



### CRUISE WEEKLY

On location on board *Celestyal Journey*

Today's issue of CW is coming to you from on board Celestyal Cruises' new ship *Celestyal Journey*.

**TODAY** is our penultimate day aboard *Celestyal Journey*, with our final call in Abu Dhabi, before she concludes her debut season in the Arabian Gulf.

Famil guests will be treated to a shore excursion touring two of Abu Dhabi's most well-known sites, the first being the Qasr Al Watan, the presidential palace of the UAE.

The visit to this brand new building will be followed up by a trip to Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, arguably Abu Dhabi's most famous site, and the UAE's largest mosque.

## Cruiseabout ready to hit accelerator

### EXCLUSIVE

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group's revitalised Cruiseabout brand will open seven new stores and set a new online booking engine live by May, *Cruise Weekly* can confirm.

Speaking ahead of the opening of its first NSW store in the Sydney suburb of Narellan - and its fifth nationwide - Cruiseabout GM Brad Kennedy (pictured) said the new store would tap into a strong market for cruising.

"We have data from cruise lines and from Flight Centre Travel Group that shows there's a lot of customers out there choosing cruise as their form of travel.

"Plus, we've got a really good team ready to go out there, so that's the first store we decided to open," Kennedy said.

While more locations are sourced across Greater Sydney and NSW, Cruiseabout will open its sixth store at Westfield North



Lakes in Brisbane next month.

The new Qld store will join Carindale, in Brisbane's east, with the brand confirming a location in the city's west is being sought.

Store number seven will come in May in Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, with at least four more in the pipeline for the next year.

Kennedy told *CW* the brand has a very strong blueprint.

"We've had 12 months of testing and learning [and] we know what our customers are looking for - we're really happy with where the stores are at."

Kennedy said Cruiseabout's call centre is also tripling in size, with a third team taking calls before the end of the financial year.

"We think that puts us in a really unique place of having that true omnichannel experience where the customer can book online, walk into a retail store, or contact our team through the phone, so we think that gives us a really good competitive edge in market," Kennedy added.

Once online, the Cruiseabout booking engine will see customer interactions served initially with a yet-to-be-named chatbot, with guests easily able to request to speak to a human agent. *ML*

More from Cruiseabout on **p3**.

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

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## Kimberley strong

**SALES** of Seabourn cruises to the Kimberley have been “off the charts” according to Director of Sales Alex Pikardt.

Speaking to *Cruise Weekly* on the sidelines of the Virtuoso Forum in Perth recently, Pikardt backed up statistics from the Virtuoso Lux Report suggesting that adventure and expedition cruise were gaining significant momentum, and that cruise was a big driver of business for member advisors.

“We started out of Darwin in 2024, there was very strong take up straight away and now it’s going from strength to strength - we are pretty much sold out for 2025 or getting close enough to it,” he said.

“[In fact], 2026 is looking incredibly good - we are sourcing a lot of people from the local market, Australia and New Zealand, and it’s almost driving itself,” Pikardt added.

The report named Adventure Cruising as the biggest travel trend for 2025 while Antarctica was named the most popular emerging destination.

Pikardt shared that the momentum with Antarctica for Seabourn backed this up.

“We have both expedition ships down in Antarctica cruising because the amount of interest in the region is off the charts - we have as much capacity down there as we can have,” he added.

## LTC lunches with Murphy



**THE** Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) hosted the latest date in its ‘Leaders Who Lunch’ series, with special guest, AmaWaterways co-owner Gary Murphy, in town from the US.

The luncheon series allows attendees to gain executive-level insights and access to luxury travel leaders from around the world, with the latest event taking place on Wed at Lucia Restaurant in Melbourne.

Murphy captivated guests with the journey of his career, including insights into the evolution of luxury travel.

Luxury Travel Collection General Manager Nikki Glading described Murphy as an icon in the river cruising space, shaping the new era of river exploration.

“His insights and passion were nothing short of invaluable, sparking profound conversations that will no doubt shape the

way we curate high-end travel experiences for our most sophisticated clientele, enhancing an already strong partnership,” Glading said.

“Our members were enthralled by the depth of AmaWaterways’ commitment to delivering tailor-made experiences, from pioneering new routes in Colombia to unveiling bespoke wine sailings designed for connoisseurs with the most refined palates.

“What stood out most, apart from Gary’s natural charisma, was the brand’s unwavering dedication to partnership - its willingness to listen, evolve, and collaborate with trusted travel advisors to ensure guests enjoy an unparalleled level of service, both on board and ashore.” MS

**Pictured:** LTC General Manager Nikki Glading with AmaWaterways guest speaker, Gary Murphy.

## Croisi to Amazon

**A NEW** luxury ship offering a unique eco-tourism experience on the Amazon River in South America is in development, CroisiEurope has announced.

The unnamed ship is the line’s first newbuild since 2020 and will mark the brand’s debut in South America, with a launch date of 2027 now set.

Homeporting in the Brazilian city of Manaus, the ship will cater to 32 passengers across four decks and will measure 49m long by 15m wide, with Amazonian culture reflected onboard via local arts, crafts and designs.

Travellers can embark on a 12-day itinerary navigating the Amazon River up to the Colombian border.

Each of the 16 suites will feature private balconies, with the vessel also featuring two Presidential suites suspended between the sky and water.

Dining will consist of a gourmet Brazilian inspired restaurant, with a sun room and conference room on offer.

