

Summer 2024

Cruise Industry News

Q U A R T E R L Y

No. 1
In Industry Reporting



European Brands

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Connectivity
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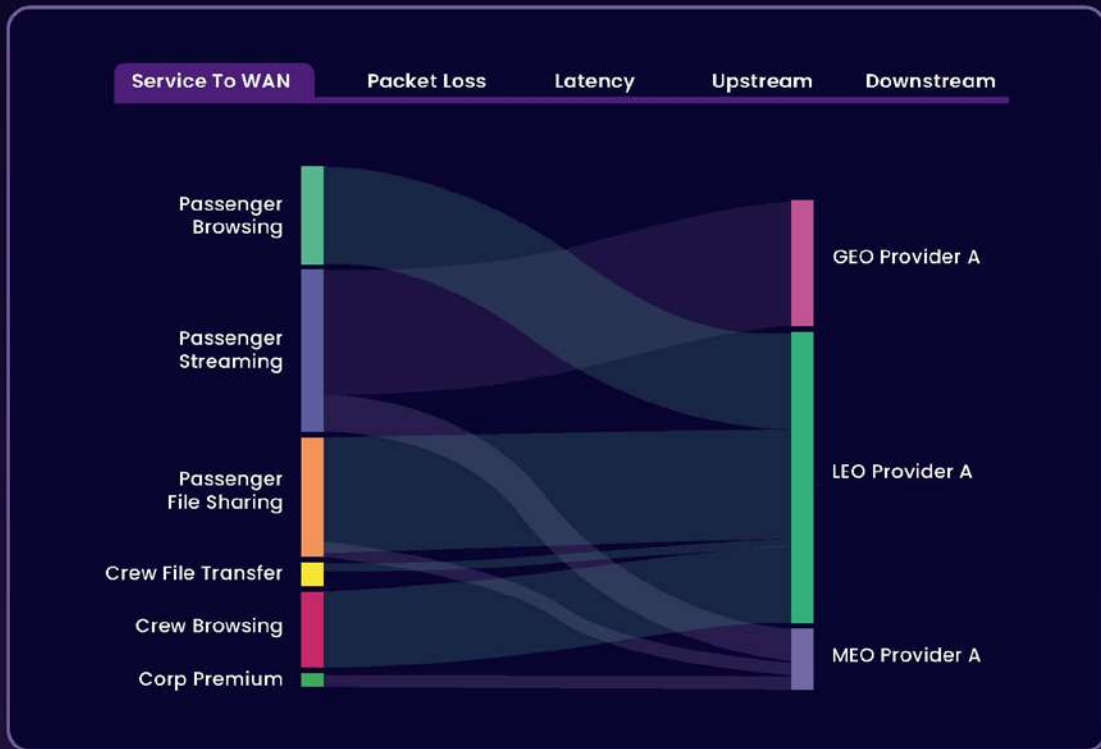
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[Cover] **Main Photo:** The AIDamar launched the summer season out of Warnemunde in April; **Bottom Left:** Quark's Ultramarine; **Bottom Right:** The 5 o'Clock Somewhere Bar on the Margaritaville at Sea Islander.

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Carnival Driving Growth and Yields

Future Course

Setting their course for the future, the leading cruise companies have ordered more ships that are often larger than previous generations and are expanding their development of private destinations in the Caribbean.

Near-term, the focus is on increasing ticket prices and maximizing onboard revenue generation through more guests buying services and packages prior to sailing, while also controlling costs and paying down debt in order to return to investment grade credit.

In addition, while improving ship energy efficiencies, the companies are testing and investing in new low and zero-emission technologies. ■

Carnival Corporation is driving growth with the introduction of new ships for the Carnival, Cunard and Princess brands in the near term, in addition to upgrading its Half Moon Cay destination with a pier, so ships can come alongside instead of tendering, and expanding the new Celebration Key destination with another pier allowing four ships to call simultaneously.

Celebration Key is slated to open in July 2025.

Not only does Carnival expect to see an uptick in ticket revenue generated by its new private destination, but also cost benefits driven by considerable fuel savings as it will be the closest destination (to ►



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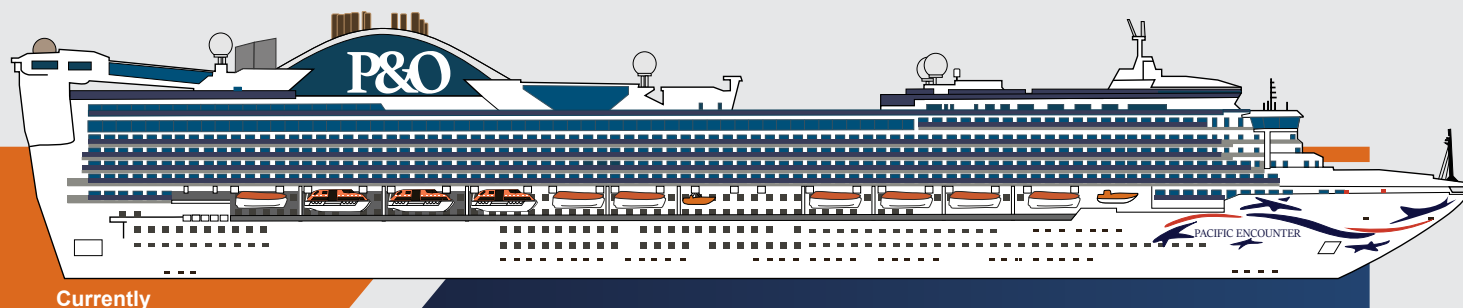
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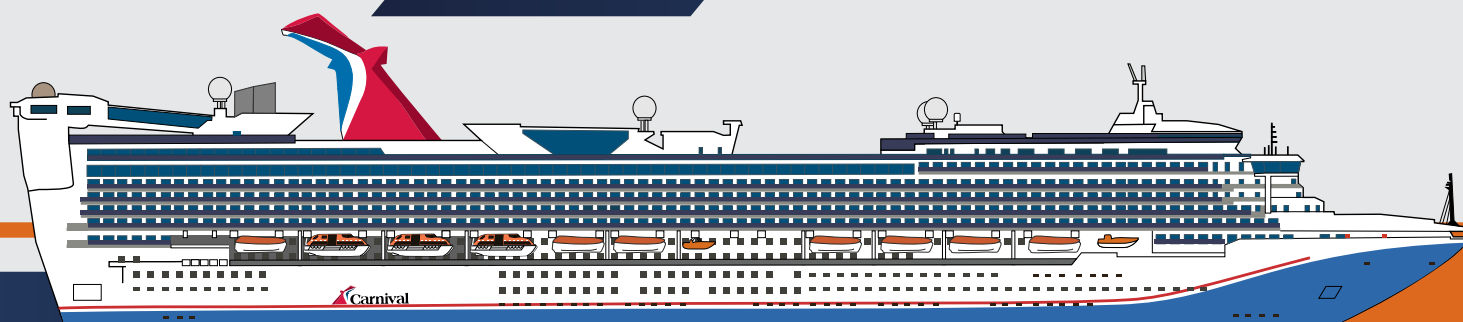
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Currently



Artist rendering

▲ The Pacific Encounter will be transferred to the Carnival brand in early 2025.

Florida) of its seven owned and operated properties in the Caribbean.

Eighteen Carnival ships sailing from 10 North American homeports are so far scheduled to call at Celebration Key.

Furthermore, Carnival is prioritizing its highest returning brand and recently announced two more Excel-class ships for Carnival Cruise Line in 2027 and 2028.

The focus on the Carnival brand also means the shutting down of P&O Cruises Australia, which will be folded into Carnival Cruise Line.

When the transition is completed next year, Carnival will have four ships in the Australia market, including the Sydney-based Carnival Splendor and the Luminosa sailing seasonally from Brisbane, in addition to their new sisters (from P&O), the Encounter and the

Adventure, while the Explorer leaves the fleet in 2025.

Thus, next year, Carnival Cruise Line will make up approximately 35 percent of Carnival Corporation's total capacity, compared to 29 percent in 2019.

Other initiatives include a modernization program for AIDA designed to deliver a "meaningful revenue uplift" across the brand.

Marketing efforts have also been stepped up across Europe with new campaigns for the company's European brands.

For 2024, 33 percent of Carnival's fleet capacity will be in the Caribbean, 17 percent in Northern Europe, 14 percent in the Mediterranean, 7 percent in Australia, 6 percent in Alaska and the balance in other trades.

According to Josh Weinstein, CEO,

the Caribbean, Alaska and Europe are all delivering yield improvement. He said that the improved operational performance, coupled with excess liquidity and the lowest orderbook in decades, leaves the company well positioned to opportunistically manage down its debt and interest expense, while returning to investment grade credit over time.

In light of the accelerating demand, Carnival reported that it is also working on pulling the booking curve forward in line with its yield management strategy and ultimately supporting higher overall pricing over the course of the booking curve.

For the balance of the year, the focus is on optimizing yield on the limited inventory remaining (for 2024) and continuing to manage down costs, and delivering an even stronger 2025. ■



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Royal Caribbean Introducing New Hardware and Destinations



The Silver Nova lines up with the Celebrity Ascent and the Icon of the Seas.

At Royal Caribbean, the group continues to introduce new hardware while also building out its destination platform.

The formula for success, however, remains unchanged, according to Jason Liberty, president and CEO, who cited “moderate capacity growth, moderate yield growth and strong cost controls.”

Pointing out their new hardware, the Icon of the Seas and the Utopia of the Seas, set to launch service this summer in the short cruise market out of Port Canaveral, Royal Caribbean has ordered a seventh ship for its Oasis class that will join the fleet in 2028.

Following the company’s Perfect Day at CocoCay, Royal Caribbean has also an-

nounced a new private destination in Cozumel, the Royal Beach Club, set to open in 2026, and broke ground this spring on the Royal Beach Club at Paradise Island in Nassau, which is scheduled to open next year.

Other efforts include the enhancement of the commerce platform through new technology and AI to improve distribution channels while lowering the cost to acquire guests.

Royal Caribbean also claims to make it easier for their guests to book cruises as well as onboard activities and services.

Changes for the year include more concentrated guest sourcing in North America with 80 percent of the guests coming from the U.S. and Canada, while the Caribbean represents 55 percent of the group’s deployment this year, followed by 15 percent in Europe, 10 percent in

Asia-Pacific and 6 percent in Alaska.

Guest sourcing and deployment reflect demand patterns, according to Liberty, who said that Royal Caribbean follows the demand pattern to optimize revenues.

He said further that he believes that Royal Caribbean has the right brands in the (market) segments. And that they should be moderately growing over time.

Meanwhile, at this point, Royal Caribbean is focused on excelling its core, growing its core and also further building out its destination platform, said Liberty. All of that is working, he added, to deliver a high ROIC profile and producing strong shareholder returns.

Combined, all these initiatives are translating into higher revenue and earnings expectations for the year and an optimistic outlook for 2025. ■

STELLA ARTOIS[®]



NCLH

Solidified Forward Trajectory

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) is charting a new strategic course, according to Harry Sommer, president and CEO, who was speaking at the company's 2024 investor day conference in May.

This will be built on a new company culture, he said, in a collaborative environment with a new management team.

The focus is on driving yield, reducing costs, optimizing capital allocation and debt reduction.

Product development will focus on investing in experiences that guests value and are willing to pay more for, Sommer said, and future growth will be secured by larger and more efficient ships with a richer cabin mix.

NCLH placed an eight-ship newbuild order this spring for its three brands, projecting a compounded annual (capacity) growth rate (CAGR) of 4 percent through 2036.

The order includes a new class of larger ships for Norwegian Cruise Line at 200,000 tons and 5,000 berths, compared to the Prima class, which has grown from 142,500 to 169,000 tons and from 3,100 to 3,850 passengers.

The Oceania Cruises brand will also get larger ships: two 86,000-ton, 1,450-passen-



The new Norwegian Aqua under construction at Fincantieri

ger ships, up from 1,250 for the Allura class.

And Regent Seven Seas will get two 77,000-ton, 850-passenger ships, up from 744 for the latest ship in that fleet, the 55,500-ton Seven Seas Grandeur.

All told, NCLH has 13 ships on order at press time, accounting for 41,000 berths being added to its existing fleet of 32 ships and 66,500 berths.

The company is also investing in its two private destinations in the Bahamas and Belize, with plans calling for a multi-ship pier to be built at Great Stirrup Cay.

Sommer commented that Harvest Cay and Great Stirrup Cay were their two highest-rated destinations.

NCLH also promised \$300 million in cost savings by 2026.

Captain Patrick Dahlgren, executive vice president vessel operations, outlined some savings initiatives including more efficient bunkering and starting ships' engines 15 minutes before sailing rather than two hours before as has been the custom.

Other examples were a fleetwide reduction of 500 crew from training cabin stewards to work more efficiently, and trimming entertainment staff from 42

per ship to 21 based on guest reviews favoring smaller and shorter high-energy shows with fewer cast members, which, Dahlgren said, also frees up passenger cabins previously used by the cast.

Menu optimization will see low-rated items being removed, bringing appetizer choices down from 11 to seven, and entrees from seven to six.

In addition, all the ships in the Norwegian fleet will see the addition of more balcony staterooms and new public venues during upcoming drydocks, converting under-utilized areas to revenue generating spaces.

Mark Kempa, CFO, listed multiple levers to drive pricing and net yield across the three brands: newbuilds with a richer cabin mix, optimized deployment, enhanced revenue management, a rigorous ROI centric marketing strategy, and maximizing guest spending throughout their journey.

The company's major deployments in 2024 sees 28 percent of its capacity in the Caribbean, 27 percent in Europe, 10 percent in Alaska, 9 percent in Asia-Pacific, and the balance in various other sailing regions. ■



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The Viking Difference

Viking (VIK), which went public at \$24 a share on the New York Stock Exchange on May 1, can attribute its success to being different, according to Torstein Hagen, founder, chairman and CEO.

That difference includes being a single brand with products that are all consistent extensions of that brand – for ocean, river and expedition cruises.

With a current fleet of nine relatively small ocean ships, two expedition ships, 80 river vessels and a one time-chartered river vessel, 26 more vessels are on order with option contracts for another 10.

Having identical ships simplifies the sales and marketing process, according to Viking, as guests book based on itinerary and not for specific ships, and it allows older ships to achieve comparable yields. Identical ships also provide operational flexibility and efficiencies in shipbuilding, maintenance and crewing.

Another differentiator is clearly defined, destination-focused experiences, prioritizing destinations instead of on-board consumption and traditional entertainment. The onboard experience is all

inclusive with a shore excursion included in every port.

Viking proudly states that it is also known for what it does not do: no children under 18 are allowed, there is no casino, no hidden costs, such as for alternative restaurants, and complimentary beer and wine with dinner.

While relying on travel agents to generate a “material portion” of its sales, Viking uses direct marketing to drive the majority of its bookings, citing a database of more than 56 million American households. The argument is that with direct marketing, the company can generate demand on its own, rather than wait for others to do it.

Launching its riverboat operation in 1997, Viking is now the largest riverboat operator in the world, and launched its first ocean vessel in 2015.

The nine 930-passenger ocean-going ships currently sailing will be joined by the 998-passenger Viking Vela in Decem-



Torstein Hagen, chairman and CEO, and Karine Hagen, executive vice president, product

ber and the Viking Vesta in July 2025. Six more ocean-going ships are on order with Fincantieri for delivery through 2029. In addition are two options for 2030.

In 2023, nearly 650,000 guests traveled with Viking, generating total revenues of more than \$4.7 billion, according to the company's IPO prospectus.

Issuing 64 million shares at \$24, means that Viking raised more than \$1.5 billion, representing a market valuation of more than \$10 billion. ■



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The Scenic Eclipse fleet's cutting-edge technology and design allows our yachts to transition seamlessly between polar expeditions and ultra-luxury yacht experiences in tropical waters. From the remote islands of the Caribbean to the ancient lands of the South Pacific, these voyages are available in three categories, each carefully curated to immerse guests deeper into the destinations.

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covery Team of up to 20 experts, from helicopter* and submersible* experiences to wildlife excursions by Zodiac and kayak.

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Cruise Voyages: These are similar to your standard cruise vacation. Explore unique ports with expert local guides and enjoy water sports in the azure waters,

bask in the picturesque landscapes, and learn about local history and culture.

What unique water activities can guests enjoy directly from the marina deck of your ultra-luxury yacht?

When the Dynamic Positioning System is activated and the ship is not in motion, the marina is easily accessible from deck 3 aft where an inflatable platform is set up in the water. Marina activities include cruising on Zodiacs, kayaking, snorkeling, stand-up paddleboard, water skiing, SEABOBS (new on Scenic Eclipse I), an inflatable trampoline or simply jumping in the water for a swim.

What are some of the new enhancements recently added to the Scenic Eclipse I in drydock?

We've added some features that were launched with her sister ship, Scenic Eclipse II. This includes a dedicated space for the Discovery Team to meet and plan their daily adventures, updates to the restaurants and new Sky Bar outdoor seating to enjoy in warm climates. The Senses Spa received new Kluft equipment to optimize wellness, including a sauna, salt therapy and infrared chairs. 4 SEABOBS were added to the marina toys, which enable guests to glide below the surface in tropical destinations.

The Scenic Eclipse II has a new, next generation submersible aboard. What makes it unique and what can clients look forward to?

Featuring 270-degree panoramic views and diving up to 100 meters below the surface, Scenic Neptune II has been designed to provide an immersive underwater experience that will give guests the feeling of seamlessly merging with the wonders of the ocean.

From the large stable aft boarding platform, guests board through an oversized hatch using an inventive retractable handrail for additional support. A short

ladder ensures ease of ingress into the cabin, where comfortable leather seats await to convey passengers on a breathtaking exploration of the subsea world.

Featuring the same refractive index as seawater, the acrylic pressure hull magically disappears upon submergence, creating a sense of boundless space and a uniquely moving engagement with the marine environment. From their central seated position with 360-degree situational awareness, the pilot not only operates the submersible, but also curates the dive for the eight guests aboard, pointing out features and marine life, to ensure everyone shares equally in the unforgettable experience.

The submersible is built for multiple daily dives with a proprietary ballast system, permitting an increased number of daily dives for improved passenger through-flow and reducing the time between dives to balance passenger payload. With a high-powered air-conditioning system, sound system and CO2 scrubbing system, guest comfort is guaranteed, whether diving in the tropics or polar regions.

What are some of the lesser-known ultra-luxury amenities available on your yachts that set them apart from other luxury vessels?

In addition to being truly all-inclusive (including premium beverages) with only up to 228 guests onboard, other ultra-luxury amenities include:

- Butler service in every suite.
- Each suite is equipped with a Luxury King Size Scenic Slumber Bed, featuring a fully adjustable mattress and a pillow menu for personalized comfort.
- All suites also include a Dyson hairdryer and an in-suite mini bar re-stocked daily.
- All 10 unique dining options onboard the Scenic Eclipse fleet are complimentary, including the Chef's Table – a unique, exclusive 11-course dining experience paired with premium beverages.
- The Senses Spa is almost 6,000 sq. ft with complimentary access to wellness facilities including: traditional sauna, infrared sauna, steam room, salt therapy lounge with heated beds, temperature-controlled plunge pools, vitality pools, therapeutic showers, fully equipped, state-of-the-art gym and Yoga & Pilates studio. Spa services like massages and facials are available for purchase while the facilities are open to all guests at no charge.
- The open bridge policy provides guests with access to one of the best viewing areas on the ship and the opportunity to learn about the technical abilities of The World's First Discovery Yachts. ■

ScenicUSA.com

Featured Warm Weather Itineraries

Sounds of Discovery: 13-Day New York to Bahamas voyage with a stop in Miami where the ship will host a special guest performer direct from Broadway. Departing Oct. 12, 2024.

Taste of Bermuda: 5-Day New York to Bermuda voyage, perfect for a luxurious introduction. Sailing Oct. 12, 2024.

Taste of the Bahamas: 9-Day Bermuda to Nassau itinerary; sailing Oct. 16, 2024, and exploring pristine beaches and coral reefs, island-hopping through diverse cultures, where the warmth of the locals will enhance your luxury yacht adventure.

Wellness Retreat: Barbados to Brazil, featuring an enhanced wellness program like massage workshops, sip and soiree facial events and even healthy cooking master classes. Departs Nov. 5, 2024.

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AMERICAN QUEEN SHIPS SOLD AT AUCTION

AMERICAN CRUISE LINES (ACL) POUNCED TO PICK UP ASSETS FROM ITS MAIN COMPETITOR, BUYING THE AMERICAN QUEEN VOYAGES RIVERBOAT FLEET AT A STEEP DISCOUNT, PICKING UP FOUR SHIPS FOR \$5,550,000.

It also paid another \$750,000 for other related assets, including trademarks associated with American Queen Voyages, website domain names and certain business records.

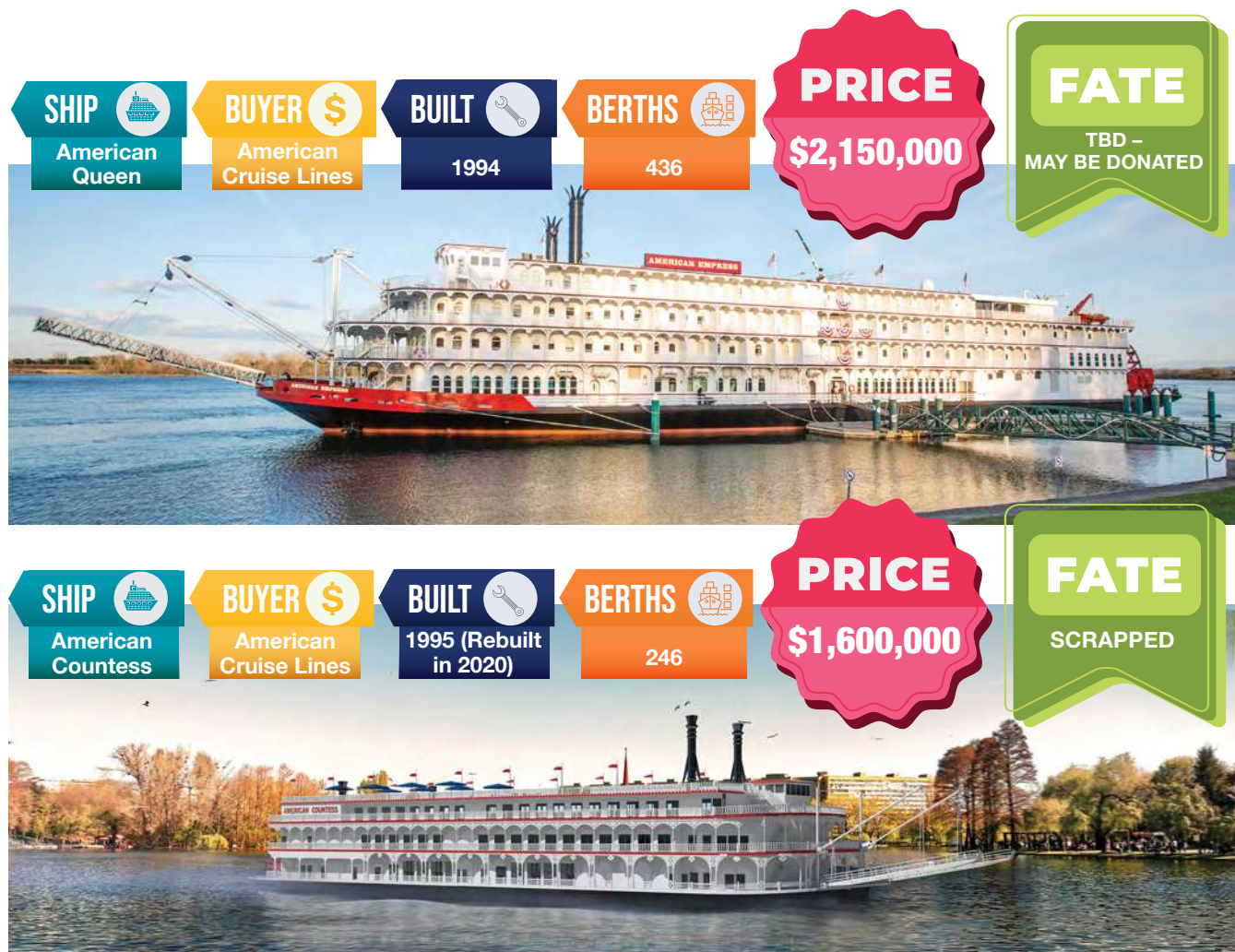
In a statement, ACL said that it was recycling the Countess and Duchess as it

wants to concentrate on new ships with rigorous environmental standards.

