



# CRUISE TIMES

ISSUE 24 SUMMER | AUTUMN 2024

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Xiquets de Tarragona human tower (castell) association. This 18th-century Catalan tradition was declared a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage of humanity in 2010.

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*Providing in-depth analysis of the cruise trade*

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# PORT EVERGLADES

## IS READY TO BREAK RECORDS

Port Everglades is poised for a record 4.4 million cruise passengers during the upcoming 2024–2025 cruise season, with three brand-new ships and Crystal's return to its former homeport.

Princess Cruises' *Sun Princess* is scheduled to make her South Florida debut in October 2024 as the line's largest and first LNG-powered ship. *Sun Princess* is the first ship in Princess's Sphere class and will accommodate more than 4,300 guests.

Silversea's *Silver Ray* is the line's second Nova-class ship and arrives in Port Everglades on 19 December 2024. With a glassy design that includes 270-degree views, the ship will accommodate more than 700 guests.

The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection's *Ilma*, the luxury line's second yacht, will be named at Port Everglades on 11 December. The 790-foot *Ilma*, which means "water" in Maltese, will make her maiden call on 27 November, ahead of the naming ceremony.

Crystal, the newly rebranded luxury line, will begin homeporting at Port Everglades in November 2024, with the completely refurbished *Crystal Serenity*.

In November 2023, Disney Cruise Line celebrated the opening of its new dedicated cruise terminal at Port Everglades, which is the line's second year-round homeport in Florida. Once guests arrive to the terminal to embark on their voyage, they dive into the world of Disney and Pixar's film *Finding Nemo*, with some of their favorite friends from the film displayed on colorful murals. The more-than-104,000-square-foot terminal was reimagined by Walt Disney Imagineering exclusively for Disney Cruise Line guests to provide a seamless embarkation experience.



In total, 45 cruise ships and one ferry will sail from Port Everglades on 10 different lines: Celebrity Cruises, Crystal, Cunard, Disney Cruise Line, Holland America Line, Princess Cruises, The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, Royal Caribbean International, Silversea Cruises, and Viking Cruises. The Baleària Caribbean ferry also sails year-round to Freeport and Bimini in the Bahamas.

Port Everglades' enviable location in the heart of South Florida and the neighboring Caribbean makes it one of the three busiest cruise ports in the world. Guests enjoy the

port's proximity to three international airports, including the rapidly growing Fort Lauderdale–Hollywood International Airport (FLL) less than two miles away. For pre- and post-cruise stays, Port Everglades is a short drive to sweeping beachfronts, a vibrant art scene, world-class restaurants, craft breweries, entertainment, shopping, casinos, and family-friendly activities – including the area's namesake, the Florida Everglades.

Port Everglades offers everything under the sun, from Caribbean cruises to world voyages to fast-ferry getaways – all from the vacation paradise of Greater Fort Lauderdale. View details on the latest cruise offerings at [PortEverglades.net](http://PortEverglades.net), or contact us by emailing [PortEverglades@broward.org](mailto:PortEverglades@broward.org).



# DELICATE BALANCE



**I**t is curious how a travel and hospitality industry could incur so much rancour and, at the same time, inspire passion in the hearts of so many.

On one side, the numbers of people and jurisdictions who see this industry as embodying environmental vandalism swell day by day; on the other, its avid clientele continues to grow. Cruise lines invest heavily in sustainability yet struggle to communicate their environmental credentials to the world at large.

Cruise industry, having survived its biggest existential crisis in a century and quickly begun to thrive again, now finds itself confronting the fallout of overtourism. Images of tourists being sprayed with water by protestors in the streets of Barcelona spread on social media, which, paradoxically, ought to be the sector's most effective marketing tool.

Authorities, instead of rolling out the red carpet, try to stem the flow by unreasonable means of taxation and number restrictions. Yet countries and jurisdictions at the same time recognise tourism's economic value and pull out all the stops to attract visitors.

This strange phenomenon reflects our polarised world today. In the thin space between the two opposing factions, the industry must operate and flourish in a delicate balance, while enduring its status as the whipping boy of overtourism because of its higher profile.

Cruise industry is not cowed by the growing antagonism. Quite the contrary: bigger ships are being built in response to demand. This is making the sector an even bigger target of public antipathy.

Controversy draws attention, and no publicity – even that based on misleading information – is bad publicity. Part of the cruise sector's success may be due to the negative attention it attracts.

As it releases one set of record performance figures after another, the industry can expect more attention to be lavished upon it in the coming period. Its responses and actions will determine whether it lands more on the side of admiration or condemnation.

*Frances Gannon*

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PUBLISHER



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# MAJOR CRUISE GROUPS SIX-MONTH FINANCIAL AND VOLUME PERFORMANCE REVIEW

## OUTPERFORMING EXPECTATIONS

**It should come as no surprise that major cruise groups reported yet another set of record interim figures, which certainly did not disappoint most people. All the key indicators suggested that their business performances would continue to improve for the rest of 2024 and beyond.**

BY ALAN LAM

**B**uilding on the success already apparent in 2023, the financial performances of major international cruise groups seemed to go from strength to strength in the first half of 2024. Their half-year operational figures reassured the most sceptical of commentators of the solidity of their businesses.

Moreover, the best-ever forward booking numbers and firm ticket prices suggested

that the industry was in the rudest of health. It continued to experience unusually robust and seemingly endless consumer demand.

### Outperforming guidance

For the first half of 2024, the three major listed cruise groups reported vigorous revenue growths, outperforming the most optimistic earlier guidance. Royal Caribbean Group (RCG), in particular, reported a 22.3% rise in total revenue for the period compared to the same period in the previous year.

All three groups have achieved new half-year revenue records. In total, the trio attained a revenue of \$23.6 billion, compared to \$19.8 billion in the first half of 2023: an increase of almost 20%.

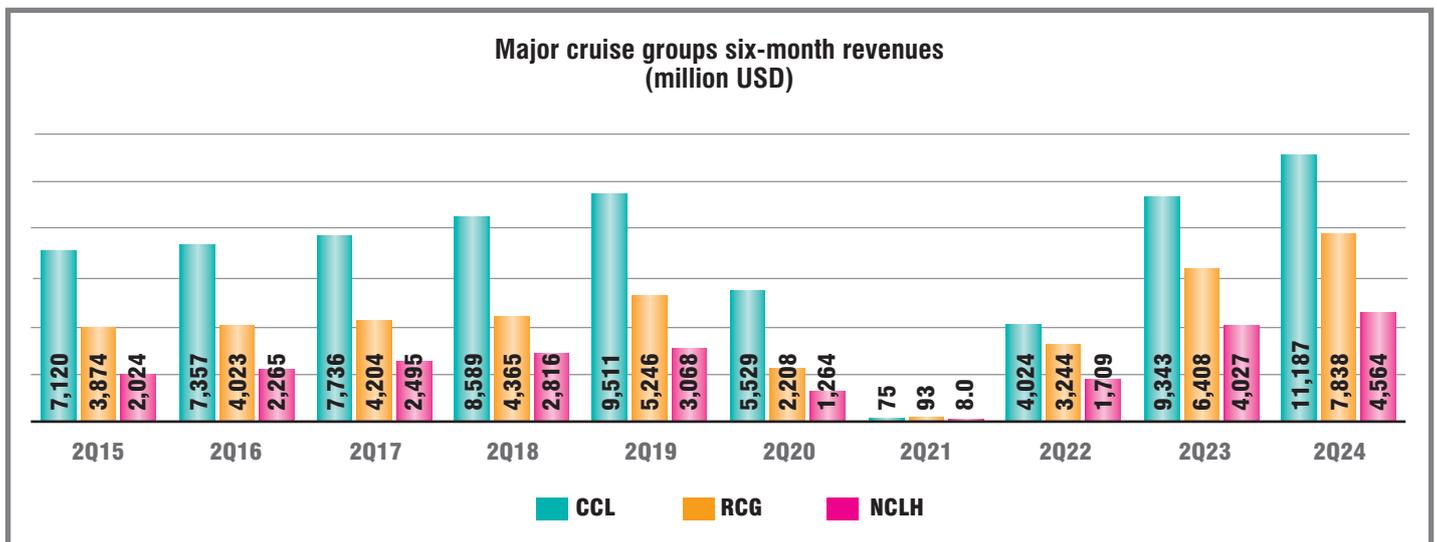
The momentum was continuing, prompting another enthusiastic guidance revision for the full year and beyond. Strong booking position and firm pricing were the main drivers. Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd (NCLH), for example, increased its net yield guidance by 100 basis points to a growth of approximately 8.2% (from approximately 7.2%), on a constant currency basis, compared to 2023. The increase in guidance was driven by strong demand across all three of its brands and itineraries.

“2024 continues to be an exceptional year in terms of our financial performance, as evidenced by our strong second-quarter results, which exceeded guidance across the board,” said Harry Sommer, NCLH’s president and chief executive officer. “As we raise our full-year guidance a third time, we expect our adjusted EPS to grow approximately 120% compared to 2023, driven mainly by our ability to capitalise on the robust market demand.”

Carnival Corporation & plc (CCL), for its part, reported booking levels outperforming its previous buoyant forecast, prompting the company to raise its full-year guidance, in constant currency, to approximately 10.25% on continuing strong demand.

All the signs indicated that CCL’s performance in the second half of 2024 would be equally robust, if not more so. “With less inventory remaining for sale for the remainder of 2024, the company achieved considerably higher prices (in constant currency) on bookings taken during the second quarter compared to the prior year, which is aligned with the company’s yield management strategy,” stated CCL.

RCG, arguably the best revenue performer in the recent past, shared a



Source: CCL, RCG, & NCLH



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similar sentiment. “The demand and pricing environment remained very strong since the last earnings call,” the company stated.

“Booking volumes were higher than the corresponding period in 2023 and at record pricing levels. The company continues to be in a record booked position for 2024 sailings. Consumer spending on board, as well as pre-cruise purchases, continue to significantly exceed 2023 levels, driven by greater participation at higher prices.”

Based on its strong second-quarter performance, RCG also raised its guidance. It now expects its net yields for the third quarter to increase by 6.5%–7.0%, in constant currency, and as reported. Its adjusted EPS in 2024 is now expected to be in the region of \$11.35–\$11.45. Based on the latest results and forecast, RCG became the first listed cruise group to reinstate dividends by declaring \$0.40 per share for the second quarter.

The company was justifiably upbeat.

“We have made incredible strides in improving our commercial operations, strategically reallocating our portfolio composition, and formulating growth plans, while strengthening even further our global team, the best in the business,” said Josh Weinstein, RCG’s chief executive officer. “Off the back of that effort, we closed yet another quarter delivering records, this time across revenues, operating income, customer deposits, and booking levels, exceeding our guidance on every measure.”

As always, passenger numbers and passenger cruise days were key to improved revenue performance. Both passenger numbers and passenger cruise days increased by an average of just over 10% in the first six months of 2024, compared to the same period in 2023.

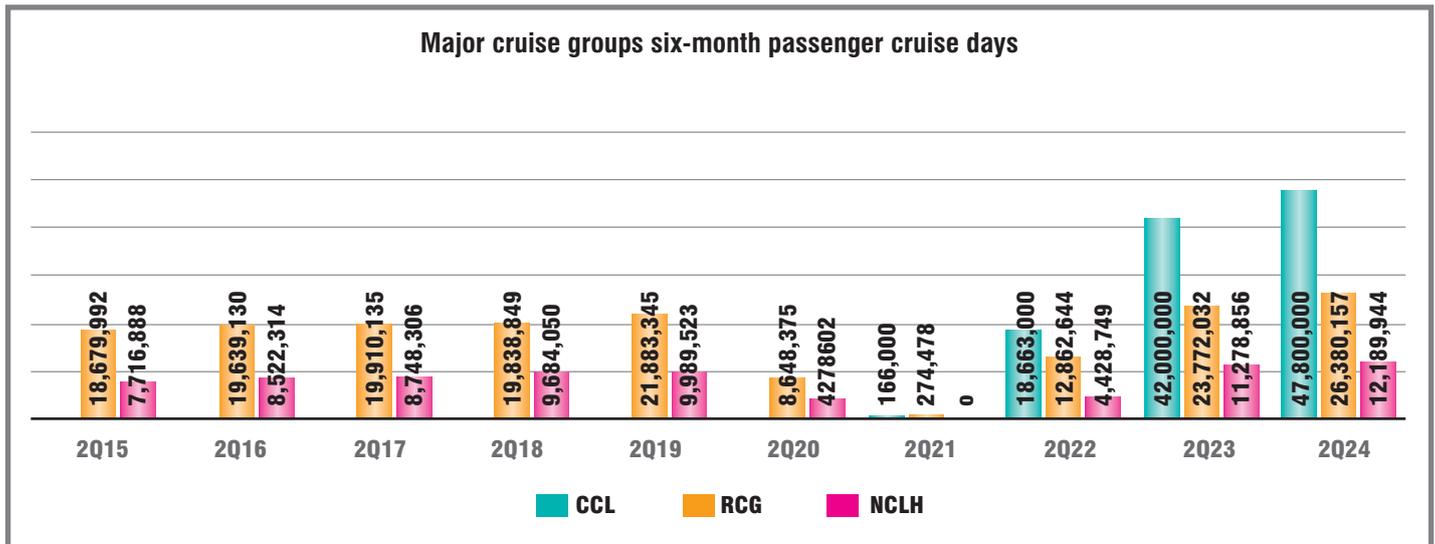
CCL, RCG, and NCLH reported occupancy rates of 103%, 107.6%, and 105.3%, respectively, for the six-month period. CCL’s relatively lower percentage

was probably due to its financial year ending a month earlier than that of its two smaller peers. This could only mean a bigger upside for the company in the coming quarters. RCG’s higher occupancy rate was partly thanks to the seemingly improbable 132% occupancy rate of its new ship, *Icon of the Seas*. Once again, newer and bigger ships were proven to be effective revenue generators.

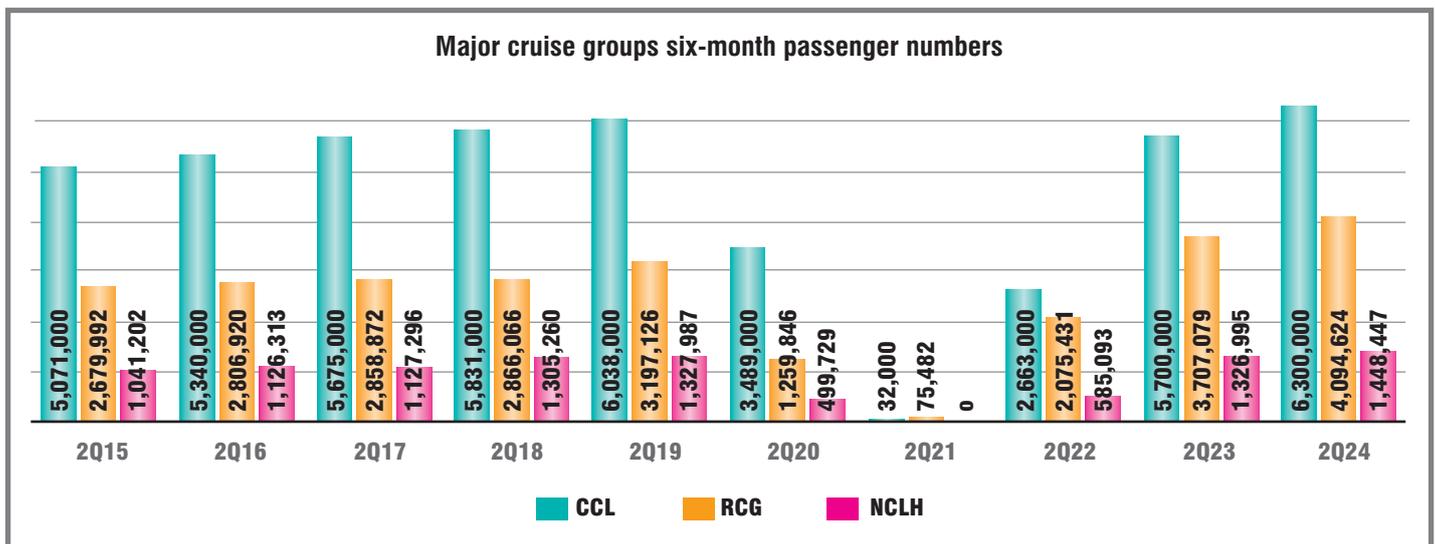
**Profitability rising**

The most reassuring feature of the post-pandemic cruise industry so far was the return of profitability. Building on the already positive six-month EBITDA performances of the previous year, the trio recorded an inspiring average of 61.2% increase in half-year EBITDA for 2024, with CCL reporting an astonishing 94.5% rise.

Both RCG and NCLH reported their net results for the half-year period turning positive for the first time since the



Source: CCL, RCG, & NCLH



Source: CCL, RCG, & NCLH



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pandemic. RCG achieved a new record, beating its previous best six-month net result, recorded in 2019, by an impressive 65.8% and surpassing its 2023 figure by a massive 195%.

RCG also reported a 77% increase in operating income. "Our momentum continues," said Jason Liberty, the group's president and CEO. "We met our financial targets 18 months earlier than expected, have our balance sheet in a strong position, reinstated our dividend, and we are just getting started. Exceptional demand for our vacation experiences has accelerated our performance by generating significant yield growth over the past several years."

Improved profitability enables NCLH to fine-tune its already successful financial strategy. "The momentum we are garnering from strong yield growth, disciplined cost management, and the initiatives that comprise our Charting the Course strategy further bolsters our confidence in achieving our previously announced 2026 financial and sustainability targets," said Sommer.

**Cautious notes**

Despite the robust performance, a cautious note must be sounded. The first sensible question is: How long will this positive demand momentum last? Surely it cannot go on forever.

We must read the figures of the trio's recent positive performances from a more critical perspective. In its previous four half-year reviews, for example, CCL reported an average of \$3.5 billion net loss on each. Despite the current record revenue performances, the company registered a moderate \$123 million net loss for the first six months of 2024. It is still a long way back from the recent deep losses. The same,



**Torstein Hagen, chairman, Viking.**

more or less, can be said about RCG and NCLH when we scrutinise the net-result chart.

Moreover, despite inflation having eased, oil price hikes having moderated, and the general economic environment having improved, the operating costs were still rising. For the first six months of 2024, the trio reported an average of more than 10% increase in operating expenses, compared to the same period in 2023. However, it is comforting to note that the pace of revenue increase far outstrips that of operating expenses.

More worthy of caution, perhaps, was the debt situation of the sector. Despite having decreased by about 6% in the last 12 months, the collective long-term liabilities of the three major cruise groups were still nearly 150% higher than in 2019.

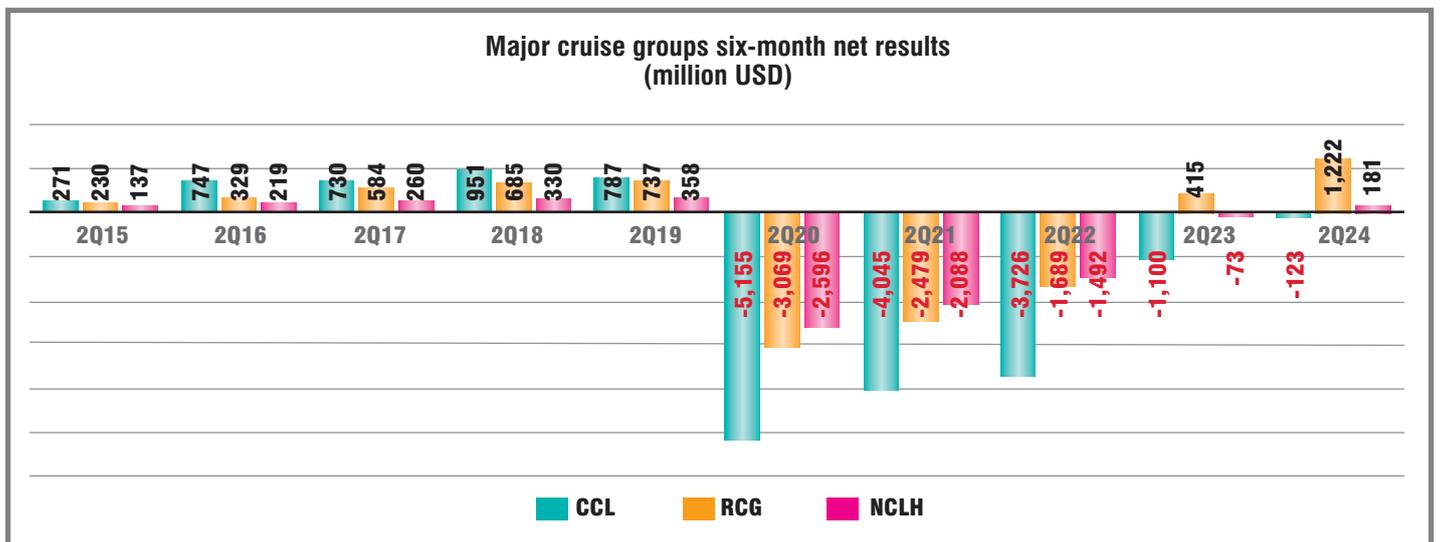
We may see long-term debts rising

again soon, as the trio embark upon ambitious newbuilding programmes. Of course, the future debt situation also depends on the financial performance of the sector and its refinancing efforts, among other factors.

**Enter Viking**

On 30 April, against a background of strong demand and the sector's improved financial performance, Viking Holdings, the operator of Viking Cruises, applied for public listing. Its shares began trading in the New York Stock Exchange at \$24. The company initially aimed to raise \$1.54 billion, based on 64.04 million shares issued.

At the end of July, barely three months after the IPO, Viking's shares were trading at \$35.5, about 48% higher, reflecting the steadfast public confidence in the company



Source: CCL, RCG, & NCLH

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– confidence that is supported by its first set of interim figures.

For the first quarter of its current financial year, Viking recorded a 14.2% increase in revenue compared to the same period in 2023, with a corresponding 13.6% increase in passenger numbers and a 14.5% increase in passenger cruise days. The company also reported that its occupancy rate had risen moderately from 92.8% in the first quarter of 2023 to 94% in the same period of 2024.

“We are pleased with our performance in the first quarter, during which we reported a net yield of \$508, and our strong advanced bookings for 2024 and 2025 are equally encouraging,” said Torstein Hagen, the company’s chairman and CEO. “We embrace a contrarian approach and steadfastly maintain a long-term perspective when managing our business. Leveraging our momentum, we are dedicated to shaping Viking’s next era to deliver value for

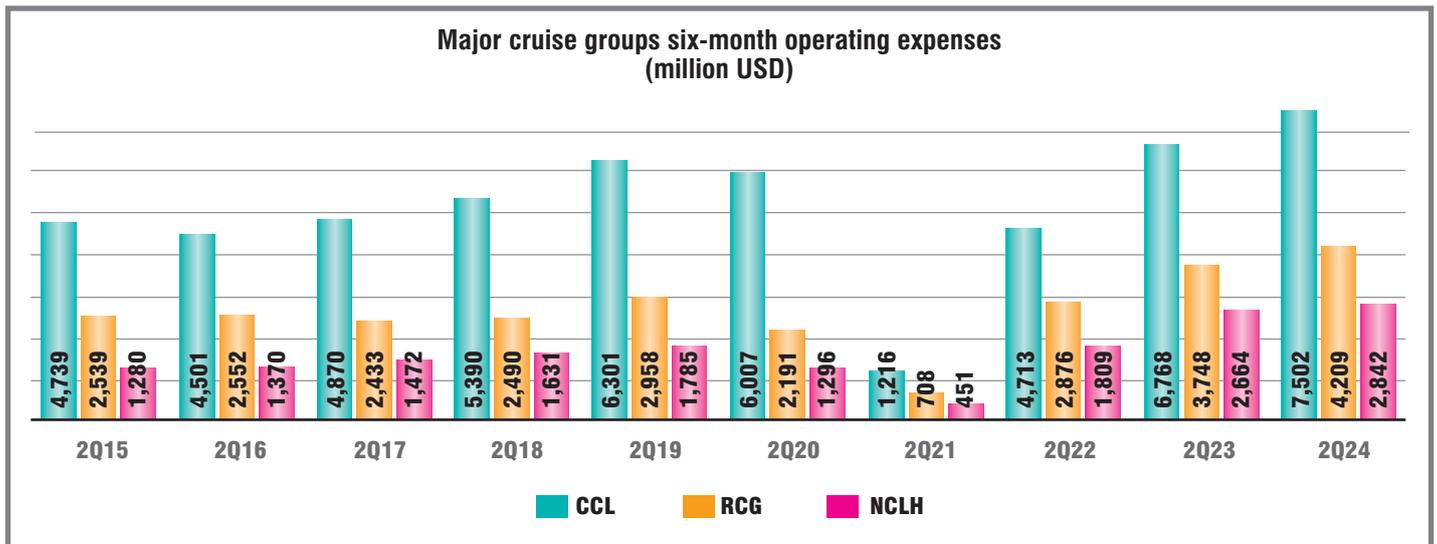
all of our stakeholders.”

But, mainly because of a deep private placement derivative loss, Viking’s first-quarter net loss deepened from \$214.4 million in 2023 to \$493.9 million in 2024, an unpalatable 130% increase.

