



Cruise Weekly today

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

Croisi joins CLIA

CROISIEUROPE has joined Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) as a River Cruise Marketing Affiliate.

The partnership will showcase CroisiEurope to CLIA's 6,000-strong travel agent membership across Australia, placing it among the Association's leading cruise operators from around the world, and executive partners representing ports, destinations, tourism operators, and suppliers.

CLIA Managing Director Joel Katz said CroisiEurope is a welcome addition to the Association's ranks, at a time when river cruising is enjoying a growing appreciation.

River cruising battle is heating up

COMPETITION in Europe's river cruising sector is likely to heat up with the news of Celebrity Cruises' entry into the category, according to analysts.

Truist Securities Managing Director Lodging & Leisure Equity Research C. Patrick Scholes believes Celebrity's initial flotilla of 10 river ships will primarily compete with smaller cruise lines, rather than established players such as Viking.

Scholes believes Celebrity parent company Royal Caribbean Group (RCL) was likely attracted to the river sector by the strength of Viking's now-public financial results (**CW** 20 Nov 2024), following the line's IPO last year (**CW** 03 May 2024).

The travel industry analyst also suggested RCL is not the only cruise company to investigate entering the river cruise market, with several of its competitors



said to be close to buying into the market pre-pandemic, before passing on the opportunity.

"Given the high ROIC and profitability of luxury river cruising, it is not impossible to believe that CCL/NCLH/RCL may enter the sector, though we are not aware of any immediate plans to do so," Scholes wrote at the Viking earnings launch last year.

"RCL made it clear that they have plans to do so with 10 initial ships...by comparison, [Viking]

currently has 82 river ships and has plans to have 93 by 2027."

The size of Celebrity's initial river fleet is unlikely to move the financial needle for RCL immediately, Scholes considered, also noting the low capital expenditure required.

"We ballpark the cost of a river cruise ship at around US\$30 million, so approximately US\$300 million for 10 ships, which is [a] fraction of the spend for *Star of the Seas*," he said. *MS*

VIKING EXPLORER SESSIONS



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Viking's popular Explorer Sessions are hitting the road, coming to 44 regions across Australia from February to April.

Don't miss this chance to engage your clients and let Viking inspire them to book their next voyage with you.

Sessions fill up fast and registration is necessary.



TM cruise growth

TRAVELMANAGERS' cruise sales grew 30% last year, the company has revealed.

The growth was particularly fuelled by international cruise - a lucrative prospect for the agency network's members.

TravelManagers reported a 12% year-on-year increase in sales, with double-digit growth for New Zealand, Asia and North America.

South America increased 48%, and in addition, 40% of TravelManagers' network of personal travel managers (PTMs) achieved annual sales of more than \$1 million, one-third of whom hit the \$2 million and above mark.

"Our 50 top-selling PTMs continued to excel by sustaining impressive commission earnings in 2024," Chief Operating Officer Grant Campbell said.

"Given they have the option to structure their business using a 90/10 commission split, they are exceeding the outdated notion that travel cannot be a financially rewarding career."

TravelManagers is encouraging its network of PTMs to "work smarter".

"Our focus is on developing and refining the tools they need to reduce stress and build resilience, while also implementing technological innovations," he added.

Ray begins to shine

SILVERSEA'S *Silver Ray* has set sail on her debut Grand Voyage, a 71-day circumnavigation of South America, featuring 38 destinations and 17 countries.

Passengers will discover both well-loved and remote locations, from Lima, Montevideo and Buenos Aires to Chile's fjords, the Garibaldi Glacier, the Amazon Rainforest, and more.

A special highlight includes three overnights in Rio de Janeiro, where guests will immerse themselves in the vibrant festivities of Brazilian Carnival.

This week, guests celebrated the start of their bucket list adventure with a bon voyage dinner featuring South American traditional specialties, set in the exotic flora- and art-filled halls of Bonnet House Museums & Gardens in Fort Lauderdale.

The location was the estate once owned by heiress, socialite, and avid traveller Evelyn Bartlett, a fitting venue for the beginning of the trip.

"This 71-day voyage will incorporate four once-in-a-lifetime events, curated by our team exclusively for guests on our Grand Voyage, to showcase the authentic soul of the destinations they're visiting, including



winetasting among the vines in Valparaiso, front row seats at the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, and a sophisticated evening spent celebrating Bajan culture in Bridgetown," President Bert Hernandez said.

Passengers will also enjoy shore excursions including an eco-adventure to a sustainable farm in Ecuador, where they will fish, forage and cook with a chef; a masterclass in Argentinian asado grilling in Buenos Aires and a seaside hike in Chile, followed by a tasting menu in a charming 1920s restaurant.

Ray's innovative design is ideal for cruising through varied ecosystems, such as the far-reaching views from every corner and the asymmetrical pool decks which overlook the water on the starboard side.

After her circumnavigation of South America, *Ray* will join *Silver Moon* and *Silver Shadow* in the Caribbean from 23 Mar. *MS*



On location in Fournier Bay

Today's issue of CW is coming to you courtesy of Viking, which is hosting key industry partners aboard *Viking Polaris*.

