



Cruise Weekly today

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

Queen hits the SEA

CUNARD Line's newly refreshed *Queen Elizabeth* (pictured) has arrived in Seattle for the first time, ahead of a special series of voyages to Alaska.

The cruises mark the beginning of *Queen Elizabeth's* residency in the Americas, as she prepares for her highly anticipated maiden season of Caribbean voyages starting in Oct (CW 06 Nov 2023).

A plaque-and-key ceremony celebrated *Queen Elizabeth's* arrival in Seattle, where the ship will homeport from Jun to Sep, sailing a range of seven- to 11-night voyages.

"Historic grandeur, refined elegance, bespoke experiences and unparalleled personal service are cornerstones of a Cunard voyage," Senior Vice President of Commercial North America Liz Fettes said.

"Our view of luxury is rooted in a belief that experiences can be both elegant and relaxed, and our Alaska voyages aboard *Queen Elizabeth* personifies that spirit."



Ritz-Carlton expands in Aus



THE Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection's expansion into Australia went up another gear this week, with the cruise line making three new additions.

Byron Fenwick (pictured) and Tyler Parker have joined Ritz-Carlton as reservations agents.

Fenwick has previously held a number of customer-facing roles with Virgin Australia, while Parker joins from Tourism Australia, where he represented the DMO in Northern Europe.

Previously, Parker worked in senior roles with the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse.

Meanwhile, the line has made a very crucial third addition to its Australian business: its first local office based in Sydney.

The new headquarters are located in Australia Square Tower in the Sydney CBD, and will be able to accommodate a team of up to 12, with ample space for future expansion.

For agents, Ritz-Carlton went live with AUD pricing yesterday, allowing travel partners to view its voyages in the local currency.

The change was implemented off the back of feedback from the travel industry.

"We're delighted to share three big pieces of news together that showcase our firm commitment to the Australian market," Vice President and General Manager Seb Seward told **Cruise Weekly**.

"We have invested in a regional headquarters worthy of our brand, hired exceptional team members who will provide Ritz-Carlton level of service to our valued trade partners, and are now selling in AUD, to improve the booking process for both travel advisor and client."

Ritz-Carlton is gearing up to launch new voyages next week, as the cruise line prepares to celebrate the debut of its third ship *Luminara* (CW 28 May). MS

The *Cloud* floats

SILVERSEA commenced its Kimberley season yesterday, with *Silver Cloud* (pictured) departing Darwin on the first of seven voyages through Australia's remote northwest.

The season has kicked off with a 10-day Darwin round trip, with other highlights of the program to include a 16-day departure from the NT capital to Bali.

There will also be a 17-day Darwin to Fremantle cruise.

Voyage highlights will include skimming across the tidal currents at Horizontal Falls by Zodiac; witnessing Montgomery Reef; guided walks and cultural interpretation at ancient Aboriginal rock art sites; and encounters with humpback whales, saltwater crocodiles, and elusive birdlife.

Cloud features a pool deck with panoramic views, offering a rare opportunity to relax in style between adventures.

Elegant public spaces and world-class dining enhance the onboard experience.



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Celestyal's suites

CELESTYAL Cruises has issued the first images of its enhanced staterooms onboard *Celestyal Discovery* following an extensive refit in Athens.

The 1,360-passenger ship now features 47 new staterooms, among which are 30 'Junior Dream Suites' (pictured) and two 'Grand Horizon Suites' perched above the Captain's Bridge.

An additional 15 'Cosmos Cabins' have also been added, increasing the ship's overall capacity by 7.4%.

The design of the new cabins takes inspiration from the regions the ship visits, including the Arabian Gulf, where she debuts in Dec on a three-year seasonal homeport in Abu Dhabi.

Celestyal Discovery will sail the region alongside fleet-mate *Celestyal Journey*, which returns to Doha for its second season at the end of the year.

"*Celestyal Discovery's* refit program speaks volumes about our continued investment in our guest experience," said Celestyal Chief Commercial Officer, Lee Haslett.

"We've not only added more balcony staterooms but enhanced our premium cabin options to meet growing demand for more space and comfort, while preserving the small-ship charm and personal service that we're known for.

"These images showcase just how far we've come, and we're incredibly proud to be taking *Celestyal Discovery* to the Arabian Gulf for the very first time this December."



Hunter cruise boom coming



A NUMBER of local NSW councils and tourism leaders have united to chart a course for rural cruise growth in Newcastle, with the aim of enhancing cruise visitor experiences.

Yesterday was the first meeting of the landmark Memorandum of Understanding on cruise growth between organisations across the Hunter Region and Central Coast.

