

The year in cruise



It's set to be a bumper year on the water – Jane Archer rounds up what's coming to cruise over the next 12 months

Whether clients want to take it easy on a wellness-themed sailing, splash around in a water park on a new record-setting megaship, or explore new frontiers on an expedition cruise – there's a sailing for everyone in our handy guide to the year ahead.

JANUARY

How better to kick off the new year than with the launch of the world's biggest ship, *Icon of the Seas*? With so many restaurants, bars and activities on board, it's a wonder anyone would want to get off. The gigantic vessel sets sail in just over a week with amenities to please all clients, from families and foodies to couples, active travellers and luxury lovers. There are water parks, slides, pools and kids' clubs, while for extra bragging rights, the suites have access to a private sun deck, pool and restaurant.

Or try: There's plenty to excite floating food fans this year. Holland America Line has just opened seafood spot Morimoto by Sea on *Nieuw Amsterdam*, while Seabourn is rolling out a new Mediterranean restaurant concept called Solis across its fleet.

FEBRUARY

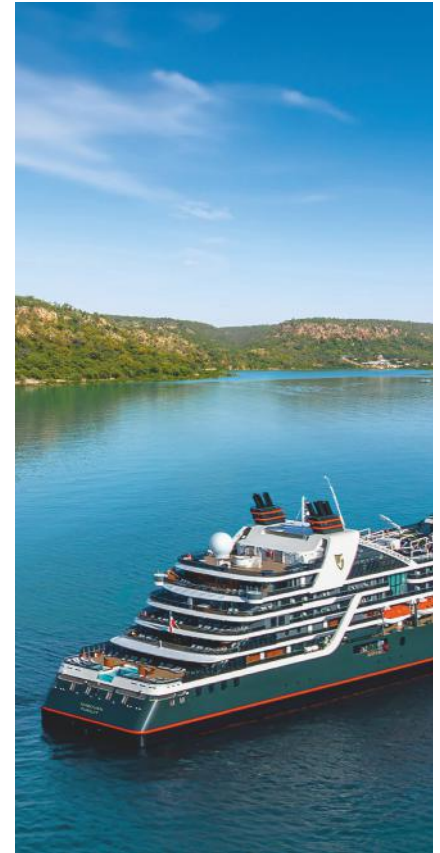
Viking and MSC Cruises have sailings in the Mediterranean in winter, when most of the crowds have gone home. In 2024, *Sun Princess*, which Princess Cruises is launching in February, will join the party. With 4,300 passengers, the vessel is the line's biggest yet and marks a radical shift for Princess, with more restaurants, additional bars, a redesigned theatre, innovative entertainment (including a tie-up with the Academy of Magical Arts' Magic Castle clubhouse in Los Angeles) and an adventure area where passengers can glide ➤

DESTINATIONS

CRUISE | 2024 CALENDAR



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Riviera Travel's Porto Mirante; Seabourn's Seabourn Pursuit in Kimberley, Australia; Athens; A-Rosa River Cruises' A-Rosa Alea



around a track at the top of the ship. It also features new-look cabins, many with exclusive access to private decks and restaurants.

Or try: River cruise lines are also eyeing up out-of-season opportunities. Viking has launched its inaugural winter Treasures of the Rhine cruises, while this year A-Rosa River Cruises, AmaWaterways and Viva Cruises will get going in February, rather than waiting till late March.

MARCH

The Douro in northern Spain and Portugal is where it's at in 2024, if the number of ships launching on the vine-flanked river is anything to go by. Avalon Waterways will make its debut in March with **Avalon Alegria**, just as Saga adds more capacity with the elegant **Spirit of the Douro**. In

July, Riviera Travel will unveil **Porto Mirante**, while August sees APT Travelmarvel's Douro debut with **Estrela**. What's the attraction? If the fabulous scenery and gorgeous cities of Salamanca and Porto don't do it, then the opportunities to imbibe port wine surely will.

