



### Cruise Weekly today

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Head to **page four** for more information on the offer.

## Cruiseabout to double in size in '25

**CRUISEABOUT** has opened its Carindale store, the brand's second in Qld, as it prepares to double in size next year.

The new store, located in Westfield Carindale, rounds out the total number of Cruiseabout locations nationally to four, with the brand also preparing to open an additional two stores in the coming months.

New locations will open in North Lakes, Queensland; and Narallen, NSW - the brand's first store in the state, completing Cruiseabouts in Perth, Adelaide, and the Gold Coast.

"Next year will see further growth as we effectively double the size of our current business," the brand's General Manager Brad Kennedy said.

"Opening Cruiseabout Carindale yesterday was the perfect way to close out what's been an exceptional first year of

operations," he added.

"Cruising remains the fastest growing sector in the travel industry, so we know we are investing in a strong future for this brand."

Cruiseabout is also building a second contact centre team over the next few months.

"We'll be looking to welcome a contingent of cruise specialists to the team over the coming months, so I'd encourage anyone looking for a new opportunity to reach out and keep an eye on the exciting developments to come," Kennedy said.

"We have an incredible team of 'Cruiseaders' and I have to thank all of them for their commitment to our business over the past year - there really has never been a more exciting time to work in the cruise industry."

Team Leader of the new Carindale store, Kelsey McColl,

said she's looking forward to being involved in the expansion of Cruiseabout.

"I've been working in Flight Centre stores across Queensland for eight years and am excited to take on a new challenge at Cruiseabout," she enthused.

"I love cruising, so it just made sense to focus on my speciality and to be a part of the emerging brand's future.

"Helping my customers find the right cruise and supporting my team to do the same is something I'm genuinely passionate about and can't wait to do every day alongside my team."

Cruiseabout's parent company Flight Centre Travel Group (FTG) has seen a 20% uplift in cruise booking value YOY, and has cited cruise as a growth priority.

FTG last month acquired Cruise Club UK, which will see it attempt to replicate its Ignite model. *MS*

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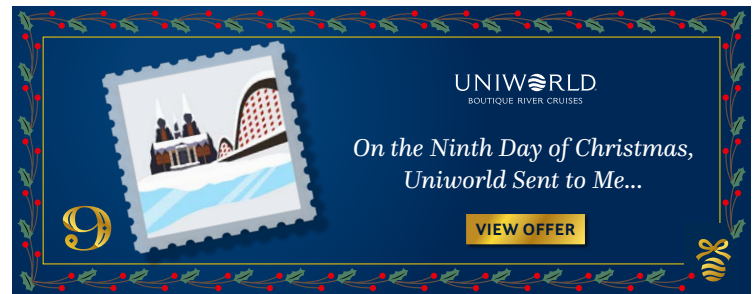
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## Gauguin upgrades

**PAUL** Gauguin Cruise's *Paul Gauguin* will undergo an extensive bow-to-stern refurbishment and upgrade early next year.

The ship will spend seven weeks in dry dock in Singapore over Feb and Mar, which will see new public spaces installed and renovated and sustainable technology added.

*Paul Gauguin's* funnel will be fitted with the three-sail logo of parent company Ponant, crafted in polished steel and illuminated with LED lights for night display.

One of the most noticeable changes will be on the top deck, which will be totally reimaged, with the pool deck to be furnished with a sweeping white shade canopy over a cabana area.

The pool itself will also receive a new mosaic facade.

Dining upgrades will see a new look introduced for *Paul Gauguin's* Le Grill main restaurant, with white tiles, wood screens and soft oak wood furnishings with bamboo light fixtures.

Catering to multi-generation parties, eight new connecting staterooms will also be installed on deck seven to build on the success of Paul Gauguin's Moana Explorer children's program in 2020.

After the drydock, the ship will offer two one-way voyages from Singapore to Australia.

## Leahy to lead Lindblad

**NATIONAL** Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions has appointed former Seabourn Cruise Line President Natalya Leahy (pictured) as its new Chief Executive Officer, replacing founder & current Chief Executive Sven-Olof Lindblad.

Leahy will join the cruise line from next year, and will be supported by a new Chief Financial Officer, Rick Goldberg, who will take his position on 31 Dec.

The move will see Sven-Olof Lindblad become co-Chair, alongside current Chair Mark Ein, while the cruise line's current interim CFO, Dyson Dryden, will retain his position as a Director.

"As Lindblad Expeditions moves into its 46th year, I am delighted and confident that the leadership of Natalya Leahy as CEO and Rick Goldberg as CFO will represent an energised, talented and experienced partnership, leading the company into our next phase of growth in the experiential travel space both at sea and on land," Sven-Olof Lindblad said.

"I look very much forward to, along with my fellow board members, supporting Natalya and Rick to maintain and strengthen our position as the leaders in this rapidly growing sector of the travel industry and creating



meaningful value for all of our stakeholders," he added.

Leahy described herself as "excited and humbled" to lead the cruise line.

"I wholeheartedly believe in the transformative power of travel, and Lindblad Expeditions is uniquely creating life-changing experiences for sophisticated travellers eager to explore the earth's most extraordinary places in extreme comfort," she said.

"I'm honoured to join the talented team here and build on Sven's legacy as we embrace the exciting opportunities ahead."

