



### Cruise Weekly today

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

### Treasured staff

DISNEY Cruise Line is set to honour Disney employees around the world as the godparents of *Disney Treasure*.

The cruise line is redefining the time-honoured maritime distinction to celebrate its more than 200,000 "magic-makers" across the globe.

"At the core of everything we do at Disney are the dedicated cast members and employees who create the magic that brings joy to millions of people around the globe," The Walt Disney Company Chief Executive Officer Bob Iger said.

"That's why we are proud to honour all Disney employees as the godparents."

## HX ponders warmer welcome in Australia

### EXCLUSIVE

HX IS looking to visit more warm water destinations - which could include Australia - in the medium-term future, as it looks to diversify its product offering, Chief Executive Officer Gebhard Rainer has told *Cruise Weekly*.

The newly appointed HX chief (*CW* 13 Jun) sees the potential for expansion in the expedition sector in warm water destinations, such as its highly successful Galapagos product (*CW* 08 May).

Asked whether Australia could factor into this mix, Rainer said he would "never say never", adding Pacific destinations, as well as those in South Asia, are well within HX's considerations.

"The Pacific region is very interesting, because you have islands that are unexplored, and very undeveloped, similar to what Greenland is.

"There is an opportunity [in Australia], and I think specifically what we are going to do with the University of Tasmania (*CW* 08 Nov 2023) will tie us more to this hemisphere," Rainer said.

"I think at some point, definitely, as we explore what the opportunity might be...I am convinced that once we get into '26 that conversation, together with the conversation of expanding the fleet, is going to be very important."

Rainer emphasised Pacific destinations are also a match for the HX Foundation - a significant consideration for the cruise line, as it scouts new parts of the globe to visit.

"You have communities where you have indigenous islanders there who need help from an economic point of view," he said.

"The combination of what we do, together with our Foundation,

serve a really perfect way of getting in there, exploring it from an expedition point of view, and at the same time helping those communities," Rainer added.

The HX chief clarified any expansion would be carried out in a considered manner, to ensure 'expedition' rather than 'tourism' remains at the heart of the cruise line's proposition.

"I think the opportunity is plentiful, as long as it's done mindfully, and as long as the true meaning of 'expedition' is not being abused.

"It has to be done mindfully, because you could easily get into just tourist destinations...we need to be very careful as to how we continue that explorer spirit.

"There are so many destinations, sea and land, that we can combine, and I think that's the other opportunity we have going into the future." MS

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## 2023 the best ever

**CRUISE** Lines International Association's (CLIA) latest study has shown cruise tourism made its highest-ever global economic impact last year, generating US\$168.6 billion in activity.

The highlight from the new *2023 Global Economic Impact Study* was shared at the recent CLIA Cruise Forward conference in Miami, revealing 2023 surpassed 2019 as the benchmark year for cruise industry performance, up 9% pre-pandemic.

The sector's economic contribution is also outpacing global GDP, to which it contributed US\$85.6 billion.

The latest figures reflect the rising popularity of cruise vacations, with 31.7 million passengers sailing last year, an increase of 7% from the 29.7 million who sailed in 2019.

"The cruise industry is an important contributor to the global economy, generating billions of dollars in economic output and supporting millions of jobs," outgoing President & CEO Kelly Craighead said.

"The economic impact of the industry extends long after a cruise ends, as CLIA research shows that 60% of cruise passengers return to a destination they first visited on a cruise for a longer stay.

"As demand for cruising continues to grow, our member cruise lines are committed to preserving the integrity, cultural heritage and beauty of treasured destinations," she added.

## FCTG's UK "entry point"

**EXCLUSIVE**

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) acquisition of Cruise Club UK (**CW** 30 Oct) allows the company to replicate its highly effective Ignite Travel Group model in England, Global Leisure Chief Exec James Kavanagh said.

Kavanagh, speaking to **CW**, said the two businesses share a number of similarities, which enable the company to layer and grow its sales model.

