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Cruise sailing into costly waters?

CRUISE lines are set to sail into higher costs, according to a report by Reuters, as oil prices increase due to the Iran war.

Analysts have warned Carnival Corporation could take the biggest hit to its profit as it is the only major cruise company that does not hedge fuel.

Prices have risen more than 35% since the beginning of the war as attacks on oil and transport facilities across the Middle East, and disruptions to energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz, raise concerns about supply.

Brent crude was priced at US\$101.7 per barrel (approximately A\$143) this morning, compared with US\$72.48 before the conflict began (approximately A\$102.5).

Iran has cautioned oil prices could surge as high as US\$200 per barrel (approximately A\$282.8) if the conflict continues.



A 10% change in fuel cost per metric ton would reduce Carnival's net income by US\$145 million (approximately A\$205 million), Reuters reported, compared with US\$57 million (approximately A\$80.6 million) for Royal Caribbean.

Norwegian Cruise Line said it has not updated its fuel hedges since earlier this month, which means its full-year profit would be hit by seven cents per share. This is equivalent to a roughly

US\$90 million fall in net income (approx A\$127m), according to calculations by financial services firm Morningstar.

Carnival's fuel costs comprised 17.7% of its total revenue when the Russo-Ukrainian war broke out in 2022, compared with 12.1% for Royal Caribbean and 14.2% for Norwegian.

"Our best hedge against fuel costs is to use less, so we focus on using less fuel in the first place," Carnival told Reuters in an e-mailed statement.

"We've cut our fuel use by 18% since 2011 despite increasing capacity by roughly 38% during that time," the company said, adding it does not see a long-term net benefit in hedging.

Carnival Corp is expected to report first-quarter results later this week.

CLICK HERE to read the full Reuters article.

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MSC is entertaining

MSC Group's cruise division has unveiled MSC Creative Studios, which is set to take entertainment on board the company's cruise ships to the next level.

The firm has acquired a production studio in Edinburgh, which it is currently transforming to become MSC Creative Studios, where it will develop its entertainment and train its performers.

Expected to be fully operational by Jul, the studio will support the development of shows and productions for both MSC Cruises and Explora Journeys from the end of their 2026 seasons, joining Carnival Corporation, Royal Caribbean, and NCLH, which operate similar facilities.

The new space will act as a central hub for entertainment development, bringing creative, technical and production teams together under one roof.

MSC Studios will include a dedicated aerial rehearsal space, 11 dance studios, six vocal studios, a technical recording studio, offices and green rooms, changing facilities, and storage.

The facility will support rehearsals, technical training, stagecraft development and performer preparation prior to shows being launched.

"Having a dedicated home for our entertainment development and training is essential as we continue to expand the scale and ambition of our productions," vice president of entertainment Steve Leatham said.

"This state-of-art facility will help ensure our shows are launch-ready and consistently delivered at the highest quality, reinforcing the cruise division's long-term commitment to innovation in onboard entertainment."

Virgin singing a new Ariya



VIRGIN Voyages has announced the addition of its latest restaurant, Ariya (pictured), aboard *Valiant Lady* this May.

The restaurant was developed in partnership with Indian chef Maneet Chauhan, and will debut following the vessel's upcoming dry dock.

The restaurant transforms *Valiant's* Razzle Dazzle breakfast and brunch spot during the day into a 220-seat, booth-style restaurant at night.

Highlights of the space will include a semi-private dining area, framed by decorative screens, made to resemble the intricate interior of a traditional jewellery box.

There will also be a feature bar backed by an eclectic DJ soundtrack of Indian classics, Bollywood hits, Punjabi pop, and global sounds.

Standout dishes will include lamb shank biryani, goan curried mussels, Malabar coconut crab cake, puffed rice and avocado chaat, tandoori pistachio-crusting snapper, and more.

Ariya has been named for Virgin founder Richard Branson's great-great-grandmother, who hailed from Tamil Nadu.

Chief executive officer Nirmal Saverimuttu said Ariya could prove to be one of the reasons why an undecided cruiser may book with Virgin.

"Ariya is the next chapter in our food and beverage collection that we've been building with real intention since day one," he said.

"Every restaurant we open is a statement about what we believe dining at sea can be, and Ariya says something we haven't said before," he added.

