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Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise news, plus a cover wrap from **Crystal Cruises**.

Crystal upgrades

CRYSTAL'S suite dreams upgrade offer allows travellers an exclusive complimentary upgrade by booking now. The cruise line will also add in garment care and dry cleaning across its entire range of suites - head to the **cover page** of today's *Cruise Weekly* for more information.

NT record growth

THE NT is hailing "record-breaking growth" for its cruise sector, which brought in an unprecedented \$181m in total economic output last season. Cunard Line's *Queen Elizabeth* will visit Darwin next week, which the NT said underscores the importance of cruise to its tourism portfolio. "As the Territory gears up for its largest cruise season yet, the cruise sector continues to be a cornerstone of the NT's tourism economy, delivering benefits to local businesses, job creation, and opportunities to showcase the Territory's unique attractions to domestic and international travellers," NT government tourism executive Suzana Bishop said.

RCI's weekends target new-to-cruise

EXCLUSIVE

ROYAL Caribbean (RCI) is evolving its brand position as the cruise line seeks to champion its shorter product and offer a "total holiday/vacation option".

The highlighting of RCI's shorter, getaway-style cruises align with the launch of the line's new ship *Utopia of the Seas* (pictured) earlier this year - billed as the "world's biggest weekend".

Utopia debuted in Jul (CW 17 Jul) with three-night weekend getaways and four-day weekday cruises to the Caribbean from Orlando - a significant shift in strategy for RCI, which historically deployed its older ships on shorter itineraries.

However it is not just the Caribbean where RCI is highlighting its micro-sailings, with more getaway-style cruises in Australia this season (26) than ever before.

Head of Sales Dave Humphreys told *Cruise Weekly* this product is designed to compete with trips to the Blue Mountains, Jervis Bay, and the Central Coast, rather than landmark overseas holidays or winter European escapes.

"There's a big distinction between going travelling and having a break," Humphreys said.

"We're very particular about making sure they're turning on the weekend, and that's helping us, as we cater to a whole new, different group of people,"



Humphreys added.

"What we're seeing around the world is on our short product, seven in 10 people are new to cruise or new to Royal, and 90% of those people get off and want to cruise again."

This makes the target market for Royal Caribbean's weekend product vastly different to the typical cruiser, Humphreys said.

"A lot of these people who are working age, are far less price-conscious than a traditional cruiser, they're shopping around, looking for a deal, and they're much more sensitive to days off [work]," he said.

"It's a totally different booking window, people aren't booking in the wave period for weekend sailings, they're thinking now, mid-Dec, thinking about a little getaway," Humphreys added.

"In the way that Australians

became infatuated with the staycation five years ago, this is really coming to prominence, and one thing we're seeing is big groups of friends, even two couples, going for a special occasion or just for a big weekend," he added.

Royal Caribbean's getaway product is in some means, also designed to compete with consumers' weekend budgets.

"You see the price of a concert ticket or a theatre ticket, and next summer, *Anthem of the Seas* comes to Sydney, and that ship has *We Will Rock You* the musical.

"If you go see a musical at The Star or at Crown, you've got two tickets, you might have a couple of nights at a hotel, you're going to have dinner, and you can get that same experience, all inclusive, on a weekend sailing for a similar price, if not better." *MS*

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Big Easy for CCL

CARNIVAL Cruise Line (CCL) has continued the roll-out of its 2026/27 cruises, with New Orleans and Long Beach voyages aboard three ships.

Sailing from Louisiana will be *Carnival Valor* (pictured) and *Carnival Liberty*, with the two ships to voyage to the destinations in the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, *Carnival Panorama* will cruise to Mexico from Long Beach.

New Orleans sailings will visit popular destinations in the eastern, western, and southern Caribbean, as well as The Bahamas, while Long Beach cruises will sail to Mexican Riviera destinations.

"The sailings we're opening today showcase the diverse array of destinations and itineraries available to our guests," VP Itinerary Planning Fred Stein said.

"We believe variety is essential to allow guests to curate unforgettable cruises as they plan future vacations.

"New Orleans and Long Beach are vital to our homeport strategy, and bring great new options to our guests who sail from each port as we continue to broaden our overall cruise schedule."



Australia is getting *Edge-y*



CELEBRITY Cruises' *Celebrity Edge* has returned to Australia for her second season Down Under, which will run through to Apr.

Edge (pictured) will offer 17 itineraries visiting a collection of 26 ports, including new destinations such as Samoa, Fiji, American Samoa, and Tonga.

