



Win with Celebrity

CELEBRITY Cruises has launched a new Australian travel advisor incentive.

Partners will have the chance to win a European cruise valid for two passengers in a Veranda twin stateroom, as part of the competition, which kicks off today.

Those who make a new and confirmed European booking for this year can enter the competition by submitting their details with a valid booking number **HERE**.

Advisors will have multiple chances to win throughout the promotional period, which ends 08 May.

The winner will be chosen at random and notified by email within seven days of the draw.

Avalon to rock out

AVALON Waterways passengers can join *Outlander's* Graham McTavish and American rock band Sister Hazel as part of the line's Storyteller Series next year.

McTavish will appear on the 'Rogue on the Rhone' itinerary, an eight-day cruise from Lyon to Arles, from 09 Jun 2026.

He will share behind-the-scenes stories from his life on the screen and the page, as passengers sail through Provence and Burgundy.

Meanwhile, the 'Rockin' on the Rhine with Sister Hazel' cruise will see the *All for You* singers treat guests to exclusive performances, special events, and personal moments with the band.

The cruise will sail for eight days from Amsterdam to Basel, departing 11 Jul 2026.

"When you combine breathtaking scenery with some of the most talented storytellers of our time, you create an experience unlike any other," President Pam Hoffee said.

Viking orders hydro ships



VIKING and shipbuilder Fincantieri have announced the world's first hydrogen-powered cruise ships, with *Viking Libra*, to debut next year.

The vessel will be capable of operating with zero emissions, once she is delivered late next year - a milestone that is set to eclipse other cruise lines such as Hurtigruten (**CW** 26 Mar) and Ponant (**CW** 30 Oct), which are working on similar projects.

Also currently under construction is the hydrogen-powered *Viking Astrea*, which is scheduled for delivery in 2027.

Both ships will host 998 guests, like all future Viking ships, and will be powered on liquefied hydrogen and fuel cells.

This hybrid propulsion system will make them capable of navigating with zero emissions, which could allow them to access the most environmentally sensitive areas, such as Norway's fjords, which are set to be closed off to non-zero-emission ships starting from next year.

"From the outset, we have designed our river and ocean ships thoughtfully to reduce their fuel consumption, and we are very proud the *Viking Libra* and the *Viking Astrea* will be even more environmentally friendly," Chair & Chief Executive Officer Torstein Hagen said.

"Viking made the principled decision to invest in hydrogen, which offers a true zero-emission solution...we look forward to welcoming the world's first hydrogen-powered cruise ship to our fleet in 2026."

Fincantieri Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director Pierroberto Folgiero said the delivery of *Libra* will reinforce the shipbuilder's commitment to shaping the future of sustainable maritime transportation.

"We are thrilled about Viking's decision to expand its fleet with the order of two additional ships, which reaffirms the strength of our partnership, and the trust placed in our expertise," he said.

"This new order is a testament to our shared vision for a more sustainable cruise industry, as together we continue to set new standards for innovation and responsible shipbuilding."

Viking and Fincantieri also announced that contracts have been signed for two additional ocean ships for delivery in 2031, and an option for two additional ocean ships for delivery in 2033.

The cruise line expects to take delivery of 26 more river ships by 2028 and 11 additional ocean ships by 2031, which will bring its fleet to 110 river ships and 23 ocean ships. *MS*

Cruise Weekly today

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

Aqua takes a bite

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's (NCL) newest ship, *Norwegian Aqua*, arrived in New York City this week for an exclusive preview, before she returns in Aug 2025 for a series of voyages to Bermuda.

More than 2,000 guests have been welcomed aboard the ship during her visit to the United States, allowing them to explore NCL's newest offerings as part of a two-day inaugural event.

"New York and the tri-state area are an incredibly important market for us, so to showcase the beautiful *Norwegian Aqua* here in the Big Apple during her inaugural season was a no-brainer," said David Herrera, President of Norwegian Cruise Line.

