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Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features four pages of all the latest cruise news plus a cover page from Crystal Cruises.

Symphony arrives

CRYSTAL Cruises will today make her inaugural entry into Australia under the cruise line's new ownership by Abercrombie & Kent.

The recently refurbished vessel's first port of call is Fremantle, with a five-cruise local program which has received a strong response.

"We knew that Crystal had a loyal following from agents and guests in Australia and NZ, and the reception we have received so far has confirmed it," Vice President Sales APAC Tony Archbold said.

There's still limited availability on the local season - more on the **cover page**.

Virgin Voyages books berths for 25/26

VIRGIN Voyages may return to Australia for a third season, with the cruise line having already booked spots at Sydney's Overseas Passenger Terminal for 2025/26.

However, the third season is likely to utilise the line's *Valiant Lady*, replacing *Resilient Lady* which commenced her first deployment to Australasia this week (**CW** yesterday) and is also flagged to return in 2024/25.

The third year of local sailing for Virgin has not been confirmed by the line at this stage, with Vice President of International Sales Shane Riley telling **Cruise Weekly** the Sydney 2025/26 bookings are "placeholders" to give it flexibility in the future.

Founder Richard Branson and CEO Nirmal Saverimuttu (pictured yesterday on board *Resilient Lady*) said they would "see how things go" for the first two years.

Australia is seen as a key market



for the cruise line, with the pair noting the strength of the Virgin brand locally through other ventures such as Virgin Australia, Virgin Money, and Virgin Active.

"Australians' loyalty to Virgin brands over the years has been a testament to the thousands of people who make Virgin what it is," Branson enthused.

Saverimuttu reiterated that key Virgin markets are a focus for the fledgling cruise line, which now has three ships in operation.

"We're in the US, the UK and Europe, and now Australia," he

said, with the unique adults-only Virgin offering aimed squarely at dispelling long-held misconceptions about cruise.

This year's season sees *Resilient*, the youngest-ever ship to operate revenue cruises in Australian waters, home port out of Melbourne, with Sydney's berthing constraints cited by Branson as one of the factors contributing to that decision.

"It's easier to fly into space than to get cruise ship space in Sydney at the moment," the human headline quipped. *BP*

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RSSC ballet partnership en pointe



REGENT Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) showcased its partnership with The Australian Ballet last night, treating members of the media to a production of *Swan Lake* at the Sydney Opera House.

The Australian Ballet is this year celebrating its 60th anniversary, with the reinvented production of *Swan Lake* by Artistic Director David Hallberg to serve as the centrepiece of the commemorations.

The performance was preceded by dinner at Aria Restaurant Sydney, where guests were joined by two representatives from The Australian Ballet.

RSSC Vice President Sales & GM Asia Pacific Lisa Pile

celebrated the imminent arrival of *Seven Seas Grandeur*, which the line took delivery of last month (**CW** 15 Nov).

Grandeur will carry 746 guests in 373 suites, and will include unrivalled RSSC features, including a bespoke Faberge egg, the first and only to reside at sea (**CW** 31 Oct).

This is the second year of Regent Seven Seas' partnership with The Australian Ballet (**CW** 13 Apr 2022).

Pictured are RSSC Director of Marketing Asia Pacific Matt Vince, Australian Ballet Director of Partnerships Vanessa Stuart, Pile, RSSC PR Manager Asia Pacific Jodie Hart, and Australian Ballet Corps de Ballet Repetiteur Charles Andersen. *MS*

Silversea Polynesia '26



SILVERSEA Cruises has unveiled its first-ever full summer season in French Polynesia for 2026, with the pre-sale now open.

The cruise line's *Silver Whisper* (**pictured**) is set to undertake 17 voyages in the Society Islands, the Marquesas Islands, and the Tuamotus between Apr and Sep. Silversea will operate two itineraries in rotation, responding to strong guest demand, offering deep immersion into 11 of the world's most remote destinations in three different archipelagos.

Travellers can choose from a seven- or 14-day itinerary, both cruising from Papeete, with the shorter of the two to visit Mo'orea and Huahine.

Hosted by an expert guide aboard a traditional boat in Bora Bora, guests will learn about the important role of storytelling in local culture and how early navigators used the stars to sail through the Pacific Ocean.

Travellers can join a cultural nature walk to discover the archaeological sites of the village of Maeva, while admiring treetop views of the coastline.

Guests can also snorkel in crystal-clear waters with the chance to witness hundreds of fish species and corals, or relax on a private island, enjoying a

traditional barbeque as well as local music.

The 14-day voyage will explore Mo'orea, Raiatea, Nuku Hiva, Fatu Hiva, Atuona, Tahuata, Rangiroa, Bora Bora, and enjoy an overnight call in Fakarava.