“We continue to evaluate options for the Queen, including the possibility of donation to a municipal or non-profit entity,” the company added, not mentioning plans for the Empress, which industry

sources believe will be operated.

In addition, American Queen Voyages founder John Waggoner was able to purchase both the Ocean Navigator and Ocean Voyager, two small coastal ships. He was the winning bidder, competing with one other party at the auction. ■



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| SHIP American Duchess | BUYER American Cruise Lines | BUILT 1995 (Rebuilt in 2017) | BERTHS 166 | PRICE \$200,000 | FATE SCRAPPED |
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|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| SHIP American Empress | BUYER American Cruise Lines | BUILT 2003 | BERTHS 223 | PRICE \$1,600,000 | FATE TBD |
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| SHIP Ocean Voyager | BUYER John Waggoner | BUILT 2001 | BERTHS 202 | PRICE \$950,500 | FATE SET TO BE OPERATED ON GREAT LAKES |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--|



NEW HARDWARE



The Blue Dream Melody started operations from Shanghai in June.

BLUE DREAM IS EXPANDING, AS THE BLUE DREAM MELODY SAILED FROM SHANGHAI IN EARLY JUNE. THE COMPANY ACQUIRED THE FORMER AIDAVITA THIS YEAR AND CONTINUES TO BUILD UP IN THE CHINESE MARKET.

“The goal for our first ship was to get started; the goal for the second ship is to differentiate,” said Helene Xu, general manager.

“While other companies may position by age group, we have no demographic targets, but instead are going after interests,” she said. “Our first ship helped us position ourselves as a national brand, while the second ship is about a lifestyle of health and sustainability.”

Also of note, capacity has been reduced as 633 staterooms are now 609, and the number of suites has increased from two to 47, she said, giving the ship a better premium cabin mix.

By the pool deck, guests can look forward to cabanas.

The company will put all its effort into the Blue Dream Melody for the time being as at press time the Blue Dream Star was pulled from service and sitting at a Chinese shipyard in Zhoushan awaiting its fate. The ship had operated since the company’s start up in 2021.

Shore Ex

In other moves, the brand is intending to slow down its itineraries, and wants guests off the ship more. All port calls will be at least seven hours, Xu said.

“In the past, shore excursions for Chinese guests were all about shopping, and while we will still offer this for free, we will also have more in-depth tours available, including cultural and food and beverage experiences,” Xu told *Cruise Industry News*.

Without a big new ship, the company is focusing on being small and

“We need to work together to expand the market pie and not share it.”

beautiful, Xu said, and offering more time in port.

This summer the plan is to sail from both Shanghai and Qingdao, and the company is planning China’s first-ever interporting operation using Xiamen and Beihai. Itineraries are set to range from four to 11 nights.

Deployment

Investors in the cruise line include state-owned companies with port investments in Qingdao, Shanghai and Zhoushan, which are all expected to be homeports in 2025.

A regional office has been established in Qingdao, while the company’s headquarters is in Shanghai.

Xu said the government should be helping to develop the cruise market.

“We need to work together to expand the market pie and not share it,” she said. “We need to increase cruise awareness ▶



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The Blue Dream Star got the company going but is currently laid up.

and the product understanding; it should not be perceived as a low-price tourism product.”

The big news this fall will be a 14-night sailing to Japan, and then a 33-night Asia itinerary with calls in Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines. Guests will be able to board in Shanghai, Xiamen, Hong Kong and Singapore.

“The Chinese government is developing diplomatic ties with Southeast Asia and we are celebrating 50 years of relations with Malaysia this year, so we are riding this wave,” Xu noted, adding the company anticipates a longer booking window for the 33-night sailing of between three to five months, and hopes to feature a long fall cruise on an annual basis.

“We are also adding more seven- and 11-night summer itineraries,” Xu said. “These are good value for the money and are for testing the market.”

The plan for the company continues to be five ships in five years, with three of their own vessels and two on long-term charter deals.

“We will not have all five homeporting in China and cannibalizing our own market,” she said. “We are opening up international homeports and eyeing longer itineraries.” — Eng Hong Ngoh

BUILDING BLUE DREAM



Helene Xu

“Thirty days to go!” said Helene Xu, as she walked out of a meeting at Blue Dream International Cruises’ Shanghai office this spring. The general manager of China’s quickly-growing Blue Dream brand was all in on getting ready for the launch of the Blue Dream Melody when she sat down with *Cruise Industry News*.

Xu explained that Blue Dream is a locally owned brand, running its own ships and sales and marketing, thus making it unique.

With older, smaller ships, Blue Dream is finding its place in the market by offering unique itineraries and more time in port.

Xu is at the helm of the emerging company and her cruise career traces back to Costa in 2008 when the Chinese cruise industry was in its infancy.

“It struck me that I wanted to take part in the growth of the industry here,” she said.

“Although Costa was already very established globally, it was entering a new market, starting from zero,” Xu recalled, as she worked in various positions, but mainly in marketing.

From there she went to SkySea Cruises, which was Royal Caribbean

Group’s short-lived joint venture to start a Chinese cruise line with the country’s leading online travel agent, Ctrip.

Her biggest takeaway wasn’t the quick startup of the brand, but instead its closure after only a short stint in the Chinese market.

“Management decided to take the high road and even though we knew the end was near, it was held to high standards all the way to the very end. We had an eight-month wind-down period.”

With SkySea over and out, Xu was quickly hired by Royal Caribbean.

“That was like standing on a giant’s shoulders and seeing the market from up there,” she said. “I learned how a cruise company could be such a well-run machine, with all the pieces working together.”

That led to a job at Fujian Zhongyun Investment Group and helping the company get into the cruise business with Blue Dream during the pandemic, building off their cargo shipping portfolio.

Xu said that after 13 years with bigger brands, it was time to help launch a new Chinese brand.

“We can continue to follow the established players and norms, but if we walk in the footsteps of the others, we will not leave our own footprints,” she said.

Xu said her management style is results oriented.

“I do about 20 percent of the work and the rest is a team effort,” she noted. “If things go wrong, it will be my responsibility.”

“The key is to trust in people and trust in people’s abilities,” she said. In a fast-paced recovering cruise market, her role is leading the team to focus on core issues.

“I told my team we can only have subtractions, not additions, as we have one month to go to launch.”

Her hope is that her team and their families can be proud of the brand, having contributed to this historical moment in building up China’s local cruise business. ■

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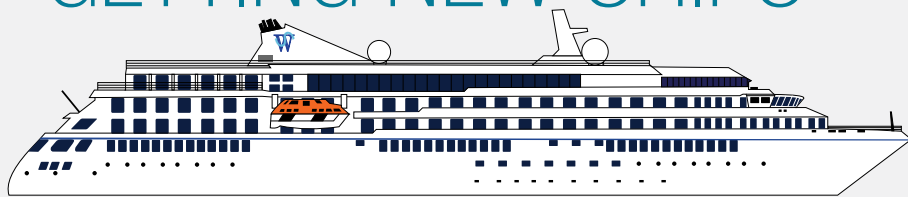
TURKISH AIRLINES



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WINDSTAR

GETTING NEW SHIPS



WINDSTAR CRUISES IS EXPANDING ITS FLEET WITH TWO ADDITIONAL SHIPS.

The company will take delivery of the Star Seeker in late 2025, which is under construction at WestSea in Portugal for Mystic and was previously expected to sail for Atlas Ocean Voyages.

A year later, in 2026, Windstar will take over the Star Explorer, which was built in 2019 for Mystic and is currently sailing for charter clients.

“These new ships will allow Windstar not only to grow, but to go back to favorite destinations that we’ve been to before and explore new destinations,” Chris Prelog, president, said during a press conference in Miami.

While itineraries have not yet been finalized, one of the new ships is expected to take over the itineraries currently being offered by the Wind Star, which would then allow that ship to move to French Polynesia.

Although the new vessels have ice-strengthened hulls, Windstar does not have plans to deploy them in polar regions, Prelog said.

“We are doing more ‘soft exploration,’ which could be Alaska, Greenland or Norway but I don’t think we’ll go to the poles. We are, after all, a cruise company,” he explained.

It does give the company the option to do polar, however. Previously, Windstar had an Alaska product, which featured some expedition-like activities.

Both ships will see changes, with the Star Seeker getting some modifications from its original newbuilding plan, and the Star Explorer set for a large conversion at WestSea for Windstar in 2026.

The conversion will not incur any costs for Windstar as it is included in the company’s deal with Mystic, he explained.

A new marina will be added to the stern of the ships and will be accessed through the deck above, Prelog said, while a helideck is set to be converted into additional guest space as the ships will be enlarged from 200 guests to 224.

“It will be replaced with two big owner’s suites and balcony cabins as well,” Prelog explained, adding that Windstar is also changing some of the design aspects on the pool deck.

“We are also changing the bow, where we’ll have a forward jacuzzi, which can also be found on our Star-class ships,” Prelog said.

To “really make them Windstar ships,” the company is adding an expanded spa and specialty dining options.

Among the dining venues being introduced are Windstar’s main dining room and the Star Grill, in addition to a yet-to-be-determined alternative restaurant.

The additional two ships are expected to grow Windstar’s capacity by approximately 30 percent. ■



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RITZENHALER TAKES THE HELM AT AZAMARA



 **Dondra Ritzenhaler, CEO**

“We own and are the leader in small-ship destination immersion,” said Dondra Ritzenhaler, CEO of Azamara, who took over as CEO in May.

Full of energy, Ritzenhaler was on day four of her new role, and said she had come into the office ahead of time, over the weekend, to put up photos and make sure everything was ready to go on day one.

“With four ships that are 700 guests each, we can go into the places the larger ships can’t get to and get immersed in the destination,” she said. “We are the leader in late nights and overnights; 45 percent of our product includes late nights and overnights while our closest competitor is at 38 percent.

“What that means is we give our guests a relaxed and unrushed experience.”

She also pointed to the company’s trademark Azamazing evenings, which are unique events for all guests that are organized by Azamara and part of the cruise.

“Those are experiences the guests literally couldn’t do on their own,” she said.

In addition, she pointed to the company’s mostly all-inclusive product, with guests not having to worry about gratu-

ities, cocktails or room service, although she noted they are planning to refresh the wine list with more premium for-charge options based on customer feedback.

Upper Premium

Ritzenhaler said Azamara was in the upper premium space, with its small ships and culinary experience helping underline its brand position.

“Our strategy is that we’re not big, and we are strategically working with travel professionals, who account for 85 percent of the product sold,” she said. “We are focused on that, in terms of being louder and speaking at more conferences, and spending more money with travel advisors, whether that is co-op (marketing) or more bonus commissions.

“Our strategy is to fill our ships with the right audience through our distribution channel of travel agents, and that is how we can compete with other brands with more ships.”

Listening

Ritzenhaler had plans to visit all four ships in addition to going on a 12-city listening tour during her first few months on the job, plus industry trade events.

“I have 17 trips planned and that will grow,” she said. “I believe we need to get out there and make sure everyone knows how committed we are.”

She had already been on a call with 800 of what she called Azamara’s most loyal guests.

For agents, she likes to ask how they think of Azamara and how easy the brand is to do business with. She said she wants to know what they think the company should change, what Azamara excels at, and what frustrates them.

The company, which was spun off from Royal Caribbean during the pandemic and is now owned by private equity firm Sycamore Investments, won’t change its short-term strategy, Ritzenhaler said. But, she said, there may be adjustments mid- and long-term depending on the results of her ship visits and ongoing conversations with guests and travel advisors.

“It’s people first. We really need to walk the walk and talk the talk with a people first culture,” Ritzenhaler said. “People, product, partnership and profitability.” — *Monty Mathisen*

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REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES HAS ADJUSTED SOME OF ITS PRICING, WITH A NEW STRATEGY GOING LIVE JULY 1.

“What we are doing is moving to a more flexible style of offering,” said Steve Odell, chief sales officer. “It has come from guest feedback to have more flexibility.”

As a result, Regent’s two-tiered pricing strategy is seeing some adjustments.

The ultimate all-inclusive fares will now include coach airfare, as opposed to business class, and allow guests to upgrade air to premium economy, business and first (at a cost). In addition guests will get a \$500 credit for Blacklane, a private chauffeur service. It can be used for airport transfers, private excursions or even 10 days prior to 10 days after their Regent cruise.

The company’s all-inclusive cruise fare will essentially remain as-is, with guests then taking care of their own transfers.

Strategy

“Building in business class air before, going to the Caribbean was one thing, but for Tahiti, it could add \$8,000 to \$10,000 to the ticket price,” Odell said. “It appeared the exotic destinations were more expensive. Now, when comparing cruise fares the promotional playing field is more level between destinations. It will open up the market and attract more people.”

The company will promote cruise-only pricing as well, Odell said, thus making the initial presentation price of the cruise lower.

Odell said he still expected many of the company’s guests to travel in business or first class, especially for further-away destinations. Many of those guests book through travel agents, who may arrange air separately. A good number of them burn their frequent flier points for premium air seats too, said Odell.

Not Free

Regent has redefined its inclusions list, according to Odell, and will adjust its communication strategy on what’s included in the cruise fare, which is just about everything.

The big one, however, remains unchanged and that is free unlimited shore excursions.

“That is high on the agenda from the research we have done,” Odell said. “We are moving away from the word ‘free’ and talking about inclusive items. We have already done that internationally and its resonating well with our customers. We’re moving toward a more included pricing ideology.”

Blacklane

While other luxury brands have similar car chauffeur deals, they are generally only for house-to-airport transfers.

Regent has taken a different approach in allowing guests to use the service in a more flexible manner. Guests will receive instructions 60 days out from departure. Travel agents can also handle car reservations on guests’ behalf, said Odell.

“The value perception here is a strong one as these (private cars) can be a big additional expense,” Odell said. ■



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AIDA

‘Pacesetter’



↑ The AIDAprima celebrating the Port of Hamburg's 835th anniversary in May.

“We are the pacesetter in the German cruise market and intend to remain so, both in terms of product development and sustainability. And if you compare us to other brands, we have by far the youngest guests. The average age is 42,” Alexander Ewig, senior vice president of marketing and sales, told *Cruise Industry News*.



↑ Alexander Ewig, senior vice president of marketing and sales

“Our product is focused on connecting people, bringing people together, when they come onboard, which means parties and having a real leisurely atmosphere. There is no captain’s dinner and no need to dress up.

“We offer a more informal, down-to-earth experience, with a huge focus on our entertainment and everything that goes with that. The ships are built around the theatrium (combination of *atrium* and *theater*) in the center. We are also much more family-oriented than the other German brands. All of this serves to totally differentiate us in the market.”



→ The AIDAmar launched the summer season out of Warnemunde in April.

PROJECT EVOLUTION

“The big news for us today is our AIDA Evolution program,” Ewig continued. “We are extensively modernizing the first three Sphinx class ships, the AIDAdiva, AIDAbella and the AIDAluna in 2025 and 2026.

“The focus will be on a new interior design, new restaurants, new suites, lounges and more. In addition, technical equipment and systems will be updated. It is the biggest modernization program in the history of our company.”

In addition to all staterooms being modernized, the number of suites will be increased, and exclusive areas and services will be introduced from which suite guests among others will benefit.

This will include a greater variety of restaurants and signature bars.

The theatrium will also be further developed, according to company information, and with more seating.

New activity areas will be created for families with children.

“We have seven ships in the Sphinx class, so we are also starting to think about the other four,” Ewig added.

NEW ITINERARIES

In other new developments for 2025, in November AIDA is going back to the United States for the first time in five years on its 128-day world cruise sailing roundtrip from Hamburg. Ewig said that the AIDAdiva will be sailing down the East Coast, through the Caribbean, transiting the Panama Canal, and then up the West Coast. It will be the first Panama Canal transit of an AIDA vessel, he noted.

The AIDAdiva continues to Hawaii, where the passengers will be able to celebrate New Year’s, and then on to Asia.

Also, for the winter of 2025, AIDA will be back in Asia, but changing its deployment to Japan and China from Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam this past winter.

“Demand has been very strong for our Asia cruises, so we are going to increase our capacity there for the next two years,” Ewig explained.

“After Covid, we have also introduced more longer cruises roundtrip from Hamburg to the Caribbean, without any air travel involved.”

Called Winter Escapes, the concept is extending to a 43-day cruise aboard the AIDAluna roundtrip from Hamburg to Brazil in January 2026, staying in Rio during carnival.

NORTHERN EUROPEAN FOOTPRINT

AIDA has been increasing its footprint in Northern Europe year-over-year, according to Ewig, with more sailings from Warnemunde, Hamburg and Kiel.

“Sailing from Germany makes our cruises more accessible to the market,” he said. “Our guests do not have to fly but can drive or take the train to the port. This summer we will have 11 of our ships in Northern Europe and three in the Mediterranean.”

As for adjusting itineraries in the Baltic, Ewig said that while Saint Petersburg had been a big attraction in the German market, other destinations such as Helsinki, Riga, Tallinn and Gdansk, are proving to be big draws in the market as well, noting that there is strong demand for this summer’s Baltic cruises.

In addition, AIDA sails to Norway, Iceland and the British Isles on cruises ranging from seven to 14 and 21 days.

“We are also offering cruises in Northern Europe during the winter.

“When the AIDAprima sailed her first winter season in 2016-17, it was the first time a ship was positioned in Hamburg year-round.

“She was also deployed there for the winters of 2021-22 and 2022-23 and was replaced this past winter with the larger AIDAnova, which returns for 2024-25. ►

AIDA



↑ The AIDA Diva's Theatrium will be redesigned and upgraded when she goes into drydock as part of AIDA's Evolution program.

"The cruises are mostly seven and 14 days to what we call the metropolises of Northern Europe and Scandinavia and the Norwegian fjords."

COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

Started two years ago, a unique initiative by AIDA is its so-called dialogue program, meaning the cruise line is engaging with local communities.

Explained Ewig: "Calling in Rotterdam, for example, there are many expensive apartment buildings near the port and there was some pushback. So, we invited people to come aboard the ship and explained our efforts to protect the environment and to be sustainable. We created a dialogue with the community, and the complaints we had went away."

"We try to understand the local communities and their concerns and will offer solutions. This approach has been working very well."

"Take Madeira, for example. They have a sustainability project and reached out to us, asking if we would support it. In this case we are not asking for anything, but offering our support and expertise to the island."

This is something the whole industry should take seriously, according to Ewig, and find ways to interact. He said the initial pushback in Rotterdam was based on misunderstandings and prejudices. Once they entered into a dialogue and the community understood that their concerns were taken seriously, attitudes changed.

SUSTAINABILITY

Having introduced the first LNG-fueled cruise ship and tested alternative power sources, including batteries, Ewig said: "Since we have tested many new concepts, our approach at the moment is to figure out which solutions work and may be viable in the future. You have to be careful not to throw too many balls in the air, since we have to catch them too, and find the best solutions for the future."

"What role can batteries play or e-fuels?" Ewig asked.

(AIDA received an award in May in recognition of its innovative lithium-ion battery energy storage system.)

"One of the gamechangers is shore power, but the issue is still that not many ports have it. If they did, it would contribute greatly to reducing fuel consumption and emissions," he noted.

MARKET LEADER

"After Covid and coming back to the market very successfully last year, our focus is still on growing the market," Ewig said. "Even if we are the clear market leader with 50 percent of the German cruise market, the cruise industry is still a niche in the tourism market, so there is opportunity to grow and get more first-timers to cruise."

"We are still investing heavily. I think we are the biggest investor in cruise marketing in the German-speaking countries. Getting new people onboard the ships is something we have to do as an industry."

AIDA's marketing focus is on Germany as well as German-speaking Austria and Switzerland. The product is very German, the main language onboard the ships is German, and the food is German-oriented.

"I think 90 percent of the German population know AIDA, so when they consider a cruise, AIDA will come to mind first. Around 40 million German households have said they would like to take a cruise."

FORMULA

"We are always working on improving the product we offer our guests," said Ewig. "I am not sure we can reinvent cruising as we did 30 years ago, but we are continuously tweaking our product, developing new concepts, new restaurants and more."

"I like to say that we have 'democratized' cruising. Everything used to be very formal and old fashioned. It was not a very modern form of holiday, and that is still the message in the popular (German) TV show *Dreamboat*. But we changed that and opened cruising up for everybody."

"Everybody is welcome aboard AIDA. If you want to have a good time and try a new holiday, we are the right place."

"We were once a three-star product, but now we have suites and alternative restaurants and also attract guests that want a four-star, even a five-star experience." — Oivind Mathisen



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← The MSC Seashore

Gearing Up for Big Moves

“We’re very excited about the World America,” said Ruben Rodriguez, president MSC Cruises USA. “Normally we get excited about the prototypes, but this is the second ship in the class. The World Europa is super successful. The ship has been very popular with American guests and the ship is the reason we got a lot of Americans to travel to the Emirates that first winter.”

Across the fleet, he said the World Europa was consistently getting the best scores from American guests, which should bode well for when the World America arrives in Miami next April, where she will be based year-round.