"Indian cuisine, done with this level of craft and this much heart, belongs on *Valiant*."

MEANWHILE, Virgin has announced its Red Hot Sailing Club voyages for next year, which celebrate the cruise line's most loyal guests.

Two exclusive sailings from Greece and the United States will set sail next year, with guests offered an exclusive look at Virgin's future.

The two sailings will depart from 04-11 Jul aboard *Scarlet Lady* from Athens, visiting Santorini, Crete, Kusadasi, and an overnight in Mykonos.

Another will travel from 08-13 Nov aboard *Brilliant Lady* from Miami, visiting Costa Maya and The Beach Club at Bimini.

Sailing Club members will be recognised with exclusive events, intimate gatherings, curated shore experiences, and specialty cocktail moments designed to reward repeat guests who continue to choose Virgin for their vacations.

These voyages will also offer a rare, behind-the-scenes perspective into Virgin's evolution, with guests able to expect interactive sessions, and opportunities to engage with members of Virgin's leadership team, who will offer insight into the past and future. *MS*

Thwaites is out

EXCLUSIVE

CELEBRITY Cruises director of sales Trevor Thwaites has departed his role, **CW** can reveal, after three-and-a-half years with the line.

Thwaites began with Celebrity in Sep 2022 (**CW** 14 Sep 2022) as head of sales, before being promoted to his director role two-and-a-half years ago.

Prior to this, Thwaites spent two years with Oceania Cruises, serving as its director of sales.

Thwaites has also previously worked with Carnival Corporation, serving as national sales manager for its Princess Cruises brand.

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HOLLAND America Line (HAL) is sponsoring one of Alaska's longest-running traditions, the Nenana Ice Classic, which invites contestants to guess the exact time the Tanana River ice will break up.

The Ice Classic began as an ice betting pool in 1906 with six entries, with the contest eventually opened statewide in 1917.

Participants predict the precise minute a tripod set on the frozen river shifts 30 metres downstream as the ice breaks, triggering a pulley-and-clock system that records the winning time.

Since the Classic's founding in 1906, more than US\$10 million (approximately A\$14 million) in prize money has been given away, with last year's pool totalling US\$211,267 (approximately A\$299,000).

This year's winner will also take home a free HAL cruise.

My Cruises hits the road

MY CRUISES has hosted two sold-out events in Sydney and Brisbane for the launch of its latest season of its 'Explorations by Norwegian', its 361-day world cruise (**CW** 09 Jan).

The wholesaler is already seeing strong demand for the program's recently announced second season, with travellers interested to learn more about it at the in-person event series, which heads to Melbourne next.

Guests were briefed on the expanded 2027/28 season, which includes elevated dining, extensive beverage inclusions, and enrichment programs.

Events also offered guests the opportunity to hear directly from My Cruises experts about the itinerary, inclusions, and concept behind the program, with 25% of attendees making a reservation on the day thanks to a flexible, fully refundable booking option available to guests.

The 2027/28 season retains the most popular elements of the first iteration while introducing new destinations and enhanced global coverage.

Season two begins with an



in-depth exploration of the Mediterranean, including embarkation and disembarkation opportunities in Istanbul, before continuing to the capitals of the Baltic, and heading north in search of the Northern Lights.

The program also includes an Australia-to-Australia round trip that connects the inaugural season (2026/27) with the newly released schedule, creating one continuous global voyage across multiple years.

"The response reflects a clear shift in how Australians are approaching long-term travel planning," said global head of cruise Michael Middleton, pictured at last week's event. *MS*

Scenic grows Asia

SCENIC Group is expanding its Singapore-based APAC team to drive regional growth.

The office, which is led from Australia by general manager sales & marketing Anthony Laver, will be joined by regional sales & marketing manager APAC Dominic Tan.

He joins Scenic from Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, bringing more than 20 years of leadership experience in the sector.

Also joining the team are two luxury cruise sales managers: Sophia Lam and Jessie Tan.

The pair are experienced sales and marketing professionals, bringing strong corporate and MICE expertise, with previous roles at Royal Caribbean Group, Resorts World, and more.

Laver said Scenic is "delighted to have created such a highly experienced and professional team."

Scenic first opened its Asia Pacific office a year and a half ago (**CW** 15 Oct 2024) marking a significant expansion within the region.



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