Or try: The mind, body and soul come under the spotlight at P&O Cruises and Swan Hellenic, which are operating wellness sailings in March. Go with P&O and the hosts include TV presenter and women's health advocate Cherry Healey and fitness instructor Sarah Gorman.

APRIL

High demand to see spellbinding castles, cities and cathedrals on the Rhine and Danube is leading to extra tonnage being introduced on the two rivers. Amadeus River Cruises' **Amadeus Nova**

enters service on the Danube with a stack of green credentials including a hybrid diesel/electric engine, heat-recovery system and solar panels. A-Rosa is boosting capacity on the Rhine with the addition of two vessels. And, in March, Uniworld River Cruises and Riverside Luxury Cruises will each get a former Crystal Cruises river ship back in service on the Rhine.

Or try: Riviera Travel's new solos-only 11-day Athens and Greek Islands holiday, departing April 5, pairs seven nights on Celestyal Cruises' **Celestyal Journey** with pre and post-cruise stays in Athens and on the Athenian Riviera.

MAY

This is shaping up to be the year of the Kimberley, with new faces entering the Aussie market as demand hots up for expedition

cruises in the vast area across the top of Western Australia.

In May, APT and Silversea Cruises return to the region, the latter with expedition ship **Silver Cloud** for the first time, and Scenic makes its debut here. Seabourn, also a Kimberley virgin, arrives in June with **Seabourn Pursuit**. Ponant is back for another season, while Kimberley specialist Coral Expeditions has boosted its number of departures to 45 during the year.

Or try: Oceania Cruises' **Marina** returns to service after a major refit that will update suites, revamp the Polo Grill steakhouse and add three places to eat, including Aquamar Kitchen, focusing on healthy cuisine.

JUNE

Disney Cruise Line is promising double the fun with the opening of Lookout Cay at Lighthouse Point.

DESTINATIONS

CRUISE | 2024 CALENDAR



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

Lookout Cay, Disney Cruise Line's private resort in the Bahamas; Seattle, US; Cunard's *Queen Elizabeth*

PICTURES: Disney Enterprises, Inc; Port of Seattle/Don Wilson



A private island in Eleuthera in the Bahamas, it promises to be a blast, offering beaches and lunchtime grills for families, waterslides for kids, and bars and private cabanas for grown-ups. Pick with care and clients can enjoy four or six-night cruises from Port Canaveral that visit both Lookout Cay and Disney's original private island, Castaway Cay.

Or try: Swap beaches for glaciers as Celebrity Cruises' **Celebrity Edge** makes its Alaska debut, with seven-night round-trip voyages from Seattle that visit the showstopping ports of Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway, and spend a morning sailing from Endicott Arm to Dawes Glacier.

JULY

This is usually when the weather in the UK stays fair – so prime

time for Hebridean Island Cruises to launch voyages to the Orkney Islands on **Lord of the Highlands**. There are three departures in July – all round-trip from Scrabster – that take in Neolithic sites, naval museums, castles and cathedrals.

For wildlife fans, Ambassador Cruise Line has three UK cruises this month when members of the Orca whale and dolphin charity will join passengers on the lookout for passing cetaceans. And for those looking for floating 'Fun Ships', suggest Carnival Cruise Line's **Carnival Miracle** on a nine-day voyage around the UK and Ireland from Dover.

Or try: Royal Caribbean is back with a second new ship for the Caribbean. **Utopia of the Seas** isn't quite as big as **Icon of the Seas**, but it's equally brimming with places to eat, drink and play, including

a new dining experience that promises a culinary tour through the 'golden age of rail travel'.

AUGUST

It seems the world can't get enough of tombs, temples and tales of mythical gods, as yet more tonnage makes its way onto the Nile. This month, Viking will add **Viking Hathor** to its fleet, as part of a plan to have six ships on the Nile by 2025. The launch comes five months after AmaWaterways welcomed **Amalilia** onto the world's longest river.

