

Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features four pages of all the latest cruise industry news, plus a full page from **Emerald Cruises and Tours**.

A gem of an offer

EMERALD Cruises & Tours is currently offering a bonus saving of \$500 per person on a selection of its 2026 cruises for bookings made by 05 Dec or until sold out.

The offer is on top of the cruise line's existing Black Friday promotion, which allows travellers to save up to \$4,250 per person on Europe and Southeast Asia river cruises, as well as yacht cruises sailing across the Mediterranean, Caribbean and Seychelles Islands.

For more information, head to the **back page**.

Celestyal hails stellar season in the Med

CELESTYAL has hailed its most successful Mediterranean and Adriatic season on record, with passenger numbers increasing by 4% and revenue up 10% on 2024.

The 1,260-guest *Celestyal Journey* operated 10 'Heavenly Greece, Italy and Croatia' sailings, and 22 'Idyllic Greece' voyages between Apr-Nov, with both itineraries offering seven ports over seven nights, while *Celestyal Discovery* sailed 69 departures of the three- and four-night 'Iconic Greek Islands'.

The season saw the 1,360-guest ship become the first cruise vessel in Greek waters to operate on a locally produced marine biofuel blend, reducing CO₂ emissions by approximately 21%.

Lee Haslett, Chief Commercial Officer at Celestyal, said: "2025 has been another strong year for Celestyal so far.

"From expanding our itineraries



and upgrading our fleet to pioneering sustainability efforts, we've seen record demand and yield across our Mediterranean program," she added.

"We now look ahead with real excitement as both *Celestyal Journey* and *Celestyal Discovery* sail to the Arabian Gulf, which is fast becoming an exciting, new destination for cruising."

Both ships are currently repositioning to the Arabian Gulf for the northern winter, with the season kicking off on 06 Dec

when *Celestyal Journey* departs on a special Abu Dhabi Grand Prix celebratory cruise.

She will then operate a seven-night 'Desert Days' itinerary for the rest of the season, sailing roundtrip from Doha and calling at Sir Bani Yas Island, Abu Dhabi and Bahrain.

Celestyal Discovery will join her fleet mate for her inaugural season in the region on 12 Dec, launching the line's new three-, four- and seven-night 'Iconic Arabia' cruises (**CW** 05 Mar). *JM*

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Timaru steals cruise spotlight in NZ

TIMARU, a small port in New Zealand's South Island, is preparing for its busiest season on record, despite the country's ongoing struggles to attract ships (*CW* 28 Nov).

Timaru is the only Kiwi port seeing an increase in cruise ship visits this summer, with 14 vessels set to dock in the city - six in Jan, six in Feb, and a final one in Mar.

Around 16,000 visitors and 7,500 crew are expected through the season, which kicked off last Fri with the arrival of Holland America Line's 2,000-passenger ship, *Noordam* - the largest ship to ever call into Timaru.

According to Nigel Davenport, the Chief Executive Officer of Venture Timaru - the city's tourism agency - the port's compact scale and proximity to the CBD is what sets it apart.

"The passengers [have] got the ability to walk off the cruise



ships and into town in five to 10 minutes," he said.

"We are really friendly, we've got a great welcoming community - they love having the vibrancy of the passengers in town."

Davenport pointed out the closeness to Mackenzie Country as an example of what is on offer for visitors.

"We've got great food, great sites, and unique things, like Te Ana Maori rock art - it's the best example of Maori rock art in the

country," he said.

Cruise passengers spend around NZ\$284 (A\$249) per person in Timaru - a figure that the city is aiming to double this year, Davenport revealed.

The city is preparing to welcome its next ship, Regent Seven Seas Cruises' *Seven Seas Explorer*, on 07 Jan 2026, followed a day later by NCL's *Norwegian Spirit*. *JM*

Pictured: Virgin Voyages' *Resilient Lady* calling into Timaru during a previous season.

Today's issue of *CW* is coming to you courtesy of Holland America Line, aboard *MS Noordam* as she cruises across the Tasman.

WE ARE now en route to our first Australian port of call, with the ship scheduled to spend a day in Hobart, Tasmania tomorrow.

It's been smooth sailing so far, with guests enjoying a huge variety of activities on our sea days including fitness classes, cooking demonstrations, bingo, trivia, recitals and much more.

A highlight last night was the trip's traditional "Orange Party" paying homage to HAL's Dutch heritage, with guests optionally dressing up with a touch of orange for Dutch-themed dining and a celebration in the theatre.

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Hurry, offer ends today!



CCL delays Rewards

CARNIVAL Cruise Line (CCL) has pushed back the start of its new Carnival Rewards program, which will now kick off 01 Sep 2026 - three months after the original launch date.

According to a recent announcement via email to members, the postponement will give cruisers more time to reach a higher final VIFP Club loyalty status, with those who achieve Diamond tier by 31 Aug 2026 able to keep that status for life.

All others will also have their VIFP status as of 31 Aug matched in the new program, with that status to last through to 31 Dec 2028.

The latest update on the program comes just a few months after CCL made changes to its earning structure, following criticism from customers (**CW** 16 Sep).

