

ISSUE 121 • OCTOBER 2023

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Trade News

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NEW
LOOK



THE JOURNEY BEGINS

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a new era of luxury ocean travel

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



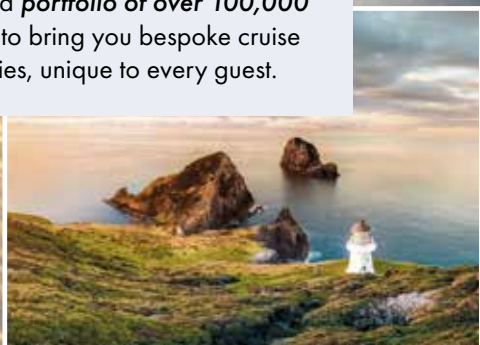
Explora
JOURNEYS

INSIDE: BEHIND THE HEADLINES HOW AND WHY CELESTYAL IS CHANGING • **LEARN & SELL** ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT FRED OLSEN • **CTN INVESTIGATES** TO UPCYCLE OR BUILD FROM SCRATCH?

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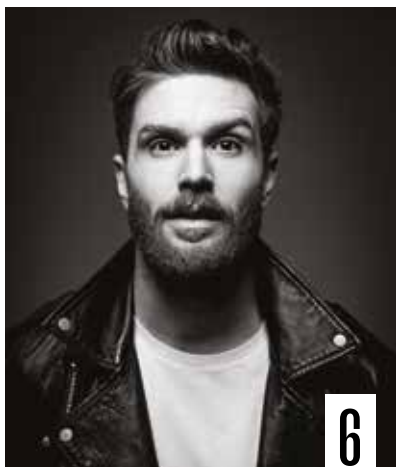
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WELCOME...

TO THE OCTOBER ISSUE

So, it's fair to say we've been rather busy over recent months. Earlier this year, we set about devising a plan to take *Cruise Trade News* to the next level. A key part of this, we decided, was to refresh the content and design of the print magazine. And so, after many long nights and hard graft by several people, the copy you have in your hands represents the beginning of a new era for us.

The crux of the relaunch includes new sections and features, all meticulously put together to bring you the information that is most relevant and topical. You'll notice a fresh, clean colour palette, as well as colour coding to improve the flow of the journey throughout the publication.

There's more about river, luxury and expedition cruising, to take into account the growth in these areas, as well as a greater focus on in-depth analysis, giving us the scope to really get into the nitty gritty of the latest stories and trends. We've also decided to make training a prominent element of the relaunch, boost destination-related content and create a more seamless journey from print to digital via the use of QR codes.

We're not stopping there, however. Later this year, the Cruise Stars Awards will return, showcasing our



ABOVE Alaska is the subject of this edition's Destination Focus

commitment to recognising and rewarding the immense talent that exists in the industry. We are also doubling down on our digital channels and video content, ensuring we have it all covered.

All in all, it's an exciting time for us, as it is for the wider cruise sector. I do hope you enjoy the new look and content. If you have any comments or suggestions, please do get in touch.

Gary Peters
Editor

On the cover: Explora Journeys

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Cruise Trade News



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Cruise Corner

CRUISE 'MAKING PROGRESS' ON SUSTAINABILITY

> CLIA's 2023 Global Cruise Industry Environmental Technologies and Practices Report shows "concrete progress by the sector in advancing its environmental and sustainability agenda".

Of the 44 new ships on order during the next five years, 25 will be powered by liquefied natural gas.

In addition, "an increasing number of vessels... will be able to incorporate zero carbon fuels", a statement said. The report also highlights shoreside electricity. Across the CLIA member fleet, 120 ships are equipped to connect to shoreside electricity.



IN NUMBERS

44

ships launching
in next 5 years

25

LNG ships

120

equipped for
shore power



MARKETING GURU

Accord Marketing chief client officer **Maria Payne** explains how to create a successful campaign using the power of social media

Promoting cruise holidays on social media can effectively reach a wide audience and showcase unique experiences, but how can you create successful campaigns? First, use high-quality visual content, such as stunning photos and videos of the cruise ship, on-board amenities, exotic destinations, must-see attractions and activities.

It's important to tell a story, with compelling narratives highlighting the journey, from departure to arrival back home.

Share stories from past cruisers, crew members and even behind-the-scenes glimpses of life on the ship. What's more, write engaging captions that evoke emotions, describe the experiences and encourage interaction. Hashtags can increase visibility, ensuring that content reaches a larger audience.

To go that step further, consider live streams, videos and stories to provide virtual ship tours or showcase exciting on-board activities. And of course, don't forget to engage; be responsive to comments and messages.



SCAN TO DISCOVER
MORE CRUISE NEWS
AND FEATURES



CELEBRITY REVAMPS TRAINING PLATFORM

> Celebrity Cruises has unveiled its relaunched training platform, Celebrity Central Training.

Complete with a fresh new look and feel, the cruise line is “supporting agents like never before, with tailored learning pathways for both seasoned experts and beginners new to selling cruise”, a statement said.

Agents are encouraged to learn at their own pace, with collections of short, bite-sized courses designed to allow them to deep dive into their specific areas of interest. The new look training platform is more user-friendly and intuitive, with a modernised design to encourage all agents to engage with the new materials.

“**THE NEW-LOOK
PLATFORM IS MORE
USER-FRIENDLY AND
INTUITIVE WITH A
MODERNISED DESIGN**”



JOEL DOMMETT TO HOST WAVE AWARDS

> Joel Dommett will host the Wave Awards 2023.

Joel is a regular face on TV, from being a finalist in *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!* to fronting *The Masked Singer* and the spin off *The Masked Dancer*.

The Wave Awards 2023 – organised by *Cruise Trade News* publisher Real Response Media – will take place on 13 November at The Dorchester, central London. For 2023, there are new categories for travel agents, including Best Independent/Solo Agent, designed to reward homeworkers and mini agencies.



BREAKING RECORDS

Princess Cruises UK & Europe sales director **Nick Hughes** highlights the success of the line's agent engagement events

The weather might not have been too good this summer, but it has been a scorcher for Princess when it comes to our trade events. Our sales team have been up and down the UK, as well as across Europe, getting in front of as many travel agents as possible. By the end of 2023, we will have hosted more than 2,600 agents, a record-breaking number for Princess.

A particular highlight has been our family day ship visits. One new-to-cruise agent, who has three teenagers, said she thought cruises would not be a viable option for a holiday until coming onboard, where she saw that – in her own words – “Princess caters for the whole family... making it the perfect holiday choice”.

On land, we've also hosted our first regional events in more than three years, as well as training initiatives, providing an opportunity to engage with our valued front-line agents across the country.

Building the brand

Andrea Kruse, COO of Viva Cruises, outlines the operator's key trade plans and what to expect from *Viva Enjoy*

What are the key objectives for Viva Cruises over the coming months?

As well as continuing to build awareness of Viva Cruises in the UK market, our main objective for the coming months is focused on the trade – we want more tour operators to feature and sell our products to consumers. After the pandemic, we've seen an increasing demand for European river cruises from a wide variety of international markets – so we've got a very international approach.

How are you building your brand awareness?

In terms of trade, we have recently appointed a sales office in the UK with two major objectives – educating the trade about Viva Cruises and our offer and getting more UK tour operators and travel agents to feature and sell our itineraries to consumers.

What's your message for UK travel agents who do not know much about the brand? Viva Cruises was founded in 2018 as the first in-house tour operator of Swiss shipping company Scylla AG. Since then, it has grown rapidly and now boasts an eight-ship fleet sailing on major European rivers, including



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Andrea Kruse; Viva's ships have a fresh new design; the company is meeting demand with new builds like *Viva Two*

be identical in design. It will have 95 cabins for 190 passengers, as well as three restaurants, an open-plan lounge and a spacious sun deck. The ship will also feature our all-inclusive product and a laid-back and feel-good atmosphere. *Viva Enjoy* will be mainly sailing on the Danube from September to December 2024. Its 12-night maiden voyage will leave on 22 September 2024 from Frankfurt to Vienna.

“
***Viva Enjoy*
will feature a laid-back and feel-good atmosphere**

new-build ships *Viva One* and *Viva Two*, with the third one, *Viva Enjoy*, launching in September 2024.

How can travel agents learn more about Viva Cruises? We are now keeping travel agents updated on all things Viva Cruises through our UK sales office, who are in regular contact with agents and are educating the trade about our product. We'll be also organising some fam trips and setting up online and offline training for them. Plus, our website has all the information about our company, cruises and ships agents would need to sell our cruises.

What can guests expect on *Viva Enjoy*? *Viva Enjoy* will be the sister ship of recently launched *Viva Two* and will



Will more new ships follow in the future? We have several other ships in our fleet, which we are gradually renovating and adapting to the Viva Cruises' look and feel. The latest ones were *Viva Voyage* and *Viva Gloria*. They were renovated earlier this year and now feature a fresh new design and a new bar concept called Viva's Vino, where guests can enjoy a wide variety of wines. All these renovations and new-build ships mean that Viva has one of the most modern fleets on Europe's rivers, something we are very proud of. ●

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



GRANDEUR TO 'ELEVATE RELAXATION'

Regent Seven Seas Cruises says its wellness and spa options on *Seven Seas Grandeur* "will enhance relaxation at sea".

Setting sail in November 2023, the ship's Serene Spa & Wellness offering will provide a "multi-sensory experience choreographed to help guests relax at every turn", according

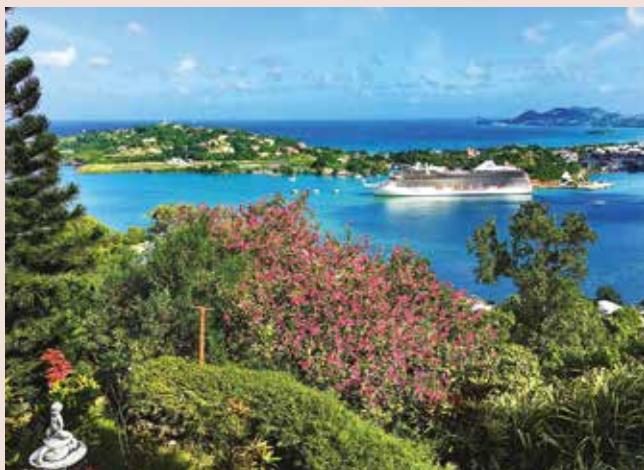
to a statement. In addition, it will focus on best-in-class techniques and luxury ingredients from around the world, including new treatments which will utilise the "restorative power of an amber and quartz crystal bed", as well as an advanced treatment table for a zero-gravity wellness massage.

Appointments



Jason Worth

Oceania Cruises has named Jason Worth as vice-president for international sales. Worth, who now oversees sales teams in the UK, Europe, Latin America and Brazil, as well as Asia Pacific, said: "[I] look forward to working closely with my global colleagues as we chart a course in the next phase of the evolution of Oceania Cruises." Worth has held various positions with the company since joining in 2011.



OCEANIA'S TASTE OF THE TROPICS

Oceania Cruises is offering 100 sailings in the Caribbean and Tahiti in 2024 and 2025. Highlights include Castries on the island of St. Lucia; Puerto Limon in Costa Rica; Gatun Lake in Panama; and Colombia's colonial city of Cartagena.

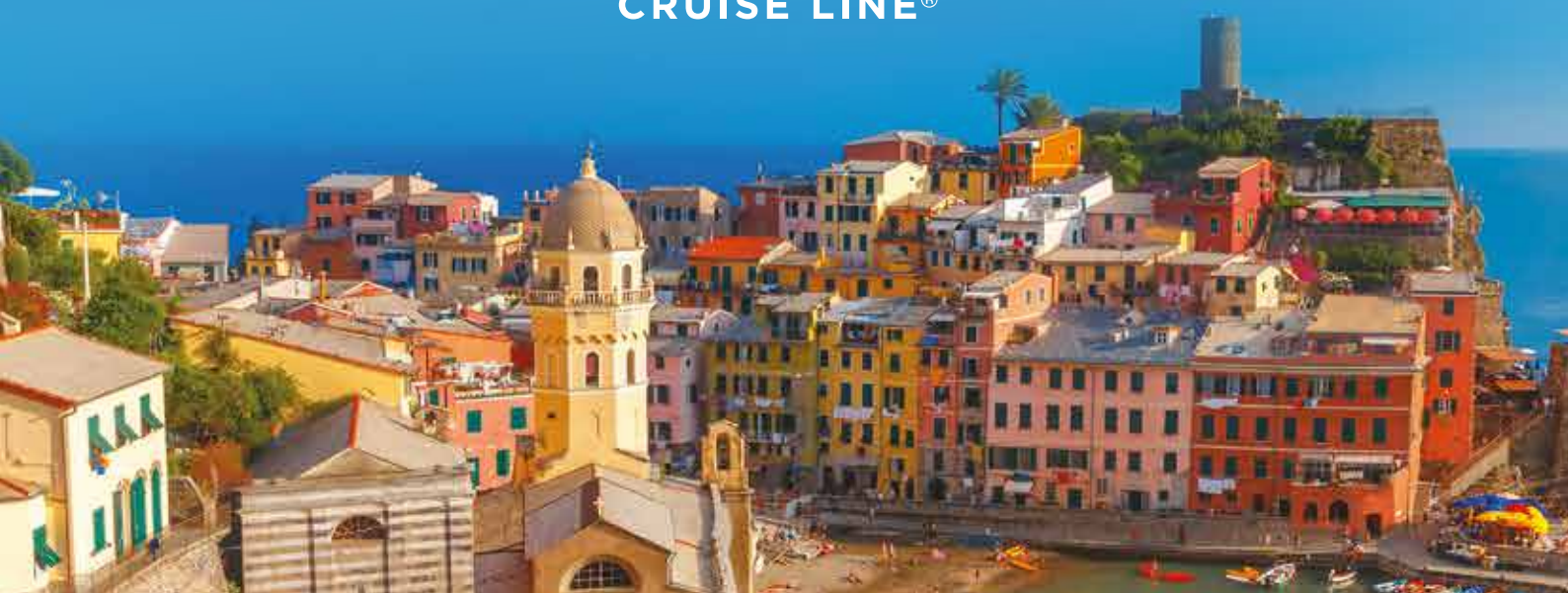
Sailing from Miami, Cartagena, New York, Los Angeles, Bridgetown, Panama and Papeete, the voyages will take place on *Marina*, *Nautica*, *Sirena* and Oceania's new ship, *Vista*. The line says they are "ideal for travellers who dream of sojourns in tropical archipelagos and who wish to explore colonial cities and soak up the island atmosphere".