Both will sail seven-night round-trip cruises from Luxor, packaged with pre and post-hotel stays in Cairo and trips to the Pyramids and Egyptian Museum. Wait until November and you can sail with Tui River Cruises, which debuts on the Nile with one-week

itineraries paired with flights from Gatwick and Manchester to Luxor.

Or try: Chef Michel Roux is taking his Michelin-starred cuisine to sea on two five-night Cunard cruises to the Norwegian fjords this month. Roux will cook a variety of his signature dishes for just 60 diners.

SEPTEMBER

Croatia's long coastline, dotted with islands and beautiful towns, is made for exploring on small yachts. Late summer, as the heat of July and August has abated, is the perfect time to visit.

Cruise Croatia has chosen September to introduce one of its new voyages. The itinerary between Opatija and Dubrovnik visits towns such as Zadar and Hvar, and includes city walking tours and excursions to national parks and wineries.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Scenic's *Scenic Eclipse* in Antarctica; northern lights in Alta, Norway; Viva Cruises' *Viva Enjoy* PICTURES: Fred Olsen Cruise Lines; Roger Pimenta/Scenic



For something different, Ponant has new seven-night cruises along the Croatian coast from Dubrovnik on board sailing ship **Le Ponant**.

Or try: Viva Cruises is stepping up capacity on the Danube with the launch this month of **Viva Enjoy**. The vessel will operate a range of four, five and seven-night itineraries, mostly round-trip from Vienna.

OCTOBER

As autumn arrives, look to the skies. To coincide with this year's solar maximum and its amazing aurora opportunities, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines has more than doubled the number of northern lights cruises it is offering in 2024. There are three departures in October, sailing on **Balmoral** from Newcastle to Norway in search of the aurora borealis. They include a call into Tromsø for whale watching and an overnight stop in Alta,

known as the 'city of the northern lights' and home to the spectacular Northern Lights Cathedral.

Alternatively, Havila Voyages is introducing an astronomy-themed cruise accompanied by Ian Ridpath. The editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of Astronomy* will be hosting talks about the northern lights, comets, the stars and Apollo space missions on cruises departing on February 1 and October 31.

Or try: Pandaw is packing four into one with a new Full Mekong combo cruise that puts life and culture along the river in Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand under the spotlight. The 21-night holiday departs on October 22.

NOVEMBER

Summer might be over in the northern hemisphere, but Down Under, spring is in the air. For clients

with time to spare, Holland America Line is circumnavigating Australia on a 35-day voyage from Sydney that takes in Tasmania and ventures to Komodo Island in Indonesia.

For something more adventurous, Coral Expeditions is going in search of dolphins, sea lions, kangaroos, dunes and beaches on two 10-night Wild Islands of South Australia round-trip cruises from Adelaide.

Or try: AmaWaterways is launching the first-ever cruises on the Magdalena River in Colombia. The seven-night sailings, on the new 60-passenger **AmaMagdalena**, travel between Cartagena and Barranquilla, promising nature, wildlife, music, culture and Unesco World Heritage Sites.

DECEMBER

A cruise in Antarctica offers the ultimate snowy scenes, and

summer in the southern hemisphere is the best time to visit. Scenic has introduced a voyage to the lesser-frequented eastern side of the White Continent following in the footsteps of Australian explorer and scientist Douglas Mawson.

The 25-day expedition on luxury discovery yacht **Scenic Eclipse** departs from Milford Sound in New Zealand on December 15 and spends 10 days exploring the icy waters of Antarctica – which hundreds of thousands of penguins call home – before finishing up in Hobart, Tasmania.

Or try: Too cold to handle? Suggest some Caribbean winter sun. Explora Journeys' **Explora I** is sailing new seven-night voyages from Miami, while Celebrity Cruises has added departures from Port Canaveral with calls at the private island of CocoCay to its collection. **TW**