



Cruise Weekly today

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

AKTG secures funds

CRYSTAL Cruises' parent company Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group (AKTG) has secured US\$500 million of financing from multinational investment bank Citigroup to fund its continued expansion. The facility enables AKTG to restructure existing legacy financing arrangements, both consolidating them and achieving better lending terms. This gives the company a clear runway for expansion over the coming years, it said. The funding is part of the 'One A&K' strategy, which is focused on unifying every element of the business and improving the company's end-to-end product.

Virgin adds 'Marvelous' celestial voyages

VIRGIN Voyages has launched its new Marvelous Voyages Collection, including its first-ever Solar Eclipse Voyage in 2026.

The series of "astrotourism" cruises is highlighted by the Aug 2026 Eclipse Voyages, giving cruisers the opportunity to sail toward the path of totality.

The 12- and 15-night voyages stop in destinations such as Dublin, Glasgow, and Reykjavik aboard *Valiant Lady*, and the Amalfi Coast, Mallorca, and Cannes aboard *Scarlet Lady*.

Grandstands outfitted with telescopes and binoculars will transform the ships' upper decks into observation viewing spaces, with astronomers on standby.

Virgin is also introducing special onboard events and appearances during the trip, with esteemed space explorers and scientists to share the magic of the cosmos with guests.



New moon ceremonies, starry symphonies, and cosmic culinary creations, such as 'Milky Way milkshakes', will round out the special programming.

Cruisers will also snag a pair of solar eclipse shades and a commemorative guide.

The Marvelous Voyages Collection also include six other sailings between Mar and Aug 2026, ranging from eight to 16 nights, spanning Iceland, Turkiye, the British Isles, and the Baltics.

Among 12 new ports for Virgin during the season are Salerno, Edinburgh, Stockholm, Hamburg

(pictured), Oslo, Tangier, Greenland, and more.

"We already sail to more than 100 international ports, but our itineraries are ever-evolving based on what our [cruisers] and travel partners are asking for," Chief Operating Officer Michelle Bentubo said.

"We've graduated from only offering short Caribbean escapes and weekender voyages to give our [cruisers] longer itinerary options up to 14 nights at more ports around the world.

"Our Marvelous Voyages, paired with *Brilliant Lady's* epic itineraries across all four corners of the US, just shows the growth and strength of this monumental brand and the choice we are committed to offering."

Sales will open for loyalty members this week, while general inventory will open from next week. *MS*

Regent
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Regent gets Rocky

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises is enhancing select Alaska voyages next year, with a new six-night land program featuring Rocky Mountaineer.

The Regent and Rocky Mountaineer Experience begins as guests step on board Rocky Mountaineer to enjoy two days of all-inclusive GoldLeaf Service, traversing from Banff to Vancouver.

After arriving in British Columbia's most populous city, guests will step on board *Seven Seas Explorer* for a seven-night voyage from Vancouver to Seward.

This experience includes a full-day tour of Yoho National Park, where guests can discover waterfalls, emerald lakes, and national heritage sites, plus an opportunity to discover Banff, in addition to transfers and accommodation.

"A sailing with Regent Seven Seas Cruises is a journey like no other - and the world-renowned Rocky Mountaineer experience is the perfect complement to our destination-immersive adventures in Alaska," the cruise line's President, Andrea DeMarco said.

"Our goal is to craft truly unforgettable moments for our guests...Regent's unique included and unlimited shore excursions offer unrivalled opportunities for exploration.

"We are excited to offer discerning guests the opportunity to elevate their Alaskan adventure to new heights," she added.

Agents explore Fiordland



KIWI cruise company Heritage Expeditions treated agents from Australia and New Zealand to a three-day expedition cruise of Fiordland, ahead of the Tourism Export Council of New Zealand's annual conference.

The lucky 25 agents aboard Heritage Expeditions' 18-guest expedition yacht *Heritage Explorer* visited some of New Zealand's most stunning and hard-to-reach destinations.

The famils were hosted by the line's Australian Sales Manager Chris le Roux and NZ Trade Sales Executive Sharon Salmons on two journeys into the heart of Fiordland's Dusky Sound, which is some 40km long and home to more than 350 islands.

The groups witnessed New Zealand's most significant historic and conservation sites, while taking in majestic scenery, including from above via a scenic helicopter transfer with Southern Lakes Helicopters.

Heritage Expeditions Commercial

Director and Expedition Leader, Aaron Russ, said he was proud to showcase some of New Zealand's most spectacular landscapes to the agents.

"Fiordland is close to our hearts and we were delighted to share our passion for, and knowledge of, this iconic destination which is both historically fascinating and the location of some of world's most stunning, grand-scale scenery," he enthused. *JM*

Pictured: David and Christine Gunning, Capital Travel; Susan and Bob Wilmot, Northshore Travel; Meaghan Wolf, Wolf & Turner Travel Associates; Allannah Free and Chris le Roux from Heritage Expeditions; Trevor Jones, Hawthorne Travel & Cruise; Megan Bishop, House of Travel Taupo; Pam Dewar, World Expeditions; Yula Geredov, Cruise Express; Dennis Elmiger and Tori Keating, XTravel; Liz Murray, Earl & Turner Travel Associates; Sarah Jenkinson and Michelle De Rose Downey, Bucket List Travel.

