

WAVE
AWARDS 2025



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Virgin VOYAGES

BOOK OF THE NIGHT

**WINNERS
REVEALED**

Virgin Voyages Proudly Supports the Wave Awards 2025



We're beyond thrilled to sponsor this year's Wave Awards — celebrating excellence across the travel industry and the incredible people who make waves every day.

A heartfelt thank you to our amazing First Mates — your passion, partnership, and dedication help us create unforgettable voyages on every horizon.

And to all the nominees, congratulations! Tonight, we raise a glass to your brilliance and the adventures yet to come.



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WAVE AWARDS 2025

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THE WAVE AWARDS 2025

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The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity dedicated to transforming lives through the power of words. It works with schools, families, and communities across the UK to improve reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, empowering people of all ages to succeed in education, work, and life.

WELCOME



It was my pleasure to welcome you all to the 11th annual Wave Awards at the stunning Dorchester Hotel. This year has seen demand for cruising once again reach new heights, spurred on by a raft of headline-grabbing ship launches, innovative commercial partnerships and the devoted legion of cruise line professionals and travel agent experts, whom we were delighted to celebrate with.

We recognised every corner of the industry in a wide variety of categories, including Best Ocean Cruise Line, Best Ship Launch and Best Homeworking Network, as well as new awards Favourite Ultra Luxury Cruise Line and Favourite Expedition Cruise Line. This year we also honoured an individual with a Special Recognition Award, highlighting someone who has been a pillar of the cruise sector for decades.

Finally, the night wouldn't have been possible without our panel of cruise and travel expert judges who came together in London earlier this summer to deliberate over our worthy winners. Our thanks go to those who gave up their valuable time to analyse every entry.

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our sponsors, who pulled out all the stops to ensure the evening was one to remember.

I hope you all had a wonderful evening and congratulations to the winners.

Will Payne
Editor, Cruise Trade News



It gives me, and Virgin Voyages, great pleasure to be a part of this year's Wave Awards, an evening dedicated to celebrating the immense talent and innovation that continue to shape the cruise and travel industries.

Over the past year, we've seen remarkable progress across every area of the sector. From bold new ship launches, including our fourth Lady ship *Brilliant Lady*, to imaginative itineraries and exceptional onboard experiences, the cruise landscape has never felt more dynamic. It's been inspiring to watch our industry evolve, driven by a shared passion amongst cruise lines, travel agents and guests for creating unforgettable journeys at sea.

As director of sales for the UK, I'm immensely proud of how collaboration continues to power our success.

Our trade partners play an invaluable role in helping more people discover the magic of cruising, and it's their expertise and enthusiasm that make this industry truly something special.

The Wave Awards is not only about recognising excellence, but also about looking forward to new horizons and partnerships, and continued growth.

On behalf of everyone at Virgin Voyages, thank you for your ongoing support and for joining us in celebrating what makes our cruise industry so exceptional.

Sarah Jane Walker
Director of sales UK, Virgin Voyages

THE JUDGES



Aaron Langford
Senior sales director UK&I,
Royal Caribbean



Adam Oldfield
CEO and founder,
Force24



Alyshia Bartlett
Head of sales UK, MSC
Cruises



Andy Harmer
Managing director,
CLIA UK and Ireland



Andy Headington
CEO, Adido



Anthony Daniels
UK and Ireland general
manager, Ponant



Dave Mills
Chief commercial
officer, Iglu Cruise



David Duff
Former managing
director EMEA,
Azamara



Edward Lang
Director of sales UK and
Ireland, Regent Seven
Seas Cruises



Geoff Ridgeon
Head of sales, Fred.
Olsen Cruise Lines



Graham Carter
Chief commercial
officer and co-founder,
Unforgettable Croatia



Hayley Moore
Vice president sales and
marketing, Hurtigruten



Helen Beck
Managing director,
global commercial,
Windstar Cruises



Iain Baillie
Associate vice
president, EMEA sales,
Cunard



Iain Powell
Chief commercial
officer, Hurtigruten



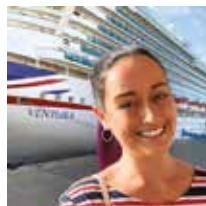
James Clarke
General manager,
Travelzoo



Jamie Loizou
Managing director,
AmaWaterways



Jant Parton
VP business
development, Celestyal



Jenni Fielding
Influencer, Cruise
Mummy



Jenny Lyons
Sales manager,
Virgin Voyages



John Wilson
Cruise sales director,
The Travel Network
Group



Jonny Peat
Director of cruise,
The Advantage Travel
Partnership



Karen Sequeira
Marketing director UK and
Ireland, Israel, Middle East and
Africa, Norwegian Cruise Line



Kelly Green
UK sales manager,
Virgin Voyages



Lee Hayhurst
Editorial director, Real
Response Media



Louise Craddock
Director of sales, UK
and Ireland, Oceania
Cruises



Lucia Rowe
Former managing
director, A-ROSA
River Cruises



Marc Shoffman
Cruise and money
writer, The Independent



Maria Payne
Managing director,
Accord Marketing



Michelle Daniels
Country manager UK and
Ireland, Australia and New
Zealand, VIVA Cruises