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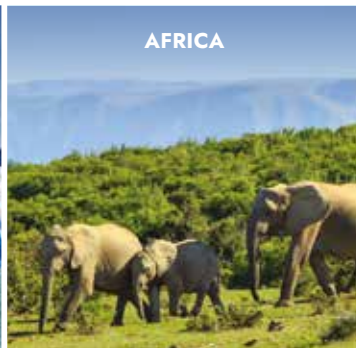
Youth programmes and kids clubs



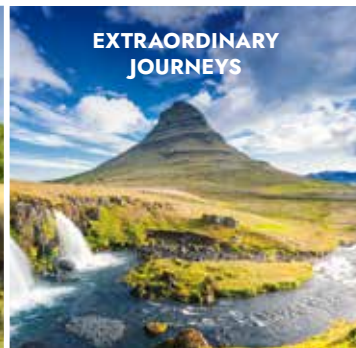
ALASKA



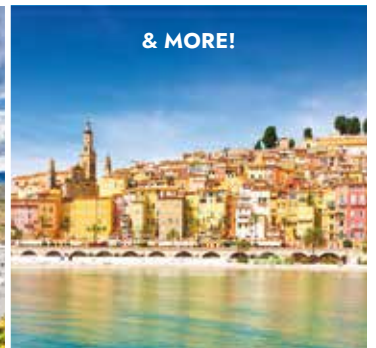
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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Havila Voyages 'giving back'

Bent Martini, Havila Voyages CEO, says the expedition line will "contribute to critical infrastructure" along the Norwegian coast, following the launch of its fourth ship.

Havila Pollux completed its maiden cruise from Bergen to Kirkenes last month. Martini says: "It is very clear that the coastal communities have been waiting for our state-of-the-art ships. We are thrilled about it and look forward to giving something back to the coastal communities."



NEW SHIPS MAKE WAVES

The ever-growing ultra-luxury expedition cruise sector received a further boost in recent weeks with the launch of two new ships.

First up, for Seabourn, is *Pursuit*, the second ship of its kind from the line, following *Seabourn Venture*. As of this month (October), the ship will begin its expedition journeys from Barbados. It will also head south exploring coastal South America, the Amazon and Antarctica into late March 2024. Following its inaugural Antarctic season, itineraries will take in the islands of the South Pacific and also Australia,

which will be the start of the line's first exploration of the Kimberley region.

Then there is *Silver Nova*, the first in Silversea's Nova class. In November, the ship will be in the Caribbean and South America, and in January 2024 will embark on the 71-day Grand Voyage South America voyage.

"As one of the most spacious ships at sea, and with the broadest array of bars, lounges and restaurants in ultra-luxury cruise travel, *Silver Nova* elevates the experience for our guests like never before," said Silversea president Barbara Muckermann.



'TAKING THE ECN TO THE NEXT LEVEL'

Akvile Marozaitė has declared that she is excited about the opportunity to take the Expedition Cruise Network (ECN) to the "next level", in her new full-time role as CEO.

Marozaitė was previously combining her job at the ECN with her position as UK & Scandinavia business development manager at Danish cruise company Albatros Expeditions.

She added: "Since the launch of the network, we have been humbled by the incredible support we received both from expedition cruise companies and the travel trade community, cementing our belief that this is a timely and needed organisation. We are just getting started and I look forward to taking the ECN to the next level and raising awareness of this incredible form of travel."

Magic in the air

As the year rumbles on, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales
Geoff Ridgeon looks ahead to selling Christmas cruises



I know it might seem a tad early to bring up Christmas, but believe me, now is the perfect time to dive into the world of festive cruise getaways for your eager travellers. While we often associate Christmas with winter coats, hot chocolate and frosty mornings, there is an alternative – the tempting thought of swapping the English winter for Christmas Eve in the Seychelles.

Your customers could join our Intrepid Beauty of Africa and the Indian Ocean Grand Voyage, which sets sail in November and returns in February, spending time in the faraway climes of Mauritius, India, Goa, Madagascar and South Africa, among many other destinations.

As you know, Christmas is more than just a holiday – it's a feeling of warmth, togetherness and magic. Could there be any better way to celebrate this special occasion than by embarking on a Christmas cruise that promises unforgettable memories and unique experiences?

MAKE IT UNFORGETTABLE

Our Christmas cruises are designed to show your customer enchanting destinations while enveloping them in the spirit of the season – and there are plenty to choose from. There's the European Christmas Markets cruise departing from Southampton on 13 December on board *Balmoral*, where guests can meander through Hamburg's enchanting markets and



ABOVE Swapping the UK's chilly winter weather for the warmth and wonder of Madagascar may be just the ticket



Our Christmas cruises show customers enchanting destinations and envelope them in the spirit of the season

HIGHLIGHTS

- 1** Four festive cruises, two of which will be away for Christmas Day
- 2** Fred Olsen's most popular festive cruise is the Christmas Celebration in the Canaries
- 3** Guests will celebrate Christmas Day on the Indian Ocean as part of the Intrepid Beauty of Africa and the Indian Ocean grand voyage

take in Copenhagen's colourful quayside. Another is the Classic Christmas Markets on *Borealis* from Liverpool on 14 December, full of pure festive ambience.

If Christmas markets don't float your clients' boats, you could offer them In Search of the Northern Lights at Christmas from Southampton on 21 December, or some winter sunshine with Christmas Celebrations in the Canaries, departing from Liverpool on 22 December.

It's worth remembering that by helping your customer lock in their Christmas plans now, you're not just ensuring a spot on these incredible cruises but also giving them something extraordinary to look forward to in a year that's been quite unpredictable. So, get ready to sprinkle some early holiday magic and make this Christmas unforgettable. ●

Time to shine

With a new trade-focused holiday brand and revamped ship in the fleet, it's an interesting time for Celestyal. We take a closer look at what the future holds

There are often moments when a business rapidly goes up in gear. Sensing the opportunity for growth and increased market presence drives internal innovation, in turn boosting external awareness. For Celestyal, the past few months have seen plenty of headlines generated.

Earlier this year, it announced the launch of a dedicated trade packaging solution, in partnership with Aviate. Celestyal Holidays, exclusively for the UK trade, allows agents to create tailor-made packages with regional flights, pre and post-cruise stays and any itinerary.

UK country manager Jo Reid explains: "The introduction of Celestyal Holidays not only demonstrates our commitment to the UK market, but also offers our agent partners exactly what they have been asking for – tailor-made packages that are simple to book, are great value for money, pay competitive commission and are fully protected. I'm confident that our investment in Celestyal Holidays will prove successful in helping us achieve our growth objectives in the UK while continuing to support our loyal trade partners."



"Partners of ours who are not able to package themselves can now book with Aviate, and are fully protected under their ATOL licence," she continues. "In addition, with new itineraries launching next year and alternative embarkation and disembarkation ports, these tailor-made packages will make it even simpler for agents to book. The UK is one of our key strategic markets and we are continuing to invest in it through increased resources, marketing activity and trade partner relations."



A NEW DIRECTION

The launch of Celestyal Holidays also comes alongside the introduction of a new ship to the fleet. *Celestyal Journey*, which set sail for the first time in its new guise in early September, has very much been designed to elevate all aspects of the on-board experience for Celestyal guests. It features the line's first ever penthouse with private terrace and the Stargazer Suite, offering a "premium luxury cruise experience".



“ **CELESTYAL JOURNEY IS THE PERFECT SHIP TO STEER OUR RENEWED SENSE OF BRAND DIRECTION**

Elsewhere, there is the Sozo Experience, inspired by the Greek tradition of wellness of mind, body and spirit. The main entertainment hub is the Amphitheatro, a live show lounge that spans two decks, while *Celestyal Journey* also has a Kids' Club and arcade games.

“The ship also offers a larger range of dining options, with seven one-of-a-kind venues including specialty and themed restaurants appealing to a wide array of tastes and cuisines from Mediterranean to European and Asian dishes,” Reid says. “In addition, there will be a cooking demonstration area and an exclusive Chef's Table venue, ideal for celebrating special occasions with friends or for private group functions.”

These additions provide a “renewed opportunity to lean into our brand story”, Reid says. “With more premium balcony space, more superior dining and

entertainment spaces, the ship is the largest in our fleet, allowing us a platform to showcase much more of the Celestyal spirit to a larger audience. The best way to talk about our brand, and for others to understand who we are, is the link to our heritage and traditions.”

Reid highlights the desire of the brand to “create value beyond our product, where we can grow our share of voice through earning trust and emotional investment from our customers and trade partners”.

A key part of this will be a focus on being “bolder in our language and bolder in our claims, because we know we live up to them”, Reid tells *CTN*. “We firmly believe that we can lead on experiences and on partnerships across the industry. *Celestyal Journey* is a beautiful new chapter in our voyage and the perfect ship to steer our renewed sense of brand direction.” ●

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE

Thessaloniki is one of the ports of call on *Celestyal Journey's* Greek itineraries; UK country manager Jo Reid; *Celestyal Journey* is the largest in the line's fleet

IN NUMBERS



45%

Booking seven-night itineraries



£3,567

Average selling price in UK market



30%

Booking longer cruise itineraries

Trust the data

Traveltek chief commercial officer **Cressida Sergeant** examines the latest booking data to discover what trends are emerging



It's been a bumper summer for sales with so many headlines for the cruise industry, but let's take a look at what our data is telling us, from June through to August.

In the UK, the five largest cruise lines to process bookings in the Traveltek platform in order of performance have been P&O Cruises, MSC Cruises, Celebrity Cruises, Royal Caribbean, and Princess Cruises. The five most popular ships (in sales volume order) were *Iona*, *Virtuosa*, *Azura*, *Britannia* and *Arvia*.

GROWING TRENDS

From June to August, the average selling price was £3,567 in the UK market. This is up from £3,240 in 2019 and up from £3,411 in 2022 for the same booking period. What's more, cruise has outperformed 2019 and 2022 for every calendar month so far this year. However, in August the YOY growth noticeably slowed. It will be interesting to see how we finish the year after such a bullish start to 2023.

The UK also has an upward trend for 14-night duration cruises, up from 26 per cent of cruises booked in 2019 to almost

“
The data supports the trend for family cruises and long-haul travel

30 per cent now. This data supports the growing trend for family cruises and long-haul travel. Elsewhere, seven-night durations moved from representing 48 per cent of bookings in 2019 to 45 per cent during summer 2023.

In Australia, the top performing cruise lines in the region through Traveltek are Norwegian Cruise Line, P&O Cruises, Princess Cruises, Royal Caribbean and Celebrity Cruises. Over in North America, MSC Cruises, Costa and Royal Caribbean lead the charge for the highest volumes of bookings. ●



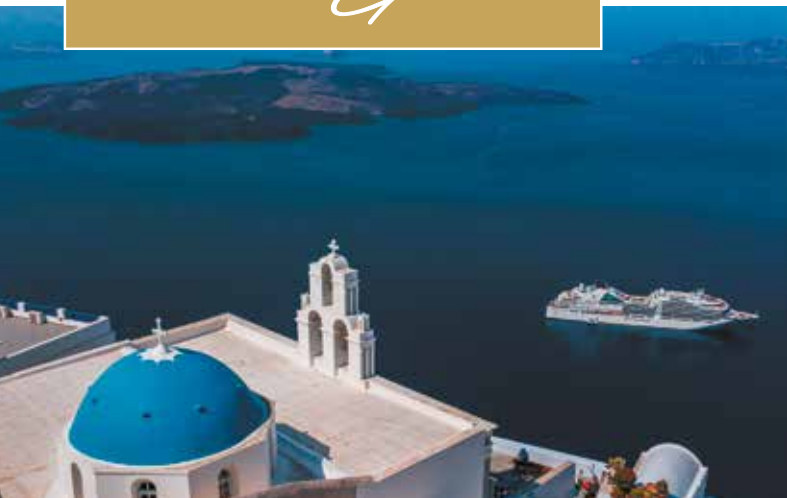
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Traveltek's Cressida Sergeant; *Iona* is a popular ship for UK passengers



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Sample itinerary - Ocean 7-night Aegean Treasures

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**Lead fare based on 2/6/24*

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Sample itinerary - Expedition 13-night Antarctica Exploration

27 Nov 2023; 6[^], 8, 28[^], 30 Jan*; 4[^], 25 Nov;
7 Dec 2024; 8, 30 Jan, 14[^] Feb 2025

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& SEABOURN PURSUIT[^]

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- 7-day Antarctica Experience with inclusive Zodiac and optional Kayak and Submarine tours
 - US\$1,500pp onboard spend

**Lead fare based on 30/1/24*

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- Intuitive, personalised service provided by staff passionate about exceeding guests expectations.
- Welcome Champagne and complimentary in-suite bar stocked with guests' preferences.
- All ocean-front suites, luxuriously appointed.
- Handcrafted itineraries developed for the expedition traveller to the world's most coveted and remote destinations featuring inclusive expedition experiences and a 24-strong team of world-class experts.
- Complimentary premium spirits and fine wines available on board at all times.
- Tipping is neither required, nor expected.
- All dining venues complimentary - guests may dine where, when and with whom they wish.

ALL-INCLUSIVE | ALL-SUITE | ULTRA-LUXURY

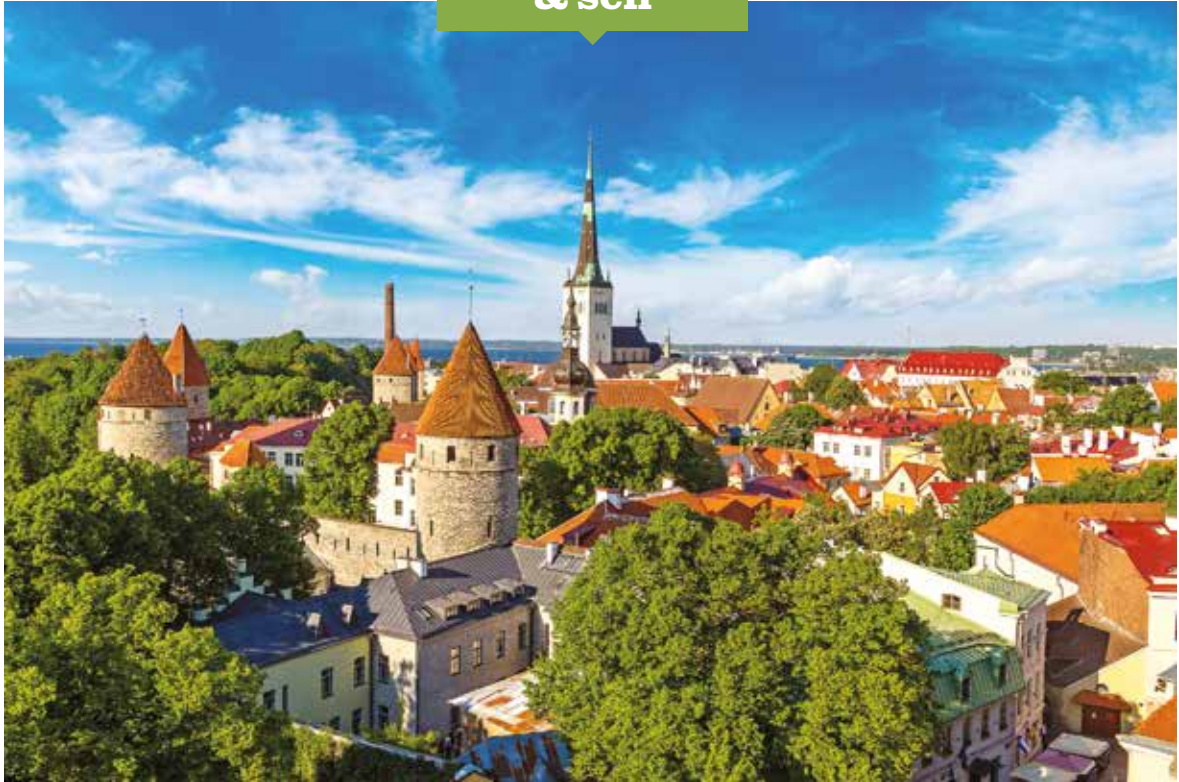
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Fred Olsen Cruise Lines

In this new regular feature, we shine the spotlight on the key, need-to-know-information to make selling easier. This time, we're focusing on learning about Fred Olsen Cruise Lines

IN THE KNOW

Fred Olsen's heritage stretches back 175 years to 1848 and today it remains a family-run business with a fleet of three ships. These ships are big enough to ensure a great variety of rewarding on board experiences but small enough that cruising with feels friendly and personal. Itineraries are designed afresh every year to make sure guests see not only the world's most amazing destinations but travel at the best possible times to see them.

