

Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of the latest cruise news, plus a full page from **Ponant Explorations**.

Fresh spring cruises on the Murray River

MURRAY River

Paddlesteamers has announced eight new three-night sailings for the upcoming spring season.

The cruises will depart from Echuca on 04, 11, 18 and 25 Oct and 01, 8, 15 and 22 Nov aboard the line's overnight paddlesteamer *Emmylou*.

Highlights include exploring the Heritage Farm Museum; an eco-cruise adventure aboard the *Murray Explorer*; tastings of table and fortified wines at St Anne's Winery; a riverside BBQ dining experience under the stars; and more.

Fares on the eight new departures are priced from \$3,500 per couple - a reduction of \$150 per person - while solo travellers can also save \$450, thanks to a reduced solo surcharge of 30%.

Fares include all onboard meals, daily shore excursions, selected beers and wines with dinner and soft drinks, bottled water and tea and coffee throughout the journey and on coach transfers.

The savings are available until 31 Jul 2025 - click [HERE](#).



A new take on river cruising



NATIONAL Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions is one of many ocean lines that has launched European river cruise itineraries for the coming years (**CW** 14 May).

However Lindblad is not simply following others into the market, Vice President Lesa Bain told **Cruise Weekly**.

The expedition specialist chooses new markets to expand into based on the opportunities available, and its recently inked partnership with Transcend Cruises (**CW** 07 May) is a perfect fit, she explained.

"[Lindblad's Director of Expedition Development Charter Ships Bill Robinson] was very specific on the type of ship he was trying to find for rivers in Europe...[he] wanted to look at rivers from a more thoughtful approach," Bain explained.

This patience has paid off, with the first two departures, setting sail on the Rhine from Apr already sold out.

Transcend's 120-guest *Connect* (pictured), the ship that will operate the new European river itineraries, answered all the questions Lindblad was asking.

These included sustainability and responsible tourism considerations, local employment, power consumption, and more.

"There are no single-use plastics, which we don't have on any of our ships, and haven't for many years," Bain added.

Developing the correct product is just as important as having the correct ship, Bain added, with Lindblad aiming for "more thoughtful" itineraries.

The cruise line wanted to focus on developing full days in-destination, she said, as opposed to the half-day tours operated by other river brands.

"The best way to think about everything we do is thoughtfulness, about how we look at the place," Bain explained.

"It's feeling like you've understood it and you've seen it, you've been a part of it...those itineraries are certainly going to allow that because they're a little bit slower-paced."

Highlights of Lindblad's first European river season will see it sail from Amsterdam to Brussels and Cologne to Basel. *MS*

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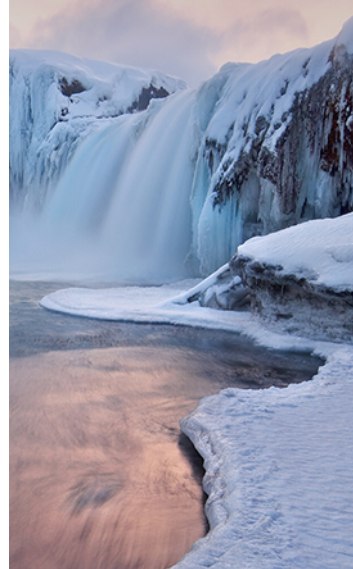
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Brisbane is ready

THE Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA) has reported the successful completion of its maiden Cruise Trade Ready Workshop Program, designed to help the city maximise its readiness for the \$1.5 billion cruise sector.

The eight-week program, run in conjunction with Tonic Tourism Solutions, saw a group of selected local operators present cruise-ready experiences to an audience of industry buyers, inbound tour brands and ground handlers.

The trade show-style event (**CW** 14 Apr) was designed to help local tourism businesses tailor their product to suit the global cruise market.

Participants embarked on a series of industry mentoring sessions, assessments and expert workshops to turn their product or experience into an ideal shore-side activity.

Broad positioning of Brisbane as a cruise-friendly, experience-rich destination was also a key objective.

"We've seen extraordinary transformation in a short time, and Brisbane is now equipped with a suite of high-quality, cruise-compatible products," said Tonic Tourism Solutions Co-Director, Sharon Harvey.

The company said businesses are now better equipped to meet demand for authentic, immersive experiences.

Avalon bookings flying high



AVALON Waterways is riding a wave of record booking momentum for next year, on the back of a growing portfolio of on-ship and onshore experiences.

The Globus family of brands river cruise marque is reporting 2026 bookings up 17% on 2024 at this point of the year, and 7% higher than 2025.

Popular itineraries include its 'Romantic Rhine' between Basel and Amsterdam; the 'Danube Dreams' through the less-travelled parts of the river east of Budapest; and the 'Paris to Normandy' along the Seine.

Christmas cruises were also cited as key drivers of booking growth, led by the flagship 'Christmastime on the Danube'.

Beyond Europe, bookings for the Mekong River are up 76% on where they were in 2025, Avalon said, with travellers flocking to its cruises that travel through Vietnam and Cambodia.

Avalon said this growth is powered by its selection of iconic destinations, immersive experiences along with "passion-packed choices and a better way to cruise".

"The record demand we're seeing is more than cruising's popularity," said Globus family of brands Managing Director APAC Chris Hall.