Nathaniel Sherborne
SVP and MD, EMEA/
ANZ and global sales
enablement, HX



Paul Whitters
Head of e-commerce
and leisure marketing,
Barrhead Travel



Rob Scott
Vice president brand
and marketing, P&O
Cruises



Robin Griffiths
National partnership
manager, APT Touring



Sarah Weetman
Head of trade
partnerships, Kuoni



Sarah Wikevand
Chief commercial
officer, ROL Cruise



Shane Lewis-Riley
Director of trade
distribution, Titan Travel



Sophie Collins
Business development
manager, Chewton Glen



Steve Dunne
Chief executive,
Digital Drums



Stuart Milan
President – North
America, Riviera Travel



Torey Kings-Hodkin
Trade sales and
marketing director,
Disney Destinations Intl.



**Tricia
Handley-Hughes**
UK and Ireland MD,
IntelTravel

Sponsored by



The Peter Grant Contribution to the Cruise Industry Award



Launched in 2021, this award honours Peter Grant, former Real Response Media director and *Cruise Trade News* and *World of Cruising* publisher, who passed away in 2020. During his time

at Real Response Media, Peter amassed numerous contacts in the cruise industry and counted many personal friends among both cruise line executives and travel agents.

WINNER

EDWINA LONSDALE

Owner, Mundy Cruising

You don't need us to tell you how difficult it can be to run a travel agency, especially through the trials and tribulations the sector has battled in recent years. To balance this challenge with running a programme dedicated to getting more young people into careers in cruise requires passion and commitment.

Edwina Lonsdale has been a force of nature in travel for almost 40 years, most notably for taking the reins of Mundy Cruising in 1999 with her husband Matthew.



"YOUNG PEOPLE LOOK AT CRUISE AND DON'T REALISE IT COULD BE FOR THEM, SO WE SET OUT TO CHANGE THAT"

Recently, she and Matthew launched the Cruise Career Springboard to create greater social mobility, diversity, and inclusivity in travel by inspiring the next generation to pursue a career in cruise.

This year, the programme saw sixth form students from St John Bosco College in Battersea, Itchen College in Southampton, and North East Surrey College of Technology learn the ropes.

Lonsdale said: "Many young people look at the cruise sector and simply don't realise it could be a career option for them, so we set out to change that."

Special Recognition Award

WINNER

STEVE WILLIAMS



It takes a special person to dedicate their entire working life to travel, including a two-decade-strong career in cruise.

Having held position with First Choice Holidays, Royal Caribbean International and, most recently, MSC Cruises, Steve Williams has played a critical role in propelling cruise to the dizzying heights it has reached in recent years. This includes overseeing trade relationships across the UK amid the launch of several new ships, like Royal Caribbean's *Oasis*, *Allure* and *Harmony of the Seas* and MSC Cruises' *MSC Seaside*, *Seaview* and *Seashore*. He was also the driving force behind a slew of inspirational sales, marketing

and partner activations, such as MSC Cruises' innovative Open Booking programme. Furthermore, Williams was part of the team that propelled MSC Cruises to one of its best-ever sales years in 2024.

Despite facing personal adversity over the last 12 months, Williams continues to fly the flag of cruise and is fully focused on his return to the industry. Accepting the award, he said: "It's really humbling. I've been in cruise for more than 20 years and in travel for nearly 40 years now. I love the

industry, I love the people, and I love the cruise lines I've had the pleasure of working for. This is so special to be recognised by you all, so thank you from the bottom of my heart. It means the world to me, especially this year, and to be recognised is truly special and humbling."

"I miss everyone very, very much and I really hope that it won't be too long before I get on my road to recovery and come back. If I had one message for you all, it would be to keep selling cruise!"

**"THIS IS SO SPECIAL TO BE RECOGNISED
BY YOU ALL, SO THANK FROM THE
BOTTOM OF MY HEART"**





CUNARD

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185 years spent refining the art of ocean travel are embodied in our uniquely famous fleet of Queens. Four beautifully crafted ships offer the perfect spaces in which to fully relax and relish the world in iconic style. We've never compromised on creating glamorous, comfortable, cultured journeys.

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Shine Rewards Club is Cunard's travel agent loyalty and reward programme. Each Cunard booking you make will earn you Shine points, which can then be used to book your own Cunard voyage, or redeemed against a wide range of vouchers for well-known retailers.

For more information visit www.shinerewardsclub.com

QUEEN MARY 2

QUEEN VICTORIA

QUEEN ELIZABETH

QUEEN ANNE

WINNERS

FAVOURITE Cruise Travel Influencer

Jenni Fielding (Cruise Mummy)

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MARELLA CRUISES

With a cruise blog that reaches a whopping one million readers each month, Jenni Fielding (AKA Cruise Mummy) goes home tonight having been announced as *World of Cruising* readers' Favourite Cruise Travel Influencer for the fourth year running. Jenni celebrates her win having been on more than a dozen cruises so far this year, relaying the experience to her followers through her personable, informative and down-to-earth insights. The former cruise travel agent and mum of two consistently keeps readers abreast of the newest ships and itineraries, while helping them decipher this crowded marketplace to help them decide which is the best holiday-at-sea for them.



