



NO KIDS ALLOWED

The surge in adult-only sailings that avoid the patter of little feet offers a new sales opportunity for agents, says [Kaye Holland](#)

CLOCKWISE: Vibe Beach Club, Norwegian Encore; a couple enjoy a stroll on deck; Oceania Cruises no longer allows children on board

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Picture this: you've bagged the best cabana by the Insta-worthy infinity pool and are looking forward to an afternoon sipping an Aperol spritz, with a book in your hand and a tropical breeze tousling your hair. Then a group of kids raucously cannonball into the pool, shattering your beautiful, blissful silence.

Is it any wonder then that adult-only sailings are on the rise? Oceania Cruises is the latest line to close its gangway to children. In January, the upscale line – which already targets a more grown-up audience with its sophisticated vibe and classy dining – announced it would be ushering in a “new era of tranquillity and sophistication at sea” by only welcoming guests aged 18 and over on future voyages.

“By transitioning to an adult-only experience, we are enhancing the very essence of the Oceania Cruises journey – one defined by sophistication, serenity and discovery,” said Jason Montague, the line’s chief luxury officer.

It’s worth noting that bookings made before January 7, 2026, that include passengers under the age of 18 will still be honoured.

For Paul Hunter, head of product at the Travel Village Group, the decision to set sail into adult-only waters is a natural move. “Oceania is putting into words what their guests already experience. It’s a smart move that stays true to the brand,” he says.

That stance is shared by Tracy Clenshaw, head of commercial at Fred Olsen Travel. She said: “Guests choose Oceania for its culinary excellence, immersive itineraries and relaxed, refined atmosphere. An adult-only environment allows these strengths to shine even more.”



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MIX AND MATCH

Oceania isn't the only cruise line to embrace child-free holidays on the water. The likes of Viking, Virgin Voyages, Tui River Cruises, Saga and Azamara have long specialised in adult-only sailings. Last year, even the famously family-friendly brand Carnival trialled a series of cruises without kids, which proved so popular that the fun-focused line is planning more for March and April.

It doesn't have to be all or nothing: certain ships within a fleet or selected dates and itineraries can be reserved exclusively for adults. Marella Cruises' *Explorer 2* and Fred Olsen Cruise Lines' *Borealis* are both child-free and, from 2027, British brand Ambassador Cruise Line will no longer take little ones on its ex-UK sailings (though they will still be welcome on fly-cruises).

Even on otherwise family-friendly vessels, there's been a surge in adult-only spaces. Step forward the Sanctuary Club sun deck on Princess Cruises' ships; Norwegian Cruise Line's Vibe Beach Club and Spice H2O Lounge; Disney Cruise Line's adult-only restaurants and Senses Spa; The Retreat on Holland America Line; MSC Cruises' top-deck Solarium; and Carnival's Serenity retreat, all for those wishing to relax without kids around.

GROWN-UP GETAWAYS

The demand is being driven by child-free and solo travellers seeking escapes away from tantrum-throwing toddlers, teens and everything in between, not to mention parents who adore their offspring but dream of a less harried holiday.

Ashley Hunt, director of Swindon Travel Hub and Premium Cruises and Tours, welcomes Oceania's decision to, ahem, stop kidding around. “For many of our clients, this style of cruising is exactly what they're seeking – sophisticated, immersive and unapologetically adult-focused,” said Hunt.

Make no mistake: child-free policies needn't limit sales. Instead, they can become a selling point and help reach a different demographic – one that knows what they want, which is getting space to decompress and enjoy decidedly grown-up diversions ranging from fine dining to wine tasting.

Iglu's chief commercial officer, Dave Mills, says: “For Oceania, we see very low levels of interest and booking from younger families – it's a great message to help prospective guests understand what the onboard experience is likely to be.”

Agents can reap the rewards of adult-only cruise lines by using it as a sales tool, says Paul Frost, head of tour operations at Iglu Cruise. He said: “Be explicit about what you won't find on board – noisy aqua parks, bombing in the pools and cartoon characters ambling around. Sometimes the most effective way to drive sales isn't to stress what's on offer but to be direct about what's not.

“Always use your own experiences to enthuse clients, perhaps by sharing your own positive stories of kid-free sailings or showing your own photographs. Your messaging and imagery should scream ‘this is for you’ – not whisper to everyone.” ●