

Cruise Weekly today

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

HAL heads west

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) has opened nearly three dozen 2027-2028 voyages across Hawaii, Mexico, the Panama Canal and the West Coast of the United States.

Newly released cruises offer deep exploration opportunities across guest-favourite regions.

Highlights include longer overnight stays in Honolulu, British Columbia's wilderness, and an extended exploration of the Gulf of California.

Guests will travel aboard *Koningsdam*, *Eurodam*, *Nieuw Amsterdam*, and *Zaandam*, with sailings operating Oct through Apr from five home ports in the US and Canada.

"Whether guests are chasing the sun in Hawaii or seeking the rugged, untouched beauty of the Great Bear Rainforest, this season truly has something for every type of cruiser," vice president of itinerary planning & deployment Paul Grigsby said.



Keel laid for Oceania Sonata



OCEANIA Cruises has celebrated the keel-laying of its next ship, *Oceania Sonata*, at the Fincantieri shipyard.

The ceremony is an important maritime tradition that honours the rich heritage of shipbuilding, as the ship prepares to become the ninth vessel in Oceania's fleet.

"*Sonata* embodies the next chapter in our legacy of redefining luxury travel, and we are proud to mark this occasion as we cement our position in the industry," Oceania chief luxury officer Jason Montague said.

"This milestone is the result of the extraordinary dedication and expertise of the Fincantieri team – shipbuilders, engineers, designers and countless others whose skill and passion transform our vision into reality."

Sonata is scheduled to embark on her maiden voyage in Aug 2027, and will be followed by

three sister ships.

These will be *Oceania Arietta*, scheduled to join the fleet in 2029, and two as-yet-unnamed *Sonata* class vessels, arriving in 2032 and 2035.

She will also join two Allura class vessels - *Oceania Vista* and *Oceania Allura* - which launched in 2023 and 2025 respectively.

"The keel laying for *Oceania Sonata* marks an important milestone not only for Oceania Cruises and Fincantieri, but for the entire luxury cruise industry," Fincantieri GM merchant ships Luigi Matarazzo added. MS

Pictured are the shipyard's senior vice president Marco Lunardi, Oceania chief experience officer Franco Semeraro, Matarazzo, Montague, NCLH president & chief executive officer Harry Sommer, and NCLH EVP chief vessel operations & new build officer Patrik Dahlgren.

Not so Perfect Day

A STORM has damaged the pier at Royal Caribbean's Perfect Day at CocoCay private destination, according to media reports, with the damage meaning only one ship will be able to call at a time.

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Royal embracing AI

ROYAL Caribbean Group is embracing artificial intelligence, as it attempts to improve operational efficiency and help guests tailor their cruise experience.

These innovations are helping the company enhance the guest experience while boosting revenue growth and ensuring smoother day-to-day processes, chairman and chief executive Jason Liberty said.

"We're investing in enterprise programs that deliver better guest satisfaction and experience while improving revenue and margin, helping us to fundamentally change how we run the business," Liberty said.

"We're infusing these technologies across the organisation through smaller practical use cases that create momentum, productivity, and confidence at the individual and team level.

The line also is improving its ability to curate and personalise guests' experiences while increasing pre-cruise engagement..

Liberty said the goal is to reduce friction and present relevant options that add value to the passengers.

This includes recommending dining options, suggesting excursions, and providing exclusive onboard activities that match a guest's interests, he added.

Azamara Ashore relaunches



AZAMARA Cruises is relaunching its Azamara Ashore program, establishing 17 new pre- and post-cruise land programs to operate between 2026 and 2028.

The Azamara Ashore programs were absent for around six years, pausing in 2020 during COVID.

Six of the newly relaunched itineraries are brand new, bringing the total to 84 programs across Africa, Oceania, Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

Each of these programs is specially curated for Azamara, with 37 fully unique and exclusive to the brand.

Guests can choose from short city stays that offer two-night cultural discoveries in turnaround ports globally, and extended AzAmazing Journeys, which provide three- to six-night itineraries designed for deeper exploration in bucket-list destinations through local cuisine, cultural connection, and immersive experiences.

There are also hotel-based stays that simplify arrivals and departures with optional transfers and end-to-end logistics handled on guests' behalf.

