

Cruise Weekly today

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

Buch is promoted

SASHA Buch, Aurora Expeditions' sustainability manager, has been promoted to head of sustainability & passenger experience.

Buch first joined Aurora in 2021, taking on the role of sustainability manager, which she served in for five-and-a-half years.

Her increase in responsibility follows a number of sustainability achievements under her remit, including the recently expanded partnership with maritime technology CounterCurrent (**CW** 11 May).

Buch also oversaw Aurora become the first cruise line to be certified as a B Corp (**CW** 30 Jan 2024).

AI to take centre stage at Cruise360

EXCLUSIVE

CRUISE experts will debate the impact of AI at Cruise360 in Sep, as technology takes centre stage at this year's conference.

The impact of AI on travel advisors and cruise retailing will be a recurring thread at Cruise360, with three sessions designed to help delegates understand the latest developments and come away with ready-to-go ideas.

Sessions will include 'The Great Debate: Is AI the Greatest Opportunity the Cruise Trade Has Ever Seen', which will see two teams argue the case, offering a balanced understanding of what the technology can and cannot do for travel advisors right now.

The session will feature Amber Wilson, HX director of sales; Mark Richards, Carnival Cruise Line national sales manager; Steve Labroski, itravel chief executive



officer; Stephanie Myers, travel industry speaker & influencer; Dave Humphreys, Royal Caribbean director of sales; and Susan Haberle, Crystal Cruises VP sales & partnerships.

Cruise360 will also see business growth expert Nicole O'Sullivan (**pictured**) explain how AI and digital searches have changed clients before they ever contact an advisor in a session titled 'The Client You Think You Know'.

She will discuss what personalisation means to the cruise client in 2026, as well as why human connection is becoming a sharper competitive

advantage, and how advisors can adapt to engage with today's client rather than the cruiser of five years ago.

Finally, 'The Digital Advisor: AI Tools That Will Change How You Work', presented by vocational education expert Steve Wiggers, will focus on tools with direct relevance to cruise retail.

He will explain how to integrate AI tools into existing workflows, explain where to apply human judgement over technology, and provide tips on how AI can support common advisor tasks.

Cruise360 will offer a packed two-day program at the ICC Sydney on 17-18 Sep, including an industry cocktail event and an extensive exhibition showcasing CLIA cruise lines, destinations, industry suppliers, and CLIA Executive Partners.

Further program details will be announced soon. *MS*



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MSC back to Alaska

MSC Cruises has opened bookings for its summer 2028 Alaska season, which will see *MSC Poesia* return to the state, sailing from Seattle.

The ship will offer weekly seven-night itineraries from Apr through Sep 2028, which will mark the third year in a row MSC has visited Alaska.

Highlights of *Poesia's* summer 2028 Alaska itineraries include Ketchikan, Icy Strait Point, Tracy Arm, Juneau, and Victoria.

"Alaska continues to captivate travellers from around the world, and we're excited to open sales for our summer 2028 season," president US Lynn Torrent said.

"Since launching our Alaska program, we've seen firsthand how much guests value the region's incredible scenery, wildlife and sense of adventure, along with MSC Cruises' blend of European style and American comfort.

"Poesia offers an unforgettable way to experience it all, combining spectacular glacier viewing and immersive shore experiences with exceptional dining, entertainment, relaxation, and a brand new MSC Yacht Club on board."



A doggone cruise scam?



CRUISE Tails, which was billed as the first-ever dog-friendly cruise (**CW** 18 Dec 2024), has turned out to be an apparent scam, vanishing without a trace with passengers' funds.

The cruise, which **Cruise Weekly** first profiled in our Porthole column in 2024 (**CW** 22 Nov 2024), promised puppy massages, a personal butler, and more for 250 dogs and their owners, with an original sail date set for Nov 2025 from Tampa.

Set to travel aboard a Margaritaville at Sea ship *Margaritaville at Sea Islander* (pictured) via a charter, Cruise Tails told guests early last year it had to push back departure to 2026 due to logistical issues.

However, the voyage was abruptly cancelled a few months later, with Cruise Tails telling passengers there would be no refunds, according to a report by television station *Tampa Bay 28*.

One passenger who spoke to the network said he paid US\$7,000 (approximately

A\$10,047) to book a spot on the cruise for himself, his wife, and their Pomeranian Sprinkles, which will not be refunded.

"They said they were having issues with the cruise ships and the ports so they had to change things up," Jerry Enget said.

"Some of the other passengers were just like 'nope I'm out, I want my money back'; some of them got refunds."

"How can you not give us the money back that we spent on this cruise that never happened... this was on them, so 100% they should have refunded our money," he said.

Cruise Tails had initially promised a "refund or future cruise credit" in its terms if the voyage was cancelled.

