

Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features five pages of all the latest cruise industry news, including a photo page from **Carnival Cruise Line**.

Cruise joins LE Hub

LUXURY Escapes has introduced cruise bookings to its Agent Hub platform.

Travel advisors now have access to brands such as Carnival Cruise Line, Princess Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Disney Cruise Line, MSC Cruises, Hurtigruten, Cunard Line, Holland America Line, and Royal Caribbean.

Luxury Escapes Senior Manager Retail Distribution Chris Brandon said the expanded offering is part of the OTA's commitment to being easy to do business with for advisors.

"We're continually evolving Agent Hub to be a true one-stop-shop, and there is more to come," Brandon enthused.

"These new features mean agents can now offer even more value and convenience to their clients, while enjoying a streamlined booking experience and access to some of the best deals in the market," he added.

The Agent Hub was launched in Mar 2024, providing advisors with exclusive offers, commission, and perks for their clients.

'Critical juncture' for NZ

NEW Zealand Cruise Association (NZCA) Chair Tansy Tompkins has issued a rallying cry to the sector that the country's outlook for cruising is "deeply concerning" and requires urgent action.

Writing in the association's Chairman's Report to launch the NZCA 2025 conference, Tompkins presented a four-pronged plan it will pursue to continue efforts to reinvigorate the sector.

These include enhanced efforts to advocate and push for a stable and transparent regulatory environment; promotion of New Zealand at key global events; partnerships with industry bodies such as Tourism New Zealand; and a review of the *Cruise Aotearoa New Zealand 2040* strategy to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose.

Tompkins identified four key problems, which now leave New Zealand's upcoming 2025/26 wave season more than 40% down on projected ship calls compared to 2023/24 and below the levels from 2017/18.

"This is not a gentle contraction," Tompkins said.

"It's not a softening of demand, it is a steep and deeply worrying decline that, if not reversed, quickly threatens to erode the infrastructure, investment, and human capability that underpins cruise in New Zealand."

Further issues include inconsistency in biofouling regulations, making it impossible for cruise lines to confidently say



a ship can enter New Zealand, leading to an unacceptable brand risk and cost, she argued.

Tompkins said new regulations and costs introduced with short notice, overall cost to visit and a perception the country is "difficult to work with" and unpredictable, were creating a perfect storm that was driving ships elsewhere.

However, Innovations such as in-water cleaning trials at the Port of Auckland were yielding promising results on biofouling, which Tompkins (**pictured**) said is a "game-changer" that could improve certainty for cruise lines.

The NZCA Chair also praised the whole-of-government approach to the industry's problems, with multiple ministers committing to enforce open and transparent conversations around cost increases and changing executive-level perception.

More from the NZCA conference on **pages two and three**.

NZCA Chief Executive Jacqui Lloyd spoke to **CW** sister title **travelBulletin** on the matter for an extended feature story this week - **CLICK HERE** to read. **ML**



On location on board
Star of the Seas

Today's issue of **CW** is coming to you courtesy of **Royal Caribbean**, which is this week hosting us on board the inaugural voyage of **Star of the Seas** in Florida.

ROYAL Caribbean has brought us to Cape Canaveral for the inaugural voyage of its newest ship **Star of the Seas**, which is now the largest ship in the world by gross tonnage.

The three-night cruise will visit Royal Caribbean's private Bahamian island Perfect Day at CocoCay, and offer passengers the opportunity to test out the brand-new ship's cornucopia of fun.

Stay tuned to **Cruise Weekly** this week for all the news.

Worldwide sign-up

REGISTRATIONS are now open for Norwegian Cruise Line's and TTC's Worldwide Rendezvous 2026, announced last week (**CW** 05 Aug).

The roadshow will take place at around 40 locations from 10 Sep to 12 Nov, and are designed with both trade and consumer in mind.

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NZ must collaborate

NEW Zealand's cruise industry will need to adopt a collaborative approach in order to overcome challenges, CLIA Australasia MD Joel Katz told attendees at the New Zealand Cruise Association Conference this morning.

"Our industry so often talks about the importance of taking a whole-of-government approach to developing cruise tourism - in a carefully planned and responsible way - and I'm delighted that this is now clearly on the agenda in New Zealand," Katz said.

He acknowledged that there is still plenty of work to be done, pointing out that the number of New Zealanders taking cruises fell by 7% last year to just over 80,000 - a result of reduced deployment, among other factors.

However, Katz said that Kiwis are willing to go elsewhere if options are limited at home, with figures showing a trend towards cruises in long-haul destinations overseas.

He also revealed that a new campaign launching soon will "put a human face to cruising's employment contribution", highlighting the NZ\$1.37 billion cruising pours into New Zealand's economy each year.

Additionally, Katz announced that CLIA is preparing a second annual economic report for NZ, slated for release in Oct.

Princess' new partners

PRINCESS Cruises will expand its Local Partnerships program to include scope for conserving cultural heritage as well as environmental stewardship.

