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EDITORIAL TEAM

EDITOR

Colette Doyle

colette.doyle@realresponsemedia.com

DEPUTY EDITOR

Gary Peters

ART EDITOR

Phil Couzens

SUBEDITOR

Caroline Parish

GROUP PRODUCTION MANAGER

Barnaby Moore

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR

Peter Grant

peter.grant@realresponsemedia.com

COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR

Rochelle Streater

rochelle.streater@realresponsemedia.com

COMMERCIAL MANAGER

Zarina Kapasi

zarina.kapasi@realresponsemedia.com

MANAGING DIRECTOR

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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LETTER

Welcome to the October issue



There's strength in numbers, so they say, and our in-depth, eight-page report on travel consortia (see *pages 36-43*) most certainly proves the point. *CTN* deputy editor Gary Peters has rounded up all the facts, figures and statistics from the country's leading consortia to discover what makes them tick.

We analyse their efforts in no fewer than 10 key areas, including the number of agents they reach, how they plan to stay ahead of the competition and their measures to educate members about cruise, to allow agents to weigh up accurately the benefits of membership.

Another bumper feature is our nine-page section on the wonders of the natural wilderness that is Alaska (*pages 57-65*). We explore the fascinating scenery and wildlife to be found in this vast, wild region, touching on places such as the gold-rush town of Skagway, capital city Juneau, the magnificent Mendenhall Glacier and the stunning Denali National Park.

Elsewhere in this issue we focus on technology, with a look at the various gadgets and gizmos being used on board by a number of cruise lines. These include virtual personal cruise assistants, mobile apps, hi-tech entertainment options and interactive gaming, which are all transforming the ship-side experience for guests.

We also get on board Azamara's *Journey* as it travels to Norway, the land of the Midnight Sun; cruise the Douro, taking in the delights of Porto and Spanish cities such as Salamanca along the way; and chat to Aurora Expeditions about the latest developments in the sector ahead of the much-anticipated launch of *Greg Mortimer*.

There's just space enough left to mention our two awards ceremonies, each unmissable in its own way. Voting is still open for the über-popular Wave Awards, with new categories including Best Specialist Travel Agent (thewaveawards.com), and there's still time to book your place at this year's Cruise Stars Awards, taking place on 22 November, when we'll be celebrating the very best of the travel trade (cruisestarsawards.com).

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Colette Doyle'.

Colette Doyle
Editor
[@cruisetradenews](https://twitter.com/cruisetradenews)

INDUSTRY



Industry rallies in support of ex-Cook employees

Cruise lines and travel firms have rallied to offer support to holidaymakers and previous Thomas Cook employees after the collapse of the brand.

The 178-year-old company was forced to cease trading after it failed to secure a £900m rescue deal.

The company's chief executive, Peter Fankhauser, stated: "We have worked exhaustively in the past few days to resolve the outstanding issues on an agreement to secure Thomas Cook's future for its employees, customers and suppliers.

"Although a deal had been largely agreed, an additional facility requested in the past few days of negotiations presented a challenge that ultimately proved insurmountable."

In the immediate aftermath, Tui announced it was "sorry to learn of the Thomas Cook news" and held a recruitment fair at its Luton office.

Travel Counsellors said it will hold Thomas Cook care events. Travel Counsellors' UK managing director and chief commercial officer, Kirsten Hughes, urged people to "get in touch with our careers team to chat about their options by emailing careers@travelcounsellors.com".

Advantage Travel Partnership also implemented its Operator Failure Plan to assist its members via a 24/7 hotline for agents.

Commenting on 23 September, Cruise 118

confirmed it had a number of concierge sales positions available and would hold a series of free workshops for Thomas Cook employees who would like to "refresh their interview techniques or update their CVs".

MSC Cruises also said via social media that it was welcoming CVs, adding: "We're thinking of our colleagues and friends at Thomas Cook. At MSC UK head office in Uxbridge we have some fantastic opportunities for people with a strong customer service ethic and love of cruise."

Cosmos and Avalon Waterways CEO Giles

Hawke added: "We are sad to learn that Thomas Cook has entered compulsory liquidation. Our thoughts are with all the staff and customers affected.

"A number of Thomas Cook customers are booked

on tours and cruises with Cosmos Tours – Cosmos, Globus and Avalon Waterways – every booking with us, via Thomas Cook, is safe and customers' holidays will go ahead.

G Adventures MD Brian Young tweeted: "Such sad news. Thomas Cook was an iconic UK travel company, and its people are amazing, they were passionate about their company, feeling for them all."

Celebrity Cruises' vice-president & MD UK, Ireland & Asia, Jo Rzymowska, told of how her "heart goes out to all the incredible staff at Thomas Cook, such an amazing brand."

"Such sad news. Thomas Cook was an iconic UK travel company"

BRIAN YOUNG, G ADVENTURES MD

In B R I E F

Top reads

● Connect with CTN on social media and our website, cruisetradenews.com, for even more cruise content. The hottest stories this month include our View from Abroad blog, this time cruising the Mediterranean with Marella Cruises, and a look into the environmental initiatives in the industry.

And the winner is...

● We're happy to announce that this month's winner of the CTN newsletter draw and £25 Amazon voucher is Sara Hussein of Baldwins Travel. The CTN newsletter is the one-stop shop featuring the latest in cruise news, features, destination guides, interviews and more.

Encore godmother

● Award-winning singer/songwriter Kelly Clarkson will be godmother of Norwegian Cruise Line's newest ship, *Norwegian Encore*. Clarkson will be performing at the ship's christening ceremony in Miami on 21 November 2019. The line's president and chief executive officer, Andy Stuart, said Clarkson was "a role model who's passionate about family and community".

A first for Hurtigruten

● MS Roald Amundsen has become the first battery-hybrid powered ship to cross the Northwest Passage. Hurtigruten CEO Daniel Skjeldam said the milestone "pays tribute to the great explorer she is named after by traversing one of the most fabled stretches of sea by hybrid propulsion".

INDUSTRY



Cruise ships are heading for a cleaner future

Cruise boosts environmental measures

Cruise lines affiliated with CLIA have invested more than \$22 billion in ships with new, energy-efficient technologies and cleaner fuels, according to a new report.

The third annual *Global Cruise Industry Environmental Technologies* report, released at the Seatrade Europe event in Hamburg, shows that 44 per cent of new-build ships will primarily use liquefied natural gas, a 60 per cent increase compared with last year.

In addition, 88 per cent of new builds will be fitted with shore-side electricity systems or will be configured to add shore-side power at a later date.

Emissions will also be reduced thanks to the use of exhaust gas cleaning systems.

CLIA Europe chairman and Costa Group and Carnival Asia CEO Michael Thamm said: "While cruise ships comprise far less than one per cent of the global maritime community, cruise lines are at the forefront in developing responsible tourism practices and innovative technologies. Our industry leads in environmental stewardship."

CLIA Global chairman Adam Goldstein added that despite the progress over recent years, "we know there is still work to be done".

REAL RESPONSE MEDIA EVENTS



Wave awards

Wave Awards: The clock is ticking

Whether you represent a cruise line, travel agency, tourist board or port, there's only one award worth winning. Yes, you guessed it, a Wave Award.

If you want to be in with a chance of celebrating at the Oscars of cruising in 2020, now is the time to tell us why you are the best in your field. This year there are new categories to enter, including Best Specialist Travel Agent and Best Brand Partnership.

The entry deadline is 25 October.

Winners will be announced on 2 April 2020 at a black-tie ceremony held at 8 Northumberland Avenue in central London. Go to thewaveawards.com for more information.

APPOINTMENTS



MSC Group has announced that **Michael Ungerer** will join as CEO of its luxury cruise business. Ungerer has more than 30 years' experience in the cruise and luxury hospitality businesses. Earlier this year MSC confirmed an order for four luxury cruise ships, to be built by Fincantieri.



Oceania Cruises has welcomed **James Scott** as its new business development manager for UK & Ireland. Scott, who has worked in the cruise industry for five years, joins the line from sister brand Norwegian Cruise Line. He will report to UK and Ireland senior director of sales Priti Mehta.



Dawn Quinn has joined Uniworld and U River Cruises as a UK key account manager. Quinn has moved from Scenic & Emerald Waterways, where she was national sales manager. The appointment follows the departure of James Howlett, now in a sales position with escorted tour operator Collette.



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INDUSTRY



MSC Magnifica will spearhead the line's biggest UK season

MSC unveils ambassador accolade and trade commitments

MSC Cruises is to reward partners as part of a new ambassador scheme, launching this month (October).

At an event to promote the line's longest ex-UK season – out of Southampton in 2021 on *MSC Magnifica* – director of sales Steve Williams told agents it was time to “make a commitment to the travel trade. As we go through such exceptional growth, it can be easy to lose flexibility. But no matter how big we get, we'll keep our values at the heart of what we do.”

The programme rewards “exceptional” individuals who go above and beyond. The line will recognise one person a month, from a spectrum of job roles – sales, marketing and more. Each winner will

receive a seven-night cruise for two and various other invitations to MSC events.

The line has also revealed a series of 10 commitments to the trade, “a promise from us to you”, added Williams. These include a personalised service to treat all agents as individuals, whether it's a “huge cruise specialist selling across multiple countries or a one-person band... every booking matters to us”.

“We want to remain flexible and open minded. We are always open to doing things differently.”

The line also confirmed it will guarantee price parity. Williams said: “We are built on the UK and Ireland travel trade. We will never undercut agents.”



MARKETING GURU

In this new series of articles, **Mark Lewsey**, head of marketing at Accord Marketing, talks us through a number of hot topics pertinent to the cruise industry. Here, he looks at the rise of the solo traveller

For many agents, “solo traveller” conjures up 20-something millennials travelling across South East Asia with only a backpack to their name. Yet this is by no means representative of today's solo travel market.

In a recent study commissioned by Accord and Global Media, we found that over-55s expressed the strongest interest in travelling alone, with 48 per cent having done so, and over a third saying they'd be willing to do so.

For solo travellers, cruise continues to be a popular choice, possibly due to concerns of safety and loneliness being naturally addressed on board. So, what can cruise lines and agents do to appeal to solo cruisers?

Obviously, a good starting point is simply making yourselves visible as a solo-friendly cruise operator, with solo travel-related keywords in your marketing, or with solo-specific supplements, alongside a long-term, audience-building SEO strategy, offering travel and destination tips.

Over-55s like benefits over features, facts over entertainment, and are hyper-sensitive to stereotyping. And by prominently displaying solo pricing options on your website, you will improve the user experience.

But don't make assumptions about them. Today's solo traveller is no longer defined by relationship, age or social circle, perceptions of life's milestones are changing and 60 per cent of solo travellers believe the industry doesn't cater for them. The timing is perfect for cruise brands to recognise this demand.

REAL RESPONSE MEDIA EVENTS

Join us at the Cruise Stars Awards

There's still time to book your spot at the 2019 Cruise Stars Awards.

From travel agent sales stars to cruise line marketing stars, the awards recognise the top talent in the industry and the individual work that goes into growing the cruise audience.

The ceremony, to be held on 22 November at the De Vere Grand Connaught Rooms, London, brings together the whole industry for an afternoon of celebration. Visit cruisestarsawards.com for more information about how to secure a place and to view the shortlist.



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INDUSTRY



VTA praises agents as closure confirmed

The boss of Voyages to Antiquity has praised the support it received from the trade as it was revealed the line will close at the end of October.

The news, released in the middle of September, stemmed from engine trouble on the line's only ship, *Aegean Odyssey*, earlier this year, which forced the company to cancel 10 cruises.

The final four cruises of the 2019 season will go ahead, with staff available to answer any questions or concerns.

It was also announced that Road Scholar will charter *Aegean Odyssey* from April 2020 for a three-year period. Its president and CEO, James Moses, said, "The ship is now in tip-top shape."

Despite the ship being fully repaired, VTA MD Jos Dewing said the engine "had an impact on future plans for Voyages to Antiquity. Repairing the ship has been the absolute priority and the focus of the company during this difficult period".

He added: "It is therefore with regret that we have taken the difficult decision to close Voyages to Antiquity at the end of October 2019, at which point our office in Oxford will also close. It is very much business as normal until this point."

● VTA's Oxford office will close on 31 October. After this agents should contact VTA in the US on +1 877 398 1460 / +1 855 222 6632 or email info@voyagestoantiquity.com.

SHIPS

Enchanted Princess floated out



The shipyard was the scene of celebration

Princess Cruises has celebrated the float-out of *Enchanted Princess* from its building dock at Fincantieri shipyard in Monfalcone, Italy.

The ceremony marked the day when the ship officially met the sea for the first time. The 3,660-guest ship will officially launch in Southampton in June 2020.

The ship's godmother is Doris Ho, president and CEO of the Magsaysay group, based in the Philippines.

Princess Cruises' vice-president UK and Europe, Tony Roberts, said: "We're delighted to see another significant stage of *Enchanted Princess*' construction successfully completed. The countdown to her launch continues and we're eagerly anticipating the final development of this stunning ship over the next few months."

CTN Best Companies

In light of the CTN Best Companies scheme, which aims to discover the best places to work for in the cruise industry, we sat down with A-Rosa UK & Ireland managing director Lucia Rowe.

How important is HR nowadays?

It is vital. Good people bring our product alive. In river cruise there is a strong link between the destinations and the people, and staff are often recruited from the destinations themselves so they can share their knowledge and understanding with customers.

What's unique about cruise HR?

While on board, staff live and work in the same space for lengthy periods of time and away from their friends and family, which isn't for everyone. This type of talent is so special that there are agencies that specialise only in recruiting cruise line employees.

How will HR develop in the future?

I believe employment will be about the person, not the skill. A skill can be learnt, but an employee's ethos and attitude are key. Holidays are about making unforgettable experiences and people can make or break this. I think we'll also see more retaining strategies, to keep hold of the talent we recruit.

What are the training needs for cruise line staff?

The roles are varied – it's important to combine learning the skills needed with product and company understanding.



● CTN has partnered with training company Ethos Farm for the Best Companies to Work for in Cruise initiative.

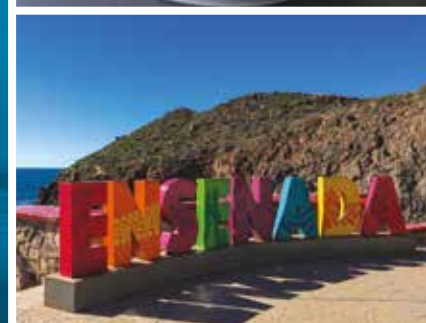
Registration and participation in the CTN Best Companies to Work for in Cruise programme, the largest independent survey of its kind, is entirely free of charge. Visit CTNBestCompanies.com for details and to register your interest. Results will be announced at the Wave Awards in April 2020.

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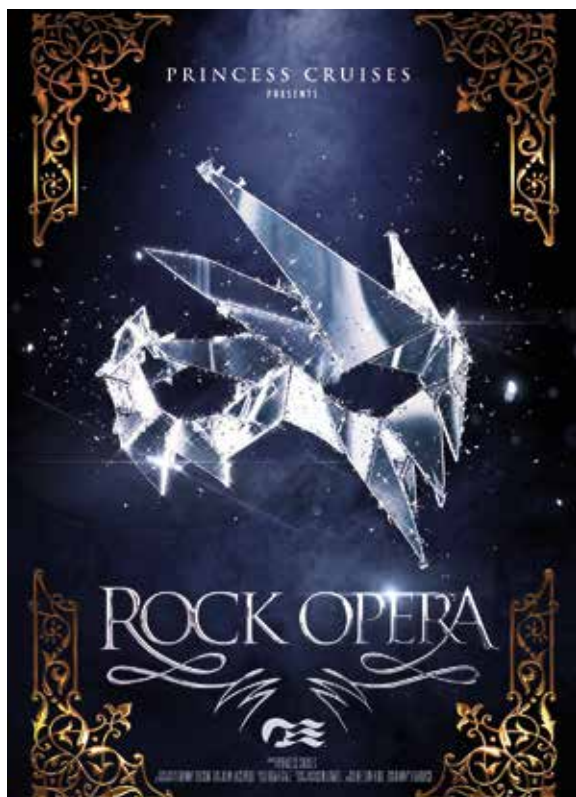
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Experiences

We round up the latest developments when it comes to on-board shows and diversions



Long live rock'n'roll

Princess Cruises' newest show will feature avant-garde costumes and a musical soundtrack spanning classic rock, musical theatre and opera, as well as songs performed in a variety of languages – English, Spanish, Latin and sign language.

Rock Opera will open on the 3,660-guest *Sky Princess* in December 2019 as it sails the Caribbean.

Princess Cruises' vice-president of

entertainment experience, Denise Saviss, said: “*Rock Opera* takes our guests on a musical journey, featuring our eight-piece live orchestra playing iconic rock songs. Our production and costume design team were inspired by one of New York City's most glamorous evenings of the year, the Met Gala.”

