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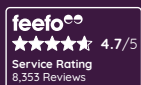
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WELCOME...

TO THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE

The unpredictability of the British summer time has been perfectly encapsulated over the past month or so. One moment, I'm picking which umbrella to take to work and the next it's deciding whether or not I'd get away with shorts in the office.

But with every cloud comes a silver lining. The inconsistent weather is one of the key driving forces behind an increase in bookings for shoulder season holidays, as consumers look to escape the drizzle. This burgeoning trend is highlighted by Virgin Voyages' UK sales director SJ Walker on page 25 in the first instalment of our new column series with the line, The Red Report.

We also take a deep dive into the state of cruise holidays, in, around and from our transatlantic neighbours, and how President Trump's controversial take on immigration and diversification is impacting attitudes towards travelling to the US. That's on page 39.

Elsewhere you'll find your usual updates from the expedition and luxury sectors on page 12 and 14, as well as the return of our 'Princess Pink' pages - which you might remember from February - on page 34.

On the cover: Marella Cruises



ABOVE Are political factors adversely affecting tourism in the USA?

What's more, as well as our annual river supplement shining a spotlight on one of the industry's most exciting sectors, with latest news, popular destinations and reviews, you'll also find our very first Expedition Toolkit to give you everything you need to sell cruises to some of the world's most remote locations, thanks to expert advice from leading operators. Happy reading!

Will Payne
Editor

cruisetradenews.com

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*Lead fare based on 29/5/26

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29 May*; 12, 26 Jun; 10, 24 Jul; 7, 21 Aug; 4 Sep 2026
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From £4,399pp* | Fly/cruise – please ask

VISITS: Vancouver, transit Seymour Narrows, Queen Charlotte Sound, Ketchikan (Alaska); Snow Pass & Decision Passage; Sitka, cruising Yakutat Bay & Hubbard Glacier; Inian Islands, Icy Strait Point, Haines (Skagway), cruising Lynn Canal, Juneau.

*Lead fare based on 29/5/26

7-Day Alaska Fjords & Canadian Inside Passage

5*, 19 Jun; 3, 17, 31 Jul; 14, 28 Aug 2026
SEABOURN ENCORE

Juneau to Vancouver

From £3,899pp* | Fly/cruise – please ask

VISITS: Juneau; Tracy or Endicott Arm; Cruising Stephens Passage; transit Decision Passage; Wrangell; cruising Stikine Strait & Behm Canal; Rudyerd Bay (Misty Fjords); cruising Misty Fjords; Prince Rupert; cruising Grenville Channel, Whale Channel & Princess Royal Channel; Alert Bay; cruising Johnstone Strait; Transit Seymour Narrows; Vancouver.

*Lead fare based on 3/6/26

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The future of luxury cruising

► Recent collaborations between river and ocean brands may well chart a new course in luxury cruising, making it a great offer for agents to sell both as one compelling journey.

In August, Seabourn partnered with Uniworld Boutique River Cruises to usher in a new era,

with the two brands joining forces to reshape the future of luxury cruising. The move marks the first collaboration between river and luxury brands, with the inaugural sailing set to launch in 2026.

The package will combine Uniworld's Venice and the Jewels of the Veneto itinerary aboard *La Venezia*, with Seabourn's seven-night Adriatic and Grecian Gems on *Seabourn Quest*.



Continued overleaf



The partnership comes after Uniworld found that 85 per cent of its guests have also sailed with Seabourn, suggesting a synergy between the brands.

For agents, it's a timely and marketable opportunity. As luxury clients in both river and ocean cruising share the same ethos and are seeking more distinctive travel stories, combining the two may well become a new foundation for the industry.

This is also ideal for clients who are new to cruising, as it means their first experience will be a blend of two sought-after itineraries.

Chris Townson, Uniworld Boutique River Cruises' managing director for UK and Europe, says: "Bringing together ultra-luxury river and ocean cruise for the first time delivers the best of both worlds in one package and felt like an absolute no-brainer."

“

Luxury clients in both river and ocean cruising share the same ethos

Uniworld has already sold 60 per cent of the capacity for their combined Venice and the Mediterranean Sea package for 2026, with top suites completely sold out, showing the strong appetite at the top end of the market.

Phil Nuttall, CEO of The Travel Village Group, says: "If there's a perfect fit to complement Seabourn's boutique cruising out of Venice, this is it. Who wouldn't want to spend the week before their beautiful Seabourn Adriatic cruise on a six-star floating hotel, being pampered?"

James Hill of GoRiverCruise describes the river-ocean cruise concept as a win-win, offering options for clients and commissions for agents. However, he cautions that disparities in accommodation sizes between river vessels and ocean ships could present challenges in managing guest expectations.

IN NUMBERS

52%
boost in ocean cruising
bookings

► **20%**
boost in river
cruising bookings

► **246%**
growth in luxury cruise
ships since 2010

According to CLIA's State of the Industry Report 2024



CRUISE 'VITAL' TO SCOTTISH ECONOMY

► Cruise tourism generated £343 million in total economic output in Scotland in 2023, according to a new study commissioned by CLIA.

The findings come after a proposal to give local authorities powers to charge a ship levy won support from Highland councillors. Officials said tourism has seen "incredible growth",

which has also created a "range of pressures".

However, new data from Oxford Economics has highlighted the substantial economic value of cruise tourism to the region, underlining its role in supporting jobs, businesses and communities.

In 2023, cruise tourism contributed £173 million to GDP in Scotland. The sector

further supported 4,712 jobs across a range of sectors, delivered £145 million in wages to workers and produced £61 million in tax revenues, benefitting public services and infrastructure.

The report highlights that cruise tourism's impact extends beyond port towns, benefitting a spectrum of businesses and communities.



SCAN

to read the latest news and insights shaping the cruise and travel industry

SPOTLIGHT

'An unmissable opportunity'



“To be a part of this year's Cruise Summit by *Cruise Trade News* was an opportunity we couldn't pass up. We are so pleased to be involved and live up to our promise to be the most trade-friendly ultra-luxury cruise line in the market. This is an exceptional event to be able to meet with agent partners, discuss successes and trends and make exciting plans for the future growth of our partnerships with them.

Events like this give agents and industry colleagues invaluable insights into the world of cruise and help to educate all involved in the benefits of brands such as Crystal. These events also help sharpen the mind with focuses on destinations, trends agents can take advantage of and lots of other useful information to help them grow their sales.

We are committed to the trade in all areas with more training webinars, more ship visits and more educational opportunities to come in 2026. The upcoming *Crystal Symphony* dry dock and additional 2028 itineraries will be communicated soon. There is also a partnership with our sister brand Abercrombie and Kent which is going from strength to strength.”

Luke Smith is vice president of trade sales UK and EMEA for Crystal Cruises

CELESTYAL BACKS HIGH STREET

➤ Celestyal Travel has opened its first UK retail store on Guildford High Street.

The new experiential store, which opened on 6 September, combines consumer-facing retail with dedicated trade training and product immersion facilities.

A key feature is the agent training excellence centre, designed to host workshops, product training and networking sessions for travel trade partners from across the UK.

Celestyal has employed five new agents in store, reporting into Janet Parton, managing director of Celestyal Travel UK. They will be responsible for managing bookings, travel and brand education for both trade and retail customers, as well as staffing the new call centre.

“The store combines consumer-facing retail with trade training facilities



WTM EYES RECORD EVENT

➤ WTM London 2025 is on track to become the largest edition in its 45-year history, driven by surging global demand in travel.

Scheduled for 4-6 November, the event will look to build on 2024's success, which saw an 11 per cent rise in qualified buyers and 34,000+ pre-scheduled meetings taking place.

The 2024 launch of the Capital Hall and Auditorium level at Excel London marked a major capacity boost, welcoming more exhibitors. This year an additional 25,000 m² has been introduced.

WTM London recently appointed Chris Carter-Chapman as event director to support this expansion.



FROM TOP *Brilliant Lady* launched in New York in September; the vessel will debut a new Spanish eatery, Rojo by Razzle Dazzle

“
**It’s our fourth ship,
but it’s not the end
of our story. It’s only
the beginning**

“The Athletic Club has seen some changes. We’ve got new menu items to make sure we’re keeping those fresh and intriguing for [guests] and repeat [guests]. But it’s not the end. The delivery of *Brilliant Lady* – ship number four – actually means we’re at the starting line.

“This milestone of beginning shake downs and putting her to the test really means that when we make our way into New York [September], we’re finally at the starting line.”

Echoing Bentubo’s statement, Rosenberg added: “It’s our fourth ship, but it’s not the end of our story. It’s only the beginning.”

Agents were invited to dine in one of the line’s speciality restaurants, as well as guided tours of the ship’s new and upgraded facilities, wellness spaces and social hubs, while a handful of immersive shows were also given their first run-out. This included *Murder in the Manor*, an 80s-inspired murder mystery blending true crime with pop hits, and *Up With A Twist*, the latest instalment in the line’s Supper Club series.

Additional new features on display included the redesigned Roundabout, which has evolved to increase the amount of open space, and the new Spanish eatery Rojo by Razzle Dazzle. ●

BRILLIANCE PERSONIFIED

The launch of Virgin Voyages’ *Brilliant Lady* gives agents the chance to entice guests to cruise with one of the sector’s most exciting operators, writes **Will Payne**

The introduction of a new vessel always sends a bolt of excitement across the industry, especially when the launch comes from Virgin Voyages. In August, the line debuted *Brilliant Lady* in the UK ahead of its official launch from New York at the start of September by inviting 1,300 travel agents onboard for an event in Portsmouth.

Speaking on a panel during the visit in the ship’s Red Room theatre, UK director of sales SJ Walker cited the

line’s extended itineraries, discounts, UK-focused promotions and incentives, as well as simplified pricing as attractive propositions to travel agents.

She said: “If you have a client who wants a kid-free holiday, what is there not to love about our fresh take on food, immersive entertainment where you can participate or spectate, and our original productions?”

“We have incredible repeat rates, new destinations and lots of excitement from the UK [market]. Our average selling value is increasing.”

Joining Walker on stage were Michelle Bentubo, chief operating officer, and Nathan Rosenberg, chief brand and marketing officer, both of whom spoke valiantly about Virgin Voyages’ future and *Brilliant Lady*’s unique selling points to help travel agents secure more sales and enquiries.

“We’re going into our fourth year of operation,” said Bentubo, “and in order to be the product people want to come back to, we need to evolve our onboard and shoreside experience.



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CULTURAL IMMERSION

Swan Hellenic has released the details of its first four cultural expedition cruises of the South Pacific and Southeast Asia. The voyages, all on *SH Minerva*, explore some of the region's most remote areas, taking guests to destinations such as the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines. "We're so proud that *SH Minerva*, the emblem of Swan Hellenic's renaissance, is bringing the magic of this extraordinary region to our enthusiastic guests for the first time," said Swan Hellenic chief commercial officer Patrizia Iantorno. Bookings for the line's Asia Pacific 2026 collection are now open on.

Head to page 5 of your River Special for the latest updates from the river sector

SPOTLIGHT

Richard Vevers



Ocean advocate and protagonist in the Emmy Award-winning Netflix documentary *Chasing Coral*, Richard Vevers, has joined the roster of inspirational speakers at this year's Expedition Cruise Network (ECN) Conference.

Avivah Wittenberg-Cox, author of *Thriving to 100*, is also one of the speakers.

Vevers is director of Room 71, and will speak about the independent ocean science organisation's mission to flip beliefs and accelerate science to find solutions to global issues.

SOLO SERENITY

Ponant Explorations has waived solo supplements on a selection of its voyages amid an increase in demand from independent cruisers. Solos will now be able to book double staterooms or suites without an extra charge.

The luxury expedition line claimed it is one of the only luxury lines to waive the surcharge. The new policy is designed to support solo travellers and groups

of "solo friends" travelling together on polar expeditions and warm weather itineraries. The company has more than 160 cruises with solo staterooms available at any given time, each sold to a certain capacity on each ship.

The line said the move comes in a bid to empower agents to reframe polar expeditions as accessible and enriching options for solo sailors.

BACK IN THE BLACK



Hurtigruten saw its UK summer trading grow by 25 per cent year-on-year, fuelled by a surge in Signature voyage bookings.

The cruise line also reported a 10 per cent increase in the number of British guests between 1 June and 28 August, while its Signature Nordic coastal voyages saw a

75 per cent increase during the same period.

Hurtigruten's expedition division, Hurtigruten Expeditions, split from the company in 2023, rebranding as HX. CEO Iain Powell said the numbers reflect a growing demand from British travellers for authentic Norwegian travel experiences.



LUXURY OF CHOICE

Silversea has revealed a new fare structure to provide guests with greater flexibility. The three new options will enable customers to personalise their travel experiences with pre- and post-cruise add-ons, including air travel, hotels, transfers and land experiences. "The Luxury of Choice reflects our deep commitment to delivering on the feedback of our guests," said Bert Hernandez, president of Silversea. "Our guests consistently tell us that they value flexibility in their travels. With our new fare options, we're empowering them to personalise every aspect of their journey."



DRIVING GROWTH

Cunard has revealed to *Cruise Trade News* that a fam trip onboard *Queen Anne* generated a 23 per cent increase in sales among the attending agents.

The seven-night cruise, which sailed to the Norwegian Fjords onboard *Queen Anne*, was the latest trade activation from Cunard to result in a spike in bookings, with two agents securing a Cunard booking worth £40,000 after

taking part in a trade event onboard *Queen Mary 2* earlier this summer.

Cunard also revealed that a visit by agents to *Queen Anne* in June led to a 60 per cent increase in bookings for those who came. Meanwhile, an exclusive cookery class with Michelin-starred chef Nathan Outlaw resulted in a 217 per cent rise in bookings for agents who attended.

SPOTLIGHT

Seabourn promotions



Seabourn has announced two promotions within its UK and Ireland business development team.

Claire Rose, who has worked for the line for three years, has been promoted to senior business development manager, having taken on additional key accounts. Charlotte Ireland, meanwhile, is now business development manager in recognition for her success in developing new UK accounts and growing their business.