Attempts by **CW** to reach the business and its partners, a Florida-based travel agency, were unsuccessful, while *Tampa Bay 28's* investigative reporting alleged discrepancies regarding the whereabouts of Cruise Tails' founder Steve Matzke. *MS*

A Coruna gets up

A **CORUNA** in Spain's Galicia region is set to welcome tens of thousands of cruise passengers from 11-13 Aug, as ships sail the country's coast for the solar eclipse of 12 Aug.

11 Aug will see three cruise ships with more than 9,000 passengers call in A Cronua.

The day of the eclipse will see the arrival of more than 11,000 cruisers, with the arrival of *Celebrity Apex*, *Queen Anne*, *Celebrity Equinox*, *Borealis*, as well as *Explora III*, which will be sailing on her inaugural voyage (**CW** 24 Jul).

Liberty of the Seas will then call on 13 Aug, in one of the port's busiest-ever periods.

Viking grounding

VIKING river ship *Viking Ullur* ran aground on the Danube on Tue, in an incident which saw all passengers evacuated from the ship.

Ullur ran aground near Vidin, with local police completing the evacuation of all 186 passengers, and Viking confirming to **Cruise Weekly** there had been no injuries aboard the ship.

Pax continued their planned itinerary with a full day in Bucharest, before the cruise concluded today as scheduled, with Viking confirming the vessel was also safe.

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AN AMERICAN woman who has been living on a cruise ship for more than a year has revealed the things “nobody warned her” about life at sea.

Laura Butler, who is the host of the YouTube channel Living On Cruise Control and resides on board Princess Cruises’ *Majestic Princess*, said one of the biggest surprises was the disorientation that arose from spending every day at sea.

This is a phenomenon she now embraces.

“Everything just kind of blurs together into this beautiful, slightly chaotic collage,” the full-time cruiser explained.

“And then I realised I wasn’t losing my grip - I was letting go on purpose.”

Laura also spoke about the bittersweet nature of friendships that are intrinsic to life on board a ship, describing how she restarts her social circle every time new people embark the vessel.

“On a ship, you meet someone at breakfast [and] by dinner, you know their entire life story - and then they leave,” Laura told her viewers, adding that “it’s beautiful and it’s a little heartbreaking at the same time”.

Laura said she stays grounded by relying on daily habits, saying, “you can’t live at full intensity every single day without burning out” - she has us convinced.

Viking unveils 2028-29



VIKING has revealed the details of its 2028-29 ocean deployment, which features more than 700 departure dates and two new itineraries.

The collection is comprised of 80 voyages visiting more than 300 ports across 84 countries and six continents, with fresh offerings including the 15-day ‘Alaskan Fjords & the Inside Passage’, which explores Kodiak, Homer, and Klawock.

Also new for the season is the 16-day ‘Mediterranean, Malta & North Africa’ cruise, which round trips from Rome and includes an overnight stay in Valletta.

Based on initial demand, Viking has also boosted departures of its recently introduced 15-day ‘Japan Discovery’ itinerary, a round trip voyage from Tokyo.

Cruisers who book before 04 Aug and within 12 months of their last voyage can double their

past guest discount, creating an extra saving of \$400 per person, or enjoy a discount of \$200 per person if they book after 12 months from their last sailing.

MEANWHILE, the cruise line has taken delivery of its newest river ship, *Viking Dagur*, which was constructed at Meyer’s Neptun Werft shipyard in Rostock-Warnemunde, Germany (**TD** 23 Oct 2025).

The vessel, which accommodates 190 guests in 95 staterooms, features Viking’s classic Scandinavian design, and will begin operating sailings on the Rhine, Main, and Danube from Oct 2026.

“The arrival of our newest river ship marks another important milestone as we continue to expand opportunities for curious travellers to explore the world in Viking comfort,” new president & chief exec Leah Talactac said. *JM*



WA unites for cruise

WA IS one of Australia’s greatest assets when it comes to spectacular coastal scenery and incredible cruising destinations.

It’s also a state with a strong belief in the power of partnerships and their ability to foster cruise tourism, so I am delighted to visit Perth this week for the state’s annual WA Cruise Exchange.

Hosted by Tourism WA, this event is a great example of how close collaborations between government, industry and destinations can benefit all.

It’s an opportunity for cruise lines and industry stakeholders to come together around our shared ambitions for the future, to highlight the opportunities in cruising, and reinforce the vital role WA plays in our region’s cruise economy.

The event involves workshops and other discussions aimed at fostering collaboration among cruise lines, ground handlers, destinations, suppliers, and more.

It’s also an opportunity to showcase some of WA’s best cruise assets, and this year delegates will visit Busseton for a taste of the state’s South West.

Tourism Western Australia’s work is designed to ensure the state continues to reap the benefits of cruise visitation, and it’s a great example of the collaborative approach we advocate for in destinations throughout Australasia.

