

Cruise Weekly today

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

APT new trade site

APT has officially launched its new trade landing page for travel advisors.

The new agent hub is designed as an all-in-one online portal to help advisors secure bookings and grow their product knowledge.

Complementing APT's existing ATG Connect portal, the new platform provides travel professionals with access to tools and resources to better serve their clients and grow their business.

Key features of the new APT Agent Hub include quick links to the company's key resources, deals of the month flyers, and more - **CLICK HERE**.

Rutherford celebrates WA support

PRINCESS Cruises Vice President Asia Pacific Matthew Rutherford has told **Cruise Weekly** Western Australia is "an example of what can be done" when the country's destinations work with the sector.

The cruise line on Thu announced *Sapphire Princess* will homeport in Fremantle from 2027-28 (**CW** 05 Sep), thanks to the support of the Government of Western Australia.

Rutherford told **CW** the complexities of cruising in the state - namely port infrastructure, cost and distance among others - makes the support of the government invaluable, and show the results of what can be achieved through partnership.

"They're an example of what can be done to get cruise lines interested in how to work through all their issues and solve them," he explained.



"They've got an enthusiastic, problem-solving, can-do attitude, and they're also really proactive with the ports - they put skin in the game."

Rutherford detailed examples of WA's work with Princess, which has included finding volunteer groups to facilitate a welcoming reception, running workshops, and working with small suppliers to bring them into the whole

value chain.

"We've grown our shorex program from one or two tours to over 10, 12, even 15, so that's all been off the back of the investment by Tourism WA," Rutherford enthused. **MS**

Pictured are Carnival Corporation Senior Director Destination Management Michael Mihajlov, Rutherford, and Director PR Meg Koffel.



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Azamara bonuses

AZAMARA Cruises has kicked off its 2025 Travel Advisor Celebration, in which the line will give away a range of bonuses and major prizes.

Running until 31 Oct, the line has launched the fifth chapter of its Azamara World Academy trade e-learning course, titled 'Destination Immersion'.

Agents who complete all five chapters will go into a draw to win up to \$1,000 in bonus commission on new bookings; double group amenity points and up to 11 CLIA Points for certification and accreditation.

There is also the chance to win an Azamara cruise as part of the major prize pool, along with weekly prizes on the line's travel advisor Facebook group.

The new Destination Immersion e-learning chapter features modules on major events visited by Azamara sailings, including the Monaco Grand Prix and British Open.

Agents can also learn more about over 13,500 shore excursions available along with nearly 250 late evening and overnight tour options.

The cruise line's signature 'AzAmazing Evenings' and 'Stories Under The Stars' offerings also feature in the new training.

Agents can also freshen up knowledge of new menus available onboard including 150 new regional entrees.

Cruise partnership renewed



AUSTRALIA'S cruise sector has renewed its partnership with the country's destination management organisation to welcome visitors to local shores.

The partnership between Tourism Australia, the Australian Cruise Association (ACA) and Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) expands on a pact first established in 2023 to increase international visitation and grow the visitor economy.

ACA and CLIA will work with Tourism Australia to collectively grow inbound demand for Australia and to make the country the premier cruising destination for high-yield travellers.

A particular focus will be on growing Australia's share of

overnight visitor expenditure.

The agreement's renewal was announced at last week's annual ACA conference in Fremantle (**CW** 05 Sep).

Tourism Australia Executive GM Industry Sally Cope said cruising continues to be an integral part of Australia's visitor economy.

"We are excited to be continuing our partnership with ACA and CLIA and collaborating on industry opportunities to capitalise on international cruising to Australia, particularly for dispersing international visitors to regional parts of the country," she said. **MS**

Pictured are ACA Chief Executive Officer Jill Abel, Cope, and CLIA MD Joel Katz.

Gong puts its case

WOLLONGONG City Council says strong community support for hosting cruise ships at Port Kembla demonstrates why the city is well positioned to become NSW's third major turnaround port.

The council has tabled what it says is a "compelling case" for the city to ease the chronic cruise growth bottleneck in Sydney as part of the NSW Government's Cruise Industry Advocacy Panel.

