



Cruise Weekly today

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

Pax numbers up

CRUISE passenger numbers are up around Australia's ports since the pre-pandemic 2018-19 season, despite a drop in the total number of cruise visits, a new Ports Australia report unearth.

The inaugural *State of Trade 2024* reveals cruise passengers are up at a compound growth rate of 4.2% since 2018/19, with total pax rising from 1.4 million in 2018-19 to million to 1.7 million in 2022-23.

This was despite the number of cruise vessel visits dipping slightly over the past few seasons, from 1,670 to 1,633.

Growth over this period has been particularly acute in rural ports, driving local economies.

RSSC hits a hole-in-one with Sorenstam

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has unveiled a new spotlight voyage with Swedish golfer Annika Sorenstam, regarded as one of the best at her sport in history.

The eight-time LPGA Player of the Year will host an exclusive Spotlight Voyage around six of the United Kingdom's historic golfing greens next year.

The 14-night voyage on board the new *Seven Seas Grandeur* will sail on 23 Jun, sailing round trip from Southampton.

The once-in-a-lifetime sailing will be filled with onboard fireside chats and meet & greets with Sorenstam, as passengers visit some of golf's most iconic destinations.

Travellers will have the opportunity to play on six prestigious courses, including past British Open hosts Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club in

England and Trump Turnberry Ailsa Golf Course in Scotland, as well as The Strand Course at Portstewart Golf Club in Ireland.

There will be driving demos on *Grandeur's* top deck, a chance to sink some putts on the ship's putting green, an on-board fashion show featuring Sorenstam's clothing partner, LOHLA Sport, tea-time golf trivia, an in-course long game clinic, and much more.

RSSC has also incorporated a two-night pre-cruise land program, which will see guests hit the links during the inaugural RSSC Golf Tournament at The Downs Golf Course in England, while staying at The Goodwood Hotel, nestled in the South Downs National Park.

The voyage will then begin with a meet-and-greet cocktail party with Sorenstam in the lavish Observation Lounge.

"We are always looking to create unforgettable experiences for our guests and so we are excited to welcome Annika Sorenstam on board *Seven Seas Grandeur* to host this incredibly special Spotlight Voyage," President Andrea DeMarco said.

MEANWHILE, RSSC has installed Starlink across its fleet, with guests on all six ships to be provided with high-speed, unlimited wi-fi as part of its voyage fare.

Guests may opt to purchase additional suite log-ins and also upgrade the connection.

The move comes after much of the industry continues to roll out Starlink on their fleets, including RSSC's sister brand Norwegian Cruise Line just over a year ago (*CW* 11 Apr 2023).

"We are committed to providing an unrivalled experience," DeMarco said. *MS*



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CRUISE WEEKLY

On location in Shenzhen

Today's issue of *Cruise Weekly* is coming to you from China courtesy of Viking.

THIS morning the *Viking Yi Dun* arrived in Shenzhen in southern China, the final stop on our inaugural 'China Discovery' coastal cruise with Viking.

We spend a full day here, enjoying a host of activities (including lots of shopping) before our final overnight in port, after which we head home via the nearby Hong Kong International Airport.

A special treat for the conclusion of our voyage tonight will be a full moon, meaning all of China celebrates the Mid-Autumn Festival - a time of family connection and togetherness as well as plenty of luscious moon cakes!

To commemorate this auspicious occasion, after a day exploring the city, guests will be treated to an onboard performance by the Guangzhou Acrobatic Group as well as a host of culinary delights.

While many pax will enjoy the included Shenzhen From the Sea' city cruise or simply explore the city independently, others will head off on other excursions such as a unique Drone Show experience from leading drone company DJI.

Estrela takes to the river



APT Travel Group (ATG) has celebrated the maiden voyage of its own purpose-designed and built river ship *Estrela*, now sailing on the Douro in Portugal.

The vessel departed on 29 Aug, officially beginning the company's next chapter, separate from former partner AmaWaterways (**CW** 10 May).

"This ship marks a significant milestone for ATG as we elevate our offerings for our guests," the company's Chief Executive David Cox said.

"*Estrela* is the first Douro river ship we have built to our own specifications, and it is undoubtedly the best river ship on the Douro for Australians," said Cox.

The ship features one of the

largest swimming pools on offer on the Douro, as well as a Sun Deck (**pictured**) featuring an outdoor bar with comfortable lounging options and a golf putting green.

Estrela features in itineraries for both APT and Travelmarvel during her maiden season, including APT's 14-day 'Douro Delights' with Madrid and Lisbon, as well as Travelmarvel's 11-day 'Lisbon with Douro Discovery'.

ATG will own and operate *Estrela*, after the company divested its relationship with fellow river cruise operator AmaWaterways earlier this year (**CW** 07 Mar).

The two had previously partnered on Europe's rivers for 20 years. *MS*

Tribute to Prince

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line will pay tribute to legendary pop music superstar Prince via a new stage production coming to *Norwegian Aqua*, themed on the late star's hits.

