



Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news, plus a full page from **Disney Cruise Line**.

No CW on Mon

THERE will be no issue of **Cruise Weekly** published on Mon, as New South Wales, South Australia, and ACT observe Labour Day, and Queensland celebrates the King's Birthday.

The next issue of **CW** will be published on Tue.

TM Asia cruises

TRAVELMARVEL'S Vietnam and Cambodia program for 2025/26 is out now.

One of the highlights of the program is the 12-day 'Essential Vietnam & Cambodia', which begins in Siem Reap with a sunrise visit to Angkor Wat.

Guests then board a seven-night Mekong cruise on *Apsara*, where they will enjoy exploring local villages like Angkor Ban and Silk Island, discover Phnom Penh's history through visits to the Killing Fields and Royal Palace of Cambodia, and more.

There is also a longer 16-day 'Discover Vietnam & Cambodia', which begins in Hanoi and adds a cruise in Ha Long Bay on *Bhaya Classic*.

Ponant's flexible strategy

PONANT is experimenting with a range of strategies to deliver its passengers with the best possible experience in the Mediterranean, as the cruise industry grows and fears of overtourism increase.

One of Ponant's most experienced captains, Thomas McCandless (**pictured**), has noted the sharp increase in competition in the Mediterranean, which has brought about tensions during peak season.

As destinations such as Greece implement measures including new levies on cruise tourism (**CW** 12 Sep), McCandless said Ponant is taking novel approaches in popular destinations like Santorini and Napoli, which include skipping calls altogether.

McCandless, who served as Ponant Fleet Captain during the COVID-19 pandemic, told **CW** the cruise line backs its skippers to make decisions which they believe are in the best interests of their passengers' experience.

"We've had some complaints from our guests, and we've decided to review our itinerary, and sometimes skip those places, and redesign with the expertise of our local captains," he said.

"We've also got autonomy within Ponant that the captains have...if we are not happy during the season, we've got that possibility to adjust the itinerary."

In certain destinations, Ponant has acquired exemptions which allow its ships the possibility



to arrive early and depart late, giving captains further flexibility to modify an itinerary to improve passenger experience.

"If the captain says, with his onboard team, that it was not a great experience, they will understand, and we are ready to explain to our guests why we would adjust either the arrival time or the itinerary itself," McCandless said.

"We've got so much good feedback from the other options, the alternatives that we've set up, so maybe we will come back to Santorini, but I don't think in the peak of the season," he added.

McCandless, who currently serves as Captain of the Kimberley-based *Le Laperouse*, said the arrangements in place in northern Western Australia are ideal for managing demand in a popular cruise region.

"The way that we arrange to not be in the same place at the same time seems to work well, even if the competition is growing, as long as everyone is expecting this communication and gentlemen's agreement between the operators," he said. *MS*

Disney Magic Ahoy

WHAT can you do aboard Disney Cruise Line's Magic Ahoy virtual cruise - quite a lot, it turns out.

Virtual cruisers can enjoy fun new activities every day, collect Mickey stamps to win prizes, and more - head to **page 4** for more info.

Rodriguez is out

ATLAS Ocean Voyages has announced a leadership transition, which will see James Rodriguez (**pictured**) step down as President & Chief Executive Officer at the end of the year.

Rodriguez has led Atlas through a period of substantial growth over the past two years, redefining luxury expedition cruising while expanding the company's footprint both in North America and internationally.

Atlas said it aims to name a successor by 2025.

The cruise line has been enjoying record sales of late, with bookings reaching unprecedented levels back in Jun (**CW** 18 Jul).

Atlas is represented in Australia by general sales agent Cruise Traveller.



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Hurti new voyage

HURTIGRUTEN is introducing a new Signature Voyage, 'Savour the Northern Lights', which explores Scandinavia by land and sea.

Passengers will embark along Norway's coast, travelling through the Lyngen Alps, Bothnian Bay, and more, over 14 days aboard *Trollfjord*.

Guests will also be able to enjoy a stay in a glass igloo to experience the Northern Lights, embark on a husky safari, and relax in Seaside Glass Villas in Kemi.

The all-inclusive cruise is priced from \$9,290, with nine departures between Nov 2025 and Mar 2026 - [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

Virgin 70% off

VIRGIN Voyages is offering 70% off the second passenger, as well as up to \$760 off for 2025 and 2026 cruises.

The 70% off deal is available on all cruises, including Virgin's brand-new itineraries.

The offer is available to book until 11 Oct, and those paying in full at the time of booking can get up to \$760 for any cruise which sails in '25 or '26.

The deal is available for cruises sailing through to 10 Aug 2026.

The offer can be combined with a number of other Virgin promotions - for more information, [CLICK HERE](#).

AmaMagdalena delayed



AMAWATERWAYS has pushed back the debut sailing date for its new river ship *AmaMagdalena* until next year (**CW** 23 Mar 2023).

Originally set to begin operating in South America in 2024, the cruise line said guests won't be able to experience the newbuild until next year, with the inaugural sailing now scheduled for 15 Mar.

The extra time will allow AmaWaterways to "finalise the essential infrastructure" necessary for the vessel to navigate Colombia's Magdalena River, which the brand says is a new destination for river cruising.

"This is the first time a major river cruise line is offering a journey of this nature on the Magdalena River," AmaWaterways co-founder & President Rudi Schreiner said.

"We've encountered challenges that are simply part of being pioneers; opening a new river to the world is not easy, but it's exactly these kinds of bold steps that allow us to offer our guests new experiences."

The launch of *AmaMelodia*, the company's second ship on

the Magdalena River, remains on schedule for Jun.

AmaWaterways said it is in talks with local communities and officials to develop the necessary infrastructure along the Magdalena River.

