



### Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise news, plus a full page from **Martin Randall Travel**.

### Even more Europe

**PRINCESS** Cruises has announced its largest-ever Europe season for 2028, with almost 300 departures across 150 itineraries, including new Ireland calls, overnight stays, and the debut of a Pole-to-Pole Odyssey voyage.

Six Princess ships will sail throughout Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, and on transatlantic voyages during the season, with all voyages now on sale.

The season includes sailings ranging from seven to 53 days, visiting 128 destinations.

New for the season are Princess' first calls to Galway and Killybegs, while the new Pole-to-Pole Odyssey will link Antarctica and the Arctic in one voyage.

Itineraries include access to more than 100 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and over 30 late-night or overnight stays designed to give travellers more time ashore.

"We continue to see strong interest in Europe itineraries that offer both iconic destinations and more time for meaningful experiences ashore," chief commercial officer Jim Berra said.

## Aussies staying the course

### EXCLUSIVE

**THE** Australian cruise sector has faced little measurable impact from a turbulent quarter of global events, industry leaders say.

Despite causing brief softness at the time, the *Hondius* hantavirus outbreak (**CW** yesterday) has had a negligible lasting effect on Australian cruise demand.

CruiseHQ general manager Caroline Hitchen told **Cruise Weekly** the wholesaler has not seen any increase in cancellations or booking hesitancy linked to last month's outbreak.

She said Aussie cruise travellers have become increasingly resilient to disruption.

"Australian cruise guests tend to be well-informed and take a considered view of isolated health stories," she said.

"Each time there's been a disruption, whether health-related, geopolitical, or weather, we've seen the same pattern: a pause in enquiry for directly affected regions, followed by a return of confidence, often with demand simply redirecting to alternative itineraries rather than disappearing," Hitchen explained.

Helloworld Travel general manager cruise Steve Brady agreed that cruise travellers tend to remain committed to the sector despite negative headlines.

"Those that love cruising are not deterred and understand the reality on board, that cruising is inherently a safe and healthy way

to travel," he told **CW**.

"The resilience of the cruise traveller post-COVID is the prime example of how committed this traveller is."

Meanwhile, geopolitical events and cost-of-living pressures are having more influence on where and how people cruise, rather than whether they sail at all.

Brady said fly-cruise demand remains strong, despite the impact of the recent federal budget and geopolitical concerns, with Australians pivoting to different markets.

Home port cruising also stands to benefit from these factors, Brady added.

"Sales are the best they have been since the war (in Iran) started," he revealed.

"There is still demand for fly-cruise, but there is a shift in destinations - Australian travellers looking at Asia, with a focus on Singapore and Japan, as well as Alaska," Brady said.

"Home port in particular remains popular, and is well-positioned to gain market share from value-oriented travellers who may reconsider [fly-cruise]."

"We are seeing strong performance from brands that target these consumers."

However Hitchen told **CW** that CruiseHQ has also witnessed demand for Europe strengthening again, and booking curves normalising to their 12-month-plus timeline. **MS**

### Cruise with Martin

**MARTIN** Randall Travel offers detailed cruises for the culturally curious.

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## HAL celebrates

**HOLLAND** America Line is preparing for fleetwide celebrations honouring the United States' 250th anniversary next month.

Celebrations will include festive onboard programming, live music, commemorative keepsakes, and special culinary experiences over the Independence Day weekend.

Guests on ships in the United States will gather for a festive party on 04 Jul featuring live music performances that go on a genre-spanning 'Soundtrack of America' journey.

There will also be a 'Great American Songbook' concert on *Zuiderdam*, celebrating the United States' iconic music.

The celebration will see guests able to enjoy interactive lawn games, Independence Day-themed trivia, scavenger hunts, and live cooking demonstrations inspired by classic American flavours.

Dinner will feature an All-American barbecue celebration in the Lido Market with favourites such as dry-rubbed beef, smoked barbecue pork ribs, hamburgers, hot dogs, and broiled salmon with pico de gallo.



## Emerald christens Astra



**ONE** of Scenic Group's top-selling advisors has christened *Emerald Astra* (pictured), as the line continues growing its fleet.

The Amsterdam christening saw Toni Lanotte-Day, the founder and president of Florida-based Toni Tours, named godmother of *Astra*, recognising her longstanding support for the line.

*Astra* becomes the 10th Star Ship in the Emerald river fleet, joining a pipeline that includes *Emerald Raiya*, *Emerald Lumi*, and *Emerald Xara*.

The cruise line also launched *Emerald Kaia* earlier this year (CW 08 Apr).

"*Astra* reflects the vision for the growth of the Emerald Cruises brand globally: contemporary, immersive, and connected to

the destinations we sail," Scenic founder Glen Moroney said.