FAVOURITE Cruise Travel Agent

Hays Travel

Hays Travel

SPONSOR



Hays Travel is the UK's largest independent travel agent and a firm favourite for cruise-goers who are looking for great deals and expert advice. Founder John Hays sold his first holiday in 1980 from his mum's babywear shop in Seaham County Durham. Following the news of its acquisition of cruise.co.uk and Seascanner parent company, Victoria Travel Group Limited, the future's looking bright. As a family-owned independent agency, Hays Travel is renowned for its friendly and professional service. Being independent means it can offer customers impartial advice and a range of opportunities whether in its branches, via its contact centre, or through its network of homeworkers, franchisees and independence group members.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - BOLSOVER CRUISE CLUB

WINNERS

FAVOURITE Ocean Cruise Line

Marella



SPONSOR



The TUI-owned cruise line continues to go from strength to strength, achieving its best-ever sales month in February this year off the back of double-digit growth in trade bookings. It's not just agents who love Marella, though. The line's commitment to affordability was enhanced with the launch of its inaugural cruise calculator, helping travellers compare the cost of its all-inclusive itineraries with comparative land-based options. Add its wanderlust-worthy, year-round voyages to the Caribbean, Canaries and the Mediterranean into the mix and you've got a winning combination. For the first time in 10 years, Marella will return to Tunisia in 2026 as part of its winter deployment.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - PRINCESS CRUISES

FAVOURITE River Cruise Line

Viking River Cruises



SPONSOR



It doesn't take a seasoned cruise-goer to see why Viking has retained its crown as consumers' favourite river cruise line for a second year running. The luxury operator launched an impressive nine new river cruise vessels in 2025, including *Viking Gyada* on the Douro; *Viking Honir* on the Rhine, Main and Danube; and *Viking Thoth* on the Nile – with the line's ship total surpassing 100. It marked this impressive milestone with a naming ceremony in Basel onboard *Viking Honir* in October, while the vessel was virtually connected to the eight other new ships around the world. Balancing the soothing Scandi-inspired interiors of its boutique longships with culturally immersive itineraries that invite guests to explore the very heart of the rivers down which they sail, the adults-only line has river cruising down to a fine art.



WINNERS

FAVOURITE Luxury Cruise Line

Cunard



SPONSOR



Renowned for its timeless elegance, exceptional service and rich maritime heritage that dates as far back as 1840, it's no surprise to see Cunard top the charts for luxury cruise travellers. Naturally, the line's heritage runs through the DNA of its four ships, each combining classic, art deco stylings with splashes of bold colour and contemporary comforts. In the Grills suites guests will find the personal service of a luxury boutique hotel with all the benefits of the line's larger ships, which include access to a private restaurant, lounge and sun deck, plus priority boarding and a dedicated concierge or butler service. But it's the line's partnerships with the likes of Hugh Bonneville and Michelin star chef Michel Roux that are the cherry on top of Cunard's luxury offering. During the 2027-2028 season, Cunard will sail 195 new itineraries, visiting 115 destinations in 32 countries.



FAVOURITE Ultra Luxury Cruise Line

Regent Seven Seas Cruises



Regent Seven Seas Cruises turned heads this summer when it unveiled the world's largest ever all-inclusive, luxury cruise suite. Accommodating up to six guests, the two-storey Skyview Regent Suite onboard next year's *Seven Seas Prestige* totals 817 square metres, with prices starting at a whopping £20,000 a night. It's par for the course for a line that operates in the travel industry's ultra luxury planes. While Regent's new 822-guest ship will raise the bar even further when it launches in late 2026, there's plenty to like about the operator already, from its personalised service to its high-end culinary experiences and immersive shore excursions. Next year the line will continue its series of Spotlight Voyages, including a Whisky-focused cruise with Whisky Advocate Magazine in September.





FAVOURITE Expedition Cruise line

Seabourn



S seabourn's ability to deliver the 'adventure-of-a-lifetime' excitement of an expedition with the style and opulence of an ultra-luxury cruise line registered highly among *World of Cruising* readers. Its purpose-built ships, *Seabourn Venture* and *Seabourn Pursuit*, are built for challenging environments, allowing them to sail the Northwest Passage, the remote fjords of Greenland, coral reef systems and the culturally rich Indigenous communities of the South Pacific. Meanwhile, a 23-person expedition team leads a wide variety of included expert-led expeditions, from 120-minute Zodiac tours with naturalists, snorkelling safaris and, as is custom for modern-day cruises to the poles, the polar plunge, with caviar and champagne waiting to help warm guests upon their return.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - HX EXPEDITIONS

FAVOURITE Specialist Cruise Line or Tour Operator

Hurtigruten



From championing local cuisine to ensuring communities benefit from the tourism it brings to the region, there are many reasons why Hurtigruten has been named winner of this award. However, its commitment to more sustainable sailing is where the line has truly excelled in recent years. The Nordic cruise line is leading the way with its mission to create the world's most energy efficient ship by 2030. Meanwhile, its decision to donate £18 per guest to each community on its itineraries every time it visits – which, at maximum capacity, equals a £9,000 donation every call – could be a gamechanger for the industry, helping support the industry's sustainability mission.