SHIPS IN THE FLEET

Bolette – the flagship of the fleet bears the name of Fred Olsen's great grandmother. It features 690 cabins, with capacity for 1,338 guests.
Borealis – the 1,353-guest *Borealis* joined the fleet in 2020 and is suited to scenic cruising of the world's lesser-known waterways.
Balmoral – the smallest Fred Olsen ship features six restaurants, seven bars and lounges, two pools and wide-open decks.



FROM TOP Guests will be enriched with stops in cities such as Tallinn in Estonia; *Balmoral* is the smallest Fred Olsen ship but is still full of features

WHO'S WHO

Geoff Ridgeon leads the way as head of sales. There are five sales and account managers within the team – Mathew Foxcroft, Carla Ball, Kerry Eades, Allison Graham and Pam White – each dedicated to acquiring a thorough understanding of their agent needs and requirements.

This team is backed up by the sales support team headed by Becky Smith. Sammy-Jo Nelder, Hayley Walker,

Jasmine Lilly and Danni Warner are all available to help agents promote and sell cruises. There is also a trade marketing team consisting of Fiona Archbold-Graham and Megan Johnson, who are dedicated to helping trade partners with marketing tools and support including copy, imagery, video, over-branded materials and social media assets. Michelle Tingley is the line's brand training manager and assists with any in-person or virtual training requirements.



“ITINERARIES ARE DESIGNED AFRESH EVERY YEAR TO COVER AMAZING DESTINATIONS

WHAT'S ON THE HORIZON

- The 93-night Intrepid Beauty of Africa & the Indian Ocean voyage, sailing on *Bolette*, departing Southampton on 19 November 2023
- Islands of the Azores, Crossing the Path of the Solar Eclipse itinerary, departing 4 April 2024, on *Bolette*
- A 14-night Maritime Cities & Sailing Events of the Baltic cruise, departing 27 June 2024 on *Borealis*

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Brand training manager **Michelle Tingley**

Why is now the time for agents to start selling more Fred Olsen cruises? We have worked on the brand to better identify our target market and explore the many reasons why agents should recommend us. Educating trade teams on the many benefits of cruising with Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines has been part of the strategy. For example, we have developed excursions and experiences that really meet the need of the enthusiast customer, taking our guests away from the sightseeing tours of the bog-standard tourist trail. We have had our best year on record,



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Next year will feature the Islands of the Azores itinerary; *Borealis* is suited to scenic cruising; brand training manager Michelle Tingley

How do you define the Fred Olsen experience for agents new to cruise?

The Fred Olsen experience is targeted around education and information that helps us promote our fleet of smaller ships, hand-crafted itineraries and the highest return rate of any UK cruise line. We share all of our campaign information, cruise and ship news, trade incentives, ship visits, educationals and where to find our marketing tools with our trade partners and are here to support you and ultimately help drive Fred Olsen sales.

What fam trips and ships visits do you have coming up? We've hosted 16 educational cruises and 41 ships visit days throughout the year. These have been very popular and, while we still have a handful left, they are fully booked. We are hearing feedback such as "One of the best ship visits I have been on", and "It completely exceeded all of my expectations". These comments are from agents with more than 15 years of experience. We are now looking ahead to planning 2024. ●

TOP TIPS

1 Fred Olsen is moving in a different direction to much of the market. Bigger ships with a party atmosphere are great; however, our guests don't like being treated as tourists, or crowded, big and busy ships.

2 Everyone wants to feel special on their holiday and our crew treat each guest as an individual, not simply a cabin number. You and your customers will be reassured of a genuinely warm, personal service.

3 Product knowledge is more than an essential sales skill. For team members of all experience levels, it becomes a source of confidence. Being known for having knowledge will differentiate you and drive sales growth.



New
Voyages
now available
to book



Sailing April 2025 to January 2026



Cunard World Club members can benefit from a 5% saving on Cunard Fare and Early Saver Fare when booked between 4 October and 4 December 2023.

The 5% saving is available on the following voyages:

Queen Anne ♦ 21 April 2025 – 6 January 2026

Queen Mary 2 ♦ 27 April 2025 – 6 January 2026

Queen Victoria ♦ 28 April 2025 – 6 October 2025

Terms and conditions apply.

The standard deposit of 15% per person is required.

QUEEN MARY 2

QUEEN VICTORIA



New voyage highlights



Grand Lobby, Queen Anne

QUEEN ANNE

- ◆ Guests can spend Christmas 2025 in the Canary Islands and enjoy New Year's Eve in Lisbon
- ◆ 9 overnight stays including Reykjavik, Oslo, Lisbon and Funchal Madeira
- ◆ Maiden calls including Tangiers, Bilbao and Trondheim
- ◆ 19 late evening departures including Tallinn, Tromsø, and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria



Santorini, Greece

QUEEN VICTORIA

- ◆ Mediterranean-Fly season sailing between April to October 2025, departing from Rome, Istanbul, Trieste and Barcelona
- ◆ Overnight stay in Istanbul
- ◆ Flights from £99 on selected Mediterranean Fly-Cruises of 14 nights or more when booked before 4 December 2023



Québec, Canada

QUEEN MARY 2

- ◆ A highlight of the new voyages includes Transatlantic Crossings with calls to Norway and Iceland
- ◆ Overnight stays in Boston, Québec, Liverpool, Rotterdam and Tromsø mean more chances to explore these entrancing cities by night
- ◆ 5 late evening departures including Bridgetown, Basseterre and Tromsø

Join Queen Elizabeth and explore the unique wilderness of Alaska in 2025. A selection of remarkable Alaska itineraries will be announced in the coming months.



Bonus 25 Shine points

On all Cunard Fare, Early Saver Fare and Late Saver bookings made and played between 4 and 17 October 2023.

Visit Shinerewardsclub.com for more information

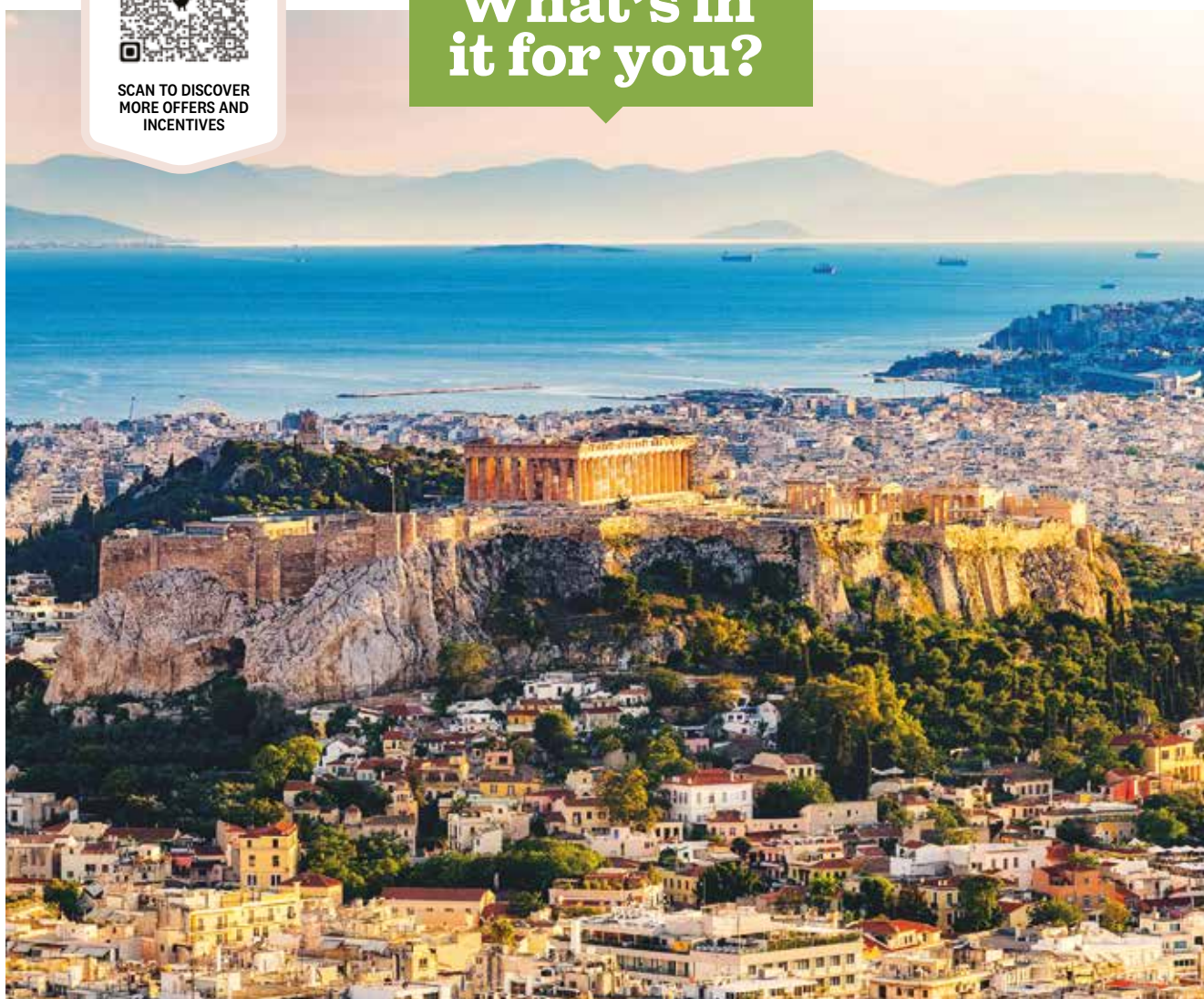


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SPECIAL OFFERS
ITINERARIES



SCAN TO DISCOVER
MORE OFFERS AND
INCENTIVES

What's in
it for you?



GREEK ISLANDS WITH RIVIERA



Riviera Travel has partnered with Celestyal Cruises to launch a new 10-night Athens & Greek Islands cruise and stay itinerary.

It consists of a seven-night sailing across the Aegean, coupled with hotel stays in Athens for one-night pre-cruise and two nights for a post-cruise beach stay. The package is available to book from 23 August, with five departures on offer between April and September 2024. Prices start from £2,199pp.

The cruise – which will take place on the 1,260-guest *Celestyal Journey*, which launches in September – will feature guided tours of Kusadasi, Crete, Santorini and Mykonos, and visits to Thessaloniki and Milos.

Riviera Travel head of product river and ocean cruise Katja Hildebrandt said: “Guests can enjoy a host of eye-catching attractions, from the remarkable history of the Acropolis to the striking amphitheatre of the Library of Celsus.”

Sign up

to the Agents Club by Cruise Trade News on Facebook and visit cruisetradenews.com for the latest incentives, itineraries and training news



UNFORGETTABLE PLANS LUXURY FAM TRIP

Next summer, 20 travel agents will join a seven-night luxury small ship fam trip with Unforgettable Croatia. Agents will sail on a Dalmatian Coast itinerary and have the option to take a guest. Agents need to apply for a chance to win a spot. The fam includes breakfast and lunch daily, a welcome dinner and captain's dinner, all excursions, private transfers and wifi, as well as daily swim stops in the local bays with complimentary watersports.

Unforgettable Croatia partnerships manager Pietro Molica Lazzaro said: "There is no better way to visit the incredible Croatian coastline than from the comfort of one of our luxury small ships."



STILL TIME TO WIN IN APT SHOPPING COMPETITION

Agents can still enter APT & Travelmarvel's food shopping competition. To enter, agents need to subscribe to APT's trade emails before 14 December 2023, or sign up in person at any of the trade events that APT attends. The operator will support the winner by covering these costs for a full year, giving them a total prize of £4,200 in Love2Shop vouchers. These will be delivered in 12 monthly instalments of £350 throughout 2024. The winner will be selected at random on 15 December.



SAIL FOR FREE WITH AMA

AmaWaterways has published its 2024 brochure and is offering travel agents a free cruise with every five bookings made.

The 2024 programme – which is being distributed to UK trade partners and can be downloaded in digital format from the line's agent portal – includes 45 itineraries across Europe, Asia, Africa and, for the first time, the Magdalena river in Colombia.

Agents who make five bookings before 31 December 2024 will qualify for a complimentary cruise for themselves and a companion. Next year, AmaWaterways will operate two seven-night itineraries on the Magdalena. Cruises will run on *AmaMagdalena*. In June 2025, a second ship, *AmaMelodia*, will also launch in Colombia.

Knowledge is power

This year, the CTN & CLIA Cruise Summit is all about preparing agents for a key selling period

As this magazine went to press, the 2023 CTN & CLIA Cruise Summit, called 'Maximising for Wave', was due to take place on 9 October, encompassing SEO, PPC, social media, content and more. With expert speakers, specialising in different areas of the industry, attendees will get key insights into how they can grow their brand offering and therefore reach more people.

In the build-up to the event, we spoke to P&O Cruises director of sales Ruth Venn, and TikTok travel industry lead Hannah Bennett, who will be providing expert analysis on the day.

RUTH VENN

How important is it for agents to prepare for wave as early as possible? Even the most organised of us can experience the last few months of the year in a blur, with back-to school chaos, last minute half-term holiday bookings and Christmas getaways taking up what we generally expect to be a quieter period.

Try to carve out time ahead of the January and February rush to reflect on wave 2023. What went well, what could you build on and how can suppliers support you? Plan any events sooner rather than later and, if you're looking for suppliers to attend, send your invites out now – it gets busy in January and February. December is a great month to make sure you're up to speed with your training and go into wave with confidence.



What are your key tips for agents over the coming months and into next year?

Knowledge is power. Take advantage of the significant amount of training and experiences available to learn more about the products you're selling. For example, on our newest ship *Arvia* there are unique experiences for guests to try including Mission Control (P&O Cruises' first multi-sensory immersive submarine simulation game), Green & Co feat. Mizuhana (which has a plant-led menu) or exclusive new stage show,

“
DECEMBER IS A GREAT MONTH TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE UP TO SPEED WITH YOUR TRAINING

IN NUMBERS

39%

use TikTok for travel-related purchases

200bn

video views on TikTok for #travel

33%

share travel content with friends

Greatest Days – The Official Take That Musical. There are some incredible deals available, and P&O Cruises offers exceptional value for money, but don't assume everyone wants the cheapest option. Take the time to understand your customer's budget and what they want from their holiday to find the right cruise for them.

