

### Cruise Weekly today

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

### Tauck adds two

**TAUCK** will add two new riverboats for 2027, with its latest fleet expansion to target the thriving Douro and Seine river markets.

The line also announced the addition of two new ships in 2026 (**CW** 24 Oct), which will bring the tour operator's fleet expansion to four new ships over the next two years.

This will result in a 30% capacity growth for Tauck over this year, up 50% in France and a 100% climb on the Douro river in Portugal.

## Explora to debut in Asia



**EXPLORA** Journeys has revealed its new collection of cruises for 2027-28, which will see the line make its debut in Asia, and launch its fifth ship, *Explora V*.

The collection includes close to 100 journeys, visiting 59 countries and nearly 200 destinations.

*Explora III* will embark on the line's first-ever journeys through Asia over the course of 28 itineraries, which will visit Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

The ship will stay overnight in destinations such as Tokyo, Osaka, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Naha, Ha Long Bay, Ho Chi Minh City, and Bali.

Itineraries will coincide with major cultural events, including China's Golden Week in Shanghai, and Chinese New Year celebrations on board in Jan 2028, which will be marked with themed entertainment and traditional festivities.

Other highlights will include exploring temples in Japan's tropical Miyako Island, wandering the volcanic landscapes of Jeju, and diving into the vibrant food halls of Singapore.

This season also welcomes the debut of *Explora V*, which will begin her service in the Med, before continuing to the Red Sea and Arabian Peninsula.

*Explora V* will launch in Dec 2027, during the Mediterranean's quieter season, visiting destinations such as Valletta,

Cagliari, Istanbul, Messina, Split, Dubrovnik, and Kepez.

A highlight of the season will be New Year's Eve in Naples, where guests aboard *Explora V* will enjoy a spectacular view of the city's legendary fireworks display from the sea.

The ship will then journey east to the Red Sea and Arabian Peninsula, where she will join her sister *Explora I* to offer a series of itineraries through Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain.

Guests will explore UNESCO-listed sites including Petra, Luxor, the Great Pyramids of Giza, and al-Ula, while *Explora I* passengers will enjoy New Year's in Dubai.

Meanwhile, *Explora II* and *Explora IV* will operate across the Caribbean, Central America, and South America, visiting 51 destinations in 30 countries.

This will include a maiden visit to Port Antonio in Jamaica, and Caribbean gems such as Jost Van Dyke and Terre-de-Haut Island.

Highlights of *Explora's* Central America program will include kayaking beneath rainforest canopies, and exploring Mayan ruins, while further south in the Amazon, guests will visit remote communities such as Boca da Valeria and Santarem, with an overnight stay in Manaus.

Both *Explora II* and *Explora IV* will celebrate New Year's Eve off the coast of San Juan, offering a front-row seat to the island's famed fireworks. *MS*

### APT books more

#### EXCLUSIVE

**SLOTS** have been booked by APT to build two more European river ships and consolidate the success of its new-generation vessels *Solara*, *Ostara*, and *Estrela*.

The development follows strong demand for the trio of APT vessels, which are purpose-built with Australians in mind seeking relaxed luxury.

Cox hinted to **Cruise Weekly** earlier this year that more hardware is on the way, citing staterooms selling out almost a year in advance of departure dates (**CW** 09 Jul).



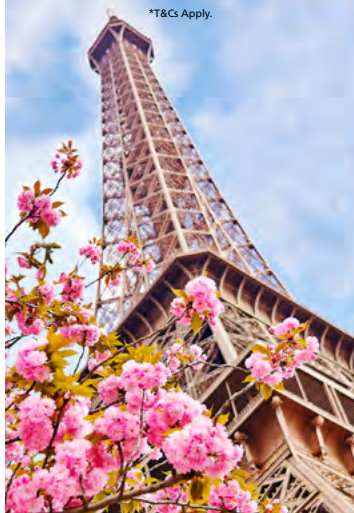

## VIKING

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## Ponant gets tied up in yachts

**FRENCH** cruise line Ponant Explorations Group will introduce a new brand to formalise its growing catamaran yachting division (**CW** breaking news).

Under the company's new Ponant Yachting brand will sit its two Spirit-class vessels, *Spirit of Ponant* and the recently-added *La Desirade* (**CW** 23 Jul).

A third vessel - to be named *Spirit of Ponant II* (**pictured**) - has been ordered from shipbuilder Lagoon, and will be delivered to enter service late next year.

