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Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise news, plus a front cover from **Royal Caribbean**.

Ovation is amped

ROYAL Caribbean's newly amplified *Ovation of the Seas* will be sailing from Brisbane in 2027-28, with Queenslanders to be able to discover everything that's new aboard the ship.

This includes the Caribbean-themed tiki bar Pesky Parrot, Izumi Teppanyaki, Giovanni's Italian Kitchen, the Sound Cellar late-night music and dancing venue, and more.

There will also be newly introduced casitas, Royal Caribbean's private covered poolside daybeds; and the new Ultimate Family Suite - see the **cover page** for more.

Viking to add two more ocean ships

ITALIAN shipbuilding company Fincantieri and Viking have signed contracts for two new ocean ships, to be built in Ancona and scheduled for delivery in 2032.

The new order exercises the initial option included in the framework first announced in Apr 2025 (**CW** 09 Apr 2025), with the ships to be based on the vessels Fincantieri has previously built for the cruise line.

They will accommodate 998 passengers across 499 cabins, like Viking's other ocean vessels, with the deal for the ships valued at between €500 million and €1b.

The pact extends the long-term maritime partnership between Viking and Fincantieri to a total of 28 ships, and also follows the announcement earlier this year of the construction of two new expedition vessels for the cruise line (**CW** 04 Mar).

"Today's agreement marks



another milestone in our long-standing partnership with Viking and serves as a powerful testament to the excellence and industrial expertise of our Ancona shipyard," Fincantieri CEO Pierroberto Folgiero said.

"Over the years, Ancona has proven to be an indispensable production hub for our group, delivering highly sophisticated

cruise ships that set the benchmark for technology, luxury, and efficiency.

"Assigning these newbuilds to Ancona reinforces the strategic role of the site, supports high-value local employment, and ensures long-term industrial continuity for our supply chain as we continue to shape the future of sustainable cruising." *MS*

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Dine and unwind on *Aura*



NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has unveiled new ways to unwind, dine, and vacation aboard the soon-to-debut *Norwegian Aura*, which in May will become the company's largest ship.

Aura will feature what NCL claims to be the most expansive spa experience in cruising, as well as Norwegian's first-ever Indian specialty restaurant, and the new Panorama Room (pictured), a fresh immersive, complimentary dining experience.

Spanning two decks, the new Mandara Spa has been inspired by forest canopies, cave-like retreats, and cascading waterfalls.

At the heart of the experience is the Thermal Suite, which offers 15 wellness amenities, 11 of which are new experiences, built around the principles of contrast therapy, allowing guests to move between warm and cool spaces.

There will also be several new water and thermal offerings, including a Blue Glow Suite, a gentle blue light experience designed to support post-travel recovery; a dedicated foot spa, to soothe and refresh tired feet and muscles; the Waterfall Experience, where water cascades over guests' heads and shoulders; a Snow Cave, featuring rock-like walls layered with snow;

a Reflection Pool with panoramic sea views; guided hot-and-cold plunge experiences; and more.

Aura will also introduce Tamara, Norwegian's first Indian specialty restaurant, which has been inspired by the popularity of similar venues at the cruise line's Indulge Food Hall.

Guests will enjoy authentic flavours with dishes like short-rib dosa, lamb biryani, and a green papaya salad, which will be cooked in an open-view kitchen anchored by tandoor ovens.

The fresh venue, located on deck 8, will feature authentic regional dishes in a sophisticated setting inspired by the architecture and craftsmanship of Indian temples and courtyards.

Also new to *Aura* is The Panorama Room, a complimentary dining experience that will transform traditional main dining through immersive visual technology.

Located on deck 6, the venue will feature expansive LED displays, multi-channel audio, synchronised lighting, and dynamic visuals that will change throughout the day and night.

Meanwhile, Hudson's, Norwegian's signature main dining room, will also debut an elevated new design. *MS*

MSC cancels another Middle East season

MSC Cruises' *MSC World Europa* will remain in the Mediterranean in 2027/28, the line has announced, having originally been scheduled to cruise in the Middle East.

The season is the second of *World Europa's* deployments in the region to be cancelled, after MSC earlier this year announced it would move the ship out of the Middle East for winter 2026/27.

World Europa will instead offer seven-night itineraries in the western Mediterranean, sailing from a selection of convenient embarkation ports.

She will visit some of the region's most sought-after destinations, offering a mix of iconic coastlines and vibrant cities, including Barcelona, Marseille, Genoa, Civitavecchia, Messina, and Valletta.

The cancellation follows *MSC Euribia* becoming stuck in Dubai



for almost two months earlier this year (**CW** 20 Apr) due to the Strait of Hormuz crisis.

MSC has also announced its upcoming new flagship *MSC World Asia* will sail in the Southern Caribbean.

The ship will offer seven- and 14-night itineraries, embarking from Fort-de-France, Pointe-à-Pitre, and Bridgetown.

Sailing through the heart of the region, guests will visit some of the region's most beautiful and culturally rich highlights, including Castries, St George's, Philipsburg, St. John's, Basseterre, Roseau, and St Vincent & the Grenadines. *MS*



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ONE cruise line is cracking down on - or we should say "quacking down on" - one of the most popular traditions in the industry.

Marella Cruises is asking guests to leave their rubber ducks at home, claiming they pose risks to onboard safety.

"As much as we love a bit of personality, the ducks have started to drive us quackers," the cruise line wrote in an onboard newsletter.

"While it's all meant in good spirit, these can become hazards and are usually disposed of by our crew."

Shipwide games of rubber duck hide-and-seek first started in 2018, when a girl hid around 50 of them on her cruise vacation.

The phenomenon has exploded in popularity, although some cruise lines, such as Marella, have been discouraging it of late.

Mitsui out on the road



JAPANESE luxury boutique cruise line Mitsui Ocean Cruises has been showcased to travel advisors around Australia this week at Japan National Tourism Organisation roadshow events in Melbourne and Brisbane.

Mitsui was the only cruise line featured at the Japan-focused trade shows, with Joe O'Sullivan, managing director of Mitsui's local GSA Cruise Traveller, saying it was great to see such a positive reaction from the many travel advisors in attendance.

"A voyage with Mitsui Ocean

Cruises offers a truly authentic way to explore Japan, with journeys imbued with depth, discovery, enrichment, amazing cuisine, and also great value-for-money," he said.

Mitsui operates *Mitsui Ocean Fuji* and the soon-to-launch *Mitsui Ocean Sakura*, both of which are former Seabourn ships (*CW* 07 Nov). *MS*

Pictured are Cruise Traveller BDM Laura Stone, Mitsui head of international sales Jeonghwan Nam, and O'Sullivan at the Melbourne event.

Fred. Olsen signs seafarer pledge

FRED. Olsen Cruise Line has become the first cruise line to sign the Seafarer Pledge, as part of its commitment to crew welfare.

As a signatory to the Merchant Navy Welfare Board's Seafarer Pledge, Fred. Olsen is promising to take practical action to support career progression, ease transitions between sea- and shore-based roles, recognise maritime skills and experience, and inspire future generations to consider careers at sea.

"Our people are at the heart of everything we do, and we recognise the invaluable contribution they make both to our business and to the wider maritime sector," technical & marine operations director Leanna Lakes said.

"We are proud to be the first cruise line to sign the Seafarer Pledge and to stand alongside organisations across the maritime industry in recognising the vital role seafarers play every day," Lakes said.

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