Ireland started her career with Seabourn, joining as business development representative in 2020.



EXPLORA SIMPLIFIES BOOKINGS

Explora Journeys has launched a new fare package which combines flights, hotel stays, private transfers and 24/7 guest support.

The luxury ocean travel brand of the MSC Group introduced the Sky & Sea fare which offers economy-class flights, covering key routes from

major airports to embarkation and disembarkation ports. The fare also provides options for upgrades and alternative departure airports.

Clients from the UK, Netherlands, Spain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, the USA and Australia can utilise the new service.



FROM TOP Sally Gunnell; Lexden House in Colchester is the base for the independent cruise specialist company

A MILE A MINUTE

Olympic gold medallist **Sally Gunnell** reflects on her glittering career and looks ahead to her new role as Cruise Miles Ambassador for ROL Cruise

What does it mean to you to be named ROL Cruise Miles Ambassador?

"I'm genuinely so chuffed. It brings together two things I care deeply about: travel and wellbeing. ROL Cruise is all about comfort, care and helping people see the world in a way that suits them. That's something I'm proud to be part of. I'm excited to share everything from tips to inspiration – especially around wellness at sea, balanced living and finding joy in the journey. There are so many hidden places and wonderful moments on board that people don't always expect. I want to help others discover those."



“ROL Cruise is all about comfort, care and helping people see the world

You've travelled the world through sport – are there any cruise destinations that overlap with your competition history?

"Definitely. Tokyo is one. I was sponsored by a Japanese brand and competed there a lot. Returning to places like that as a traveller gives you a whole new perspective. Barcelona is another, obviously. Barcelona will also always be close to my heart. I won Olympic gold there, celebrated my 50th birthday there, and we often sail from there. I love the food, the atmosphere – it has everything."

You're a cruise ship godmother – what does that mean to you?

"Being named as *Ambience's* godmother was such an honour, and it was a truly special day. It felt like a beautiful link between my love of travel and this

new chapter in my life. I've sailed with Cunard, Celebrity Cruises, Royal Caribbean International and others. They each have their strengths. Cunard is all about classic luxury. Celebrity Cruises felt beautifully designed and had incredible food. Royal Caribbean International had some of the best entertainment I've ever seen – genuinely West-End worthy!"

Are there any lessons from your sporting career that you've carried with you into this next chapter?

"Absolutely. Sport gave me a deep love of travel and the confidence to embrace the unknown. At 16, I was flying off to faraway places, often alone, and that really shaped me. It also taught me to get comfortable with discomfort. I don't need the same level of challenge these days, but I still love that buzz of discovery."

For those who may not know you beyond your sporting career, how would you describe yourself?

"I'm a mum to three boys, a dog lover, and someone who genuinely enjoys the peace of nature. These days, I'm passionate about making people feel good about themselves. After retiring from athletics, I had to redefine who I was, and wellness has become a huge part of that journey. For me, it's all about balance, purpose and helping others find joy in their everyday lives." ●



To find out more about ROL Cruise and Cruise Miles, visit rolcruise.co.uk

Last-minute delights

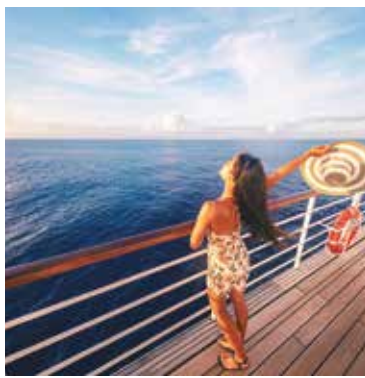
Every month, thousands of cruisers look for their next sailing on the *World of Cruising* website.

Raphael Giacardi reviews recent data from our sister publication and rounds up market trends

Search data from *World of Cruising* offers a live window into what prospective passengers want – and right now, the story is last-minute demand. Every month, up to 180,000 unique visitors come to the site, with thousands using the search tool to explore future sailings. Their behaviour gives us a real-time view of the market, and in this new column we'll highlight the trends that matter most for the trade.

Our latest data shows that short-lead demand is driving bookings. In the past month, of all searches with a specified travel period, nearly 30 per cent were for sailings departing within the next two months. Of those, the Mediterranean dominated – accounting for more than 40 per cent of searches.

“
Nearly half of prospective cruisers are looking to sail in the next six months



Overall, more than four in five searches were for European cruises. For agents and operators, this highlights the need to push Med itineraries hard in the shoulder seasons, where availability remains.

BEYOND THE LATES

Looking further ahead, demand for winter-sun 2025–26 sailings is also strong. This was the second-largest search bucket at 21 per cent. Unsurprisingly, the Caribbean is leading the way, taking over a third of those searches. This makes the Caribbean a key battleground for targeted winter-sun marketing.

All in all, nearly half of prospective cruisers are looking to sail within the next six months – a clear opportunity to fill short-term inventory. But there are also signs of rising interest further ahead.

Spring and summer 2026 searches each represent around 15 per cent of demand. More importantly, when isolating the most recent weeks, those figures increase to just over 17 per cent



IN NUMBERS

50%

of prospective cruisers are looking to sail in the next six months

40%

of visitors are looking for Mediterranean departures

21%

of searches are for winter-sun 2025–2026 sailings

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM

Mediterranean itineraries come top of short-lead searches; interest in 2026 departures is gathering pace

each – a combined 35 per cent, compared to 30 per cent across a wider dataset. This suggests rising forward demand may soon narrow the late booking window.

So, what do the numbers tell us? Last-minute Med and European departures remain in high demand, the Caribbean continues to dominate the winter-sun market, and interest in 2026 departures is gathering pace. The message is clear: the time to maximise the lates market is now, while preparing for stronger forward bookings to come. ●



AUTUMNAL ADVENTURES

The Northern Lights, the Geminid Meteor Shower and a premium drinks package are just some of the highlights your guests can experience on a 2026 Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines itinerary, writes **Will Payne**

As the summer slowly draws to a close and the industry prepares for the end of 2025, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines is keeping one eye firmly on next year with the roll out of its new 2026/2027 brochure.

It features more than 100 voyages taking in destinations such as Norway, the Mediterranean and more, leaving guests spoilt for choice when it comes to deciding which itinerary to book.

The programme includes several standout sailings, such as Fred. Olsen's three-ship Fleet Fiesta in Gran Canaria in December 2026, a Mystery Cruise, three festive Christmas and New Year sailings and the return of the line's You Choose Your Cruise adventure.

“We’ve included some particularly special sailings to warmer and cooler climates

There will also be a 71-night Grand Voyage, encompassing a new Mediterranean fly-cruise programme, taking in Corsica, the Adriatic, Greece, the French Riviera, the Amalfi Coast and more, while featuring new calls into the Italian ports of Messina, Siracusa and Savona, plus Lesvos and Samos in Greece.

Martin Lister, head of product innovation at Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, says: “We have had great fun planning our next programme of cruising, with

plenty of sailings offering the chance to extend summer's warmth as the days become shorter and darker back home.

“We’ve also included some particularly special sailings to both warmer and cooler climates, from the chance to witness the Geminid Meteor Shower from the vantage point of the sea, where there is less light pollution, to shoreside adventures to seek out the Northern Lights.”

INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCES

In addition to the new autumn/winter programme, Fred. Olsen has rolled out a new inclusive pricing structure that will come into force for all sailings from January 2026 onwards.

This means, in addition to full board dining, guests will be able to



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Guests can explore Corsica on a 16-night French Riviera cruise; *Balmoral* offers an 11-night Greek islands itinerary; the Northern Lights can be spotted on a variety of itineraries

3

standout Fred. Olsen 2026 sailings

1 A 16-night Exploring the French Riviera cruise onboard *Bolette*, roundtrip from Liverpool via Gibraltar, Toulon, Villefranche, Ajaccio, Corsica, Cartagena and Malaga, departs 22 September 2026, from £1,899 per person.

2 An 11-night Exploring the Greek Islands fly-cruise onboard *Balmoral*, from Heraklion to Limassol via Ermoupoli, Kavala, Mytilene, Vathy and Rhodes, departs 29 October 2026, from £1,779 per person including flights and transfers.

3 An eight-night Scenic Norwegian Fjords cruise onboard *Borealis*, roundtrip from Southampton via Stavanger, Eidfjord, Bergen and Nordfjordeid departs 13 September 2026, from £999 per person.

enjoy house beers, wines, spirits, and draught soft drinks with lunch and dinner; entertainment and enrichment activities; shuttle buses when the port is more than one mile from the ship; guided social strolls in selected ports; fitness classes; crew gratuities and port fees and taxes – all covered in the cost of their initial cruise fare.

If that wasn't enough, Fred. Olsen has introduced a new Premium Drinks Package as an optional upgrade. Guests who have already booked a drinks package for a cruise in 2026 will automatically be upgraded to the new Premium Drinks Package at no extra cost.

Doug Glenwright, guest experience director at Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, says: "We know that cruising provides exceptional value for money when compared with many overland equivalents, but feedback from our guests told us that this wasn't actually always clear.

"It's really important to us that every cruise is relaxing and carefree, and that

should start right from the moment a booking is made. That's why we've listened to our guests, and made our pricing simpler, clearer and more inclusive – so that guests can look ahead to exploring the world with us without worrying about extra costs."

ONBOARD INNOVATION

Next year, Fred. Olsen will also roll-out a series of ship-side innovations.

This includes a new open-air venue on *Borealis*, *Fresco*, which is included in the cost and offers light bites deckside.

The line's speciality restaurant will feature a rotation of Italian, Asia-Fusion and Grill menus, and the Chef's table experience will give guests new multi-course delights in an intimate setting.

If you have customers on the fence about their 2026 travel plans, recommend a Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines itinerary to ensure they experience a once in a lifetime sailing with the delicate touches which set this leading cruise line apart. ●




**Fred. Olsen
Cruise Lines**

To find out more, visit
fredolsencruises.com



Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines

MEDITERRANEAN FLY CRUISES

Escaping to the Mediterranean offers many architectural, cultural and culinary highlights, and exploring this sought-after region on a Fred. Olsen fly cruise is especially rewarding.

With a flight into the heart of the destination and fewer days at sea, your customers will soon become immersed in their chosen region.



In a region full of contrasts, our team has crafted these sailings to not only include extended stays in iconic destinations such as Dubrovnik but also feature hidden gems like Propriano and Kalamata –many of which are only accessible to smaller ships.

What's more, while scenic cruising aboard *Balmoral*, your customers can experience memorable moments like witnessing the active Stromboli volcano at sunset.

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Regional flights from London Heathrow, London Stansted or Manchester included.

Domestic Flights from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast or Newcastle available on request.



One hold bag and one cabin bag included.



Dedicated Fred. Olsen representatives to guide and assist you at overseas airports.



Transfer(s) to/from the ship included.



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“Which marketing streams will help me attract the most cruise clients?”

Nowadays, agents and cruise lines have a wide range of tools and platforms at their disposal, but which routes to market are the best for attracting customers and boosting sales? **Rashmi Narayan** reports

As the cruise sector continues to exceed expectations in the post-pandemic landscape, competition for consumer attention is fiercer than ever. Cruise lines are expanding their fleets and itineraries, as well as redefining their onboard experience to appeal to a broader and more diverse market. But while product innovation is vital, effective marketing is what ultimately drives bookings for agents.

In today's environment, lines and their travel partners are faced with a widening array of tools and platforms, raising the question: which channels are truly delivering results? Traditional methods such as word of mouth, referrals, email marketing and printed brochures remain surprisingly resilient, particularly among loyal cruisers and the older demographic. However, there's no denying the growing influence of social media, especially in attracting first-time cruisers and younger audiences seeking visual inspiration.

From television segments and personalised digital campaigns to holiday planning tools powered by AI, social media has shifted how cruise holidays are discovered and booked. It's not about replacing the old with the new, it's about finding the right balance.

Jess Masters, a homeworking agent from Travel Counsellors, enjoys selling cruise holidays because of the diverse range of destinations, ships and experiences the market offers. “There really is a cruise for everyone,” she says.

“
I've been sharing social media posts that showcase particular cruise lines and offers

“From small, intimate expedition voyages to big, family-friendly adventures, every cruise line has something unique to offer. That means I can help my customers find the perfect match for them. One of the things I love most about the cruise industry is how loyal the market is. Once people try it, they're hooked and keep coming back time and time again. Many even rebook while they're still on board, which means I can help them keep the excitement going for their next adventure.”

When it comes to marketing, Masters has been focusing on two things. “First, I've been sharing social media posts that showcase particular cruise lines and offers, using some of the fantastic images, videos and deals provided by the cruise companies. These are short and snappy video reels or sometimes a carousel of photos to tell a story. Second, I've been creating my own original content – speaking directly





SCAN
Broadcasting icons become first-ever 'ambassadors' of Ambassador Cruise Line



to camera so people can get to know me and hear my advice first-hand. So far, I've made a 'Cruise Myth Busting' video to tackle the most

common misconceptions, and another called 'Why a Cruise Might Be for You' to inspire anyone who hasn't considered one before."

While she is still in her first year as a Travel Counsellor, Masters has already booked two standout cruises – a Disney Cruise Line sailing for a wedding and a P&O Cruises voyage to the Norwegian Fjords for a 60th birthday. Plus, having been lucky enough to cruise to Antarctica herself, she can share those once-in-a-lifetime insights with her customers. "I can't wait to help even more people discover the joy of cruising," she adds.

EXPANDING YOUR REACH

Creating an imprint in the industry doesn't have to be a herculean task for cruise lines. Though there are a plethora of marketing tools available today, sometimes, sticking to traditional methods like emails, television and even word of mouth make a huge difference.

“Traditional methods like emails, television and even word of mouth make a huge difference

One channel that agents are learning more about utilising to showcase their brand and reach new customers is television. Hayley Moore, UK and Europe sales director for Princess Cruises, appeared on *World of Cruising TV*'s season three and believed that was an effective platform for the cruise line to expand its remit across the UK.

