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### Cruise Weekly today

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

### Virgin pass is back

**VIRGIN** Voyages' Annual Pass is returning next year with bigger and better offers, including a complimentary stay on the Richard Branson-owned Necker Island.

The pass, which was only introduced for the first time last month (**CW** 05 Dec), allows holders to hop onto any ship, anytime, from anywhere, for a calendar year.

The 2026 pass costs US\$199,000 (A\$321,235), and includes business class flights, birthday upgrades, privately hosted shorex, and a one-week stay on Necker Island.

Travel advisors who sell an Annual Pass will earn a commission of A\$16,140.

## CLIA Award 2025 finalists revealed

**CRUISE** Lines International Association (CLIA) has revealed the finalists for its upcoming 22nd Cruise Industry Awards for Australasia (**CW** breaking news).

Taking place on 08 Mar at The Star Event Centre in Sydney, the sold-out celebration will see a total of 75 finalists from across Australia and New Zealand vie to take home an award.

Around 800 nominations were received for this year's awards, which will involve 15 categories.

CLIA MD Joel Katz said this year's finalists reflected a thriving membership that is now bigger than ever before.

"CLIA's travel agent membership is now at record levels in Australasia, and this is demonstrated by the breadth of nominations and finalists in this year's awards," he said.

"We can see new faces and fresh perspectives among the

finalists, alongside some of the established achievers of the Australasian cruise community."

Phil Hoffmann Travel, Ignite Travel Group, Gallivanter Travel, Bicton Travel/Claremont Cruise & Travel Centre, and Hunter Travel Group will compete for the Agency of the Year - Multi-Location accolade.

Finalists for the coveted Cruise Champion gong are Kylie Crouch, First Travel Group; Michael Middleton, Ignite; Belle Goldie, The Cruise & Travel Store; and Rose Febo, TravelManagers.

Meanwhile, the Online Cruise Agency of the Year Australasia category will see Cruise Guru, Our Vacation Centre, Clean Cruising, Ecruising and Trip-A-Deal go head-to-head.

Karryn Bartlett, TravelManagers Australia; Sarah Webster, Wayfinder Travel; Tracy King, MTA - Mobile Travel Agents; Jane

Fowler, TravelManagers; and Lauren Jenkins, MTA - Mobile Travel Agents will battle it out for the Mobile/Home Based Agent of the Year Australia award.

The industry's night of nights will also see the title of Cruise Consultant of the Year Australia go to one of Amanda Taylor, My Cruises; Michelle Yates, The Travel Studio; Kat Logan, Cruiseabout Brisbane; Malcolm Leyland, Cruise Express; or Samantha Renvoye, Clean Cruising.

"Cruising has become a clear priority among our region's travel agents, and so this year's awards will help celebrate that focus and support," Katz added.

"The cruise industry is incredibly grateful for the passion and professionalism shown by our trade partners, and I congratulate all our award finalists for their success" - see the full list of CLIA Award 2025 finalists **HERE**. JM



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## Carnival to set sail from Aus to Asia

**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line is setting sail for Asia from Australia for the first time, on board *Carnival Adventure* and *Carnival Luminosa*, with voyages on sale now.

Offering two itineraries in 2027, *Adventure* will explore Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam - new destinations for Carnival.

The program includes a Sydney to Singapore voyage, stopping in Indonesia, and a round-trip cruise from Singapore.

*Luminosa* will introduce a 14-day voyage in 2026, sailing from Tokyo to Singapore, which will visit Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Vietnam.

The ship will also sail on a 14-day voyage from Singapore to Brisbane via Bali and Darwin.

Vice President Sales & Marketing Kara Glamore expressed her excitement in setting sail from Australia to Asia for the first time.



"These itineraries mark a new chapter in cruising for Carnival, just as we prepare to embark on an exciting expansion to four ships in Australia, when P&O's *Pacific Adventure* and *Pacific Encounter* join the Carnival family in Mar," she said.

"This is going to give Australians a new, affordable and thrilling

way to visit multiple destinations across Asia, all while enjoying the unparalleled fun of a Carnival cruise," Glamore enthused.

"Asia has bustling cities, breathtaking scenery, ancient temples, and world-famous beaches, and we can't wait for our guests to explore this magical part of the world." MS

## Boheme on Mekong

**MEKONG** Kingdoms, a luxury river cruise operator specialising in Southeast Asia, has announced a new addition to its fleet.

*Boheme*, a 50-metre-long vessel, will sail between the Kingdom of Laos' royal capital, Luang Prabang, and the national capital, Vientiane.

The 13-suite ship, which can accommodate up to 26 passengers, will operate a five-night itinerary, with guests able to either start or end their journey at the historic Avani+ Luang Prabang Hotel to explore the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang.

Excursions include an exploration of the Pak Ou caves, dining near the Kuang Si waterfall, learning from the artisans of Ban Chan pottery village, and visiting Xayaboury's Elephant Conservation Centre.

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**SPOTTING** sea creatures from the ship and shore is one of the most enjoyable parts of cruising, but one bizarre amphibious inhabitant may be about to enter the ocean.

A robotic sea turtle could soon be populating the oceans, thanks to Chinese company Beatbot, and its Amphibious RoboTurtle (pictured).

The prototype was unveiled last week at global tech event CES in Las Vegas.

The RoboTurtle is designed for applications including ecological research, environmental monitoring, and disaster response, and definitely, definitely not spying.



## Norwegian leaning into 2025's trends

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line is tailoring its European program this year to some of 2025's top travel trends, including 'season-swapping', and 'coolcations', as well as solo travel.

Season-swapping is predicted to be one of the trends of the year, with Norwegian cruisers to visit Europe outside of the peak summer period.

Autumn and spring shoulder season cruises offer cooler breezes and fewer crowds, with Norwegian running its European program this year from Mar through Nov.

Late season Greek sailings are available on *Norwegian Viva*, visiting Turkiye and Morocco.

There are also Northern Europe or Baltic voyages departing from London (pictured), Copenhagen, or Stockholm.

Finland and Norway have also been called out as trending destinations for this year, as coolcations to more temperate destinations trend.

Scandinavian countries are particularly appealing to those embracing the concept, with both Finland and Norway featuring



heavily in Norwegian's Baltic and Northern Europe itineraries.

These cruises feature several overnight stays in Copenhagen and Helsinki, a brand-new home port for Norwegian in 2026.

Another trending destination is Rome, which is attracting renewed interest as a set-jetting destination following the release of the new *Gladiator II* film.

Norwegian will sail 22 round-trip and open-jaw sailings departing from nearby Civitavecchia on board six different vessels, including the brand-new *Viva*, as well as *Norwegian Sky*.

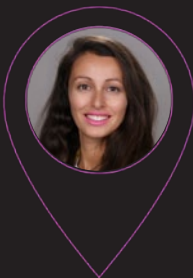
The solo travel trend is also

showing no sign of slowing down, with recent research finding cruising is one of the most popular travel styles for those travelling alone.

Norwegian offers specially designed solo cabins, organised activities for independent guests, and a dedicated social space, Studio Lounge for solo travellers.

Recent research from Norwegian also revealed nearly three-quarters of Australians (73%) believe cruising is the best way to travel - so much so that more than a quarter would only choose a cruise for any future holiday (CW 10 Jan 2024). MS

## SPEAKERS



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CEO,  
1000 Mile Travel



**Steve Labroski**  
CEO,  
itravel



**Wendy Wu**  
Founder,  
Wendy Wu Tours

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