The FCTG chief added coming out of the pandemic, Ignite is turning over half a billion dollars in sales, off the back of a growth rate of 20%.

"For us to be able to bring the Ignite model into the UK is a strategy that allows us to be able to accelerate growth into that market...it's a really great entry point to rapidly grow in the UK market," he said.

"Customers see the deals they bring to market, and...their conversion on those deals is really strong and high.

"We procure a range of different products for the customer and then package it up with exceptional bonus value...it's very much high packaging, high volume, but quite specific and tailored to a specific product range," Kavanagh explained.

The difference between the two, he added, is the booking windows typical of Cruise Club UK and Ignite customers.

Australians typically book a cruise further out, particularly if it is departing Europe, whereas the UK market can often be a short-haul, last-minute market, which books closer-to-home sailings.

"For us as a company, it gives us a great kind of northern hemisphere/southern hemisphere [dynamic], to be able to think of far-out sales, as well as last-minute sales, have distribution access across different parts of the world.

"I think the cruise lines will love, in terms of the ability to distribute more of their products to different countries with Flight Centre," Kavanagh added.

The FCTG chief said the company has plans to rapidly grow Cruise Club UK, as well as its cruise offering in the country, which is one of the biggest markets for the travel style around the globe.

"It gives us the ability to actually bring to market exclusive products they just can't get anywhere else," he explained.

"We want to make sure that we have [verticals] in categories that we can see as growth categories have got good tailwinds, and they're quite resilient, they can recover quite well, but also that there's strong consumer demand.

"The UK is the number three source market for cruise passengers globally, whereas Australia is number four...they grew up at 15% year-on-year, so a lot of high demand in that space."

**MEANWHILE**, cruise's strong growth potential was called out by FCTG Chief Executive Officer Graham Turner in his address to the company's recent AGM.

'Skroo' said cruise sales are growing strongly, up 31% in Australia last year, and noted potential growth in the Cruiseabout brand. *MS*

## A Legend at ILTM

**WINDSTAR** Cruises' *Star Legend* is sailing to Cannes for two days at ILTM, with the ship set to be open for tours and dining on 03 and 04 Dec.

Vice President of Sales Dianna Rom and Director of Sales Gina McGinnis will be on site at ILTM, with *Legend* to be anchored in the city's harbour, and private shuttles available from the event to the ship.



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## Explora revs up

**EXPLORA** Journeys guests booking the Formula 1 Grand Prix de Monaco 2025 experience will now have access to the exclusive Paddock Club.

The perk is available for guests staying in Ocean Residences and Penthouses on board *Explora II* during the Grand Prix, which will take place from 22 to 25 May.

The ship will be docked in the heart of Monaco's Port Hercule, just steps from the Circuit de Monaco.

Explora will be the only luxury line with a ship docked in Monaco during race days.

The company will be present at upcoming Formula 1 events worldwide, marking a continuation of the MSC Group's two-year long-commitment to the sport (CW 22 Mar 2022).

## Celestyal simplifies fare structure

**CELESTYAL** Cruises is set to introduce a new, simplified fare structure, 'Celestyal One', which will replace its 'Experience' and 'Experience Plus' packages.

The cruise line is also set to introduce a prepaid food and beverage digital wallet, 'CelestyalPay', in what will be the biggest change to Celestyal's sales structure in its history.

The changes will take effect from next month, with Celestyal One to include the cruise fare, complimentary essential wi-fi for all guests, filter coffee, tea, water, and juice throughout the day (6am-10pm), unlimited free soft drinks in the main restaurants with meals, as well as port fees and taxes, and crew gratuities.

The cruise line is also simplifying its drinks offering, with the introduction of CelestyalPay to see the removal of all beverage packages, allowing passengers to



pay for any non-complimentary food and drink purchases with the new digital wallet.