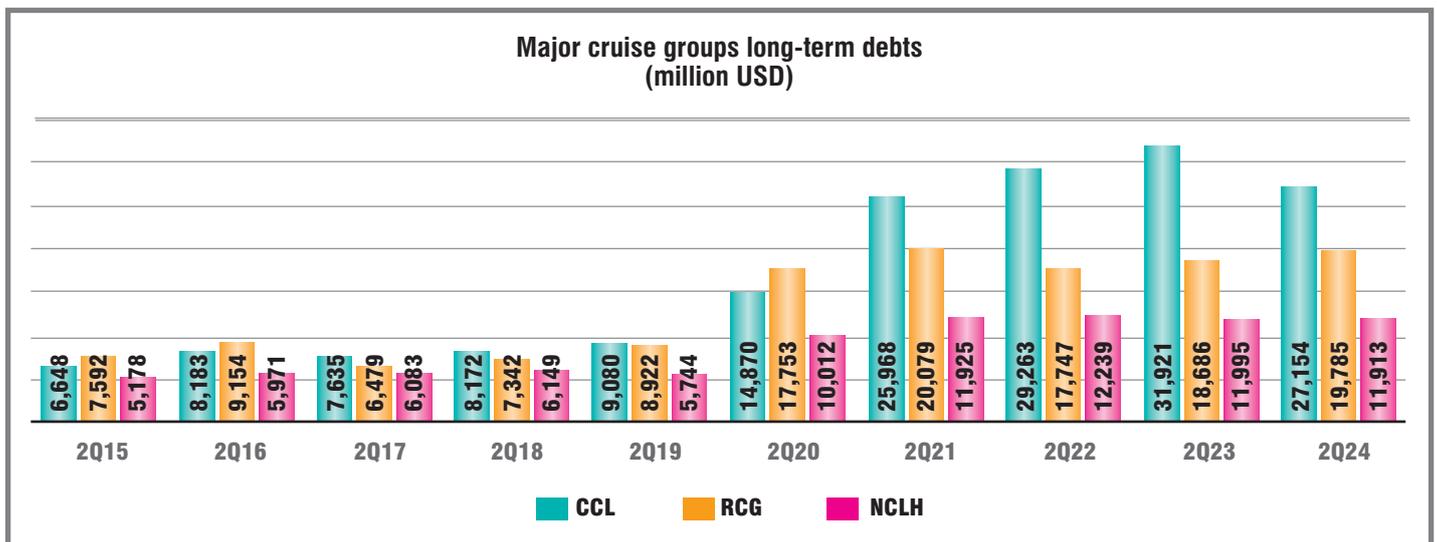
Despite this setback, such was the success of its IPO, during its first earnings call, Viking announced the firming of options for two newbuildings with Fincantieri for 2029 deliveries.

Because of its huge river cruise segment, Viking’s performance figures cannot be fairly compared to those of major ocean cruise operators. But they will serve as another indicator of the cruise industry’s prospect, especially when considering that Viking’s “contrarian approach” strategy is so radically differently from those of CCL, RCG, and NCLH.

*CruiseTimes* will include more details and analyses of Viking’s performance in its future industry performance reviews.



Source: CCL, RCG, & NCLH



Source: CCL, RCG, & NCLH

BY AARON SAUNDERS

**A**s cruise industry veterans, insiders, and observers gathered in Miami in April for the annual Seatrade Cruise Global conference, few could have expected that the cruise industry, just four years after a global health pandemic crippled it, would come roaring back, better than ever.

No one doubts the resiliency of cruise, but the industry's recovery has been nothing short of astounding. Revenue, particularly onboard revenue, is surging past expectations. Occupancy is up over 100 per cent for most lines – as much as 132 per cent for Royal Caribbean, which is seeing record demand for its newest vessel, *Icon of the Seas*. And consumer interest, particularly among new-to-cruise, remains high.

But unlike in previous years, when this demand was described as “pent-up” as a result of the travel restrictions imposed during the global pandemic, the messaging at Seatrade Cruise Global 2024 was clear: this is “natural” demand.

### Natural demand driving results

“The concept of pent-up demand for cruising is gone,” said Carnival Corporation CEO Josh Weinstein during the Seatrade Cruise Global keynote address. “For the industry and certainly for us, the demand profile is unprecedented. Our outlook for 2024 [has] record yields, record demand, record passengers carried. And as amazing as that is, our bookings for 2025 are better than they were at this point last year for 2024.

# Seatrade 2024: Occupancy, Occupancy, Occupancy!

“This is natural demand, because we all provide amazing experiences,” Weinstein concluded.

He has plenty of reasons to be optimistic. Carnival Corp's earnings report for Q2 2024 highlights operating income of \$560 million, *five times* the figure in 2023. Adjusted net income for the second quarter outperformed March guidance by nearly \$170 million. The company's cumulative booked position for the remainder of 2024 is the best on record in terms of price and occupancy. And consumer deposits on hand reached \$8.3 billion, shattering the previous record by over \$1 billion.

“We are very pleased with the continued acceleration of demand for 2025 and beyond, which builds upon the fantastic achievements in 2024 thus far. This positive trajectory is a testament to the successful execution of our demand generation efforts

and the delivery of exceptional vacation experiences once onboard,” said Weinstein in a statement.

Royal Caribbean Group's Jason Liberty echoed those sentiments, buoyed by the record-breaking launch of *Icon of the Seas*, the biggest passenger ship to ever set sail, just four months prior to Seatrade.

“It is the start of a new era of vacations, and we're excited to see tens of millions of families and friends make their mark with memories they create together and on their own adventures without compromise,” said Liberty about *Icon of the Seas*.

Harry Sommer, president and CEO of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, referred to the “virtuous cycle” of cruising, noting that passengers who take a cruise and have a good time typically return home with stories to share about their experiences – which in turn helps to drive bookings.



Photos: Seatrade Cruise Global

“It could be friends, family, a neighbour, relatives,” said Sommer. “That positive word of mouth is really huge for our industry. The ubiquity of social media really helps in this endeavour.”

**Lack of clarity on sustainability**

The panel of CEOs also touched on sustainability, the watchword of 2023’s State of the Industry. While it continues to be an important benchmark for the cruise industry to work towards, conflicting regulations around the globe and the lack of a common, agreeable fuel source for future vessels continue to stymie the top brass in cruise.

“There is more opportunity for us to continue to evolve the technology that supports our ships and the infrastructure on land,” said Liberty. “Many parties here today help us reduce the amount of fuel we burn and emissions, but this only solves so much. We need to make sure we have fuel sources that allow us to get to net zero.

“We need fuel sources where we know where they will be, and what they are, and what is available to us is scalable and affordable,” said Liberty.

“The problem is, they are not doing it in line with the rest of the world – they are coming out with their own agenda, and we don’t have a global approach,” said MSC’s Pierfrancesco Vago.

Vago was referring to new regulations from the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), which requires emissions reporting for all cargo and passenger vessels over 5,000 gross tons as of 1 January 2025. Under the plan, shipping companies must have an approved monitoring plan for reporting annual emissions. Companies must submit an emissions report for each vessel sailing within EU waters, as well as an emissions report for the entire company’s fleet, in total, that must then be verified by an accredited verifier. Companies then must buy – and use – accredited emissions allowances by 30 September of the following year.

While the EU ETS is designed to reduce emissions targets for passenger, cargo, and offshore vessels, the reporting requirements are onerous. This may cause vessel operators to look elsewhere for deployments and routing.

“This is a wider problem in the maritime, not just in cruise but logistics, supply, and cargo become uncompetitive if shipment is in Europe versus Northern Africa,” said Vago about the differing emissions standards between continents. “This needs to be looked upon and brought to IMO level, as IMO is looking to understand how to



**Networking opportunities in the registration area.**



harmonise the approach in the global sense.”

Executives also touched on confusion about future issues that will affect not just cruise but also the broader maritime shipping industry.

A good example can be seen in ongoing discussions about alternative fuels, with cruise lines hedging their future newbuild bets on vessels that have hybrid fuel sources: LNG or traditional marine gas oil. Ships that are green-methanol ready. Ships that have capability for auxiliary battery banks onboard. Shipping giant Maersk has already committed to green methanol to power its future fleet. If successful, that technology could find its way aboard cruise ships in short order.

But, as always, source and supply of these alternative fuels remain challenging – and costly.

### New technologies

On the trade floor at the Miami Beach Convention Center, things looked much as they always have: a strong contingent of worldwide ports and homeports clustered on one side of the venue, while suppliers and shipyards took up the “technical” platform on the other.



**Keynote on the state of the global cruise industry, with MSC Cruises executive chairman Pierfrancesco Vago speaking.**

But towards the main entrance, the convention floor looked more like a technology or computer game convention. Vendors showed off apps, AI-assist technologies, virtual reality games and simulators, and other new innovations that are slowly, but surely, becoming part of the

big ship cruising experience, particularly as mainstream lines seek to court a millennial, new-to-cruise audience.

That sort of thing is being embraced by cruise lines: media were invited to take a virtual stroll through MSC’s forthcoming *MSC World America* thanks to a pair of



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Apple Vision Pro virtual reality goggles that allowed them to “walk” the decks – a full year before the ship’s physical debut in Miami, scheduled for just after Seatrade Cruise Global 2025.

Innovation has never been stronger in the cruise industry. Lines, particularly those engaged in mainstream cruising, are in a race to blend successful elements of all-inclusive resorts and theme parks on land into a seagoing package that can attract the ever-lucrative new-to-cruise passenger. That means bigger waterslides, more elaborate features like the Bolt roller coasters on Carnival’s newest vessels, or an entire rethink of the cruising experience, like *Icon of the Seas* or the adults-only, big-ship vibe of Virgin Voyages.

**More good news**

After relatively announcement-free sessions since the pandemic, Seatrade Cruise Global’s 2024 edition saw several high-profile announcements from cruise lines.

MSC Cruises announced that its third World-class vessel would be called *MSC World Asia*, complete with an elaborate virtual steel-cutting held right on the trade floor.



Windstar Cruises announced the first expansion to its fleet in a decade, acquiring two new ships (one already in service, one still in the yard) that will debut in 2025.

American Cruise Lines announced two more coastal ships, the fifth and sixth in the line’s innovative Project Blue series of catamarans, to enter service in June and November 2024.

The biggest news was reserved for Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, which announced a massive newbuild order for eight vessels. Four of these are 200,000-gross-ton vessels earmarked for NCLH that will debut from 2030 to 2036. Two additional 86,000-gross-ton passenger vessels

carrying 1,450 passengers will debut for NCLH’s Oceania brand in 2027 and 2029, while two 77,000-gross-ton ships, carrying 850 guests apiece, are earmarked for Regent Seven Seas and will debut in 2026 and 2029.

**Seatrade looks ahead**

The optimism was palpable throughout all four days of Seatrade Cruise Global 2024. With metrics pointed in the right direction, there’s no reason to believe that the industry’s 2025 conference will be any less fantastic.

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# Methanol moves to spotlight as cruise industry seeks to cut GHG emissions

BY KARI REINIKAINEN

**M**ethanol is emerging as a favourite alternative fuel as cruise lines strive to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Clarksons, the London-based maritime services provider, estimated in June 2023 that a fifth of newbuildings of all ship types could be methanol-capable or methanol-ready by 2030. This would mean some 1,200 ships. In 2022, only 7 per cent of the orderbook in gross-tonnage terms and 3 per cent in ship numbers fitted that description.

The popularity of green methanol as a future ship propulsion fuel is growing by leaps and bounds. Green methanol is non-toxic and easy to handle, so it will be used where there is pressure now to act on green transition.

Several cruise lines are looking at using methanol to power their ships. The newbuilding *Mein Schiff 7* of TUI Cruises not only is methanol-ready but also uses the fuel as its main propulsion energy source, to be supplied by Mabanaft. A memorandum of understanding on this has been signed. It marks the beginning of a long-term strategic partnership between Mabanaft and TUI.

Celebrity Cruises and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings are also among the cruise companies to have stated in public that they are taking steps to use methanol in the future.

But the picture is not straightforward.

"Green methanol will not be the single fuel all ships will be using, but one of many fuels which will be used to meet emission requirements by public and legislations," said Brian Madsen, head of machinery and systems at the Danish consultant naval architect company Knud E. Hansen.

Because of its regulatory compliance and more user-friendly properties, methanol, so far, has emerged as the frontrunner of future fuels. But its ascendancy is not without obstacles and considerations.

## Main considerations

The biggest questions for the further development of methanol as fuel relate, unsurprisingly, to prices, availability, and carbon accounting.

"Due to the low production of green methanol and the current orderbook, there is speculation over the actual amount of fuel that will be available for shipping, and whether it will be certified green to ensure that the GHG emissions are accounted for on a lifecycle assessment basis," Lloyd's Register stated in its report *Fuel for Thought: Methanol*.

However, Dr Carlo Raucci, director of sustainable fuels and strategy at the Maritime Decarbonisation Hub, Lloyd's Register, said that the lack of green methanol is not an obstacle to its use as a fuel by the cruise industry, but merely a limitation in the short term.

"Moreover, this is true for any of the alternative fuels, not only green methanol,"

he told *CruiseTimes*. "Supplies of any of the alternative fuels with very low carbon intensity may be limited, especially in the short term. Time to build infrastructure, arrange business approvals, and lead time for construction must be factored in to the development of a fully fledged methanol fuel landscape."

It is likely that green methanol would be shipped from regions where it can be produced to ones where the demand cannot be met by local production.

"As with any other commodities, methanol will be traded," Raucci continued. "To what extent remains to be seen. It will depend on production volumes and the ability to meet demand from owners/operators. Additionally, there will be a balance between domestic use, in order to satisfy local demands, and exports."

The cost of green methanol production over time has raised some concerns, but Raucci said it is important to understand how the production could evolve. Current research suggests that it depends on the cost of sourcing sustainable carbon, and on the evolution of direct air capture (DAC) in the mid to long term.

"Regardless of the expected change in costs, its attractiveness depends also on the relative costs and/or constraints of relevant contenders, such as ammonia," Raucci concluded.

Methanol of synthetic or biogenic origin would be the best-suited green fuel for the cruise industry because of its physical



Photo: Knud E. Hansen

**Brian Madsen, head of machinery and systems, Knud E. Hansen.**



**Mia Elg, R&D manager, Deltamarin.**



Photo: MAN Energy Solutions

**Sokrates Tolgos, global head of cruise, MAN Energy Solutions.**

properties. Of all alternative fuels discussed, it is the one closest to diesel, and it does not have problems as technically challenging as do other new fuels, according to Sokrates Tolgos, global head of cruise at the German engine builder MAN Energy Solutions. However, like with other new green fuels, owners will have to accept that green methanol will be significantly more expensive than oil.

"Typically, the fuel bill ranges between 20 and 30 per cent of the total operating expenses of a cruise ship, but this varies from ship to ship. Imagine that the fuel price would triple in the future; this would affect ticket prices," said Tolgos, referring to the use of methanol.

All other new fuels would also be much more expensive than oil. So the situation would not be different from methanol in this respect. Non-compliance with future regulation on GHG emissions is not a wise financial option, as it would incur severe penalties, plus the purchase of a corresponding amount of missing emission certificates.

"With rising fuel prices, owners are increasingly switching their attention from capital expenditure (at construction stage) to lifecycle cost approach," Tolgos said. He noted that higher capital expenditure for a more energy-efficient cruise ship, or for technology enabling it to run on a more challenging but potentially cheaper future

fuel, would lead to a less steeply rising operating expenditure curve later on, so that after a certain number of years the higher initial investment would pay off.

Methanol takes up more space on board than oil – roughly twice as much for the same energy content – but Tolgos said that cruise ships could run for weeks without having to bunker, due to the larger capacity of their tanks; yet most of them call at a port almost every day or after just a few days at sea. Consequently, bunkering more often than what is current practice could address the space requirement issue. Of course, there are other factors of safety and existing regulations that determine the minimum required amount of energy storage in terms of fuel on board.

As far as existing ships are concerned, Tolgos said that increased use of biodiesel or green methanol are the only viable new-fuel options that would make financial sense for vessel retrofit costs, with more frequent bunkering as the main tool to deal with reduced range after such a retrofit.

From a technical point of view, there are no barriers to starting to use methanol. The big issue is the market availability of the "right" methanol – that is, fuel of either synthetic or biogenic origin, since the use of existing fossil-fuel-based methanol would make GHG emissions much worse than diesel from a holistic, well-to-wake perspective.

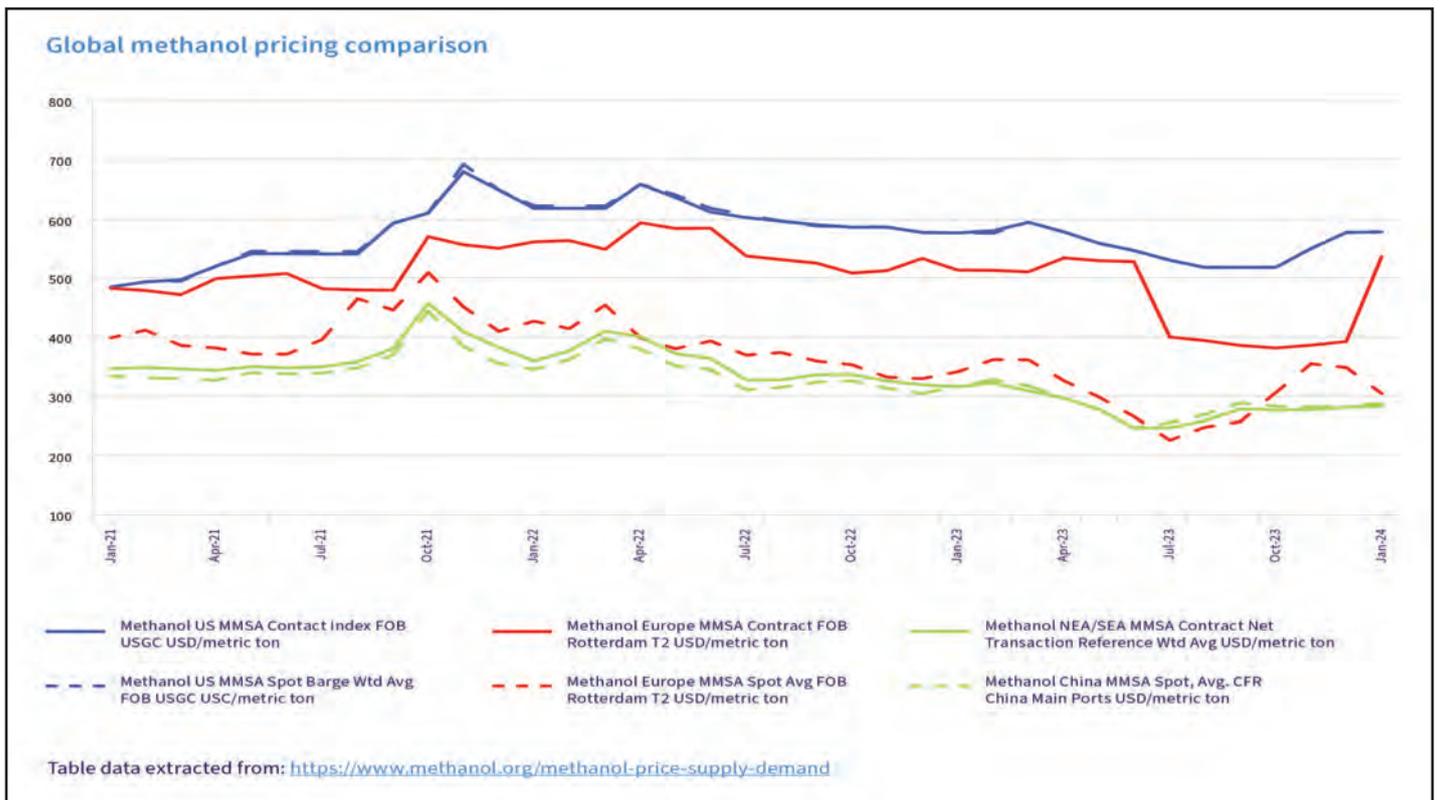
The major challenge for producing green methanol is the availability of a net-zero-carbon feedstock for the fuel synthesis. There are only two ways: either using carbon atoms of biogenic origin, or extracting the carbon atoms from CO<sub>2</sub> in the air (direct air capturing). This is a challenge that adopting non-carbon fuels like ammonia or hydrogen will not have.

There is also the fact that other vessel segments, such as container liners, have taken a turn towards methanol in recent years. This means that demand for sustainable methanol is expected to grow, thereby building up the business case for potential suppliers. Currently, the cost, limited available quantities, and insufficient supply infrastructure of sustainable methanol present a challenge for operators and owners.

Moreover, green methanol hardly exists in the marine industry, facilities to produce and further distribute this fuel still need to be constructed and require significant investments, and they will rely on abundant green electricity to run on, which will be in high demand from other sectors as well.

**Transition pressure**

Tolgos noted that the cruise industry was under serious pressure to transition to greener fuels, because, unlike freight shipping, it was not a vital part of the global economy: people could take holidays



Source: Methanol Institute | Data compiled by: Lloyd's Register



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elsewhere, but there is no viable alternative to ships in most parts of cargo transport.

Some regulators and parts of public opinion seem to highlight the non-essential nature of the cruise industry. But their views may be misguided when considering the emission footprint per passenger for the voyage performed and comparing this to the footprint that would have been generated for the same voyage via other means of transport, such as cars or planes. Nonetheless, the seriousness of the challenge for this industry is there, Tolgos said.

Maikel Arts, head of strategic growth area, cruise, Wärtsilä Marine, concurred. "The cruise industry is on the front line of the energy transition and is among the first sectors to target net-zero-carbon operations," he said. "As a result, methanol is emerging as one of the most promising fuel candidates to support this transition and, based on increasing interest over the last few years, we should expect to see the number of methanol-fuelled vessels grow in the cruise market."

**Flexible options**

While alternative and transition fuels such as methanol offer options for significantly reducing emissions, upscaling of infrastructure and supply for these cleaner fuels is needed in order for widespread adoption to become feasible.

Due to the uncertainty around which

alternative fuel is likely to become widespread in the future, both in its availability and cost effectiveness, operators and owners of cruise ships must perform a balancing act between long-term viability and immediate decarbonisation.

Forward thinkers in the industry are already adopting engines capable of running on these future fuels, with an increasingly large portion of fuel-flexible vessels being ordered as newbuilds and for retrofit. There is still a lot of work to do to help most of the fleet implement immediate decarbonisation solutions.

Although investing in sustainable net-zero-carbon fuel technology such as methanol is an important element toward net-zero operations, electrification and the reduction of energy consumption are important to focus on.

"Every percentage of efficiency that can be obtained by, for example, better engine technology or more efficient vessel routing is also contributing to the goal of net zero. It will also help to reduce your total cost of ownership. Even though this is already important today, it will become even more important when running on expensive sustainable fuels and paying for emissions are matters of regulatory requirement," Arts said.

Adopting flexible options is the best way to balance short- and long-term needs. Investing in fuel-flexible options will mitigate market fluctuations and infrastructure and

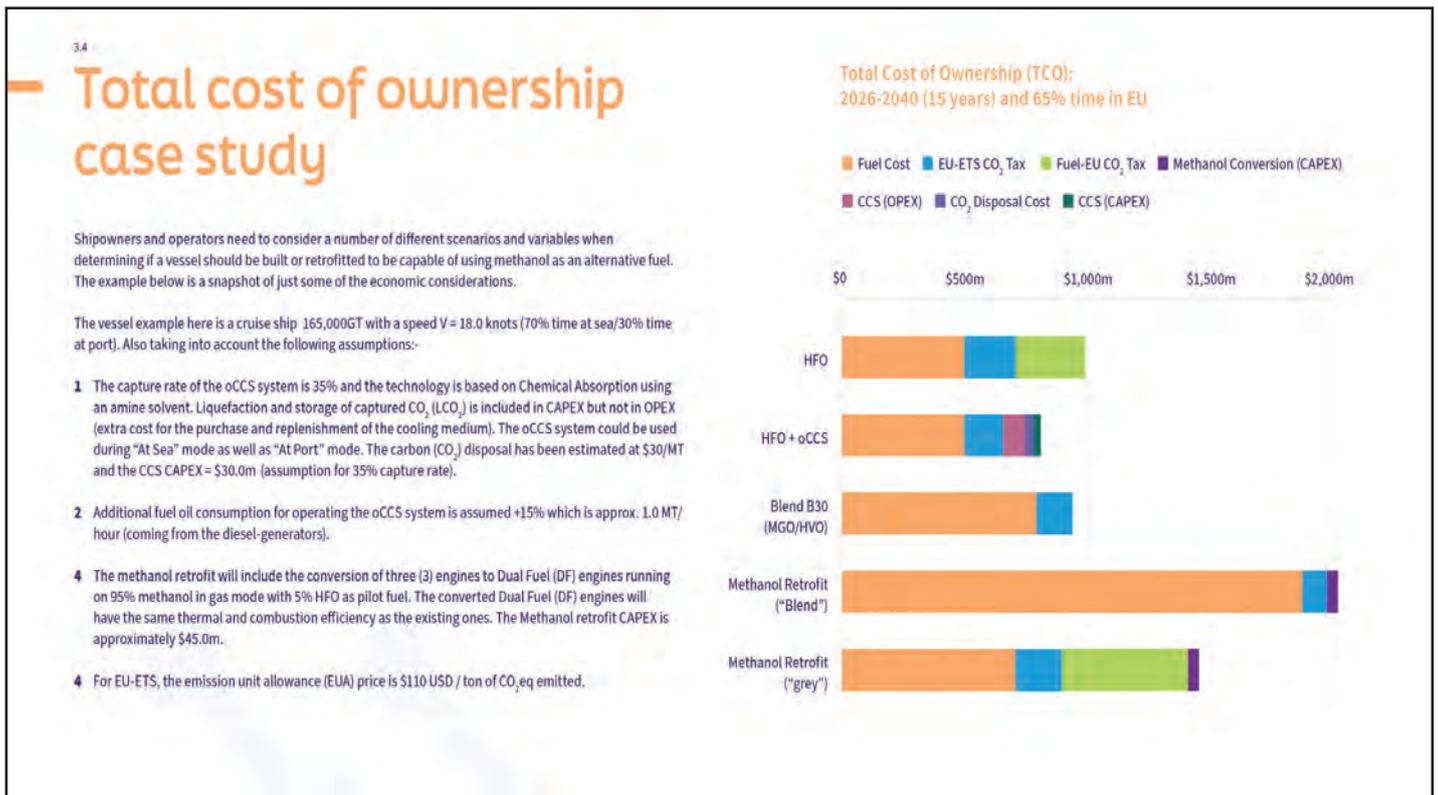
supply risks, helping to enable operators to use whichever fuel is most viable at that moment on a certain route. This gives operators and owners of cruise ships the flexibility to reduce any risks that would come with betting on a single fuel source.