The ship will have tweaks for the U.S. market, such as the company’s first sports bar, with indoor and outdoor areas, and

various bar food, plus MSC’s comedy club concept, another first.

“We already have guest entertainers, but with the comedians, we are taking it to a whole new level,” Rodriguez said.

In addition are seven unique districts for the 5,400-guest ship, as well as MSC’s Cliffhanger, where guests are suspended over the side of the ship.

BEST OF

Rodriguez said the World-class ships combine the best features from the Meraviglia and Seaside classes of ships.

“Some of the most popular venues from the World Europa will be on the World America, including the coffee emporium with unique coffee experiences. It has the Gin Project and our brewery. The items Americans love on World Europa will be on World America, but on top of that, we did research and asked guests what they wanted to see, and we were able to implement it.”

Among other highlights is the Family Aventura, a district designed for families.

“We attract a lot of families with kids. They love the water parks, the playgrounds and the ropes course, but they want it all together. They want a space where the family can be together and have a place to relax. There is a lot of shaded seating in that area, and there’s also complimentary dining. Guests can spend an entire afternoon or day enjoying themselves in that district.”

INVENTORY

Rodriguez said the company opened sales on the World America in 2023 and the response from consumers and trade partners had been robust.

“In the next year, you will see a more vocal and aggressive reveal of the ship,” he explained. “There will be two new restaurants, there will be new features for family adventures and more.

“We’re also going to expose consumers and partners more to our partners at the shipyard, as well as the crew that will bring the ship to life.” ►



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↑ Guests can look forward to the Cliffhanger on the MSC World America.

With the World America in service, more changes are slated for the market. The MSC Grandiosa is coming to Port Canaveral for winter 2025-26 as a second ship to sail alongside the Seashore. The Seascape moves to Galveston, where MSC launches year-round service in late 2025. The weeklong cruises will sail on Sundays, with three sea days and calls in Costa Maya, Roatan and Cozumel.

“We’re getting a good response for that. That is a bigger climb for us. Texas is a new market for us and later this year we will start more aggressive marketing.

“Texas is a big cruise market. We’re excited they go cruising, but they may not know MSC. We’re ready for the challenge.”

Rodriguez said the passenger mix may be similar to cruises out of Port

Canaveral, where the company has a higher percentage of American guests aboard.

WHAT'S NEXT

With MSC ships sailing from Miami, Port Canaveral, New York and soon Galveston, the West Coast is next.

“It’s no secret. We’re exploring deploying from the West Coast. We’re exploring options out of Seattle and Los Angeles longer-term. That is a hole in our deployment we need to fill sooner or later. We’re hoping to be able to talk

about that in the next 12 to 18 months.”

Other changes for the U.S. market include new offices. MSC Group has bought over 100,000 square feet of new office space in Miami and will locate its cargo division and offices for MSC Cruises and Explora Journeys in the new space. The shell space is set to be outfitted this year and the company is hoping to move in in early 2025. At the same time, the company will move into a second new office in Broward County for its outbound agents and concierge team. — *Monty Mathisen*

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Costa

All In On European Summer

Early June saw the Costa Diadema plug in to shore power for the first time in Kiel, where it homeports this summer from May through September, sailing weekly itineraries featuring the Norwegian fjords, departing on Fridays.

President Mario Zanetti, who has led the turnaround of the Costa brand, said in prepared statement the debut of shore power in Kiel was just another further step in the brand's decarbonization journey.

MED PROGRAM

Further south, the Costa Fortuna kicked off its new summer itinerary from Athens.

Sailing weekly cruises every Friday through the middle of September, the new itinerary features calls to Istanbul, Mykonos, Crete, Rhodes and Santorini.

Some departures will include a second call in Bodrum, or Kos, instead of Rhodes.

That deployment features a new twist as well, with Costa adding its new "Sea Destination" experience for Fortuna passengers, allowing them to enjoy a unique destination-immersive offering matched to the itinerary.

In Mykonos, Costa hosts a pool-side party, featuring what it said were lights and colors reminiscent of the golden beaches and white houses found in the Greek port. DJs will play music from Mykonos' clubs, promising to keep the party going late.

Carnival's Italian brand has added new shore excursions too, as passen-

gers can visit a local family-run farm in Mykonos and learn about rural traditions and recipes for local dishes, with a sunset barbecue experience at the end of the excursion.

REALIGNMENT

Changes for the Costa brand since 2020 include the shedding of capacity and a realignment toward its core markets in Europe and South America, with less reliance on Asia.

The Venezia, Firenze and Luminosa were transferred to the Carnival Cruise

Line brand and the smaller and older neoRomantica was sold off in 2020.

Earlier this year, the company shed its Florida staff, toning down its presence in the North American market.

With the fleet change, it means Costa is left with one ship year-round in Asia, keeping its presence in the market it once dominated. Meanwhile, the rest of the fleet is in Europe for the summer season.

In winter, the ships spread out with Caribbean programs, Middle East itineraries and a sizable deployment in South America, plus a world cruise. ■



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The big news for TUI Cruises this year was the June launch of Mein Schiff 7. The first cruise ship built as methanol-ready. It will operate on MGO until methanol, and eventually green methanol, becomes available.

The cruise line has entered into an agreement with an energy company, Mabanaft, which plans to supply methanol to the ship in the future, first in Germany, and later elsewhere in Europe.

Meanwhile, work is ongoing to develop the necessary components to enable four-stroke engines to run on methanol, according to TUI, so that Mein Schiff 7 can be methanol-powered by 2026. The technology may also allow future conversions of other ships in the fleet.

Built by Meyer Turku, the 111,500-ton Mein Schiff 7, which is a sister ship to Mein Schiff 1 and 2, will have a guest capacity of 2,894 with a crew of about 1,000.

Among the new features onboard will be cabin categories for solo travelers in addition to new Asian and Italian specialty restaurants.

PREMIUM BRAND

Sailing a seven-ship fleet this year, TUI Cruises, which is targeting the German market, will have an annual capacity of approximately 650,500 passengers, up 10 percent from last year.

More expansion is on the horizon, however, with two more newbuildings arriving in 2025 and 2026: Mein Schiff Relax, and a yet un-named sister ship. Introducing the ships as the InTUItion class, the two newbuilds from Fincantieri, will be significantly larger than the rest of the fleet, at 161,000 tons and 4,000 passengers each, and will be fueled by LNG.

The new ships will boost TUI's passenger capacity by 68 percent by 2026.

Supporting TUI's growth ambitions, nearly 3 million Germans cruised in 2023, the company said, and defined a market potential of 4 to 4.5 million.

Boasting to be a premium, all-inclusive product, TUI's website says that guests don't have to worry about a thing onboard, and least of all their wallets.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

Reporting results for the first half of its fiscal year and second quarter 2024, the TUI Group cited the strong operating performance of its cruise sector, in which TUI Cruises is the largest brand, in addition to Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, also in Germany, and Marella Cruises in the UK market.

The positive earnings performance in the second quarter was attributed to higher capacity utilization and significantly improved rates. The occupancy rate across the three brands rose 6 percentage points year-over-year to 98 percent, and the average rate improved 20 percent to 221 euros.

The occupancy rate for the TUI Cruises brand was reported to be 100 percent for the second quarter, compared to 93 percent in 2023.

The average daily rate was reported to be 169 euros during the second quarter, which was 25 percent higher than last year.

According to the TUI Group, both performance indicators demonstrate strong demand for the German-language product.

Mein Schiff 7 will sail in Northern Europe during her inaugural summer and in the Canary Islands in the winter. ■

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P&O Cruises started the year with its largest ever investment in media advertising for the “Holiday Like Never Before” campaign intended to reach beyond the cruise category and talk to an audience who may never have thought of traveling on a ship before, according to Robert Scott, vice president of brand, marketing and sales.

The most popular destinations booked during the Wave season were the Norwegian fjords, the Caribbean and Atlantic Islands.

The average age of the guests has come down over the past few years, a spokesperson added, showing that the cruise line is attracting a fundamentally new type of guest, which can be attributed to the introduction of new ships into the market, the Iona and Arvia, offering new experiences and itineraries, while challenging the outdated perceptions of what a cruise holiday is.

According to P&O, to attract new audiences, it has also been tapping into current trends, and recent examples of that are its wellbeing and lifestyle cruises.

AIRLINE PARTNERS

P&O Cruises announced its airline partners for the winter 2024-25 season in May, including TUI Airways, Norse Atlantic Airways and Virgin Atlantic flying from different gateways in the UK and on different days to Barbados and Antigua.

Paul Ludlow, P&O president, said in a prepared statement that the cruise line recognizes that flights are a key part of the holiday experience and will ensure that guests have a consistent flight experience matching the quality they would expect from their cruise.

Making the trips easier for the passengers, P&O said all luggage checked in at the airport for the charter flights will be delivered directly to the cabins on the ships in the Caribbean. For the return, luggage is picked up from outside the cabin doors and collected upon arrival at UK airports.

The Arvia and the Britannia will be deployed in the Caribbean during the winter season.

← At 185,500 tons and with a passenger capacity of 5,200, the Arvia and her sister ship, the Iona, are the largest cruise ships ever built for the UK market.

DIFFERENTIATORS

Further seeking to differentiate the brand in the market are new entertainment offerings and dining experiences.

One entertainment option is the *Schhh* show by Nicole Scherzinger, described as a multisensory experience in the Skydome, “which will be transformed into an otherworldly space with ethereal dancers, music and visuals when the sun goes down.”

According to P&O, “passengers can let go, escape and surrender to the night’s spell.”

Other entertainment features include a new magic and illusion show, new Limelight Club performers and more.

On the food and beverage side, the cruise line highlights its so-called Food Heroes, who bring innovative menus and exclusive food experiences to the ships, such as chefs Marco Pierre White, Jose Pizarro, Shivi Ramoutar and Kjartan Skjeldede, who has created Norwegian specialty dishes, and drinks expert Olly Smith.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

P&O stated that its formula for success is never one thing but a combination of many things including the right price, messaging, investment and delivering holiday happiness to its guests.

Continuous market insight identifies who and where future guests are, and research provides insight on how to inspire consumers to choose a cruise for a holiday.

Sailing seven ships, P&O is not only targeting the British family market, but also adults-only, dedicating two ships to the market segment, the Arcadia and the Aurora. The other ships, including the recent additions, the 5,200-passenger Iona and Arvia, are described as family-friendly.

The 2015-built Britannia underwent a drydock and refurbishment this spring that included upgrades of public spaces and staterooms, following drydocks and revamps of the Arcadia and Aurora last year.

In the summer, five ships sail in Northern Europe, turning in Southampton; one ship sails to the Mediterranean from Southampton; and one ship is deployed out of Malta.

During the winter, in addition to the two ships deployed in the Caribbean, one ship sails in the Canary Islands, one ship will be on a world cruise, while the other ships are slated to sail long cruises roundtrip from the UK to the Caribbean, South America and the Middle East. ■

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Marella

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↑ The Marella Voyager

It's going to be the biggest year ever for Marella Cruises, with over 350,000 guests expected across the company's fleet of five ships, said Chris Hackney, managing director.

TUI Group, which owns Marella, reported the cruise line's second quarter occupancy at 99 percent, up from 95 percent a year ago. The daily rate per guest was reported at 197 pounds, up from 181 pounds for the second quarter in 2023.



← Chris Hackney, managing director

Sovereign of the Seas, Seaward, Seabourn Pride, Star Princess, Seabourn Spirit, Club Med 2, Fantasy, Westerdam, Nordic Empress, Crown Princess, Horizon, Silja Serenade, Ecstasy, Regal Princess, Monarch of the Seas, Hanseatic, Silja Symphony, Majesty of the Seas, Dreamward, Zenith, Royal Viking Queen, Club Med 2, Crown Jewel, Graciya, Costa Allegra, Bartlett, Normandie, Woodward, Crown Dynasty, Costa Romantica, Kazakhstan 2, American Adventure, Kong Harald, Richard With, Nordlys, the Seas, Sun Princess, Carnival Destiny, Galaxy, Rhapsody of the Seas, Dawn Princess, Mercury, Grand Princess, Sea Princess, R One, R Two, Voyager of the Norwegian Sky, Seven Seas Navigator, Explorer of the Adventurer of the Seas, Carnival Spirit, Radiance of Seas, Constellation, Coral Princess, Navigator of the the Seas, Serenade of the Seas, Carnival Miracle, Carnival Valor, Pride of America, Norwegian Jewel, Seas, Crown Princess, MBL Mexico, Norwegian MBL Orchestra, Norwegian Gem, Ventura, MBL MBL Fantasia, Celebrity Solstice, MBL MBL Magnifica, Carnival Dream, Silver Spirit, Queen Elizabeth, Allure of the Seas, Z-Austral, Disney Fantasy, Carnival Breeze, MBL Divina, Celebrity Reflection, MBL Preziosa, Royal Princess, Mein Schiff 3, Regal Princess, Quantum of the Seas, Mein Schiff 4, Britannia, Anthem of the Seas, Carnival Vista, Ovation of the Seas, Harmony of the Seas, Mein Schiff 5, Silver Muse, Seabourn Encore, Majestic Princess, MBL Meraviglia, MBL Seaside, Symphony of the Seas, MBL Seaview, Seabourn Ovation, Mein Schiff 1, Aida Helios, Celebrity Edge, Mein Schiff 2, Costa Venezia, MBL Belissima, Spectrum of the Seas, Sky Princess, MBL Grandioza, Carnival Panorama, Celebrity Apex, P&O Zebra, Enchanted Princess, Silver Moon, Odyssey of the Seas, Costa Firenze, Mardi Gras, MBL Virtuosa, Aida Cosma, MBL Seashore, Silver Dawn, Discovery Princess, Wander of the Seas, Celebrity Beyond, Disney Wish, Celebration, MBL Seascope, MBL Enricha, P&O Arvia, Oceania Vista, Leon of the Seas, Celebrity Ascend, Carnival Jubilee

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Three new homeports included Singapore last winter, Marmaris this summer and La Romana for winter 2024-25.

"Customers choose a cruise around destinations, and we are working hard on new deployments," he said.

The company's fly-cruise model means most guests are within a 90-minute drive of a UK airport, and board TUI planes that take them to the ships. It's a seamless experience, said Hackney. It also means the company can vary its deployment thanks to having its own airlift.

"That gives us a huge amount of flexibility with our deployment," Hackney said, noting there are no plans to base ships in the UK.

"Our cruise-and-stay product is popular, with access to hotels through the TUI Group," he continued. "Historically, about 20 percent of our customers will do a week cruise and a week stay at a hotel, and we are looking to push that to 25 percent."

NEXT UP

The Marella Discovery 2 will drydock later this year, with work highlighted by a significant cabin refurbishment for balconies and suites, Hackney said.

Other technical projects include bulbous bow updates across the fleet, waste heat recovery and LED lighting, along with investment in HVAC to make the ships more efficient.

DEPLOYMENT

New next winter is the company's La Romana homeporting program, giving it a new wrinkle in the Caribbean with calls into the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

"We generally operate in the Mediterranean in the summer and the Caribbean and Canaries in the winter. That is our blueprint that has worked successfully," he explained. "It brings the strengths of our airlift and cruise-and-stay product."

The company will have one additional ship in the Canaries for 2024-25 as earlier this year the Marella Discovery 2's program in Asia was cancelled due to the geopolitical situation in the Middle East and the repositioning of the ship back-and-forth to the Far East.

POSITIVE OUTLOOK

"We are in a fortunate position," Hackney added. "The bookings are looking good at the moment. We had a successful winter and the summer season is positive."

"We are conscious in the UK of where our customers are coming from. There is a cost-of-living crisis here and we offer value for money with the all-inclusive proposition we have. That is something we put in a lot of our messaging."

"The key is to make sure the customer experience is phenomenal. We discuss that on a daily basis and look at how to evolve the product proposition. Our customer satisfaction scores are the best they have ever been and we know that directly relates to better retention. If we can get customers coming back, that is the number one goal that will drive all other measures." – *Monty Mathisen*

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The Royal Connection

↓ From the christening of the Queen Anne



↑ Captain Inger Klein Thorhauge, master of the Queen Anne

Introducing the 3,000-passenger Queen Anne this spring, Cunard Line will be bumping up its annual passenger capacity from an estimated 220,000 in 2023 to 304,000 in 2024 and 330,760 in 2025 when all four of its ships will be in service for the full year, according to the *2024 Cruise Industry News Annual Report*.

The Queen Anne was delivered by Fincantieri in April where she had been built at the Marghera shipyard for a reported \$600 million.

She is the fourth ship in Carnival Corporation's Pinnacle class and the 249th ship to sail under the Cunard flag and the third built for Cunard by Fincantieri.

The 113,300-ton, 3,000-passenger Queen Anne joins the Queen Mary 2, the Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Victoria, marking the first time since 1999 that Cunard is operating four ships simultaneously.

OFFICER TEAM

Captain Inger Thorhauge is the master during the Queen Anne's inaugural season, with Yuliy Kostov as deputy captain, Jon Cammish as chief engineer, Robert Howie as hotel director and Stuart Smart as human resources manager. The ship's crew count is approximately 1,225.

The Pinnacle-class ship has a powerplant consisting of four Caterpillar-MaK engines rated at 12.6 MW each. The new ship is also equipped for shore power.

During her debut season, the Queen Anne sails to the Norwegian fjords, the

British Isles, Iceland, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. She embarks on a world cruise in January 2025, sailing 108 days westward roundtrip from Southampton and returning around Africa, calling in Cape Town, Namibia and Senegal, rather than going through the Suez Canal.

GEARING UP

Beefing up its sales efforts with more berths to fill, Cunard named a new president, Katie McAlister, who assumed her position last August, and has named a dedicated sales force for North America in addition to regional sales teams in the UK.

Cunard's key market are the UK and North America.

The new ship is named after Queen Anne, who reigned from 1702 to 1714, and marks what Cunard refers to as the royal history and status of the Cunard brand. ■



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BEFORE



AMK has had a successful collaboration with Celestyal Cruises for many years and feels honored that once again Celestyal has trusted them with the design and aesthetic upgrade of their 2 new ships – The CELESTYAL JOURNEY & CELESTYAL DISCOVERY.

AMK played a key role in the ships; refurbishment, focusing on two primary objectives. First, we aimed to adapt the spaces

and functions of the ship to the Celestyal brand and at the same time, to create the Mediterranean aesthetic on 2 ships that had a completely different identity. Our approach involves incorporating colors, textures and elements that authentically recreate the welcoming atmosphere of the Mediterranean. At the same time, we carefully designed the spaces to be consistent with Celestyal's

philosophy of promoting enjoyment, relaxation, unforgettable experiences and the exploration of unique destinations.

Focusing on CELESTYAL DISCOVERY (formerly Aura / AIDA), the design, colors and functionality seemed to be from another era. Aesthetics were strongly absent and far from the Mediterranean style. The need for a complete makeover was imperative, with little



BEFORE



BEFORE

remaining from the original state. With an extremely tight schedule, design and construction had to be completed in less than 4 months, from December 2023 to mid-March 2024. It took a lot of organization and coordination to meet the deadlines. During the first weeks, the carpets for all the areas had to be designed as their delivery required three months. At the same time, the color schemes were being built, new areas were being designed, specifications were being set. From some point on, design went hand in hand with construction. The uninterrupted and excellent cooperation with the manufacturers was a necessary condition for achieving the deadlines. Flexibility and adaptability were keys to the project's success. The final result of the refurbishment is quite impressive, the ship was completely transformed and proudly joined the Celestyal fleet.



BEFORE



BEFORE



✦ Celestyal has a refreshed fleet.

Big Investments

“We have a renewed fleet. As of March, we are operating two new-to-the-brand vessels and have moved away from the older ships,” said Chris Theophilides, CEO of Celestyal.

The company purchased the 1993-built Celestyal Journey, the former Ryndam, in March 2023, and started operations in September. That was followed by the 2003-built Celestyal Discovery, which was the former AIDAaura and was purchased in November when a previous deal Carnival had to sell the ship fell through. The Discovery entered operations in March. With the fleet refreshed, the 1992-built Crystal and 1982-built Olympia have been retired.

“We have also committed to new operating regions in the Adriatic and Arabian Gulf. The culmination of this means it’s a year-round operation for

us,” added Theophilides. “The headline is investment, not just in hardware, but in people, systems and anything to do with the customer.”

NEXT

The ships and refurbishments were helped by new capital, with private equity joining the Celestyal ownership structure some 24 months ago.

Theophilides said the first phase of cap-ex in both ships was finished, with the investment going into passenger areas on both ships.

The Journey saw a refresh of its premium suite inventory, and now features all new balcony and penthouse suites, enabling the company to triple the number of balconies it has on its weeklong product.

The Discovery saw a significant amount of work in public spaces.

“There is nothing left from the AIDA era,” said Theophilides. “The ship was in good condition but just had a different look and feel for that market. So we’ve completely redone all that and changed the passenger flow, making it more conducive for our three- and four-night cruises.”

A new phase of investment will include exhaust gas cleaning and shore power installations for the Discovery, and shore power and automation systems for the Journey, which already has an exhaust gas cleaning system.

DIFFERENTIATORS

“What distinguishes us is that we have a full in-house management company for technical, marine and hotel operations,” said Theophilides. “That works tremendously in our favor in terms of purchasing. ►



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Celestyal



◀ The Celestyal Discovery will be deployed on the company's short-cruise program this summer.

Europe in 2025 and go around Africa if needed.

Part of the new deployment strategy is an effort to get guests back on the Celestyal ships.

"We surveyed past passengers and found 83 to 86 percent want to come back and sail with us again to different parts of the world," said Theophilides, underscoring that the destination immersion the company offers in Greece will always be core to the program, with a weeklong product and three- and four-night itineraries that typically visit two ports per day.

We stay in ports longer; when there are other ships pulling out we are still there, allowing the guests to immerse themselves in destinations and nightlife.

"We do a benchmark on this every few years and look at potentially outsourcing some items, but we always come out more efficient, especially on the hotel and food and beverage purchasing side."

Theophilides said one of the reasons the company was able to absorb and refurbish capacity quickly and on time was thanks to having its own in-house ship management, thus completely controlling the process.

ITINERARIES

"Our key ingredient has always been differentiating ourselves through our itineraries," Theophilides said. "When we say destination immersion, I really mean it and we show it. We stay in ports longer; when there are other ships pulling out we are still there, allowing the guests to immerse themselves in destinations and nightlife."

That is the recipe, so to speak, the company is leaning on as it opens new operating areas in the Adriatic and Arabian Gulf.

Deployments in both those regions grow in 2025. The company will spend more time in the Adriatic next summer in a butterfly rotation with the Eastern Mediterranean, allowing guests to combine two unique seven-day itineraries into a two-week cruise. The Arabian Gulf deployment will also grow, with a longer season planned for 2025-26.