The show will also feature on *Enchanted Princess* in June 2020 for its inaugural season in the Mediterranean.



Immersive cruising

An immersive fine art and dining experience will debut on board *MSC Grandiosa*, which sets sail in November this year.

Called *Degas, Danse, Dessin*, the concept, which will feature the works of French artist Edgar Degas, is to take place in a purpose-built installation in the ship's

L'Atelier Bistro. It will include 26 studies of movement and dance, as well as five videos about Degas' work and life. It was previously exhibited at major international galleries and museums.

MSC Cruises is working with the Aïmes organisation, which creates multi-sensory interactive experiences.

Musical teas

Marella Cruises has revealed it will be hosting a 'Great Musical Afternoon Tea' on board *Marella Explorer 2*.

The new tea-time spectacular will take place weekly in the ship's Dining Club restaurant, with uplifting music from much-loved West End shows.

Guests will be able to choose from six different teas, as well as a choice of

cocktails, at £15 a person, bookable from the ship's kiosks. A glass of fizz will also be on offer for an extra £5.

The Great Musical Afternoon Tea is available on all sailings on *Marella Explorer 2*, with the ship sailing routes in the Baltics, Canary Islands, Fjords and Arctic, Mediterranean, Northern Europe and the Caribbean.

Time for tea... and some tunes



Selling Seabourn's Caribbean!



During winter *Seabourn Odyssey* sails to less visited Caribbean islands, roundtrip from Barbados - ideal for the luxury 'warm weather' traveller.

Sell Seabourn as an ultra-luxury, all-inclusive boutique hotel at sea to your clients. The benefits – spacious all-suite accommodation, attentive service, a choice of stunning Caribbean destinations – and they only unpack once!



Here are a few more tips!

- Seabourn's 7* & 14-night holidays roundtrip from Barbados are easy to combine with direct flights from UK airports
- Intimate Seabourn Odyssey offers 229 ocean-front suites, 90% with private balcony
- 'With the Compliments of Seabourn' are:-
 - Our unique Caviar in the Surf® beach party, where crew members wade waist-deep through turquoise waters to serve guests chilled caviar and champagne^
 - Shopping with the Chef® experiences for fresh seafood at local markets, with an expert Seabourn chef
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SAMPLE ITINERARY

7-night Caribbean

21 Nov; 12 Dec 2020 | 16 Jan; 20 Feb 2021
Bridgetown (Barbados); Rodney Bay (St Lucia); Falmouth (English Harbour, Antigua); Great Harbour (Jost Van Dyke)^; Carambola Beach (St Kitts & Nevis)^; Fort-de-France (Martinique); St George's (Grenada); Barbados

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^In select ports subject to weather conditions.

*7-night roundtrip Barbados cruises in Winter 2020/21



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In my VIEW

G Adventures managing director **Brian Young** outlines why the focus should be on what travellers can experience in destinations, rather than on-board amenities



I am fascinated by the cruise industry. The sheer number of ships coming into the market is staggering. With a focus on building bigger vessels, every launch comes with the promise of new and better amenities, from dining and pools to go-kart tracks and climbing walls.

While I commend these new ships, the design and the expertise involved, it does make me think about travellers believing being bigger is better. While river and ocean cruising are growing, both in terms of the industry and the vessels, we at G Adventures are taking the opposite view. Our philosophy is that small is beautiful and offers a more immersive experience.

I believe we should be focusing less on entertainment and activities and more on what travellers can do in the destinations they visit. Look at the power travel has to support communities, distribute wealth

and create memories – why should cruising be different? Challenges such as over-tourism can be reduced by offering more activities outside of these popular tourist sites.

This is where the beauty of small ships come into play. Take our *G Expedition* ship as an example. With just 134 passengers, we can offer every traveller the opportunity not only to disembark at each stop, but also to explore areas larger vessels can't reach. Travellers on larger ships work up an appetite with gym classes on board: ours earn their lunch hiking around the Norwegian fjords, or over Antarctic ice.

The true joys of travel

We encourage passengers to get off the ship and to immerse themselves in local areas, so not only do they learn first-hand so much more about local cultures but

“Travellers on big ships work up an appetite in the gym: ours earn their lunch hiking”

also inevitably leave more of their traveller pounds in these communities.

At sea, having the opportunity to bond, learn and laugh with fellow travellers, without the isolation they might feel on a huge ship, is a very welcome prospect. This is even more so for solo travellers, an area I believe the industry can improve.

We see a large percentage of solo guests. With dedicated cabins and no solo supplements, those who want to take that adventure of a lifetime independently are drawn to the communal element of our *G Expedition*, attending lectures, eating and taking excursions with fellow visitors they will get to know very well.

Agents who have travellers seeking community, a chance to build friendships, solo travellers looking to explore and travellers wanting to experience more of a destination and to ensure their travel is doing good, should look beyond large ships and see the value in smaller vessels.

Travel isn't about the latest tech, luxury sheets and robot bars – it's about enjoying a hot tea with locals in a small cafe on the Norwegian fjords, or being captivated as a wild polar bear walks by in the distance. Travel is about feeling alive. ⚓



Fjords such as the Geiranger are accessible with G Adventures

Spotlight on...

CroisiEurope

CroisiEurope's UK sales director, **John Fair**, discusses what to expect from its second ocean-going ship, *La Belle des Océans*, and why the line's trade bookings have rocketed

Why launch another ocean ship?

It's something we've always aspired to. The chance came up with the ex-Silversea ship, *Silver Discoverer*, and we decided to take it. It's a small vessel – 60 suites, 120 passengers, so we're not talking huge liners, but it's a good foot in the ocean market. We do have our coastal cruiser in Croatia, of course, *La Belle de l'Adriatique*.

What about itineraries for the new ship?

We're going to be doing nine rotations between Singapore and Phuket, starting in October and through to Christmas. Then we have a series of positional cruises early in 2020, including four around Corsica. She arrives in Canada for June 2020. It's a very unusual product.

Why this ship?

It's all-suite, which was an attraction. We'll put our own stamp on it – for the interiors there'll be changes. It will be very much a CroisiEurope product.

The response we've had is very positive. The ship can go into ports that others can't. As a family-run business we were keen to expand [more ocean], since the success of the coastal cruiser. We know we'll deliver, but will be is all-suite.

Why such a varied range of destinations?

We want to keep it fresh; we couldn't just run the same Mediterranean cruise for 20 weeks a year – it's not that sort of ship or style. By keeping the itineraries varied we attract a very varied customer.

How will you stand out in ocean cruising?

I think it comes down to the experience on board, itineraries and size of the ship – as a package it will be very attractive. We know how to deliver a product and, in many ways, it will be a mix of our river cruise experience and new ocean aspects.



Could we see more ocean ships in the fleet?

If the new ship goes well, who knows? We're very forward looking, not afraid to go out with a new product, to invest.

Do you expect your river guests to switch?

I think there'll be some, without question. We know 50 per cent of our customers come back to us for another cruise.

Will you be recruiting more UK staff?

That's certainly the plan. We had a good year last year. This year, January was excellent, February and March not so

good. But since April it's been strong. Almost at once after the Brexit deadline extension announcement, sales went up. If we carry on as it is, we will see double-digit growth for this year.

Something very pleasing is our trade growth – we are 27 per cent up this year. For the first time it's a higher percentage than direct. We're starting to see the benefits of a UK trade presence.

Now we have more fam trips, more contracts with partners and so on. The more people we can show the product, the better. It's a big part of what we want to do. We're starting to see results. Would I like a bigger team? Yes, eventually. But let's get the rest of this year over first.

What did you make of the CLIA river passenger figures earlier this year?

It's good to have growth. There aren't many parts of the travel industry with that. I'm sure we'll reach 250,000 passengers next year. We'll keep growing from there and we're nowhere near saturation point. It's a very positive part of the industry.



La Belle des Océans can accommodate 120 passengers



In the lap of **Luxury**

Seabourn's senior vice-president, global sales & marketing, **Chris Austin** explains why the line's new expedition ships will elevate the brand to a whole new level

What destinations have been popular with Seabourn guests this year?

Australia, Vietnam and Thailand are very popular with our UK guests.

You recently extended your partnership with UNESCO – can you provide a bit more detail?

We have been working closely with UNESCO World Heritage for a number of years and this tie-up with them will give Seabourn an exclusive partnership for a further five years.

This will allow us to give our guests more unique and exciting excursions to 170 of their sites, with many trips before other tourists get there. We are being allowed easy access to many of the sites alongside great experts including archaeologists. We are very proud and excited about this initiative.

How do you think Seabourn is perceived by its guests?

They understand that we are offering them a bespoke six-star experience both on and off board. They realise that they are getting an ultra-luxury travel experience on an all-inclusive basis.

What else are you excited about?

In August this year we introduced the chance for our guests to travel on private planes by Seabourn Private Air. This is the perfect addition to our ultra-luxury offering.

It provides guests with the chance to charter a private plane as part of their holiday. They can arrange this through their travel advisor. This will be an exciting extra for travel agents to sell.

And you have two new expedition ships launching...

We always listen to our guests and over the years they have told us that they would love to do some expedition cruising with us. So we are building two new ultra-luxury expedition ships that will offer our legendary service. This feels like a natural evolution of the brand.

We are launching our first polar-class ship, *Seabourn Venture*, in 2021. This will be very special as it will only carry 264 guests, so it will be an amazing experience. We've had such a great response to these new ships – the itineraries we have on offer will be real bucket-list trips.



Seabourn Venture will visit the spectacular scenery of the Amazon

What can we expect to see on board?

We will have 24 zodiacs on the ship and two amazing battery-powered submarine that will take guests 300 metres below the surface. I'm so excited about *Seabourn Venture* – it's going to be a real James Bond experience. We are also incredibly excited about the interiors.

Top interiors expert Adam D Tihany has done an amazing job. The suites and public areas look like the world's best ski chalets and we think our guests will love this. It's real 'chalet chic'. The suites are so well laid out – they even have heated wardrobes. We are particularly proud of the two-storey suite with a Grand Winter Garden.

What trends do you think we'll be seeing in cruise in the next 12 months?

There's a real buzz in the new-to-cruise sector and we are seeing a lot of people who have never cruised before booking a Seabourn cruise. Younger people are also getting on board too – I think Instagram has a lot to do with this.

There's also a real appetite for shorter cruises. Our seven-day itineraries are particularly popular, especially our seven-day cruises to Alaska with no repeat ports. In Europe, cruises to Greece and Turkey are proving to be really popular with guests telling us they love the history-rich cities of Istanbul and Athens.

There's also a trend for cruises that stay overnight in ports so guests can enjoy the excitement of the destination, plus there's a demand for round-the-world cruises too. Our 146-day cruise from Miami to San Francisco has been incredibly popular.

Looking into your crystal ball, what do you see coming next?

Younger, affluent travellers don't want to compromise when they book a holiday, which is why ultra-luxury cruises like those that Seabourn offer will appeal to them. They are also interested in travelling to bucket-list destinations, so our new expedition ships will appeal to them. ⚓

Antarctica – always an expedition highlight



Winning streak

In this regular series of articles, we profile the winners of last year's Cruise Stars Awards



Lee Ashton

Cruise Sales Manager
CRUISE 1ST

How did you feel about winning the travel agent rising star award?

The feeling when I picked up the award on stage was amazing. I was so happy that I'd made the trip to London. In the evening we had a few drinks to celebrate and it's one of those moments in life I will never forget. I could probably tell you how the day and night went by the hour.

What do you think were the main factors that contributed to your win?

I can only assume I gave the judges what they were looking for. I give 110 per cent every day, demonstrating my passion for selling cruises and helping clients to fulfil their dream holidays. What made me different from other agents? Well, in both my previous role at TUI, for which I won the award, and in my present job, I do

long hours at work and in my own time, ensuring every bit of each holiday is organised correctly. I like to think that my regular clients are more friends, not just people who hand over money to me.

What tips can you pass on to others to help them be successful?

Don't be too disheartened if you've had a bad day. Every person in the world will experience a bad day at work, but it's how you respond that counts. Always stay positive and always smile.

What has been your best experience in the cruise industry so far?

I've had many great experiences and for so many different reasons. From going on *Celebrity Reflection* and *Quantum of the Seas* on the inaugural sailings, to having a drink with Ben Fogle in London. All so different and all so amazing.

What innovations would you like to see introduced in the industry?

I would personally prefer a system that allows us to view, book and ask questions for every element of a cruise package. I know we have systems that include cruise lines, but they are limited with information and sometimes don't always say the correct things. At work I have approximately 12 windows open. It would be so much easier to have it together on one screen.

What would you say is your dream cruise destination?

Well, this is easy. It's been my dream destination since the start of my cruise



Lee is determined that one day he will visit the Galapagos Islands

life and, even though I will need to remortgage or win the lottery to get there, it has to be the Galapagos Islands. I am determined that one day I will do it.

What on-board amenity do you enjoy the most?

I loved the Sky Ride on *Carnival Vista* as well as the dodgems on *Anthem of the Seas*. They are two very different, crazy, wild experiences that you would never expect to find on a ship. Every year different activities are emerging and it's an exciting industry to be in.

How do you see your career progressing?

Since winning at the Cruise Stars Awards I have moved to Cruise 1st as a sales manager. The award gave me a great platform to progress and it truly helped knowing I had the support from people within the industry. We all know someone who works somewhere else for a different cruise company, and these people certainly helped me when it came to the interview stage. The cruise industry is a small world, after all. I would like to think that my career has just started. ⚓

“I like to think that my regular clients are more friends, not just people who hand over money”

peaceful moments



The Douro carves a route past postcard-pretty villages and terraced vineyards, with dramatic panoramas unfolding at every twist and turn. Sail its scenic waters on Spirit of Chartwell, a luxurious vessel which carried the Queen for her Diamond Jubilee pageant, or on a relaxed CroisiEurope voyage, where you can take in the vineyard vistas from a sun-deck swimming pool.

► VIP door-to-door travel service† ► Expertly designed itineraries ► Price Promise



The Enchanting River Douro

Sailing on CroisiEurope's MS Gil Eanes or MS Amalia Rodrigues

8 days from **£1,499pp***

Includes 20 meals and all-inclusive drinks on board
Departs May-October 2020

*Lead-in price based on 10 October 2020 departure in a cat. 1 cabin



A Royal Voyage on the Douro

Sailing on Spirit of Chartwell

8 days from **£2,999pp***

Includes all meals and complimentary drinks on board
Departs June-October 2020

*Lead-in price based on 16 October 2020 departure in a standard cabin



Book online at www.titanagents.co.uk

†Mainland UK only. Prices are per person, correct at time of print and subject to availability.

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travel

perfect moments shared

Sales INSPIRATION

Dig for victory

A-Rosa has partnered with archaeological holidays operator Andante Travels for a series of archaeology-themed river cruises in 2020.

Agents can earn a Love2Shop voucher worth £20 for every 2020 booking they make up to 31 October 2019.

Five itineraries are featured across three A-Rosa ships: *A-Rosa Stella*, on the Rhone, *A-Rosa Donna*, on the Danube, and *A-Rosa Aqua*, on the Rhine.

Prices start from £1,649pp for a five-day Cruising the Rhine: Medieval Cathedrals at Christmas cruise on board *A-Rosa Aqua*, departing 23 December 2020.

Splendid Roman remains can be studied on the A-Rosa tours

Incentive

Incentive



Win a three-night trip

Cruise on Splendor

Agents could win a place on a three-night trade preview from 31 January 2020 on Regent Seven Seas Cruises' *Seven Seas Splendor*.

For a chance to win, agents should download a Luxury Perfected email template from www.rssc.com/splendorpreview and personalise the form, then send it on to their luxury cruise clients. Entrants should send their personalised template to sdeadman@rssc.com, removing any client email addresses.

The winner will be chosen at random. There is no limit to the number of "sends" an agent can enter. Open until 31 October 2019. A winner will be contacted by 14 November.

Upgrades with Princess

Princess Cruises is offering free stateroom upgrades on more than 1,000 voyages setting sail in 2019, 2020 and 2021. The offer runs until 31 October.

Guests booking an ocean view stateroom can get a free upgrade to a balcony. Those on the five new ships – the *Royal*, *Regal*, *Majestic*, *Sky* and *Enchanted Princess* – will be upgraded from balcony to mini-suite.

On select British Isles cruises in 2020 on *Regal Princess* guests can upgrade to a balcony from an inside stateroom. Details at princess.com

Offer



Regal Princess upgrades are available for trips until 2021

This month's star prizes, incentives & fam trip offers

Offer

Solo cruises on the Rhine will cost less from now on

Travel solo for less

Emerald Waterways has removed the single supplement on selected sailings in Europe, to ensure guests pay the twin-share price, yet enjoy single occupancy. Itineraries with this offer include:

- The nine-day Enchantment of Eastern Europe river cruise from £2,895pp. Bookings are available on various dates in 2020
- Rhine river cruises with no single supplements from £3,845pp on the eight-

day Charms of Holland & Belgium voyage

- Sensations of Lyon & Provence itinerary along the Rhone from £3,095pp

The offer is limited to five cabins per sailing. Prices include discounts, return flights, transfers, shore excursions, all tipping and gratuities, on-board meals with complimentary wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board and exclusive events and experiences.

