



### Cruise Weekly today

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

### Williams at Riverside

#### EXCLUSIVE

**FORMER** Celestyal Cruises head Stewart Williams has joined Riverside Luxury Cruises, representing the Germany-based line in Australia, *CW* can reveal.

Williams first stepped out representing Riverside last weekend at the Luxury Travel Collection consumer event in Melbourne, with Riverside's MD UK Charlie Hewitt-Davies confirming the move.

"We are delighted to have Stewart join our team representing Riverside Luxury Cruises in the Australian market," she said.

Williams most recently served six years representing Celestyal as its regional manager from 2018-2024.

His career in the travel industry also saw him spend 20 years as Globus family of brands' managing director.

Riverside was most recently represented in Australia by Susie Coughlin, who departed the line last month after just 12 months (*CW* 28 Jan).

The brand also recently appointed The Mint Partners to provide PR representation.

## Pile to take on expanded role

**LISA Pile's** dual role with Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) and Oceania Cruises has been expanded, which will see her now serve as vice president & general manager for both brands.

The move, effective immediately, is aimed at strengthening both brands' presence in the Asia Pacific region, the company said.

Pile (**pictured**) will oversee all commercial, sales, and strategic growth initiatives for the two cruise lines.

The move will see director of sales James Sitters continue to lead the Oceania team, reporting directly into Pile in her expanded role, the cruise line said.

"A key focus for me will be deepening our relationships with local travel partners, ensuring they have the tools, support, and insights needed to thrive," enthused Pile.

"Together, we will drive meaningful growth for both brands and further strengthen our leadership in this rapidly expanding luxury market."

Meanwhile, RSSC has revealed an exclusive new collection of land programs that are available to book pre- or post-voyage.

The shoreside tours are featured on sailings departing from this year, including on voyages in Australia, spanning six of RSSC's seven ships.

These experiences cater to the growing desire to combine cruise



and land holidays, giving guests the freedom to explore ports at an unhurried pace, and spend more meaningful time immersed in each destination.

Open for bookings now, the multi-day land programs, which come at an additional cost, must be booked no later than 90 days prior to sailing, with availability varying by departure date.

One of the highlights of the new land programs will be the three-day 'Lizard Island Escape', which will see guests overnight in Sydney after their cruise.

They will then enjoy two nights at the only ultra-luxury resort located directly on the Great Barrier Reef.

Meanwhile, the four-day 'Gems of the Cote d'Azur' departs from Monte Carlo on an itinerary to the French Riviera, where travellers will explore Monaco City, the destination's old town, along with a scenic stop in the hilltop village of Eze.

Meanwhile, the five-day 'British Countryside & Cuisine' departs from London, and offers visits to Oxford, Beaulieu and Winchester, with highlights including the Winchester Cathedral. *MS*

## Asia calling with NCL

**ASIA** is calling - answer its call with Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL).

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View a range of Norwegian's Asian departures on **page 4**.

## Cruise to hit \$2b

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) cruise-related TTV is now on track to exceed \$2 billion this fiscal year, according to the company's H1 results, released this morning.

The stunning figure would mean a 100% increase in TTV for the sector this fiscal year, up from \$1 billion in FY25.

FCTG's acquisition of United Kingdom-based online travel agency Iglu Cruise (*CW* 11 Dec) has accelerated the company's momentum in this sector.

The acquisition came following the company's earlier buy of Cruise Club UK in 2024 (*CW* 30 Oct 2024).

FCTG's Cruiseabout retail and CruiseHQ wholesale brands were also called out as key sectors for organic expansion.

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### HAL delves deeper

**HOLLAND** America Line (HAL) will offer longer, immersive voyages in South America and Antarctica in 2027 and 2028.

All itineraries are a minimum of 14 days, giving travellers ample time to explore the destinations at a relaxed pace.

*Nieuw Amsterdam* will make her debut, operating sailings ranging from up to 41 days from Oct 2027 through Mar 2028, visiting Antarctica, the Amazon River, the fjords of Chile, and more.

The ship replaces *Oosterdam* and offers guests more stateroom and suite options.

HAL will kick off the season with the 26-day Inca Coast: Mexico & Latin America Legendary Voyage, an extended journey from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, to San Antonio, Chile, sailing 07 Oct 2027, aboard *Nieuw Amsterdam*.

The cruise line will also offer nine dedicated scenic cruising experiences and enrichment on board that brings the region to life, including Spanish, tango classes, and destination-inspired dishes.

"These voyages are designed to help travellers really connect with the region, from the energy of South America to the history of the Inca Coast and the awe of Antarctica," said Dan Rough, vice president of revenue management.

## Conquest back from dry dock



**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line's *Carnival Conquest* has returned to Miami with new and refreshed spaces following her dry dock.

Updates have brought the popular Heroes Tribute Bar & Lounge to *Conquest*, as well as family friendly spaces.

The ship's 12-day dry dock at the Grand Bahama Shipyard also expanded her casino and refreshed her retail venues.

Heroes Tribute Bar & Lounge honours military veterans and active-duty service members, while also raising funds for Operation Homefront, which supports military families across the United States.

There is also a new onboard space for teens, Club O2, which was added alongside the renovated WAREHOUSE video arcade, offering an upgraded and

more interactive play experience.

