



Cruise Weekly today

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

New A-ROSA CEO

ROLF-DIETER Maltzahn has been announced as A-ROSA's new Chief Executive Officer, replacing Managing Director Jorg Eichler at the top of the cruise line.

The handover will take place next month, and will see Maltzahn work with Chief Operating Officer and co-partner Markus Zoepke.

Maltzahn has had an extensive career in the tourism industry in Europe, including at TUI and DER Touristik.

"We are delighted to have found a very experienced but also innovative CEO for A-ROSA in Rolf-Dieter Maltzahn," A-ROSA Chair Michael Ungerer said.

"Thanks to his many years of diverse expertise in the tourism industry, particularly in the areas of business strategy, digitalisation and agile transformation, he will successfully lead A-ROSA River Cruises into the future.

"On behalf of the shareholders and the Advisory Board, I would like to thank Jorg Eichler for over 11 years of successful leadership and for developing A-ROSA into the premium brand it is today," Ungerer added.

Ponant acquires majority stake in Aqua

PONANT has acquired a majority share of Aqua Expeditions, with a view to the luxury small-ship operator's further global expansion (**CW** breaking news).

The move is backed by Ponant part-owner, French investment holding Groupe Artemis, and will see Aqua founder Francesco Galli Zugaro retain a minority shareholding, and his role as Chief Executive Officer.

Zugaro will continue to lead Aqua, along with his senior management team, as a stand-alone business unit.

The transaction comes at a pivotal time, as Aqua ramps up the launch of its East Africa itineraries, exploring the Tanzania and the Seychelles, particularly its Aldabra Group (**CW** 11 Sep 2024).

"We are thrilled to welcome Aqua Expeditions into the Ponant family," Ponant Chief Executive Officer Herve Gastinel said.

"This partnership aligns perfectly with our vision of excellence and sustainability in the luxury sector.

"It reflects our commitment to offering unparalleled travel experiences in iconic destinations such as the Galapagos and now also river journeys, while preserving the natural beauty of the places we explore."

Zugaro said joining forces with Ponant, and the support of Artemis, is a remarkable opportunity for his cruise line.



"Partnering with another family-owned business ensures we maintain a heritage of luxury in our brand," he said.

"With the financial support and expertise from our partners, we are well-positioned to continue our growth and offer our guests unforgettable journeys to the world's most biodiverse and culturally rich regions while maintaining our core brand values," Zugaro added.

Aqua has been expanding locally of late, last year announcing a new partnership with Flight Centre Travel Group, which saw the cruise line become a preferred supplier for the agency network (**CW** 03 Jul 2024).

MEANWHILE, Ponant has released a new 'Luxury Voyages Collection' brochure, featuring exclusive offers and experiences from Sep 2025 to Apr 2026.

The new collection offers once-in-a-lifetime experiences,

including an exclusive Antarctic adventure departing from Ushuaia to Hobart on board *Le Commandant Charcot*.

The voyage will be joined by Jonathan Shackleton, a descendant of Antarctic explorer Ernest Shackleton, and the family's historian.

Guests will also have the opportunity to venture into the heart of the Weddell Sea.

Guests can explore hidden gems across destinations such as Northern Europe, the Canary Islands, and Papua New Guinea.

Ponant is also offering more than 50 departures featuring a free solo supplement, eliminating the tariff for single travellers.

This offer is valid on select departures across the globe, including voyages to Northern Europe, Scandinavia, Antarctica, the Mediterranean, Oceania, and more - **CLICK HERE**. *MS*

Pictured: *Aqua Blu*.

HOME EX LAUNCHING SOON

LIVE 10 MARCH • 6 MONTHS ON-DEMAND ACCESS

HOME EX

HOME AGENT
VIRTUAL
EXPERIENCE

REGISTER FREE



Steaming along

MURRAY River

Paddlesteamers' *Australian Star* project is steaming along, with the installation of the upcoming ship's vintage engine and deck now complete.

The 9.5-tonne, refurbished 1907 woodfire steam engine and 20-tonne middle deck of *Australian Star* have now been installed - thanks to \$2.25 million from the Victorian State Government's Regional Tourism Investment Fund.