MARELLA
CRUISES

We're making waves...

Proud to sponsor this year's awards and
even prouder to be shortlisted





FAVOURITE Cruise Destination

Qatar



SPONSOR



Home to expansive souks, sublime palm-fringed beaches and the awe-inspiring Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar's standing as an essential stop for cruise travellers has never been stronger. Anyone who was unfamiliar with the allure of Qatar caught a glimpse of this mightily ambitious destination's potential when the world's largest sporting spectacle came to town during the winter of 2023.

Still reeling having hosted the FIFA World Cup, Qatar's star is rising among cruise travellers, with its diversity of world-class museums and galleries, dazzling seven-kilometre-long promenade and sprawling markets offering plenty for guests to get stuck into.

Travellers keen to grasp how Qatar has evolved over the centuries need only head to the remarkable Souq Waqif. Here, the mud-daubed buildings – which date back to when Doha was merely a village – sit beneath the shimmering high rises of Qatar's new metropolitan centre.



WINNERS

BEST Specialist Cruise Agent

Panache Cruises



SPONSOR



Driven by steadfast and innovative founder James Cole, Panache Cruises is one of the fastest growing cruise and travel businesses in the UK and beyond. The brand has expanded its remit overseas, with its US office achieving sales of £7.3 million and its top 40 customers in the UK booking 460 cruises and spending more than £7.5 million. The company is expanding with new websites in the UK and US and in 2025 posted a 72 per cent uplift in year-on-year revenue. In November, Panache joined the Expedition Cruise Network's corporate membership scheme to bolster its expertise of the sector.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - IGLU CRUISE

FINALISTS World Travel Holdings UK, Bolsover Cruise Club, ROL Cruise, CruiseKings, Mundy Cruising, The Cruise Room, Travel Counsellors, Hays Travel, Paramount Cruises, The Cruise Specialists

BEST Homeworking Network

InteleTravel



SPONSOR



With cruise revenues up 81 per cent, bookings up 67 per cent and average booking value increasing by nearly 10 per cent year on year, InteleTravel has gone from strength to strength in the last 12 months with now more than 2,500 of its travel agent members booking cruise. The organisation has also scaled its partner engagement programme and held its first Cruise Boot Camp in Southampton, which saw more than 100 agents meet with 10 supplier partners. It also hosted its inaugural River Cruise Conference and launched a dedicated cruise newsletter in September, which gained an impressive 50 per cent open rate from 16,426 recipients.



FINALISTS Barrhead Travel (Brilliant Travel), GoCruise & Travel

WINNERS

BEST Independent/Solo Agent

The Cruise Room

**THE
CRUISE
ROOM**

SPONSOR

Regent
SEVEN SEAS CRUISES®

This year was nothing short of remarkable for The Cruise Room. Despite boosting their total sales since launch to nearly £9 million in 2025, the high street experts have not rested on their laurels and set their sights on further growth. A social media campaign saw Facebook followers increase by more than 5,700, with content being viewed more than two million times. A Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines post in particular was viewed 142,000 times. The brand has also seen its luxury sales grow to almost 40 per cent of its total business and its average booking value has increased by a whopping 16.5 per cent.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - CRUISE FAMILY

FINALISTS Creative Travel Company, Go Cruise with Jane, Cruise Monks, Art of Travel Group, Future Travel Group, Harden Holidays

BEST Retail Agent

Barrhead Travel Group

BarrheadTravel

SPONSOR


PRINCESS®

Over the last 12 months, cruise sales have shone bright for Barrhead Travel, growing by 30 per cent on last year. This has been achieved by a rigorous social media strategy, which alone generated £12 million worth of sales, and a focus on upskilling staff with the introduction of additional Cruise Champions, HQ takeover days and in-store cruise events. Riviera business has increased by 40 per cent and luxury sales are up 18 per cent, buoyed by the agency group's ship visit programme, which saw members attend 185 vessels this year.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - THE CRUISE ROOM

FINALISTS Premium Cruises and Tours (Swindon Travel Hub), Hays Travel

CHEWTON GLEN

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Chewton Glen, New Forest, Hampshire, England, BH25 6QS



WINNERS

FAVOURITE Online Agent



SPONSOR



Fred. Olsen
Cruise Lines

Iglu Cruise

Testing, analytics and data insights are the crucial pillars of any successful online company. This year, Iglu Cruise undertook 175 A/B tests to better understand how customers prefer to be contacted, how pricing and product details are best displayed and the best way to book a cruise. These insights led to the introduction of a new online wish list tool, Zendesk integration to improve customer experience and the introduction of a new paid search tool which led to a 64 per cent uptick in visitors. The brand also invested in its Youtube channel, Facebook account and TikTok presence, which generated a 59 per cent uptick in followers.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - PANACHE CRUISES