"I felt like being on the couch, especially with host Dean Wilson and cruise journalist Kaye Holland there, gave us the perfect platform to showcase the brand as it is, with me being the voice and face of Princess," she says. "Then when we hopped to the kitchen and experienced some recipes from on board, I just think it gives a completely different – pardon the pun – flavour." ►

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Platforms such as *World of Cruising TV* can be a great way to showcase a brand; try to use a personal touch with social media; traditional methods like email can still have a significant impact



Moore believes that being on television is another way of talking that goes beyond looking through a brochure, as it helps to bring destinations to life. "That TV show was such a great opportunity to give a quick whistle-stop, 360 degree view of the brand. It's fantastic – such a different way of doing things. We've got our new podcast, magazines, coverage, emails, everything, so having TV as well is another way of reaching our audience in a new manner."

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Many cruise lines have used specific tools to create personalised brochures and tailored itineraries. Last year, Norwegian Cruise Line launched a portal called NCL Connect – a marketing platform that allows travel partners to co-brand ready-made digital content created by Norwegian Cruise Line's in-house experts. The

LEFT Data-driven targeting is one of the key ways of attracting modern, digitally savvy travellers

“Many cruise lines have used specific tools to create personalised brochures and tailored itineraries

platform also included a co-branded website featuring NCL sailings for clients to browse.

In the last four years, Panache Cruises top 40 customers in the UK have booked 460 cruises, spending more than £7.5m. Over the past 12 months, the company's workforce has grown from 67 to 76 across the UK and US. CEO James Cole says: "We've invested heavily in apprentices and plan to recruit another eight this year. We're recruiting more new customers using social and digital marketing channels, along with increasing our number of repeat bookings."

Ultimately, no single marketing stream holds all the answers. Success lies in a well-balanced strategy that combines traditional methods with the reach and agility of digital channels. Personalised emails, engaging brochures and word of mouth still carry weight, particularly among loyal cruisers, while social media, influencer partnerships and data-driven targeting are proving essential for attracting modern, digitally-savvy travellers.

By blending the old with the new and leveraging the tools provided by cruise lines, agents can position themselves as trusted experts and maximise their reach in an increasingly competitive marketplace. ●

What marketing methods have you found most effective for reaching clients and selling cruises?



Jess Masters, Travel Counsellors

"Sharing social media posts which include a carousel of images showcasing specific cruise lines and offers, using some of the fantastic images, videos and deals provided by the cruise companies, is a great marketing tool."



Jamie Loizou, AmaWaterways

"Referrals remain incredibly powerful. If your clients had a great cruise, ask them for a testimonial and share it across multiple channels. You should also encourage them to refer their friends and family to you, as their trusted travel agent."



Robbie O'Grady, The Cruise Room

"When it comes to the best marketing tools for travel agents out there, at The Cruise Room, we still believe in old-school word of mouth or recommendations. Even platforms like Facebook remain a big channel and resource for cruise guests."

The Caribbean wave

Virgin Voyages' UK sales director **SJ Walker** on how perceptions of the Caribbean as a winter sun escape are changing and how agents can make the most of this shift

When we launched Virgin Voyages, we set out to redefine what a holiday at sea could look like: stylish, adults-only and packed with experiences that go far beyond the expected. As we look to the Caribbean, one of our most vibrant regions, I'm thrilled to share how the UK market has embraced these award-winning voyages like never before, thanks, in no small part, to our brilliant trade partners.

Traditionally, the Caribbean has been seen by UK Sailors (what we call guests) as a winter sun escape. While that will always hold true, we're now seeing a shift in behaviour. More Sailors are looking beyond a week-long holiday and opting for our longer up to 11-night itineraries. From extended voyages weaving together multiple islands to immersive sailings that balance sea days with unique destination experiences, demand from the UK has never been stronger.

BEHIND THE SHIFT

Why is this happening? Part of the story is value. Longer voyages not only allow Sailors to stretch out their time in paradise, but they also deliver a richer sense of discovery. And with our Always Included Luxury, which includes Michelin-inspired dining, unlimited fitness classes, Wi-Fi and essential drinks, travellers know they're getting more for their money than ever before.



“ Longer voyages deliver a richer sense of discovery”

Whether it's relaxing on the sprawling white beaches of Grand Turk or spending the day floating in the crystal-clear Bahamian waters at our exclusive Virgin Voyages Beach Club at Bimini, our travellers are telling us that time, not just destination, is the ultimate luxury.

And because the Caribbean is such a standout region for us, all four of our Lady Ships will be positioned there this November, highlighting its importance to our brand and to our guests.

TRADE IMPORTANCE

The other part of the story is you, our trade partners. You've helped us shift perceptions of what a Caribbean cruise

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT Virgin Voyages' UK sales director SJ Walker; Virgin specialises in stylish, adults-only holidays

can be, positioning Virgin Voyages as the premium adults-only alternative in a region often dominated by family-focused offerings.

Looking ahead, the opportunity is clear. The Caribbean will remain a cornerstone for Virgin Voyages, and the UK is proving itself to be one of the most enthusiastic markets for growth quadrupling business year to date. Together with the trade, we're ensuring that Caribbean cruising isn't just a dream getaway, it's a reality that's becoming part of the UK traveller's holiday rhythm.



IN NUMBERS

44%

of British cruisers are 'most excited' to sail to the Caribbean

7.3%

growth in global visits to the Caribbean in 2023 on 2019

40+

different itineraries offered by Virgin Voyages in the Caribbean



ENCHANTED ISLES

National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions is giving UK travel agents the chance to win an adventure to the Galápagos amid the launch of its new fly-cruise programme to the Ecuadorian archipelago

Picture this: you've returned to the beach after an hour of paddleboarding along volcanic coastlines and a creep of tortoises emerges from the tree line. The sun glistens off their shells as they meander care-free towards the shore while you watch in awe at one of nature's most magnificent occurrences.

This image could become a reality thanks to National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' new trade incentive. UK Agents who book one of the line's new 10-day Exploring Galápagos UK fly-cruise itineraries between 1 September-31 December will stand a chance to win an expedition to the Galápagos* – it's that simple!

What's more, the prize includes a one-night pre-cruise and post-night stay

“
Travellers follow trails past sea lions before heading inland through lush forest

in Quito, allowing you even more time to discover the Ecuadorian capital's well-preserved historic centre.

The incentive comes amid the launch of the expedition specialist's new year-round fly-cruise programme from the UK to the Galápagos onboard *National Geographic Endeavour II*. Purpose built to accommodate expedition-style travel, *National Geographic Endeavour II* is elegant, nimble and equipped with state-of-the-art tools like underwater cameras, a glass-bottom boat and kayaks for up-close explorations.

The vessel carries just 96 guests across five decks and 52 cabins, offering an open-air observation deck, an underwater gear area and dual Zodiac boarding platform. Guests will also be able to meet the captain, thanks to the ship's open bridge policy, and enjoy indoor and outdoor dining – weather permitting.

DESTINATION IMMERSION

Sailing roundtrip from Quito in Ecuador, the 10-day Exploring Galápagos itinerary calls in destinations such as North Seymour, Isabela, Fernandina, Espanola, Floreana, Santa Cruz, Bartolome, Santiago, Genovesa and San Cristobal.

In North Seymour, travellers follow coastal trails past sea lions before heading inland through a lush forest of



palo santo trees, where frigatebirds nest, blue-footed boobies dance and iguanas feed on cacti.

National Geographic Endeavour II will then cross the equator at Volcán Ecuador, the northernmost of the island's six volcanoes. Here guests can spot whales, dolphins, sea turtles and ocean sunfish on guided shoreside excursions.

As the youngest and most pristine island in the Galápagos, Fernandina is home to one of the most active volcanoes in the world. Hikes ashore lead across stagnant lava flows and offer the chance to spot flightless cormorants and large marine iguanas.

Then, guests can spot swallow-tailed gulls, mockingbirds, Nazca boobies and, seasonally, the world's only population of waved albatross at the bird paradise

of Española. From there, they head to Floreana to trail past its iconic, pink-tinted lagoon frequented by flocks of flamingos.

In Santa Cruz, guests will find Puerto Ayora, the largest town and headquarters of both the Galápagos National Park and Charles Darwin Research Station. There's also the Lonesome George monument and the chance to tour tortoise-breeding corrals.

If you have customers on the lookout for an expedition to one of the world's most remote and rewarding expedition destinations, recommend Lindblad Expeditions new, year-round fly-cruise programme to the Galápagos. You'll not only secure repeat business and rave reviews – but a spot for yourself on an adventure of a lifetime. ●

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Guests will have the chance to spot sea lions on coastal walks; giant tortoises await shoreside; lava flows can be observed from a safe distance; *National Geographic Endeavour II*

Get on board

National-Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions' 10-day Exploring Galápagos fly-cruise itinerary, roundtrip Quito via North Seymour, Isabela, Fernandina, Espanola, Floreana, Santa Cruz, Bartolome, Santiago, Genovesa and San Cristobal, departs 1 or 8 May 2026 from £5,980pp. Year-round departures available as fly-cruise packages, call for details.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC | LINDBLAD
EXPEDITIONS

For more information,
visit uk.expeditions.com
or contact 0800 098 1496.
To order your supply of fly/cruise
brochures please email
agency.sales@expeditions.co.uk.
Digital copies are also available
for over-brand.

*Selected departures offered, cabin and departure will be assigned at Lindblad Expeditions' discretion, subject to availability. No international or internal flights are included. Expedition prize is for one person, companion fares can be offered at time of booking – limited to one per person, per agency



Windstar Cruises

With additional team members and two new yachts on the horizon, there's plenty of opportunity for agents to grow their sales through this specialist small ship cruise line

IN THE KNOW

For four decades, Windstar Cruises has been whisking holidaymakers away to captivating destinations across the globe. Having started out with motor sailing yachts tailored for upscale yet casual travel, the line has gone from strength to strength and now offers cruises across Europe, the Caribbean, Costa Rica and the Panama Canal, Alaska, Canada, Japan, the South Pacific and Asia. The company is part of the Xanterra Travel Collection, a group of global hospitality and travel firms.

THE FLEET

Windstar Cruises operates a fleet of three Star class all-suite yachts and three Wind class sailing yachts. In December 2025 and 2026, the line will welcome *Star Seeker* and *Star Explorer*, respectively, expanding the company's product to eight yachts,



each accommodating between 150-350 guests. The new ships have 112 suites, featuring private verandas and infinity windows, as well as two new Owner's Suites with wrap-around balconies.

Windstar's Wind class yachts are also undergoing a two-phase redesign

which is due to be completed by 2027. The project encompasses a full refresh of the vessel's public spaces with new layouts, furniture, wall and floor coverings, lighting and art features, as well as premium suite improvements. New technology will also be added, including interactive TVs in all guest staterooms.

AGENT SUPPORT

Earlier this year, the line appointed Helen Beck as its new managing director of global commercial to build sales operations in the UK and expand the line's presence in Europe, Australia and Latin America. Beck will be instrumental in setting up Windstar's global entities, hiring new team members, working with IT and marketing to launch new websites and booking engines, and be responsible for the company's growth and

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Head of sales UK & Ireland
Augustus Lonsdale on how to
sell Windstar Cruises effectively



Where should an agent who has never sold Windstar before start?

“Visit our agent website or contact us – we have so much passion in the brand and we love sharing it with you. Many people think we are only sailing ships, or only tropical destinations, but we are soon to be an eight-yacht cruise brand. I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention that as official sponsor of the O2 Arena, we’ve got premium seats and we’d love you to join us after you book!”

What sort of traveller does a Windstar sailing appeal to?

“We describe our product as ‘where polished meets refreshingly laid-back’. Our clients appreciate the best of the best. Let’s start easy – don’t just look at your cruise guests – our yacht-style itineraries appeal across the board from cruise guests, to river cruisers, to touring travellers to those who’ve never cruised before.”



CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Windstar has three Star class all-suite yachts; guests can dine in style at Amphora; sailing yachts can access smaller, more exclusive ports; fresh, seasonal ingredients are key to the ships’ menus

“Windstar will offer a series of taster cruises from London

development outside of North America.

Last year, the line held its largest-ever ship visit programme in the UK with 450 agents taking part in events in 11 different ports of call. It also launched a dedicated UK website.

WHAT’S ON THE HORIZON

For the first time in 2026, Windstar will offer a series of three- and four-night taster cruises from London. In May 2026, *Star Pride* will sail a three-night

Belgium: A Sweet Getaway cruise and two departures of a four-night St Malo Getaway cruise. Windstar will also have one of its sailing yachts, the 148-guest *Wind Star*, sailing 10-night cruises in the Canary Islands. In 2027, *Wind Star* will join *Star Breeze* in French Polynesia. In December 2025, the line will offer a series of winter sun itineraries taking in Carnival, the Canary Islands Music Festival and Christmas lights displays.

WHO’S WHO?

The line’s sales operation in the UK is spearheaded by head of sales UK & Ireland Augustus Lonsdale, who has worked for the company since May 2023. Lonsdale and Beck, who is based in London, are led by Christopher Prelog, the line’s president.

SELLING TIPS

1 With two new ships on the horizon and plans for further fleet refurbishments, Windstar is primed to boost repeat booking rates from customers on the lookout for something new from the brand.

2 The line can also tempt first-timers with its upcoming series of short cruises from London. These itineraries are perfect for travellers who are apprehensive about cruising, given the ease of pre-travel and shorter durations.

3 The operator’s smaller ships allow it to access ports that larger lines can’t, while offering a good crew-to-guest ratio. If you have customers keen on intimate sailings, Windstar should make your list of recommendations.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT From left: Nathaniel Sherborne, Anthony Daniels, Shane Lewis-Riley and Rob Scott; judges enjoyed lunch on the day; entrants were hotly debated

SETTING THE STANDARD

All eyes are on this year's Wave Awards at The Dorchester Hotel for what promises to be another night of glitz, glamour and gallant victors

The shortlist for the Wave Awards 2025, taking place on 26 November, has been announced following a record number of entries, beating last year's figure by 33 per cent.

The event, hosted by *Cruise Trade News* and *World of Cruising* in partnership with Virgin Voyages, will take place at The Dorchester on London's Park Lane, where 33 winners will be announced on the night.



