



### Cruise Weekly today

**CRUISE Weekly** today features three pages of all the latest cruise news, plus a full page from **Cruise Lines International Association**.

### Award noms open

**CRUISE** Lines International Association is encouraging the sector to nominate themselves or a colleague for the organisation's upcoming 21st annual awards (**CW** 23 Oct).

Categories include 'Cruise Consultant of the Year', 'Mobile Agent of the Year', 'Rising Star', 'Agent/Agency Promotion of the Year', 'Network Promotion of the Year', 'Cruise Month Promotion of the Year', and more - head to **page four** of today's **Cruise Weekly** to nominate now, and for more information on the awards.

## Azamara names new Chief Executive

**AZAMARA** has confirmed the immediate departure of Chief Executive Officer Carol Cabezas, who has led the former Royal Caribbean Group-owned cruise line since its acquisition by private equity firm Sycamore Partners almost three years ago (**CW** 20 Jan 2021).

Cabezas' name was absent from a formal update from Azamara this morning, which noted the appointment of Celebrity Cruises' Dondra Ritzenthaler (**pictured**) as "Incoming CEO", taking up her new role in May.

Until Ritzenthaler commences her new role, Chair Dan Hanrahan, will "provide day-to-day leadership and oversight of the team".

The new chief has been with Royal Caribbean Group for two decades, most recently as Celebrity Senior Vice President of Sales, Trade Support, & Services



for the Americas.

Ritzenthaler said, "Azamara provides a unique and exciting offering within the luxury cruise space, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to lead the company into its next chapter".

"I look forward to working with the talented team and their travel partners to better serve the customer base and grow the Azamara brand," she said.

As well as the changes at the top, Azamara has also named

Alain Ferzil as its new Chief Financial Officer, taking up the role effective immediately.

Also a former Royal Caribbean Group staffer, Ferzil has previously served as the acting CFO for Virgin Voyages.

Hanrahan said the two new appointments' "deep knowledge of and experience leading cruise lines will support the shift of our focus to expanding our business and realising Azamara's full potential." *BP*

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## Celebrity's next level of Xcel-ence



**CELEBRITY** Cruises has revealed the name of its next Edge series ship, *Celebrity Xcel*, which is set to launch in summer 2025-26.

The reveal was made at Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyard in Saint-Nazaire, as the first piece of steel for the new vessel was cut (pictured).

*Xcel* will feature an expanded Rooftop Garden, a redesigned Grand Plaza spanning three decks, and other Edge series highlights such as The Retreat, an exclusive resort-within-a-resort area for suite guests, highlighted by a two-storey sun deck.

The ship will also have accommodations for today's modern tastes, such as contemporary two-storey villas with private plunge pools, and staterooms with infinite verandas.

Other features include a Resort Deck with unique cantilevered float pools and a multi-level,

multi-terraced Sunset Bar.

The ship will make her debut in Nov 2025 in the Caribbean, sailing her inaugural winter season (on sale now) from Fort Lauderdale, on seven-night itineraries alternating between the Bahamas, Mexico, and the Cayman Islands; and Puerto Plata, St. Thomas, and St. Maarten.

"The Edge series has shattered preconceived notions of cruising, and I am thrilled to announce our next bold step as a brand with *Celebrity Xcel*," President Laura Hodges Bethge said.

"True to her name, this next ship will *Xcel* beyond her sister ships with entirely new experiences, yet to be revealed, but that will change the game all over again."

*Xcel's* highly anticipated sister ship *Celebrity Ascent* is set to debut later this month (CW 25 Jan). *MS*

## An Icon-ic entertainment line-up



**LIONS**, mermaids, and pirates will all feature as part of Royal Caribbean International's (RCI) *Icon of the Seas'* "show-stopping" entertainment line-up.

*Icon* will introduce firsts such as skateboarders, live music, comedy, robots, and the debut of *The Wizard of Oz* at sea.

The ship will feature four signature "stages" - air, ice, water, and theatre - hosted at the Royal Theatre, the Absolute Zero ice arena, and the all-new AquaTheatre (pictured).

Highlights include *Aqua Action!*, which combines technological and physical feats, in a high-octane production.

*Aqua Action!* features Olympic-level high divers, skateboarders, aerialists, slackliners, and synchronised swimmers coming together with high-tech firsts, such as a double 3D flying system, and robots doubling as diving boards and set creators,

set to "blur the lines" between live-action movie and theatrical experience, RCI said.

Entertainment beyond the stage includes 50 live musicians and comedians performing in venues including the new Lou's Jazz 'n Blues, Dueling Pianos, Schooner Bar, and the Point & Feather English pub.