FINALISTS Bolsover Cruise Club, CruiseKings, Cruise2

WINNERS

BEST Technology Innovation

ROL Cruise



SPONSOR



In response to growing digital expectations across age demographics, ROL Cruise set out to become the first independent UK cruise specialist to launch a dedicated mobile app. It invested over 200 hours in the creation of MyROL, with its internal software development team conducting extensive testing with both staff and customers to ensure the platform intuitively responded to the needs and behaviours of cruise travellers. The result was a user-friendly product that empowers cruise-goers with instant access via smartphone to bookings, itineraries, answers to FAQs, exclusive offers and real-time travel updates. The brand has seen more than 500 app downloads since launch.



FINALISTS Digitaltravel.io, nevetal

BEST Technology Provider

DigitalTravel.io



SPONSOR



**Fred. Olsen
Cruise Lines**

DigitalTravel.io is a specialist digital development agency redefining what it means to be a technology partner in the retail cruise space. It creates intelligent, high-performance platforms, building solutions tailored to each brand and business model it works with, from conversion-optimised websites and mobile apps to fully integrated CRM. In three years, the Liverpool-based startup has grown into a £1 million tech business with global reach, driving industry-beating online conversion rates and customer engagement. Today, it serves more than 100 cruise lines and cruise-seller digital platforms worldwide, with multi-currency and language implementations.



WINNERS

BEST Port

Portsmouth International Port



SPONSOR



Following significant investment in infrastructure, Portsmouth International Port has maintained impressive momentum, earning this award for the third consecutive year. As well as high scores on guest satisfaction questionnaires and a 154 per cent increase in arrivals since 2019, the city-owned port has demonstrated exceptional commitment to increasing local engagement. Central to this was the development of Portsmouth Cruise Ambassador teams, made up of volunteers who contributed 2,351 hours in 2024.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - LIVERPOOL

FINALISTS Creative Travel Company, Go Cruise with Jane, Cruise Monks, Art of Travel Group, Future Travel Group, Harden Holidays

BEST for Excursions

Quark Expeditions



Quark Expeditions has been a leader in immersive polar travel since 1991, with a strong emphasis on off-ship adventures which take travellers closer to the action. It prides itself on having the most guides per guest in the industry (six to one) and delivering exhilarating excursions in remote destinations such as Patagonia and Svalbard. In 2024, Quark Expeditions continued to take polar exploration to new heights – quite literally. In the Canadian Arctic, flightseeing trips saw helicopters reach higher latitudes than ever before.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - CELESTYAL

FINALISTS Azamara Cruises, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, InterCruises Shoreside & Port Services, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Shore Excursions Group

WINNERS

BEST Entertainment

Virgin Voyages



Virgin Voyages has redefined cruise ship entertainment through a bold, adult-oriented vision built on innovation, inclusivity and creativity. By partnering with award-winning artists and investing in purpose-built venues, the line delivers storytelling-led shows, immersive theatre, live music and pop-up events that blur the line between audience and performer. This distinctive approach supports emerging talent and mirrors the energy of global festivals and city nightlife. Judges praised the brand's clear strategy, cross-department collaboration and agile use of guest feedback. With over 90 per cent of excellent and very good guest scores for entertainment, and a 25 per cent rise in attendance at mainstage shows and events, Virgin Voyages is demonstrating excellence in originality and engagement at sea.



FINALISTS Cunard, Marella Cruises, TUI River Cruises



WINNERS

BEST Accommodation Design

Regent Seven Seas Cruises



SPONSOR

CHEWTON GLEN
HAMPSHIRE

With 30 years of experience in ultra-luxury cruising, Regent Seven Seas Cruises knows the importance of onboard accommodation. The line's spacious suites are fitted with custom-crafted furnishings and over 99 per cent feature a private veranda. The 4,443-square-foot Regent Suite is a superb illustration of the line's dedication to perfection. Guests can expect four-poster beds, luxury mattresses made from highly breathable natural fibres, nine different types of marble in the master bathrooms, and large wraparound verandas. The launch of *Seven Seas Prestige* in 2026 will further reinforce the line's dedication to accommodation design excellence with the two-level 817-square-metre Skyview Regent Suite, which will feature a floating natural stone staircase and a private elevator.



FINALISTS Aroya, Atlas Ocean Voyages

WAVE
AWARDS 2025

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Introduce your clients to **Celestyal** where our year-round sailings unlock the world's most iconic destinations in **Greece**, the eastern **Mediterranean** and **Arabian Gulf**. We offer unparalleled flexibility to fit any holiday timeline, with cruises ranging from quick 3-day escapes to 14-day voyages. This allows you to easily match the perfect cruise duration to your client's needs.

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At **Celestyal**, we are committed to excellence, and that's why we are thrilled to sponsor the prestigious **Wave Awards 2025**. Good luck to all the nominees!

