

Cruise Weekly today

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

RSSC's new record

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has celebrated the strongest booking month in the history of the line.

RSSC said Jan's record demand underscores the line's continued momentum and its position as the benchmark for all-inclusive cruising.

Bookings increased by 20% when compared to Jan 2025, driven by strong demand across RSSC's global destination portfolio.

Travellers secured voyages well in advance, demonstrating increased confidence in long-term travel planning.

There was particularly strong interest in the Pacific and South America, RSSC reported.

Le Commandant-Charcot arrives in Aus

PONANT Explorations' *Le Commandant-Charcot* (pictured), the world's only luxury icebreaker, arrived in Hobart this week, marking her first-ever visit to Australia (**CW** yesterday).

The ship docked on Sat afternoon, concluding a landmark half-circumnavigation of Antarctica, sailing through some of the continent's most remote and rarely accessed regions.

Le Commandant-Charcot visited Adélie Land, Wilkes Land, the Shackleton Ice Shelf, and Queen Mary Land, which she will again visit in two years' time, when she sails a full Antarctic Circumnavigation (**CW** 15 Feb), which will depart from Australia.

"This is a deeply personal moment for me," Captain Stanislas Devorsine said.

"I spent many years in Hobart and had the privilege of commanding *L'Astrolabe* for



a decade, at the heart of the long-standing French-Australian collaboration in Antarctica.

"When Ponant Explorations launched this project in 2018, I was proud to share my icebreaker experience as *Le Commandant-Charcot* was being designed,"

Devorsine added.

The ship will now sail to Cape Town via Antarctica, before heading off on a 20-night voyage to her home nation of France.

Le Commandant-Charcot will then proceed on her northern hemisphere polar season. **MS**



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Azamara's relaxed luxury being copied

AZAMARA'S distinct onboard personality is beginning to take hold across the cruise sector, as customer preferences evolve, according to director of sales Victoria Chigwidden.

The line's ethos of 'relaxed luxury' is slowly being emulated around the industry, she said, as many other brands attempt to soften their own product, easing onboard dress codes and creating more casual spaces.

Chigwidden said she is proud to see Azamara has been a leader in the space, she told **CW**.

"There's other cruise lines that are now doing that, and we take that as a compliment," Chigwidden said of the relaxed luxury approach.

"They obviously see what we're doing as working."

However, Chigwidden emphasised the kind of approach Azamara takes is one it has



refined over years, and cannot be easily copied.

"The home away from home, and feeling welcome on board, that doesn't just happen overnight," she explained.

"I think it shows the way we treat our crew and our people - we're all in this together, we're one big family."

This does not mean the cruise line will not evolve in the future though, Chigwidden said, with the recently announced Azamara Forward program set to transform its ships (**CW** 16 Jan).

Azamara's largest-ever renovation program will take place later this year, introducing

ship-wide upgrades and reimaged dining and bar venues across its entire fleet.

Chigwidden believed this will contribute to attracting a slightly different kind of customer: one who is still passionate about relaxed luxury, but with a greater focus on hard product.

One approach which will not be changing at Azamara will be its willingness to welcome guests of all ages.

With lines such as Viking and now Oceania Cruises (**CW** 08 Jan) committing to an adults-only experience, Chigwidden says Azamara will continue to represent a luxury option which welcomes younger guests, without tailoring to them.

She believed this will prove to be a selling point for Azamara, when compared to other luxury options, as well as contemporary cruise lines. **MS**

Elliott eyes NCLH

ELLIOTT Investment

Management has increased its stake in Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) to more than 10%, according to *The Wall Street Journal*, which could see the shareholder activism fund push for changes.

The *WSJ* also reported Elliott is working with former Royal Caribbean president & chief executive officer Adam Goldstein, who could be in the mix for a board seat at the cruise company.

NCLH parted ways with chief executive officer Harry Sommer last week, with board member John Chidsey taking over the role (**CW** 13 Feb) - the company's fourth head in the past 10 years.

The firm also ordered a trio of ships yesterday (**CW** 17 Feb), building on its aggressive fleet renewal strategy.

