



### Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise news.

## Duo becomes a trio

**ANTARCTICA** cruise operator Polar Latitudes has announced a strategic partnership with Chimu Adventures and Nordic Hamburg, opening the door for the three brands to expand their offerings.

Polar Latitudes will add pre- and post-cruise Latin America itineraries, and will also look to advance its low-emission cruising tech.

The United States-based Antarctica operator will also make use of Chimu's upcoming ship *Ocean Nova*, announced when the Australian company partnered with Nordic Hamburg (**CW** 27 Sep).

Polar Latitudes is also planning to further expand into the Australian market.

"We've been searching for the ideal partners to help us expand for more than three years, and now we've found them," Polar Latitudes Chief Executive John McKeon said.

"On so many levels, this new team is going to ensure that Polar Latitudes stays at the forefront of this increasingly competitive marketplace."

Chimu MD Chad Carey said the trio is on the same page of creating "value-led experiences" for its customers.

## Cruise on the up for FC

### EXCLUSIVE

**CRUISE** is playing an increasingly larger role in Flight Centre's (FC) sales strategy, Managing Director Andrew Stark told **CW**, as the agency aims to diversify its product offering.

He said selling more cruise is a goal for the network, particularly as its 'Bundle and Save' promotion hits the market, offering \$500 off bookings.

The new offer is also helping Flight Centre stave off softening demand over the last six months.

"We've started to build this narrative that we want to be famous for flights, plus more," Stark told **CW**, following Flight Centre's recent conference aboard P&O Cruises Australia's *Pacific Encounter*.

"The flight space has become highly commoditised, revenue streams are probably a little bit constrained to where they were years gone by, and when you're famous for flights and predominantly that's a lot of what you sell, you have to look to how you can diversify your product offering.

"We've been doubling down on how we become more of a 'four-plus component' brand: you sell a flight, which is one component, you sell an insurance policy, which is another component, and then you sell a cruise, and you sell a hotel, and you sell an activity."

Early signs from 'Bundle and Save' are "very positive",

Stark said, with Flight Centre's advisors using the promotion as an effective conversion metric, particularly as interest in cruise spikes in Australia.

"We're seeing a number of bookings being converted sooner rather than later, in order to capitalise on the \$500 off per booking, and we certainly see the uptake in cruise cutting through far more than we do in touring, so cruise is a popular product," Stark added.

Helping Flight Centre's advisors more effectively convert on cruise bookings is the company's training partnership with Cruise Lines International Association (**CW** 05 Jul 2023).

"We doubled down on investing in training, so we will probably have about 1,500 fully accredited CLIA consultants the next six months...I'm included in that," Stark enthused.

"[We're] singing from the same hymn sheet, making sure the most senior people in the business are CLIA accredited.

"The training element has been in play now for a year, so we've seen the fruits of that initiative paying off now.

"We know with cruising, you can get it really wrong as well... you put the wrong customer on the wrong cruise, and you have a non-cruiser for life.

"You put the right customer on the right cruise, and you get a cruiser for life," he added. *MS*

## Vic cruise strategy

### EXCLUSIVE

**VICTORIA** is developing its own cruise strategy, Minister for Tourism Steve Dimopoulos has told **CW**, as the state fights its cruise-hostile reputation.

"We're developing a Cruise Shipping Strategy to strengthen the sector even more, so we can maximise the benefits of this important industry," the Minister told **CW** following the release of last week's Economic Impact Assessment, jointly commissioned by CLIA and the Australian Cruise Association (**CW** 18 Oct).

"Victoria's cruise sector... generates an economic impact of \$637 million - up significantly from \$380 million last year, thanks to more ships coming to our state.

"Victoria's visitor economy is sailing ahead, and the cruise industry plays a key role in driving growth, supporting local jobs, and boosting businesses across the state."

The commitment to cruise from Victoria comes as its neighbour SA is set to launch its own cruise attraction working group (**CW** 06 Sep).

