



Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features four pages of all the latest cruise industry news, including a photo page from **MSC Cruises** and a full page from **CLIA**.

Join CLIA today

NEXT year's memberships for Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) are now open, helping travel advisors boost their sales.

Agents can join CLIA to expand their cruise knowledge and skills through hundreds of online courses and by attending live and virtual events; earn CLIA certification through the globally recognised training platform; and access valuable tools and downloadable resources in the CLIA Members Hub - see **page 5** for more info.

APT, Travelmarvel unveil new sites

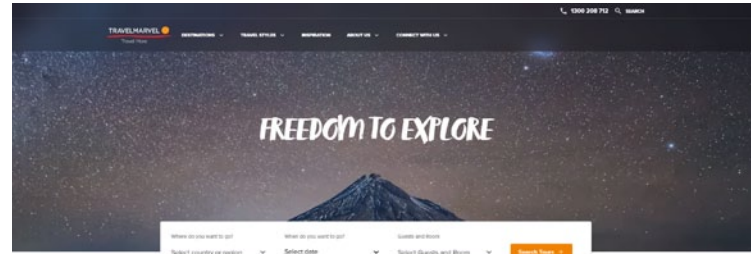
APT Travel Group has unveiled significantly enhanced websites for both its **APT Luxury Travel** and **Travelmarvel** brands.

Key improvements supporting advisors and partners include faster, improved navigation, while itineraries have become more detailed, featuring day-by-day descriptions, complemented by high-quality visuals.

This includes easy access to inclusions, departure dates, and pricing, helping advisors quickly access everything they need.

These new platforms aim to transform the way travel is researched, planned, and booked, offering a seamless, faster, and more visually captivating journey.

A highlight of the refreshed website is its expanded collection of high-resolution imagery and videos, allowing travellers to preview ships, explore destinations, and get a clear



sense of their journey ahead.

There are also refined search options, allowing advisors to quickly match specific client preferences with the right tours, making it easier to find the ideal options for a traveller based on criteria such as dates, destinations, and interests.

The enhanced websites represent APT's ongoing commitment to supporting its

travel agent partners, the tour operator said, while ensuring guests have the inspiration and information they need to plan their next unforgettable journey.

APT has prepared a video guide to help advisors navigate the website's new design and features - watch **HERE**.

Visit the new APT website **HERE** and the new Travelmarvel website **HERE**. *MS*

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Mexico delays fee

MEXICO has delayed the implementation of its US\$42 cruise fee for six months, until 01 Jul (**CW** 03 Dec).

The Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA), leading the sector in its rally against the fee, said more comprehensive measures are required to address broader concerns about what it called the tax's "devastating impact on cruise tourism, Mexico's economy and the livelihoods of its coastal communities".

The fee is 213% more than the average cost at Caribbean ports, the FCCA told the media, which raises "serious questions about the competitiveness of Mexican destinations in the global cruise market".

The FCCA said even a modest 15% reduction in cruise calls to Mexican ports could negate the intended economic benefits of the tax.

"The removal of the in-transit tax exemption - which was provided to our industry over a decade ago for valid reasons that still apply today - was done without our prior input and after the legislation was passed," Chief Executive Officer Michele Paige said.

"It is ironic that until this law was abruptly announced the industry was looking to grow business in Mexico, and now the opposite will occur."

Ponant kicks off in NZ

PONANT has launched its New Zealand season, aboard two of its luxury expedition vessels.

Le Soleal will be joined by *Le Jacques Cartier* in the region this year, for her first season in NZ.

The ships will embark on eight departures through to Mar, visiting 23 ports of call, and offering guests a rare opportunity to discover the hidden treasures of New Zealand and its surrounding regions.

There will also be two sailings down to Antarctica from Dunedin.

Le Jacques Cartier will first sail to New Zealand from Tasmania on 02 Jan, where she will explore both the North and South Islands, before she sets off on a brand-new 15-night voyage, from Auckland to Cairns on 25 Jan.

Highlights of the cruise will include the Bay of Islands, Norfolk Island, and Vanuatu.

Meanwhile, *Le Soleal* kicked off Ponant's NZ season last week, starting with two expeditions sailing south to explore the country's Subantarctic Islands.

Guests will have the opportunity to sail alongside destination experts including ornithologists, and get up close with the wildlife sanctuaries of Campbell Island, the Snares Islands, as well as Australia's Macquarie Island.

Le Soleal's next sailing will be a brand-new 15-night New Year's cruise from the South Island to the North Island, featuring scenic immersion into New Zealand's



fjords, with time spent venturing through Doubtful, Milford and Dusky sounds, as well as visits to Stewart Island, a new destination for Ponant.

The ship will then head north to Akaroa, Kaikoura, Wellington, the Bay of Islands, and Auckland, making a number of calls along the way.

Ponant will venture even farther south in Feb, offering a once-in-a-lifetime 21-night expedition to Antarctica, sailing round trip from Dunedin aboard *Le Soleal*.

The itinerary will travel with lecturer and guide Jonathan Shackleton, descendant of Ernest Shackleton, and historian Lucy Scott, great-granddaughter of Robert Falcon Scott.

"We are proud to continue our operations in the region with this new summer season," Chief Executive Deb Corbett said.

"Our included shore excursions and tours are providing guests with authentic NZ experiences and continue to contribute to support local communities and their economies," she added. *MS*

Delaney to Virgin

CRUISE sales heavyweight John Delaney will lead a revitalised international sales force for Virgin Voyages into 2025 as part of a reshuffle at the cruise line.

A former sales executive for a number of leading cruise lines, Delaney has joined Virgin as its new Senior Commercial Advisor, and will spearhead the brand's sales activities in all markets globally.