Why are events such as the Cruise Summit important? The summit is the perfect opportunity to hear first-hand from industry experts and to bolster your black book with in-person networking opportunities. Your team will thank you when you return with a host of top tips and insights to help maximise their sales.

HANNAH BENNETT

How important is TikTok to the future of travel and selling cruise?

Travel is a huge content theme on TikTok now with more than 200 billion video views for #Travel, and so many travel sub-categories stand

“IT'S EASY TO SET UP AN ORGANIC PROFILE FOR YOUR BUSINESS IN THE APP & START POSTING

out within that, including #cruise with 10.5 billion video views. Our community of one billion people is not just seeing this content passively, they watch it, with 47 per cent saying they give TikTok their full attention (significantly higher than other platforms) and they interact with it – with 37 per cent saving travel content on TikTok and 33 per cent sharing posts with friends. It's not just about engagement on TikTok – 39 per cent of users have also made a travel booking or a travel related purchase after seeing content on TikTok – solidifying TikTok's place in the future of travel.

How can people in cruise use tools such as TikTok to boost their business? TikTok can be used to run an organic profile and/or for targeted paid activity. It's easy to set up an organic profile for your business in the app and start posting. As TikTok is powered by a content graph rather than a social graph, you don't need thousands of followers to get traction on the platform, instead it is much more about the content you create and post.

What advice do you have for those with little social media experience when it comes to using social tools? Jumping straight into content experimentation on TikTok can be overwhelming so I'd recommend taking a step back first to get an understanding of what travel conversations are most relevant to you and also how other brands and creators are showing up. The best way to get a feel for the range of travel topics and for how the community is engaging is downloading and spending time on TikTok. ●



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Explore our World of Wonders on our Small Group Cruises



**7 nights from
£2995**

PORTUGAL

ROYAL BARGE ON THE DOURO

- An exclusive cruise along the stunning River Douro on the former Royal Barge, the Spirit of Chartwell. Calling at Porto city, Entre-os-Rios, Pinhão, Barca d'Alva and Régua

FULL BOARD AND DRINKS WITH DINNER



**7 nights from
£1865**

CROATIA

THE COAST OF EXPLORERS & EMPERORS

- A meander aboard the MV Admiral along the inimitable Croatian coast from Split to medieval Korčula, Hvar, Mljet, Dubrovnik, Brac, Pelješac Peninsula & Pučišća. 5 lunches & 5 dinners incl.

EXCLUSIVE SAILING



**6 nights from
£2645**

FRANCE

PÉNICHE PROVENÇALE

- A leisurely barge cruise along the Canal du Rhône from Arles to Sète. Visit Avignon, Pont du Gard, Nîmes, Aigues-Mortes, Étang de Thau and pretty Saint-Guilhem-le-Désert

FULL BOARD AND DRINKS ON VESSEL



**10 nights from
£3395**

EGYPT

LAKE NASSER & THE NILE

- This tour starts with a 3-night stay in Cairo, takes to the river for Nile-side temples and tombs of the pharaohs in Luxor, and cruises on Lake Nasser to barely known and rarely visited treasures

FULL BOARD ON CRUISES INCLUDED



**7 nights from
£2595**

SCOTLAND

LORD OF THE GLENS

- An exclusive voyage on board the 'Lord of the Glens' through the heart of the Scottish Highlands, traversing four scenic lochs on a transit of the waterways of the Caledonian Canal

FULL BOARD ON CRUISE INCLUDED



**11 nights from
£4195**

INDIA

ASSAM & THE BRAHMAPUTRA

- Cruise along India's Brahmaputra River including Assam's tea country, the monasteries of Majuli Island & a jeep safari in Kaziranga NP. Full-board incl., plus 5-star hotel stays in Kolkata & Delhi

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On the
road with

Claire Rose

Seabourn's **Claire Rose** explains how her role as a business development manager is changing

What's the best thing about your job?

I've been working for Seabourn for over a year now and I love being able to focus on the passion in my life, which is cruise. It just so happens that I work for the best ultra-luxury cruise brand in the industry, which makes everything I do in my role an absolute dream.

How has being 'on the road' and meeting agents changed in recent times?

Face-to-face meetings are really valuable in terms of personal connection. However advances in technology enable us to achieve so much more, and be more time-efficient. The changing landscape of the industry means that it is so much easier to connect with partners who work remotely from all over the UK, regardless of where they are located.

What key Seabourn selling points are you focusing on when meeting agents?

There are three key areas: our ultra-luxury all-inclusive product, how ultra-luxury feels with Seabourn, and our Seabourn Moments concept, which



our on-board team strive to create. One of my goals has been to give partners the confidence to sell ultra-luxury and expedition. Personal experience is key, and, through our fam trip programme, we are delighted that many agent partners have been able to experience their own Seabourn Moments this year and can share these and their unique stories with their clients.

FROM TOP Claire Rose is passionate about cruise; fam trips on ships such as *Seabourn Venture* are key

addition, we have more escorted fam trips, which are designed to enable more partners to experience our brand.

What are the current challenges in agent training? The good news is that we now have the technology to reach more agent partners with webinars and in-person training, such as our Expedition Rendezvous events, which took place in small cinemas and screening rooms around the country this spring. The challenge is to ensure that partners also engage with the online sales and marketing tools we have available, such as our Seabourn Academy training and our trade website GoSeabourn, which offers user-friendly access to all the resources partners need to book, plan, promote and become an expert on the Seabourn brand.

How do you think the role of a BDM is changing? My time management now looks very different. I spend less time physically travelling from account to account and more time talking on virtual calls and providing follow up. Having that technology means we are all working in a much faster moving field with an expectation (and the ability) to bring product to market and share that with partners. ●

What do you have planned over the coming months to support agents? We have planned ship events both in the UK and overseas and we sponsor and attend as many conferences as possible with key partners and CLIA. In



“
I SPEND LESS TIME TRAVELLING AND MORE TIME ON VIRTUAL CALLS AND PROVIDING FOLLOW UP

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

A new era of luxury ocean travel has arrived with the launch of *Explora I*

In August 2023, *Explora I*, the first ship to join the fleet of Explora Journeys, commenced its maiden journey. Departing from Copenhagen, Denmark, the ship embarked on an epic 14-night journey across the icy narrows of Iceland and the Scottish Isles charting a course through seven destinations with a two-night stay in Reykjavik, before returning to the Danish capital.

The first in a series of itineraries which will span three continents, this northern European journey was designed to emphasise the brand's 'Ocean State of Mind' philosophy with immersive experiences that aim to reward guests physically, intellectually and spiritually. Along with the on-board experience, this also includes activities such as exploring Copenhagen's beguiling waterways by kayak, discovering Shetland through its heritage pony breed and an overnight stay in Iceland to explore the soul-enriching sites inside the Golden Circle.

Explora Journeys CEO Michael Ungerer said: "It was an absolute honour to welcome the very first guests onboard our extraordinary ship and share this special moment with them as we embark on the maiden journey of *Explora I* from Copenhagen. Our guests will be able to experience the very best European hospitality at sea and our vibrant,



cosmopolitan sense of luxury, while discovering some of the world's most remarkable destinations. A new era of transformative luxury ocean travel begins now with the first sailing of *Explora I*."

The ship will spend several weeks in Northern Europe for a range of different itineraries and will then cross the Atlantic and spend the winter in North America and the Caribbean before returning to Europe in summer 2024 for voyages in the Mediterranean.

FIRST OF MANY

Explora I is the first of four confirmed ships for the line setting sail from 2023 through to 2027. *Explora II* is scheduled to launch in August 2024.

Designed with the guest and relaxed, home-like comfort in mind – and in partnership with some of the world's foremost superyacht and luxury hospitality designers – the ship seamlessly blends Swiss precision with modern European design.

With 461 oceanfront suites, penthouses and residences, guests will enjoy feeling closer to the

“EXPLORA I OFFERS THE BEST HOSPITALITY AT SEA AND A VIBRANT, COSMOPOLITAN SENSE OF LUXURY”





“SEVERAL INDOOR AND OUTDOOR BARS AND LOUNGES MAKE SURE THAT GUESTS ARE SPOILT FOR CHOICE



sea thanks to their floor-to-ceiling windows and personal private terrace. Suites start at 35 sqm, making them among the most spacious for the luxury cruise category.

Overall, 14 decks provide ample public space, maximising guest choice. Think generous outdoor decks delivering stunning views of the sea, with 64 private cabanas across three outdoor pools, as well as a fourth pool with a retractable glass roof, allowing swimming and poolside relaxation in any weather. Flexible dining means there is more variety than ever, with global culinary talents on display and a focus on provenance and sustainably sourced ingredients. To make sure guests are spoilt for choice, several indoor and outdoor bars and lounges are also on board to unwind and relax and enjoy the varied entertainment on offer.

CLOCKWISE FROM

ABOVE Sakura offers the finest Pan-Asian cuisine; guests can feel closer to the sea in the oceanfront suites; the relaxed Med Club Yacht celebrates mediterranean fare; with 14 decks, *Explora I* offers ample space

BECOME A PIONEER

During *Explora I*'s inaugural year, Explora Journeys has launched an exclusive status in recognition of travel agents who have put their trust in the brand by introducing and booking journeys for their clients ahead of the ship's launch. This status has benefits for both agents and guests when making new bookings.

Agents who have already made bookings can benefit from value savings of up to 10 per cent and journey experience credits that they can 'gift' to clients. For new bookings, benefits include an invitation to join a complimentary voyage, access to reduced travel agent rates, plus bonus commission when referring a colleague and once they start booking with Explora Journeys.

Also, there is still time to become an Explora Journeys pioneer – agents need to simply make a new Explora Journeys booking before 31 December 2023. In addition, Explora Journeys is promoting 'always on' value savings. These include the Explora Early Booking Benefit – a five per cent saving on all journeys booked early and paid in full, and Extended and Grand Journey savings of up to 10 per cent on combined, longer journeys.

What's more, there are journeys available for those who prefer to travel solo, with a supplement from as little as 15 per cent more than the standard per person fare – one of the lowest supplements in the industry. ●





Explora
JOURNEYS

ZEETOURS
Uw Cruisespecialist



DISCOVER THE OCEAN STATE OF MIND

Welcome to a new era of luxury ocean travel. EXPLORA I, recently launched on 1 August 2023, leads the way for the Explora Journeys fleet, taking guests on a journey that effortlessly blends celebrated destinations and hidden gems to redefine the notion of adventure.

Inspired by the transformative power of the sea, Explora Journeys is uniquely positioned to be able to deliver the Ocean State Of Mind by transcending the limits of ordinary travel.

The ocean and its influence permeate every aspect of the guest experience, from the destinations visited to the luxurious onboard amenities.

FEATURED JOURNEYS

All journeys include access to sophisticated, varied experiences across 18 food and beverage venues, including six restaurants, five lounges and in-suite dining, unlimited beverages, fine wines, premium spirits, a welcome bottle of champagne, complimentary Wi-Fi, on board gratuities and more.*

A Sensational New Year Celebration

29 DECEMBER – 5 JANUARY 2024
7 NIGHTS | EXPLORA I

**SAN JUAN • BASSETERRE • SAINT-PIERRE •
MARIGOT • CHARLOTTE AMALIE
(SAINT THOMAS) • MIAMI**



Journey Experience Credit of EUR 150 per suite

Ocean Suites fares from EUR 5,050 pp

A Journey to an Arcadian Antilles Adventure

31 JANUARY – 9 FEBRUARY 2024
9 NIGHTS | EXPLORA I

**BRIDGETOWN • SOUFRIÈRE • BASSETERRE •
GUSTAVIA - OVERNIGHT • ROSEAU • SAINT-PIERRE •
ST. GEORGE'S (GRENADA) • BRIDGETOWN**



Journey Experience Credit of EUR 200 per suite

Ocean Suites fares from EUR 4,400 pp

Lost Cities and UNESCO Treasures on Colombia's Coast

16 FEBRUARY - 24 FEBRUARY 2024
8 NIGHTS | EXPLORA I

**MIAMI • SANTA MARTA - OVERNIGHT • CARTAGENA -
OVERNIGHT • COLÓN • WILLEMSTAD - OVERNIGHT •
SAINT-PIERRE • BRIDGETOWN**



Journey Experience Credit of EUR 200 per suite

Ocean Suites fares from EUR 3,900 pp

A Celestial Caribbean & Creole Soul

8 MARCH - 18 MARCH 2024
10 NIGHTS | EXPLORA I

**MIAMI • KEY WEST • SPANISH TOWN (VIRGIN GORDA) •
GUSTAVIA • ST. JOHN'S • DESHAIES • SOUFRIÈRE •
BEQUIA • BRIDGETOWN**



Journey Experience Credit of EUR 200 per suite

Ocean Suites fares from EUR 5,300 pp

*Terms & Conditions apply; Fares subject to availability and subject to change *Experience fee applies to two venues*

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT ZEETOURS CRUISES 010-28 23 800 | CRUISES@ZEETOURS.NL

Journey Experience Credit (JEC) will be applied to the reservation within 30 days of the journey start. The JEC will appear as Event Journey Experience Credit on the booking confirmation to confirm the JEC has been applied. The offer will be applicable to any reservations created between 30/09/2023 – 14/10/2023. The offer is applicable to journeys departing from 01/08/2023 – 30/04/2025. The offer is combinable with other Journey Experience Credit offers and combinable with all Explora Journeys promotions including, but not limited to, Journey Fare, Explora Early Booking Benefit, Back2Back, Explora Extended Journey Savings, Amenity Program, Hosted Program and Journey Together program. Journey Experience Credit values for Journey Together program are as follows: EUR 100 per suite on 4 to 7-night Journeys, EUR 150 per suite on 8 to 15-night Journeys, EUR 250 per suite on 16+ night Journey. The offer is not combinable with other like offers and Journey Together+. Doubling the offer is not permitted. JEC will be based on the total number of nights onboard and be applied per suite booked. JEC will be applied to guests 1 and 2 within each suite. 3rd and 4th guests will not receive the JEC. Solo travellers earn 50% of the Journey Experience Credit per suite. JEC can be used towards all onboard purchases including dining experiences, the ultra-exclusive selection of cocktails and beverages, destination experiences, and spa treatments. They are not applicable towards purchases in the Monobrand shops, casino credits or advances, additional gratuities, or exchangeable for cash. Should the reservation cancel, transfer, or change to a journey outside of the designated Journey window the offer will be removed. JEC is non-refundable with no cash value. Full amount must be used by 18:00 on the final night of the journey. Any portion remaining will be forfeited.

SHIP OF THE MONTH

STAR FLYER

Star Flyer is a four-masted barquentine operated by Star Clippers. Sister ship to *Star Clipper*, and identical in every way, she has a guest capacity of 166 with a guest to crew ratio of 2:1. Visiting the Mediterranean in the summer months and the Caribbean in the winter months, *Star Flyer* offers year-round sunshine in some of the most beautiful ports of call the world has to offer. Sailing under wind power where conditions allow, *Star Flyer* is one of the leading environmentally friendly cruise ships. When sailing from St Maarten in the winter months, guests can expect to be sailing under wind power, with the engines off, for up to 70 per cent of the duration of the cruise.



