



Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features four pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

Greece cruise limits

GREECE'S Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has said the "time has come" to restrict cruise ships, and consider limits or restrictions on the number of cruise visitors.

The restrictions could start next year, Mitsotakis told *Bloomberg*, causing shockwaves in the cruise industry, and sending the price of cruise stocks tumbling.

Mitsotakis said restrictions might take the form of limiting the number of berths, or establishing a bidding process for cruise lines to gain slots, such as in other destinations like Glacier Bay National Park.

Greece has struggled with tourism demand since COVID.

Royal Caribbean arrives at *Utopia*

ROYAL Caribbean International is saying "cheers to the weekend" as *Utopia of the Seas* officially joins its fleet.

The new ship, billed as "the ultimate short getaway", is getting ready for her debut next month from Port Canaveral.

The Chantiers de l'Atlantique handed Royal Caribbean the keys to *Utopia* at its shipyard in Saint-Nazaire, following more than two years of construction.

Royal Caribbean Group President & Chief Executive Officer Jason Liberty, Royal Caribbean International President & Chief Executive Michael Bayley, and Chantiers de l'Atlantique GM Laurent Castaing hosted more than 1,600 crew members and workers, who came together to mark the handover in *Utopia's* signature AquaTheater (pictured).

The ship will now make her way to the United States as the



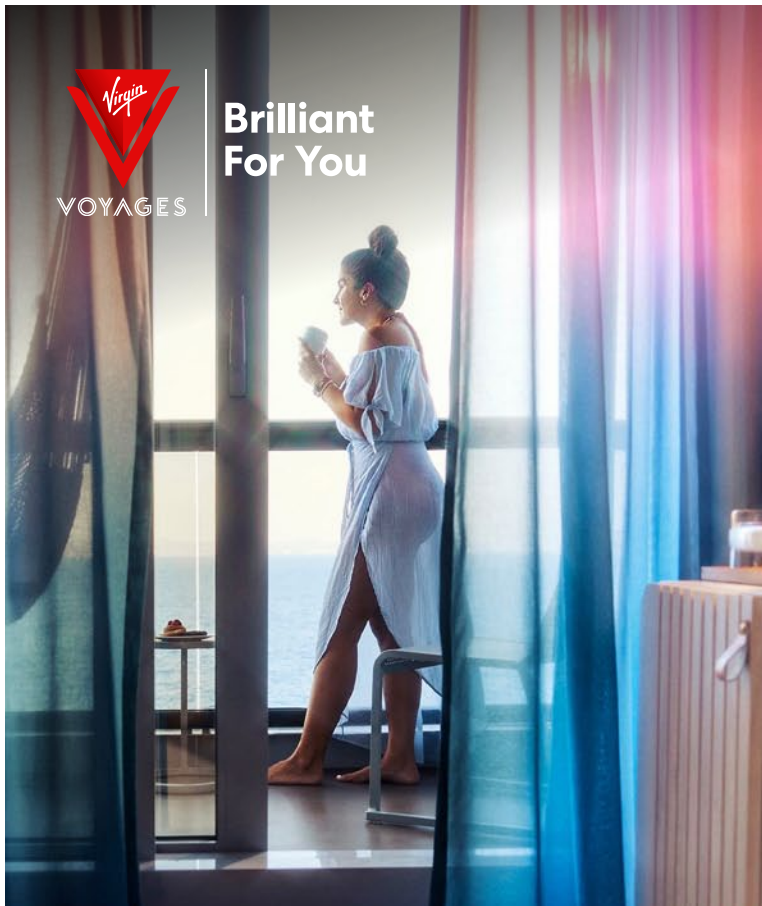
Royal Caribbean team makes the finishing touches to get her ready.

Utopia will sail three-night weekends and four-night weekday getaways when she debuts on 19 Jul.

"Taking delivery of *Utopia of the Seas* is an incredibly important milestone, as it marks yet another evolution of our game-changing ships and our mission to create

the best vacation experiences responsibly," Liberty said.

"From the ultimate multi-generational vacation on this year's earlier debut of *Icon of the Seas* to now the ultimate weekend getaway on *Utopia of the Seas*, we are laser-focused on delivering a variety of vacation options and priceless memories for our guests." MS



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Explora II ready for inaugural voyage

EXPLORA Journeys' second ship *Explora II* has completed her successful sea trials, and will start sailing on 11 Aug for her maiden journey from Barcelona.

The ship is the second in a fleet of six to be built for Explora by Fincantieri, and will now cruise the western Mediterranean.

Itineraries will feature distinctive ports such as Portofino, Porto Cervo, Saint-Tropez, Calvi, Mahon, Monte Carlo, and more.

Journeys start at seven nights and can extend to 14 or 21 nights, all departing from easily accessible ports, such as Barcelona, Spain, and Rome.

"The launch of *Explora I* last year was the realisation of a long-held family dream to offer guests an unmatched luxury at sea experience," MSC Group Cruise Division Executive Chair Pierfrancesco Vago said.



Guests can enjoy elegant suites with a private ocean-front terrace, unlimited premium beverages, high-speed wi-fi via Starlink connectivity, vibrant entertainment, and more.

Explora II also offers three outdoor pools, one indoor pool with a retractable roof, one

indoor hydrotherapy pool, and 64 private cabanas.

The vessel features shore-to-ship power connectivity, allowing the ship to minimise engine use at ports where available.

Explora also recently announced a partnership with the 37th America's Cup (**CW** 28 May). *MS*

TUI ship delivery

TUI Cruises has taken delivery of its methanol-ready *Mein Schiff 7*, which shipyard Meyer Turku delivered to the line last week.