While her two predecessors currently operate itineraries in and around the Mediterranean islands of Corsica and Sardinia, *Spirit of Ponant II* will instead be deployed to French Polynesia once she enters service.

*Spirit of Ponant II* will measure just under 25 metres in length and 11 metres in width, with five double staterooms.



Chief Executive Officer Herve Gastinel said the areas the new fleet will sail are well-suited for yacht exploration.

"With the acquisition of the *Spirit of Ponant II*, the 22nd ship in the fleet, we are expanding our offering in the luxury sailing segment for intimate, sophisticated and responsible voyages," Gastinel said.

"We are developing a unique world, where each experience is tailor-made: itineraries, gastronomy, excursions and more.

"This strategy is also embodied

in the launch of our new brand, Ponant Yachting, which combines the intimate experience of sailing with the sophisticated and personalised services of Ponant Explorations Group voyages.

"This strengthens our unique portfolio of brands in the cruise industry," Gastinel added.

The new Ponant Yachting fleet aims to cater to a more exclusive operation that targets families and groups of friends eager to customise their own experience.

Each catamaran caters to between nine and 12 travellers, plus a crew of four - a captain, first mate, hostess and a chef.

The all-inclusive experience allows travellers to craft their own itinerary, including access to secluded anchorages, plus the ability to personalise the activities available on board, and even have a hand in deciding the menu including alcoholic beverages. **ML**

### New ACA board

**AUSTRALIAN** Cruise Association (ACA) members welcomed APT's Mladen Vukic and Intercruises' Joanne Brown as newly elected board members at last week's annual conference (**CW** yesterday).

Re-elected to the board were Port of Brisbane's Brendan Connell and South Australian Tourism Commission's Andrew McKinnon, who will serve new two-year terms.

Farewelled was Shorex Australia's James Coughlan, who served as Treasurer on the last board; and the popular Karlie Cavanagh, who was recognised at the conference for her distinguished service by Chief Executive Jill Abel.

The board also acknowledged outgoing Chair Philip Holliday, ahead of its reconvening in the coming weeks to elect a replacement for him.

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**MSC Cruises** features prominently at all Formula One races throughout the season, thanks to its partnership with the driving championship.

However at the recent Italian Grand Prix in Monza, the cruise line went a step further, bringing its gastronomic experiences to the pits for the BWT Alpine team it sponsors.

MSC's top chefs brought their culinary excellence trackside, serving its top-class cuisine to the Alpine team, including the pit crew, engineers, team VIPs, and drivers Pierre Gasly and Franco Colapinto (**pictured**).

The exclusive menu featured dishes from MSC's signature restaurants Eataly, Kaito Sushi & Teppanyaki, Chef's Garden Kitchen, Hola Tacos & Cantina and more.



## Douglas Mawson delivered



**SHIPBUILDER** China Merchants Group has delivered Aurora Expedition's new ship *Douglas Mawson* (**CW** 17 Jul), which is set to be the final vessel in her class.

The ship (**pictured**) is a sister to Aurora's first two vessels, *Greg Mortimer* and *Sylvia Earle*, and is scheduled to begin sailing Antarctica later this year, following a shakedown along the coastline of Tasmania.

Public areas include restaurants and bars, a swimming pool, gym, spa, sauna, and boutique.

**MEANWHILE**, Aurora also

recently completed its first-ever trial of biofuel, achieving a major step in its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

*Sylvia Earle* became Aurora's first ship to trial hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO), a sustainable biofuel made entirely from used cooking oil.

The ship recently bunkered HVO in Valencia, and operated for several days along the coast of Spain, running on 100% HVO.

Tests resulted in an estimated 90% reduction in fuel-related greenhouse gas. *MS*

## Swan's Asia reveal

**FULL** details are now available for Swan Hellenic's first four Asia Pacific voyages on board *Minerva*.

Running from 05 Apr to 20 May, the itineraries will run under Swan Hellenic's Cruise Plus format, meaning special hotel accommodation, charter flights and transfers are needed to reach departure points.

*Minerva's* four new Pacific itineraries begin with a 13-night sailing from Honiara to Jayapura in Papua New Guinea, which will be bookmarked by one night of charter accommodation in Brisbane and Bali at each end.

The next two cruises also include one night in Bali at each end, and will see travellers venture deep into West Papua and Raja Ampat.

The mini-season will conclude with the final sailing from the Philippines to Japan, arriving on 20 May.

The new itineraries come from the return of *Minerva* to the fleet after a protracted dispute saw the ship idle for two years (**CW** 31 Jul).



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