1 Watersports

A number of different water-related activities are complimentary on board, such as kayaking, paddle-boarding, water-skiing, wind-surfing and snorkelling. A dedicated and friendly on-board sports team can assist guests with the activities.



Fast facts

166
guests

115M
length

16
sails

2:1
guest to crew ratio



2 Authentic experience

For more than 30 years, Star Clippers has been offering an authentic, natural sailing experience with both modern propulsion methods and traditional sailing. When possible, engines are switched off and the ship operates under wind power, which makes for a memorable and sustainable cruise.



3 Life on board

Life on board *Star Flyer* is relaxed and laid-back, with comfortable and casual attire recommended. There are no formal nights on board, but guests can expect an occasional (and optional) themed night such as pirate night and white night.



4 Ports of call

Being a smaller ship, *Star Flyer* can reach destinations larger ships are unable to. Guests can discover quiet bays and isolated beaches, away from the hustle and bustle of busy cruise ports. For example, when in the Caribbean, *Star Flyer* nestles into Falmouth Harbour.



5 Family-owned

Over 30 years ago, Swedish entrepreneur Mikael Krafft launched Star Clippers to allow passengers to experience true sailing with the modern amenities and comfort of a private yacht. The Krafft family still plays an integral part in operations.



6 Dining

There are no pre-set seating arrangements in the dining room on *Star Flyer*. Like other elements of a Star Clippers voyage, dinner is a relaxed affair. Menus feature international cuisine as well as some local specialities, to add yet more flavour to the voyage.

SHIP OF THE MONTH

VIKING SAIGON

Designed to navigate the Mekong, *Viking Saigon* offers understated elegance and has been built to reflect the clean, Scandinavian design for which Viking is known. Filled with light, the Lounge and Restaurant boast floor-to-ceiling windows to make the most of those precious views, as do all the staterooms, which offer a veranda or French balcony. Guests can explore one of the world's most scenic regions in comfort with outdoor verandas, hotel-style beds and public areas bathed in light, offering panoramic views of the surroundings.



1 Accommodation

Viking Saigon consists of 40 comfortable outside staterooms. The Explorer suites feature two full-size rooms with a veranda off the bedroom and a spacious bathroom with separate bathtub and glass enclosed shower.



2 Immersion

When sailing on *Viking Saigon*, guests can explore the cultural treasures of Vietnam and Cambodia with 16 guided, included tours. In addition, hotel stays in Hanoi, Siem Reap and Ho Chi Minh City are part of the package and bracket an eight-day Mekong voyage.



3



3 Communal spaces

The upper deck offers a pool with 360-degree views of the Mekong. The Spa & Fitness Centre is also a popular area to spend some free time. For al fresco sundowners, guests can head to the open-air Sky Bar with a shaded seating area or enjoy the Lounge & Bar.

Fast facts

80

guests

40

outside staterooms

3

decks

1

pool

2022

year built



4 Entertainment

Guests can enjoy a whole array of culturally immersive entertainment while sailing on *Viking Saigon*. There are lectures on Vietnamese history and culture, modern Cambodian history and the formation of the Mekong and Tonle Sap River.



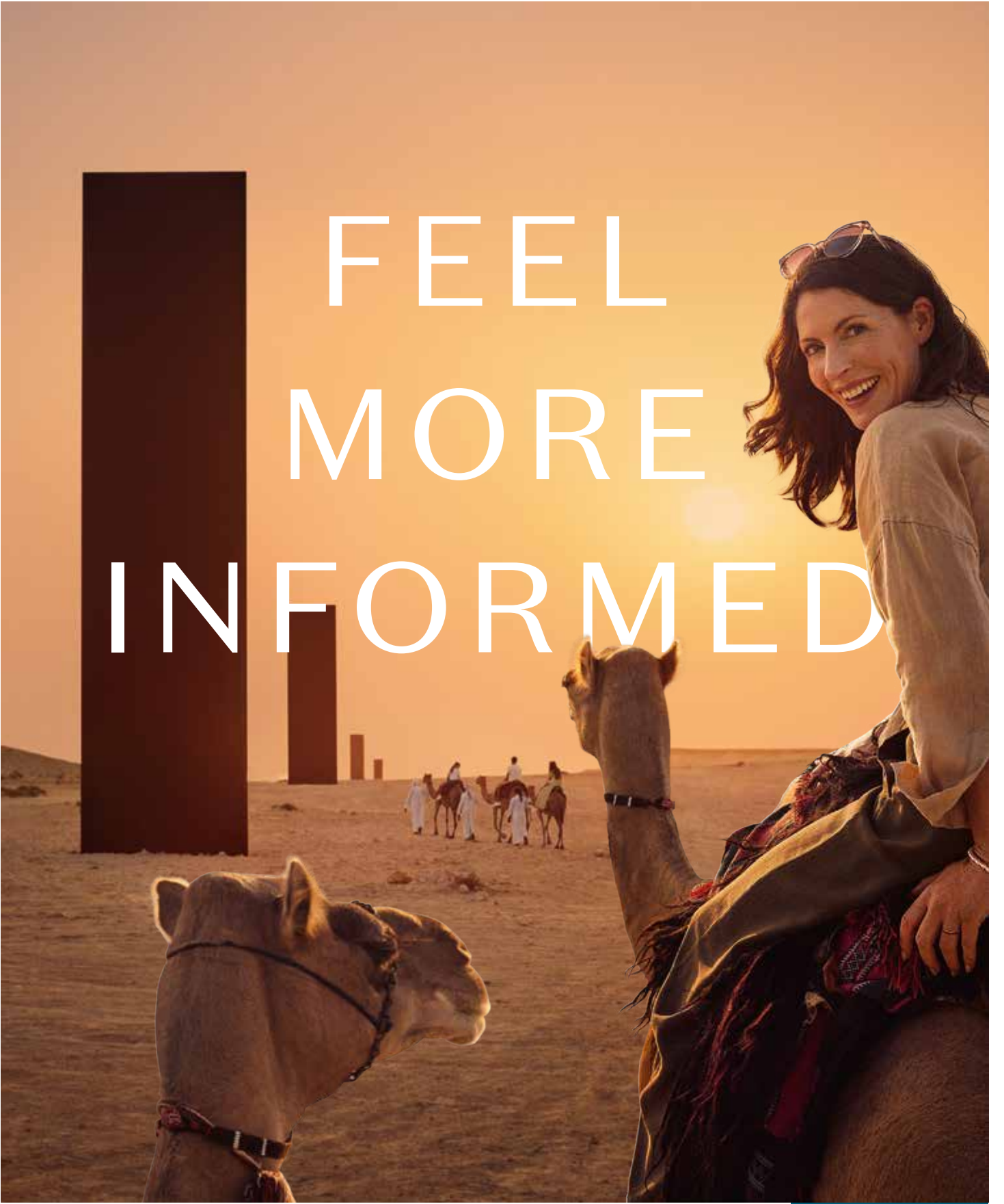
5 Local guides

Viking works with a vast network of local Vietnamese and Cambodian guides who are passionate about sharing their country with guests. The itinerary is a fully escorted programme by an English speaking Vietnamese programme director.



6 Dining

All mealtimes when on board are spent in the Restaurant, which boasts floor-to-ceiling windows for panoramic views at all hours of the day. The menu features regional cuisine and always available classics enhanced with locally sourced ingredients.



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OLD SHIPS, NEW TRICKS

The cruise world is slowly turning greener, attracting those who consider themselves more environmentally conscious. However, it's led to an industry-wide debate – can ships be renovated and upcycled without having to order a brand-new leviathan? **Calum Brown** looks for the answers

Remember the Toyota Prius? Japan's hybrid family car was supposedly designed to massage the trees and save the earth. Drivers believed the battery-petrol-composite was akin to automotive Jesus, and if you didn't opt to purchase one then Mother Nature would destroy us all. If you owned an older car, you had to adapt or be judged.

Now, a similar train of thought is creeping across the cruise industry. There's a polarising vibe where older cruise ships become easy targets, with people brandishing their opinions and spearheading a notion that freshly constructed cruise ships are kinder to the environment and older vessels remain akin to poison.

Others point to research that showcases how new ships use vast amounts of resources, harming the atmosphere. Renovating an older vessel, they claim, saves all that mayhem and pollution. Prolonging the lifespan of a ship that's already been created and installing a modern emissions-conscious powerplant to match contemporary regulations therefore makes perfect sense. It's the best of both worlds, it might be said. So – what's the deal?

NO LONGER AN OXYMORON

The phrase 'green cruising' has long been seen as an oxymoron, but that's only the case when judging the book by its cover.



In the past, the cruise industry has been lampooned by environmentalists as a cacophony of habitat-abusing toxins and bad attitudes. Cruise lines have been pushed into cleaning up their act courtesy of a changing world, fronted by studies from Friends of the Earth.

Announcing a ban on plastic straws and following baseline sustainability practices isn't enough to appease those concerned with climate change anymore. Aggressive decarbonisation goals, cleaner alternative fuels, greener port-based infrastructures and technological advancement remain the order of the day. According to the likes of UN research, only ships built to modern regulations can possibly achieve those targets.

Keyboard warriors and inconsequential socialites may get carried along by that argument, but is it one big misconception? Could it not be argued that all those voices that sneer and mock the decision to keep an older vessel up-to-date completely misinterpret society's infatuation with 'new is greener'?

Crafting a new vessel from the keel up is not just heavy on time and cost, but also on resources. More than 25,000 tonnes of steel are required for the construction of a mid-sized cruise ship, calling for more raw materials to be extracted from the earth.

THE CASE FOR RENOVATION

Upcycling used to be a dirty word but, thanks to efforts from the likes of Ambassador Cruise Line, the term has enjoyed a renaissance. Start-up cruise lines over the past century typically renovated older ships to avoid large financial outlays, but there was a stigma attached.

“Upcycling used to be a dirty word but, thanks to the likes of Ambassador Cruise Line, the term has enjoyed a renaissance”

To capture paying guests who would book a cabin multiple times per year, ships had to be new or famously established. Perfectly useable liners became victims of society. Out with the old, and in with the new. That was then, this is now, and the tourism landscape has shifted towards environmentally friendly holidaymakers. Repurposing a mature ship now presents merit rather than dishonour. Nick Hughes, chief operating officer at Ambassador Cruise Line, can attest to that.

He says: “Huge amounts of resources and materials go into a new build and we are very happy to reduce, reuse and recycle excellent existing ships and make them fit for modern emission standards. We know that our guests enjoy the size and layout of more traditional ships and these also give us great opportunities to visit a wider range of port destinations. Why use even more resources while there are excellent options already available?”

Then there's the benefit of time scale. Crafting a cruise ship from scratch takes years of planning and construction. While Cunard's *Queen Mary 2* was officially ordered in November 2000, the maiden voyage wouldn't occur until January 2004.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Ambassador is keen to reuse and recycle ships; ship breakers and scrap yards are key to repurposing vessels; *Celebrity Silhouette* has had next-generation water treatment systems retrofitted



Ambassador's revamped *Ambition* (originally built as *MS Mistral* in 1999) went from planning in May 2022 to her maiden voyage only one year later, cutting the schedule by almost 66 per cent. Not to mention avoiding the subsequent carbon output of opting for a new build. Although it would be impolite to ask for exact figures, we reckon the cost of renovation was far less than ordering a fresh craft. When we asked Hughes, he simply responded: "Indeed".

DEBUNKING MISCONCEPTIONS

So, what about the big question – pollution? Repurposing is all well and good for the cruise line's bank balance, but are these second-hand ships spewing excess toxins into the oceans?



"We are happy to report that we are on track to maintain a carbon intensity indicator rating of C for the next three years and that we have a good EEXI (Energy Efficiency Existing Ship Index) rating," Hughes explains. "We continue to work with the Norwegian Maritime Authority in reporting our NOx emissions and are comfortably meeting the Tier III emission requirements."

Sewage treatment, maintenance and safety fall into the same argument. It's societal nature to assume contemporary attributes cannot be achieved by anything built prior to new legislation, but that's another misconception.

RWO, a supplier of intelligent water management solutions, worked with Celebrity Cruises to retrofit next-generation water treatment systems on *Celebrity Silhouette* and *Celebrity Reflection* – both more than a decade old. The unique CS-MBR system employs submerged membranes and sustainable biological treatment technology to filter more than 99 per cent of solids, microplastics, viruses and bacteria from anything fed into the sea.

Royal Caribbean took a similar approach way back in 2009, installing advanced wastewater purification technology in the entire fleet. Carnival



“How long can upcycling continue to adapt until ratification ensures that an older vessel doesn’t meet lawful regulations?”

established a similar mantra when upgrading its global armada with contemporary energy-saving technology. Everyone is at it.

Concerns for safety and maintenance also enter a dead-end argument. All face-lifted ships trading between brands must meet strict and prudent regulations regarding flame-retardant textiles and lifeboat procedures, alongside austere and regulated maintenance schedules. Everything is legal, everything is safe and nothing detracts from the cruise experience.

A DOSE OF REALISM

There’s one unanswered question regarding ocean-going upcycling. How long can it continue to adapt until ratification ensures that an older vessel doesn’t meet lawful regulations?

As world powers establish ever-tightening emission targets, it feels illogical to keep pouring money into a ship that can only be upscaled to

a point, before serious powerplant upgrades amount to the financial equivalent of doomsday.

As anyone who understands the construction process of a cruise liner will understand, the ship is built around the engines, rather than installed once the hull has been constructed. It’s the only way to feasibly fit the colossal drivetrain without compromising the liner’s structural integrity.

As such, while those engines can be modified to run on better fuel, operate with modern exhaust systems and perform with up-to-date efficiencies, it’s a finite time before designs and fuel changes leave older engines behind. And it’s not as simple as removing one drivetrain for another.

That’s where the new ships come into play. You cannot run Windows 11 on a ZX Spectrum, and you cannot run a medium-speed MAN L58/64 nine-cylinder turbo-charged diesel engine on liquefied natural gas (LNG). Cunard’s upcoming *Queen Anne* will propel herself with Caterpillar-MaK 12V43C units, which will provide bandwidth for further-reaching upgrades.

Taking a dose of future reality, it may sound unsporting to suggest that the current fleet of renovated cruise liners are sailing on borrowed time, but that doesn’t mean the ideology is unsound. Upcycling an already manufactured product makes a tonne of sense, both financially and environmentally. Older ships can easily run alongside fresher constructions without societal prejudice. The dated outer aesthetics may not be to everyone’s taste, but the environmental argument has been debunked. Perhaps it’s time to move on to the next fad. ●



FROM TOP Building new ships such as Cunard’s *Queen Mary 2* can be time-consuming; Crafting a new vessel from keel up is heavy on costs



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conversation
with...



SCAN TO DISCOVER
MORE INTERVIEWS

James Cole

Since launching in 2020, Panache Cruises has been riding the wave of success. Gary Peters speaks to founder and MD **James Cole** about how the company can continue to thrive

Casting minds back to 2020 brings little joy for many. However, for James Cole, there was a bright ray of sunshine as, in July of that otherwise difficult and somewhat painful year, Panache Cruises began trading. “Some people questioned starting a new cruise retail business in the middle of a pandemic when cruises weren’t sailing,” he explains. “We thought it was a good time, however, and we recruited some quality people.”