MV Piano Land, Malaysia's new key player

CHINA'S first independently operated luxury cruise ship and the flagship vessel of Astro Ocean Cruise, *MV Piano Land*, set sail on her maiden voyage over the weekend (**CW** 01 Dec).

The 1,760-passenger ship's debut was commemorated with a special welcome reception and flag-raising ceremony held at the Port Klang Cruise Terminal (PKCT) in Malaysia.

As the first Chinese cruise ship to be homeported in the country thanks to a partnership between Astro Ocean Cruise Line and Hwajing Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd, *MV Piano's* debut marks a major milestone for Malaysia's cruise tourism ambitions.

The 70,000-ton ship will offer two-night sailings between Penang and Port Klang, and three-night cruises visiting Penang, Langkawi, and Port Klang.

On board, guests will find 880



cabins, halal and international dining options, Broadway-style shows, wellness centres, shopping arcades, kids' clubs, recreational facilities, and more.

PKCT Chairman, YBhg. Dato' Azman Shah Mohd Yusof, explained the decision to homeport in Malaysia "further strengthens Malaysia's ambition to become ASEAN's leading

gateway for cruise tourism, offering a diverse range of cruise segments and experiences".

Kenny Cheong, Managing Director of Hwajing Travel & Tours, added that the arrival of *MV Piano Land* "reaffirms our commitment to making cruise holidays more accessible and enriching for travellers across Malaysia and Southeast Asia". *JM*



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HOLLAND America Line is definitely serious about its onboard cuisine - and clientele aboard the *MS Noordam* this week are still talking about the festive fare on board for Thanksgiving last Thu evening when the ship was cruising down the east coast of NZ.

During a sea day cooking demonstration by the ship's Executive Chef, Willem Waltheer, he remarked at the strong demand for turkey during the celebration, which saw about half a ton (500kg) of the birds consumed on board by the 1,800 passengers and 700-odd crew.

"You guys really enjoyed your Thanksgiving," he said, noting that while the US President always traditionally saves a turkey from the chopping block in a White House ceremony, "there's for sure no pardoning of turkeys on the *Noordam*".



Aurora floats on biofuel



AURORA Expeditions has shared further insights into its successful biofuel trial aboard the *Sylvia Earle* earlier this year.

Speaking during the *Douglas Mawson* shakedown (**CW** 27 Nov), Sustainability Manager Sasha Buch revealed that Aurora was able to operate the vessel on a new renewable fuel - hydrotreated vegetable oil.

She explained, "It's essentially a waste product converted into marine fuel".

The trial, conducted along the Spanish coastline over a few days "achieved approximately 90% reduction in fuel-related emissions", according to Buch.

While the results were highly encouraging, she noted that challenges remain before broader adoption is feasible.

"It's expensive, and even though it's made from waste, it's still a finite resource and not yet available at the scale the industry needs," she said.

Aurora plans to conduct additional trials when *Sylvia Earle* returns to Europe next year. **MV**

Taiwan cruise jump

THE emerging tourist destination of Taiwan is predicting a significant surge in cruise passengers.

Taiwan International Ports Corporation has revealed by the end of the year, the Asian island destination will have enjoyed an 8% rise in cruise arrivals when compared to 2019 volumes.

Figures released by the body today show international cruise ships will have made 567 calls by the end of the month, bringing 1.135 million passengers to Taiwan's shores.

By Oct 2025, international passenger numbers accounted for 38% of the country's cruise arrivals - up from 31% in 2019, with the growth expected to continue in 2026.

CRUISE WEEKLY On Board: *MS Noordam*



Art Studio

Located in a corner of the Deck 10 observation lounge, *Noordam*'s onboard art studio is a hive of activity particularly during days at sea. A constant stream of sessions are on offer, including calligraphy, watercolours, origami, drawing, doodling, sketching and more, under expert tuition offering plenty of tips and tricks, with all materials provided at no cost.



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EDITORIAL

Editor - Myles Stedman
Journalists - Adam Bishop, Janie Medbury
Editor-at-large - Bruce Piper
Editorial Director - Damian Francis
Associate Publisher - Jo-Anne Hui-Miller
info@cruiseweekly.com.au

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Head of Sales & Marketing - Sean Harrigan
Business Development Manager
Kara Stanley
advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au

GENERAL MANAGER & PUBLISHER
Matthew Vince

ACCOUNTS

accounts@traveldaily.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia
Tel: (AU) +61 2 8007 6760 or (NZ) 0800 799 220
Tel: (Int'l) 1300 799 220

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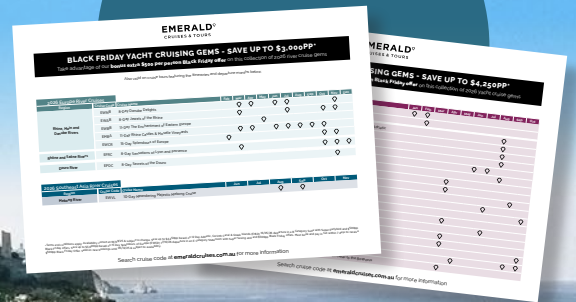
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