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Head to **page 4** of today's **Cruise Weekly** for more info.

Celebrity launches bumper 2027/28

CELEBRITY Cruises will offer more than 175 itineraries in its worldwide 2027/28 season, with the line today revealing the first part of its global fleet deployment covering 180 destinations.

Agents and travellers will be able to book their staterooms from 30 Sep, with the line confirming *Celebrity Edge* and the upgraded *Celebrity Solstice* will return to sail in Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific.

The duo will visit a combination of 33 local and regional destinations during the season, with select sailings including an overnight stay in Adelaide and Cairns to allow travellers to enjoy the local culinary scene.

Both ships will bookend their stay in local waters with open-jaw sailings to and from Hawaii.

Edge will spend the northern summer in Alaska during the off season, with her fourth program



to be longer and more in-depth as one of three ships cruising in the region.

Meanwhile, *Celebrity Xcel* will spend her second season cruising the Mediterranean, with back-to-back itineraries designed to avoid repeated port visits.

Seven ships in total will operate for Celebrity around Europe, including three Edge-class vessels - *Xcel*, *Ascent* and *Apex* - looping between 90 destinations across 25 countries.

Xcel and *Ascent* will feature sailings of between seven to 12 days through Spain, Portugal,

Morocco, Italy, France, Greece, Malta, and Turkey.

Celebrity Equinox will ply waters around Corsica and Sardinia, while *Celebrity Constellation* and *Celebrity Infinity* will cruise in Italy and the Greek islands.

Meanwhile, *Celebrity Eclipse* will be based in Southampton, while passengers will explore Northern Europe on *Celebrity Silhouette*.

More than 60 overnight stays will take place across the season, including Tokyo, Kyoto, Kobe, and Aomori, which Celebrity said are four of its most highly-sought cities in Japan.

There will also be 115 port days lasting 12 hours or more, creating copious opportunities to explore Europe's cities and towns.

President Laura Hodges Bethge said the 2027/28 sailings will provide incredible destination experiences for both first-time guests and cruising veterans. *ML*

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Malone to Aurora

KATIE Malone has joined Aurora Expeditions as its new CMO, as the role is back to being based out of the cruise line's head office in Sydney.

She replaces Greg Cormier, who was based in Toronto, and took the job less than 12 months ago (**CW** 10 Sep).

Malone will lead Aurora's global marketing strategy, with a focus on strengthening brand alignment, enhancing digital and commercial performance, and driving continued momentum across international markets.

She brings decades of senior marketing and commercial leadership experience across the travel, cruise, aviation, and hospitality industries.

Malone most recently served as P&O Australia's Marketing Director, a role she served in for two-and-a-half years.

Royal's new Beach Club pricing strategy

ROYAL Caribbean has switched to dynamic pricing to sell capacity for Royal Beach Club Island in The Bahamas, which opened for bookings last month (**CW** 02 Jul).

Michael Bayley, Royal Caribbean Group's President & Chief Executive, told investors at a second-quarter earnings call last week that the line will change prices according to demand.

"It is dynamic because we've got a lot of capacity coming into Nassau and some days will be different from others in terms of the overall Royal Caribbean capacity in the port.

"We've got different packages available, and we've been extremely pleased with the sales to date," he added.

Bayley revealed there has been a flurry of Ultimate Family Cabana bookings worth US\$10,000 each, with one selling within the first hour of sales opening.



"We really do think we've got the product right and we think it's going to deliver very high levels of guest satisfaction."

Bayley also noted that construction of Royal Beach Club Island is "on all target" and "really looking impressive".

Jason Liberty, President of Royal Caribbean's parent company,

said the cruise line will welcome "meaningfully less" passengers to the destination to begin with, before a "slow ramp-up" of numbers in the first and second quarter of next year.

The first cruise ship call into the new destination will take place on 21 Dec, with day pass prices starting at around US\$139. *JM*

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SYDNEY has been ranked the world's seventh most beautiful cruise port, according to a focus group conducted by AllClear Travel Insurance.

The study involved 100 participants connected to eye-tracking technology, with measurements on visual engagement used to determine the top 20 most visually appealing cruise ports, and assign a score out of 100.

Each participant was observed to see how long it took for their eyes to catch on a memorable icon or feature in the port, and for how long they were fixated on it.

Sydney was the only Australian city to feature in the list, scoring 76, while Malta's capital Valletta claimed top spot with a perfect 100.

The UNESCO-listed city caught the eye of most study participants for its scenic blue harbour, classic architecture, and visual appeal.

Valletta led the ranking ahead of Ushuaia in Argentina, which scored 86, followed by Palermo, Stockholm, Nassau, and Oranjestad.



Croatia rewards top agents



A NUMBER of top-selling agents from around the world were recently invited by Unforgettable Croatia on board *My Wish* for a seven-night journey along the Croatian coast.

Cruising from Sibenik to Dubrovnik, the group of 15 agents plus their travel companions were hosted on the trip by Head of Global Sales David Stone.

Company founder Graham Carter also joined the cruise for a few days to express his thanks to the group for their ongoing support and sales expertise.

Carter's visit coincided with a massive white party on the ship's sun deck, complete with free-flowing drinks and a captain's dinner, all backed with a live band belting out tracks to keep the party going.

"Unforgettable Croatia is on track to secure its highest-ever occupancy rate in 2025 - currently in excess of 98% - and the trade

has been instrumental to this success," Carter said.

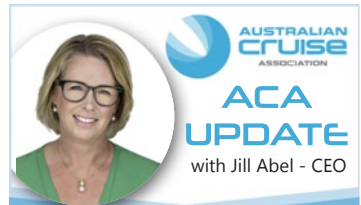
"In Australia alone, bookings are up 27% and revenue is up 39% year-on-year, with Australian travellers now accounting for 20% of all guests on board our small-ship Croatia cruises."

The voyage included daily three-course lunches, a cocktail welcome dinner and daily stops for some swimming and use of the ship's watersport equipment.

On land, the group enjoyed visits to Trogir, Split, Brac, Jelsa, Hvar, Korcula, Slano and Ston, with highlights including a chance to sample freshly shucked oysters.

The group also participated in a guided tour of Krka National Park, and were shown around the Diocletian Palace in Split and Dubrovnik old town. *ML*

Australian agent Samantha Riches from MyCruise was among the contingent and is **pictured** above with David Stone.



Charting success in Townsville

I'M ON the road again this week - this time in Townsville for a two-day cruise program that's brought together representatives from both international and domestic cruise lines, as well as ground handlers, as well as Tourism & Events Queensland.

The event highlights the growing interest in this vibrant North Queensland port.

It's been fantastic to reconnect in person and take part in a productive workshop at the Port of Townsville, where I delivered a State of the Industry update and joined in roundtable discussions with local tourism operators.

These conversations are crucial as we continue to strengthen regional engagement and align on the evolving expectations of cruise guests.

Townsville is a real success story. After a record 21 ship calls in the 2024/25 season - up from 18 the previous year - the city already has 26 visits on the books for 2025/26.

This growth is no accident; it reflects years of strategic investment and collaboration by the port, Townsville Enterprise and the broader tourism community.

Yesterday's port tour showcased recent infrastructure upgrades that are enabling Townsville to welcome a growing number of cruise visitors, while the city family and today's visit to Magnetic Island have highlighted the region's compelling, authentic experiences.

Townsville's momentum is a great example of what's possible when regions commit to cruise - and I'm excited to see what's next.

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