

### Cruise Weekly today

**Cruise Weekly** today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news, plus a full page from **Sea Cloud Cruises**.

### Sea Cloud on sail

**TWO** itineraries aboard Sea Cloud Cruises' boutique sailing yachts are highlighted on the **last page** of today's **Cruise Weekly** - a British Isles voyage from Edinburgh to Dublin and a Mediterranean cruise from Livorno to Nice.

Sea Cloud Cruises, which boasts *Sea Cloud*, *Sea Cloud II* and *Sea Cloud Spirit* as its three-strong fleet, is now represented locally by Jones&Co (**CW** 30 Apr), giving agents access to the line's full itineraries, as well as dedicated product training and trade support.

More details on **page four**.

## Hong Kong in focus at Cruise360

### EXCLUSIVE

**THE** Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTb) has signed on as Headline Partner for next month's Cruise360 Australasia conference, with the move putting the focus squarely on the destination as a regional cruising hub.

Cruise360 will return to the International Convention Centre (ICC) Sydney on 17-18 Sep, and is this year set to be even bigger and better - with HKTb's leading role expanding on its longstanding presence at the event over several years.

HKTb recently launched its new 'Only in Hong Kong' global tourism campaign, with the organisation's director for Australia, NZ and South Pacific, Karen McMillan, saying supporting Cruise360, as well as broader trade-facing activity, reflected HKTb's commitment to



working closely with the travel trade to convert growing interest into visitation.

"As one of Asia's leading cruise hubs, we see significant opportunities to grow cruise tourism and encourage travellers to extend their stay to experience the many attractions and experiences that can only be found in Hong Kong," she said.

CLIA executive director, Joel

Katz, noted that Asia had rapidly become one of the top international cruise regions for Australian and NZ travellers.

"We look forward to introducing more CLIA travel advisors to opportunities that Hong Kong represents for their cruise clients," he said.

Limited tickets for the event are still available exclusively to CLIA members - **CLICK HERE**.



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# Ama aiming for even more rewards

**FRESH** off the success of its inaugural River of Rewards mega famil (**CW** 05 Aug), AmaWaterways' goal will be for the program to become a yearly tentpole incentive for Australia's travel advisor community, head of marketing Angela Smith told **Cruise Weekly**.

The major trade incentive, which is in the running for a National Travel Industry Award, took well over 100 lucky agents and their travelling companions on a cruise along the Danube aboard the brand-new *AmaSofia*.

Smith said the trip has been so well-received that she believes it can be a driver of success for both AmaWaterways and travel advisors within the industry.

"River of Rewards has a bit of a name now from that brand level," she declared.

"People are engaged with the idea of river cruising...we wanted



to carve out a bit of a name for river cruising, not just for AmaWaterways, and this idea of River of Rewards and people coming back to it I think has really taken off."

River of Rewards will officially be returning next year, managing director Steve Richards said, aboard its 'Riches of the Mekong' itinerary (**CW** 10 Aug).

Smith said the success of the

mega famil was down to the entire team.

"It's a marketing campaign that the entire team supported," Smith enthused.

"We needed our sales team out there encouraging [advisors] to sign up for the incentive, and on a monthly basis, doing a new challenge, and tracking their bookings," she explained.

**Pictured:** *AmaSofia*.

## Liberty on board

**ROYAL** Caribbean Group CEO Jason Liberty is spreading his interests beyond the ocean and into the sky, having overnight been appointed to the Board of Directors of Southwest Airlines.

A statement from the low-cost carrier said it had determined that adding a director with "extensive public company leadership experience" would further strengthen its board expertise.

Liberty has been chairman and CEO of Royal Caribbean Group since 2025, after being CEO from 2022 and CFO for nine years before that.

Until last year Liberty was also CLIA's global chair.

## MSC unveils 'Catalina Sugar Beach'

**MSC** Cruises has announced that its new Catalina Island destination, off the coast of La Romana in the Dominican Republic, will now be known as Catalina Sugar Beach.

Set to open in Nov this year, the location is receiving significant enhancements to create a "premier leisure destination" in the Caribbean, which will be enjoyed by passengers sailing with MSC Cruises and Explora Journeys, the company said.

MSC commences weekly sailings from its new La Romana homeport in Nov, and *MSC Opera* will call at Sugar Beach on every itinerary.

Operated in partnership with CTL Maritime and Casa de Campo Resort & Villas, the destination will "offer an experience that showcases the island's natural character and



beauty as a protected natural monument in the Dominican Republic," MSC said.

As well as crystal blue waters and white-sand beaches, shore excursions will offer a range of nature encounters including snorkelling to see some of the island's flourishing marine life, boat trips to the nearby Cave of Wonders and more.

It will offer dining and beverage facilities, a water sports centre, cabanas and a signposted scenic pathway.

## Scientific Coral

**CORAL** Expeditions has announced a new 11-night 'Science and Conservation on the Great Barrier Reef' voyage, starting in Bundaberg with two nights at Turtle Sands Nature Resort, which is part of the NRMA tourism portfolio alongside the cruise line.