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Adriatic



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celestyalcompass.com



WINNERS

BEST for Cuisine

Hurtigruten



When the cruise experience is so closely linked to the culture, landscape and traditions of a country, it is vital that onboard dining reflects that local identity. Hurtigruten's Norway's Coastal Kitchen concept is designed to bring the tastes and flavours of the Norwegian coast to the ships' tables. The goal is to celebrate the country's culinary heritage, while focusing on hyper-local, seasonal and sustainable produce. Transparency is at the heart of the concept, with menus highlighting the origin of key ingredients. In 2025, Hurtigruten expanded its Culinary Ambassadors programme, and – from this autumn – the line is offering new land-and-sea experiences, enabling guests to establish a deeper connection with Norwegian producers and what makes Norwegian cuisine unique.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - HAVILA VOYAGES

FINALISTS Oceania Cruises, Princess Cruises, Seabourn, Virgin Voyages

WINNERS

BEST for Enrichment

Cunard



Enrichment programmes have always been a keystone of the Cunard experience. The line has long been praised for the calibre of its speakers, including authors, scientists, artists and explorers, as well as relevant and brand-aligned partnerships with the English National Ballet, the Cheltenham Literary Festival and the Society of London Theatre. In 2025, Cunard operated nine Event Voyages, including the maiden Film Festival at Sea and the 185th Cunard Anniversary sailing. The judges were impressed with Cunard's desire to dig deeper into the importance of enrichment programmes.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - HX EXPEDITIONS

FINALISTS Atlas Ocean Voyages, Regent Seven Seas Cruises

BEST for Wellbeing

Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours

SCENIC®

Scenic is dedicated to redefining wellness at sea, blending innovation with holistic wellbeing across its river and ocean fleets. On board, guests enjoy state-of-the-art facilities, including the 550-square-metre Senses Spa with KLAFS saunas, plunge pools and salt therapy lounges, alongside the only dedicated yoga and Pilates studio at sea. Wellness Managers oversee the facilities and programmes that range from aerial yoga and mindfulness meditation to Ayurvedic and sound healing therapies. Scenic also offers cooking classes, wellness workshops and dedicated wellness voyages featuring expert-led sessions.



FINALISTS Cunard, Explora Journeys, Virgin Voyages, Aroya

WINNERS

BEST Advertising & Marketing Campaign

P&O Cruises



Faced with the challenge of significantly growing its customer base, P&O Cruises developed a bold and engaging campaign that cut through market noise and resonated with both seasoned cruisers and new audiences, especially within the UK. The use of 'travel wisdoms', pioneering time-slice techniques, a memorable music track and a clear call to action created a compelling and cohesive message.

Launched over the key post-Christmas booking period, the campaign was perfectly timed to maximise impact. Every element, from concept to execution was clearly thought through and professionally delivered. The results spoke for themselves, with strong performance across a wide range of metrics including initiatives like its Shine at Sea agent training.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - ACCORD MARKETING for Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

FINALISTS Celestyal, Marella Cruises, My Kind of Cruise, Barrhead Travel Group, Aroya, The PC Agency

WINNERS

BEST Escorted and Specialist Tour Operator

Travelsphere & Just You

travelsphere



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Judges found Travelsphere & Just You demonstrated a clear commitment to growth, innovation, accessibility, trade engagement and sustainability. The partnership has delivered tangible results across the board, achieving record-breaking profits, increased passenger volumes and terrific customer satisfaction, with a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 78. Strategic partnerships, such as with the Royal Geographical Society, added real depth to the product offering, while the expansion of regional flight departures significantly improved accessibility.

Sustainability has been embedded through initiatives like tree planting and donations to Planeterra, reflecting a business that genuinely aims to do good. The overall strategy was clear, credible, and well-aligned with customer and market needs making this a compelling, impactful submission from a company delivering on its promises.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - RIVIERA TRAVEL

FINALISTS Saga Holidays, Titan Travel, Shore Excursions Group



BEST Sustainability Initiative

HX (Hurtigruten Expeditions)



As this award recognises a brand with a truly holistic and ambitious approach to sustainability in expedition cruising, HX (Hurtigruten Expeditions) stood out with a clear mission to become the most sustainable in the sector. HX has taken measurable steps forward, notably through the publication of its first independent ESG report. Its wide range of initiatives, from the impactful HX Foundation, which supports local sustainability causes, to the integration of citizen science and onboard scientists, demonstrates real commitment. HX has delivered an impressive breadth of activity across multiple areas.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - AE EXPEDITIONS

FINALISTS Marella Cruises, Havila Voyages, Portsmouth International Port

BEST Transfer Service

Lifts To

LIFTS TO

Lifts To specialise in luxury and eco-friendly cruise transfers to ski resorts and golf courses, while providing other concierge services. The judges were impressed with Lifts To's dedication to the cruise transfer sector, backed by more than 20 years of expertise in global transfers in other travel sectors. Partnering as the transfer provider for many of the world's leading cruise operators, Lifts To has built strong, lasting collaborations by adapting to evolving customer needs (eco friendly options) and market dynamics. Its commitment to high service standards is evident through its in-house customer service team, driving remarkable growth.



