



CRUISE

WEEKLY

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Cruise Weekly today

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

Celestyal UAE ties

CELESTYAL Cruises has signed a multi-year partnership with The Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi to promote the city.

The line will push its nine Abu Dhabi shore excursions, which visit a range of the city's attractions and highlights.

The agreement follows the inaugural season for Celestyal's two ships in the Arabian Gulf, with *Celestyal Journey* to visit Abu Dhabi each week as part of its seven-day 'Desert Days' round-trip cruise from Doha.

The line's 1,360-guest *Celestyal Discovery* will home port in Abu Dhabi during the coming season, offering three- and four-day itineraries.

Paspaley unearths Pearl Expeditions

PEARL producer Paspaley has introduced Pearl Expeditions, the brand under which it will proceed with its plan to offer expedition cruising in northern Australia, with 'first lady of cruising' Sarina Bratton at the helm.

The new wholly Australian-owned venture will operate with the 30-passenger *Paspaley Pearl* motor yacht (pictured), with 21 crew members on hand, including four dedicated expedition guides.

"Imbued with the relaxed Australian hospitality that will define us, Pearl Expeditions represents a new spirit of exploration, where immersive adventure and elegance converge," Bratton said.

Paspaley Pearl will set sail on its maiden itinerary in Jul in the Kimberley, with future voyages to explore the coastlines of Papua New Guinea, East Indonesia, Raja Ampat, Borneo and more.



The 53-metre ship will take guests to iconic sights such as King George Falls, Montgomery Reef and the Hunter River along with lesser-known local highlights such as Hidden Island and Hell's Gate.

Guests will also have the chance to visit one of Paspaley Pearl's operational pearl farms to see how the company produces its world-famous luxury jewellery.

Paspaley Group Executive Director, James Paspaley, said as a company that has its roots deep in the Kimberley region, he was excited to be able to "leverage the resources and skills of several of our businesses to create the

Paspaley Pearl experience."

Paspaley is also no stranger to land-based hospitality ventures as owners of New York's Wall Street Hotel, and is about to relaunch the Pinctada Hotel in Broome.

The new Pearl Expeditions venture fills the void left by the unexpected breakdown of an agreement with Ponant to form a joint-venture with Paspaley Pearl last year (**CW** 06 Nov 2024).

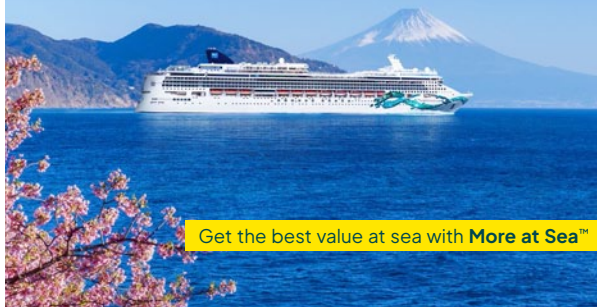
Pearl Expeditions also marks the reuniting of the Paspaley family with Bratton, with the two acting as co-founders of Orion Expedition Cruises, which was eventually sold to Lindblad Expeditions 12 years ago (**CW** 07 Mar 2013).

More details about specific itineraries, accommodation options, departure ports and expedition dates for 2025 and 2026 will be released via the line's new website, which will go live in the coming weeks. **ML**



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NCL sizes up what passengers want

RETURN on experience and space per passenger will continue to govern Norwegian Cruise Line's (NCL) newbuild strategy, rather than the size of other ships in the market, the company's President David Herrera (**pictured**) said.



NCL's next class of ship - ordered from Fincantieri last year as part of a major group-wide fleet enhancement (**CW** 09 Apr 2024) - is set to carry 5,100 passengers each and will be by far the largest in the line's history.

The new vessels will bring NCL into more direct competition alongside other plus-sized lines such as Royal Caribbean International and MSC Cruises.

However, this does not mean NCL will sacrifice any of its brand identity to compete with megaship operators, Herrera said.

"Our ships are able to deliver the guest experience with the high personal space ratios that

we do, we're proud of that [and] we're not wishing we were something else."

Speaking in a panel discussion on board *Norwegian Aqua* this week, Herrera said the mix of guest experience and usable area dictated many of the changes made against its second Prima-class ship, *Norwegian Viva*, which entered service two years ago.

