



### Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features four pages of all the latest cruise industry news.



On location  
**Nadi**

Today's issue of CW is coming to you from the Fiji Tourism Exchange.

**TODAY** we are flying into Nadi for the Fiji Tourism Exchange, taking place at Sheraton Fiji Golf & Beach Resort on Fri.

The two-day event will include an update from South Sea Cruises Group on Blue Lagoon Cruises' new vessel and snorkelling experience.

## New river destinations needed

**RIVER** cruising will need to expand its destination map, particularly in Europe, as the market grows in the coming years, according to Avalon Waterways president Pam Hoffee.

Speaking to **Cruise Weekly** on board this week's Avalon training charter, Hoffee said added capacity in the coming years will mean new destinations along already popular rivers will need to be developed, as opposed to "over-loving" current ports.

"I think there are a lot of opportunities in Europe to go beyond the itineraries that exist now, and with so much more capacity coming, I think that's a reality of what we need to do as an industry," Hoffee said.

"There are communities that already have enough business from the river cruise industry and they're happy with what they have," she added.

"We have to develop with communities that want to have river cruise ships coming, and there are tons of charming places that nobody's going to."

One port, developed by Avalon, is Austria's Ybbs an der Donau, which is more than 700 years old.

Hoffee said Avalon initially started sailing to the port as an alternative to other more heavily visited destinations such as Melk and Durnstein - which were originally developed due to the influence of cruising.

She also pointed to ports on Hungary's Danube Bend, such as Esztergom and Visegrad, which are ripe for further development.

Avalon visits these destinations on a number of its itineraries, but Hoffee said the line may add more calls in the following years.

Despite this, the wider industry needs to start talking about finding new ports, she said. *MS*



On location on board  
**Avalon Envision**

Today's issue of CW is coming to you from Avalon Waterways' **Avalon Envision**.

**THE** first day of the Avalon Waterways training famill will see **Avalon Envision** dock in Breisach in Germany.

This small town, located almost halfway along the Rhine, is adjacent to the larger town of Freiburg.

Though it is small, it offers no shortage of expeditions, with highlights such as St. Stephan's Minster Cathedral, the Badischer Winzerkeller local winery, and the Old Town.

Following that, the ship will travel overnight to Strasbourg.



# VIKING

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## Viking to build new ship for India

**VIKING** has announced the construction of a new ship designed for India's Brahmaputra River, the *Viking Ganges*, scheduled for delivery in 2028.

She will join sister ship, the *Viking Brahmaputra* (pictured), which is set to begin operations in late 2027.

In addition, the river cruise line has announced new dates for its India itineraries from 2027-29, which are now open for booking.

"Since announcing our new river voyages in India, we have seen strong interest from guests eager to explore this remarkable region," said Torstein Hagen, chairman and CEO of Viking.

"By adding a second ship on the Brahmaputra River in 2028 and opening 2029 departure dates now, we look forward to inviting even more curious travellers to explore India in Viking comfort in the years to come."



Both the ships will sail between Guwahati and Nimati Ghat in the north-eastern state of Assam on Viking's new 15-day itinerary, 'Wonders of India', which also features a seven-day fully-guided land program.

*Ganges* and *Brahmaputra* will have capacity for 80 passengers and feature 40 staterooms.

Operating roundtrip from Delhi, *Wonders of India* will feature

stops in Agra and Jaipur as well as 13 included tours and 10 visits to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including the Golden Triangle and the Taj Mahal.

Guests will also have the chance to walk through Old Delhi, see the Palace of Winds and Guwahati's temple, search for one-horned rhinos at Kaziranga National Park and discover Majuli, one of the world's largest river islands. *JHM*

## Symphony at sea

**FRED.** Olsen Cruise Lines has announced what is believed to be the world's first composer-in-residence, Benjamin Squires, who has worked on blockbusters such as *Wicked: For Good*.

Squires is now on board *Balmoral*, where he is working on the world's first cruise score, inspired by his journey to watch the Northern Lights.

"I've composed hundreds of pieces, but the opportunity to create a musical narrative of an entire journey through a soundtrack is a totally unique challenge," he said.

According to the cruise line, the appointment followed research revealing the connection between music and memory in travel, with nearly four in five British travellers associating specific songs with past trips.



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## HX ventures deeper into Alaska

HX Expeditions has added two new itineraries and inaugural calls to Klawock and Valdez as part of its 2026 Alaska program.

“While most Alaska cruises show travellers the coastline, HX goes deeper, reaching rarely visited regions, working directly with Alaska Native corporations, and designing experiences with communities rather than around them,” explained Sam Imes, Alaska Product Planner for HX Expeditions.

“That approach is at the heart of our 2026 Alaska season, which includes two new itineraries and first-time visits to new ports.”

These include the new nine-night ‘Inside Passage: Fjords of the Great Land’ itinerary, which offers a condensed exploration of Southeast Alaska, travelling through Misty Fjords with viewings of wildlife from small expedition boat explorations.



Also new to the program is the ‘Inside Passage: Where the Mountains Meet the Sea’ 12-night trip, beginning in Whittier and ending in Vancouver, exploring Prince William Sound and crossing the Gulf of Alaska.

Meanwhile, the HX Expeditions is introducing 11 excursions around Klawock and Valdez, in an effort to delve deeper into Alaska Native communities and their way of life.

These include experiences in Klawock where guests can meet with master carvers, apprentice artists and visit Alaska’s largest authentic totem park, as well as enjoy a chef-led tasting of locally sourced seafood.

