

Cruise Weekly today

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

Thomas is a Princess

PRINCESS Cruises has welcomed Alison Thomas (**pictured**) as its new State Manager for Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania.

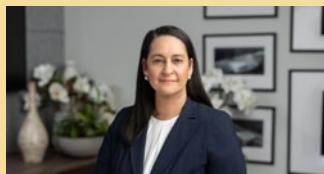
Bringing 40 years of experience across the aviation and hotel sectors, she will manage the accounts for Princess' southern states.

Thomas brings varied industry knowledge and a deep commitment to supporting the travel trade.

"A graduate of the TIME mentor program, Alison is a highly respected and well-regarded industry professional who is excited to step into the cruise sector," the company said in a statement.

"Her extensive expertise and wealth of knowledge will be instrumental in driving Princess' growth across this important region."

Thomas added: "A heartfelt thank you to the amazing team at Princess for the warm welcome and support as I settle into the role."



Lindblad's new charter



NATIONAL Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions has expanded its Alaska program to meet surging demand with a three-year charter of Aurora Expeditions' *Greg Mortimer* (**pictured**).

The popular Australian ship will head to Lindblad Expeditions during the southern winter seasons of 2027 and 2028, with an option for 2029.

Following her northern summer seasons, she will return to Aurora Expeditions for the southern summer seasons.

"I am incredibly proud of the exceptional, unique, and intimate Alaska experience that our ships and our expert expedition team deliver," Lindblad Chief Executive Officer Natalya Leahy said.

"Demand for our Alaska voyages continues to grow, and I'm thrilled that with the introduction of a new ship to our Alaska fleet, we can welcome even more explorers and also offer exciting new itineraries to our collection."

The charter will support Lindblad's continued growth, as its *Sea Bird* and *Sea Lion* vessels retire next year.

"These beloved ships have been the backdrop to countless memorable adventures for our guests over many years," the Lindblad CEO added.

Cruise Weekly understands the charter arrangement will see a small number of Aurora Expeditions guests affected.

The line told **Cruise Weekly** these passengers have been contacted over the past few months and accommodated on other itineraries.

Greg Mortimer is one of seven Infinity-class vessels built by SunStone Ships, three of which (including *Sylvia Earle* and the recently delivered *Douglas Mawson*) sail for Aurora.

The ship, like other Infinity-class vessels, features an inverted bow, which makes her ideal for navigating rough polar waters. *MS*

NCL taps new boss

MARC Kazlauskas (**pictured**) has been appointed by Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) as its new President (**CW** breaking news).

Kazlauskas brings decades of experience leading global travel companies, including most recently as Chief Executive Officer of Avoya Travel, one of the US's largest travel companies.

He has also served as President of FROSCHE by Chase Travel, and Managing Director of Chase Travel Group.

"Marc is a proven leader with deep commercial expertise and an unwavering commitment to the guest experience," President & CEO Harry Sommer said.

"His appointment comes at a pivotal time for the Norwegian Cruise Line brand as we continue to see healthy demand for cruise, execute on our newbuild program and make significant progress on major initiatives, including enhancements to our private island in the Bahamas, Great Stirrup Cay."

Kazlauskas replaces David Herrera, who departed NCL in Aug (**CW** 21 Aug).



Virgin VOYAGES

80% OFF
SECOND SAILOR
PLUS UP TO \$400
IN FREE DRINKS

*T&Cs apply



with
Love from
VIRGIN
VOYAGES

CONTACT US



Delivering Serenity

CRYSTAL has announced its first wave of 2028 voyages aboard *Crystal Serenity*, which features Amazon River journeys, a Caribbean Circle Grand Voyage and spring sailing in the Azores.

The season will start with round trip sailings from Fort Lauderdale, offering a relaxed start to the season and warm-weather coastal exploration.

Ports of call include the British Virgin Islands, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, the historic city of Cartagena, and Puerto Limon.

Serenity will then sail on a 25-day Amazon voyage, with calls in Manaus, as well as remote river communities, offering opportunities to explore the region's biodiversity and culture.

The voyage may be linked with adjacent sailings to form the Caribbean Circle Grand Voyage, encompassing 14 Caribbean islands and five countries in Central America.

Serenity will then head back to Cartagena, as well as Roatan and Belize, for a blend of islands, reefs and quiet bays, followed by calls at Puerto Rico, The Bahamas, Turks & Caicos, and more.

The season concludes with a transatlantic sailing to the Azores, aligned with migrating whales, before *Serenity* enters dry dock in Lisbon.

Xmas sail and rail

SPEND next Christmas on a luxury ship around Australia before a rail trip across the country as part of a new package with Cruise Traveller.

Guests booking the Oceania Cruises/Indian Pacific package are offered extensive savings and a free five-star hotel stay in Perth for bookings made by the end of the year - **CLICK HERE** for more info.

Aussies booking bigger



NEW Cruise Guru data has revealed Australians are booking bigger staterooms, planning further ahead, and prioritising value for next year.

The online cruise booking platform experienced record demand for balconies in the third quarter of 2025, and also saw customers plan further ahead.

Cruise Guru booking data shows more than half of travellers booked at least a balcony stateroom this year, while 11% booked a suites.

Inside stateroom bookings were down across some cruise lines too, Cruise Guru observed.

CCO Michael Betteridge (pictured) said this reflects a "quality over quantity" mindset, as the Australian cruiser grows more sophisticated.

"Aussies tend to love the fun and excitement of cruising but also want their own private sanctuary, views and the comfort that upgraded cabins offer.

"They see cruising as the best of both worlds and they're willing to invest in that experience.

Forward planning is also accelerating at record pace, with average lead time landing at about nine months or 275 days across all categories.