No doubt it’s been a whirlwind three years since the agency launched, but Cole says he and the team have “not looked back; everything’s been going largely according to plan”. He continues: “You start out with a plan of what you want to do and we’re very happy with where we’re at. Of course, certain things work a little bit differently than intended, but we’re pleased with the place we’re in and we’re loving the partnerships that we have with luxury and ultra-luxury cruise lines.

“We have a plan to take us through to 2027 and by and large we’re on track to exceed that plan. It helps to break it down – what do I need to do or what does the team need to do today to keep us on that track? We ask ourselves, are we doing the right thing and how can we improve our customer service? We’re not resting on our laurels; just stick to your knitting, as I say.”

“

BY 2030, THE LUXURY AND ULTRA-LUXURY SECTOR WILL DOUBLE IN SIZE... THERE’S NO QUESTION ABOUT IT



GROWTH IS THE WORD

At the time of speaking, Cole is preparing to move the company to a new office, such has been the rate of expansion in recent times. In fact, earlier this year, the company announced plans to grow its team by 30 per cent, offering competitive salaries and a slew of benefits to attract and retain the best talent. Cole says: “It is difficult to find the right people, but it isn’t insurmountable. It’s a challenge that we’ve taken on and I think over the last six months, we’ve recruited some exceptional colleagues. People have chosen to come work for us. It’s not necessarily just been about salary; it’s about benefits, the working environment and flexibility.”



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Panache MD James Cole; the demand for luxury cruises continues to grow; for Panache, staff wellbeing is a priority

This leads into a key focus for Cole, which is workplace wellbeing and making Panache synonymous with putting people first. “One of the things that I think has come out of the pandemic as a positive is all about flexibility and what’s important in life,” he says. “I think I’ve always treated people well in whichever business I’ve been in, but I wanted to take Panache Cruises to the next level. For example, the new office is one that I want people to want to come to rather than feeling that they must. It’s not just about having some office space with a few desks thrown in, but rather about creating the right working environment.”

So, with a new office, recruitment “going well”, and an expansion in the US proving a hit already, Panache is ready to mirror the growth that Cole expects to see in the luxury and ultra-luxury sectors. “By 2030, that sector of the market will double in size,” he predicts. “There’s absolutely no question about it. Look at every single one of the key players in the market – they are bringing new ships online, or refurbishing ships they have in their fleet. Does everything

go according to plan, of course it doesn’t and there are ups and downs in every market, but the general trend is for significant growth.”

THE TECH QUESTION

Now more than ever, the issue of technology comes into play, with little doubt that developments such as artificial intelligence will form part of how cruise lines and travel agencies change. At Panache, Cole says the agency has a “paradox”. On one side, it is “a digital marketing platform”, with a large chunk of marketing resources spent online and socially.

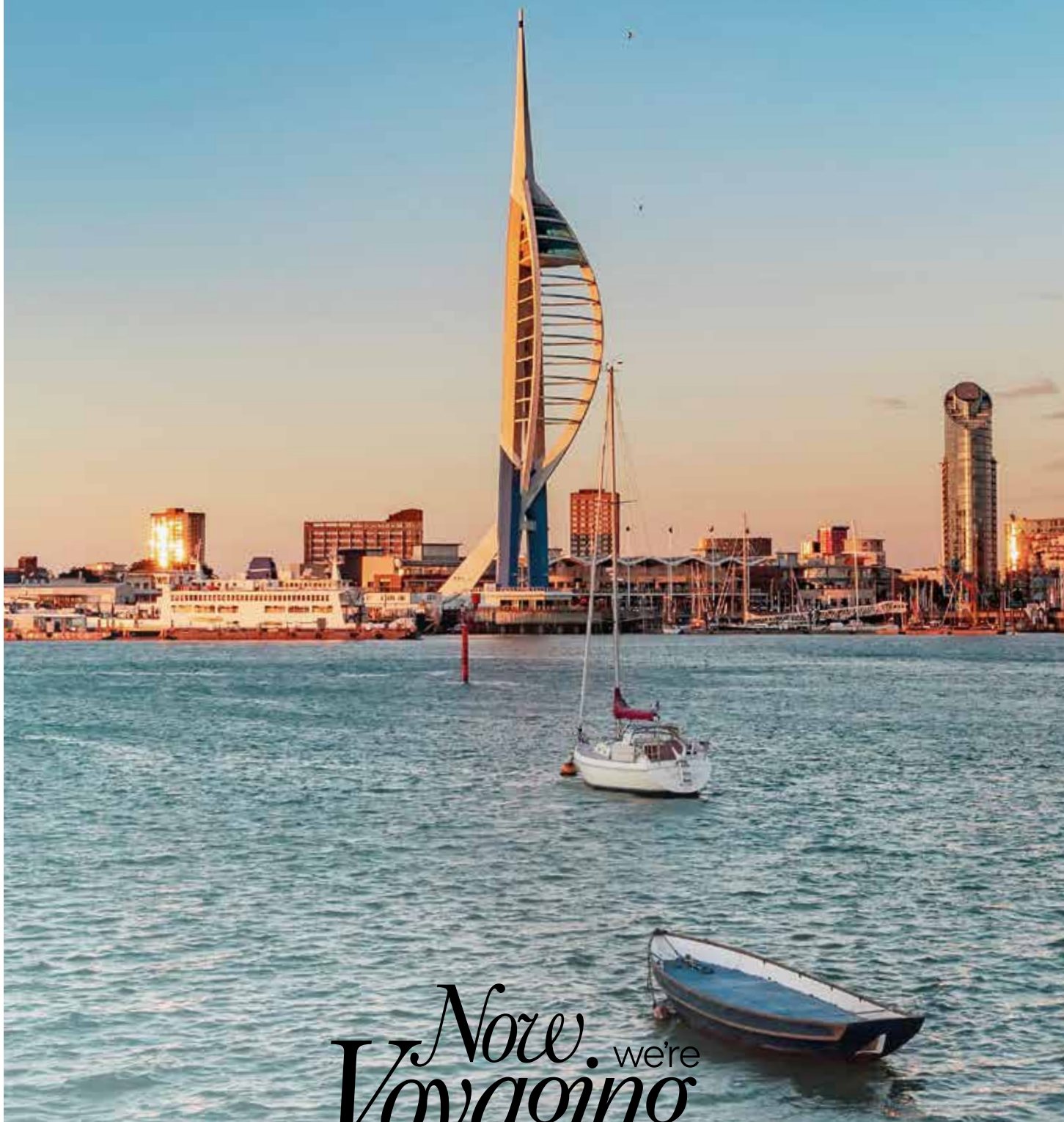
However, “the paradox of our businesses is that we do not sell cruises online”, explains Cole. “We could do it, but we take people offline and introduce them to their very own cruise connoisseur, who’s with them from the beginning right the way through to returning from that cruise holiday. We do that because customers demand it; they want high-end, personalised service, with people going the extra mile, which we call our ‘nothing is too much trouble’ service.

“When we’re not perfect, they might have an issue that they want to talk to me about. If the phone rings, somebody answers. Yes there is an opportunity for technology to enhance marketing and customer service, but for me there is no replacement for one-to-one customer service.”

There are few certainties in business, but with a commitment to excellence and an already well-established reputation for doing the right thing, Panache seems in good shape to continue riding the wave. ●



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THE POWER OF EMPOWERMENT

Gilly Pickup investigates why going it alone on a river cruise is becoming a more popular holiday choice

In a nutshell, solo river cruising is simply one of the best holiday options for those travelling independently. For a start, the vibe is informal, atmosphere on board welcoming and, since river ships carry a relatively small number of passengers, it's not too difficult to get to know people on board. Besides all that, it is an opportunity to enjoy 'slow tourism' at its best, a really enjoyable way to escape from the stresses and tribulations of everyday life.

Riviera Travel, which offers sole occupancy cabins with no single surcharges across their full collection of European river cruises, has seven dedicated solo traveller itineraries with

multiple 2024 departure dates. So there are plenty to choose from and are sure to whet most appetites, including along the Rhine, Moselle, Danube, Douro, Dutch Bulb fields and the Seine.

Riviera Travel CEO Phil Hullah says: "To help first-timers feel at home we have welcome drinks on river cruises, so guests get to meet one another and socialise as they wish. We do find that guests settle into a comfortable routine quickly, regardless of age and whether they are travelling on their own for the first time. A holiday is, of course, a refreshing experience, and in our experience a solo cruise can additionally be very empowering. Guests can return home with a whole

new perspective on life; what could be more revitalising than that?"

With the exception of *Scenic Azure* and *Scenic Gem*, single balcony suites are the way to go on Scenic Space-Ships, where guests can travel in five-star all-inclusive luxury. Emerald Cruises meanwhile offers a single stateroom on the Riviera Deck of its Europe Star-Ships where solo travellers can enjoy guided group tours, wine tasting sessions and museum visits, at the same time keeping fit while sightseeing with the EmeraldACTIVE programme.

A spokesperson for Saga says that the company does everything possible to ensure solo travellers feel welcome, including programmes to introduce solo travellers to fellow guests, through to something as simple as having one robe and glass in their bathroom. On their river cruise programme, 12 solo cabins are set aside on every *Spirit of the Rhine* and *Spirit of the Danube* cruise.



SCAN TO DISCOVER
MORE RIVER CRUISE
DESTINATIONS

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT There's lots to explore along the Rhone river; Nicko's *Bellejour* will offer Just You packages for solo travellers; Uniworld river cruise passengers are guaranteed a truly luxurious trip

"A river cruise not only allows people to explore a region in more depth, but also offers the opportunity to make friends"

MAKING FRIENDS

Elsewhere, four AmaWaterways ships, namely *AmaDante*, *AmaLyra*, *AmaCello* and *AmaDolce*, have a limited number of specially designed single occupancy staterooms with French balconies without an additional single supplement.

Jamie Loizou, the line's managing director, explains: "A river cruise is a great option for solo travellers. As river cruise ships are small, they tend to have an intimate atmosphere, making it easy to get to know other guests and the on-board team. Our cruise managers accompany our guests not only on the

cruise, but also on many pre and post-land programmes which our solo guests love. That means they have one point of contact for the whole duration of their trip with us, someone they know will look out for them and introduce them to other fellow travellers."

Jules Verne has been providing pioneering adventures for 45 years, long attracting a high percentage of solo travellers – currently 37 per cent of their customers. They say countries that top their independent travellers' wish lists are India, Egypt and Italy. Since 1978, the company has worked with suppliers to get rid of the single supplement where possible, offering a range of departure dates on tours for groups of solo travellers to support the continued demand for solo-only tours.

The company's managing director Debbie O'Neill says: "Solo travel is nothing new for us. River cruises are popular with independent travellers, especially our Christmas cruises. We don't currently offer a solo-only river cruise option because, having spent time talking to customers and looking at some recent survey results, 75 per cent of our solo customers tell us that they want to travel with a mixed group such as couples and friends as well as solos."



INCREASING POPULARITY

For luxury river line Uniworld, UK managing director Chris Townson urges agents "to look at the many benefits of river cruising for their solo traveller clients". He adds: "A river cruise not only allows people to explore a region in more depth, but also offers the opportunity to make friendships, thanks to the small numbers of guests as well as the range of interactive and collective experiences both on board and off including wine tastings, yoga and wellness, bike rides, painting and cookery classes. With Uniworld, the staff-to-guest ratio ensures a highly personalised service that meets every guest's needs and careful attention is paid to solo travellers."

Selling tips

- 1** Remind clients about river cruise inclusions. Depending on the line, this could include single cabin supplement waiver, flights/ rail travel, or complimentary transfers
- 2** Emphasise that clients could visit three or more countries on a week-long river cruise and are sure to find a suitable itinerary
- 3** River cruise excursions may make it feel safer for independent travellers to visit new places as part of a group and enjoy several destinations without worrying about the next night's accommodation



EXPERT VIEW

“Our experience is that people of all ages are increasingly travelling the world alone for the first time, not just to satisfy their wanderlust, but because solo exploration and adventure can grow self-confidence whatever stage a person is at in their life. To keep pace with demand, we place a clear emphasis on solo travel with no supplements on our single cruises.”

Phil Hullah, CEO, Riviera Travel

He continues: “We are seeing an increase in females aged 60-plus solo travellers book for 2023, up 80 per cent from 2022. This season Uniworld has offered its largest ever collection of sailings with a solo supplement waiver, some included within our seasonal offers.”

Digging deeper into the suitability and advantages of river cruises for single, they are wide and varied, says Tim Thorpe from cruiseholidaysuk.co.uk. He emphasises how themed cruises, perhaps visiting gardens or historical sites and therefore meeting like-minded people sharing a common interest, is a valuable ice-breaker. He points out too that since river ships generally dock close to the centre of destinations, it makes it easier for solos to do their own thing if they so desire.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS

Nicko Cruises, represented in the UK by cruise specialist Light Blue Travel, has announced a partnership with singles holiday operator Just You to be its exclusive river cruise supplier for the next two years. Just You, crafting

holidays for solo travellers for more than twenty years, offers 22 departure dates for European river cruises commencing 2024, as well as a 2023 Danube Christmas markets cruise programme. Just You packages will be available and commissionable to travel agents. Cruises will be operated by six Nicko vessels – *Rhein Symphonie*, *Bellejour*, *Bijou du Rhone*, *Seine Comtesse*, *Douro Queen* and *Maxima*.

Just You customers will receive a fully escorted exclusive programme, accompanied by a dedicated Just You guide, while sole occupancy cabins are guaranteed. In line with all Nicko itineraries marketed from the UK by Light Blue Travel, Just You customers will benefit from an all-inclusive package including a la carte dinner service, unlimited drinks package, gratuities, wifi, port taxes as well as English language excursions.

Light Blue Travel UK & Europe commercial director Michelle Daniels points out: “Just You solo travellers are in for a treat with the selection of all-inclusive Nicko Cruises now

being included in Just You’s 2023 and 24 escorted holidays programme. Itineraries feature Europe’s most popular rivers in Germany, France and Portugal.” Just You managing director Adam Kemp adds: “We are excited to partner with Nicko Cruises to offer fantastic cruise itineraries to our solo customers. The quality of Nicko’s ships and on-board service is aligned with what we know our customers seek.” ●

Itineraries

Emerald Cruises

A seven-night Tulips and the Rhine cruise, departing April 2024, is priced from £3,292 in single cabin, including flights if cruise booked/paid for in full at time of booking.
emeraldcrises.co.uk

Nicko Cruises

A Rhine and The Moselle voyage comes in at £2,675, sailing on the *Rhein Symphonie* and including Eurostar travel and four excursions. Price for July 2024 departure.
nicko-cruises.co.uk

Scenic

Prices for a Gems of the Danube cruise in a single balcony suite start from £4,455, including flights if cruise booked/paid for in full at time of booking.
scenic.co.uk



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'Doing the right thing'

Riviera Travel is entering the next phase of its journey
with plenty to excite both agents and guests

The Riviera Travel story is one of repeat success. From its acclaimed river cruise itineraries to escorted tours and its tall-ship ocean programme, there are many ways in which guests can travel with the operator – and indeed many ways for agents to tempt new clients.