FINALIST Saga Travel



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WINNERS

BEST Trade Sales Team

Riviera Travel



Riviera Travel has made significant investments in its learning platform and trade sales team, showing a clear focus on growth and support for trade partners. Its ability to listen and respond effectively to agent needs is reflected in both actions and outcomes.

Judges noted a standout two-minute call waiting time, which highlights their dedication to excellent service, while the video showcased genuine passion and enthusiasm for supporting agents. The submission was comprehensive, well-measured and backed by strong results, especially with new products like the launch of their exclusive solo ship itineraries, making it not only compelling but also an example of excellence in trade support and development.



FINALISTS Celestyal, HX Hurtigruten Expeditions, Seabourn, P&O Cruises, AmaWaterways, Virgin Voyages, Scenic & Emerald Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, The PC Agency, Explora Journeys

WINNERS

BEST Initiative for Attracting New to Cruise

Riviera Travel



This entry stood out for its depth, clarity, and strategic focus. The judges labelled this as the most comprehensive and convincing submission. Riviera Travel not only addressed the complexity of cruising head-on, but the brand also delivered a robust, four-pronged strategy aimed at breaking down barriers for both new-to-cruise customers and agents. Significant investment in tools like its Riviera Travel Explorer learning platform, alongside training and real-world support, demonstrated a serious commitment to simplifying the cruise experience. The line's approach has been well-structured, easy to follow and backed by compelling results, particularly around agent engagement, booking uplifts and market expansion into Ireland.



FINALISTS Celestyal, Paramount Cruises, Hays Travel

WINNERS

BEST PR Team

PR42



PR42 combines strategic clarity, impressive implementation, and exceptional results. Their ambitious yet focused approach delivered tangible commercial and reputational gains for every client, including increased media coverage and high-profile broadcast placements. What's particularly remarkable is the scale and pace of their activity, all driven by a three-person team. The company's ability to deliver measurable sales impact and maintain high client satisfaction speaks to their professionalism and execution. To the media, press releases have been immensely helpful in shaping stories.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - CUNARD

FINALISTS Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, Lotus

WAVE AWARDS 2025



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BEST New Ship Launch

MSC Cruises, MSC World America



The launch of MSC Cruises' *MSC World America* was nothing short of remarkable. Sending ripples across the cruise and travel industry, the line's 23rd and most advanced ship to date is powered by liquefied natural gas (LNG) and is the largest to serve the North America region. The vessel launched with a focus on innovation and guest-centric design with flexible dining options and expanded MSC Yacht Club. The inaugural sailing and christening in Miami featured godmother Drew Barrymore and special guest Orlando Bloom, both stars of MSC Cruises' global campaign "Let's Holiday". Judges praised the line's combination of market expansion, marketing and strategic industry leadership, as well as MSC's commitment to the environment.



FINALISTS Aroya Cruises (*Aroya*), Norwegian Cruise Line (*Aqua*)

BEST Expedition Cruise Line

HX (Hurtigruten Expeditions)



HX's commitment to protecting the waters it sails in is nothing short of inspirational. This year the leading expedition operator published its first independent ESG report and awarded HX foundation grants to organisations like Sipineq+, which supports the establishment of Greenland's first pride event. These initiatives helped propel the line to new heights in 2025, marking a 15 per cent year-on-year boost in revenue and a 27 per cent reduction in CO2 emissions against 2023. Furthermore, the HX Foundation disbursed a staggering €421,840 to 58 projects across 19 different countries.



FINALISTS Saga Travel



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BEST Luxury River Cruise Line

AmaWaterways



A deep passion for innovation and exceptional service has propelled AmaWaterways to new heights this year. Building on its history of innovation, the line became the first to operate on Colombia's Magdalena River, with a second ship launching in due course and worked closely with local communities to ensure excursions are respectful and sustainable. Elsewhere, the line grew its fleet with *AmaSintra* and announced the launch of *AmaMaya* and *AmaSofia* and achieved a guest satisfaction rate of 98 per cent and a repeat business rate of 43 per cent. Judges commended the line's commercial performance, innovation and clear, thought out goals.



FINALISTS Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, Scenic and Emerald Cruises

BEST Luxury Ocean Cruise Line

Seabourn



Having listened to guest feedback, Seabourn chose to introduce a new Mediterranean restaurant on its four ocean ships focusing on light, colourful cuisine utilising locally purchased produce. To further heighten customer service onboard, the line launched free Starlink WiFi for all guests, as well as an Image Masters photography class and expanded its shoreside call centre to offer its trade partners enhanced service. The line also extended its inclusive shore event offering. Judges praised the line's impactful mission statement and commitment to its travel agent partners.



