



### Cruise Weekly today

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

### McLean's big move

**LONG-TIME** Regent Seven Seas Cruises BDM Elsa McLean has been appointed as Adventure World's Head of Sales, which will see her lead sales initiatives across Lindblad Expeditions and Star Clippers. "I am truly excited to join the dynamic team at Adventure World and empower our partners and travellers to embark on extraordinary and responsible journeys," enthused McLean. She will continue to be based on the Gold Coast.

## A&K, Crystal deepen ties

### EXCLUSIVE

**ABERCROMBIE** & Kent Travel Group (AKTG) has begun an alignment process that will see various A&K land tours married up with Crystal Cruise departures to offer travellers the opportunity to seamlessly combine the two.

At the centre of the objective is A&K's Small Group Journeys, which average at around 12 passengers and are capped at 18.

The move is an expansion of an existing offering which allows Crystal passengers to select from a range of pre-prepared bespoke pre- and post-cruise land extensions in a selection of cities to undertake on their own.

Once the integration is complete, full A&K Small Group Journeys of up to 18 travellers will be timed to coincide with Crystal Cruises embarkations.

Speaking to *Cruise Weekly*, AKTG Vice President Sales for Australia & New Zealand Susan Haberle said the ultimate goal is to create a one-stop shop for the trade to book both products for their clients.

"You're doing your Crystal booking and you've got Small Group Journeys [and] we will do more and more of those as we develop our product on these joint initiatives, Small Group Journeys and Crystal."

A major hurdle in the path of a full integration, however, comes in scheduling A&K Small Group Journeys far enough in advance to fit with Crystal port bookings, with cruise lines typically locking these in many years in advance.

Currently, Crystal has the first half of 2027 available, with the second half becoming available in the next few weeks, making almost three full calendar years open for booking.

The A&K side is currently more limited, with only 2026 expedition cruises available at present, and 2026 Small Group Journeys about to launch.



"Unfortunately, it never is as far ahead, but we'll certainly have an indication of what we're going to be able to do in a few weeks time," Haberle said.

"The client books a '26 Crystal cruise in Oct '26, then we'll be able to look at the Small Group Journeys range, put a tailor made itinerary [together]."

"We haven't got the exact pricing [but] as soon as the pricing drops in, we'll be able to get that for them," Haberle said.

The gradual integration of both Crystal and A&K has been underway since AKTG purchased *Crystal Serenity* and *Crystal Symphony* from the defunct Genting Hong Kong operation two years ago (*CW* 20 Jan 2022).

Travel advisors will also find more opportunities to experience both brands on famil programs, with Connoisseur Club members able to experience both brands in the one trip.

The first group to enjoy this new arrangement is currently in India on a famil led by Sales Director Alexa Papoulias, experiencing A&K land product before flying to Mumbai for a three-night Crystal sailing to Colombo.

Haberle said A&K may become a more visible presence on board Crystal by gradually assuming operational control of the cruise line's shore excursions.

"We haven't got to this stage yet where they will be branded A&K - potentially they could be as we develop them - but what we will promote is on certain cruises where we have a strong foothold, the shore excursions will be run by our teams on the ground."

AKTG currently operates more than 60 DMC offices worldwide, opening recently in Mexico. *ML*

### Silversea finds more

**SILVERSEA** has revealed its new brand positioning, 'To Finding More', which is now live across the cruise line's channels and platforms.

The refreshed brand expression focuses on emotion and authenticity to celebrate the joy of travel and the curiosity of Silversea's guests.

"Guests choose Silversea for the unparalleled experiences that can't be found anywhere else, and our new brand positioning brings them even closer 'To Finding More'," said Annette Diaz, Silversea's interim Chief Marketing Officer.

"This new positioning marks a shift in what luxury travel can be," she added.

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## MSC's magnificent visit to Australia

MSC Cruises' *MSC Magnifica* (pictured) brought a taste of the Mediterranean to Australia last week during her world cruise.

*Magnifica* sailed into Hobart on Wed as part of her 120-night voyage, which began in Rome, and visits almost 50 destinations across more than 20 countries.

*Magnifica* will make nine Australian calls on her the cruise, which included an overnight in Sydney on Fri, where MSC invited a number of trade guests on board for a ship tour and lunch.

The vessel also visited Eden yesterday, and tomorrow will call in Melbourne.