In the long term, vessels adopting flexible options will be future-proofed against more stringent regulations, and simultaneously able to easily convert to whichever fuel will be a frontrunner in the next decade and beyond.

**Design perspectives**

Mia Elg, R&D manager at the Finnish consultant naval architect company Deltamarin, also noted that methanol was easier to handle than the other proposed new marine fuels. "If the ship can be designed from the start with methanol, the tanks can be located in a way where the penalty for larger volume compared to diesel and having to arrange voids between methanol tanks and engine room is as small as possible," she said. "As a ship designer, it is of course hard for me to comment on the potential future price and availability of methanol. Last year, we had a presentation regarding methanol production pathways in our ship machinery club, and the researcher presented that it was possible to reduce considerably the costs of bio or synthetic methanol production."

Elg made the same point as Tolgos: cruise ships were built with huge fuel tanks



Source: Lloyd's Register

to give them a very long range. “We also see from practical measurements and in our simulations that the real, average daily consumption of ships is much lower than the ‘design consumption’ at design speed and max draft,” she said. “Also, the energy-saving devices, which should be utilised in ships prior to going to expensive fuels, further reduce ship fuel consumption. Therefore, ships with alternative fuels could be designed so that the new fuel storage does not have to cover such extreme autonomy requirements.”

Tom Strang, SVP marine affairs at Carnival Corporation & plc, said that the company continued to investigate all potential options to reducing GHG emissions, including methanol. “We believe there is a role for methanol, especially for converting fuel systems on vessels that aren’t candidates for LNG conversion. In fact, we’ve done several studies looking at possible methanol designs,” he told *CruiseTimes*.

**Feasible alternatives**

As a feasible fuel for cruise ships, green methanol must, in the first place, be affordable and widely available in places where it is needed – a situation that does not exist today. It will also be important to address storage concerns, safety, and toxicity issues in handling methanol,

because it takes twice as much methanol as conventional fuel to produce the same energy.

“So while methanol may have a role, we remain committed to methane as the truly viable pathway to net-zero GHG emissions,” said Strang. “LNG – essentially liquefied methane – delivers immediate GHG reductions today and lays the foundation for a transition to bio-methane as it scales up, and eventually for e-methane as it comes online. Plus, a ship built for methane can later be converted to a methanol- or ammonia-powered vessel, whereas the opposite is not true.”

Michele Francioni, chief energy transition officer at MSC Cruises, also regarded the availability of methanol as a concern. “We believe that an optimistic forecast of renewable-methanol availability is that there will be around seven to eight million tonnes by 2028 on a global scale,” he said. “There will be a range of different industries competing for the product, a factor that will have a significant bearing on whether methanol is available in the volumes required for the maritime sector.” He added that there was a very limited methanol bunkering infrastructure right now.

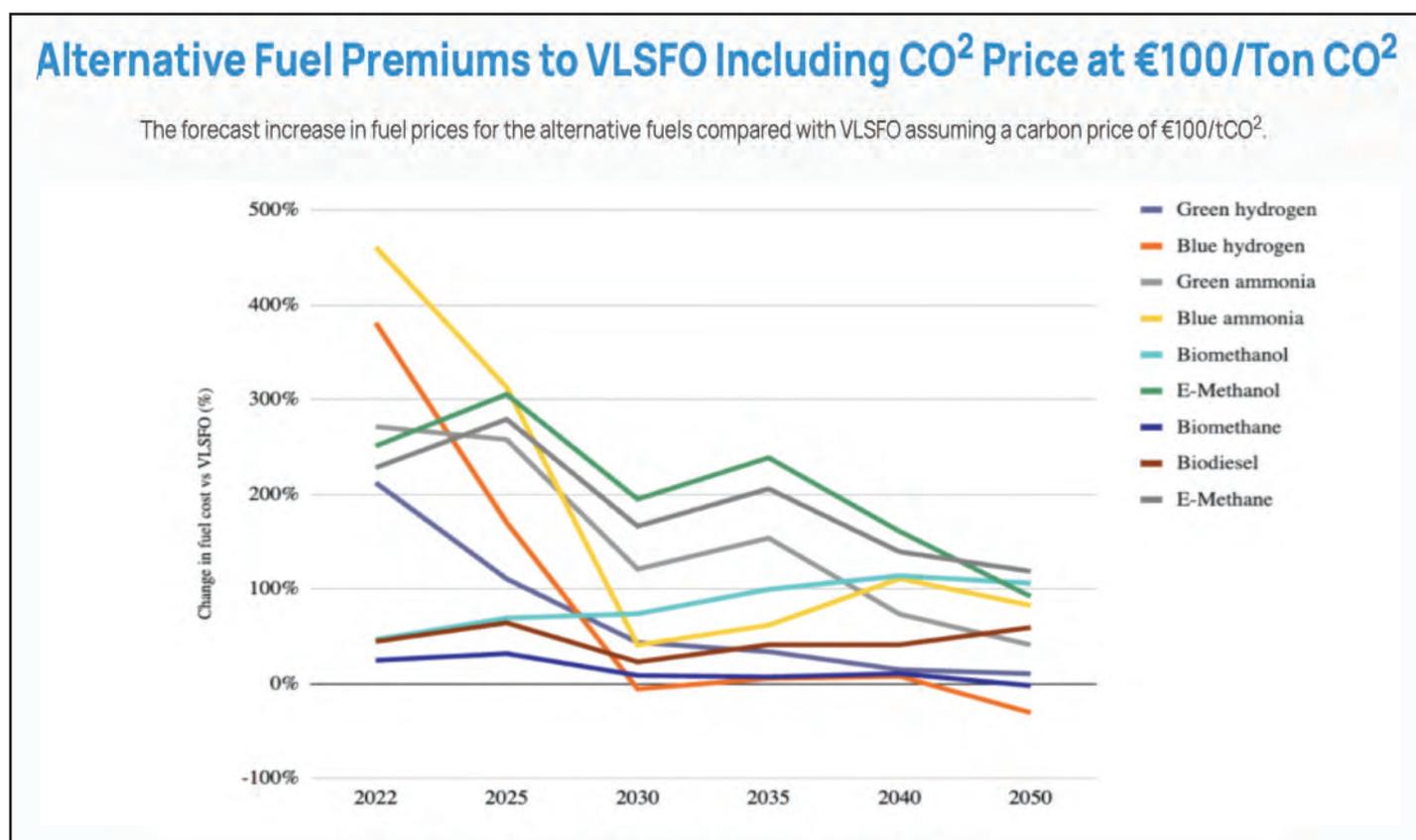
The cost of green methanol is another important consideration, and the sector, including MSC Cruises, simply does not yet know whether it will emerge as a more

affordable alternative to bio-LNG or e-LNG.

“All in all, we have to consider availability, the bunkering infrastructure landscape, and, last but by no means least, cost when it comes to the future prospect of using renewable methanol. We will continue with our drive to make sure that our fleet of ships are fuel flexible and can accommodate any potential changes in the marketplace,” Francioni said.

While LNG is a transitional solution, it offers relatively small but immediate emission reductions when compared to more conventional marine fuels. However, for more significant emission reductions that are made possible by bio-LNG and e-LNG, no additional investment in ship technology or infrastructure is needed, as these renewable variants are identical to their fossil counterpart.

“In contrast, methanol produced from fossil sources, like natural gas and coal, performs much worse than conventional marine fuels on a well-to-wake CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent basis. So there is no incentive to switch until sufficient renewable supply is available,” Francioni said. “We are designing ships and working with shipyards that will see vessels built in five years’ time and last for 30 years. By being flexible with future fuels, we can mitigate risk and aim to have future success in commercial, operational, and sustainable terms.”



Source: IMO



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A NEW

# Japanese cruise ship

Photo: © MOL Cruises Ltd

## FOR INTERNATIONAL PASSENGERS

Mitsui O.S.K. Lines' recent acquisition of a luxury 458-passenger cruise ship from Seabourn and its launch of a new cruise brand, Mitsui Ocean Cruises, made headline news across the industry.

BY NOBUKO FUJIWARA

It soon became apparent that, as well as attracting the traditional domestic passengers, Mitsui had international clientele in its sight. The 2009-built *Mitsui Ocean Fuji*, formerly *Seabourn Odyssey*, will be prepared for both domestic and foreign guests. Mitsui Ocean Cruises (MOC) aims to offer all of its guests the experience of appreciating Japan's changing seasons, exquisite nature, and traditional culture, while also offering "Omotenashi" (Japanese-style service).

MOC is a subsidiary of Mitsui O.S.K. Lines (MOL), a giant corporation that owns over 800 vessels, including container ships, ferries, and LNG and bulk carriers. The corporation has a history of more than 100 years in shipping operations.

Mitsui O.S.K. Passenger Lines Ltd,

MOL's initial ocean cruise business unit, was established in 1963. In 1970, the line executed the first-ever round-the-world cruise by a Japanese passenger ship. In October 2023, the company was renamed MOL Cruises Ltd, trading under the Mitsui Ocean Cruises brand. It is now positioned nearer to the core of the group's business operations.

Tsunemichi Mukai is the president and CEO of the newly restructured cruise line. He is also the managing executive officer of MOL O.S.K. Lines. This should be an indication of the importance of the cruise business within the conglomerate.

The company currently operates one ship, the 1990-built, 398-passenger *Nippon Maru*, targeting an almost exclusively domestic audience. Its second ship, *Mitsui Ocean Fuji*, will be bigger and younger.

MOL's renewed focus on the cruise business aims to diversify its operations beyond maritime transport and increase the weight of stable revenue business.

Anthony Kaufman, currently the chief commercial, marketing, and sales officer at MOL Cruises, is a key figure responsible for promoting the internationalisation of the brand and widening its domestic market appeal. He played a significant role in expanding the cruise market in Japan through his former role in Princess Cruises. He played a key part in containing the

*Diamond Princess* Covid-19 incident in 2020 and is highly regarded within Japan's cruise industry.

Kaufman was approached by MOL as a consultant when they decided to enhance their focus on cruise operations. "When I boarded *Nippon Maru*, I was amazed by the excellence of the product, from the ports of call to the service, food, onboard experiences, and entertainment," said Kaufman. "The authentic Japanese culture, traditions, and spaces were truly special and unlike anything I had ever seen before. That's why we want a wider range of travellers, including international passengers, to have the same great experience on *Mitsui Ocean Fuji*."

### Preparing for launch

Both ships of the company offer similar luxury cruise experiences. The main difference is that MOC will offer cruises to international passengers on its new vessel. Upon its official launch in December 2024, *Mitsui Ocean Fuji* will start offering services on board in the English language.

It will take some time to acquire Japanese registration for the ship, as various regulatory conditions need to be met. This could be a challenge for MOC.

International passengers will be limited to around 25–30 per cent per cruise. "We will continue to attract Japanese customers

through domestic travel agencies,” Kaufman told *Cruise Times*. “For international passengers, we are focusing on markets in Asia such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, as well as the US, Australia, New Zealand, and maybe Europe. We have already begun discussions with various general sales agents in these countries to establish relationships. However, we still want the core of the passenger base to be Japanese, providing an authentic Japanese ship experience to our international guests.”

The ship will be handed over by Seabourn in late September and will undergo refitting at Mitsubishi Heavy Industries in Yokohama. The galley will be adapted for preparing Japanese cuisine, and shower toilets will be installed in all cabins – a necessity for Japanese guests. Dining facilities will be given Japanese names. It seems that there will be only a small window between September and December to prepare the ship for service.

“*Seabourn Odyssey* is a small vessel, perfect for visiting various Japanese ports,” said Kaufman. “Given my previous experience at Holland America Group, I was able to assist in this acquisition from multiple perspectives. The ship’s interior, designed by the renowned Tihany Design, is beautifully completed, so we won’t make major changes. Necessary design adjustments will be minimal and carefully considered, handled by a Japanese design company, which also crafted Mitsui Ocean Cruises’ logo.”

**State of market**

Compared to North America and Europe, Japan’s cruise market has been slow to expand. “In the West, cruises have long been a vacation option, clearly understood across the spectrum from large ships to small luxury vessels. In Japan, this awareness came late, and most cruise ships were Western, posing language and food barriers for Japanese people,” explained Kaufman.

Furthermore, the three Japanese cruise lines were known for their small, high-priced luxury ships, which were perceived as exclusive to those with ample time and money. One of these companies, Venus Cruise, withdrew from the cruise business in January 2023, citing the deteriorating business environment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Currently, international lines like Princess Cruises and MSC Cruises operate cruises departing from Japan. Recovery from the pandemic is gradual. NYK Cruises’ new ship, *Asuka III*, will be launched in July 2025. Disney Cruise Line plans to operate in Japan from 2028.

“In order to increase the number of cruise



Photo: © Nobuko Fujiwara

**L-R: Tsunemichi Mukai, president and CEO, MOL Cruises Ltd and managing executive officer, MOL, and Anthony Kaufman, chief commercial, marketing, and sales officer, MOL Cruises Ltd.**



Photo: © MOL Cruises Ltd

**Observation Bar 36.**



Photo: © MOL Cruises Ltd

**Penthouse spa suite.**



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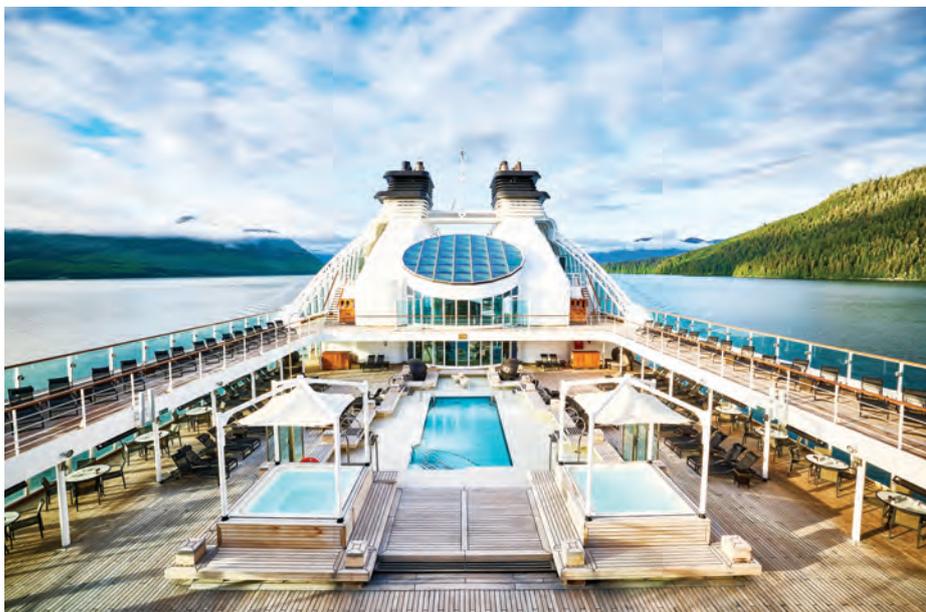


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passengers in Japan, it is essential to introduce a variety of cruise products and boost interest among Japanese people. We welcome new entrants to help expand the market and increase awareness of cruising as a high-value vacation choice," said Mukai.

### Strengths of MOC

Mukai emphasised the wealth of ports of call as a strength of MOC. "Our ships have a long history of world cruises and grand cruises lasting more than 60 days," he said. "We have visited most of Japan's approximately 160 ports and have a history and experience of creating special shore excursions to satisfy repeat customers. Moreover, figures like Kaufman help discover Japan's charms from a foreign perspective that we Japanese may not notice."

The numbers of international cruise ships and passengers visiting Japan are steadily increasing. The company hopes that *Mitsui Ocean Fuji*, a Japanese cruise ship offering authentic Japanese service and entertainment while touring Japanese and international ports of call, will stand out as a unique choice in an increasingly crowded marketplace. The ship features spacious suites and variety of cuisine. While the ticket price on this ship is on the higher side, international guests might find this exclusive experience a bit more affordable because of the current trend of a weak yen.

### Forward plans

MOC's management is already thinking ahead, with a well-thought-out expansion plan. "As MOL expands its cruise business, we have significantly grown our organisation to handle multiple cruise ships," said Kaufman. "When adding a new ship, consistent policies, procedures, and systems are necessary. Therefore, over the past six months, we have been addressing various issues to build this organisation. We have also deeply considered how to ensure that we offer the best possible product to both Japanese and international passengers. To welcome and operate for international guests, we intend to increase the number of personnel with experience on international cruise ships, build a robust organisation, and prepare for operations. Additionally, we aim to promote the unique cruising experience offered by the Mitsui Ocean Cruises brand and its concept worldwide."

The itineraries of *Mitsui Ocean Fuji* have already been announced through July 2025, and bookings are off to a strong start

# POSITIVE POLAR

## A science-focused expedition cruise line

There is a new player in the crowded world of expedition cruising, a player with a distinctly different business strategy and operational philosophy.

© Sunstone

The *Ocean Atlantic* in Albatros Expeditions livery.



BY MIKE LOUAGIE

**P**ositive Polar is a science-focused expedition cruise start-up, based in California, that wants to change “travel shame” into “travel pride”.

A statement from the company

aply sums up the philosophy of this intriguing new expedition cruise operator: “Driven by passion for our planet and grounded in science, Positive Polar is committed to demonstrating how expedition cruising can have a positive impact on the planet by supporting improved ocean productivity while amplifying its power

to fight global warming.”

*CruiseTimes* talked with Hans Lagerweij, board advisor and interim chief commercial officer at Positive Polar. He is a well-known personality in the world of cruising, playing active roles in Albatros Expeditions, the Four Seasons Yacht project, Victory Cruise Line, and Quark Expeditions.

## The genesis

“Positive Polar has been founded by two people,” said Lagerweij. “Hugo Hinrichsen is the CEO and co-founder, bringing extensive operational expertise from his background as an ex-Chilean navy frigate captain. He is also a seasoned polar helicopter pilot with Oceanwide Expeditions. He knows the polar regions well. His various roles brought him in touch with climate restoration scientists, and he became fascinated by the subject. The talk of the day is carbon reduction, but the planet is in such a bad state that it can do with some regenerative action.”

Lagerweij enthusiastically described the genesis of Positive Polar: “Hugo met Jenn [Jennifer Bonilla], co-founder of Positive Polar. She’s a qualified scientist with a background working for medical companies. Together they are in touch with climate restoration scientists. Climate restoration has a strong focus on the ocean and its role as a natural carbon sink, which has been significantly diminished due to the harmful activities we’ve undertaken in the past century. There are methods to reverse this process. One of the methods that is going to be researched is sea fertilisation, using iron. Experimentation will be ongoing, although it will not take place in Antarctica. Another aspect is the role of whales in this fertilisation process. We’ve nearly wiped them out, but fortunately their numbers have been increasing in recent years. By coincidence, Hugo’s Danish ancestors were whalers, making Positive Polar’s mission to restore whale populations deeply personal.”

The big question was if it would be possible to carry out real scientific research on board an expedition cruise ship. “We don’t want to bring scientists on board just to entertain the passengers, to give lectures, as on other ships. We want genuine scientific labs on the vessel, with up to 10–15 researchers, in addition to the expedition team. It should also lead to scientific publications,” said Lagerweij.

The founders let the ideas mature for two years. At the beginning of 2024, the company was finally set up, with money from undisclosed investors. Lagerweij assumed the role of an advisor in February.

Immediately, they started the search for a ship. “There are more potential expedition vessels available than you might think,” said Lagerweij. “The expedition market isn’t doing so well. There’s overcapacity, but I believe this is temporary, and within two to three years, there will be a shortage of ships again. We’ve also inspected new ships, and they were not suitable at all. We need a 40–



**Ocean Atlantic and Ocean Endeavour side by side.**

50 m<sup>2</sup> science lab. To create that on a new ship, you would have to remove quite a few cabins or sacrifice a bar, finding the ideal location on board, and so on.”

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**“While many companies are focusing on China, we intend to direct our efforts more towards Brazil.”**

**Hans Lagerweij, Positive Polar**

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Two old Sunstone ships, *Ocean Atlantic* and *Ocean Endeavour*, were considered. “I knew the *Ocean Atlantic* well, from my time with Albatros Expeditions. These former Russian vessels were built as ferries to connect Vladivostok with ports in Japan and South Korea. They still have small car decks,” Lagerweij told us. “During Seatrade Global 2024 in Miami, the company signed the contract for the 1986-built *Ocean Atlantic*. The sturdy 128-cabin vessel will be renamed *Polar Angel*, though this has not happened officially yet. The old lady will be thoroughly redesigned and refurbished in cooperation with Tomas Tillberg Design and Makinen Marine Interior Solutions. We also contracted Nikki Baxendale, a Canadian artist and photographer, who will act as art director.”

The company has started recruiting staff. It has also selected Resco’s CruisePAL as its reservation and booking system.

## Ambitious planning

Positive Polar’s itineraries will be different, a departure from the norm. “That

has to do with Hugo’s background,” said Lagerweij. “He wants to focus on Chile. Antarctic departures will be from Punta Arenas rather than Ushuaia. It requires more time, but it will also allow cruising the Chilean fjords and visiting Cape Horn, something often asked by expedition cruise guests.”

Positive Polar’s innovative approach to itinerary planning is also shown in its focus on wildlife, specifically whales. “In the Arctic summer the ship will sail to Iceland, Svalbard, and Greenland,” said Lagerweij. “Between the two polar seasons we will also visit whale-rich areas, like islands along the Chilean coast. The waters around Robinson Crusoe Island, part of the Juan Fernández Archipelago, for instance, are known for the presence of humpback whales, blue whales, and sperm whales. Afterwards, the vessel will transit the Panama Canal bound for Dominica, an island known for being a sperm whale hotspot. Its deep waters make it an ideal habitat for these magnificent creatures, providing unique opportunities for research and conservation efforts.”

“We aim to start sales in July, but because they have already contracted science teams (a commercial contract), they want to begin sailing as early as December/January,” said Lagerweij, referring to the founders. “I explained that this was too soon. They accepted that the ship would certainly not be filled in that timeframe.”

The vessel is currently in lay-up in Caen, France, together with some other expedition vessels. They all have to leave in September, because of the start of some

important port infrastructure upgrading that will see the replacement of the busy Colombelles swing bridge. "Probably we will have to finish the refurbishment somewhere else, like on the Canary Islands," Lagerweij told us. "Labs will be built on the former car deck. We might add underwater drones or even a submarine, but this is not for the use of guests."

The vessel is currently in the midst of a well-conceived, extensive transformation. "The ship was once renovated without a specific purpose in mind," said Lagerweij. "During the planning, small mistakes were made, such as placing a bar in the middle of the ship where no one could find. We are now creating a dedicated space. The bar will be located above the lecture room, and outside it there will be a wellness area with Jacuzzis and a sauna. This will give the ship a 'heart' for the guests. The ship was previously so large, and the guests so spread out, which was not conducive to a cosy onboard atmosphere."

Despite the age of the ship, the company aims ambitiously high. "One thing you cannot change is the size of the cabins, which are not very large.

However, for the hotel service, we aim to compete at the top end of the expedition



© Mike Louagje

**Whales are crucial for the CO2 pump because their nutrient-rich faeces stimulates the growth of phytoplankton, which absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.**

cruise market," said Lagerweij.

**Science explained**

The Antarctic Ocean plays a key role in regulating the climate through a process called the biological carbon pump. This involves phytoplankton in the ocean

absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and moving it deep into the ocean, reducing the amount of greenhouse gases in the air. Phytoplankton are essential for feeding all marine life before falling to the bottom of the ocean, sinking carbon as they go.

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**Hugo Hinrichsen, CEO and co-founder, Positive Polar.**



**Jennifer Bonilla, co-founder, Positive Polar.**



**Hans Lagerweij, board advisor and interim chief commercial officer, Positive Polar.**

Positive Polar initially said it would work with scientists to responsibly spread nutrients that mimic what whales would do in parts of the ocean where this can make a positive difference. Whale faeces contain important nutrients like iron, nitrogen, and phosphorus, which are essential for the growth of marine plants and phytoplankton. When whales defecate near the ocean surface, these nutrients stimulate the growth of phytoplankton, which are the base of the marine food web and play a crucial role in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

It used to be all about throwing iron into the ocean. We asked Lagerweij about the reason for this change.

“The ultimate goal is indeed to carry out

‘fertilisation’,” he replied. “But if you prominently display this on the website and then apply for an Antarctic permit, you will encounter problems. It’s better to focus on the whales and start with a fully permitted experiment somewhere between Antarctica and the Arctic. This way, in a few years, you might have a feasible project. Otherwise, as a start-up, you will face too many oppositions.”

#### Target audience

With its unique concept, which signifies a further product differentiation within the already quite differentiated expedition cruise segment, Positive Polar aims to attract a slightly different clientele. “Our target audience includes source markets in

Europe, the English-speaking sphere, and Brazil, which we view as an emerging market. While many companies are focusing on China, we intend to direct our efforts more towards Brazil,” said Lagerweij.

There is no doubt that Positive Polar’s approach is a departure from those of the conventional polar expedition operators. Whether or not it will succeed as a business may be debatable.

If its main objectives are achieved, the company certainly will go a long way towards contributing to turning “travel shame” into “travel pride”. While we salute the noble philosophy of this audacious start-up, we are certain that, for the moment, at least, with Hans Lagerweij on board, the company is in good hands.