FINALISTS Cunard, Explora Journeys, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Windstar Cruises, Oceania Cruises

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WINNERS

BEST For Solo Travellers

Riviera Travel



Riviera Travel has built its solo programme to make sure independent travellers feel safe and able to river cruise however they please, whether that's solitarily or with like-minded travellers. In response to growing demand for solo cruising, the line added three new solo itineraries to its 2024/2025 season and implemented cruise directors and tour managers dedicated to solo passengers. This led to a 66 per cent in solo river cruise bookings via trade partners. Solo travellers now count for almost 13 per cent of the river cruise line's total bookings, with a nearly 50 per cent repeat rate. Riviera Travel further boosted its trade partners' understanding of this market with the introduction of a new solo module on its online trade training platform, Riviera Explorer.



FINALISTS Hebridean Island Cruises, HX, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

BEST Specialist Cruise Line

Unforgettable Croatia



Unforgettable Croatia looked to enhance the small-ship experience it is well known for this year, as well as expand its fleet and refine the guest offering. Earlier this year the line launched the Yacht Cruise Collection, setting a new benchmark for luxury cruising. A relentless focus on quality and guest satisfaction meant 2024 was the line's most successful season to date, achieving an unprecedented 99.21 per cent occupancy rate, despite increasing cabin capacity by 20 per cent to 2,286. Judges praised the line's strategic steps and excellent growth, as well as the company's drive to improve.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - ANTARA CRUISES

FINALISTS Hurtigruten, Havila Voyages, St Hilda Sea Adventures, Hebridean Islands Cruises

WINNERS

BEST Family Cruise Line

Royal Caribbean International



Families and Royal Caribbean International go hand in hand. This year, the line launched *Oasis of the Seas*, its first ship to debut with shorter itineraries designed to fit busy family schedules. Royal Caribbean International also held focus groups for guests, crew and employees to gain feedback on new onboard features to heighten the guest experience further. This led to the launch of Royal Railway on *Utopia of the Seas* – a theatrical dining experience for families – and additional private island destinations. In 2024, the cruise line's average booking age was 43 and the number of millennials booking a cruise with the company jumped six per cent in 2024 compared to 2019. UK family bookings have grown by 54 per cent since 2019.



FINALISTS P&O Cruises, Aroya

BEST Value for Money Cruise Line

Celestyal



In November 2024, Celestyal unveiled 'Celestyal One', streamlining its fare structure to create an all-in-one, inclusive pricing model. Based on feedback, the line replaced the previous package complexities with one transparent fare which covered all meals, entertainment, WiFi, soft drinks, gratuities and port fees. The company also introduced CelestyalPay, a prepaid specialty food and beverage tab. Within the first month of the new schemes' launch, guests satisfaction increased by 4.9 per cent and 35 per cent of its guests utilised the new CelestyalPay function to pre-load funds.



FINALISTS Riviera Travel, Marella Cruises, VIVA Cruises, P&O Cruises



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WINNERS

BEST Ocean Cruise Line

Royal Caribbean International



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A year ago, Royal Caribbean International set its sights on successfully launching *Utopia of the Seas*, expanding its private island portfolio to rival land-based breaks and implementing new technologies to further its commitment to sustainability. Since then, the launch of *Utopia* ushered in a new era for the company with shorter itineraries attracting more new to cruise guests, as well as new AI-based technologies to optimise the ship's routes and systems to maximise efficiency and reduce waste. Royal also announced the opening of new Beach Clubs in Nassau, Cozumel and the South Pacific, as well as the new Perfect Day Mexico. Royal Caribbean International was praised by judges for utilising guest and crew feedback to inform discussions while demonstrating exceptional strategic ambition and execution.



HIGHLY COMMENDED - P&O CRUISES

FINALISTS Princess Cruises, Virgin Voyages, Celestyal, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, Norwegian Cruise Line, Marella Cruises, MSC Cruises

WINNERS

BEST River Cruise Line

APT & Travelmarvel



APT and Travelmarvel's mission is to lead the way in innovative, sustainable river and small ship cruising while supporting its trade partners and bolstering its market share in the UK and Ireland. The line's goals for this year were ambitious – launch three ships, achieve 50 per cent growth in UK and Ireland retail sales, reach more consumers with targetted advertising and reduce its carbon emissions per guest voyage by 10 per cent. And the results speak for themselves. APT's ultra-luxury European ships *Solara* and *Ostara* and Travelmarvel's *MS Estrela* hit the waterways with a splash, while UK and Ireland retail trade sales surged by 60 per cent. A Sky AdSmart TV campaign generated 3.2 million impressions and more than 3,000 agents accessed its bank of trade tools.



FINALISTS VIVA Cruises, TUI River Cruises, Riviera Travel

GRAND PRIX
AWARD

WINNER

Riviera Travel



What a year it's been for Riviera Travel, topped off by scooping not one, not two, but three trophies at this year's Wave Awards, making them the 2025 Grand Prix champions. It's the perfect end to what has been a stellar 12 months for the river cruise operator. In April the line launched the 80-metre *Riviera Rose* and hosted its first trade awards ceremony, the Riv Awards. In the summer, the company reshuffled its trade team to better serve

its agent partners, and launched *Riviera Rose*'s sister vessel, *Riviera Radiance*, while announcing plans for the industry's first-ever solo-only river cruise ship, *MS George Eliot*. We can't wait to see what's next for the brand.





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