The three-year partnership, led by the Port Authority of NSW, brings together seven local governments: Newcastle Council; Lake Macquarie Council; Cessnock Council; Singleton Council; Port Stephens Council; Maitland Council; and Central Coast Council.

Also joining the pact will be Destination Sydney Surrounds North and the Newcastle Tourism Industry Group, as well as local businesses eager to capitalise on opportunities arising from the growth of the cruise sector.

Port Authority Chief Executive John McKenna said the MOU will support local businesses to develop tourism offerings tailored to capture the cruise market over the next decade.

"This partnership is about more than just welcoming cruise ships, it's about showcasing the incredible experiences the regions have to offer, from the natural beauty of the Central Coast and the Hunter Valley's

world-class wine country to the vibrant energy of Newcastle itself.

"It's a win-win: passengers get unforgettable experiences, and local businesses and communities benefit from the economic opportunities that come with a thriving cruise industry."

Port Authority GM Cruise Martin Bidgood said the agreement is the natural next step following the planned expansion of cruise into Newcastle (pictured), through the 10-year license with the city's port announced two years ago (**CW** 19 Oct 2023). **MS**

Little love from Ama

AMERICAN Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) Senior Vice President of Business Development Sarah Little has been named godmother of AmaWaterways' upcoming Danube ship *AmaSofia*.

The travel advisor ambassador will christen the ship during ASTA's River Cruise Expo in Amsterdam in Mar.

AmaSofia will sail a variety of seven-night itineraries along Europe's second-longest river, including guest favourites such as 'Melodies of the Danube' and 'Romantic Danube'.

The ship will be AmaWaterways' 10th on the Danube, further strengthening its footprint in one of Europe's most beloved and iconic river cruise destinations.

Co-founder & Chief Brand Ambassador Kristin Karst said AmaWaterways is thrilled to honour Little with the title.

"Sarah's unwavering support of the advisor community and her deep-rooted passion for the industry make her an exceptional choice as godmother," she said.

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PROSPECTORS flocked to regional Victoria 200 years ago when gold was discovered, but new details about a shipwreck off the coast of Colombia may trigger even more hysteria.

Researchers combing over the galleon *San Jose*, sunk by the British navy in 1708 off the coast of Cartagena, are now estimating the treasure aboard the ship may be worth as much as US\$30 billion dollars.

The wreck was discovered in 2015, with its haul of gold, silver & emeralds still onboard.

Such value has ignited an international argument over who actually owns the ship, with Spain claiming it is a state vessel, while Colombia says it sank in their waters.

Sadly for enterprising or cash-strapped amateur divers though, Colombia has already declared the site a "protected archeological area", meaning its contents are off-limits.

NCL cruises into cinema



NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) celebrated its partnership with the 72nd Sydney Film Festival last night, hosting travel partners and guests at an exclusive screening of *The Ballad of Wallis Island* at the State Theatre.

Announced earlier this year, NCL linked up with the Sydney Film Festival to become an Official Presenting Partner of SSFTV, the festival's giant outdoor screen in Martin Place (CW 31 Mar).

As part of the tie-up, the cruise line is running an immersive activation at SSFTV until Sun 15 Jun, showcasing global travel and cruise inspiration.

Arts, culture, and entertainment have always been popular with NCL's Australian guests, with recent research showing cinema as the top interest, making the partnership a natural fit.

The Sydney Film Festival shares NCL's spirit of discovery and adventure, reflected in the festival's tagline, 'See the bigger picture'. MV/JM

Pictured: Leanne Fonagy, NCL PR Manager, Asia Pacific; Judy Gilfeather-Zhu, Sydney Film Festival Partnerships Manager; Ben Angell, NCL VP & MD, Asia Pacific & Tara Clifford, NCL Senior Marketing Manager, Asia Pacific.

Fred's nip of Scotch

FRED. Olsen Cruise Lines has returned to Scotland for a selection of summer sailings.

The cruise line sailed into Rosyth last week, marking the start of a summer season of sailings aboard its 1,325-guest ship *Balmoral*.

A total of eight cruises will depart from Rosyth between Jun and Aug 2025, offering guests the chance to enjoy scenic and cultural discoveries.

The first departure of the season will be the 10-night 'Scotland, Scilly Isles & the West Country' cruise, featuring visits to local sights such as the Duncansby Head, the Needle, and Old Man of Hoy.

Other highlights of the season include scenic cruising past Fingal's Cave and the remote Scottish isles; exploring Arctic Norway under the glow of the midnight sun; uncovering the heritage of the Baltic with visits to Riga, Tallinn and Copenhagen; and whale watching in Iceland.

Guests can also enjoy the chance to sail the Seine through Normandy.




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