

Cruise Weekly today

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

Cruise360 sold out

CRUISE Lines International Association's Cruise360 is officially sold out, with the conference later this month to be at full capacity.

Almost 900 people are expected to attend this year's event, making it one of the largest industry gatherings ever held in Australia.

Offering a mix of international experts and local figures, the conference will be held at ICC Sydney on 17-18 Sep under this year's theme: 'Future Ready. Client Ready. Cruise Ready'.

The two-day conference program also includes a welcome cocktail event and an extensive trade show.

Darr: Australia should work with Asia

EXCLUSIVE

CLIA chief executive officer Bud Darr has called on Australia to work not just with the South Pacific, but with the broader APAC region, to help stimulate its flagging cruise sector.

Darr (**pictured**), speaking to **CW** at last week's Australian Cruise Association Conference in Brisbane (**CW** yesterday), said that, with distance being a key mitigating factor for the local sector, the time is now for the country to work with more of its neighbours to help solve some of the market's problems.

"I would say that I think that the region has a lot of untapped potential...I would say, the more successful Southeast Asia becomes, the more viable Australia is going to be," he said.

"Fundamentally, Australia is still going to be a seasonal market, which means ships have to come



from somewhere else and go back to somewhere else."

Darr said once ships arrive in Southeast Asia, there is real opportunity for those vessels to move to Australia on a seasonal basis, allowing cruise lines to keep ships in the region, cutting down repositioning costs.

"I think that's a great opportunity...the cost differential between those longer repositioning legs could be replaced with lower-cost options and shorter repositioning legs," Darr explained.

"I would encourage Australia

to work with the leaders in that region to help develop a regional ecosystem that can work together," he added.

The need for wider regional collaboration is spurred by the failure of China to develop into the commercially viable deployment destination the cruise industry had expected, Darr said.

"China's been a big disappointment to anybody who thought they would invest their time and resources and ships to go there," he declared.

"There was a time when there were a lot more western cruise ships were deployed to China and where Australia benefitted from that," Darr explained.

[The Chinese market] really didn't work out too well commercially, and I don't really see much western cruise activity going back into China." *MS*



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Travelmarvel to build ocean vessel

APT Travel Group (ATG) has announced its first premium small ship, with Travelmarvel to operate the company's first-ever purpose-built ocean vessel.

Scheduled to enter service in Apr 2029, she will offer an intimate small ship experience, providing access to smaller ports beyond the reach of larger cruise vessels, with Travelmarvel calling out the Mediterranean as one of her key destinations.

Her ice-class hull will enable a diverse range of itineraries, including exploration of some of the world's most remote regions.

The newbuild has been designed to meet demand from travellers seeking a relaxed and enriching yacht-like cruising experience that balances comfort, quality, and value.

She will be positioned as a leading ship within the four-star, premium small ship market.



The landmark investment marks the first seagoing ship designed and built specifically for ATG, following years of successful chartered ocean voyages.

Chief exec David Cox said the investment offers the opportunity to deliver an experience tailored exclusively to Travelmarvel itineraries and its guests, as ATG looks to capitalise on a clear opportunity in the market.

"As demand continues to grow, we identified a gap in the market for a contemporary small ship that delivers quality, comfort, and

engaging destination experiences at great value," he said.

"The launch represents an exciting step forward for the brand and the future of small ship cruising," Cox added.

"This is one of the most significant investments in Travelmarvel's history and demonstrates our commitment to the brand's continued evolution and growth."

Further details, including specifications and inaugural itineraries, will be announced closer to launch. *MS*

Celestyal for kids

CELESTYAL has launched a dedicated kids' club program onboard *Celestyal Journey* and *Celestyal Discovery*, designed for children aged three to 16.

After receiving positive feedback following a trial across both ships last season, the program will operate on select sailings in the Mediterranean, Adriatic, and the Greek Isles during school break periods.

The kids' club is divided into four age groups, with activities including colouring, painting, LEGO, puzzles, board games, arts and crafts, treasure hunts, karaoke, mini discos, and a variety of sports, including tennis, soccer, basketball, table tennis, and dancing.

Parents and guardians do not need to remain with children aged five and above during scheduled sessions.



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Riverside pedals a new Danube route

RIVERSIDE Luxury Cruises has introduced new cycling cruises on the Danube for next year, launching three itineraries aboard *Riverside Mozart* (pictured).

