

Your comprehensive guide to selling cruise holidays

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cruise

TRADE NEWS



Simply the **BEST**

The cruise industry celebrates
at the Wave Awards 2021

MAKING WAVES

Bold plans for
Ambassador Cruise Line

CTN INVESTIGATES

How the sector is improving its
accessibility credentials

AT A GLANCE

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Fred Olsen's new flagship



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*Fares shown are based on two adults sharing a stateroom and are subject to change.





EDITORIAL TEAM

EDITOR

Gary Peters
gary.peters@realresponsemedia.com

STAFF WRITER

Lucy Abbott

CONTRIBUTORS

Colette Doyle
Harriet Mallinson
Vicky Mayer
Jeannine Williamson

ART DIRECTOR

Phil Couzens

SUB EDITOR

Caroline Parish

GROUP PRODUCTION MANAGER

Barnaby Moore

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR

Rochelle Streater
rochelle.streater@realresponsemedia.com

COMMERCIAL MANAGER

Keith Cartwright
keith.cartwright@realresponsemedia.com

MARKETING DIRECTOR

James Gambling
james.gambling@realresponsemedia.com

CEO

Chris Pitchford
chris.pitchford@realresponsemedia.com

For subscriptions & enquiries:

020 8444 2554
info@cruisetradenews.com

All enquiries

+44 (0) 20 8444 2554

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Cruise Trade News

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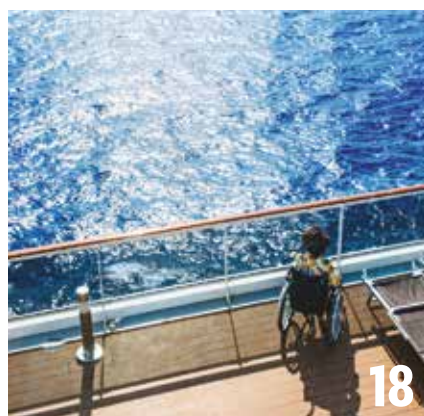
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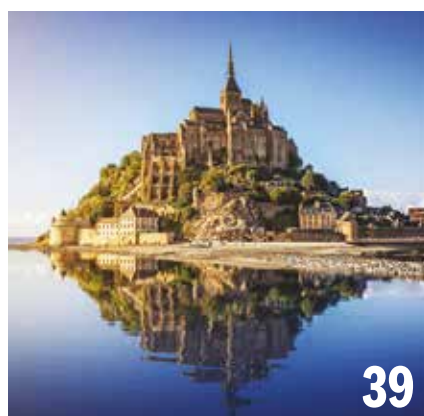
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EXPEDITION SPECIAL

The latest itineraries and trends in this fast-growing segment of the cruise business

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SEABOURN OVATION

2, 9>, 30 JUL; 6>, 27 AUG; 3 SEP 2022

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• US\$500 per suite onboard spend

From Copenhagen visit Tallinn; St Petersburg, Helsinki and Stockholm

Highlight: *Two nights and three days to explore St Petersburg and beyond*

>itinerary in reverse

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SEABOURN OVATION | 4 MAY 2022

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Editor's letter

Welcome to the November issue

There's nothing I enjoy more than a good party. For those of you who know me, it will come as no surprise to read the previous sentence. I'm not talking about some random Friday night out – although after the enforced

lockdowns they are certainly worthy of excitement – rather I am referring to the Wave Awards, our main awards ceremony, which we held in October.

This event, like others, was delayed due to circumstances outside our control but the perseverance of many people – not least our sponsors – ensured the night was one to remember for all the right reasons.

It was wonderful to come together with so many cruise friends, celebrating achievements and generally having a good time – boy, it felt liberating. There was so much to catch up on and you can see a flavour of what occurred inside with our special coverage.

As for the real nitty gritty of this issue, we take a look at accessibility in the cruise sector and what the industry is doing to create holidays for all. Meanwhile, we take a deep dive into Fred Olsen Cruise Lines' new flagship, *Bolette*, to discover what's in store on board. We find that there are plenty of firsts for guests to look forward to on the ship, particularly when it comes to cuisine.

We also have an interview with the CEO of Ambassador Cruise Line, discussing trade relationships and plans for the fleet,



Above:
The awards took centre stage in October

and take a closer look at a new partnership between Qatar Tourism and CLIA. There's also a special expedition section in this issue, too, featuring an interview with Hurtigruten Expeditions. As ever, you'll also find the latest news updates and incentives to help you when it comes to selling.

Happy reading. Let the countdown to Christmas begin.

Gary Peters
Editor, Cruise Trade News

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The Briefing

THE ULTIMATE DESTINATION FOR CRUISE NEWS

In BRIEF

Azamara in South Africa

● Azamara has confirmed that *Azamara Pursuit* will set sail from January to March 2022 with six back-to-back voyages in South Africa. The line said it will operate a selection of country-intensive itineraries and will resume pre and post-cruise land explorations with luxury safari operator Micato Safaris.

Encore to return early 2022

● Seabourn has revealed that *Seabourn Encore* will return to the Canary Islands and the Mediterranean from 19 February 2022. The ship was scheduled to resume operations in April but will now set sail earlier than planned.

● Ventura resumes sailings

Half of the P&O Cruises fleet is now cruising as *Ventura* resumed operations in October. Prices for the ship's 12-night cruises to Spain and Portugal start from £599pp. The ship has joined *Iona* and *Britannia*, which were already back in service, with *Azura* set to sail in December 2021.

PRIZES

The Christmas countdown begins

This Christmas, *Cruise Trade News* has teamed up with Fred Olsen Cruise Lines to bring you the most innovative campaign in travel.

For the month of December, a host of amazing prizes will be available to win, kindly donated by Fred Olsen. The promotion, from 1 December to Christmas Eve, will operate in both print and digital formats to provide a truly multi-platform experience.

Fred Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales Geoff Ridgeon said: "Wow, what a year it has been. To say it has been a rollercoaster would be a bit of an understatement. But what is undeniable is that we quite simply couldn't have got through the past 18 months without the support of the trade."

"Earlier this year we unveiled The Olsen Way, and one of the guiding principles is 'It's all about the people. All of it. Everything'. That is certainly true when it comes to you all.

Sponsoring the *Cruise Trade News* advent calendar is the perfect opportunity for us to extend a thank-you to you all for your patience, guidance, support and feedback, as we worked to get our ships sailing again."

CTN editor Gary Peters said: "The December issue of CTN is always a special moment for us, as we look to give back to the travel agent community. I'd like to thank Fred Olsen for working with us to deliver a bit of festive joy at this special time of year. Keep your eyes peeled for more over the coming weeks."

THE NEWS YOU NEED

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

SIGN UP NOW AT
cruisetradenews.com

NEW SHIP

Explora cuts steel

Explora Journeys, the new luxury brand of MSC Group, has marked another milestone with the steel-cutting of *Explora II*.

The second vessel in the fleet is expected to welcome its first guests on board in spring 2024. This follows on just three months from the launch of the Explora Journeys brand – the first ship, *Explora I*, is scheduled to set sail in May 2023. Two further ships will be joining the fleet in 2025 and 2026, the line confirmed.

Explora Journeys stated that the fleet "will utilise the latest in environmental-supporting technologies while being ready to adapt to alternative energy solutions". This comes after MSC Cruises pledged that its cruise operations will produce net zero emissions by 2050.

The line's executive chairman, Pierfrancesco Vago, said: "We will continue to invest in its expansion to attract the growing number and aspirations of the next generation of discerning luxury travellers."



PHOTOGRAPHY: IVAN SARACI



Emerald Sakara will be heading for the Seychelles

NEW SHIP

Emerald to build second yacht

Emerald Cruises is to welcome a second luxury superyacht to the fleet.

The line said that *Emerald Sakara* is expected to celebrate its inaugural departure in 2023. Following its maiden voyage through the Indian Ocean's Seychelles islands, *Emerald Sakara* will then join sister ship *Emerald Azzurra* in sailing the Mediterranean, Adriatic, Red and Black Seas.

Construction is underway in Ha Long City, Vietnam. *Emerald Sakara* will have balconies in 88 per cent of its cabins and more space per guest than similar vessels

of her size in the Reflections Restaurant and Horizon Bar & Lounge.

Guests will also be able to enjoy an infinity pool, a spa, gym and marina platform, with a number of marina toys available, such as paddleboards and snorkelling equipment.

Emerald Cruises global director of brand & marketing David Winterton said: "We've received enormous interest in yacht cruising since announcing the launch of *Emerald Azzurra*, and we're thrilled to be able to announce the construction of our second luxury superyacht, *Emerald Sakara*."

ITINERARIES

Oceania goes big for 2023

Oceania Cruises' 2023 Europe and North America Collection features seven ships sailing 179 itineraries, calling at more than 260 ports, the line has revealed.

The programme is the line's most expansive to date and includes 190 overnight/multi-day stays, with itineraries ranging from seven to 56 days in length.

Oceania Cruises president & CEO Bob Binder said: "These new voyages are ideal for discerning travellers seeking to re-discover the world. Whether they are retracing familiar paths or setting off to uncharted territories, they will find endearing smiles, enthralling



For 2023, Oceania will be sending out seven ships

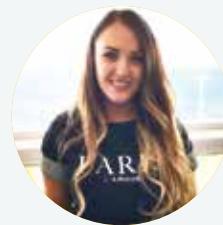
cultural elements, and fascinating culinary experiences."

Guests will be able to explore the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, Baltic & Scandinavia, Alaska, Canada, and the Colonial Americas, with Oceania promising experiences that include "off-the-beaten-path villages and dramatic, unspoiled natural wonders".

APPOINTMENTS



Carnival UK has named **Sture Myrmell** as its new president. Myrmell, who will transition from his role as president of P&O Cruises Australia and Carnival Australia, will replace Simon Palethorpe, who is leaving the organisation after six years.



Virgin Voyages has made appointments to its UK sales team. **Kerry Buchanan** has joined as sales executive, while Jack Atherton is now business development executive (south). Layla Davies has been appointed business development executive (north).



Travel tech company Inspiretec has moved **Steve Gummer** to the newly created customer success executive position. Gummer – who has been with the company for more than a decade – will provide dedicated assistance for those who sign up to Inspiretec's CRM product.

A growing appetite

Regent Seven Seas Cruises UK MD **Graham Sadler** says the luxury cruise line is seeing evidence of a boom in bookings. He outlines plans to get agents back on board *Seven Seas Splendor* in 2022



How do you envisage your relationship with agents evolving now that you are back sailing?

We have been communicating with our agents and guests throughout the pandemic and this has been greatly appreciated. In recent months we have pivoted these conversations to booking future cruises and our strategies are now being played out. For example, we are now hosting live events with our travel partners once again and enjoying that all important face-to-face contact with prospective guests.

The trade is absolutely key to our future success, and we are committed to working with them. This is reflected by the fact that we offer what we believe is the highest average commission of £1,500 per booking in the industry. Now more than ever, commission values are very important.

“In August we celebrated our fourth record-breaking launch day in a year”

Earlier this year, you told CTN that business would “explode in the coming months”. Do you think we’re seeing that prediction come to fruition now?

Yes, I do, and we have the evidence. In August, we celebrated our fourth record-breaking launch day within a year with the launch of our 2023/2024 collection, after our 2024 World Cruise had sold out in July in under three hours. It all demonstrates that the appetite for luxury travel continues to grow. As we move into the autumn, we see little easing of demand for our unrivalled space and luxury.

What do you want agents to take away from their experience on board *Seven Seas Splendor*?

In the first instance, many wonderful memories – and sheer happiness that we are back cruising. I also want them

to have the joy of our crew in mind when they are talking to their customers. I hope they will have had a taste of the true value that the unrivalled Regent experience can offer.

I also hope they will have enjoyed the amazing entertainment and facilities on board. These are just a few of the incredible amenities that come as part of a cruise with Regent Seven Seas, as well as free flights, transfers and, of course, personalised service. Plus, the most beautifully designed suites and public rooms that are among the most spacious at sea.

***Seven Seas Splendor* will be back in the UK in May 2022. Do you hope to get agents back on board then, or do you plan any immediate fam trips?**

Though we do not have any immediate plans to host more trips, with our entire fleet back in the water by February 2022, we hope to be able to share our product with travel agents as soon as possible. In the meantime, we have many other ways our agent community can familiarise themselves with the Regent Seven Seas offering. These include online ship tours, suite guides and many brand, ship and destination videos. Our sales team can also help in this regard.

Now, more than ever, our guests are booking further forward, to ensure that they can secure their chosen itinerary in their chosen suite. Instead of focusing on deals, I would recommend that travel agents highlight the incredible value that comes with luxury cruising, and Regent Seven Seas Cruises in particular. 📞



Agents will be invited on *Seven Seas Splendor* as soon as RSSC can arrange it

BEST OCEAN CRUISE LINE

A BIG THANK YOU...

To all our trade partners who voted for us to win Best Ocean Cruise Line and Best Family Cruise line. We couldn't have got through the last year without you all.





A CHANGING WORLD

In his regular column for *CTN*, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales **Geoff Ridgeon** discusses how the world is beginning to open up once more

Since I started this regular column, back when we were preparing to welcome guests on board in the summer, there has been a running theme throughout – change. How do we

acknowledge it, embrace it and, best of all, how do we sell it? It will come as no surprise that here I talk about change.

Yes, I know it can be frustrating and at times we have all been on tenterhooks waiting for the next update from our government so we can assess what it means for our business and the industry.

However, this latest change brings with it a real sense of positivity and a real shift in consumer confidence for cruise and travel. While the principle of the traffic light system was logical, there were more countries moving on and off the lists than my kids doing the hokey cokey, which made the reality of planning a holiday stressful and uncertain – and that's without the introduction of the watch-lists.

People were either leaving their decisions to the last minute to try to anticipate any changes, or booking much further in advance.

“A country is considered safe to visit, or isn't, so booking is less daunting”

Still time to explore

We now have a simpler system of the red list and the rest of the world. A country is either considered safe for us to visit for a holiday, or it isn't, which will make booking a holiday seem so much less daunting. I think this is even more crucial for cruise, bringing us more freedom to choose the ports we visit on any one sailing.

Of course, we still need to anticipate countries moving on and off the red list and we need to be able to adapt to that, both as cruise operators and as travel agents. However, at least now we are watching just one list rather than five.

These changes also make the testing requirements much less confusing, with a “one size fits all” approach for people returning to the UK in operation. Now, those who are fully vaccinated do not need to provide a negative test to return home, as long as they aren't travelling from or via a red list country.

And – at the time of writing – by the end of the month we will be able to venture to any country not on the red list (which, let's face it, gives us a fair number to choose from) without the need to shell out for expensive PCR tests on our return to the UK – as long as we are fully vaccinated – instead making way for the quicker and more cost-effective lateral flow tests.

This is a positive step forward for travel in 2021 and beyond. We must do all we can to optimise this opportunity – there is still plenty of time to explore this year. The world is a bigger oyster now than it has been for some time. Happy sailing. 🚢



GEOFF RIDGEON

HEAD OF SALES
FRED OLSEN CRUISE LINES



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Alaska | Canada & New England | Transoceanic

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Voyages Featuring Overnight(s): 120 | Total Overnights: 190

Grand Voyages: 57 | *Vista* Inaugural Voyages: 18

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Royal reveals new trade concept

Royal Caribbean International has launched what it is calling the Royal Flush – a new programme for trade partners.

The programme will reward trade partners with a strengthened commercial offer of a complete sales package – flights, transfers, cruise and “peace of mind that Royal Caribbean is providing all elements of the holiday”, the line said.

Cash rewards can be earned by agent partners on all Royal Flush packages booked for their customers through Royal Caribbean, in addition to their existing commission scheme.

Agents can earn cash rewards that are staggered, increasing in line with the category of the stateroom on the ship that is booked for the customer, starting from an interior stateroom and with the maximum value awarded to those who book a suite.



“We have listened closely to our trade partners,” says Stuart Byron



Wonder of the Seas is the world's biggest cruise ship

The value of the incentive also varies depending on the destination the customer is travelling to, whether it is Europe or further afield.

Royal Caribbean International UK & Ireland sales director Stuart Byron said: “We are extremely confident that next year will be better than ever before and we wanted to move forward with an

incredibly strong commercial offer alongside the strongest line-up of ships we’ve had ever to come to Europe.

“We have listened closely to our trade partners and now, more than ever before, we understand the importance of providing a commercial package, which incentivises booking the full fly-cruise package through Royal Caribbean.”

Royal Caribbean will have eight ships sailing in Europe in summer 2022, including *Odyssey of the Seas* and the upcoming Oasis-class *Wonder of the Seas*, the world’s largest cruise ship to date.

Agents can earn cash rewards that increase in line with the stateroom category booked



Bruges could be on the itinerary for MSC passengers stopping off at Zeebrugge

VISIT

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for more on cruise line
restart plans, agent
training, itineraries
and incentives



Cruise Challenge continues tour of UK

There is still time to secure your place at a Cruise Challenge event near you in 2021.

