



### Cruise Weekly today

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

### Avalon is seasonal

**AVALON** Waterways has unveiled new seasonal excursions which will begin next year.

The new program is designed to answer demand for, and encourage travellers to embrace, the European off-season, spanning spring, autumn, and winter.

Highlights from the new 2027 lineup include hands-on apricot picking and tastings in Southern France; apple-picking and cider-tastings in Normandy, and more.

There will also be lavender and distillery experiences through Europe, as well as hands-on culinary classes featuring fresh, regional ingredients from local markets; strawberry-pickling and tasting; flower-picking, and essential oil workshops.

The introduction of seasonal excursions comes as traveller preferences continue to shift toward cooler and less crowded travel, with Avalon finding 75% of its past passengers prefer to travel outside peak months.

This trend is already reflected in booking patterns this year, with Avalon seeing off-season sailings grow 18% year-on-year, driven in part by expanded capacity in late autumn and early winter.

"Where you go matters - when you go can change the experience entirely," president Pam Hoffee said.

"Our new seasonal excursions connect our guests more deeply - and authentically - to the places they're exploring," Hoffee added.

## Demand recovers for Royal



**ROYAL** Caribbean Group has seen cruise demand recover already from the disruption of the Iran war, but flagged in its Q1 results the impact of higher fuel costs due to stalled Middle Eastern supply.

Demand remains resilient despite geopolitical tensions, Royal Caribbean said, with bookings currently running at a higher pace than last year, and the company posting a record wave season.

Reservations for Royal Caribbean's Mediterranean cruises rebounded strongly, now also running at a higher pace than the same time last year, after slightly moderating in Mar and Apr due to the conflict.

However, the second and third quarters are more exposed to premium itineraries hit by the conflict, with some spillover into Q3, Royal Caribbean said.

Rising fuel costs have also prompted the company to cut its annual profit forecast to between US\$17.10 and US\$17.50 for the year, down from its prior forecast of US\$17.70 to US\$18.10.

Royal Caribbean still expected annual revenue to grow roughly 10%, in line with its prior forecast of double-digit growth.

The company expected fuel costs to be about US\$1.3 billion (approximately A\$1.8 billion) higher than its earlier full-year forecast of around \$1.17 billion (approximately A\$2.4b), based on current prices and after hedging.

Royal Caribbean secured about 59% of its fuel needs for the rest of 2026 at rates below current market prices.

"Our strong first quarter results and record wave season demonstrate the exceptional appeal and compelling value proposition of our trusted brands, industry-leading ships, and destinations," chair & chief executive Jason Liberty said.

"Demand for our experiences continues to be strong, and we remain focused on delivering the best vacations responsibly, accelerating revenue growth, and managing costs, all while continuing to invest in our future and drive further differentiation.

"We expect another year of double-digit revenue and earnings growth, driven by consumers' preference for our leading brands and expanding portfolio - all supported by our strong booked position, leading margin profile, and fortified balance sheet." *MS*

### Corinthian is here

**ACCOR'S** Orient Express sailing brand has officially launched its first vessel, holding a naming ceremony for *Orient Express Corinthian* earlier this week (*CW* 29 Jan).

The milestone event was held in Saint-Nazaire ahead of the luxury yacht's debut voyage tomorrow, which will head to the French Riviera before her inaugural Mediterranean season, offering itineraries of between one and four nights.

*Orient Express Corinthian* offers 54 suites inspired by the golden age of travel, as well as The Guerlain spa, eight bars including an art deco speakeasy, a 115-seat cabaret, and a recording studio.

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## Panache can scale

**PANACHE** Cruises believes its model and way of doing business will scale well in Australia, similar to its earlier expansion into the United States (**CW** yesterday).

Founder & managing director James Cole, speaking to **CW** on his first trip to Australia earlier this week, was confident only slight refinements will be required to adapt Panache to the local market.

“When we did move into the US, what we found is that about 90% of what we were doing in the UK worked in the US,” Cole explained.

“It was just understanding and being open-minded about what that 10% was for each of those three Cs,” Cole said, referring to ‘colleagues’, ‘customers’, and ‘cruise lines’.

He said it took Panache a few months to understand and implement tweaks to its way of doing business after launching in the United States.

“We just need to understand the difference of how we work with our colleagues, our customers, and our cruise line partners in the ideal way for the Australian market.”

Cole also said Panache is yet to see a downturn in travel sentiment from the Iran war, echoing that greater disposable income can help insulate against a range of macro forces.