"We listen to our guests...what do they want more of and where would we benefit from adding space," he said.

One particular change, Herrera noted, involved removing the popular go-kart circuit to free up space on the top deck.

NCL's current Prima-class ships are the smallest it has built since the 2,400-passenger *Norwegian Gem* debuted in 2007.

The class will top out with its final two ships, due in 2027 and 2028, each of which will be able to carry 3,650 guests.

The arrival of NCL's first 5,000-plus pax ships in 2030 will then give the cruise line a larger diversity of vessel sizes, allowing it to offer a broad itinerary mix.

"Managing your fleet deployment based on capacity is something that we've learned is the right way to [direct] your fleet," Herrera noted.

"There's certain limitations and restrictions...if all of your ships are huge, you can only go to a few places, and our goal is to give our guests more options and more variety, so that's why we continue to build a different mix in the size of our ships." *MS*



On location on board
Norwegian Aqua

Today's issue of *CW* is coming to you courtesy of Norwegian Cruise Line, which is this week hosting us aboard the all-new *Norwegian Aqua*.

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's new flagship *Norwegian Aqua* is calling Great Stirrup Cay for the first time today.

The cruise line announced at *Aqua*'s christening ceremony earlier this week details of its reimagining of the destination, which will include an almost 20km² new pool area.

Current highlights of Great Stirrup Cay include Silver Cove, an exclusive oceanfront retreat featuring beachfront villas, a private beach, a lagoon area, and more.




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MSC conservation

MSC Cruises has cut the ribbon to officially open its new Marine Conservation Centre in the Bahamas.

The new research station, located at MSC's private island Ocean Cay, will serve as a base for biologists and scientists.

Visitors will be able to learn about coral and marine conservation at the facility's coral nursery and via interactive seminars.

The centre will also be the hub for The MSC Foundation's Super Coral Reefs Program, which has been restoring coral in a 165km² radius around the island by using coral species more resilient to gradually rising ocean temperatures.

Gauguin's top Darwin stop



PAUL Gauguin Cruises has celebrated a rare Australian docking of *MS Paul Gauguin*, with over 20 senior travel professionals enjoying a tour of the vessel in Darwin.

The arrival of the ship was even more significant as it had just arrived from Singapore where it had undertaken a thorough refurbishment inside and out (**CW** 08 Apr) while in drydock for seven weeks.

Now proudly sporting the Ponant logo on the funnel, the refurbishment included a contemporary redesign of the Le Grill restaurant, a reimagined pool deck with a shaded cabana area, eight new connecting staterooms, refreshed furnishings throughout the ship, and the integration of a range of sustainable technologies.

"It's incredibly exciting to see *Le Paul Gauguin* en route from Singapore coming in directly from her facelift and her beautiful renovation," Deb Corbett, CEO Asia-Pacific at Ponant told **Cruise Weekly** in Darwin.

"It's relaxed luxury at its best, just oozing French Polynesia.

"The crew are family, they welcome everyone on board, there's amazing open deck spaces, the light comes in and it's just picture perfect - Australians

will love it," she added.

Corbett said that Ponant and Paul Gauguin both had a strong end of year performance which continued into 2025 off the back of travellers' thirst for exploration travel, something she believed cruise did extremely well.

"People are really wanting that immersive, close experience, and they are really wanting to connect with regional communities and the local culture, and I think this is what exploration travel is all about," Corbett added.

"What [we] are seeing as an emerging market is that people don't want to bring stuff home anymore, they want to bring home stories and experiences instead - so this style of exploration travel really connects them and makes them come home with lifelong memories." **DF**

Pictured above is the Ponant Explorations Group - Asia Pacific team of National Home-Based Sales Manager, Sandra Cahill; State Manager NSW/ACT, Kristina Sambaher; State Manager Vic/Tas, Annabelle Brown; Head of Sales APAC, Julie Rogers; *MS Paul Gauguin* Captain Michel Quioc; Ponant Explorations Group CEO Asia Pacific, Deb Corbett; Marketing Director Asia Pacific, Charles Boutet; and State Manager Qld/NT, Janelle Ramsey.