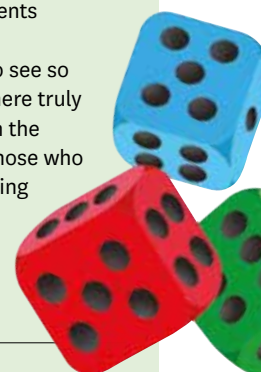
The travel agent roadshow with a difference, organised by *Cruise Trade News*, is a unique combination of education, entertainment and prizes.

CTN editor Gary Peters said: "Since resuming the Cruise Challenge events in September, we have been able to bring cruise lines and agents together once again.

"It's been wonderful to see so many happy faces and there truly is no other event like it in the cruise sector. I urge all those who can to attend the remaining events this year."

Dates and locations for 2022 will be released shortly.

For more information, visit cruisechallenge.evessiocloud.com, or get in touch with Gary Peters on gary.peters@realresponsemedia.com



MSC UNVEILS NEW WINTER SAILINGS

MSC Cruises has announced the introduction of a new Northern Europe itinerary for this winter – the first time the line has offered a winter programme in the region.

The line said that the Northern Pearls itinerary will provide "direct access to cosmopolitan cities, medieval culture and quaint villages", with weekly embarkation dates at Southampton's new Horizon Cruise Terminal from November to April.

Starting from 14 November 2021, *MSC Magnifica* will offer seven-night voyages,

calling at Hamburg, Amsterdam, Zeebrugge for Bruges and Brussels, Le Havre for Paris, and Southampton.

MSC Cruises UK & Ireland MD Antonio Paradiso said: "*MSC Magnifica*, a popular ship with our guests, will offer weekly embarkation in the south of England from the brand-new Horizon Cruise Terminal at ABP Southampton that opened this summer. This gives holidaymakers direct and convenient access to some of Europe's best cities for a great winter cruise."

CELEBRITY UPGRADES REWARDS INCENTIVE

Celebrity Cruises has enhanced its Celebrity Rewards programme to give travel agents the option to choose a gift for their clients or for themselves.

The line said the launch is a "first-of-its-kind initiative in the cruise industry" and follows feedback from travel partners who want to "treat their clients".

Celebrity Cruises said the initiative will "help to enrich agent relationships with their clients and with the brand".

Celebrity Cruises head of sales Nicola McNeish added: "We have listened to our amazing agents and partners, and the elevated Celebrity Rewards programme echoes their feedback, including the option to give back to the clients."

To send a gift to clients, agents can choose the preferred present from a catalogue and complete an online form. Gifts include cakes, champagne, chocolates and soft toys for younger clients, with an option to add a personal message, too.



Clients booking on Apex may find themselves receiving a gift

The RIGHT blend

Ambassador Cruise Line CEO **Christian Verhounig** shares his thoughts on how the new line can tap into demand for no-fly cruising by blending a traditional cruise experience with innovative itineraries

What has been the reaction since you launched the brand earlier this year?

There is huge unfulfilled demand for no-fly departures. Ambassador is filling the niche as a premium-value British cruise line offering a friendly service on smaller ships with traditional values. We've included some clear vaccination and health procedures and financial protection policies via our trust account, so guests booking with us have peace of mind regarding their money and health.

What are your immediate challenges as a new line and how do you intend to overcome them?

The launch of the first British cruise line in over a decade has not been without its



concerns. Ambassador is addressing a customer demographic that is almost entirely vaccinated and by the time we operate in 2022, the majority of the destination markets we serve will also be fully vaccinated. All guests and crew are to be vaccinated, subject to exemptions.

We also own our first ship, *Ambience*, outright, so we don't have any financial debt, unlike some existing players in the market. Ambassador's guests' deposits are not used to finance the operation. Guests' deposits and payments for their cruises are paid into a fully independently managed trust account and the monies are not released until the cruise departs. Likewise, additional insurance cover is in place to protect financially all monies paid directly to Ambassador, or via travel agents, in case a cruise is cancelled.

How are you working with the trade – and how do you intend to develop your partnerships?

Since our launch in June, we have been establishing relationships with our travel agent partners and wider trade contacts, as they are the key to our success. Our business development team is on hand to deliver bespoke one-on-one product training and marketing support on request.

We provide an easy-to-use online tool along with a dedicated trade partner section on the Ambassador website, home to a range of useful information. We know that early bookings are vital to agents, so we'll often launch special sales campaigns to help secure early booking business.

We are also working on our plans for ship visits and fam trips in 2022.

What should agents know about Ambassador to help them sell your cruises?

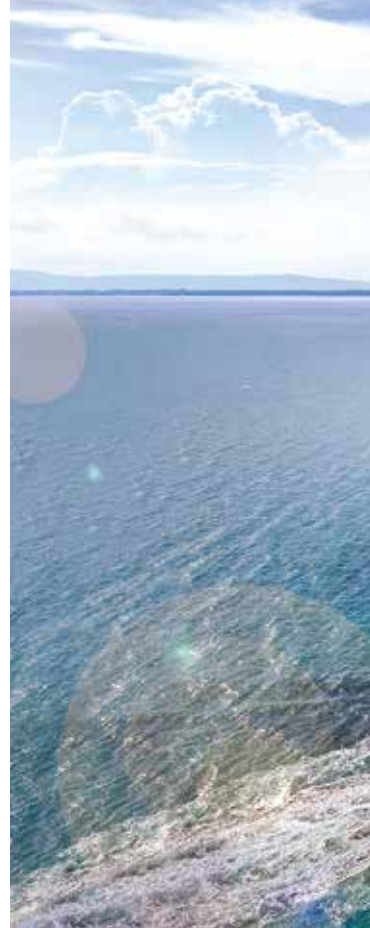
We offer unbeatable value, with a premium level, traditional cruise experience at a fantastically affordable price. Quality doesn't have to come at a huge cost.

Treating our guests right is not just about the booking and on-board



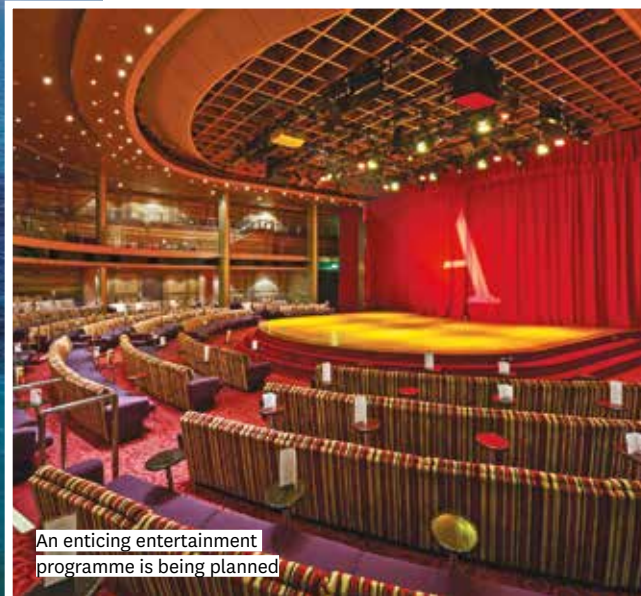
**Christian
Verhounig**

CEO
AMBIANCE CRUISE LINE





Ambience will be able to visit ports some other ships can't reach



An enticing entertainment programme is being planned

“We know early bookings are vital to agents, so there’ll be special sales campaigns”

experience. We know how important it is to feel financially protected and to be able to book with confidence, which is why our booking reassurances include a refund guarantee, should one of our cruises be cancelled.

Your first ship is *Ambience* – what you can tell us about the on-board experience?

Ambience offers a higher space-to-guest ratio. We can build relationships between staff and guests and create a sense of community at sea. She’ll be carrying 1,400 guests, so she will create an inviting and social atmosphere.

The ship will have a choice of five restaurants offering a selection of locally inspired dishes including speciality dining options, as well as two cafes and nine lounges. The restaurants will all be service-led, with no self-service buffets.

We are currently designing an enticing on-board entertainment and enrichment

programme aimed specifically at our 50-plus market. It includes the likes of dedicated bridge hosts adding a professional atmosphere to the game. Guest comedians, a book club and, on cruises of six nights and more, we will also have hand-picked expert speakers, arts and crafts demonstrations and lessons for our passengers.

What plans do you have to expand the *Ambassador* fleet?

While we have ambitions beyond one ship, we won’t confirm the extent of that at this stage. However, it would be prudent of us to be aware of other ships of a similar type as they become available.

Can you tell us more about your itineraries for 2022 and beyond, including your maiden voyage?

The maiden season features 33 voyages covering more than 90 different ports,

spanning the British Isles, Norwegian fjords, the Baltics, Greenland, the Arctic, the Canary Islands, Cuba, the Caribbean and Scandinavia, from 6 April 2022 to 16 May 2023. *Ambience*’s size and environmental compliance allow her to visit many of the ports that other vessels cannot access.

Ambience’s inaugural sailing is a four-night cruise to Hamburg. With two sea days cruising the River Elbe, and a full day in port, we feel we are introducing *Ambience* to our guests and giving them ample time to experience the pleasures of sailing on board our flagship as well as exploring the Hanseatic city.

Ambassador also has two multi-generational cruises scheduled for next summer, when children and infants over six months old can sail with the family.

Do you expect to continue your company’s focus on no-fly cruising for the foreseeable future?

Ambassador is exclusively for the British market sailing from London Tilbury. After finishing its inaugural season in spring 2023, we plan to extend sailings from additional regional ports on a no-fly range of voyages. 📍



CLASSIC TRADITIONAL CRUISING WITH THE WARMEST OF WELCOMES

UNBEATABLE VALUE

ADULT ONLY NO FLY CRUISING

- Save up to 25% off Full Fares
- Convenient Port Parking from £7.50 per vehicle per night
- Premium coach transfers with local area pick-up points Half-Price from £40pp return

INTRODUCING "AMBASSADOR FARES"

- Up to 25% saving off our Full Fares
- Includes our top Ambassador Expedition Drinks Package (discounted by 10%)
- Guaranteed dinner sitting (excludes table size)
- Priority for complimentary cabin upgrades (subject to availability)

FARE INCLUDES:

- Sumptuous full board cuisine • Captain's Welcome & Farewell cocktail party • Captain's Gala Dinner & Baked Alaska Parade
- A wide range of entertainment • Use of gym, swimming pools, hot tubs & spa • Portage of luggage



- Refund Guarantee†
- Book with just a deposit, then nothing to pay until 2022
- Insurance cover in place to financially protect all guests' booking
- Money held in a trust account until you sail
- Enhanced Health & Safety protocols

SUMMER 2022, WINTER & SPRING 2023 NOW ON SALE

Here she is, our flagship of the fleet, our first lady of the sea: Ambience. Derived from the French word for 'surrounding', our ambition at Ambassador is to create the optimum atmosphere on board; one that brings out the best in each of us. The perfect ambience.



Savings for solo cruisers

As part of our commitment to single guests, we have allocated single occupancy cabins at a single supplement against the equivalent twin fare based on five selected single cabin categories. For sailings of 6 nights or more, there is also a welcome cocktail party.

Great deals for groups

Get together a group and take advantage of some amazing savings and added value benefits. A group comprises of just 15 adult guests with a special 5% group discount off on selected sailings. Includes one free additional place for every 25 adult paying fares (26th place free), two free additional places for 50 adult fare paying guests (52nd place free), onboard welcome cocktail party and group dining for dinner.

Peace of mind guarantee

We know how important it is for your clients to feel financially protected and to be able to book with confidence, which is why our booking reassurances include a refund guarantee, should one of our cruises be cancelled. In addition, we operate a fully independent managed Trust Account where guests' funds are deposited and only released when the cruise departs.



Drop-off and pick-up is located immediately adjacent to the Cruise Terminal. Pre-booked parking spaces can be booked prior to your cruise



Introducing premium regional coaching to London Tilbury - With 80 convenient local regional pick-up points Unbeatable Value - Half price introductory offer - return coach saver fares from only £40pp



Ambience - a traditional, authentic cruise experience:

Ambience is our first ship and carries approximately 1,400 guests, creating a welcoming and social atmosphere. She is 70,285GRT, with 798 cabins, five restaurants, two cafes, nine lounges, two swimming pools, promenade decks, a spa, day and evening entertainment, fitness and leisure facilities complemented by enticing enrichment and lifestyle programmes.

To partner or discuss co-operative marketing opportunities please contact:

Lisa Jacobs | Head of Trade Sales
Maira Gregson | Business Development Manager
 Northern England & Scotland
Deborah Rixson | Business Development Manager
 Southern England, Wales / Groups
Bethany Barker | Business Development Executive
Sheena Allsopp | Trade Sales Support Manager

Trade Sales Reservations 0808 102 8355

Trade Sales Support 0808 102 8356

Email tradesales@ambassadorcruiseline.com

Group Sales 0808 102 8357

Email groupsales@ambassadorcruiseline.com

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 NOW AVAILABLE**



www.facebook.com/AmbassadorTradeTeam

Call our specialist cruise consultants for **FREE**. Lines open:
**Mon-Thurs 09:00-20:00, Fri 09:00-18:00,
 Sat 09:00-17:00, Sun 10:00-16:00**

Opening hours are subject to change.

Please see our website for up-to-date opening hours.

UK Office: Gateway House, Stonehouse Lane, Purfleet, Essex, RM19 1NS.

Cruise Calendar 2022-2023

All Ambience sailings depart from London Tilbury

Sailing date	Cruise Title	Nights	Code
06 Apr 2022	Maiden Voyage to Hamburg	4	A12201
10 Apr 2022	A Taste of Fjordland	6	A12202
16 Apr 2022	Majestic Easter Fjordland	8	A12203
24 Apr 2022	Springtime Fjordland	7	A12204
01 May 2022	British Isles Discovery	11	A12205
12 May 2022	Baltic Treasures & St. Petersburg	14	A12206
26 May 2022	Round Britain & Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebration	12	A12207
07 June 2022	Land of Ice & Fire	14	A12208
21 June 2022	Arctic Voyage to Greenland & Iceland	21	A12209
12 July 2022	British Isles Discovery	11	A12210
23 July 2022	Baltic Treasures & St. Petersburg ☺	14	A12211
06 Aug 2022	Summertime Fjordland ☺	7	A12212
13 Aug 2022	Iceland, Faroes & Edinburgh Festival	12	A12213
25 Aug 2022	Summertime Fjordland	7	A12214
01 Sep 2022	British Isles Discovery	11	A12215
12 Sep 2022	Grand Canada, Greenland & Iceland Experience	34	A12216
16 Oct 2022	Autumn Fjordland	7	A12217
23 Oct 2022	Grand Black Sea & Mediterranean	32	A12218
24 Nov 2022	Canaries, Madeira & Morocco Winter Sun	15	A12219
09 Dec 2022	Festive Event	1	A12220
10 Dec 2022	Festive Event	1	A12221
11 Dec 2022	German Christmas Markets	5	A12222
16 Dec 2022	Festive Event	1	A12223
17 Dec 2022	Festive Event	1	A12224
18 Dec 2022	Festive Market Getaway	3	A12225
21 Dec 2022	Christmas & New Year Canary Islands	15	A12226
05 Jan 2023	Cuba & Treasures of the Caribbean	42	A12301
16 Feb 2023	Cape Verde, Canaries & Morocco Winter Escape	21	A12302
09 Mar 2023	Norway's Land of the Northern Lights	14	A12303
23 Mar 2023	Iceland's Land of the Northern Lights	11	A12304
03 Apr 2023	Easter British Isles Discovery	11	A12305
14 Apr 2023	Grand Black Sea & Mediterranean	32	A12306
16 May 2023	Hidden Baltic Treasures & St. Petersburg	16	A12307

☺ Multi-generational cruising



ACCESS ALL AREAS

The cruise sector has innovated across a number of areas in recent years, but how does it fare when it comes to providing an accessible experience for all? **Lucy Abbott** investigates

Jon Fletcher has been cruising since he was 14, with his first experience being on a school trip on *SS Uganda*. Now aged 60, and with many years working as a travel agent under his belt, Fletcher has been lucky enough to spend a large chunk of his working life either travelling by sea or helping to organise holidays for his clients.

What's more, Fletcher – who has spina bifida – is a wheelchair user and thinks that cruises are among the most accessible holidays for anyone with a disability.

“I have a canine partner assistance dog called Georgia and one of the things I love is that we can travel together and share the experience,” he tells *CTN*. “She absolutely loves sailing and is quite the socialite. Next year I am planning to sail America's East Coast to see for myself the beauty of a New England and Canadian fall, and spend a bit of time in one of my favourite cities, New York.”

According to Scope, a disability charity, there are 14.1 million disabled people in the UK. However, in 2019, disabled adults in England made 26 per cent fewer trips than those without a disability, figures from the Department for Transport's report *Transport: Disability and Accessibility Statistics* show.

To help change this, Fletcher has launched a new venture – the Wheelie Good Travel Company – which aims to put “fun, excitement and adventure” back at the forefront of cruising for disabled passengers. So, what is the current state of play?

Dedicated support

While it's universally accepted that cruises are a great way to travel for those with some form of disability, “the approach to disabilities on board is inconsistent”, disability blogger Zoë Escudier-Davies explains. Escudier-Davies runs the Cruising Wheelchair blog, which has more than 9,000 followers on Instagram.

