

Special sailings

Don't miss the world's best festivals and special events by sea, writes Jane Archer

Pick any date in the calendar and chances are there'll be an exciting event somewhere in the world - and you could send your cruise clients there to join the fun.

It might be a familiar event such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix in Monaco or the Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, or maybe the less well-known Redentore festival in Venice that gives thanks for the end of the plague.

Cruise planners are on the ball, searching out festivals and events to help you inspire your clients. Here are some to get you started.

▶ FESTIVAL FEVER

Japan's Nebuta Festival in Aomori runs from August 2-7 each year and is one of the most spectacular fiestas in the world, with huge colourful floats accompanied by drummers, flautists and dancers. Princess Cruises' 11-day Circle Japan cruise round-trip from Yokohama (the port for Tokyo) catches the last day of the festival, staying until 11pm that evening so passengers can party until late. From £1,519 per person cruise-only, departing August 4, 2018.

Also in Asia, Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Millennium* is in Taiwan for the Pingxi Lantern Festival on February 19, 2019, when hundreds of thousands of paper lanterns carrying wishes and prayers are released into the night sky. *Millennium* stays until 3am the next day so passengers don't miss the spectacle. The 14-night voyage is from Hong Kong to Singapore, from £1,755 cruise-only.

Closer to home, Saga Cruises' *Saga* [→](#)

Nebuta Festival, Japan

→ *Pearl II* is in Dartmouth, south Devon, for the town's 2018 Royal Regatta (August 30-September 1), when dozens of sailing boats race on the River Dart. From £1,045 for six nights departing Dover on August 25.

Or check out Edinburgh, which comes alive in August when both the Fringe Festival - a celebration of theatre, comedy, cabaret and more - and Military Tattoo are in town (the dates this year are August 3-27 and August 3-25 respectively).

Fred Olsen Cruise Lines' passengers can enjoy both on a nine-night Lochs and Islands voyage around the UK from Dover on *Boudicca* that stays three nights in Rosyth (the port for Edinburgh) from August 5-7. From £1,299 departing July 30.

▶ CARNIVAL CAPERS

Pack your feathers and sequins because we're off to Rio Carnival, joining the millions who take to the streets for nine days of partying before the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday (and, in theory, 40 days of abstinence). There are colourful floats, extravagant costumes, music and dance as the city's top samba schools compete in the Sambadrome, a half-mile avenue-style stadium, hoping to be named champions.

The 2019 carnival runs from



At Taiwan's Pingxi Lantern Festival thousands of paper lanterns carrying wishes and prayers are released into the sky

March 1-9 and *Azamara Pursuit*, the ship joining Azamara Club Cruises this August, will be there for three days (March 3-5) on its 13-night Carnival in Rio voyage round-trip from Buenos Aires departing February 24.

It won't be alone. Holland America Line's *Veendam* and Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Eclipse* will also be there from March 3-5 so passengers have lots of time to join the revelry. From £1,835 cruise-only for Celebrity's 11-night South America & Carnival Cruise, departing February 27, 2019. It is selling grandstand seats in the Sambadrome from £491.

Celebrity also has a ship in New Orleans for three days for Mardi Gras (our Shrove Tuesday), which marks the culmination of a week or more of parades, floats and balls. It's on March 5, 2019, and *Celebrity Reflection* will be there from March 3-5 on a



10-night Mardi Gras and Caribbean cruise round-trip from Fort Lauderdale.

The American Queen Steamboat Company is offering two nights in New Orleans during Mardi Gras at the end of a nine-day cruise on the Mississippi from Memphis. From £3,275 for 11 nights departing February 24, including flights, a pre-cruise night and tour in Memphis and two nights in the Big Easy.

▶ FIREWORK FUN

Cruise passengers can start 2019 with a bang at the New Year's Eve fireworks displays in Sydney with Azamara Club Cruises, or Funchal in Madeira with P&O Cruises or Cruise & Maritime Voyages.