“I was very impressed by the high calibre of entries submitted

The winners were decided after a comprehensive judging day held at *The Independent* HQ in Finsbury Square, London, in July.

A total of 40 judges made up the independent panel, with new additions including Helen Beck, managing director, global commercial, Windstar Cruises; David Duff, managing director, UK, Azamara; and Andy Harmer OBE, CLIA UK and Ireland managing director.

Geoff Ridgeon, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines head of sales, who was also in attendance, said: “There have been very strong entries this year from some amazing companies, each offering a lot of breadth and depth.

“The Wave Awards are always important as it's a great way to recognise

the success of the industry and those who have gone one step further. We're always trying to think of ways to do things differently, and it's great we can sit back and recognise those who have done just that.”

Iain Baillie, associate vice president of EMEA sales for Cunard, said: “I was very impressed by the exceptionally high calibre of award entries submitted this year, which clearly reflected the considerable time, thought and effort invested by the nominees.”

“Cunard entered the Wave Awards because travel agents play a vital role in connecting guests with the unique experiences we offer. These awards celebrate the dedication, expertise and passion of the travel trade community.”

He continued: “By participating, we not only show our appreciation but also strengthen our partnerships and reaffirm our commitment to working with agents to grow and succeed.” ●

WAVE AWARDS 2025



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Visit thewaveawards.com to view the full shortlist and ticket options

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What's in It For You?



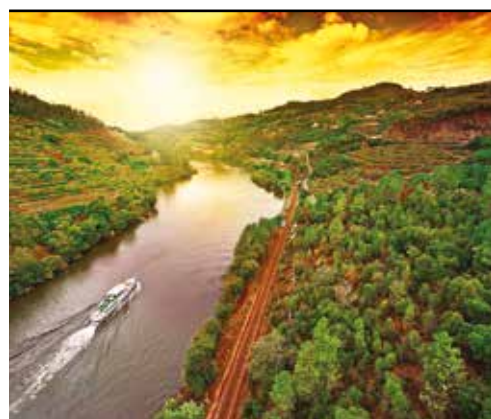
SCAN
to find out more about
Cruise Stars 2025, taking
place on 12 December



RIVERVIEW RETURNS TO AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam will return as the host city for the three-day CLIA RiverView conference, taking place from 8-10 March 2026. Nine cruise operators have signed up so far to take part in the 14th edition of CLIA's annual river conference, which will see agents from UK and Ireland sample the operators' products

firsthand through hosted lunches, dinners, and overnight stays. Meanwhile, a range of optional masterclasses, including a half-day workshop specifically aimed at agents entering the sector, will be take place alongside business sessions, a networking trade fair and multiple ship visits.



UNLOCKING THE VAULT

Following the success of its debut earlier this year, Riviera Travel is bringing back The Vault for travel agents.

The original campaign, which ran from 7 July to 10 August 2025, saw 486 agents log 708 trade bookings, unlocking rewards through the Riviera Explorer platform.

Now, just in time for "mini peaks", The Vault returns with even bigger rewards. Launching on 1 September and running until 6 October, the revamped incentive offers more than 500 prizes. These include holidays to Sri Lanka or Morocco, or a festive river cruise. Agents can also win fam trip places and a range of lifestyle rewards.

PROMOTION



P&O's Cruise Week incentive

P&O Cruises kicked off CLIA Cruise Week with the return of its Shine on Shore incentive, which gives agents the chance to win a place on one of Azura's Shine at Sea sailings in October and November 2025, and offers prizes including 500 Shine points, £100 vouchers and a seven-night fly/cruise holiday.

"CLIA Cruise Week is the perfect time to bring back our Shine on Shore incentive which proved so popular last year," said the line's associate vice-president, sales and distribution, Ruth Venn.

All agents need to do is book and spin every Select Price holiday between 15 September and 9 October 2025 for five chances to win 500 Shine points every week as well as other prizes.

SHIP OF THE MONTH

TUI AL HOREYA

T *TUI Al Horeya's* debut in November 2024 marked TUI River Cruises' first venture into Egypt. When the ship launched, 100 biodegradable candles in coconut shells crafted by local artists were placed on the River Nile to bless the 145-passenger vessel ahead of its maiden voyage to Luxor. It then began a series of seven-night Legends of the Nile itineraries return from Luxor, calling at Edfu, Kom Ombo and Aswan. Each sailing includes live entertainment, two dining options and two Egyptologists on hand to provide insight into the country. *TUI Al Horeya* is the fourth in the line's fleet, joining *TUI Isla*, *TUI Maya* and *TUI Skyla*. It has proved so popular that TUI River Cruises has confirmed a fifth ship and second River Nile vessel, *TUI Bahareya*, which will launch later in 2025.



1 Cabins

The vessel offers single, balcony and superior cabins with French balconies, plus a larger option, a French Balcony Suite Cabin, which has a bigger bathroom and upgraded toiletries. All rooms come with air con, tea-making facilities and a hairdryer, fridge, safe and TV.



2 Wellness

Travellers can stay on top of their fitness goals in the wellness area, which offers treadmills, elliptical machines, free weights and stationary bikes. There's space for fitness classes, but if guests want to take things easier, they can treat themselves to a massage.



3 Dining

TUI Al Horeya's two restaurants and two bars are perfect for a bite to eat and a drink after a day exploring. The main restaurant, Lazeeza – which means 'delicious' in Arabic – offers waiter service for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It also hosts a six-course gala dinner once a sailing.

Fast facts

2024

launch date

145

guests

74

cabins

5

decks



4 Egyptologists

Budding archaeologists and wannabe Indiana Joneses can learn the ropes with TUI's onboard Egyptologists. On every sailing, the experts lead in-depth talks on ancient Egypt, and they are always happy to answer any questions guests may have.



5 Entertainment

The Observatory is the ship's contemporary lounge, which doubles as the main bar and space for live quizzes, films and music in the evening. There's a variety of traditional entertainment from local acts, too, including Egyptian whirling dervishes.



6 Pools

Egypt has highs of 35°C from May to October, so advise guests to make use of the ship's swimming pool. Located on the top deck, it's surrounded by plenty of sunloungers as well as two hot tubs – just in case the weather isn't quite warm enough.

Hayley Moore

Seven months on from Princess Cruises' industry-first takeover of *Cruise Trade News*, the line's UK and Europe sales director sits down with **Will Payne** to reflect on 2025 and look ahead to the inaugural sailing of *Star Princess*

It's not every day you have a meeting to discuss which shade of pink a magazine's pages should be, but for the *Cruise Trade News* and Princess Cruises teams in February 2025, conversations like this were a common occurrence.

At the turn of the year, *Cruise Trade News* partnered with the Carnival UK brand for the industry's first cruise line magazine takeover to promote the company's Love Boat campaign and share new agent engagement initiatives.

"The partnership with *Cruise Trade News* was a real highlight of 2025 for me," says Princess Cruises UK and Europe sales director Hayley Moore as we sit down to reflect on the final product. "It was a unique opportunity to showcase Princess in a fresh and impactful way, and reflected our shared commitment to inspiring and equipping agents during Wave."

To further cement the success of the takeover, the special edition was named as a finalist in the Trade Campaign of the Year category at the 2025 Travel Marketing Awards. "It's been exciting to see other brands now following suit, using the blueprint we created. We're delighted to have paved the way for new and innovative ways to connect cruise lines with the trade," Moore adds.

BUILDING BLOCKS

Seven months on, Princess Cruises has gone from strength to strength, with booking momentum continuing to build across the board. June saw the launch of the line's Europe 2027 programme,

“We're delighted to have paved the way for new ways to connect cruise with the trade



which delivered record-breaking results as its most successful Europe launch to date, highlighting the growing desire amongst cruisers to book early.

The line also unveiled details of its Alaska and Japan 2027 programmes, which sees new ship *Star Princess* return for her second season in Alaska, alongside seven other Princess ships, and Japan will see its most expansive season yet, with two ships sailing the region for the first time.

"Our UK trade partners were instrumental in this success, with five of the top eight global agencies coming from the UK market," Moore states.

SHINE LIKE A STAR

Looking ahead, Moore is firmly focused on the inaugural sailing of *Star Princess* in October. "We're thrilled with how everything is progressing," she says.

What's on the horizon?

Star Princess

"The launch of *Star Princess*, of course! On top of that, we're finalists for 'Best Trade Sales Team' at the 2025 Wave Awards so I am looking forward to that event. Fingers crossed we'll take home the win for a second consecutive year!"

Recruitment drive

"We're currently recruiting for a national training manager, a brand new role dedicated solely to supporting travel agents across the UK. With such a diverse mix of networks, from large retailers to homeworkers, this role will allow us to deliver more tailored and personalised training that meets the needs of different business models."

Brand awareness

"Our goal is to keep Princess top of mind, with agents feeling confident and empowered to sell our brand. This new role marks a significant step forward in amplifying our voice in the trade and deepening our support for the agent community."

“Our goal is to keep Princess top of mind, with agents feeling confident and empowered

"The ship recently completed its sea trials with flying colours and remains on track to welcome its first guests on 4 October."

The vessel will debut in the Mediterranean, followed by an inaugural season featuring sailings in the Caribbean, the Panama Canal and Alaska. Guests will find a new entertainment programme featuring two original productions in the Princess Arena – *Meridian*, a romantic, cinematic feature, and *Illuminate*, a whimsical spectacle inspired by the magic of the circus.

CLOCKWISE FROM

FAR LEFT Princess Cruises' Hayley Moore; *Star Princess*' inaugural sailing will take place in October; guests can enjoy live shows at night and panoramic views during the day in the Dome

Critical to the success of *Star Princess*, Moore believes, is the line's travel agent partners. "We're putting them front and centre with a dedicated campaign we're calling 'Star-tember' – a month-long celebration throughout September designed to build excitement and drive engagement across the trade."

The campaign saw a range of weekly webinars, Kahoot quizzes and themed prizes on offer to keep the momentum of the launch going and *Star Princess* at the forefront for the trade. If that wasn't enough, one lucky agent took home the grand prize of a sailing on *Star Princess* in Alaska or a cruise on sister ship *Sun Princess* in the Caribbean in 2026.

"We also recognise that experiencing the ship firsthand is one of the most powerful ways agents can connect with the product," Moore continues. "That's why we're proud to be hosting UK and Ireland agents onboard *Star Princess* for her second-ever voyage, sailing around the Mediterranean out of Barcelona." ●



On the
road with...

Josh Smith

Princess Cruises' sales development and engagement manager on navigating challenges in agent training and how the trade can use the line's new Sphere class vessel to bolster their business

How have the past few months been in terms of agent engagement?

We've continued to make meaningful connections through a combination of in-person events, our Princess Academy newsletter and live training sessions. While attendance can vary, our recorded content has driven high engagement on social – especially on our sales YouTube channel and our dedicated agent platform, OneSource. And of course, nothing quite compares to the energy of in-person interactions. Our presence at trade conferences and consumer events allows us to strengthen relationships with our valued travel agents, answer questions face to face and reinforce our commitment to the trade.

How will you work with agents throughout the remainder of the year?

Our focus remains firmly on supporting our agent partners through enhancing our training programmes and sharing timely updates through the Princess



Academy. You'll find us at industry conferences, travel agent events and consumer shows, and we look forward to continuing to connect and work with our agent partners.

Star Princess is just round the corner – what should agents focus on when selling the ship?

Agents should position *Star Princess* as a next-generation cruise experience that blends beloved Princess traditions with elevated design, cutting-edge technology and captivating entertainment. After two cruises in the Mediterranean, *Star Princess* will sail the Caribbean from November 2025 through to April 2026, followed by her

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Star Princess will debut in the Mediterranean; Josh Smith joined Princess Cruises in May 2024

Alaska debut in May. Our Sphere class ships have been designed to let the outside in, with expansive glass walls, open-air spaces and panoramic venues, which will offer unparalleled views.

What are some of the challenges you face when it comes to agent training, and how do you combat them?

At Princess, travel agents are the heartbeat of our business. We know that ongoing training is key – not just to keep agents up to date with product news and promotions, but also to help them sell Princess with confidence and expertise. Training does come with its challenges. There's no one-size-fits-all approach and, with a fast-moving industry, training needs be continuous and adaptable.

We have different formats and timings to reach as many agents as possible, but it's always a balancing act. Still, we love a challenge. In the past six months, we've delivered sessions on everything from booking systems and fleet updates to our value-packed packages and a selection of the destinations we visit. And because attendance isn't always possible, every session is recorded and available on our YouTube channel.



“
Agents should position *Star Princess* as a next-generation cruise experience



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LAVISH EXPEDITIONS

Undisturbed landscapes, rare wildlife and owner-style luxury await your customers on an Atlas Ocean Voyages cruise, says **Will Payne**

Visiting the world's most remote destinations is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for some travellers.

It's imperative, therefore, that your customers are treated like royalty by a cruise line which takes expedition cruising up a notch.

Combining luxury with in-depth adventures to the polar regions, the Mediterranean, Northern Europe and more, Atlas Ocean Voyages ensures guests feel like Darwin-esque explorers ashore and a yacht owner back onboard.

LUXURY LIFESTYLE

The line's vessels – *World Navigator*, *World Traveller* and *World Voyager* – each offer 99 suites and staterooms, and with fewer than 200 passengers and a near 1:1 crew-to-guest ratio, there's more room for connection.

“Guests can hike imposing glaciers alongside a colony of gentoo penguins



While offering the staples of an expedition operator, like Zodiacs, a dome observation lounge and a range of public spaces and eateries, Atlas goes one step further with luxury additions like included excursions, 24-hour room service, marble spa bathrooms and L'Occitane amenities, which enrich the experience with thoughtful detail.

Atlas is conscious of the delicate waters it sails in and proudly boasts clean power and dynamic positioning systems to protect ecosystems, as well as quiet hydro-jet propulsion capability for wildlife viewing without disturbing fragile environments.

FROM TOP Guests can spy a range of wildlife from the comfort of their well-appointed suite; immersive onboard experiences include culinary demonstrations with world-renowned chefs

SHORESIDE SERENDIPITY

Demonstrating its commitment to providing guests with once-in-a-lifetime expeditions, Atlas has a team of 17 polar expedition experts on each vessel.