Win Apple products

River operator Lotus Cruises is giving agents the chance to win a range of Apple products, including iPhones, iPads, MacBooks and iMacs, as part of its latest incentive programme.

Agents and tour operators can collect Lotus Coins every time they book a cabin on one of the line's seven-night sailings, from 2019 to 2021. Coins can then be used to redeem an Apple product.

Agents can earn two coins for bookings in a superior, vista or signature suite and three coins for bookings in a prestige or grand suite.

To redeem their reward, agents and operators need to keep a record of the reference number for each booking and complete an incentive form online.

The programme runs until 15 March 2020. Lotus Coins cannot be exchanged for money. For the full list of rewards available, visit lotuscruises.com/incentive

Offer

Book with confidence

Celebrity Cruises has launched a booking deal so guests can change or amend a cruise, free of charge.

The offer, for all guests making a new booking until 18 November 2019, also includes savings on itineraries on sale for 2020/21.

Celebrity Cruises' Dream, Discover, Explore offer includes:

- Guests get one and two free classic drinks packages (worth £787pp), and £250 onboard spend on all sailings in an Oceanview stateroom or above
- When booking a Suite Class stateroom, guests one and two have pre-paid gratuities & unlimited wifi
- Additional guests on bookings will

save 50 per cent on the cruise fare and a free non-alcoholic drinks package

- Guests sailing from Southampton in 2019 and 2020, on *Celebrity Apex* and *Celebrity Silhouette*, will enjoy pre-paid gratuities, free classic drinks packages and £250 onboard spend
- Free flights will be available on European sailings aboard *Celebrity Edge*, *Apex*, *Infinity*, *Reflection* and *Constellation* from selected UK and Irish airports, plus free classic drinks packages and £250 onboard spend
- Until 31 October 2019 sailings on *Celebrity Flora* enjoy a 25 per cent saving (sailings until December 2021), with £625 air credit on flights for sailings until December 2020.

Celebrity Reflection guests will benefit from free flights and drinks



boutique cruising

SAGA

Winter 2021 cruises now on sale

A thrilling helicopter flight over Rio de Janeiro, a visit to the stunning lost city of Macchu Piccu, the chance to create ice sculptures in Alta's Igloo Hotel... just some of the magical experiences in Saga's winter 2021 cruise collection.

Our beautifully boutique ships, Spirit of Discovery and Spirit of Adventure will be all inclusive, giving your customers amazing value for money. Book now and they'll save up to 35% off the full fares too.

All Saga's winter 2021 cruises include:

- A chauffeur to the ship up to 250 miles each way
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Save up to 35% off full fares



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Private chauffeur service up to 75 miles each way or shared chauffeur service from 76-250 miles. All Inclusive includes selected wines with lunch and dinner, Saga house-branded spirits, cocktails containing house-branded spirits, draught beer and lager, non-alcoholic cocktails, all mixers and soft drinks. Please ask for further details. Saga's holidays and cruises are exclusively for the over 50s but a travel companion may be 40+. NTA-SC3225.

Win at selling

The British Isles

The British Isles can be rather forgotten when it comes to cruise destinations, passed over in favour of more exotic locations. Here, head of trade sales & groups at CMV

Lisa Jacobs explains exactly what it has to offer

We often overlook the fact that the British Isles is made up of more than 6,000 islands boasting some spectacular coastlines and beautiful rural landscapes; it is rich in diverse cultures, customs and traditions. Travel agents will find that many people, including regular clients, have never explored these wonderful islands.

A cruise with Cruise & Maritime Voyages (CMV) offers a voyage of fascinating, often overlooked wonders. CMV's unique itineraries take guests to remote, far-flung islands, iconic cities and charming coastal towns. With departures from no fewer than 13 different UK ports, agents can offer a fantastic opportunity to explore some of the best of both Britain and Northern Ireland and uncover the



“The choice of departure port means the customer can often find a cruise close to home”

enthralling history that has bequeathed our island nation its remarkable heritage.

The choice of departure port means the customer can often find a British Isles cruise close to their home. Enterprising agents in Scotland and the North of England are selling CMV departures from Rotterdam by booking convenient flights, sometimes providing accommodation in the city itself, or nearby Amsterdam.

The following are among the most popular British Isles destinations visited by CMV: Kirkwall is the gateway to the Orkney Islands with some 6,000 years of history etched into the rugged landscape. Passengers can visit the Isle of Skye, or Tobermory on the Isle of Mull.

When the ship drops anchor off the tranquil Isles of Scilly it's time to visit Tresco's famous Abbey Gardens. Or guests can explore



TOP TIPS

Sell the advantage of small to mid-size ships that can access more remote corners of the British Isles

• Highlight the wide choice of departure ports, meaning you can offer your customers convenient regional sailings

• Recommend that customers book early, as these itineraries rate among CMV's most popular cruises and can soon end up as wait-listed. Also take advantage of CMV's great value early booking deals

picturesque Guernsey with its beautiful sandy bays. Belfast too is a popular call; visitors can not only enjoy the scenery, but also visit the remarkable Titanic museum.

With a fleet of small to medium-sized classic ships, CMV offers a more traditional British cruise experience as opposed to sailing on the vast, mega-resort ships sometimes built today.

They present a more leisurely and friendly 'home from home' style of cruising and maritime experience, giving access to a much wider choice of interesting and remote ports of call. On board guests will find prices in sterling, British-style entertainment, plus a delicious British menu with international choices, as well as comfortable accommodation. ⚓

Aurora Expeditions

As the old saying goes, strike while the iron is hot, and that is exactly what Aurora Expeditions plans to do. Gary Peters joins **MD Robert Halfpenny** to discover how

A lot has changed in the 25 years since Robert Halfpenny joined the travel industry.

Back in 1994, for example, a certain Mr Tony Blair had just ascended to the top of the UK Labour Party and was on his way to becoming the nation's darling (for a period, at least). The Premier League was only two years old and not the all-consuming machine it is today. Social media wasn't even a dream; people still spoke face to face.

When it comes to the travel industry, the key difference between then and now boils down to attitude. The idea of a traveller going on a journey – not just in the literal sense – is now ingrained in the industry.

“People started off backpacking, then it was family holidays, then touring on

buses and the like,” says Halfpenny, who is away from his usual base of Australia for a series of key meetings in London.

“Now they want more authentic, real experiences. That's what we're offering. The world is getting smaller and people want to get out and see it before it is spoiled, I suppose. People want to see the remoteness and to have experiences. Some 20-odd years ago we were happier with just getting abroad. Today everything is so rushed.”

Hello, Greg Mortimer

What certainly hasn't been rushed is the development of Aurora's new ship, *Greg Mortimer* – named after the company co-founder – which sets sail on its inaugural voyage on 31 October this year to Antarctica, carrying 100 passengers.

The ship will offer expedition cruising in its purest form. There is a certain level of comfort on board but first and foremost is the idea of adventure, or as Halfpenny describes it, “our secret sauce”.

“A lot of thought has gone into this. We offer the extremes, such as polar diving, but for others a Zodiac ride is enough. We bring it all together and give them a nudge. Lots of people have kayaking but with us it's not a little side thing. Everyone chooses their own customised adventures.”

This is the difference, says Halfpenny, between Aurora and the competition, as more cruise lines seek a slice of an ever-growing pie. He elaborates: “As long as we focus on positioning ourselves in a certain segment, we should be all right.”

“When I came in [to the business in 2017] and we spoke about the new ship... it was kind of polarised. We had the new entrants with the luxury expedition ships, then the more authentic operators with Russian vessels, like us. However, there wasn't really anything in the middle and that's where we wanted to position Aurora Expeditions. We have gone from a small



The *Greg Mortimer* has a bow structure unique in cruise ships

garage band to getting on the main stage.”

Being part of the middle ground requires more interesting ways of thinking. As Halfpenny says, it's not an old-school Russian vessel, but nor is it dressed up in the luxury sense. As exhibit A, take the X-BOW, which “wasn't being used in expedition travel”, he explains. “We chose it because of its efficiency, as you can get through a 3-4m swell in the Drake Passage and maintain 12 knots. We can use less fuel and reduce sea sickness, as the energy is dispersed and we're piercing the waves.”

Going once... going twice... sold

Whether or not such a development truly appeals to guests is almost irrelevant. It's good for sustainability and is good PR, for sure. In any event, *Greg Mortimer* has sold so exceptionally well – “it sold out in the first nine months” – that Aurora has confirmed plans for a second new-build ship, to be delivered in autumn 2021.

“We needed more capacity,” says Halfpenny. “The challenge is, do you build a bigger ship? No, that doesn't align with our core values, hence the sister ship. What will be different is that it will have



“We had the luxury expedition ships and then there were the Russian vessels, but there was nothing in the middle, and that's where we wanted to position Aurora Expeditions”



the next four years of technology development and innovation.

"It will be delivered in September 2021, so we'll have two seasons of running the *Greg Mortimer*. For the name [of the ship] we'll be running a competition, a trade and consumer competition."

Boaty McBoatface? No thanks

And if the second ship sells as well as *Greg Mortimer*? "There is a possibility [of a third ship]; we are talking about that. It's really about making sure we don't cannibalise the business we have, but there are plenty of destinations in the world to go to that we're attracted to."

Book early

Halfpenny is full of praise for Craig Upshall, Aurora's sales director for UK and Europe, who joined in March 2018. At the time, about "85 per cent of sales were from Australia", Halfpenny says. But in 2021 the line is expecting about 40 per cent from the UK and North America, 60 per cent from Australia.

"That's been very impressive – even more so when you consider that UK and North America are typically later in booking," says Halfpenny. "That's the message to agents – get them in early and don't miss out. The best offers are always the early ones."

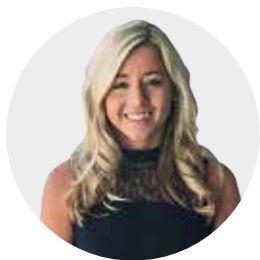
"We want people to go to these places and come back as ambassadors. That's the legacy – it's not just about pleasure, but also learning."

That, more than anything, is perhaps the biggest change in the past two and a bit decades. ⚓

Aurora offers everything from Zodiac trips to polar diving

Experiences such as treks into Antarctica are high on many people's wish lists





GEMMA SMITH

Virgin Voyages' UK sales manager explains how the new cruise line intends to shake up the industry and why its first ship, *Scarlet Lady*, is perfect for foodies

Why is your cruise line the best?

Virgin Voyages has taken a completely fresh look at cruising with a mission to create the world's most irresistible holiday. Our advantage is that we started with a blank piece of paper; we are not only disrupting (smartly, of course) the way in which people cruise but we are also creating an epic sea change for our crew, our sailors on board and for our First Mates (our trade partners).

If your cruise line was a famous person, who would it be and why?

Virgin Voyages is focused on sustainable travel so we are removing single-use plastics on board our ships. With that in mind, I would say we are like Prince Harry, who has recently launched the sustainable travel initiative. When travelling with us, it is also all about mindset, whether it is a having some retox time in the Manor Nightclub, or a moment of detox in the Redemption Spa.

How long have you worked for your cruise line?

I have worked for Virgin for four years and moved to Virgin Voyages in February 2019, just in time for our sales launch on

“When I started at Virgin Voyages my niece asked if it meant I was a mermaid”

Valentine's Day. My first day with the cruise line, I was on *Scarlet Lady* in Genoa mid-construction – it was a really incredible first day.

What's the funniest thing you've ever been asked about cruising?

When I first started at Virgin Voyages I was showing my niece some pictures of *Scarlet Lady* and she asked if this meant I was a mermaid. Of course I said, 'Yes!'.

What are you most looking forward to on *Scarlet Lady*?

I am a bit of a foodie, so I can't wait to sample the dining options. We will not have any buffets or the traditional main dining room; instead we have created more than 20 eateries, from casual dining at the Galley, which is an upmarket food hall, to Wake, which is a steak and seafood fine dining restaurant. There is also a restaurant called the Test Kitchen, where the chefs will create a special meal for guests.

Which port would you prefer to disembark at, and what would you do?

It has to be our exclusive Beach Club at Bimini in the Bahamas, which will have

great food, an amazing pool area, a relaxation area with hammocks and the gorgeous beach front. I love going snorkelling, which Bimini is renowned for.

And where would you opt to stay on board and why?

At the moment all our itineraries have a day at sea, so I wouldn't stay on the ship in any port. Having said that, I would love to stay in any of the Mega RockStar Suites on *Scarlet Lady*. There is a hair and makeup squad included and this would be a real treat for me. Growing up with brothers, it's safe to say this area is not my forte.

Which cruise is on your bucket list?

I've always wanted to cruise from Seattle to Alaska to see the glaciers and wildlife.

If you didn't work in the industry, what do you think you would do?

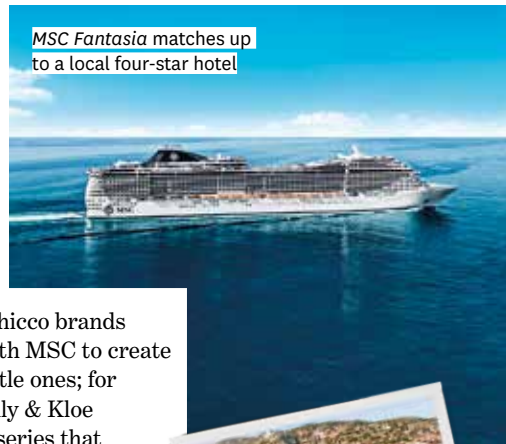
I have always loved travelling and experiencing new destinations and cultures so naturally it was the perfect industry to be involved in, and it was always my plan. I secured my first job in travel following my Master's degree, but an alternative could have been a career in the NHS. ↓





Children will love the chance to visit beaches in Mallorca

Choose cruise



MSC Fantasia matches up to a local four-star hotel

A FAMILY AFFAIR

In this regular series of articles, we look at converting new-to-cruise clients. This month we compare taking the family to stay in a hotel in Mallorca versus a cruise to the popular Balearic island

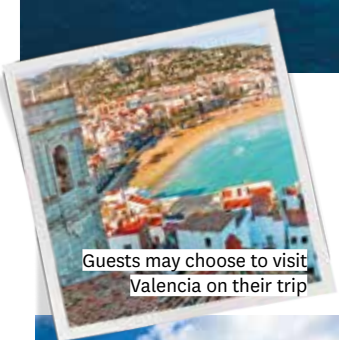
Family holidays are a great way to introduce younger members of the family to the pleasures of cruising. Many cruise lines offer facilities for children, from toddlers to teens; in the example quoted below, Italian operator MSC offers no fewer than five different kids' clubs, spanning from babies right up to 17-year-olds.



Historic sites in Marseille could be on the itinerary

The Lego and Chicco brands have partnered with MSC to create this concept for little ones; for older children, Kelly & Kloe Onboard is a web series that follows the story of two young girls who spend time on board an MSC cruise in the company of their father. This full day of kids' entertainment allows children to explore the ship and bring to life the magic of the series by learning the theme song and dance routine and taking part in a selfie contest dressed up as characters from the story, as well as having the chance to get creative by writing their very own episode of the adventure.

The MSC Family Explorer Club, meanwhile, allows couples with children to explore a destination together by offering family-friendly programming where tours start later in the morning, are shorter in duration and run accompanied by expert guides who also interact with the group as story tellers. ⚓



Guests may choose to visit Valencia on their trip



Cagliari in Sardinia is also one of the MSC ports of call

HOTEL VS CRUISE

ITINERARY	DESTINATIONS VISITED	ACCOMMODATION	DINING	AMENITIES	PRICE
Mediterranean cruise, seven nights' full board on MSC Cruises' <i>Fantasia</i>	Round-trip from Palma de Mallorca via Valencia, Marseille, Genoa, Civitavecchia, Palermo and Cagliari	Balcony cabin	Two dining rooms, Il Galeone and Il Covo, plus speciality outlets, an ice-cream bar, pizzeria and grill, and children's meal options	Daytime activities, evening shows, Broadway-style theatrical performances, live music, DJ, Outdoor games, gym, yoga and fitness classes	£3,516 including flights and transfers for two adults and two children
Seven nights' full board at the four-star Sea Club Mediterranean Resort hotel	Alcudia, Mallorca	Premium one-bedroom apartment	Facilities include a buffet restaurant with show cooking, plus a choice of four snack bars serving pizza, burgers, ice cream, etc	Six outdoor pools, splash park, nightly entertainment, sports facilities, gym, beauty salon and cocktail bar, plus an activities schedule including juice-making and dance classes	Price £3,768 including flights and transfers for two adults and two children

Itineraries supplied courtesy of Ponders Travel; for more information call 01954 232 802, visit ponderstravel.co.uk, or contact sales@ponderstravel.co.uk



1

1 These boots are made for walking

Dust off those walking shoes and take a shore programme with a difference. While many cruise lines offer tours of differing levels of activity, Ramblers Walking Holidays is one of the only specialists to work alongside a line – in this case, Fred Olsen – to provide tailored programmes across the globe, from the fjords of Norway to the islands of Indonesia. Prices for a seven-night Fjords of Norway itinerary, departing 24 April 2020, start from £1,249pp. As revealed in the September issue of *Cruise Trade News*, Ramblers' new 2020 cruise and walk brochure is now being sold through the trade and the operator is paying commission for the first time in its 73-year history.

