



Cruise Weekly today

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

Credit on Gauguin

PAUL Gauguin Cruises has launched a flight credit offer of \$1,500 per person to help travellers easily reach French Polynesia to board their cruise.

The credit is available for bookings made before 30 Apr and is valid for 17 departures in 2025 and 2026.

The line's *Paul Gauguin* is currently undergoing a major dry dock renovation and refurbishment (**CW** 11 Dec), returning to its Polynesian home next month.

Travellers on the upgraded ship will enjoy a redesigned pool deck and new technology, among other new features.

CLICK HERE for more details on the promotion.

Celestyal Gulf cruises "like starting again"

EXCLUSIVE

CELESTYAL Cruises' move to year-round sailing with the addition of the Arabian Gulf (**CW** 10 Jan 2024) has been like starting over again for the line, according to Vice President, Brand, Marketing & Customer Experience Anna Gregori.

The Athens-based cruise line just wrapped up its first season in the region (**CW** yesterday), which sailed at full capacity, smashing its estimated targets.

Demand for the product was so strong Celestyal extended the season, adding 10% capacity, ahead of *Celestyal Journey's* fleetmate *Celestyal Discovery* joining her in the Arabian Gulf.

The success was not a given however, with the cruise line forced to rethink its entire marketing strategy.

"Who we target in the Gulf is very different to the Greek

cruises," Gregori explained to **CW**.

"You have nationals and the expat community, and cruise is very new to most of that audience," she added.

"To Australians, the UK, [and] North Americans, a cruise isn't new to them, but the destination is, and so how we position the brand is very different.

"To those regions, it's all about the ship and the facilities, but to those [who] aren't new to cruise, it's all about the destinations, so we just have to adapt that and tweak [the messaging]."

The successful first season reinforces Celestyal's long-term commitment to the region, Gregori added.

"We're not just passing through - we've got a real commitment, a three- to four-year commitment in the region for both our ships," she said.

Also key to Celestyal's successful

inaugural season in the Arabian Gulf are strong local partners in each destination.

"[It is] really important we have really good partners in all of our Arabian Gulf destinations, and that extends to our shore excursions as well," she said.

"Part of the research that we did with our audience, our advisors, as well as our customers [found] there was still a little bit of nervousness over what to expect, so for us to partner with those regional experts, we can do it hand-in-glove."

Learnings from the inaugural season saw Celestyal make a number of changes to its Gulf itineraries, swapping Muscat for Ras Al-Khaimah (**CW** 05 Mar).

Cutting the longer travel time required to reach Oman's capital allows Celestyal to prioritise the longer days and later stays its guests enjoy, Gregori said. *MS*



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HAL opens Mexico

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) has opened its 2026-27 Mexico and Pacific Coast season, with five ships operating up to 19 departures up to 12 days each.

The season will see *Eurodam*, *Koningsdam*, *Nieuw Amsterdam*, *Noordam* and *Zaandam* sail eight different itineraries from San Diego and either Seattle or Vancouver, either round-trip or one-way.

In Southern California, *Koningsdam* and *Zaandam* will explore the Mexican Riviera from San Diego, visiting the Baja California Peninsula, the Sea of Cortes, Cabo San Lucas, and more.

Highlights of HAL's Mexican voyages also include a late-night departure from Loreto and scenic cruising along Magdalena Bay.

Further north, HAL will offer cruises along the West Coast of the United States, visiting ports including Astoria, Santa Barbara, and Ensenada, with some cruises overnighing in San Francisco.

The season features two departures of a seven-day 'Great Bear Rainforest' voyage on board *Noordam*, which will book-end the ship's regular Alaska season in Apr and Oct.

Sailing round-trip from Seattle, the voyage provides opportunities to view wildlife in British Columbia including whales and eagles in Prince Rupert and Ketchikan, while also sailing the Inside Passage.

The line will also offer a series of one-night Pacific Northwest itineraries between Seattle and Vancouver designed to entice new-to-brand or new-to-cruise guests.

"This series of cruises provides great options for those seeking a quick escape," said HAL Vice President Revenue Planning & Deployment Paul Grigsby.

Virtuoso ices its Cruise Icons



THIRTY-FIVE Virtuoso agents in Australia have been recognised as Cruise Icons, the organisation's most coveted designation for its top 1% of cruise sellers globally.

The 2025 Cruise Icons sit within an esteemed collection of 185 agents from 13 countries to reach the benchmark, which Virtuoso said was a 27% increase on 2024.

Since its creation in 2019, Virtuoso's Cruise Icons program has seen a 363% jump in agents attaining the high sales bar in North America, with further rises seen since the program expanded further internationally in 2023.

Sales of Virtuoso's preferred cruise partners soared 45% in 2024 compared to a year earlier, with North America seeing particularly strong growth.

Many Virtuoso cruise partners even extend exclusive amenities to Cruise Icon agents to pass on to their clients.

Australia's members in the elite Virtuoso Cruise Icons club for 2025 feature agents from consistently strong retail brands including Gregor & Lewis Bespoke Travel, Bicton Travel, Main Beach Travel, Home Travel Company, Spencer Travel and many more.

CLICK HERE to see the full list of Virtuoso's Cruise Icons for 2025 on *travelBulletin*.