Next, *Norwegian Aqua* will head to Miami for her christening on 13 Apr, with a celebratory ceremony featuring godfather and actor, Eric Stonestreet.

Aqua will then offer a series of seven-day Caribbean cruises from Port Canaveral between Apr to Jul before returning to New York City to sail five and seven-day voyages to Bermuda from Aug through Oct 2025.

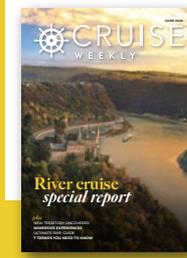
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Adventure captains

CAPTAINS Mickey and Minnie Mouse have been revealed as the characters which will adorn the stern of the new *Disney Adventure*.

At nearly four metres tall, the duo will welcome guests onboard the new Disney Cruise Line vessel upon her debut in Singapore this year.

It's the first time both Mickey and Minnie have appeared together on a ship's stern.

Sorcerer Mickey from *Fantasia* appears on the stern of *Disney Dream*, while Minnie appears solo on both *Disney Wish* and *Disney Treasure*.

The refurbished vessel, formerly known as *Genting Dream*, is currently in the final stages of outfitting at the Wismar dock in Germany.

MEANWHILE, Disney Cruise Line has expanded its support of Junior Junkanoo, a program dedicated to helping children design and participate in a vibrant Bahamian cultural festival and parade, which takes place on Boxing Day and New Year's Day each year.

Funding from Disney also allows schools to invest in costumes, materials and prizes for parade float competitions.

The line has also sponsored several activations promoting the program, including at its private island called Disney Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point, which opened last year.

Cruise viruses exposed

CRUISE ship health inspections may be dramatically scaled back or discontinued altogether due to significant workforce cuts made to the US' Centres for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC).

The department's Vessel Sanitation Program (VSP) now lacks the staff required to carry out routine inspections of cruise ships following cuts made by Department of Health Secretary Robert Kennedy Jr (**pictured**).

Citing "restructuring plans", the controversial initiative has reportedly cut large numbers of staff from the CDC's Division of Environmental Health Science & Practice, wiping out its ability to record and manage sickness outbreaks onboard cruise ships.

VSP conducts regular unannounced inspections on cruise ships calling in American ports, assessing and giving each a score out of 100 on how well they are maintaining and operating to public health standards across eight key criteria.

Cruise ships sailing from the US are required to submit to a minimum of two inspections per year, taking corrective steps to rectify observed violations.

Up to four CDC inspectors are needed to carry out an inspection, depending on the size of the ship.

Ships are checked for clean and safe use of water, heating, venting and air-conditioning systems and the cleanliness of food service and



kitchens, swimming pools, hot tubs and child activity centres.

Kennedy Jr told the United States' *ABC News* that some public health programs and key staff have been cut by mistake and are in the process of being reinstated, but that he is aiming to make the CDC more efficient.

"We're streamlining the agencies...we're going to make it work for public health, make it work for the American people," he said.

According to the CDC website, which reports instances of viral sicknesses on cruise ships, there have been 12 outbreaks identified by the CDC this year, which have affected a combined 1,400 pax.

Ten of these have been the common gastrointestinal bug caused by norovirus.

An outbreak is classified as when 3% or more of passengers have reported symptoms to a ship's medical team. *ML*

CLIA lands in CHC

CRUISE specialist training has arrived on New Zealand's South Island for the first time, with Christchurch hosting its first CLIA LIVE event this week.

Held over two days yesterday and today, the sold-out event brings more than two dozen cruise BDMs to host training updates with local agents.

It is the second New Zealand city targeted by CLIA this year, with its annual stop in Auckland coming in May.

"The event has grown to the point where we can now offer in-person training in Christchurch too, and we've had a fantastic response from travel agents not only in Canterbury but also from many other parts of the South Island," said CLIA Australasia Director of Membership and Events Marita Nusic.

Dine under stars

AMBASSADOR Cruise has launched a 'Dining Under the Stars' experience on its overnight journeys in Ha Long and Lan Ha Bays.

