



Cruise Weekly today

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

BEDA cruise ready

THE Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA) will run an eight-week training program to help businesses across tourism, hospitality and retail boost sales and capitalise on the city's \$1.5 billion dollar cruise industry sector.

A recent economic impact assessment of cruise tourism in Australia found Brisbane is now the country's second biggest cruise port, with 196 ships arriving in 2023/24.

Beginning next week, the program has 15 local tourism operators enrolled including businesses in Brisbane, Moreton Bay, Redland City, Logan and the Scenic Rim.

These businesses include local tour operators, attractions, event planners, First Nations and eco-tourism experiences, and even a Harry Potter themed store and cafe.

The program is designed to provide each with knowledge and industry networks to develop and market new shore experiences for cruise visitors as well as pre- and post-cruise itinerary extensions.

Australian Cruise Association CEO Jill Abel said Brisbane has become a key destination for cruise, with world-class port facilities boosting the sector.

"The Cruise Tourism Trade Ready Program will equip shore-side attractions with essential tools to thrive in this growing market and help drive an increase in transit calls to Brisbane," Abel said.

Brisbane Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner said there was a huge opportunity to create more pathways to connect cruise passengers with the city's range of experiences.

Aqua christened in Miami



NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has officially christened *Norwegian Aqua* in Miami, with a special appearance from American actor Eric Stonestreet, the ship's godfather.

The christening ceremony took place at Norwegian's terminal at PortMiami, with more than 2,000 guests in attendance, including **Cruise Weekly**.

"The team at Norwegian, on board and ashore, are the very best of the best, and I am honoured to serve as the godfather of the beautiful *Norwegian Aqua*," Stonestreet said at the christening.

"As a new cruiser who has a deep passion for travel, it is absolutely spectacular to see the amazing features and experiences that travellers and their families can enjoy aboard *Norwegian Aqua*, including the world's first hybrid roller coaster and water slide, the Aqua Slidecoaster."

The ceremony saw a preview of Norwegian's newest in-house production *Revolution: A Celebration of Prince*, the world's first-ever theatrical concert experience (**CW** 17 Sep 2024) honouring the singer-songwriter.

Aqua Captain Robert Lundberg also gave remarks, while pastor Pete Pera made an official blessing of the ship, wishing safe travels for all who sail aboard.

The christening concluded with

the ceremonial bottle break across *Aqua's* hull, initiated by Stonestreet, which signifies good fortune and safe travels for all who sail on board.

"It is a very special time for all of us at NCL - we are welcoming a new incredible ship into our fleet with the christening of the stunning and action-packed *Norwegian Aqua*, and we are doing so alongside her godfather, Eric Stonestreet, who perfectly embodies the authenticity of what it means for our guests to 'Experience More at Sea,'" NCL President David Herrera said.

The Norwegian head also revealed plans for the expansion of Great Stirrup Cay (**CW** 21 May), the cruise line's private island destination (more on **page 3**), which *Aqua* will visit as part of her christening voyage. *MS*

HAL extends 2026

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) has extended its 2026 Europe season by six weeks, offering more opportunities to explore the Mediterranean and Norway.

Four additional cruises are now available to book as part of the expansion, including a chance to see the northern lights on a cruise that enters the Arctic Circle.

The extra departure of the popular 14-day 'Arctic Journey and Northern Lights with The History Channel' cruise will set sail on 07 Nov 2026, with the ship staying overnight at Alta, also known as the world's northern lights capital.

Also open for booking is a 14-day 'Mediterranean and Atlantic Treasures: Lisbon Overnight', a seven-day 'Norway with Nordfjord'; and a 15-day 'Cultural Crossing with England and Normandy'.

Each of the newly added cruises will sail aboard *Nieuw Statendam* roundtrip or one-way from Rotterdam.

MEANWHILE, HAL has kicked off its anniversary sale, with savings, onboard credit and reduced deposits among the offers on sale until 02 Jun.

Departures from Apr 2025 to Apr 2026 are available, with savings of up to 25% off launch fares plus onboard credit of up to US\$300 per stateroom.