© Mike Louagie

During the International Polar Year 2007–2008, the German research vessel *Polarstern* embarked on a mission to the Antarctic Ocean with 15 tonnes of iron sulphate for a remarkable experiment. The scientists aimed to “fertilise” the ocean with iron to induce an algal bloom. This was not their first attempt; a similar experiment had been conducted during the Antarctic summer of 2003–2004. The concept is straightforward: iron stimulates algae to bloom. Algae on the ocean’s surface absorb CO2 from the atmosphere and transport it to the deep sea. The larger the algal bloom, the greater the amount of this greenhouse gas stored in the ocean. Iron is thus used as a way to combat global warming.



# Technology and training enable safer operations for big ships in confined waters

**Cruise ships have become significantly bigger, and handling them in confined waters can pose challenges.**

**A number of collisions and other incidents have taken place in ports: they have not led to loss of life or serious material damage, but they serve as reminders that big ships can be difficult to control in strong winds and currents when in confined waters. Design, operations, and training all come into play in keeping ships safe in these conditions.**

BY KARI REINIKAINEN

**A**gainst this background, it is interesting to find the master of Princess Cruises' new 175,000-gross-ton *Sun Princess* praising the capabilities of his ship in a recent interview.

This vessel has 18,000 b.h.p. thrusters, which is 80 per cent more powerful than in the previous 143,000-gross-ton Regal-class ships. *Sun Princess* can push off the dock in 40-knot winds using its thrusters and Azipod propulsors, while the previous class of ships would find 25-knot winds challenging.

According to Per Nahfeldt, general manager products – electric propulsion, Kongsberg Maritime, there are two principal approaches to look at the power requirements of thrusters, as far as wind conditions are concerned: the first is to use the average wind conditions in the region where the ship is intended to operate as the basis of calculations for power; the second is to use the known maximum conditions.

Some cruise ships built around the turn

of the millennium received additional thruster power later in their lives when it emerged that the original installation had not been powerful enough. But an overly powerful thruster installation does not translate into an efficient use of capital.

## Complex optimisation

Luckily, getting things right has become easier, according to Marco Bognolo, vice president of basic design at Fincantieri Merchant Ships Division. In recent years, ship design has changed radically, evolving from the days when propulsion systems and thrusters were primarily based on statistics and experience to current practices using sophisticated methods to assess performance well before the vessels are built.

"Today, manoeuvrability analyses are first carried out using computational fluid dynamics (CFD) tools, and then validated with scaled models. Computational capabilities now include simulating different design concepts, such as the effects of conventional shaft lines associated with

rudders and stern thrusters, or alternatively, a podded propulsion system," Bognolo told *CruiseTimes*.

In designing ships, many variables, such as balancing the power of side forces generated by the propulsion system and the bow thrusters, are considered to maintain course-keeping ability and avoid undesired rotational effects.

"Optimisation also involves determining the proper size and position of thruster tunnels to avoid suction effects that may reduce thruster efficiency, as well as estimating thrust reduction when the vessel is sailing at slow speeds," Bognolo said. "The accuracy of our computational model extends beyond the underwater parts to include the aerodynamics of superstructures. While past calculations only estimated wind forces acting on the vessel's lateral projected area, modern software allows for a thorough analysis of the actual three-dimensional shapes using CFD techniques. Subsequent model tests are conducted to validate the real forces generated by the wind at different angles

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Photo: MSC Cruises

**Captain Pier Paolo Scala, VP global port operations, MSC Cruises.**

and speeds.”

Initial calculations typically consider unrestricted waters and quasi-static conditions. But the effects of shallow waters, currents, tides, and dynamic interferences when leaving or approaching the quay are important topics to address during ship design.

Additionally, for specific ship types, such as expedition vessels, station-keeping capability is a key requirement, because these ships often need to maintain their position in areas where using an anchor is not an option. “Finally, and to add more complexity to the scenario, the initial design of passenger vessels includes the capability to predict noise and vibration behaviour also during manoeuvring. A portfolio of active and passive mitigating actions has been developed and is now adopted as necessary to ensure that required comfort levels for passengers are maintained,” said Bognolo.

### Preparing for worst

There is also the possibility that things can go wrong at a crucial moment. “Generally, one of the biggest concerns for a cruise [ship] operator when manoeuvring in port is the risk of a blackout,” said Maikel Arts, head of strategic growth area, cruise, Wärtsilä Marine. “A blackout in port is a dangerous situation due to the loss of power in combination with the close proximity of other vessels and quay sides. This is often why cruise ships have more engines running than needed, for back-up reasons. However, the average load on the engines is so low that this has a negative impact on fuel efficiency.”

For this reason, Wärtsilä promotes hybrid systems to cruise lines, combining two methods of propulsion: a combustion



**Maikel Arts, head of strategic growth area, cruise, Wärtsilä Marine.**

engine and a rechargeable battery power system. This enables cruise operators to use the engine in the most optimal way, which is to provide the average power for manoeuvring and absorption of short load variations.

“Then in case of a blackout, cruise operators have the battery on standby, immediately providing power, so that the ship always stays under control whilst the crew get the other engines switched on. Ultimately, battery systems provide excellent back-up capabilities, which, for manoeuvring situations, provides the reassurance that they will always remain in control of the ship,” Arts said, adding that the ability to switch off the standby engines, which are running on idle, in turn reduces fuel consumption and emissions and increases operational efficiency.

Equipment manufacturers respond to the demand from the cruise industry by offering more powerful thrusters. The increasing size of cruise ships has meant that more power is needed for a vessel to manoeuvre. “Whilst this can generally require more thrusters, manoeuvrability can also be achieved with better thruster optimisation,” Arts pointed out. “At Wärtsilä, for example, our tunnel thrusters cover the biggest, longest vessels on the market, and are sufficient to keep the largest vessels under control by providing 22,000 kW of tunnel thruster power. This gives cruise ships the manoeuvrability required in ports by guiding the movement of a vessel, all while ensuring accurate station-keeping.”

However, tunnel thrusters, if not considered properly during the design process, can have a negative impact on the hull, from a fuel efficiency perspective. This is important to consider, especially with cruise operators under pressure to meet



Photo: Fincantieri

**Marco Bognolo, VP basic design, Fincantieri Merchant Ships Division.**

increasingly strict regulatory requirements.

### Design technology helps

Tom Strang, senior vice president of maritime affairs at Carnival Corporation & plc, said that in many ports with confined waters, the company’s ships relied on local maritime pilots who had extensive knowledge of the area and its waterways to provide additional navigational expertise, further enhancing the safe operation and manoeuvring of these ships.

But technology also plays a vital role. “To counter the increased hydrodynamic resistance and windage which otherwise affects the ship’s speed and manoeuvring characteristics, we commonly use Azipods on our ships to provide greater lateral manoeuvrability compared to traditional fixed propeller and rudder configurations,” Strang said. “Azipods provide low-speed propulsion through a 360-degree rotation, offering exceptional manoeuvrability, including enabling the ship to turn on the spot, move in any direction (even sideways), and maintain precise positioning – all vital for larger ships operating in confined spaces such as ports and narrow waterways.”

Overcoming these manoeuvring challenges also requires greater lateral power, and we have seen a proportionate increase in the power of bow thrusters. “The additional power improves low-speed manoeuvring in port, allowing the captain to turn the vessel to port or starboard side without using the main propulsion mechanism, which requires some forward motion for turning, making it an incompatible option in very confined spaces,” Strang continued.

Bridge design has also developed considerably in recent years, with

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ergonomics playing a key role, as well as improvements in equipment, all aimed at providing the bridge team with more effective and efficient tools to handle the cruise ship of today. “Modern ships are equipped with advanced navigation and control systems that integrate radar, positioning systems, and other sensors,” Strang said. “These systems, other real-time data, and the continuous monitoring of weather (including wind strength and direction relative to the ship), tides, and currents are vital in assisting captains in making informed decisions.”

Collectively, these solutions address the unique challenges of operating large ships safely and efficiently in and out of smaller ports. They often reduce or eliminate the need for tug assistance, even in the most confined ports.

### Simulator training

Side by side with design and technology, training also plays a major role in safe navigation of ships in confined waters. “From a training perspective, similar to the airline and other safety-critical industries, we require our bridge teams to regularly train using simulators that replicate a wide range of real-world scenarios, including the challenges of manoeuvring large ships in small ports and narrow waterways,” Strang said.

Regular and recurring practice in Carnival’s Center for Simulator Maritime Training (CSMART) Academy gives bridge and engineering officers a robust, continual learning experience using the industry’s most advanced simulator equipment, technology, instructional tools, and curriculum.

The CSMART simulators can virtually transport officers to 60 ports around the world, to give them real-world experience and training in the intricacies and challenges of navigation. “They also provide a wide array of scenarios and sea conditions, including ship traffic, aircraft interference, weather events, and wildlife circumvention,” said Strang. “The result is bridge and engineering officers with the critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills to tackle any challenge, including manoeuvring in smaller ports. It should also be noted that we routinely invite pilots to attend simulator sessions – especially when a new class of vessel or new port is being assessed.”

All bridge officers at MSC Cruises also undergo regular simulator training at one of the company’s training centres. This allows them to refresh their skills, discuss



Photo: Kongsberg

**Per Nahfeldt, general manager products – electric propulsion, Kongsberg Maritime.**

challenging scenarios, and go part of the way towards performance evaluations that can lead to promotion.

“We have in recent years comprehensively recorded manoeuvres of every one of our vessels in ports all around the world. The data is stored in an internal system and is accessible to shipboard teams to review historical events to help them with planning prior to entering a port, especially for the first time,” said Captain Pier Paolo Scala, VP global port operations at MSC Cruises.

He pointed out that strong winds, even for just a few minutes, can have a seriously negative impact on a cruise ship irrespective of its size, but that a larger vessel is more susceptible to such challenges.

“With wind speeds of up to 30 knots, ships will be fine with the appropriate number of mooring lines and bollards at the port,” said Scala. “Above 30 knots the ship



Photo: Gina Peyiazis

**Tom Strang, SVP, maritime affairs, Carnival Corporation & plc.**

will have to start the thrusters and propellers, and at 30–40 knots one or two tugboats will need to be in situation to help with the operation. We take a very conservative and precautionary approach with wind conditions. If its speed exceeds 20 to 25 knots, we start all the vessel’s pods or bow thrusters, provided that the port has the appropriate infrastructure.”

Manoeuvrability is one of the more critical points in the design process for a new class of vessel. The water and air draughts of a vessel are extremely important. Factors such as the shallowness of a port channel, the turning basin or a bridge can mean that a vessel class is restricted in its itineraries in particular parts of the world.

As is often the case, advances in technology help make operations safer. But ultimately it is the people in charge who operate the technology, and their skills and competences play a crucial role in safety.



# Maturing Oceania cruise market faces high hurdles

BY SUSAN PARKER

**A**ustralia, New Zealand, and their neighbouring countries, such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and others in the South Pacific, suffered some of the hardest hits during the pandemic, partly due to their comparatively late re-entry into the market.

The first post-pandemic 2022–2023 season was a positive one, despite the borders in Australia not opening until April 2022 and in New Zealand until July 2022. But it was not without its problems.

Like so many other places worldwide, Australia “really struggled coming out of the pandemic in delivering destinations vis-à-vis staffing, buses, coach drivers, et cetera, but we are back now delivering what is expected,” said Jill Abel, CEO of

Australia Cruise Association (ACA). New Zealand experienced similar troubles, which are still ongoing, in part due to the late return of tourism to the country.

For the 2023–2024 season, record numbers are being reported – as they are in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and some of the countries in the South Pacific Cruise Alliance – signifying that this region’s cruise business is back on its feet.

But it is not all plain sailing, as Joel Katz, managing director of CLIA Australasia, told *CruiseTimes*: “Australia’s cruise industry, while currently experiencing strong passenger demand

and significant economic contributions, faces a cautious outlook. The enthusiasm of Australian cruisers and the economic benefits they bring are tempered by operational and regulatory challenges, which could impact future growth.”

Indeed, Carnival Corporation & plc, for instance, cited these challenges when

**With the arrival of newbuildings and new players, the post-pandemic Oceania cruise market is showing definitive signs of maturity, but major hurdles remain in place.**



**Tahiti in the Society Islands is home to about 70% of the population of French Polynesia.**

announcing recently that the P&O Cruises Australia brand would be folded into Carnival Cruise Line (CCL) in March 2025. Two of its three ships, Pacific Encounter and Pacific Adventure, will join the four CCL ships deployed in South Pacific, while Pacific Explorer will exit the fleet. Carnival

stated that it would have seven cruise lines, operating 19 ships, calling on 78 destinations in this region in 2025, representing almost 60 per cent of the Oceania market.

Josh Weinstein, CEO of Carnival Corporation & plc, explained the decision:

“Given the strategic reality of the South Pacific’s small population and significantly higher operating and regulatory costs, we’re adjusting our approach to give us the efficiencies we need to continue delivering an incredible cruise experience year-round to our guests in the region.”



While acknowledging the key role that the iconic 90-year-old brand has played in building a thriving cruise industry in the region, Abel said: "We are delighted that Carnival Cruise Line is committed to continuing their strong presence in this region. Changes like this allow for organisations to continue to perform in a robust manner and respond to evolving market requirements. We will continue to work as an organisation to advocate for the industry, which is a major contributor to Australia's visitor economy."

In 2023, about 1.25 million Australians embarked on ocean cruises, slightly up on 2019 figures. Australia is now the fourth-largest cruise market in the world, after the US, UK, and Germany. In the 2022/23 financial year, cruise tourism generated a record Aus\$5.63 billion (€3.45 billion) in total economic output, supporting over 18,000 jobs across various sectors of the industry, including 62 Australian ports and destinations, according to figures released by CLIA and ACA.

For the 2024–2025 season, numbers in Australia are looking very stable. Abel said: "The fly-cruise and European markets are showing strength, and we are hoping next season will be strongly international. Being a long-haul destination, I think the opportunity for combining cruise with land-based has a lot of potential. It is safe to say that we are seen as a safe destination, and that may be a real positive."

For New Zealand, which has its own set of challenges, however, numbers are due to be 15–20 per cent down for its 17 ports or anchorages. Jacqui Lloyd, CEO of New Zealand Cruise Association (NZCA), said: "This is due in part to macro issues such as geopolitical concerns, including deployment difficulties because of the Red Sea, fuel costs, and foreign exchanges, and micro issues such as increased costs within the Oceania region, the risks associated with biofouling for Australia-based vessels, and some regulatory barriers."

The good news is that while some lines have reduced calls, others, such as Celebrity Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, and Viking Cruises, have increased them. Passenger ratings are still high, according to Lloyd.

## The debutants

The dynamism of the region's post-pandemic cruise business is amply demonstrated by the number of new entrants to the market, in terms of both new ships and new players.

On 29 June 2024, Seabourn's newbuilding *Seabourn Pursuit* was christened in the Kimberley, Western Australia, with the Wunambal Gaambera people as godparents. Natalya Leahy, president of Seabourn, said: "We truly believe in the transformative power of travel, and when we visit local communities, we are able to both celebrate their culture and drive positive sustainable changes in the places they call home." Next year, the line's regional departures will double to twelve, seven of which will be charters.

Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Edge* and Scenic Cruises' *Scenic Eclipse II* are also sailing in the region. On top of that, Virgin Voyages and Disney Cruise Line have entered the market for the first time. Abel said: "We are getting newbuildings in now, a sign that we are a reliable, mature market. Younger tonnage is very exciting. It is a great testament to the destination and people working in it that we have new tonnage and a broad range of choices."

This is also testimony to the hard work the region has put in to the cruise business and the fact that Australians are big cruisers with the highest market penetration in the world, according to Katz.

## Hurdles Down Under

Like in most other markets around the world, there are high hurdles in the way for Oceania. Continuing efforts are being made to overcome them. For example, the industry's quest for government understanding of just what cruise brings to the communities it serves, and the negative effect of some policies should they continue to be imposed, is in full throttle.

Despite the strong performance, the outlook remains cautious, according to Katz. "Operating costs in Australia are among the highest globally, and inconsistent regulatory frameworks add to the complexity and expenses of planning cruise operations," he said. "These factors are increasingly deterring cruise lines from introducing domestic

1. **Jill Abel, CEO, Australia Cruise Association.**
2. **L-R: Joel Katz, managing director, CLIA Australasia; Jacqui Lloyd, CEO, New Zealand Cruise Association; Jill Abel, CEO, Australia Cruise Association; and Bud Gilroy, former chairman, South Pacific Cruise Alliance.**
3. **Aboriginal greeting in Fremantle, Australia.**
4. **L-R: *AIDamar* and *Grand Princess* in the outer harbour, Adelaide, Australia.**

*Photo: Susan Parker*

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*Photo: South Australian Tourism Commission*

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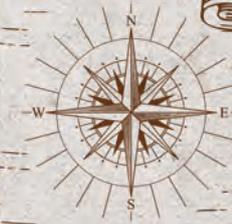
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itineraries and are straining the resources of those already committed to the region. While there is significant economic potential, the challenges faced by cruise lines could lead to a further reduction in deployments in the future. Collaborative efforts between the government, industry stakeholders, and local communities are essential to create a sustainable and thriving cruise industry. Overall, while Australia benefits greatly from cruise tourism, the future growth of the industry will depend on successfully overcoming operational and regulatory hurdles to remain competitive in the global market.”

Katz is not a lone voice on these issues. “We need to keep on a trajectory of improvement and not be complacent,” said Abel. “Our involvement with Tourism Australia has been very positive. We have spent a long time getting government and others to understand how important cruise is to them. We have come a long way in sharing that story – the importance of cruise to tourism.”

One of the key issues being addressed is that of entry and departure ports, of which there are only a few. This is imposing certain limitations for itinerary planning. Abel said: “Our focus at ACA is to make sure we support and work with the border region so that deployment has appeal. We are working really hard with the Australian border force to develop more first and last ports of entry. We pretty much have the go-ahead for Broome. We just have to make some infrastructure changes: for example, luggage screening and staffing. We are hoping for this next year.”

The Kimberley in Western Australia is acting as a testbed when it comes to numbers of visitors. Abel said: “We are doing a good job of working together with cruise lines on self-management of the Kimberley. It would be good to avoid having that as a government-regulated policy.”

New Zealand, too, has its challenges. “A key piece of the work we want to do is to bring cruise into the tourism industry,” Lloyd said. “We are just finalising the first-ever national cruise strategy, Cruise Aotearoa 2040, which will be released at the end of June. This strategy will help the government to understand the benefits of the industry and how we are working with communities for good social licence.”

It may be helpful that the current Minister of Tourism is also the Associate Minister of Maritime and Transport.

Debbie Summers, executive director of ID Zealand, said: “One of the biggest problems in New Zealand relates to compliance originating from the previous government, and also costs. The new government wants sustainable growth. We need to look after the customers and clients we have.”

Stakeholders, including CLIA, cruise lines, government and regional tourism organisations, ports, local government, tourism operators, communities, and ground handlers have all been involved in developing Cruise Aotearoa 2040 to ensure strong representation and voices from across the sector. “It is a living document and will be regularly updated across our 16-year horizon,” said Lloyd.

In terms of the significantly higher operating and regulatory costs mentioned in relation to Carnival’s P&O Cruises Australia brand decision, Lloyd, too, commented on these challenges. “The feedback we have received from lines is the short runway for cost or regulation changes: changes made mid-season rather than with a long lead to match booking window. When this occurs it is hard for the lines to absorb increased costs, which then affects deployment decision. This is something we address in our national strategy.”

In New Zealand, one item in the regulation that is causing problems concerns the biofouling of vessels coming into the country’s territorial waters. This resulted in 37 cancelled calls during the first post-pandemic season.

“These vessels did not meet standard, as they were unable to undertake normal dry-dock cleaning due to a lack of slots available as the industry restarted, or due to the loss of institutional knowledge from both lines and cleaning companies re niche area cleaning, which required a specific skill set and tended to be manual,” said Lloyd. “Vessels that reposition from the northern hemisphere are able to be cleaned at dry-docks or with divers on the way to Oceania. The difficulty is for vessels that are based in Australia year-round, as there is no niche area cleaning available in either New Zealand or Australia. The 2023–2024 season saw only one vessel that was unable to enter NZ due to biofouling. In this

1. L–R: **Jeremy Palmer, managing director, ID Zealand, and Debbie Summers, executive director, ID Zealand.** *Photo: Susan Parker*
2. L–R: **Leigh Howard, chief operating officer, Tourism Fiji, and Chad Eastgate, event manager, Tourism Fiji.** *Photo: Susan Parker*
3. **Coral Princess in Albany, Australia.** *Photo: Colm Doyle*
4. **Ponant’s Le Lapérouse in the Kimberley, Australia.** *Photo: Ponant*

case, the vessel in question had been based in Australia and was hoping to have niche area cleaned with divers at the 12 nm limit of NZ, but was unable to due to bad weather and had to return to Australia.”

There is some interest shown by ports in both New Zealand and Australia in enabling safe niche area cleaning capability, but this would require legislative change. So it is a work in progress.

### Long way to OPS

A key component of sustainable cruise shipping today is the provision of onshore power supply (OPS). In this part of the world, it still has quite a way to go to achieve this goal. “Onshore power is a challenge,” said Abel. “This is a combination of government paying for infrastructure and the capacity of the ports, for example, the grid in some destinations [could not cope]. The port authority of NSW has made significant progress on the highly complex major project that will deliver the first shore-powered cruise terminal in the Southern Hemisphere, at Bays Port, Sydney. ACA and the cruise industry continue to work closely with the port authority and recognise the importance of shore power developments in Australia to match developments globally and the commitment to assisting the industry to meet sustainability targets. Brisbane and Hobart are looking at it.”

In a number of places in New Zealand, in Picton for example, the story would be the same as regards the capacity of the grid, according to Lloyd. “Ports are interested also in future fuels and bunkering, but there is a lot of work to be done with central government,” she said. “We are working with them to see what



Moorea, one of the Windward Islands in French Polynesia.

Photo: Stephane Mailion Photography

the future can be because, as a country, we are very focused on the environment and nature.”

Elsewhere in the region, the situation is even more difficult. Fiji, for example, is a long way off exploring alternative energy,

according to Leigh

Howard, chief operating officer of Tourism Fiji. “From a financial capability [standpoint], it is quite challenging for us,” he told *CruiseTimes*.

“Some of our institutions are trying to work with the government on this. We now have a new coalition government after 16 years. It is all about trying to find a sustainable way forward.”

### The right ships

There is more debate these days about ship size and a growing understanding of making sure the ship fits with the destination and vice versa.

For New Zealand, it is all about the “right ship, right place, right time”, according to

Lloyd. “We like to handle larger vessels because of the larger throughput and pre/post volume is helpful, but also smaller ships for some of our small ports, who don’t usually see vessels,” she said. “Volume and volume management are probably the main issue we have. We

certainly won’t be capping numbers, but with collaboration and coordination I think we can achieve a sustainable level. We would rather work with communities, helping them to understand how to manage cruise tourism, and with cruise lines to move ships to a different town to make it less onerous on a place.”

In smaller places like Fiji, according to Howard, the key strategy is to grow the expedition sector, as it has a low impact on the environment and is a great way to earn an income and support the local communities. “We would like the bigger vessels to stay in bigger-traffic areas,” he told us. “Fiji has grown organically in terms of cruise. So now we are looking for new opportunities. Expedition ships are looking beyond Australia and New Zealand for new itineraries and experiences. We are seeing Silversea coming through quite regularly. We

have one of their ships based in Fiji next year for about a month. We are hoping to grow that segment. The economic benefit of having an expedition ship based in Fiji is good.”

With Fiji Airways increasing its long-haul connections, this could further open up the market. Captain Cook Cruises’ *Caledonia Sky* is now based in Fiji. Scenic Cruises’ *Scenic Eclipse II* is visiting in

October, as are ships of Seabourn, Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, and Ponant.

Currently, calls to Fiji number 100–150 a year. “Beyond this would be a strain on our infrastructure. We really need a national masterplan that looks at all the variants in a tourism sector,” said Howard. This would be important for addressing such issues as the capability of stakeholders to expand and scale up, and bus bottlenecks in ports.

The first cruise symposium was held in Fiji in 2023, bringing all stakeholders together to create a unified voice for the direction of the industry. This year, the programme was extended to introduce a suppliers’ workshop and to have contributions from expedition cruise executives.

### Destination participation

The conversation about a two-way dialogue between communities and the



Naming ceremony of Seabourn Pursuit took place on 29 June 2024 at Ngula Jar Island, WA. Captain Ertan Vasvi is shown at the traditional jim+ri ceremony of the Wunambal Gaambera Traditional Owners, godparents of the new ultra-luxury expedition ship.

Photo: Seabourn



Local women cycling on the remote island of Raivavae, French Polynesia.

Photo: Gregoire Le Bacon, LionAiles



cruise industry has taken off since the pandemic, nowhere more so than in this part of the world.

Papua New Guinea has seen its post-pandemic cruise numbers reach new records. Ingrid Kuman, executive manager of policy and strategic planning at Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority, said: "We are looking at a more sustainable approach going forward. We have had some issues re numbers of people. We are looking at the larger-capacity ships vis-à-vis expedition ships. It is a trade-off, but with expedition there is a more positive impact on the community. Also, expedition ships are coming to more remote destinations which offer a richer cultural experience to guests."

She explained that discussions were ongoing towards developing a cruise strategy for the next five years, which she hoped would be released in the fourth quarter 2024. "In terms of long-term planning, there may be a quota on numbers," she said.

Summers talked about how the cruise sector was helping to rejuvenate regions, which was particularly helpful given that overall tourism was only at about three-quarters of pre-pandemic levels.

Timaru in New Zealand is one example of a port or destination that has seen the potential of cruise and is eager to attract more. Having had only three to four calls per season in the years leading up to the pandemic, it is now up to 14. Andrew Pye, commercial and marine manager at PrimePort Timaru, said: "We have very good support from the local community, including the mayor. We have the capacity for double. Thirty calls would be comfortable. It is important to have an extra revenue stream, because a lot of the original trades such as fertilisers, milk, and butter exports, are declining."