*Magnifica* will also visit Adelaide, Kangaroo Island, Albany, Busselton, and Fremantle, on her 16-day visit to Australia.

The ship will then head to the Maldives, Africa, and the Canary Islands, before returning to Italy.

*Magnifica's* arrival into Australia



- MSC's first visit Down Under this year - comes as new data from the European cruise line reveals the Mediterranean is the top destination for local passengers, with more than 60% of the cruise line's guests choosing to sail in the region.

The Western Mediterranean has proved most popular, with Barcelona and Rome being the preferred ports of embarkation by Australian guests.

"We are delighted to welcome *MSC Magnifica* back to the Southern Hemisphere as part of her 2025 World Cruise," Vice President International Sales Antonio Paradiso said.

"The 2025 World Cruise allows us to celebrate the many beautiful destinations our guests and crew call home while showcasing the European hospitality synonymous with the MSC Cruises brand." MS

## Viking World 26-27

VIKING has unveiled its 25-2027 World Voyages Collection brochure, featuring a range of extended travel itineraries including Grand Journeys, Viking World Voyages and Longitudinal World Cruises.

The 108-page digital publication highlights exclusive benefits for Viking World Voyage guests and new overland excursions in Africa, India and South America.

The 'Viking World Cruise 2026-27' is just one of the sailings showcased within the guide, visiting 31 countries with 62 guided tours and overnight stays in 15 cities.

Readers can also learn about the new 69-day 'Viking Longitudinal World Cruise VI', which spans the waterways and oceans from the Americas to Antarctica.

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## Suns shine down on My Cruises

**MY CRUISES** become the official Coaches Partner of the Gold Coast Suns AFL team.

The strategic move will help strengthen the cruise agency's presence in its home city during a time of significant growth for the company.

The partnership will see the My Cruises branding featured heavily on Damien Hardwick's coaching group, including the polos and signage in the coach's box on game day.

My Cruises will also give away Royal Caribbean sailings to Suns members and fans throughout the season, as well as exclusive offers and opportunities to win holiday vouchers with activations across the home games at People First Stadium.

"As we continue growing and maintain our leading position within the travel industry, we are passionate about our local community and partnering with the Suns is ideal thanks to our shared core values and aligned business ethics," My Cruises Chief Executive Officer Ryan Thomas said.

To celebrate the partnership, My Cruises is offering the chance to win a seven-day South Pacific cruise with Royal Caribbean for Suns fans, with every entrant to receive a \$200 gift voucher to put towards their next cruise.

## Alaska, BC, in deep water



**THE** United States trade war with Canada is heating up in the cruise sector, with the US state of Alaska and Canadian province of British Columbia trading shots on the weekend.

Alaskan Senator Dan Sullivan has threatened to suspend the *Passenger Vessel Services Act*, which requires cruise ships embarking from the United States to stop overseas before returning to an American port.

An exemption to the law was introduced during the pandemic (**CW** 22 Sep 2021), with Alaskan politicians at the time seeking to make the move permanent.

British Columbia Greater Victoria Harbour Authority said at the time any such move would have a "devastating" effect on the Canadian province.

Sullivan said he could ask President of the United States Donald Trump to issue an exemption by executive order, which could have a billion-dollar impact on Canada's economy.

Most cruises exploring Alaska

do so through BC, especially when travelling from the US.

Sullivan's threat comes after BC's Premier David Eby said he would introduce legislation to place tolls on commercial travel from the United States' mainland to Alaska, which usually takes place through his province.

"It is a bit of a dangerous game," Senator Sullivan said during the weekend on Alaskan radio.

"Canada, you don't want to mess with Alaska...if you do, we're going to work hard on having our cruise ships bypass your ports, and that'll help our economy tremendously, it'll help our tourism industry tremendously, and it'll really hurt their tourism."

Alaska's tourism economy is already being hit hard by the second Trump tariffs, according to Alaska Travel Industry Association President Jillian Simpson.

Canadians make up roughly 10% of travellers to Alaska, Simpson said, and many travel to the state from Vancouver, BC's capital. *MS*

## Shanghai record

A **NEW** single-day passenger record has been set at Shanghai's Wusongkou International Cruise Terminal, with 4,800 guests welcomed across two ships.

The arrival of 2,200 visitors on AIDA Cruises' *AIDAstella* combined with 2,600 onboard Royal Caribbean's *Spectrum of the Seas* set the new mark.