Highlights of the new programs include 'Victoria Falls & Chobe National Park with Micato Safaris', which takes travellers through Zimbabwe and into Botswana offering views of Victoria Falls, and safari game drives through Chobe National Park.

Meanwhile, 'Machu Picchu, Cusco & Hiram Bingham Train with Coltur Peru' will see travellers experience Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley of the Peruvian Andes, engaging with master artisans and guardians of Andean tradition.

Guests will also immerse themselves in the legacy of the Citadel, with the journey culminating with a ride on the iconic Belmond Hiram Bingham train, complete with world-class dining and an open bar. MS

Seabourn history

SEABOURN Cruise Line and its guests are helping the brand make history on its latest record-setting voyage, which is sailing in Antarctica.

The cruise line is currently sailing a 12-day Antarctica exploration voyage aboard *Seabourn Venture*, during which the ship reached 70° south, the most southerly point in Carnival Corp history.

Venture also became the most southerly ship on the Antarctic Peninsula at the time while crossing the Antarctic Circle, landing passengers directly onto the Antarctic Sea ice at approximately 69.5° south, where they enjoyed a champagne toast at the most southerly point any Seabourn guest has ever been.

Furthermore, the ship completed Seabourn's first-ever exploration of George VI Sound, and brought guests to historic Base E on Stonington Island, a rarely visited former British research station.

Ama's new pair

AMAWATERWAYS has appointed a new chief technology officer and chief people officer, naming Virginia Suliman and Michael Moghtader respectively in the two roles.

Both appointees join AmaWaterways from outside the cruise sector.

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A LOST graduation ring has been found buried on a beach after 44 years.

The owner of the ring, Darien Ladner, lost it on a trip to a Mississippi beach in 1982.

Ladner even returned to the beach with an assistant principal who offered to search with his metal detector, but they had no luck.

However earlier this week, he received a Facebook message from a man, who told Ladner he had found the ring in excellent condition while treasure hunting with his metal detector at the beach.

Ladner was amazed to learn the ring had been found in the same spot where he lost it.

"From the time I lost it, we've had seven hurricanes and five tropical storms," Ladner said.

"That ring's been through a lot, not considering all the heavy equipment running up and down the beach."



HAL a star for Carnival

CARNIVAL Corporation's Holland America Line (HAL) brand is one of the company's star performers, according to an equity report from Truist.

The cruise line represents approximately 10% of Carnival Corp's capacity, and has performed "very well" over the past 12 months, according to the Truist report.

Carnival Corp management has leaned into a tailored marketing strategy for HAL that has resonated with the target customer demographic.

The company had previously explored more novel marketing programs targeting historically non-core demographics, which did not perform as hoped.

The research report also revealed Carnival Cruise Line's new Carnival Rewards program, which will launch in Sep (**CW 02 Dec**), will be cash flow positive from day one; however, it will have a negative impact on PNL for the first year-and-a-half.

Carnival Rewards is modelled to be similar to airline loyalty, placing a greater emphasis on dollar spend to receive rewards.



The economics of Carnival's new co-branded credit card (only available in the United States) are also more favourable under the new rewards program.

Carnival in Dec pushed back the start date of the rewards program to Sep, three months after the original launch date, to give members of the old program more time to reach a higher level before they transition.

Those who achieve Diamond by 31 Aug 2026 will be able to keep that status for life.

Others who transition over will keep their status through to the end of 2028. **MS**

Celestyal repos

CELESTYAL has launched two new repositioning cruises for this year, sailing from Athens to Jeddah, following strong interest from guests for these cruises last year.

The cruise line's *Celestyal Journey* will depart on 14 Nov on a seven-night voyage with calls at Port Said and Safaga in Egypt, before transiting the Suez Canal.

Journey will then visit Aqaba, before arriving in Jeddah, with prices for the cruise starting from \$1,109pp.

Meanwhile, *Celestyal Discovery* will depart on an eight-night voyage on 20 Nov, calling at the same destinations: Port Said, Safaga, Aqaba, and Jeddah, with a transit through the Suez Canal.

Discovery will also visit Kusadasi, with passengers able to book a seven-night segment from this port.

Prices start from \$1,269 per person twin share.

Both ships will then continue their passage from Jeddah to the Arabian Gulf for their winter seasons.

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