Each ship's team comprises naturalists, geologists, marine biologists and historians, who enrich the journey through engaging lectures, guided landings and onshore walks.

In Antarctica, guests can hike imposing glaciers alongside a colony of gentoo penguins or watch a humpback whale breach from the dark depths of the sea just a few feet away on a Zodiac.

Meanwhile, in the Arctic, human habitation gives way to the polar bears, reindeer, walrus and belugas that guests might spy on a shore landing amid the golden tundra and snow-clad mountains of the Svalbard archipelago.

On either side of the Arctic Circle, colourful villages and vibrant capital cities thrive, which is why some polar expeditions feature excursions to destinations where human civilization has taken root.

Seeing the ends of the earth is one thing, but doing so on what feels like your own yacht will ensure customers leave rave reviews and book again. ●

Get on board

Atlas Ocean Voyages' 12-day Exploration of Antarctica cruise aboard *World Navigator* departs Ushuaia on 20 November 2025, with prices starting from £5,999 per person.



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CTN
Investigates

STARS, STRIPES & SETBACKS

Are cruise-goers being put off travelling to the US due to president Trump's controversial stance on immigration and the economy? **Will Payne** investigates





It's not often one person can have such a profound impact on the travel sector, but if ever someone could, it's the president of the United States.

The industry felt the full force of this influence when Donald Trump's presidency began in 2017, marking the start of the so-called "Trump Slump". The phrase was coined to describe the sharp fall in visitor numbers to the US due to the controversial businessman's anti-globalist "America first" policy.

Fast forward seven years and, despite all odds, the Republican was elected for a second term having pipped Democratic incumbent vice president Kamala Harris to the post.

Trump soon turned his attention to the cruise industry, when in February, US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick said the president would order crackdowns on cruise operators, such as Royal Caribbean and NCL, after claiming "none of them pay taxes".

This raised alarm bells across the pond, given that last year Alaska, the Mississippi, transatlantic, Great Lakes and Hawaii all featured in the top 20 most searched cruise destinations worldwide, according to the *Independent*. The first on the list was the Caribbean, which, despite not falling under US law, is largely only accessible for Brits via ports such as Miami and Fort Lauderdale.

Furthermore, US authorities recently announced that as of 30 September 2025, the fee for an ESTA – the travel authorisation needed to enter the US – will increase by \$19, which Advantage CEO Julia Lo Bue-Said believes is likely to impact US visitor numbers over the next couple of weeks.

But election results aren't the only reason Brits are thinking twice about holidaying in the US. In July, inflation in the country jumped by 2.7 per cent after Trump's tariffs took hold.

DOWNWARD TRAJECTORY

The US Department of Commerce found that new international arrivals for March 2025 saw a sharp and widespread drop from many of the country's key source markets. UK arrivals, one of the States' most important markets, is down nearly 15 per cent year-on-year.

Despite the vast majority (90 per cent) of US tourism spending coming from domestic arrivals, the dip in international visitors is still being felt.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the US economy is on track to lose an eye-watering \$12.5 billion in international visitor spending in 2025, dropping from \$181 billion in 2024 to \$169 billion this year.

The WTTC said the US, which is the largest travel and tourism sector in the world, is the only country among 184 economies analysed by

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP

LEFT While UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer attempts to negotiate trade deals for the UK, back in the US, president Donald Trump's tariffs are hiking prices for locals and tourists alike; Miami is a key port for Brits heading for the Caribbean; the White House has been accused of employing "polarising policies and rhetoric"



SCAN

Cruise Corner Podcast:
How to make the pitch for
expedition less intimidating

Oxford Economics forecast to see international visitor spending decline in 2025.

The research firm had originally forecast a nine per cent increase in foreign travel earlier this year before revising its estimation to reflect “polarising Trump Administration policies and rhetoric”.

Julia Simpson, WTTC president and CEO, says: “This is a wake-up call for the US government. The world’s biggest travel and tourism economy is heading in the wrong direction, not because of a lack of demand, but because of a failure to act. While other nations are rolling out the welcome mat, the US government is putting up the ‘closed’ sign.”

Simpson says it could take several years for the US to return to pre-pandemic levels of international visitor spend without “urgent action” to restore international travellers’ confidence.

STATE OF PLAY

But how are these numbers impacting tourist sentiment in the UK? For Hays Travel, US cruise bookings have remained steady in 2025 with “some fluctuations”.

“We saw a slight reduction in New York departures earlier in the year, but these have returned to normal levels,” says the agency’s head of cruise Catriona Parsons. “Cruise lines including Celebrity, Carnival, Princess, MSC,

“While other nations are rolling out the welcome mat, the US government is putting up the ‘closed’ sign



Cunard, Royal Caribbean and Norwegian Cruise Line remain ever popular. Our customers are looking for luxury and relaxation all wrapped up in the best value package. They want to visit new places, experience new cultures and enjoy exceptional cuisine, which is what the cruise industry does best.”

Iglu Cruise, however, notes an uplift in cruise bookings made in 2025 to the US versus 2024, including to Alaska, Hawaii and other states. “The lure of the destinations seems to have superseded concerns over politics, with particular curiosity this year about Alaska,” a spokesperson for the agency says.

“Our 2024 survey indicated that itinerary is the most motivating factor when considering a cruise. The inexpensive repositioning cruises westward to the States in the autumn always sell well, based on their incredible value for money.”

Conversely with some cruise lines such as NCL, reporting a reduction in the number of US airline seats available to Europe, Iglu notes more availability, some very late, on European cruises this summer for British guests.

The Advantage Travel Partnership reports that US bookings “broadly align” with 2024 data despite the country’s political climate.

The top three popular US destinations to visit amongst the consortium’s client base remain the same as 2024: Orlando, New York and Las Vegas. Half of Advantage bookings made so far this year to the US are for travel in 2025 and, whilst there’s some trepidation around the sentiment to travel to the US, the company admits, booking data suggests there are continued signs – given ►





the traditional longer advance booking patterns for the states – of persistent demand.

Lo Bue-Said says: “It’s interesting to see that despite the concerns around tourism numbers to America, overall, the US market is currently remaining robust.

“We’re seeing particular interest in the southern states such as Nashville, driven by the growing popularity of country music, as well as those states in North America that will be hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup, providing tourists with the chance to watch the games in the same time zones, showing the impact sports tourism can have on a destination.”

‘OUR CLIENTS DON’T FEEL SAFE’

For some travellers, it’s not just the weather forecast, sporting experiences or dining options that inspire their holiday choices. Jamie Wake, managing director of LGBT+ specialist travel agency Wide Awake Holidays, knows first-hand the trials and tribulations some holidaymakers may face.

“I can say with confidence that interest in the US remains strong among LGBT+ travellers, but sadly, with much more caution than in previous years as we see a noticeable shift in where they feel comfortable going,” he says.

While headline US destinations like New York, San Francisco and Miami



“We’re seeing particular interest in states such as Nashville, driven by the growing popularity of country music

remain strong, Wake continues, there’s a clear reluctance from LGBT+ travellers to explore states perceived as politically or socially hostile – such as Florida and Texas.

Despite some states being avoided by LGBT+ travellers, Wake notes a rising interest in destinations like Providence, Provincetown, Portland and even some parts of Colorado, all known for inclusive communities and progressive values.

But, Wake says, “on more than one occasion” his customers have cited the rollback of LGBT+ rights in specific states as the reason for choosing alternative destinations, including Canada and European cities that feel safer and more accommodating.

Safer Tourism, a charity working to protect UK travellers, recently polled 2,000 British holidaymakers and found that while 41 per cent of respondents select “level of risk, security and safety” of a destination as a priority, this proportion rises to 49 per cent of those identifying as homosexual, and 50 per cent for those identifying as “other sexuality”.

When asked how important or unimportant risk, security and safety concerns are when selecting a destination, 61 per cent of those identifying as homosexual and 80 per cent of those identifying as “other sexuality” said it was

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT LGBT+ clients need reassurance when choosing destinations; Florida is perceived as unwelcoming for LGBT+ travellers; WTTC president and CEO Julia Simpson; Miami has built its reputation on being safe and welcoming; Jamie Wake, MD of the specialist travel agency Wide Awake Holidays

“

There's a clear reluctance from LGBT+ travellers to explore states perceived as politically or socially hostile

“very important” compared to 54 per cent of total respondents.

This stark comparison comes as no surprise to Wake, who says his clients are doing their research and are increasingly informed and intentional about their travel

decisions and highlighting concerns about where it's safe to be themselves.

States passing laws that target drag performers, trans healthcare, or same-sex parenting rights are often immediately ruled out by LGBT+ travellers, Wake says. “The social climate of a destination is now as important as its beaches or nightlife, particularly for our community,” he adds. “As a result, we've seen greater demand for inclusive US cities and a pivot toward destinations with vocal allyship and protective laws in place.

“It's no longer just about the holiday itself, but people want to feel seen and safe, and that includes their rights being respected abroad. In one case, a honeymoon couple ruled out Florida entirely due to recent laws affecting LGBT+ visibility in public spaces and schools.”

He continues: “We often say, ‘sometimes gay-friendly isn't friendly enough’, and this is becoming especially true when it comes to travel to the US. Our role is not only to curate beautiful travel experiences, but to empower LGBT+ travellers with the knowledge and confidence to travel safely and authentically. Our clients don't just want tolerance – they want to feel welcome, celebrated, and safe.”

THE WIDER PICTURE

Wide Awake Holidays is a member of the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA), a US-based network of LGBT+ tour operators and businesses.

President and CEO of the organisation, John Tanzella, admits the reluctance from LGBT+ travellers to visit the US is wider reaching than the UK. “There is anxiety around navigating US Customs and Border Protection, especially from trans and gender-diverse travellers who already experience heightened anxiety when passing through airport security,” he says.

The IGLTA conducted a survey focusing on LGBT+ travel perceptions in Florida and found that more than 80 per cent of LGBT+ travellers in the US see the state as somewhat or very unwelcoming.

“When legislation is discriminatory, it directly influences where people feel safe and respected, and ultimately, where they choose to travel. As a result, destinations like Miami and Tampa that have built their reputation on being safe and welcoming – and are still fully committed to inclusion – suffer from the state's policies,” Tanzella continues.

Cruising and travelling to the US is set to become a heated topic of debate. Not only have political ideologies already deterred some minority groups from visiting the country, but economic considerations – like increased prices at adventure parks and the rapid rise in tipping culture – are putting more Brits off a holiday across the pond.

Cruises in and out of the US will remain robust regardless of the political and economic landscape. The country is the main departure port for the world's most popular cruise destination, the Caribbean, and the infrastructure in ports like Miami, New York and Fort Lauderdale is monumental.

However, in times where safety, security and financial reassurance is ranking higher on travellers' list of priorities, the US could end up playing second fiddle to destinations like the Mediterranean, Australia and South America where differences are celebrated, not punished. If the tide turns against US tourism in coming years, the Caribbean's biggest departure point may find itself watching ships sail without the British passengers it once took for granted. ●





SPICE OF LIFE

From roasted jumbo scallops to char siu pork bao buns, your clients will be spoilt for choice when dining with Marella Cruises, writes **Will Payne**

Cruise dining has come a long way since being branded as bland, rigid and unimaginative. Now, sailors can sample cuisines from around the world in less than a few hundred steps.

One line which is spearheading this evolution is Marella Cruises, which prides itself on its rich onboard gastronomy. Ranging from extra-casual Pool Deck options and a revolutionary food-hall concept to fine-dining and musical afternoon teas, there's plenty of choice for all ages.

What's more, guests can enjoy a minimum of six included dining venues and three speciality picks per ship.

Here, we break down some of the brand's standout eateries and what guests can expect.

“**Guests can enjoy a minimum of six included dining venues per ship**”

LATITUDE 53 / 47°

Latitude 53 is the main dining room onboard *Marella Explorer*, *Marella Explorer 2* and *Marella Voyager*, and 47° is the main eatery on *Marella Discovery* and *Marella Discovery 2*. Here, guests can enjoy a traditional sit-down dining experience with attentive waiter service and sweeping ocean views through panoramic floor-to-ceiling windows.

The menu offers classic dishes with a modern twist, like pâté en croûte with warm, homemade bread. A highlight

is the lobster souffle, which is served on the line's “dress to impress” night, and it'd be rude not to finish off the evening with a slice or two of apple pie with custard.

SNACK SHACK

For a more relaxed dining experience, Snack Shack offers poolside light bites throughout the day. This includes grab and go sandwiches like egg and cress, Greek falafel, and prosciutto on an artisan baguette.

Guests will also find hot dishes, like beef and chicken burgers, fish and chips, sweet chilli chicken wings and macaroni cheese. For travellers with a sweet tooth, there's a range of assorted fresh fruit cups, a selection of warm chocolate chip cookies and a double espresso brownie.



THE GLASS HOUSE

This space has been restyled to look like a trendy beach club, complete with couple-sized Balinese beds. The food offering, meanwhile, has two personalities. By day, it offers quick breakfast dishes and deli-style light bites, including rotisserie-style chicken, salads and paninis.

Come sundown, the venue lines up the likes of tapas platters, sharing boards and for a little extra globe-trotting, meat skewers. The Glass House can be found onboard *Marella Discovery* and *Marella Discovery 2*.

KORA LA

A firm Marella Cruises favourite, this swanky eatery boasts a selection of pan-Asian dishes for your guests to tuck in to – from gyozas and dumplings to curries and bespoke dishes created by renowned chef Ian Pengelley. They'll

also find the line's new Thali option, an Indian-style meal made up of a selection of dishes served on a platter.

Kora La can be found fleet-wide and, as with all of the line's speciality dining venues, comes with a cover charge and a dress code. Guests will have to don the glad rags to dine here and should book in advance.

SILVER FORK

Silver Fork, one of *Marella Voyager's* speciality dining venues found on Deck 5, celebrates the best of British cuisine. With a three-course à la carte menu and a seven-course tasting menu, guests have plenty of reason to come back for more.