Theophilides said bookings were good for the Arabian Gulf program and the company was still getting bookings for this season's upcoming repositioning voyage that at press time was scheduled to go through the Suez Canal.

Depending on the security situation, the company may elect to reposition the ship without guests, he said. They have also built in time to reposition to

2027 AND 2028

Celestyal planned to announce its 2026 deployment in June at press time, and Theophilides explained he was already looking at 2027 and 2028.

"We have aspirations to grow and are understanding what that looks like in terms of deployment and how much capacity you can bring on," he said.

"The experience of identifying vessels that make sense for us isn't that straightforward. We are happy with the vessels we brought in, but it is challenging to find a midsized vessel that has the operating specs and capabilities we need for maneuverability and our tendering operations."

While there is no time frame, the company wants first to make sure the initial investments in the Discovery and Journey are completed, and that they are in full year-round operation.

Theophilides said the company would be careful about growth.

"We don't want to lose our charm and what we are known for," he said, noting intimate ships and service delivery. "We want to stay with what is true to the brand and not digress from what made the brand known and successful in the past."

"It's about consistency while growing into other operating areas and delivering what people expect aboard Celestyal." — *Monty Mathisen*

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◆ The Ambition

The 2024-25 season for Ambassador Cruise Line and its two ships features 127 ports, 34 countries and 150,000 nautical miles of deployment, said Nicola Harper, head of distribution.

The company has increased its UK regional departures to 39 from 32, she noted.

In addition, 78 twin cabins on the Ambition and 89 cabins on the Ambience have been allocated as single-cabin occupancy to encourage solo travel.

“While it’s fair to say that the retired market is a key part of our customer base, we are seeing a bigger influx of guests that have sailed with luxury brands previously, and who have said that they’re surprised at how good our offering is. We are also welcoming a lot of ‘new-to-cruise’ guests at the lower end of our age demographic (40 to 50), showcasing the trust and confidence our guests have in us,” Harper said.

2025-26

The company launched its 2025-26 program in March, and Harper said that sales revenue doubled in the first month.

She pointed to the company’s strengths, which includes a commitment to a no-fly cruise program.

“We also ensure that any new products we introduce are very much centered on enhancing the guest experience. Recent innovations include the launch of Ambassador’s first mobile app; a ‘refer-a-friend’ discount scheme; the installation of Starlink onboard both ships; and the introduction of the Ambassador Guarantee, a pledge to reimburse any guest dissatisfied with their cruise and cover their return travel,” Harper said.

The 2025-26 program includes 31 sailings on the Ambience, and 45 on the Ambition. There are five multigenerational sailings, including three taking place during the summer, the most in a season, and featuring the first ever on the Ambition.

Repeat guests represent 44 percent of bookings for the season, she said.

Both ships have seen hefty investments to bring them up to IMO Tier III standards, enabling deployment flexibility, Harper explained.

“There is also a selection of short sailings, offering guests a choice of European City Breaks during the year, including a French Escape in August to Honfleur.

“The longest itinerary is the 40-night Jewels of the Caribbean sailing, departing in January 2026 on the Ambience,” said Harper.

WHAT'S NEXT

Despite exponential increases in travel costs and a cost-of-living surge in the UK, Harper said business was doing quite well, as consumers were looking for a premium value option.

“We are an agile and flexible business and have proved ourselves able to adapt to changing situations,” she said.

“Our full accounts are yet to be published for the fiscal year ending March 2024, but projections indicate the business will significantly increase its revenues and its profitability despite operational obstacles, record-high fuel prices and an inflationary and unfavorable macroeconomic environment.

“We are looking at a number of opportunities, and there are many, but we have yet to make any decision for the moment,” said Harper, when asked if the company would continue expanding.

“However, growth has to be natural and when the time is right and we look to expand our fleet, we will focus on small-to mid-sized ships as they distinguish us from the larger vessels that are now commonplace, and offer a point of difference, which we know our guests appreciate.” ■

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New Look Hamburg



Plantours has a new look with a refreshed brand and more, according to Managing Director Oliver Steuber.

The 400-guest Hamburg saw its livery updated following a spring drydock in Turkey. The ship also had significant

emissions- and efficiency-related engine work done, he said.

Gone is the traditional yellow funnel and white hull, which has been replaced by an updated blue livery with a new logo. The new slogan *So Close To The*

World expresses the company's itineraries and the need to see places in person.

The ship's next drydock, anticipated in 2026, will include significant hotel updates.

DEPLOYMENT MOVES

Steuber said the freshened brand, which caters to the German-speaking market with a premium product offering and unusual itineraries, also included some product changes, with longer cruises being planned and some shifts in deployment strategy.

While the Hamburg heads to the Caribbean and spends a lot of time in Cuba this winter, the 2025-26 season is much different, featuring a long 133-day voyage roundtrip from Hamburg.

"It's not a world cruise, and available in segments. We are spending New Year's in Rio, going to Antarctica and heading to Cape Town," he said.

The company wants to do more soft expedition cruising, Steuber continued, and with temperatures on the rise in Europe, he said the Northern European season can now start in April as opposed to May. Steuber also said that the company intends to rotate in and out of deployment in Antarctica on a biannual basis.

2025 ADJUSTMENTS

The height of the 2025 season will include more cruises in the Channel Islands as well as Greenland. The company will take a break from its traditional Great Lakes deployment.

Steuber said he is looking at a potential long voyage from Hamburg to Chicago and back for 2026. Other wish list items include Asia, where the company has its eye on Japan and Indonesia, he noted.

While Plantours has been adding capacity with its riverboats in Europe, the 400-guest Hamburg could eventually be joined by a second cruise ship.

"We're always checking opportunities to buy a second ship," Steuber said. "There are some ships on the market. It's not a must but we are always looking. We would want something bigger, in the 600- to 900-guest range." — *Monty Mathisen*

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"Our advantage is our ships. At 550 to 1,200 guests, they offer an alternative to the crowds," said Michael Schulze, director of cruise at the Bonn-based tour and cruise operator Phoenix Reisen.

"Each of our ships is unique and with a maritime atmosphere while also modernized with what we call a 'welcome home' atmosphere for our guests. They have such features as all-around promenade decks, a classic open stern, open bridge wings and a lookout area where our guests can observe the bridge.

"Our cruises are global with constantly changing itineraries," Schulze continued.

"We are the last privately-run, medium-sized cruise company and probably enjoy the highest repeat rate of any brand, at nearly 70 percent."

He added that demand is strong and pricing is up in the German market.

HIGH STANDARDS

Shortly after the pandemic, Phoenix Reisen embarked on an ambitious renewal program with the Amara, which went into drydock at the Remontowa yard in Gdansk from October 2023 to February 2024 for a complete overhaul including new engines, exhaust, propulsion, hull coating, bow thrusters, shore power, safety equipment and more.

Schulze described the program as a huge investment in the fleet, noting that 50 million euros were spent on the Amara.

The 1988-built ship was brought up to 2024 technical standards, he commented, in addition to staterooms, public spaces and crew areas being upgraded as well.

Another 20 million euros were spent on the Amadea and Deutschland in drydock in April and May.

The 1991-built Amadea was refreshed at Lloyd Werft Bremerhaven, while the 1998-built Deutschland was renovated at the Bredo yard in Bremerhaven.

The 1984-built Artania is scheduled for drydock at Lloyd Werft in October and November.

OCEANS AND RIVERS

Phoenix Reisen operates the Amadea, Amara and Artania year-round and the Deutschland seasonally, in addition to a fleet of nearly 40 river vessels with the latest newbuild, the Amina, joining the fleet earlier this year.

Another newbuild, the Aurelia, is set to join next year, sailing five-day cruises on the Rhine in the Netherlands and on the Danube.

Among upcoming ocean cruises, an 80-day sailing around Africa aboard the Amadea has been replaced with new itineraries, including a 50-day cruise roundtrip from Hamburg starting October 8 to the Azores, Bermuda, the Caribbean, Cape Verde and the Canary Islands, Schulze noted. For 2024-25, the company is also sailing its longest world cruise ever, 162 days aboard the Artania.

2025 will also feature more cruises out of Germany, with 55 turnarounds in Bremerhaven.



↑ The Amara calling in New York this spring.

FORMULA

The Phoenix Reisen formula is straight forward, according to Schulze: “Good ships offering a premium quality experience, great itineraries and food, professional partners and suppliers putting their heart into the product, and authentic and personal treatment of guests, making them feel welcome aboard the ship, and one language (German).” –

Oivind Mathisen



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Unique Product in French Polynesia



✦ The 48-guest Panorama II sails year-round in Tahiti.

Variety Cruises is deployed in French Polynesia through 2026, according to Filippos Venetopoulos, CEO, who said the company was coming off a strong first year in the region in 2023 and had made some operational adjustments for 2024.

With the 48-guest, 20-crew Panorama II sailing in French Polynesia, Variety has tweaked its itineraries to spend less time in the open ocean, while offering more inclusions as well as excursions in its ticket price, Venetopoulos said, making it a competitive offering.

The company offers a weeklong and 10-night product in the region, and travel advisors can benefit from a sell three and sail free campaign, as for every three

rooms sold, the company will give an advisor a free stateroom.

“The biggest selling point for us is that we dock at every island, which is very rare,” Venetopoulos said. “While other ships are using tenders, we are dockside and our guests get the flexibility.”

The company has worked closely with its local port agent in the region to assist the Greece-based company with the operation, said Venetopoulos, who also added that they work closely with the other operators in the region on provisioning.

In addition, Variety has hired a local tour guide and has a local French Polynesian chef aboard, he said.

The Panorama II underwent a refurbishment before its repositioning to

French Polynesia, and guests can look forward to an abundance of outdoor deck space, which is utilized for everything from dining to sunrise yoga.

“The next big challenge for us is where we are going to drydock the ship,” Venetopoulos said.

While other operators in the area generally sail to Singapore for a drydock, Variety is planning to drydock the ship in French Polynesia.

The smaller ship will be able to fit in a local drydock, he said, and the company plans to bring its own technicians in and work with local companies as well, helping support the region economically. ■

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◀ The Hanseatic Inspiration was drydocked at Lloyd Werft in May.

Hapag-Lloyd Cruises cancelled the Hanseatic Spirit's 2024-25 winter season in Antarctica in May, in favor of putting the 230-guest luxury/expedition ship in Northern Europe for the winter instead. It trims the company's Antarctica deployment from three ships to two.

Cancelled voyages include a total of 12 cruises that were previously scheduled to take place between October 31, 2024, and April 22, 2025.

The deployment move was in response to feedback from guests who showed interest in winter expeditions sailing from German homeports, according to

Hanseatic Updates



the company, which had offered them previously on the Hanseatic Nature during the 2023-24 season.

While the Hanseatic Nature and the Hanseatic Inspiration are set to offer programs in Antarctica, the Hanseatic Spirit will sail from Germany for itineraries to the Norwegian fjords, Western Europe and the Baltic.

In other company news, the Hanseatic Inspiration was at Lloyd Werft in May for a quick drydock.

According to Captain Ulf Wolter, the bow thrusters were serviced as part of the technical scope of the project, which also included stabilizer, rudder and propeller maintenance, which was necessary for the renewal of the ship's class certificate.

The drydock included 100 crew that stayed on the ship and helped with interior work, plus around 300 employees from various subcontractors, and another 120 from the shipyard.

The "to-do" list featured some 250 items of work. Interior work included sprucing up the reception area, stairwells, the pool deck, spa and staterooms.

Isolde Susset, head of expedition cruises and tourism, said that since the ship was delivered in 2019, no major work had been necessary yet, but they took the time to respond to guest requests.

These included installing underfloor heating in the bathrooms of the ship's grand suites. Other feedback from guests said closets in staterooms were difficult to open. As a result, all the closet doors now have a new locking system. ■

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Nicko



Refreshed Vasco da Gama

Following a stay in the drydock at Lisnave the Vasco da Gama debuted in May on a cruise from Lisbon with new bathrooms installed in all its outside cabins on Deck 4.

Nicko Cruises also spent time and money on the infotainment system aboard, and now German TV channels are available to guests.

More maintenance work included new windows, new carpets, fresh varnish on wood floors, furniture repair and a new modern bathroom in the ship's penthouse suite, plus new balcony doors.

On the technical side, the hull received a new coating and the drive shaft was completely removed, overhauled by the manufacturer and then extensively tested during sea trials.

The HVAC system was also overhauled, according to the company, and there was extensive renovation work carried out in the pool area on Deck 11.

Mystic's German brand targets the premium market, spends more time in port and the Vasco da Gama is the line's only ocean ship. The former Statendam was acquired at auction during the pandemic and sails alongside a big river fleet for the German operator.

Among current deals, the company offers 15 percent discounts on early-bird bookings and only charges a 15 percent single supplement.

A long world cruise departs in October and goes through March.

Those that sail all eight segments can look forward to staying aboard for 148 days and sailing from Crete. Pricing starts at just under 24,000 euros per person.

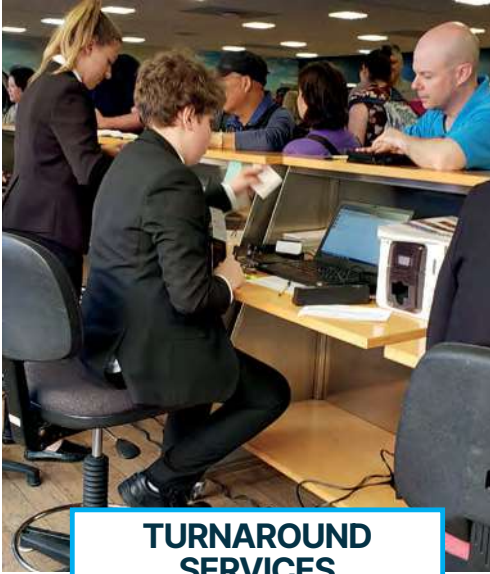
Special benefits for those aboard the world cruise include complimentary wine and beer at all main meals, which the company usually charges for or includes in a paid beverage package. Guests also get free laundry service, and those that are staying on for the entire world cruise, or multiple segments, get free half-day shore excursions in turnaround ports.

For those booking the entire 148-day cruise, Nicko is giving away two free cabins per booking for one (selected) segment, allowing guests to bring family and friends aboard.

With the world cruise wrapping up in Tenerife next March, the Vasco da Gama will be back in position for her spring season in the Mediterranean before she is slated to sail in Northern Europe for the 2025 summer season. ■

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Doing It Different

When a Fred. Olsen ship calls in the Shetland Islands, guests are guided to a farm where Shetland ponies are raised. These iconic little horses are carefully bred to preserve their trademark stature, heavy coat, and surprising strength.

It's the sort of quiet, off-the-beaten-path excursion that typifies Fred. Olsen, where boutique journeys are both pastoral and charmingly unique, said Clare Ward, the line's director of product and customer services.

"We know that our guests want to have real, genuine experiences when they are ashore with us and we have a team here who are passionate about developing our shore tours to help guests to really experience and immerse themselves in the local way of living," Ward said.

BUSY BRITISH MARKET

Fred. Olsen sails three ships, the Bolette, the Borealis, and the Balmoral, each with less than 1,400 passengers. The intimacy is the strength of the brand, Ward said, as it allows for attentive service from a thoughtful crew.

As the small ship market and British market grow more crowded, Fred. Olsen relies on in-depth knowledge of its customer to stay ahead.

"It's this level of personal customer service that sets us apart in what is a very busy cruise market. Our ships are small enough so that our crew can remember what a guest's favorite tippie is and where they like to sit in our lounges," she said.

"We have also invested significant time and energy in understanding who our guests are and the types of experiences they want to have when they sail with us, and have used that knowledge to evolve our product in recent years. We've not reinvented the wheel with this, and continue to be a destination-led cruise line that targets the 55-plus market. But more than ever we understand that it's less about age and more about mindset."

WHERE AND HOW

The line remains primarily a UK product, sailing from Dover, Southampton, Portsmouth, Liverpool, Newcastle and Rosyth through at least 2026. In March, Fred. Olsen unveiled its 2025-26 program that included a return to fly-cruising as well, with the Balmoral sailing from several Mediterranean ports from September 2025.

"What we don't do here at Fred. Olsen is 'cookie cutter' or 'A to B' cruises, where a ship will sail the same route over and over again. We have a high number of repeat cruisers, and want our guests to be able to have new and exciting experience," Ward said.

"All of our itinerary planning is curated from scratch here by an in-house team, who are experts at what they do. We also put great emphasis on visiting places at the best time of year too, whether that's to offer the best chance to experience a natural event such as the Northern Lights, Midnight Sun, or sailing into the heart of the Norwegian fjords in the spring when the waterfalls are at their strongest, to coinciding with special events ashore."

Operating older ships requires a constant eye on efficiency and sustainable practices. It's something guests want and it's the right thing to do, Ward said.

"We are constantly reviewing the way we sail and the measures we can take to tread lighter on the planet through a reduction in our waste, improving energy efficiency and using better fuel," she said. "We are also more creative with our itinerary planning, allowing more time to sail between ports to reduce the amount of fuel we use. Minimizing our environmental impact is a journey that never ends, and we're always reviewing our operations and looking for greener ways to sail our seas." – *Mat Probasco*

CRUISING INTO A GREENER HORIZON

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CARNIVAL NAVIGATING PROCUREMENT



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There are a lot of cost pressures now. There is a lot of inflation and we are always looking for different ways, or different products, where we can use our buying leverage.

12-night sailings from Dover, departing on May 18 and June 29.

Restart

“Last year was all about the restart,” Dennis continued. “And now our supplier base has gotten much better with their fulfillment rates, but we are probably about 4 percentage points behind where we were pre-pandemic.

“We are still trying to work with our suppliers to make sure they have the goods we need and that comes with forecasting and stock levels.”

For those suppliers, it also means more business than ever before. While Carnival Cruise Line has retired some older and smaller ships, it has grown significantly since the pandemic. The Mardi Gras, Celebration and Jubilee added over 15,000 newbuild berths, and the Luminosa, Venezia and Firenze all transferred from Costa, adding significantly more capacity.

“Confirmation of what is coming is very important to us. Suppliers should communicate if there is a shortage so we can help the vessels that may be impacted,” Dennis advised.

“There are a lot of cost pressures now. There is a lot of inflation and we are always looking for different ways, or different products, where we can use our buying leverage.” ■

WHEN IT COMES TO THE SUPPLY CHAIN, HURDLES SURROUND DEPLOYMENT IN EUROPE, ACCORDING TO RALPH DENNIS, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT FOR FOOD, HOTEL, BAR AND IT AT CARNIVAL CRUISE LINE.

“We ran into some challenges with our new ship, the Jubilee, last year,” he said. The new ship entered service out of Galveston, Texas, in late December following its delivery in Germany from the Meyer Werft shipyard.

“We had several containers held up right before delivery, and we were able to make it work. Those containers eventually came back from Europe to

Galveston, which was pretty expensive and nerve racking,” he said.

Europe 2024 and 2025

As of late March, speaking at the Marine Hotel Association Conference and Trade Show, Dennis pointed to the summer season in Europe.

“That is the big item for us right now, figuring out how to get some food and bar items to the UK,” he explained.

Tightening restrictions in the EU combined with Brexit have made importing just about any food item into the UK significantly more challenging for all cruise operators.

For Carnival, 2024 includes two departures from the UK on the Legend from Dover, sailing in June and July for 12 nights and heading to Iceland.

Summer 2025 is similar, although with a ship switch as the Miracle offers two

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▲ Heroes Tribute Bar & Lounge

DANIEL CAPELLA

CARNIVAL LOCAL TOUCHES

“We’re investing heavily in local ingredients,” said Eric Brown, director of beverage operations at Carnival Cruise Line.

“We feel that a ship homeporting in Galveston needs to reflect the community. So with the Jubilee, we have Texas made products aboard.”

Brown also pointed to Carnival’s new Heroes Tribute Bar & Lounge, which was recently added to more ships after routine drydocks.

The venue is an ongoing recognition of sacrifices made by armed services personnel and their families.

Local

“We’ve also incorporated quite a few veteran-owned brands into these areas so we’re giving recognition to our proud U.S. veterans,” said Brown.

Other unique items across the fleet are ship-tailored experiences. The Mardi Gras has the Fortune Teller, paying tribute to New Orleans and its French

Quarter with Victorian elegance and a mysterious look.

Farther north, the Venezia is sailing from New York and offering Carnival’s Italian-themed cruise product.

“There are a lot of aperitifs and bitters and things like that,” said Brown.

“We have found a lot of success in our beverage package purchases, but we have also found a number of guests still don’t buy the big package. They want to purchase individually as they feel they get more bang for their buck.”

Sustainable

Carnival is on track to significantly reduce glass bottle usage this year, having partnered with Bacardi and ecoSPIRITS.

The pilot program features reusable containers developed by ecoSPIRITS to serve Bacardi rum, in turn reducing single-use packaging (glass bottles) by 95 percent.

The rum will be transferred from the ecoTOTE to a serving format using ecoSPIRITS’ SmartPour technology.

“

We are on track to reduce our use of glass bottles by 300,000 this year, and that is across four ships.

After a three-month pilot program last year on three ships, the program has been expanded in 2024.

“We are on track to reduce our use of glass bottles by 300,000 this year, and that is across four ships,” said Brown.

As far as trends, beer has kind of “mellowed out” after peaking, said Brown.

“Wine is still doing well as long as we lean on our specialty restaurants for their culinary input, and we design our wine program around what their vision is for the culinary side,” he explained.

“Spirits are what seems to be driving the numbers these days. But, it’s not just a shot of this or a regular gin and tonic. That gin and tonic needs to be something different, maybe with a Mediterranean twist or an extra garnish that speaks to the cocktail.

“It needs to be memorable instead of just poured in a glass and served. We want the presentation to create a memory and we’re focused hard on creating those experiences.” ■



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ROYAL CARIBBEAN GROUP MASTERING GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN



The Celebrity Edge is based in Alaska this summer, where the company is harnessing AI to predict consumption patterns.

“AS WE LAUNCH NEW HARDWARE, IT IS CHALLENGING FROM A SUPPLY CHAIN PERSPECTIVE. WE HAVE UNIQUE RESTAURANTS ABOARD. HOW DO WE PROVISION FOR THEM?” ASKED VINA JUMPP, ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL HOTEL, FOOD AND BEVERAGE PROCUREMENT AT ROYAL CARIBBEAN GROUP.

“Last year the Celebrity Edge worked its way from Dubai to Australia. One of the challenges we had was looking at how to provide fresh fish for our guests. We were able to accomplish this with new technology, nitro-freezing fish,” she said, speaking at the Marine Hotel Association event that took place in March.