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A FLORIDA aquarium's resident manatee is now officially the oldest on record, as recently confirmed by Guinness World Records.

The British reference book said Romeo (**pictured**), a resident at Gulfarium Marine Adventure Park on Okaloosa Island, is estimated to be at least 71 years old - and probably a few years older than that.

Romeo was found in the wild in 1957, and was at the time estimated to be between two and five years old, which now makes him easily good enough for the world record.

Guinness said the previous oldest manatee, named Snoopy, was 69 years old when he died in Jul 2017 at the Bishop Museum of Science & Nature in Bradenton, FL.

Romeo has fathered nine calves with his partner, Juliet, who died at the age of 65 in Apr 2024.

Manatees typically live between 30-40 years old, Gulfarium officials said.



Getting into a new *Spirit*



SILVERSEA has unveiled its next phase of enhancements for *Silver Spirit* (**pictured**), which will see the line introduce culinary and experiential upgrades to the ship.

Spirit's enhancement, which will be completed by May, will see the ship debut Silversea's S.A.L.T. culinary program, alongside refreshed public spaces and suite enhancements.

The introduction of S.A.L.T. will further elevate *Spirit's* culinary landscape, incorporating local cultures and flavours into the onboard experience.

New venues include S.A.L.T. Kitchen, offering destination-inspired menus, and S.A.L.T. Bar featuring regional spirits and custom cocktails.

Meanwhile, the S.A.L.T. Lab will see guests deepen their appreciation of the destination through intimate, hands-on cooking classes, focused on regional tastes and traditions.

There will also be reimaged public spaces, including a modernised Venetian Lounge, which will undergo a full refresh to feature new elegant drapery, carpet upgrades, banquette

reupholstery, and more.

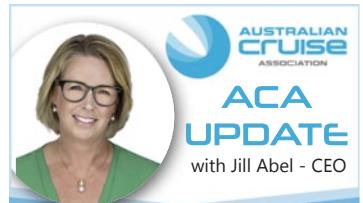
The lounge will feature a brand new, state-of-the-art LED wall that will significantly elevate Silversea's entertainment.

Spirit's pool deck will also be revitalised, while her Zagara Beauty Spa will benefit from new spa chairs and beds.

Lastly, *Spirit's* accommodations will be elevated, with new medallion suites offering guests a private veranda, a luxurious bathroom with a standard vanity, bathtub, and walk-in shower, as well as a secluded bedroom area with a king-size bed.

Spirit's upgrades follow on from the successful transformation of *Silver Muse* late last year (**CW** 16 Jan), as part of a wider project to elevate guest comfort and establish consistency across Silversea's Muse-class vessels.

"With each ship's revitalisation, we are thoughtfully reshaping the future of our onboard experience to introduce new concepts, expand our guest favourites, and continue elevating the way our guests experience the world," president Bert Hernandez said. **MS**



Growth from north to south

IT'S BEEN a strong start to the year for the Australian Cruise Association, with three new members joining our growing national network, demonstrating the continued momentum of Australia's cruise sector.

We are pleased to welcome two transport specialists supporting cruise operations at both ends of the country.

Cruise Transit (Darwin) joins as a newly established provider enhancing ground-handling services in one of the most important expedition gateways.

In the south, Wynyard Bus Lines (Hobart) brings decades of cruise logistics expertise, recently managing more than 1,750 guest movements in a single day.

In Queensland, Travena Glen Farm offers an authentic, family-run rural experience just 30 minutes from the Brisbane International Cruise Terminal, adding a high-quality, regionally grounded shore experience to the national offering.

When you think of cruising, inland Victoria may not immediately come to mind - yet this new luxury offering is a powerful example of how cruise has evolved.

ACA member APT Travel Group has partnered with Murray River Paddlesteamers to launch new itineraries aboard *Australian Star*.

Launched in 2025 and locally built in Mildura, the soon-to-be-christened vessel is the only wood-fired, five-star, accommodated paddlesteamer in the world and the largest paddlesteamer in the southern hemisphere.