Many cruise lines, such as Holland America Line, ensure that guests fill out a form detailing the specifics of their disability before boarding, so the correct adaptations can be made to the ship in order to prepare. The cruise line explained to *CTN* that this is so they can “be sure we have a full understanding of their needs so they can enjoy the cruise”.

A Maritime and Coastguard Agency disabled passenger satisfaction survey from 2019 showed that “on average, 55

per cent of disabled passengers who travelled on a cruise and/or ferry in 2019 were either very satisfied or satisfied”, demonstrating a favourable score, while highlighting that there is room for improvement in this respect.

Cruise lines such as Marella Cruises are actively looking for ways to improve awareness of accessibility on board, with a Marella spokesperson telling *CTN*: “Most of our ships are accessible and we'll do everything we can to support our customers. We have a dedicated special assistance team on hand to offer advice and answer questions. We are working with AccessAble to ensure any current or future guests are as fully informed as possible in regards to the facilities on board the Marella fleet.”

When approached for comment, cruise industry group CLIA stated: “Cruising is accessible as it's affordable and easy to plan with travel options and experiences that appeal to a broad range of budgets, interests, and abilities.

“It's experiential as it offers more choices in activities and destinations that can be experienced in a single trip than on any other type of holiday travel – attracting diverse travellers. And it's



Cruises can be among the most accessible holidays for anyone with a disability

In 2019, disabled adults in England made 26 per cent fewer trips than those without a disability, the DfT found



Some Fred Olsen cabins have more space for those who need to use their wheelchair

“In many cases, the biggest challenges are easily rectified, with many of the newer ships being extremely accessible”

transformational, as cruising provides opportunities for personal growth and greater understanding of the world by connecting people and cultures.”

On-board changes

Digging deeper, how do lines adapt ships and their cabins? Holland America Line explains that its ships “have computers with ADA [assistance] requirements and listening, light, tactile technology for in-stateroom use”. The line added: “We have a formal process to ensure all guests will have proper access to enjoy all cruises, and it is also a commitment from Holland America Line that all our guests receive the same service, dining amenities and experience to be able to enjoy their cruise to the utmost.”

Elsewhere, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines director of product and customer services

Clare Ward explains: “Some [cabins] have more space for those who need to use their wheelchair in their cabin, and we have some that are wheelchair accessible for those who need the use of a wheelchair or scooter when out and about or exploring the ship, but not so much while in their room. We also have a number of cabins with adapted bathrooms or wet rooms. These cabins are available in a range of grades, from premier and balcony suites to interior cabins.

“In our theatres we have hearing loops, and reserved seating areas for guests using wheelchairs, but when it comes to programming our entertainment team works hard to create an inclusive schedule of events on all of our cruises.”

Disability blogger Caroline Bathurst – who runs the Cazbarr website and has arthrogryposis and scoliosis – states that



Jon Fletcher takes his assistance dog, Georgia, wherever he cruises

some adaptations industry-wide do not go far enough. “Not all disabled toilets are practical. I was on a ship once where the emergency assistance alarm button was too high, so if you fell to the floor, you had no way of reaching it,” she says. “[Outside my cabin] I don’t see lowered counters in the shops, and bars can be overcrowded, so ordering a drink can be difficult, but some ships have staff taking orders in and around the bar.”

Changes to on-board areas typically vary by line and ship. As Jon Fletcher says, “in many cases, the biggest challenges are easily rectified, [with] many of the newer ships [being] extremely accessible”.

He adds: “For example, on Virgin Voyages, they have ensured that all their amazing restaurants are easily accessible for anyone in a wheelchair. And Norwegian Cruise Line and Celebrity Cruises have put a part of the bar in many of their venues at wheelchair height.”



Blogger Caroline Bathurst travels with her husband, Jeff

Port access

For disabled cruisers, accessibility is vital from the moment they leave home, and particularly when they reach their starting port. Bathurst explains that “as a full-time wheelchair user, I try to get cruises leaving and arriving from Southampton. This way, no flying is involved for me and my chair. Getting on and off the ship is so easy for a wheelchair user compared with getting on/off a plane.”

To ensure that disabled guests can access their cruise ship safely, the Port of Southampton's new cruise terminal, Horizon Cruise, has been specially designed to ensure that it is accessible for every type of mobility. ABP Head of Cruise Rebekah Keeler describes to *CTN* the features the terminal has, such as “tactile paving, talking escalators, ramps, lifts, dropped kerbs, rumble strips and accessible signage”. Excursions and port access are a huge part of cruising: Caroline Bathurst says it is what she loves most about this type of holiday: “I love the fact I am in one place and can visit many different countries.”

Some lines offer alternative activities for disabled guests to take advantage of when the ship is emptier if port access does not allow them to disembark. P&O Cruises told *CTN* that it offers “a range of activities designed to accommodate the needs of guests with reduced mobility or who are wheelchair users”.

Yet for some disabled cruisers, being unable to disembark is not an issue. Fletcher says: “Yes, there may be ports where I cannot get off, but there is even an advantage to that, because while everyone else is off the ship I can enjoy a spa day at a discount or lunch in a speciality restaurant at a fraction of the cost of a sea day.

“What appeals to me about cruising, particularly on the newer ships, is the sheer variety of places to eat and drink, to enjoy entertainment, to meet new friends and even be pampered and spoilt rotten,”

The best way to see the world

As regular cruisers know, the staff on board the ship can make or break the cruising experience. While disabled cruisers often have an able-bodied

companion on board, if needed, staff on board also play a part in assisting those passengers. Lines such as Holland America Line, Marella Cruises and P&O offer an assigned member of staff to a disabled passenger.

There's also a financial aspect to ensuring ships are as accessible as possible: disabled people in the UK form a large part of the economy, with an annual spending power of £274 billion, according to analysis from Scope.

As for the future, the provisions that cruise lines have in place for disabled cruisers are constantly improving, with newer ships tending to be the most accessible, as Fletcher says: “Cruises are probably among the most accessible holidays anybody with a disability, whether it is visible or less visible, can take.”

Cruising is an exciting and adventurous way to travel and having a disability should not be a barrier.

As for Fletcher and the Wheelie Good Travel Company: “Success for me is not just about numbers or bums on seats, it is about the quality of the experience that the disabled traveller enjoys.

“For me success will come when travellers regularly tell me, ‘I achieved

that dream and I thought I would never do that’. It will be about sharing our travellers’ passion – that is the way we will become the byword for accessible travel and the leader in the sector.”

All in all, as Escudier-Davies says, “cruising is the best way to see the world”. 🌐



Horizon Cruise, the new port at Southampton, has new features for disabled passengers

“Getting on and off a ship at Southampton is so easy for a wheelchair user compared with getting on and off a plane”



Zoë Escudier-Davies says “cruising is the best way to see the world”

”
In conversation with...

Tradewind Voyages

Cruise industry veteran **Alan McGrory** now has his feet firmly under the table at Tradewind Voyages. He explains to *CTN* why the brand has a unique selling point and lays out his vision

Alan McGrory is no stranger to the cruise business. After spells at some of the industry's biggest lines, as well as two years doing consultancy work in the travel and hospitality sectors, earlier this year he joined Tradewind Voyages.

The line, which emerged during the depths of the pandemic in 2020, was in need of a new chief executive following the departure of Stuart McQuaker. Up stepped McGrory, and now, a few short months later, the line is sailing and has announced plans for its Mediterranean cruises in 2022. So, it's all hands to the pump.

"When we came into it, there were changes," McGrory explains. "But the core team has been there from the start – I think that's something that has really helped me. You've got your sales team, the finance team, the marine team... they're all here."



Golden Horizon has a unique style



Golden Horizon has sails above and 21st-century tech below

In the light of the cancellation of the line's winter Caribbean season, McGrory says: "I'm very happy that we've been able as a small team to adjust to anything that has come our way, and really be creative in some of the ways we've operated. The fact that there has been a lot of pressure at one time has helped to form bonds between the team members. I think the fact that everybody has a voice and a seat at the table really helps."

The ship sells

This intimate bond that McGrory speaks of can also be applied to the line's ship – *Golden Horizon*. A near-replica of the 1913-built ocean vessel *France II*, *Golden Horizon* is described as having "the charm, adventure and romance of a historic ship".

McGrory says that while the 272-guest

ship certainly does have echoes of a bygone era, in reality the ship is utilising modern-day technology, forming a fusion of old and new.

"It is truly unique in the sense that you have sail power and then underneath that you have a 21st-century operation," he says. "I suppose that's one thing we have in the armoury – a brand new ship with 21st century technology, but sailing with the rigging above. People love it."

Above the water line, the distinctive appearance of *Golden Horizon* is helping to spread word about the line, proving that word of mouth is still a useful selling tool.

"It's interesting... we've been in Portland, we've been in Southampton, Dover, and there are these larger ships around us that are absolutely beautiful and great, yet everybody's focused on the



The Tradewind ship is grabbing attention wherever she travels



Fixtures and fittings are a blend of old and new

one that has the sails – *Golden Horizon*,” McGrory says. “We get so many pictures of people on the larger ships taking photos of the guests embarking on ours. They then ask us, ‘when and how can I book?’”

When it comes to booking, McGrory is keen to highlight how the line is committed to working with the trade, labelling agents as the people who provide “confidence to guests” and the need to “work together” more closely than ever before.

Earlier this year, the line invited agents on board to sample the ship for a short sailing along the English south coast. “That’s the best thing that’s happened for

“We’ve definitely seen the numbers spike up in bookings”

us – we were able to showcase the product,” McGrory says.

“There’s an awful lot of confidence in the market. We’ve definitely seen the numbers spike up in bookings – people have confidence to go back out there and they’ve seen the ship, they’ve been on it and really enjoyed it

“I think it was one of the first times that many people had actually seen each other for 18 months – there were many with longer hair [than pre-pandemic]. It was great for us as we have that connection with agents.”

New job, new challenges

The team ethos, work ethic and personal connection McGrory speaks of will certainly be needed over the coming months – and it’s not a story that’s

unique to Tradewind Voyages.

McGrory highlights that in the short term, “it’s about getting a successful operation into play”. So, that’s everything to do with systems, processes and procedures. “Addressing the

short-term, success is definitely getting them [clients] to come back on board, making sure that they have the product that they’re looking for, listening to them, and then understanding where we need to make tweaks or changes.

“Probably our key challenges are the same as every other cruise line right now – product and supply. With so many ships coming back in and hotels and everything else that’s starting to open up, that’s [about] getting supply. We’re not in the same situation as some of the larger brands, because we’re not looking for a huge number of guests – our maximum capacity right now is 272.”

The settling in period has passed. Now, McGrory seems all set to use his experience to lead his team and the cruise line across the waters ahead. 📍

Spotlight On

Qatar's cruise plans

Qatar Tourism cruise manager **Craig Upshall** explains to *CTN* how a new partnership with CLIA will help drive cruise passengers to the region

Among countless cruise destinations around the world are a number in the Middle Eastern Gulf Region. Doha, in Qatar, stands out as one of the best, though, with the building of a new cruise terminal and a complete redevelopment of the port area both evidence of its growing reputation.

Now Qatar Tourism has joined the CLIA UK & Ireland family to provide the perfect platform for promoting Qatar as a cruise destination to the UK & Irish travel trade. Our goal as a tourism board is to promote tourism to the country and there is no better way to visit than by sea, on one of the many cruise lines that call into Doha, its capital.

CLIA's distribution to the travel trade is unsurpassed for the cruise sector, which is one of the main reasons for the partnership. Cruise forms an integral part of Qatar Tourism's 2030 vision, with rapid growth in the sector expected over the coming years.

A bold vision

With the new terminal at Doha Port, Qatar is investing heavily in cruise infrastructure. The welcome to Doha for our cruise visitors will be unparalleled in the region. With the new overall port development, it will give cruise visitors the opportunity to take a leisurely walk from their ship through the port area, including the botanical gardens, towards the Corniche and into the downtown quarter of Msheireb, which also gives access to Souq Waqif and the museums in the area.

Our sponsorship programme with CLIA is a multi-level approach to promote the destination to the travel trade, giving an insight to what Doha city



Doha is noted for its landmark residential developments as well as the new port

“There is no better way to visit Qatar than by sea, calling at its capital, Doha”

itself has to offer, along with the wider attractions available.

The visibility that our headline sponsorship of CLIA's Selling Cruise Day on 4 November in Southampton will provide is a fantastic opportunity to get in front of more than 300 travel agents. It will open the eyes of our travel partners to the possibilities in Doha as a pre or post option to package with those cruise lines, with embarkations in Doha's own port.

The destination has so much to offer beyond Doha too, with more than 340 miles of coastline. There are plenty of water-based activities to offer all ages, from kite surfing and kayaking to diving and snorkelling, or just relaxing on one of the country's many pristine beaches.

By showcasing Qatar as a cruise destination for both transit passengers and pre and post stays through our partnership with CLIA, we expect to receive many requests for more information, training and marketing support, which we'll be happy to give.

It's also our goal to bring agents to the destination via our award-winning flag carrier Qatar Airways, which assists the industry with special fares to support our focus on cruise. 🇶🇦



CRAIG UPSHALL
QATAR TOURISM CRUISE MANAGER



CRUISING FROM VANCOUVER?

Take the opportunity to add on VIA's famous 'Canadian' train and explore more of Canada. Perhaps take the one night trip to Jasper and explore the majestic Rocky Mountains or why not sit back and relax for the full four night journey to Toronto (you can always break the journey for a few nights en-route).



CRUISING FROM MONTREAL OR QUEBEC CITY?

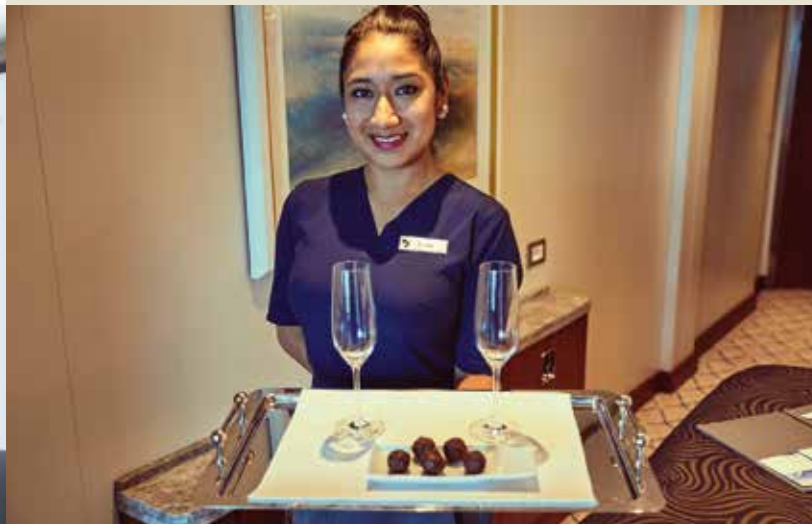
Those departing from either port have the option of using VIA Rail's daily, affordable and efficient services to visit some of the other cities on the east coast. How about visiting the capital of Ottawa or the cosmopolitan city of Toronto or why not both?



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VIA Rail Canada



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WAVE AWARDS 2021



Simply the BEST

The Wave Awards returned on 15 October
and what a night it was, as the industry
came together to celebrate

After so long away, the Wave Awards made a triumphant return in October. The event, organised by Real Response Media (publishers of *Cruise Trade News*), was a spectacular evening, rewarding innovation and hard work across the cruise industry.

The event – held at 8 Northumberland Avenue, London and hosted by actress Debra Stephenson – featured judged categories covering every element of cruise – such as Best Ocean Cruise Line, Best Environmental Initiative, and Best New Ship Launch, and more – as well as the Passenger Favourite categories, as voted for by the public.

This year also saw the introduction of The Peter Grant Contribution to the Cruise Industry Award, to honour the

“We all celebrated long into the night, and rightly so – the industry deserved a moment to relax”

former Real Response Media director and *CTN* and *World of Cruising* publisher, who passed away suddenly in 2020.

CTN editor Gary Peters said: “It was an unforgettable night, not least because we all got to come together again as an industry after such a difficult period. We all celebrated long into the night, and rightly so, as the industry deserved a moment to relax away from the stresses of everyday life.

“I’d like to congratulate all the winners on their success and to pay tribute to the industry’s perseverance, passion and commitment to driving the cruise

sector forward. We are now entering brighter days and there is so much to look forward to.”

RRM CEO Chris Pitchford added: “I’d like to once again place on record my thanks to all who made this year’s Wave Awards possible. We all know how tough it was to get the event back up and running following delays caused by the pandemic, but the smiling faces on the night made all that worthwhile. We can’t wait to start planning the 2022 edition – it will be something to remember, that I can guarantee.”

Stay tuned for more information about the Wave Awards 2022, but for now, please see inside for pictures from the night and a few words from our winners.