Virtuoso Senior Vice President Global Member & Partner Sales Cory Hagopian extended his congratulations to the 2025 Icons

class, affirming each as setting "an extraordinary standard".

"This distinction elevates their standing with our partners and reinforces their industry prominence with clients, serving as a badge of honour they can wear with pride," Hagopian said.

As a further benefit of their sales success, Cruise Icons gain access to exclusive travel opportunities, with the group recently returning from a luxury Ponant expedition through the St Lawrence River aboard *Le Commandant Charcot*.

Hosted by Ponant Chief Executive Americas Samuel Chamberlain, the trip began in Old Quebec and travelled through the river's polar landscapes during the boreal winter to finish up last week in the natural harbour of Saint Pierre. *ML*

The group is **pictured** above on the bow of the ship.

Coral's 30 years

CORAL Expeditions has kicked off its latest season of expeditions in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, its fourth decade in the region.

The first sailing of the new season departed yesterday, with recent deluge rains in the region creating strong rivers and waterfalls tipped to flow in full force through to Jun.

In its 40 years exploring the Kimberley, Coral has grown from a single vessel and 35 departures over five months to 60-plus itineraries on three ships from Feb-Oct.

The brand has seen particular growth in its 12-night Abrolhos and Coral Coast voyages, with several US and UK charter bookings operating in 2025.

The new season also features numerous sold-out departures to Ningaloo and Rowley Shoals.

Royal gets Wiggly

AS PART of its partnership with The Wiggles, Royal Caribbean has announced a sailing with DJ Dorothy on *Quantum of the Seas* in Apr.

Guests will enjoy a Sail Away party featuring remixed Wiggles tracks from DJ Dorothy, character photo opps and a "Wiggly dance floor".

From summer 2025-26, six Wiggles-themed cruises will sail from Sydney and Brisbane.





PORTHOLE

LET'S be honest, cruising has a way of unleashing some bad habits when it comes to eating - hello, bottomless ice cream.

But a new floating community in development is aiming to become a 'blue zone' at sea, offering guests all the health and wellness they can handle.

The new *Narrative* will be focused on diet, exercise and lifestyle with habits known for their life-prolonging effects.

There will be a 930m² wellness centre on board, complete with a gym, yoga rooms, steam room, relaxation pods, and more.

Residents can enjoy wellness checks, dental services, eye exams and hearing checks via an all-inclusive 'living fee' as well as a medical centre with doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, pharmacists and physiotherapists - there will even be a hospital on board.

Personal trainers will be on hand to develop customised fitness and nutrition plans, while the ship will also have a research section where doctors will study dietary models.

An anti-ageing program will offer treatments including nutraceuticals, and red light & stem cell therapy.

Residences are on sale ranging from US\$1 million to US\$8 million, with ownership lasting for the life of the ship, which will set sail in 2027.

Agents go cruising with Fred



FRED. Olsen Cruise Lines' Aussie representative, Cruise Traveller, recently hosted two groups of local agents for a few days on board *Bolette* to sample the experience for themselves.

The famils consisted of separate groups, first enjoyed by 10 agents from Sydney who boarded for a short sailing to Melbourne, hosted by Cruise Traveller BDM for NSW/ACT Julie Donaldson.

A second group of 10 then



joined a short adventure to Hobart, hosted by Business Development Manager for Vic/Tas/SA, Laura Stone.

Both groups enjoyed the opportunity to sample various onboard restaurants and facilities, as well as a special invite to visit the captain on the ship's bridge.

One agent - Kim McGriffin from Travel Plus in Warrigal - made herself right at home in the captain's chair and even offered to take over navigation duties (**pictured** inset).

While flattered at the potential for time off, the captain politely declined the generous offer.

Bolette is currently midway through a 108-day world cruise, which departed from Liverpool on 04 Jan.

The Melbourne-based group of agents are **pictured** above. *ML*

The kings of China

ROYAL Caribbean's 2026-27 China line-up will see new destinations and expanded itineraries from the cruise line's two home ports in Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Vacationers can embark on journeys ranging from two to nine nights on *Spectrum of the Seas*, exploring destinations including Tokyo, Osaka, Mt. Fuji, Okinawa, Nagoya, Hakodate, Busan, Jeju, Da Nang, and Hue.

Cruisers can book a sailing from today, beginning May '26.



CLIA UPDATE

with Joel Katz
MD, CLIA Australasia

Certified cruise experts

THE number of travel agents who hold CLIA certification is now higher than ever in Australasia, proving yet again that we have some of the most professional cruise specialists in the world.

More than 2,000 Australasian CLIA members now hold Accredited, Ambassador or Masters certifications, showing they have the knowledge and skills needed to be a true cruise specialist and a expert advisor.

It's a sign that they've gone above and beyond to understand the global cruise industry, and that they can provide the best possible guidance for anyone looking to travel by sea.

To maintain their certification, every CLIA travel agent needs to complete an annual refresher course, bringing them up to date with industry issues and the latest developments in cruising.

It's called Cruise Dynamics, and this year's course looks at the Guiding Principles for Responsible Tourism that are helping to shape how cruise tourism benefits communities around the world, plus some of the exciting new ships ready to launch this year.

CLIA members with certification need to complete Cruise Dynamics by 31 March and can access the course via the CLIA Members Hub.

To find out more about CLIA certification, **CLICK HERE.**

