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Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry, plus a cover wrap from **Regent Seven Seas Cruises**.

Riverside AU plans

RIVERSIDE Luxury Cruises has confirmed to **Cruise Weekly** that it will continue its partnership with Luxury Escapes, despite putting boots on the ground in Australia to attract direct bookings from travel agents.

This means agency partners can continue to make bookings through Luxury Escapes or directly with the European cruise line, which appointed a local sales rep earlier this month (**CW** 10 Feb).

Riverside Luxury Cruises, informed **Cruise Weekly** that it will increase its local presence if it continues to attract more customers from the Australian and New Zealand markets, and it will also organise famil trips on its ships this year.

Aqua gets cooking

AQUA Expeditions has revealed its chef-hosted sailings for this year, which will feature menus inspired by each destination's culture.

Renowned Australian chef & restaurateur Benjamin Cross will appear on *Aqua Blu* in East Indonesia, cruising from 23-30 Aug, and serving up 48-hour beef short rib rendang; Balinese suckling pig with bumbu Bali; organic Javanese prawns marinated in fragrant oil and lime; and freshly caught fish grilled with Balinese sambal - **CLICK HERE** for more information.

Meanwhile, Peruvian legend Chef Pedro Miguel Schiaffino will appear on two *Aqua Nera* cruises in Peruvian Amazonia.

Cruise shines at Virtuoso



SEVERAL cruise lines were honoured at Virtuoso's second annual regional awards, which took place during the luxury network's Australia and New Zealand Forum in WA this week.

The event brought together 190 attendees at the Ritz-Carlton, Perth, including owners and managers from Virtuoso's travel agency members in Australia and New Zealand and preferred partners from around the world.

Main Beach Travel's Mike Dwyer (**pictured**) took home the Southern Cross Award, which recognises a member that goes above and beyond in engagement, activism, advocacy, sponsorship and the promotion of Virtuoso in the local markets.

Viking was a big winner on night, taking home all of the partner awards in the cruise categories, including Most Engaged, Top Producer, and Highest Annual Growth.

As for member winners, Travel Associates was named the Top

Producer in the cruise category, which recognises members and partners with the highest overall network sales per category.

"We congratulate the recipients that were honoured with regional awards during our Australia and New Zealand Forum and thank them for their critical role in helping maintain the Virtuoso network's collective leadership position within the industry," said Virtuoso Chairman & CEO Matthew D. Upchurch.

The evening wrapped with the announcement that next year's Forum host destination will be Auckland, New Zealand.

Hosted in partnership with Tourism New Zealand, the 2026 Australia and New Zealand Forum will be held from 25-27 Mar 2026.

Meanwhile, Virtuoso will continue to celebrate its top members and partners around the world at its Global Awards in Las Vegas, which will take place during the annual Virtuoso Travel Week in Aug. *JM*

Upgrade with RSSC

UPGRADE your horizons with Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC), which is currently offering a free two-category suite upgrade, plus a low 7.5% down payment.

Always included in a RSSC cruise are unlimited shore excursions, meals at all specialty restaurants, drinks; in-suite minibar, spa; pre-paid gratuities; unlimited wi-fi; valet laundry service; 24-hour in-suite dining, and more.

Those in a Penthouse suite also receive free butler service, while those in a Concierge suite or higher will enjoy a one night pre-cruise hotel stay - head to the **cover page** for more info.



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New Ayana cruise

AYANA Cruises has announced a three-day, two-night voyage aboard its luxury yacht *Ayana Lako di'a*.

The cruise is the second Ayana has introduced, after debuting a two-day, one-night journey last year (**CW** 18 Mar).

The new cruise will take guests in *Ayana Lako di'a's* nine staterooms on a deeper exploration of Komodo National Park.

Exclusive to the three-day, two-night sailings are additional destinations such as exploring Pulau Taka Makasar's sand dunes, snorkelling at Manta Point, and unwinding on Mauwan Island.

The itineraries also include visits to destinations such as Kalong Island to witness the destination's spectacular sunset fruit bat flight; a visit to Komodo Island for an up-close encounter with the legendary Komodo dragons; snorkelling at the iconic Pink Beach; and a sunset hike on Padar, which offers guests panoramic views.

Both itineraries include full-board gourmet meals, free-flow mineral water, and non-alcoholic beverages, as well as transfers to and from Komodo International Airport, and national park fees.

Guests can also enjoy a wide range of activities such as snorkelling, kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, and yoga.

Cruise on show at LTC event



THE Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) held its inaugural Luxury Travel Event on the weekend, inspiring hundreds of new luxury travellers at the ICC Sydney.

The event is designed to provide a direct-to-consumer engagement opportunity for LTC's partners and members, and inspire high-net-worth travellers to plan and book cruises and holidays.

Lines in attendance included Ponant, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Tauck, The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, and more, together with LTC members Travel Associates, Take Off Go, Travel Experts, Trendsetter, Onboard Luxury, Tailored Journeys, and Ramsgate Travel Service.

LTC General Manager Nikki Glading said the Luxury Travel Event is key to helping suppliers and advisors connect with new clients, offering them a luxurious platform to reengage existing clients and educate them on new product offerings.

"The event provided a fantastic opportunity to gain insight into the destinations discerning

travellers are considering for the upcoming year, enabling LTC to curate an impeccable product range for our members to hand-pick from the finest collection.

"An incredible 71% of our attendees were not currently booking their holidays with a travel advisor, which speaks volumes about the impact events like this have on introducing new clients to our experienced members and partners.