If they opt for à la carte, they'll find the likes of lightly fried cockles and coronation chicken starters, and tender salmon and a chef's twist on pie and mash for mains. For dessert, they've got sticky toffee pudding or Eton mess.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Guests won't be left hungry onboard; Kora La offers pan-Asian delights; Silver Fork celebrates the best of British cuisine; diners can swap food recommendations with like-minded travellers in Latitude 53

If tastings are more their thing, the seven-course menu lines up the likes of tomato soup, scallops, Beef Wellington and a chocolatey dessert, all paired with a flight of wine.

SURF & TURF STEAKHOUSE

True to its name, Surf & Turf Steakhouse's menu includes the likes of steak, seafood, chicken and lamb dishes, as well as a long and varied list of sides. This speciality dining venue is a firm favourite and, like Kora La, can also be found fleet-wide. Travellers are advised to make a reservation well in advance as it's a popular choice.

Each steak is carefully handpicked and cut in-house before being expertly seared on the line's 350°C grill. All 28-day aged cuts, like the porterhouse, ribeye and sirloin, are served with a choice of homemade sauces. 🍖



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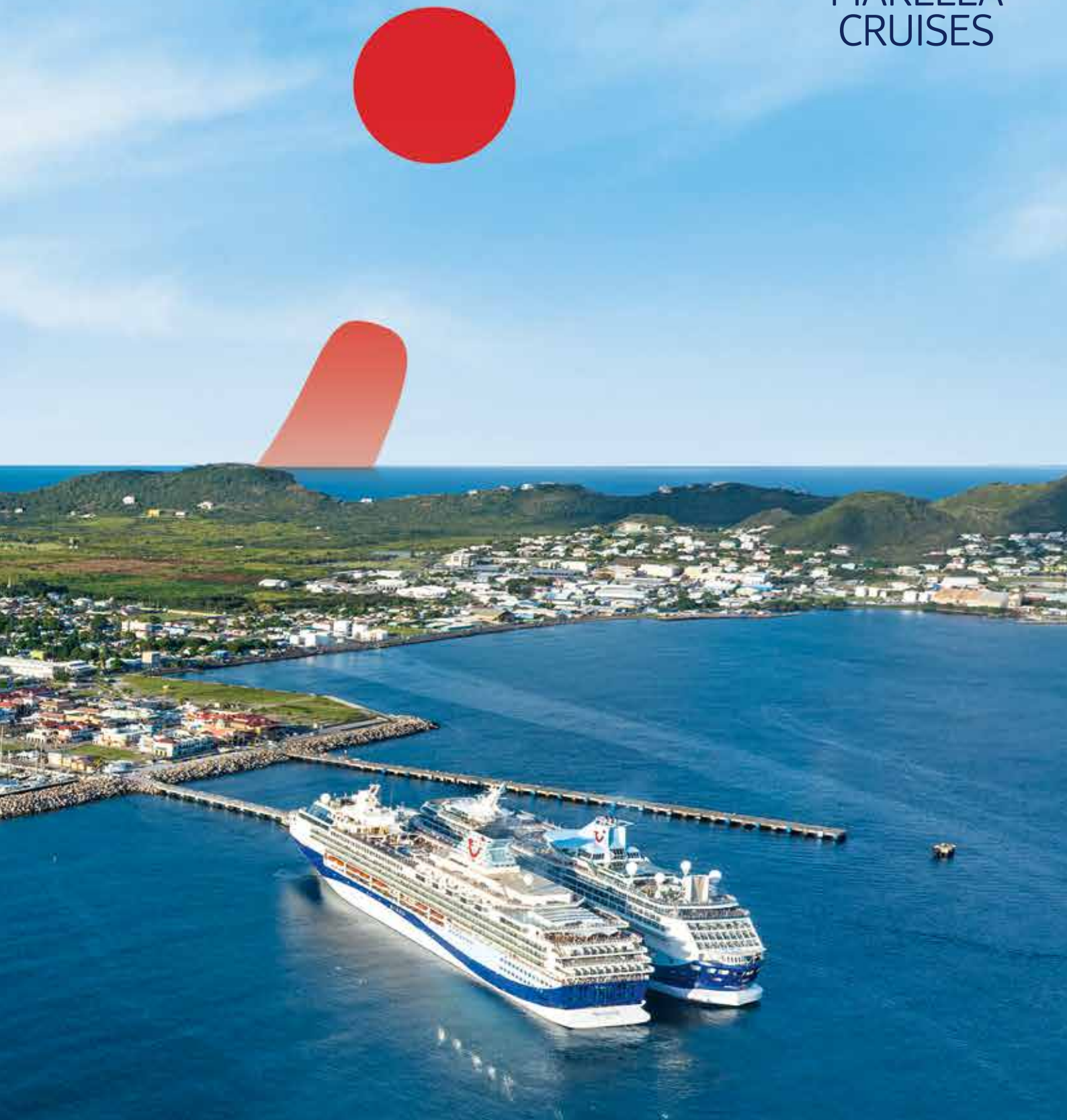


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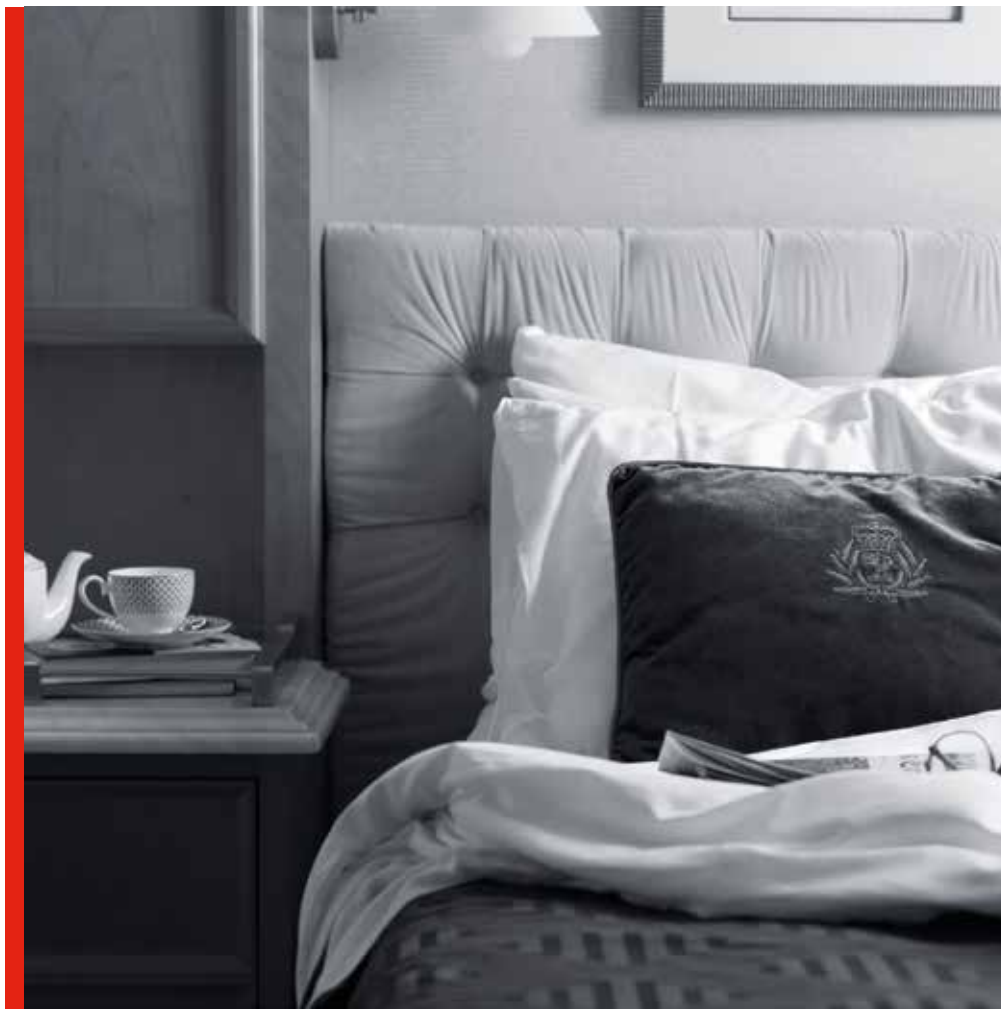
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QUEEN ANNE



ALL ABOARD

Removing barriers to travel is an issue many lines are still grappling with. **Carrie-Ann Lightley** boards P&O Cruises' *Arvia* for a supported group holiday to assess whether accessibility, service and shore experiences are meeting travellers' needs

There's a tension that comes with accessible travel; a need to anticipate problems before they happen. As a wheelchair user with complex PTSD, I've spent years looking for step-free routes, tracking down accessible toilets and pre-empting failure. But on a supported group cruise organised by accessible holiday

experts Limitless Travel aboard P&O Cruises' *Arvia*, that load was lifted.

Over two weeks, I explored a floating city, joined excursions in Spain and France and tested how well this model delivered, from pre-cruise preparation to disembarkation and everything in between. Here, I share a play-by-play of my time onboard, revealing what the line got right and the areas where there's still room for improvement.

BEFORE THE CRUISE

A care call with the cruise line prior to departure covered everything from wheelchair dimensions and emergency evacuation procedures to medication and access needs. I was added to a WhatsApp group with the other guests and staff, which helped break the ice. On departure day, an adapted vehicle arrived at my hotel and drove me straight to Southampton. ►



Embarkation was calm and quick. The Limitless team met us at the terminal and guided us through check-in, using priority lanes reserved for those with mobility needs. Within an hour, I was in my cabin, with my luggage already waiting for me.

ARRIVING AT MY CABIN

My cabin on Deck 15 was genuinely accessible: wide doorways, turning space, a roll-in shower with a bench, grab rails, and automatic doors to the cabin, bathroom and balcony. The



“
The waiters and entertainers took the time to get to know us, not just serve us

wardrobe had a pull-down rail I could reach, which is a rare occurrence on most cruise ships. Every detail said “you’re welcome here”.

Lighting could be controlled from the bed, and I appreciated how clearly placed the emergency cords were. It was one of the few accessible rooms I’ve stayed in where I didn’t have to rearrange the furniture to function.

EXPLORING THE SHIP

At more than 1,100 feet in length, *Arvia* is big, but most areas were reachable with lifts and clear signage, though there were often long waits for lifts at peak times. I took time on day one to explore key venues with the help of the Limitless team. Some outer decks had tight furniture layouts, and at breakfast and lunch times the buffet became congested, but the crew were present and proactive.

For example, buffet staff wore bright yellow aprons that read “How can I help?”, which was a small thing that made a big difference when I needed assistance carrying a tray or navigating queues.

DINING AND SERVICE

Limitless reserved accessible tables in one of the main restaurants for group meals, with the seating plans taking both space and comfort into account. Whether I joined them for meals or opted for room service, the food was of high quality, with vegetarian and allergy-friendly options (of which there were plenty) marked clearly.

P&O’s crew made a visible effort to connect with guests. They remembered preferences and adjustments were made discreetly with quiet efficiency. I had genuine conversations with waiters and entertainers who took the time to get to know us, not just serve us.

ENTERTAINMENT AND DOWNTIME

Entertainment ranged from theatre and movie nights at the cinema to quizzes and spa sessions. There was always something to do, which Paula, another guest, summed up perfectly: “I love



cruises,” she said. “Everything’s in one place and there’s always something going on.”

Accessible facilities were available at every venue we visited. Some needed pre-booking, like the pool hoist I used with support from crew, while others I could wheel straight into, such as the wheelchair spaces in the theatre.

EXCURSIONS AND SHORE SUPPORT

According to Limitless Travel’s founder, Angus Drummond, making cruise holidays accessible isn’t just about removing the physical barriers. “We set out to remove the emotional and logistical barriers too,” he explains.

“That’s why our team travels alongside guests to offer consistent support and peace of mind.”

And it showed. Port days, from bustling Alicante to historic Toulon, were planned with bathroom stops and access-checked venues. The day before each excursion, we were briefed on weather and timings and there were walking tours, cultural visits and market stops too. If anything didn’t go to plan, someone was already solving it before I even had to ask.

I also booked myself onto one of P&O’s accessible excursions in Marbella which was separate from the group. While the line’s options were limited, the booking team onboard were helpful, informed and honest about things like the terrain, which gave me the confidence to explore on my own.

DISEMBARKATION AND THE JOURNEY HOME

When it came time to disembark, I was met at my cabin door and guided through the process. My bags were taken, transport confirmed, and staff stayed with us until everyone was safely underway. That level of end-to-end support isn’t just a luxury, it’s what makes travel possible for many of us. ●

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT The team access-check all aspects of port visits so you can relax and enjoy the view; Arvia is light and spacious; bustling Alicante is one of the tour destinations; the stunning SkyDome; cabins are well equipped with all aspects of accessibility in mind



MY VERDICT

“Admittedly, this wasn’t a perfect cruise – buffet congestion and deck layouts could be improved – yet it was the most relaxed I’ve felt at sea. Travelling in a group can feel risky when your access needs are unique, but it felt like the group understood one another. With 14 guests – some needing full care, others just wanting reassurance – and five staff, the balance worked. When travel stops being a challenge and starts feeling like a choice again, that’s when you know someone got it right.”

Get on Board

P&O Cruises with Limitless Travel; 14-night Spain and France on Arvia return from Southampton via A Coruña, Málaga, Alicante, Marseille, Barcelona and Cádiz, departs August 2026, with prices from £5,999pp; limitlesstravel.org

Carrie-Ann was a guest of Limitless Travel, supported by P&O Cruises, Avanti West Coast and Transmobility.