A shockwave was felt around Australia last year, when Princess Cruises announced it was pulling out of Victoria due to an ongoing struggle over port fees with the state (**CW** 30 Nov).



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## New Cal praises

**NEW** Caledonia Tourism has praised the resumption of cruising as a decisive step towards stabilisation and “a return to normality”.

The arrival last week of National Geographic - Lindblad Expeditions to the port of Easo in Lifou followed months of halted cruise traffic due to civil unrest across New Caledonia.

The tourism body said further visits scheduled for Noumea and Lifou next month herald a shared desire to boost the local economy.

## Croisi gets hiking

**CROISIEUROPE** has revealed an expanded ‘Cruise & Hike’ program for 2025, with two new itineraries featuring guided walks through local scenery.

New options for next year include a five-night round-trip cruise from Strasbourg departing on 28 Aug and sailing the Rhine Valley, with walkers taking in sights such as the Eberbach Monastery and the Black Forest treetops.

Also new is a four-night sailing from Bordeaux on 13 Oct 2025 along the Gironde, where hikers can trek the banks of an estuary to view traditional fishing villages and walk the Fort Medoc loop.

The new additions take the ‘Cruise & Hike’ itinerary range to eight.

# Fly-cruise is taking off

**EXCLUSIVE**

**AUSTRALIA’S** fly-cruise market is seeing significant growth, with travellers showing an increasing appetite for diverse destinations and immersive experiences.

The observation was made by Helloworld cruise chief Steve Brady, as ships arrive in Sydney for the summer season.

“One key takeaway from the year is that every customer type has a product or experience to suit them on a cruise,” he said.

“Whether that’s couples, families, solos and friend groups, or if they’re looking for a big ship, small ship, expedition or luxury.

“We’re seeing that there is a cruise product for anyone, and the agents having success are the ones matching the right customer to the right cruise,” Brady told *Cruise Weekly*.

The Mediterranean and Japan are becoming top choices for Aussies looking to fly to a new destination to begin their cruise.

“Customers are no longer limited by home port sailings and really, the world is their oyster when they look to their next cruise holiday,” Brady said.

He also noted a sustained interest in land and cruise packages, as well as expedition cruises, which is attracting both experienced cruise passengers and new to cruise.

Australians’ preferences for longer stays has seen a trend of blending cruising adventures

with different travel products, including rail journeys, extended tours, and event-based trips such as attending the Grand Prix.

“This diversification within the cruise market opens up new horizons for Australians looking to enrich their travel experiences by seamlessly combining exploration by sea with other forms of travel,” Brady shared.

“In our wholesale divisions we’ve been able to offer cruises combined with events like the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo and the Monaco Grand Prix, as well as innovative cruise and rail packages in Europe.”

The Helloworld cruise chief has also witnessed customers return to participate in the same cruise or same region.

“It is a demonstration that cruise has such a wide offering of experiences from onboard entertainment to shore excursions that we see people returning to a similar cruise multiple times, as they know the experience is always varied.

“It also shows the strength of cruise as a travel type as we know it is popular from the ‘all taken care of’ aspect,” Brady said, also noting there is still room for the market to grow with agents.

He explained, “there are agents and stores who are still early on in their cruise selling journey and we’re supporting them as they increase their sales in this part of the market”. JM

## On Water Amazon

**ECO-CONSCIOUS** touring brand World Expeditions has chartered *Anakonda* for an eight-day river cruise on the Amazon River in Ecuador.

Operated as part of its ‘On Water Expeditions’ collection, the itinerary is limited to 36 pax in 18 staterooms.

Each cabin features a private bathroom and either a French balcony or private outdoor terrace to enjoy the scenery.

Upper-deck suites also offer an outdoor whirlpool bathtub.

The itinerary takes travellers deep into the white water and black water stretched across the Ecuadorian Amazon to explore jungle trails.

Off-ship activities will include diving, hiking, snorkelling and daily kayak excursions, with guests challenged to catch a sight of the region’s ultra-rare pink river dolphin.

