

ASK THE experts

With new-to-cruise clients a focus for many lines, **Lina Molloholli** asks how agents can sell more sailings to first-timers

1



2



3



PICTURES: James North; Royal Caribbean/Rob Kolimbarch

1 “There is a growing trend this year for multigenerational families”

Luke Smith has been at Carnival Cruise Line for 18 years and his focus is increasing Carnival’s business among the UK trade. He is also the chairman of the Trade Engagement Committee for Clia UK and Ireland.



Luke Smith
director, UK and international sales,
Carnival Cruise Line

“The breadth of product and tremendous value – with 25%-50% savings over comparable land-based alternatives – are an exciting opportunity to bring new-to-cruise customers on board. And value is one of the key messages that will encourage new-to-cruise customers to try their first cruise.

If you showcase the included elements – such as the dining, water parks, adult-only areas and world-class entertainment – you will join the ever-growing number of agents selling customers their first of many cruise holidays.

We’re seeing increased interest from all sorts of customers in the new-to-cruise category, but multigenerational families are the most exciting. The big sell for large family groups is that ships have something for everyone to enjoy, while also offering the opportunity to come together for shared memories, such as meals and live performances. Grandparents can enjoy a glass of wine in the complimentary adult-only area, while parents are on an excursion and the children spend the day in the kids’ club or up on the sports deck.

Many multigenerational families are booking their first cruise for next summer. Agents can use content from our image and video library for their social media activity – so make sure you’re taking advantage of this growth opportunity.

2 “Shorter trips are ideal for someone who is new to cruising”

Katy Berzins has held several positions in the company over the past 16 years. In 2018, she moved over to the cruise division to bring Tui River Cruises to the UK market, and has been responsible for the launch of the three vessels.



Katy Berzins
head of TUI River Cruises,
Tui UK & Ireland

“For those who haven’t cruised before, it can be difficult to imagine what it’s going to be like on board a river cruise ship, so a great way to sell Tui river ships to customers is to focus on the fact that they are adult-only. They have an intimate feel, with a maximum of 155 guests on board, so customers will have their own space. All ships have a choice of two restaurants, with no set dining times, so customers can sit down to eat at a time that suits them.

Highlight the activities clients can do – from yoga or mini golf on the top deck to wine-tasting in ports of call – while visiting world-famous cities and under-the-radar-towns in a short space of time. From November 2024, our new River Nile cruise will set sail for the first time.

We’ve also increased the holiday duration options for summer 2024, so cruisers can choose from three, four, six, 11 and 15-night itineraries. Shorter trips are a great opportunity for someone who is new to cruising to try it out before committing to a longer cruise. Plus, shorter durations mean travel agents can sell holidays at a much lower price. With a choice of full-board-plus or all-inclusive, it makes an attractive package for first-time cruisers.

3 “Find out a client’s comfort zone and meet them on their level”

Stuart Byron joined Royal Caribbean Cruise International in 2018 and his core focus is creating ambitious plans for growth. He enjoys working closely with the travel trade to share ideas and identify new opportunities.



Stuart Byron
director of sales for UK, Ireland and Spain,
Royal Caribbean International

“We’re seeing record demand for our holidays, and it’s a great time for agents to capitalise on the increased popularity of cruise, particularly among millennial and Gen Z new-to-cruise audiences.

People are feeling the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis and, while a holiday is something consumers are confident in spending more on, they are looking for something that exceeds expectations and creates memories. As a result, we’re also seeing an increase in bookings from multigenerational new-to-cruise groups looking for opportunities to travel with the whole family and maximise their time together.

Freedom of choice is important to the new-to-cruise market. Some people will prefer to dip their toe in and try a shorter cruise for their first sailing, while others will jump straight in with a longer one. For agents, it’s about knowing a customer’s comfort zone and meeting them on their level.

People often purchase with their emotions, particularly when it comes to booking a memory-making holiday, so it’s vital that new-to-cruise guests can visualise what a holiday could feel like. Trade partners can use our My Royal Genie digital sales tool to create digital brochures for customers with inspirational videos and tailored content to help give them an idea of what it’ll be like.