

### Cruise Weekly today

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

### Big Seabourn sale

**SEABOURN** has launched its Explore Beyond Event, providing guests up to US\$2,000 in onboard credit per suite, in addition to reduced deposits on select sailings from 2026 to 2029.

These offers are available on new bookings made and deposited between now and 16 Nov.

Travellers can make the most of this offer on sailings across Antarctica, the Arctic, the Caribbean, the South Pacific and the Mediterranean.

## RSSC, Oceania's hotel move

**AS REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) and Oceania Cruises move to larger ship platforms, NCLH's two luxury brands are designing their vessels more like upscale residential hotels.

Both cruise lines' ships are growing in size, as they introduce larger newbuild classes while phasing out legacy vessels.

Their answer to the potential loss of onboard intimacy is to offer more space per guest, larger accommodations, more differentiated rooms, and more places to live rather than more activities, global ambassador **Steve Odell** (pictured left) told **Cruise Weekly**.

"If you look at the luxury hotel sector, the magnificent ultra luxury hotels have all gone down that beautiful residential feel... we've done the same with *Seven Seas Prestige*, and we've done the same with the Sonata-class ships with Oceania."

"This is about personal space, bigger suites, more suites, more categories of suites, we've got two-level suites...the ship is going to be 40% larger than the Explorer-class, but with only 10% more guests."

NCLH's strategy is also being reflected in its renovated ships, managing director **Lisa Pile** (pictured right) told **CW**.

"If you look at the reimagination of the Explorer-class over the next few years, we're taking out the entry level suite and combining suites, so the entry level is 40m<sup>2</sup>."

Odell said the company remains acutely aware of its vessels' sizes, noting the luxury experience begins to change on ships above a certain threshold.

Oceania's next-generation platform, the new Sonata-class, will accommodate around 1,395 guests, compared with about 1,100 on *Oceania Allura* and 1,250 on *Oceania Marina* and *Oceania Riviera*.



"[Capacity] above 900 starts to compromise what you can deliver, it becomes a different thing," he explained.

"Even if you change the staffing ratio, it's still more people getting on, getting off, trying to get into restaurants, so the whole idea is to actually make it more exclusive by making it more expansive."

"You've got a lot more open spaces, al fresco dining, meeting points, the guest-to-space ratio is very high - it's the way of the future," Odell added.

The changes to RSSC and Oceania's platforms come as NCLH looks to design its future luxury ships as long-term legacy investments that will hold up against future preferences.

"We're a very innovative organisation, we're constantly looking at what we build today, and how that's going to look in 20-25 years' time, and if we talk about the demographics, we've got to also consider that for the next 20-25 years as well," Pile told **CW**.

Odell added: "You've got to think about your customer today, you know, baby boomers are still our core, and today, they're in their sixties."

"The next generation perhaps wants something a little bit different, a bit of privacy, a bit of choice, a bit of personalisation, so you've got to build something that embraces everything, because you're building for a lot of years ahead." **MS**

### Heading up North

**TRUE** North Cruises' *True North* has embarked on her first international voyage of the season, departing Western Australia and sailing around PNG and Melanesia.

There are still several staterooms available to book for the 2026 season, with itineraries including the 'Sepik Soiree 1' trip departing 15 Oct from \$28,795.50pp, the 'Navigate New Britain' adventure departing 14 Nov from \$39,595.50pp and the 'Uncharted Melanesia' itinerary departing 04 Dec from \$32,935.50pp.

Additionally, *True North II* will be operating sailings around the Great Barrier Reef in Nov.

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## Half off Oceania

**OCEANIA** Cruises has launched a new sale, with savings of up to 50% on transoceanic sailings booked before 04 Nov.

The sale is valid for both Pacific and Atlantic crossings.

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## Azamara weighing new ship



**AZAMARA** has plans to grow beyond four ships, chief international sales officer David Siewers has told *Cruise Weekly*, with the company considering both newbuilds and acquisitions to expand its fleet.

Siewers is bullish about the cruise line's future, with the brand now considering which approach makes the most sense to build the fleet, while also finding ships that match Azamara's preferred size profile.

Meanwhile, shipyards around the world are facing severe capacity constraints and backlogs, with as many as 80 ships currently on order globally for delivery through to 2036.

"We absolutely have plans to grow our fleet, we talk about it every single executive leadership meeting," Siewers told *CW*.

"The question really becomes, what is the most purposeful way for us to do that: is it via a newbuild, knowing that the shipyards are extremely busy, but what that could be in terms of

our brand identity?

"Or is it acquisition, and what does look that like in terms of being able to bring the Azamara experience there and what ships are available that fit in that size profile?" Siewers said.

Azamara is also not looking to grow simply for the sake of adding berths, with the cruise line's current capacity of 700-1,000 passengers representing its "sweet spot", Siewers said, as he fears adding capacity may compromise onboard experience.