Three cultural organisations were this morning revealed as the inaugural partners for Princess' expanded program, leading with Tauranga-based Te Kura Waka, which is helmed by respected Maori advocate, Jack Thatcher.

Te Kura Waka is a school program dedicated to the revival and promotion of traditional celestial navigation techniques - using the sun, moon, stars and planets to sail across the ocean.

Princess Cruises will also continue to support Bay Bush Action in Northland and Natures Wonders in Otago, two groups working to protect wildlife and habitats through predator control for native birds and ecosystems.

"We are proud to be deepening our ties with grassroots conservation and cultural organisations in New Zealand that are making a real and measurable difference in the local communities our ships visit," said Princess Cruises Vice President APAC, Matthew Rutherford.

Funding for the Princess Local Partnerships program primarily comes from guest donations, which are matched by the line.

The program has been shaped through consultation with local communities, cruise guests, travel agents, government and shipboard

crew, all of whom have identified environmental conservation and the Maori culture as top priorities.

"We are honoured to work alongside these remarkable organisations - Bay Bush Action, Natures Wonders and now Te Kura Waka - as they protect what makes New Zealand so unique," Rutherford said.

MEANWHILE, Princess Cruises has revealed a restructured and strengthened sales team featuring several key promotions (**CW** breaking news yesterday).

Changes include David Craven's promotion to Field Sales & Key Account Manager, which will see him lead the national field team, and partner closely with key accounts to drive performance and consistency across regions.

Also promoted is Heather Pryde, who will take on the role of National Sales Manager.

Furthermore, Princess has filled the role of Queensland State Manager with Tyrone Jost, who will step shoreside after six years working on board the line's ships.

The changes also follow the promotion of Elly Eves to Key Account & Operations Manager earlier this year (**CW** 27 May), which saw her take over the cruise line's groups functions.

"Each of these appointments reflects our commitment to building a high-performing, customer-focused sales division," Senior Director Sales & Marketing APAC Nick Ferguson said. *ML/MS*

Star Princess trials

PRINCESS Cruises' newest ship *Star Princess* (**CW** 17 Jul) has shined through her sea trials off the coast of Italy, with engineers testing the vessel's steering, navigation systems, propulsion, and more.

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CRUISE WEEKLY

On location in
Napier

Today's issue of CW is coming to you from the New Zealand Cruise Association's (NZCA) 2025 conference in Napier.

MOMENTUM for cruise in New Zealand appears to have stalled, leading the NZCA to theme its conference around the rally cry 'This is not a drill'.

By its own admission, the country's cruise future is on the line and now is the time to act.

With far fewer ship calls this season than in recent years, CEO Jacqui Lloyd has said the industry is settling in for two quiet years and is now pushing for better times in 2027/28.

Cruise Weekly will be across all the happenings from the critical two-day event.

Five for A&K sailing the Nile



ABERCROMBIE & Kent (A&K) has introduced *Nile Seray*, its fifth luxury riverboat in Egypt, which sets sail in 2026.

The newbuild ship features 32 suites, all with floor-to-ceiling windows, large bathrooms, and Juliet balconies - some also have private outdoor spa pools.

Guests will have access to two restaurants, a top-deck swimming pool, outdoor lounge bar, and

a wellness space with two spa treatment rooms and a well-equipped gym.

Nile Seray will offer four-night voyages between Aswan and Luxor, with daily expert-guided visits to tombs, temples, and bazaars; sailing trips to little islands on the Nile; and hot-air balloon rides.

Travellers can register their interest **HERE**. JM

Party gets shorter

CARNIVAL Cruise Line will introduce its first short itineraries aboard *Mardi Gras* in 2027/28.

The ship will sail new four- and five-day Bahamas cruises from Port Canaveral, with the shorter option visiting two of the cruise line's private destinations: Celebration Key and RelaxAway, Half Moon Cay; and the longer sailing adding in a Nassau call.

Mardi Gras' deployment on shorter cruises is timed with the arrival of *Carnival Festivale* (see **page 2**), President Christine Duffy said.

The new *Mardi Gras* sailings are currently on sale.

Meanwhile, *Carnival Celebration* will continue to offer week-long cruises from PortMiami, with a range of new sailings featuring a visit to Celebration Key.

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Agents sail into fun on board *Carnival Panorama*

SIX of Flight Centre AU & NZ's top-selling agents were rewarded with an unforgettable famil aboard *Carnival Panorama* - Carnival Cruise Line's spectacular Vista-class ship, homeported year-round in Long Beach, California and hosted by BDM Jordy Clayton and Trade Engagement Manager Liz Simbaqueba.

The adventure began in Los Angeles with a welcome dinner hosted by Santa Monica Travel & Tourism at the iconic Lobster restaurant. Once aboard *Carnival Panorama*, the group were immersed in Carnival's signature fun - from dazzling entertainment, activities and deck parties to endless dining options and warm hospitality.

Ashore, the group explored the sun-soaked Mexican Riviera, diving into vibrant shore excursions, authentic local flavours, and cheeky tequila tastings.