Mein Schiff 7 is the seventh ship of her namesake series built at the shipyard, and is the first in the TUI fleet to run exclusively on low-emission marine diesel, with maximum sulphur content of 0.1%.

The ship has a shore power connection and is built so she can also run on methanol, with a view to making *Mein Schiff 7*'s propulsion almost carbon dioxide-neutral.

The ship is the first vessel with methanol capability built at the Meyer Turku shipyard.

Following the delivery, *Mein Schiff 7* sailed to Kiel, where she welcomed her first guests on board on 12 Jun, TUI Chief Executive Wybcke Meier said.

- Hailing a cab in NYC
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Celebrity Xcel-erates on new ship

CELEBRITY Cruises' *Celebrity Xcel's* keel-laying ceremony took place at the Chantiers de l'Atlantique shipyard in Saint-Nazaire last week.

The latest addition to Celebrity's Edge Series will be the fifth ship in the class, and is scheduled to sail next year.

The event was attended by Royal Caribbean Group President & Chief Executive Officer Jason Liberty, Celebrity President Laura Hodges Bethge, and Chantiers de l'Atlantique GM Laurent Castaing, who watched the first 739-ton steel block for the new ship lowered into the dry dock.

Executives from the cruise company and the shipyard placed newly minted coins on the first piece of steel, to bestow good luck on *Xcel* during her construction and future sailings.

"Today, we not only mark the start of construction, but we are



laying the foundation on which countless memories will be created," Liberty said.

"Each new ship also represents an opportunity to advance our journey to net zero, and with *Xcel*, we are building our first methanol-capable ship, which helps advance our transition to the energy platform of the future," he added.

Xcel will make her debut in Nov

2025 in the Caribbean, sailing her inaugural season from Fort Lauderdale, on seven-night itineraries alternating between the Bahamas, Mexico; and the Cayman Islands, Puerto Plata, St. Thomas, and St. Maarten.

The sailings are now open for booking now. *MS*

Pictured: those involved in the design and construction of *Xcel* celebrate her keel-laying.

Celestyal's new

CELESTYAL Cruises has announced a new contact number and operating hours for Australian customers.

The cruise line's new contact number is (+61) 1800 648 737.

It will be available during the new operating hours of Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm.

Celestyal announced earlier this year it will expand to year-round operations, adding Persian Gulf destinations.

It will be the biggest-ever change to the Piraeus-based brand's operations.

The all-new seven-day Persian Gulf itinerary will launch in Nov, and run from Jan to Mar, marking the first time Celestyal has sailed during the northern winter.

The Desert Days itinerary, cruising aboard *Celestyal Journey*, will visit four new countries and six new ports.

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IT IS a hard job parting a British person and their tea, with MSC Cruises recently launching what should prove to be a major leg-up in the United Kingdom market.

MSC has launched the first 'Tea Library at sea', which is filled with nearly 100 types of tea, such as PG Tips, Tetley, Clipper, Yorkshire Tea, Twinings and even private label brands.

The Tea Library is also filled with dozens of varieties of milk, sugar, sweeteners, mugs, cups, teapots, tea cosies, and other tea paraphernalia.

Three-quarters of British travellers declare tea never tastes the same abroad, which has left 51% bringing their own tea bags when they leave England, and 37% going as far as bringing their own kettle, mug, and even their own sugar bowl - that is despite the fact, tea did not originate in the United Kingdom.

Cruise borders simplified?

THE Australian Border Force (ABF) wants trials to simplify trans-Tasman travel expand to involve cruise, Commissioner Michael Outram told the Tourism & Transport Forum's Outlook Tourism Conference last week.

The ABF, along with a working group made up of travel stakeholders, is currently trialling contactless outbound travel, working with airlines to collect the data required for Australia's incoming passenger card through a mobile app.

This would then be securely transmitted to immigration, and see travellers pass through a SmartGate without even showing their passport.

Outram said the ABF is going to recommend the trial expands to include cruising.

"The cruise industry does a lot of things in the United States around pre-clearance of passengers [and] biometrics, that I think would be really useful across the trial of our region," Outram said.

"We're going to recommend the trans-Tasman trials expand to include cruise."

The goal would be the elimination of the much-maligned incoming passenger card, which passengers have been promised would be retired many times.

"We're also thinking about inbound contactless [travel and] if we can get rid of the inbound passenger card [and] collect that data before you travel," he added.

Outram said if the ABF and Australia's inbound industry does not further digitise in the next decade, the risk profile presented will be far harder to manage, as the country faces a projected 50% increase in travellers over the next decade.

"We're never going to get thousands more officers [and] government budgets are tight, so how are we going to manage that increase in travellers?"

Outram said travellers are not going to want to line-up at airports or cruise terminals.

"If we're not digital by then, it'll be very hard to manage that risk manually...it really is about the data, it's about AI driving a lot of our decision-making...so the vast majority of low-risk travellers can come straight through." *MS*

Seabourn groups

SEABOURN Cruise Line has introduced Enhanced Groups Programs for travel advisors, which have been crafted to elevate business prospects for agents, improve communication, and simplify the booking process.

Key features of the enhanced program include a revised Tour Conductor Credit, the shipboard credits or bonus commissions for bookings, the elimination of deposit requirements for smaller group allotments, and expanded group capacity.

The program is effective for all groups for voyages sailing autumn 2025 and beyond, offering those who book nine full fare guests the 10th at a reduced fare.

The new Accelerated Tier provides an expanded list of select voyages that allows the booking of seven full fare guests with the eighth guest sailing at a reduced fare.

Seabourn's new simplified Tour Conductor Credit calculates the weighted average of all fares paid.




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Cruise Weekly is part of the Business Publishing Group family of publications.

Cruise Weekly is Australasia's leading travel industry cruise publication.

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