Leahy's departure from Seabourn was announced late last month, with her replacement named as former Carnival Corporation executive Mark Tamis (CW 26 Nov). MS

## Boheme debuts

**MEKONG** Kingdoms, Minor Hotels' luxury Asian-based cruise line, has unveiled *Boheme* (pictured), as the newest addition to its fleet.

The ship set sail on Mon, on her first round trip journey on the Mekong between Luang Prabang and Vientiane.

The five-night cruise will treat passengers to shore excursions to Pak Ou Caves, dine near the Kuang Si Waterfall, try their hand at making saa paper, and meet elephants at the Centro de Conservacion de Elefantes.

Back on board, guests can enjoy massages, cooking & mixology classes, and more.

*Boheme* accommodates up to 26 passengers in her 13 suites, with each stateroom equipped with air conditioning and premium amenities, such as a high-quality sound system, a Nespresso coffee machine, and a minibar.

The ship contains three suite classes: the 60m<sup>2</sup> Royal suites, 30m<sup>2</sup> Deluxe suites, and the 26m<sup>2</sup> Premier View suites.

Guests can also start or end their journey with a stay at Avani+ Luang Prabang Hotel.



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## PORTRHOLE

**MOST** cruisers kindly leave their stateroom attendant a tip at the end of the voyage.

However, a recent post by Carnival Cruise Line Brand Ambassador John Heald (pictured) re-sparked an age-old debate about the concept of tipping.

One commenter thought this performative display of generosity to be “demeaning”, while Heald defended it, suggesting it likely put a smile on the crew member’s face.



## Antarctica in AUD

**AURORA** Expeditions is now taking Antarctica bookings in Australian dollars.

Once a stateroom is placed on hold, it can be guaranteed in AUD for the deposit and the final payment, based on the exchange rate at the time of the booking.

Aurora’s website will still display Antarctic pricing in USD, with AUD set to be worked in as the sticker price in the near future.

The move is part of a phased approach by Aurora to improve its services.

## TIME’s floating Carnival



**MENTORS**, mentees, and recent graduates from the Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) Queensland chapter found their sea legs recently at a networking function held on board Carnival Cruise Line’s *Carnival Luminosa* in Brisbane.

Hosted by National Sales Manager Mark Richards and his team, the event was the first time TIME has held a networking event on a cruise ship.

Attendees enjoyed a ship tour to explore all the ‘FUN’ elements of the ship, followed by a delectable three-course lunch in the dining room and a presentation about the TIME program.

Speakers included Richards himself, who lauded the role of mentors, whose industry guidance and support can dramatically accelerate professional development.

Recent TIME graduate Zoe Gentle from Europ Assistance shared her personal progress from the program, while Travellers Choice BDM Kim Tomlinson spoke

from a mentor’s perspective on the rewards their experience can have on those coming through.

The Carnival team is pictured in the back row with mentors, mentees, and TIME Committee members during the event. *ML*

## Tauck Xmas cruise

**TAUCK** has added a new Xmas market river cruise on the Seine, set to sail next year.

The new trip is Tauck’s first in France, and will travel aboard *Sapphire* from Paris.

Guests will enjoy three nights in the city, with a visit to the French capital’s Christmas markets, including those at the Tuileries Garden, where guests can shop for local crafts and sample hot mulled wine, roasted chestnuts, sausages, cheeses, chocolates and more.

The eight-day itinerary will then visit Rouen, Les Andelys, Vernon, and Poissy.

The cruise sails from \$6,790 - **CLICK HERE** for more info.

## CLIA UPDATE



with Joel Katz  
MD, CLIA Australasia

A record-breaking year

**IN AN** industry that’s no stranger to setting records, 2024 has been an especially proud time for the cruising sector.

The past year has brought new levels of prosperity for our industry, resulting in figures we’ve never seen before and might never have imagined just a few years ago.

In Oct, we released a record-breaking economic impact assessment, showing cruise tourism contributed \$8.43 billion to the Australian economy during 2023-24.

The same report showed a record 4.3 million passenger visit days in Australia, and a record 26,000 jobs supported by cruise tourism around the country.

Within our CLIA community, we hosted a record crowd of close to 850 people at our annual Cruise360 Australasia conference in Sydney, and welcomed record attendances at our CLIA LIVE events across Australia and NZ.

Our CLIA membership in Australasia reached a record 6,274 travel agents in 2024, giving us our strongest-ever presence in this region.

CLIA’s forecasts show cruising is likely to continue breaking records into 2025 and beyond.

We’re grateful for all the support we receive from our partners, and wish you all the best next year.





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\*Offer is valid on a selection of 2024, 2025 and 2026 departures, for new bookings made between 25 November 2024 and 3 January 2025 inclusive. Offer is not retroactive, is subject to availability and may be removed at any time. Offer is not available on any *Le Commandant Charcot* and *Le PONANT* departures. Offer is combinable with PONANT Yacht Club discounts, Join the Club Offer, the PONANT Bonus, and Back-to-Back discounts. Offer is not combinable with any Flight Credit offers, Free Single supplement, Shipboard Credit or any other offer. To take advantage of this offer, please contact your travel agent or our cruise consultants and quote the code «XMAS24». Other terms and conditions may apply. Photograph: © Studio PONANT - Vutheara Kham.