Cruisers will discover the iconic peaks of the Societys, learn about local culinary traditions in a test kitchen in Mo'orea, discover Raiatea by electric bicycle, and relax on a private island.

There will also be a 21-day Easter Island sailing, departing Valparaiso on 16 Mar, as well as two combination voyages.

"Silversea's rapid increase in capacity has opened opportunities for even deeper immersion into the world's most enriching regions, such as French Polynesia," Senior Vice President Expeditions, Destination & Itinerary Management Conrad Combrink revealed.

"There is no better way to experience these idyllic islands and atolls than by ship, and there is no better ship to connect travellers meaningfully with each destination that *Silver Whisper*.

"In addition to being the most spacious ship deployed to French Polynesia, she will have the most personalized service, with a crew-to-guest ratio of 1:1.3 and butler service for every suite." *MS*

The Chat

with Jenny

Travel Daily

A conversation with
Wendy Wu
Wendy Wu Tours



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Virgin makes a splash

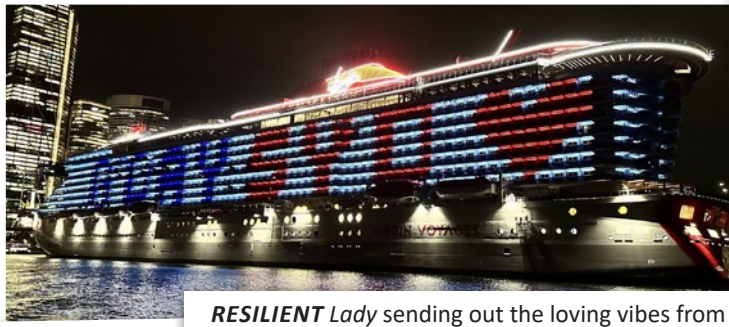
VIRGIN Voyages has enjoyed blanket mainstream media coverage this week, with founder Richard Branson appearing on television, radio, and in person aboard *Resilient Lady* to promote the cruise line.

Yesterday he ended up in the ship's pool alongside Chief Executive Officer Nirmal Saverimuttu and "cruiseinfluencer" Honida Beram, as crew erupted into a flash mob - view our exclusive video **HERE**.

Later in the day travel advisor partners were welcomed on board, as were cruise industry stakeholders, media personalities, and influencers, for a ship tour followed by dinner and the opportunity to participate in Virgin's famed onboard "Scarlet Night" party.

As well as invited guests, more than 1,200 Aussies took the opportunity to come aboard by booking a ticket to the one-night event, giving them unlimited access to the ship including a culinary preview of the brand's six signature onboard restaurants.

Branson was also happy to pose for **Cruise Weekly** with a copy of yesterday's *Daily Telegraph* (right) which featured a Virgin wrap in partnership with Ignite Travel Group.



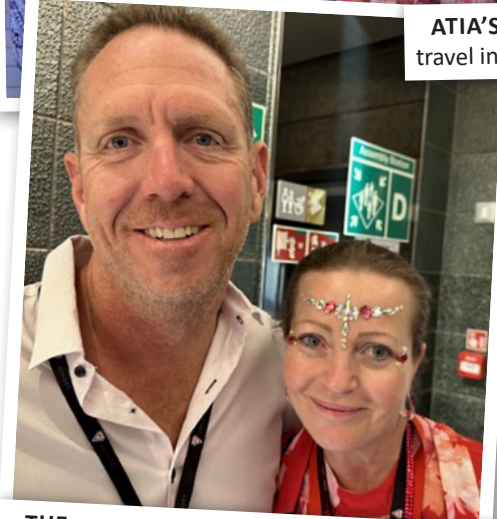
RESILIENT Lady sending out the loving vibes from Sydney's Overseas Passenger Terminal.



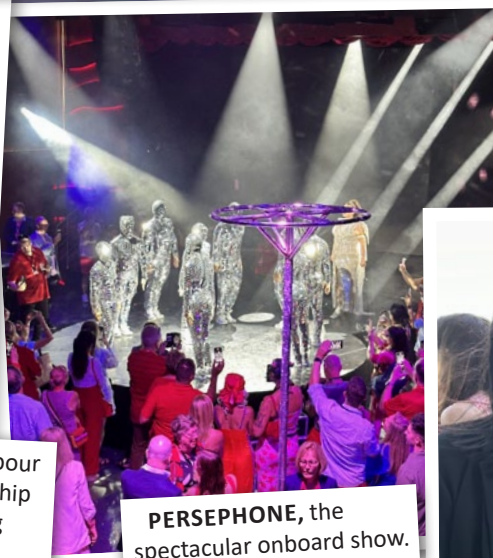
ATIA'S Richard Taylor took this pic of some of the travel industry partners who enjoyed the night.