Virgin has also named Matt Lebborn as its new Director of Sales, Europe & New Markets, who has hit the ground running by helping the line establish sales efforts in 11 new European countries.

Delaney's team also includes Kayleigh Hilton, who joined earlier this year as Business Development Executive.

"These exciting updates to our sales organisation are designed to strengthen our footprint, support our growth and continue our international expansion," Chief Executive Nirmal Saverimuttu said.

The cruise line will also seek to unify trade sales worldwide under Luke Day, recently appointed as Senior Manager, Global Trade Engagement.

Delaney's appointment follows the departure earlier this year of Shane Lewis-Riley (**CW** 18 Sep), who spearheaded Virgin's launch in a number of global markets.



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Tue 10th December 2024

MSC Cruises hosts trade partners in the Med

A GROUP of travel partners recently enjoyed all that the Western Mediterranean and MSC Cruises has to offer on a seven-night cruise on board the cruise line's World-Class ship, *MSC World Europa*.

Cruising from Barcelona, calling to Marseille, Genoa, Civitavecchia, Palermo and Malta, the group hosted by MSC Cruises' Aaron Eilers and Michelle Warren, were treated to specialty dining, Aurea Spa treatments, shore excursions in Portofino, shows and entertainment, multiple bar venues, dining experiences, the F1 simulator, waterslides, and more.

Travel partners were also able to experience the MSC Yacht Club with a tour and aperitif in the lounge where they found out all about the features and benefits of MSC Yacht Club, the line's luxury "ship within a ship" concept. MSC Cruises will be delivering its next World-Class ship, *MSC World America*, in Apr next year, when she will sail in the Caribbean from Miami.

MSC Cruises offers flexi porting, which means a guest can choose their own embarkation port to match their holiday needs and disembark at the same port, to provide full flexibility for guests.

Michelle Warren, Marketing Manager for MSC Cruises in Australia says, "we are thrilled that we were able showcase our gorgeous World-Class ship, *MSC World Europa*, to our valued partners during Nov in the Western Med - the sea was calm, the weather lovely and the Christmas markets were just so beautiful to see; it makes cruising in Europe at this time of year just a wonderful experience and for our partners it is the best way to fully experience the MSC Cruises European hospitality and the quality of our ships. We look forward to hosting more partners on board in 2025".



MICHELLE Warren, Josh Duncan, Aaron Eilers, Anne Calder, Delia Trainou, Lizzie Brett, Margaret De Vries, and Sarah Lee.



ENJOYING the local food and wine in Palermo, Sicily.



DELIA, Josh, Anne, Michelle and Margaret with *MSC World Europa*.

EMBARKATION to *MSC World Europa* from Barcelona.



CHEERS at Aperitif in The Yacht Club.



AARON, Michelle, Anne, Josh, Lizzie and Delia in Palermo, Sicily.



THE weather did not dampen the excitement of exploring on our shore excursion from Genoa.



MICHELLE, Margaret and Lizzie exploring Marseille.



MARGARET De Vries, MTA, enjoying the gorgeous *MSC World Europa* promenade.



THE famous Swarovski stairs in The Yacht Club.



ENJOYING the local food at Portofino.



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CRUISE lines don't always ace their marketing efforts, and what can seem like a good idea at the time can often turn out to be a bad idea after the fact.

Virgin Voyages admitted as much, with CEO Nirmal Saverimuttu telling *The Telegraph* the line made "some mistakes" upon its launch.

In an effort to promote its adults-only onboard environment, the cruise line provided passengers aboard *Scarlet Lady's* maiden voyage in 2019 with a kit of sex toys, including a vibrator, condoms, and vegan lubricant.

The controversial move was part of an effort to appeal to millennial tastes, which included a tattoo parlour, drag acts, 80s-inspired workouts, and a dating coach.

Other "mistakes" now no longer on board include a "participatory" sex-themed show with simulated fellatio.

ACA toasts most successful year yet

THE cruise sector's 'who's who' gathered last week at the Sydney Opera House, as the Australian Cruise Association (ACA) celebrated the end of another successful year.

ACA Chair Phil Holliday welcomed guests to the Opera House's new restaurant, Midden by Mark Olive, where he spoke of the many achievements of the Association this year, which has grown to its highest number of members in 2024.

Guests from various sectors of the industry, including many of the cruise lines, ports, attractions, and destinations, attended the event, which showcased Mark Olive's delicious indigenous culinary offerings against a stunning Sydney backdrop.

The Association has hosted numerous cruise-ready workshops around Australia this year, and has been represented at several key domestic and international events.

A number of these saw Chief Executive Officer Jill Abel feature as a speaker, including Aug's *Travel24*, hosted by *Cruise Weekly's* sister title *Travel Daily*



(*CW* 09 Aug).

ACA also staged its own conference in Adelaide (*CW* 05 Sep), which attracted record attendance, while the Association has been invited to sit on key industry working groups, including the one announced recently by the Government of New South Wales, which will deliberate on a third terminal for Sydney (*CW* 14 Oct).

"The industry continues to go from strength to strength, even in these challenging times," Holliday told attendees.

"We increased our advocacy with peak participation in the *Coastal Trading Act* review, the National Visitor Economy Group, the South Australian Cruise Attraction Working Group, the New South Wales Cruise Industry Advisory Panel, [and] the National Sea Passenger Facilitation Committee," he added. *MS*

Pictured is Abel with Cruise Lines International Association Hall of Famer Ted Blamey and Carnival Corporation Director of Nautical Operations Australia Michael Drake.

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