Seabourn hits USA

LUXURY ship *Seabourn Encore* has docked for the first time in the continental United States, berthing in the Californian port of Long Beach.

The arrival marked the mid-way point of a major series of one-way repositioning itineraries designed to avoid ongoing conflict and uncertainty in the Red Sea.

Encore will now continue its journey to Europe via the Panama Canal and Atlantic Ocean, where it will spend the summer in the Mediterranean.

In Nov, the ship will embark on another major 18,500 nautical mile voyage when it retraces its westbound path to spend the winter in Japan.



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WHEN you have a litany of timeless classic tales in your trademark library, the question is which one do you choose?

The next animated classic from Walt Disney Animation Studios to become a cruise ship production will see the story of *Hercules* battle his evil uncle Hades as he plots to overthrow Zeus and claim Mount Olympus.

The creative team behind the show, based on the 1997 movie, recently shared some behind-the-scenes insights into the new show, which will debut onboard *Disney Destiny* when she arrives in Fort Lauderdale from Nov this year.

Award-winning puppet designer Michael Curry shared details of one of his characters, which will draw on an elaborate design to play the role of the multi-headed Hydra monster Hercules must defeat.

IMO net-zero mandate

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) has urged the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to remain realistic in setting its industry-wide emission pricing structures for the entire maritime sector.

In a landmark session of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee last week, the new regulations set a fuel standard for global shipping, including cruise ships and a price mechanism for emissions.

The impetus behind the legally binding framework aims to set a path for the maritime industry to reach its stated goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

The measures will be formally adopted in Oct this year before coming into force in 2027 and will apply to all vessels over 5,000 Gross Registered Tonnes, which together account for 85% of total emissions from int'l shipping.

The new regulations state there will be two levels of compliance with GHG fuel intensity targets, with a 'Base Target' and a 'Direct Compliance Target'.



Ships complying or exceeding the set thresholds can earn 'surplus units' and balance their emissions deficit by transferring these from older ships.

This caveat means operators of older ships that can't justify significant retroactive investment will be able to continue to phase out these vessels over their intended timeframes, claiming surplus units from newer ships.

CLIA has previously stated that its leisure cruise ship fleet equates to 1% of the global ocean-going shipping fleet.

"CLIA and our cruise line members remain committed to pursuing net-zero emissions by 2050 and will continue to pursue multiple paths to fulfil that ambition," a statement from CLIA Global said.

"We also continue to call on governments and fuel providers to do their part to help bring the needed alternative fuels to the market at scale.

"We will continue to analyse the framework on behalf of our members and how it could help close the cost gap between zero- and near-zero GHG fuels and traditional fuels," CLIA said. *ML*



Australia shines in Florida

IT WAS fantastic to showcase our region to the world last week at Seatrade Cruise Global in Miami, where ACA led a strong delegation for the event's 40th anniversary.

It was also a proud moment to reflect on Australia having been represented at more than 30 of these influential global gatherings.

A personal highlight was seeing Australia recognised during the official welcome event for our ongoing commitment to the global cruise industry - a reminder of the strong role our region plays in shaping the future of cruise.

The event was buzzing with optimism as cruise lines shared positive news about the construction of new ships and expressed interest in bringing them to Australian shores.

There were numerous discussions about the ongoing expansion of the Australian market, with cruise lines exploring new ports, diversifying itineraries, and enhancing shore excursion offerings to provide even richer experiences for guests.

There is also continued interest in pre- and post-cruise touring options in Australia and New Zealand, especially land-based experiences such as rail journeys, particularly appealing to the growing North American market.

As always, our legendary Down Under BBQ was a major highlight, drawing in key stakeholders and reinforcing the warm, welcoming spirit Australia is known for.

As Australia's cruise industry continues to evolve, events like this are essential in ensuring we remain a dynamic and influential player on the world stage.



On Board: Norwegian Aqua

Sukothai

Sukothai is Norwegian's all-new Thai restaurant, found exclusively on *Norwegian Aqua*. The restaurant's stylish and warm atmosphere is the perfect place to enjoy appetisers, house specialties, and traditional curries. Menu highlights include salt & pepper prawns, Thai spring rolls, chicken satay, and tom kha gai.



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