The sailings allow active travellers to cycle more than 650 kilometres along the EV6 'Rivers Route' cycling route, while enjoying the comforts, flexibility, and service of a Riverside cruise.

Riverside is introducing the new itineraries with flexible sailing options, with two seven-night journeys (Passau to Vienna, 22-29 Jul; and Vienna to Budapest, 29 Jul-05 Aug) that can be booked individually or combined into a 14-night Passau-Budapest cruise.

Departures will feature tailored daily rides, with routes ranging from 29 to 100km featuring the Wachau Valley, the Schloggen Loop, and the Danube Bend.

Guests can bring their own bike or borrow an e-bike, and will



be supported by expert guides, safety vehicles, and alternative Riverside choice excursions.

The full 14-night itinerary also features an after-hours VIP evening at Vienna's Belvedere, with a private musical performance and private viewing of *The Kiss* by Klimt.

Seven-night sailings start at \$7,639 per person, and a 14-night voyage starts at \$15,279pp.

Riverside also recently unveiled new lunch experiences, wine tastings, and personalised pairings, now available across the line's fleet in its dining venue, the Vintage Room (**CW** 13 Jul).

Guests can choose from an expanded selection of wine pairings featuring champagne and premium vintages, with non-alcoholic wine pairings to launch later this year. *MS*

Way to the Windies

EXPLORA Journeys is preparing to begin sailing across the Caribbean from late Oct to Mar 2027 with both *Explora I* and *Explora III*.

The cruise line's flagship will kick off her season on 17 Nov, departing from Miami, while *Explora III* makes her debut in the region, departing Quebec on 15 Oct and reaching Puerto Rico on 01 Nov.

Destinations during the Caribbean season include St Barthelemy, St Lucia, the British Virgin Islands, Anguilla, Dominica, and Grenada.

Each journey is highlighted by local culinary and craft experiences that guests can partake in, including rum blending in St Kitts, chocolate-making in St Lucia, enjoying soca and steelpan performances in Trinidad, and much more.



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IT IS one thing to have artificial intelligence in your pocket, but some cruisers in Asia this season will be sailing with an AI crew member.

A humanoid robot will be joining Adora Cruises' *Adora Mediterranea* later this year for the ship's first home port season from Port Klang.

'Master Hwa' will welcome and engage guests through cultural showcases, family activities, and special celebrations aboard the ship, blending technology, Malaysian culture, and a new generation of cruise experiences.

The multilingual robot will be capable of Bahasa Malaysia, English, and Mandarin.



MSC bears down in Alaska



MSC Cruises is currently hosting a trade famil aboard *MSC Poesia* during her inaugural Alaska season (**CW** 18 May).

Sailing round-trip from Seattle, the famil is being hosted by business development manager Aaron Eilers, celebrating MSC's new Alaska program and the 2027-28 booking season.

Highlights of *Poesia's* inaugural Alaska itineraries include ports of call such as Victoria, Endicott Arm, and Dawes Glacier, as well

as Ketchikan.

The program follows *Poesia's* recent refurbishment and the addition of a new MSC Yacht Club (**CW** 16 Apr).

MSC has just opened sales for its third Alaska season, with *Poesia* returning to Seattle for weekly seven-night sailings from 24 Apr to 18 Sep 2028.

Ports on *Poesia's* summer 2028 Alaska itineraries include Ketchikan, Icy Strait Point, Tracy Arm, Juneau, and Victoria. *MS*

CCL still Elegant

CARNIVAL Cruise Line (CCL) has confirmed its signature Elegant Night will remain on all Australian voyages, following rumours the dress-up evening was disappearing.

The cruise line has started replacing the Elegant Night on three- and four-night itineraries overseas with a vibrant White Night celebration, according to brand ambassador John Heald.

However this change is not being made on local itineraries, CCL confirmed.

Deals of the Norse

VIKING'S 'flights on us' offer is currently available on a range of voyages worldwide, with economy airfares of up to \$2,800pp on river, ocean, and expedition voyages departing between 2027 and 2029.

Included are the 11-day 'Passage to Eastern Europe' journey, departing 26 Mar 2027 from \$6,895pp, and the 15-day 'Ancient Mediterranean Antiquities' voyage, departing 22 Dec 2027 from \$9,995pp.


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