"When you create an environment that is welcoming, inspiring, and filled with those exquisite touches of luxury, like a champagne masterclass, custom fragrance experiences and gourmet creations under the guidance of a celebrity chef, you truly bring the magic of luxury travel to life," she added. **MS**

Pictured are LTC Event Manager Lisa Wright; LTC General Manager Nikki Glading; LTC Head of Marketing Stephanie Bleakley; Global PR & Communications Executive Leisure Alex Lucey; and Luxperience Buyer Manager Lauren Dunemann.

HAL gets fishy

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) is expanding its Morimoto By Sea dining experience with a new sushi bar on five of its ships.

The new concept features a menu by chef Masaharu Morimoto, offering his signature sushi, sashimi, rolls and smaller dishes.

The new sushi bar, adjacent to the Tamarind dining area, will be in addition to the existing Morimoto By Sea pop-up, as well as the stand-alone specialty restaurant on board *Nieuw Amsterdam*.

Morimoto By Sea will seat 12 guests, with additional table seating in the surrounding area on *Rotterdam*, *Koningsdam* and *Nieuw Statendam*.

Eurodam will feature a small counter for sushi preparation, with seating in the surrounding area.

The concept will roll out from Mar through Jun.

"With Chef Morimoto's knowledge and expertise in the sushi world, it made sense for him to expand beyond his Morimoto By Sea restaurant and develop a specialised sushi bar featuring his signature style and flavours," VP Food Beverage & Rooms Michael Stendebach said.

"We're excited to extend our fresh fish options and give our guests access to another specialty venue."

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PORTRHOLE

WHILE some might find them cheesy, towel animals have become an indispensable part of the cruise experience and a fun way to retire for the night after an evening onboard.

They've been part of the Carnival Cruise Line experience since 1991, with cabin stewards expertly crafting quite a menagerie of creatures that look just like the real thing.

Stewards can craft monkeys that guests will find swinging from a clothes hanger in the wardrobe to an elegant swan on the bed, a flying bat suspended from the ceiling or stingrays and elephants hidden elsewhere.

Guests even find a high level of detail involved, with many stewards using paper dots to create facial features.

Carnival has gone even one step further by introducing a towel animal puppet show for children in the main lounge during many sailings.

If cruisers want to learn how to do it themselves at home, the line has published a guidebook on the techniques to make various towel animals and the steps needed to turn linen into a towel zoo.



Agents 'Sail to Scale' on RCI



ROYAL Caribbean's *Quantum of the Seas* is currently hosting a group of Aussie agents from around the country on the inaugural 'Sail to Scale' professional development event.

Hosted by Roslyn Ranse from Travel Agent Achievers and Anna Shannon from Travel Agent Finder, the event combines three days of strategy sessions with networking and time to enjoy the wonders of the ship.

The event has been designed to motivate agents and increase their conversion rate with new business tools including new sales and marketing skills. **ML**

Pictured: The group enjoying the Sail Away Party on the top deck of *Quantum of the Seas*.

Paradise proposals

ROYAL Caribbean is calling for expressions of interest from Bahamian businesses to be part of its new 17-acre Royal Beach Club on Paradise Island (**CW** 13 Dec 2024).

The call is inviting local artists, producers, musicians and entertainers, operators of beach and water activities to submit proposals, along with a restaurateur to develop its new signature dining venue.

Oceania into NE

OCEANIA Cruises will deploy two ships to the New England region for the 2025 summer season, offering voyages in Canada and north to Iceland.

The 1,250-guest *Marina* will offer guests a chance to learn about the local culinary scene via its onboard cooking school.

Separately, the 670-guest *Insignia* will allow travellers to access smaller ports such as Eskifjordur in Iceland.

Together, the two ships will offer itineraries ranging from 11-19 days, with highlights including whale watching and shore excursions to see puffins.

Cruise Calendar

Current ports of call in Australia and New Zealand.

SYDNEY	
<i>Queen Anne</i>	28 Feb
<i>Westerdam</i>	02 Mar
<i>Carnival Splendor</i>	02 Mar
<i>Celebrity Edge</i>	02 Mar
<i>Bolette</i>	03 Mar
<i>Ovation of the Seas</i>	04 Mar
<i>Carnival Splendor</i>	06 Mar
<i>Pacific Adventure</i>	06 Mar

MELBOURNE	
<i>Westerdam</i>	28 Feb
<i>Artania</i>	28 Mar

BRISBANE	
<i>Quantum of the Seas</i>	28 Feb
<i>Pacific Encounter</i>	01 Mar
<i>Queen Anne</i>	03 Mar
<i>Pacific Encounter</i>	04 Mar
<i>Norwegian Sun</i>	05 Mar
<i>Carnival Luminosa</i>	06 Mar

PERTH	
<i>Costa Deliziosa</i>	01 Mar
<i>Azamara Onward</i>	03 Mar

HOBART	
<i>Celebrity Edge</i>	05 Mar
<i>Westerdam</i>	06 Mar

DARWIN	
<i>Arcadia</i>	28 Feb
<i>Coral Geographer</i>	01 Mar
<i>Azamara Pursuit</i>	02 Mar
<i>Viking Venus</i>	03 Mar

TOWNSVILLE	
<i>Amadea</i>	03 Mar

CAIRNS	
<i>Amadea</i>	04 Mar

BUSSELTON	
<i>Azamara Onward</i>	02 Mar

AIRLIE BEACH	
<i>Queen Anne</i>	04 Mar
<i>Queen Anne</i>	06 Mar

AUCKLAND	
<i>Royal Princess</i>	28 Feb