

Cruise Weekly today

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

HLC's dual hire

REPRESENTATION company Luxury Travel Marketing has appointed Rachel Harrigan and Erin Kramer as Account Managers for Hapag-Lloyd Cruises (HLC) in Australia.

The two are experienced within the cruise sector and will focus on supporting travel advisor partners across Australia, delivering product training, marketing support, and tailored sales strategies to help grow Hapag-Lloyd's footprint in the market.

Both Harrigan and Kramer are well known to the cruise sector from their time with Viking and Scenic, where they previously worked together.

Small client bases a big problem for agents

ALTHOUGH positive public sentiment toward travel advisors has never been higher, Royal Caribbean Senior Vice President Sales & Trade Relations Vicki Freed believes average client base size is the biggest issue facing agents today.

Speaking to **Cruise Weekly** on board *Ovation of the Seas* (pictured) in Mexico this week, Freed said finding repeat clients is among the toughest jobs in the profession, leaving advisors feeling "all dressed up with nowhere to go".

The problem is particularly daunting for those new to the role and independent consultants, she added.

"People don't have a big enough net of prospects, they need more clients," Freed said.

"The travel advisor today can get the education, they can learn the product, they know the



product, they have the passion to be in this industry, they just don't have enough clients.

"That's the hardest part [for] somebody who just doesn't have walk-in business."

Royal Caribbean works to help its advisors develop a sizable prospect pool, Freed said, particularly as more travellers seek out the expertise of an industry professional post-COVID.

"Groups are one of the ways

that they can do it, so they can get affinity for groups and get friends and family, and multi-generation families, they can be a specialist in celebrations.

"You want to ask a simple question: is there anyone else that you can think of who might want to travel with you?"

"If you ask that question each and every time you close a sale, you will get one new booking out of four times." MS

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Oceania to sing new Sonata in 2027

OCEANIA Cruises has cut the steel on its new ship *Sonata* at the Fincantieri-Marghera shipyard in Venice, heralding a new chapter for the line.

Sonata will lend her name not only to the new ship, but to Oceania's newest class of vessels, which will be the largest and most amenity-rich in the fleet.

The new ship will debut in 2027, followed by her sister ship *Arietta*.

"*Sonata* heralds the dawn of a new era in luxury cruising," Oceania Chief Luxury Officer Jason Montague (**pictured**) declared at the ceremony.

"We are proud to continue our legacy of innovation alongside Fincantieri, our shipbuilding partner for close to 20 years.

"Together, we have crafted ships that stand as some of the most acclaimed examples of luxury, elegance, comfort, and Italian craftsmanship at sea."



Sonata will be the ninth ship in the Oceania fleet, and will embark on her maiden summer voyage in 2027.

The milestone also reflects Oceania's enduring partnership with Fincantieri, the shipbuilder behind many of the cruise line's other vessels, such as *Marina*,

Riviera, *Vista*, and *Allura*, the latter which will debut in Jul.

The fleet transformation comes as Oceania prepares to charter its older Regatta-class ships *Regatta* and *Insignia*, with the line hinting *Nautica* and *Sirena* are likely to also be leased out in the future (**CW** 17 Apr). *MS*

Las Vegas to poles

TRIPADEAL has launched a new package for NRL fans to combine the opening round of next season's premiership with a Swan Hellenic polar voyage and a South American holiday.

Priced from \$28,499ppts but non-commissionable to agents, the deal includes flights to Sin City, Gold tickets to the NRL on 28 Feb 2026, flights to Ushuaia and a 13-night balcony cabin voyage onboard *SH Vega*.

A two-night pre-cruise hotel stay, one-night post and three nights in Vegas are also included in the package.

CLICK HERE for more details.

A royal weekend

CRUISE Weekly will not be published on Mon due to the King's Birthday in some states.

We will be back with the latest industry news on Tue.





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Supreme talent to join *Star of the Seas*

ROYAL Caribbean has named Diana Ross as the "star" of its *Star of the Seas*, anointing the singer as the new ship's godmother.

Ross will join a long-standing maritime tradition of bestowing safekeeping onto *Star*, her crew, and the millions who will sail on the ship.

She will take part in a naming ceremony in *Star's* AquaTheater, located in the ship's AquaDome neighbourhood, surrounded by wrap-around ocean views.

"We are thrilled to have Diana Ross join us for the debut of *Star of the Seas*, the next bold vacation in our revolutionary Icon-class designed to encompass the best a vacation experience can offer," President & Chief Executive Michael Bayley said.

"We couldn't imagine a more fitting godmother for *Star* than Diana Ross, who is a true icon known for creating music that transcends generations while



celebrating life and bringing people together.

"We can't wait to welcome Ms Ross, our guests, and crew to celebrate the arrival of *Star* this Aug," Bayley added.

The 'Queen of Motown Records' said she is truly honoured to join the Royal Caribbean family.

"Having spent years creating beautiful music and memories

and bringing people together from all over the world, this feels like a perfect continuation of my journey as godmother of *Star of the Seas*," Ross said.