WE AWOKED to the ultimate winter wonderland this morning in Antarctica, with huge snow flakes falling, ice flows surrounding the ship, and humpback whales swimming just metres from our Nordic Balcony window.

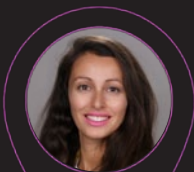
True to the nature of expedition cruising, today's unpredictable weather led to a last minute change of plans for *Polaris*, with the planned ports of Orne Harbour and Chiriguano Bay showing windspeeds of 40 knots.

The gusting snow during our brief stop at Orne Harbour, was a magical view from the comfort of The Living Room on board, but would have made for less ideal expedition activities in the wind.

The quick-thinking captain and expedition team on board relocated the ship to the more sheltered Fournier Bay for an afternoon of expedition activities in the falling snow.

Along the way we have spotted leopard seals, fur seals, and multiple humpback whales amongst the sea ice floating around the ship.

SPEAKERS



Nicola Veltman
CEO,
1000 Mile Travel



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Wendy Wu
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PORThOLE

SOME lucky cruisers, particularly those sailing in Antarctica, often get to spot a whale on their voyage.

However, a number of Sydneysiders didn't need to travel nearly that far earlier this week, with a juvenile Antarctic minke whale making its way into Port Hacking.

The whale was spotted on the ferry to Bundeena, in the city's south, with many also glimpsing it from the shore.

"A sighting like this is an incredible one," wildlife scientist Vanessa Pirota told *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

"To see an animal like that at this time of year in shallow waters is also unusual."

It is extremely rare to see the whales in Sydney in the middle of summer, with scientists theorising the whale could've been following food, or it could've simply become lost.

Making the most of Manfredi's



THE Australian and New Zealand contingent aboard *Viking Polaris* this week were treated to an exclusive hosted dinner in the ship's private dining room, with a menu from the adjacent Manfredi's Restaurant.

Inspired by Italian trattorias, Manfredi's offers guests delectable Italian cuisine, with the group enjoying Viking's signature steak, the Viking Bistecca, and a variety of handmade pastas.

Of course, no Italian feast would be complete without a taste of tirimisu for dessert.

Pictured enjoying the evening are: Michelle and Grant Everson,

Jamison Travel; Meaghan Wolf and Moana Newton, Wolf & Turner Travel Associates; Darryn and Kerrie Fellowes, Virtuoso; Karen Van Huisstede and Adam Wren, italktravel The Junction; Kiera Smith, Viking; Shelley and Frederic Jacquemin, Travel Associates at Home; Marie Holmand and Amy Slater, Chirn Park Travel Associates; and Toby lemma, Viking. *AP*

Get Eddy for this

ANDREW Eddy will spearhead newly independent Hurtigruten's sales and industry partnership, as the Norwegian operator's new Sales Director.

Eddy will return to the team, following a short stint away as Head of Sales with tour operator Adventure World.

He previously spent almost three years with the former combined Hurtigruten Group, rising to the role of National Key Account Manager.

"Andrew is one our greatest brand advocates and he wore the Hurtigruten badge with pride," MD Damian Perry said.

Cruise Calendar

Current ports of call in Australia and New Zealand.

SYDNEY	
<i>Pacific Adventure</i>	31 Jan
<i>Royal Princess</i>	01 Feb
<i>Carnival Splendor</i>	02 Feb
<i>Westerdam</i>	02 Feb
<i>Pacific Adventure</i>	03 Feb
<i>Asuka II</i>	03 Feb
<i>Viking Sky</i>	05 Feb
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	06 Feb

BRISBANE	
<i>Quantum of the Seas</i>	31 Jan
<i>Pacific Encounter</i>	01 Feb
<i>Carnival Luminosa</i>	02 Feb
<i>Quantum of the Seas</i>	03 Feb
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	04 Feb
<i>Carnival Luminosa</i>	06 Feb

CAIRNS	
<i>Crown Princess</i>	21 May

YORKEYS KNOB	
<i>Ovation of the Seas</i>	05 Feb

PORT DOUGLAS	
<i>Crown Princess</i>	03 Feb

FREMANTLE	
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	03 Feb

ALBANY	
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	01 Feb

BUSSELTON	
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	02 Feb

HOBART	
<i>Disney Wonder</i>	01 Feb
<i>Silver Nova</i>	02 Feb
<i>Disney Wonder</i>	05 Feb
<i>Westerdam</i>	06 Feb

PORT ARTHUR	
<i>Coral Discoverer</i>	05 Feb

MELBOURNE	
<i>Westerdam</i>	31 Jan
<i>Disney Wonder</i>	03 Feb
<i>Westerdam</i>	04 Feb
<i>Silver Nova</i>	05 Feb
<i>Asuka II</i>	06 Feb



On Board: *Viking Polaris*



Finse Terrace

Situated at the rear of the ship outside the Aula theatre, this charming outdoor venue features comfortable seating, and lava rock "firepits" to keep things warm while guests take in the wonders of the natural world. It is also a great place to watch the ship's Special Operations Boats and Zodiacs as they take guests on expeditions out into the Antarctic environment.