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Viking Vor Nights are back



VIKING is bringing back its social training event, Viking Vor Nights, which the line says are set to be bigger than ever this year.

There will be thousands of dollars in prizes up for grabs in each capital city, with the events making their way to Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide from next month.

Named after the Norse goddess of wisdom, the Viking Vor Nights are designed for agents who are not very familiar with the brand, as well as experienced Viking sellers who want to learn the latest about the cruise line.

Participants will be treated to a three-course meal and beverages while they learn more about Viking's expanding river, ocean and expedition fleet and voyages, coupled with the chance to win

some incredible prizes.

The Viking Vor Nights will kick off in Sydney at Doltone House Hyde Park on 20 May, before heading to Brisbane on 21 May at Emporium Hotel South Bank and Melbourne on 28 May at Arts Centre Melbourne.

The cruise line will then take the training event to Perth on 03 Jun at Crown Perth, before wrapping up in Adelaide at The Playford Hotel on 04 Jun.

Viking is encouraging agents to secure their ticket as soon as possible, as the events typically fill up fast.

The training sessions are free to attend, and run for three-and-a-half hours from 6pm - reserve your spot **HERE**. JM

Pictured: Attendees at one of last year's Viking Vor events.

Darwin port inquiry

A **FEDERAL** Senate inquiry has been called for by the Australian Citizens Party (ACP) into claims of national security concerns in the Port of Darwin's 99-year lease to Chinese operator Landbridge.

ACP's Research Director and Senate candidate for Victoria, Robert Barwick, said it was "rank hypocrisy" to claim Landbridge's links to the Chinese Government were grounds for concern, with both major parties promising to cancel the lease if elected.

Barwick backed his comment by saying both major parties, had previously reviewed the lease, including once by Peter Dutton as Defence Minister and determined there were no national security concerns.

"The major parties are in a race to the bottom on national security," Barwick said.

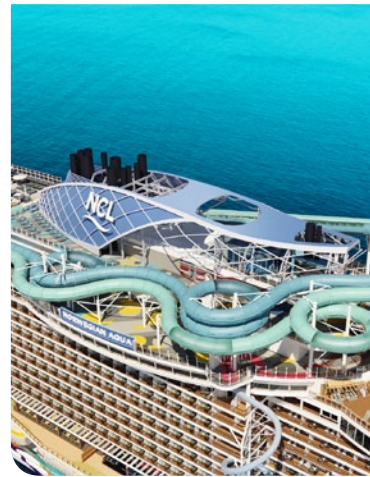
Asia expeditions

TOURISM management firm Destination Asia has launched a new division focusing on expedition services for land tour operators and cruise lines.

The new Expeditions by Destination Asia division will see a range of single-day and multi-day expedition-based itineraries developed for cruise brands to sell.

At the helm of the division will be specialists covering Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Malaysia, who will help to craft "transformative experiences" alongside local communities.

"These destinations are a paradise for nature lovers and underwater explorers, offering a glimpse of the wonders that await on our unforgettable expedition journeys," said Destination Asia Director of Expeditions, Alvin Materi.



 **CRUISE WEEKLY**

On Board: *Norwegian Aqua*

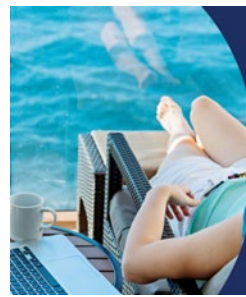
The Aqua Slidecoaster

Norwegian Aqua's top-deck "show-stopper" is the all-new Aqua Slidecoaster, the first-ever hybrid water slide-roller coaster. This two-person ride reaches rip-roaring speeds, as it carves its way around *Aqua's* sun deck. The dual slides and a magnetic lift propel passengers down these stories of twists and turns.

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PORThOLE

IT PROBABLY isn't a good idea to put a penguin in control of a helicopter during an Antarctic shore excursion, as one pilot learned the hard way.

The chopper crashed at low altitude, thankfully without harming any passengers, on Bird Island off South Africa - an Antarctic research station.

According to the crash report, the passenger - described as a 'specialist' - was riding in the front seat of the helicopter while holding a box containing a penguin on his lap, securing it with his hands, but lost his grip just after take-off.