Betteridge said this is evidence of Australian cruisers planning more strategically.

"The desire to secure the right ship, the right itinerary, and the right cabin is pushing bookings further out," he said.

"Customers have learned that waiting may mean missing out.

"While we have seen last-minute cruising demand, many itineraries are filled already,"

Passengers are also expressing a renewed appetite for value-adds and fly-cruise, painting the picture of a more considered, experience-driven Aussie cruiser.

Asia tops the list for international destinations, recording a 45% increase in the third quarter versus the same period last year.

"Local cruising offers convenience, certainty and a stress-free solution that continues to resonate with Australian families," Bettridge said.

"We're also seeing steady momentum for international itineraries as customers start planning bigger, more adventurous trips.

"This could be driven by more guests seeking unique and diverse cultural experiences with the value and convenience of cruising as they explore new destinations, particularly in Asia," he added. *MS*

Avalon ups Xmas

AVALON Waterways is increasing its number of Christmastime sailings for the holiday season in 2026 to meet demand.

Next year marks the largest-ever line-up of festive sailings for Avalon, and the new itinerary brings a 15% boost in capacity to the cruise line's Christmas voyages to more than 40 departures.

Avalon's holiday cruises are among its most popular – selling out earlier each year as guests chase the glow of Europe's winter wonderlands.

"These cruises have become the highlight of our year," Globus family of brands MD Chris Hall declared.

"Every holiday season, our guests eagerly await their Christmas sailing on our Suite Ships, travelling on the iconic rivers in Europe – complete with festive lights, steaming mugs of mulled wine and centuries of Christmas tradition," Hall added.

"Expanding them for 2026 means more cruisers can experience the beauty of the season, and comfort and warmth of travelling with Avalon," he said.

WE'RE HIRING News Journalist

Travel Daily is seeking a talented and motivated News Journalist to join our Sydney-based editorial team. This is an exciting opportunity for a skilled writer with a passion for storytelling, travel, and breaking news to contribute to our fast-paced publications.

For more information and to apply **CLICK HERE**.



**BUSINESS
PUBLISHING
GROUP**



Travel Daily
Travel & Cruise
Weekly



travelBulletin
Pharmacy
Daily



CRUISE
WEEKLY
business events news





AMERICAN actress and godmother of *MSC World America*, Drew Barrymore, was apparently not content with being the matriarch of just one MSC Cruises ship.

The *Charlie's Angels* star has now taken on the role of 'God Aunt' to MSC's upcoming ship *MSC World Atlantic*, which sales opened for this week.

However, Barrymore has not just pledged to be any old God Aunt - she wants to be the "Cool God Aunt".

"When MSC Cruises first asked me to be the godmother of *MSC World America*, I was a little bit shy about it," Barrymore said.

"Then once I cut that ribbon last Apr, I went from shy to totally honoured, and I couldn't be prouder!

"Now that pride extends to being *MSC World Atlantic's* God Aunt - I'll be the cool God Aunt," Barrymore enthused.

Celestyal revs up in Arabia

CELESTYAL Cruises recently hosted travel advisors from around the world on its Abu Dhabi Grand Prix sailing, with guest star and former Formula 1 race winner David Coulthard.

The cruise served as a celebration of the start of Celestyal's second Arabian Gulf season, with the 'Desert Days & Abu Dhabi Grand Prix' itinerary setting sail last week.

A highlight of the cruise saw the 13 travel partners, including from Australia, treated to a fireside chat with Coulthard (**pictured**), hosted by sports presenter Laura Winter, during which the former Formula 1 driver discussed his career in the 1990s and 2000s.

The famil was supported by the Department of Abu Dhabi Culture & Tourism, and saw agents enjoy three nights on board *Celestyal Journey*, enjoying multiple shore experiences including premium access to the Grand Prix.

"Having David Coulthard and Laura Winter join us created a standout 'backstage pass' moment for agents and guests alike, and we were delighted to host our global trade partners on



board for an immersive famil," Chief Commercial Officer Lee Haslett said.

Journey will continue to operate a 7-night 'Desert Days' itinerary for the rest of the season.

The itinerary will sail round trip from Doha, calling at Sir Bani Yas Island, Abu Dhabi, and Bahrain, as well as an overnight stay in Dubai.

Prices start from \$1,039 per person twin share.

Celestyal Discovery will join *Journey* today, launching the cruise line's new three-, four- and seven-night 'Iconic Arabia' cruises, sailing round trip from Abu Dhabi.

The new cruises will call at Doha, Khasab, Dubai, and Sir Bani Yas, as well as offering maiden visits to Ras Al Khaimah.

Prices start from \$509 per person twin share for a three-night sailing, as part of a summer sale through to 05 Feb. *MS*

Dine out in Denali

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) is introducing an enhanced Denali Lodge and a free dining plan for 2027.

The season, which will mark HAL's 80th exploring Alaska, delivers upgraded amenities, and added value for guests.

Holland America is offering a free dining package for guests who book with the early booking bonus.

This inclusive dining package covers breakfast and dinner at HAL's signature properties in Denali, Skagway, and Dawson City, plus lunch aboard the glass-domed McKinley Explorer railcars.

Guests can choose between 19 cruises during the season, each of which includes a visit to Denali National Park, and a stay at Denali Lodge.

The property is undergoing a \$70 million transformation that will be complete ahead of the 2027 season (*CW* 09 Jan), which will introduce new guestroom buildings, along with a reimagined main lodge featuring a contemporary restaurant, and more.



SAILING NEW WATERS

Here's why the cruise industry is setting sail for Southeast Asia.

» CLICK HERE TO READ

Travel Daily