Princess ups wi-fi

PRINCESS Cruises has improved its connectivity with the launch of MedallionNet Max, a new level of wi-fi.

The cruise line will now offer two tiers of wi-fi service - MedallionNet Classic and MedallionNet Max.

MedallionNet Classic will offer the same service performance, reliability, and global coverage that Princess guests enjoy now, while MedallionNet Max will offer prioritised access to the highest quality and highest performance bandwidth available at sea.

The new service will debut on 31 Aug, exclusively with Princess Plus and Princess Premier bundles.

Pricing for MedallionNet Classic remains \$24.99 per day for a single device plan and \$44.99 per day for a multi-device plan.

ACA responds

AUSTRALIAN Cruise Association (ACA) CEO Jill Abel said the Government's decision to extend the Coastal Trading Act (CW 13 Aug) acknowledges the important contribution that the cruise sector makes to Australia's visitor economy.

"The extension will enable an appropriate time frame for a review of the...Act to take place and provides certainty for cruise line operators to make deployment decisions during this time," she said.

Abel added that ACA will continue to advocate for a long-term solution to the policy.

BEIJING TO SINGAPORE

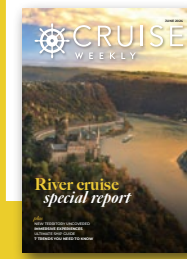
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FRANCE'S Seine River copped a bad rap during the Olympics, so it's in need of a good news story.

Paris' Batobus hop-on-hop-off attraction is inviting travellers to channel their inner child with its new LEGO-themed boat decorated in the famous brand's colours.

Onboard, guests can take part in a variety of LEGO activities, marvel at unique creations while cruising the Seine, with Batobus also slowing to allow a photo opportunity with huge LEGO masterpieces that have been set up on the river bank.

These include a 3.3-metre high recreation of the Eiffel Tower and a 2.5-metre long Notre Dame Cathedral.

Each guest will also receive a LEGO passport and postcard, which can be stamped at a LEGO store where guests will receive an exclusive souvenir.

Fly free with Viking

TRAVELLERS embarking on a river, ocean or expedition cruise with Viking in 2025, 2026 or 2027 can enjoy free airfares from Australia as part of the line's new offer, valid for bookings deposited by 15 Nov.

Viking ANZ Managing Director Michelle Black said the company has taken care of everything so guests can maximise their journey time.

Take it as a good fish...?



IT'S "Norway all the way" for Hurtigruten, which has recently launched a refreshing new campaign platform.

Aiming to cut through the competitive cruise market by fully embracing its 'Norwegianess', Hurtigruten has its sights on differentiating itself from other lines in its messaging and layout.

The concept sees joyful Norwegian idioms in their original language translated and then interpreted from literal to actual meaning, with a backdrop of striking and scenic imagery.

Joint Effort Creative crafted Hurtigruten's new campaign, which has spawned new taglines such as "Å ta det for god fisk", translating to "take it as good fish", which means "to believe something without doubt".

The campaign also recognises Norwegians' love of the outdoors and exploring nature, with the apt saying, "Ut pa tur, aldri sur" - "out on a trip, never grumpy" - tying in with Hurtigruten's focus on authentic, local experiences as part of its itineraries.

The new campaign will launch across a variety of channels, including outdoor, digital, press, and Spotify, spotlighting

Hurtigruten's Original Coastal and Signature voyages.

It will then extend its reach to key global markets such as the UK and North America.

"Being Norwegian flagged, with local staff both on board our ships and leading our shore excursions, we wanted to capitalise on this point of difference and cement Hurtigruten's position as the leading experts in Norwegian coastal cruising," Managing Director Damian Perry said.

"As a visitor immersed in Norwegian culture, you begin to understand and appreciate the wonderful people who bring our voyages to life.

"We wanted to translate that Norwegianess for our market - quite literally - and have subsequently created a series of tactics that we believe will turn heads," he added.

Hurtigruten is also ensuring clients feel "en gladlaks" - like a "happy salmon" - the cruise line is offering savings of up to \$1,200 per cabin on selected Original Coastal Voyages, and up to \$1,400 per cabin on selected premium Signature voyages from now until the end of next month - **CLICK HERE. MS**



Talk the Talk

IT'S conference season and ACA is on the road!

Last week I was honoured to be invited to sit on a panel at **Travel Daily's** inaugural Travel24 conference.

Along with CLIA and a number of cruise line representatives, we looked at the future of ocean cruising, discussing broad-ranging topics from new guest sectors to sustainability, and I was pleased to be able to mention the importance of the work we are doing as a sector with Government around destination management to future proof the sector.

Next stop is the NZCA Conference in Auckland.

During my presentation, I will focus on the 'whole of region' and the impacts each of our neighbouring countries have on the overall success of cruising.

The "tyranny of distance" can be a challenge for cruise ships deploying to our region as well as current infrastructure constraints and regulations.

However, we are also reminded each wave season of the attractiveness of this region for our international guests as well as domestic travellers who enjoy the close-to-home itineraries on offer with the chance to visit world-class destinations at each port of call.

Cruise 360 is on the radar for the end of Aug in Sydney, with a wonderful line-up of speakers again in 2024.

This is followed closely thereafter by ACA's annual conference in Adelaide in early Sep, where our 'Steering Ideas to Success' program promises to deliver a lively exchange of ideas.