For a full list of winners, go to
thewaveawards.com







Snap from the Wave Awards 2021 photobooth, sponsored by Qatar Tourism



Lynn Narraway

The Peter Grant Contribution to the Cruise Industry Award

“I am thrilled and very honoured to receive the Peter Grant award. I’d like to thank all the team at CTN and *World of Cruising* for choosing me for this very prestigious accolade. I am also grateful to all my colleagues within cruise, our fantastic travel partners and my amazing team at Seabourn and Holland America Line. Finally, this award gives us an opportunity to remember Peter Grant every year.”

Saga

Best Value-for-Money Cruise Line;
Best for Solo Travellers; Grand Prix
Iain Powell, head of commercial partnerships & trade sales

“All of us at Saga are exceptionally proud to have won three awards at this year’s Wave Awards. The past 18 months have been exceptionally challenging for our industry and the awards evening provided us all with the opportunity to celebrate successes and achievements.”

Marella Cruises

Best for Entertainment
Chris Hackney, MD

“We’re thrilled to have won the Best for Entertainment award. We’ve worked hard over the years to make sure our guests have a variety of entertainment to choose from and we’re delighted to have been recognised at the Wave Awards for the second time. Our on-board entertainment team is unique to Marella Cruises and truly put the customer at the heart of what they do, to ensure they have an incredible cruise with us.”

‘WHAT AN HONOUR’

Barrhead Travel

Best Retail Agent

Jacqueline Dobson, president

“What an honour to have been named Best Retail Agent at this year’s Wave Awards – particularly after such a turbulent year. I am so proud of our teams across the business, who have risen to every single challenge that came their way. Above all, there has been tremendous teamwork from our people.”

Solent Stevedores

Best Environmental Initiative

Tom Dynes, operations director

“We are incredibly proud to receive this award in recognition of our forward-thinking environmental initiatives. It is important for us to be a key player in the wider cruise industry movement to become more sustainable. We know that positive progress with air quality is also an important part of the future of the city of Southampton, and we’re dedicated to being part of this.”

The latest reaction from a selection of the Wave Awards 2021 winners

Royal Caribbean International

Best Ocean Cruise Line;
Best Family Cruise Line;
Favourite Ocean Cruise Line
Stuart Byron, sales director UK, Ireland and Spain

“We are incredibly proud to have won three awards at the prestigious Wave Awards – for Best Ocean Cruise Line and Best Family Cruise Line, as well as for Favourite Ocean Cruise Line, which is voted for by the public. From speciality dining and quality accommodation to innovation, thrilling on-board activities and world-class entertainment, we pride ourselves on ensuring guests of all ages have an unforgettable holiday from start to finish.”

Fred Olsen Cruise Lines

Favourite Specialist Cruise Line & Best Brand Partnership
Geoff Ridgeon, head of sales

“We are extremely proud that guests voted for us as their Favourite Specialist Cruise Line and we’re also delighted to have won the award for Best Brand Partnership for our work on the D-Day cruise with the Royal British Legion. We have never been more excited about the future, especially with the launch of the newest additions to our fleet of smaller ships, *Bolette* and *Borealis*.”

For more coverage and images – including detailed captions – go to thewaveawards.com



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Win at Selling The Mekong

APT head of sales **Jessica Shelton-Agar** explains the main elements to focus on when tempting clients to cruise on the enduringly popular Mekong

Following a year of such limited travel, it's easy to understand why our data is revealing a strong trend for booking further ahead, as well as for longer-haul bookings, as customers plan in advance for cruises in 2022 and 2023.

When it comes to cruising in further-flung destinations, one of the most exciting rivers to sail is the Mekong. Now is a great time for the trade to brush up on their knowledge of this exciting region, and all that Vietnam and Cambodia have to offer customers. This way, agents are poised and ready to maximise their sales.

Itineraries include all the unmissable “hero” experiences, such as visits to the Angkor Wat complex and the Cu Chi



Clients thinking of a tour to Vietnam may be in the market for a river trip

Selling TIPS

People know that they want to visit Vietnam and Cambodia, but they may not automatically think of doing so via a river cruise, so agents need to suggest this travel style proactively to their clients

• Food is a massive pull for any river cruise along the Mekong, and local cuisine is a colourful and authentic expression of Vietnamese and Cambodian culture. That makes the Mekong a great river cruise destination to sell to foodies

• Highlight the convenience of being able to wake up in a stunning new location every day, but having to unpack only once. This is a great advantage that river cruising has over touring or FIT

“Ships sail through landscapes that are usually off limits to those on guided tours”

Tunnels, but additionally, ships will sail through landscapes that are difficult to access by road and therefore usually off limits to those on guided tours or travelling independently.

Cruising allows for leisurely exploration of local life, which is often focused alongside riverbanks.

Local stories brought to life

River cruising is a fantastic way to travel for first-time travellers to Asia. Working with the best local guides, an expert cruise director will take care of all the details, meaning that customers are ensured a comprehensive, immersive and fully supported travel experience.

It also means that guests will learn the stories behind what they are seeing for a greater understanding of local culture, and they will have the opportunity to engage with local riverside communities.

The Mekong is also a great destination to sell to clients who have previously

dipped a toe into Asian travel and are looking for something more adventurous.

There are many operators with cruises on the Mekong to choose from, so the trade can really personalise the experiences they are selling. APT's own offering, for example, is curated for those who want the finer things in life, with the most luxurious accommodation aboard the *Mekong Serenity*, fine dining and handpicked experiences.

With a more accessible price point and additional free time for independent exploration, Travelmarvel offers a four-star experience aboard the *RV Apsara*, which will be new to the fleet for next year. 📌



JESSICA SHELTON-AGAR
HEAD OF SALES
APT



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

EXPERIENCE THE OLSEN WAY

On board *Borealis* in 2022

Stylish, spacious and comfortable, with a choice of elegant public areas and restaurants, our new ship *Borealis* has become a guests' favourite in our fleet of smaller ships.

Our award-winning Journey Planners have crafted some exciting journeys for her over the coming months, from setting off to the remote and dramatic lands of the Norwegian Arctic in search of the famed Northern Lights, to exploring Iceland, where guests could enjoy a dip in the Blue Lagoon's geothermal baths, at a time of year with less tourists around.

IN SEARCH OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS



Sail from Liverpool

11th Feb 2022 | 16 nights | *Borealis* | Cruise code S2204A

Prices from £1,799pp Plus, £100pp spend & tips covered

HAND-CRAFTED HIGHLIGHTS

Extended stays in Tromsø, Alta & Hammerfest
to give guests greater chance of seeing
Mother Nature's light show

CLASSIC ICELAND IN NINE NIGHTS



Sail from Liverpool

13th Mar 2022 | 9 nights | *Borealis* | Cruise code S2206A

Prices from £1,099pp Plus, £75pp spend & tips covered

HAND-CRAFTED HIGHLIGHTS

Reykjavik is the gateway to the marvels of the Golden Circle, from the thundering Gullfoss Waterfall to the bursting Strokkur Geyser

To book, please call 0800 0355 052 | www.fredolsencruises.com/agent

Terms and conditions apply. From prices shown are based on two sharing an interior Twin Cabin. Prices correct at time of going to print, 15th Oct 2021. Please check before quoting. For full terms and conditions please visit www.fredolsencruises.com



Fast Facts

This summer, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines set sail with a new flagship in the fleet, *Bolette*. Proudly bearing the name of Fred Olsen Junior's great-great grandmother, *Bolette* offers elegant and stylish interiors, specially designed with the line's guests in mind, and introduces several new restaurants, lounges, and facilities to the fleet alongside sister ship *Borealis*. With just 690 cabins, *Bolette* fits perfectly within Fred. Olsen's fleet of smaller ships. Plus, with high sailing speeds, guests can reach destinations more quickly, allowing them to visit more ports of call and giving them more time to enjoy the scenic route.

1,338

GUESTS

11

BARS & LOUNGES

2

SPECIALITY DINING AREAS

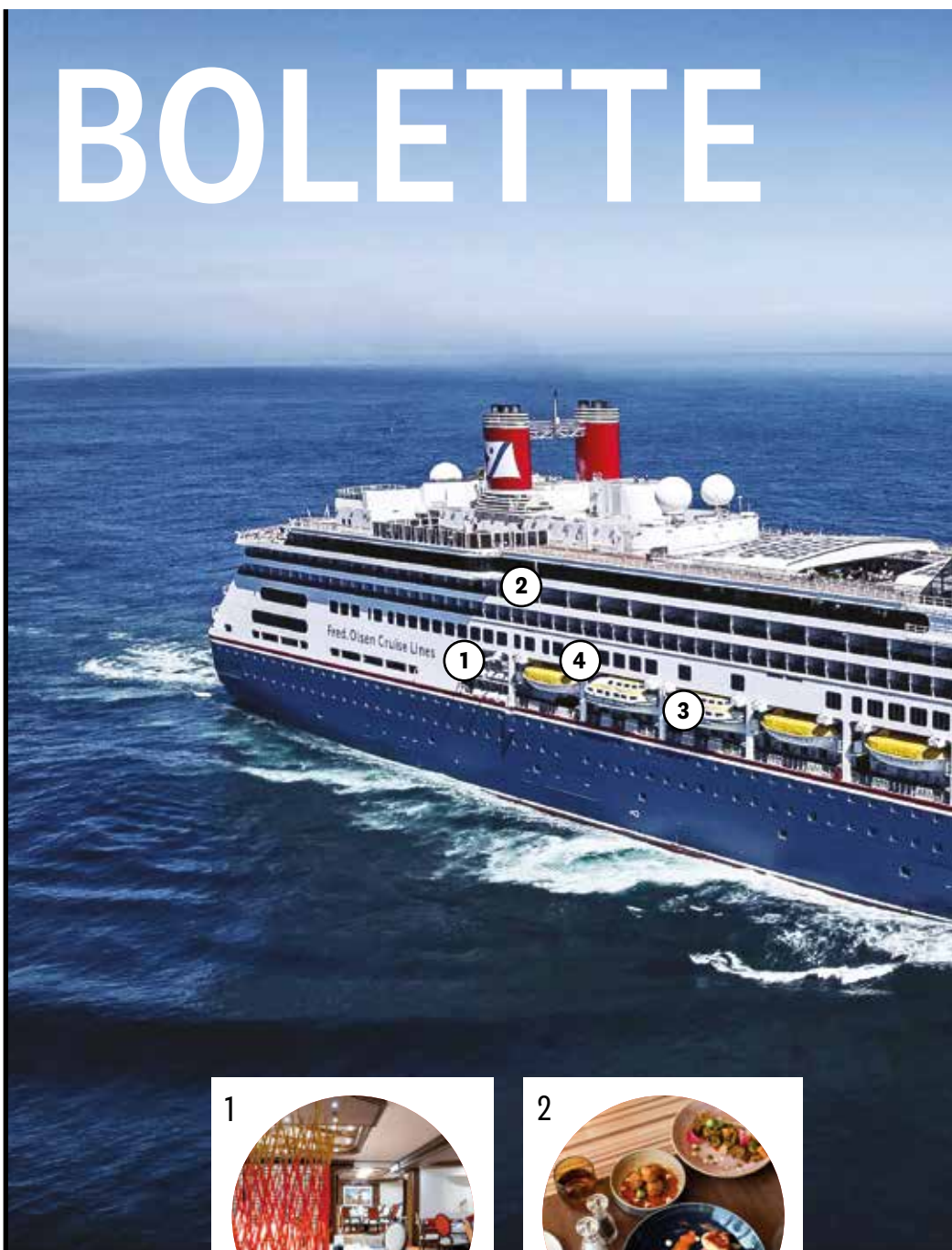
2

RIBS

1

ALL WEATHER POOL

BOLETTE



1



Colours & Tastes

Colours & Tastes restaurant offers modern Asian fusion dishes. The decor is colourful and the food offers a set of new taste experiences. Specialist chefs will create a selection of dishes for guests to share at their table, including spiced grilled meats, seafood, gyozas, dim sum and sushi.

2



Vasco

Named after the famous explorer Vasco Da Gama, Vasco is a fresh and modern take on Indian food. The menu has been inspired by chefs from Goa and focuses on the culinary traditions of that area – a place where the tastes of Europe first met the tropical warmth and spices of western India.



3



The Auditorium

A new venue in the Fred. Olsen fleet, The Auditorium offers an interactive entertainment experience. A team of expert chefs will host live culinary demonstrations and tasting sessions in a well-equipped kitchen, sharing the inspiration and the stories behind the dishes served on board.

4



The Bookmark Café and Lounge

In keeping with the rest of the fleet, *Bolette* also offers The Bookmark Café and Lounge. Here guests can enjoy speciality coffees and teas, as well as a tempting selection of handmade chocolates and truffles. The decor has been designed with elegance and simplicity in mind.

5



Thermal Suite

New for the line is *Bolette's* Thermal Suite, a relaxation centre with the ambience of a traditional Turkish bath. Here guests will find aromatherapy steam rooms to unwind and relax, while a hydrotherapy pool and heated relaxation beds will help to relieve any muscle tension and alleviate sore joints.



Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

EXPERIENCE THE OLSEN WAY

On board *Bolette* in 2022



Since her maiden voyage in August, *Bolette* has claimed her place as our new flagship. With just 690 cabins, and spacious public areas, she fits perfectly within our fleet of smaller ships.

Her faster speeds mean our award-winning Journey Planners can craft itineraries with more ports of call and more time sailing the most scenic routes. Her cabins and public areas have been fully refurbished with the elegant Fred. Olsen design touches and this summer, our guests have been enjoying getting to know one of the newest additions to our fleet.

EXPLORING ANDALUSIA



Sail from Southampton

18th Jan 2022 | 12 nights | *Bolette* | Cruise code T2201A

Prices from **£1,199pp** Plus, £75pp spend & tips covered

HAND-CRAFTED HIGHLIGHTS

Indulge in authentic flavours in their region of origin, from Valencian paella to tapas and sherry from Cádiz

IN SEARCH OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS



Sail from Southampton

30th Jan 2022 | 14 nights | *Bolette* | Cruise code T2202A

Prices from **£1,599pp** Plus, £100pp spend & tips covered

HAND-CRAFTED HIGHLIGHTS

As guests explore Arctic Norway, they will not only get to witness the beauty of the region's wintertime landscapes, but also experience what life is like living amongst them

To book, please call 0800 0355 052 | www.fredolsencruises.com/agent

Terms and conditions apply. From prices shown are based on two sharing an interior Twin Cabin. Prices correct at time of going to print, 15th Oct 2021. Please check before quoting. For full terms and conditions please visit www.fredolsencruises.com



The tidal island of
Le Mont-Saint-Michel

The delights of FRANCE

A cruise on the French waterways takes in scenic sights with plenty of time to savour the country's famous food and wine, writes **Jeannine Williamson**

The Seine, running through the heart of Paris, and the Rhône and Saône, flowing through the Burgundy wine region, are just three of the very different waterways waiting to be explored in France.

Lines have recommenced sailings in this beautiful river cruise region, which is full of appeal, both for repeaters looking for a new experience and for first-timers who may have been to France before and are looking to explore the country from a different perspective.

Viking UK head of sales Neil Barclay says: "The rivers of France transport travellers through such rich culture and tradition that it's obvious why the Rhône, Seine, Dordogne or Gironde itineraries are firm favourites among guests."

"There seems to be a real pent-up demand for travel through France. It is the number-one destination for travellers worldwide for good reason, after all, and I think it is partly due to the contrasting landscapes it offers guests."

"You can glide past scenes from riverside ruins and lush vineyards to elegant cities. French river cruises in particular tap into the growing trend for slow travel and many of the routes take in quieter, smaller towns and villages."

Viking has launched four new Longships that are purpose built to navigate the Seine. The 168-passenger *Viking Kari*, *Radgrid*, *Skaga* and *Fjorgyn* moor at Viking's exclusive docking location in central Paris, just a short walk from the Eiffel Tower.



Viking has a docking location within walking distance of the Eiffel Tower

Selling TIPS

French cruises are a top choice for foodies, and many lines offer special wine-themed sailings.

There's also a wide range of travel options, including self-drive

•

Recommend a Seine sailing to city-break clients as ships always moor overnight in Paris, and pre and post-cruise extensions are available

•

Distances between destinations tend to be short, which means less time sailing and plenty of time to explore ashore

•

Hotel barges on canals and smaller rivers offer a leisurely alternative to mainstream river cruising and can be exclusively chartered by families and groups of friends

Food and drink focus

AmaWaterways has relocated its popular ship *AmaKristina* on the Rhône, the first time one of the line's twin balcony ships – where cabins have both a French and an outside balcony – has sailed in France. There is availability on December's Colours of Provence festive sailings, which provide a different insight into the Christmas river cruise

season usually associated with Germany.

The line has also added a new itinerary, Essence of Burgundy & Provence, sailing from Chalon-sur-Saone to Arles and marking AmaWaterways' debut on the Saone. This cruise will appeal to active clients who can use on-board bikes to pedal along the Via Rhona cycle trail or join organised excursions along the path as the ship sails to the next destination.

Next year will also see AmaWaterways' new Impressions of the Seine & Paris itinerary between Paris and Le Havre, which also includes a three-night stay in St Malo with a visit to the famous tidal island Mont-Saint-Michel.