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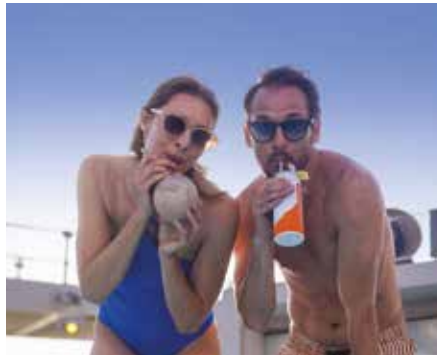
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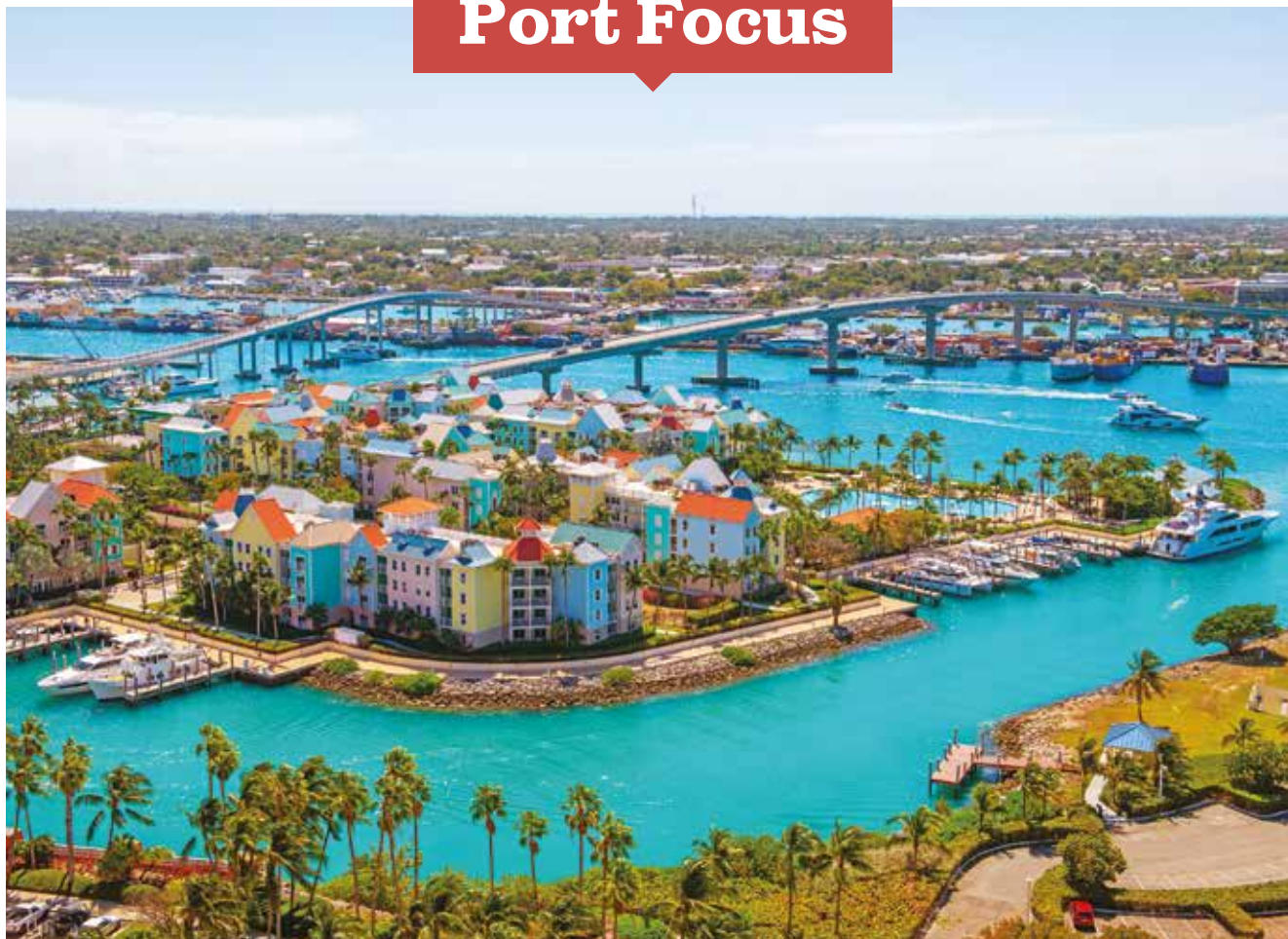


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Port Focus



Nassau

From the salty scent of the sea to the tantalising taste of “chicken in da bag,” Nassau provides a truly authentic Bahamian experience, says **Sofia Gonzalez**

Colourful is a simple way to describe the capital city of the Bahamas, but the landscapes offer much more than just that.

Picture this: the glacier-blue ocean morphs into different shades as the pumpkin-hued dusk sky intercepts the horizon. Later, the frost-white sands of Junkanoo beach merge into the slightly darker ocean below, as rainbow fish and fuchsia flamingo ponder each other's existence.

Full of decadent foods, such as conch fritters and fresh snapper, and stunning salt-white beaches, it's no wonder Nassau is one of the most visited ports in the Caribbean with more than 3.7 million cruise passengers docking annually.

There's a plethora of things to do and see, such as swimming with pigs and dolphins, observing marine life from above and below the water, and learning about the deep-rooted history of piracy on the island, which dates back to the 18th century.

There is something new around every corner, like waterparks and segway tours, with rich cuisine widely available all over the island. Locals and tourists mingle through a shared love of everything Nassau has to offer, with travellers getting the chance to experience what it feels like to be a true Bahamian.

Here, we highlight a range of unmissable sights and eateries fit for all budgets. If you have clients on the hunt for a Caribbean experience like no other, Nassau could be the pick for them. ►



Three unmissable things to do

SWIMMING WITH PIGS

While the original swimming hogs can be found in Big Major Cay, the pigs have gotten so popular they have migrated to nearby beaches, including Rose and Pearl Island. Big Major Cay is a small distance from the capital, but many day trips are offered, either by boat or plane. If travelling that far doesn't strike an interest, there are closer beaches with other swimming pigs, such as Rose Island, where guests can also grab a bite to eat or explore the local reef via snorkelling.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Nassau's much-loved swimming pigs; Parliament Square boasts colonial-influenced architecture; the finest local food, fresh from the sea; take a trip to soak up the history of Fort Fincastle, which dates back to the late 1700s

“To beat the heat, take a trip to a waterpark, offering chills and thrills



WATERPARKS

Nearly all Brits heading to the Bahamas will look for ways to beat the heat, and you can't go wrong with a trip to a waterpark, offering both chills and thrills. Nassau is full of resorts with their own waterparks, equipped with towering slides, massive pools and lazy rivers. Recommend destinations include Aquaventure at Atlantis, Fins Up Waterpark at Margaritaville and Baha Bay at Baha Mar. If guests opt for a pre- or post-cruise stay at one of these resorts, they can get free access to the parks, but otherwise, a day pass can be purchased for a small fee.

ISLAND HISTORY

While guests of every age can learn something new from this museum, the Pirates of Nassau is a great place for kids to learn and have some fun. There are several eye-catching exhibits and a giant model pirate ship, allowing everyone to get an understanding of the island's piracy heritage. To explore the nation's rich heritage, check out the Bahamas Historical Society, where travellers are walked through Bahamian native history, slavery, emancipation and more; the exhibits, murals and artifacts give a comprehensive look at the island's past. Other places to visit include the Balcony House, Nassau Public Library, the Heritage Museum of the Bahamas and Pompey Museum.





Three places to eat BUDGET

No visit to the Bahamas is complete without a stop at the Bamboo Shack. “Chicken in da bag” is the ultimate local comfort food, and this place has been serving their exceptional takeout of chicken and conch since 1990.

Both tourists and locals alike enjoy this special Bahamian meal, and with multiple locations across the island, the Bamboo Shack is always accessible for a meal on the go. Seats are offered inside as well for those who want some respite from the sun. Options outside of chicken in da bag are also offered, such as a conch burger or shrimp dinner.

MID-RANGE

For British Bahamian fusion, the Cricket Club offers a blend of both cultures through their food and experience. This spot is also renowned for its exceptional hangover food, including an English breakfast and the Bahamian

“ The Bamboo Shack’s ‘chicken in da bag’ is the ultimate comfort food of the Bahamas

souse. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, families are always welcome to watch captivating events. Whether it’s premiership football on Sundays, American football season, or cricket, residents and tourists will both show up to cheer for their teams. On Wednesdays, they host dart nights, where local teams vie for the top spot.

PREMIUM

Located on the beachfront overlooking lapping waves and white sand, Marcus at Baha Mar Fish+Chop House is a cut above the rest. Marcus Up Top is a rooftop bar attached to the main restaurant, perfect for a sunset cocktail – or two – and romantic evening. The menu was created by chef Marcus Samuelsson and is inspired by regional flavours, the interiors reflect the Bahamas’ colourful and warm culture. Great for large parties, Marcus offers a special party menu, offering a “Taste of Nassau” or “Taste of the Bahamas.” A favourite of chef Marcus and guests is his cornbread, served with spiced rum butter.

Three Standout Sailings to Nassau

1 **Royal Caribbean’s** three-night *Wonder of the Seas* roundtrip cruise from Miami via CocoCay and Nassau, departs 9 January 2026, from £332pp.

2 **Norwegian Cruise Line’s** seven-night *Norwegian Breakaway* roundtrip cruise from New York via Orlando, Great Stirrup Cay, and Nassau, departs 22 November 2025, from £807pp.

3 **Celebrity Cruises’** five-night *Celebrity Summit* roundtrip cruise from Fort Lauderdale via Key West and Nassau, departs 13 October 2025, from £315.



How to travel sustainably

Segway tours with Bahamas Eco-Glide Adventures will allow guests to soak up the city without releasing anything harmful into the environment. Tours can either take one and a half hours or three hours, from £40 or £62. Trips can be browsed and booked on the Bahamas Eco-Glide Adventures website.





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

Juli Hodson
Travel Counsellor



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SOUND WAVES

Help your customers create lasting memories on the high seas with visits to the places which have inspired toe-tapping tunes for decades. Words by **Sofia Gonzalez**

PARIS

Taylor Swift

“Let the only flashing lights be the tower at midnight.” Released in 2022, Taylor Swift took her shot at a song about the “City of Lights.” This song captures the intense love she felt while writing it, expressing how she and her lover live in a world of their own – world that is Paris. Out of every city across the globe, Swift chose to make Paris the one to retreat to when you’re in love, which makes sense considering its nickname,

the “City of Love.” You’ll be “taken by the view” offered throughout the city, such as the striking Eiffel Tower, the historic Louvre, and imposing cathedrals, like Notre Dame. Paris holds a lot of nostalgia for movie fans as well, with so many films, animated and live action, taking place in the iconic city. The cuisine is also a must try, from flaky croissants to colourful macarons and buttery escargot, depending on how adventurous guests are feeling. Glide along the winding Seine, which hosted

Olympic athletes in the 2024 games, taking in the empowering sights and culture as you drift by. “My love, we were in Paris.”

Get on board

Uniworld’s 15-day A Portrait of Majestic France cruise aboard *Bon Voyage*, from Bordeaux to Paris via Cussac-Fort-Médoc, Cadillac, Bourg-Sur-Gironde, Libourne, Vernon, Rouen and Caudebec-en-Caux, Versailles, departs 17 May 2026 from £7,424pp. ►



LOST IN JAPAN

Shawn Mendes

"I was hoping I could get lost in your paradise." Shawn Mendes wrote this song with a longing in mind. While his longing seems to be for a girl in the song, the girl happens to be in Japan, connecting his love for her to an affection for the city. Released in 2018, the song sees Mendes longing to drop everything and fly to Japan, eager to lose himself in the city, with her, and in the paradise they share. "It'll only be a couple hours" until guests get the chance to explore Japan for themselves, finding their own ways to get lost in the culture. Visit ancient shrines and temples, and get in touch with the city's roots. They can wander away from the city to take a hike up Mount Fuji or embrace 'sakura' – the country's cherry blossoms every spring. Then they can sample the street food from vendors in Osaka or Kyoto, the tantalising mix of seasonings dancing on their tongue, or the fresh fish in Japan's most famous dish, sushi. "Let's get lost tonight."

Get on board

Royal Caribbean's eight-night Jeju, Kyoto, Niigata & Hakodate cruise aboard *Spectrum of the Seas*, roundtrip from Shanghai via Jeju, Kyoto, Niigata and Hakodate, departs 18 April 2026, from £1,197pp.

AFRICA

Toto

"It's gonna take a lot to drag me away from you." *Africa*, Toto's most popular song from 1982, is about a man's deep love for the continent and the longing he feels for it. Playing the song fills listeners with the same feelings of joy of discovery which the lyrics hint at. The music is calming, as if you, too, are exploring Africa. Traverse through this diverse continent, maybe even "bless the rains," on some of its popular rivers, stopping at destinations such as Zimbabwe and Egypt. Guests can explore ancient temples and spot rare and remarkable wildlife up close as they sail through or around the continent. "Hurry, boy, it's waitin' there for you."

“**Take a hike up Japan's Mount Fuji or see its iconic springtime cherry blossoms**

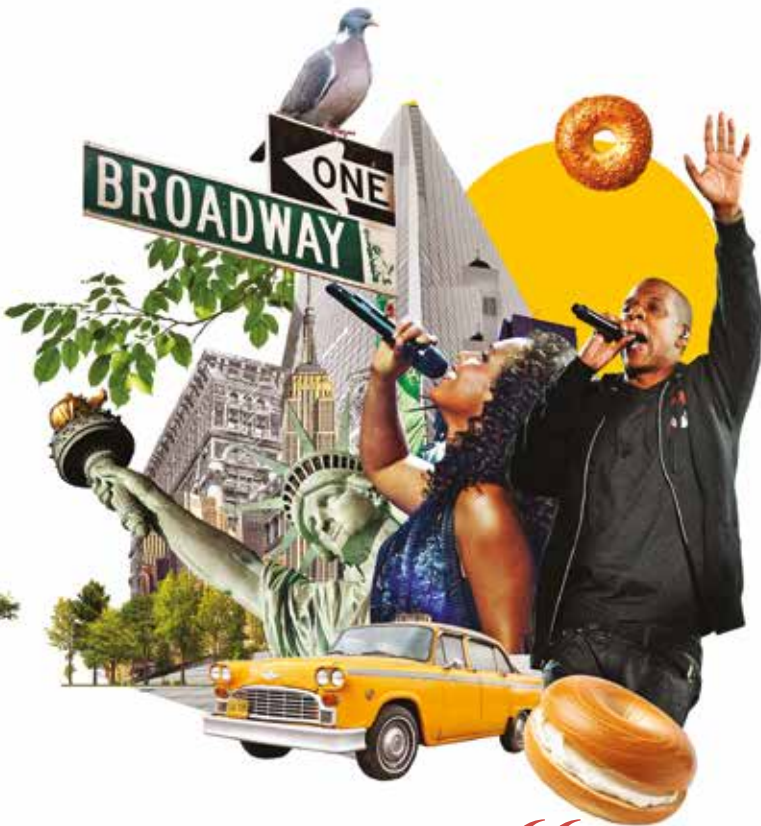
Get on board

AmaWaterways' 16-night Golden Trails of Africa cruise aboard *Zambezi Queen* from Johannesburg to Arusha via Victoria Falls, Tarangire, Ngorongoro and Serengeti National Park, departs 8 February 2026, from £16,808pp.

