



HAL launches new brand campaign

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) yesterday kicked off its 2024/25 Australian season with a unique event on board *Noordam*, which arrived in Sydney Harbour yesterday morning.

Industry partners were treated to a high level pickleball tournament, where some of Australia's leading players demonstrated their prowess at the fast-growing sport on the ship's dedicated top deck court.

Carnival Vice President of Sales & Partnerships Ryan Taibel also showcased the new 'All That's Missing is U' campaign which will "reinvigorate the brand in the local market".

"Holland America is back to sailing in Australia, and we want to lean into the human need to be at the centre of the cruising experience - to make sure our guests know they are a part of the journey," he said.

"There's just one thing that's missing for our local guests...our slogan is 'Savor the Journey' and while that's important to us, we seem to have left out something relevant to our guests in Australia and NZ - the letter U," he added.

The event aboard *Noordam* was the first in Holland America's "Savour Series" which will highlight a different element of the cruise experience.

Holland America's local season runs until Apr, offering a series of seven- to 14-day trans-Tasman itineraries, while the cruise line



is also currently promoting its Europe and Alaska programs for next year.

MEANWHILE, Taibel also unveiled plans for a new dining experience on board *Noordam*.

Dubbed "Morimoto By Sea", the once-per-cruise pop-up restaurant will launch on the vessel next year, "ready for the Alaska season in 2024" featuring the cuisine of Holland America's Fresh Fish Ambassador, the famed Chef Masaharu Morimoto, Taibel confirmed.

Attendees at yesterday's event were treated to bite-sized samples of some of the unique appetisers which will be offered at Morimoto By Sea.

The concept is also rolling out as a pop-up on the rest of the Holland America's fleet, apart from *Nieuw Amsterdam* which will amp things up even further



with a stand-alone specialty Morimoto restaurant starting from next month. *BP*

Pictured above are Caitlyn Paris and Carina Mullen from Cruise HQ with Holland America's Nola Melamet and Rebecca Cranston, plus Josh Duncan from itravel.

Inset, Melamet is seen with Brendan Lee, Executive Officer at Pickleball Australia Association with a HAL-branded pickleball bat - and some pickles, naturally!

VV's new CFO

VIRGIN Voyages (VV) has named former Virgin America exec Peter Hunt as its new Chief Financial Officer, taking over from Erin Williams, who oversaw VV's recent US\$550m capital raise (*CW* 08 Sep).



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Cruise future looks strong

EXCLUSIVE

THE short- and medium-term prospects for cruise are looking strong according to Travellers Choice Managing Director Christian Hunter (pictured).

Hunter spoke with *Cruise Weekly* on the Gold Coast last Sat while hosting this year's Travellers Choice conference.

While much of the event revolved around the future of travel in an economically uncertain period, Hunter was buoyed by the prospects of the cruise industry.

"We've got some amazing cruise ships out there and we're seeing more and more come into the marketplace with different styles of cruising," Hunter exclaimed.

"There's no way cruise won't succeed because it is such a great product, and our membership, they get cruising."

Hunter pointed to new brands



bringing ships to Australian waters, like Virgin Voyages and Disney Cruise Line, as an indicator of what is to come.

"Our members are really focused on cruising and they will do their bit to ensure that they get their share of the market."

Hunter continued by lauding the top-end products, great ships, and "really unique" experiences cruise was currently providing as a reason to be excited.

"I think it's only going to drive people to look for cruising more and more, I genuinely do - the future of cruise is looking strong."

"The investment that the cruise lines are putting in will really kick it along," he added. *DF*

AQV 2025 season

AMERICAN Queen Voyages (AQV) has released its 2025 River Collection, ranging from six to 17 days aboard *American Queen*, *American Countess* and *American Empress*.

The season will see an expanded collection of Themed Voyages and Special Events, as well as cruises on the Lower Mississippi River, with itineraries such as Memphis to New Orleans, vice versa, as well as a round trip New Orleans.

Columbia & Snake river itineraries include Portland to Spokane and vice versa; and Ohio & Mississippi River cruises include itineraries such as Memphis to Cincinnati and round trip Cincinnati; Pittsburgh to Louisville and vice versa; Memphis to Chattanooga and more - further info at 1800 076 290.

Cruise is booming

VIRTUOSO has earmarked "small ships" as "big possibilities" in this year's *Luxe Report*.

The luxury travel agency network has revealed small-vessel cruising is on the rise with new and experienced passengers alike, who are favouring the sector's less-crowded, more-intimate settings.

This includes river cruises, the report said, with those seeking a more authentic experience favouring this sector for its casual atmosphere, proximity to major cities, and wide-ranging itineraries, with popular routes include the Danube, the Mekong, and the Nile.

Adventure cruising is also trending, due to passengers' prevailing interest in Alaska, as well as the increased accessibility of Antarctica.

The continent is set to be next year's leading adventure destination, the report said.



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WHAT better kick off to a conference than a welcome gathering on a floating event space in a beautiful location?

With backing from big brands in the cruise industry, it was the ideal way for the Travellers Choice 2023 conference on the Gold Coast to get started.

Delegates prepared for a night out on floating venue Yot Club, for what should have been a cruisy evening of drinks and networking.

Unfortunately, nature had other ideas as the mother of all storm fronts rolled in, just as the buses came to collect attendees, and there was no escaping the storm that ensued - but thankfully all survived.



RCI celebrates its culinary royalty

CULINARY royalty graced Sydney Harbour on Fri when famed British chef Jamie Oliver entertained industry guests aboard Royal Caribbean International's (RCI) *Ovation of the Seas* as she kicked off her 2023/24 Australian season.

Oliver has partnered with RCI for 10 years, since the launch of the first Jamie's Italian eatery at sea (*CW* 04 Dec 2014), which has now expanded right across the cruise line's fleet.

Royal Caribbean Director of Marketing Kathryn Lock welcomed participants, highlighting the strong synergy between the two brands.

"Certainly what's so wonderful about what Jamie offers is this sharing of time amongst families and loved ones on the ship.

"Here at Royal Caribbean that's what we're all about as well, we just want to bring people together...we want people to be sharing incredible moments on board our ship," she added.

Oliver said he is thrilled to be in Sydney and to celebrate the long-standing partnership.

"Jamie's Italian shares a



common vision with Royal Caribbean when it comes to food and dining...at Jamie's Italian, we keep it simple and fresh, creating a cosy atmosphere for families to enjoy some quality time together," he said.

Oliver, who now has 76 restaurants globally, described the close attention to detail required to ensure the onboard eateries are a success.

"In London I have a team which is involved in every intricacy of every ship and every launch and every menu," he added, with each shipboard restaurant making

fresh pasta and bread every day.

RCI Vice President Gavin Smith said this summer more than 250,000 holidaymakers will set sail in the region, including over 90,000 sailing from Sydney on *Ovation* alone.

Smith noted significant amounts of locally sourced produce to support the local operations, including more than 700 tonnes of Australian tomatoes, 13 tonnes of basil and 100 tonnes of onions, much of which is used at Jamie's Italian eateries afloat. *BP*

Oliver is **pictured** with RCI Head of Sales Dave Humphreys.

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