*Conquest* now resumes her year-round sailings from Miami, offering short cruises to The Bahamas and Caribbean, including visits to Celebration Key, Carnival's new exclusive destination on Grand Bahama.

**MEANWHILE**, Carnival has cancelled shore excursions on Mexico's mainland, amid security concerns following a major military operation that killed cartel leader Nemesio 'El Mencho' Oseguera Cervantes.

While Carnival confirmed to **CW** it has not cancelled any sailings to Mexico, brand ambassador John Heald said the line has cancelled shore excursions.

Popular Carnival land programs in Mexico include tours to Tulum, while a number of snorkelling excursions have also halted. *MS*

### Truist's NCLH call

**TRUIST** analysts have suggested Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings' (NCLH) change at the top earlier this month (**CW** 13 Feb) may reflect accountability for recent operational and strategic challenges, particularly around its Caribbean deployment and yield pressure.

The bank holding company met with NCLH management recently, and revealed in a report the cruise firm is expecting a difficult quarter, particularly in the Caribbean.

This is due to the slower-than-expected roll-out of upgrades at its private island Great Stirrup Cay, combined with a 40% year-on-year capacity increase in the region (**CW** 05 Feb).

"It sounds to us that the blame for these operational miscalculations and issues were made clear in the announcement," Truist said in an update following the news.

### HLO's luxury spike

**WHOLESALE** cruise bookings with Helloworld were up 17% in the first half of the year, the company revealed today in its results announcement.

Total cruise TTV in Australia was consistent with the prior corresponding period, Helloworld noted, despite steep capacity decreases.



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## PORTHOLE

**IMAGINE** being so famous that people want to impersonate you.

Well, Carnival Cruise Line brand ambassador John Heald has experienced a taste of celebrity life - albeit not the glamorous side - after an account pretending to be him tricked thousands of people.

Heald - the real one - spends much of his time answering questions from cruisers, sharing his first-hand insights with his more-than 650,000 followers on Facebook.

He is also the go-to source of news for many of Carnival's guests, passing along updates from the line's executives.

The fake John Heald has around 15,000 followers, but thankfully the OG Heald caught wind of the account and exposed the fraudster.

"Please be warned that whoever is running this page has just managed to scam a lady and had her [send] money," he revealed.

"I can't go into details legally, but she thought she was paying for a specific excursion."

Heald said the sham Facebook page can be spotted by its lack of a cruise-related cover photo and comparatively low follower count.

He also issued a special message to the imposter: "I sincerely hope you get seasick and lockjaw at the same time."

## Emerald honours staff



**EMERALD** Cruises has announced *Emerald Kaia's* (pictured) two godparents ahead of the luxury yacht joining the fleet in Apr.

The cruise line has named two long-standing Scenic Group team members as *Kaia's* godparents ahead of her inaugural Mediterranean season.

Kim Scoular, director of operations; and Ray Gilbert, senior software engineer, have been acknowledged with the prestigious honour.

Scoular has almost three decades of experience with Scenic, starting as a reservations agent before embarking on a global career as a tour director, and moving into her current position where she leads the operations team.

Gilbert started with Scenic Group in 1998, and has played a pivotal role in shaping the company's IT infrastructure.

"For almost 30 years, Kim Scoular and Ray Gilbert have dedicated their passion, expertise, and loyalty to the Scenic Group family, helping shape our business into what it is

today," Scenic Group CCO Damien Thomas said.

"Their naming as godparents of *Emerald Kaia* recognises not only their remarkable individual journeys, but also the commitment and teamwork that define our collective success.

*Kaia* is due to be christened in Venice in Jun, during a ceremony which will bring together Scenic Group team members, travel partners, and guests.

The ship will then transit the Red Sea and Suez Canal in Nov, en route to the Seychelles, following her Mediterranean season.

She will sail from Dec to Mar, exploring the Indian Ocean and East Africa.

*Kaia* is the first of three next-generation yachts joining the Emerald fleet.

She has been purpose-built for 128 passengers, with design features including an all-new Observation Sun Deck, including a spa pool; a reimaged La Cucina restaurant with an open kitchen and additional al fresco dining; and a new private dining experience, The Night Market Grill. *MS*



**CLIA UPDATE**

with Joel Katz  
MD, CLIA Australasia

### Awards countdown is on

With just over a week to go before our 23rd Annual Cruise Industry Awards, CLIA is gearing up for the biggest celebration we've ever held in this region.

Having moved to the grand stage of the International Convention Centre Sydney, this year's event on 07 Mar will allow us to welcome more guests than ever and put on a bigger show.

I'm immensely proud of our CLIA membership in Australasia, which I firmly believe is the most professional and dedicated of all our regions worldwide.

That's why the CLIA Awards are such an important event, giving us an opportunity to celebrate the extraordinary people who help drive cruising's success in Australasia - the advisors, agencies and partners who set the benchmark for professionalism, knowledge, innovation and service.

Such a fantastic celebration wouldn't be possible without the help of our headline sponsor Visit Qatar, and the support of all our cruise lines and award sponsors.

Thank you for making this event such a fitting tribute.

I want to congratulate all our award finalists and wish them the best of luck next week.

If you can't join us on the night, be sure to follow *Cruise Weekly* for all the results and detailed coverage.





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