The new concept features two five-course menus - international and Vietnamese - accompanied by a live band performing classic hits on the vessels' 360-degree sundecks.

The dining experience includes a softly lit, white tablecloth service.

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School in session for Tauck

A NEW documentary soon to be released draws on a unique mapping effort by underwater robots to recount in high detail the final hours of the *Titanic*.

According to *BBC News*, the robots took more than 700,000 photos of the doomed liner to create a digital replica.

The results have been studied by shipwreck experts and will be used in a new documentary by *National Geographic* and Atlantic Productions, called *Titanic: A Digital Resurrection*, which is now in production.

According to producers, the scan provides the first full look inside and out of the ship, with an exact 3D replica showing how the ship cracked in half after striking the iceberg.

Scans will show immense new detail including broken porthole windows, which will be compared with eyewitness accounts from the disaster.

Viewers will go inside the ship's boiler room, which now shows how engineers worked until the final moments to keep the lights on for those unable or unwilling to evacuate.

"It's like a crime scene: you need to see what the evidence is, in the context of where it is," said Parks Stephenson, an analyst of the *Titanic*.

The imagery also suggests the punctures in the hull which led to the ship's demise were the size of an A4 piece of paper.



MORE than 40 Aussie agents went back to school last month, however the classroom this time was the delightful entrapments of Portugal's Douro River, with the teacher being the Tauck Academy.

Held to coincide with Tauck's 100th birthday celebrations, the week-long academic cram session ran from 21-28 Mar and included two nights at the Ritz Four Seasons Lisbon and five nights onboard Tauck's *MS Andorinha*.

The ever-changing scenery along the river included some bucket-list experiences including a bicycle ride along the riverbank and a chance to explore some historic Portuguese towns.

Prior to embarkation, the group enjoyed a welcome dinner at the Queluz National Palace in Lisbon, with the week-long 'educational' capped off with a throwback 1920s themed party to celebrate Tauck's special milestone.

While onboard *Andorinha*, the group enjoyed guided a walk in the Ribeira quarter and the city of Porto and Villa Nova de Gaia.

Of course, it wasn't all plain sailing, with the class completing

six hours of classroom training to brush up their Tauck knowledge and become Tauck Expert Certified Advisors - granting them access to extra resources to accelerate their sales.

Tauck Managing Director Australia, David Clark, said the opportunity to share Portugal with some of its most valued advisors during a commemorative occasion was special.

"We are dedicated to the partnerships we are building with travel advisors and we appreciate their passion for learning about Tauck's offering," Clark said.

"What truly made this a career highlight for me was the gratitude and appreciation from everyone.

"It was incredibly humbling to see our travel advisor partners take the time to participate, and the friendships that formed will last a lifetime," he added.

Clark was joined on the trip by Tauck National Account Manager Jerry Pilgrim and National Account Manager, Helen Eves. *ML*

The group is pictured above exploring one of Portugal's quaint country estates.



CLIA UPDATE

with Joel Katz
MD, CLIA Australasia

Australia is on show

THIS week I am in Miami, where CLIA has joined the biggest-ever delegation Australia and New Zealand have sent to the annual and high-profile Seatrade Cruise Global conference.

Alongside the Australian Cruise Association (ACA) and the New Zealand Cruise Association (NZCA), I am among more than 30 Australasian organisations here, including ports, destinations and industry stakeholders.

Australia and New Zealand represent one of the world's most dynamic cruise regions, and this 40th anniversary conference gives us an opportunity to ensure we're top-of-mind among cruise industry leaders around the world.

At the same time, it will allow our industry supporters from Australia and New Zealand to hear more about the trends and issues shaping the cruise industry.

Our delegation will be part of numerous events and discussions throughout the conference and exhibition, and will take part in an Australasia panel discussion on the challenges and opportunities affecting the sector locally.

With a bigger presence than ever before, we'll be working to show how important Australia and New Zealand are to international cruising and help create greater opportunities for cruise fans and our members throughout this region.