## Aurora breaks records



**AURORA** Expeditions has delivered a record 2025/26 Antarctic season, welcoming a 30% increase in guests.

The line operated 30 voyages in total, facilitating around 800 landings during the season.

This year’s program was underpinned by the launch of Aurora’s third expedition vessel *Douglas Mawson* in Sydney in Nov, ahead of her inaugural Antarctic season (**CW** 11 Dec).

This is the first time in Aurora’s 35-year history it has operated three ships simultaneously in Antarctica, expanding access and choice for expeditioners.

The season also marked a long-anticipated return to East Antarctica after 15 years, alongside the introduction of ‘Active Antarctica’ voyages, featuring 14 included activities designed to further deepen

immersive exploration.

Aurora also achieved one record-breaking cruise, reaching 78° 44.405’ south, marking a new world record for the southernmost voyage in history.

Furthermore, the program introduced several industry firsts, such as the utilisation of AI-powered routing technology and microplastic filtration systems in Antarctica, enhancing operational efficiency while contributing to ongoing environmental research and protection efforts.

The season also marked the introduction of drone-supported scouting, which is used to assist the bridge with real-time ice and landing site assessment, helping to enhance navigation safety and inform expedition planning.

Aurora’ 2026/27 Antarctic voyages are now open for booking - **CLICK HERE**. **MS**

## Hurtigruten proves strong

**HURTIGRUTEN** has reported strong financial growth in its 2025 results, increasing its EBITDA more than 80% year-on-year.

The cruise line’s figure of €90.2 million (approximately A\$147 million) was up from €49.8 million the year prior, with Hurtigruten converting a significant amount of its debt to equity.

Additional capital was also injected by Hurtigruten’s new owners, and maturities on new debt were extended to 2030.

The positive numbers were driven by higher demand and a stronger commercial product, particularly within Hurtigruten’s Signature segment.

Around 222,000 guests travelled with Hurtigruten last year, a 6% increase compared to the previous year.

Operating revenues also increased by 12% to €501.8 million (A\$817.7 million).

“The 2025 figures show that the changes we have implemented are delivering results,” chief executive officer Hedda Felin said.

“The underlying operations have improved significantly, we have strong revenue growth, and a stronger financial position.

“This gives us the stability we need to prioritise reliable operations, quality, and profitable growth.”

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**USUALLY** it is cruise ships turning heads in the waters off the coast of Florida, but another very peculiar vessel drew attention recently.

A pink Cadillac boat has been turning heads on Sarasota Bay, as she plays music and hosts private groups, birthday celebrations, and tourists.

Captain Benjamin Kaye said the vessel consistently draws attention while plying the waters of Florida's Gulf Coast.

"A lot of these boaters are so shocked to see it that they didn't even recognise it at first," he said.

"You'll see a lot of boats go by, circle around, then they wave, take pictures, and ask questions," Kaye added.



## ANZAC Day commemorated



**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line commemorated ANZAC Day last weekend with a dawn service at sea, giving guests the opportunity to pause and reflect on the national day of remembrance during their voyage.

Crew and guests aboard *Carnival Splendor*, *Carnival Adventure*, and *Carnival Encounter* participated in the commemorations during voyages departing Sydney and Brisbane to destinations including Tasmania and Vanuatu.

Each service featured a



traditional dawn ceremony, the reading of the *Ode of Remembrance*, a wreath-laying tribute, and the sharing of traditional ANZAC cookies.

Across the Pacific, the cruise line this week announced its fifth Excel-class ship, *Carnival Tropicale*, will home port in Texas when she's delivered in 2028 (CW 28 Apr). MS

## MSC Caribbean '28

**MSC Cruises** has revealed its summer 2028 Caribbean itineraries, with the line to deploy six ships to the region for the season.

Summer 2028 guests will be among the first to experience Sandy Cay, MSC's new luxury private island retreat, along with enhancements to Ocean Cay Marine Reserve.

A highlight of the season will be *MSC World Atlantic's* first summer from Port Canaveral, offering alternating seven-night eastern and western Caribbean itineraries.

She will be joined by her classmate, *MSC World America*, which will sail from Miami, also on seven-night Caribbean itineraries.

Guests departing from these two ports will be able to choose from a variety of short sailings to The Bahamas.

MSC's new year-round offering from La Romana in the Dominican Republic, sailing for seven nights aboard *MSC Opera*, offers a diverse selection of ports, including calls at Isla Catalina.



## A NEW ERA OF LUXURY

Goldman Travel Group's **Anthony Goldman** on catering to the luxury traveller.

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