The ship will deliver seven-night vacations to the most sought-after destinations in the Eastern and Western Caribbean, including Perfect Day at CocoCay, the cruise line's private Bahamian island. *MS*

Princess Euro 27

PRINCESS Cruises has unveiled its 2027 European season, featuring more than 200 itineraries across the Mediterranean and Northern Europe, plus solar eclipse and trans-Atlantic sailings.

On sale from 11 Jun, highlights include two ships departing from Rome and Southampton on 24 Jul 2027 on special solar eclipse sailings for the spectacle on 02 Aug.

More than 136 departures on 51 unique itineraries make up the Mediterranean component, with cruises ranging from seven to 42 days.

In northern Europe, the line will run 44 departures across 13 itineraries sailing the British Isles, Iceland and Norway, and an Oktoberfest cruise visiting seven major capital cities.

Europe will also be easily connected with the Americas, featuring 22 one-way trans-Atlantic crossings.

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CARNIVAL Ambassador John Heald has amassed a cult-like following on Facebook for his rants and cruising Q&As alike, but one topic has really fired up the fanbase.

This week saw the former Carnival Cruise Director wax rhapsodic about the scourge of technology on simple pleasures like perusing a physical menu before dining.

"I don't want to order my dinner in the dinning room via the Hub App or by scanning the QR code," Heald said.

"It's bad enough that I go to the supermarket and spend my time scanning my own shopping and having a whole conversation with the automated assistant that something shouldn't be in the bagging area - yes, I am fat but I can still enjoy some salad... unexpected item, vicious sod."

Heald's post garnered more than 8,800 comments, mostly from people wholeheartedly agreeing that the sight of a table full of cruisers all looking at their "eye-phones" with digital menus was the end of socialising as we know it.

The overwhelming consensus was that physical menus still have a place in cruise dining rooms and that travellers should all abandon their technology, ask for a menu and enjoy each other's company when dining at sea.

NCL tests more biofuel

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) successfully tested biofuel blends on 47% of its global fleet in 2024, with more than half also equipped with shore power capability.

The data was contained in the company's newly-released annual *Sail and Sustain* report for 2024, which detailed the environmental, social and corporate governance initiatives rolled out by the line across the year.

NCLH said the report covered its current fleet of 33 ships and more than 70,000 berths across its three lines - Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

The report formed part of NCLH's *Charting the Course* corporate strategy which was unveiled last year (**CW** 21 May 2024) and sets objectives not just for financial performance but also crew, staff and guest engagement efforts.

NCLH said *Sail & Sustain* is built around five pillars focusing on caring for nature, sailing safely, empowering people, operating with integrity and strengthening local communities.

NCLH earned a 'B' rating from its CDP water security disclosure, a United Nations initiative driving the world's biggest corporations to decouple growth from depletion of freshwater resources as part of the Paris Agreement.

The company also said it was able to divert 54% of its total waste away from landfills.

The year saw the introduction of a program to monitor biodiversity in Alaska through water sampling onboard *Norwegian Bliss*.

Data collected is being shared



with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and has helped to identify and protect threatened species in the region.

The company has also partnered with NatureMetrics to expand this data collection initiative, which will be expanded to *Norwegian Encore* during its seasonal deployment in Alaska.

"We are increasingly investing in data-driven approaches to monitor our impacts on nature and biodiversity," NCLH President Harry Sommer (**pictured**) said.

"These insights not only guide sustainable practices and regulatory compliance but also support transparent reporting and continuous improvement, making sailing on our ships a responsible way to explore the world's most extraordinary natural environments." **ML**

CLICK HERE to read the report.

Adventure axings

CARNIVAL Cruise Line has cancelled itineraries on *Carnival Adventure* between 17 May and 14 Jun 2027, citing a change in short-term plans.

Affected itineraries ranged from Queensland coast sailings to South Pacific adventures, with affected guests offered onboard credit compensation.

Wu boosts cruise

FOURTEEN itineraries combining ocean cruising with all-inclusive land touring feature in an updated Cruise and Tour brochure released by Wendy Wu Tours.

Destinations featured in the guide include Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America, India, Africa and Antarctica.

The company has partnered with cruise brands including Royal Caribbean, Norwegian Cruise Line, Hurtigruten and others to design its packages, which include return airfares, balcony staterooms and more.

CLICK HERE to view online.

SeaDream's NYE

AN EXCLUSIVE New Year's Eve party in the Caribbean nation of St Barths headlines the 2027/28 season of sailings from SeaDream Yacht Club.

Sixteen new voyages taking travellers to 28 destinations have been announced by the line, with a particular focus on the Virgin Islands.

Both *SeaDream I* and *SeaDream II* will anchor in Gustavia Harbour, St Barths to ring in the new year alongside a flotilla of luxury yachts, with guests able to enjoy three full days as part of the itineraries.

Further highlights of the season include 10 round-trip departures from San Juan, Bridgetown, and St Thomas, more in-depth exploration of the Virgin Islands, more overnight and extended stays, guided snorkelling and evening visits to Bioluminescent Bay in Vieques, Puerto Rico.