



Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

MSC Seascapes opens for sale

MSC Cruises has opened bookings for *MSC Seascapes*, the line's second EVO class ship which is currently under construction in Italy with a planned Nov delivery date.

The ship features 2,270 cabins in 12 different configurations, along with 11 dining venues, 19 bars and lounges and six swimming pools, with initial itineraries based in PortMiami.

Seascapes's MSC Yacht Club will be the largest in the fleet, with the ship having a huge waterfront promenade and the glass-floored Bridge of Sighs on deck 16.

Give cruise a fair go, urges WTTC

THE World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has called on the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to "stop singling out the cruise industry with harmful and unnecessary measures".

WTTC CEO Julia Simpson welcomed the expiration of the CDC's conditional sail order (**CW** 14 Jan), but said the agency's "decision to continue elevated travel health notices is nonsensical".

"The cruise industry has proven time and time again that its enhanced health and safety protocols consistently achieve significantly lower rates of COVID-19 occurrence than onshore," she said.

"Cruise lines have an excellent record for health and safety, and cruising continues to offer extraordinary travel experiences," Simpson added.

Crystal pauses cruises

THE lodgement of a petition to appoint provisional liquidators to Genting Hong Kong (**CW** yesterday) has forced the management of Crystal Cruises to announce the temporary suspension of sailings.

The cruise line's ocean and expedition voyages will be paused until 29 Apr, while Crystal's river cruises are suspended until the end of May, according to Crystal's Interim President & CEO, Jack Anderson (**CW** breaking news).

"This was an extremely difficult decision but a prudent one given the current business environment and recent developments with our parent company," he said.

The three ships currently in operation - *Crystal Serenity* and *Crystal Symphony* sailing in the Caribbean, and *Crystal Endeavor* in Antarctica - will complete their current voyages.

Symphony will disembark its

passengers in Miami this Sat 22 Jan, while *Serenity* will wrap things up in Aruba on 30 Jan.

Endeavor's current cruise will end on 04 Feb in Ushuaia, Argentina, the company said, while Crystal's European river ships are currently not sailing due to it being the off-season.

For guests currently sailing on back-to-back voyages, Crystal said it would provide a refund for unused days of the cruise fare paid, while a full refund will also be paid on future affected bookings, the company promised.

Yesterday's announcement from Genting Hong Kong confirmed that "certain business activities of the group, including but not limited to the operations of cruise lines by Dream Cruises Holding Limited, shall continue...however it is anticipated that the majority of the Group's existing operations will cease to operate".

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Uniworld upgrades

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruises is now allowing passengers to bid on potential stateroom upgrades ahead of their departure.

The new platform is powered by Plusgrade, which also works with many carriers across the world to enable them to boost revenue through upgrade bids.

Uniworld's program is dubbed "Category+" and allows guests to browse staterooms and suites still available on their cruise in a higher category than originally booked, and then place an offer.

Bids may be placed on multiple available staterooms to increase upgrade chances, but guests will only pay for their upgrade if it is accepted.

"At Uniworld we're always looking for new ways to elevate our guests' river cruise experience," said the brand's CEO Ellen Bettridge.

"We're thrilled to be the first river cruise line to work with Plusgrade in providing an upgrade program of this nature... our new Category+ stateroom program will give our guests an opportunity to add even more luxury to their vacation at a price point of their choosing, risk-free."

If a bid is accepted guests are notified by email, and if the cruise was originally booked with a travel advisor the agent will also receive commission on the additional amount payable.

For more information on the program see uniworld.com.

Oceania about-faces world cruise

OCEANIA Cruises this morning confirmed the cancellation of several voyages aboard its *Insignia* in Asia as part of its current world cruise itinerary, with the ship instead to turn around 180 degrees from Papeete and head west.

Insignia is currently in Hawai'i and heading to French Polynesia, but the onward itinerary from Papeete on 29 Jan has been revised.

After visiting Moorea, Raietea and Bora Bora the ship will sail back to Los Angeles and then onward to Mexico, Costa Rica, through the Panama Canal to Miami and ultimately to Europe.

Passengers on board have been told that the Destinations Team is exploring opportunities for Exclusive Shoreside Events on the new itinerary, and those who wish to continue on the journey will receive a 15% refund of the cruise fare paid.

Alternatively passengers who disembark early will be given a pro-rata refund of the voyage not sailed, accommodation on the segment voyages of their choice and a 10% discount.

As well as those sailing on the full world cruise itinerary, the change will impact Aussies booked on segment voyages in Asia, who have been offered a full refund of cruise fares paid.

CUNARD has released its northern summer 2023 cruise program, featuring more than 150 international voyages aboard *Queen Elizabeth*, *Queen Victoria* and *Queen Mary 2* (pictured).

Queen Mary 2, the world's only ocean liner, will sail a program of 18 transatlantic crossings, with departures from both Southampton and New York.

Other Cunard voyages will take in Alaska, the Mediterranean, Canada & New England and the Baltics, according to Carnival UK

President, Sture Myrmell.

