with 21 treatment rooms, a gym, multiple saunas, an ice room and both a thermal and cold plunge pool.

"The spa has also completely wowed us. It offers cutting-edge experiences like IV therapy, anti-ageing treatments

and a quartz stone massage. Guests lie on a table filled with thousands of warm quartz stones that are said to improve circulation and help detox the body – truly unique and unforgettable."

It's clear that NCL is pushing the boundaries of what it means to cruise by appealing to all holidaymakers, however, they travel. The vessel flows seamlessly between sleek, art-deco-style bars and high-tech activities like AR bowling and arcades in the Aqua Game Zone.

Yet the key to attracting new cruisers is ensuring all kinds of travellers feel at home onboard, whether they prefer playing bingo with a cup of tea or downing glass after glass of soda between waterslide rides. ●



The CLIA View

Andy Harmer OBE looks ahead to the 2025 CLIA Conference and what the annual coming together of travel agents and cruise lines has in store

The countdown is on for this year's CLIA Conference – and we can't wait to welcome more than 800 delegates to Southampton for our biggest event of the year, taking place from 21-24 May. In fact, it's not just the largest agent event in the UK and Ireland, but across all of Europe, demonstrating just how much support we get from our fantastic travel agent community.

It comes at a time when cruise continues to go from strength to strength, with even more choice, more destinations, new ship launches and more first-time travellers looking to cruise than ever before.

We'll have the usual firm favourites in place this year, including business sessions, a networking trade fair, a 'sailaway' party on land and ship visits. Plus, two optional pre-Conference opportunities are available, comprising a 'new to selling cruise sales day' and Expedition Summit on 21 March. With more content than ever before, it promises to be an engaging, insightful



CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT

Southampton is the venue for this year's CLIA Conference; Andy Harmer is gearing up to welcome more than 800 delegates to the annual event

and enjoyable few days. If you're joining, please come and say hello to me and the CLIA team.

The conference comes hot on the heels of a wealth of trade-focused events we've already hosted this year. What's been particularly striking is the appetite for learning, networking and first-hand insight across every sector of cruise. The demand to hear from experts and peers feels like it's never been greater. For instance, RiverView 2025, our river cruise event which this year was held in Budapest, sold out all 400 agent places in just 24 hours.

Thanks again to everyone who joined us for RiverView, as well as other recent events such as a dedicated river cruise day and an expedition forum. We've received lots of positive feedback and are always open to your views and further suggestions.

Elsewhere, keep an eye out for the publication of the overall UK and Ireland passenger numbers for 2024. We'll be releasing the latest figures at a stakeholder event on 7 May and hope to see the increasing demand we've experienced across the past few years continue. We'll also highlight those areas of cruise that have thrived, which last year included multi-generational groups and solo travellers.

Further out on the horizon is CLIA Cruise Week. Although it's taking place in mid-September, do keep it front of mind, as we'll be releasing a comprehensive programme of activities and initiatives to help every agent with their cruise sales across the week and beyond. More details about this are coming soon.

From ship tours and in-person events to online training and new-to-cruise sessions, we're committed to supporting you, our agent community, 365 days a year. CLIA Conference is set to be our biggest gathering yet – and we can't wait to welcome agents aboard. It's a real celebration of the passion, expertise and community that drives our incredible industry forward.

Andy Harmer OBE is managing director of CLIA UK & Ireland 

“

CLIA Conference is a celebration of the passion, expertise and community that drives our incredible industry forward





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Debating July 2025

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL **0345 505 1920**
OR SPEAK WITH YOUR **REGIONAL SALES MANAGER**

Terms, conditions, restrictions and capacity controls apply. Please visit OceaniaCruises.com for complete terms.





Autumn is the *best time* to river cruise

No crowds, beautiful colours
and award-winning itineraries!

UNBEATABLE VALUE

which always includes



Return flights plus transfers



7 nights on our five-star ship with
impeccable on-board service



Spacious cabins with window
or French balcony



Delicious full board dining, plus
the Chef's or Captains Dinner



Daily excursions and visits



Free drinks package*



Expert Riviera Cruise Director
and Concierge†

River cruise	Departures	Price from
The Blue Danube – Vienna, Budapest & Salzburg	June to October 2025 and April to October 2026	£1,799pp
Rhine & Moselle	May to October 2025 and May to October 2026	£1,999pp
The Douro, Porto & Salamanca	June to November 2025 and April to November 2026	£1,949pp
The Seine, Paris & Normandy	June to October 2025 and April to October 2026	£1,799pp
Burgundy, the River Rhône & Provence	June to October 2025 and April to October 2026	£1,799pp
Rhine Cruise to Switzerland	May to October 2025 and May to October 2026	£1,899pp

To find out more, request a brochure or to book

Call **01283 901 053** Visit **rivieratravel.co.uk/agents**

ABTA V4744 ATOL 3430 protected. Images used in conjunction with Riviera Travel. *2025 river cruises include an unlimited quantity of drinks at lunch and from 6pm to midnight while on board (selected drinks available), for 2026 river cruises, the free all-inclusive drinks includes unlimited quantity of drinks from 10am to midnight while on board (selected drinks available). †No concierge on the Douro cruise.