There are more new itineraries from Tauck, including French Escapade: The Riviera to Paris, featuring two nights in Cannes – with excursion options such as a trip to Nice and Monaco – combined with a nine-night Rhône cruise. On the Savouring France: Paris, Lyon & Provence cruise, Tauck has added a new food-themed Paris walking tour that includes tastings of French specialities.

Food and drink are to the fore with Riviera Travel, where evening menus have been refined to feature what the operator calls local flavours dishes. These are linked to the regions being visited, plus wines showcasing both popular and lesser-known grape varieties, with many sourced from nearby vineyards.

Story time

TV fans will want to take a look at Avalon Waterways' Sex & The City of Lights round-trip Paris sailing on the Seine in July 2022.



Four Viking Longships will specialise in Seine cruises

Part of the line's Storyteller Series, the special guest will be Candace Bushnell, author and creator of *Sex And The City*.

Amadeus River Cruises has upgraded its flexible shore excursions to offer more tours, often with several options to choose from in the morning and afternoon. Agents can book an introductory excursion package for their clients, with five or six selected tours included and the option to buy more, or an unlimited package covering all the excursions on its Seine, Rhône and Saone cruises. This allows clients to create a personalised programme of activities such as a truffle farm tour and tasting in Provence or walking in the footsteps of artists in the painters' village of Auvers-sur-Oise.

A self-drive option is part of Uniworld Boutique River Cruises' no-fly portfolio. On these trips, parking is arranged close to the embarkation point, with train tickets back if necessary, and Uniworld also provides route and accommodation suggestions for passengers who want to make the journey part of their holiday. Fares are £250pp less than



Uniworld brings flavours of France to the table on board SS Joie de Vivre

website prices, so savings can be put to ferry and accommodation costs.

Hotel barges, many of which started life as working vessels, provide a relaxing way to explore the network of French canals and waterways. Converted into floating boutique hotels, they cater for between eight and 22 guests and can be exclusively booked by groups.

Tranquil villages

Europe's largest river cruise operator, CroisiEurope, has increased capacity for UK passengers on its fleet of six hotel barges, which sail through Alsace, Burgundy, Provence, Ile de France, Champagne and the upper Loire.

New for 2023 is a week-long cruise starting from Paris along the Petite-Seine to the Yonne. Highlights include a visit to the tranquil village of Barbizon, which inspired numerous artists and spawned a namesake school of art considered the precursor of Impressionism, and the vast Palace of Fontainebleau, a former royal hunting lodge.

CroisiEurope UK sales director John Fair explains: "Our French hotel barge itineraries

are a fantastic option for families and groups of friends looking for a relaxed and intimate journey through some of the most beautiful and interesting parts of France. With increased capacity, the new itinerary for 2023 and some really competitive pricing, I'm confident that we'll attract even more UK travellers wanting to truly get away from it all."

European Waterways, meanwhile, offers six-night sailings in various regions, including Canal de Briare, France's oldest canal. The 2022 brochure includes more exclusive excursions and experiential outings such as a private tour and tasting at Domaine Chanson, one of southern Burgundy's most historic wine-makers. MD Derek Banks says the move is in response to travellers' demands for more unique and memorable activities.

He explains: "Many of our guests tell us that they've 'been there, done that' aboard the larger river and ocean vessels, and they yearn for the truly unique activities that our smaller, more intimate barge cruises provide." 📍

ITINERARIES

Amadeus River Cruises

- Prices for a seven-night Treasures of Burgundy and Provence itinerary on *Amadeus Provence* start from £1,790pp, departing 5 May 2022.

📍 amadeus-rivercruises.co.uk

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises

- The seven-night Paris and Normandy round-trip sailing on *SS Joie de Vivre* is priced from £2,249pp, departing 20 March 2022.

📍 uniworld.com

CroisiEurope

- The 14-night Burgundy and the Doubs Valley sailing from Dijon to Besancon on the *MS Jeanine* barge is priced from £2,260pp, departing 7 April 2022.

📍 croisieurope.co.uk

All information is subject to change due to current travel restrictions



WE'RE OVER THE MOON TO BE VOTED BEST RIVER CRUISE LINE 2021



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Visit **AVALONWATERWAYS.CO.UK** or **CONTACT YOUR TRAVEL AGENT**

EXPEDITION SPECIAL



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One-to-one with Aurora Expeditions UK's Jos Dewing, a man in the perfect job

ITINERARIES & NEWS

MS Spitsbergen is due to head north in 2022

Hurtigruten Expeditions will take guests to “rarely visited and isolated villages” in Russia next year.

The 17-day White Sea – Norway and Russia Adventure itinerary on *MS Spitsbergen* will depart from Bergen, Norway, on 6 October 2022 and sail north along the Norwegian coast.

Highlights include the Lofoten Islands and the North Cape, the northernmost point of the European mainland.

Hurtigruten Expeditions CEO Asta Lassen said: “Russia’s White Sea is another dream destination our patrons have asked for when we’ve surveyed our previous guests, just like the Galápagos and western Africa.

“Finally, guests will now be able to go to Russia’s best-kept secret, the White Sea, which very few travellers ever get to experience.”



HURTIGRUTEN EXPEDITIONS TO VISIT WHITE SEA

LINDBLAD LAUNCHES NEW SHIP

Lindblad Expeditions has launched its latest cruise ship, *National Geographic Endurance*.

Named in honour of explorer Ernest Shackleton, the 126-guest *National Geographic Endurance* “embodies every innovation and concept Lindblad Expeditions has developed in 50-plus years of pioneering expedition travel”, the line said in a statement.

The line’s founder and co-chair, Sven Lindblad, said: “The energy, the enthusiasm, the dedication that

have been put in to the making of this ship was for one purpose only – to make it possible for you folks to go out and explore the world, and to appreciate the world and all its wonders and then to face together some of the challenges that we inevitably must as it relates to the natural world.”

National Geographic Endurance features the X-Bow, described as “a game-changing design” that is said to provide a smoother sailing experience, as well as use less fuel.



The new ship will put clients in touch with some of the natural wonders of the world

PHOTOGRAPHY: JULIETTE ROWLAND



Venturing back to Antarctica, *Scenic Eclipse* will take its guests into areas unvisited for two years

SCENIC ECLIPSE TO MAKE RETURN

Scenic Eclipse will be one of the first cruise ships to return to Antarctica when it resumes sailing its expedition voyages from 6 January 2022.

The 16-day Antarctica in Depth itinerary will depart from Ushuaia, with guests spending six full days exploring the Antarctic Peninsula.

Included daily excursions will range from cruising among the ice formations in zodiacs, navigating in kayaks or paddleboards among icebergs, and hikes with expert marine biologists.

Scenic Discovery Yachts expedition operations manager Jason Flesher said: "This 2022 season will be like no other, as only a few expedition lines will be operating.

"Antarctica will have had no tourists for nearly two years, so we are expecting unbelievable encounters and experiences with the wildlife. Our expert discovery team members' passion for this part of the world will help bring this unique region to life for our guests."



The Antarctic Peninsula is on some itineraries for Silversea passengers

SILVERSEA REVEALS ANTARCTICA SEASON

Silversea Cruises has confirmed details for its 2021/22 Antarctica season, with three ships departing from Chilean ports.

The line has reached an agreement with Chilean authorities for both *Silver Cloud* and *Silver Wind* to set sail from Punta Arenas, with *Silver Explorer* departing from Puerto Williams this month (November).

Silversea will offer a series of five, six, nine or 10-day explorations. Longer journeys will visit the Antarctic Peninsula, South Shetland Islands, Falkland Islands, Elephant Island and South Georgia.

In addition, itineraries will give guests the opportunity to see the wildlife and icescapes of Antarctica. The line will have experts offering lectures, discussions, hikes and nature walks, all of which are included in the fare.



The second Seabourn ship will take to the water in April 2023

SEABOURN NAMES SECOND SHIP

Seabourn has revealed that its second ultra-luxury purpose-built expedition ship will be called *Seabourn Pursuit*.

Construction for the vessel began in autumn last year. It is scheduled for delivery in February 2023, with its sister ship, *Seabourn Venture*, slated for delivery in March 2022.

Seabourn Pursuit will leave for its inaugural voyage on 4 April 2023, departing from Reykjavik,

capital of Iceland, on its western coast.

Seabourn president Josh Leibowitz said: "*Seabourn Pursuit* will navigate the most unexplored parts of the world in the highest level of comfort, safety and environmental protection available for the luxury traveller.

"We are defining an entirely new category of expedition travel with *Seabourn Pursuit* and its sister ship, *Seabourn Venture*."

Worldwide cultural expedition leaders

For 70 years Swan Hellenic has been known for creating unique, cultural expedition cruises for those who want to explore more and dive a little deeper.

We are proud to launch three new, state-of-the-art boutique expedition ships. Let us take you to places where the secrets of the earth still hold untold wonders. From the vast, polar regions to the Russian Far East and beyond, there is so much to explore. With us you will see what others don't.

**TO DISCOVER MORE
VISIT SWANHELLENIC.COM
OR CALL 020 7846 0271**



A NEW ERA

Looking ahead to the launch of the line's expedition brand, Viking UK head of sales **Neil Barclay** reveals what it will offer guests

The launch of Viking Expeditions will be a hugely exciting moment for Viking next year, especially as it marks our 25th anniversary. Viking was founded in 1997 with four river ships and we launched ocean cruises in 2015, so it feels like the start of another new era for the brand.

Our new expedition ship, the Polar Class 6 *Viking Octantis*, will set sail in January, followed by her sister ship, *Viking Polaris*, in the summer. Each ship will host a maximum of 378 guests in 189 staterooms, making them well placed to meet the current demand for small-ship cruising.

The ships are designed by the same experienced nautical architects and engineers who designed Viking ocean ships but are optimally sized and built for expeditions. They are small enough to navigate remote polar regions and the St Lawrence River, which connects the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean, while

being large enough to provide superior handling and stability in the roughest seas.

Curious explorers

Our guests are curious people who like to expand their world view through travel and these new expedition itineraries will allow them to take this spirit of exploration one step further.

The ships will allow guests to explore the most remote locations in the world and offer a whole new level of onshore experiences. These excursions will be enhanced by the work of our research partners and the Viking resident scientists who will be on board every sailing working on a variety of studies – the expedition ships are effectively working research vessels.

The research programme has been developed in consultation with Cambridge University and is designed to support a broad range of research activities. Guests will have supervised access to The Laboratory, which is in a glass-enclosed mezzanine, and will

be able to learn from and participate in activities with scientists undertaking primary research – an experience unique to Viking.

“Our guests will be able to learn from scientists undertaking primary research”



Viking's ships will offer stunning views on every itinerary

Selling points

Something we are particularly proud of is the industry firsts that the ships offer – these set us far apart from other expedition lines in the market and offer great selling points for agents.

The Hangar is one industry first – it is an enclosed, in-ship marina that permits the launch of small excursion craft through the ship's multiple shell doors.

We will have two yellow submarines on each ship – a nod to our chairman's love of The Beatles – and these comfortably accommodate six guests and a pilot. They will offer an incomparable undersea experience.

We have also created the world's most advanced venue for learning at sea with The Aula, a stunning panoramic auditorium at the stern. The Aula will offer a dynamic venue for lectures and entertainment to happen.

Another point of difference is that all staterooms on board *Viking Octantis* and *Viking Polaris* feature a Nordic balcony, a sunroom that converts into an al fresco viewing platform. The floor-to-ceiling, distortion-free glass on the very outside of the ship lets guests take in the views, while keeping the elements out.

Expedition-style voyages are an exciting and fast-growing sector so it's great to see Viking become a part of it. 🌐



NEIL BARCLAY
VIKING UK HEAD OF SALES

Sustainable IMMERSION

In an exclusive interview, Hurtigruten Expeditions UK head of sales **Mark Walter** explains how the line continues to take guests deeper into destinations while still protecting the environment

What's new for Hurtigruten Expeditions?

We have introduced a wide range of new and exciting destinations that adventurers can visit in 2022, such as Russia, the Galápagos Islands, and Cape Verde. We'll also be the first-ever expedition cruise company to venture to Bissagos – an archipelago of 88 islands and home to hippos, dolphins, crocodiles, sea turtles, manatees, and 500 species of birds.

As world leaders in expedition cruising, we want to offer our guests more opportunities to visit lesser-known

destinations responsibly. Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal are just some of the new places we're offering guests, and our recently launched departures from Dover give UK passengers a no-fly option for experiencing Norway all year round.

How are you working with the travel trade in the present climate?

We launched a new B2B agent portal in June offering agents a range of features such as live availability, real-time pricing, instant booking capabilities, training courses and customisable marketing materials. We've just launched a brand-new portal incentive whereby agents can earn up to £75-worth of Love2Shop vouchers by completing our training and then making bookings through the portal.

How do you intend to grow and evolve the brand over the coming years?

Our ambition is to become the world leader in exploration travel. Not only will we take guests to some of the lesser-explored parts of the world, but our expert-led expedition team will truly bring the experience of the destinations to life through activities and lectures

on board, as well as through excursions.

Sustainability is at the heart of what we do, and we are always looking at new initiatives and partnerships to help support the environment and the local communities we operate in. We currently have three hybrid ships in operation, and our entire fleet runs on biofuel.

What type of experience can guests expect on board?

Our guests can expect an authentic and immersive experience where they can learn something new from our knowledgeable expedition team. The Science Centre is the hub of all our ships. Guests can participate in citizen science projects or join the expedition team to learn about the local wildlife, as well as the culture and history of the destinations visited. Excursions range from exploring coastline towns to camping in Antarctica. We want the experience itself to be informal and encourage guests to explore as much as they want for a memorable trip.

As for itineraries, what exciting updates can you share with travel agents?

We are sailing to several exciting new destinations in 2022 on itineraries packed



**MARK
WALTER**

UK HEAD OF SALES
HURTIGRUTEN EXPEDITIONS





Roald Amundsen is a hybrid-powered cruise ship



Natural wonders such as the Northern Lights are a huge draw in Hurtigruten's destinations

“We’re always looking at new initiatives to help support the environment and the local communities we operate in”

with adventure to appeal to both existing and new guests. Each destination has something unique and special to offer our passengers. Bissagos offers distinct wildlife while the capital cities of Dakar and Banjul invite travellers the chance to experience the culture of western Africa. In the Galápagos Islands, guests can follow in the footsteps of Darwin, exploring with our expedition team the local wildlife and other natural wonders.

How do you ensure guests are fully immersed in the destinations you visit?

Our expedition team help enhance the overall experience and take the sailing to a whole new level. Team members come from all over the world and are experts within their field, ranging from biology and astronomy to ornithology and they

have a treasure trove of fascinating facts and stories to share.

We also have a variety of activities on board and ashore for our guests to get involved with, to make a difference to the places they visit. A great example of this is marine conservation body ORCA, which engages guests on board to help address the decline in marine life in UK and European waters.

How are you protecting the environments you visit and what sustainability measures do you have in place on your ships?

We have three hybrid-powered ships featuring the latest technology, which means we have the most advanced fleet of expedition ships the travel industry has yet seen. We’ve also implemented other sustainability initiatives including a voluntary ban – more than a decade ago – on heavy fuel oil, investing in fuel alternatives including using rotten fish to power our ships, and we were the first cruise company to remove single-use plastic from our entire fleet, in 2018. We respect and protect our destinations and we invite our guests to visit the most spectacular nature and wildlife on our planet, but in a responsible way. 🌱



Marine life is one of the main attractions for Hurtigruten guests

Winter 2021/22

READY FOR A NORTHERN LIGHTS ADVENTURE?

Northern Lights and Fjords Expedition Cruise from Dover

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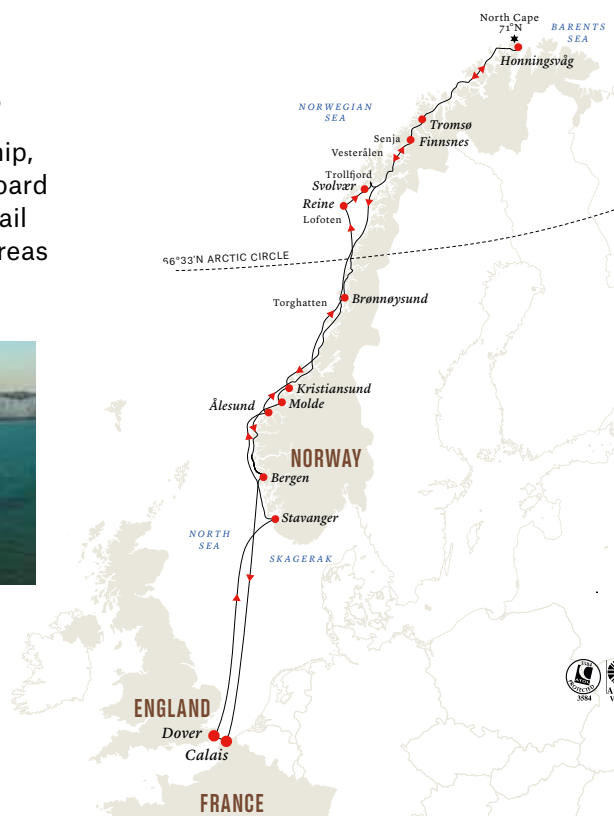
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The Hokkaido flower fields are one of the surprising finds in a tour of Japan's more outlying destinations



Into the **WILD**

With an increasing number of intrepid holidaymakers looking for an experience that will take them to the furthest-flung corners of the earth, the expedition cruise market is awash with exciting possibilities, as **Colette Doyle** discovers



Alaska's creatures come in many different forms, from marine life to the magnificent bald eagle



“With more clients looking to tick off their post-lockdown wishlist, agents will see more expedition enquiries”

these sailings or to start capturing a growing new market.