He added there are no plans to add larger ships, even as other luxury cruise lines grow bigger.

"Even as we talk about the future of the brand, we always fall back to exactly where we are today [size-wise] being perfect for our guests," Siewers explained.

"Seven hundred up to maybe a 1,000 is our sweet spot...as soon as you go higher than that, you start to get a little bit more lost, and once you go a little bit smaller, it's just a different passenger experience." *MS*

## Explora revs up

**EXPLORA** Journeys has opened sales for its 2027 Monaco Grand Prix voyage, which will see *Explora I* return to Port Hercule for the third year in a row.

Suite-only stays and suites with three-day grandstand access will be available aboard *Explora I* for the Grand Prix.

There will also be suites with three-day Paddock Club hospitality released soon, offering guests an additional opportunity to experience the race weekend with access to gourmet dining, pit lane walks, and appearances by legends of Formula 1.

From 02 to 07 Jun, *Explora I* will take her place just 150 metres from the circuit, putting her at the heart of the energy and excitement of the race weekend.

For those looking to extend their time on board, the Monaco race weekend can also be combined with a cruise pre- or post-event.

Guests can sail from Rome to Monaco from 24 May to 07 June, continue from Monaco to Barcelona from 02 to 14 Jun, or combine both from Rome to Barcelona from 24 May to 14 Jun, creating an opportunity to experience the Grand Prix as part of a longer Mediterranean journey.

Call Explora on 1 800 570 780 for more.

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**IN A** time where many of us follow a budget for our cruises, a luxury travel concierge has provided some insights on the habits of the 1%.

Hailing from Luxembourg and based in Dubai, Matthieu Schon spends his days planning trips for some of the world's wealthiest travellers, athletes, and VIPs.

Schon described one client who spent the equivalent of A\$1.6m on a week in Europe, renting a yacht for over A\$400k and other festivities costing more than A\$96k.

Among some of the more unusual requests, Schon recounted the time one of his clients wanted a giant croissant on their private jet, causing him to request a special order at the bakery.

That is all in addition to clients calling him at all hours for spontaneous changes to plans - what a life.

## Travel advisors dispel Antarctica myths

**ANTARCTICA** may be a dream destination for some, but there are plenty of myths about travelling in the region that deter potential clients, several agents shared with *Cruise Weekly*.

One of the biggest beliefs is that it is a bucket-list destination best saved for retirement.

"Don't wait," urged Take Off Go's Ivona Siniarska, adding that each of her three trips in the last two years has been a completely different experience.

"I don't really believe Antarctica is necessarily a once-in-a-lifetime destination anymore; you might think it is before you go, but there is a reason so many people become completely obsessed with going back."

Before she embarked on her own trip to Antarctica, Global Travel Network travel agent Dani Potter was worried it offered little more than snow and ice.

"Every single day was different and somehow more magnificent than the one before, I never got tired of looking at it - I didn't want to go home," she recalled.

"Antarctica completely blew me away," she added.



Meanwhile, Siniarska debunked the misconception that Antarctica is only for extreme adventurers and physically fit guests.

"You can absolutely make Antarctica as adventurous as you want it to be - you can kayak, camp on the ice, hike, snowshoe, do the polar plunge and basically say 'yes' to everything that's offered," she said.

"But you can also stay on board a beautiful luxury expedition ship, head out on Zodiac cruises, do shorter landings and experience this incredible part of the world without needing to be an extreme adventurer."

Meanwhile, many believe that Antarctica is too difficult to access

or that it is unsafe, according to Karen Ridge from Mildura Travel & Cruise.

"People think it's complex, that it's a long way away, and they worry about what happens if something goes wrong - will I be rescued, will my insurance work?" explained Ridge.

"But it doesn't have to be that way at all - you can go with an escorted group and someone will look after you the whole way.

"You're with like-minded people who are going to support the journey and enjoy it with you - you're safe," she said.

For TravelManagers' Jane Fowler, the main roadblock she often hears is the perceived cost of visiting Antarctica.

"There are options across different price points, ages and travel styles, so it is not just a destination for wealthy retirees," explained Fowler.

"There are more ways to experience it than many travellers realise from cruise-by itineraries on traditional ships through to smaller expedition ships and more immersive experiences," she said. *JHM*

## RIVER CRUISE CHANGES COURSE

Here is how the booming sector is entering a new era.

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### ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Head of Sales & Marketing - Sean Harrigan  
Business Development Manager - Kara Stanley  
[advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au](mailto:advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au)

GENERAL MANAGER & PUBLISHER  
Matthew Vince

### ACCOUNTS

[accounts@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:accounts@traveldaily.com.au)  
[info@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:info@traveldaily.com.au)  
Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd  
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia  
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia  
Tel: (AU) +61 2 8007 6760 or (NZ) 0800 799 220  
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