"From famous city destinations to breathtaking natural wonders, the Cunard 2023 New Voyages offer the perfect way to rediscover the joy of exploration while enjoying our signature White Star Service and all the other special touches that set a Cunard cruise apart from the rest," Myrmell added.

The program is available for booking from 02 Feb 2022, with more itinerary and ship info online at cunard.com.

A-ROSA highlights sustainability features

A-ROSA River Cruises has released further details of the environmental credentials of its new *A-ROSA Sena* river ship which launches on the northern Rhine in May (CW 12 Aug 2021).

Developed in partnership with the Concordia Damen shipyard, the hybrid-powered ship, with a so-called "E-motion" concept which combines a diesel engine with a battery-powered electric motor, giving the system the "peak-shaving" ability to store and use any surplus energy.

Sena will also be the first river ship in Europe to be fitted with an exhaust heat recovery

system, and also has an optimised hull to reduce friction and energy consumption.

Any exhaust gases are treated with a special catalytic converter and particle filter, capturing at least 75% of NOx and 90% of particulate matter.

A state-of-the-art waste water treatment plan will also mitigate any discharges into the river.

A-ROSA Regional Director Birgit Eisbrenner said "we are so proud that we are leading the way with some incredible features that make this ship the most climate-friendly river cruise ship in Europe".



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LINDBLAD Expeditions clearly understands the mindset of its target market - they're curious explorers who also like to answer curly questions.

The cruise line is this month running a US promotion in conjunction with iconic TV quiz show *Jeopardy*, offering 10 lucky viewers the chance to win a trip.

Prospective cruisers are invited to tune into the show each weekday and enter the daily Final Jeopardy! category on a dedicated web page to go into a draw to win a voyage aboard the 100-passenger *National Geographic Quest* or *National Geographic Venture*.

The promotion is the continuation of a 17-year relationship between Lindblad and the TV program, which has also taken the *Jeopardy* Clue Crew and former host, the late Alex Trebeck, across the globe to ask hundreds of questions from some of the planet's wildest and most inspirational places.

Virtuoso appoints

FORMER Uniworld, Qantas Holidays and The Travel Corporation senior executive Fiona Dalton has been announced as the new General Manager of Virtuoso Australia and New Zealand.

She is one of five global GMs reporting into Virtuoso Senior VP of Global Operations, Michael Londregan.

New US cruise concept



US-BASED American Cruise Lines has unveiled plans to construct a new fleet of 12 identical "go-anywhere" ships for the US market, with the move more than doubling the nation's existing capacity for domestic coastal cruises.

Dubbed "Project Blue," the initiative will feature US-built ships with an innovative hybrid catamaran design, giving them "unprecedented near-shore operating versatility" according to CEO Charles B. Robertson.

"Project Blue started as a design challenge to create a boat small enough for New England harbours and stable enough for the Alaska Inside Passage, with a draft shallow enough for the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway.

"These boats can run almost anywhere, and because there will be 12 of them, they will be deployed all over the United States," he said.

Each boat in the fleet will accommodate 109 passengers and 50 crew, Robertson added.

"Their go-anywhere agility combines the adventure of an expedition with the luxury of the finest river cruises," with the

vessels featuring 56 staterooms, almost all with private balconies.

Observation and sitting areas will be available at the bow, both inside and outside, and at the stern the ships will have a new adventure deck equipped with kayaks, tender and other activity related options.

Two dining venues will be on offer, along with room service, and itineraries will focus on small towns and close-to-home adventures, Robertson said.

The first two Project Blue ships, being built by Chesapeake Shipbuilding, are already under construction, and will be named *American Eagle* and *American Glory*, as namesakes of the company's first two small US-built ships.

"American Cruise Lines has been introducing 100% US-built, crewed and registered ships for over 30 years, and the company is proud of its all-American tradition specialising in close-to-home cruising across the USA," the company said.

Currently American Cruise Line operates a total of 15 ships on about 35 domestic itineraries in 31 states.

Rise up for cruise!

THE entire cruise, travel and tourism industry is being invited to participate in a national Day of Action to highlight the need for the lifting of the cruise ban and additional support.

A new Aussie Travel Action Group on Facebook has attracted more than 1,000 followers already, with the organisers coordinating visits to electorate offices of key Federal and State Parliamentarians on Tue 25 Jan.

Engaging with CLIA, CATO and AFTA, the group is focused on delivering the right messages to support the work they doing in Canberra, with key messages calling on Governments to allow the travel sector to trade normally, just like other parts of the economy.

"The overall message is that it is a day of sadness and desperation, that it has come to this where the industry feels compelled to leave their offices to alert the community and politicians to the parlous situation for the industry," the group said.

MPs will also be urged to provide urgent financial support via AFTA's proposed Travel Sector Skills Retention and Recovery Package.

It's expected that gatherings will take place in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Melbourne as well as some regional centres, with the industry urged to find out more by joining the Facebook group accessible [HERE](#).