"It's about Avalon's difference: 'Suite Ships' with a view, passion-filled excursions and the freedom to cruise your way." *ML*

Experience More

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's (NCL) new virtual voyage, 'Experiencing More of the World with NCL', launches today (**CW** 09 Jul).

Participants can explore Norwegian's destinations through fun, interactive activities - **CLICK HERE**.

Coral goes coastal

ATTRACTING a new generation of explorers is the target behind a new product series set to be introduced by Coral Expeditions.

Known as Coastal Adventures, the series is made up of shorter itineraries and a wider variety of onshore activities to incentivise travellers to choose their own schedule.

Ships will often stay in the one location for a full day, allowing guests to fit in more than one tour or activity.

Beginning from 04 Jan next year, Coral Expeditions will pioneer its new program in Tasmania with a line-up of four- and six-night itineraries.

Coastal Adventures will then expand to Queensland and Western Australia with new four- and six-night voyages in the Great Barrier Reef and Southwest Australia.

Ports on the latter series will include Busselton, Margaret River, and Cape Naturaliste.

Coral Expeditions Chief Executive Officer Mark Fifield said the new product "opens up a wonderful opportunity for busy working professionals, couples, solo travellers and even families to play, escape, unwind and enrich in some of our favourite places".

"Shorter adventures appeal to both new explorers as well as our seasoned young-at-heart guests," he added.



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ANOTHER retiree has cottoned on to the benefits of swapping land for sea.

Former teacher Sharon Lane left her home in Orange County, California, to move onto a Villa Vie cruise ship.

"Every month I have a maintenance fee to pay and that is less than I was paying for rent [on land]," the 77-year-old told *NBC Los Angeles*.

Interior cabins on Villa Vie cost US\$129,999 (A\$198,000), with residents then paying US\$3,000 (A\$4,600) a month for all their expenses, including meals, beer, wine, wi-fi, and laundry - but the benefits don't stop there.

"All the chores that you have to do in life - done," Lane said.

"If you put your to-do list on a piece of paper and you cross off anything that wasn't a fun activity, then you end up with the life that we have now," added Lane.

Carnival's Key celebration



CARNIVAL Cruise Line recently treated government officials, community leaders and local residents of Grand Bahama to an exclusive preview of its new destination, Celebration Key (*CW* 24 Jun).

Attendees were able to experience the private island's features, including its centerpiece Suncastle and racing waterslides, as well as the largest freshwater lagoons in the Caribbean.

Local officials toured the five distinct areas that will offer guests diverse experiences, from relaxation at the adults-only Pearl Cove Beach Club to fun family

adventures at Starfish Lagoon.

The event took place in tandem with the embarkation of *Carnival Vista*, which will make the first official visit to the private island for its grand opening on Sun.

"This is the first major project to be completed on the island of Grand Bahama in 20 years or more, and we're proud to be the cruise line to bring it to fruition," Carnival's Christine Duffy said.

"We wouldn't be here today, now just a week from our first official visit with *Carnival Vista*, without the dedication of hundreds of Bahamians who helped to build Celebration Key,"

Windstar appoints

WINDSTAR Cruises has shuffled its fleet operations leadership team, following the retirement of Paul Barrett, Vice President of Marine and Technical Operations, at the beginning of this month.

Barrett's shoes will be filled by two newly created specialised roles, with Alan Wilson joining as VP of Marine Operations, and Giovanni Canu promoted to VP of Technical Operations, both based in Miami.

Wilson brings more than 25 years of executive experience in the maritime industry, most recently serving as VP of Marine Operations for Holland America Group.

Meanwhile, Canu first joined Windstar earlier this year as Director Technical Projects and Energy Efficiency.

Windstar is also mourning the loss of one of its senior leaders, Mike Inman.

The much-loved cruise veteran served as Windstar's Senior Director Marine Safety & Environmental Operations.

He recently passed away following a battle with illness.

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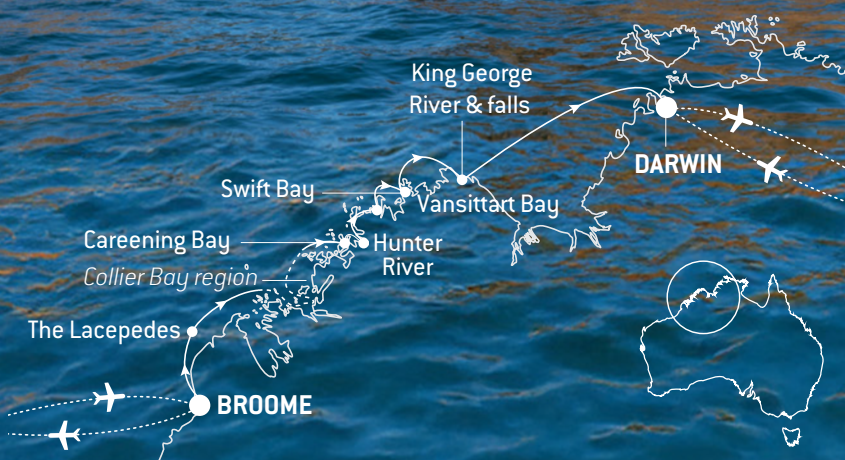
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