“With more people looking to tick off their post-lockdown wishlist, agents should expect more expedition cruise-related enquiries, meaning now is the ideal time to familiarise yourself with everything they have to offer.”

Below, we take a look at some of the main regions that offer the opportunity of expedition itineraries and hear from seasoned specialist Edwina Lonsdale, MD of Mundy Cruising, who offers some pertinent advice.

Alaska

The 49th US state offers incredible scenery and, with its glacier-formed fjords, millions of acres of pristine parkland and ice-age glaciers, wildlife and watersports abound here. In the capital, Juneau, guests can take part in a dogsled ride or catch a glimpse of hump-backed whales, while in Ketchikan a trip by seaplane to the Misty Fjords National Monument is a must.

At Sitka, guests can experience wildlife such as the Alaska coastal brown bear and black-tail deer; for fauna of a different kind, the Sealife Centre at Seward is the

state's leading aquarium as well as an ocean wildlife rehabilitation centre.

TOP TIP: Make sure clients understand the difference between a classic, large-ship Alaska cruise and an expedition cruise; expedition cruising is not for everyone.

SAMPLE ITINERARY: Hurtigruten has a 12-night cruise on *MS Kong Harald*, departing 20 March 2023. Prices start from £2,829pp.

The Amazon

Deep in South America and flowing through Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Brazil, the Amazon is the largest river in the world in terms of its volume of water, as well as one of the longest.

The Amazon basin is an area of amazingly unique biodiversity, home to some 10 per cent of all the world's known animal species, plus 40,000 plant species, 3,000 freshwater fish species, and more than 370 types of reptile – so there's always something remarkable to see. On board a cruise here, the expedition team will plan itineraries for

Cruise industry body CLIA is well known for having its finger on the pulse of the cruise sector, so when it launched a brand-new guide to expedition cruising in April this year, it was clearly a nod to the growing popularity of that type of itinerary. The guide outlines the key aspects of an expedition cruise, such as ship specifics, on-board activities, entertainment and shore excursions, and the main differences between expeditions and ocean or river cruising.

“Expedition sailings are a fantastic way to explore off-the-beaten track destinations and we're expecting demand to increase as international travel continues to open up,” says CLIA UK & Ireland MD Andy Harmer. “Our guide is intended to be a one-stop-shop for agents who are looking either to continue selling



product variety. Make sure you can differentiate the various offerings and how they translate into a distinctly different experience for clients.

SAMPLE ITINERARY: Ponant's new ship *Le Commandant Charcot* departs 30 October 2022 for a 14-night itinerary. Cruise-only prices from £17,187pp; flights and transfers available on request.

Arctic Circle

Polar bears tend to be a top draw for many cruise passengers in this vast icy wilderness, which covers the northern regions of Norway, as well as the Svalbard archipelago and parts of Sweden, Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Canada, Russia and the US. Other species found here include whales, seals, walruses, Arctic foxes, musk oxen and reindeer. Guests can also visit the indigenous Inuit tribes who still inhabit settlements in Greenland, Canada and Alaska.

Guests will have a choice of such thrilling excursions as a helicopter trip over the cascading waterfalls of the Norwegian fjords, kayaking between enormous floating icebergs in Svalbard and discovering the local marine life during a submarine dive in Greenland.

TOP TIP: There are so many different Arctic itineraries, from Svalbard to the Northeast Passage and from Greenland to the Northwest Passage. Spitsbergen is probably best for a first-time visitor.

How to sell EXPEDITION ITINERARIES

Most people have an expedition cruise on their wishlist, even if they don't realise it. Their once-in-a-lifetime must-do could be seeing a polar bear in the wild, or watching emperor penguins speed-launch out of the water. Identify the wish and a sale will be forthcoming

•
Adventurous travellers are convinced that a cruise is not for them, but start talking to them about expedition destinations they will visit on small ships because it is the only way to get there, and all that anti-cruise prejudice falls away

•
Reaching an expedition ship can be complicated and time-consuming, so enhance the trip of a lifetime with a land add-on – for example combining the Galápagos with Peru and a trip to Machu Picchu

•
With thanks to Mundy Cruising

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zodiac and kayak exploration, as well as treks and visits to myriad places and people of interest.

TOP TIP: The lower stretches of the Amazon as far as Manaus can be up to six miles wide. This is a very different experience from exploring the tributaries of the Upper Amazon – so make sure to advise clients accordingly.

SAMPLE ITINERARY: Seabourn has an eight-night fly-cruise on *Venture*, departing 8 April 2023. Fly-cruise prices from £8,993pp.

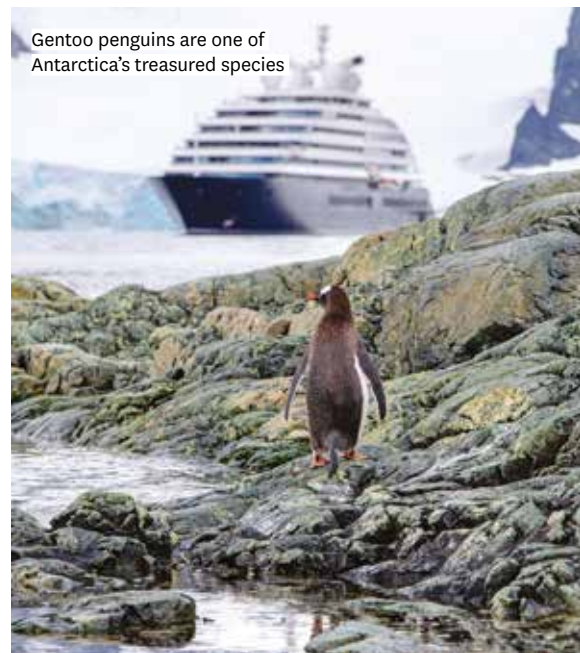
Antarctica

The White Continent continues to fascinate travellers in search of the ultimate adventure. Guests can hope to spot both emperor and gentoo penguins in their natural habitat, as well as humpback whales and Weddell seals.

There are numerous activities available, including kayaking, hiking and snowshoeing, plus polar swimming. Cruise lines that come here usually offer lectures hosted by expert naturalist guides on a range of fascinating topics, such as the region's history, geopolitics, the great explorers, climate change and environmental protection.

TOP TIP: Even within the niche that is expedition cruising, there is a lot of

Gentoo penguins are one of Antarctica's treasured species



SAMPLE ITINERARY: *Scenic Eclipse* departs 19 June 2023 for a 14-night Arctic adventure. Fly-cruise prices start from £12,430pp.

Asia

With such diverse influences at play in Asia, a cruise has to be the best way to discover the shorelines of India, China and Sri Lanka, or the islands of Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan.

There are numerous exciting excursions available in the region: Bali, for instance, offers abundant marine life, while on Java the active volcano Mount Bromo rises majestically in a lunar-like landscape.

Another way to experience the region is via the mighty Mekong, which runs through China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Here travellers can visit ancient temples, lush landscapes and cities where imperial and colonial legacies intertwine.

Those looking for a contrast to Japan's neon-fuelled, futuristic capital, Tokyo, should consider sailing up the east coast to explore the wild remote nature of Hokkaido, considered the country's last frontier. Hokkaido offers an unspoiled island environment, with mountains, national parks, lakes and rivers, alongside Japan's largest marshland. A whole host of wild birds and spotted seals inhabit the neighbouring oceans.

TOP TIP: With culture, plentiful wildlife and marine life, as well as remote river cruises, Asia has so much to offer. The snorkelling and diving are particularly fabulous within the Western Pacific's Coral Triangle. Travelling to and from the region can often be tricky, so make sure clients understand the importance of using a cruise specialist.

SAMPLE ITINERARY: Ponant will operate a 12-night cruise on 4 April 2022, with prices from £7,000pp.

Australasia

Australia and New Zealand make up a region of extremes: flowing fjords and thundering waterfalls mingle with sandy beaches and abundant wildlife, while



The Kimberley region is home to incredible scenery

some of the world's oldest landscapes sit alongside some of the youngest urban hubs.

In terms of cruise itineraries, the Kimberley region, in Australia's rugged northwest, is home to incredible scenery and a fascinating Aboriginal culture. Set sail from Wyndham, a former gold rush town surrounded by mangrove swamps and mudflats, and stop off at intriguing ports of call such as the Lacepede Islands. Located just off the coast, this is an important breeding area for sea birds and offers a spectacular location for bird watching.

The Hunter River, meanwhile, is home to mudskippers, fiddler crabs and the saltwater crocodile – the most aggressive species of its kind known to man. Those looking for a James Bond-style adventure should head to Naturalist Island, where a stunning stretch of beach makes a perfect landing site for small helicopters. These can pick up visitors wishing to explore some of the Kimberley's vast interior. One of the highlights is the Mitchell Falls: it makes an eye-catching sight, with four tiers of waterfalls plunging into deep pools below.

TOP TIP: The Kimberley is on every Australian's wishlist, but in the UK many guests may not even be aware of it. It is a great add-on to a trip to visit friends and relatives, or for second-time visitors.

SAMPLE ITINERARY: Silversea's *Silver Explorer* has a 10-night itinerary departing 20 July 2023. Fly-cruise prices start from £8,316pp.

Galápagos

For cruise lovers looking to follow in the footsteps of Charles Darwin, the Galápagos Islands are a must-see destination. Here, travellers will come eye to eye with a range of amazing beasts, as well as exotic landscapes, all adding up to a once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

There are numerous points of interest, but Santa Cruz is the destination's main tourism hub. A zodiac ride will take guests to Black Turtle Cove, a great place to discover sea turtles, several species of ray – and even sharks. Bartolome is a popular spot for taking fine panoramic photos of the surrounding area. From the top of the hill, guests can look down upon penguins and numerous other creatures in the waters below.

Punta Espinoza features extraordinary black lava rocks and hosts the largest colony of marine iguanas, along with sealions and flightless cormorants – one of the creatures that contributed to the formation of Darwin's famed theory of evolution. 🐢

TOP TIP: Getting to the Galápagos requires an overnight stopover in Quito, so suggest a longer stay in Ecuador prior to the cruise, or alternatively a Peru land programme.

SAMPLE ITINERARY: *Celebrity Flora's* seven-night Galápagos cruise departs 23 September 2022. Cruise-only prices from £4,616pp; flights and transfers available on request.

All itineraries courtesy of Panache Cruises; panachecruises.com, 0161 516 6423



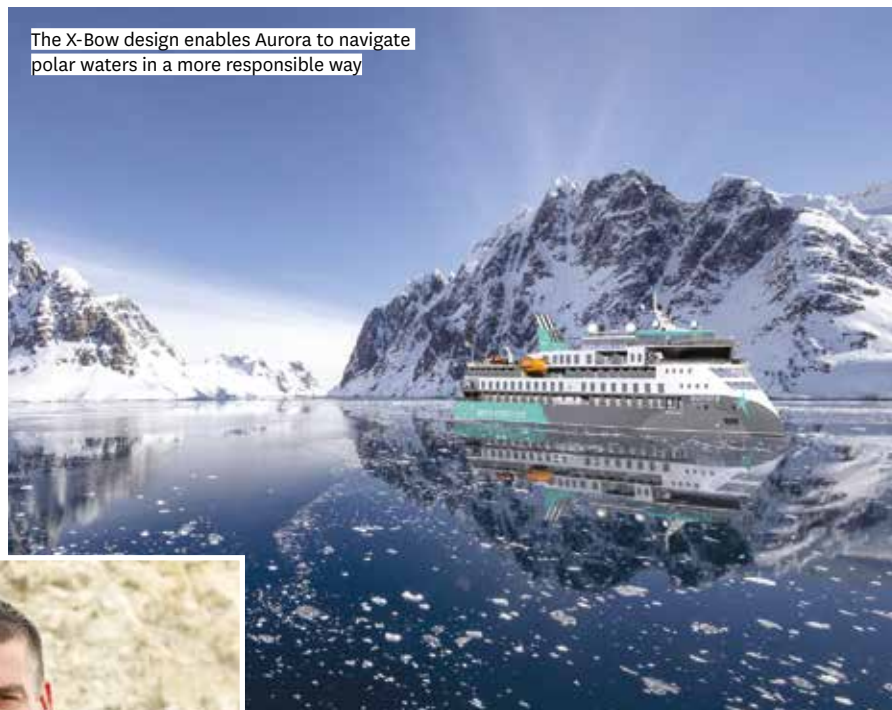
A NATURAL FIT

In June this year, **Jos Dewing** was appointed Aurora Expeditions' first UK MD. He explains why his new role ticks all the right boxes

Aboard Aurora's second ship, *Sylvia Earle*, will be a Science Centre for use by passengers as well as experts

Expedition interview

The X-Bow design enables Aurora to navigate polar waters in a more responsible way



Jos Dewing, managing director UK, says his job suits him perfectly

You joined the company earlier this year. What attracted you to the role?

I've got quite an interesting background – I've run a cruise specialist travel agency as well as a cruise line, so I've kind of worked on both sides of the fence. Back when I was MD of a cruise agency, I was very interested in expedition cruising, and Aurora Expeditions was always the ultimate expedition product for me – it really ticked all the boxes. The opportunity to come in and lead the UK operation... I felt I had a bit of a calling to the product and it was quite a magical moment.

You've been in post a few short months – has anything about the job surprised you?

I have to say, I thought I knew everything – not meaning to sound arrogant – about expedition cruising, but this has taught me that when selling products based on brochures and so on, there's a part of it that can't be seen. When you start talking to the staff, the expedition team, looking at

testimonials and really get immersed with the product itself... there's just so much more to expedition than I understood before. It's not just a transaction

“Guests will learn about the planet in a way they can't get anywhere else”

to go to an amazing destination and have a great holiday – it's more than that. It's the passion that flows through this business and the expertise and the desire to change people's lives with travel experiences. It really is something else.

Is that a key point of difference for agents – expedition cruising is about changing lives?

Phrases such as 'life changing', or 'off the beaten track', 'unique, authentic' – they need qualification because they are easy things to say but there are qualities needed to deliver them. I've spoken to enough people with first-hand experience to know that these are life-changing trips. Guests will go on them and learn about the planet in a way they can't get from anything else.

On a personal level, what are your objectives at Aurora?

My dad was a professional scuba diver and that meant as a family we had a real sense of nature, marine life welfare, sustainability and so on. That's how I was raised, so the whole sustainability angle with Aurora is incredibly authentic and it's important to me.

The ships – *Greg Mortimer* and *Sylvia Earle*, with their X-Bow design – have been designed with expedition cruising and the environment in mind. They are exactly what's needed in this day and age. We also have citizen science programmes to educate our guests and teach them about expedition travel, the environment, and the destinations they're visiting.

Personally, the environment is very important to me and it will also be important to travel agents and travellers in the future. Thinking about the conversations I have with agent partners and guests, sustainability and the environment are up there with everything else.



Brown bears are one of the possible sightings on the Kuril Islands in the northern Pacific

PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER JULIF

“We’re really hoping to run fam trips next year – the more agents on board, the better”

What are your challenges moving forward?

The big challenge has been Covid-19, but the industry has done an awful lot of work behind the scenes with regards to protocols, health and safety, and rapid response measures. There’s an easing now, with updates to the red list meaning our Antarctica programme in early 2022 is going ahead – this is huge for us. We’re looking forward to operating again.

It’s challenging in any operation to differentiate the brand and to make sure travel agent partners understand the product against others in the market. The fortunate thing for me is that we have some unique selling points that are well known to many polar experts, and certain specialist partners, but perhaps not so well known to others. We have an incredible activity programme – the polar plunge, snorkelling, kayaks – and a three-day trek across South Georgia in the footsteps of Ernest Shackleton, for example.

There’s a great spirit of Australian camaraderie in the business and it flows through down to the guests and the expedition team. The expedition DNA really runs through the business, and

that makes it unique. Some companies have developed their expedition product as demand has increased, but Aurora has evolved from a real expeditioner – Greg Mortimer himself – and it’s evolved organically over 30 years into the company it is today.

How is work progressing on your new ship, *Sylvia Earle*?

She’s in the shipyard and getting ready to go. We’re incredibly excited about her launch next year. At the moment, we’re using our other ship, the *Greg Mortimer*, to operate the Antarctica season, which will begin on 8 January. *Sylvia Earle* will be joining later in 2022. We’ll be announcing full details of the inaugural celebrations in due course – everyone is raring to go.

What can agents expect for later next year and also for 2023?