6
OF THE BEST

Land experiences

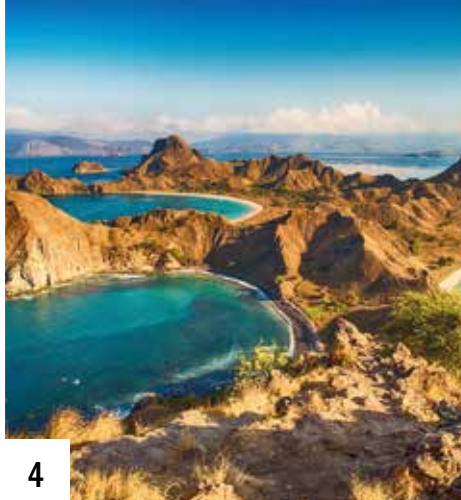
One of the attractions of a cruise is the almost unlimited opportunities it offers for on-shore exploration, as **Gary Peters** reports

2 Exploration in Vietnam

Twenty two days exploring Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos – that's what guests get for a holiday starting at £3,549pp, departing 13 March 2020. This cruise and tour, from Titan Travel, includes a host of fascinating excursions, including tours in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Phnom Penh, to name just a few, as well as a river cruise along the Mekong, which is fast growing in popularity. Guests will have the chance to see a number of museums and the Cu Chi Tunnels, which were once used by Viet Cong soldiers during the Vietnam War.

3 AzAmazing evenings

Azamara has anchored itself as the go-to line for destination immersion, and its new programme of more than 1,700 land tours promises to take guests to the heart of a destination, with more time in port than ever before. While the scope and detail are impressive, one of the highlights remains the line's AzAmazing evenings – specially curated events that occur once on every cruise. Whether it be a visit to the St Petersburg Symphony Orchestra or a traditional Korean performance at the Busan Culture Centre, there are few lines that delve as deeply as Azamara. Prices for Azamara's 10-night Wine and Romance voyage, departing 14 May 2020, start from £2,012pp. This includes three nights in Bordeaux to sample the area's wine-making history.



4

4 The legendary Komodo

Cruising isn't just about great accommodation and food; sometimes it's the opportunity to see unique wildlife in its natural habitat that seduces. Aqua Expeditions has seven and 12-night Bali to Komodo National Park cruises, which, alongside numerous picture-perfect islands, visit the two key islands of the Komodo National Park – Rinca and Padar. Here, accompanied by official guides, guests can spot the famed dragons in the wild and discover the watering holes where they hunt for prey. Prices for a seven-night departure on 2 May 2020 start from approximately £6,200pp.

5 Living local

This August Oceania Cruises unveiled a new series of its Go Local tours, designed to inspire guests to look further than the traditional tourist hotspots. Some of the most widely publicised among the more than 120 tours across Europe, Alaska and South America include fishing with locals in Portofino, painting classes in Ireland and becoming a shepherd for a day in the Basque Country, followed by a local picnic. Those wishing to indulge their inner shepherd should book the 22-day Fairytales and Folklore itinerary, departing 25 May 2020, and add the Go Local tour on day nine in Biarritz. Prices from £4,869pp.

3

5



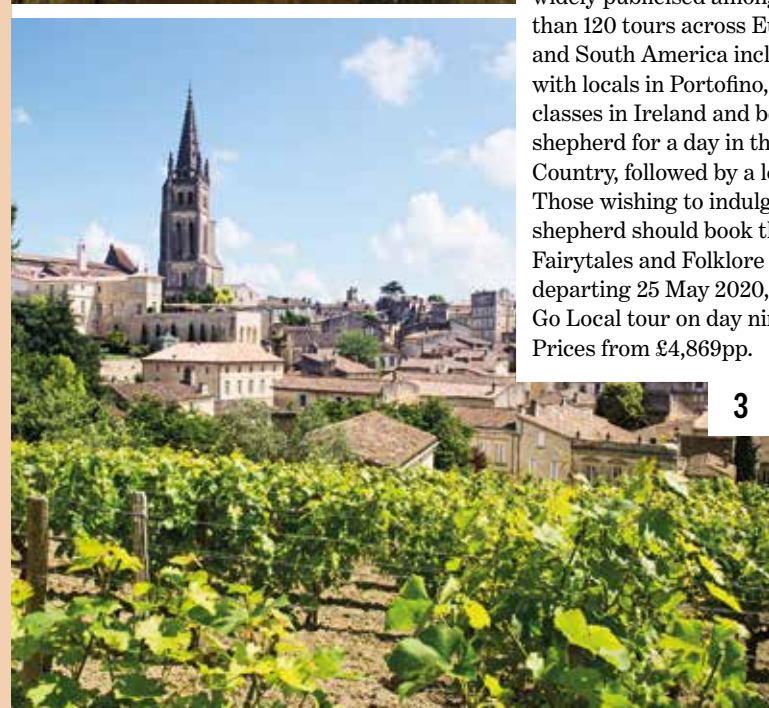
6 Cuisine expertise

Sometimes it really is all about the food. While cruise lines have invested heavily in recent years to update restaurants and bring renowned chefs on board for cookery classes, there's still something special about getting off the ship and experiencing the local cuisine among people who live there. Regent Seven Seas Cruises includes a tour of Roatan's foodie scene and the Blue Harbor Tropical Arboretum, a 160-acre botanical garden and fruit orchard, where guests can learn about seasonal produce and harvest some of their own, to use later in a cooking class. Prices for a Miami to Miami cruise, departing 24 March 2020, start at £5,519pp.

6



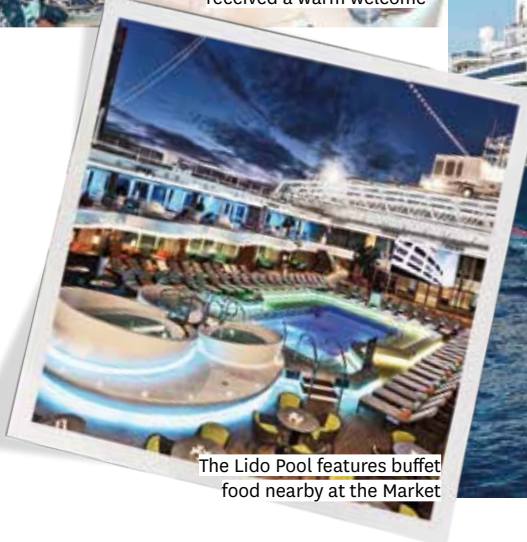
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The HAL/CTN winners received a warm welcome

The competition prize meant a weekend away with a tour of *Nieuw Statendam*



The Lido Pool features buffet food nearby at the Market

Nieuw Statendam

We are a generous bunch here at *Cruise Trade News*, so we recently got together with the lovely people at Holland America Line to run a fantastic competition. The prize was a weekend away in the exciting city of Amsterdam for two agents plus two colleagues, including the chance to visit the line's 1,331-passenger Pinnacle ship *Nieuw Statendam*.

Our competition winners, Alison and Paul Crisp of Not Just Travel and Nicola Colquhoun and Jan O'Connor of Broadway Travel, joined 10 other agents, CTN editor Colette Doyle and HAL's senior marketing manager, Carly Perkins, for a fun-filled tour of the Dutch capital.

After drinks on the first evening at the SkyLounge at the DoubleTree by Hilton, which

offers panoramic views of the city, the group enjoyed dinner with a twist on board a fascinating canal cruise.

The next day it was time to board *Nieuw Statendam* and tour round the impressive vessel, stopping to look at a number of cabins (including one for solo travellers) and important areas such as the two-tier Queen's Lounge, home to the Memphis BB King's Blues Club, then on to the duelling pianos stage at Billboard Onboard.

Taking a tour of the eating outlets, the agents visited Rudi's Sel de Mer, which serves classic French cuisine, and the numerous self-service stations at Lido Market, before ending up with lunch at the magnificent Adam Tihany-designed Dining Room, where they tucked into Thai beef salad and sea bass.



Club Orange offers a premium meeting place for members



Guests can enjoy steak at The Pinnacle Grill

Lincoln Center Stage



Lincoln Center Stage showcases a range of chamber music



Amsterdam was the venue for the lucky winners



Memphis style rules at BB King's Blues Club



Verandah cabins are a compact choice but offer a private sea view



The winning agents enjoyed a visit to the exquisite Dining Room

Fast Facts

The double-width *AmaMagna* brings a new dimension to river cruising. Sailing the Danube, this innovative ship offers a wider choice of luxury, with spacious suites ranging from 355 to 710 sq ft, ocean-worthy amenities, including four restaurants and five bars, and a one-of-a-kind Zen Wellness Studio. With the personalised service on board and a choice of daily shore excursions – including guided bike and hike tours – *AmaMagna* redefines river cruising.

.....

4

DECKS

98

STATEROOMS

196

GUESTS

4

RESTAURANTS

5

BARS

1

CINEMA

1

POOL WITH
WHIRLPOOL

AmaMagna



The Al Fresco Restaurant

Featuring a retractable roof and windows, this refreshing venue offers lighter flavours with a focus on vegetarian and seafood options.



Jimmy's Wine Bar & Restaurant

Named in honour of one of AmaWaterways' co-founders, the late Jimmy Murphy, this intimate venue serves delicious dishes family-style – perfect for meeting new people or dining with a group.



The Chef's Table

Here, the kitchen – usually hidden – becomes part of the entertainment. Watch the chef prepare a special meal and indulge in a delectable tasting menu paired with hand-selected fine wines.



The Marina

A unique innovation for river ships, the Marina platform opens at the rear of the ship to reveal a Sundowner boat for excursions and other adventures.



Accommodation

Relax in comfort and luxury with elegant, contemporary staterooms and suites, the majority offering full outside balconies to enjoy the scenery. The Owner's Suite boasts 710 sq ft of space, making it the largest on the rivers.



Zen Wellness Studio

Stretch out in this space, where a professionally trained wellness host leads small group classes such as yoga and circuit training. Spin classes also feature on bikes as part of the on-board wellness programme.

An illustration of a person with long dark hair, wearing a yellow sweater and blue pants, sitting on the top edge of a large white rectangular frame. They are holding a green laptop.

The great consortia survey

Should you join a travel agent consortium? **Gary Peters** speaks to those in the know to determine the benefits



Advantage Travel Partnership

PAULA LACEY

Outgoing group membership & commercial director

History of consortium

Advantage Travel Partnership is the UK's largest independent travel agent partnership. Advantage leisure and business travel agencies who are part of the group are each independently owned, but as a collective they produce more than £4.5bn of travel sales each year, making members experts in every aspect of the travel industry. Indeed, Advantage is the only organisation of its size that is solely owned by its member partners, which means that they are all actively engaged in the business with full control over their own destiny.

Core objectives

Advantage is extremely proud of its travel agency partners and although their skills and travel knowledge are as different as the individuals themselves, they all share a passion for travel and a desire to tailor their travel services to the individual needs of their customers. Advantage works closely with our agents to provide them with the tools they need to offer their clients the most inspirational, yet affordable, range of travel products.

Number of members

353 member companies with more than 650 locations through the UK. All members are independent. Each member is an individual business and we tailor support accordingly.

Benefits of being a member

Advantage is owned by its members, ensuring they have control over the destiny of the organisation. We are the top selling consortium for more than 100 suppliers, meaning we can deliver best-in-class commercial deals. We also have a wide range of marketing programmes to help members with customer retention and acquisition, as well as dedicated business development managers to offer support. Product specific schemes such as cruise champions, luxury connoisseurs and a new explorers scheme help members get a strong foothold in the growing adventure and touring markets.

Plans to attract more members

Most new members are referred by existing members or supplier partners. We understand the challenges agents face and are well placed to help them meet those challenges with comprehensive support services. Many of our new members are in fact start-up businesses that we can help nurture during the crucial start-up and establishment phase.

Challenges over the coming years

There are many external factors that affect the travel industry, most of which are outside our control, from natural disasters to political situations. Regulatory changes can be a challenge for a small to medium-sized business and it's important that we support our members in these areas.

“EVERYTHING WE DO IS ABOUT DRIVING PROFITS BACK TO THE MEMBERS”

Staying ahead of the competition

Advantage has invested in technology in order to provide unique business solutions. This is an area where we will continue to invest in order to provide members with technology solutions to help their business. Everything we do is about driving profits back to the members.

Members actively selling cruise

Owing to the size of the cruise market and its continued growth, the majority of our members will actively sell cruise. Some will specialise more than others and have very targeted cruise propositions that result in multimillion pound cruise turnover.

Annual cost of membership

This will depend on the size of the member's business. However, on average, our members receive annual benefits equal to 20x their subscription fee investment.

Measures to educate members about cruise

We have a very specific and targeted focus on cruise and as such it has its own dedicated resource. We have a Cruise Champions strategy, with over 140 members, and these are members that are either already knowledgeable in cruise, or members that want to grow their cruise business. We also provide a range of dedicated marketing services, including cruise guides, while a recent innovation was Cruise Finder, which can be used by members to match the perfect cruise to a clients' needs easily. Soon we'll be launching Cruise & More within the Advantage Holidays platform, giving members the ability to repackage cruise at highly competitive prices under the Advantage ATOL.



AITO

GEMMA ANTROBUS

Chair, AITO travel agents

History of consortium

AITO was started as an association for independent tour operators in 1976. Some 19 years later, in 1995, the association expanded to include an agents' division, initially set up as a distribution channel for the specialist independent tour operator product that's available within the association.

Core objectives

Our mission is to bring together like-minded independent travel agents, tour operators and affiliate businesses to promote the benefits of booking with independent travel companies. These offer in-depth and expert knowledge, plus impartial advice, and always provide exceptional customer service. Selling what is right for the individual client is key.

Number of members

Approximately 100 agents, 120 tour operators, 50 affiliates and 35 tourist boards, which is growing every month.

Benefits of being a member

It is the access to niche and specialist product that non-AITO Agent members (and thus the consumer) can't, respectively, either sell or find elsewhere on the high street. Many of the small and niche tour operators do not sell via any agent network other than AITO agents, so this gives AITO agents a good USP in the overcrowded marketplace that is now 'retail' sales, whether that be from a shop front, an office or as a homeworker.

"POTENTIAL MEMBER AGENTS CAN SEE AT FIRST HAND THE BOND BETWEEN MEMBERS"

Plans to attract more members

We invite interested and potential member agents to experience our networking dinners and training events. They can see first-hand the bond between members that really isn't emulated anywhere else in the industry. Through this bond and the activities that the association provides for its members, agencies can differentiate themselves from their competitors and demonstrate to consumers the value of booking with an independent agency.

Challenges over the coming years

The travel industry is exceptionally flexible and adaptable. We deal with change every day, from ash clouds to strikes to flight cancellations and delays, so whatever challenges next year might bring, be it economic, political or social, the independent sector will rise to the challenge.

Staying ahead of the competition

We don't see ourselves as having

direct competition in the market. We are the perfect complement to any agent who is already a consortium member and also for those who are not. If you are an independent agent looking to make that next step towards selling more niche and specialist product, supported by a membership of your peers, all of whom are working hard to innovate and secure their futures, then AITO Specialist Travel Agents is the association for you.

Members actively selling cruise

Our members sell all forms of travel, including cruise.

Annual cost of membership

For travel agents with one branch it is £458 + VAT, with a sliding scale for additional branches and homeworkers.

Measures to educate members about cruise

AITO has recently welcomed new river cruise members to the association. It continues to recruit cruise companies that meet its membership criteria in respect of independence. Education comes in the form of our regular product training events, which are well attended by agents.

Co-op Travel Consortium

ALISON HOLMES

Head of the consortium

History of consortium

The consortium is now in its sixth year and is enjoying steady growth. We wanted to create a consortium that reflects the Co-operative values for our members.

Core objectives

The business is built on strong independent values, which means we are perfectly positioned to provide exceptional support and services to all types of independent travel agents, enabling our members to operate thriving and successful businesses.

As an independent business, we understand the importance of dedicating time to everyone individually. This ensures all our members are presented with the right tools and support for their individual business.

Number of members

70 independent travel agents, made up of a mixture of call centres, retail shops and homeworking businesses.

