

of the BEST

FESTIVE CRUISES FOR 2021

It's not too early to sell a 2021 Christmas or New Year escape, writes **Laura French**

Let's face it, Christmas and New Year this year are likely to be a little different. December 31 is likely to be a tad tamer than usual, and the closest we'll get to linking arms with strangers down the local and singing 'Auld Lang Syne' is probably a takeaway with the same people we've seen every day for the past 10 months.

But that means demand for having a proper Christmas and New Year celebration next year might just be bigger than ever. So we've found some of the best festive cruises to sell now for December 2021, helping you (and your clients) get in there early while there's still availability, and giving them something to look forward to while in the festive mood.



1 ANTARCTICA EXPEDITION, SILVERSEA

For clients looking to splash the cash on a Christmas cruise they'll never forget (and with guaranteed snow), an Antarctica expedition is hard to beat – and for those seeking a little extra luxury, Silversea's 15-day voyage from Ushuaia on *Silver Cloud* is among the standouts. Guests will venture from the Falkland Islands to the Antarctic Sound and South Shetland Islands before crossing the infamous Drake Passage, with Christmas Day spent sailing these remote waters and New Year's Eve in the company of penguins on the Antarctic Peninsula. Expect kayaking, hiking and Zodiac trips aplenty as passengers explore one of the remotest corners of the Earth, with albatrosses, humpback whales and dolphins for friends.

Book it: From £14,400 per person including all meals, drinks, pre-cruise hotel stay, transfers, excursions and flights from the UK, departing December 21, 2021. silversea.com



2 CHRISTMAS IN PROVENCE AND THE RHONE VALLEY, CROISIEUROPE

Midnight Mass in Avignon, a night-time cruise to see Lyon's twinkling lights and an indulgent Christmas Eve dinner are among the highlights on this four-day hop along the Rhône through Lyon, Viviers and Avignon, with a Christmas present for every guest thrown in for good measure. Guests will also visit a confectioner in Viviers to learn how the local nougat is made, tour the Palais des Papes in Avignon and enjoy various festive surprises as they sail one of Europe's rising river stars.

Book it: From £693 per person (cruise-only), including all meals, drinks, gala dinner and onboard activities, departing December 22, 2021. croisieurope.co.uk

3

NEW YEAR ON THE DANUBE, RIVIERA TRAVEL

If ringing in 2022 in the 'City of Music' appeals, suggest this new sailing from Riviera Travel, which meanders through Budapest, Bratislava and Vienna with fairy-lit Christmas markets, guided city tours and an onboard Hungarian folklore show among the standouts across six history-filled days. New Year's Eve features a gala dinner, classical music recital and midnight drinks and canapés, while New Year's Day brings a visit to Vienna's opulent Schönbrunn Palace and its yuletide market – one way to work off a hangover.

Book it: From £1,429 per person based on two sharing a lower deck cabin on Riviera Travel's *William Wordsworth*, including all meals, gala dinner, tours, overseas transfers and flights on December 29, 2021. rivieratravel.co.uk



4

CANARY ISLANDS CELEBRATION, CUNARD

For a Santa-hats-on-the-beach kind of Christmas, look no further than this family-friendly 14-night voyage on *Queen Victoria*, which leaves from Southampton and takes in Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Tenerife, La Palma, Madeira and La Coruña in mainland Spain. Christmas Day is spent at sea with a roster of themed activities and food (plus ample amounts of the line's signature eggnog), while New Year's Eve celebrations take place in Funchal, with Madeira's fireworks show – once named the largest in the world by Guinness World Records – topping off a night to remember.

