

Cruise Weekly today

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- CLIA Australasia
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Head to **page 5** for more information on the comp, which is in its last full month.

Karst: Aussies valuable to river cruising

AUSTRALIANS are some of the most valuable river cruise guests in the world, AmaWaterways Chief Brand Ambassador and co-owner Kristin Karst has told **CW**.

The AmaWaterways kingpin, in Australia for last week's Cruise360 (**CW** 29 Aug), said Australians represent high-value receipts when travelling with the cruise line, making the country one of its essential markets.

"[Australians] want to travel not just for one week, but they take a lot of back-to-back cruises, or there's back-to-back [with] our pre- or post-land component," Karst explained to **CW**.

"Then they maybe do something on their own, and come back on another river cruise with us.

"These longer vacations, we don't have so much from the other guests, but we do from Australia, and that is wonderful to



see," she added.

AmaWaterways recently celebrated the first anniversary of the opening of its local office (**CW** 10 Mar), following the end of its relationship with Australian river line APT (**CW** 07 Mar 2024).

Karst said AmaWaterways has

learned much about Aussie guests since its founding in 2002, and believes it is expanding into markets such as Australia at a fruitful time for river cruising.

Pictured are Managing Director Steve Richards, Karst, and Head of Marketing Angela Smith.

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CRUISE WEEKLY

On location in
Fremantle

Today's issue of CW is coming to you courtesy of the Australian Cruise Association, which is this week hosting its annual conference.

DELEGATES for this week's Australian Cruise Association conference are being welcomed to Fremantle today, before the plenary sessions kick off tomorrow.

Tonight delegates will be welcomed at one of Fremantle's most well-known breweries, Gage Roads, where we will have the added treat of watching Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours' *Scenic Eclipse II* sail past on her way into town.

Legend hits the seas



ROYAL Caribbean's *Legend of the Seas* has floated for the first time (**pictured**), with the newest Icon-class ship reaching a major milestone in preparation for her Aug 2026 debut.

The teams behind the construction of the third Icon-class vessel celebrated the moment she hit the water at Meyer Turku shipyard in Southwest Finland.

Legend's dry dock was filled with water overnight in a process that took nearly 12 hours.

Once the dock was filled, the ship floated over to the outfitting dock, marking an engineering feat that brings her one step closer to welcoming her first vacationers.

Highlights aboard *Legend* will include the Category 6 water park, and Crown's Edge - part skywalk, part ropes course, and part thrill ride.

Legend will deliver European summer adventures next

year on seven-night Western Mediterranean vacations, before making a grand Caribbean debut in Nov 2026 with six-night Western Caribbean and eight-night Southern Caribbean vacations, including visits to Royal Caribbean's private destination, Perfect Day at CocoCay.

The ship will also be the cruise line's fourth to be fuelled by liquefied natural gas, and feature industry-leading environmental programs such as waste heat recovery systems and shore power connection.

Late last month Royal Caribbean welcomed its second Icon-class ship to the fleet, *Star of the Seas*, which was received in Port Canaveral (**CW** 22 Aug).

The first Icon-class vessel, the namesake *Icon of the Seas*, made her debut in Jan 2024, with Argentine soccer legend Lionel Messi serving as the ship's godfather (**CW** 29 Jan 2024). *MS*

Fiji's new princess

BLUE Lagoon Cruises, which operates small ship cruises in Fiji, has announced the upcoming launch of its second vessel, *Yasawa Princess II*.

Set to join the fleet in Apr, the catamaran will mark "an exciting new chapter" for the cruise line.

The newbuild vessel measures 45 metres and offers 22 cabins available in twin or double configuration, for a maximum of 44 guests, who will have access to a full suite of modern amenities.

Like Blue Lagoon's current flagship *Yasawa Princess*, the new vessel will feature a shallow draft, granting access to areas within the islands that larger ships cannot reach.

On board, the ship will feature dining, lounge seating, and a fully serviced bar on the upper deck, as well as a sun deck and a hydraulic rise-and-fall stern platform for easy access to the water.