In Australia, Abel said that all of the states were focused on destination management plans: "Cruise lines are committed to coming to places that are welcoming."

Fiji is going through a destination certification process with input from outside. Howard said: "We tend to leverage off others, for example GSTC (Global Sustainable

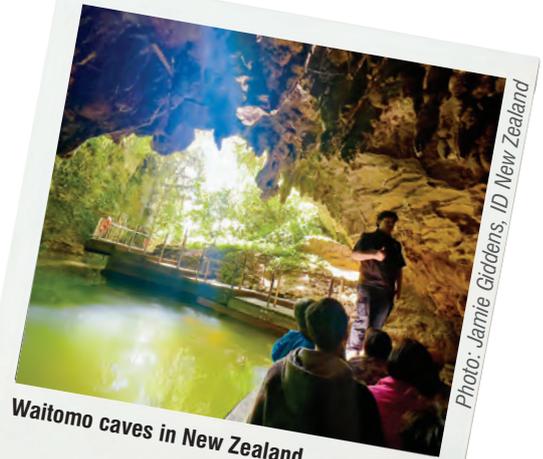


Photo: Jamie Giddens, ID New Zealand

Waitomo caves in New Zealand.

Tourism Council) and Earthcheck, for best practices and also to bridge the gap between the government and the private sector."

Speaking on behalf of the South Pacific Cruise Alliance (SPCA) at Seatrade Cruise Global in April, former chairman Bud Gilroy said: "Ten years ago, there was no discussion about the South Pacific, so I am happy with where we are now. We are seeing more and more companies coming to our waters. I am pretty confident our eight-country members have that to tell. We have countries with three (Wallis and Futuna) to just over 1,000 calls (French Polynesia). We have commitments for 2026."

While explaining that tourism is the country's number one revenue source, Gilroy also sees the importance of building for the next generation. "We need societal acceptability. Some don't want visitors. We need to manage calls, creating destinations/ports, getting people ready and make sure cruise lines know what they will get, not what they expect. We don't forget cruise companies that believed in us years ago. We want to nurture them, maintain what we have, and build more too."

Despite the challenges, the post-pandemic cruise market in Oceania is showing unmistakable signs of maturity and resilience. Supported by destinations and local communities that see the benefits of cruise tourism, cruise lines and other stakeholders are overcoming hurdles and propelling the industry further forward.

**1. L-R: Pauline Riman, senior digital marketing officer; Mary Kanawi, project officer; and Ingrid Kuman, executive manager, policy & strategic planning, Papua New Guinea Tourism Promotion Authority.**

Photo: Susan Parker

**2. L-R: Andrew Pye, commercial & marine manager, PrimePort Timaru, and Nigel Bowen, mayor of Timaru.**

Photo: Susan Parker

**3. Virgin Voyages' Resilient Lady calling at Timaru, New Zealand.**

Photo: PrimePort Timaru

**4. Viliani Takau, CEO, Tonga Ministry of Tourism, and chairman, South Pacific Cruise Alliance.**

Photo: South Pacific Cruise Alliance

# JOINED-UP THINKING AND KEY ISSUES CONCERNING NORWEGIAN CRUISE BUSINESS

“Joined-up” was the phrase that came to mind most often during a familiarisation (“fam”) trip organised by Cruise Norway in late April 2024. The trip also highlighted some of the key issues and developments in Norway’s cruise sector.

All aboard the Viking ships Nordfjordeid.

BY SUSAN PARKER

**D**uring a packed weeklong schedule, six ports or destinations – Stavanger, Haugesund, Eidfjord, Flåm, Nordfjordeid, and Hareid – shared details of what they had to offer with a group of cruise line executives and media representatives.

From the start it was obvious that these destinations had worked hard together – from the ports to the bus operators – to showcase their best and to detail what was needed from the ship side.

It was clear that “joined-up” was the only way forward. Communities within themselves, and communities with cruise lines, needed to understand each other

and work together to create a successful future for cruise business in Norway.

## Joined-up thinking

Discussing call and passenger numbers to Flåm, former port operation manager Jon Olav Stedje said: “What is important for us as a port is that everyone here should feel it is an advantage to be a cruise destination. The money you [cruise lines] are spending with us, we are spending on them. We are making it better and better, not just for you but for us, too. We have a more and more sustainable focus.”

Sustainability required mutual understanding and a level of cooperation. At the trip’s starting point in

Stavanger, Line Murphy, cruise manager of Region Stavanger, said: “It is all about cooperation and level of knowledge. My main message is: ‘Please give us what we need. I am here to help both the cruise lines and the destinations. There are lots of people working really hard for you.’”

Monica Berstad, managing director of Cruise Norway, cited Haugesund as an example of a port that has grown with care. “Vigleik has done an exceptional job with all the community to show what is good about cruise. Keeping it to no more than one ship a day, which has helped the community. They love to have cruise because it works well together with the local community.”



**L-R: Tor Mikkel Tokvam, port director, Port of Aurland/Flåm; Gry Steine Mundal, head of sales, Norway's best; and Jon Olav Stedje, former port operation manager, Port of Aurland/Flåm, on the quay in Flåm.**



**L-R: Line Murphy, cruise manager, Region Stavanger; Monica Berstad, MD, Cruise Norway; and Lars from Guide Companiet, outside Chili Chocolate in Stavanger old town.**

Like elsewhere in the world, cruise is promoted in Norway as a mutually beneficial business for both destinations and cruise lines. Speaking in his role as CEO of the Norwegian Nature Centre Hardanger, Oddvar Brakestad, who has been working with the cruise industry since the centre opened almost 30 years earlier, said: "I feel that the cruise industry has a place in Norway and also in the fjords. It is important for local people and government to know that cruise uses what is local in Eidfjord. If the cruise industry wants to use the fjords, then we also want some business back locally."

The pandemic gave rise to some challenges as associated businesses were forced to close and people sought jobs elsewhere. Most of these are back on track, but shortages of boats, buses, drivers, and guides continue to cause headaches in some places. With calls to Norway increasing in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, due to Baltic itineraries shifting westwards, added pressure has

been put on some destinations.

In the 2024 season, the Norwegian Coastal Administration estimates an increase of 4 per cent in the number of cruise calls over 2023, and an increase of 6 per cent in the number of cruise passenger visits. If the estimate holds true, 2024 will be the first year that cruise ships make more than 4,000 port calls in Norway.

More than ever before, this rapidly rising trend requires more joined-up thinking, especially in tackling potential issues relating to bigger volumes.

### Addressing people congestion

Tuesdays and Wednesdays, being the most popular days for calls, give rise to congestion, with everyone scrambling to find solutions to prevent bottlenecks.

Providing greater shore excursion options was part of the joined-up narrative of the week, with each host destination bringing in a variety of businesses to showcase tour opportunities – everything from paddleboarding in Skudeneshavn to

visiting Berentsens whiskey centre in Egersund, which opened in April 2024.

Nordfjordeid's approach is to extend its docking facilities provided by SeaWalk, which is working well except during high winds, to a new fixed pier (three locations are being considered), and, for smaller ships, to introduce the idea of Davik as an alternative, either with tenders or Zodiacs.

Being relatively smaller destinations and more environmentally conscious, restricting the numbers without being seen as hostile to cruise is an intricate balancing act. Jon Olav Lefdal, who owns 61 per cent of the Port of Nordfjordeid, said: "We don't want people pollution. We want everyone to have a nice time here, so our plan is one ship per day, or we can take two if one is smaller, up to a maximum of 1,000 [passengers], and one larger, for example, *Iona*", which takes 5,200 passengers.

We also heard how important it was for the destinations that passengers enjoy what was immediately on hand whenever possible, rather than being bussed out



**Andrea Leonetti, itinerary designer, Silversea Cruises at the Norwegian Fjord Horse Centre.**



**Anita Sletbak, senior consultant, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, at Swords in Rock, Stavanger.**



**Bernt Brandal, mayor, Hareid municipality at Kvitneset natural and World War II historical site.**



**L–R: Marit Karlsen, marketing executive, Cruise Norway; Inge Tangerås, CEO, Visit Eidfjord; and Heidi Kvamsdal, product and content marketing manager, Visit Eidfjord, on the quay in Eidfjord.**



Photos: Susan Parker

**Neil Cron, destination excursion manager, Saga Cruises, and Abigail Crossley, senior manager, global sourcing shore excursions, Carnival UK, after a RIB ride in Stavanger.**

further afield. Jacob Bredesen, marketing director of the Port of Nordfjordeid, said: “We are trying to spread it. If we can make it more alive, people will stay.” In the new Viking Centre, complete with Myklebust ship, for example, about 2,000 people can visit in a period of six hours. With a longer day in port, this number could be increased.

Tromsø is an example of a destination that is working hard to keep abreast of any congestion issues. Having been certified as a sustainable destination by Innovation Norway in 2019, it has been recertified this year. Berstad said: “They have also recently conducted an impact analysis and are very advanced in overcoming all the challenges with the great popularity the city has gained as a sought-after destination for all parts of tourism. They have also managed to secure enough buses, but they lack bus drivers, and the main job now is to get more people to participate in activities that are just a short bus ride outside the city, where capacity is good. They also have plans to conduct carrying capacity analyses.”

In this respect, Bergen and Stavanger are also certified, and with recent growth at Ålesund and Olden, they too might benefit from certification.

Steady and surefooted progress is the order of the day. All stakeholders are urged to subscribe to this approach. Hareid, for example, is a blank canvas, having just had its first calls confirmed for June 2026, by Phoenix Reisen’s *Artania*. Mayor Bernt Brandal said: “We want to grow slowly and then maybe have larger ships when we know better. We can divide passengers, some locally and some going further into the region. I think that is important. We have set up a cruise network of local stakeholders and put money into it. We now have some private investors, too.”

A close collaboration between Port of Stavanger and Sandnes Port, which started in 2022, has led to 18 calls to the latter in 2023 and 10 in 2024. This provides opportunities to Sandnes and extra capacity to Stavanger, which received 232 calls this year, including those from P&O Cruises’ *Iona* on a regular seven-day summer itinerary.

“Together with the port of Sandnes, we are looking at the possibility of being able to receive larger cruise ships in Sandnes. Then a channel-deepening operation must be carried out at the quay at Somaneset. Investigations are being carried out as we speak,” said Odd Bjørn Bekkeheien, acting port director and CEO of Port of Stavanger.

### Lessening local oppositions

The wider world needs to become part of this joined-up phenomenon by being better informed, especially on what the cruise industry is doing to minimise environmental impacts.

Destinations have gone up a gear in proactively informing local communities, including politicians, activists, and residents, on just what is and is not correct when it comes to noise and air pollution from the ships, for example.

Murphy said: “The media in Stavanger are usually very negative, and we read a lot of things which are not true. We need your help. We are interested in bringing people on board your ships.” Cruise lines such as AIDA Cruises and MSC Cruises are very open to taking locals on board to see and hear from the environmental officer and captain about what takes place in terms of sustainability.

Stedje knows just how easy it is for the wrong impression to take hold and how important it is to involve the community: “We

may have only one day [in a year] with three ships in, but I know that, during that day, there will be one journalist taking a picture when the engines are turned on. It is like 20 seconds of the whole year, and that can ruin our reputation.”

In Nordfjordeid, a recent tour on board a ship was very helpful. Lefdal said: “We invited on board people from the community who had been very negative about cruise, and we showed them about LNG operations. The mayor of the city was there, and when he saw how they treated garbage, cleaned the water, et cetera, he said, ‘If we were half as good on land, we would have been the best in Norway’, and this is important to know.” Bredesen cited the example of a Green Party member being astonished to learn that cruise lines “recycle more than we do”.

As a positive counterbalance, getting good stories out to a wider public via the media also helps communities to see some of the benefits of hosting the ships, whether this be sustainability, added revenue, or employment opportunities. The owner of a tattoo shop in Ålesund, for example, is under no illusion that passengers bring significant income to the business.

In Haugesund, the number of people employed in the cruise business has risen from two in 2013, when the first call took place, to 40 now.

As we travelled from place to place, there were many stories of how important it was to create work for the younger generations who were keen to return home, having been forced to leave for lack of employment opportunities.

### Developing onshore power

Aside from the “joined-up” theme, the trip also focused on sharing other aspects



**L-R: Vigleik Dueland, director of tourism and cruise development, Destination Haugesund & Haugalandet, and Rasmus Tveit, cruise coordinator, Karlsund Port.**



Photos: Susan Parker

**Jon Olav Lefdal, owner, Port of Nordfjordeid, en route to Davik on private yacht *Riva Italia*.**

of cruise business development in Norway, such as the onshore power (OPS) provision plans and development – the sector is overcoming substantial obstacles in this journey.

While destinations such as Flåm are close to a major hydro plant, others have only enough energy for their own needs, so each port has to carefully consider whether OPS is feasible.

Haugesund already has three OPS cabinets (90 m apart) on the quay at Garpeskjær with a maximum capacity of 16 MW, although the power from the grid company has a limitation of 12.8 MW before the system can achieve the full effect. A flexible cable management system means that power can be supplied along the whole quay, and there is a 20 per cent discount on the quay fee for those plugging in. The first connection took place on 9 June 2023. Vidar Riise, CEO of Havnekraft, the shore power company, said: "The vast majority of ships that can take shore power now order power, but we have had many cancellations due to wind and bad weather this year."

Eidfjord is fortunate in being close to the second-largest hydro plant in the world and hence is well placed for OPS. Inge Tangerås, CEO of Visit Eidfjord, said: "We have to have OPS, otherwise we are out of business."

Tangerås later updated *CruiseTimes* on a recent decision: "The city government of Eidfjord made, in June, the decision to proceed with the project, which means that we now start the process of detailing the business case with respect to investment costs and revenues. Projected revenues to make the project economically viable are based on a projected growth in the number of cruise calls to Eidfjord, from the current level of 80 to 90 per year to 120 calls in

2035," he said.

The investment is sponsored by Enova with NOK 20 million (€1.75 million), which is about 20 per cent of the total. An investment decision is planned for December 2024, with completed installation and start-up in 2026. There will be one installation on the quay, initially built for 10 MW but planned for 16 MW.

Stavanger also has NOK 20 million in financial support from Enova to have three cruise ship outlets (24 MW), with one at Strandkaaien, ready for operation on 1 January 2027.

In Nordfjordeid, the hope is for a new concrete pier together with OPS at a total cost of €15 million, with some investment from the government but most from the port, said Lefdal. "Shore power supply is something we have been working on for two years. The community tells us that we want shore supply, and if we cannot put it on SeaWalk, then we have to build a concrete pier. It will cost €1 million to get OPS to the new port if we build it. We will have one connection, as we say we only want one big ship [at a time]."

Hareid, too, is exploring shore power possibilities in cooperation with Dimo and Ulmatec. There are also plans to establish another quay, as Bent Arild Grytten, port director of Hareid Port and head of municipal administration in Hareid, explained: "We have had, and still have, some discussions regarding establishing a quay with a much larger capacity. We have also picked a proper location for this. Further progress depends on the response we get from the cruise operators and the general municipal economy. We have to see what ship fits our destinations. As a port director, I want the big ships, but everyone else may not agree. We aim to manage up

to 1,500 passengers [per day] to begin with. The length of the new quay will depend on what the community wants vis-à-vis numbers of passengers, but it could be 300 metres or so."

### World Heritage deadlock

Flåm has its finger poised on the button to invest €15 million to extend its pier by 80 metres in order to facilitate OPS connections, but it cannot go ahead until a decision has been made about the Norwegian parliament's resolution to halt emissions from cruise ships and ferries in the World Heritage Geirangerfjord and Nærøyfjord by 2026.

The situation with emissions from passenger ships in the World Heritage fjords has been causing consternation in the cruise industry since 2018, when the regulations were first introduced by the Norwegian Maritime Authority (NMA).

No one is disputing the need to have zero emissions or that the cruise industry comply. What is being disputed is the timeline and the fact that it is impossible right now to achieve this goal without removing the existing ships.

When visiting Flåm in late April, port director Tor Mikkjel Tokvam was full of hope for a meeting with the minister the following week, which would finally bring some clarity to the situation before the summer. However, as *CruiseTimes* goes to press, and the government goes into summer recession, there has been no further development.

The NMA has suggested that cruise ships could load a quantity of biogas or biofuel equivalent to what would be burnt during a sailing through World Heritage fjords. This interim measure for solving the problem has been welcomed.



**L-R: Tracy Diaz, director, shore excursion operations, Princess Cruises, and Maria Cristina Roggero, land experience plan and operation manager, Costa Cruises, at the Vøringsfossen waterfall.**



**L-R: Giovanna Dipasquale, head of itinerary management and Michelle McDermott, destination experiences product executive, both from Ambassador Cruise Line in Fretheim Hotel, Flåm.**

Tokvam said: "This would affect Flåm, but it is negligible compared to what it could have been. This we can live with and of course, for us, not having clarity has been like a lock that has meant we have not been able to plan ahead, because we don't know what is coming beyond 2026 when potentially we could have no income. We are spending public money; we need to do it responsibly, so we are waiting until we hear what will happen and then we need 24 months to implement the quay development."

The port's plans are now on hold, and they are not the only ones. From ports to suppliers, investment has to wait until a decision has been made. Those involved in the industry are on a knife edge while they wait, poised with ideas which cannot take shape.

Indeed, Rita Berstad Maraak, port director of Stranda Port Authority, said: "No one dares to take the risk of investing until they know what will happen from 1 January 2026." While Stranda is calling for a final decision as soon as possible and a postponement until it is technically and commercially achievable, the port authority is proposing that a corridor could be established through the Storfjorden to Hellesylt, which is outside the World Heritage area. This would provide some necessary income and ensure that customers are not lost in the transition phase.

The proposed regulations would also have a negative effect on small-ship operators. Sylviane de Tracy, director of cruise research and development of Ponant, learnt of many new excursion possibilities during the week that could be of interest, including in the World Heritage fjords. "When we know what is happening about the regulations in the fjord, we could bring

more tonnage in, if it is available," she said.

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines is just one of the lines that has changed some itineraries to the fjord area because it will no longer be possible to enter Flåm or Geiranger from 2026 as things stand.

At Saga Cruises, plans are still being finalised for 2026 itineraries. Neil Cron, destination experience manager, said: "As yet, this issue, given no clear decisions have been taken, is not impacting our planning regarding choice of ports. As always, with all such concerns, we will continue to review as and when necessary."

The Port of Flåm has not wasted the waiting time and is ready to go with its infrastructure development, having worked with the community to ensure its acceptance. "Our ambition, when we have a secure future, is to extend the pier by 80 metres," Tokvam said. "This is combined with the intention to provide flexibility when it comes to providing shore power on the pier. There might be a little bit of construction work for a couple of years, but it's planned to be done during winter, so we will manage to keep the business running while we build."

A cable will be laid from Flåm to the hydro plant in Aurland, and this will bring 100 per cent clean energy not only to the port but also to the community.

"The whole world wants to electrify right now and go to cleaner fuel, but what is a little bit special for us is that hydroelectric power is actually local value creation," Tokvam said. "Flåm municipality has two foundations: tourism and hydroelectric. It's a perfect combination, so finally the two cornerstones are connected in the same project."

### Opposing seafarer bill

On 1 May 2024, the Norwegian

government presented a new bill that would impose Norwegian wage conditions on all ships sailing in its waters from 2026. In order to avoid these new pay regulations, cruise lines could opt to ensure that less than 50 per cent of the voyage takes place in Norwegian waters. This could have a massive impact on the number of passengers visiting and, as a consequence, the number of people employed in the local tourism industry.

Berstad explained that there had been about 90 submissions to the government by the 12 June deadline for comment. "We hope for a change so that the law does not apply to cruises. It is also uncertain whether the ESA will approve such a law," she said, referring to the EFTA Surveillance Authority; EFTA is the European Free Trade Association. "Everything is uncertain, but we are fighting to prevent this change from being implemented. If the law goes through in its current form, it appears that the further north one goes, the more affected areas one will find. We also need to see how the shipping companies choose to operate under such a law. Everything is very uncertain regarding the potential impact, and, as mentioned, we are fighting to prevent it from being passed or to have cruises exempted from the law."

### Familiarisation trip values

Aside from highlighting key issues and developments, this fam trip, like most, was also a chance for both sides – ports and cruise lines – to communicate their respective needs and concerns and to highlight what each had to offer. It was a place where conversations took place and could be carried forward to a better understanding of how to make this business work for everyone.

Reflecting on the trip, Abigail Crossley,



**L-R: Catrina Megahey, shore experiences product executive, Carnival UK; Monica Berstad, MD, Cruise Norway; and Sylviane de Tracy, director of cruise and research development, Ponant, on electric bus tour of Nordfjordeid.**

senior manager, global sourcing shore excursions at Carnival UK, later said: "The recent familiarisation trip to Norway proved to be highly advantageous to us. The trip was instrumental in reinforcing existing relationships, discovering untapped opportunities, and optimising the guest experience through a refreshed and enriched excursion portfolio."

At Princess Cruises, its director of shore excursion operations, Tracy Diaz, said: "You guys this week have made sure we see different things on offer. It is amazing what cruise can do for a community, but it has to

be managed well."

In general, fam trips are very good for tightening up on details, for example discovering that passengers can walk rather than take buses, and for finding new shore excursion opportunities.

Anita Sletbak, senior consultant, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, said: "The visit we made in Haugesund to that beautiful house and garden will be one of my suggestions for new tours for 2025."

The timing of the trip was beneficial for the destinations. Andrea Leonetti, itinerary designer from Silversea Cruises, explained:



Photos: Susan Parker

**Sig Hansen, producer and actor on the TV series *Deadliest Catch*, in Svensholmen.**

"We have *Silver Dawn* here this year and *Silver Spirit* next year. It is really good the familiarisation trip takes place now, because we are looking for destinations for 2026/27."

As destinations and cruise lines joined up in this convivial fam trip, issues and concerns were highlighted and discussed, and solutions were suggested, resulting at least in better mutual understanding. While some of the challenges are seemingly insurmountable, what is required now is to work together, overcoming obstacles, towards the common goal of developing Norway's cruise business.

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Aerial view of Stockholm city over Skeppsholmen and Blasieholmen.

# Cruise Europe promotes Baltic ports and proactive approach to industry image

BY FRANCES GANNON

**A**gainst the backdrop of a gloriously sunny Stockholm, Cruise Europe (CE) members and delegates from yacht and cruise lines and the press gathered to discuss issues and strategies of cruise business in Europe in general, and the Baltic in particular.

The association also welcomed its new chairman following the retirement of Captain Michael McCarthy, who had occupied this position since 2012. Simone Maraschi, managing director of Cruise Gate Hamburg GmbH, was appointed his successor.

Maraschi steps into a pair of very large shoes. The challenges he and CE face are daunting in the context of economic and geopolitical uncertainties, not to mention the antagonism towards overtourism spreading across Europe.

But CE is poised for the challenges. The association was founded on solid principles and is in the hands of experienced leadership. This was referenced by McCarthy in his parting tribute to his friend and colleague, Jens Skrede, CE's long-time managing director.

"In my subsequent 12 years as chairman," said McCarthy, "I have had the honour of working alongside Jens and over 30 different elected council members from every region of Europe. I found that our democratic leadership style is one of the most effective for CE, because it

**The Cruise Europe Conference, held in May 2024, focused on promoting the Baltic as an attractive region for cruise business, despite the loss of St Petersburg and other Russia-related issues. It also espoused a proactive approach to the industry's image problem.**

encourages everyone to participate in all processes, sharing their opinions, knowing that you value their input, hear their feedback, and they have space to participate, increasing their empowerment and motivation."

To his successor, Simone Maraschi, McCarthy said: "I want to congratulate

Simone and wish him well on accepting the challenge and stepping forward to the role of chairman. I am especially delighted that the council had the foresight to nominate him unopposed, as it sends him and the industry a very positive message of commitment and backing as he takes up the role."



Photo: Jens Reiterer, Sthlm Eventfoto

**L–R: Captain Michael McCarthy, outgoing chairman, CE; Simone Maraschi, managing director, Cruise Gate Hamburg and incoming chairman, CE; and Jens Skrede, managing director CE.**

## Glorious Baltic

Europe's attraction to cruise business was unquestionable despite all the challenges. The association turned its attention to promoting its host city and the surrounding region as an alluring example of what Europe has to offer to cruise tourism. This was accentuated by Stockholm, one of the most beautiful cities in the world, bathing in the unusually warm May sunshine.

It was acknowledged that Stockholm, Helsinki, Tallinn, Riga, and other Baltic ports had been overshadowed in the past by St Petersburg and had suffered significant loss of cruise business since 2022, because of the Baltic's perceived proximity to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the loss of St Petersburg.

During the conference, it was brought home to cruise and yacht executives, who might have left the region on account of the Russian issue, that the Baltic is an attractive cruise destination with or without St Petersburg; each destination could unapologetically stand tall in its own right.

Not only did the executives get to experience Stockholm, but CE members representing Helsinki, Tallinn, and Riga extended an invitation for a one-off Cruise Europe familiarisation trip after the conference. This proved to be an invaluable eye-opener to the cruise line executives, reminding them of what these glorious destinations have to offer.

## Proactive approach

A major problem that is increasingly pressing in Europe, and in cruise industry as a whole, is how to respond to unreasonable criticism levelled against cruising.

CE was keen to address this issue proactively. But, at the moment, the association is not structured to be consumer-facing and therefore is not consumer-media-facing – this is more within CLIA's remit. This fact was communicated by Nigel Lingard, the conference moderator. He asked Nikos Mertzaniadis, CLIA's vice president of government affairs, whether he felt that CE should be working closely with CLIA to deal with criticism, particularly from local media, and other cruise-business-related issues.