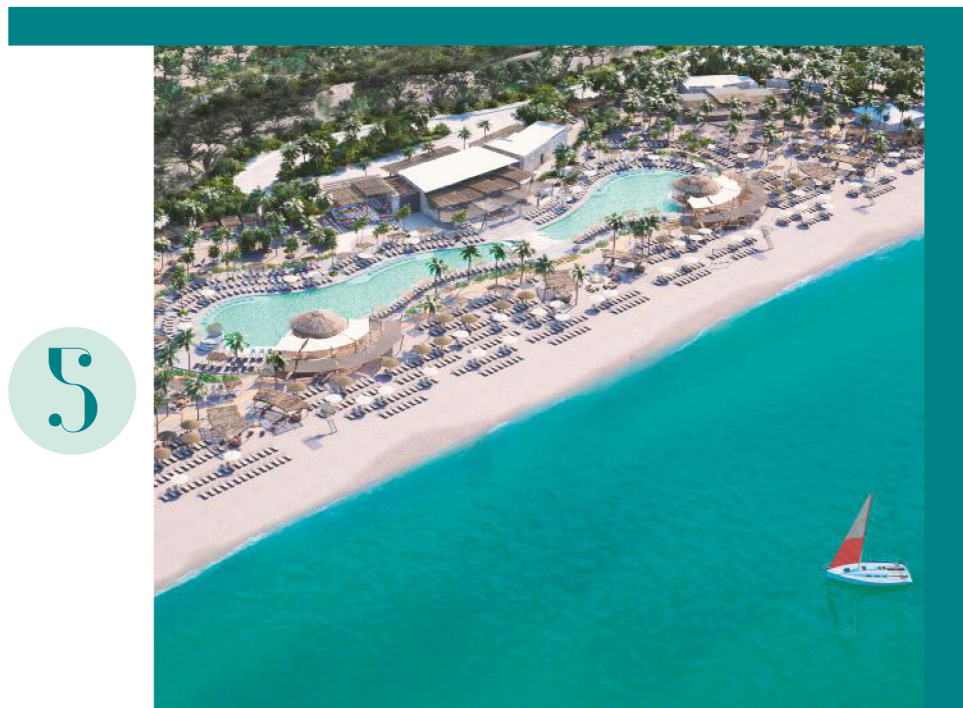
Book it: From £2,399 per person based on two sharing a Standard Inside cabin, including dining, entertainment, activities and daily afternoon tea, departing December 23, 2021. cunard.com



PICTURES: Zoltan Gebori, Juergen Sack, Shutterstock, Christopher Iron

DESTINATIONS

CRUISE | 2021 FESTIVE CRUISES



VALIANT NEW YEAR'S AHOY, VIRGIN VOYAGES

If a New Year escape to the Caribbean sounds like your clients' thing, look to this eight-night trip from Miami, which sails to Puerto Plata, San Juan in Puerto Rico and The Beach Club at Bimini in the Bahamas, with all the surprises you'd expect from Branson's newest baby. In true Virgin style, the line is keeping its New Year plans under wraps for now, but Shane Riley, associate vice-president of international sales, says: "Sailors can expect an amazing celebration with a number of soirées designed to celebrate the new year in style". It will be on new ship *Valiant Lady*, set to begin sailing in May; a shorter four-night itinerary will also run over new year on existing ship *Scarlet Lady*.

Book it: From \$2,400 per person based on two sharing The Insider cabin (cruise-only), including all food, tips and Wi-Fi, and departing December 26, 2021.
virginvoyages.com

BEST OF *the* REST

Norway Adventure: There's no time like Christmas to explore Norway and the Arctic circle, when its snow-blanketed towns and villages come alive with festivities. Titan Travel offers a 13-day Hurtigruten sailing from Bergen to Kirkenes from £1,999 per person, including Titan's VIP door-to-door service and flights on December 18, 2021.
titantravel.co.uk

Caribbean Islands and Festive Celebrations: If a festive escape sailing among exotic, palm-fringed islands appeals, look to Fred Olsen's 30-night trip from Southampton to St Kitts, Barbados, Antigua, Saint Lucia and Cuba, with New Year's Eve watching the fireworks in St Maarten. Prices from £3,849 per person, departing December 7, 2021.
fredolsencruises.com

Seine Enchanting Christmas: Just Go Holidays combines Christmas Day in the capital with a four-night Seine cruise on *A-Rosa Viva*, then tags on land tours to the Palace of Versailles and Champagne for extra festive cheer on this eight-day trip. From £999 per person including return coach travel and ferry crossings, departing December 22, 2021.
justgoholidays.com



FESTIVE SEASON ON THE ROMANTIC RHINE, AVALON WATERWAYS

No one does Christmas markets quite like Germany, and this eight-day trip from Avalon Waterways takes passengers to some of its best. Guests will venture from the fairy-lit canals of Amsterdam to the art-filled streets of Basel via Cologne, Rudesheim, Mainz, Strasbourg – whose festive market dates back more than 400 years – and Breisach, with glühwein, bratwurst and souvenir-shopping aplenty at every stop. Highlights include a visit to the Renaissance-era Heidelberg Castle, an excursion to the wine country in Alsace and a day in the Black Forest for a glimpse into the region's long-standing traditions.

Book it: From £1,996 per person including all meals, departing December 4, 2021 (cruise-only).
avalonwaterways.co.uk