"*Yasawa Princess II* reinforces our commitment to sustainable tourism in the Yasawa Islands whilst also meeting the unprecedented demand for small ship cruising in Fiji," said Brad Rutherford, South Sea Cruises Group CEO.

Yasawa Princess II will operate four-night itineraries across 2026 and 2027, all of which depart from and return to Port Denarau.

Check out Wonder

DISNEY Destinations is inviting agents to join a ship tour of *Disney Wonder* during her upcoming Australian farewell season.

Available dates include 24 Oct and 27 Oct in Sydney, and 30 Oct, 06 Nov, 13 Nov, and 20 Nov in Melbourne.

The offer is available to advisors who have not yet toured or sailed on board the ship - submit an expression of interest **HERE** by 12 Sep.



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CRUISE companies, particularly river cruise lines, are constantly on the hunt for new destinations to sail in.

One Australian man may have just provided a new answer.

Verdis was once a previously unclaimed pocket of land between Serbia and Croatia - that was until 20-year-old Daniel Jackson declared himself the president of the patch of dirt.

The parcel was left unclaimed by the two Balkan states following the Croatian War of Independence in 1995.

Jackson is fortunately planning to be a benevolent leader, proposing the tiny state of Verdis as a place where "new systems of governance" can be tested, and for humanitarian workers to live.

However, he is currently being forced to "govern" Verdis in absentia, in exile in the United Kingdom, thanks to Croatia not looking too kindly upon his claim.

Where cruise may be able to get in on the fun is that the microstate borders the Danube - one of the most popular rivers for cruise lines.

As Jackson continues to seek international recognition of his state, **CW** would not be surprised if he is happy to set up shore excursions showing off the country, which is barely larger than Vatican City.

New NCLH office takes the cake



NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) last night celebrated 10 years in business in APAC operating from an office in Sydney, and took the opportunity to officially open its new headquarters in Barangaroo.

The event was hosted by Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) Senior Vice President International & Consumer Sales Steve Odell, Norwegian Cruise Line Vice President & Managing Director Ben Angell, and RSSC Vice President Sales & GM Lisa Pile.

Odell said of the occasion, "It's amazing to be here at this time for me because, as many of you know, I was the number one employee back in 2015 when I met Harry Sommer, who is now our big boss at NCLH, and I went for an interview because the

company wanted to open an office in Australia for APAC."

Odell added that it would be 10 years on 01 Oct and that there were still a few of the originals in the building.

"I think the longevity of the management and the consistency of the management has been key to our success in this market - it's been very stable and we have managed to grow together and learn together."

Odell also thanked the company's Miami head office and said that it had bought into the local proposition in "a very intense way".

Angell revealed that the NCLH office now houses close to 200 people locally. **DF**

Pictured: Pile, Odell, and Angell prepare to enjoy a slice of delicious NCLH-themed cake.



Fremantle is ready

LAST week, I had the pleasure of attending CLIA's Cruise360 in Brisbane, an event that once again reinforced the strength and collaboration of our industry.

The global growth of cruise is very positive, with 81 new ships ordered over the next 10 years and our focus being to maintain and grow our share of this expansion.

Cruise360 provided the perfect stage to highlight opportunities and challenges, and to set the tone for the week ahead.

Today, I'm delighted to share that the 2025 ACA Conference has officially kicked off in Fremantle.

We're welcoming a record delegation of more than 160 - a clear reflection of the current momentum of our cruise industry.

Delegates are out exploring Fremantle on networking tours, experiencing everything from the historic port precinct to the city's vibrant food and culture, and this evening, we'll gather at Gage Roads Freo for our welcome function near Fremantle Port.

Adding to the occasion, *Scenic Eclipse II* will make its first call to Fremantle today and, in perfect timing, will sail past our function at 6pm - a fitting reminder of the opportunity in our industry.

Tomorrow, we move into a full day of conference sessions featuring international and domestic speakers who will bring valuable insights across sustainability, destination development, and market trends.

It is shaping up to be an inspiring few days here in Fremantle, as we celebrate achievements, tackle challenges, and continue to drive the future of cruise in Australia.



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