Benefits of being a member

We supply our members with ABTA and ATOL facilities, market-leading commercial terms with suppliers, merchant facilities, reduced administration and overhead costs through our centralised payment system, as well as support and advice on any regulatory matters and general day-to-day support.

Plans to attract more members

We have been extremely lucky to date and many agents come to us after being recommended by our own members, suppliers and industry colleagues, due to our transparency and flexibility with our members.

Challenges over the coming years

A key challenge is the change in the buying habits of the consumer and ensuring our members are

equipped to compete. Also, it is about staying up to speed with the opportunities for marketing via social media.

Staying ahead of the competition

[We focus on] our Co-operative values, flexibility and transparency with our members.

Members actively selling cruise

I would say approximately 80 per cent of our members are actively selling cruises.

Annual cost of membership

We charge a management fee that is based on agents' net commission.

Measures to educate members about cruise

[We] arrange webinars with cruise suppliers and events and we also promote ship visits.

Global Travel Group

RHIAN HERBERT

Head of new business development

History of consortium

Global Travel Group is a travel consortium with more than 25 years of established travel business, providing travel agents with training, commercial and technical support, marketing resources and ATOL protection, which allows our members to dynamically package and tailor holidays to their clients' needs.

Core objectives

The idea of Global Travel Group emerged from an aim to break through expensive barriers and allow non-travel professionals access into the dynamic and lucrative travel industry.



Number of members

Global Travel Group has more than 350 members, with people from all backgrounds and experiences. Our comprehensive two-week training course provides all types of agents with the necessary skills they require to start their own travel business.

Benefits of being a member

Being part of Dnata, a major global player in the travel market, allows us to offer substantial additional benefits to our members including the increase in the strength of our buying power and stronger commercial terms with many travel industry suppliers. The main benefits of being a member also include core training, commercial and technical support, marketing resources and ATOL protection.

We have also partnered with mybookingrewards.com to help our agents earn rewards on holiday bookings at more than 2,000 hotels and destinations, with the benefit of being able to manage them all in one place.

Plans to attract more members

To attract more agents we have sales development operations in the north, central and south of the UK. Having staff on the road is the very best way to get our message out there and support members, no matter what size their agency. Global Travel Group has a dedicated website for agents along with travel events to drive awareness.

Challenges over the coming years

The current political state will be something to watch over the coming years, with plans to activate Brexit and leave the EU by 31 October. This may determine the movement of the travel industry and its regulations and we will adapt and reassure our members through this process. However, despite this challenge, Global Travel Group is seeing an increase in members moving from homeworker to retail agent, which has bucked the trend of high streets taking a hit over the past few years.

Staying ahead of the competition

There is no other travel consortium that offers as much as Global Travel Group or the same package. We offer unrivalled earning potential, support, training, knowledge and experience. If you want a business opportunity to earn good returns, then we can certainly offer you that. We also value long-term relationships and that's why we have members who have worked with us for over two decades.

Members actively selling cruise

For us, cruise is trading 16.5 per cent up, year to date, and is averaging approximately 20 per cent share of our overall full member sales.

Annual cost of membership

There is a one-off fee to become a member of Global Travel Group, regardless of whether you want to be based at home, in an office or in a retail shop. This is £14,995 plus VAT – however, if you are already working in the travel industry, the joining fee is waived.

Measures to educate members about cruise

We hold regional one-day training events, providing agents and suppliers with the opportunity to enjoy valuable one-on-one meetings during speed-networking sessions. In the past we have also held on-board training sessions, giving agents essential experience of cruise ships and the calibre of features their customers can expect at sea. There are also dedicated cruise marketing programmes taking place throughout the year.



Hays Travel

JONATHAN WOODALL

Group head of commercial and cruise

History of consortium

Hays Travel has grown from being a small retail shop in Sunderland into the UK's largest independent travel agent. A key ingredient in its success was the formation of the Hays Travel Independence Group in 1995, to provide other independent travel companies with the tools to run a successful travel business.

Core objectives

We recognise that every business is unique and provide tailored support to suit. We specialise in nurturing new start-up businesses with big ideas and potential for expansion.

Number of members

We have 108 members trading from more than 200 locations. All members bring a diverse range of travel agencies to the consortium; from high street shops to telesales operators, online travel agents, corporate travel companies and homeworker networks.

Benefits of being a member

We are a large and well-established company with substantial buying power, so we have excellent commercial terms with some of the UK's biggest tour operators and suppliers. All members are issued with their own ABTA number and can offer fully financially protected bookings to their customers. We also provide travel software and our own tour operating system.

Plans to attract more members

We rely heavily on our current members being our ambassadors. There are few things more effective at encouraging others than seeing people around you succeed.

Challenges over the coming years

Our main challenge will be to move with the times and provide the services our customers want in a continuously crowded market. We also aim to work to develop more eco-friendly holidays.

Staying ahead of the competition

We are a big business with a family feel. Every member of staff goes through customer service training, no matter what role they have.

Members actively selling cruise

All our Independence Group and homeworkers are actively selling cruise, with around 80 per cent seeing continued success. We hope to increase this so all members feel confident selling cruise.

Annual cost of membership

Costs vary depending on the size and needs of a company and the type of membership, but monthly costs are kept to a minimum, and our contracts usually involve a commission split.

Measures to educate members about cruise

We actively encourage members to attend educational events hosted by cruise lines. We often include these as part of our conferences or road shows, so people can familiarise themselves with what's on offer. We also have webinars for one-to-one cruise training. On top of all this, we have a dedicated cruise team in head office sharing the latest cruise offers and deals.

InteleTravel

TRICIA HUGHES

UK director

History of consortium

Globally InteleTravel is the largest homeworking agency and is recognised by the world's leading travel brands.

Core objectives

[Our next step] involves taking our education and tutorials to a different level. In March this year we achieved ABTA approval and are now fully ensconced in the UK travel industry.

Number of members

In the UK there are 3,000 members.

Benefits of being a member

Our main benefits include access to partner training, education and competitive commercial deals, to provide good commission earnings.

Plans to attract more members

For us it is about word of mouth throughout the industry.

Challenges over the coming years

The ability for our partners to cope with the growth in volumes and IT integration with partner systems.

Staying ahead of the competition

Our tests and exams are mandatory before agents can trade and earn commissions. Also, back-office functionality is diverse and efficient.



The Travel Network Group

ALEXIS COLES-BARRASSO

Director of PR and communications

History of consortium

The Travel Trust Association (a part of the Travel Network Group) was established in 1993 and was designed for travel businesses looking for an alternative to bonding arrangements. All money is secured into a member's own individual trust account and guaranteed by the Travel Trust Association. Travel Trust Association membership also gives tour operators and travel agents full compliance within the industry's travel regulations and the tools to book without the need for any financial bonds, security, or net assets.

Core objectives

Our network provides an effective distribution channel for suppliers operating in the travel market and currently works with over 200 business partners. Our key differentiator is the unique way in which we support the needs of our diverse membership and, at the same time, allow them the freedom to operate and drive their business the way they choose.

“STAYING AHEAD IS ABOUT TAKING OUR EDUCATION TO A DIFFERENT LEVEL”

What's more, 50 per cent of agents are new to travel.

Members actively selling cruise

Approximately 100.

Annual cost of membership

There is a £144 one-off fee, plus £32 per month.

Measures to educate members about cruise

[We are focusing on] delivering high-intensity cruise training that can be shared with customers, customer presentations and ship visits, promoting CLIA benefits, attending CLIA conferences and dedicated cruise webinars.

“WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON OUR EXPERIENCED AND ENERGETIC SERVICES TEAM”

Number of members

With a 1,000-strong membership base, our members range from some of the UK's largest networks of independent travel retailers and multi-million-pound e-commerce travel companies through to smaller family-run high street travel agents and self-employed homeworkers, demonstrating that we have membership propositions to suit all travel enterprises, large or small. We have around 120 homeworkers that operate under the Independent Travel Experts brand. They are a key part of our business and we are attracting new homeworkers all the time.

Benefits of being a member

Over the past few years our business has become the fastest growing travel membership organisation in the UK, purely due to our obsession with delivering world-class support to our members. We have transformed our business in recent years through ensuring that we take a professional, timely and easy-to-do-business-with approach to everything we do.

Plans to attract more members

Scale is important to us and we have a recruitment team in Woking that is actively seeking to engage with new members. We also host a number of recruitment events each year across the country.

Challenges over the coming years

The UK travel industry operates in a challenging and volatile world and therefore our business can be impacted by anything from the weather and the economic situation to political unrest and natural disasters. However, it remains a very robust sector and continues to thrive as the population continues to see travel as one of life's essential pastimes.

Staying ahead of the competition

We pride ourselves on developing strong relationships with our members and by having an experienced and energetic membership services team. Members have their own dedicated membership services manager who they can turn to, not only for help, guidance and support but also for information about activities that are taking place within our group and across the industry too.

Members actively selling cruise

The vast majority of our members are actively selling cruise. We established a cruise tour operation two years ago, called Cruise Club Concierge, which assists with selling and packaging cruise. It's been very successful and is growing all the time.

Annual cost of membership

It varies from brand to brand.

Measures to educate members about cruise

We run workshops, open days and seminars throughout the year that cover cruising and how members can grow their cruise sales. We also host an annual cruise conference and work closely with cruise lines to make sure that we are at the forefront of their developments and agent offers.

Travel Counsellors

KIRSTEN HUGHES

Managing director

History of consortium

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the business model was one of the first of its kind in the UK to offer travel professionals the opportunity to run their own corporate or leisure travel business from home or shared offices.

Core objectives

Travel Counsellors is a people-focused travel company, providing tailored leisure and corporate travel experiences to 750,000+ customers each year. Over 1,800 Travel Counsellors across the globe provide highly bespoke services through taking time to get to know their customers personally – an opportunity afforded by running their own travel business from home.

Number of members

More than 1,200 Travel Counsellors in seven countries (UK, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, South Africa, Australia and the UAE), and 400 support team colleagues across the globe.



Benefits of being a member

We empower professional people to launch and grow a successful travel business in an industry they love, providing the support, tools and technology to focus on creating brilliant travel experiences and building long-lasting customer relationships.

We also use technology to enhance the human touch, not replace it. Our bespoke-built booking platform Phenix, enables access to hundreds of travel suppliers and cruise companies, allowing each Travel Counsellor to create customised travel itineraries finely tuned to client preferences and booking behaviour.

Plans to attract more members

In a recent internal company survey, 94 per cent of Travel Counsellors agreed with the statement, "I love my job", with 92 per cent stating they would not consider returning to their previous career. This is in no small part due to the fact that owning a corporate or leisure travel business with Travel Counsellors offers the opportunity for uncapped earning potential, while empowering people to achieve a great work/life balance through remote working.

It's testament to the company's focus on customer experience that its continuous success has come from word-of-mouth, customer testimonials and personal recommendations.

"WE USE TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE THE HUMAN TOUCH, NOT REPLACE IT"

Challenges over the coming years

Despite uncertainties in the political and economic climate, we remain focused on the most important people of all – our customers. By continuing to ensure our cruising customers enjoy seamless booking and travel experiences and being there for them whenever they need us, means that the trusted relationships that individual Travel Counsellors nurture with their customers will continue to support company growth.

Staying ahead of the competition

Last year alone saw the company invest £6m in technology, equating to £3,500 spent per Travel Counsellor. While innovations in technology allow members to get closer to their customers, technology will always be used to support the human connections the company strives to create.

Members actively selling cruise

More than 40 per cent of the Travel Counsellors' international community is actively selling cruise – a growing area of the business in line with the growing popularity of cruising holidays, the opportunity cruising itineraries offer for exploring the world, and the fixed-cost options provided by setting sail from Southampton and cruise ports across the globe.

Annual cost of membership

There is no annual fee, although there is an initial joining fee. The entry fee for experienced travel professionals is £295 + VAT.

Measures to educate members about cruise

This year alone we have hosted up to 100 dedicated cruise-themed roadshows, training initiatives and events in partnership with cruising suppliers to keep individual Travel Counsellors up to date with the latest innovations and product developments in the cruise industry and identify the very best travel experiences available.

There is also a dedicated, in-house TV channel, TCTV, which hosts a weekly cruise-focused show, featuring representatives from international cruise suppliers and presenting the latest news from the industry. ⚓





Gadgets & gizmos

From virtual assistants to personal avatars, ultra-modern equipment is bringing technology to the high seas, writes **Jeannine Williamson**



Zoe makes finding the way to areas such as the pool screen easier for MSC clients

OceanMedallion means facts are available at the touch of a screen



Princess Cruises' Ocean medallion



Aurora's Greg Mortimer has a hull that combats seasickness

As we all become increasingly reliant on technology in our day-to-day lives, cruise lines are rolling out the latest advances to speed up boarding, enrich experiences and generally add an exciting new dimension to life at sea.

The leading innovations can be found on the largest and newest vessels, but mobile apps are increasingly becoming the norm across many cruise lines.

"When it comes to enhancement technology, the cruise industry has come on in leaps and bounds," says CLIA UK & Ireland director Andy Harmer. "Cruise lines are constantly developing new technology to make the guest experience even more seamless and create better-connected voyages."

"These state-of-the-art innovations appeal to tech-savvy customers who use the latest gadgets at home and expect the same on board. Such technologies range from the complex infrastructure that goes into creating smart ships to apps that travellers can access on their own devices. This technology is to the highest standard and guests can be assured that their personal information is kept safe and secure at all times."

Talk to me

MSC Cruises made waves with the introduction of Zoe, the world's first virtual personal cruise assistant, which has been programmed to respond to voice commands and answer more than 800 questions about on-board services. Available in every cabin, Zoe was introduced on *MSC Bellissima* and will be available on each new ship, starting with *MSC Grandiosa* later this year and *MSC Virtuosa* in 2020.

MSC Cruises CEO Gianni Onorato comments: "In 2017 we introduced MSC for Me, an industry-leading digital innovation platform that revolutionised the way guests were able to customise and personalise their experience. This was just the starting point in providing a connected cruise experience."

"There was a core guest need to be met, which was to find answers to common questions in a quick and easy way, enabling guests to make the most of their holiday. We researched the



A six-passenger submarine features on *Scenic Eclipse*

SELLING TIPS

Will appeal to tech-savvy young and new-to-cruise clients

- Personalises the cruise experience

- Saves time checking in and booking shore excursions and speciality restaurants

- Enables families and groups to keep in touch with children and friends

- Provides in-depth learning and enrichment for guests

latest connected technologies and identified voice assistants and artificial intelligence as the way to meet this need, and work on Zoe began."

Meanwhile, *Celebrity Edge* – billed as the world's most technologically advanced cruise ship – arrived in the UK earlier this year ahead of a summer season sailing in Europe. Passengers can upload a selfie via the mobile app and use facial recognition software to bypass traditional document checks. The most spectacular innovation is the Magic Carpet, a cantilevered platform on the exterior of the ship that reaches heights of 13 storeys above sea level and has seating, a bar and a space for live music.

"*Celebrity Edge* is redefining the cruise experience, and the UK is a really significant market for us," explains Celebrity Cruises president and CEO Lisa Lutoff Perlo. "The ship's transformative design, spaces, technology, and so much more, create a holiday like no other."

In addition, Princess Cruises has the multi-award winning OceanMedallion, which is the same size as a 10p piece and designed to create a simple and personalised cruise experience. Worn as a pendant, bracelet or on a clip, it offers touchless cabin entry – as the guest approaches

Focus on: Technology

the door opens automatically – and connects to PlayOcean portals to enable passengers to take part in digital scavenger hunts, create their own avatars and turn their smart device into a game controller for interactive gaming.

Other uses include the family and friends locator which lets passengers find fellow group members and chat with them. Regarding personal information being stored, Princess says guests only provide the same advance information they would normally complete via the cruise personaliser, such as passport, insurance and emergency contact details.

Windows on wildlife

Exclusive to its three new expedition-class ships – *Hanseatic Nature*, *Hanseatic Inspiration* and *Hanseatic Spirit* – the first of which will launch this autumn, Hapag-Lloyd Cruises is introducing a large touchscreen study wall. It is situated in the Ocean Academy, and passengers can carry out in-depth research on wildlife and the destinations they're visiting.

Silversea will also have a large interactive digital wall aboard its Galapagos ship *Silver Origin*, launching in summer 2020, via which guests will be able to access destination-related



including pictures, videos, excursion previews and scientific presentations.

Carnival Cruise Line's HUB App, launched in 2015, has a 4.6+ customer rating and has been downloaded more than six million times. Recently it was expanded to allow guests to have pizza and drinks delivered anywhere on board and to include day-by-day schedules of children's clubs, with visitors given the chance to nominate favourite activities. Norwegian Cruise Line has also completed the expansion of its Cruise Norwegian app across its 16-ship fleet.

And it's not just lines with a younger demographic that are embracing technology. In response to guest demand, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, which traditionally appeals to mature cruisers, has introduced a new app across its four ships. Features include a pre-cruise countdown, booking function for excursions, destination information, restaurant menus and a digital daily programme.