If they can't wait that long, Princess's eight-day Japan Explorer cruise from Yokohama is in Kumano for the city's annual fireworks festival, when some 10,000 rockets are fired into the night sky. The cruise departs August 15 this year and also in 2019. From £1,319 cruise-only.

Over in Italy, clients can enjoy fireworks in Venice at the aforementioned Redentore festival, an annual celebration that gives thanks for the end of a plague in 1577 that killed some 50,000 people. The event, which includes a regatta on the Guidecca Canal, is on July 14-15 this year and Azamara will be there at the end of a nine-night cruise from Civitavecchia (the port for Rome). It →



PICTURE: VISITENGLAND/ENGLISH RIVIERA

ABOVE:
Pingxi Lantern
Festival, Taiwan

LEFT:
Royal Regatta,
Dartmouth

PICTURES: TOURISM AUSTRALIA; VISIT VICTORIA; SHUTTERSTOCK



LEFT:
New Year's
Eve, Sydney

RIGHT:
Thiepval
Memorial,
France



BELOW:
Australian
Open tennis
tournament

costs from £2,850 cruise-only.

On the rivers, Rhine in Flames is a firecracker of an event held on five weekends between May and September, when flotillas of illuminated boats cruise the river as fireworks light up the towns and cities along the banks. The River Cruise Line's *Lady Anne* is joining the flotillas on cruises in August and September, while Shearings has timed a July cruise on the Rhine to be in Rudesheim for the fireworks. From £1,412 for eight days, departing July 4, including return coach travel from the UK.

SPORTS AND PORTS

Cruise lines including Fred Olsen, Azamara, P&O Cruises and SeaDream Yacht Club are among those docked in or near Monte Carlo for this year's Monaco

Grand Prix, from May 24-27. Star Clippers' sailing ship *Star Flyer* will also be in the principality on May 24 for the trials and on May 27 for the race proper. From £1,695 cruise-only for a seven-night round-trip sailing from Cannes.

Crystal Cruises' *Crystal Serenity* and *Crystal Esprit* will both be in Monaco on May 26 next year for the 2019 race.

New this year, Crystal has a golf-themed cruise with excursions for players and tickets to the 2018 British Open in Carnoustie in Scotland, which takes place from July 19-22. The 14-day cruise around the British Isles departs Dover on July 15 and costs from £4,445. Excursions to the final cost \$349 (grandstand) or \$1,199 (Champions Club hospitality area).

Footie fans can catch World

Cup matches in St Petersburg with Azamara this summer. A 12-night voyage from Greenwich to Stockholm is in the city for the Nigeria v Argentina game on June 26, while a sailing from Stockholm to Southampton, also 12 nights, is there for the Round of 16 match on July 3. Prices from £3,589. Match tickets are available via the Fifa website.

Anyone for tennis? Rather than just attending an event for a day, clients can pair a 10-night South Australia Discovery cruise from Sydney on Holland America Line's *Noordam* in January 2019 with a week or two in Melbourne during the Australian Open, running from January 14-27. The January 4-14 cruise costs from £1,189 excluding flights; tickets for the tennis will be on sale at ausopen.com/tickets.

ALL THAT JAZZ

Music lovers can join an 11-day Rhône cruise between Arles and Saint Jean de Losne with Avalon Waterways in June that starts and ends with stays in Nice and Paris, and is in the town of Vienne, south of Lyon, on July 4 for its annual jazz festival (June 28-July 13).

Everything from jazz and opera to rock goes during La Fête de la Musique in the Champagne region of France, when amateur and professional musicians perform in free concerts and on street corners to celebrate the summer solstice on June 21. Hotel barge specialist European Waterways will be in the town of Dormans that evening on a six-night cruise from Châlons-en-Champagne to Château-Thierry. From £4,050 cruise-only departing June 17. →





PICTURE: ERHARD BARWICK/HURTIGRUTEN



The northern lights are so popular that P&O, Saga and CMV also have winter cruises to Norway

LEFT: Northern lights viewed on Hurtigruten's *Trollfjord*

CELESTIAL SIGHTINGS

Hurtigruten is the master when it comes to northern lights cruises, with sailings up and down the coast of Norway throughout winter and announcements made when they are spotted.

