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Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news, plus a cover page from **Viking** and a full page from **Aurora Expeditions**.

Explore with Viking

THE Viking Explorer sessions are coming to Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, and the Gold Coast in Feb and Mar.

The events are open to travel advisors and travellers to learn about the world of Viking and walk away with a new booking - see **cover page** for more info.

Go wild with Aurora

GO WILD with your bucket list with Aurora Expeditions.

Explore the cruise line's top 10 wild experiences on **page 4** of today's **CW**.

Cutting *Icon's* perception down to size

WHILE Royal Caribbean may be on the precipice of launching the world's largest cruise ship in Miami, *Icon of the Seas*' towering shadow should not be the biggest takeaway for travellers, President & Chief Executive Officer Jason Liberty has clarified overnight.

Speaking at a media briefing aboard the ship, Liberty explained the immense scale of *Icon* is a product of the design team wanting to take experiences to a new level rather than accomplishing the mantle of the world's largest cruise ship.

"*Icon* actually has fewer cabins than *Utopia of the Seas* (due to launch later this year) and so for us the focus really has been on experiences," Liberty said.

"The square footage per passenger is higher [with *Icon*] and the construction of the different neighbourhoods and being able to segregate the



different multigenerational passengers was really the broader focus for us," he added.

While acknowledging that *Icon*-class vessels are larger than its Oasis-class ships, Liberty said the latest design is actually seeking to create more space per passenger in public areas than previous incarnations of Royal ships.

"We're not trying to hide the size of the ship - it's obvious - we're just trying to focus things on the experience that we are building on and incorporating more public space per person."

The 5,610-pax vessel boasts eight themed neighbourhoods catering to the whims of all generations, as well as more than 40 eateries, six waterslides, 16 pools, 2,805 staterooms, and a wide range of shows themed across air, ice and water.

MEANWHILE, Liberty was announced as CLIA Chair for 2024-2025 on the weekend - more on **page 3**. **AB**

Pictured: Royal Caribbean International Chief Executive Officer Michael Bayley with Liberty at the *Icon* media briefing.



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CCL's heart grew three sizes that day

CARNIVAL Cruise Line's (CCL) 'Grinchmas in July' sailings are returning this year, for their second season on board *Carnival Splendor* (CW 14 Aug 2023).

Grinchmas in July sailings will depart from Sydney starting from 24 Jun's 10-night cruise to the South Pacific.

The Grinch will also make an appearance aboard *Splendor's* 04 Jul four-night sailing to Moreton Island, 08 Jul's nine-night sailing to the South Pacific, and round out with 17 Jul's four-night sailing to Moreton Island.

The cruises will bring the very best of Christmas in Jul traditions to the seas, allowing Australians the fun of a winter Xmas.

Throughout the four sailings *Splendor* will be transformed into a magical winter wonderland, including a giant Christmas tree with glittering lights and baubles; Xmas-themed beverages; and



speciality dining items; as well as a dusting of winter 'snow' in the ship's atrium.

The festive glee on the sea continues with Christmas carolling, holiday games, trivia, arts & crafts, a 'Jingle Bell Jam' soundtrack, and a screening of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* at *Splendor's* Dive-In Movies.

There will even be an ugly Christmas sweater night and festive outfit competition.

The sailings form part of CCL's ongoing Dr Seuss partnership and its Seuss at Sea offerings,

including the Green Eggs and Ham breakfast, Seussapalooza, and Seuss Storytime.

"Due to the sell-out success of our inaugural Grinchmas in July sailings, we're bringing the festive cheer back and this year it's going to be even Grinch-ier with more fun for the whole family," Vice President Kara Glamore said.

"Grinchmas in July is exclusive to *Carnival Splendor* and is an extension of our Dr Seuss partnership, which we are so excited to continue into 2024," she added. *MS*



On location on board
Icon of the Seas

Today's issue of CW is coming to you courtesy of Royal Caribbean International.

THE second day aboard a special *Icon of the Seas* preview sailing has revealed plenty of the blood, sweat, and tears that were invested by RCI's design team to come up with its latest line of Icon-class vessels.

This morning we were treated to a news briefing with top executives Jason Liberty and Michael Bayley, who relayed some of the biggest selling points and challenges associated with *Icon*.

Special immersion sessions have also been running to give pax a deeper understanding of all products and services.

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PORTRHOLE

ROYAL Caribbean International's new ship *Icon of the Seas*, which **Cruise Weekly** is aboard this week, has just made a very important appointment to its staff.

Icon has recently been joined by her Chief Dog Officer, Rover, who is an adorable Golden Retriever pup.

Rover's role is fairly simple - bring joy and happiness to fellow crew members and guests - and she does it with the help of her owner, an Aussie woman named Alison.

Pictured: Rover and Captain Henrik Loy keep a keen eye for any cats on the horizon.



RCG's Liberty new CLIA Chair

JASON Liberty has been announced as Cruise Lines International Association Chair for 2024-2025.

Royal Caribbean Group's President & Chief Executive Officer succeeds MSC Cruises Executive Chair Pierfrancesco Vago, who has served in the role since Jan 2021 (**CW** 22 Jan 2021).

Liberty has also been a member of CLIA's Global Executive Committee since Feb 2022.

"I am excited and honoured to lead this organisation as we enter a new era of cruising," he said.

"With consumer demand continuing to accelerate, we are doubling down on our commitment to decarbonisation and sustainable growth, ensuring that we are not only investing in our oceans and communities, but preserving them for generations of travellers to come.

"I look forward to working with CLIA leadership and our partners around the world to further position cruise vacations as an accessible and responsible option for today's travellers that create positive ripple effects across the globe," Liberty added.

President & Chief Executive Kelly Craighead welcomed Liberty to the role, and thanked Vago for his leadership as Chair over the past three years, during which he navigated "challenging times and creating a solid foundation for the industry's future growth".

"On behalf of the CLIA community including ocean, river, and specialty cruise lines, suppliers, business partners, travel advisers, and agencies, I would like to congratulate Mr Liberty on his appointment as CLIA chair," she said.

"Liberty assumes the chairmanship at a time when the industry is building on the momentum of strong demand and our members are advancing ambitious sustainability initiatives in pursuit of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

"[He] is a highly versatile and strategic leader who will help us build on this resurgence of travel and realise our global operating ambitions," Craighead added.

Liberty became RCG President & CEO in early 2022, following a career spanning nearly two decades in the cruise industry. *MS*

A-ROSA a-raises

A-ROSA Cruises has been supporting charitable projects recently, with the line's New Year's Raffles raising €15,000 for good causes.

The lotteries took place on board A-ROSA's ships in the Rhine and Danube.

They will see €5,000 each go to the Rostock Animal Welfare Association and the affiliated Rostock-Schlage Animal Shelter, the Rahe Family Foundation, and the Rostock Homeless Aid Organisation.

"This year, once again, we greatly appreciate the generous participation of our guests in the draws," Chief Executive Officer Jorg Eichler.

"Social commitment is of great importance to us and our guests...thanks to their readiness to donate and the dedication of our employees, we can again support important social causes in Rostock, our hometown," Eichler added.

Raffle participants had the chance to win an A-ROSA river cruise, as well as other travel vouchers and prizes.



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