The latest "only-on-NCL" production is titled *Revolution: A Celebration of Prince*, and is one of two new major productions leading the entertainment line-up on the cruise line's next new ship.

In what is being described as a "concert-like experience", NCL's new show will feature performances of iconic Prince hits including *Let's Go Crazy*, *Little Red Corvette*, *Delirious*, *Purple Rain*, and more.

The other new stage production being developed is a modernisation of *Elements* (**CW** 03 Nov 2023), which NCL says blends magic, acrobatics and intrigue, as well as being the cruise line's highest guest-rated show ever.

Both productions have been crafted at NCL's in-house Creative Studios production team in Tampa, in partnership with Broadway choreographer, Patricia Wilcox.

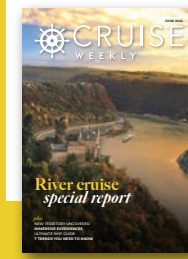
The cruise line's President David Herrera said NCL is "thrilled to build on our legacy of excellence in entertainment to offer our guests more options across the ship, including exclusive original productions that cannot be seen anywhere else".



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The best in cruise

CARNIVAL Corporation has been named one of the World's Best Companies by news organisation TIME in its annual corporate poll.

The analysis lists 1,000 of the top-performing businesses worldwide, with Carnival Corp named in 78th place.

Carnival was also the highest ranking cruise line, with Norwegian Cruise Line coming in 218th place and Royal Caribbean Group in 309th.

TIME's base criteria for the ranking begins with companies generating at least US\$100 million in revenue last year.

Other factors considered in compiling the list were employee satisfaction, revenue growth in the past three years and ESG performance.

A decade of chasing lights



HURTIGRUTEN is celebrating 10 years since it introduced its 'Northern Lights Promise' which signified its commitment to showcasing one of the world's most dazzling natural phenomena.

The 2024/25 northern winter season will see the Norwegian expedition line offer 266 itineraries where guests can reasonably expect to see the Northern Lights at some stage.

This experience will be enhanced further by Hurtigruten scheduling nine astronomer-led expeditions, on the back of a highly popular debut for the concept last year.

Esteemed Northern Lights specialist astronomer, Tom Keress (**pictured**), joined Hurtigruten earlier this year in the role of 'Chief Aurora Chaser'.

Acting as an onboard expert on the Northern Lights, Keress hosts digital talks about the seasonal celestial ballet, along with webinars, workshops and activities to enhance the guest experience.

Travellers venturing to see the cosmic spectacle may be in for a show rarely seen, as an expected peak in solar activity that occurs only every 11 years is due to take place over the 2024/25 season.

This peak results in the highest number of charged particles that the sun releases into space, heightening the chances of seeing the Northern Lights this winter.

"While we have offered guests cruises to see the Northern Lights since 1893, this coming winter season will be one of the best ever to see this natural phenomenon due to the solar maximum," said Hurtigruten CEO, Hedda Felin.

"Additionally, the chances of viewing the Northern Lights from a ship are significantly better compared with on land, especially with minimal light pollution onboard Hurtigruten's ships."

A recent survey of 4,000 people identified the Northern Lights as the ultimate bucket-list experience, ahead of Machu Picchu, Antarctica and even going on an African safari.

Hurtigruten's Northern Lights Promise is valid each auroral season and this year, means that in the event the lights do not occur within sight of the ship between 20 Sep and 31 Mar, travellers will receive a free six-day southbound or seven-day northbound Coastal Express Voyage with Hurtigruten. *ML*



IN THE never ending quest for new destinations, some cruise lines are pushing the boundaries of what their ships can accomplish.

German line Nicko Cruises created a scene recently when its ship Vasco da Gama squeezed ever so gently into the tiny UK port of Fowey.

In doing so, the ship dwarfed dozens of tiny yachts and dinghies moored nearby as it docked in the Cornish town.

So small was the port that the 1,258 passengers on board at the time made up more than half of the town's population.

While some residents called the ship "an eyesore" for dominating the landscape and blocking the view for houses across the river, but many too saw the benefit the ship's visit brought to the town as passengers spent their money at local shops and restaurants.

Amadeus Amara

AMADEUS River Cruises is continuing to grow, confirming another new ship will be added to the fleet next year.

Dubbed *Amadeus Amara*, the latest vessel will cater to 164 passengers across three decks, with an indoor swimming pool featuring at the stern.

It will also be Amadeus' most sustainable ship, the line said, with a shallow draft design that reduces water resistance, limiting its fuel consumption.

A top-line steering system will automatically adjust the ship based on weather conditions, current and traffic.

Amadeus Amara will join the line's European fleet from Jul next year, sailing in Europe.

Spirit's close shave

PASSENGERS on Carnival Spirit were given a shake-up last week when the ship made brief contact with an iceberg while sailing along the Tracy Arm Fjord in Alaska.

Carnival Cruise Line said nobody onboard was injured and the ship was undamaged by what it said was contact with "an errant piece of drifting ice".