The box slid onto the pitch control lever, causing the chopper to roll to the right and strike the ground with its rotors.

While the helicopter ended up pretty banged up, thankfully no human or penguin passengers were harmed.

Perhaps the penguin needed more thorough flight training...

NCL reveals Great Stirrup Cay makeover

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has revealed the expansion plans for Great Stirrup Cay, its private Caribbean island destination in the Bahamas.

A number of new experiences will make their debut on Great Stirrup Cay in the fourth quarter, alongside the completion of the destination's new multi-ship pier.

An expansive pool area of almost 20km² will be introduced, as will a dedicated bar, and a kids' splash zone.

NCL President David Herrera revealed the news at the christening of the cruise line's new ship *Norwegian Aqua* (see **page 1**), after improvements were initially flagged at the announcement of the company's Charting the Course strategy last year (**CW** 21 May 2024).

The island will feature a new Vibe Beach Club, the adults-only outdoor lounge with private cabanas, loungers and other upgraded amenities.

Also introduced will be Horizon Park, the all-new recreational area that recently debuted on *Norwegian Bliss* and *Norwegian Breakaway*, which provides lawn-



style games and a place to gather for families.

A new relaxation area will also be realised, with hammocks and a range of other Tiki-inspired amenities and experiences yet to be revealed.

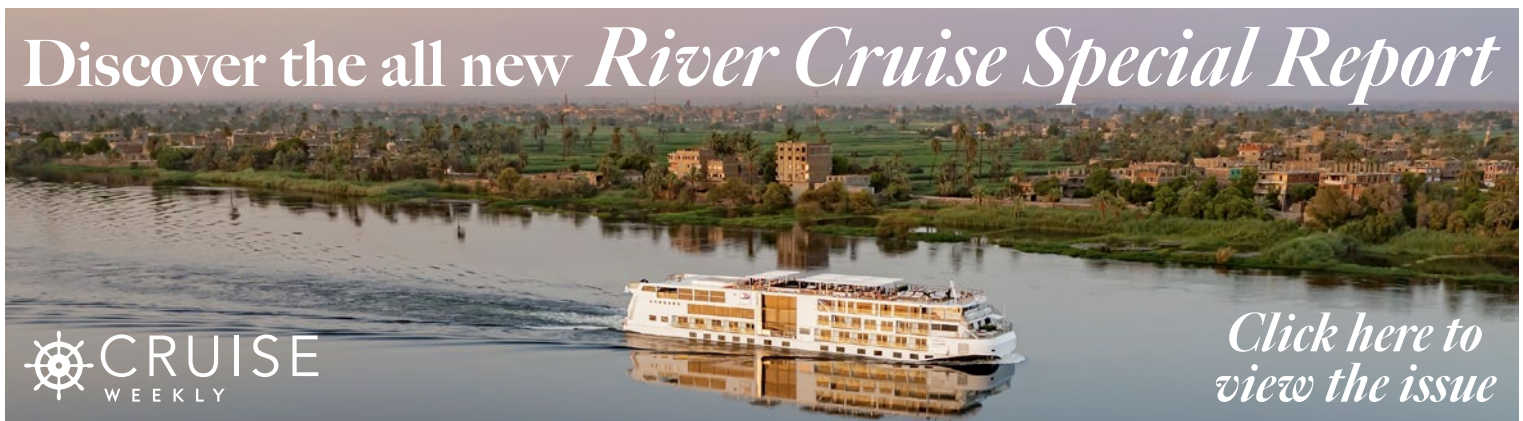
NCL also committed to plans for more improvements to Great Stirrup Cay in the future, which will be revealed at a later date.

"Later this year we will launch new experiences for our guests to enjoy on this already incredible

private island," Herrera said.

"With our newest ship, *Norwegian Aqua*, entering into the market with voyages to the Caribbean and the Bahamas, it is the perfect time to start planning your next warm-weather vacation," he added.

Great Stirrup Cay is listed as one of NCL's most popular destinations, and features highlights such as kayaking, ziplining and a complimentary taco station. *MS*



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