In Valdez, passengers can enjoy high-alpine hiking at Thompson Park, kayak through the Valdez Glacier Lake or enjoy a forest hike through the John Hunter Memorial Trail. *JHM*

### Immersive Alaska

PRINCESS Cruises has released four ‘North to Alaska’ experiences, as it prepares for its largest Alaska season ever across its eight ships.

This includes the ‘Glacier Experience’, offering expert narration during glacier viewings and access to bowfront viewing areas, and ‘Welcome to Alaska’, where guests can learn about the region from a naturalist.

Also on offer is ‘Apres Sea’, an elevated post-adventure experience with warm drinks and panoramic views and the ‘Candlelight Concert series: Fire and Ice’, featuring intimate performances by local singer-songwriters. *JHM*

## Seabourn turns a page

SEABOURN is embarking on a three-year partnership with leading magazine *The Atlantic*, which will include an itinerary takeover in 2028 on a cruise from Montreal to Boston, where the publication was founded.

“We’re thrilled to be collaborating with Seabourn to bring *The Atlantic* and the experience of our live events to their voyages,” said Alice McKown, *The Atlantic*’s publisher and chief revenue officer.

“Storytelling and connection define our work, and this allows us to develop one-of-a-kind events in intimate settings for Seabourn’s guests,” she added.

Coinciding with the line’s 40th anniversary, the ‘12-day with *The Atlantic*: A Seabourn Conversations Exclusive’ itinerary will feature moderated discussions and experiences inspired by *The Atlantic* Festival.



In addition, *The Atlantic* will host events on select trips covering a range of topics with conversations led by its journalists, from business and science to culture, technology and health.

Guests will also receive free digital access to *The Atlantic* while on board and receive a complimentary three-month subscription post-trip.

Libraries on each Seabourn ship will be curated by *The Atlantic*, with issues of the magazine and books by its current and historical writers. *JHM*

### Dream come true

**CARNIVAL Dream** has emerged from dry dock with several refreshed spaces and is now heading for Galveston.

New features include the Dreams Studio, where passengers can have professional photos taken, as well as a new Carnival Adventures store for booking shore excursions.

The Effy Jewelry store has been refreshed and the casino space also includes a new layout with a host station.

*Carnival Dream* is now sailing from Barcelona and will call in to Alicante, Malga and Gibraltar, before arriving in Galveston on 05 Apr.




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## Ponant's hidden Japan

WHILE Japan battles with over-tourism, Ponant has suggested its small ship cruises are the ideal way to disperse travellers and see a hidden part of the country most tourists never think about.

Speaking to *Cruise Weekly* on the sidelines of a Ponant lunch in Sydney yesterday, Ryo Ijichi (pictured), director of Japan and South Korea, said it was working with the Japanese government to promote tourism dispersal.

"We exceeded the record of 30 million [tourists] last year, and our expectation is that this year is going to exceed 40 million," he said.

"The government is even thinking of a strategic plan to go up to 100 million."

He urged tourists to think beyond the major tourist hubs such as Tokyo and Kyoto.

"We have 35,000 kilometres of coastline, and we have over 15,000 islands in Japan, so when you change your route to not go to the ordinary, there [are] still plenty of places that are relatively vacant, not congested, many



are UNESCO World Heritage, or connected to famous historical events of Japan," Ijichi exclaimed.

"When you come on board, we'll take you to the unordinary, we'll take you to the inconvenient, yet fascinating places," he added.

The Japan season for Ponant is currently towards the end of Feb to May with *Le Soléal* and *Le Jacques Cartier* sailing in the region, but Ijichi said it was also bringing a ship for Sep and Oct, with a longer season or more ships always considered. *DF*

A COUPLE who sold their home to live and work out of a cruise ship have boasted that they have saved thousands.

Katrina and Kevin Middleton (pictured) sold their Scotland home to hop aboard a cruise ship in Sep 2025, saving an extra \$2,600 per month.

The couple said they are now free from added expenses such as maintaining a car or paying for a coffee each morning

Both work remotely, with Katrina as a CRM in marketing and Kevin as an IT consultant, with the only downside being that they work on UK hours regardless of their location.

The couple said that their stress levels have also significantly decreased with the new setup, as there is always a quiet place on the cruise to relax or get work done and it is always much easier to switch off.




### On Board: *Avalon Envision* Observation Lounge

*Avalon Envision's* Observation Lounge acts as the "front porch of the ship", providing panoramic views ideal for relaxing as the Rhine passes by. Located on deck 2, the space is designed to be more intimate and scenic than other spaces on board. Guests are also invited to pull up a chair to enjoy an al fresco lunch.



## CLIA UPDATE

with Joel Katz  
MD, CLIA Australasia

### Disrupted flights

THE value of an advisor is never clearer than during times of disruption, but few have time to enjoy any appreciation right now.

As we face current world events, CLIA has been asked to create consolidated policy guidance from cruise lines to support advisors, but as much as we would like to, the reality is this is just not possible.

Cruise lines are responding to many variables, factoring in flight cancellations, routing, timing, point of origin, and individual booking conditions.

Guests are travelling from multiple markets, on different airlines on different routes, and often with pre- and post-arrangements.

As a result, impacts are being assessed in real-time. Even if a centralised guidance was possible, it would quickly date and risk more confusion.

The most effective approach is to continue working directly with cruise line teams, who have visibility of each booking and operational updates.

We know this creates additional pressure, and we will continue to monitor for any industry-wide updates that can be shared.

The role advisors play is critical, and our industry truly appreciates the support you provide for your clients.