In recent months, Riviera has put in place plans to capitalise on growing demand and enter the next stage of its mission to deliver memorable holidays, as it gears up to celebrate its 40th birthday in 2024.

PROTECTING THE PLANET

A key part of this is, as the operator puts it, is 'doing the right thing' by its guests, agent partners and the destinations it visits. A series of new pledges cover four pillars: sustainability, managing carbon footprint, operating ethically and charitable contributions.

The operator plans to reduce guests' carbon footprint by 20 per cent by 2028 – to be measured on a per customer, per night basis – across all holiday categories. This will be achieved by



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Head of trade Tom Morgan; Riviera aims to use greener energy and reduce plastic and paper on ships such as *Lord Byron* and *Jane Austen*



RIVIERA PLANS TO REDUCE GUESTS' CARBON FOOTPRINT BY 20% BY 2028

increasing rail travel options on existing holidays and utilising greener energy sources on its ships. It will also halve the use of plastic and paper by 2025.

Riviera has also established a new partnership with the charity Practical Action, a global development organisation that works with communities on the frontline of climate change. Riviera aims to raise significant funds by donating £1 per guest booked from 2024 onwards. Riviera CEO Phil Hullah says: "With the launch of our new plan, we will start the next phase of our journey, the aim being to ensure that Riviera, our partners and our peers do the right thing in every way we can."



SUPPORTING AGENTS

This year has also seen a strengthening of Riviera's commitment to travel agents. It has created a trade engagement committee to help influence future support. It will convene twice a year, in-person, for agents to share their feedback, opinions and ideas on how Riviera can better serve their needs.

Agents will also be asked for input on product development, marketing campaigns, training and education programmes, alongside incentive and engagement initiatives. What's more, a new trade-dedicated contact centre team now exclusively handles agent enquiries and bookings.

When it was launched this summer, head of trade Thomas Morgan said: "Agents are central to the success of Riviera and our dedicated, trade-friendly team will help further strengthen communications. We are absolutely committed to working alongside agents for the long term and this is another example of the partnership approach in action." ●

HIGHLIGHTS • FOOD & DRINKS
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Port Focus



SPLENDID SOUTHAMPTON

There's much more to Southampton than just being Britain's biggest cruise terminal, as **Nicole Carmichael** discovers

For fans of no-fly cruises, Southampton is a familiar destination. Situated in the historic county of Hampshire and 80 miles from London, it's quick and easy to reach by road and train and, as the largest city on the south coast, there is plenty to see and do there. With its rich maritime heritage and focus on water sports, sailing and ocean racing, Southampton is the cruise capital of the UK and the best the city has to offer is handily clustered around the cruise terminals and quays where the rivers Itchen and Test meet.

Southampton is famously the departure point for the *Titanic* and was one of the major embarkation points for D-Day. It's also the port where troops left for the Battle of Agincourt in the Middle Ages so it has played a significant role in the world stage over the past

“THE AWARD-WINNING DANCING MAN BREWERY HAS A SERIOUSLY DELICIOUS MENU

500 years. So, for guests who fancy a pre or post-cruise visit to the city, there is much to do to make the most of this historic port stop.

Highlights TUDOR HOUSE AND GARDEN

Southampton's first ever museum was built in 1491 and faces St. Michael's Square in the heart of the old town. It offers a unique, atmospheric insight into the lives and times of its inhabitants throughout the years – notably artist George Rogers and Sir John Dawtrey, who received large



sums of money from Henry VIII to supply food for the Royal Navy. It also offers a fantastic tour and indulgent cream tea as well as fascinating talks about the house.

OCEAN VILLAGE MARINA

Situated in the heart of Southampton, this upscale marina is packed with shops and restaurants and even a cinema. It's



the perfect place to take a stroll on the waterfront, enjoy a glass of wine or beer and watch the world pass by.

THE MAYFLOWER STUDIOS

Located near Southampton's Central Station, the Mayflower is a 90-year-old Grade II-listed theatre which often plays host to major West End productions such as *Les Miserables* and *West Side Story*. It's also a great venue for top bands and comedy acts, plus immersive theatre with themed dinner events.

THE NEW FOREST WILDLIFE PARK

A short hop from the city centre, the New Forest Wildlife Park is a wonderful way to reconnect with the natural world. There's

a whole host of mammals, birds and amphibians to visit, from a tiny harvest mouse to crowd-pleasing smooth-coated otters and red-necked wallabies. This little haven in Hampshire is a true delight.

Food and drink

LA REGATA

This award-winning authentic Spanish tapas bar on the waterfront boasts a menu of more than 65 delicious tapas dishes as well as a selection of traditional paella, plus delicious main courses including whole suckling pig. A great stop right near the docks and the main shopping area and a firm favourite with locals.

DANCING MAN BREWERY

The lively Dancing Man Brewery is not only a multi award-winning microbrewery producing bold beers such as Jesus Hairdo and Necessary Evil, it also has a seriously delicious menu. Plus, it's housed in a 14th-century medieval warehouse, built by Cistercian monks.

THE PIG IN THE WALL

Tucked away in the heart of Southampton's medieval walls is the outstanding PIG hotel with just 12 bedrooms. As with other PIGs, there is delicious food here with the kitchen garden at the heart of its uncomplicated seasonal British menu.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Southampton in the sunshine; delight in the decor of the PIG-in the wall hotel; steep yourself in history at the Tudor House; the New Forest Wildlife Park; savour Spanish cuisine at La Regata; the Mayflower is a great venue for theatre, music and comedy

THE ROCKSTONE

Specialising in hearty gastro pub grub, the Rockstone is a community pub chock full of art from local artisans and boasting two beautiful beer gardens. Foodie fans say their burgers are to die for.

Off the beaten track BEATNIK EMPORIUM

Quirky vintage and retro clothing can be found in this unusual treasure trove. Established in 1992, this homage to the pre-loved has an incredible stock which began life as a festival stall. It's the perfect place to shop for an original outfit for a cruise.

OCTOBER BOOKS

As a proudly independent bookshop that's owned by staff and customers, October Books is the perfect place for guests to visit and stock up on some great reads. The store also sells a great range of quirky and thought-provoking greeting cards. 🍷

Itineraries

P&O Cruises

A seven-night Norwegian Fjords from Southampton cruise aboard *Iona*, roundtrip from Southampton via Stavanger, Olden, Alesund and Haugesund, departing 7 September 2024, from £699pp.

pocruises.co.uk

Silversea

14-night Atlantic Coast cruise aboard *Silver Spirit*, roundtrip from Southampton via Honfleur, St.Malo, La Pallice, Bordeaux, Bilbao, La Coruna, Porto and Lisbon, departing 20 September 2024, from £7,500pp.

silversea.com

Alaska &
Canada

Call of the Wild



Thanks to new ships and itinerary launches there are more reasons than ever to venture into the land of glaciers, grizzlies and gold rush cities. **Sarah Holt** reports

You only need to mention the nicknames of Canada and Alaska to conjure up a sense of excitement in clients. The terms ‘The Great White North’ and ‘The Last Frontier’ imply adventure, roads less travelled and the greatest of escapes.

As we move into 2024, there are more ways than ever to build on that initial anticipation, as cruise lines launch new ships and itineraries and sculpt increasingly personalised experiences in the region, and the good news for agents is that some industry experts are reporting that travellers are becoming increasingly willing to spend that little bit more on their experiences.

“Alaska and Canada itineraries are perfect for those desiring to tap into their inner adventurer and discover the diversity and cultural heritage of North America,” says Regent Seven Seas Cruises senior director of sales UK Paul Beale. “Trends illustrate that guests are putting more value on their time and experiences and are willing to spend more to explore these northerly destinations in luxury, enjoying the highest possible standards of service in lavishly designed restaurants, lounges and suites.”

THE CLASSICS

Combined, Canada and the state of Alaska span 11.7 million square kilometres. So, as might be expected from a region this size, there’s a dizzying amount of cruise itineraries on offer. In Canada, cruises generally focus on either the east or west coast of the country,

with common departure points including Toronto and Montreal in the east and Vancouver in the west.

East coast cruises often continue on into the northern states of the US, such as Boston, while west coast sailings frequently venture into Alaska. In Alaska itself, the port of Seward is a popular embarkation point.

There are a few destinations that are more popular than others on cruise itineraries in Canada and Alaska. Snaking from Seattle in the south to Skagway in the north, the Inside Passage is a 1,000-plus-mile sea route that passes between the coasts of British Columbia and Alaska and the dozens of islands that are scattered off their shores. Made up of a series of straits, sounds (more commonly called inlets in the UK) and deeper fjords, the scenery here is cinematic.

Next there is Skagway, a boomtown during the gold rush of the late 1800s when tens of thousands of prospectors from Seattle and San Francisco used the town as a springboard to the goldfields of Canada’s Yukon area. Thanks to restoration work, the town centre has retained its 19th-century architecture, giving it the look of a John Wayne film set. Visitors can still ride the now vintage railway that gold hunters took to find their fortunes.

MILESTONES AWAIT

Launching in November 2023, Regent Seven Seas’ newest ship *Seven Seas Grandeur* will make its Canada debut in September 2024. The ship’s inaugural Historical Northeast cruise in the region will sail from Montreal



SCAN TO DISCOVER
MORE OCEAN CRUISE
DESTINATIONS

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Seven Seas Grandeur will make its Canada debut in 2024; the Rocky Mountaineer train offers unparalleled views; the Aleutian Islands are home to spectacular wildlife including the crested auklet

to Boston, calling in at ports like Quebec City, with its UNESCO world heritage Old Town, Sept-Îles, where visitors can learn about the heritage of the Innu, the province's most prominent First Nations people, and the island of Newfoundland, aka the Seabird Capital of North America.

In May 2024, Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Edge* will be the first to cruise around the region, sailing the six-night Alaska Dawes Glacier itinerary from Vancouver to Seattle, calling in at Juneau and Skagway and sailing through 30 miles of the Endicott Arm Fjord where passengers will have the opportunity to spot brown bears, bald eagles and moose on the fjord's shores. *Celebrity Summit* and *Celebrity Solstice* will then join, offering a total of 57 sailings and a range of six- to eight-night itineraries between May and September 2024.



For Princess Cruises, 2024 will mark a big milestone in the company's history – 55 years of sailing in Alaska – and seven ships will sail 158 cruises, following 14 itineraries, from the four home ports of San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver and Anchorage (Whittier).

In 2025, *Caribbean Princess* will make its Alaskan debut as the line starts sailing to Alaska from Los Angeles, and a range of new itineraries will be launched that include a 22-night round-trip voyage from San Francisco on *Ruby Princess* that coincides with the Summer Solstice and a 17-night roundtrip cruise from Seattle on *Grand Princess* that includes three days of scenic glacier viewing.

Viking Cruises has also recently released a new range of itineraries on its expedition ships that take in the east coast of Canada. The new Great Lakes Collection cruise, for example, sails from Toronto to Duluth in Minnesota, USA, calling at destinations including Port Colborne in Ontario, which is the gateway to Niagara Falls.

Viking UK head of sales Neil Barclay explains: "The Great Lakes boast historic canals that are engineering marvels, cities with thriving arts and culture and unmatched wilderness yet remain fairly undiscovered by many UK travellers. The Canadian section of these itineraries sail through the region of Ontario."

Finally, this year Holland America Line has expanded its Alaska Up Close offering. This programme of on-board experiences is designed to immerse passengers in all things Alaskan while

they're on board the ship and includes elements like Alaskan-themed brunches, cocktails made with glacier ice and expert lectures on topics like whale song.

TO THE EXTREME

Some rarer expedition itineraries, such as those offered by Hurtigruten, take passengers into the extremes of Alaska, to the far southwestern tip of the state and beyond into the abyss-like Bering Sea.

For example, protected as part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, St Matthew is 200 miles from the nearest village. That's not to say nothing lives here. The island is home to Arctic foxes, insular voles, puffins, cormorants and rare McKay's Bunting birds. Also, located in Katmai National Park, Geographic Harbor consists of

Selling tips

1 Pique clients' interests by revealing how some of the world's most cutting-edge cruise ships will be heading to Canada and Alaska in late 2023/24

2 Upsell by telling clients about the cruise and rail options available from common departure ports like Vancouver and Toronto

3 Sell some of the more expensive cruises by hitting home the bucket-list nature of itineraries and how they take passengers to places that most people in the world will never see



“The Great Lakes boast historic canals that are engineering marvels, cities with thriving arts and culture and unmatched wilderness”

two large bays framed by snow-crested mountain peaks.

It would also be remiss to not mention the Aleutian Islands, a chain of more than 60 islands and islets that are nicknamed the Alaskan Bush due to their remoteness. The archipelago is the home of the Aleut community and cruise passengers can find out more about Aleut history and culture when they visit the island of St Paul in particular.

CRUISE AND RAIL

Cruises to Alaska and Canada give travellers the opportunity to see some of the world's most remote and hard-to-reach places but, even with all of these destinations ticked off, there's still so much more to see in this part of the world. This is why many cruise

passengers choose to extend their trips with a little time exploring inland. Some hire cars and plot their own route, others prefer to see the sights by train.

One of the most famous train journey companies in Canada is Rocky Mountaineer, which operates three routes within the country. First Passage to the West takes passengers from Vancouver to Banff via the iconic Lake Louise with its Tiffany-blue waters. Journey Through the Clouds runs from Vancouver to Jasper along Fraser River and past the 300-foot-tall Pyramid Falls. Rainforest to Goldrush also trails from Vancouver to Jasper, but this route passes through Whistler, too.

Another option is ViaRail, which operates train lines all across Canada, from Vancouver in the west to Halifax in the east. Its portfolio includes four



EXPERT VIEW

“The more you explore this region, the more you discover just how remarkable these places are, not only the wildlife and landscapes, but the people who call this their home. There is so much more to the Inside Passage than most ships cover, and there is so much more to the region than just the Inside Passage. I could run another 100 voyages in the area and keep making new discoveries every single day.”

Alastair Newton,
expeditions operations director,
Hurtigruten Expeditions

Scenic Adventure Routes which pass through some of Canada's most eye-widening scenery. On the Winnipeg to Churchill route, for example, passengers will get to see sights like the boreal forest of Thompson and Hudson Bay, the native habitat of beluga whales. ●

Itineraries

Regent Seven Seas

The 11-night Historical Northeast cruise, sailing from Montreal to Boston on *Seven Seas Grandeur*, is priced from £10,359pp, departing September 2024.

rssc.com

Hurtigruten

18-day Alaska and British Columbia: Inside Passage sailing from Vancouver on *Road Amundsen* is priced from £5,496pp, departing 19 July 2024.

hurtigruten.co.uk

Oceania Cruises

Luxury line Oceania has a seven-day Essential Alaska cruise sailing from Vancouver to Seward on *Regatta*, priced from £4,479pp departing 13 May 2024.

oceaniacruises.com





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

A port call at Gibraltar offers the option to see the local monkeys on the rock or a chance to savour local food and wine; with 16 places to eat, there's something to please every palate

A taste of the Med

On a memorable cruise aboard *Enchanted Princess*, **Vicky Mayer** enjoys a culinary journey she'll remember forever

There is a tower of seafood in front of me, a fruit de mer platter piled high with crab legs, plump prawns and freshly shucked oysters. Close your eyes and you could be in the south of France. But I'm nowhere near Marseille – instead, I'm sailing off the coast of Barcelona on the first night of a foodie-filled Mediterranean cruise on *Enchanted Princess* and gazing in awe at the very generous entrée at Princess' head of culinary arts Rudi Sodamin's new fish restaurant The Catch by Rudi.