“We also look at synergies for arbitrage,” she continued. “How do we ship

out of Tokyo to Australia? The marketplace is always changing, and we cannot remain stagnant. We have to keep moving and looking for new technologies, new suppliers and innovative solutions.”

As the company rebuilds its Asia programs coming out of the pandemic, Jumpp had just spent two weeks in Shanghai, Singapore and Tokyo.

“There is a lot of potential there for us in the supply chain,” she said.

“South America is growing slowly but continues to be very challenging.”

Challenges

“A couple of years ago we had to ship about 20 containers back from Europe,” Jumpp recalled. “We could not clear them back into the U.S. It was not so simple. And then what do you do with that inventory? It’s important to understand the restrictions and educate the supplier base.”

Jumpp said the company had been holding supplier conferences in an effort to help and showcase best practices.

“One incorrect certification and an entire container could be held,” she explained. “When it comes to animal products, it’s important to understand the

components that make up that product. One of the biggest items we exported for American guests in Europe was cookies. We can’t export those anymore due to regulations.”

AI Tool

Jumpp said that Royal Caribbean had introduced a new AI tool to help forecast consumption and what items ships would need, taking into account guest demographics, load factors and itinerary.

“The data we are getting for our base forecast is more accurate,” she said. “For example, if we have ships in Alaska for the summer, we want to finish the season with little inventory left. The AI tool is helping us in Alaska more than anywhere else. Forecasting is critical and we have to be responsible to our supplier base. Are we using too much? Are we using too little? Are we on target and if we are not, how do we fix the root cause?”

Jumpp advised suppliers to look at the company’s deployment for opportunities.

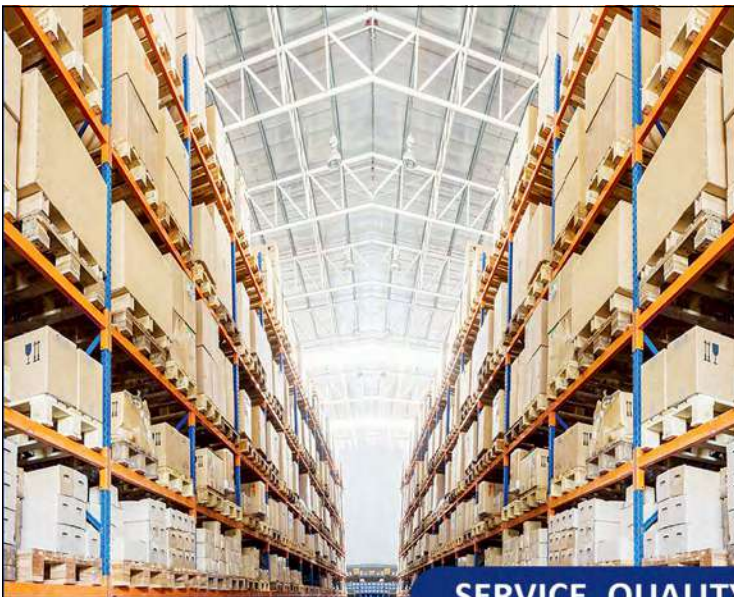
“Galveston and the Northeast are big opportunities,” she said. “Focus where the ships are. If you want to expand, that’s the place to be.” ■

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NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE

EVOLVING BEVERAGE PROGRAM



The Norwegian Viva features the Metropolitan Bar, serving sustainable drinks.

NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE DID ROUGHLY \$1 BILLION IN BEVERAGE-RELATED REVENUE IN 2023, RANGING FROM COCKTAILS TO WATER, COFFEE AND SODA.

“When you eat, you start with a beverage and sometimes end with one, which is why beverage has become a celebrity,” said Luis Ortega, director beverage development and operations, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings.

With many guests opting into Norwegian’s beverage package, either paying for it or having it included as part of their ticket bundle, Ortega said that approximately 80 percent of beverage revenue was from passengers on various versions of the company’s unlimited drink packages.

“

Our biggest innovation has been sustainability.

“When you have new ships with so many new locations, we have the flexibility to innovate and bring in new things, and different options, whether that is a whiskey bar, or a beer or wine concept,” Ortega said.

Among those new concepts on the Norwegian Prima and Viva has been the Metropolitan Bar, offering sustainable craft cocktails and biodynamic wines.

To be eligible to partner with the Metropolitan Bar, vendors are required to present their sustainability initiatives to the company.

Some examples include cocktails utilizing residual coffee grounds, recycling banana peels into syrup, and repurposing misshapen croissants that would otherwise go to waste.

“Our biggest innovation has been sustainability,” he continued. “We were the first to get rid of plastic straws seven years ago. That was a big decision at the time as it cost us a quarter of a million dollars. From there we continued to take small steps and today, we’ve gotten rid of almost every single bottle. Everything is in cans.”

Ortega said that the company’s mid-sized ships were using five tons of plastic over a seven-day cruise.

“The bigger ships were using 10 tons of plastic. Imagine how much work that was for the crew. In addition to that, we were paying to recycle.”

As far as trends, Ortega said that over his 40-year career in the industry, the number one cocktail has always been and currently is the piña colada.

“It’s not even on the menu and it’s the number one drink.” ■



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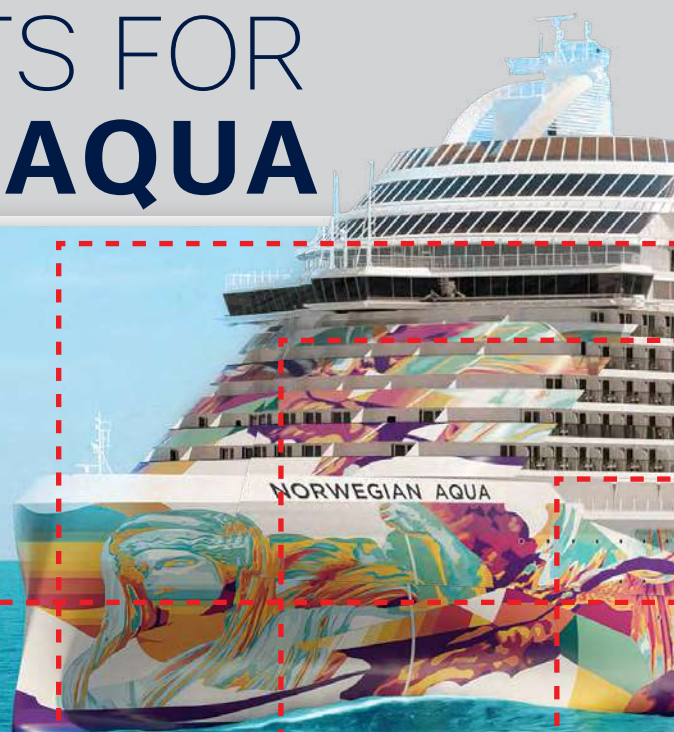
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SET TO DEBUT IN 2025, THE NEW NORWEGIAN AQUA WILL FEATURE A NUMBER OF NEW DINING OPTIONS AND SOME CHANGES TO RETURNING FAVORITES.



Metropolitan Bar

The Metropolitan Bar will return with a new design inspired by art deco and the mid-century modern areas of New York City. The bar also relocates from mid ship to aft.



Palomar

First introduced by the Norwegian Prima, the upscale Mediterranean seafood dining venue is making its return with more space.



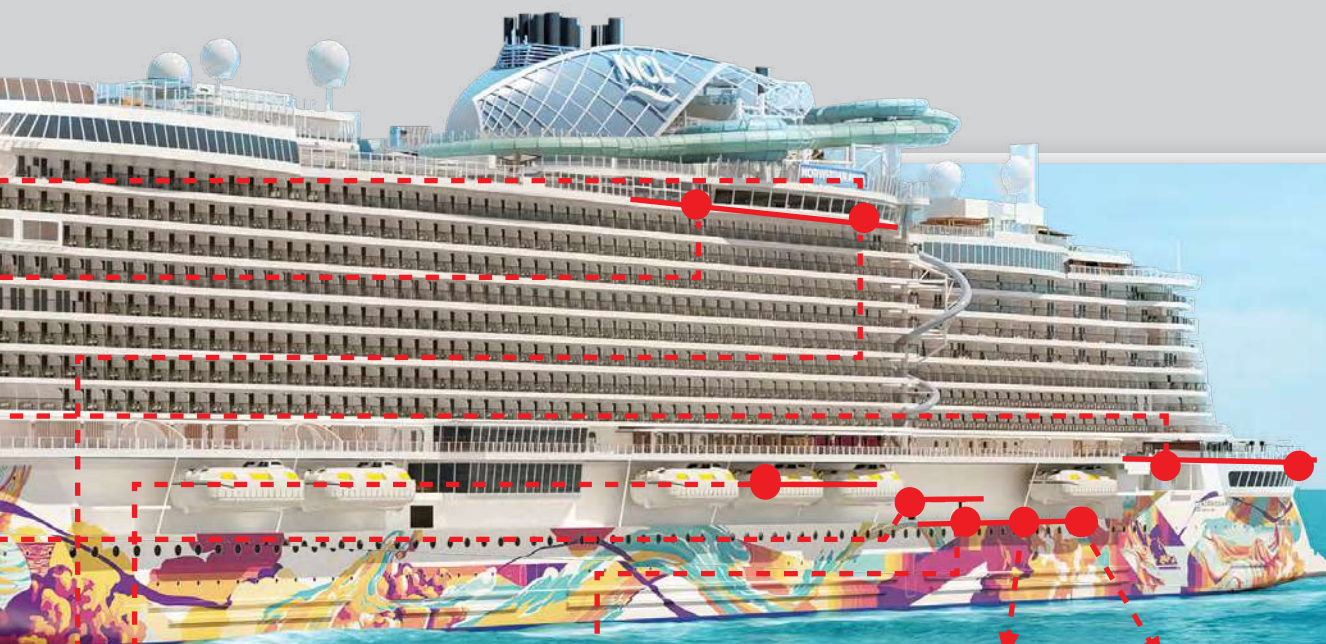
Sukhothai

One of the new dining venues is Sukhothai, serving authentic Thai cuisine. The menu includes dishes like Gai Pad King, marinated Ginger Chicken with bell pepper, mushrooms, Thai chili, and scallions; Nam Tok char-broiled beef with chilies and lime juice; and classics like Papaya Salad and Pad Thai.



Planterie

Another new dining venue is Planterie. Located in the ship's Indulge Food Hall, the food station features plant-based dishes like tofu poke bowls and a Mediterranean Goddess Bowl filled with spiced vegetables, tabbouleh and honey-roasted carrots.



Surfside Café

The Aqua's buffet-style dining venue has floor-to-ceiling windows and is open for three meals a day.



Hasuki

Hasuki is being expanded as the hibachi and sushi venue has additional seating.



The Commodore Room

The ship's main dining room has a new design for the Aqua, with a rustic yet luxurious look featuring wood furnishings, leather banquettes and floors that mimic the lines of a pier.



Cagney's Steakhouse

Cagney's Steakhouse gets a new design that celebrates the 20th-century modernist feel of Chicago, and more seating.



Swirl Wine Bar

Also new is the Swirl Wine Bar. The company calls it the perfect balance between exclusivity and approachability for a unique, intimate experience.



Indulge Food Hall

A signature feature of the Prima-class ships, Indulge Food Hall is back with its food truck-like concept and a brand new design.

MARGARITAS AND CHEESEBURGERS ARE MUSIC TO THEIR EARS



The Tiki Bar and Grill Island Eats

Eric Neuwirth, director of food and beverage

THE CRUISE LINE HAD PLENTY OF MATERIAL TO DRAW FROM, INCLUDING THE SUCCESSFUL LAND-BASED RESORTS, WHEN BUILDING A CULINARY PROGRAM FOR MARGARITAVILLE'S TWO SHIPS, THE PARADISE AND THE FRESH-FROM-DRYDOCK ISLANDER, SAID ERIC NEUWIRTH, DIRECTOR OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE.

“Looking first to the legacy of the Margaritaville brand is always an important place to start. Whether it’s gathering inspiration from Jimmy Buffett himself, or the lifestyle he lived, we have so much freedom to build a food and beverage program,” said Neuwirth. “The Margaritaville brand, and all the properties within its portfolio, push to

deliver an elevated and differentiated experience with food and beverage. Margaritaville is our true north that allows us to dream up island-inspired creations with a chef-crafted twist that put ingredients and quality preparation at the forefront.”

Buffett fans, known as Parrotheads, adore names and themes playing on his 32 studio albums and six books.

5 o’Clock Somewhere

There’s room for a diversity of offerings within the brand, Neuwirth said. With the elevated JWB Prime Steakhouse or the carefree state of mind at a 5 o’Clock Somewhere Bar, the line has created a unique spin on Buffett lore that speaks to cruisers, he said.

“We have familiar favorites like Cheeseburger in Paradise Burger Bar as well as new-for-Margaritaville-at-Sea flavors like Island Eats, with fun mash-ups like Sea-Cuterie Boards. We very much keep in mind that guests, especially guests of all ages, are looking for variety on longer cruises. We get to push the envelope, thinking up ways for them to find our signature brand of fun,



“

We usually push out more than 1,875 margaritas each day on the Paradise, which translates to around 80 to 90 bottles of tequila.

no matter the venue, menu, or meal,” Neuwirth said.

Paradise to Islander

The Cheeseburger in Paradise Burger Bar has been carried over from the Paradise to the new Islander, as has Fins, the main dining room that Neuwirth said was a surprise hit.

“Several signature favorites, like Key Lime Sponge Cake, have made the jump to the new ship,” he said. “We’re excited to launch Mexican Cutie Cantina too, where guests will take that same build-it-your-way approach to tacos. Because, let’s be honest, is there anything better than sitting back in the sun by the pool with tacos and an ice-cold margarita?”

Keeping it all going is a team effort, Neuwirth said, especially in the age of labor and supply shortages.

“We have an incredible team and really great vendors, but like any entity in the hospitality space, we have hiccups

from time to time,” he said. Overcoming obstacles requires keeping nimble, even more so when rolling out a new ship.

“The variety of restaurants aboard the Islander also lets us wander into uncharted waters and deliver something new. We’re offering boba tea at Far Side Sushi, close to our Far Out Arcade and Teen’s Club, because we know it’s a family-friendly favorite. We’re introducing the Bubbles Up Lounge and Champagne Bar for guests looking for something to kick off their evening meal in the Islander Dining Room. Plus, we have three pools, all with a differentiated atmosphere, and the food and beverage program at each will match the vibe of the experience.”

Shakers of Salt

And where would a margarita-themed cruise line be without its beverage program?

Each of the thirteen bars and lounges have their own signature margarita highlighting the venue’s ambiance.

“The pineapple vanilla margarita is a personal favorite,” Neuwirth said.

“Some of our venues will have completely different offerings. There are classic champagne cocktails like the Kir Royale or French 75 at Bubbles Up Lounge and Champagne Bar or guests can head to the Tiki Bar, an adults-only lounge, for over 18 different rums from the Caribbean and around the world. Wine drinkers will always be able to find the right selection with over 75 different wines offered.”

Overall, Neuwirth said, the beverage program is well thought out and robust, covering 13 venues on the Islander. A guest can sit back by the adults-only pool with a cocktail or catch the game with a cold draft beer at Havana Daydreamin’ Sports Bar and Lounge.

Tequila, of course, goes quickly.

“We usually push out more than 1,875 margaritas each day on the Paradise, which translates to around 80 to 90 bottles of tequila. I’ve stopped counting the limes so don’t ask!” he said. “I’m confident that whether a guest is looking for the perfect pour of something tall and strong or a delicately balanced cocktail, we’re ready to deliver.” —*Mat Probasco*



WINDSTAR STAYING ON TREND

“THE WILLINGNESS OF OUR GUESTS TO SPEND, COMPARED TO PRE-PANDEMIC, HAS DOUBLED, AND IN SOME CASES, TRIPLED,” SAID PETER TOBLER, DIRECTOR OF HOTEL OPERATIONS AT WINDSTAR CRUISES.

“**B**everage revenue is through the roof for us right now. It’s about localization and immersive experiences. This could be shopping with the sommelier or beverage manager, going to local markets and bringing products back aboard. That is what we are into,” he said, speaking at the Marine Hotel Association event that took place in March.

“We also offer shopping with the chef, so the guests can join the chef going to a local market, purchase local products and bring them back aboard; and they are featured that evening on the menu,” Tobler continued.

Tobler said that both food and beverage menus have also been regionalized to local markets and areas.

“In Tahiti we have a ship year-round, so we go out and buy local rum. French Polynesia is also world famous for its va-

nilla, so the likelihood of having a vanilla-infused cocktail on the menu is very high.”

10 Years with JBF

2025 will mark Windstar’s decade-long anniversary with the James Beard Foundation as select sailings bring aboard James Beard chefs for dinners, wine pairings, cooking demonstrations and more.

To mark the milestone, Windstar will be welcoming five all-star chefs aboard, four who have previously sailed with the cruise line as part of the partnership and are said to be guest favorites. The five chefs are: Jamilka Borges, José Mendin, Jennifer Hill Booker, Jennifer Jasinski, and Larry Forgione, who is new to Windstar.

Changes to the program include tweaking the beverage side.

“Two years ago we partnered with the luxury division of a well-known wine institution out of Napa Valley and brought them aboard the ships,” said Tobler. “We are pairing our James Beard Foundation chefs with the luxury division of a wine association and it’s paying off very well.”

SOS

Another trend has been plant-based foods, gluten-free and SOS-free, meaning salt, oil and sugar free.



Peter Tobler, director of hotel operations

“

It’s about localization and immersive experiences.

“We have a lot of theme cruises and charters, and some large groups that are purely based on the SOS style of living,” Tobler said.

“The plant-based smoothies we serve at breakfast literally fly out the door. Not only that, but we have created some zero-proof cocktails that are vinegar based and are very popular.

“We are catering to an affluent market and a demographic that is well traveled. They have opted to go down this healthy route and we have to cater to them from both the food and beverage side.” ■

UPCOMING JAMES BEARD 10TH ANNIVERSARY SAILINGS

**CHEF JAMILKA BORGES****DATE:** March 15, 2025**DURATION:** 7 Days**ITINERARY:** Windward Ways & Tobago Cays: Aruba to Bridgetown**SHIP:** Star Pride**CHEF JOSÉ MENDIN****DATE:** April 12, 2025**DURATION:** 8 Days**ITINERARY:** Spanish Symphony: Lisbon to Barcelona**SHIP:** Wind Surf**JENNIFER HILL BOOKER****DATE:** June 29, 2025**DURATION:** 11 Days**ITINERARY:** Baltic Beauty: Stockholm to Copenhagen**SHIP:** Star Legend**CHEF JENNIFER JASINSKI****DATE:** August 27, 2025**DURATION:** 9 Days**ITINERARY:** Adriatic Archipelagos & Greek Goddesses: Venice to Athens**SHIP:** Wind Surf**CHEF LARRY FORGIONE****DATE:** October 7, 2025**DURATION:** 12 Days**ITINERARY:** Southeast Canadian Explorations: Montreal to New York**SHIP:** Star Pride



▲ The U.S.-flagged Sea Lion



▲ The National Geographic Islander II

LINDBLAD RESPONDING TO CHANGING REGULATIONS

“For us, the biggest challenge has been changing regulations in the various countries we are traveling to and shipping supplies to,” said Bruce Tschampel, vice president, operational and strategic services, Lindblad Expeditions, which has a fleet of ships operating at far-flung corners of the globe.

“It’s all about staying on top of supplies and understanding the requirements,” said Tschampel.

That can range from the company’s year-round program in the Galapagos to seasonal deployments in the Arctic and Antarctica, programs in Europe and four U.S.-flagged ships.

“In the old days, it used to be about relying on port agents. They knew everything. That is not the case any longer,” Tschampel continued. “We are really relying on our supplier partners, our logistics teams and our own research. We’ve had containers held and restricted for one

“

We’ve had containers held and restricted for one or two items, or for documentation that is not complete. Communication across every part of that system is among our biggest obstacles.

or two items, or for documentation that is not complete. Communication across every part of that system is among our biggest obstacles.”

In Europe, Tschampel said he is looking to source more items they can no longer import from the United States.

Supplies being held up adds not only to expenses, but also to stress levels across the company and aboard the ships.

“We’re priced at a point where guest expectations are really high, and our repeat business is very important to us,” Tschampel noted.

“We’re spending a lot of time on our expedition program, and that includes

our food and beverage and wellness programs. There is a tremendous emphasis on vegan travelers and we are spending a lot of time talking about food waste.”

A successful logistics operation comes down to communication.

“We are very understanding when things are not available. The more time we have to react, respond and pivot gives us the best options, but finding out on the day of the delivery is a good way to damage that partnership.

“We want to manage our costs but would rather spend it on product and the guest experience than how we get it there.” ■



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Among the menu options at Solis is lamb shank confit with herb gnocchi.

“

A big focus is not just having a static product, but having a product that is tailored; that is adding to the experience and itinerary we are sailing in.

“This immersive, holistic experience has become more important for our guests.”

Operations

Adding two new expedition ships coming out of Covid and during a supply chain crisis was a challenge.

“Operating in remote destinations it’s all about partnerships so that you have a consistent supply and therefore are able to provide a consistent product,” Putzhammer explained.

The Seabourn Venture joined the fleet in 2022; it was followed by the Pursuit in 2023. Both ships are deployed in Antarctica for the winter season.

“All of us have supply chain and geopolitical challenges. Operating in remote areas, we had to learn the expedition space quickly. It’s not just about provisioning the ships in the remote destinations, but the in-between destinations as well,” he said.

“The supply chain has calmed down but it is still a high risk in remote areas. We have to prepare ourselves to deal with eventualities like container ships that change routes or don’t arrive on time. The shipping companies don’t take much responsibility when they are delayed. We have set up different models for this, and in some cases are distributing out of local warehouses instead of just (sending) containers.” ■

“Innovation is becoming faster paced than it was five or 10 years ago,” said Daniel Putzhammer, senior director, food and beverage and talent acquisition/training at Seabourn.

“Every time guests come aboard they expect something new,” noted Putzhammer, underlining that the company must keep innovating on the food and beverage side of the operation.

With ultra-luxury ships, high ticket prices and high-net worth American guests, there isn’t much room for error. More complexities are thrown in with the company’s deployment. Seabourn’s fleet of small ocean-going ships go just about everywhere, and two new 264-guest expedition ships added to the fleet in recent years go even further afield.

Looking ahead, there is also a unique world cruise in 2026, sailing for 129 days on the Sojourn from Los Angeles to the South Pacific, Japan and then back to Alaska before finishing in Vancouver.

Sixty-three ports await for potential provisioning opportunities.

Solis

Among new concepts on the fleet is Solis, a fine-dining concept which features fresh Mediterranean cuisine. The concept debuted on the Quest in January 2024 and was recently added on the Ovation, Encore and Sojourn.

