



Cruise Weekly today

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

Francis joins BPG

AUSTRALIA'S leading business-to-business travel news publisher, and **Cruise Weekly** parent company, the Business Publishing Group (BPG), has appointed senior Mumbrella executive Damian Francis to the newly created role of Editorial Director.

Francis joins BPG with two decades of print and digital media experience, as well as strong expertise in events, PR, & content curation, having led the content & events teams at Mumbrella for more than five years.

His appointment follows the recent major private equity investment in BPG, which saw the appointment of a new GM.

Aurora wins Vantage Travel auction

AURORA Expeditions has emerged as the successful bidder for the assets of collapsed Boston-based Vantage Travel (**CW** 07 Jul) after sweetening the cash component of its offer to US\$2 million, along with 5% of future revenues through to 2028.

An offshoot of Aurora, Pacific Travel Partners, made the deal as part of an auction process earlier this week, in an American bankruptcy court.

The initial bid was US\$1.5 million, including a 10% deposit, which was followed by a higher offer as part of a process soliciting final sealed bids lodged by 7pm local time on Tue evening.

After three rounds of bidding, Pacific Travel Partners was victorious, beating out the previous frontrunner, a rival bid by New Zealand-based Heritage Expeditions and its associate Nordic Hamburg (**CW** 03 Jul)

which is believed to have initially offered US\$1 million.

Heritage remains the "back-up bid" in the event that the sale to Aurora does not proceed, according to court documents.

The assets purchased include all intellectual property held by Vantage including its trade name "Vantage Deluxe World Travel", as well as the company's customer and prospect list.

Vantage operated two expedition ships from the same series as Aurora's *Greg Mortimer* and *Sylvia Earle*, but these were charter operations and are not included in the acquisition.

Court documents indicate that pre-pandemic, Vantage offered more than 500 tour, ocean and river cruise departures annually, and since the company's 1983 inception, had serviced more than 500,000 travellers.

Like Aurora's vessels, the

Vantage expedition ships *Ocean Explorer* and *Ocean Odyssey* were chartered year-round from SunStone Maritime Group, and are currently located in Europe.

Aurora's offer for Vantage will also see it allow customers of the failed company to use existing travel credits to fund up to 50% of the cost of ocean voyages departing through until 30 Nov 2028, or 20% of river cruises and land trips, but not for air travel or trip extensions.

Credits are transferrable, and any deposits on new bookings from former Vantage clients will be placed in a trust account and not released to Aurora until departure.

The cruise line this week also announced a new North America-centric sales structure, with Toronto-based David Tanguay becoming Global Head of Sales (**CW** yesterday).

You are invited

TO AN EXCLUSIVE CRUISE EVENT

We invite you and your clients to join us at our Exclusive Cruise Events series, beginning in August. Find out what makes Oceania Cruises so special, along with our latest news including the launch of our newest ship *Allura* set to sail in 2025. Join us for special offers, canapés and drinks on the day.

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Two Princess ships in South America

PRINCESS Cruises' 2024-2025 South America & Antarctica season is now on sale, with *Majestic Princess* debuting and *Sapphire Princess* returning to 'the Ice'.

Showcasing otherworldly landscapes, vast Antarctic tundra, and the fjords and channels of Chile, Princess has unveiled four new voyages for Antarctica (pictured).

Sapphire will again sail to some of the world's most dramatically diverse landscapes with the opportunity to get swept away by Antarctica, the charm of the Falkland Islands' penguins, and incredible vistas of Elephant Island, Antarctic Sound, and Gerlache Strait.

She will be joined by *Majestic* to offer an enchanting fusion of exotic cultures and landscapes combined with exciting cruisetours.



New this season is a 17-day Antarctica voyage sailing round trip from Buenos Aires.

There is also a 51-day South America Grand Adventure, sailing on *Majestic* between LA and Fort Lauderdale, highlighted with overnight stays in Lima, Buenos Aires, and Rio de Janeiro.