According to the state-owned Xinhua News Agency, the total is the highest arrivals number since the port commenced operations in 2011.

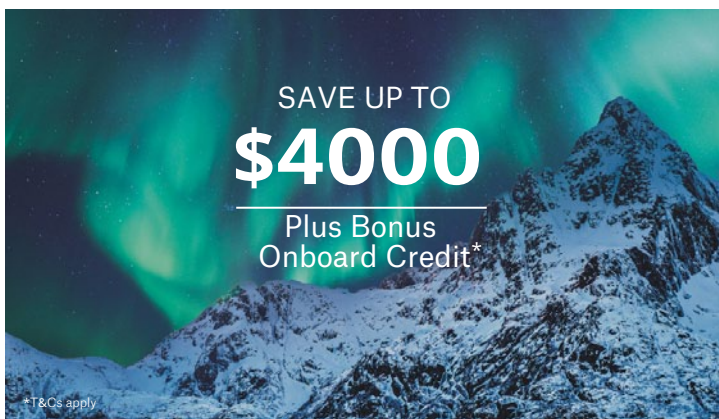
Chinese immigration authorities said nearly 30% of cruise travellers applied for China's 240-hour visa-free transit pass while another 61% were able to utilise visa waiver policies recently enacted.

China has granted unilateral visa-free entry to 38 countries and extended the transit visa-free period to 240 hours for 54 countries.

More than 20 million foreign travellers entered China visa-free last year, up 112% year-on-year.

Over than 3m came to China under the unilateral visa-free policy, up by 1,200% year-on-year, according to data from the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

**MEANWHILE**, Royal Caribbean has revealed its 2026-27 schedule in China (**CW** 12 Mar), with *Spectrum of the Seas* to sail in the region.



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**AFTER** catching onto the fact that living on a cruise ship can be more affordable than owning a home, a couple from Seattle is now in their fourth year of travelling the world on a budget.

Angelyn and Richard Burk, who are in their 50s, made the decision to sell their house in May 2021.

“Our original plan was to stay in different countries for a month at a time and eventually retire to cruise ships as we got older,” Angelyn told *CNN Travel*.

“We love to travel and we were searching for a way to continuously travel in our retirement that made financial sense,” she said.

The couple spend around A\$125 a day, which covers their room, food, entertainment, transportation, gratuity, port fees, and taxes, totalling around A\$45,535 per year - far cheaper than a mortgage, and “well within our retirement budget”, according to Angelyn.

Some days, the couple spends as little as A\$60.

The Burks usually take on big cruises that span months at a time, with their trips so far including a 51-day sailing from Seattle to Sydney, as well as 50 days around the Adriatic Sea.

“When planning out cruises, I try to stay on the same ship as long as possible, as long as it is cost-effective,” Angelyn shared.

## Fred takes on the north



**FRED.** Olsen Cruise Lines has returned to Newcastle, UK (pictured), marking the start of its spring and summer sailings.

*Borealis* will offer a selection of sailings throughout the season, including Norway, Portugal, Spain, Scotland, France, and more.

The arrival also marks the first time *Borealis* has visited the Port of Tyne.

The inaugural call was celebrated with an exchange of plaques - a maritime tradition marking the establishment of a lasting relationship between the port and ship.

The season will see guests go in search of the Northern Lights; learn more about life in the Arctic in Tromso with a Sami community; and discover the maritime traditions of Spain and Portugal, with the chance to join a flamenco lesson in Cadiz.

Passengers can also explore Iceland’s natural wonders and waterfalls; and enjoy a five-night cruise to Amsterdam to witness the Netherlands’ spectacular

tulips in full bloom.

*Borealis’* first cruise from Newcastle will be the 10-night ‘In Search of the Northern Lights’ itinerary. *MS*

## Serves up on Aza

**AZAMARA** has been announced as the official sponsor of the Mallorca Championships professional tennis tournament.

This year’s event will take place from 21 to 28 Jun at the Mallorca Country Club.

The announcement was made at ITB Berlin this month. “I’m delighted to confirm our partnership with Mallorca Championships, as its exclusive cruise sponsor,” Chief Executive Officer Dondra Ritzenthaler said.

“We look forward to bringing Azamara to tennis fans from around the world this summer in Mallorca, and are excited to share more updates on our plans for the tournament with loyal guests and partners.”



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