After the land program where guests receive key context on turtle conservation and reef restoration initiatives at the resort, they will join *Coral Discoverer* to explore reef systems around Lady Elliott Island and Wistari Reef.

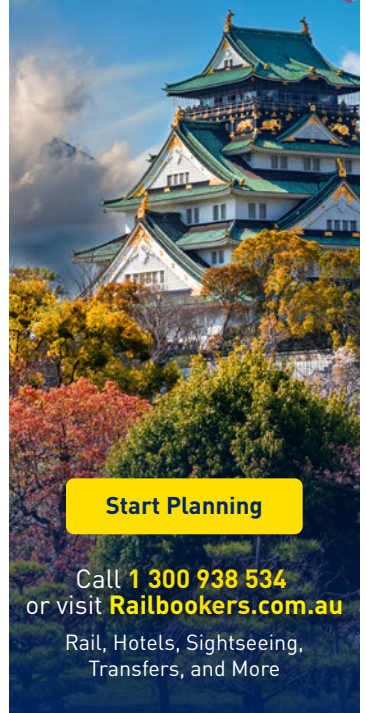
Priced from \$10,900ppts, the voyage continues north to locations like Yamacutta and Thetford Reefs, Scawfell and Brampton Island, and concludes after final days at Dunk Island and Port Douglas.

The scientific departure is scheduled for 31 Mar 2027 - details on 07 4040 9999.

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**OLD** rockers never die - they just end up going to sea.

At least that seems to be the case with a newly released Yacht Rock Cruise departing from Vancouver next year.

And there will be a distinctive Australian flavour on board, with our very own Little River Band (pictured) highlighted as one of the headliner acts alongside 70s and 80s legends Boz Scaggs and Kenny Loggins.



Also on board will be Ray Parker Jr (who sang the original theme to *Ghostbusters*) and a bunch of other ageing artists with whom *CW* is unfamiliar.

It is a six-day voyage to Los Angeles aboard *Celebrity Summit*, and bookings open next week via Signature Cruise Experiences, which has been producing live entertainment and events at sea since 2001.

"We thought it was only fitting to create a vacation where the music finally gets to come along for the ride," said organiser Michael Lazaroff - see [theyachtrackcruise.com](http://theyachtrackcruise.com).

## Guests at sea for census

### CARNIVAL

Cruise Line made sure that figures from last night's census will be accurate, delivering forms to around 6,000 guests currently aboard *Carnival Adventure* and *Carnival Splendor*.

The Carnival team (pictured) dropped the documents to every stateroom on Tue, with passengers proudly noting that their location last night was formally "at sea".

The forms will be collected by the onboard guest services staff today and lodged with the Australian Bureau of Statistics.



Passengers on *Carnival Encounter* missed out on the fun, because the vessel is on an international itinerary visiting Tonga and Fiji, meaning they were classified as being overseas on Census night.

## Americas big for HX

**THE** Americas has become the largest source market globally for HX Expeditions, with the company announcing a hefty 53% year-on-year growth in the first half of 2026, including 61% in sales sourced through travel advisors.

Steve Smotrys, HX MD and SVP commercial, Americas, said the company continued to expand travel advisor resources through a new onboarding program and a dedicated Groups division, as well as ongoing growth of the HX Expeditions Americas commercial team.

## Fred Olsen record

**FRED** Olsen Cruise Lines has recorded its biggest-ever trading day, after last month opening sales for a new Amazon and Antarctica Grand Voyage that departs in 2028.

UK-based CEO Samantha Stimpson said the response to the 87-night sailing had been "phenomenal", building on an exceptional year for the brand, which has seen a 10% uplift in passenger numbers.

Forward bookings for 2027 are up more than 40% on the same time last year for 2026, while new-to-cruise and repeat guest numbers are also rising.



## CLIA UPDATE

with Joel Katz  
MD, CLIA Australasia

### Cruise on NZ's agenda

Today CLIA heads to Auckland for the annual New Zealand Cruise Association Conference, an opportunity to rally support for our region's cruise industry.

Together with key cruise lines, we'll be joining the NZCA in highlighting the importance of cruise tourism to local communities and the need for a competitive regulatory environment to help us attract more ships down under.

A key point of my address at this year's conference is the huge success of cruising internationally, with record passenger numbers worldwide and billions of dollars of investment in new ships.

Despite this, NZ has suffered a decline in cruise ship visitation thanks to a difficult regulatory environment and high costs. Australia too has seen a decline as we lose competitiveness against other countries.

While there are similarities between the issues in NZ and Australia, the government responses have been starkly different. NZ has sent a clear message that it wants to reverse the decline and work with industry to achieve success, but Australia has not.

Australia needs to follow NZ's lead. We need a national approach to bring together all levels of government and industry, so we can restore Australia's competitiveness, protect local jobs and help our tourism economy to thrive.





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