The 38-passenger *Australian Star* will operate from Echuca, and feature 19 en suite staterooms, a fine dining restaurant, function space, a guest lounge with panoramic views, and a two-level bar.

"*Australian Star* will be a one-of-a-kind experience that will attract people from across the state and around Australia," Victoria's Minister for Tourism & Sport Steve Dimopoulos said.

"[She] will be the most luxurious way to experience Victoria's great Murray River - and all the towns that make this region so great."

The debut of *Australian Star* later this year will see Murray River Paddlesteamers offer two overnight ships for the first time (CW 27 Aug 2024).

APT Travel Group will charter 38 cruises on *Australian Star* and Murray River Paddlesteamers' current ship.

Emerald lays *Kaia* keel



EMERALD Cruises has celebrated the keel-laying milestone for its next-generation superyacht *Emerald Kaia*.

The ceremony was held late last month in Ha Long Bay, with the ship now on schedule to debut in Apr 2026, with her inaugural season in Venice, Dubrovnik, and Athens now available for booking.

"The keel-laying of *Emerald Kaia* marks another exciting step forward in our vision for redefining the yachting experience," Chair & founder Glen Moroney said.

"Building on the tremendous success of *Emerald Azzurra* and *Emerald Sakara*, *Emerald Kaia* reflects our commitment to innovation, luxury and sustainability," he added.

"We thank the skilled team at MKM Yachts for bringing this vision to life."



Kaia is designed to accommodate 128 guests, with almost all of the ship's staterooms featuring a verandah.

Key highlights include an expansive Observation Sun Deck, and state-of-the-art wellness areas with a 50% larger spa and swim-up platform allowing direct access to the ocean from the fitness centre.

Kaia also features enhanced marina facilities, including an indoor lounge, and new water toys, such as an inflatable slide.

The ship will offer itineraries to the Mediterranean, Adriatic, Aegean, and the Seychelles. MS

Pictured: MKM employees prepare for the keel-laying; inset: a render of *Kaia*.

HAL Antarctic 2026

NEW glacier experiences will be one of the highlights of Holland America Line's (HAL) new 2026-2027 South America and Antarctica Season.

The itineraries will range between 14 and 31 days in length, with *Oosterdam* and *Volendam* to explore the region from Nov 2026 through Mar 2027.

Guests will visit to hard-to-reach destinations like the Amazon River, the Falkland Islands, Antarctica, and new for the 2026-2027 season, the Bruggen Glacier, the Southern Hemisphere's largest glacier outside of Antarctica.

Guests hoping to see the glacier can board *Oosterdam* to sail on a 14- or 15-day 'South American Pathways: Chilean Fjords & Glaciers', open jaw between San Antonio and Buenos Aires.

Meanwhile, those hoping to visit the Amazon can join the 'Legendary Amazon Explorer' aboard *Volendam*.

The cruise sails for 27 or 30 days round-trip or from New York City to Fort Lauderdale, guests can sail into the heart of the Amazon Rainforest, taking in wildlife such as botos, birds, howler monkeys and more, including an overnight call in Manaus, providing an extended opportunity to see the confluence of the Amazon and Negro rivers.



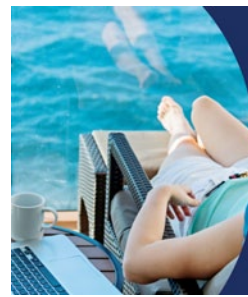
UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL: Join Our Mentoring Program and Ignite Your Success!

TIME is a Career Advancement Path for all Employees in Travel, Tourism, Hospitality, Cruise and Aviation Industry including Regional, and Rural Areas across Australia

WHAT TIME CAN
DO FOR YOU...

- Further develop your management and leadership potential
- Develop confidence and networking opportunities
- Strategic career planning
- Increase your knowledge of organisational culture & processes

For more information visit - www.travelindustrymentor.com.au



THE last thing you want while enjoying a cruise is for your stateroom to become your own personal swimming pool.

Unfortunately, that is the situation that many passengers on board P&O Cruises' *Azura* found themselves in this week during a Canary Islands voyage, after a pipe burst from one of the ship's swimming pools, causing flooding in the higher levels of the ship - in the middle of the night, no less.

One couple from the UK, Marcus and Melissa, captured the incident on their phones for their YouTube channel, Fly Drive Explore, after they were woken by alarms around 2am.