Highlights of the 2024-25 season include 11- and 13-night New Zealand voyages, discovering both the North and South islands; a nine-night Australian Wine Cruise, visiting the Barossa Valley, the Yarra Valley, and Tasmanian wine regions; a 13-night Christmas & New Year's cruise, exploring New Zealand's coastlines, fjords, and cities; a 14-night South Pacific adventure, taking in Fiji, Vanuatu, and the Loyalty Islands; and a four-night Tasmania getaway.

Celebrity Solstice will also return

to Australia for two departures from Sydney, on 19 Oct, travelling up to Asia, and 09 Apr, through Fiji and onto Hawaii.

"We're thrilled *Celebrity Edge* will be returning to Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific for a second season, providing guests an unmatched cruise experience designed to connect them closer to the destination," President Laura Hodges Bethge said.

"Celebrity's elevated holiday options are redefining travel, especially in this region where guests can enjoy the Edge-series difference," she added.

The cruise line recently announced *Edge* will spend at least four seasons in Australian waters, with the confirmation the ship will once again join *Solstice* Down Under for the 2026/27 season (CW 02 Oct). MS

Azamara icy return

SMALL-SHIP line Azamara will return to Alaska for the 2026 summer after seven years away, with a season of 'Extended Destination Days' offering 10-plus hours in port.

The season will feature a line-up of itineraries ranging from 10-13 days operated by *Azamara Pursuit* visiting both popular and remote locations.

Highlights of the season will see guests offered the chance to engage with indigenous communities and embark on wildlife-spotting trips to see whales and bears.

Azamara CEO Dondra Ritzenthaler said the return to Alaska came on the back of popular demand for a return.

Itineraries include extended stays in Alaskan ports including Juneau, Wrangell, Skagway and Ketchikan, as well as Nanaimo and Victoria, BC.

Remote ports to be explored include Kodiak, Dutch Harbor and Icy Strait Point, the latter renowned for its whale-watching opportunities.

The line's hallmark AzAmazing Evening event will take place in Ketchikan, with guests able to enjoy locally brewed beers, axe throwing, traditional Tlingit dancing and culinary treats, culminating with a private performance of the Great Alaskan Lumberjack Show to showcase the state's timber industry.



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HURRICANE Milton may have caused the cruise industry plenty of grief, but it upturned lives - and living situations - in the state of Florida too.

One resident of the US' southernmost state returned home after Milton to find an alligator living in his pool.

The man said he was relieved his house was not seriously damaged by the storm, but he was not so enthusiastic about his new housemate.

The alligator is thought to have wandered over from a nearby retention pond, and to have, stunningly, scaled a chain-link fence into the house.

The reptile has now been safely rehomed, and will not be invited back.



RSSC's Prestige moment



THE steel-cutting ceremony for Regent Seven Seas Cruises' (RSSC) *Seven Seas Prestige* heralds a new chapter in the line's history, as construction begins on a new generation for the fleet.

The ceremony took place overnight at the Fincantieri-Marghera shipyard in Venice, and was attended by RSSC President Andrea DeMarco; Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings President & Chief Executive Officer Harry Sommer; Executive Vice President Vessel Operations Patrik Dahlgren; Senior Vice President Newbuild & Refurbishment Alberico Trivellone; and RSSC

Senior Vice President of Hotel Operations Francesco Semeraro, as well as a number of senior Fincantieri representatives.

"*Prestige* represents a new era for Regent Seven Seas Cruises as we once again elevate standards in ultra-luxury, all-inclusive vacations," DeMarco said.

"We are delighted to continue our long-established relationship with Fincantieri, a storied name in shipbuilding," she added.

"This talented team will deliver a ship that transcends luxury, exuding elegance and refinement, while radiating sophistication in every way." *MS*

A HAL of a program

HOLLAND America Line's (HAL) 2026 Canada & New England season features port visits, increased port visits, and added overnights.

Two Holland America ships, *Zuiderdam* and *Volendam*, will offer an extended season in the region from Apr through Oct, with new 'Legendary Voyages' showcasing the grandeur of the region, all the way through to Iceland.

The duo will offer seven-day round-trip departures from Boston, or between Boston and Montreal or Quebec City.

Volendam also sails 10- or 11-day itineraries which delve deeper into the Maritimes and include Newfoundland and New France.

Meanwhile, the 28-Day 'Canada, New England and Iceland Legendary Voyage', cruising round trip from Boston aboard *Volendam*, takes guests north to destinations like Portland and Sydney, explores seven ports in Iceland, and returns westward to visit four more ports of call in Canada.

Discover the all new *River Cruise Special Report*

