



Cruise Weekly today

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NCL restructure sees Borg ship out

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) senior director sales strategy & operations Damian Borg has departed the company.

Borg (**pictured**) broke the news on LinkedIn this morning, confirming he finished at Norwegian yesterday, bringing to a close a nine-year career with the cruise line.

"It has been a privilege representing one of the world's most recognised cruise brands and leading trade strategy across the APAC region, working alongside exceptional colleagues, partners, and industry friends," he wrote.

"I leave immensely proud of what we achieved together, strengthening partnerships, expanding our footprint across Asia Pacific, and helping more travellers discover the transformative power of travel.

"To everyone I have had



the pleasure of working with, thank you for your support, collaboration and friendship - the relationships built over the years will long outlast any title."

Borg's departure follows efforts from parent company NCLH to cut shoreside headcount, following pressure from activist investors to reduce administrative costs and improve efficiency.

The sweeping corporate restructuring strategy plans to cut payroll by up to 20%, with unconfirmed reports that NCLH has also slashed a number of

Australian BDM jobs for its flagship NCL brand.

The layoffs are part of a cost-cutting campaign driven by new NCLH chief executive officer John Chidsey, who arrived in Feb following the departure of Harry Sommer (**CW** 13 Feb).

"We have already begun taking decisive actions to strengthen execution and accountability across the company, which will enhance results over the longer term," Chidsey said after NCLH cut its profit forecast last month (**CW** 05 May).

"These are long-term structural actions that we believe will help offset near-term pressures and position the business for stronger performance over time."

NCLH has also faced pressure from a softer-than-expected macro environment, as well as weaker domestic demand in the United States. *MS*



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Panache reaches £50m in turnover

BRITISH luxury cruise agency Panache Cruises has hit £50 million (approximately A\$95 million) in turnover for the first time, following a massive rise in sales over the past 12 months.

Panache, which launched in 2020, saw its revenue increase from £34.9 million to £50.1 million in the 12 months to the end of May.

The travel agency also generated more than £1 million in EBITDA, and grew its headcount from 72 to 110 over the same period - boosted by the opening of its Australian office last month (*CW* 01 May).

Chief executive officer and founder James Cole (**pictured**) said reaching £50m is a "huge milestone", especially against the backdrop of the Iran war.

"It's an outstanding achievement but the progress we've made in the last 12 months



goes way beyond just record sales figures," he said.

"Every business with ambitions to scale sustainably has to be built on fantastic foundations."

Cole has consistently stated his goal is for Panache to become the world's biggest retailer of luxury and ultra-luxury cruises by 2031.

This would see it reach a whopping £300 million (A\$569 million) in revenue.

"We think we can do that largely through organic growth but if the right acquisition comes along, we'll certainly look at it," he said.

"We'd only undertake an acquisition if the company shared our values and culture.

"In addition to our US base, we opened an Australian office in May and plan to expand further internationally by opening in Canada," Cole added.

He said the travel agency's foundations are based on the three Cs: colleagues, customers and cruise lines.

"That means doubling down every single year on making sure we offer the best working environment we possibly can; amazing customer service so our customers keep booking with us and recommending us to their friends; and establishing long-term partnerships with our cruise line partners." *MS*

Viking out of China

VIKING'S China-based ship *Viking Yi Dun* (**pictured**) has been reflagged to Norway, and will be redeployed to Europe, where she will offer Mandarin-language cruises.

Yi Dun is scheduled to make her maiden European voyage from Barcelona in Aug, rejoining service on Mediterranean routes.

The ship was known as *Zhao Shang Yi Dun* while she sailed out of Shenzhen as part of a joint venture between Viking and China Merchants (*CW* 11 Sep 2024).

Yi Dun was originally built as *Viking Sun* in 2017, before the ship was transferred to the joint venture in 2021 (*CW* 18 Dec 2023).



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THE crew of Carnival Cruise Line's *Carnival Adventure* donated more than 1,000 towels to the community of Port Vila this weekend.

This is the second donation of towels Carnival has made this year.

The towels will be distributed to children learning to swim, as part of learn to swim classes funded by Carnival.

Carnival has provided funding for swimming lessons for hundreds of children from schools around Port Vila over the past 18 months through the guest-funded Pacific Partnerships program.

Vanuatu has the world's fourth-highest drowning rate.



Hapag in tune with the world

HAPAG-LLOYD Cruises is introducing a new world music festival concept aboard *Europa* on select voyages in 2026 and 2027.

International artists will bring to life the musical traditions of the regions *Europa* visits, creating an intimate festival atmosphere.

The inaugural voyage later this year features Croatian singer Marcela Orosi, Italian chanson artist FLO, and Serbian blues singer Katarina Pejak.

Catalan duo Paula Grande and Vic Moliner (**pictured**) will also join the cruise.

These four acts will sail aboard the 'Island Magic and the Azure-Blue Adriatic' cruise from 22 Sep-04 Oct.

The other world music festival sailing this year will feature artists including Spanish art-folk singer Maria Rodes, Portuguese singer-songwriter Mimi Froes, and Brazilian jazz artist Anna Setton join 'The Soul of Spain & the Heart of Portugal' cruise from 05-15 Nov.

Next year's musical line-up will include Mexican singer and producer Pahua, Afro-Cuban artist Evelyn Dupuy, and



acclaimed Brazilian musician Luiza Brina, who will join 'The Diverse West Coast of the American Continent' from 17 Feb-18 Mar 2027.

The 'Canary Islands & Oriental Magic' sailing from 25 Oct-06 Nov 2027 has also been designated as a world music festival cruise, with artists to be confirmed later.

Hapag-Lloyd has been stepping up its presence in the Australian market through its representation company Luxury Travel Marketing, with a number of advisors recently joining an exclusive famil aboard *Hanseatic Inspiration* (**CW** 28 May). *MS*

Palermo expands

PALERMO'S cruise port has expanded with a new terminal and soon-to-be-opened walkway, which has increased the facility's capacity and will shortly connect guests directly to the town centre.

The new facility, open now, comes in addition to Palermo's existing terminal, as the port prepares to ramp up to nearly one million cruise passengers welcomed this year.

Opening last month, the new cruise terminal covers 1,300m², and is adjacent to Palermo's longest pier, which is 370m.

The 100-metre walkway linking the new terminal directly to Palermo's downtown is scheduled to open by the end of 2026.

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