



Cruise Weekly today

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

Venture with Ponant

STAY closer and venture deeper with Ponant Explorations in the South Pacific, Indonesia, and Japan. The cruise line is today promoting a number of its key itineraries in Asia Pacific, including the 13-night 'Ancestral Cruises of the South Pacific' and the 12-night 'Authentic Japan'. There is also the 11-night 'Voyage to Indonesia: Dragons, Reefs, & the Spice Islands'. Cruises lead in from \$16,280 in a balcony stateroom aboard *Le Jacques Cartier*. Head to **page 4** of today's **Cruise Weekly** for more information on Ponant.

MSC Yacht Club bringing in Aussies

EXCLUSIVE

MSC Cruises' MSC Yacht Club has become one of the line's most important products in Australia during new managing director Katrina McAlpine's first six months on the job, running at 150% of prior levels.

The cruise line's premium 'ship-within-a-ship' luxury enclave has proved popular with Australians since McAlpine took over at MSC in Jan (**CW** 10 Dec).

Yacht Club's popularity has seen MSC modernise many of its older Musica-class ships, such as *MSC Musica* and *MSC Orchestra*, with the enclave (**CW** 04 Feb), expanding the concept to 19 vessels fleetwide.

"The Australian market is a really prime market for premium product, and that is evident with Yacht Club," McAlpine explained, speaking to **CW** in her first interview since taking the job.

"We have started to promote it more meaningfully here in this market now, but before we started meaningfully promoting it, we were already up 50% versus 2024," she enthused.

"For 2027 forward bookings are already up 30% versus '26 at the same point, so there is a huge amount of organic demand."

While the Yacht Club product appeals to a wide range of demographics, including younger travellers and couples, families are among the groups with which it is most popular, McAlpine said.

"We are seeing a lot of families come through Yacht Club - we're seeing multigenerational becoming quite big from this market," she explained.

"Families with the MSC are up 50% since about four years ago," McAlpine added.

MEANWHILE, MSC has appointed a new head of sales,

CW can reveal, with Megan Toni joining the line's leadership team.

Toni brings more than 20 years of cruise sector experience, including 16 years with P&O Cruises Australia and six years with Princess Cruises, where she built a strong reputation for driving revenue growth.

She will lead sales strategy for the MSC brand, with a focus on strengthening trade partnerships, expanding distribution channels, and supporting the cruise line's continued regional growth.

McAlpine said the appointment reflects a deliberate approach to building commercial leadership.

"We have a strong and dedicated sales team who have worked hard to build the relationships and reputation MSC Cruises enjoys...Megan's appointment complements that foundation and will bring a depth of commercial and revenue

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Bud Darr to speak at ACA conference

EXCLUSIVE

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) chief executive officer Bud Darr (pictured) will speak at this year's Australian Cruise Association (ACA) conference in Brisbane, **Cruise Weekly** can exclusively reveal (CW breaking news).

Darr will be one of four keynote speakers at the conference, which will take place from 02-04 Sep, and will return to Brisbane for the first time in 12 years.

Early bird registrations for the event are now open until the end of next month.

Other keynote speakers will include Luis Ajamil, chief executive officer of cruise port architecture firm Bermello Ajamil; Holland America Line vice president onboard revenue Carole Biencourt; and Viking director of port operations Stefano Torresi.

The four senior executives will



bring deep insights into global deployment strategies, regional planning, and the evolution of cruise itineraries.

"Brisbane is the perfect host city for this year's conference as we look ahead to the next phase of cruise growth in Australia," ACA chief executive Jill Abel said.

"The theme 'Building Value Beyond the Berth' reflects the industry's increasing focus on long-term economic, social and community value, and the important role cruise plays in

supporting destinations, tourism operators and local businesses across the country.

"We are delighted to welcome such a high-calibre line-up of international and domestic speakers who will provide valuable insights into the future of cruise deployment, destination development and industry collaboration," she added.

The three-day event begins with networking tours showcasing Brisbane's cruise and tourism offering, with delegates having the opportunity to explore experiences including the Brisbane International Cruise Terminal, Howard Smith Wharves, cultural and riverfront precincts, and curated food, beverage and behind-the-scenes experiences.

Conference sessions will include industry updates, keynote addresses, and panels focusing on regional development, innovation, and cruise trends. *MS*

The Godmother pt. III

EXPLORA Journeys has named acclaimed ocean conservationist and dive trainer Cristina Ozores as the godmother of *Explora III*, which will see her bless the vessel in Barcelona on 01 Aug.

Ozores is the co-founder of marine education and conservation centre Vellmari in the Balearic Islands, which has partnered with the MSC Foundation to assist with seagrass restoration and educational initiatives.

Her work reflects shared values around ocean literacy, community engagement, and long-term ocean stewardship.