"It's a lot more complicated than that," said Mertzaniadis. "The whole shipping industry – ports and shipping lines and cruise lines and everything else – has been fortified for decades behind port walls. Those walls do not exist anymore. So even if we have to speak to cruise lines or ports or port agents, this is not about your daily job;



**Panel titled 'The impact of geopolitical events, national regulations and taxation issues on deployment decisions'. L-R: Sandra Weir, senior director government relations and public affairs, NCL Holdings; Crystal Morgan, senior director deployment and itinerary planning, Seabourn Cruises; Spyros Almpertis, VP port operations, itinerary planning and fuel management, Crystal; Nikos Mertzaniadis, VP government affairs, CLIA; and Nigel Lingard, moderator.**

this is not about generating profit or doing your job in a good way. The eyes of the regulatory authorities are very expansive. You've got these people who are operating in the EU. The UK has similar legislation. There's the green claims legislation that is coming out. There is a sustainable value chain that is coming out, and everybody will ask that reports be submitted in standard templates, and it has to be verified by third parties, and so on. So it's not only us but it's all businesses that are moving out of this."

Mertzaniadis gave an example: "I'm

doing my business; I get a profit; I have a grocery shop; everything goes well. It's about you having to report to the public. So here's when the media comes, and they pick up those public reports, and then you have to explain the contents to the media. That's how the whole thing gets started."

Though he did not directly answer the part of the question about criticism, from Mertzaniadis's eloquent response one could easily surmise that inaccurate perception of facts was once again the biggest cause of criticism against cruise business.



**L-R: Marcus Puttich, director destination, TUI Cruises, and Nicky Guerrero, moderator of panel titled 'How can cruise lines boost the Baltic region by extending the cruise season in Northern Europe?'**

Photos: Jens Reiterer, Shrim Eventfoto



**Kaj (Tico) Takolander, VP passenger services, Port of Helsinki, posing a question to the panel titled 'The impact of geopolitical events, national regulations and taxation issues on deployment decisions'.**

Lingard asked Mai Elmar, executive director of Cruise Port Rotterdam, if she had been involved in work for a paper on this subject for CE. "Yes, I have done so for the Atlantic Europe region for a while, both for CLIA and within CE," she said. "There are people out there using 25-to-30-year-old

data, using information that is not verified and is not up to date [to appraise the industry]. So they are non-factual. Unfortunately, as Nikos just said, the newspapers and social media are full of them. It's a sort of new religion. So what we have tried to do, in cooperation with CLIA, within the Netherlands, and now within our Atlantic Europe region, is to figure out the facts that are there."

Having outlined the problem, Elmar suggested a strategic approach. "CLIA has done a marvellous study on very many actual facts, and now I think the great challenge for all of us in this room and for the whole industry is how to tackle the issue and get them [facts] out," she said. "Not to get into a discussion that won't get us anywhere, but simply to share facts confidently and loudly. I think that would be the way to go to have an overall message communicated."

Mertzaniadis shared more of his insights and proposed a specific way to tackle the issue: "You are all business people; you are all operations people. I am probably the odd one out, because I'm a lobbyist and I've been lobbying for 15 years. And if you think our industry has a big problem, try leading



**Olle Burell, president, Stockholm City Council, giving his welcome address.**

the tobacco industry, as I did for four years. That's even worse. So there is stuff we can do, but there is stuff we will need help with; we will probably need to rely on others and probably hire external experts. If you look at the lobbying industry, the hardest part of it is the research, then comes education, and



## **BilbOPS, the sustainable project to electrify the terminals of the Port of Bilbao**

Strategically located on the Cantabrian coast in the north of Spain, the Basque Country has become the ideal destination for cruises thanks to the wide-ranging and attractive cultural and gastronomic options it has to offer.

The Port of Bilbao, an essential point on the cruise route, is equipped with two terminals that can accommodate three ships on its quays. The port is prepared to receive all types of cruise ships without exception, with no restrictions on vessel length or draught. This year, the Port of Bilbao is expected to

welcome around 80 cruise ships from 28 companies, bringing approximately 150,000 tourists.

A pioneer in environmental management, the Port of Bilbao will install OPS connection points on its docks to supply power to ships at berth. The cruise ship docks will be fitted out for two ships to be connected to the onshore power grid.

BilbOPS is the name given to this sustainable initiative, scheduled to be commissioned in 2026, which will lower atmospheric gas emissions by up to 40% and reduce noise and vibration levels. In addition, a

solar PV plant will be set up on site to generate green energy for the port.

The project involves a total investment of €78 million, of which €14.2 million will be provided by the European Commission under the CEF Transport 2021–2027 grant programme.

Thanks to pioneering initiatives such as this, where the project watchwords are innovation and sustainability, the Port of Bilbao is looking to become a strategic benchmark for sustainable tourism on the Bay of Biscay.





**Panel titled 'Itinerary planning – how can the CE team be prepared for future growth? New products, terminal developments and growth opportunities across all 4 regions'. L–R: Justin Poulsen, VP itinerary planning and destination development, Silversea Cruises; Debbie Holbrook, director deployment and itinerary planning, Princess Cruises; Sacha Rougier, VP itinerary planning and destination experience, Orient Express Silenseas; Jack Cochrane, senior manager itinerary and destination planning, Carnival UK; Nick Hoogeweij, executive director, Cruise Port Rotterdam, CE Council; and moderator John Mawer, Cruise Port Liverpool and CE council.**

then comes communication. So when you look into research, you look first at what Mai is doing, what CLIA is doing, what the cruise lines are doing, and this is input. Get your facts and figures right first."

That's the first step. After that, attention shifts to the community, the government, and the press.

"Then it comes to the audience, and, in all our cases, the audience is the local community. The people whose lives are affected by the cruise business – the shop owners, taxi drivers, and those who live nearby," Mertzaniadis said.

"Talk to leaders of every destination community. Some of your ports are of national importance. So you're talking about [communicating directly with] national governments. It is also about the media; you need to make sure that you know what their perceptions are and what they believe about the cruise industry."

In support of his argument, Mertzaniadis cited a survey carried out with the port of Lisbon a week earlier, which concluded that people saw the economic benefit of cruise but also the environmental problems with its operations. Yet 70 per cent could not name any specific environmental issue caused by the cruise industry.

Even more devastating was the fact that hardly anyone in the industry knew that the first shore-power-capable cruise ship was delivered 27 years ago, in 1997, a ship built by Fincantieri. "If we don't know that, then definitely politicians don't know it, definitely media don't know it," said Mertzaniadis, highlighting the scale of the problem, the mountain the industry has to climb.

Only when all the facts are known, and those in the industry are well informed, can proper communication with the public, the government, and the media begin. For

Mertzaniadis, it is therefore imperative for the industry to inform itself first. Otherwise, the misperception of cruise and the hostility towards it will persist.

Mertzaniadis urged a proactive approach at every stage. For him it was all about being better safe than sorry.

"If you can do that proactively, you're spreading the message. If you do this in a timely way, consistently, with relevant messages, there will not be any surprises," he said. He explained that if you did not act proactively, when the questions are asked by the media – about levels of air emissions, for example – then you cannot answer accurately. And that leaves the media to draw their own conclusions, which would often be wrong.

Mertzaniadis believed that ports' in-house communication officers or hired PR agencies should fulfil this role effectively.

"It has to be done proactively rather than waiting for media to start looking for information of their own," concluded Mertzaniadis.

Failure to communicate proactively and effectively has been costly to Europe's cruise industry, undermining its potential, however attractive the destination might be. Though the conference discussed a myriad of issues, what was most troubling was that communication, after so many years, remained one of the industry's biggest stumbling blocks – in an age when communication has never before been so easy and affordable.



Photos: Jens Reitere / Sthlm Eventfoto

**Enjoying pre-gala-dinner drinks, L–R: Inge Tangerås, CEO, Visit Eidfjord; Antoine Zoppi, itinerary designer, Silversea Cruises; Spyros Almpertis, VP port operations, itinerary planning and fuel management, Crystal; and James Cabello, head of port and shoreside operations, Four Seasons Yachts.**



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# Canada New England faces challenges as numbers rise

CNE may have a small slice of the cruise pie, but it's focused on a sustainable future and on making sure regulators understand the value of the business on all levels.



BY SUSAN PARKER

The conversation about cruise this season, whether in Canada New England, Australasia, or Norway, encompasses many of the same themes, to a greater or lesser degree: regulatory challenges, onshore power supply, social acceptability, and sustainability.

During the annual Cruise Canada and New England (CCNE) symposium in New York from 11 to 13 June, we heard that call and passenger numbers were on the rise almost everywhere in 2023 and that, for many, 2024 is going to be a record season.

According to Melissa Román Burch, chief operations officer and executive vice president, New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), “2023 was a banner year for cruising in the city. We had 1.3 million passengers through our terminals. It is a vital part of tourism here, an economic engine for our waterfront communities, bringing \$420 million [€392 million] annually. The CNE route is very important to New York.”

This region certainly packs a punch and draws a lot of interest, despite the fact that it accounts for only 1.1% of global cruise capacity. Growth potential, however, comes in the form of both drive-to, and fly-to, cruise as well as more open-jaw itineraries and



**L-R: Nicolai Skogland, executive director, port operations and government relations, Viking Cruises; Captain Thomas Hinderhofer, senior director terminal operations and systems, Royal Caribbean Group; Jennifer Marmanillo, director itinerary planning, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings; Lauren Gleason, chief administrative officer maritime, Massachusetts Port Authority; and Yves Gilson, director, marketing and cruises, Port of Montreal.**

creating greater awareness of CNE as a region. Of those cruising in CNE in 2023, 84% came from the USA, with only 8% from Canada.

Following a survey specifically into Cruise the Saint Lawrence, Chris Matrippolito, director of global research, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), pointed to a gap in awareness of cruises in the region and identified an

opportunity: “There is the potential of about 2.9 million source passengers in the Cruise the Saint Lawrence geography.”

However, clouds are gathering in the form of regulations and costs, which is causing considerable concern when it comes to the region's potential for future growth.

Since the first symposium in Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1998, the CCNE Alliance



has worked hard to encourage the cruise lines to call, to expand the popular fall season into the summer, which is beginning to take hold, and to the first winter calls in 2025. It will now face the new challenges head on. "We have always worked collectively, and that is why we are so strong," said René Trépanier, executive director, Cruise the Saint Lawrence.

Social acceptability has moved centre stage here too, with a general acknowledgement that in order to maintain longevity, the communities must be involved in, and alongside, any decisions going forward when it comes to cruise ships calling. The two need to progress in lockstep in order to benefit all the stakeholders in this flourishing sector of tourism.

### Regulations, economic impact, and increased costs

Cruising in the Great Lakes is limited by the size of ship that can enter via the Saint Lawrence Seaway. At present, eight ships visit out of 61 worldwide that Stephen Burnett, executive director of the Great Lakes Cruise Association, has identified as being able to make it into the lakes. "This is massive potential for us," he said.

Most recently the revived Victory Cruise Lines (formerly part of American Queen Voyages), with John Waggoner at the helm,



Photo: Susan Parker

**L–R: Nancy Houley, director of business development, Cruise the Saint Lawrence; Max Taffet, senior vice president, offshore wind and PortNYC planning, New York City Economic Development Corporation; Sandra Weir, global government relations and public affairs, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings; Mike Watts, founder and president, Watts Marine; and Anne Kalosh, editor of Seatrade-Cruise.com.**

is sailing 31 itineraries in the Great Lakes on *Victory 1* (formerly *Ocean Voyager*) and *Victory 2* (formerly *Ocean Navigator*), beginning next spring.

Of concern, however, is the high cost of pilotage and, among other things, the cost of transiting the Seaway, which, for example, is \$37,000 for a Viking ship. "Cruise lines are quite angry about the cost of operating," Burnett said. "We are deeply concerned

about this and don't want to price ourselves out of the market. We have to look for a resolution, and that may be at a political level. We have had discussions on the Canadian side and raised the whole topic of an over-regulated industry. We can only flourish if conditions are right, and costs are a great element of that."

An example of a port which is benefiting from cruise is Thunder Bay. Having 16 calls

this year, of which five are turnarounds, is good business. Paul Pepe, manager of Tourism Thunder Bay, said: "The economic impact of passengers and ships in the community [\$5 million in 2024] is one thing, but also cruising amplifies our destination to a wider audience. It supports other elements of our community too, because shore excursion development for cruise now can be for other visitors too. The benefits for us have been memorable. It also helps stimulate investment in the waterfront."

The Saint Lawrence, and Canada generally, is facing challenges when it comes to black and grey water discharge regulations put in place by Transport Canada in 2022. Though initially voluntary, these are expected to become compulsory by the end of 2024 or early 2025. With no discharge of either type within at least 3 nautical miles (nm) from shore, an ice shelf, or fast ice anywhere in Canada, and with treatment requirements placed on both when discharging at 3–12 nm, it affects all of the Saint Lawrence.

Nancy Houley, director of business development at Cruise the Saint Lawrence, said: "This regulation makes sense, but it threw us all for a loop. Inland rivers and the Great Lakes are mostly impacted by the measures, as there are limited ports with offload capabilities. Although Montreal and Quebec are both capable of accepting grey water, there is limited onshore infrastructure elsewhere to do this. As a result, additional attention is posed on itinerary planning and costs."

Although the whale corridors have been in place for some years now, this season has already been a busy one. "Our industry has factored this into the itinerary planning, but some of our ports have seen these measures impact cruise calls and shorten others," said Houley.



Networking cocktail reception at the Edge, the highest skyjack in the western hemisphere.



Photos: Susan Parker

**L–R: Danielle Timmons, partner and VP cruise operations, Aquila; Kelly Curtin, executive vice president, New York City Tourism and Conventions; Robert Mercure, general manager, Destination Quebec City; Alexandra Pierce, visitor industry director, City and Borough of Juneau; and Sarah Flink, executive director, CruiseMaine.**

### Social acceptability, sustainability, and community collaboration

The CCNE Alliance is committed to a sustainable future for the region and to achieving a harmonious balance among ports, communities, and the cruise lines, as Sarah Rumley, executive director of Cruise Atlantic Canada, explained in a presentation.

CCNE is known for breaking the mould, and this year Sarah Flink, executive director of CruiseMaine, moderated a panel in which a selection of destinations, which had faced or are facing congestion challenges, were highlighted. Bar Harbor, Juneau, Portland Maine, Peggy's Cove, New York, and Quebec City were cited as case histories to explain what the problems of congestion had been and how they had been overcome.

One example has yet to be resolved, as Flink explained: "Bar Harbor is a cautionary

tale. It shows what happens when you lose social acceptability. You have to build a story and deliver it again and again and again. Celebrate your successes. It is very important to share these and to keep doing it. What affects one of us affects all of us."

For any port facing similar challenges, these specific examples covered destinations with anything from 29 residents to eight million, while passenger numbers on a call day range from a few hundred to 16,000.

What came across loud and clear is that communities need to work together to listen, educate, explain, and work on solutions. Robert Mercure, general manager of Destination Quebec City, talked about efforts to make sure that residents of the old UNESCO-designated city did not move out due to overcrowding from tourism, leaving it as a "dead" city.

"Working with the port, we wanted to remove some of the issues that were making this a political hot potato," he said. This included better dispersal of passengers through changing booking times, exploring areas wanting more footfall, partnering with Innovation Lab to help with passenger flow, and the port creating a hotline with the local residents to keep them informed of cruise ship movements. Hotlines have also been introduced in Juneau and in Portland, Maine.

Juneau being a linchpin on Alaska cruises has had its fair share of challenges. Alexandra Pierce, visitor industry director, City and Borough of Juneau, said: "Infrastructure is absolutely a destination management tool. We are constantly identifying pain points and refining. For

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**L-R: Stephen Burnett, executive director, the Great Lakes Cruise Association, and Paul Pepe, manager, Tourism Thunder Bay.**



**L-R: Jane-Anne Cormier, cruise coordinator, Port of Havre-Saint-Pierre, and Odessa Thériault, executive director, Port of Havre-Saint-Pierre.**

example, downtown we are planning a new sea-walk for pedestrians.”

The week before, tourism officials in Juneau had reached a voluntary agreement with the major cruise lines to coordinate their schedules to cap lower berths at 16,000 per day on Sunday through Friday and at 12,000 on Saturdays, beginning in 2026.

When it comes to congestion in ports, the CCNE Alliance is working on a planning system across the member ports which was greeted with enthusiasm. Jennifer Marmanillo, director of itinerary planning at Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, said: “Congestion is a global problem. It would be great if you could be the first to introduce this. We would make changes.” Later she encouraged ports to be more vocal in their needs generally: “We love to have ports come to us. If we can make changes, we will.”

In a later session on the topic of waterfront, regulatory changes, and opportunities, Luis Ajamil, president and CEO of Bermello Ajamil & Partners, pointed to the increasing size of ships: “The industry is changing faster than ports can, so it is about anticipating. The biggest factor is the amount of people. To handle and disperse them is the challenge.” But he added: “Waterfront development has to be good for cruise and for the residents.”

On the subject of shore excursions, demand is growing for authentic, curated tours with sustainable credentials. Global Cruises has just begun operating here, having been asked by the cruise lines to come to the region, according to Myrna Meyer, regional manager of Canada & New England, who said: “Our portfolio of shore excursions comprises 19 categories or collections, including our well-recognised selfie and photo tour.”

This dovetails with what Royal Caribbean is experiencing in terms of itineraries. Captain Thomas Hinderhofer, senior director of terminal operations and systems at Royal Caribbean Group, said: “Curated cruises with a special name get a lot of recognition. This is great for the industry. I think it is really important for the ports to work with the DMOs [destination marketing organisations] a lot more.”

Saguenay is an example of a community that works closely together and wants to do the best by its people. Nathalie Gaudreault, tourism director of Promotion Saguenay, said: “Yes, we want to have cruise ships but also to help the destination to get better. We are introducing a new regulation by 2026, which will prohibit tours that operate without making any stops at local attractions, because these bring no economic impact to, nor interaction with, the community.”

Sept-Îles is investing \$37 million in upgrading its Mgr-Blanche Quay and constructing a cruise pavilion shore-side, which will replace the tent currently being

used on the dock. The pavilion will be made of wood with picture windows, and there will be a shaputuan/two-doored tent next door. This has been designed with the involvement of the local Innu communities, said Suzanne Cassista, executive director, Destination Sept-Îles Nakauinanu: “We are working closely with them to ensure that we can share, for example, their traditions, music, and dancing.”

Gaspe is also keen to increase interaction with the community. Igor Urban, deputy general manager, and Pascale Rémillard, executive director at Destination Gaspe, said: “Destinations want to share their culture, and we need time to do that. We want to have real moments with the cruise passengers.” Side by side with this is a desire to progress the financial impact on the community.

Discussions on sustainability certification are welcomed, but it can be onerous, particularly for smaller operators, as Danielle Timmons, partner and VP of cruise operations Aquila, explained: “For our operators generally the sustainability



**L-R: Eric Benedict, consultant, Access Cruise; Erin Brennan, MD, Cruise Newfoundland & Labrador; and Bob McCarthy, VP development, Port of St John’s, Newfoundland.**



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**L-R: Nathalie Gaudreault, tourism director, Promotion Saguenay, and Dany Gravel, head of operations international cruise, Promotion Saguenay.**



**L-R: Myrna Meyer, regional manager, Canada & New England, Global Cruises, and Claudine Pohl, cruise industry innovator.**

push is wonderful, but it is very expensive and time-consuming to get certification. We want it, but we are struggling with the investment and the time to get further down the road."

Sydney, Nova Scotia, is just one of the ports experiencing an uplift in cruises in the summer. Nicole MacAulay, manager of cruise, Port of Sydney, said: "Calls are up 17% on 2023. In July we have four two-ship days, which we have never done before. We are changing marketing to focus on summer and families to develop the project from just being fall colours." Although this sounds as though it could lead to congestion, she said: "Passengers will disperse across the islands, so we don't have real hot spots."

In the Îles de la Madeleine, more calls arrive in the summer and Ponant coming in winter 2025 are increasing call numbers. Denis Bourque, port manager of Escalpe Îles de la Madeleine, was happy to announce that the very first overnight calls to the islands will take place next year from Ponant.

### **A truly sustainable vision**

No business can survive without moving forward. Out-of-the-box thinking can be daunting when considered operationally, but it could just be the solution that ends up being a win-win for everyone.

For many years now there has been some low-level muttering about the cost of tours sold on board and the mark-up that the cruise lines are making on the original supplier price.

René Trépanier, executive director of Cruise the Saint Lawrence, mentioned this in New York, and he followed up afterwards with *CruiseTimes* about a vision he has to ensure that the suppliers, the destination, the passengers, and the cruise lines all benefit.

The topic is gaining momentum worldwide as suppliers are beginning to push back at being unable to offer the product they would like to, at the price being asked of them. "The suppliers have a big pressure from the tour operator, which comes from the cruise line, to always cut the prices and deliver a product at the lowest price, but sold at the maximum price on the ship.

"But now some are saying, you are asking me to sell the product at a minimum price, which is being sold at two or three times the price on board the ship. For the reputation of my service, I don't want to go any further, and I don't want to welcome the passenger to my place, because I don't feel honest selling a product where the mark-up is so high."

At this point it is important to factor in that about 60% of passengers go ashore independently and, with modern communications, find their way back to the ship on time, which goes against the old adage of a tour being the only way to guarantee that the passengers get back to the ship before it sails.

Trépanier is not advocating for more independents to do their own thing. Quite the contrary: his vision has the potential for cruise lines to sell more tours, but for the local suppliers to benefit more also. "We believe that the best way to discover a destination is still on a guided tour with an experienced guide."

At present the high price of tours limits the numbers of tours taken to about 30% but, with a new business model incorporating the destination, Trépanier believes that that percentage could rise to 40%, 50%, or 60%. "We, like the cruise lines, want to sell more guided tours, and we want to have fewer independent people disembarking without the opportunity to

have a guide with them. If we are included from the beginning, we can help each other to encourage more passengers onto tours."

The idea is that tours offered by the cruise lines will be promoted as a priority, but that the destinations have more of a chance to capture the independents and steer them towards local suppliers involved in the sustainable tourism plan.

In smaller ports, such as Baie-Comeau and Sept-Îles, the attractions are widespread, which means those on foot don't get to see the "wow" that is on offer. These ports, particularly, need to see more passengers taking guided tours. Trépanier is keen to suggest a way for cruise lines to also benefit: "They could get a little mark-up on the independents' experience as well, because no one is taking care of these passengers so far."

To really make this work, he suggested that the destinations be included from the very beginning of the chain: "Let's say we integrate everything from before the passengers are booking, then we could be included in the marketing of the destination also. We have a big amount of money from our tourism offices and government which could be invested, but we are not asked to do it because the cruise lines are self-sufficient in terms of promotion."

Partnering in the promotion, however, would mean that the destinations would know, for example, that a passenger is coming on a particular line in two years, and they would be able to reach out to them with information on how to get the best out of their visit to each port. Going further, once the passenger is on board, the upcoming destination could connect with the client and prepare them for what is on offer. For example, that they can take a guided tour, but if they don't want to join a group, here are some possibilities.



**L-R: Pascale Rémillard, executive director, Destination Gaspé, and Igor Urban, deputy general manager, Destination Gaspé.**



**L-R: Kelly Murphy, director of marketing and cruise development, Port Charlottetown, and Charlotte Wong, trade and sales officer, Tourism Prince Edward Island.**

Trépanier is keen to stress that this is a win-win situation for everyone. "We talk to the cruise lines to help us on the price. We will push on the bookings and make sure we provide the services. And, for the independents, we will try to find a way to give the lines a recompense if they help us to talk to their passengers. We are not competing; we are working together."

It is clear that everyone is losing out when it comes to the independents. "As a destination we would like to have 60% on

tours at one-third or half the price, giving more money to the locals, not 30% [at the higher cruise line price]."

And, as the final link in the chain, the destinations would have the opportunity to say farewell to the passengers and to follow up with them should they want to return on land.

**Onshore power**

Presently, 42% of CLIA member ships can connect to onshore power, with 72%

expected to be ready by 2028.

There is plenty of activity from a number of ports in the region when it comes to applications for onshore power supply (OPS) funding, feasibility studies, and possible implementation.

A visit to Brooklyn Cruise Terminal's OPS facility guided by Mike Watts, founder and president of Watts Marine, was well attended. Port representatives were given a chance to see the system in place, and the space required to fit the equipment, for both



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**L-R: Danielle Timmons, partner and VP cruise operations, Aquila, and Kelsey Phinney, cruise manager/trolley charter manager, Aquila.**



**L-R: René Trépanier, executive director, Cruise the Saint Lawrence, and Yves Gilson, president, Cruise the Saint Lawrence and director, marketing and cruises, Port of Montreal.**

the supply and the connection on the quay, which is presently a fixed connection but is due to be replaced by a mobile cable positioning device customised by Watts Marine.

Of the ships calling here, 60% of those that can plug in do so, according to Ken Winkler, general manager and facility security officer at Ports America.

The owners, New York City Economic Development Corp, have conducted a feasibility study on bringing OPS to the Manhattan Terminal also. Work to extend the apron of Pier 90 includes adding a trench to house the necessary OPS cables.

The port of Boston has put in an application for an EPA Clean Ports grant for \$350 million for two connections and a new quay and terminal, as part of the port's net-zero strategy. Lauren Gleason, chief administrative officer maritime, Massachusetts Port Authority, said: "Average homeport vessels two years from now, we expect to be 36% bigger, so we want to be able to handle these vessels operationally."

Charlottetown in Prince Edward Island and Quebec City both have applications in for OPS funding, for \$29 million (one connection) and \$45 million (three connections), respectively. Kelly Murphy, director of marketing and cruise development, Port Charlottetown, said: "If we are both successful, this will create the first green ship corridor, as Halifax already has it and Boston has an application in."