"This famil didn't just showcase the ship - it brought the Carnival experience and signature fun to life," said Simbaqueba. "Our

agents returned with fresh insights, stronger confidence, and unforgettable memories to share."

Agents included Rachael Attard, Jade Harrison, Leesa Hydes, Nicole Norton, Paul Rowley, and Aroha Vanderclay - now fully armed to sell the ultimate Carnival experience.



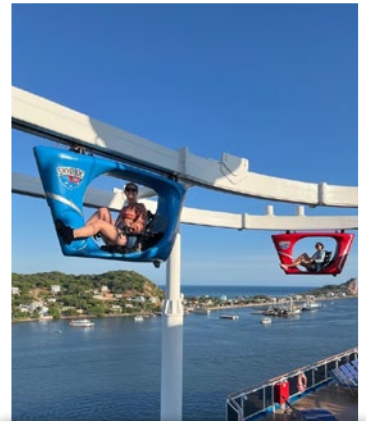
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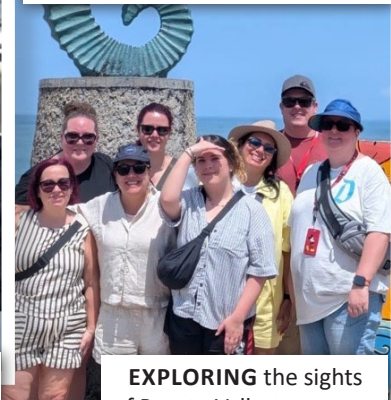
EIGHTIES night - always a fun event.



CARNIVAL Panorama embarkation. Front: Liz, Leesa and Jordy. Back: Paul, Rachel, Nicole, Aroha, and Jade.



SKYRIDE thrills high above the *Panorama* whilst in Mazatlan.



EXPLORING the sights of Puerto Vallarta.



SALSA & Salsa shore experience in La Paz, Mexico.



ENJOYING a dinner hosted by Santa Monica Travel and Tourism.



TEQUILA tasting in Puerto Vallarta.



CHEERS from Red Frog Rum Bar.



A BOAT owner in Orange County recently had to commandeer his vessel back from a rather cute imposter - a Californian sea lion.

The man filmed the sea lion as he approached it, asking "Excuse me, sir, are you supposed to be up there?"

Affronted, the mammal asserted its right to be there with a mighty roar (translation: mind your own business).

The man backed down and responded the only way he could in such a situation: "Oh, my mistake, I guess - I guess that's your boat."

The clip has attracted nearly 70,000 likes on Instagram - watch it [HERE](#).

Ponant is en pointe



PONANT Explorations State Manager Victoria & Tasmania Annabelle Brown recently hosted an exclusive famil aboard *Le Laperouse* on a voyage from Oslo to Copenhagen.

The 10-night journey explored Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, with travel partners in attendance from Bayview Travel, Toorak Travel, Woodley & James Travel Associates, and Gannon & Turner Travel Associates.

The specially curated sailing immersed participants in the world of the Paris Opera Ballet, with guests enjoying captivating performances by the company's principal dancers staged on *Le Laperouse's* elevated marina platform (**pictured**).

They also took part in on board classical dance lessons with Yann Saiz, a soloist with the Paris Opera Ballet and teacher at the Paris Opera Ballet School.

Guests also gained insight into the artistry of stage production

during a costume creation workshop with Christine Neumeister, the Paris Opera's esteemed Head of Costumes.

The experience was crowned by an exclusive performance at the Sweden's Helsingborgs Symfoniorkester & Konserthus, celebrated for its striking functionalist architecture, which was one of the included shore excursions in the itinerary. *MS*

Pearl's false start

PEARL Expeditions is now underway with its maiden itinerary from Broome to Wyndham after regulatory delays forced the line's original voyage to be cancelled.

The line's debut expedition onboard *Paspaley Pearl* (**pictured**) was meant to be a 10-night voyage in the other direction, from Wyndham to Broome, departing on 31 Jul.

However, due to a range of regulatory and technical documentations, which were extensively delayed, the initial cruise had to be scrapped.

All travellers booked on the cancelled voyage have been reaccommodated on the second or subsequent sailings, with the line also covering out-of-pocket expenses incurred by guests changing travel plans.



Silversea appoints

SILVERSEA has appointed Gianluca Sparacino as its new Global Head of Food and Beverage, effective 18 Aug.

Sparacino will work closely with shoreside and shipboard teams to elevate the cruise line's dining program.

The culinary expert brings more than three decades of experience to his new role, including his recent tenure at Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts.

"Gianluca's expertise aligns with our mission to redefine experiential luxury travel through meaningful, destination-inspired dining," said President Bert Hernandez.



On Board: *Star of the Seas*

Lincoln Park Supper Club

Cocktails and live jazz are the highlights of this newly introduced space aboard *Star of the Seas*. The formal dining venue offers up plates including crab ravioli, lamb with morel and chanterelle mushrooms, walleye with artichokes, and more, while ringing in the nostalgia of Chicago's golden days.