The line often offers a free one-week voyage if the lights don't show for passengers travelling on 12-day round-trip sailings from Bergen.

The lights are so popular that P&O Cruises, Saga and CMV also have winter cruises to Norway. CMV has a 15-night Land of the Northern Lights cruise from Bristol Avonmouth, departing March 17, 2019, from £1,259.

Instead of waiting for the lights to come on, passengers can see them go out on an 11-night cruise from Dubai to Mumbai with Azamara, timed to coincide with a total eclipse of the sun at 9am on December 26, 2019. From £2,397 departing December 17. **TW**

IN MEMORY


The First World War ended on November 11, 1918, and Fred Olsen is marking the centenary with a seven-night round-trip cruise from Southampton that is in Ghent for Remembrance Sunday. Passengers can visit Ypres, which was reduced to rubble during the fighting, and Thiepval Memorial in France.

From £799 departing November 8.

June 2019 will be 75 years since the D-Day Landings in Normandy that marked the start of the end of the Second World War. Scenic is remembering the occasion with a Seine river cruise from Paris on June 4 that is in Honfleur for two days so passengers can visit the Landing Beaches and watch the

parades and commemorations.

Azamara's 2019 14-night Tall Sails and Remembrance cruise is in Cherbourg for the 75th anniversary of the D-Day Landings and in Rouen in France for L'Armada 2019, when around 50 ships dock on the Seine River, which runs through the town. From £4,363 for 14 nights departing May 28, 2019.

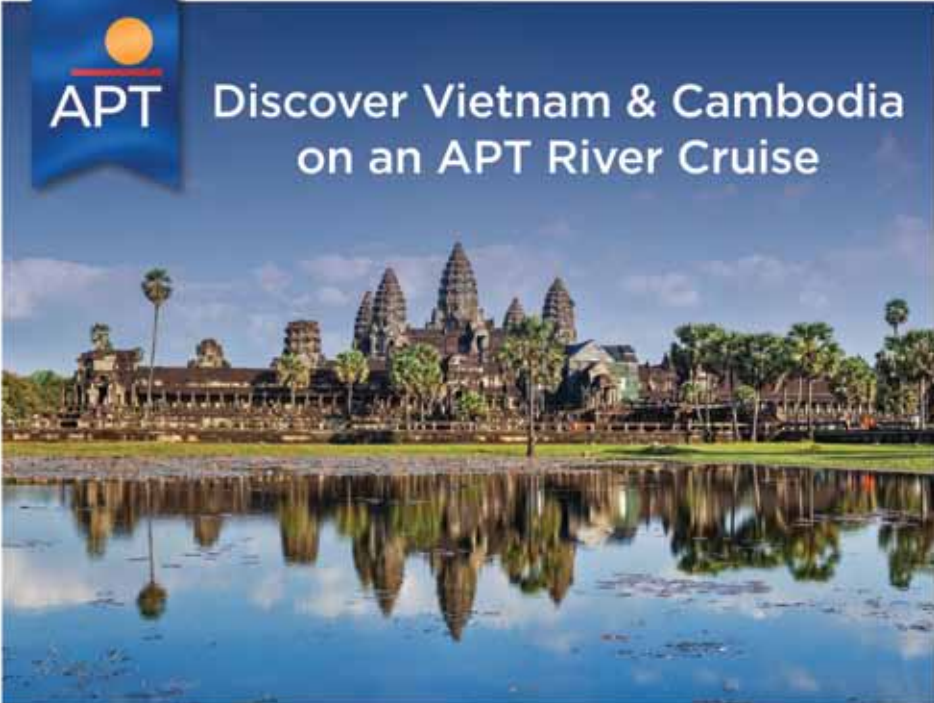


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