Their video shows crew members escorting them out of their midship room on deck 8, and directing them to Brodies British Pub to join passengers from what Marcus estimated were another 20-26 affected staterooms.

During the video, the captain can be heard informing passengers about the burst pipe, and reassuring them that the flooding was under control.

The couple waited almost two hours before they were given a dry, albeit smaller, stateroom, which they described as "less than ideal".

Marcus and Melissa were also told they would be provided with a yet-to-be-determined level of compensation.

HK is "perfect" for cruise



EXCLUSIVE

HONG Kong (pictured) is the perfect pre- or post-cruise destination, declared Karen Macmillan, Hong Kong Tourism Board Managing Director, in an interview with *Cruise Weekly*.

Thanks to Hong Kong's proximity to Asia and the rest of the world, the destination is also an ideal stopover en route to Europe, or one of many stops on an Asian multi-destination itinerary.

"Hong Kong's accessibility from Australia and variety of experiences makes it the ideal destination for any type of traveller," Macmillan added.

"Within 30 minutes, you can go from hiking on an outlying island to taking in the skyline with a rooftop sundowner in Central."

Hong Kong is currently at around 80% of its 2018 visitation numbers, according to Macmillan, outpacing direct air capacity, which is also gradually increasing.

Cathay Pacific is close to 100% capacity and Qantas Airways operates daily ex Sydney and

Melbourne; Hong Kong Airlines is also re-entering the market with seasonal flights ex Gold Coast.

"A whopping 84% (up 15% from 2018 figures) of Australian visitors are repeat travellers to the destination," Macmillan said.

"This is due in large part to its relatively short distance (approximately eight hours) from Australia, excellent international connectivity and all-round ease of experience, with English largely spoken and world-renowned public transport."

Aussies are staying in Hong Kong 1.9 nights longer, while also spending 21% more.

"Luxury expenditure has also continued to grow, whether that's [tourists] starting or finishing their trip at the top end of the plane or splurging on one of the city's many five-star hotels."

Carnival Cruise Line yesterday announced it will set sail to Asia from Australia for the first time in 2027, with *Carnival Luminosa* to introduce a 14-day voyage visiting Hong Kong (*CW* yesterday). *JHM*

Cruise Calendar

Current ports of call in Australia and New Zealand.

SYDNEY	
<i>Silver Muse</i>	17 Jan
<i>Royal Princess</i>	18 Jan
<i>Seven Seas Explorer</i>	18 Jan
<i>Silver Muse</i>	18 Jan
<i>Pacific Adventure</i>	19 Jan
<i>Viking Venus</i>	19 Jan
<i>Viking Venus</i>	20 Jan
<i>Carnival Splendor</i>	20 Jan
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	22 Jan
<i>Disney Wonder</i>	22 Jan
<i>Ovation of the Seas</i>	23 Jan
<i>Viking Orion</i>	23 Jan

MELBOURNE	
<i>Viking Venus</i>	17 Jan
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	17 Jan
<i>Norwegian Sun</i>	18 Jan
<i>Regatta</i>	20 Jan
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	20 Jan
<i>Viking Orion</i>	21 Jan
<i>Pacific Adventure</i>	21 Jan

BRISBANE	
<i>Quantum of the Seas</i>	17 Jan
<i>Pacific Encounter</i>	18 Jan
<i>Carnival Luminosa</i>	19 Jan
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	20 Jan
<i>Viking Venus</i>	22 Jan

ADELAIDE	
<i>Regatta</i>	17 Jan
<i>Norwegian Sun</i>	21 Jan
<i>Norwegian Sun</i>	22 Jan
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	22 Jan

HOBART	
<i>Coral Discoverer</i>	17 Jan
<i>Norwegian Sun</i>	17 Jan
<i>Coral Discoverer</i>	18 Jan
<i>Seabourn Quest</i>	18 Jan
<i>Viking Orion</i>	19 Jan
<i>Regatta</i>	22 Jan
<i>Silver Muse</i>	23 Jan

DARWIN	
<i>Seven Seas Voyager</i>	18 Jan
<i>Europa 2</i>	21 Jan
<i>Noordam</i>	22 Jan