First is the Antarctic season next year, early season, which we’re now committed to operate. We’re really hoping there’ll be some opportunities to bring agents on board and run fam trips – the more agents we can bring on board, the better. The ships will be in the Northern European area in summer 2022 so we’ll have more chances for agents to visit. The ships are exploring Alaska, the

Northwest Passage, the Russian Far East, Aleutian Islands, Wrangel Island, Kuril Islands – it’s a diverse programme. There’s something for everyone – even for those guests who are seasoned explorers, there’s plenty going on to pique their interest.

What’s the future for expedition cruising?

Before the pandemic, expedition was by far the fastest growing area of the industry in terms of new ships, and it’ll be the same coming out of the pandemic. People’s wanderlust has increased. The market will grow and, of course, everyone has a different way of doing it and approaching it. Aurora is really focused on the authentic, beyond-expectations, small-ship experience. It is very much about the activities and the close-to-nature experiences, as well as the educational opportunities.

Our itineraries can be very agile, too. We won’t have a fixed itinerary; if there’s an opportunity for the ship to go somewhere else, whether it’s to see a polar bear or a pod of whales or whatever, the ship will adjust course. Other lines will grow in their own areas – ours is very much the classic, authentic, small-ship expedition line. 🐻

Guests can travel on a zodiac to observe wildlife on Wrangel Island





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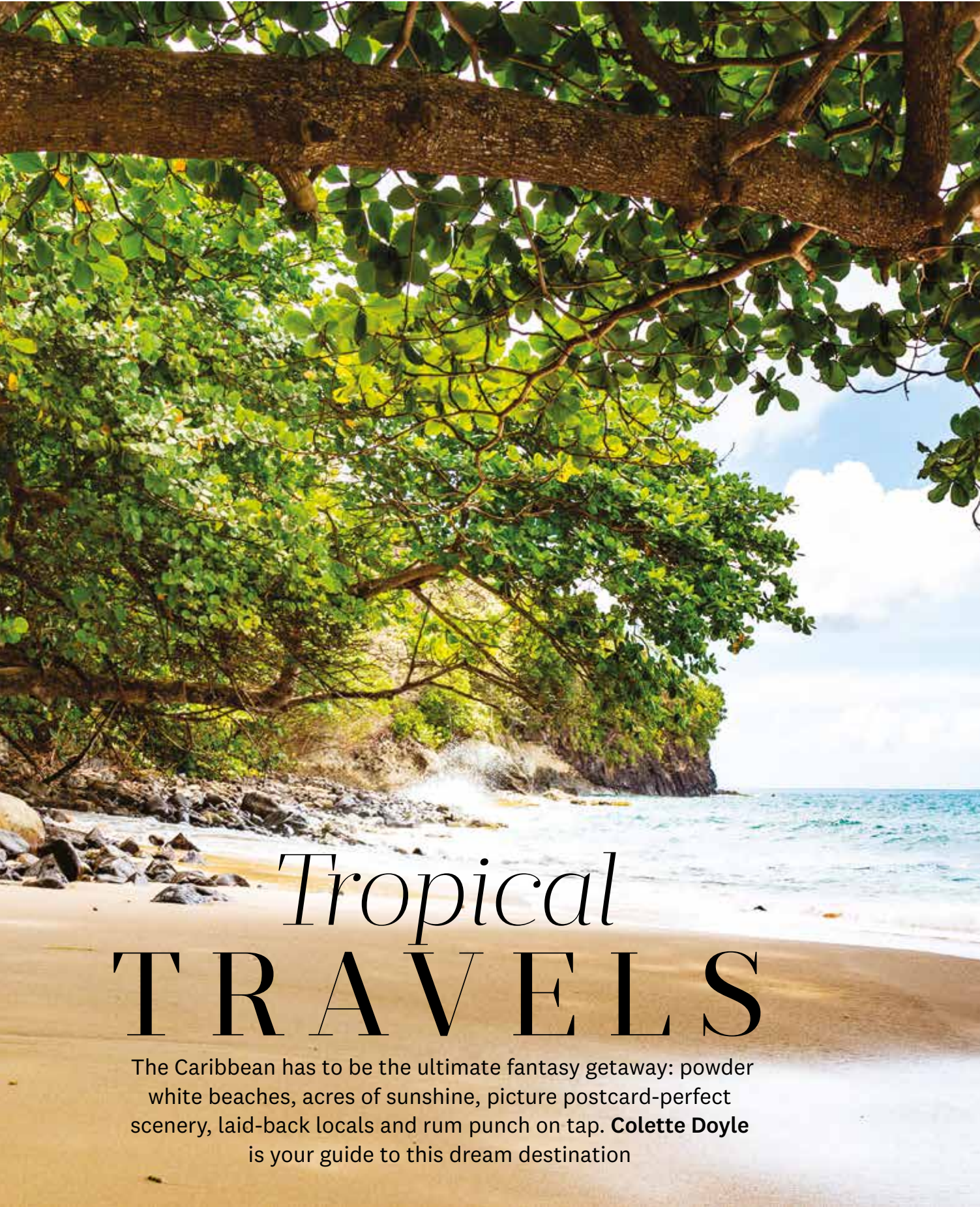
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Tropical TRAVELS

The Caribbean has to be the ultimate fantasy getaway: powder white beaches, acres of sunshine, picture postcard-perfect scenery, laid-back locals and rum punch on tap. **Colette Doyle** is your guide to this dream destination



Warm beaches put St Lucia on the map for many visitors

The Caribbean is a perennially popular choice with British cruisers – little wonder given the glorious weather and the way travellers can so easily visit a number of incredible destinations during their time aboard. As Celebrity Cruises puts it, some of the world's most beautiful beaches and amazing natural wonders can be found in the region.

Guests sailing to the islands can experience real adventure, exploring tropical fish in the Great Maya coral reef, which runs for more than 700 miles along the eastern coasts of Mexico, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras, climbing waterfalls to descend into caves, or discovering ultimate relaxation on serene and secluded beaches. It's also a foodie's heaven, with specialties like mahi-mahi, grouper, kingfish, red and yellowtail snapper, and conch from the iconic shell.

Bolsover Cruise Club managing director Michael Wilson says: "The Caribbean is just the ultimate escape, as much from the British winter weather as from the stresses of day-to-day life at home. The beaches are faultless, the locals are so incredibly friendly, the activities on offer cater to everyone, plus there's just a general sense of being totally carefree that we all crave from a holiday."

He continues: "The Caribbean is hard to beat in terms of winter sun, and so many cruises visiting the region means there is so much choice, whether you want unbeatable P&O Cruises service in the likes of Barbados and Antigua, or six-star luxury on lesser-visited islands such as Jost Van Dyke with a cruise line like SeaDream Yacht Club."



The Caribbean has almost countless islands – it's up to you to help guests find their favourite

To clients wanting the best of both worlds, agents can offer a holiday that starts in a hotel and finishes sailing round the islands

Paradise awaits

In terms of popular ports of call in the region, Marella Cruises highlights its Paradise Islands itinerary, which calls at Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, St Maarten, St Kitts and Antigua. For agents with clients wanting the best of both worlds, Marella offers a cruise & stay in Barbados, whereby passengers can start their holiday in a hotel and finish it sailing round the islands.

Celebrity Cruises notes that Cozumel in Mexico is a stunning destination that offers plenty for travellers both above and below the shoreline. Amid the largest coral reef in

the West, this Caribbean island is an experience-seeker's dream, with angling, diving and snorkelling – all popular activities for discovering the beauty under the wonderful blue waters.

Another amazing treasure of the Caribbean is Philipsburg, the capital of the Dutch side, St Maarten. This island provides a unique cultural experience, combining French and Dutch flavours as holidaymakers travel from its northern to its southern boundaries. Clients are sure to love hopping between the two to explore the heritage and cuisine of both cultures.

Extravagant excursions

Passengers cruising the Caribbean are spoilt for choice when it comes to excursions. In the eastern Caribbean Marella suggests guests might enjoy a tree-top canopy adventure, or sail past the famous Pitons in St Lucia (two mountainous volcanic plugs that have become eye-catching landmarks), go river-tubing in Grenada, or kayaking and snorkelling with stingrays in Antigua.

In the western Caribbean, meanwhile, guests can visit Mayan ruins in Mexico, take an aerial tram through the Veragua rainforest in Costa



The Rooftop Garden on board
Celebrity Beyond

Rica, or snorkel in the clear blue waters of Roatán in Honduras.

Celebrity describes its shore excursions in the region as “a fusion of pristine beaches, cultural delights and delicious delicacies, all set against the captivating natural beauty of the islands”. Many locations naturally have excellent watersports, including snorkelling in calm, crystal-clear waters, exploring protected coral reefs and diving with stingrays, tropical fish and green sea turtles.

The cruise line’s top picks for excursions include the Chichen Itza ruins in Cozumel: home to the great Mayan empire, it extends across six square miles and includes several hundred magnificent buildings. Guests will surely be fascinated to explore this legendary wonder of the world, taking in the great pyramid of Kulkulkan, an ancient skull rack known as a tzompantli, the temple of Venus and the temple of Warriors, as well as the largest and best-preserved Mayan ball court.

Another unforgettable excursion offered by Celebrity is a day out at Turtle Bay near



Marella Discovery 2 takes in some
of the region’s most popular ports

Charlotte Amalie, the capital of the island of St Thomas, sailing aboard a classic pirate schooner or modern catamaran. Guests can take in the stunning island views as the captain anchors in this beautiful blue bay off Buck Island. Then it’s time to snorkel, swim, and explore an exciting underwater world of coral formations and colourful tropical fish.

“The beauty of the Caribbean is that shore excursions cater for everyone,” says Bolsover’s Wilson. “Whether you’re holidaying with kids, like to get out there hiking, or are reluctant to venture far from a beach, the Caribbean has something for you.

“The snorkelling is out of this world, those qualified can scuba dive in some of the best locations on earth, hikes will take you through rainforest to the top of mountain reaches, or hidden coves, and boat trips range from boozy rum-fuelled afternoons to sunset sailings. As for beaches, some Caribbean islands have one for every day of the year, so you’ll never struggle to find one you like.”

Selling TIPS

With hundreds of islands, such as Aruba, Anguilla, St Bart’s and Turks & Caicos, as well as the eastern islands of Dominica, Grenada, St Vincent and St Lucia, it’s important to highlight to clients how truly unique each one is

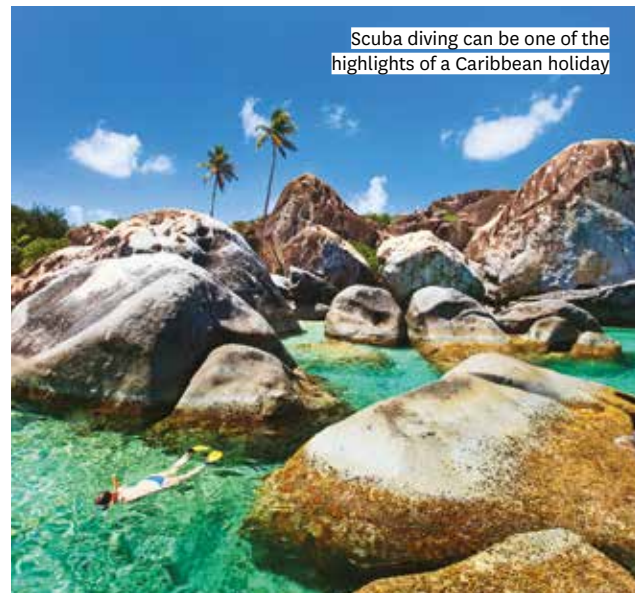
A general tip for cruising in the Caribbean is to bear in mind the weather; though generally good all year round, with temperatures between 24° and 29°C, December to April is the Caribbean’s high season, with more sunny days and less rain on average than at other times of the year

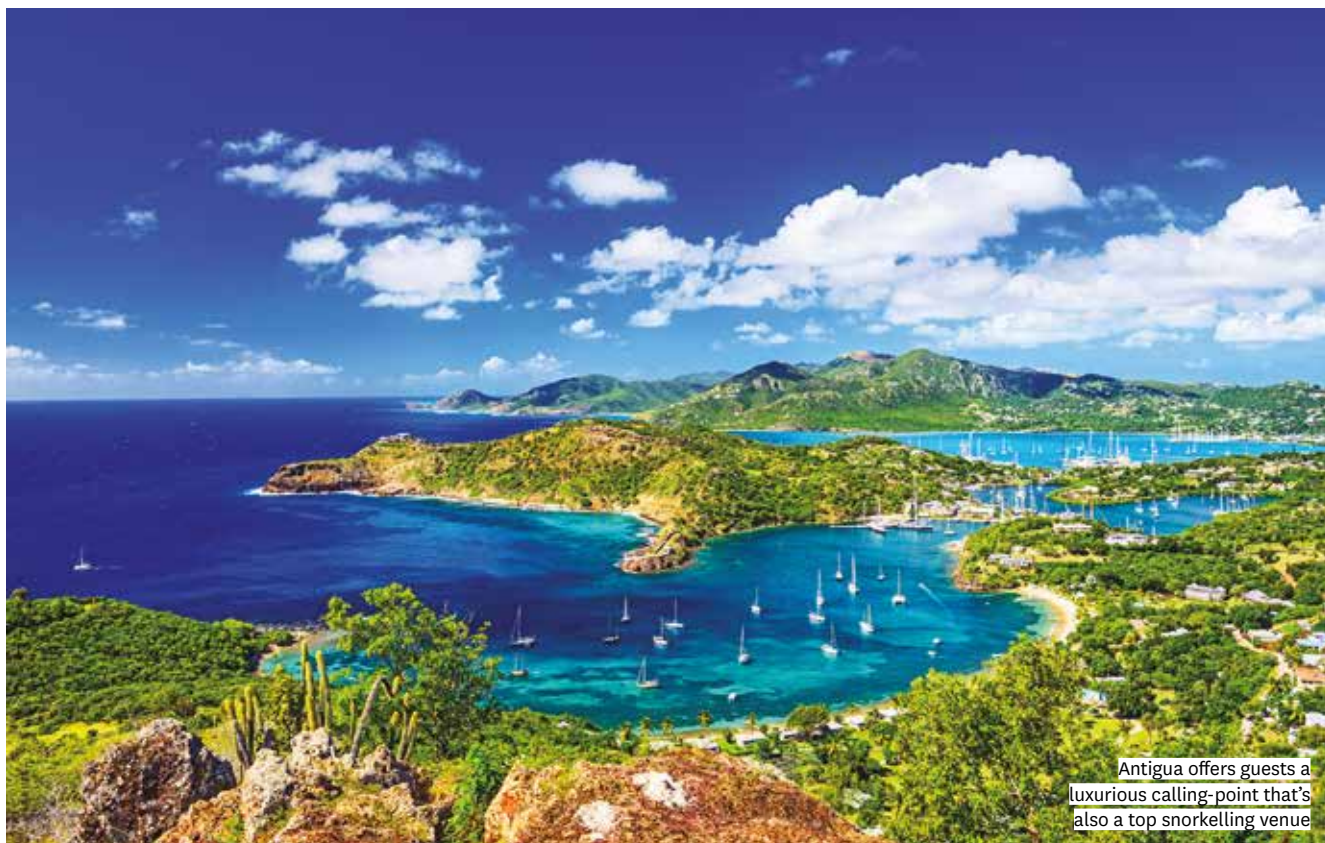
The eastern Caribbean includes the British Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Grand Turk. These islands are relatively close together, which means there are fewer sea days and longer stops in port.

Western Caribbean itineraries may include Cozumel and other Mexican ports, as well as the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica and Jamaica

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Scuba diving can be one of the
highlights of a Caribbean holiday





Antigua offers guests a luxurious calling-point that's also a top snorkelling venue

ITINERARIES

P&O Cruises

• Fly-cruise prices for a 15-night cruise aboard *Arvia*, departing 18 March 2023, start from £1,088pp. Destinations include Barbados, St Lucia, Martinique, St Kitts, and other islands.

🔗 [pocruises.com](https://www.pocruises.com)

Celebrity Cruises

• Guests can cruise on *Celebrity Apex* on a nine-night Key West, Belize & Grand Cayman voyage, departing 6 January 2023. Prices from £1,956pp.

🔗 [celebritycruises.com](https://www.celebritycruises.com)

Royal Caribbean International

• *Harmony of the Seas* will depart on 9 April 2022 for an Eastern Caribbean & Perfect Day itinerary. Prices for the nine-night cruise start at £1,367pp.

🔗 [royalcaribbean.com](https://www.royalcaribbean.com)

A Caribbean tonic

New for the region's winter season 2022/23 is a selection of itineraries from Marella, with ports of call including the US Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico on sailings out of Barbados. Cruises from Jamaica on *Discovery 2* in the same period cover the western Caribbean, with itineraries including an overnight call in Havana and the more untouched central Caribbean region, visiting Panama, Colombia and Costa Rica.