The line's head of marketing, Ben Williams, says: "We are extremely excited to introduce the new app, the latest development to improve the guest

experience from start to finish. One of the main challenges was developing an app that moves across time zones and can be used with minimal internet connectivity, which is essential in ensuring that we are able to enhance our guests' cruise experience. We have lots of future functionalities planned already, so we hope that uptake grows as the app develops."

Improving the actual sailing experience, Aurora Expeditions' new ship, *Greg Mortimer*, launching this month (October), is the first passenger vessel designed with patented Ulstein X-BOW technology. This allows for gentler sea crossings in rough waters such as the Drake Passage. And the trend for thrilling excursions continues with a six-passenger submarine on the new *Scenic Eclipse*.

Full details are still to be announced about *Scarlet Lady*, Virgin Voyages' eagerly awaited debut in the cruise world. However, technological features are said to include mood lighting in all cabins, which will automatically adjust to enhance the time of day based on where the ship is sailing, such as the golden sunsets of the Caribbean. ⚓



TEST THE TECHNOLOGY

MSC Cruises

- Eight-night Mediterranean cruise round-trip from Messina aboard *MSC Grandiosa*, departing 30 March 2020, from £799pp, cruise only. 0203 426 3000; mscbook.com

Celebrity Cruises

- Seven-night Eastern Caribbean cruise round-trip from Fort Lauderdale aboard *Celebrity Edge*, departing 29 December 2019, from £1,589pp, cruise only. 0845 163 8256; celebritycruises.co.uk

Hapag-Lloyd

- 15-night Expedition Antarctica round-trip from Ushuaia aboard *Hanseatic Inspiration*, departing 1 December 2020, from £11,723pp, cruise only. 0800 0513 829; hl-cruises.com

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Going for gold

Portugal's Douro is more popular than ever – and with good reason, as **Jeannine Williamson** discovers

Surrounded by unspoiled countryside, the Douro is like no other river in Europe

The so-called River of Gold was first discovered by the Romans, and now modern-day cruisers are putting it on the map. Winding 125 miles through dramatic vineyard-clad valleys from the Atlantic city of Porto to the Spanish border, the Douro offers a unique sailing experience.

Unlike working rivers such as the Rhine and Danube, which are lined with major towns and cities, the Douro was once a wild waterway. It was tamed by five dams built in the 1960s and 1970s, including the 115ft Carrapetelo lock, which is the deepest in Europe, and as a result it is flanked by spectacular scenery.

All cruises begin and end in Portugal's pretty second city, Porto, and most are seven-night itineraries to the Spanish border with a day trip to the honey-coloured university city of Salamanca. Excursion highlights – many of which are reached by coach – include famous port houses, the Mateus manor (which clients will recognise from the popular rosé wine label) and the lofty sanctuary of Nossa Senhora dos Remedios, with its spectacular blue-and-white tiled staircase. There is also a walking tour of Porto itself.

Meeting rising demand

In recent times there has been insufficient capacity on the Douro to meet demand, but the situation has been eased by the launch of three new ships this year – *A-Rosa Alva*, AmaWaterways' *AmaDouro* and CroisiEurope's *Amalia Rodrigues*.

A-Rosa's MD for UK & Ireland, Lucia Rowe, says: "The Douro is a river that our partners have been asking us to feature for a long time, and finally we can. We're delighted that both Shearings and Newmarket Holidays are offering it for 2020 on our newest ship, which has an intimate feel with just 63 cabins. The cruise travels through the world's oldest protected wine-growing region and is a great way to explore Portuguese culture and traditions."

Shearings Holidays managing director Jane Atkins adds: "Demand is always high for this river, as cruises are

restricted to minimise environmental impact. The Douro is a great choice for agents to promote to those customers who have done the major rivers such as the Rhine or Danube and are looking to discover a different, more off-the-beaten-track region.

"The ship departs from Porto so the transfers from the airport are short. This cruise offers the opportunity to combine time in the vibrant city of Porto, and it's also a great choice for those who want to add on a longer beach resort extension."

The pioneer and main player on the Douro is CroisiEurope, whose first Portuguese ship, *Vasco da Gama*, was launched in 2002 and renovated in 2014. With the addition of *Amalia Rodrigues*, the line now has a six-strong fleet.

CroisiEurope's UK sales director, John Fair, comments: "The Douro is one of our most popular itineraries as it really does have it all – stunning scenery, picturesque towns, quaint villages and superb wines, with sunshine pretty much guaranteed."

"We are one of the few river companies to own and operate our own ships on the Douro, so our guests know that a Douro cruise with CroisiEurope will be of the same high quality as our other cruises, and we have launched a sixth ship to meet demand."

A unique waterway

AmaWaterways has doubled its Douro capacity with the new 102-passenger *AmaDouro* – also the line's first vessel to have a British godmother, Advantage Travel Partnership CEO Julia Lo Bue-Said.

"The region has been popular since we started sailing there in 2013," explains AmaWaterways' managing director,

CroisiEurope's *Amalia Rodrigues* is one of three new ships on the Douro

"The Douro has it all – stunning scenery, quaint villages and superb wines, with sunshine pretty much guaranteed"

Sell it

Shearings Holidays has a seven-night cruise on *A-Rosa Alva* departing on selected dates in May, June, July and September 2020, from £1,809pp, including flights; 0844 824 6359.

📞 shearingsagent.com

Titan Travel's nine-night A Celebration of Lisbon and the Douro itinerary departs 10 June 2020, from £3,299pp, including two nights in a hotel, a seven-night sailing on *Spirit of Chartwell*, flights and VIP home travel service; 0800 988 5166.

📞 titanagents.co.uk

CroisiEurope has a five-night Porto and the Douro Valley cruise on *Amalia Rodrigues* departing 31 March 2020, from £936pp cruise only; 020 8328 1281.

📞 croisieurope.co.uk

SELLING TIPS

Smaller ships offer a more intimate cruise experience

- Suggest pre and post-cruise land stays in Porto and Lisbon

- Vessels are only allowed to sail in the daytime so passengers never miss the sights

- Vineyard tours and tastings will appeal to wine lovers and foodies

- Ideal for clients who have sailed the Danube and Rhine

Stuart Perl. "There are no major cities on the Douro, apart from Porto where you embark, so the cruise takes you away from the hustle and bustle and allows you to be fully immersed in the culture of the region."

"The remote location of the towns and villages we visit makes them unique excursions that most other tours in Portugal would not take in. And having Julia as our godmother is a way of demonstrating our strong commitment to the UK market and showing how proud we are of our UK trade partners."

Riviera Travel introduced two new Douro ships in 2017 and 2018, and national sales manager Thomas Morgan says: "One of the many highlights is that sailing is only permitted during the day, so your clients can really enjoy the sundeck and relax. It's also great if your customers are looking for something quieter, as there are far fewer river ships on the Douro."

The most unique vessel on the river is the elegant *Spirit of Chartwell* – the royal barge that carried the Queen along the Thames during her 2012 Diamond Jubilee celebrations – which is now chartered by Titan Travel.

"Travellers can feel like royalty as they sail along the beautiful Douro," explains Titan Travel's senior product manager, Robert Stapley. "With a maximum capacity of 30 passengers, *Spirit of Chartwell* is perfect for travellers who are looking for an intimate river



With grapes lining the banks, vineyard visits are a given

cruise without lots of people yet with plenty of space. Each experience aboard this famous ship is enhanced with wine tastings, folk shows, cooking demonstrations and informative talks, providing unforgettable holiday moments."

Final word goes to CLIA UK & Ireland director Andy Harmer, who says: "Last year 23,800 UK and Irish passengers took a cruise on the Douro, an increase of 3,100 from 2017. When selling this river, agents should focus on how guests will sail through miles of picturesque vineyards while getting a fascinating look into the history of wine-making and cuisine." ⚓

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Day in the life

What you do and how you do it – in your own words

Trevor Ridler

Branch Manager
BALDWINS TRAVEL

My alarm goes off at...

6am – and I cannot function until that first coffee of the day. I enjoy my one-hour drive to work with Radio 2 as company. My daughter has been working her university placement with Baldwins Travel's marketing department this year, so that has been extra company in the car for me.

My job entails...

As well as running a very busy high-street agency, I also look after everything cruise for Baldwins Travel. We have eight cruise champions throughout the branch network, along with other cruise specialists and a few on our new-to-cruise development programme. I find the one thing that makes a successful training session is undoubtedly doughnuts and cookies.

I got my job...

I started working for Baldwins Travel in 2013, on the cruise programme for our cruise champions, and in 2016 I started the new-to-cruise programme. Before working



“

We always ensure the customer gets what is right for them, and will even advise them not to book if we feel the product is not perfect. We can also arrange a private car to the port, so they can arrive in style

”

on the high street I spent many years working on cruise ships looking after passengers. I love my job... however, on a cold frosty morning, I still miss waking up to Caribbean temperatures.

A typical day involves...

Finding the perfect cruise holidays for my loyal – and new – clients, and helping my team with their development and advising them where best to find what they need.

At lunchtime...

I have to watch the calories so it's normally a light salad or some pasta.

Occasionally I treat myself to a handmade club sandwich from the local independent bakery, which makes the best bread in the world.

The most stressful part of my job...

Airlines are normally responsible for the most stress – with strikes, closures or time changes. If cruise passengers are late, they risk the ship departing before they arrive. Cruise lines are great at dealing with these things, but they have a schedule, and I'm always worried until I know the customer has arrived in port and joined their ship.

I love it when...

A customer who has never cruised before comes home wanting to book their next cruise immediately, and tells me that they are now hooked on cruising.

I'll never forget...

New York Harbour 1986, for the 100th anniversary of the Statue of Liberty. I was cruise director on Chandris Cruises' *Galileo*. We were anchored directly in front of Lady Liberty, right next to other ships.

We bring to the table...

Our personal service, where nothing is too much trouble. We always ensure the customer gets what is right for them, and will even advise them not to book if we feel the product is not perfect. We can also arrange a private car to the port, too, so they really start their cruise in style.

I'd like to shake up the industry by...

Getting rid of the formal dress code on all cruises. We should trust that customers can dress appropriately for the occasion. A dress code should just say what is not acceptable, such as shorts and swimwear in the restaurant. It is hard to pack for a 14-night cruise when limited to 20/23kg of luggage for a flight, without having to pack clothes for two or three formal nights. ⚓

One of Trevor's best trips so far: celebrating Liberty's centenary



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25 June	Bournemouth
3 September	Cardiff
17 September	Newcastle
1 October	Manchester
22 October	Southampton
12 November	Leeds
26 November	Ipswich
3 December	London



cruise
TRADE NEWS

Incredible journey

The Land of the Midnight Sun and *Azamara Journey* – a combination worth writing about, as **Gary Peters** reports

Honningsvåg was reborn in the 1950s as people made their way back home and built new lives through a thriving fishing industry.

It feels appropriate that my time here is rounded off with fresh king crab, a locally brewed beer and a charming performance from three young locals outlining the unique history of the town. Destination immersion is one of Azamara's key selling points, and the proof is most certainly in the pudding.

Boutique cruising

I join the Norway Midnight Sun itinerary on day seven, 24 hours before my encounter with Honningsvåg, as the ship is docked in the picturesque setting of Tromsø. Those on board have already enjoyed the sights in Oslo, Flam and the Troll Fjord, to name but a few, and there's an undeniable atmosphere of expectation for what is still to come.

My home for the next four nights, *Azamara Journey*, is a boutique vessel holding just 694 passengers. The ship first entered service back in 2000 for Renaissance Cruises and then spent time in the Pullmantur family before joining the Azamara fleet in 2008.

The ship is intimate yet never feels claustrophobic – just like my veranda stateroom, which ticks all the boxes in terms of comfort and is functional in all areas, including a perfectly adequate balcony. I barely have time to sample any amenities, however, as I'm soon on the move for a very special evening.



It's day two of my cruise on *Azamara Journey* and a smattering of guests and I have just finished our excursion in Honningsvåg, the northernmost city in Norway, from where the North Cape is just 18 miles away. This quaint place, with a population of fewer than 2,500, welcomes more than 1,000 cruise ships during the summer season and has one of the busiest ports in northern Europe.

It's easy to see why. Cool, crisp air fills the lungs, while reindeer graze on Arctic flora in the distance. It is also a natural habitat for walrus, whales and a host of bird species. If only this lasted longer than two hours, I tell myself – it sure beats my usual Tuesday morning scenery of weary-eyed commuters.

One of the more enduring experiences in this close-knit community occurs in the main church. Built in 1885, it survived the scorched earth policy of the Nazis when they left the area towards the end of World War Two. In fact, it was the only building left standing. A town left in ruins yet not defeated,

All white on the night

Thank goodness I packed a white shirt, I think, as I ascend to the pool deck. Sure, it's not compulsory, but nobody wants to stick out like a sore thumb. I am talking, of course, about Azamara's famed poolside party. These White Nights, as they are known, take place at least once on every cruise, when the pool deck overflows with decorations, food and drinks, and the passengers all dress in white. Almost everyone makes the effort, even if it requires a little improvisation (respect to the gentleman who joins the party in his white dressing gown, and I'm sure

Itinerary

Geiranger

A tiny village that is more famous for the snow-capped peaks that surround it, Geiranger has stunning views of the Seven Sisters Waterfall.

Alesund

In Alesund guests will find architecture really comes into its own, with Art Nouveau-style turrets and spires dotting the landscape.

Tromso

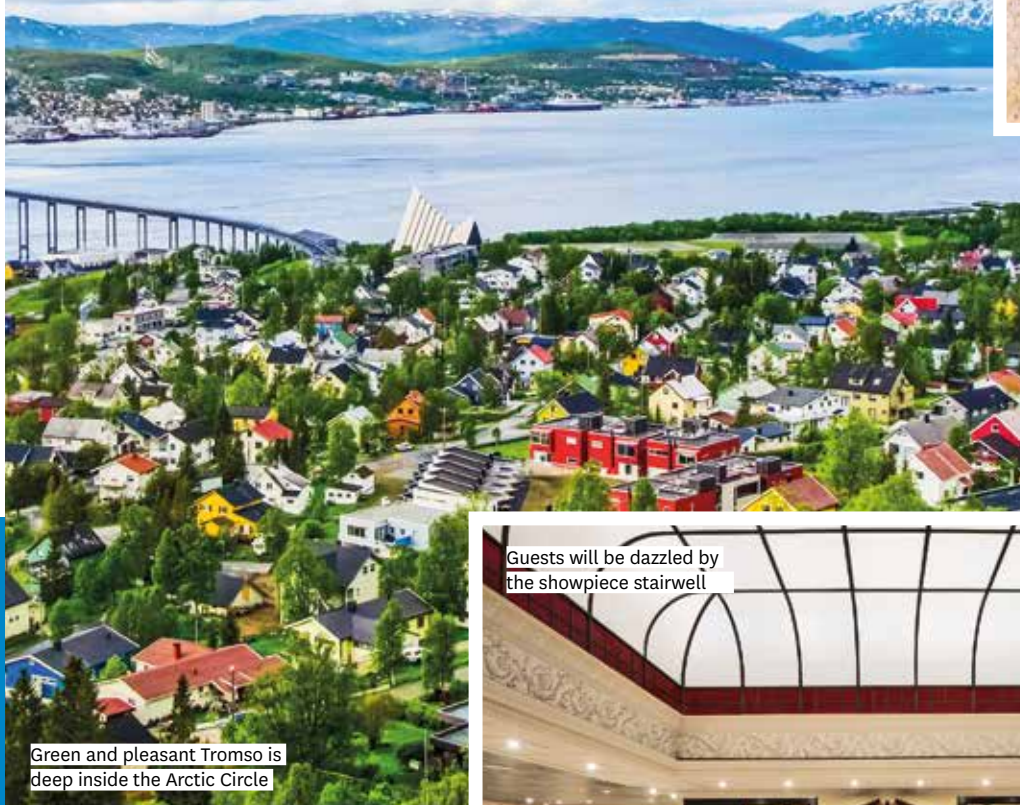
Surrounded by islands and fjords, Tromso is far north of the Arctic Circle and is best viewed via the cable car ride up Storsteinen Mountain.

Honningsvag

Officially Norway's northernmost city, pretty Honningsvag is no bigger than a village. The sun does not set here from mid-May to late July.

Bodo

A highlight in Bodo is the Saltstraumen Maelstrom, the world's strongest tidal current. The Salmon Centre and cathedral are other tourist favourites.



Green and pleasant Tromso is deep inside the Arctic Circle

I also see someone in a white towel fashioned into a poncho. Brave).

Attentive crew are always on hand for a refill and the food stations situated along the deck serve tasty barbecue cuisine. There's also a live band mixing an array of 1980s pop classics, and it isn't long before the party animals among us take to the dancefloor. For a first night on board it's as good as they come.