Marie-André Blanchet, director cruise and port ecosystems, Port of Quebec, said: "If we have the answers [on funding] in July as promised, we would be ready to plug in a ship in 2027. The port has committed \$8 million in investment. The engineering team is working on a solution. The port has an objective to reduce carbon emissions from

cruise ships by 50% by 2030."

Saguenay is looking at the possibility, but Dany Gravel, head of operations international cruise, Promotion Saguenay, said: "If we are to put that much money into it, we want to make sure of its social acceptability. We want to continue to grow, but with respect to the community." He said that \$625,000 is being invested over a five-year period to measure and monitor a wide range of data in real time, including data on water and air quality and the sound environment of the fjord's ecosystems.

A government-funded feasibility study into OPS has already taken place in Havre-Saint-Pierre. "The total extending project is \$200 million. This includes three different zones of the port: marine, fishing industry, and a new cruise zone, that includes shore power, and will be long enough and deep enough to welcome *Queen Mary 2*," said Odessa Thériault, executive director, Port of Havre-Saint-Pierre.

For Gaspé, Urban said: "We are looking at what we have, what we can do, and what is realistic. We want to have a fast and effective power so the community has real benefits from the industry. We want to show the mayor [Daniel Cote, who was attending the symposium] what it is about. We want political support."

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there is still some uncertainty about OPS, according to Erin Brennan, managing director Cruise Newfoundland & Labrador (N&L). "We are looking at how it might fit. There is one utility and one supplier, and there is plenty of energy." The association has hired Access Cruise to come up with a strategic plan, due to be released in early 2025, to help grow the business. "I think diversity – circumnavigation, transatlantic, luxury, adventure cruises – is serving N&L very well," said Brennan.

Acknowledging that not every port can install OPS, Nicolai Skogland, executive director port operations and government relations at Viking Cruises, said: "We use OPS where it is available. It is not conditional on whether we visit or not. If it makes sense, invest in it."

Discussing the source of the energy behind OPS, it is interesting to note that Sandra Weir, global government relations and public affairs at Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, said that although it is important how clean the energy source is, at this stage as long as ports are working towards it, it does not have to be 100% clean, because plugging in still helps in terms of meeting the carbon intensity indicator (CII).

Being able to supply alternative fuels is higher on the agenda for Captain Hinderhofer, who said: "OPS is only 10% of the CII bucket, whereas the fuel we burn is much greater. More important is the fuels that we burn while under way. We may be adding ports to adhere to CII requirements; there may be longer itineraries."

When it comes to saving fuel and also appealing to a larger client base, Marmanillo said: "Open jaws here are becoming more popular because we can get in more content. We are making air/sea easier now for passengers, so that makes it more popular too." Weir agreed: "We are actively reducing the fuel we use. Open-jaw compared to roundtrip can save up to 16% in fuel consumption."

While OPS is a hot topic on the agenda, it is only one part of an increasingly complex world when it comes to achieving net-zero carbon.

**Mark your calendars! From 9 to 11 June 2025, Halifax, Nova Scotia, will proudly host the Cruise Canada New England Symposium for the first time since 2005.**

# MedCruise

spotlights implications of infrastructure,  
port size, and social media

The latest edition of MedCruise General Assembly was once again a platform for exchanging ideas. It was where expert advice was offered, insight was shared, and cruise lines and ports sought to better understand each other.

BY FRANCES GANNON

**A**s always at MedCruise, issues were discussed, solutions suggested, and information exchanged during the weeklong event. Much of the discussion centred on exploring various implications of infrastructure requirements, port sizes, and the importance of social media. On this occasion there was also, deservedly, a special focus on the hitherto lesser-known host port city.

The 64th MedCruise General Assembly was held



in June in the UNESCO World Heritage city of Tarragona, 60 miles south of Barcelona, in the Costa Daurada region of Spain. The timing of the event coincided with the inauguration of the city's newly built cruise terminal, which is now managed and operated by Global Ports Holding (GPH).

Participating in the inauguration and welcome reception on 11 June were delegates from Port Tarragona, GPH, Tarragona Cruise Port, and MedCruise association, 26 executives representing 23 cruise and yacht companies, local dignitaries, a large group of international press, and MedCruise members from across all of its regions.

## Promoting Tarragona

As a lesser-known cruise destination, the Roman city of



Photo: Xiquets de Tarragona

Tarragona has four human tower associations. This image shows a tower with the base level formed, requiring the cooperation of many people. Without a leader, nothing works, but everyone has a place, from the largest and strongest to the smallest. This idea of a community pulling together and aiming high to achieve an amazing feat or communal goal certainly resonates with cruise industry.

Tarragona has a good deal of historic and contemporary attractions to offer, which MedCruise was keen to promote. Tarragona marketed itself as “a Mediterranean secret”. Having hosted the assembly, this destination is no longer a secret, as it has captured the attention of cruise and yacht itinerary planners.

In 2022, the port inaugurated a newly built wharf exclusively dedicated to cruise. Thanks to the foresight and ambition of many key stakeholders and the sizeable capital investments, Tarragona Cruise Port can now provide turnaround operations, complemented by its proximity to motorways, Barcelona Airport, and the close-by Reus Airport.

There is a wealth of high-quality excursion options in and around the city, within a comfortable driving distance. The city itself has so much to offer, including eight UNESCO-listed monuments and a further six on its periphery. The Costa Daurada wine region boasts six “protected designations of origin”, offering excellent wine tours. Among the popular excursion highlights is the active Cistercian Poblet Monastery, located only 40 minutes from Tarragona, which gained UNESCO World Heritage status in 1991.

**Infrastructure conundrum**

During the assembly, aside from enthusiastically promoting the host city, MedCruise did not lose its focus on its main business of constantly striving to be a driver for development and encouraging the exchange of best-practice ideas among cruise port cities, not just in its own region but also all over the world.

There is no doubt that many MedCruise port members are very experienced and highly successful in maintaining and growing their cruise businesses, but there is always room for improvement.

Moderating a session titled “Decoding charm: strategies to integrate medium-sized ports into the cruise itinerary”, aimed at helping small and medium-size ports to understand why cruise lines chose one port over another, MedCruise board member Laura Cimaglia, the association’s port and city relationship director, solicited advice by asking: “What can we do better, and what is the biggest mistake you think that some ports make?”

In response, Giovanna Dipasquale, head of itinerary management at Ambassador Cruise Line, soundly



Mark Robinson, general manager of BC Group, moderated the panel “How we create harmonious and holistic services in our ports and destinations”.



Panel titled “How we create harmonious and holistic services in our ports and destinations”, L–R: Turkey Kari, executive director marketing, Cruise Saudi; Choni Fernández Veciana, chief sustainability officer and customer, PortAventura World; Genoveva Climent, commercial and business development director, Port Tarragona; moderator Mark Robinson, general manager, BC Group; Christine Manjencic, VP, destination services operations, Norwegian Cruise Line; and Jeff Shieh, manager, deployment planning and analysis, Seabourn – Holland America Group.



Panel titled “Decoding Charm: Strategies to integrate medium-sized ports into the cruise itinerary”, L–R: Moderator Laura Cimaglia, port and city relationship director, MedCruise Association; Scott Eddy, travel specialist; Francesco Rossiello, senior manager deployment and itinerary planning, Holland America Line; Giovanna Dipasquale, head of itinerary management, Ambassador Cruise Line; and Stewart Chiron, the Cruise Guy.



Julia Strikh, deputy head of external affairs department, Port of Odesa, Ukraine, was specially welcomed and given the opportunity to speak during the assembly. Due to geopolitical unrest in recent years, Julia and other Black Sea members bravely attend these events to ensure that the cruise and yacht community will return to this very important region when peace is restored.



Cruise and yacht executives and international media enjoy a captivating visit to Poblet Monastery.



The inauguration ceremony of Tarragona Cruise Terminal took place on 11 June.

advised that when Ambassador started back in 2020, they decided that their target market would be senior British guests and that, when choosing a port, there were many things they must consider.

She emphasised that if you were just starting as a medium-sized port, you should also have a target. "You can't be a medium-size or small port and say, Yes, we want to have big-size ships and yachts – because the yacht will not want to come if you also have a big-sized ship [in port at the same time]," she said. "So try with maybe one product, and slowly you can develop. Of course you can do better, but don't just start with everything at once, because it can be very confusing, and you will not make everyone happy."

Infrastructure is another big consideration. "Many of our guests have mobility problems, and I got really upset when I was offered to go to the 30th port at anchor in the same area," said Dipasquale.

Clearly, no one wants to be put on an itinerary planner's blacklist. To avoid this, Dipasquale's strong advice was: "Know your clients and choose your clients, and make it right for them. It doesn't matter if you have a very nice destination. You also should really have infrastructure. Guests need facilities. Just a pier doesn't make a cruise port, and a shed doesn't make a terminal."

Cimaglia probed the argument by highlighting a contradiction. In recent years, ports have been told that terminals are not so important, and only a space is needed for cruise operation. Yet now Ambassador Cruise Line, at least, seems to have a different view on infrastructure requirement. "So what should we invest in our ports? Build terminals or not?" she asked.

"It depends on what you want to do," Dipasquale clarified. "If you want to be a turnaround [port], obviously you need a terminal, you need some seating areas for guests, you need to handle luggage, you need check-in counters, and so on. But if you are a transit port, which can be any port where there is a big port in the vicinity, maybe a small terminal with a souvenir shop, toilets, Wi-Fi, but don't make it too big. We just need a nice pier with strong bollards and nothing else. What we like is a pier close to the city. If the pier is not close to the city, we need the means to reach the city."

## Sizes matter

Cimaglia categorised different cruise port sizes based on the numbers of passengers a year: ports with fewer than 100,000 passengers are regarded as small, those with 100,000–250,000 as medium, and those with over one million as large, very large, or major cruise ports. These are commonly accepted criteria suggested by industry experts.

“Port of Taranto, where I work, like many other ports, is not a marquee port. Sometimes we struggle to position these ports in the market, where size matters,” she said. Then, addressing the panel, she asked: “When you start off as a cruise port, what do you think is the main challenge for investment decisions and cruise experience when you are a small or medium-size port?”

“From my perspective, I actually don’t think that there’s such a thing as a small, medium, or large port,” replied Scott Eddy, world traveller, storyteller, and blogger. “It’s all about your mindset. A small port can actually be a huge port if they have the proper digital infrastructure in place, if they constantly story-tell about the destination, if they’re actually trying to reach the world every single day.”

Port size, for Eddy, was defined digitally in today’s world. He emphasised that the biggest problem was the lack of social media presence. “You need to be super-active; you need to be engaging; you need to reach out to people before they reach you,” he said. “In most places – I’m talking about destinations, cruise lines, airlines – the person who handles the social media has 30 other job responsibilities. Social media falls to the bottom because it doesn’t produce return on investment the next day, and therefore it suffers.”

Eddy eulogised the power of social media: “Think about a country that’s going through a coup. What’s the first thing the in-power government does? It cuts off social media, it cuts off access to TV, it cuts off access to everything. So you’re telling me that it can stop a coup, but it can’t sell the destination?”

Eddy’s recommendation to every company in the world is that they should have at least one full-time, dedicated social media worker, if not a whole team. “I mean, our lives are ruled by the computer and what’s in our pockets. Why not take advantage of it? It’s free, and it is not going to be free forever.”

Stewart Chiron, cruise industry expert, better known as the Cruise Guy, spoke about opportunities for the small and



Panel titled “Expeditions in the Med. Is it possible?”, L-R: Spyros Almpertis, VP port operations/itinerary planning and fuel management, Crystal; Nicky Guerrero, moderator; Hugues Lamy, director port operations, Swan Hellenic Cruises; and Sacha Rougier, VP itinerary planning and destination experience, Orient Express.



Panel titled “Women Power in the Waters”, L-R: Moderator Anne-Marie Spinosi, board member and events and #PortsTogether activities director; Figen Ayan, president, MedCruise; Captain Kate McCue, Celebrity Cruises; and Marie-Caroline Laurent, CLIA Europe.



Across three busy working days, MedCruise secretariat organised 648 B2B meetings for its members.



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Entrance of the Scala Dei monastery in the wine region of Priorat. It is thanks to the Carthusian order who once lived at this monastery that vines began to be grown in the region. The tour from Tarragona to this region is breathtaking, with magnificent rolling hills covered in a tapestry of vineyards.



Guide explaining how Padró & Co. vermouth is a grape-based spirit made from a unique infusion of aromatic herbs and aged in barrels before bottling in the winery.



Nulles wine cathedral, where Adernats wines and cavas are produced.

medium-size ports to make themselves better known, including joining organisations like MedCruise. He reiterated what Eddy had said. “Being active and trying to utilise social media are imperative,” he said. “You need to reach out and make yourselves known, because there’s a lot of very interesting ports out there that really could make a difference.”

He suggested that it was important to make itineraries something that are truly incredible rather than just okay. But he also warned: “It’s not for everybody. Just because you’ve got a body of water outside and a pier doesn’t make you a port of call or a homeport, but there are so many opportunities out there for the small and medium ports to make themselves known.”

He used the host destination as an example. “I can tell you I thoroughly enjoyed Tarragona. It’s an amazing port, and I think there’s a tremendous potential here. I was just blown away by everything they have to offer and look forward to coming back.”

Cimaglia asked Chiron what he thought the guests would look for in a destination – a fundamental question of the cruise industry. “The guests are looking for activities,” said Chiron. “They’re looking for history, which is very important. And the women like to go shopping. But it’s important to have a nice mix. You have to have something for them to do. You have some ports, especially the ones in the Caribbean, that just kind of came out of nowhere. There’s no history tied to it, and there’s really no purpose of going there, and people stay on ships and it’s a missed opportunity. But here in the Mediterranean there’s so much history and culture to be shared, to be enjoyed. It’s just being able to articulate and communicate the excitement that these ports have to offer. Tarragona has got it. I am just very disappointed in myself that I didn’t know about it before.”

Chiron said that big ships could not access many of the smaller or medium-sized ports, and this was an advantage, especially for smaller ships. But from a seasoned cruiser’s perspective, Chiron, having recently sailed on his 325th cruise, spoke with authority on the subject: “Cruise lines are bringing the passengers to the ports. If the ports want to get those passengers off the ship, the local tourism board needs to do a better job. Show people what you have got to offer, which



Tarragona is the perfect city for a walking tour – its Roman history is evident around every corner.

may be a lot more exciting and enticing than the bigger ports.”

For Eddy, it is also all about the people and the stories. “Your staff is what makes your port,” he said. “Your port is just a box; the cruise ship is just a boat. What makes a difference is the people who are on the ship, in the port, who’s greeting you when you get off the ship. When you get off the ship in a port, if the first person you see doesn’t have a smile on their face, if they don’t say ‘Good morning, welcome’, or a band is not playing, that’s not a good first impression. There are so many stories to be told, and in my opinion the smaller ports have way more advantage than the bigger ports. Barcelona is already a household name; Tarragona has more interesting stories. You know why? Because nobody knows about them. Everybody knows Sagrada Família.”

### Demographic view

Chiron brought up an interesting point about new-to-cruise and Gen Z. “The industry is continuously going after the first-timers,” he said. “We’re going to start seeing studies about Gen Z coming up, and I think what a lot of people have to do when they go through the data is that there are younger people, age 18 to, say, 26, 27, who

are still either graduating from high school or in college. They don’t have the discretionary income. But don’t underestimate them. There is going to be more cruisers than any generation in history, simply because a vast majority of them have already cruised with their families. And communicating to them about the different destinations around the world is going to be very important, and I know that cruise lines know the value of social media. They also understand the importance of their public relations departments.”

Chiron was not alone in this optimistic view. “Just to piggyback what he said,” Eddy added. “Not only will they be the biggest demographic to be sailing very soon, but they will also spend more on experiences than anybody has ever done in history, even if they don’t have the money. They will go into debt spending money on experiences, because they value that more than anything.”

With their wealth of experiences, cruise line executives and cruise industry experts offered truly valuable advice. As MedCruise strives to be a driver of development, its twice-yearly general assemblies continue to be solid platforms for exchanging ideas and dispensing advice.

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On 7 June, Disney Cruise Line, Bahamian officials, and local Junkanoo commemorated the opening of Disney Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point with a special community celebration. L-R: Hon. Clay Sweeting, MP, Central and South Eleuthera; Hon. I. Chester Cooper, deputy prime minister and minister of tourism, investments, and aviation; Hon. Philip Davis, prime minister; Sharon Siskie, senior vice president and general manager, Disney Cruise Line; Thomas Mazloum, president of new experiences portfolio and Disney Signature Experiences; and Yolanda Cade, VP communications and public affairs, Disney Signature Experiences.

## Disney Cruise Line goes destination first with Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point

In 2019, a news story was published detailing Disney Cruise Line's plans for a new private cruise destination. The port would be located at the southern tip of Eleuthera, known as Lighthouse Point. There was understandable scepticism about this decision, as the narrow, sandy Caribbean island had such a fragile ecosystem.

BY BRITTANY CHRUSCIEL

Disney's first private island, Castaway Cay, located off South Abaco in the Bahamas, opened back in 1997. That was the beginning and end of private cruise destinations for Disney Cruise Line (DCL) – until now.

Fast-forward five years, and the Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point is not only open but also filled with activities. Disney's local team brought it to life with much more care and respect than anyone could have anticipated back in 2019.

"It was a collaborative effort [with the Bahamian government] in the spirit of creating an environment that was authentically Bahamian with the least environmental impact that we could manage," Jeff Van Langeveld, vice

president of marketing sales international, Disney Destinations, said in an interview with *CruiseTimes*.

It's these two principles – keeping the island culturally authentic and prioritising conservation – that make Disney's Lookout Cay a successful venture in expanding its destination portfolio.

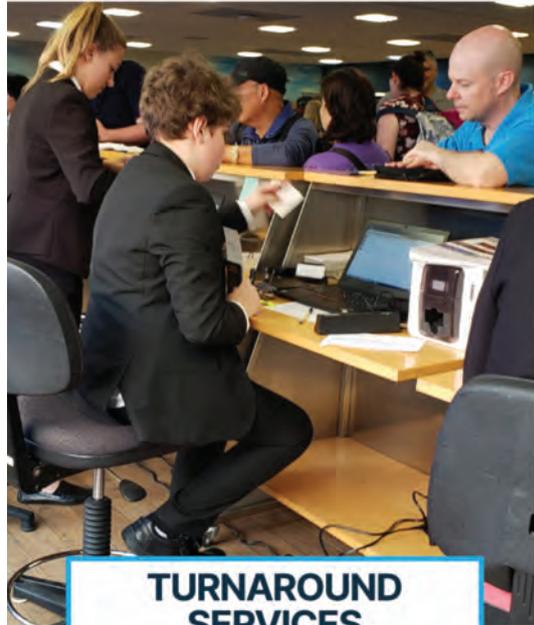
### Authentic Bahamian

DCL chose not to guess the significance of a Bahamian Junkanoo parade; instead, it goes straight to the source, into the fray of festival season on Bay Street in Nassau.

A local advisory team, consisting of artists, designers, musicians, producers, and Imagineers, helped to shape every aspect of Lookout Cay, from the colours of the buildings and the merchandise in the shops to the exclusive character costumes and an original song written and recorded in the Bahamas, which is played around the

# Port & Shore

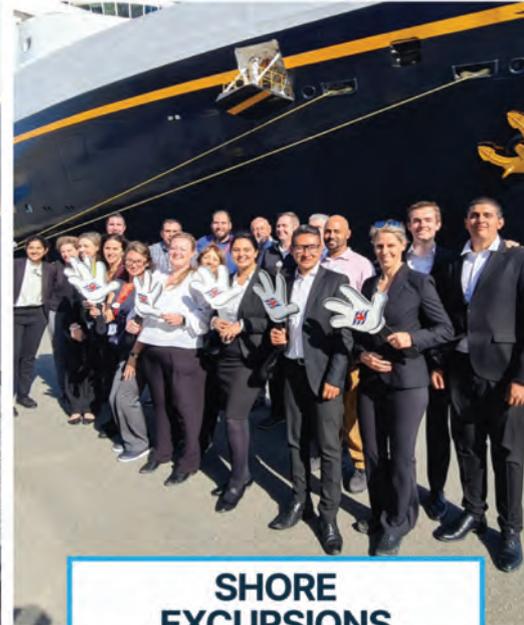
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**Bradley Watson, Bahamas conservation program manager, Disney Cruise Line.**

island. About 200 local employees keep the private port running smoothly day to day.

An expert panel, hosted on 8 June aboard *Disney Magic* on the first sailing to Lookout Cay, gave media the opportunity to hear firsthand about how the port was primarily shaped by Bahamians. Among the guest speakers were Warren Andrew Pinder, co-chair of the National Junkanoo Committee, and Rachel Quinn, DCL's vice president of entertainment operations, who oversaw the development of Lookout Cay's Junkanoo-inspired entertainment programme.

Other panellists included senior creative director for Walt Disney Imagineering, Kevin Thomas, Eleutheran artist Kevin Cooper, muralist Dorman Stubbs, who painted the vibrant exteriors around the port, and Bahamian music producer Victor Johnson, who arranged the music of Lookout Cay, including its theme and love letter to Eleuthera, "Ery'ting Cool".

"You think about Castaway Cay; you get off, you grab your beach towel and head to the beach – it's a day of fun in the sun and the water. But we've infused lots of different types of experiences, which just means you have really unique choices across the two islands, giving guests two different experiences," said Jodi Bainter, Walt Disney Company's vice president of domestic leisure sales.

### Minimal impact

In an intentional departure from the pure sun-and-fun mission of Castaway Cay, there are no pools or waterslides built into the beach at Lookout Cay; instead, guests are encouraged to partake in the natural beauty of this Eleutheran destination, which teems with white sand and clear Caribbean waters. Of course, some dedicated slides and



**Disney Magic at Lookout Cay.**

shaded splash areas are available around the port for children, like the *Little Mermaid*-themed Sebastian's Cove.

Another standout feature is the trestle bridge connecting the ship's pier to the island, which stretches out long and winding into the horizon. Initially, it stands out to guests for the wrong reason: the pending 10-minute walk to the trolley – another mandatory 10-minute ride – might seem unnecessarily long, with nowhere to rest. That is, until you learn that you are passing over protected coral and fish habitats, created using native limestone. The 20 minutes it takes to get to the heart of Lookout Cay are intended to be spent appreciating your surroundings, helped along by the endearing voiceover of local inhabitants like Shelly the crab as you ride the trolley.

### Local engagement

Bradley Watson, a Bahamian conservationist, was hired by Disney in August 2022 in a new role as Bahamas conservation programmes manager. With 75 per cent of Disney cruises calling somewhere in the Bahamas, the investment in the country's sustainability is a sound business decision.

"When [Disney] wrote up the environmental management plan (EMP) and thought about the work that needed to be done, reaching out to local conservationists and employing them to do the work seemed to be the best way to do it," Watson told *CruiseTimes*. "We already have relationships with the island; we have experience with these habitats and these ecosystems.

"I've been watching development on the

island, realising that South Eleuthera needed something, and a lot of people needed jobs. And so that made me excited about joining the project. We needed a way to drive the community forward, and this project was perfect for that. At the same time, there were some concerns about the environment. And so, we did a huge EIA (environmental impact assessment), something that happened before I even signed on to the job. The environmental management plan was based on the EIA, and it dictated so much conservation work, I was chomping at the bit. I get to do marine conservation and terrestrial conservation, storytelling and working with communities. And it's working with the community that I'm basically a part of."

### Continuing efforts

Now that Lookout Cay is open to guests, Watson continues his monitoring and research alongside his conservationist colleague Pachancia Knowles. In addition to terrestrial surveys once a month, the conservation team is in charge of 36 sites (and more than 800 individual corals) surrounding Lighthouse Point as part of their marine monitoring programme.

"A lot of this research and a lot of these approaches had not been taken in the Bahamas before – or at least not on this scale," Watson said. "And so, for example, the trestle pier is a very new way to operate a cruise port. As we were doing that, we did a lot of relocation of coral, and we also did sponge relocation. We had to find different ways to move those sponges – they're quite large and difficult to move in the water. We worked with our partners at Disney World

# Welcome

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**The blanket flower is an example of the flora found around Disney's Lookout Cay in southern Eleuthera.**

Animal Kingdom Lodge and even our costuming department [to design a specialised net]. The EMP we have is remarkable because it outlines work similar to the level of conservation work you do as part of a nonprofit organisation, or something like that – much more sensitive than the average construction project.”

Recalling the initial scepticism of local media about the treatment of this part of Eleuthera, *CruiseTimes* asked Watson if he believed that DCL had won over the community with the conservation work being done around Lighthouse Point.

“I’m thinking back to our opening day – we had a community day – and I heard from a number of people how impressed they were with what we’d done to preserve the vegetation onsite,” said Watson. “So that was heartening for me, because I am a Bahamian and I am here representing my country and my company at the same time. And so, when I see the success of other Bahamians seeing what we’re doing and giving approval of it, it makes me more confident in what I do, and it makes me more confident to advocate for this environment as well.”

Watson makes clear that his position encompasses much more than tagging birds and counting crabs. His aim is to engage the local community, DCL employees (known as cast members), and ultimately guests in the conservation work being done on Lookout Cay.

“Sometimes the work is going out to survey coral, and sometimes the work is going out to talk to the community. We organised beach cleanups – it’s one of the first things we did to engage the community, and we did it alongside the contractor as well, so there was a lot of collaboration there



**The elevated walkways found around the port also protect vegetation and creatures native to the beach here, like land crab and curly-tailed lizards.**

too,” said Watson.

As part of an agreement with the Bahamian government, portions of the beach at Lighthouse Point are still available to native Eleutherans to use when a ship is not in port.

“For the average cast member, this is their home,” said Watson. “So they know these birds. They know these crabs. They know the environment. I thought that it would be very good to collaborate with them because they bring something to the table. We’ve done some community outreach work already where we’ve gone out to the schools. We’ve distributed books about Bahamian ecosystems, trying to emulate the same success there. We want to get the

local people as involved as possible.”