"Naming Toni as godmother recognises the role travel advisors have played in building Scenic Group and the role they will continue to play in shaping our future," he enthused.

"As we continue to expand our fleet, we're also celebrating the travel advisors whose expertise and passion help connect guests with unforgettable travel experiences," Moroney added.

Lanotte-Day said: "In maritime tradition, being a godmother represents luck, protection and prosperous journeys ahead.

"I also see it as representing the travel advisors who believe in this product and help bring it to life for their clients." *MS*

## Hurti sale still on

**AGENTS** have been given more time to take advantage of Hurtigruten's flash sale, which offers up 30% off select voyages in 2026/27, a low deposit of \$250, and more. The sale ends 5pm 06 Jun.



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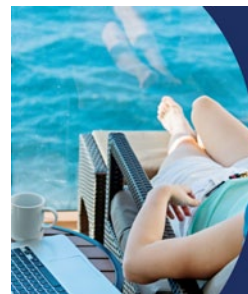


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## PORThOLE

**PLANS** have been put forward for a vessel that would dwarf even the biggest cruise ships in the world - one so big that she has been coined a 'floating city'.

Dubbed *Freedom Ship*, the US\$16.16 billion (approximately A\$22.51 billion) project would be capable of housing around 50,000 people, as well as 10,000 tourists and a 20,000-strong crew.

"*Freedom Ship* is envisioned as a permanently mobile city at sea - designed for long-term residence rather than short-term travel," said Freedom Cruise International, which has taken ownership of an idea that was originally dreamt up by engineer Norman Nixon in the 1990s.

"It is not a cruise ship and not defined by destinations or itineraries," the company said.

"It is meant to feel familiar, accessible, and unremarkable in the best sense - an ordinary part of life within a city that happens to move."

The 1.6km-long vessel would contain everything you'd expect to find in a city, including schools, colleges, shops, banks, night clubs, a sports stadium, a convention centre, and more.

The mega-ship could take up to four years to complete, if Freedom Cruise International can get its hands on funding.

## Valiant Lady's new look



**VIRGIN** Voyages' *Valiant Lady* (pictured) has been transformed following a two-week dry dock last month, with the ship now featuring new dining venues and redesigned spaces.

Guests can enjoy a fresh dining option, Ariya by Razzle Dazzle, which seats 220 people in a space inspired by India's spice markets (**CW** 17 Mar), and serves dishes like lamb shank Biryani, puffed rice, and avocado chaat, alongside a range of Indian-inspired cocktails.

*Valiant* also now boasts new shaded daybeds and updated lounge seating at one of her most popular outdoor spaces, The Athletic Club, as well as refreshed furniture in her central social hub, The Roundabout.

Still serving coffee all day, 'Grounds Club Too' now transitions into a full bar from late afternoon, offering a low-key spot to unwind.

In 'The Manor', guests will notice that the space's raised platforms have been removed to open up the dance floor, while

a relocated stage and additional seating at the martini and cocktail bar, On The Rocks, make for better views for guests.

Meanwhile, at 'On The Dock', a new stage setup and windscreen will make outdoor performances more comfortable.

TAG and Pandora have now joined *Valiant's* retail offerings, while the VV brand shop has become larger.

There are also more than 20 new entertainment events scheduled to take place across the Red Room, The Manor, The Roundabout, The Perch, dining venues and late-night social spaces, including Sink or Swim, a high-stakes game show.

"*Valiant Lady* was already one of the most compelling ships at sea, but we kept asking ourselves how to make her even more worth coming back for," chief executive officer Nirmal Saverimuttu said.

"From Ariya to The Manor to a completely reimagined lineup of Happenings, *Valiant Lady* returns with a new energy our Sailors will feel immediately." *JM*



## CLIA UPDATE

with Joel Katz  
MD, CLIA Australasia

### Lessons from NZ

LAST week New Zealand gave a big show of support for cruising, bringing together five key Ministers to meet with cruise leaders over the issues that impact our industry's future.

It's no secret that New Zealand has suffered a major decline in cruise ship visitation thanks to a difficult regulatory environment and high costs - despite soaring global demand for cruising.

In many ways, New Zealand provides important lessons for Australia; we too face a decline in cruise ship deployment as Australia loses competitiveness, which has a huge impact on local businesses and communities.

But while there are similarities between the issues in New Zealand and Australia, the government responses have not been the same.

NZ has sent a clear message that it wants to reverse the decline and work collaboratively with industry to achieve success; Australia has not.

Despite concerted efforts by CLIA, our cruise lines and our industry stakeholders, calls for govt action have been ignored.

Australia needs to follow the lead - we need a national, strategic approach to bring together all levels of government and industry, so we can restore Australia's competitiveness and allow cruise tourism to thrive.



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