Nine custom-designed excursion boats will allow guests to explore secluded areas rich in biodiversity, opening up parts of Colombia rarely seen by travellers, while shore excursions will connect guests with indigenous communities.

While on board, guests will enjoy tropical fruit tastings, artisanal chocolate and rum samplings, experience Colombian coffee, and dine at the ship's intimate restaurant, headed by a local chef.

Once ready, the two custom-built river ships will sail seven-night itineraries guided by experienced locals.

AmaWaterways is offering alternative arrangements to guests affected by the delay, including the option to rebook for another destination or postpone their trip to later in 2025. **JM**

Riviera goes big

RIVIERA Travel River Cruises is getting in early for week two of Cruise Month with its "biggest-ever campaign" designed to support and thank the trade.

A suite of promotions have been launched, beginning with savings of \$2,000 per cabin on voyages seven nights or more, or up to \$3,000 on 10+ nights.

In addition, agents will earn a \$50 gift card as a reward for any new booking made in Oct.

Advisors can also try the Riviera experience themselves, earning their own stateroom by selling three to their clients.

For group bookers, book seven cabins and the eighth is for free - call Travel the World on 1300 749 097.

AIDA talks green

AIDA Cruises recently invited a group of Danish politicians onboard *AIDAnova* for a robust discussion on how the cruise industry can work with ports on matters of sustainability.

In attendance along with the Danish Parliament and Copenhagen City Council was AIDA Cruises President, Felix Eichhorn and local city leaders.

Matters discussed included guest management and upcoming sustainability projects, such as the city's first shore power plant, which comes online next year.

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PORTRHOLE

A FEW months back, *Cruise Weekly* shared the plight of cruise ship, *SS United States* (CW 21 Jun), which was facing eviction from its port in Philadelphia, with its owners racing to preserve its legacy.

Well, a final home for the historic liner has now been found - it's getting sunk.

The 1951-launched ship, which still holds the record for the fastest Transatlantic crossing at 36 knots, will now become the world's largest artificial reef, scuttled off the north-western coast of Florida.

The development comes after the *SS United States* Conservancy announced it had sold the ship to the Okaloosa Board of County Commissioners, a Florida county bordering Alabama.

Its owners say the decision is a more dignified end for the ship than scrapping, which they believe was the only other real option on the table.

The County Board's Chairman says the investment marks an enhancement of its reputation as a premier diving destination.

Wildlife experts in Okaloosa expect the ship to become a tourist draw for scuba divers from around the world.

The scuttling process is expected to take up to a year to complete, with the ship's final resting place off Destin Beach yet to be determined.

Royal's Star finds the water



ROYAL Caribbean's second Icon-class ship - *Star of the Seas* - has completed its latest construction milestone - with the hull meeting

water for the first time.

A ceremony to mark the moment took place yesterday at the Meyer Turku shipyard in Finland where the ship is being built, with a customary shot fired from a cannon in celebration.

At that moment, 348 million litres of water began to flood the construction dock, a process which ran overnight as it took nearly nine hours to complete.

CLICK HERE to see a video of the float-out and ceremony.

Star of the Seas has now moved into the outfitting dock where it will be fully kitted out and prepared for sea trials, and eventually, its journey to Port Canaveral in Florida, where it will enter service in Aug 2025.

Like its sister *Icon of the Seas*, the second ship in the class will be LNG powered and feature eight distinct 'neighbourhoods' with six waterslides, seven swimming pools and more than 40 restaurants and bars.

Star of the Seas will operate seven-night itineraries to the Bahamas and Caribbean, with weekly stops at the line's private island, CocoCay. *ML*

Cunard on Pointe

ACCLAIMED Cuban ballet company Acosta Danza will complete a six-week residency onboard *Queen Victoria* from 26 May to 07 Jul 2025 during its Mediterranean season.

While on board the Cunard vessel, the troupe will perform two different shows for guests to enjoy in the Royal Court Theatre or on stateroom TVs.

Founded by world-famous ballerina Carlos Acosta, the ballet troupe was formed as a way to nurture young Latin American dance talent capable of combining both classical and contemporary styles.

"As one of the world's leading contemporary ballet companies, their artistry will add a captivating new dimension to our Mediterranean voyages," commented Cunard President, Katie McAlister.

Cruise Calendar

Current ports of call in Australia and New Zealand.

SYDNEY	
<i>Carnival Splendor</i>	06 Oct
<i>The World</i>	07 Oct
<i>Carnival Splendor</i>	10 Oct
AIRLIE BEACH	
<i>Pacific Encounter</i>	07 Oct
CAIRNS	
<i>Pacific Encounter</i>	08 Oct
DARWIN	
<i>Coral Discoverer</i>	08 Oct
<i>Le Jacques Cartier</i>	09 Oct
BROOME	
<i>True North II</i>	05 Oct
<i>Ocean Dream</i>	06 Oct
FREMANTLE	
<i>Coral Adventurer</i>	04 Oct
ALBANY	
<i>Coral Adventurer</i>	08 Oct
MELBOURNE	
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	05 Oct
AUCKLAND	
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	10 Oct

Fees for cruisers

CRUISE lines visiting two ports on the US west coast will be hit with increasing fees, which will be used to improve passenger facilities and fund ongoing infrastructure works.

The Alaskan port of Haines will introduce its first-ever fee, starting at US\$9 per pax, rising to \$12 two years later and \$13 per person by 2029.

California's Catalina Island will raise its existing fee from US\$5 to \$7.50 from 2026.

MAGIC AH-OY!

What can you do on a *Disney Cruise Line* virtual voyage?

Turns out quite a lot...

Enjoy fun new activities every day

Whether you have **10 minutes or an hour a day to spare**, just log in and take advantage of the snackable stories, visual guides and amazing entertainment that will help you learn everything you need to know about a Disney cruise.

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