VIENNA

Billy Joel

"It's alright, you can afford to lose a day or two." *Vienna* was released in 1977 and is a metaphor for growing older and not being too quick to grow up. Joel writes about slowing down and enjoying life while you can. The city represents a place where time moves slowly, allowing visitors to "disappear for a while," and just enjoy their surroundings and the people they are with. What better way to disappear than on a river cruise along the Danube, coasting through many cities beyond Vienna, offering a great way to lose a few days and enjoy life. Guests can explore palaces and museums or take a dance class or two while in the "City of Waltzes." Vienna is Europe's classical music capital, so enjoying performances of Mozart or Strauss in a music hall is a great way to slow down and take everything in. "When will you realise Vienna waits for you?"



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT From Japan and Africa to New York, Australia and Austria, destinations all around the world have always been inspirational to music artists

Get on board

Viking Cruises' eight-day Danube Waltz cruise aboard *Viking Jarl*, from Budapest to Passau via Bratislava, Vienna, Krems and Linz departs 8 March 2026, from £2,095pp.

EMPIRE STATE OF MIND

Jay-Z and Alicia Keys

"These streets will make you feel brand new." New York, the Big Apple, the Empire State; no matter what it's dubbed, the city never gets old, always offering something else to explore. Jay-Z grew up in the city that never sleeps, and he wrote this song as a tribute to his humble beginnings, comparing his success story to two other famous New Yorkers, Frank Sinatra

“New York never gets old, always offering something else to explore

and Robert de Niro. The song was released in 2009 and captures the spirit and vibrancy of Manhattan. "There's nothing you can't do" when visiting the concrete jungle, including seeing Lady Liberty, the Empire State Building or the Museum of Natural History. Broadway is always running, with shows new and old, and a stroll through Central Park offers scenic views no matter the time of year. Grab a slice of New York pizza or wake up to a New York bagel, and try as many cuisines as possible, since locals claim all the food in the city is simply the best. "Let's hear it for New York."

Get on board

Norwegian Cruise Line's seven-day Canada & New England: Boston and Halifax cruise aboard *Norwegian Escape*, roundtrip from New York via Boston, Portland, Saint John and Halifax, departs 29 August 2026, from £693pp.

GREAT SOUTHERN LAND

Icehouse

"Listen to the motion of the wind in the mountains." Icehouse released this song in 1982 to reflect the culture and history of Australia. The song discusses how Australia was before it got colonised, exuding a feeling of nostalgia, even for those who have never visited. The lyrics highlight the profound connections between the land and the people who live there, the love for the continent a prominent theme throughout it. Icehouse also mentions the "endless ocean" surrounding the country, as well as its mountains. Australia is known for its landscapes, offering multiple places to explore. Guests can go snorkelling or diving in the Great Barrier Reef, visit the Daintree Rainforest or enjoy coastal views from a ride along the Great Ocean road. The Sydney Opera house is also a great place to visit, or museum-hop in Brisbane to delve into Australia's history.

Get on board

Carnival Cruise Line's 10-day Vanuatu & New Caledonia cruise aboard *Carnival Adventure*, roundtrip from Sydney via Nouméa, Lifou Island, Mystery Island and Port Vila, departs 23 March 2026 from £780pp.





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OR WHEREVER YOU STREAM PODCASTS

Oceania
Allura

TASTE THE DIFFERENCE

Oceania Cruises prides itself on having “The finest cuisine at sea”, but does it deliver? **Kaye Holland** steps on board the line’s newest ship to find out

In July this year, Oceania Cruises unveiled *Allura*, the prelude to an exciting run of new vessels due in 2027, 2029 and 2035, respectively. Unsurprisingly for a line that claims to rule the culinary waves, Oceania has pulled out all the stops to ensure delivery on its promise, with *Allura* featuring one chef for every eight guests. In fact, half of the ship’s 800 crew are dedicated to culinary operations.

The new ship caters to guests’ hunger for learning, too. A cruise on *Allura* isn’t just about relaxation – it’s about coming back improved. Unleash your inner Picasso in the Artist Loft, or learn how to post a reel on Instagram and other social

media and smartphone basics, courtesy of the clever digital team at the new Lync Digital Centre.

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

Twelve dining venues – a staggering number for a ship that accommodates 1,200 passengers at full capacity – means guests can enjoy a different dining experience each day. Refreshingly, every restaurant is included in the price (some lines charge between £30-£45 a head to eat in their high-end ‘speciality’ restaurants).

“There are no ships of this size that have so many dining options,” Alexis Quaretti, Oceania’s executive

culinary director, tells me on a tour of *Allura*’s colossal 2,400sqm galley.

Returning favourites include The Polo Grill steakhouse, Italian restaurant Toscana, the wellness-inspired Aquamar Kitchen, and the elegant white and silver-hued Grand Dining Room. Elsewhere, the line’s signature French restaurant Jacques – named for legendary chef Jacques Pépin, Oceania’s first-ever culinary director – makes a comeback.

Introduced on *Marina* and *Riviera* (the line’s two Oceania-class ships), it was dropped from *Allura*’s older sister, *Vista*, and replaced by casual venue Ember. However, Jacques’ fans complained and – full credit to Oceania – they listened and ►



brought the crowd-pleaser back on *Allura*. The new iteration features French classics like duck à l'orange with Grand Marnier.

However, there's also plenty of newness on *Allura* for guests to, erm, sink their teeth into. Stop by The Crêperie for, as the name suggests, delicate, authentic French crepes. And be sure to tuck into the new Japanese-Peruvian dishes – think tuna ceviche with leche de tigre, and crispy soft shell crab tempura inside fluffy bao buns – at popular pan-Asian speciality Red Ginger while admiring the restaurant's stunning wall of floating glass lanterns.

Do all of the aforementioned add up to the best cuisine at sea? That's questionable, but it's undeniable that a great deal of effort has gone into *Allura*'s culinary output.

SLEEP TALK

Oceania has done away with inside cabins on *Allura*, which instead offers six categories of accommodation, all with either French balconies or verandas. The lion's share of the 600 cabins are entry-level veranda staterooms. Measuring more than 290 square feet, they are the largest standard staterooms at sea.

The space ratio remains the same at concierge level, the next category up, but upgrading gets you perks such as access

“
**A cruise on *Allura*
isn't just about
relaxation – it's about
coming back improved**

Fast facts

1,200
guests

15
decks

12
restaurants

6
cabin types

to an exclusive lounge – the serene Aquamar Spa Terrace with its whirlpools, thalassotherapy pool, and open-air deck – as well as complimentary laundry. A step above that are the penthouse suites, Oceania suites, Vista suites and the icing on the cake, the three Owner's suites. These span the width of the ship but sell like hot cakes, so if you are thinking of splashing out, be quick.

What unites all the staterooms and suites on *Allura* is their elegant décor, enlivened with shades of cream and fawn, complemented by large beds topped with Oceania's signature (and supremely comfortable) tranquillity mattresses, and ample-sized marble bathrooms.

TIME TO LEARN

Painting a masterpiece, cooking Greek food, becoming au fait with AI – it's amazing what you can learn on *Allura*. Oceania knows that the best trips teach you something, even if it's only brushing up your social media skills or adding a few mezze dishes to your home cooking repertoire. To this end, the line has introduced a new digital centre on *Allura* that offers complimentary creative tech classes such as 'Shots, Sips and Snacks' whereby guests are taught how to take the best pictures of food on their phone.



Passengers can then put their newfound photography skills to the test in the state-of-the-art Culinary Centre. Here, two-hour 'Passport to...' classes cost £89 and focus on the flavours of the *destination du jour*.

First introduced on *Marina* and *Riviera*, the cookery school has been expanded on *Allura* and now features 24 gleaming individual work stations.

CURIOUS EXCURSIONS

Allura's commitment to enrichment is also apparent in its selection of shore excursions. These range from active adventures like kayaking the Dalmatian coastline (£118) to exclusive, small-group options and select tours offering unique experiences that allow guests to explore their destination more slowly.

In Ravenna, Italy, I signed up for one of the line's select tours (£155) and spent an enjoyable morning pottering about the hill-top town of Brisighella's charming cobbled streets before stopping for lunch at La Sabbiona – a family-run farmhouse. After serving us homemade pasta and creamy gourmet cheeses

“The mid-sized *Allura* is the perfect fit, with the aura of a boutique hotel afloat

accompanied by sangiovese di romagna wine, the owners chatted to us, opening up their home – and hearts – to us.

Unlike other lines, there's no pressure to book a cruise-line organised excursion, either. Subsequently, when *Allura* docked in Dubrovnik, I spent hours strolling around the Croatian city's striking ramparts.

A FLOATING HOTEL

The arrival of *Allura* comes after the debut of sister-company NCL's 3,571-passenger *Aqua*, famed for having the world's first waterslide-rollercoaster. It also comes smack bang between the launch of the 6,764-passenger *MSC America*, with its series of swimming pools and Royal Caribbean's 20-deck, 5,610-passenger *Star of the Seas*. Collectively, *Aqua*, *MSC America* and *Star* aren't so much ships as floating behemoths. Smaller ships have launched this year too – notably the Ritz-Carlton's 453-passenger *Luminara*.

By contrast, the mid-sized *Allura* is the perfect fit: small enough to navigate, but large enough to have lots going on – from sunrise yoga sessions on deck to original production shows in the theatre. *Allura* has the aura of a boutique hotel afloat – all sweeping staircases, shimmering chandeliers, covetable art and acres of marble. ●

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT Pan-Asian Red Ginger offers intriguing fusion food; explore Corfu on the Mediterranean Wayfarer itinerary; wine aficionados will love the Dom Pérignon experience; stroll around Dubrovnik's striking ramparts



EXPERT VERDICT

Great for foodies – *Allura* puts food front and centre.

Don't miss The 'Passport to' cooking classes. Watch the experts at work as they prepare a dish before attempting to replicate it at your workstation.

Best spots on the ship

The luxurious new library has a carefully curated collection of books, floor-to-ceiling glass walls, and Ralph Lauren furnishings.

Value for money All meals and non-alcoholic drinks are included. However, alcohol, excursions and spa treatments could soon push the price up.

Eco credentials

Allura operates on marine gas oil (MGO) – a cleaner-burning fuel than traditional heavy fuel oil (HFO).

Star rating 4/5

Get on board

A seven-night 'Mediterranean Wayfarer' voyage aboard *Allura* from Rome to Trieste departs on 6 June 2026 and costs from £4,249pp for a veranda stateroom. oceaniacruises.com



The CLIA View

Andy Harmer OBE explores how the introduction of yacht-style cruising and renowned land-based hotel brands has driven the luxury market to new heights in 2025

Luxury cruising is one of the most dynamic and opportunity-rich sectors of our industry – and demand for high-end experiences at sea has never been stronger. At this year's CLIA Conference, for the first time, we introduced a Luxury Cruise Takeover, reflecting their popularity and the evolving expectations of high-net-worth travellers.

For holidaymakers who are interested in luxury land-based breaks, cruise may not have been a consideration in the past. But in recent years we have seen the growth in small yacht-style cruising, suite-only accommodation, the introduction of unique and inspired shoreside options, and ships that have the public space for guests to roam and relax. This is a sector that has embraced diversity of product and experiences.

As a result of that diversity, many customers now recognise that cruise is an attractive option that surpasses land-based options. The entry of renowned



hotel brands into the cruise space is further helping to raise the profile of the sector, as it uniquely blends luxury at sea with shoreside excellence.

For travel agents, this expansion presents a golden opportunity to engage affluent travellers who value exclusivity.

Luxury cruise clients are among the most sophisticated in travel. They seek more than just impressive surroundings – they want curated, immersive experiences, whether that's private access to cultural landmarks, wellness journeys with world-class practitioners or sustainability-conscious voyages that align with their values. The rise of "slow luxury" – where longer, more in-depth itineraries replace rushed port-hopping – is a key trend, as is the demand for personalisation, from cabin preferences to bespoke excursions.

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT The luxury cruise market is growing rapidly, with wellness and curated journeys a major focus for travellers; Andy Harmer says CLIA is committed to equipping agents to excel in this emerging sector

For agents, success in this sector hinges on product knowledge and the ability to tell a compelling story. Luxury travellers don't just buy a cruise – they invest in an emotionally resonant journey. This means understanding subtle differentiators, such as the intimate offerings of an ocean voyage to the South Pacific versus expedition-luxury hybrid voyages to the likes of the Galápagos Islands.

CLIA is committed to equipping agents with the tools to excel in this space. Through initiatives such as our dedicated luxury events, specialised training and publicising fam trips, we help the trade develop and refine their expertise.

The luxury cruise market is expanding rapidly, with new ships, new brands and new itineraries emerging. For agents, the key to unlocking this potential lies in know-how, storytelling and trust-building. Those who master these skills will position themselves at the forefront of one of travel's most lucrative and exciting sectors.

The opportunity is clear – now is the time to seize it.

Andy Harmer OBE is managing director of CLIA UK & Ireland 



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The rise of slow luxury is a key trend, as is the demand for personalisation, from cabin preferences to bespoke excursions

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