



Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features three pages of the latest cruise industry news.

A very near miss

TUI Cruises' *Mein Schiff 4* was nearly hit by a missile during the current conflict in Iran, while docked at Abu Dhabi's Zayed Port.

The vessel had 2,500 guests on board, most of them German nationals, when the missile landed metres away.

According to German media outlets, there was "chaos and panic" on the ship as guests were ordered off deck and away from windows.

Mein Schiff 4 is one of six cruise ships currently docked in the Middle East amidst the ongoing conflict, with others including two Celestyal Cruises ships and MSC Cruises' *MSC Euribia* (**CW** yesterday).

Snake's alive for ACL

AMERICAN Cruise Lines (ACL) has unveiled a new 16-day 'Grand Columbia & Snake Rivers Cruise' aboard its 2027 ship *American Anthem*.

The cruise will begin operating round trip from Portland, Oregon in May 2027.

Anthem will sail through Stevenson, Washington; Astoria, Oregon; Richard, WA; Clarkston, WA; and Hells Canyon, OR.

ACA's national cruise plan

THE Australian Cruise Association (ACA) has launched a national strategic action plan to drive policy reform, infrastructure investment, and sustainable cruise growth.

ACA's plan sets out a clear, coordinated approach for cruise, as well as a strategic engagement program with federal and state govt to drive policy reform and infrastructure investment.

A central pillar of the plan is a national cruise tourism strategy, which ACA chief executive officer Jill Abel said comes in response to long-standing fragmentation across policy, planning, and regulatory settings.

Failures in these regards have directly affected the country's cruise competitiveness, ACA said.

"Australia needs a coordinated national approach to cruise - one that recognises the sector's economic contribution, supports infrastructure planning and provides certainty for cruise lines making long-term deployment decisions," Abel said.

The plan focuses on a number of priority areas, including policy and regulatory reform.

This includes border processing, efficiency and regulatory harmonisation, and trading certainty, with the *Coastal Trading Act* currently under review (**CW** 21 Aug 2024).

Port and terminal infrastructure will be a priority focus, addressing capacity constraints at major

gateways, and enabling growth at rural ports; as will destination development, supporting sustainable cruise growth aligned with state and rural strategies.

Other priority areas include sustainability and social license, including shore power, emissions reduction, and innovation in clean fuels; as well as rural economic development, ensuring cruise continues to deliver tangible benefits to communities around the country.

The plan includes a structured engagement program with key federal portfolios covering tourism, transport, trade, infrastructure, environment, and border operations, alongside local engagement in all of the country's states and territories.

It also aims to strengthen ACA's engagement with a variety of other stakeholders.

Chair Brendan Connell said the plan reflects the collective voice of ACA's membership, and strives to provide a framework for long-term industry confidence.

"Our ports, destinations and industry partners are committed to sustainable cruise growth, but they require policy certainty and coordinated planning to invest with confidence."

"This plan represents a unified position and a constructive pathway forward to ensure cruise continues to deliver economic and social benefits across Australia," he said. **MS**

NCL simplifies fares

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has announced a refreshed fare structure designed to help agents sell the cruise line's products.

The new model introduces the new 'Just Cruise' fare aimed at guests who want simplicity and flexibility.

The cruise-only fare covers essentials, including dining, entertainment, stateroom accommodation, and more.

Guests can also upgrade to Free at Sea for A\$59 per person to enjoy additional perks, such as premium beverages, specialty dining, shore excursion credits, and a wi-fi package.

The clear differentiation between base fare and optional upgrades is designed to make it easier to explain and sell value to clients.

"Guest and trade research tell us that travellers want more control over how they cruise, and this new approach delivers exactly that," said Ben Angell, VP and managing director, NCL APAC.

"Introducing a cruise-only fare makes it easier for guests to choose how they holiday."

Agents can learn more about the new fare structure by joining NCL's training webinar, on tomorrow - register **HERE**.

NCL's parent company NCLH overnight delivered its Q4 results - see more on **page 3**.



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Ponant introduces 2027 brochure

PONANT Explorations Group has unveiled its Mar-Nov 2027 brochure, 'Your Voyage Begins Here', which has introduced an expanded collection of luxury small-ship journeys spanning the poles and the Mediterranean.

A series of newly curated itineraries are highlights of the program, with routes introduced through the Philippines, Borneo, and the Azores.