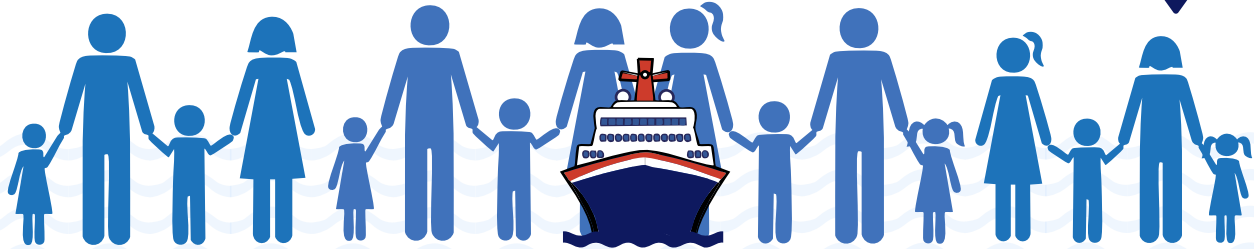
Explora III's maiden journey will be a seven-night voyage from Barcelona to Lisbon.

The remainder of her inaugural season will be highlighted by Northern Europe, Iceland, and Greenland, before making a transatlantic crossing.



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PORTHOLE

THOSE visiting Lifou in New Caledonia's Loyalty Islands will unfortunately have to leave their mankini at home.

Carnival Cruise Line (CCL) has reminded guests to follow a more modest dress code when visiting the island in order to respect local customs.

This dress code includes swimwear to only be worn around the beach or a pool, and items such as g-strings, thongs, and mankinis being strictly prohibited.

In a statement on its website, CCL explained that Lifou's local customs heavily favour reserved attire.

"Some destinations, such as Lifou, which is a tribal island, are populated by proud indigenous people whose culture is based on respect, and in many cases are highly religious," CCL said.

"The communities in these locations also request visitors to wear traditional one-piece or full-piece swimsuits and refrain from wearing bikini or monokini-type swimsuits [while] at the beach."

Guests who break the dress code will be forced to return the ship and potentially face a ban from further shore excursions on the sailing.

Failure to comply with these rules could also mean that CCL can no longer include Lifou as a port of call on its itineraries.

Atlas reports strong growth



ATLAS Ocean Voyages has reported a 49% growth in sales, as demand increases for its new yacht *Atlas Adventurer* (pictured).

The strong performance reflects continued demand across the line's full portfolio of expedition experiences, such as Antarctica, the Arctic, and Europe, as well as new-to-brand destinations including Africa and Asia.

Adding to this momentum has been the exceptional response to *Adventurer*, the brand's newest luxury expedition sailing yacht, launching in 2028 (**CW** 28 Apr).

Demand for *Adventurer* from early access Atlas Yacht Club members has been exceeding expectations, following the unveiling of the ship's inaugural season last month (**CW** 14 May).

The cruise line says early booking trends have indicated particularly robust demand for the yacht's immersive new itineraries throughout Africa and Asia - destinations Atlas has not offered before.

Reservations for *Adventurer* will open to the public tomorrow.

Joe O'Sullivan, managing director of Atlas' Australian

representative Cruise Traveller, said *Adventurer* has appealed strongly to Aussies.

"Atlas Ocean Voyages is a perfect fit for Australians who value effortless elegance, an abundance of space, elevated cuisine, efficient service, affordability, and a focus on authentic, low-impact visits to smaller ports and remote and pristine places around the world," he said.

Executive VP global sales Kristian Anderson added: "The strength of our brand continues to be rooted in delivering extraordinary experiences in some of the world's most compelling destinations.

"What's been especially encouraging is seeing how the excitement surrounding *Atlas Adventurer* has introduced new travellers and travel advisors to Atlas Ocean Voyages.

"The response has created meaningful awareness for our brand and generated a halo effect across our entire fleet, contributing to strong booking activity well beyond a single vessel," O'Sullivan added. *MS*



Showcasing AU in the EU

REPORTING from Viking headquarters in Basel this week, where I'm highlighting the depth and diversity of Australia's cruise offering and the exciting opportunities for future growth.

Discussions have focused on how we continue building itineraries that go beyond the major cities, creating more opportunities for regional destinations, expanding both ocean and expedition cruising, and strengthening the pre- and post-cruise experiences that add real value to the visitor economy.

These conversations align closely with our 2026 Conference theme, 'Building Value Beyond the Berth', and the important role destinations, operators, and industry partners play in creating experiences that encourage longer stays, greater dispersal, and deeper engagement with our region.

They also help set the scene for a keynote presentation by Stefano Torresi, Viking's director of port operations, at this year's Conference in Brisbane, where delegates will hear directly about the factors shaping the line's future itinerary development and deployment.

Viking's growth trajectory continues to impress.

Since going public in 2024, the company has delivered strong financial performance while rapidly expanding its fleet, launching multiple new ships in recent years with an extensive order book.


We're delighted to welcome Viking back as a Conference Sponsor for the third consecutive year and look forward to hosting Stefano in Brisbane, alongside a tailored family program that will further showcase the strength and diversity of our cruise experiences.

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