The restaurant offers light, modern Mediterranean cuisine “bursting with color and character,” prepared fresh and entirely from scratch, according to the company.

Solis was developed with longtime Seabourn partners, Master Chef and Culinary Partner Anton Egger and Senior Corporate Chef Franck Salein.

“A big focus is not just having a static product, but having a product that is tailored; that is adding to the experience and itinerary we are sailing in,” said Putzhammer, who was speaking at the Marine Hotel Association event being held in Naples, Florida, earlier this year.



Spectra

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Pose

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STAYING MOBILE

Rescompany's cruisePAL POS helps expand the flexibility of the bar and restaurant staff, as the mobile POS allows crew to fully handle passengers' orders and needs from any location, said Robert Wawrzyniak, senior product manager.

"Mobile orders can be sent from cruisePAL mobile POS directly to the bars and galleys for fast processing while reducing human error by typing in orders twice," he said.

"It provides crew with instant access to information regarding pricing, discounts, promotions and item-related information, such as food preparation processes, allergens and nutritional values and sustainability of ingredients."

The cruisePAL product is suitable for bars, restaurants, boutiques, casinos, spas and other concessioner outlets; it can be used on tablets, smartphones and PCs.

"cruisePAL POS allows the staff to stay mobile and process more orders, while improving the overall service and increasing efficiency," Wawrzyniak added.

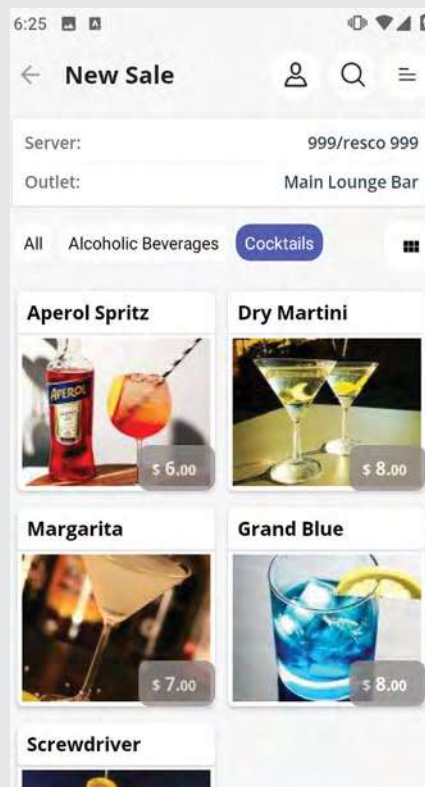
"Sales on a ship can also be synchronized almost instantly with shore for complaint resolution, reporting, marketing and prediction analysis," said Wawrzyniak. "Furthermore, the sales data collected onboard immediately alters outlet stock levels visible in Resco Inventory."

Analytics that come with the software allow companies to identify top-selling items and lost revenue while smartly managing inventory and demand for items on a real-time basis.

"Functions include automatic low and high stock orders, predictive ordering based on machine learning algorithms that can be adjusted based on the customers' requirements, easy tracking and tracing of stock onboard, fast movements of stock and automated generic ordering," Wawrzyniak explained.

Predictive ordering takes multiple factors into account, including past consumption patterns, seasonal trends, and the expected number of guests, ensuring optimal inventory management.

It also provides immediate sales visibility and supports discounts and fees,



which are applied automatically, so the customer-facing crew onboard do not have to adjust prices and promotions on their own. ■

PROCURING IN ALASKA

ALASKAN DREAM CRUISES OPERATES SMALL SHIPS SEASONALLY IN ALASKA, AND WITH ALASKAN OWNERS, IS HEAVILY FOCUSED ON A LOCAL PRODUCT ABOARD.

"We're buying all Alaskan seafood for guest meals. There's fresh seafood on the menu every night. And then we buy jams and chocolates from Alaskan companies, as well as Alaskan beer and spirits," said Jeremy Plank, CFO.

"In the guest rooms we stock locally made shampoos and soaps. The bed scarves in each suite were designed by an Alaska Native artist, Mary Goddard. She's also designed our logo and a lot of our graphics. And then of course in each destination we visit, we work with the local tribes and guides." ■

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SOFT SERVE TO DRIVE REVENUE

Kent Precision Foods Group's Frostline Soft Serve Mix doesn't need to be refrigerated or frozen, and has an 18-month shelf life, making it a unique fit aboard cruise ships.



"We also have consistency in pricing. While the dairy market may fluctuate weekly, we've committed to yearly pricing for cruise lines," said Kirk Kuiper, senior manager of business development.

Cruise ships may go through millions of dollars' worth of soft serve on an annual basis as it is often available 24/7 for free on the pool deck or in self-serve venues.

An increasing amount of soft serve has also found its way to the industry's private islands, which continue to grow in size and food and beverage scope. As a result, most cruise lines buy the product by the truckload.

Kent provides not only traditional flavors such as chocolate and vanilla, which account for about 80 percent of sales, said Kuiper, but has other options including pumpkin spice and lavender lemon butter cookie.

"People come back for seconds and thirds, and every day they could have a different flavor," said Kuiper.

The company's soft serve mix works both in the traditional big soft serve machines, but also in blenders and shake machines.

The next step may be sizing up incremental revenue opportunities for soft serve.

The company's Frostline Crafted Collective features new flavor options. Customers can choose from one of five different flavor packets. They can add it to a Frostline vanilla base mix allowing the creation of artisan frozen treats from soft serve, smoothies and frozen cocktails to shakes, coffee drinks, hard-pack ice cream and other options.

One premium option could be a hot honey sundae topped with a drizzle of honey and spiced candied pecans.

Adding soft serve options at the bar may drive additional revenue opportunities, as the Frostline product also works with a blender. Frozen cocktail options include lavender lemon butter cookie soft serve blended with lemon-infused vodka and ice, served with a butter cookie crumb rim and a sprig of lavender.

More revenue opportunities could come in the coffee space with frozen specialty coffee drinks. The company said one option could be offering a pistachio cream latte soft serve blended with ice and a shot of espresso. ■



MHA LAUNCHES NEW CULINARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

THE MARINE HOTEL ASSOCIATION (MHA) IS LAUNCHING A NEW SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF OF ITS CRUISE LINE MEMBERS WITH CIA CONSULTING, A BUSINESS UNIT OF THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA (CIA).

CIA chef instructors will deliver a five-day, hands-on training program for scholarship awardees nominated by the MHA. The inaugural program will take place at the CIA's New York campus, while a second program will be offered at the CIA's Singapore campus next June.

According to the MHA, the program is designed to help culinary professionals advance their careers. Those participating will gain an understanding of global flavors with techniques and strategies to execute these flavors in a plant-forward environment.

Topics including yield and food waste, cost awareness, total utilization of product and sustainability.

"Our mission at the MHA has always been to support the folks that make it happen onboard by fostering excellence within the maritime hospitality industry through various

strategic associations. We have taken a monumental step forward in achieving this goal as we are creating unprecedented opportunities for culinary talent to thrive,” said Philippe Faucher, senior vice president of The Apollo Group and president of the MHA Board of Directors.

The program was developed by CIA Consulting, with input from the MHA Culinary Council, which is composed of culinary leaders from various cruise lines.

“Ensuring that these culinary team members have proper training will not only help participating cruise lines improve food yield and reduce waste, it will also help increase guest satisfaction, by providing a global palette of vibrant and flavorful menu items,” said David Kamen, director of client experience for CIA Consulting.

According to John McGirl, chief people officer at Starboard Cruise Ser-



The new scholarship program will open up more opportunities for shipboard talent.

vices and chair of the MHA Scholarship Foundation, the organization has delivered thousands of scholarships to the industry over its 40 years of existence.

“This is a natural evolution of the program to recognize the level of professional leadership in our culinarians onboard,” added McGirl. ■

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Lookout Cay is Disney's new private destination.

Disney Going Local At Lookout Cay

It would be too easy for Disney Cruise Line to develop its new private destination, Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point, in the model of a Disney theme park. July marked 69 years since Disneyland opened and the company's proliferation of theme parks around the world gave Disney plenty of expertise in expanding its robust, ever-expanding, and instantly recognizable brand.

But Disney went in another direction. While keeping Mickey and the gang in the picture, Disney put Bahamian culture center stage, playing up colorful carnival celebrations, highlighting local artists, and letting the otherworldly beauty of Eleuthera speak for itself.

The result is a Neverland 331 miles from Port Canaveral and 233 miles from Port Everglades, with characters and traditions all its own.

Junkanoo

Twice a year, once on Dec. 26 and again New Years Day, Bahamians pull

on the wildly colorful costumes they've been working on for 12 months, fall into cacophonous troupes of revelers, and tramp up through the streets with horns and drums and cowbells

Unlike manufactured theme park attractions, the Junkanoo celebrations are something baked into the Bahamian soul, said Andrew Pinder, chairman of the National Junkanoo Committee, who worked closely with Disney for two years on the project.

They will run twice-daily at Disney's new private destination.

"The most important thing that we stressed was the authenticity. Junkanoo is celebration of our traditions, our culture. It's colorful, it's expressed through music, dance, and a vibrance led by a beat, that beat that we really cherish. In speaking with Disney, it's something that they really listened to," Pinder said. "They got it right. I was extremely satisfied and happy to see the presentation that was there for the guests."

One of the few places Disney strayed from Junkanoo tradition was in the costume construction, replacing paper, cardboard, and wood glue with more sturdy apparel that could be used without disintegrating in the twice-daily parades planned on island, said Rachel Quinn, vice president entertainment operations.

"This was our North Star," Quinn said. "Then we were like, how do we add a little bit of Disney into this?"

Music Magic

Disney wanted to highlight the best of what was already local in Eleuthera, said Kevin Thomas, creative director at Walt Disney Imagineering.

"The goal for our team is to celebrate The Bahamas and the beauty of the island of Eleuthera," said Thomas. "Rather than creating a fictional story, we are offering guests an opportunity to relax, via expressions of art, music and storytelling."

That included introducing new songs to Disney's canon of difficult-to-forget songs.



Local artisan touches are everywhere.

Tunes like “Everything Cool” by Bahamas music producer Victor Johnson greet guests with messages about not rushing through their time on island.

Johnson, who also remixed several Disney classics to add a distinctly Bahamian element, said the pressure to create a new Disney masterpiece — like “Heigh Ho” or “Bibbidi-Bobbidi Boo” — was overwhelming at first.

Disney officials reassured the young artist that he only needed to be himself, he said.

“I had to bring the spirit of the people,” he said.

Mural Magic

Disney also empowered local visual artists Kevin Cooper and Dorman Stubbs to create themes and color palettes for the site’s buildings and murals.

Thatch-roofed A-frame bungalows along the pier area and the adults-only Serenity Bay portray a sort of chic Robinson Crusoe aesthetic. But the majority of structures feature oversized undulating roofs that from afar are reminiscent of ris-

ing sea swells, sea shells, or turtle backs.

Disney gave Stubbs a single reference point to start from, a fish. Instead of working from a fish image, however, Stubbs came to his designs by imagining what a fish might see and feel as it swam. Then he considered what other plants and animals native to the island might experience, he said.

Environment

Access to the island comes via a long curved T-shaped pier where the ship ties up at the cross. It’s a 10- or 15-minute walk to shore where a tram awaits to cart guests to the main property.

Asking cruise passengers to trek 15 minutes in the Bahamian sun may seem odd but the docking area is set at a distance for a reason: protecting the undersea life from unnatural currents and other disturbances, said Bradley Watson, the project’s conservation programs manager.

Before construction began, several species of coral were moved out of the path of the pier and re-homed in clusters on either side. Underwater stone structures were also sunk to allow coral and fish calm habitats, Watson said.

On land, a minimum of concrete was poured to reduce habitat destruction for native plants, birds, crabs, lizards, arthropods, and insects. To keep guests from creating their own paths, most buildings are reached via raised boardwalks.

In all, Watson said the idea was to create more by building less, limiting development to under 16 percent of the 900-acre property.

“I really like the idea of establishing a sense of place,” he said. “One of the best things we did is the things we didn’t do.”

Disney’s Imagineers had highlighting the island itself foremost in mind from the start, Thomas said.

“It’s such natural beauty and the architecture is obviously pretty distinctive that we have there. We wanted to have minimal impact to this natural environment. We took nature as our inspiration: the shapes of the building, the color schemes that we use, everything was influenced by nature,” he said. “It was very important for us from the beginning that we were celebrating the Bahamian culture and the natural environment we were working within.” ►

CRUISE EXPERIENCE



Junkanoo



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Venues

Of course Disney isn't selling guests on what's not there.

The tram ride leaves Mabrika Cove and winds along sandy roads cut through the island's rugged, dry terrain to the Goombay tram stop, a short distance from Disney T'ings and Treasures of Eleuthera gift shops.

Disney T'ings features the variations on the usual characters in custom outfits, but Treasures of Eleuthera has items only found on the island, such as locally roasted coffee beans, jewelry crafted from crushed seashells, and lithographs from local artists.

Across from the shops, the Goombay Cultural Center features workshops on Junkanoo costume making, dance, song and more. It's also where the Junkanoo parade reaches its climax.

Near the wide, flat Family Beach, the Rush Out Gush Out water park was a huge hit with little ones as well as a few adventurous adults. The park is overlooked by Sensations Smoothies and the Watering Hole Bar.

A big hit with about everyone were the barbeque restaurants where burgers and fries were accompanied by plays on local fare.

Both the Serenity Bay Cabanas and Mabrika Cove Cabanas were available to book for private use by families or groups. They feature a mini-refrigerator, casual, well designed furnishings, and little porches overlooking the water. – *Mat Probasco*

DANIEL CAPELLA



▲ The Celebrity Summit sails out of Miami.

What Guests Want And What They Demand

POST-PANDEMIC TRAVELERS ARE MORE APT TO PLAN AHEAD, ASK MORE QUESTIONS, AND MAKE SURE THEIR NEEDS AND DESIRES ARE MET BEFORE LEAVING HOME, CRUISE TRAVEL ADVISORS TOLD *CRUISE INDUSTRY NEWS*.

Removing guess work through mobile apps and well-catered private islands, meanwhile, are proving popular with guests.

“With so many options available, the average consumer might find themselves inundated and overwhelmed,” noted Michelle Fee, CEO of Cruise Planners. “A seasoned travel advisor brings firsthand experience, having sailed on dozens of

ships, explored hundreds of destinations, and tried out the onboard activities.”

Connectivity

One hot topic is connectivity, which has gone from a perk or motor that drove people to one product or another, to a necessity that, like hygiene, is expected, and when lacking, fuels dissatisfaction, said Matthew Eichhorst, president of Expedia Cruises.

“I think it used to be nice to have Wi-Fi, and now it’s a must have. People get really frustrated if they go somewhere and they don’t have connectivity. It’s become what we refer to as hygiene rather than a motor,” Eichhorst said.

While Princess Cruises’ Medallion program and the applications rolled out by other cruise lines have been popular and widely used, Eichhorst said they aren’t front-end drivers for bookings. Passengers enjoy being connected and the novelty of the programs add to their satisfaction. It’s also a reassurance that there will be available connectivity.

“I don’t think people are going just for the Medallion, but when you have connectivity, you can create a much greater customer experience. And Princess is seeing that; Royal Caribbean is seeing ►

CRUISE EXPERIENCE



The Norwegian Escape calls in Saint John. ▲

that with their apps on their phone. Everyone's kind of doing it now. So, it's a game changer," he said.

Travel experts acknowledged Wi-Fi service at sea has come a long way in recent years.

Ellen Overcast, a vacation specialist at Dream Vacations in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, said her clients are eager to share photos and videos of their cruise adventures.

"People feel that they should offer Wi-Fi packages at more affordable pricing since it really is helping to promote them when folks post pictures on social media," Overcast said. "Most of my clients are still looking for Wi-Fi that works. Many of the cruise lines struggle with reliable Wi-Fi service."

Ariel Chavez, of Cruise Planners and NewFrontierTravel in Mobile, Alabama, said getting all the onboard necessities out of the way upfront through packages was a growing trend.

"Many people enjoy and now look for the more all-inclusive packages cruise lines offer including drink packages, Wi-Fi, gratuities and shore excursions. They often provide a better value and many people say it makes it easier to budget or keep track of expenses. In some cases,

this is also better for travel agents as you get credit for these packages."

Strong Pricing

While the Mediterranean and Alaska remain hot sellers, the Caribbean is a favorite for last-minute bookers and those looking for short cruises, travel agents said.

Royal Caribbean's Perfect Day was a big win, said Overcast.

"The days of last-minute deals are far and few between," she said.

Fee saw the resurgence of private islands as furthering the industry's diversity.

"Private islands offered by cruise lines receive immense praise from travelers. It's heartening to witness other cruise brands also investing in enhancing and renovating their private island destinations to meet the growing expectations of passengers," she said.

"While shorter cruises remain popular, there's a rising interest in longer voyages too and visits to unique destinations off the beaten path. Expedition cruises to remote regions are gaining popularity."

Chavez agreed, saying multiple clients booked long, relatively pricy cruises, and

while airfares were annoying, her customers were willing to pay.

Diversity of Product

New-to-cruise passengers tend to book shorter itineraries on newer ships from U.S. ports, Chavez continued.

"This is a good way to introduce the value of cruising to the millions of Americans who are still not familiar with this type of vacation," she said. "For avid cruisers, longer and exotic itineraries on mid-sized and small ships tend to be a preferred option."

Taunya Altamirano, owner of Live Love Drink Travel in Peoria, Arizona, said many of her customers were unaware of the diversity of products the industry currently offers.

"I find the majority of folks have never even heard of expedition cruising, so when I mention it, they get very excited."

Ship vs. Shore

Seemingly, the ships are becoming more and more the stars of the show.

Eichhorst said the industry still may not be selling the stay-on-the-ship, don't-go-ashore concept to the extent possible.

"Look for the stay-aboard concept to be an upcoming booking trend, maybe

sold in the same breath as the popular, captive-audience, private islands. They are a huge, huge hit.”

Chavez said many of her clients adore intimate, well-tailored shore excursions, especially if they highlight cultural differences unique to the region. It’s even better, she said, if the guide is a local resident.

“I’d say, small groups and off-the-beaten-path options are often rated better than large group tours. Smaller groups enjoy having their own private guides, often someone local who can show them a more immersive or customized experience.”

Even large cruise ports have plenty of appeal for shore excursions, said Altamirano.

“The best option is always to book with the cruise line for excursions, for many reasons, some of which we have seen on the news recently. The fact that they have so many options allows for guests to be able to participate in cultural experiences and adventures.”



The Queen Elizabeth gets a festive welcome for her maiden call in Sasebo.

Agents’ Answers

Eichhorst said guests are booking more with travel agents as well as directly with cruise lines.

“We’ve seen bookings shift more to travel agencies as customers want to talk to somebody and ask whether this is a safe place to go? What do I need to do to prepare? Maybe I’m going more multigenerational, so how do I get cabins that are close to each other?” he said. “I don’t know that the product has become more complex, but I’d say the customers have become more complex because they

have a lot more questions as we’ve come through this last period of the pandemic where we never really thought about some of these finer details.”

Fee said package bundles, group tours, and an increase in solo travelers has Cruise Planners’ clients asking a lot of questions.

“That’s why the expertise of a travel advisor truly comes to the forefront here,” she said. “Their insights are invaluable in guiding families and couples toward informed decisions and planning their perfect cruise vacation.” —*Mat Probasco*



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Gus
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president

“WE ARE FOCUSED ON GUEST RESEARCH AND BRINGING THE GUEST CLOSER TO THE EXPERIENCES FROM OUR VAST ITINERARIES AND THE REGIONS WE VISIT,” SAID GUS ANTORCHA, PRESIDENT OF HOLLAND AMERICA LINE, WHO WAS SPEAKING ABOARD THE NIEUW STATENDAM. HE FURTHER SAID THAT HOLLAND AMERICA IS ADAPTING ITS PRODUCT BASED ON THREE MAIN PILLARS: FRESH, REGIONAL AND LOCAL.

That strategy features new food, beverage and entertainment offerings onboard, and the innovations are part of the brand’s broader differentiation based on passenger feedback.

Three Pillars

Antorcha said that the company’s food and beverage offering is the perfect intersection of the three-element strategy.

With its new Global Fresh Fish program, Holland America puts an emphasis on the fresh aspect, serving locally sourced seafood that goes from port to plate in less than 48 hours.

The initiative includes approximately 80 different types of fish from 60 ports worldwide, which are served onboard at no extra cost. ►

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CRUISE EXPERIENCE

“We have a heavy emphasis on fish but it’s broader than that,” Antorcha added, noting that the program is also regionally inspired. “It works very well with fresh fish because we are very focused on bringing in aspects of the food and culture of the places we visit.”

Building on the idea, Holland America is offering more regional products, which represent yet another element of the strategy.

“When you are regional, it’s also easier to do fresh because you’re buying locally, which brings us to our third piece: local,” Antorcha said.

“If you are sailing from Seattle to Alaska this summer, you can try Rainier cherries and our fresh certified Alaskan halibut.”

While in the Caribbean passengers will be able to taste tostones made from fresh plantains bought in ports like San Juan. Guests in Alaska will be able to taste cocktails prepared with glacier ice, he added.

Entertainment

Further bringing regions it visits to life, Holland America is introducing a series of new destination-inspired shows that will debut in theaters across the fleet.

While some of the new presentations build on a traditional format and “change the model just a little bit,” most shows build on unique elements of places being visited, said Bill Prince, vice president of entertainment and enrichment.

“We want to make sure that, wherever we go, we lean into the destinations, and we look at ways to do that all the time,” he added.

The shows are tailored specifically for what guests want to see, Prince said, and feature local bands and regional instruments.

Deployment

Antorcha said that Holland America is “leading the way in creating well-researched, curated and customized cruises

Crispy whole fish is served onboard as part of the fresh fish program that includes 80 fish types from 60 ports.



es that represent unique local opportunities for guests from ship to shore.”

Added Paul Grigsby, vice president of deployment and revenue planning: “We know through research that our guests desire to travel longer and farther, while exploring and lingering on their way.”

One of the main initiatives is the introduction of the Legendary Cruises portfolio, which include longer roundtrip cruises.

“These are 25- to 59-day cruises that have been very popular,” he added, pointing to a 42-day cruise to the Mediterranean.

The itinerary was inspired “right out of Holland America’s 150-year heritage,” he said, and recreates a similar voyage offered by the company in 1925.

The Volendam sails roundtrip from Port Everglades in November. Calls in-

clude ports in Portugal, Morocco, Italy, Greece, Tunisia and Spain.