Guests will enjoy onboard experts, naturalists, and historians, with captivating stories and curated activities.

The program will be infused

with local culture with Argentine folkloric musicians, regional cuisine & wines, and local dancers and samba classes from the famed Carnival festival.

"No other large ship cruise line sails Antarctica like Princess," President John Padgett said.

"Our master navigators, unique local relationships and outstanding amenities make accessing these exotic destinations not only immersive but amazingly comfortable."

Aqua adds four

AS DEMAND "soars" for Aqua Expeditions, the cruise line has added four new seven-night sailings from Feb, on board *Aqua Nera*.

The cruise line has witnessed a notable spike in demand, particularly for travel to Peru and the Amazon, Chief Executive Officer & founder Francesco Galli Zugaro noted.

"It is our absolute pleasure to release these additional *Aqua Nera* sailings in Feb, a month that sees the Amazon truly come to life with an abundance of opportunities for our guests to witness more unique wildlife than ever and take part in immersive cultural adventures and local festivities," he said.

In addition to the four seven-night sailings, there are also three- and four-night cruises available - [CLICK HERE](#).



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CARNIVAL Cruise Line's 'Lucky Captain' Vittorio Marchi recently celebrated his 35th year with the brand.

If you're wondering why he's known as The Lucky Captain, Marchi's career began on 08 Aug 1988 - 8/8/88 - with eight representing a lucky number in many Asian cultures.

Captain Marchi's journey has taken him to various Carnival ships; he previously served as the captain of *Carnival Spirit* out of Sydney, where he led the crew for over two years.

He has now returned to Australia, bringing his expertise and knowledge to *Carnival Splendor*.

"It is an honour and a privilege to have returned to Australia after being at the helm of *Carnival Spirit*," he revealed.

"To be back as the Captain of *Carnival Splendor* brings back many unforgettable memories."

Another ship break

CUNARD Line's *Queen Mary 2* broke free of its mooring lines in Civitavecchia last week and drifted from her pier.

Both forward and aft gangways collapsed during the incident, but the ship was quickly secured with the assistance of tugboats, and no injuries were reported.

Coral targeting solos



CORAL Expeditions has expanded its Solo Traveller program to meet growing demand.

New offerings, increased availability, and better value for solo travellers all make up Coral's new programs and opportunities.

The cruise line has added a new Solo Share program to complement its longstanding Solo Supplement, Solo Standby, and Solo Specials offers.

Under the new program, any guest can secure a booking in a twin cabin at a single rate, if they are willing to share the twin room with another guest of the same gender.

Guests will be notified of their roommate and introduced prior to departure, and if no match is made, guests will travel alone on the single rate.

This program is available immediately for bookings.

Additional initiatives a part of the onboard experience for solo travellers include communal seating tables and facilitated solo traveller dinners with ship officers

and guest lecturers.

Inclusive welcome and farewell events and hosted lectures and social activities will also be held on board.

"Over recent years we see a continuing growth in the interest for sole travel," Commercial Director Jeff Gillies explained.

"We will continue to listen to our guests and travel partners and will adapt programs, design itineraries and ships and provide services that make solo travellers feel at ease and part of our expedition community."

NZCA strategy

THE New Zealand Cruise Association (NZCA) is working to develop a 'National Cruise Strategy for Aotearoa New Zealand.'

NZCA said member feedback shows an appetite for a coordinated approach to cruise growth, and the development of a collaborative strategy.

The Association said the aim will be to establish a "unified, balanced, and progressive approach for the future of New Zealand's cruise sector", and to ensure cruise is embedded in all parts of the country's tourism ecosystem.

The strategy will align with New Zealand's national tourism master plan, building on the strengths of the country's tourism industry, while ensuring the sustainability and resilience of the sector.

The NZCA will be sharing a high-level draft of the strategy at its conference later this month, ahead of the strategy's delivery in Oct.



The Chat
with Jenny
A Conversation with Rachel Kingswell
Travel Associates AU NZ
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