We will rock you

There's no shortage of daytime activities to keep passengers busy. For example, on my first full morning on board, post-White Night, there are fitness classes, a wake-up quiz and a lecture detailing the navigation and exploration expertise of the Vikings. Guests can also join wine-tasting sessions, tango classes for all those who like to shake their hips, a nerve-jangling spelling bee and LGBTQ get-togethers, among much else.

Teens are also catered for, with new friendships forged around the social-icebreaker that is the Wii console, while

Guests will be dazzled by the showpiece stairwell



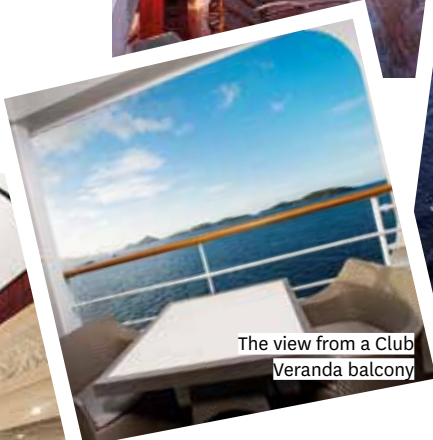
cruisers sailing solo can join other singletons for themed dinners.

The Sanctum spa, on deck nine, is one of the most sophisticated spots on the ship. It offers whole-body massages and other exclusive packages, treatments and therapies, perfect for those at-sea days. And speaking of therapy, *Azamara Journey* has two shopping outlets – Indulgences and the Journey Shop – where passengers can buy perfumes, cosmetics, souvenirs, jewellery and so on.

The casino, on deck five, has a selection of slot machines and the usual favourites,



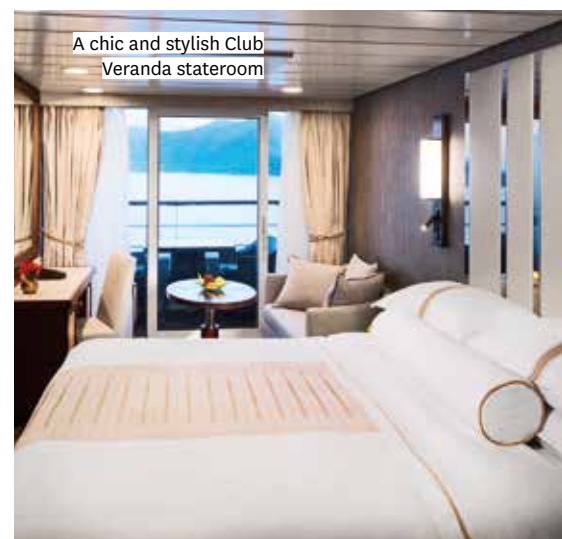
Aqualina serves classic Italian fare



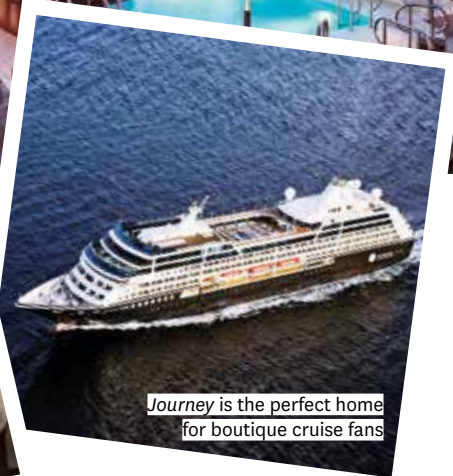
The view from a Club Veranda balcony



A chic and stylish Club Veranda stateroom



Evening on the ship's elegant pool deck



Journey is the perfect home for boutique cruise fans

SELLING TIPS

Intimate ship yet plenty of entertainment options, too

White Night party provides a great way to meet fellow guests

Destination immersion is key with Azamara

Good mix of dining options

soufflé is particularly good – while the latter is an excellent steakhouse. Both come with a cover charge of \$30, although dining here is complimentary for suite guests.

The Patio, on the pool deck, is ideal for those who prefer a more relaxed style of dining, and it's just the place for a hamburger or a sandwich while watching the waves go by. The other complimentary venues are more traditional in style, but no reservations are necessary, which again suits all those flexible and casual cruisers out there.

Alcoholic beverages are on the menu, too, and there are several additional spots, as well as the restaurants, to enjoy them. The Living Room is a prime venue for unwinding during the day, as is the Mosaic Café, where guests can sample speciality coffees and teas as well as a selection of brandies, cognacs and ports in the evening.

Then there's Spirits, on deck five, a rather trendy locale to sip cocktails while listening to live piano music. This is where I spend a large portion of one sea day, after which the ship calls in Bodo and Trondheim. Sadly, this is my departure point, and I find myself wishing all those still on board one hell of a journey. ⚓

including roulette, blackjack and poker, while on the same deck guests can visit the Cabaret Lounge for singing, dancing, magic acts, stand-up comedy and musicals. The all-time classic bingo also makes an appearance; prizes on offer include a cruise, unlimited internet packages, cash and more.

A personal highlight, however, is on the second night as DJ Mike unleashes my inner rock god during Classic Rock Night, when the brilliance of Aerosmith, Queen, Fleetwood Mac, Led Zeppelin and many more fills the Living Room on deck 10. It's undoubtedly one of my favourite nights I've ever had at sea and should, in my opinion, be compulsory on every sailing, on every line.

Food for thought

All that rocking leaves a person hungry, and *Journey* offers a choice of five main restaurants for cruisers to satisfy their appetites. Discoveries, Windows Café and The Patio are all included in the fare, as are some dishes on the room-service menu. Aqualina and Prime C are the speciality eateries, the former serving classic Italian dishes – the limoncello

Details

● Azamara's 17-night Norway Intensive North Cape cruise departs 24 June 2021. Prices from approximately £5,700pp.



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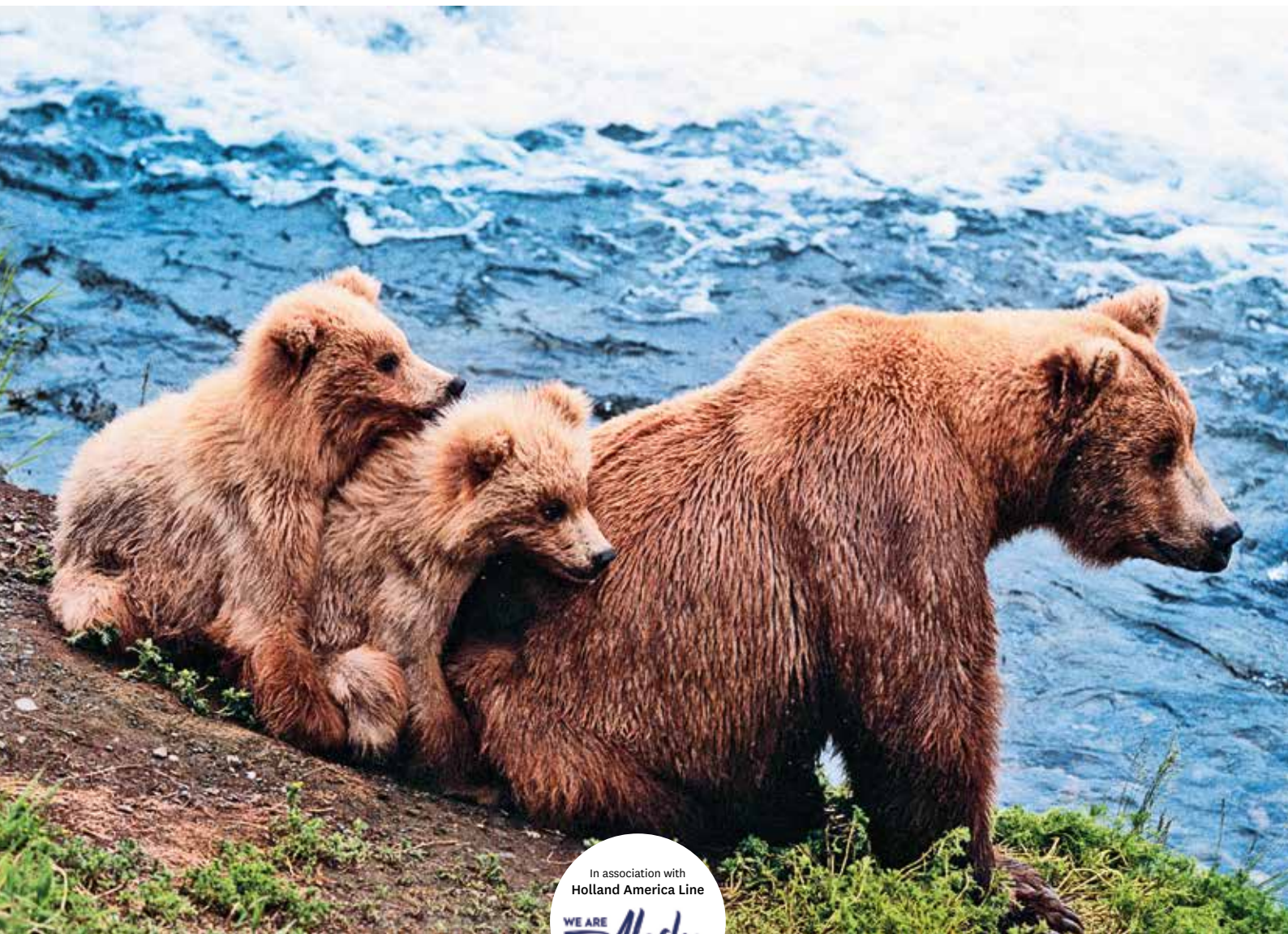
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Stateroom upgrades applicable on new Cunard Fare bookings made between 1 May 2019 - 31 Dec 2019 on selected voyages, subject to availability.

DESTINATION SPECIAL



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WE ARE
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Welcome to our bumper destination report on Alaska, sponsored by regional cruise specialist Holland America Line (HAL). This region really is a fascinating place for an expedition sailing – as the US' largest state, Alaska offers cruisers the chance to view unspoiled scenes of natural beauty and get close to a wonderful variety of wildlife, both on and off shore.

Inside this special section you'll find the ultimate destination guide packed with itineraries to give your clients inspiration, including such fascinating ports of call as Juneau, Anchorage, Ketchikan and Skagway.

We also have a round-up of all the latest cruise news from the region (*see pages 58 & 59*), plus an in-depth overview of HAL's We are Alaska programme, with handy selling hints for agents.

Visit www.hollandamerica.com for more information

HOTLIST

ALL THE LATEST TRAVEL UPDATES
IN WESTERN CANADA AND ALASKA

Sightseeing among Alaska's peaks
can be twinned with a Canadian visit



Best of both worlds

Holland America Line's Land+Sea concept gives guests more time to explore the fascinating worlds of Alaska and Western Canada.

The extended packages – ranging from nine to 14 days for the Denali Land+Sea Journeys and nine to 18 days for the Yukon and Denali Land+Sea Journeys – include visits to Denali National Park and stays at HAL's exclusive McKinley Chalet

Resort. Some Yukon itineraries also include a journey on the White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad, which has been in operation since 1898.

Get on board

● A 14-day Yukon and Double Denali itinerary, including a voyage through the Inside Passage and two-night stay in Denali, departs 17 May 2020. Prices start from £2,268pp.

Record numbers in Seattle

The Port of Seattle, a key port for cruises to Alaska, is celebrating its biggest cruise season yet with an estimated 1,204,170 passengers this year, breaking last year's record of 1,114,888.

The results of a new economic impact report show that the cruise business is worth almost £744 million a year, with each homeported ship call contributing £3.47 million to the state's economy, supporting more than 5,000 jobs.

This growth in the cruise business has prompted the port to begin the process of building an additional cruise terminal.

While on board a ship, clients can sign up, check their luggage and receive their airline boarding pass. Luggage will be transferred directly to the airline, checked to the final USA destination and can be tracked online. This service, Port Valet, is offered by Holland America Line.

Seattle is seeing
a cruise boom





The package is available on HAL's Nieuw Statendam

HAL's exclusive amenities package going fleet wide

Holland America Line's Club Orange premium amenities programme will be available on all ships in the fleet by the end of this month.

The programme includes upgrades within the booked category to the best available stateroom, based on availability at the time of purchase. A new addition is the Captain's Choice event, only for guests who purchase Club Orange.

Guests can also benefit from priority check-in and disembarkation, priority

tender service and priority alternative restaurant reservations.

The cost of Club Orange is \$35 per person per day on *Nieuw Statendam* and *Koningsdam* and \$25 per person per day on all other ships.

The first and second guest in the same stateroom must both purchase the programme. There is no extra charge for third and fourth guests in the same stateroom. Club Orange must be purchased prior to cruise departure and is not available to buy on board.



BB King's Blues Club is just one of the attractions on board

Koningsdam to sail Alaska in summer 2020

HAL's Pinnacle-class ship *Koningsdam* will cruise Alaska for the first time between May and September 2020.

The ship will sail round trip from Vancouver every Saturday and visit Juneau, Skagway and Ketchikan, spending a full day cruising UNESCO-listed Glacier Bay National Park, with a voyage to the Inside Passage.

Pinnacle-class differences in Alaska include:

- A full day in Glacier Bay National Park
- More than 70 per cent accommodation with private veranda, plus family and single staterooms
- Immersive BBC Earth Frozen Planet and Planet Earth II concerts at the ship's Main Stage
- Classical strings, 50 years of chart hits at Billboard Onboard, BB King's Blues and the new Rolling Stone Rock Room
- Extensive dining choices from pan-Asian to French brasserie, plus regional specialities are available
- Explorations Central (EXC) personalised destination resources to help travellers make the most of their destinations according to their own interests



Whales are on the agenda for families travelling together

Family time with HAL

Holland America Line has a range of experiences on its ships and ashore to bring families together on a cruise.

The line's Discover Alaska's Whales in Juneau experience, for small groups, includes viewing humpback whales and discussions on the animals' biology, habitat and behaviour. Guests can also see seals and porpoises.

In addition, HAL offers a junior ranger programme in Glacier Bay,

Alaska. Children can interact with National Park rangers and earn their junior ranger badge.

Holland America Line president Orlando Ashford said: "If you want to experience new cultures with family, bring history to life for your children or just have a fun-in-the-sun vacation, then we're the cruise line for you."

"We believe family travel should be about spending quality time together."



The wild side

Gateway to the final frontier, Canada's island-dotted western coastline is a paradise for cruise passengers. Here they can enjoy multicultural cities, spectacular scenery and unique fauna. **Heidi Fuller-Love** reports



Alaska is famous for its glaciers and other spectacular landscapes

Vancouver is a popular cruise embarkation port



Better known as the British Columbia Coast or the BC Coast, Canada's western coastline on the North Pacific Ocean between Alaska and Washington features deep inlets and picturesque fjords inhabited by growling bears and soaring eagles.

Covering some 10 per cent of Canada's coastline, Western Canada also has approximately 40,000 islands, including Vancouver with its blend of glittering skyscrapers, historic neighbourhoods and gourmet restaurants, and Haida Gwaii – also known as the Queen Charlotte Islands – renowned as one of the richest biological and cultural areas in North America.

“From the multi-cultural beauty of Vancouver to the delights of sophisticated Victoria and the magnificent wilderness that is Alaska, this region of Canada has something for everyone when it comes to cruises,” says Cunard's sales director, Gary Anslow.

On nature's trail

Nature is undoubtedly the big lure in this sparsely populated region, where passengers will be thrilled to glimpse polar bears, whales, moose and other wildlife in their natural habitat. With cruises that often coincide with the summer holidays and countless fascinating shore excursions to suit all ages, this is an ideal multi-generational destination that provides an unparalleled opportunity to explore remote regions in comfort.

As Fred Olsen's head of destination experience and itinerary planning, Martin Lister, explains: “The smaller size of our ships allows us to reach a number of the remote islands in the Northern Archipelago, as well as offering

spectacular scenic cruising through the narrow sounds, channels and passageways for which this part of the world is renowned.”

Vancouver is the ideal departure point for thrilling cruises along the west coast of British Columbia and through the Inside Passage, a vast stretch of protected ocean dotted with islands, fjords and bays that stretches from British Columbia to Skagway.

As well as Vancouver, Victoria is a popular cruise stop on itineraries covering Western Canada. The streets of British Columbia's charming capital – which is sometimes known as The City of Gardens because of its glorious green spaces – are lined with beautifully preserved Victorian architecture. This laidback city is also home to Canada's oldest Chinatown.

Majestic experiences

Alaska is seven times the size of the UK and a cruise is definitely the best way to explore this enthralling US state, which is largely inaccessible by land.





Mendenhall Glacier – all 13 and half miles of it – could be on the itinerary

SELLING TIPS

Appeals to all ages

Packed with breathtaking scenery, exciting excursions, lively cities and thrilling wildlife encounters, a Western Canada and Alaska cruise has something for everyone.

It's adventure with lashings of luxury

A cruise ship makes the ideal base for exploring this untamed region.

