Depart Brisbane and be one of the first to visit Royal Beach Club℠ Lelepa. Sail through the majestic fjords and landscapes of New Zealand on a Christmas sailing from Sydney. Enjoy a South East Asia escape from Singapore. Celebrate the Chinese New Year on a cruise from Hong Kong. Witness first-hand the iconic cherry blossom season from Tokyo - all onboard *Voyager of the Seas®*.

CRUISE WEEKLY
delivered daily!

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Wednesday 26th Aug 2026

Cruise Weekly today

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

The Royal journey

ROYAL Caribbean's *Voyager of the Seas* will be sailing across Brisbane, Sydney, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Tokyo during 2027 and 2028.

The vessel will operate sailings from Brisbane ranging from two to seven nights across the South Pacific, calling at Mystery Island, Port Vila, Luganville, and Noumea, along with the chance to visit the new Royal Beach Club Lelepa.

From Sydney, she will embark on a 10-night Christmas sailing to New Zealand, with ports of call including Picton, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and more.

See more on the **front page**.

Luxury cruising becoming segmented

LUXURY cruising is becoming more segmented, as passengers' preferences change and cruise lines redefine what a premium experience entails.

Cruise Weekly spoke with prominent industry executives about clarity and target demographics within the sector.

Brands such as Oceania Cruises, Viking, and Virgin Voyages all define luxury as serenity, space, sophistication, and uninterrupted adult experiences, while National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions, Explora Journeys, and Cunard Line are pioneering meaningful luxury experiences that can be shared across generations.

Both of these customer groups are growing too, according to Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) general manager Nikki Glading.

"What we're seeing from our members is genuinely a split - both groups are thriving," she told ***Cruise Weekly***.

"Multigenerational and extended family bookings are absolutely growing - grandparents wanting one big trip with the whole family, adult children bringing parents along.

"At the very same time, couples chasing peace, quiet and exclusivity haven't gone anywhere - return rates for couples and family travellers are almost identical, sitting in the high-70s."

Glading said this is evidence of clients simply bringing more of their family along for the ride, rather than couples disappearing into family travel.

She told ***Cruise Weekly*** that luxury is becoming about clarity of identity.

"Luxury today isn't one thing - commitment to a lane is."

Lisa Pile, local managing director of Oceania Cruises explained: "Our focus is on creating experiences that feel enriching, seamless and personal.

"An adults-only environment supports that vision by allowing us to tailor every aspect of the guest experience around the interests and expectations of our travellers," she told ***CW***.

However, Lindblad Expeditions believes children can contribute to the atmosphere that defines its product.

"Demand for family and multigenerational expedition bookings has grown significantly over the last several years," said Liz Glover, head of marketing for Lindblad's local general sales agent Adventure World, told ***CW***.

"Rather than traditional resort-style kid clubs or surface-level entertainment, the goal was to immerse youth directly in field science and active exploration," she added. *MS*

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Iglu big for FCTG in FY26

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) newly acquired United Kingdom-based cruise OTA Iglu.com contributed almost $500 million in TTV to the company's annual results in FY26, the firm announced today.

FCTG reported total TTV of $25.7 billion, up 5%, with Iglu contributing $497 million, despite only being acquired halfway through FY26 (***CW*** 11 Dec).

Iglu also provided $6.7 million in underlying profit before tax to FCTG's $278 million result, which overall was down 4% from the prior fiscal year.

The solid contributions of the new acquisition came despite the impacts of the Iran war, the effects of which saw FCTG miss its goal of $2 billion in cruise-related TTV for FY26 (***CW*** 25 Feb).

FCTG in May called out the disrupted travel environment as a result of the Iran war, identifying the cruise sector as one of the most exposed to the conflict (***CW*** 06 May).

The war dealt a hit to the company's leisure bookings in Q4, with FCTG reporting a total of $1.8 billion in cruise TTV for FY26.

FCTG now expects to eclipse the $2 billion mark in FY27, which would mean a stunning 100% increase in TTV for the sector since FY25, when FCTG turned over $1 billion in sales.

Cruise overall continues to be one of the star performers for the company, and was called out as one of the leisure sectors building the most momentum into FY27, as detailed in the presentation.

The category is highlighted in FCTG's report as a "winner" and a "high-margin bet", alongside other growth verticals like luxury, digital, and touring.

Highlighted in the presentation was FCTG's dedicated cruise agency Cruiseabout, which earlier this month celebrated its 10th store opening in Indooroopilly, ahead of five more locations planned for this fiscal year (***CW*** 07 Aug). *MS*

Panache's Aussie office in full flight

PANACHE Cruises' new Australian office has recorded $2 million in sales in its first three months, on track for its target of $10 million in the first year of operation.

Juliana Nasmith, head of sales and operations for the new Sydney office, is "incredibly pleased with the response so far", considering the UK-based brand is building itself from the ground up in the Australian market.

"What has been most encouraging is how strongly Australian travellers have responded to our highly personalised approach," Nasmith said.

"Luxury cruise is a considered purchase, and clients really value having an expert who takes the time to understand what they want, guide them through the options, and look after the finer details.