### Sharing insights

Disney’s Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point, like MSC Cruises’ Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve, is part of a trend towards acknowledging that private ports still exist in the context of a geography, a biodiverse environment, and a culture. Including citizens in the development of their own land goes a step beyond simply recognising a port’s origin, putting economic growth in the hands of the locals who could benefit.

“The cruise industry is a big part of the blue economy in the Bahamas, and that is what drives a lot of our development, our GDP, et cetera,” Watson said. “So I like to



**Family enjoying Mabrika Cove Cabanas, with *Disney Magic* in the background.**



**Rush Out Gush Out water play can be enjoyed by people of all ages.**

think about how we can look at that as an economic engine and what sort of by-products we can produce while we conduct our operations. That can be conservation value; it can be research that could be disseminated throughout the world for us to share within the industry; it can be just changing the way things happen, the way things work, and the way we do business, moving things forward."



Photos: Disney Cruise Line

**Aerial view of Disney Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point on the Bahamian island of Eleuthera.**

Along Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point's nature trail, which culminates in its namesake lighthouse, the Discovery Trail puts emphasis on the flora and fauna. A self-guided tour of signs with QR codes encourages guests to further interact with their surroundings.

"I think what we've done has been a really great experiment in making an environmentally friendly destination, and I think it would be beautiful if we could share these insights with the rest of the industry and move it in a different direction," Watson said.

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# NEWBUILDING DELIVERY AND ORDERBOOK UPDATES

## RETURN OF MEGASHIP ORDERS

**R**eflecting the current trend of the industry, the ocean cruise-ship newbuilding delivery volume and orderbook size revived decisively in the first half of 2024.

After years of hesitation, following the leads of Royal Caribbean Group (RCG) and MSC Cruises, the remaining two members of the “big four” cruise giants have finally joined the exclusive 200,000-gross-ton cruise megaship operators club.

Orderbook activities have been increasing steadily in recent months. But the size of the orderbook in the first half of 2024 did not swell as fast as we hoped, partly because of the larger volumes of vessel deliveries and overcapacity in the upscale expedition cruise segment.

The announcement of an eight-ship order by Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd (NCLH) in April was the defining moment of the next stage of orderbook development. This trend was solidified by Carnival Corporation’s (CCL) three-megaship order at the end of July.

### Bigger capacity

After the recent dips as a result of the pandemic, the total capacity of newbuildings delivered has recovered in the first six months of 2024. Judging by the content and dynamism of the current orderbook, *CruiseTimes* expects the situation to improve much further from this point on.

But the number of vessels delivered has fallen to less than half of the figure from the same period in the peak year of 2019, because of shrinking expedition and luxury vessel productions. This situation will persist for the foreseeable future, as megaship newbuildings are now in vogue again.

On 19 April, Cunard took delivery of the much-anticipated 3,000-passenger *Queen Anne* from Fincantieri, the line’s first new ship in more than a decade. The introduction of this new vessel meant that the brand would operate four ships for the first time since 1999. The ship, commissioned in 2017, had been delayed because of the pandemic, and its eventual delivery was not entirely trouble free. The



Photo: Royal Caribbean Group

**On 14 June, Chantiers de l’Atlantique delivered *Utopia of the Seas* to Royal Caribbean International.**

ship’s inaugural arrival at its homeport of Southampton, UK, was put back a few days because of some last-minute “touch-ups”.

On 14 May, Silversea Cruises took delivery of its second Nova-class ship, the 54,700-gross-ton, 728-passenger *Silver Ray*, from Meyer Werft. The vessel was set to depart Lisbon for its inaugural cruise on 15 June and spend the summer in the Mediterranean. It would then reposition to the Americas in autumn.

In early June, TUI Cruises took delivery of the 2,894-passenger, methanol-ready *Mein Schiff 7* from Meyer Turku. This was the Finnish shipyard’s first-ever methanol-ready cruise newbuild. Meyer Turku is famed for its decade-long know-how in pioneering LNG-powered passenger ship construction.

On 14 June, Chantiers de l’Atlantique delivered the 5,714-lower-berth *Utopia of the Seas*, the sixth Oasis-class vessel and the second-biggest cruise ship in the world, to Royal Caribbean International. The ship would debut on 19 July. It was the first Oasis-class ship designated for shorter, three-to-four-day itineraries from Port Canaveral.

At the same time, the French shipbuilder held a keel-laying ceremony for the 140,600-

gross-ton *Celebrity Xcel*, the fifth and final Edge-class ship of Celebrity Cruises. This newbuild, due for delivery in November 2025, will be methanol-ready, featuring a Wärtsilä tri-fuel-capable engine.

On 12 July, Chantiers de l’Atlantique handed over the 448-passenger luxury newbuild *Ilma* to its owner, the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection.

Four more newbuilds are expected for the remainder of 2024, with an estimated size and capacity totalling 366,000 gross tons and 8,700 lower berths.

### More delays

Lingering global supply chain issues still plague the shipbuilding business. In April, Princess Cruises and Fincantieri jointly announced the delay of the next Sphere-class newbuild, *Star Princess*, from 29 July to 26 September 2025, following a comprehensive review of the “remaining construction milestones”.

In June, it was reported that Explora Journeys had delayed the delivery of its second ship, *Explora II*. The setback forced the line to cancel five planned seven-night cruises. Last year, the line’s first ship, *Explora I*, was delayed because of an issue

with materials used.

Initially, *Explora II* had been scheduled to depart on its maiden voyage on 11 August, but its delivery date was subsequently changed to 12 September. The company said it needed more time for the final finishes to the ship, whose maiden voyage is now slated for 16 September.

Cruise lines are still forced to cancel planned inaugural cruises because of ship construction delays. More delay announcements may be forthcoming.

### Orders coming

Following the mid-February order of a fourth Excel-class vessel, in late March CCL ordered a fifth newbuild of the same series from Meyer Werft for 2028 delivery. This will be the group's 11th Excel-class ship.

As predicted, the new wave of newbuilding orders surged in April when NCLH placed a momentous eight-ship order at Fincantieri for its three brands, for deliveries between 2026 and 2036. This was the group's most ambitious newbuilding programme to date, spanning a period of 10 years and totalling 25,000 lower berths.

After completion of the Prima-class series, NCLH's Norwegian Cruise Line brand expects four entirely new, 200,000-gross-ton-class ships, the biggest in the company's history. Upon ordering these newbuilds, NCLH became the latest entrant to the 200,000-gross-ton ship operators club, joining RCG and MSC.

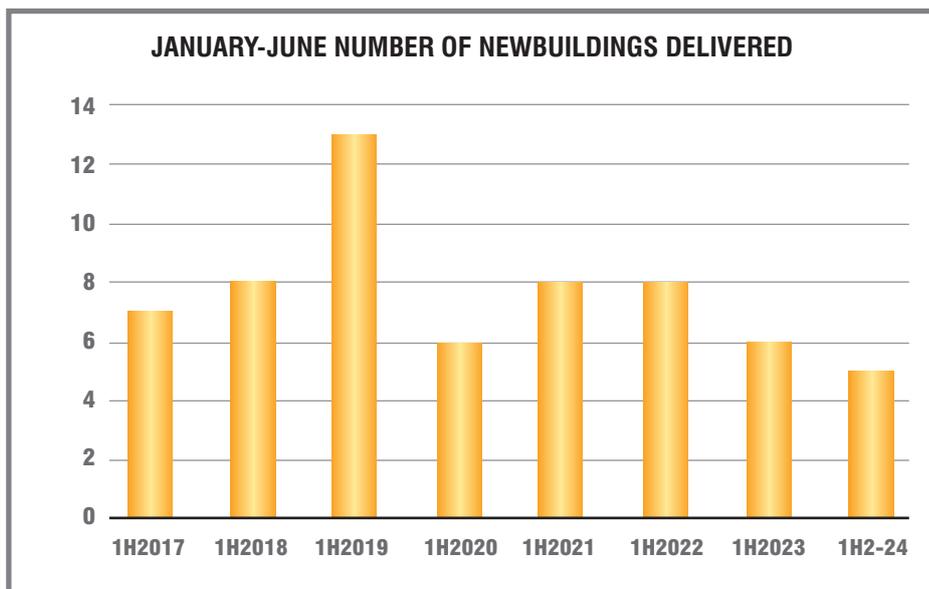
For its Oceania brand, the group expects two 86,000-gross-ton, 1,400-lower-berth newbuilds for 2027 and 2029 deliveries, following the completion of the Allure-class series.

Finally, after completion of the Explorer-class vessels, NCLH's Regent Seven Seas brand expects to take delivery of a 77,000-gross-ton, 850-lower-berth newbuild in 2026 and an identical unit in 2029.

This is a massive and ambitious fleet expansion programme. The group is banking on continuous year-on-year growth in demand. In this connection, it must be mentioned that NCLH's last major newbuilding journey ended in downgrading the Prima-class ship size because of weakened demand.

Elsewhere, Scenic Cruises announced its expansion plan in April, with a new ship, the 128-passenger *Emerald Kaia*, which is to enter service in April 2026. It will be built based on the blueprints of the 2023-built *Emerald Sakara* and 2022-built *Emerald Azzurra*, but it will be 10 per cent bigger.

In late May 2024, the newly listed Viking Holdings Ltd, operator of Viking Cruises,



Source: CruiseTimes Research

exercised options at Fincantieri for two more newbuilds for 2029 deliveries, bringing its total number of ocean cruise ships on order to eight. The orders were announced during the company's first earnings call. Following this move, the company had two more options with the Italian shipbuilding giant that needed to be executed by 2025 for 2030 deliveries.

At the end of June, A&K Travel Group signed a memorandum of agreement with Fincantieri for the construction of two 61,800-gross-ton, 690-passenger vessels, provisionally slated for 2028 delivery, for its

Crystal brand. The agreement came with an option for a third ship, planned for delivery in 2032.

In early July, Orient Land, the operator of Tokyo Disneyland, ordered a 140,000-gross-ton, 4,000-passenger newbuild at Meyer Werft, throwing the struggling shipyard a lifeline. The German shipbuilder has been facing a deepening liquidity crisis in recent years because of the pandemic and inflation. The new *Disney Wish*-class ship will be delivered in 2028 and enter service in early 2029.

On 23 July, CCL announced it had



Japanese company Oriental Land Co. Ltd (OLC) has commissioned Meyer Werft to build a Wish-class cruise ship for the Japanese market. Bernard Meyer signed the contract for its construction in Tokyo on 9 July, with delivery scheduled for 2028. OLC operates the Disney theme parks in Japan under licence and plans to take the first cruises with the new ship in early 2029. L-R: Kenji Yoshida, president and COO, OLC, and Bernard Meyer, chairman, Meyer Group.

ordered three 230,000-gross-ton vessels from Fincantieri for its namesake brand Carnival Cruise Line for 2029, 2031, and 2033 deliveries, thus becoming the last of the big four to join the 200,000-gross-ton vessel operators club.

The group now has six newbuilds on order, five of them for its Carnival Cruise Line brand, which is on the pathway to major capacity expansion.

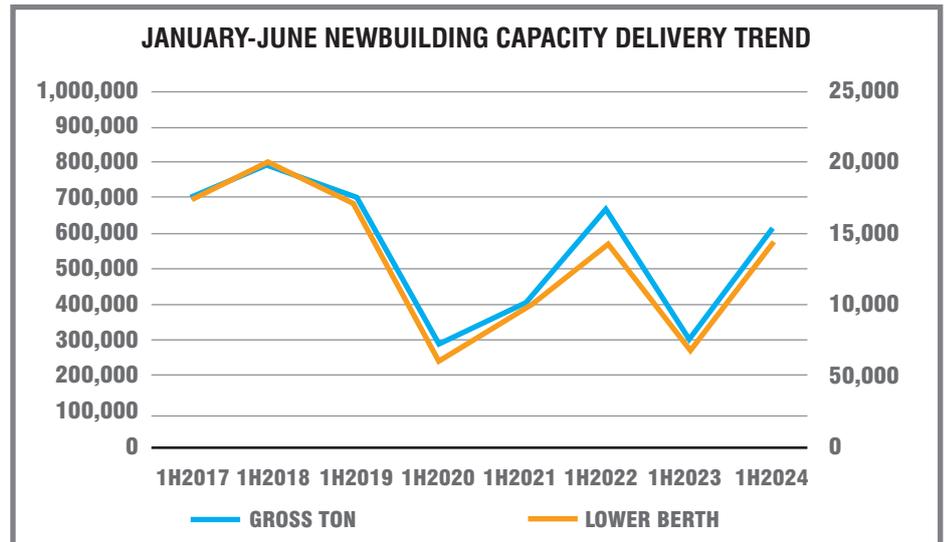
CCL's strategy is one of measured capacity growth. It intends to add one or two ships per year from 2027 by capitalising on its anticipated strong cash flow and improved balance sheet in the coming years.

RCG's performance track records for its Oasis- and Icon-class ships have inspired the latest megaship gold rush. The demand for these large ships remains undiminished.

CruiseTimes expects a continuing tangible orderbook recovery in the medium term, provided the global macroeconomic environment remains reasonably stable.

**The discontents**

In the cruise ship construction sector, one of the most noticeable phenomena at present is how much the size of the smaller



Source: CruiseTimes Research

expedition vessel orderbook has shrunk in just one year because of overcapacity. As of 6 July, only 13 units were listed on the orderbook, totalling about 206,000 gross tons and just over 2,000 lower berths. A year earlier, the figures stood at 25 units, 500,000 gross tons, and 6,800 lower berths. We see no discernible driver in the short to medium term to reverse this trend.

Despite the still largely full orderbook for bigger ships and brightening prospects, some cruise ship builders are struggling financially because of inflation and rising costs. Meyer Group, for instance, has been mired in deep losses that would take a substantial cash injection to rectify the situation. The willingness of cruise lines to renegotiate the contracts will be key.





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# Exploring the Future of Maritime Industry: **Hellenic Maritime Forum 2024** IN ATHENS



On 19–20 November 2024, maritime professionals from across the Balkans region and beyond will converge in Athens for the highly anticipated Hellenic Maritime Forum. This prestigious event promises to be a dynamic platform for industry stakeholders, including shipowners, ship managers, ports, regulators, classification societies, technology companies, and suppliers, to delve into critical issues shaping the maritime sector.

At the forefront of discussions will be the imperative of decarbonisation. As the global push for sustainability gains momentum, the maritime industry faces increasing pressure to reduce its carbon footprint. Participants will engage in a firm dialogue on innovative strategies and technologies aimed at achieving greener and more sustainable maritime operations.

In addition to environmental concerns, the forum will also shine a spotlight on

seafarer well-being and safety. Recognising the vital role played by maritime professionals, sessions will delve into ways to enhance working conditions, promote mental health, and ensure the safety of seafarers at sea.

Digitalisation and artificial intelligence will feature prominently on the agenda. With rapid advances in technology reshaping the maritime landscape, attendees will explore the transformative potential of digital solutions in optimising vessel performance, enhancing operational efficiency, and maintaining decision-making processes.

The event will kick off with a Gala Cocktail Party at the end of the first day, providing attendees with a relaxed and informal setting to network and forge valuable connections. This social gathering promises to be a highlight, fostering camaraderie and collaboration among industry peers.

Day two will commence with several presentations and panel discussions from leading experts and thought leaders, offering valuable insights into emerging trends and best practices. As the forum draws to a close, the excitement will culminate in an Awards Ceremony, where outstanding achievements and contributions to the maritime industry will be celebrated and recognised. This momentous occasion will honour individuals and organisations who have demonstrated excellence and innovation in their fields.

The Hellenic Maritime Forum in Athens represents a crucial moment for the maritime community to come together, exchange knowledge, and chart a course towards a more sustainable, efficient, and resilient future. With a diverse range of topics and engaging activities planned, participants can look forward to a truly enriching and rewarding experience.



Photo: TUI AG

On 22 June, *Mein Schiff 7* was christened in the Bay of Kiel by godmother Fenia Kalachani, who has been an environmental officer on board the *Mein Schiff* fleet since 2020.

#### Newbuildings delivered 1 January – 9 August 2024.

SHIP NAME	BUILDER	GROSS TON	LOWER BERTH	CRUISE BRAND
<i>Ilma</i>	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	46,750	456	The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection
<i>Mein Schiff 7</i>	Meyer Turku	111,550	2,895	TUI Cruises
<i>Queen Anne</i>	Fincantieri	113,000	3,000	Cunard
<i>Silver Ray</i>	Meyer Werft	54,700	728	Silversea Cruises
<i>Sun Princess</i>	Fincantieri	175,500	4,000	Princess Cruises
<i>Utopia of the Seas</i>	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	231,000	5,715	Royal Caribbean International

Source: CruiseTimes Research

#### Ocean cruise newbuilding orderbook on 9 August 2024. (140,000 gross tons and above)

SHIP NAME	DELIVERY	BUILDER	GROSS TON	LR BERTH	BRAND	CONTRACT PRICE
<i>Adora Cruises 2</i>	2026	Shanghai Waigaoqiao Shipyard	141,900	4,288	Adora Cruises	\$750,000,000
Excel Class 4 (LNG)	2027	Meyer Werft	183,858	5,374	Carnival Cruise Line	\$1,100,000,000
Excel Class 5 (LNG)	2028	Meyer Werft	183,858	5,374	Carnival Cruise Line	\$1,100,000,000
Carnival new class 1	2029	Fincantieri	230,000	5,000	Carnival Cruise Line	
Carnival new class 2	2031	Fincantieri	230,000	5,000	Carnival Cruise Line	
Carnival new class 3	2033	Fincantieri	230,000	5,000	Carnival Cruise Line	
<i>Celebrity Xcel</i>	2025	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	140,600	2,900	Celebrity Cruises	\$900,000,000
<i>Disney Treasure</i>	2024	Meyer Werft	144,000	2,500	Disney Cruise Line	\$900,000,000
<i>Disney Destiny</i> (LNG)	2025	Meyer Werft	144,000	2,500	Disney Cruise Line	\$900,000,000
<i>Disney Adventure</i>	2025	Meyer Werft	208,000	4,700	Disney Cruise Line	\$1,100,000,000
<i>MSC World America</i> (LNG)	2025	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	215,863	5,264	MSC Cruises	€1,125,000,000
<i>MSC World Asia</i> (LNG)	2026	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	215,863	5,264	MSC Cruises	€1,125,000,000
<i>MSC World class 4</i> (LNG)	2027	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	215,863	5,264	MSC Cruises	€1,125,000,000
<i>Norwegian Aqua</i>	2025	Fincantieri	156,300	3,570	Norwegian Cruise Line	€800,000,000
Prima Plus class 2	2026	Fincantieri	156,300	3,570	Norwegian Cruise Line	€800,000,000
Prima Plus class 1	2027	Fincantieri	172,000	3,570	Norwegian Cruise Line	€800,000,000
Prima Plus class 2	2028	Fincantieri	172,000	3,570	Norwegian Cruise Line	€800,000,000
NCL new class 1	2030	Fincantieri	200,000	5,000	Norwegian Cruise Line	
NCL new class 2	2032	Fincantieri	200,000	5,000	Norwegian Cruise Line	
NCL new class 3	2034	Fincantieri	200,000	5,000	Norwegian Cruise Line	
NCL new class 4	2036	Fincantieri	200,000	5,000	Norwegian Cruise Line	
<i>Star Princess</i>	2025	Fincantieri	175,500	4,300	Princess Cruises	\$1,000,000,000
<i>Star of the Seas</i> (LNG)	2025	Meyer Turku	250,000	5,000	Royal Caribbean International	\$1,600,000,000
Icon class 3 (LNG)	2026	Meyer Turku	250,000	5,000	Royal Caribbean International	\$1,600,000,000
Oasis class 7	2028	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	231,000	5,714	Royal Caribbean International	\$1,400,000,000
<i>Mein Schiff Relax</i> (LNG dual fuel)	2024	Fincantieri	161,000	5,000	TUI Cruises	\$1,150,000,000
<i>Mein Schiff 9</i> (LNG dual fuel)	2026	Fincantieri	161,000	5,000	TUI Cruises	\$1,150,000,000

Source: CruiseTimes Research



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Photo: Cunard

The naming ceremony of Cunard's newest ship, *Queen Anne*, took place on 3 June in Liverpool. Tens of thousands of people gathered for the occasion and were treated to performances by Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, and more.

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Silversea took delivery of the *Silver Ray*, the second cruise ship of the innovative Nova class, from Meyer Werft on 14 May. On board the *Silver Ray* in Eemshaven, seated at table, L–R: Bernard Meyer, chairman, Meyer Group; Bernd Eikens, CEO, Meyer Group; Jason Liberty, president and CEO, Royal Caribbean Group; Bert Hernandez, newly appointed president, Silversea; and Harri Kulovaara, EVP, Maritime, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., together with executives of Meyer Werft and Royal Caribbean Group; and Captain Alessandro Zanello.

### Ocean cruise newbuilding orderbook on 9 August 2024 (45,000–139,999 gross tons)

SHIP NAME	DELIVERY	BUILDER	GROSS TON	LR BERTH	BRAND	CONTRACT PRICE
Crystal 1	2028	Fincantieri	61,800	690	Crystal	MoA
Crystal 2	2028	Fincantieri	61,800	690	Crystal	MoA
Disney Land order	2028	Meyer Werft	140,000	2,500	Disney Land	\$1,000,000,000
<i>Explora 2</i>	2024	Fincantieri	63,900	922	Explora Journeys	€500,000,000
<i>Explora 3</i> (LNG)	2026	Fincantieri	63,900	922	Explora Journeys	€620,000,000
<i>Explora 4</i> (LNG)	2027	Fincantieri	63,900	922	Explora Journeys	€620,000,000
<i>Explora 5</i> (hydrogen powered)	2027	Fincantieri	72,810	922	Explora Journeys	€630,000,000
<i>Explora 6</i> (hydrogen powered)	2028	Fincantieri	72,810	922	Explora Journeys	€630,000,000
<i>Asuka III</i>	2025	Meyer Werft	52,183	744	NYK Cruises	\$640,000,000
<i>Allura</i>	2025	Fincantieri	67,817	1,200	Oceania Cruises	€575,000,000
Oceania new class 1	2027	Fincantieri	84,700	1,450	Oceania Cruises	
Oceania new class 2	2028	Fincantieri	84,700	1,450	Oceania Cruises	
<i>Njord</i>	2025	Meyer Werft	84,800	1,000	Ocean Residences Development	\$650,000,000
<i>Seven Seas Prestige</i>	2026	Fincantieri	76,500	850	Regent Seven Seas	
Prestige class 2	2029	Fincantieri	76,500	850	Regent Seven Seas	
<i>Luminara</i>	2025	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	46,750	456	The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection	€400,000,000
<i>Narrative</i>	2026	Brodosplit Shipyard	62,000	627 (units)	Storylines	\$900,000,000
<i>Viking Vela</i>	2024	Fincantieri	54,300	998	Viking Cruises	\$320,000,000
<i>Viking Vesta</i>	2025	Fincantieri	54,300	998	Viking Cruises	\$320,000,000
Viking 13 (hydrogen fuel cells)	2026	Fincantieri	54,300	998	Viking Cruises	€425,000,000
Viking 14 (hydrogen fuel cells)	2027	Fincantieri	54,300	998	Viking Cruises	€425,000,000
Viking 15 (hydrogen fuel cells)	2028	Fincantieri	54,300	998	Viking Cruises	€425,000,000
Viking 16 (hydrogen fuel cells)	2028	Fincantieri	54,300	998	Viking Cruises	€425,000,000
Viking 17 (hydrogen fuel cells)	2029	Fincantieri	54,300	998	Viking Cruises	€425,000,000
Viking 18 (hydrogen fuel cells)	2029	Fincantieri	54,300	998	Viking Cruises	€425,000,000
<i>Brilliant Lady</i>	2025	Fincantieri	110,000	2,800	Virgin Voyages	€710,000,000

Source: CruiseTimes Research

### Ocean cruise newbuilding orderbook on 9 August 2024 (small, upscale, & expedition)

SHIP NAME	DELIVERY	BUILDER	GROSS TON	LR BERTH	BRAND	CONTRACT PRICE
<i>Aman at Sea</i>	2027	T. Mariotti	23,000	250	Aman/Cruise Saudi	
<i>Magellan Discoverer</i>	2026	Asenav	4,900	76	Antarctica21	
<i>Four Seasons 1</i>	2025	Fincantieri	32,950	185	Four Seasons Yachts	€400,000,000
<i>Four Seasons 2</i>	2026	Fincantieri	32,950	185	Four Seasons Yachts	€400,000,000
<i>World Adventurer</i>	2025	West Sea Viana Shipyard, Portugal	9,923	172	Mystic Cruises/Atlas Ocean Voyages	\$120,000,000
<i>World Discoverer</i>	2026	West Sea Viana Shipyard, Portugal	9,923	172	Mystic Cruises/Atlas Ocean Voyages	\$120,000,000
<i>Star Seeker</i>	2025	West Sea Viana Shipyard, Portugal	9,923	224	Mystic Cruises/Atlas Ocean Voyages	\$120,000,000
<i>Janssonius</i>	2024	DIV Shipbuilding	6,603	194	Oceanwide Expeditions	\$85,000,000
<i>Orient Express Corinthian</i>	2026	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	26,600	116	Orient Express	
<i>Orient Express Silenseas 2</i>	2027	Chantiers de l'Atlantique	26,600	116	Orient Express	
Ryobi order	2027	West Sea Viana Shipyard, Portugal	9,500	120	Ryobi Holdings	€100,000,000
<i>Emerald Kaia</i>	2026	Ha Long Shipbuilding, Vietnam	5,175	128	Scenic Group/Emerald Cruises	
<i>Douglas Mawson</i>	2025	China Merchants Heavy Industry	8,200	200	SunStone Ships/Aurora Expeditions	\$100,000,000

Source: CruiseTimes Research



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