There will also be a unique journey through the Irish countryside and summer voyages to the North Sea and the Atlantic coasts of France and Spain.

Polar regions remain central to Ponant Explorations' identity, with voyages from Iceland to the North Pole aboard *Le Commandant Charcot*.

The Mediterranean also comes into focus, with more than 60 sailings across summer 2027, alongside immersive journeys



through Italy and coastal voyages aboard *Le Ponant*.

Select departures with Aqua Expeditions will further expand the company's portfolio across the Mekong, Amazon, and more.

Aqua's program features the Galapagos Islands, Eastern Indonesia, Svalbard, the

Seychelles and Tanzania.

A suite of Ponant Benefits designed to support early sales and maximise value has been released alongside the brochure, including savings of up to 30% off the standard cruise fare for early bookings, and free solo supplements - **CLICK HERE**. *MS*

Marquet promoted

FLIGHT Centre global cruise product manager Tammy Marquet (**pictured**) has been promoted to global head of product, cruise & tour.

Her adjusted role will see her continue to strengthen Flight Centre's cruise and touring footprint around the world, amid a broader global product restructure for the brand.

Marquet has served in cruise roles with Flight Centre Travel Group for 20 years, working with a variety of the company's brands, such as Infinity Holidays, as well as its namesake retail brand.

Global product leader Monique Van Gelder will lead the restructured team.




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MEETING the love of your life on a cruise ship seems like something out of a romcom, but for some lucky people, it is simply their reality.

Hannah was just a teenager when she met her life partner Mitchell on a P&O Cruises sailing from the UK to Amsterdam in 2019.

"I was 19 and convinced it was just a holiday romance," she recalled.

"I met his friends first and they said Mitchell was asleep in his cabin - it was his first ever cruise.

"They dared me to wake him up as a prank.

"I remember saying to him, 'hello, it's the girl of your dreams' and somehow, I was right!" Hannah added.

Naturally, the two got engaged while on a cruise in 2023, and fittingly chose to have their wedding on a P&O sailing last year in the Greek Islands.

NCLH's Q1 under pressure

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) has delivered a solid Q4 2025, but is already under pressure for Q1 2026 due to its large capacity increase in the Caribbean.

NCLH generated a total revenue of US\$2.2 billion (approximately A\$3.1 billion) for Q4, a 6% increase compared to the prior corresponding period, while adjusted EBITDA increased 20% to US\$564 million (A\$796 million), exceeding both the company's guidance and its prior year result.

Gross margin per capacity day increased 7.6% versus Q4 2024, while gross cruise costs per capacity day decreased to approximately US\$272, compared to US\$286 in the prior year.

However NCLH will be constrained for Q1, with new president & chief executive John Chidsey calling out past execution missteps (**CW** 05 Feb).

NCLH noted "misalignment" with its commercial strategy for its Norwegian Cruise Line brand, as well as the timing of the opening of the full slate of amenities at Great Stirrup Cay.

The company said it is already slightly below the optimal booking range for Q1, as it attempts to fill its increased capacity in the Caribbean.

Longer-term demand trends remain constructive though, NCLH noted.

"As I step into this new role my initial assessment is that our strategy is sound, but execution and cross-functional alignment have fallen short," Chidsey said.

"Our priority is to act urgently to address these gaps by improving coordination, reinforcing accountability and strengthening financial discipline across the organisation," he said.

"The good news is that we have strong assets and have recently enhanced our leadership team with the right combination of new and tenured talent."

NCLH last month flagged difficult fiscal times ahead, with former president Harry Sommer stepping down shortly thereafter (**CW** 13 Feb).

Financial analysts have noted the change may have reflected accountability for NCLH's strategic challenges (**CW** 25 Feb). *MS*

A-Rosa unveils '27

A-ROSA has announced two new ports of departure and 20 new itineraries for next year's sailing season, which will see the line also celebrate 25 years of river cruising.

Duisburg will be a new port for A-Rosa, which will mainly accommodate northbound Rhine cruises aboard *A-Rosa Aqua* (pictured) and *A-Rosa Sena*, allowing for extended stays in Benelux hubs.

Sena will also travel southbound along the Rhine, calling at major centres throughout the Rhine-Ruhr region, such as Cologne, Bonn, and Mainz.

Vienna is the other new port of departure, being home to *A-Rosa Flora* which will embark on five-to-seven-night Danube cruises, as well as going further towards the Cataracts and Delta for 14- to 16-night sailings.



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