



### Cruise Weekly today

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



On location on board *Avalon Envision*

Today's issue of CW is coming to you courtesy of Avalon Waterways, which is hosting us aboard *Avalon Envision* for her training charter.

**AVALON Envision** today calls into Heidelberg, one of the oldest and most renowned towns in Germany.

Cruise passengers will disembark on a range of shore excursions, including a guided tour of Heidelberg Castle or enjoy a visit to some of the region's breweries.

## Avalon's "relaxed luxury" ideal for Aus

**AVALON** Waterways believes its style of cruising is ideally suited toward Australian guests, president Pam Hoffee told **CW**, as the line attempts to court more passengers from Down Under.

Its style of "relaxed luxury" aligns with many Australians, who traditionally resist overly formal travel, she said.

Avalon has emphasised this onboard atmosphere through casual dining venues such as the Panorama Bistro, as well as a more individual style of services from its crew members.

However, the cruise line is also emphasising the ease of booking back-to-back cruises, Hoffee said, as it attempts to cater towards markets which travel for longer periods of time, such as Australia.

"One of the real strong points for Avalon is that we have so many seven-night cruises that you can combine and put



together, and so for an advisor, that makes a really easy way to create this kind of longer trip for an Australian traveller," she said.

Passengers can piece together the Rhine with the Danube through the 'Magnificent Europe' itinerary, the cruise line's bestselling trip in Australia.

Cruisers can also combine the Rhine with France through both the Rhone and the Seine, Hoffee explained, with the latter river being another of Australia's

favourite products.

The Seine is so popular for the river cruise line it was recently forced to relocate its Bordeaux-based ship, *Avalon Artistry II*, north to accommodate demand (**CW** 26 Feb).

However Hoffee said Avalon is keeping the door open for a possible return to the region in the future. **MS**

**Pictured** are Hoffee and Globus family of brands head of marketing Johanna Raeder.



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## RSSC's new Era of Exploration

**REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises has unveiled a 150-night global voyage, its '2029 World Cruise - Eras of Exploration' sailing on board the *Seven Seas Mariner*.

The once-in-a-lifetime adventure will take 700 travellers from Miami to Rome, stopping in 70 ports across seven continents with 13 overnight stays and 326 included shore excursions, visiting destinations including Peru, Antarctica, Asia, the South Pacific, Mediterranean and Amazon River.

Following her upgrade in 2025, the Explorer-Class *Seven Seas Mariner* features brand new public spaces, elegant refreshed suites with updated furnishings, fully redesigned marble bathrooms for Signature, Grand Mariner, Seven Seas and Horizon Suites, and a newly enhanced Pool Grill with an elevated pizzeria concept.

In addition, *Seven Seas Mariner*



also includes the new Epicurean Enrichment Studio, a state-of-the-art culinary theatre.

"We are delighted to announce the latest iteration of our iconic World Cruise, which has been inspired by history's most intrepid explorers and the paths of legendary adventures," said Wesley D'Silva, President, Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

"The 150-night 'Eras of Exploration World Cruise' will be an unforgettable experience

that taps into the true essence of travel and adventure; we are looking forward to bringing our discerning guests onto this journey in the most luxurious and all-inclusive way possible."

Fares start from \$142,680 per guest for a deluxe veranda suite and up to \$492,860 per guest for a 186sqm Signature Suite.

Bookings open on 01 Apr, but guests can now pre-register their interest. *JHM*

### *Emilie* sails on

**UNIWORLD** Boutique River Cruises christened its newest vessel *S.S. Emilie* in Amsterdam this week, officially welcoming her into the fleet.

The ceremony included the traditional practice of breaking a champagne bottle onto the hull, led by Uniworld CEO Ellen Bettridge and the ship's godmother Julie Higgins (*CW* 24 Nov 2025).

*S.S. Emilie's* inaugural sailing will be the eight-day 'Tulips and Windmills' itinerary from Amsterdam to Antwerp with port of calls including Zaandam, Rotterdam, Ghent and Bruges.

The 132 metre vessel will be able to accommodate 157 guests across 77 cabins including Grand Suites that connect with Deluxe French Balcony suites next door for a 2-bedroom suite option for large groups. *JB*

## New buy for Viking?

**CHINA** Merchants is exiting the luxury cruise business, selling its ship *Zhao Shang Yi Dun*, with Viking rumoured to be a potential buyer.

Formerly the *Viking Sun*, the ship was previously acquired in 2021 through a joint venture between the two businesses and was later renamed.

Viking did not comment.