"It gives us a lot of confidence in the opportunity ahead," she added.

Panache's founder and chief executive officer James Cole said the reason for opening the Australian office was to capitalise on what is a "very different" market to its home in the United Kingdom.

"The cruise market in Australia is growing quickly and we can only see it growing further," Cole said.

AI's choice illusion

A REPORT from advertising tech platform Verve has revealed 91% of consumers using AI for cruise end up engaging with only one brand.

Collated from analysing online searches, AI conversations and American consumer survey responses, the report also discovered that only 8.9% take two or more brands into consideration.

Verve explained that this occurred due to AI agents and platforms pointing toward specific cruise brands quickly following initial queries.

Royal Caribbean leads the way in AI search popularity, making up 37.1% of all branded cruise searches, followed by Norwegian Cruise Line with 15.6%, amd Celebrity, MSC and Princess all around the 8-10% mark.

Findings from the report also reveal that the majority of searches were triggered by significant occasions, such as the launch of a new cruise vessel, with almost 90% of searches from customers looking for specific ships.

AI was also found to point customers towards bookings which prioritised price and value over the itinerary or onboard experience.

However, Verve's data revealed 60% of US consumers most prioritise the monetary value of a cruise vacation.

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PORTHOLE

AN AMERICAN couple has embraced the nomadic lifestyle, spending the past three years jumping from cruise ship to cruise ship.

Libby Rome and her husband decided to sell their belongings about 16 years ago, moving between hotels, before deciding to take up life on the high seas.

According to Rome, everything that she owns can fit into a backpack.

Rome told *People* magazine she does not even own a car, nor a permanent address.

She said that after 15 sailings with Princess Cruises, laundry service is free.

"My laundry is me putting my dirty clothes in a bag and filling in a form and leaving it next to my door for when my cabin steward comes in," she told *People* magazine.

"He brought it back clean and hung it the next day for me...it really is no chores, no errands."

Rome added that her mail goes to her sister's address back in the United States.

For medical attention, she takes advantage of the onboard doctors, booking cruises that dock and leave from the same port so she can book appointments during cruise turnarounds, seeing the same doctors each time.

Overall, the life costs her and her husband US$66 per day.

Cruise a star for HLO

HELLOWORLD'S wholesale cruise division was one of the company's star performers of the year, as revealed in its FY26 financial results, released today.

HLO's wholesale cruise sales continue to grow, up 12.3% in FY26 across its dedicated cruise brands, which include Cruiseco, Creative Cruising, and Signature By Cruiseco.

Helloworld had previously announced its wholesale cruise bookings were up 17% for the first half of the year (***CW*** 25 Feb).

The impressive result follows an earlier indication from chief operating officer and executive director Cinzia Burnes that cruise bookings had slowed slightly during the crucial wave season due to the Iran war (***CW*** 12 Mar).

Burnes told ***Cruise Weekly*** at the time numbers were "a little lower" than Helloworld would have expected during the cruise sector's peak booking period.

A highlight of the year was wholesale consortium Cruiseco's launch of dynamic cruise packaging, allowing Helloworld to deliver "value-led" itineraries, with a focus on short- to medium-haul destinations.

Completing a big year for the brand, Cruiseco was also awarded the 'Most Outstanding Wholesaler' at last year's National Travel Industry Awards (***CW*** 20 Oct).

It will defend its title this year too in Melbourne, having recently been announced a finalist for the 2026 award.

Overall, Helloworld reported a total underlying EBITDA of $60.2 million for the year, up 8.4% on the prior corresponding period, while its TTV of $4 billion was up 4.1% on the PCP, which the company said had been noticeably affected by the war.

Other highlights for the year saw Helloworld announce next year's Cruise Stars trip, which will see winning travel advisors rewarded with a 10-night Great Barrier Reef sailing on board Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Edge* (***CW*** 17 Jun). *MS*

Pictured receiving Cruiseco's 2025 NTIA are Helloworld general manager cruise Steve Brady and Burnes with Singapore Tourism Board assistant chief executive international Oliver Chong.

CLIA UPDATE

with Joel Katz
MD, CLIA Australasia

Taking cruise to the bush

TODAY CLIA is heading inland to Dubbo in NSW, to an event that is far from our ports but close to the needs of our cruise community.

Dubbo this week hosts News Corporation's annual Bush Summit, bringing together political figures and business leaders to discuss many of the issues facing Australia's rural and regional communities.

We'll be there to make sure cruise tourism is part of these discussions, as we campaign for greater recognition for the economic contribution our industry makes in locations all over Australia.

With the launch of our Paddock to Port Alliance earlier this month, CLIA has been putting a spotlight on the Australians who make cruising possible - including our farmers, food suppliers, tourism operators, travel advisors, destinations and various other industry stakeholders.

Our aim is to highlight the thousands of Australian jobs that rely on cruise tourism and send a message to government that action is needed to lift the country's competitiveness and prevent us from losing cruise tourism to other countries.

This week's summit is just one part of our Paddock to Port initiative, so follow our campaign on Linkedin **HERE** to find out more and help spread the word.

CLIA AUSTRALASIA

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