



### Cruise Weekly today

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

### Fiji ship grounded

**MV FIJI Princess** remains grounded after it hit a reef near Monuriki Island on Sat, with 30 guests on board. The incident took place when a severe squall caused the ship's anchor to drag towards a reef and the crew had limited time to respond, said the line. All passengers and non-essential crew disembarked the ship and returned to Port Denarau, where they were accommodated by the line at hotels on the island, with alternative activities and experiences arranged. Pumpable fuel and other oils stored on the ship have since been removed, reducing any environmental risks.

## Riverside aiming to be best-in-class

**RECENTLY** appointed Riverside Cruises country manager Stewart Williams (**CW** 25 Feb) believes his line can bring a new level of luxury travel not yet seen by Australian guests in the sector.

In an exclusive interview with **Cruise Weekly**, Williams (**pictured**) said he believes the cruise line will appeal to what Australian ultra-luxury travellers have become accustomed to in recent years.

"I think it's a market that really hasn't been tapped into yet...I think there is a market now that is not being supported for those people who want something a little bit more special," he said.

"It's not a brand that's coming into the middle of the market and trying to differentiate itself through different points of its products - it's something that's coming right at the top."

Noting the presence of other



luxury river cruise lines in the market, Williams said he believes Riverside has the ability to offer even greater service.

"Other operators have on average about 150 passengers - we are at 110 on the same sized ship, so we can provide ultimate service," he explained.

Less staterooms also means Riverside can offer facilities many other ships cannot squeeze on board, such as a wellness centre with a gymnasium and pool, as well as guest laundry facilities.

"The standard cabin on

Riverside is 20m<sup>2</sup>...on some of the other operators, that's their main suites," Williams added.

Riverside has now tasked its new country manager with building brand awareness and working with distribution partners in Australia, with family trips also set to depart in Jul.

Williams replaces Riverside's inaugural Australian representative commercial sales & marketing representative Susie Coughlin, who departed the cruise line at the start of the year (**CW** 28 Jan). *MS*



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## New Ama CEO pushes for guest lens

### EXCLUSIVE

**UNDER** new CEO Catherine Powell, AmaWaterways is taking an even more guest-centric approach to positioning the brand and delineating its point-of-difference in the market, ANZ MD Steve Richards has revealed.

Speaking with *Cruise Weekly* at Virtuoso's regional forum in Auckland, Richards (**pictured**) said Powell's appointment in Jul last year (*CW* 30 May 2025) has already seen a meaningful shift in the way the cruise line is further elevating the brand in the eyes of its passengers.

"Our CEO has come from Disney and Airbnb, and anyone who has had an experience at Disney will know they are world leaders, so [Powell] has made us more operational and focused on hardware," Richards said.

"Nobody walks away from a Disney experience disappointed,



and Airbnb has also evolved in terms of how hosts offer their experiences - [Powell] was very much part of that journey, so we're very lucky to have her."

The fingerprints of Powell's involvement at Ama can already be seen in its sizable recent investment to upgrade its entire fleet of ships across key areas such as wine and dining.

However, the luxury cruise line is not only focused on improving the value proposition of its current hardware, with the company on track to grow its fleet to 40 ships by 2030, fuelled by new private equity funding backed by LVMH.

The new vessels will help consolidate strong gains made in the competitive European river market, Richards said, providing a raft of additional unique selling points, such as its plan to add more ships that are double the standard width on the Danube.

Since Amawaterways set up its Australian office two years ago (*CW* 14 Mar 2024), Richards said the team has doubled its head count, and recently brought on three additional people to help the operations keep pace with strong demand.

The bulk of recent recruits have been in the group reservations department, following a surge in interest in Australia for charter bookings on its 150-pax ships.

"We joined [the ANZ market] at a good time...and now I'm running out of room in the office," he said, adding that he is exploring options to relocate to a larger location. *AB*

### River to ocean

**WINDSTAR** Cruises is launching a river-to-ocean cruising category, with new sailings taking place on *Star Explorer*, which will make her debut in Dec.

She will embark on European trips in 2027, including the 'Impressionist France' cruise from Bordeaux to London and the 'Connoisseur's Delight: Northern Spain and Portugal', sailing on the Garonne and Gironde rivers.

CCO Janet Bava said the category offers new ways to engage existing river clients.

"With Windstar, agents now have a seamless way to retain those clients by offering something new: yachts that move from rivers to the open sea, unlocking destinations that traditional river ships and large ocean vessels simply can't reach," she said.




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## Stay Updated

on the latest cruise news

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**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line has spent the past week telling guests its recent updates were actually just April Fool's jokes.

These included a letter to guests stating that its popular cruise activity involving hiding and finding rubber ducks would be banned due to environmental concerns, and even included a signature from CCL president Christine Duffy at the bottom of the page.

Another announcement involved changes to its loyalty program, alluding to the notion that it would return to its traditional structure based on days sailed.

Following uproar from upcoming guests and long-time cruisers on social media, CCL brand ambassador John Heald took the time to respond to the travellers' concerns, reassuring them that both announcements were in fact very realistic April Fool's Day jokes.

## Accessibility celebrated

**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line's Celebration Key has been officially recognised for its accessibility efforts, making it the first cruise destination to earn KultureCity's sensory inclusion certification.

The cruise line has worked with the non-profit for six years, which aims to create sensory-inclusive spaces for those who live with disabilities such as autism, dementia, PTSD and sensory processing disorders.

At the private island, guests with sensory needs are given complimentary packs with noise-reducing headphones, fidget tools and glasses with filters to block out strobe and bright lights.

It also includes a VIP lanyard with a headphone logo and light bulb symbol to signal to Carnival employees that they may need support, as well as a feelings thermometer to help non-verbal guests to communicate.

"This milestone demonstrates Carnival's dedication to making vacations accessible and enjoyable for all, including families with sensory processing needs," said Christine Duffy, president of CCL.



"By training our team members and offering tailored resources both on board and at Celebration Key, we ensure every guest feels supported, understood, and welcome," she added.

The initiatives at Celebration Key are in addition to CCL's fleetwide efforts, such as training its shipboard staff and call centre team, who interact with guests during the booking process.

"Creating truly inclusive experiences means anticipating the needs of every guest before they arrive," said Uma Srivastava, executive director of KultureCity.

"By certifying Celebration Key, Carnival Cruise Line is setting a new standard for the travel industry, ensuring that individuals with sensory needs and invisible disabilities can fully participate in and enjoy every moment of their journey," she added. *JHM*

## It's all in the fam

**HOLLAND** America Line's *Koningsdam* now offers new family and group options after emerging from her two-week dry dock in the Bahamas, including five new, larger oceanview staterooms.

Each space fits up to four guests and features a double sofa bed and two beds that convert to a queen-size bed.

Four of the upgraded staterooms also connect to one another, allowing larger groups to book together.

## Med cruise report

**CRUISE** port association MedCruise is launching a new study to understand the economic, social and environmental impacts of cruise tourism, while offering an in-depth analysis into the opportunities for sustainable cruise development.

It will involve 13 members including Dubrovnik, Gibraltar, Sardinian Ports, Western Sicilian Ports & others.

The results from the study will be revealed in 2027.



## LUXURY CRUISING REDEFINED

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