As the first Princess restaurant devoted to seafood, there are plenty of fresh fish dishes on the menu The Daily Catch, which features sustainable seafood from local ports of call. I am on a seven-night cruise that even the most seasoned cruisers must dream of – the chance to sail leisurely around the Mediterranean on a sun-drenched ship, sampling some of the continent's best cuisine. Add to that the chance to hit the shore to sample some great local fare too and I can see why this is no ordinary cruise holiday.

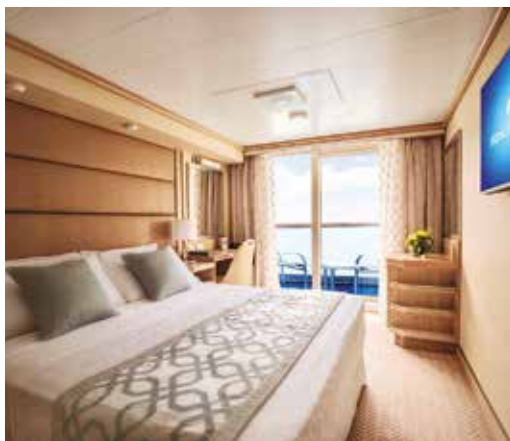
Princess Cruises has long been known for its great cuisine and after a very strict two-week

pre-cruise diet, I can't wait to let my appetite loose. Built in 2019, this mid-sized ship boasts 16 places to eat, from casual venues like the Salty Dog Grill and the World Fresh MarketPlace to speciality restaurants Sabatini's, The Catch and Crown Grill. Guests can also enjoy the chance to drink at 18 different bars and enjoy a leisurely tea or coffee at three cafes.

There's a wide range of cuisine on board for everyone, including a separate vegan menu, fresh sushi bar and even an Italian gelato bar, Gelateria, which serves mouth-watering ice creams and sorbets. Princess Cruises understands all the fun of a foodie cruise – from trying a new dish or a tasty cocktail to dressing up for a gourmet dinner at one of their ships' speciality restaurants. And with such a wide choice of cuisine on offer, every day is a food lover's dream.

A TASTEBUD WORKOUT

Over the course of the week, my tastebuds are given the ultimate workout from dawn 'till dusk. Highlights include expertly made coffees and fresh pastries for breakfast at the popular International Café plus some incredible meals at



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT A trip on *Enchanted Princess* is foodie heaven; enjoy Sabatini's Italian trattoria; the Crown Grill offers every type of steak under the sun; relax with a leisurely breakfast and an ocean view

speciality restaurants The Crown Grill, Sabatini's and The Catch By Rudi.

During a four-course feast at Sabatini's, I enjoy some of the best pasta dishes I have ever had at sea, including a faultless mushroom risotto. Each course is teamed with some great wine-pairings from the knowledgeable sommelier and, to finish, don't miss the waistline-busting tiramisu. More of a steak fan? Then head to the Crown Grill where there is every type of steak under the sun plus an impressive salt menu to accompany them.

I pay \$39 per person (excluding drinks) for dinner at one of the specialty restaurants, but it is well worth the price and for guests who buy a Princess Premier Package (\$80 a day per guest), they will get two complimentary speciality dining meals per guest.

Fast facts

3,660
guests

1,346
crew

19
decks

2021
date of inaugural cruise

MEET YOU AT O'MALLEY'S

It's not just the food that's fantastic on *Enchanted Princess*. On my cruise, the popular O'Malley's Irish Pub on deck five is a great post dinner meet-up point with talented Irish bands playing tunes from contemporary Irish artists as well as some barnstorming traditional jigs. Meanwhile at Take 5 on deck six, live jazz in a low-lit room is the perfect accompaniment to a smoky Negroni.

Mediterranean cuisine is known throughout the world for its diversity, taste and tradition so continuing the on-board foodie experience, it's a pleasure to leave the ship and take a deep dive into the heart of this amazing region.

Our first port call is Gibraltar and instead of heading up the rock to see the local monkeys, I enjoy a leisurely lunch at a local wine bar where each course is paired with local Spanish wines. It's a great introduction to the area's wide range of wines and a chance to enjoy some great tapas.

At the midpoint of the cruise, the ship docks in Marseille and I head inland to visit Le Moulin de la Coquille, a family-run olive farm in Provence where a great olive-oil tasting whets my appetite for a wonderful al fresco three-course lunch at a local restaurant.

Meanwhile, fans of Italian cuisine are in for a total treat on a port stop





“Princess Cruises understands the fun of a foodie cruise - from trying a new dish or tasty cocktail to dressing up for a gourmet dinner”

in Genoa, where they can buy some of Italy's best fresh pesto in the local delis. A quick coach transfer takes us to the buzzy town of Rapallo and a meal I will remember forever. At family-run restaurant Alfredo, the owner demonstrates the art of making the local delicacy, a flat focaccia (yes, really). Soft goats' cheese is encased in layers of wafer-thin layers of filo pastry then baked in a high-heat oven. The result is a moreish cheesy delight with the restaurant erupting in cries of 'incredible', 'wow' and 'yum'.

SAVING THE BEST FOR LAST

Having enjoyed an amazing foodie journey, both on and off board, I'm intrigued by my last dinner invite - to the exclusive 360: experience. The invite is mysterious - meet at 5pm on deck five for cocktails followed by dinner.

A smart maître d' greets guests with a warm welcome and escorts us through the kitchen by the Catch restaurant to a large secret room where guests sit side by side at circular tables with a large space in the centre of the room.

And then, the screens behind us explode with sound and colour as A-lister Brooke Shields appears with a fictional tale of her culinary journey around Europe. What follows is an amazing immersive dinner where every course - from a Greek tzatziki and olive starter to a sublime Italian lemon pasta followed by a Spanish beef main course and an incredible French lavender and honey dessert - is accompanied by a visual montage of the countries with lemon and lavender being blasted into the room to further enhance the experience.

Together, with my lucky fellow diners, two and a half hours later, I leave the

room amazed and entranced by this unique experience. At the moment, an invite to 360: is only by special invite from the captain but, such is the success of this incredible gourmet experience, there's talk of it being rolled out on to the rest of the fleet.

Like Brooke, I've experienced an incredible taste journey around the Med, met some passionate cooks, oil producers and wine buffs along the way, and enjoyed some amazing meals on board *Enchanted Princess*.

This is a cruise I will never forget and, though I lack the skills of the talented Princess chefs, I can't wait to get busy in my own kitchen with fragrant pesto from Genoa and virgin olive oil from Provence. 🍷

Selling tips

1 This itinerary and ship are ideally suited to cruisers who want to indulge in brilliant cuisine in every on-board venue and port of call

2 Talk up the exclusive culinary experiences on offer, such as the in-depth demonstrations available at family-run restaurants

3 Innovation is key to Princess and this includes its culinary offering on board, such as the immersive 360: dining experience

Details

A seven-night Mediterranean with France and Italy from Barcelona cruise, sailing on Princess' new ship *Sun Princess* and calling at Gibraltar, Marseille and Genoa, among other destinations, departs 11 May 2024, with prices from £899pp.



Vivacious Voyager

Lucy Abbott reports back from her time on *Marella Voyager* and outlines what guests can expect from the latest ship from Marella Cruises



This ship can please everyone, with a kids' club for families, a romantic spa retreat for couples and dedicated solo cabins



As the clock strikes three in the morning, the beat pumps on in The Electric Rooms, *Marella Voyager's* brand-new nightclub. And I'm in the middle of the dancefloor, which is lit up by impressive LED light displays, enjoying a crafted cocktail and in slight disbelief that I'm on a cruise ship, rather than a nightclub in central London.

After all, being on board *Marella Voyager's* first-ever sailing is a reason to celebrate and the exertions in the club only mark the end of the evening celebrations. I can't help but let the feeling of excitement overcome me as I picture all the fun that is yet to be had by guests – but first, more about my adventure.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

Previously known as *Mein Schiff Herz*, sailing for (what was then called) TUI Cruises and built in 1997, *Marella Voyager* has undergone a complete makeover. Stepping onto the ship, I would never have guessed that this isn't a new ship, as I marvel at the endless eateries, thoughtful spaces and elegant artworks.

The first thought that comes to mind is that this is a ship that really can please everyone, from families, with a kids' club to suit every age, and couples, with a romantic spa retreat, to solos, with dedicated solo cabins. I have my work cut out to explore it all, as *Marella Voyager* is the line's largest ship yet, holding up to 1,912 guests spread across a total of 13 decks.

But first, I decide to start at arguably the most important part of anyone's cruising experience – the cabin. As I open the door to my stateroom, I am welcomed by cool, wooden interiors, a plush queen-sized bed (that can also be separated to twin beds), a tea and coffee-making station and an en-suite bathroom featuring a shower.

But the real star of the show is the balcony. Stepping out onto the huge nine-metre squared platform, I audibly gasp as this is by far the largest I've had in a balcony-class cabin. And that's not all – at the end of the huge square balcony I find a hammock just calling my name to be used. So, I do just that and feel the gentle sway as the sun cascades across my face – I truly feel as if I'm on holiday now.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP
LEFT *Marella Voyager* will visit Naples next year; the glitzy launch party; *Voyager* is the line's largest ship yet; Palermo is on the itinerary plan for 2024





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Staff and guests gathered to celebrate *Voyager's* debut; there's a diverse range of dining options on board; the spa offers luxurious treatments to help you relax

OLD FAVOURITES AND NEW VENUES

Getting the motivation to finally pull myself away from my hammock, I decide to explore the rest of the ship and see what it has to offer. For those guests who have sailed with Marella Cruises before, I'm pleased to report that firm favourites such as the gin and whiskey bar Apertif, the speciality restaurant Surf and Turf and the Squid and Anchor pub can all be found on *Marella Voyager*.

But, perhaps more excitingly, as I walk around the ship, I'm finding more and more new additions. The first I come across is the expansion of the spa, equipped with two whirlpools, water jets, a gym and an extensive list of treatments.

Feeling peckish, I decide to venture into the reimagined buffet dining

hall, called The Kitchens. This takes the form of a large food hall housing eight different stalls where guests can indulge in everything from a roast dinner wrapped in a Yorkshire pudding to a bowl of delectable ice cream. I decide to opt for Bamboo, which serves up vegetable chow mein, ramen, sweet and sour pork and much more. After polishing off a bowl of delicious

Selling tips

1 Talk up the fact that *Marella Voyager* is full of new and exciting things to do, so even for experienced Marella clients, a different experience is on the cards

2 For the foodies out there, The Kitchens is an ideal selling point, featuring a range of places to eat, each offering something unique

3 While *Voyager* is the largest ship in the Marella fleet, it still maintains an intimate feel, so highlight this to those who want plenty of activities without huge crowds



Fast facts

952

cabins

16

restaurants

10

bars

1

pool

noodles, I can safely say that it rivals my local Chinese takeaway with ease. What stands out to me as I continue to explore The Kitchens is the impressive range of vegetarian and vegan options, which can sometimes be difficult to find when cruising.

Leaving the mouth-watering smells of the food hall behind, I go on to an exciting new concept – The Exchange. I've never needed a password before to access a bar on a ship, but I find myself uttering a secret codeword into a dial-up phone and, once granted entry, step back in time to a 1930s speakeasy. In the spirit of not giving the magic away, all I will say is prepare yourself for a dramatic, exciting and immersive performance by the talented team.

As the night comes to a close, the atmosphere is electric and there's only one place to be of course – The Electric Rooms nightclub. 🎵

Details

A seven-night Paradise Islands itinerary, visiting the likes of Bridgetown, Barbados and Philipsburg, St Maarten, departs 3 March 2024. Prices from £1,489pp.

tui.co.uk



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STARS AWARDS

Star Power

What makes winning a Cruise Stars Award special? Previous victors describe why it's a significant accolade

Later this year, the Cruise Stars Awards returns. Organised by *Cruise Trade News* and last held at the end of 2019, the Cruise Stars recognise success and innovation, shining a spotlight on the brightest and best talent in the cruise industry. Finalists will be invited to a prestigious lunchtime event in central London on 8 December 2023.

Here, winners from previous editions explain how scooping an award helped them in their careers.

AUGUSTUS LONSDALE

Windstar Cruises head of UK sales

How did winning an award help you in your career? I think it gave me confidence that I was doing the right thing – not just in the business I was working in, but also more generally in my career. Of course, it's been great to be able to mention it on CVs and LinkedIn, but the personal boost it gave me increased my motivation and drove me to achieve better things – that certainly was the biggest benefit.

Why are events such as this important?

Having something focused specifically on our industry, where you know those judging and those viewing are colleagues who are as passionate as you are about it, makes being part of an awards like



this extra special. As an industry, we are particularly good at elevating our share of voice beyond the context of how large cruise is, but it's a great honour to be judged and rewarded by people who know in detail the work you are doing.

REBECCA JONES

Ambassador Cruise Line
head of marketing

How did it feel to win a Cruise Stars award? At the time, I was quite shocked to hear parts of my submission being read out before my name was announced. There was a high calibre of finalists that year and I did not think I would stand a chance of winning. Hearing why the judges had selected my submission to win was incredibly insightful as it was a different approach to traditional cruise marketing.

“**THE AWARD INCREASED MY MOTIVATION AND DROVE ME TO ACHIEVE BETTER THINGS**”

How did winning help you in your career? After the cruise line I worked for went into administration during the pandemic, and then spending six months working for a dental practice, coming back into travel was incredibly difficult. However, having such a well-regarded industry award on my CV was a good talking point for interviews, allowing me to explain my passion for the industry and how that passion had been recognised by the Cruise Star Awards and *Cruise Trade News*.



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TRAVEL PARTNER INCENTIVE



A GLITTERING OPPORTUNITY

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SEVEN SEAS CRUISES®

WIN

A FABERGÉ EGG PENDANT

The arrival of *Seven Seas Grandeur*™ is nearly upon us! To celebrate this auspicious occasion, we are offering our travel partners our richest, most exciting and luxurious incentive yet - the chance to win a fabulous Fabergé egg pendant worth £7,600.

Like *Seven Seas Grandeur*'s unique objet d'art, Journey in Jewels, this stunning handcrafted item of fine jewellery encapsulates the iconic symbol of Fabergé.

Crafted from 18-karat gold and set with precious gemstones, it will make a prized possession and talking point for generations to come.

TO BE IN WITH A CHANCE OF WINNING, SIMPLY MAKE A NEW REGENT 2024 BOOKING BETWEEN 1 OCTOBER - 30 NOVEMBER 2023.

Any 2024 cruise on any ship is eligible, from *Seven Seas Grandeur*'s first forays into the Mediterranean, Canada & New England and the Caribbean to *Seven Seas Explorer*'s Alaskan and Asian adventures. Good luck!

TO ENTER VISIT [RSSC.COM/FABERGE-INCENTIVE](https://rssc.com/faberge-incentive)