"At the heart of so many of the memories made on Royal Caribbean vacations is a combination of live entertainment that's unmatched in the vacation industry, and we're taking it to the next level on *Icon*," Senior Vice President Entertainment Nick Weir said.

"If you're a fan of full-scale productions on Broadway and the West End or live music and comedy in hot spots like Las Vegas, *Icon* has it all for every mood and style in one vacation - alongside never-before-seen twists only found on Royal Caribbean." *MS*

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**A POD** of orcas have sunk another boat in Europe, after a nearly hour-long attack.

*Grazie Mamma* became the fourth boat in two years to have been sunk by an unusually brazen pod.

The sinking occurred on Halloween off the coast of Morocco, in the Strait of Gibraltar, and fortunately, all aboard were safely rescued.

The orcas repeatedly hit *Grazie Mamma's* rudder, causing major damage to the ship and allowing water into her hull.

Not even aid from the Royal Moroccan Navy helped, as *Grazie Mamma* eventually sank as she entered the port of Tanger-Med.

## Yule love this deal

**VIKING'S** weekly deal is a Christmas on the Main & Moselle cruise between Prague and Paris.

Sail iconic rivers at Christmas on the 12-day voyage, which travels between the two cities.

The cruise is on sale now as part of Viking's The Heart of Exploring sale and priced from \$5,195 per person with savings up to \$2,000 per couple.

In addition to France and the Czech Republic, the cruise also visits a number of German ports - for more information, [CLICK HERE](#).

## HX's "season of science"

**HX HURTIGRUTEN** Expeditions is setting new sustainability benchmarks next with its largest-ever "season of science" in Antarctica in 2023-24.

The cruise line is donating more than 1,100 nights to researchers, is supporting more than 20 research projects, and is facilitating more than 16,000 data submissions through its science & education program.

HX has booked 1,158 cruise nights for third-party researchers in Antarctica, the highest number donated by the cruise line

By the end of the year HX will have provided more than 1,500 staterooms to researchers.

HX will achieve another milestone by providing support for more than 20 research projects and as many as eight citizen science initiatives.

Researchers collaborate closely with HX's industry-leading expedition team, fostering guest education through lectures, demonstrations, and real-time data analysis in the cruise line's Science Centres.

Projects in the 2023-24

Antarctica Science Program span drone-based whale research, penguin colony monitoring, and baleen whale population studies.

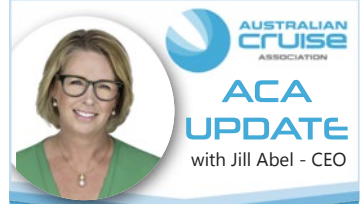
A new project, part of HX's ongoing collaboration with the California Ocean Alliance, will study humpback whale bubble net feeding behaviour.

The University of Tasmania's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies will also continue its social science study, examining the effects of citizen science activities on guest behaviour during and after travelling.

Submissions to citizen science project Happywhale are also expected to exceed 16,000 this season, as curious guests continue to put forward observations of whales spotted on their travels with HX.

The cruise line's Science & Education Program has facilitated the publication of 17 scientific reports and papers since 2019.

These findings have contributed critical data to the scientific community and supported research at institutions such as UNIS and SCRIPPS. *MS*



## Cruise - it just adds up

**THE** recent Economic Impact Assessment conducted by ACA and CLIA showed 62 ports and destinations around Australia welcomed 1,354 ship visits in 2022-2023.

This number was up by an incredible 32% on the previous report conducted in 2018-19.

This illustrates the vast reach of our industry and the positive impact we can make injecting money into communities - particularly smaller regional locations - via their tour operators, food and beverage outlets, transport providers and so on.

It also allows them to reach travellers with whom they may otherwise have not had the chance to interact.

This will only get better as the cruise lines announce their upcoming circumnavigations.

In 2023-24, Princess Cruises, Oceania Cruises, and Royal Caribbean International have a total of nearly 100 days in multiple destinations across Australia and NZ.

That only continues to increase over the next two cruise seasons as Holland America Line and Silversea Cruises announce their circumnavigation voyages.

Queensland and Western Australia are leading the way with the highest number of cruise destinations on offer for guests, particularly as smaller ships can get into some of the more remote locations.

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**NOMINATE NOW**

For more information on Award Category criteria and how to nominate – please visit [cruising.org.au](http://cruising.org.au)  
Nominations are open to all CLIA Travel Agent members and close on 30 November 2023.