Sustainability and environmental protection will be a key component of the ship’s operations, with solar panels in place for the ship to shut down its engines at night and operate on batteries.

Guests will be able to engage in respectful tourism and meet with local communities to share knowledge and stories.

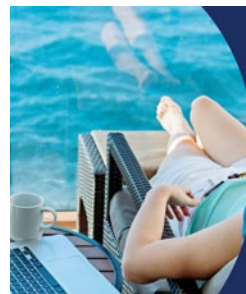
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## Stay Updated

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**CRUISING** is meant to be a serene, relaxing experience... unless you bring a Hollywood movie stunt into it.

US viewers of the 97th Academy Awards were this week treated to a special series of advertisements showcasing Hollywood stuntmen and women in action, albeit set to five major brands.

Among these was Carnival Cruise Line, which featured in the series of 30-second ads alongside L'Oréal Paris, MNTN, Kiehl's and Samsung.

The series paid tribute to the highly dangerous yet essential work performed by stunt actors that make movies so good.

In the Carnival ad, a stunt actor is shown embarking a cruise in a most unorthodox way - by skydiving in and landing in the top deck pool. Check out the ad [HERE](#).



## Narellan set to go cruising



**SHOPPERS** moving between Coles and Kmart at Narellan Town Centre in Sydney's southwest will also now walk past Cruiseabout's first NSW outlet, which opened to customers this week.

The store features digital signage, including a giant screen which will also be used for in-store events and customer presentations by cruise partners.

Team members at Cruiseabout Narellan include former Flight Centre staff who specialised in cruise sales, plus two former Silversea team members.

Since it first opened on Tue this week, the new store is already making bookings, with Celebrity Cruises a particular favourite.

Agents have even fielded queries from travellers eager to see Antarctica with Viking.

According to Cruiseabout GM Brad Kennedy, the new Narellan store is twice the size of the first store in Perth which opened in May last year (*CW* 02 May 2024).

"The demographic of the region has changed quite significantly.

"We're seeing with the census data there's more of an older demographic out there [and] a lot of people own their homes, so there's a lot more disposable income," Kennedy said.

In cutting the ribbon to officially open Cruiseabout Narellan, the brand's Head of Operations, Kelly Neri, said nine out of 10 customers in the region are considering a cruise. *ML*

**Pictured above** are Cruiseabout Narellan team members Jason Rolph, Monique Scott and Lauren Whelan with Store Manager Ash Jurd, Kelly Neri and Head of Product, Brooke Rand.



On Board: *Celestyal Journey*

### Cafe Nation

Celestyal Cruises' new Cafe Nation outpost is the surest sign yet this Greece-based line is going after Australian guests. This relaxing coffee corner serves java most hours of the day, and is new on board *Celestyal Journey*, having been only available aboard fleetmate *Celestyal Discovery* since its inception.

## Cruise Calendar

Current ports of call in Australia and New Zealand.

SYDNEY	
<i>Crown Princess</i>	08 Mar
<i>Pacific Adventure</i>	10 Mar
<i>Regatta</i>	10 Mar
<i>Celebrity Edge</i>	12 Mar
<i>Royal Princess</i>	13 Mar

BRISBANE	
<i>Carnival Luminosa</i>	09 Mar
<i>Quantum of the Seas</i>	10 Mar
<i>Scenic Eclipse II</i>	11 Mar
<i>Regatta</i>	12 Mar
<i>Carnival Luminosa</i>	13 Mar

AIRLIE BEACH	
<i>Norwegian Sun</i>	07 Mar
<i>Pacific Encounter</i>	08 Mar
<i>Carnival Luminosa</i>	11 Mar
<i>Quantum of the Seas</i>	12 Mar
<i>Crown Princess</i>	12 Mar

CAIRNS	
<i>Crown Princess</i>	13 Mar

DARWIN	
<i>Amadea</i>	08 Mar
<i>Queen Anne</i>	10 Mar
<i>Norwegian Sun</i>	13 Mar

BROOME	
<i>Coral Adventurer</i>	11 Mar

ADELAIDE	
<i>Celebrity Edge</i>	07 Mar

HOBART	
<i>Pacific Adventure</i>	08 Mar
<i>Bolette</i>	08 Mar
<i>Regatta</i>	08 Mar
<i>Royal Princess</i>	09 Mar
<i>MSC Magnifica</i>	12 Mar

MELBOURNE	
<i>Celebrity Edge</i>	10 Mar
<i>Royal Princess</i>	11 Mar

BAY OF ISLANDS	
<i>Scenic Eclipse II</i>	07 Mar



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#### EDITORIAL

Editor - Myles Stedman  
Deputy Editor - Matt Lennon  
Journalists - Adam Bishop, Janie Medbury  
Editor-at-large - Bruce Piper  
Publisher - Damian Francis  
Associate Publisher - Jo-Anne Hui-Miller  
[info@cruiseweekly.com.au](mailto:info@cruiseweekly.com.au)

#### ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Head of Sales & Marketing - Sean Harrigan  
Advertising - Laura Aghajanian  
[advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au](mailto:advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au)

#### HEAD OF OPERATIONS & CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Anna Piper

#### ACCOUNTS

[accounts@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:accounts@traveldaily.com.au)

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd  
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia  
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia  
Tel: (AU) +61 2 8007 6760 or (NZ) 0800 799 220  
Tel: (Int'l) 1300 799 220



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