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Aurora goes in-depth in the Arctic

MORE than 20 "transformative" voyages ranging from eight to 16 days have been unveiled by Aurora Expeditions as part of its 2027 'Arctic and Beyond' season.

The program will be operated by two of the line's three ships - *Greg Mortimer* and *Sylvia Earle* - and will offer travellers in-depth access to regions including Svalbard, the Northwest Passage, Greenland, the British Isles, South America, Scandinavia, and more.

Mixed throughout the season are a range of special edition itineraries focusing on dedicated themes such as polar bears, women's expeditions, and expert-led photography journeys.

There are also 15 polar voyages and 10 'Discovery' voyages, with three in Scotland, two in Costa Rica, two in Iceland and one combining Scotland and Norway.

Solo travellers are also being incentivised to book with Aurora,



with the line dedicating 10 staterooms on each voyage with no single supplement.

"The Arctic & Beyond 2027 season showcases what Aurora does best: offering meaningful, responsible adventures in the world's wildest places," Aurora Expeditions Chief Executive Officer Michael Heath said.

"From polar bears in the high Arctic to sea cliffs in the Scottish Isles, each voyage is designed to connect our expeditioners with nature, culture, and science."

Aurora has also partnered with New Scientist Discovery tours, which will indulge travellers with a passion for history, wildlife and ice movement patterns. *ML*

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Scenery and sustainability

I RECENTLY had the pleasure of hosting a group of cruise line executives on the stunning shores of Norfolk Island.

Representatives from Princess Cruises, Holland America Line, Seabourn, Carnival, Royal Caribbean, Silversea and Viking experienced the island's spectacular scenery, rich heritage, immersive shore excursions, and the warmth of its cruise-ready community.

But Norfolk isn't just a pretty port - it's also operationally robust.

The island's purpose-built Passenger Transfer Vessels (PTVs), developed by Australia's Birdon Group, have been a game changer.

Designed to handle local maritime conditions, these vessels can transfer up to 90 guests at a time, safely and efficiently.

With three vessels shuttling guests to and from ships, cruise operations are significantly enhanced, making for an outstanding tender destination.

It was fitting that our visit coincided with World Environment Day, given Norfolk Island is something of a recycling powerhouse - now diverting 80% of the island's waste from landfill.

This local commitment to sustainability mirrors the global efforts of the cruise industry.

Norfolk Island truly represents the future of cruising: beautiful, welcoming, operationally sound, and deeply committed to a sustainable future.

Carnival clears its plate

CARNIVAL Corporation says it has reduced its per-person food wastage by 44% compared to 2019 levels, beating its target of 40% a year early, and is well on its way to achieving a 50% reduction by 2030.

The reductions come as part of the cruising giant's 'Less Left Over' food management strategy, an ongoing process aimed at ensuring food and ingredients don't go to waste and its brands reduce the amount of uneaten food going into the rubbish.

In the six years since its launch, Carnival Corporation has managed to save US\$250 million through more finely tuned food provision, preparation, and service practices for the 13.5 million pax who sail on its ships each year.

This has been done by using real-time analytics and insights for more targeted ingredient purchasing, dynamic menu planning and "prep-to-plate operational precision".

Chief Executive Officer Josh Weinstein said the result is great for the planet and also great for Carnival's bottom line.

"[Our strategy] is powered by dozens of large and small programs and technologies across our cruise lines to cut food waste 50% by 2030," Weinstein said.

"More than that, it's also a global rallying cry that is turning everyday actions into lasting impact by nurturing a shared



mindset among our 160,000 talented team members - a mindset that values creativity in delivering amazing meals for our guests and crew while getting the most out of our resources."

Crew training has been increased to empower them to take ownership in minimising food waste and serving "just right" portions, so guests can fill their plate without overindulging.

Extra ingredients are also being donated to a growing network of community food banks.

Additionally, Carnival said it is embarking on an upcycling element, creating new products from uneaten food.

This includes transforming used coffee grounds into vegan soap products and converting used cooking oil into biofuels, which are being used on its land-based tour operations in Alaska.

Further wastage is minimised via the use of more than 90 food dehydrators and 630 biodigesters installed across the global fleet.

These devices use natural bacteria to liquify uneaten food and break down more difficult items by up to 90%, which can be used as garden mulch, compost, or offloaded. *ML*

Lindblad's 60 years

A MILESTONE is on the horizon for National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions, which will be celebrating 60 years of expedition cruising - see more on page 6.

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Royal Caribbean not sweating Mexico

ROYAL Caribbean Senior Vice President Sales & Trade Relations Vicki Freed (**pictured**) does not believe Mexico's new cruise-in-transit fee (**CW** 07 May) will hurt demand for the destination.

Freed, speaking to **Cruise Weekly** from *Ovation of the Seas* in Ensenada last week, described the new payment, which will begin in Jul, as a peppercorn.

The cruise-in-transit fee will start at US\$5 per head, and increase gradually to US\$21 in Aug 2028 (**CW** 07 May).