Guests can either add the charges to their account as they go, or be invited to preload their CelestyalPay wallet prior to sailing, which will also attract top-up bonus credit from the cruise line of up to €1,000.

The announcements are coupled with an increase in complimentary eateries, with passengers now able to dine at the Greek Deli or Pizza Oven.

The changes will take effect on all bookings from 11 Dec for cruises departing from 21 Mar.

"We're thrilled to be introducing our new Celestyal One fare

structure and CelestyalPay as a direct response to feedback from our guests and travel agent partners," Chief Commercial Officer Lee Haslett said.

**MEANWHILE**, Celestyal is also set to add 47 staterooms to its newest ship, *Celestyal Discovery*, in the vessel's latest refit.

The additions will see the ship's capacity increase to 1,300, with two new Grand Horizon Suites featuring expansive balconies, positioned above the bridge.

Thirty newly designed Junior Dream Suites will also be added, a new stateroom category on the ship, and 15 further spacious interior Cosmos Cabins.

*Discovery's* Smoked Olive restaurant will also be available as a dedicated dining space for all suite guests.

The refit will include an extra pop-up evening restaurant with a bookable private dining area. *MS*

## We're turning Black Friday **Green**

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**ONE** emperor penguin recently learned how cruise passengers sailing to Antarctica feel, after swimming more than 3,500 kilometres from the White Continent to WA.

The penguin is now being cared for in recovery, with experts believing he is the first of his species to swim such a long distance.

The Australian Department of Biodiversity, Conservation & Attractions said the male penguin, nicknamed Gus, was malnourished when he was first spotted near the coastal town of Denmark.

A local surfer was among the first to spot Gus emerging from the waves on 01 Nov.

"There was this big bird in the water, and we thought it was another sea bird, but then it kept coming closer to the shore - and it was way too big - and it just stood up and waddled right over to us," they said.

## RCI's heroes celebrated



**ENGLISH** celebrity chef Jamie Oliver announced the winners of his inaugural Australian Food Hero Awards yesterday, live from on board Royal Caribbean's *Ovation of the Seas*.

A cavalcade of Oliver's friends, including Dannii Minogue, The Wiggles, Boo Seeka, Jessica Rowe, Tobie Puttock, Julia Busuttill Nishimura, Jessica Nguyen, Narelda Jacobs, and more joined the restaurateur to present the winners, who were chosen from more than 1,200 entries.

The Food Hero Awards celebrate unsung Australians who are positively changing the country's food system.

Categories included Food Educator of the Year, Food

Kindness Award, Food for Movement, Community or School Food Champion, and Food Entrepreneur of the Year.

Winners came from across Australia, including the small Aboriginal Mulan Community in Western Australia; Mooroopna, Victoria; Kalkaringi, NT; Melbourne, Victoria; and South Albury, New South Wales.

They were celebrated for their work in making sure Australian kids are well nourished and supported, often working in incredibly challenging situations with high levels of food insecurity.

Technology partner Wonde also awarded all winners a \$10,000 prize to support their continued growth. *MS*

## More fun for CCL

**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line (CCL) is adding to the fun from both coasts of the United States, opening more 2026/27 voyages from New York City and California.

The cruise line's *Carnival Firenze* and *Carnival Radiance* will sail year-round from Long Beach, while *Carnival Venezia* will continue its seasonal sailings from NYC.

*Venezia* will offer a variety of four- to eight-day cruises, from the Manhattan Cruise Terminal in New York during the ship's 2026 seasonal deployment in the city.

*Firenze* will sail an extensive schedule of short cruises from Long Beach to Mexico over three and four days, while *Radiance* will travel on an array of Mexican Rivera cruises, and several Carnival Journeys cruises to Hawaii.

*Carnival Panorama* will also sail from Long Beach year-round, with guests able to choose from sailings visiting Cabo San Lucas, Ensenada, Puerto Vallarta, Mazatlan, and La Paz.



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