Supported by what it says are united regional stakeholders, the Cruise Wollongong Taskforce said the addition of Port Kembla would "unlock significant visitor economy benefits and increase economic activity across the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee and Macarthur region".

The taskforce said its warm community welcome was on full show when it hosted seven ships between 2016-19.

This was amplified during the pandemic when *Ruby Princess* was berthed in Port Kembla, with the community delivering 1,200 care packages to impacted crew.

Wollongong's submission also highlighted its competitive advantage over other major NSW ports such as Newcastle and Eden, both by proximity to Sydney, turnaround capability, road and rail access, and under-utilised infrastructure.



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DESPITE sponsoring a show that begins directly after the sinking of the *Titanic*, premium cruise line Viking has enjoyed major success through its partnership with hit show *Downton Abbey* over its 14 years on and off.

The cruise line has continued that collaboration into the upcoming premiere of *Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale*, which will hit cinemas in Australia on Thu this week.

Viking has even launched a dedicated website showcasing its exclusive pre- and post-cruise land extensions taking in Highclere Castle, where *Downton Abbey* is filmed.

CLICK HERE to check that out.

Speaking of cruise lines appearing on TV shows, fans of the *Real Housewives* franchise will spot some serious repping by Virgin Voyages on an upcoming episode of its latest Miami season as the ladies embark for a sailing.

Sir Richard Branson himself makes a cameo appearance in the show as he welcomes Marysol Patton and her *Real Housewives* entourage aboard to celebrate Patton's wedding.

The line appears in two episodes of the latest season as the ladies enjoy the Scarlet Night party, dine at Spanish-inspired restaurant Rojo, and take part in a retro 1980s VHS aerobics class.

Eclipse basks in WA success



COINCIDING with the start of the 2025 Australian Cruise Association conference last week, Fremantle welcomed the mighty *Scenic Eclipse II* into its harbour for the first time recently.

The ship has spent the past few months exploring the Kimberley and the WA coast, with its two onboard helicopters taking guests high above to admire the region's cliffs and outback landscapes.

In an interview with *The West Australian*, *Scenic Eclipse II* Captain Torry Sakkariassen said a highlight of the WA season was visiting the Montebello Islands off the Pilbara coast, where he said "we had 100 humpback whales round the ship".

"*Scenic Eclipse II*'s second Kimberley and Western Australia season has been a huge success, and we're excited to celebrate our journey to the beautiful port of Fremantle," said Scenic

Group General Manager Sales & Marketing APAC, Anthony Laver.

"Our guests have been completely captivated by Western Australia's raw beauty and unique experiences [and] as we head further on to South Pacific waters via East Antarctica, we're offering Australians their final opportunity to join us on these truly remarkable ultra-luxury Discovery Yacht voyages in our region."

Scenic Eclipse II is winding up its latest Australian season before it heads south to Antarctica to spend the summer.

Before that though, there are still a few opportunities to secure a suite on a very limited series of South Pacific sailings, with the ship exploring Norfolk Island, New Caledonia and Fiji.

From there, its final sailing will set off from the Yasawa Islands and head to New Zealand before starting its Antarctic season. *ML*

CCL tweaks cruises

CARNIVAL Cruise Line has announced adjusted itineraries for nine 2026 cruises across five of its ships, according to a statement sent to guests.

Carnival Sunrise saw the most tweaks, with three cruises now set to operate updated itineraries.

Additionally, *Carnival Glory's* 16 Feb 2026 departure has been adjusted to visit Nassau on a different day, while its 16 Oct 2026 cruise will visit Celebration Key on an alternate date.

Other changes include *Carnival Elation*, which had its 09 Feb sailing fully revised; *Carnival Freedom's* 14 Feb cruise, which will visit Celebration Key on a different day, and more.

Shore excursions purchased through Carnival will be automatically adjusted, the cruise line said, while ones for cancelled ports will be automatically refunded.

Burlesque at sea

AIDA Cruises has announced the return of its adults-only burlesque shows onboard *AIDAperla*, reports suggest.

The shows, which take place in the vessel's Nightfly nightclub, were initially discontinued in 2019.

Described on the line's website as an "experience that combines theatre, dance and adult entertainment", tickets for the burlesque performances vary from €15-€35 (A\$27-\$54) per person.