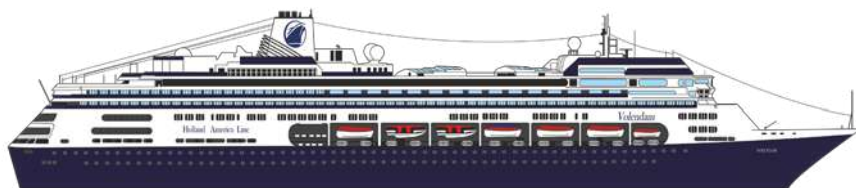
Holland America is also offering Legendary Cruises to other regions, including Australia and Asia.

“We’ve seen that these longer cruises are successful, and not just from a bottom-line standpoint. When we survey the guests, it always comes back the same: people want something different, further afield,” Grigsby said.

He highlighted that most of the itineraries sail roundtrip from U.S. homeports.

“In other words, you can go to these far-flung regions of the world, using essentially a domestic air ticket,” he said, pointing to embarkation options in San Diego, Port Everglades and Seattle.

“All you have to do is get there, and we take you to the South Pacific or Europe. That is something that resonates well with our market.” – *Daniel Capella*





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MSC Short Market Push

CONTINUING ITS EXPANSION IN THE U.S. MARKET, MSC CRUISES HAS A SHIP DEDICATED TO SHORT CRUISES OUT OF PORT MIAMI ON A YEAR-ROUND BASIS FOR THE FIRST TIME AS THE MAGNIFICA IS OFFERING A SERIES OF THREE- AND FOUR-NIGHT SAILINGS.

The port mix includes calls to Nassau, Freeport and Key West and most of the ship's itineraries feature visits to the company's private island, Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve.

Short Product

According to *Cruise Industry News* data, MSC will have a 55 percent increase in its short Caribbean capacity this year thanks to the Magnifica, which is one of the smaller ships in the company's fleet at 2,500 guests.

Onboard in mid-April for a weekend cruise out of Miami with the ship full,

MSC may have had the most unique mix of guests on all ships sailing out of South Florida on short cruises.

While most of the guests hailed from the United States, a sizeable number of Latin Americans were also onboard, with groups from Central and South America, in addition to guests from the Middle East and Europe.

Product Tweaks

While remaining consistent with the company's product globally, the experience onboard the Magnifica was tweaked to better serve the short cruise market with a nod toward the demographics aboard.

Entertainment featured more Latin music, as well as activities better suited to a younger audience, including more parties and daily adults-only comedy shows.

Longer shows were presented in the main theater, featuring dancers, singers, and acrobats, with themes including rock n' roll music, classic movies and modern circus.

The Magnifica also offers a larger-than-average nightclub, located high on the ship and featuring floor-to-ceiling

windows with a DJ playing tunes late into the night.

Other product tweaks on the food and beverage side included tap water in the main dining rooms (MSC charges for bottled water in other markets, with tap water unavailable), the addition of soft-serve ice cream in the buffet, all-day availability of juices and ice tea and a revamped choice of always-available items for dinner in the main restaurants.

Larger Ship

While the Magnifica is set to reposition back to Europe next year, it has laid the groundwork for what is next: a bigger ship in the short Caribbean market.

Currently offering week-long cruises out of Miami, the Seascope is set to take over part of the Magnifica's program.

With the new World America offering seven-night cruises to the Caribbean starting in April, the Seascope will add a rotation of three- and four-night cruises to its schedule.

MSC is also set to offer more short cruises from Port Canaveral starting in the 2025-26 winter season with the Seashore. — Daniel Capella



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Devon Bryan, chief information security officer

“WE MAKE SURE WE ARE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN TO ENSURE THAT THE COMPANY DOES NOT HAVE A BAD DAY FROM A CYBERATTACK PERSPECTIVE,” SAID DEVON BRYAN, CHIEF INFORMATION SECURITY OFFICER AT CARNIVAL CORPORATION.

He said it was a matter of layering the right technologies, maturing supporting risk-based processes and investing in the right people skills.

Leigh Carr, vice president of maritime cyber safety, said her role involved

protecting critical assets on the ships, from navigation to safety management systems.

“We identify vulnerabilities and threats that will impact those assets and then work to protect them, monitoring 24/7,” she said, in an interview with *Cruise Industry News*.

“We don’t want to have a bad day, and we want to make sure the company is prepared to recover,” she added, noting enterprise-level backup and recovery systems.

Carr explained that meant working across the industry with other maritime organizations including the IMO, class societies and flag states to get ahead of any bad actors.

Among company initiatives has been to roll out more secure remote-access protocols.

“When we had a pause in our operation during the pandemic, we had technicians that could not come to the ships, so we came up with creative ways for them to get in remotely. We are securing those systems even more,” Carr explained.

‘Layered Defense’

“We think about defending in depth. That is a layered defense model that starts with identifying our critical assets and what they are and where they are, and ensuring they are adequately protected commensurate with the associated risks. We are continuously enhancing our ability to detect so we can respond timely and recover if necessary,” said Bryan.

“We think about that in the context of the simplistic NIST Cybersecurity Framework, meaning to identify, protect, detect, respond and recover. If protection

fails, we have to be able to respond and recover with as minimal downtime as possible.

“We want to be cyber-resilient so we can ‘withstand’ so we do not have to recover at all,” Bryan continued.

Increased connectivity to the ships has kept Bryan and his team on their toes.

“With it comes additional concerns with what bad actors might be able to do. With us staying true to our layered security defense, threat intel led risk-based approach and applying industry best practices, it does afford us some degree of confidence in our ability to protect our business operations.”

New technology brought in shoreside or on the ships is evaluated through the company’s risk assessment framework, Bryan explained.

“There are primary and secondary data centers on the ships,” he continued.

Carr noted that the company looks at the assets from both an IT and operational-technology (OT) side and ranks them on criticality.

“The highest critical assets are built in with high availability. In the event something does happen, we can maintain critical operations and are always working to identify ways to enhance our recovery options.

“We also want to make sure if a system is impacted and we need to do recovery that we have images onboard so we can quickly restore that system,” Carr said.

Bad Actors

“What are we really worried about? It’s not just about loss of financial data and loss of systems,” Bryan explained. “In our maritime environment it’s about safeguarding lives. Those OT systems



Carnival's fleet includes nine brands and over 90 ships. ▲

may have life-impactful consequences. That urgency is not lost on us.

"There is also potential environmental impact. We think about a bad actor corrupting systems aboard that could potentially lead to an environmental disaster. We factor that in as part of the equation."

Bryan said the company spends time on cyber threat intelligence, monitoring what is happening globally as offense informs defense.

"We leverage our intelligence providers to help with the filtering," said Bryan. "Filtering the signal-to-noise ratio is a key component of our threat intelligence platform."

Among recent concerns has been satellite jamming and spoofing.

Noting the current geopolitical environment, Carr said: "We have a close relationship with our global maritime

security group on the physical side. We look at those threats across the industry as far as GPS interference. With the introduction of Starlink, we are meeting with SpaceX to look at the implication of GPS spoofing and jamming for lower orbit signals. The technology is always changing and we are always looking at improving our cyber defense.

"We work with third-party vendors and have technologies on the ships around docking and GPS to help us determine where the ships are positioned. We have backup systems that report to stations on land that make sure the signals are constantly being checked and rechecked, so we are not only getting positioning from our satellites but also from land-based stations."



▲
Leigh Carr, vice president
of maritime cyber safety

Complex and Diverse

Carr credited the support of the executive leadership at Carnival Corporation.

"We get the executive support," she said. "If you do not have executive support from the cyber perspective, you cannot effectively operate a program like this. ►



The 2011-built Costa Favolosa

“

We are continuously enhancing our ability to detect so we can respond timely and recover if necessary.

“We don’t focus on just one area. If you look at a cruise ship, we have water treatment navigation, satellite, hotel systems and more. It’s complex but offers a diverse field of systems. We are constantly learning and being challenged.”

Another initiative is bringing together shipboard, shoreside, IT and OT items into the company’s fleet operation centers, so analysts can see even more in real time.

“We can respond quickly, everyone is on the same page,” Carr said. “Cyber is a team sport; it’s a team event. If we can get people thinking of this at the top of their minds on a regular basis. We want the seafarers focused on the job, which is operating the ship.

“Our motto is, if they see something, they need to say something, and we tell them who to say it to. On the back end we can correlate that with the experts and respond together.”

Bryan said that putting it all together, it’s about making sure that the company’s cybersecurity strategy is directly aligned with the corporation’s key strategic imperatives.

He noted his organization’s tagline, “Ship & Shore, Always Secure,” isn’t just a slogan. It serves as the guiding principle for not just what his global cybersecurity services organization does but extends to the human firewall layer that each employee of Carnival provides.

“We’re in the business of delivering



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unforgettable happiness from the cruise experience to our guests. Those guests will not be happy if their data is compromised or if there’s disruption with the systems onboard the vessels. We make sure the technologies we invest in and the processes we deploy are laser-focused on helping our company meet its commercial objectives.”

Bryan, citing his military days, added: “Mission first, people always” as a key component of the approach he takes to help secure the world’s largest cruise company. – Monty Mathisen

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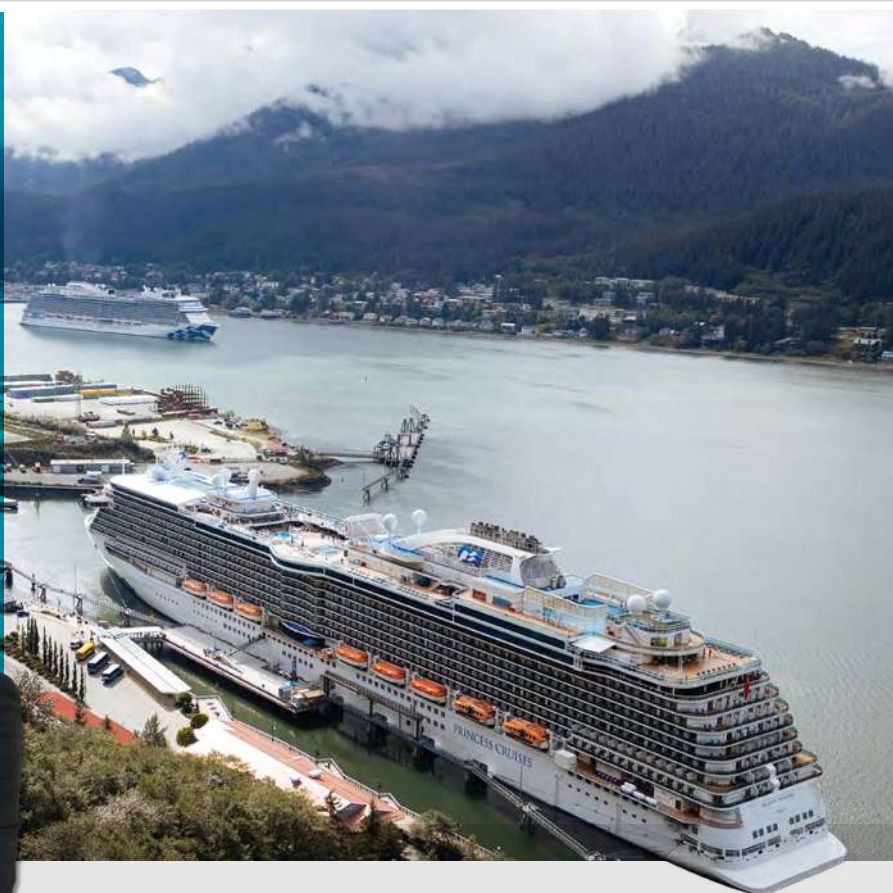


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Paul Marsh,
director of global connectivity



THE HIGH SPEED SEAS

Carnival Corporation completed the rollout of Starlink across its 90-plus ship fleet in just under 12 months, said Paul Marsh, director of global connectivity and destination technology, who works in the strategic operations department overseen by Jan Swartz, executive vice president of strategic operations.

The combination of Starlink and Neuron, which enables ships to quickly switch between coverage providers, has brought the company to a land-based connectivity experience aboard, Marsh said.

“Historically, the internet has been an inhibitor, not an enabler, whether it was cost, capacity or space on the ship. We’re getting into an area where capacity is going to exceed demand. We’re looking at ways to use that capacity to deliver memorable cruise experiences to our guests and crew,” Marsh explained.

The bigger ships in the fleet feature 12 Starlink antennas each, he added.

Marsh said the company has a vendor-agnostic and flexible sourcing approach, using multiple connectivity providers on every ship, while leaving room to adapt to new technologies. Other key providers include Telenor, SES and Speedcast.

New satellites coming from Amazon and Telesat will drive even more capacity to the ships and Carnival’s destination portfolio.

“Neuron allows us to bring in capacity from multiple sources and use a multi-provider approach. Starlink can be the primary source and then we have a secondary source for risk mitigation,” he noted.

Another added benefit has been a happier crew with better communication options to talk to family back home. The

“

We’re getting into an area where capacity is going to exceed demand.

company is also looking at more telemedicine options with increased internet capabilities aboard.

“We no longer compare ourselves to the best solution at sea,” Marsh continued. “We compare ourselves to a land-based experience. It’s phenomenal to think about it when you compare it to where we were in 2022. We have seen better guest satisfaction scores and re-funds (for internet) are down.

“We are preparing for what is next, when there is a world of excess capacity, and how do we use that to deliver the best guest experience.” ■

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SEAMLESS PROFIT POTENTIAL

“Connectivity is a huge part of onboard revenue, and we are a unique partner in that we generate revenue with zero cost,” said Pramod Arora, CEO of WMS, which is now privately owned. “Cruise lines don’t have to do anything on the cap-ex or op-ex side and we take care of the value chain with the revenue going directly to the bottom line.”

WMS provides cellular connectivity services to the industry and has clients such as Royal Caribbean and Carnival Cruise Line, which will have the first 5G WMS ship at sea soon with the Carnival Jubilee.

WMS has roaming agreements with over 400 mobile carriers, meaning guests’ phones will work onboard at predefined rates for calling, texting and mobile data use, with a revenue split between the carrier, WMS and the cruise line.

Day Pass

The big news is that Verizon Day Pass has come shipboard. Used when traveling internationally by Verizon customers, it presents a set daily rate for minutes, data and an allotment of data. That is now transitioning to sea with the Verizon Cruise Daily Pass at \$30 per line per day and includes 50 minutes of incoming/outgoing calls per day, unlimited texting and 500 megabytes of data.

Arora said the company was the first to bring 2G, 3G and 4G aboard cruise ships and also the first to develop set roaming packages, with the day pass being a natural next step.

“We are working with many carriers to expand the day-pass concept globally,” he said.

It is seamless to the cruise lines, Arora said, with no equipment upgrades re-

quired. WMS is busy in the background making sure it has the appropriate amount of bandwidth to handle the uptick in demand, which was up sixfold year-over-year in the first quarter of 2024, he said.

Communication to guests ahead of time and onboard is also key in helping drive more usage.

WMS has its own website, cellular-atsea.com, with more information for guests on what rates are available onboard from their carriers. Arora said he is also working closely with cruise lines to make sure the right information is in their respective mobile apps. Another avenue WMS is working on is to educate the travel advisor community.



Pramod Arora, CEO

BENEFIT-DRIVEN PRIORITIES

“THE HYPE ON AI AND MORE SPECIFICALLY GENERATIVE AI IS CONSIDERABLE AND IT UNDERSTANDABLY EVOLVES ON WHAT SEEMS TO BE A DAILY BASIS,” SAID LUCA PRONZATI, CHIEF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY OFFICER AT MSC CRUISES. “WE ARE PUTTING TOGETHER AN AI STRATEGY ACROSS ALL ASPECTS OF OUR OPERATIONS TO ADDRESS BENEFIT-DRIVEN PRIORITIES THAT THE MANY DIFFERENT OPPORTUNITIES THIS POWERFUL TECHNOLOGY CAN UNLOCK BOTH TODAY AND INTO THE FUTURE.”

Pronzati said the company was looking closely at digital marketing with a strong focus on content production, customer service and website assistance.

“We have seen significant behavioral shifts and changes among consumers after the pandemic and they have developed a different perspective and a new approach whereby they wish to engage more directly with brands than previously,” he continued, mentioning that customers want more customization options for their holidays on MSC’s website.

“We are working hard to reshape the overall end-to-end experience for consumers, starting from pre-cruise, and we aim to deliver the most effective navigation and reservation approach for them,” Pronzati explained.

New innovations include mobile check-in.

As part of the digital embarkation process, guests can set up their future sailing



'No Distinction'

The overall goal is that there is no distinction in quality of service between land-based and ship-based cellular roaming, Arora said.

He noted that one area most mobile carriers don't have high penetration rates in is the cruise industry. He said that penetration rates for those traveling abroad could be as high as 80 percent, while shipboard is around 30 to 40 percent.

"We have done more in the last 12 months than the last 12 years, with the technology and pricing model moving quickly," he said. "We are looking at creative options to price these products for the end user, so they are affordable and a good revenue generator for the cruise lines.

"We have a unique revenue opportunity that delivers an incremental profit opportunity. Our culture is unwavering customer focus, and we strive to exceed customer expectations at every touchpoint." ■

well in advance and in a seamless way, he said, submitting all the necessary personal data and security information required by using best-of-breed technology solutions available on digital channels, both on the web and on the MSC for Me app.

"This really does lead to a stress-free embarkation experience at the cruise terminal," Pronzati said.

"Another major step forward is what we internally call the 'Voice of the Customer' program, which utilizes AI-powered technology. This transformative change collects and analyzes consumers' feedback that is then configured in operational actions that can address any perceived pinch points or gaps towards a net promoter score in the customer experience. The program has a range of features in its pipeline, one of which means that we can intervene directly during a ship's voyage to allow our crew to address and resolve matters onboard." ■

AI STREAMLINES OPERATIONS



The 2022-built Norwegian Prima

"AI IS REPLACING WHAT WE CALL MONOTONOUS TASKS, WHETHER IT IS WRITING MARKETING COPY OR TRANSLATING MARKETING COPY," SAID HARRY SOMMER, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE HOLDINGS. "BOTH THE WRITING OF THE COPY AND TRANSLATING IS VERY TIME-CONSUMING."

In addition, AI is being implemented in the company's website chat function to answer commonly asked questions from guests, which can number tens of thousands of requests, said Sommer, who was speaking at the company's investor day event held in New York in May.

"We believe we can automate substantial parts of that," Sommer said.

In addition, AI is being used to cre-

ate training modules for crew and even travel partners.

"They are not incredibly glamorous and exciting but each one of them represent people who can be repurposed for other tasks or ultimately cost savings," Sommer noted.

Sommer said the company is growing capacity and would like to do that without growing headcount, which is where AI is starting to come into play.

It is also playing a role when it comes to data analytics, Sommer said, and looking at what customers and potential customers do when they come to the various NCLH brand websites, and how the company follows up afterward.

"There are things we can do on the itinerary planning side. We went through an initiative recently to do a better job coupling revenue and costs in itinerary planning.

"We can use AI to crunch the huge amount of information out there. Every single voyage has a P&L (profit and loss statement). We can consolidate that and it will allow us to make better decisions." ■



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If we don't act by 2050, plastic in the ocean will outweigh the fish that call it home. However, thanks to Sofidel's extensive research and development, there's a way to help the planet while achieving your cruise line's sustainability goals – by implementing dispensers made from recovered ocean plastic.



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Papernet powered by HyTech Seas paper towel dispensers are compatible with Dissolve Tech

paper towels, which are innovative in that they dissolve in under three minutes if accidentally flushed down the toilet. For cruise ships with sensitive pipes, it can help minimize costly maintenance and odor issues due to clogs from traditional hand towels.

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Lindblad

Defining Expedition Cruising



Lindblad Expeditions is offering a combination of new geographies and doing new things in places they have already been.

“Given the history of this company, it feels like we have been almost everywhere, and we are on a renewed geography as we speak,” Trey Byus, chief expedition officer for Lindblad Expeditions, told *Cruise Industry News*.

“The National Geographic Explorer is in South Africa on a voyage from Cape Town to Dar es Salaam, calling at South African ports, Madagascar and Mozambique. We were there some 20 years ago and have gone back with a renewed product.

“Later this year, we have a voyage from Nome via the Pribilof and Aleutian Islands to northern Japan and Hokkaido. It is a new voyage for us although in a familiar area.

“Even in the Mediterranean we have a new product we call ‘Croatia Under Sail’ with the Sea Cloud II sailing from Dubrovnik to northern Croatia, Slovenia and Venice.

“And when we look to next year, we are bringing the Orion back to the Mediterranean.”

RENEWED

“The big news for us in terms of doing new things in places we already know quite well is in Antarctica where we are offering our guests, who are crunched for time or don’t want to sail across the Drake Passage, the opportunity to fly to Antarctica,” Byus said.

There are two varieties of the program, guests can fly both ways or fly one way and sail the other.

The roundtrip flight program from Puerto Natales in Chile to King George Island is eight days. The flight itself is about two hours and guests spend five days exploring Antarctica, according to Byus.

In addition, Lindblad offers a variety of other Antarctica voyages from 12 to 22 days.

There is also a new trip on the Columbia River in partnership with Food & Wine (magazine). ►

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Byus described the Columbia River as the “fruit and bread-basket” of the Pacific Northwest.

“It is the fruit, the vegetables, the wines, the cuisine. It is really a hot spot that a lot of people don’t know about. So, we have upped the bar in terms of our culinary and wine focus both on and off the vessel,” he said.

NEW GUESTS

Byus said: “We love our past guests, they are the lifeblood of the company, because they are so loyal. But we need more of them. One way to do that is to offer geographies and itineraries that appeal to first timers, and that includes the Galapagos, but also Alaska and Antarctica.”

He added that many of Lindblad’s guests get their first exposure to cruising in Antarctica because the only way to see the polar region is by ship. But the Arctic and Iceland also generate a lot of first timers.

Another way to attract first timers is to offer more short programs, and Lindblad has a variety of five-night voyages, including a program in western Greenland. Guests fly on chartered aircraft from Boston or Providence to Kangerlussuaq and return via Reykjavik.

WORLDWIDE

With 10-owned ships in addition to six chartered vessels this year, growing to seven next year, Lindblad operates in more than 120 different countries and territories, according to Byus. That means more than 550 published departures and about 170 unique itineraries.

“We really do everything from small intimate 28-guest expeditions on the Amazon River to exploratory icebreaker-like



We love attracting more first timers, getting them turned on to the concept of expedition travel, and then they tend to come back again and again.

voyages with our PC5 ice class vessels, the Resolution and the Endurance, in the Arctic and Antarctica,” said Byus.

Lindblad has its association with National Geographic, which was recently renewed until 2040.

“We challenge ourselves every single day to bring all our expedition activities to the next level,” he added.

“When I think back, the way we used to travel to Antarctica was spectacular, and now we have layered on an undersea component with scuba diving and the ROV going to depths the scuba divers cannot and filming for the guests, or snowshoeing, cross country skiing or kayaking.”