Meanwhile, *Celebrity Beyond*, which will sail her maiden voyage from Southampton on 27 April next year, is heading to the Caribbean in autumn 2022 and spring 2023. The newest ship to join the ground-breaking Edge series, *Celebrity Beyond* will "allow travellers to experience the Caribbean like never before", according to the cruise line. Guests can soak up the sun and take in the spectacular sunsets with the innovative outward-facing design and newly expanded open-air spaces.

Passengers can experience the exciting destinations on the horizon from the two-storey Sunset Bar imagined by world-famous designer Nate Berkus. There's also a redesigned Rooftop Garden, created by the renowned Kelly Hoppen, which allows guests views of the water from deck 15.

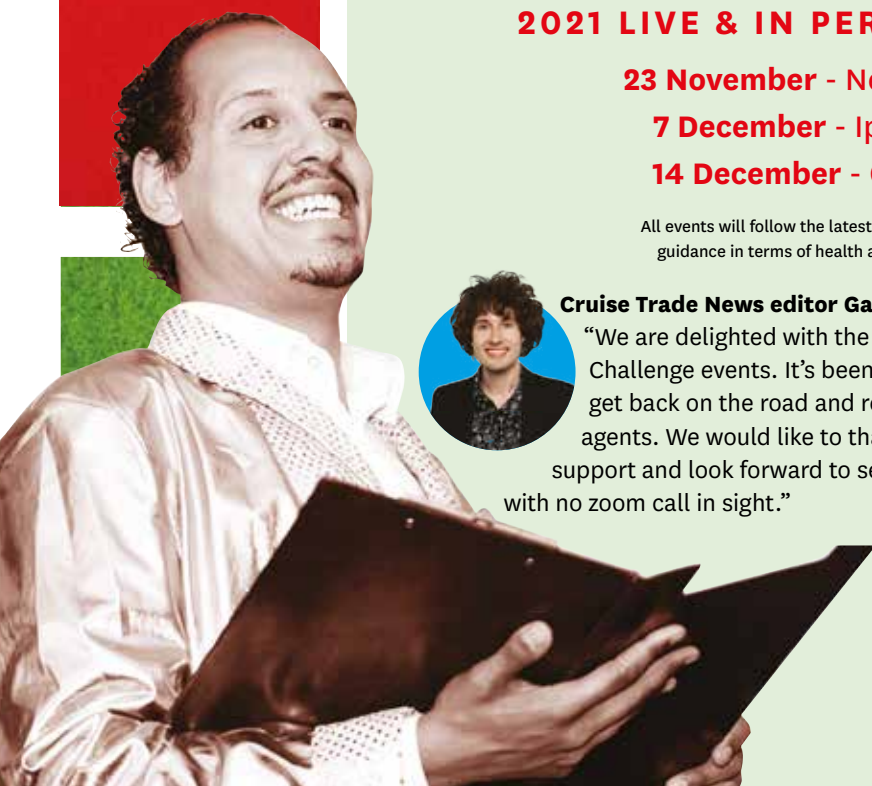
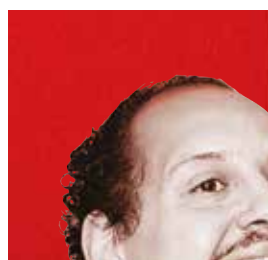
When travellers return to the ship from their day of adventure, scuba diving or exploring the islands, they will be able to unwind with a drink and live music on the

Magic Carpet – a cantilevered, floating platform that connects with 13 decks of the ship above sea level.

Wilson at Bolsover sums up the appeal of Caribbean cruising perfectly: "I think that, this year especially, there's an opportunity to better sell the Caribbean by really homing in on the escape element. We're all desperate for some sun as we're burnt out from the past year or so; the Caribbean is the tonic to that and it's so easy to reach via ship."🔗

The ruins of the Chichen Itza site take guests back to the ancient Mayan culture





Cruise Trade News editor Gary Peters said

"We are delighted with the return of live Cruise Challenge events. It's been a long wait, but it is great to get back on the road and reunite cruise lines and travel agents. We would like to thank all our sponsors for their support and look forward to seeing you later this year – with no zoom call in sight."



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Boost your cruise knowledge & win a host of fantastic prizes.

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

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TRADE NEWS

Heimaey is the only one of the
Westman Islands where anyone lives



JUPITER RISING

On a voyage with Viking, **Vicky Mayer** discovers
gushing geysers, black volcanoes, bubbling
hot pools – and baby pufflings

Hot springs are one of the country's most famous natural attractions

Cruise review: Viking Jupiter



The volcanic terrain means that the country is sparsely populated

On a sunny day in August, the view from the beach on the island of Vigur is one of vast blue skies and friendly Eider ducks. Situated half an hour by boat from Isafjordur in the West Fjords of Iceland, this pretty island is home to only one family, British polar explorer Felicity Aston and her Icelandic husband, Gisli. Together with their four-year old son, they're the proud custodians of this tiny part of the world where the ducks roam free and 40,000 puffins – with their offspring, known as pufflings – set up home in the spring.

What a sight it is. And the reason for my visit? I'm on a week-long trip around Iceland on *Viking Jupiter*. The Iceland's Natural Beauty cruise is part of Viking's Welcome Back series of itineraries, which offer guests the chance to get back on board their favourite Viking ships. My last trip abroad was in 2019, so this feels like a chance to see the world again.

Like many of my fellow cruisers, I have never visited Iceland, so this port-rich circumnavigational trip is a real treat. Cruising around the island is a smart way to travel, and this trip offers is the chance to see some of its most remote and spectacularly beautiful parts.

Over the course of a week, I see whales up close, drive a chunky four-wheel ATV over the slopes of a black volcano, duck under gushing waterfalls and enjoy pool-hopping at an out-of-the-way geothermal bath.

Think back to geography field trips, and this is the feeling that guests will get travelling around Iceland – though of course, lumpy dorm beds in damp YHAs have been replaced by the luxury of a Viking cruise.

Icelandic adventures

My Icelandic adventure begins in the country's capital, Reykjavik. Though Iceland covers 40,000 square miles, its volcanic terrain means much is sparsely inhabited, and two thirds of the country's 330,000 population live in the city.



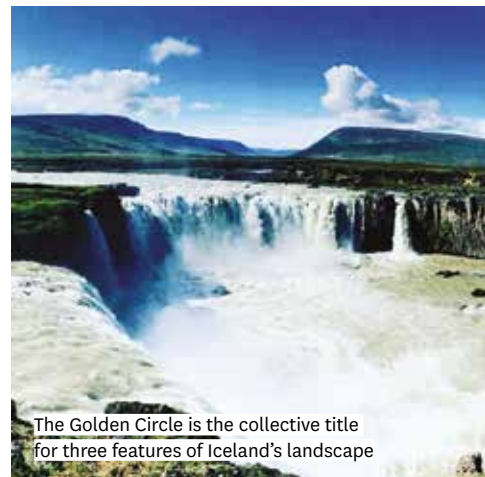
There are 40,000 puffins and their young – called pufflings – on the island of Vigur

On board, the excitement of the first day on a ship is palpable. *Viking Jupiter* usually sails with 930 passengers but with Covid restrictions still in place, there are only 600 passengers on board as I take my first steps on the ship.

Viking is taking no chances – they are the only cruise company to boast PCR clinics on board all their ships. What this means in practice is that it's common courtesy to wear a mask when walking around the public areas of the ship, and my temperature is taken as I enter every restaurant.

Even more stringent is the daily saliva test where I must spit into a test tube before eating or drinking anything in the morning. The saliva is tested at the on-board lab and it's a great (if slightly fiddly way) of keeping everyone safe and well.

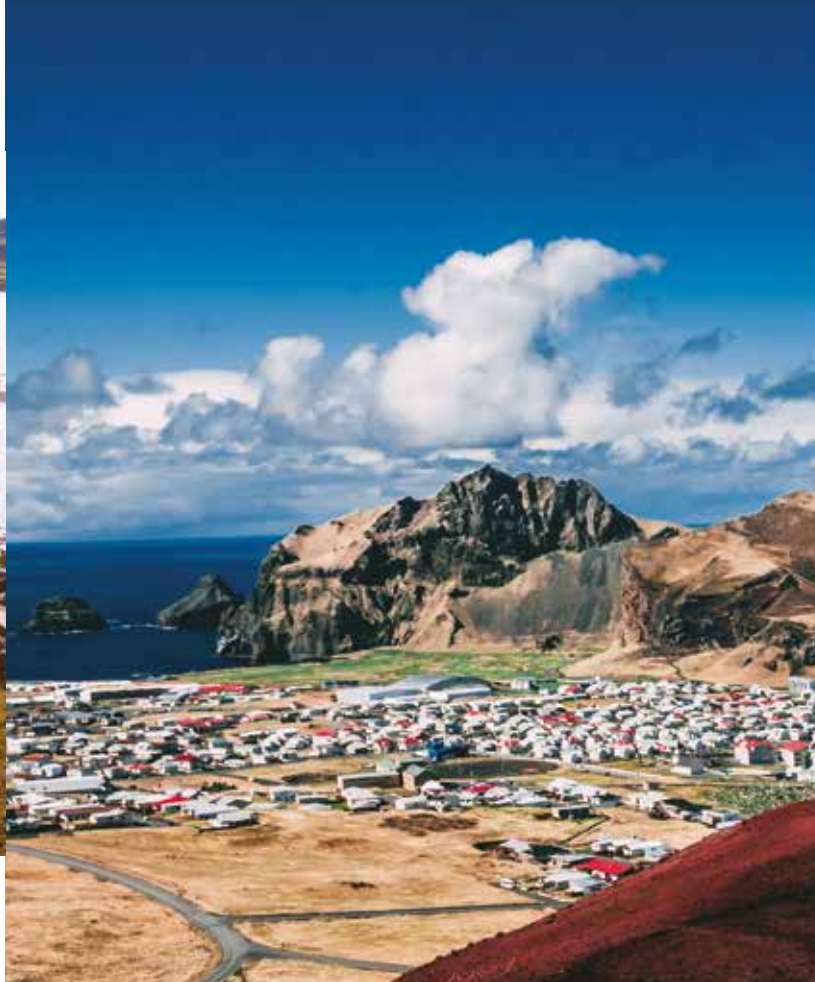
My home for the week is an elegant penthouse veranda stateroom, decorated in cool blues and



The Golden Circle is the collective title for three features of Iceland's landscape



The new Vok baths offer a closer-to-nature swim



Cooled red volcanic ash makes for an astonishing landscape

Selling TIPS

Viking has a Covid testing lab on board, as well as daily testing, so for any clients who are wary of booking, highlight this to assuage their concerns about the safety of cruising

Despite its small size, Iceland has a number of world-famous attractions, and the ease of travelling by ship means that a cruise is the simplest way to take them in without the hassle of organising local transport

From a wellbeing point of view, Iceland is a great destination to take in natural beauty, not to mention invigorating hot springs and thermal baths. Suggest it to clients who want a cruise with a distinctly natural feeling

creams and boasting a roomy balcony that offers great views of the mist-covered ports as we approach them. With some excursions starting at 7.30 am, this will be the ultimate sea crash-pad.

My first excursion begins with an eight-and-a-half-hour Golden Circle coach trip. At \$199, it offers Iceland's greatest hits in a day – Thingvellir National Park, where the American and Eurasian tectonic plates are pulling apart from one another; the Geysir geothermal area, where guests will see hot water being thrown up into the air; and the mighty Gullfoss waterfall, where getting wet is just part of the fun.

However, this is only a taste of what's in store. As Europe's westernmost nation, Iceland is one of the world's wildest places and is rightly lauded for its active volcanoes, stunning waterfalls, hot thermal springs and abundant wildlife.

Sailing overnight, the next stop is Isafjordur, in the west of the island. Known as the area's 'capital', it is a lively and industrious port. The locals sometimes get snowed in but during my visit the sun is out and it's the perfect weather for a whale-watching adventure.

Speeding across the sea in a RIB boat is also exhilarating but nothing can compare to the sheer joy of seeing whales in the wild. As tell-tale vapours emerge from the sea, some of the creatures line up and I'm

treated to an aquatic spectacle complete with flashing tails and mighty fins.

Every day brings more adventures and I'm wowed by the trip to Vok baths, a new development of thermal baths situated on Lake Urriðavatn in the east of Iceland. Here it is common to spend hours moving between the hot pools with a drink in hand from the bar, then braving the cold in the lake. It's my first taste of hot pools, and I'm hooked.

Easy to navigate

Back on board, each day over a cocktail in the Explorer's Lounge, I chat to my fellow cruisers about how wonderfully wild Iceland is, and how funny and charming our guides are. *Viking Jupiter* was built in 2019 and she still feels like a new ship. Like her sisters, she is incredibly easy to navigate.

Her four restaurants – Italian Manfredi's, the signature restaurant,



The Chef's Table has a tasting menu that pairs food with wine



After a day trekking, lying back in the hydrotherapy pool is totally addictive

stylish Chef's Table and fun and varied World Café – offer exemplary meals at no extra cost. Manfredi's scores highly with juicy steaks that are marinated overnight to make

them extra succulent and I love the daily five-course tasting menus at the Chef's Table with paired wines.

As there is so much to see on shore, I often take advantage of an hour or so relaxing in the ship's cosy Nordic spa before dinner. Here there is complimentary use of the hydrotherapy pool, steam room and sauna. As I can confirm, after a day trekking around Iceland, lying back in the pool as it bubbles up is totally addictive.

The final stop on the cruise takes me to the Westman Islands in the south of the country. Heimaey is the only populated island in this area, and it is famous for the volcanic eruption of Eldfell mountain,

which happened here in January 1973.

As I am reliably informed, everyone, including the residents of the old people's home, were evacuated in an orderly fashion to Reykjavik. However, some people did arrive without their false teeth, so someone was sent back by air to collect them. It's great stories like these that make Iceland (and the people) so entertaining. They are also incredibly passionate about nature.

It's not surprising that tourism is booming in Iceland – its epic landscapes, incredible wildlife and self-deprecating locals make it a destination that any cruiser is sure to fall in love with. 🇮🇸

DETAILS

A 12-night Iceland's Majestic Landscapes cruise on *Viking Jupiter* from Bergen to Reykjavik via Flam departs 16 July 2023. Prices from £4,790pp.

Cool blues and creams feature in the Deluxe Veranda stateroom



The last word

Azamara president **Carol Cabezas** discusses the line's restart and looks forward to the launch of a new ship

As we emerge from a period that has been dominated by restrictions, travellers are embracing their new-found freedom.

More than ever before, we want to live life to its fullest, and from what we're seeing at Azamara, embarking on meaningful travel adventures is playing a huge part in that.

Immersive travel has always been, and will always be, at the core of everything we do at Azamara. We're committed to taking people beyond the initial layers of a city and taking them to the heart of a destination, from cooking and sampling authentic food to listening to traditional music or spending time with locals.

We're confident that the past 18 months has accelerated the demand for culturally immersive travel, as people seek meaningful connections with the cultures and people they visit, as well as between themselves, creating unforgettable memories with the people they love along the way.

Intimate adventures

It's a hugely exciting time for us at Azamara. I was recently on board *Quest* for our first sailing and I cannot put into words the emotions I felt throughout the entire voyage – I was so proud to witness



“Our goal is to invite new and returning guests to explore places they have never visited before”

what we've achieved over the past year come to life and to see our guests and crew so happy to be back on board.

Our four boutique ships house only about 690 passengers at a time each, providing our guests with the opportunity to visit unique, smaller ports and have a more intimate small-ship cruising experience. In our recent 2023 deployment announcement, we confirmed

that Azamara will be visiting quieter ports that are accessible only to smaller ships. These include Cesme, Turkey; Mariehamn, Finland, and Brest, France.

We don't just visit these smaller ports; we also spend more time there. Later stays and overnights give our guests the chance to follow in the footsteps of locals with fewer people around, and to immerse themselves in the nightlife.

What's more, with our country-intensive itineraries,

we give our guests more time to explore a country's hidden gems and to connect with the local life and culture. We want them to feel at ease and to experience these countries at a slower and more relaxed and leisurely pace.

These European-intensive trips have seen the highest demand, which is why we emerged from the pandemic with five back-to-back Country Intensive Voyages in the Greek Isles in September, and why we will be offering

more country intensives than ever before in 2022/2023.

With these voyages, our goal is to invite new and returning guests to explore places they have never visited before, or better yet, connect them to a country they have travelled to before, but add in ports that are considered hidden gems to allow for a new experience.

Moving onward

We know that food is an integral part of discovering and embracing any culture. So, at our on-board restaurants, such as Discoveries, we've redesigned each menu to feature dishes from the countries we visit.

Keeping the safety of our guests and crew front of mind, we also introduced Destination Celebration experiences – an adaptation of AzAmazing evenings that can be enjoyed from the comfort of the ship. These complimentary evening events bring the culture and heritage of a destination to life on board, for example an evening of traditional music from electric violin act DuoViolins with accompanying orchestra and a singer.

Looking ahead to 2022, we're excited to finally welcome our newest addition to the fleet, *Azamara Onward*. Departing on her maiden voyage in May, *Onward* will provide our guests with even more unique itinerary options and destination-immersion programmes. ①



Immersive journeys are at the heart of the Azamara experience

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