Reasons to stay longer

Whether it's a train ride through the Rockies, a trip to Toronto or a hotel stay in LA, there are plenty of ways to extend a Western Canada and Alaska cruise.

Top attractions here include Alaska's capital, Juneau, where passengers can join an excursion to see the magnificent Mendenhall Glacier, or take a 20-minute float plane ride to visit Admiralty Island, known as Fortress of the Bears because it's home to one of the world's largest brown bear colonies.

"Cruising is one of the very best ways to explore Western Canada and in particular Alaska. The region has such a huge variety of natural wonders, from temperate rainforests to towering glaciers. In such a vast and wild region of the world, cruising makes the destination incredibly accessible and provides an awe-inspiring perspective of the mountains, glaciers and frozen landscapes," says Celebrity Cruises' UK & Ireland head of sales, Nicola McNeish.

Alaskan cruises also leave from Seattle but departures from here include two full days at sea, whereas Vancouver is closer to Alaska, giving clients more time to explore.

Rocky Mountaineer European regional sales director Steve Harris says: "Pairing the mountains with the deep blue sea is a natural match for those looking to explore the Final Frontier even further,



Beautifully preserved façades characterise the waterfront at Victoria

which is why we combine Alaska cruises with thrilling train trips through the Rocky Mountains."

Other ports of call on an Alaska cruise include Skagway, the Gold Rush town that was the inspiration for Jack London's classic novel *The Call of the Wild*, and Ketchikan, renowned for its abundant salmon and beautifully carved Native American totem poles.

Add to that a host of exciting pre or post-cruise land excursions to Denali National Park or the Kenai River Valley, and agents won't be lost for ways of selling this wonderful destination to clients.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Holland America Line

Founded in 1873, Holland America Line has been sailing to Western Canada and Alaska since the 1950s. The company has a reputation for offering authentic, personalised destination experiences visited in timeless elegance, on a fleet of 14 ships which, with their unmistakable dark blue hulls and white superstructures, visit more than 100 countries.

As well as alliances with partners such as BBC Earth, Holland America Line offers enrichment ranging from regional cookery demonstrations and photography classes to digital workshops in order to offer guests a fascinating range of activities. One of the company's unique experiences crafted for passengers cruising to Western Canada and Alaska is a bike ride to see the magnificent 13-and-a-half-mile-long Mendenhall Glacier. This is followed by a refreshing tasting tour of the best Alaskan microbrewery beers at Merchants Wharf, a historic seaplane hangar where many of the region's first floatplane operators were based.

Holland America Line's director of sales in the UK, Wendy Lahmich, says: "Holland America Line is the expert in

Alaska cruising. We use the saying, 'We are Alaska', to perfectly sum up our expertise, knowledge, experience and robust cruise and land tour offerings that add up to the authentic and iconic experience in Alaska.

"With more than seven decades of experience offering travel to Alaska, we offer the ultimate cruise experience with comfortable, perfectly sized ships – including our new Pinnacle-class ship *Koningsdam* in 2020 – more visits to Glacier Bay than any other line, and an on-board experience with talks, encounters, and shore activities designed to help our guests of all ages get the most from their Alaska cruise adventure.

"Given the great potential with Alaska attracting more first-time cruisers than any other destination, agents need to be sure they are helping clients experience

One of the unique experiences is a bike ride to see the 13-and-a-half-mile-long Mendenhall Glacier



If they're lucky, guests might get to see a grizzly

the best of Alaska. This translates into happy clients and future cruise bookings for you. Holland America Line delivers through our authentic experiences in Alaska and our reputation for delivering the top premium product. This experience is also a great match for multi-generational families looking for a memorable holiday together. It creates potential for agents to book four or five staterooms at the same time." ⚓

ITINERARIES

The Inside Passage

● This cruise on *Koningsdam* departs Vancouver for a seven-night voyage taking in the famed Inside Passage, an incredible waterway where guests can see seals, porpoises, eagles and whales. Juneau and Glacier Bay – a favoured area of the humpback whale – are also on the itinerary. The final port of call is Ketchikan, where guests can visit the Misty Fjords. Prices from £859pp, based on 2 May 2020 departure.

Delightful Denali

● Following an overnight stay in Anchorage, guests take in the wonderful wildlife in Denali on a guided tundra wilderness tour. Once on board, it's onwards to Skagway, to visit its old-time saloons, the scenic capital of Juneau and then to sample the Mendenhall Glacier, among other sights. Prices from £1,615pp, based on 13 May 2020 departure.

Epic exploration

● Cruising on *Maasdam*, this 14-night Great Land Explorer voyage promises a more immersive Alaska and thrilling option excursions by Zodiac. After boarding in Vancouver, guests spend day two cruising the Inside Passage before arriving in Ketchikan, known as the salmon capital of the world. Other highlights include sailing through the jagged peaks of Tracy Arm, and Icy Strait Point. Prices from £1,503pp, based on 4 May 2020 departure.

Yukon calling

● Unique to Holland America Line, the 11-night Yukon and Double Denali Holiday takes clients into the heart of the unexplored Yukon territory and the Denali National Park. The itinerary starts with a three-night cruise, departing Vancouver, and cruising the Inside Passage and Juneau, before passengers disembark in Skagway, with



Denali National Park

a full day to explore the old Gold Rush town. From here it's on to Dawson City – which includes the chance to sample historic landmarks such as Tombstone Park – and Fairbanks, Denali National Park, with the end of the itinerary in Anchorage. Prices from £1,549pp, based on 27 May 2020 departure.

All itineraries available from Holland America Line;

📍 hollandamerica.com

The great OUTDOORS

Alaska is the perfect destination for guests who have never cruised before. It's so easy to combine an Alaska cruise with a land tour – and often clients will come to you asking about Canada & Alaska without realising that the best way to explore this magnificent region is by ship

Eurodam takes in the splendours of Glacier Bay



Sell the destination

We know that many visitors who are considering Alaska have not yet cruised, so we recommend that you present Alaska as a destination and touring experience, then add that they will be staying at a premium 'hotel at sea'. Alaska covers such a large area and has such an erratic transportation network, it would be difficult for the independent traveller to see very much in a two-week holiday, so a Holland America Line cruise or Land+Sea journey should be presented as the ideal solution.

Alaska is the perfect destination for nature and wildlife lovers

Travellers are increasingly seeking immersive, close-to-nature experiences and Alaska ticks all those boxes, with its mountains and glaciers, wildlife and sea life. Experiences may include touching

ice-age glaciers, cuddling husky pups, whale watching, taking a floatplane over stunning fjords, and trailing grizzlies and their cubs. All these experiences are possible in one holiday.

The weather in summer is mild

Most of our holidays cover the South Eastern and Central regions of Alaska, where the weather is surprisingly mild and the scenery ranges from forested mountains and great wildlife parks to glaciers dating from the ice-age. Alaskan holidays are normally taken from May to September, when temperatures reach up to 72 degrees Fahrenheit and the days are long and bright.

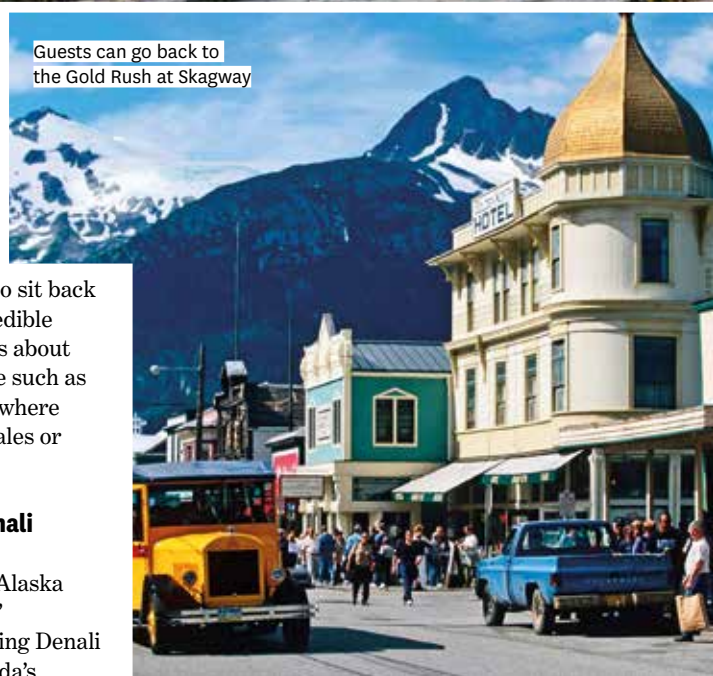
Koningsdam has featured concerts in association with BBC Earth films





Denali, or Mount McKinley, greets visitors to Alaska

Guests can go back to the Gold Rush at Skagway



Combine Alaska with the Rockies

You may have clients who want to visit the Canadian Rockies. Most Rockies tours (including the excellent Rocky Mountaineer train) last just a few days, so are ideal as add-ons and very easy to combine with an Alaska cruise. A number of UK tour operators (who take bookings from agents) will offer an integrated Rockies & Alaska holiday including a HAL cruise – a ready packaged holiday you can recommend.

Cruising is the best way to enjoy Alaska's coastal scenery

On a seven-night Inside Passage cruise, Holland America Line offers more Glacier Bay National Park visits than any other company. Guests have a whole day cruising the bay with the chance of watching glaciers calve and seals perched on icebergs and listening to fascinating talks by an Alaska Ranger expert.

Alaska is ideal for all ages and abilities

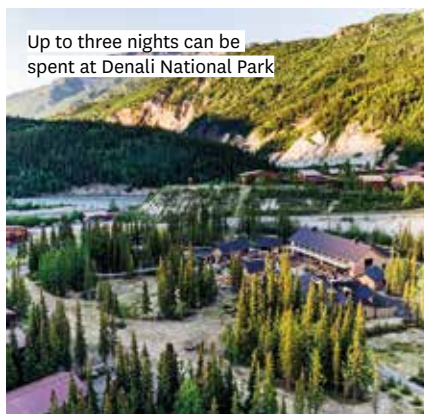
An Alaska cruise is the perfect family holiday. Kids will learn about nature and wildlife in a fun way from Park Rangers – *Koningsdam* even features staterooms for families of up to five. Active and engaged couples will love 'flightseeing', ATV adventures, hiking, river rafting and more opportunities. Alaska is also perfect

for any clients who just wish to sit back in comfort and enjoy the incredible scenery. It is not about age, it's about enjoying the finer things in life such as visiting amazing Glacier Bay, where guests may see breaching whales or massive glaciers calving.

Go further and deeper – Denali National Park & the Yukon

It's so easy to incorporate an Alaska cruise with up to three nights' accommodation at awe-inspiring Denali National Park, and even Canada's unspoiled Yukon on one of Holland America Line's 'Land+Sea' holidays. You simply make one booking and we take care of all the hotels and travel arrangements for your clients.

Up to three nights can be spent at Denali National Park



Become an Alaska expert

Holland America Line's 'HAL Academy' training course offers a specialist Alaska module, which will give you lots of information about Alaska, along with selling tips. Holland America Line's Business Development team also offers training, webinars and incentives to help you sell more Alaska. ⚓

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to find out more

Industry insider

The CTN team has been out and about, hobnobbing with the good and great of the glamorous cruise world to bring you a flavour of all the recent launches, lunches, events and get-togethers



Spectacular Seabourn

It's not every Saturday you get to rub shoulders with VIPs in an amazing location, so CTN editor Colette Doyle and RRM publisher Chris Pitchford (pictured with HAL's Wendy Lahmich and Carly Perkins) made the most of their soirée at Woburn Abbey. Hosted by Seabourn, the gala event was in aid of a very worthy cause, the Lord's and Lady Taverners. Around 200 guests enjoyed drinks and dinner and listened to an inspirational speech from Reverend Richard Coles. In total, an amazing £75K was raised for the charities.



It's all Greek to them

There was nary a smashed plate in sight when CTN editor Colette Doyle (third from left) went to dinner with the Celestyal Cruises team at posh Greek eatery Hovarda in Soho. Rebecca Witte, Frosso Zaroulea and Leslie Peden were on hand to fill guests in on the line's latest activities, including new itineraries that will take in the Adriatic for the very first time.

Back with a bang

After a summer hiatus, the Cruise Challenge is back. The most unique event in the industry made its return in Bedford and the night did not disappoint. In what was one of the highest scoring matches of the season to date, the Green team edged to victory on 39 points, against the Reds on 32, and the Blue team on 30. See thecruisechallenge.com for details.



Serving up sustainability

At an intimate media lunch at Daphne's Italian restaurant in Chelsea, Giles Hawke, CEO of Cosmos Tours, launched the company's exciting 2020 brochures. He also gave the audience of invited travel journalists details of the company's ambitious 30-year plan to make sure that sustainability is at the heart of everything the company does.



A magnificent ship

Agent partners and trade media, including CTN's Gary Peters, above, were invited to explore MSC Cruises' UK headquarters in west London as the line made a very special announcement for the UK market. MSC Magnifica will undergo an extensive refurbishment and offer 24 new sailings from Southampton in summer 2021. All cruises will start and end in Southampton on a ship tailored for the UK market, the line's UK & Ireland MD, Antonio Paradiso, said.



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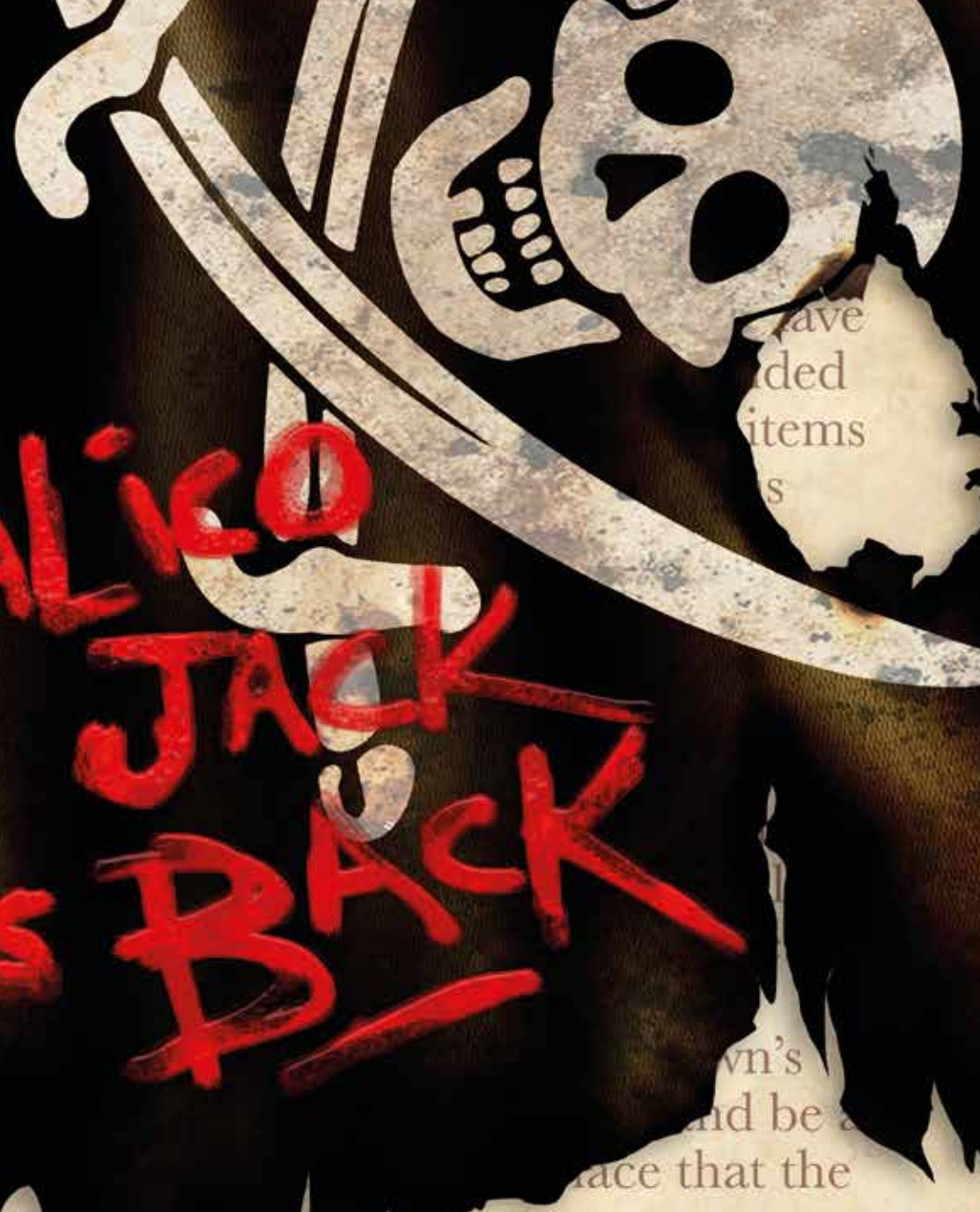

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