Another special feature that sets Lindblad apart in the market, according to Byus, is the relationship between the captain and the expedition leader who work as a team to create the best possible guest experience.

“In our operation, the captain always has the final call, of course, especially as it regards to safety, but he works together with the expedition leader. They really work as a team. It is a nuanced idea that some people don’t necessarily understand until they see it in action.” ■



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Seabourn

Cold and Warm Weather Itineraries

While expedition voyages are typically defined as being in the Arctic or Antarctica, the cold polar regions, Seabourn is also focused on what Robin West, vice president and general manager, expeditions, called warm weather expedition itineraries.



↑ The Seabourn expedition ships meet in Antarctica.

“We are starting our first Kimberley sailings between Broome and Darwin this summer,” he said. “Plans call for the Seabourn Pursuit to sail in Antarctica and Kimberley in Australia for the next three to four years. Obviously, with some tweaks from year to year.”

New for 2025 is a 23-day cruise from Darwin to Lautoka in Fiji calling in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, which West described as offering a fantastic diversity in terms of culture and natural history.

“The Northwest Passage is also one of those itineraries that stand out,” West

“

We have 24 zodiacs and kayaks onboard as well as two seven-seat submarines allowing guests to dive to depths of 300 meters

continued. “We are actually doing two 23-day Northwest Passage sailings between Kangerlussuaq and Nome back-to-back in 2025.”

Seabourn operates two new expedition ships built by T. Mariotti: the 23,000-ton, 264-passenger Venture, which entered service in 2022, and its sister ship, the Pursuit, which entered service in 2023.

PATTERN

The general deployment pattern has the Seabourn Pursuit sailing in the Kimberley region this summer and in 2025 and 2026, while the Ven-

ture spends summers in Northern Europe and the Arctic. Both ships sail in Antarctica during the winter season.

While many brands struggle with repositioning cruises in spring and fall, West said that Seabourn does not have repositioning voyages as the sailings aboard the Pursuit, for example, through the South Pacific are true expeditions with great content, including activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, kayaking, and going down in one of the two submarines the ships carry onboard, or going ashore for cultural experiences.

Moving the Venture from Antarctica to the Arctic may be more similar to a repositioning, West admitted, but with exceptions.

“Going north, we offer sailings around the British Isles, which have turned out to be very popular, and moving south, we do Amazon sailings that have also been very well received.”

New winter programs include a sailing on the Pursuit coming across the South Pacific to the Chilean fjords in combination with Antarctica, and the Venture coming down the East Coast of South America, combining the Falklands with South Georgia.

NEW SHIPS

“From a hardware perspective, our ships were purpose-built for expeditions,” West said. “Thus, they have extended autonomy so we can run for a period of time without any outside influences, so to speak, for provisioning or bunkering. This allows us to offer up to 28-day long itineraries that we can operate totally independently.

“The ships have PC6 ice-strengthened hulls so we can safely operate in polar regions.

“Beyond that we have 24 zodiacs and kayaks onboard as well as two seven-seat submarines allowing guests to dive to depths of 300 meters or 1,000 feet. Those are deployed as often as we can whether we are in Greenland, Iceland, the Canadian Arctic, down in Antarctica, or in the South Pacific.

“Three weeks ago, we were diving at Robinson Crusoe Island down to a World War II wreck; the guests were absolutely blown away.”

The ships also have GSS Cineflex cameras that allow guests to view polar bears, walrus or birds from a distance without any impact on the wildlife, according to West, who said the cameras project images on monitors onboard, including in guest suites.

“We have been able to offer live-time lectures with an ornithologist or a polar bear expert while tracking birds or bears up to two miles away. Those are unique experiences other ships cannot offer.”

Each ship has a bow lounge onboard that mimics the bridge with consoles and screens whereby guests can engage and interact with the bridge, sharing navigation, weather and ice information.

There is also an open bridge policy.



↑ The 264-guest Seabourn Venture

ULTRA LUXURY

What else sets Seabourn apart in the expedition market? “We are an ultra-luxury brand,” answered West.

“When it comes to the food, wine, service, the engagement onboard and the quality of our expedition teams, we have very high standards. We also have 30,000 square feet of open deck space, more than any other vessel in our category.

“When we built the ships, our vision was to be able to view as much of the outside environment as possible, for our guests to be outside as much as possible, and enjoy the wildlife encounters.”

There are also the small details, like a heated gear locker in every suite, so when it is time for the afternoon activities, the gear is dry and warm before guests go outside again.

Planning new programs means that Seabourn often sends out scouting teams, according to West. In the case of the Kimberley, he said he was familiar with the destinations from past experience, but wanted to make sure that the experience was still the same. So, last year, scouting teams traveled to the Kimberley, Papua New Guinea, West Papua, the Solomon Islands and the Vanuatu area. ■

SunStone

Market Forces Drive Younger Fleet



↑ The Greg Mortimer is one in a series of Infinity-class vessels.

The largest provider of expedition ships on charter deals is seeing the market evolving quickly, as older vessels that are less commercially competitive are starting to exit service.

“Expedition tonnage seems to be divided into different generations,” said Carsten Lund, chief commercial officer at SunStone Ships, which charters out ships it owns to various tour operators.

Lund said that of around 100 ships that could be considered in the expedition cruise market, some 38 were more than 30 years old.

“Then we had a 20-year period where only 16 vessels were built. In the past decade, 46 expedition vessels have been built, with 39 of these in the last five years. The combination of Covid and the deliveries of newbuilds has resulted in an overcapacity in the market,” Lund told *Cruise Industry News*.

“We are reaching a point where the first generation of

expedition vessels is reaching the age of retirement, which, combined with the temporary overcapacity, will result in many of these exiting the market in the next few years.

“In our company vision we have a target of cutting our average vessel age in half by 2030,” Lund said. “As our fleet is currently divided 50/50 between new and secondhand tonnage, we will slowly retire the older tonnage, as we are building new.”

Other news was the bankruptcy of Vantage Travel, which took Lund by surprise, as the Boston-based tour operator had two of SunStone’s new Infinity-class ships on year-round charter deals.

“Getting two vessels back unexpectedly was not something we as a small company are able to handle without major impact to our daily operation. We were therefore forced to slow down the development of new projects and instead focus on the present.”

Lund found new charter customers for both Vantage ships, as the Ocean Explorer will sail for Quark Expeditions later this year and the Ocean Odyssey will be “employed outside the expedition cruise market.”

With Quark chartering the Ocean Explorer, that frees up SunStone’s Ocean Adventurer, which Lund said is now available for sale or charter.

The company has one more Infinity-class newbuild coming in 2025. The seventh and final ship will be a sister to the other six, all built in China and chartered to various tour operators. The 2025 newbuild will enter service for Aurora Expeditions, making it the third new SunStone ship in the Australian brand’s fleet, joining the Greg Mortimer and Sylvia Earle.

Lund also has his focus on more new ships, and said he hopes to have a signed newbuild deal in place by the end of the year for the company’s Boundless vessel concept.

Those ships will be bigger. With the Infinity class ranging from about 120 guests to just under 200, the Boundless ships will be configurable from 200 to 268.

Design changes include more tweaks for warm-water expedition cruising.

“We will have an enclosed garage, which can be used not only for zodiacs but also for ATVs, segways, bikes, or other equipment popular in warmer areas,” Lund said. “The Boundless concept also has a large midship pool with a retractable glass ceiling, making it ideal for all climates.” ■



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Quark



↑ The 199-guest Ultramarine

Edge of the World

Quark Expeditions is shuffling ships later this year as the Ocean Adventurer is being retired in favor of the Ocean Explorer, which was available following the demise of Vantage Travel.

The 138-guest SunStone ship joins the 2020-built Ultramarine and the 2019-built World Explorer.

"The diversity of adventure options we offer allows us to be relevant and compelling," said Andrew White, CEO.

He said chartering the Ocean Explorer was a great opportunity.

"It has everything you would want, whether it's the expedition credentials, safe return to port, comfort and ice class ... it's a fantastic ship," said White, who had just gotten back from the company's inaugural Essential Patagonia program. The 15-day itinerary, which explored Chilean fjords and Torres del Paine, re-



↑ Andrew White, CEO

traced Charles Darwin's voyage to the "edge of the world" while navigating Chile's network of fjords and channels.

"It was a new itinerary on the Ultramarine. Half the guests were repeaters; there is a depth of loyalty to Quark," White said. Highlights included sight-seeing flights, paddleboarding, kayaking and more.

April marked the three-year anniversary of Quark taking delivery of its Ultramarine, which White calls an unrivaled operational base for polar adventure. With two helicopters, the company can also of-

fer unmatched expedition programming such as alpine heli-trekking, mountain biking, alpine kayaking, heli-landing, heli-hiking, ice sheet landing and more.

"We have three values," said White, "to go beyond, go together and go responsibly."

3 SHIPS, POLAR ONLY

The three ships concentrate on the poles, said White, and there are no plans to go to warm-water destinations.

The company plans to add more fly-cruise product in Antarctica, he noted, pointing to more infrastructure and airlift options coming to King George Island.

And in the Arctic, he pointed to three theaters of operation to vary the product: Svalbard, Greenland and Iceland and the Canadian Arctic.

Of note, the World Explorer will exit the fleet in 2026 when Mystic, the ship owner, delivers her to Windstar.

NEW SHIP

The Ocean Explorer will start its Quark career this October.

White said the newer ship will be more economical to operate compared to the 1976-built Ocean Adventurer.

There is also diversity in the customer base, with the company enjoying a diversified distribution base.

"China is coming back," White told *Cruise Industry News*. "North America is a big market for us, as is Australia and the UK. China is not at the same levels as pre-Covid years, but we have an office and team in Beijing ... Sourcing is more concentrated in the U.S. than it was five years ago."

White said the company was outperforming the market.

"We're very focused on what we can control, and that is filling our ships profitably and delivering the best experience for our guests."

"It's a busy marketplace from a customer point of view. There is a lot of choice, activity and promotional noise." ■

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Heritage



↑ The Heritage Adventurer



↑ Aaron Russ, commercial director

Best Aspects

A new expedition to Japan this summer is doing well for Heritage Expeditions, as the Heritage Adventurer will focus on national parks and arts and circumnavigate Honshu as it sails for 16 days roundtrip from Osaka, said Aaron Russ, commercial director.

"We are going to the wilder corners of Japan with our full expedition team aboard," continued Russ. "It's about the best aspects of expedition cruising and the exploration of Japan, showcasing the culture, history and wild places."

The company will sail the same route again in 2025 during its summer cruise program. There's also a new Indonesia product in October and new for 2025 and selling well, said Russ, is a 19-day Asian Island Odyssey, taking the ship back to Australia after starting in Taiwan.

Following the demise of Vantage Travel in 2023, Heritage made a play for the assets in U.S. bankruptcy court, but ultimately lost the deal to Aurora Expeditions.

"We're always on the growth trajectory. We have a proven track record," said Russ. "We're looking at opportunities for meaningful and sustainable growth."

Key source markets for the company include Australia and New Zealand as well as the UK.

The company's trademark voyage is its Ross Sea Antarctica sailing, leaving from New Zealand and heading south for 28 days.

"That is one of our longest-standing itineraries," said Russ. "We've been visiting the region for 33 years and it's one of the parts of Antarctica that sees few other expedition ships, but it's where the bulk of the history is."

After debuting the Heritage Adventurer, the former Hanseatic, in 2022, the company has been progressively updating and enhancing the 1991-built ship.

After upgrading its tonnage from Russian research vessels to the Adventurer and 18-guest yacht-like Heritage Explorer, Russ said that many of the new ships coming into the market were focused on the ship being the destination.

"What we're going to see over time is a specialization, as clients will become aware of what works for them and what style suits them," Russ said. "Not all expeditions are created equal, and they will adjust their purchase decisions accordingly."

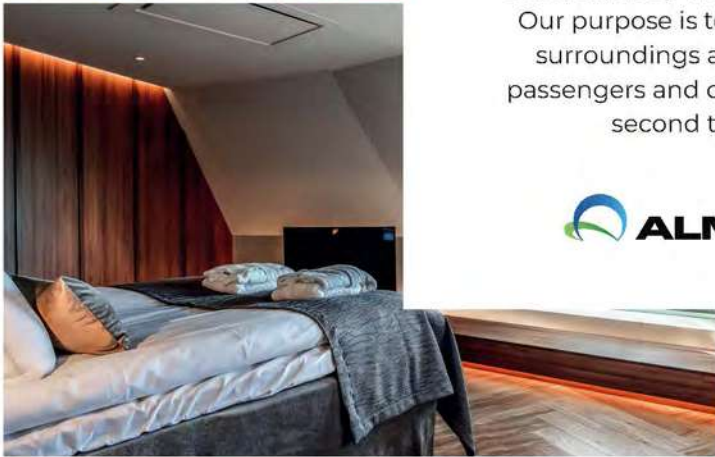
"There is a short orderbook for future newbuilds as the market is at over capacity at the moment. If there was a shortage of capacity people would be ordering ships," he continued.

"We're one of the original expedition companies and stay true to the original ethos of expedition travel. You're comfortable and looked after aboard, but the destination is the focus and the ship is the means to take you there." ■



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Polar Latitudes

Expansion Plans



↑ The Seaventure is operated on a charter agreement.



↑ John McKeon, president and CEO

“

The companies that jumped into this thinking it was a gold mine are realizing it is much tougher.

“Bookings are looking good for next year and slightly ahead of where we would normally be,” said John McKeon, president and CEO of Polar Latitudes.

“We worked through all our leftover Covid items this past season. There were some guests that had been shuffled around for two or three years.

“The basic thing is that we have come through the storm for the most part.”

Sailing the Seaventure on a seasonal basis in Antarctica, McKeon said he was very happy with the vessel.

There is big news in summer 2026, as McKeon will enter the Arctic expedition market for the first time.

“We are going to have three voyages in East Greenland. Personally, I wanted to be Antarctica-only, but passengers want to travel with us,” he said. “The bottom line is that we are bullish, and the next couple of seasons look strong and healthy.”

With the Seaventure on charter for the time being, McKeon said that in the near future he may be looking for a second ship or to build his own.

“We are starting to see the industry consolidate,” McKeon continued.

“The older ships are disappearing as they burn too much fuel. The companies that jumped into this thinking it was a gold mine are realizing it is much tougher ... The bigger issue that there was too much capacity is starting to sort itself out.”

Polar Latitudes spreads out its business so as not to be reliant on any one source market, with the majority of guests coming from the U.S., followed by China and the UK.

Guests continue to want an environmentally responsible voyage, McKeon said.

“They want to feel they can participate in something unique that makes them feel good about being there, as opposed to going down and being in polar Disneyland.” ■



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Antarctica21

New Ship For 2026

Antarctica21 has another new ship coming as the 76-guest Magellan Discoverer will debut in time for the 2026-27 season, replacing the older Ocean Nova and sailing alongside the 2019-built Magellan Explorer, explained Francesco Contini, executive vice president of sales and marketing.

The ship is also expected to be the most sustainable yet for the region, with battery packs and an innovative hybrid technical plant, with more information coming soon.

"We have the demand, we have the clientele, and the Ocean Nova is getting older, so we made the decision to renew the fleet," he said.

"We are replacing capacity and expanding a little bit."

With some of the smallest ships in the market, Contini underlined the company's advantage.

"We have total flexibility carrying under 100 passengers. We don't have to worry about passenger

limits or logistics of moving larger groups around."

Operating a unique fly-cruise model, the company brings guests into Punta Arenas in Chile and then flies them to King George Island to meet the ship, eliminating two days of bumpy Drake Passage sailing from both ends of the typical Antarctica voyages.

With limited infrastructure in Punta Arenas, the company recently opened its Explorers House, a multi-million dollar investment.

The 2,000-square-meter facility is a private club of sorts, with space for lectures, dining and more.

Antarctica21 has one of the more unique models in the region, operating with small ships and only seasonally.

"What we have decided to do is look at ways to extend the season for the Magellan Explorer. We are operating for over 200 days. We would like to extend that for another 40 days and do something else and are always looking for creative ideas." ■



↑ The Magellan Explorer

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| | Ritz-Carlton | Ilma | \$350 | 37,000 | 456 | Chantiers | World | Q3 |
| | Disney | Treasure | \$900 | 140,000 | 2,500 | Meyer Werft | Caribbean | Q4 |
| | Viking Ocean | Viking Vela | \$400 | 47,000 | 998 | Fincantieri | World | Q4 |
| | Oceanwide | Janssonius | \$85 | 6,300 | 174 | Brodosplit | World | TBA |

(1) In Millions, Costs May Be Estimated
TBA = To Be Announced

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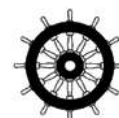




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A large white cruise ship with blue accents is sailing on turquoise water. The ship has multiple decks with railings and a blue logo on the upper part. In the foreground, a person is kayaking in a yellow and orange kayak, and two blue inflatable rings are floating. Other people are swimming in the water. The background features a tropical beach with white sand and green mountains under a blue sky with white clouds.

2. On charter to Aurora

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|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------|----------|-------------|---------|----------|
| 2027: | | | | | | | |
| Explora Journeys | Explora IV | \$600 | 64,000 | 922 | Fincantieri | World | Spring |
| Viking Ocean | Unnamed | \$400 | 47,000 | 998 | Fincantieri | World | TBA |
| Orient Express | Unnamed | \$300 | 30,000 | 108 | Chantiers | TBA | TBA |
| Norwegian | Unnamed | \$1,300 | 169,000 | 3,650 | Fincantieri | TBA | TBA |
| Mystic/Atlas | World Discoverer | \$120 | 10,000 | 200 | West Sea | World | TBA |
| MSC Cruises | Unnamed | \$1,200 | 205,700 | 5,400 | Chantiers | TBA | TBA |
| Explora Journeys | Explora V | \$600 | 70,000 | 922 | Fincantieri | World | TBA |
| Carnival | Unnamed | \$950 | 183,900 | 5,400 | Meyer Werft | TBA | TBA |
| Ryobi Holdings | Unnamed | \$150 | 20,000 | 150 | West Sea | World | TBA |
| Oceania | Unnamed | \$980 | 86,000 | 1,450 | Fincantieri | TBA | TBA |
| 2028: | | | | | | | |
| Explora Journeys | Explora VI | \$600 | 70,000 | 998 | Fincantieri | World | TBA |
| Viking Ocean | Unnamed | \$400 | 47,000 | 998 | Fincantieri | World | TBA |
| Norwegian | Unnamed | \$1,300 | 169,000 | 3,650 | Fincantieri | TBA | TBA |
| Royal Caribbean | Unnamed | \$1,450 | 231,000 | 5,714 | Chantiers | TBA | TBA |
| 2029: | | | | | | | |
| Viking Ocean | Unnamed | \$400 | 47,000 | 998 | Fincantieri | World | TBA |
| Viking Ocean | Unnamed | \$400 | 47,000 | 998 | Fincantieri | World | TBA |
| Regent | Unnamed | \$885 | 77,000 | 850 | Fincantieri | TBA | TBA |
| Oceania | Unnamed | \$980 | 86,000 | 1,450 | Fincantieri | TBA | TBA |
| 2030–2036: | | | | | | | |
| Norwegian | Unnamed | \$1,500 | 200,000 | 5,000 | Fincantieri | TBA | 2030 |
| Norwegian | Unnamed | \$1,500 | 200,000 | 5,000 | Fincantieri | TBA | 2032 |
| Norwegian | Unnamed | \$1,500 | 200,000 | 5,000 | Fincantieri | TBA | 2034 |
| Norwegian | Unnamed | \$1,500 | 200,000 | 5,000 | Fincantieri | TBA | 2036 |
| COASTAL SHIPS: | | | | | | | |
| American | Liberty | \$55 | 4,100 | 109 | Chesapeake | U.S. | 2024 |
| American | Legend | \$55 | 4,100 | 109 | Chesapeake | U.S. | 2024 |
| American | Patriot | \$55 | 4,100 | 125 | Chesapeake | U.S. | 2025 |
| American | Pioneer | \$55 | 4,100 | 125 | Chesapeake | U.S. | 2025 |
| American | Unnamed | \$55 | 4,100 | 125 | Chesapeake | U.S. | 2026 |
| American | Unnamed | \$55 | 4,100 | 125 | Chesapeake | U.S. | 2026 |
| American | Unnamed | \$65 | 5,000 | 175 | Chesapeake | U.S. | 2026 |

| | | | | | |
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Expedition Market



Executive Guide



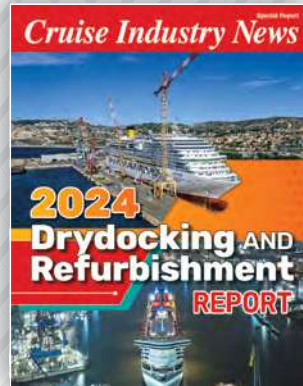
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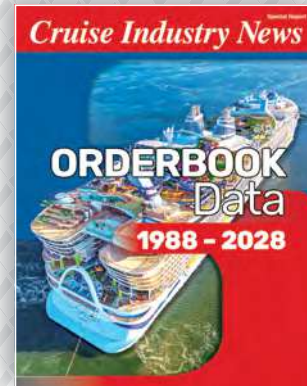
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Luxury Market



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voyage plan: summer 2024

A look back at the last few months

SMOOTH SAILING



Neonyx Cruises prepares **to sail** with the former Costa Magica



Baltimore Harbour **reopens** for cruise ships



Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings orders **8 new** ships for 3 brands



Carnival **orders** another Excel class ship for 2028 delivery



Viking goes public and **orders 2** more ocean ships



Juneau **limits** cruise numbers



Positive Polar **to start** new expedition cruise line



MSC Cruises announces **largest ever** U.S. program for 2025-26 winter



Queen Anne **delivered**



Aroya Cruises **reveals** initial deployment and first product details



Margaritaville at Sea **adds** second ship to its fleet



Villa Vie Residences **delays** start up



Maud **to move back** to Hurtigruten's coastal express service



Pacific Explorer **to leave** Carnival Corporation fleet



Windstar **to add** two ships to its fleet



American Cruise Lines **to scrap** part of American Queen's former fleet



Ocean Diamond sold and **exiting** cruise market



Hapag-Lloyd **cancels** Hanseatic Spirit's season in Antarctica



Carnival Cruise Line **to absorb** P&O Australia brand in 2025

ROUGH SEAS

ADRIFT

ON COURSE

MARINE HOTEL ASSOCIATION

The logo features the letters 'MHA' in a bold, dark blue font. Three wavy, orange lines are positioned between the 'M' and 'A'. Below the letters, the number '40th' is displayed in a light blue, outlined font. The entire graphic is set against a teal background with faint, overlapping outlines of the numbers '38' and '39'.

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