AIRBNB chief Susan Wheeldon with Destination NSW Chief Executive Officer Steve Cox.



THE ones who make it all happen: Sydney Harbour Marine Pilot Lindsay Cavanagh who guided the ship into port, and wife Karlie from Inchcape Shipping Services, Virgin Voyages' port agency.



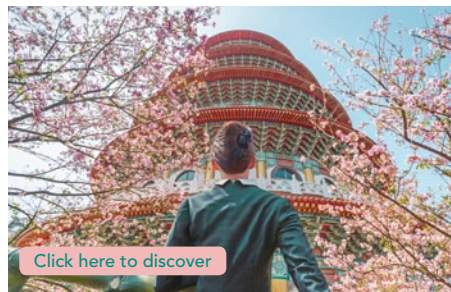
PERSEPHONE, the spectacular onboard show.



MTA Mobile Travel Agent Michelle Feilberg with husband Carl.



DESTINATION NSW's Sue Doyle, Stephen Mahoney and Kylie-Jane Menzies.



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VIRGIN Voyages offers an intriguing mix of naughty and nice - or as the cruise line's Vice President of International Sales Shane Riley puts it, many opportunities to detox and then "retox" the next night.

During a tour of *Resilient Lady* while docked at Sydney's Overseas Passenger Terminal yesterday, Riley detailed the huge array of wellness facilities on board.

As well as an enormous ocean-facing gymnasium equipped with the latest exercise technology, there's a comprehensive spa offering all the latest treatments.

A wide array of free group exercise classes are on offer, from sunrise yoga atop the ship at the appropriately named "Perch", through to spin classes and innovative aerobics - including a 1990s boy-band dance-off on the ship's basketball court which is designed so you don't even realise you're exercising.

There's even a dedicated elevated jogging track around the ship's funnel area, meaning runners don't have to dodge sun-loungers as they jog.

Of course, there's also plenty of opportunity to make the most of all that good work, allowing guests to feel good about shaking their phones to summon a bottle of bubbly to wherever they are on the ship.

Craighead names Sakara



EMERALD Cruises has formally debuted its new *Emerald Sakara*, with Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) President & Chief Executive Officer Kelly Craighead officiating as the superyacht-style vessel's godmother in a ceremony in San Juan last weekend.

Scenic Group founder and Chair Glen Moroney was joined by other senior executives including Scenic Managing Director for the US, Ken Muskat, and local authorities, saying "we are a pretty unique entity in the cruise industry when it comes to both our river and ocean luxury ships".

"We are intimately involved with every aspect of the build process - coming up with the concept, doing the design, overseeing the engineering, then building the ships including all interior design in-house, then employing all of the crew members directly," Moroney said.

"Having Kelly as the godmother of our newest luxury yacht, *Emerald Sakara*, follows that same thought process as she

embodies a similar can-do attitude and history, and her leadership and guidance with CLIA over the recent challenging years for the industry is inspirational," he added.

Moroney particularly highlighted CLIA's ongoing efforts to help ensure the long-term viability of cruising, focusing on advocacy for a sustainable industry across the globe.

Craighead said she was honoured to be an ambassador for the entire CLIA team in her new role as godmother.

"The stunning luxury of *Emerald Sakara*, complemented by Emerald Cruises' commitment to environmentally responsible tourism, exemplifies CLIA's advocacy for sustainable tourism and preservation of cruise destinations around the world for future generations," she said. *BP*

Craighead is **pictured** centre with Moroney; Discover Puerto Rico Chief Executive Officer Brad Dean; Christian Trinidad De Jesus from Puerto Rico Ports Authority; and Captain Rob O'Leary.



Welcoming our Maidens

THE arrival of the new cruise lines heading to Australia is now well underway.

Disney Wonder sailed into Sydney in late Oct heralding a new era for family cruising.

I was lucky enough to jump on board at one of their events and I applaud the way they have worked their "magic" into every aspect of the cruise experience.

With such a deep brand legacy behind it, it is no wonder that their cruises are mostly sold out for the current season, which runs to February 2024.

The good news is that the ship will return for another season next Oct.

Later this week, I will be lucky enough to sail with Virgin Voyages' *Resilient Lady* as she makes her way to homeport in Melbourne for the summer.

Another cruise line that has a strong brand DNA, I am looking forward to seeing how that comes to life onboard.

I have no doubt the renowned Virgin sense of fun will be a great match with the relaxed Australian vibe.

And finally, *Celebrity Edge* arrived in Darwin on Mon before heading down to Sydney.

I will join a cruise there that will make its way across to Auckland.

Welcome to all our new cruise fraternity continuing to make cruising in this country a highly sought after holiday option and delivering important contributions to our economy.