“Our adventures have always sought to safeguard the ecosystems we explore and contribute to the sustainability of travel in the regions we experience,” said World Expeditions CEO, Sue Badyari.

“The *Anakonda* cruise offers our guests the chance to experience the beauty of the Amazon in a way that respects the environment and the indigenous cultures we encounter, and in doing so allows deep connection with nature,” she added.

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## PORTHOLE

**CELEBRITY** Cruises was at the centre of one of the best product placement opportunities in the world yesterday, as King Charles and Queen Camilla visited the Sydney Opera House.

*Celebrity Edge*, which has just returned to Australasian waters for her second Down Under summer cruise season, was conveniently parked just across the water at Circular Quay's Overseas Passenger Terminal, and provided a backdrop for much of the global media frenzy around the royals' visit.

An extended meet-and-greet session on the Opera House forecourt was breathlessly followed live on television (**pictured**), with the ship pride of place in the background.



The departure of *Celebrity Edge* was also exquisitely timed, with the ship moving into shot to block the view of the Sydney Harbour Bridge at about 7.10pm local time - just as British journalists were reporting live on UK breakfast television with the coathanger in the background.

## MSC lives the sweet life



**MSC** Cruises has unveiled a range of new dining and beverage concepts for its forthcoming ship *MSC World America*, with the ship to feature seven distinct onboard "districts".

Among the offerings will be a new-look 'Sweet Temptations' candy store on the main Promenade, building on the concept from *MSC World Europa*.

The updated candy store concept features colourful decor with a make-your-own-sundae bar, Venchi pick'n'm chocolates, hot crepes, waffles and donuts and a bar serving "crazy shakes".

Chocolate lovers can also visit the Jean Philippe Chocolate Cafe concept, already a popular staple on many MSC ships, to create customised chocolate bars.

*World America* will also feature two brand new concepts including the 'All Stars Sports Bar' screening live sport from around the world alongside traditional American food and beverages and interactive games such as darts and digital shuffleboard.

Elsewhere, The Loft will be a new adults-only venue hosting live comedy, duelling pianos and

classic karaoke for night owls.

The ship will also offer the Elixir Mixology Bar - another concept adapted from *World Europa* - and bourbon-based cocktails.

Masters of the Sea will be a traditional British-style pub offering a micro-brewery and signature beers including an IPA and Pilsner made with American hops and desalinated sea water.

Finally, The Gin Project will serve more than 20 craft gins from US and Canadian distilleries, with guests able to use a vintage Crawley's shaker to mix up their own botanical cocktails.

"New experiences await guests throughout *MSC World America*, and when it comes to bars, lounges as well as destinations to grab a sweet treat, we've worked hard to bring something truly unique," said Senior Vice President Shipboard Hospitality Operations Bernhard Stacher.

*World America* makes its debut in Apr next year and will be based in Miami, sailing to the Caribbean with each itinerary including a stop at the line's private Bahamian island, Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve. **ML**



### Cruising by the numbers

**CRUISE** season has begun and for our members around Australia, that means a busy and exciting few months as they welcome guests and crew to our shores.

Last week, in partnership with CLIA, we officially launched the AEC "Value of Cruise" Economic Impact Assessment for 2023/24.

This report talks about the impressive numbers around the value of cruise tourism to our visitor economy which has surged to a record A\$8.43b supporting more than 26,000 jobs.

Most importantly, behind those numbers are a group of hard-working, passionate hotel employees, café owners, bus drivers, greeters, retail workers, tour operators and port employees at our nearly 50 ports.

As a result of the industry's efforts to carefully plan and deliver quality experiences making for desirable cruise line itineraries, the average passenger spend per day onshore last year was around \$A455 and average crew spend was around \$138pp.

Total passenger expenditure was an incredible \$A1.94b which was up 29.6% on last year.

These outcomes also reflect the pre-and post-cruise extensions that are undertaken by passengers seeking further immersion while they are in our country - maybe on an inland rail journey or a visit to our iconic attractions.

We know that cruise travellers often return to destinations they initially discovered during a cruise with a number of long tail economic benefits.