Royal Caribbean recently repositioned *Ovation* to Los Angeles, where she will sail a season of cruises to Mexico during the northern summer (**CW** 03 Jun).

"We don't think the guests will have a problem with the \$5," Freed said.

"It's really such a nominal fee at US\$5 a person, I don't think



the consumer is going to have an issue with that.

"Mexico is putting a lot of infrastructure in place in their different ports of call, and they're putting in a lot of investments, so this becomes a win-win for everybody," she said.

The fee will be charged to cruises sailing from Jul.

It will be retroactively applied to previously made bookings through a passenger's SeaPass, except where local laws prohibit.

Royal Caribbean will also not be quibbling with the United States' notorious 'Jones Act', Freed said.

The law forces foreign-flagged vessels to visit an overseas port of call on all itineraries beginning in the United States.

It was temporarily repealed during the COVID-19 pandemic to stimulate domestic American cruising (**CW** 29 Oct 2020), but Freed confirmed Royal Caribbean will not be campaigning for it to be repealed.

"We're not fighting it, we're really content with the way it is," Freed said.

The repealing of the 'Jones Act' would allow all cruise lines to cruise to Alaska without a stopover in Canada, and to sail Hawaiian voyages. *MS*

Viking combines

VIKING has combined two or more of its most popular European itineraries and relaunched them as 14 new voyages headlining its 2026 and 2027 ocean season.

New for the year include the 15-day 'Jewels of the Mediterranean', a round-trip sailing from Rome taking in Tunisia, Spain and France, with overnight stays in Barcelona and Florence.

Also new is a 20-day journey from Barcelona to Tromsø in Norway, which takes in the serenity of quiet season, during which travellers will search for the Northern Lights.

The season also includes transatlantic crossings, including a 21-day itinerary between Rome and San Juan in Puerto Rico.

Itineraries across the season are now open for booking.



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PASSENGERS may need to pack extra deodorant next summer, as one major cruise line has announced a surprising ban on handheld fans.

Carnival Cruise Line has added the popular travel accessory to its list of banned items, leaving some regular cruisers baffled.

A letter given to passengers when they board the cruise line's ships explains that 'handheld fans are not permitted in the nightclub or any indoor dance floor', citing safety reasons.

In a video message, the line's brand ambassador John Heald stressed that only handheld paper fans 'made of cardboard' are banned from the indoor dance floor, but does not detail why exactly.

Guests will still be allowed to bring small electric handheld fans onboard Carnival Cruise Line ships.

Here comes the fun



CUNARD Line has teamed up with Abbey Road Studios to introduce a new Listening Lounge experience on board *Queen Elizabeth* later this year.

The recording studio has created a series of playlists packed with iconic recordings featuring well-known artists, including The Beatles, Ed Sheeran, and Gregory Porter.

The playlists will also serve up famous film scores from the likes of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* trilogies, *Harry Potter*, *Indiana Jones*, and more.

"Abbey Road Studios is synonymous with iconic musical performances, and this partnership allows us to bring this heritage to sea," Cunard President Katie McAlister said.

The 60-minute experience will

be hosted in the Commodore Club, where participants can listen to the playlists via headphones, while enjoying a cocktail selection designed to complement the music.

Guests can experience the Listening Lounges on select sea days, starting during *Queen Elizabeth's* maiden Caribbean season from Miami in Oct.

Additionally, music fans can enjoy the ultimate experience on a special Event Voyage in partnership with Abbey Road, which departs Southampton for New York on 23 Oct 2026.

The week-long cruise will feature live performances, a photography exhibition and Q&As with Abbey Road's roster of award-winning recording and mastering engineers. *JM*

Azamara sees stars

AZAMARA Cruises has introduced more night-time experiences, including curated night tours, double overnight stays, and a new 'Stories Under the Stars' program.

The cruise line will offer 28 double overnight stays across its fleet from Asia to Europe and beyond, allowing guests to spend two consecutive nights in port, as well as a selection of 246 nighttime excursions.

Highlights include a flamenco evening at the Tablao El Arenal during a double overnight in Seville, as part of the 'Spain Cruise: Valencia, Malaga & Seville' sailing.

The cruise line has also partnered with local guides to offer a collection of night tours that "reveal the after-hours spirit of each destination", including a club-hopping experience in Singapore.

Passengers on cruises of nine nights or longer can enjoy fireside folklore paired with s'mores and "spiked" hot chocolate as part of Azamara's new evening 'Stories Under the Stars' program.



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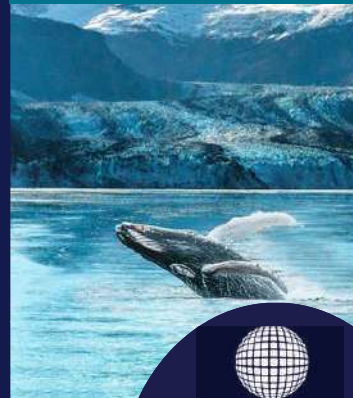
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