According to news website Jiemian, she has slowly moved away from China-based home ports, introducing Japan itineraries, then disappearing from China routes altogether.

It is also believed that *Yi Dun* struggled to capture enough demand from affluent Chinese travellers looking for a slow cruise experience.

## Celestyal cancels

**CELESTYAL** has delayed the repositioning of *Celestyal Discovery* ahead of its Mediterranean, cancelling its upcoming Greek Islands sailing originally scheduled for 03 Apr.

Meanwhile, all guests have safely disembarked from the ship in Dubai, UAE and *Celestyal Journey* in Doha, Qatar, which are both fully operational.



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on the latest cruise news

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## PORTHOLE

**SMALL** ship cruise line Azamara Cruises is partnering with Texas whiskey producer Milam & Greene to launch an experimental journey, 'Bourbon Quest', where one of four bourbon barrels will sail on board the *Azamara Quest* on a 188-night World Cruise, visiting 37 countries.

Meanwhile, the remaining three bourbon barrels will continue aging on land in Texas, Kentucky and Florida.

Sixteen months later, the results will be revealed, when the bourbon from *Quest* will be compared to others aged on land in different climates, highlighting how maritime conditions influence the maturation process.

"Partnering with Milam & Greene to age a barrel at sea is a natural fit for us - it combines craftsmanship, discovery, and storytelling in a way that guests can truly follow throughout the sailing," said Simon Blacoe, VP of hotel operations at Azamara Cruises.

The final product will be showcased during the final leg of the 2027 World Cruise during a celebratory unveiling and 400 units of the ultra-limited spirit will be available exclusively for Azamara guests.

On board, guests will also be able to enjoy whiskey tastings, culinary pairings, chef-led experiences, and more.

## Ponant's new cruisers

**LUXURY** cruise line Ponant has its sights on a new generation of clients, as it embarks on a mission to expand its reputation in Australia and around the globe.

During a lunch in Sydney this week with the travel trade, new group chief executive officer Benoît-Etienne Domenget (pictured), revealed his thoughts on the way forward for Ponant.

"A newcomer, new generation, is coming to our tours and want to have a genuine experience," he explained of the client.

"This connection - authenticity, genuine interaction with communities, I think those are the trends which are the most powerful right now."

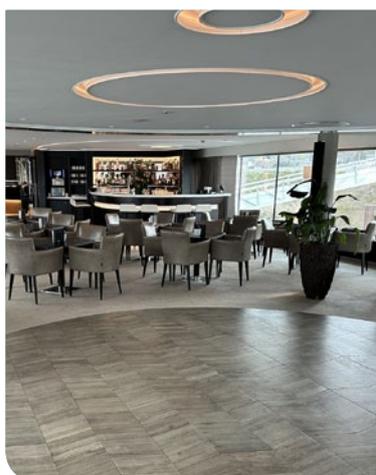
Meanwhile, Domenget highlighted the increasing number of solo travellers and the idea of "separately together", a concept which APAC boss Deb Corbett expanded on for the Australian market.

"We're seeing an increased amount of people, men and women, wanting to travel together but are solos, because

they don't want to share with their friend in a cabin," Corbett explained.

"It's quite interesting - we need to navigate our way around this, remake it and reframe it so that people can actually find these amazing [solo] opportunities and deals," she added.

According to a report from Scoot, 87 percent of Australians plan to travel solo in the next 12




### Avalon Envision

#### Panorama Lounge

Adjacent to the Panorama Bistro is the Panorama Lounge, the social heart of the ship.

This diverse space features floor-to-ceiling windows, offering spectacular views of the river.

Passengers can also enjoy a leisurely cappuccino, a cocktail, light snacks, and nightly entertainment while sailing.

## Belmond riverboat

**LVMH-BACKED** Les Bateaux Belmond has revealed the launch of floating villa called Marguerite, A Belmond Boat, Burgundy, scheduled to launch late summer 2026.

The riverboat accommodates up to eight guests and features spaces such as an open-plan salon, an outdoor deck and a private plunge pool.

*Marguerite's* refreshed itinerary explores the Burgundy region, although a dedicated guest experience executive guides passengers to personalise every aspect of their journey.

Highlights include an exploration of Dijon's heritage where guests can take part in mustard-making classes, art tours, historic castle visits, culinary workshops, e-bike tours on the legendary Route des Grands Crus and a private lunch in the historic salon of Château du Clos de Vougeot.

"This is exactly what our guests seek with Les Bateaux Belmond: a genuine connection to our contemporary heritage, a sense of place, and authenticity that embodies our values," enthused general manager Maxime Brun.

