

Luxury travel

The rising tide of luxury cruising

The launch of the elegant Explora III

Oceania spotlights Wellness Discovery Tours

Encore Cruises marks 35 years



Health retreats –
luxury with lasting benefits

Comfort and convenience
from Windhoek to Zurich

Antarctica tops luxury wishlists

Luxury travel

South African high-end travellers are seeking more than lavish accommodation. Curated experiences, meaningful moments, health gains and exceptional service are becoming the true hallmarks of luxury travel.

New-to-cruise will drive luxury growth

Luxury cruising is a valuable revenue stream for travel advisers, with passenger volumes expected to reach 2,7 million by 2035. *Travel News* was invited to attend a preview as the fabulous, brand-new *Explora III* sailed the Med. **Natasha Schmidt** reports.

NATASHA SCHMIDT

THE next wave of growth in luxury cruising may not come from existing cruise passengers but from affluent travellers who already spend heavily on luxury hotels, private villas, safaris, wellness retreats and tailor-made holidays.

That was one of the central messages from a McKinsey presentation delivered aboard *Explora III*, the newest ship in Explora Journeys' fleet. The presentation took place during a preview journey from Civitavecchia, the port of Rome, to Barcelona ahead of the ship's naming ceremony on August 1.

McKinsey's data showed that spending on luxury products was growing by approximately 3% a year, compared with 7% growth in luxury experiences.

"Luxury, as all of us know, is shifting from product to experience," **Nicola Sandri**, Senior Partner in McKinsey's Milan office, said.

He said luxury travel was growing by approximately 5% annually, outpacing the roughly 3,5% growth in both the broader luxury and travel markets. Compounded over time, that growth would almost double the luxury-travel market within 13 years.

'Building a family legacy by connecting with family and friends' featured on the wish lists of 47% of luxury travellers surveyed, rising to 57% among Gen Z and millennial respondents. Other leading priorities included discovering natural and cultural heritage, travelling more sustainably and supporting local communities.

"70% of luxury consumers aged between 20 and 45 believe the journey matters as much as the destination," Sandri said.

Turning specifically to cruising, **Filippo Gozzi**, Partner in McKinsey's Milan office, said global

luxury-cruise passenger volumes had trebled over the past decade, rising from around 400 000 in 2015 to 1,2 million in 2025. This represented average annual growth of approximately 12%.

Luxury-berth capacity had also nearly tripled, growing by approximately 11% annually over the same period. "This is sustained capital commitment – a strong vote of confidence in this category by shipowners," Gozzi said.

McKinsey expects luxury-cruise demand to grow by around 10% a year through to 2035, reaching approximately 2,7 million passengers. About 20 additional luxury ships are expected to enter service over the same period.

Challenge

"That creates a challenge. Every new ship will need more guests and, in particular, will need more new-to-cruise guests," Gozzi said. "The next decade will be a storytelling, distribution and customer-conversion story."



Anna Nash. Photo: Explora Journeys



Explora III, the newest ship in Explora Journeys' fleet. Photo: Explora Journeys

McKinsey identified several potential customer groups, including professionals in their 40s and 50s seeking culture, wellness, premium experiences and seamless service; retirees who prioritise cultural experiences; elite hotel and airline loyalty members already accustomed to

premium service; and multigenerational families seeking a holiday suited to different ages and interests.

"There is no one archetype, and certainly not only the traditional cruiser," Gozzi said. "Different profiles, but one expectation: seamless without sameness."

The potential market is also expanding. McKinsey projects that the number of wealthy individuals worldwide will grow from approximately 200 million in 2025 to 340 million by 2035 – an increase of around 140 million people.

Luxury cruising nevertheless serves only a fraction of this market. Approximately 1,2 million people take luxury cruises annually, compared with an estimated global pool of 200 million luxury travellers.

"Directionally, this is well below 1% of the estimated global luxury-traveller pool. Luxury cruising has tripled and has still only scratched the surface," Gozzi said.

For travel agents, this means looking beyond clients who already identify themselves as cruisers. "The industry should stop asking only, 'How do we win more cruisers?' It should ask, 'How do we win more luxury travellers?'"

"The next luxury cruiser may never search for a cruise. They may not follow cruise brands. They may not think of themselves as cruisers," he said.

Explora Journeys, the MSC Group's luxury ocean travel brand, speaks of journeys rather than cruises, suites rather than cabins and guests rather than passengers. Its ships are intended to offer the space, service, dining and flexibility associated with a luxury resort while allowing guests to travel between destinations without repeatedly packing, unpacking and changing hotels.

"Explora Journeys was really born to fill a white space in the market. We bring together the sophistication of the world's finest hotels with the freedom and the perspective that only the ocean can offer," said **Anna Nash**, President of Explora Journeys.

"Luxury is a banned word. We like to talk about elegance and sophistication, but it's truly how we make our guests feel. This unique positioning is resonating strongly, particularly with guests who are completely new to cruising."

To page 4



Discover More With Oceania

Whether you're captivated by the untamed beauty of Africa or the timeless charm of the Mediterranean, every Oceania Cruises voyage is designed for travellers who seek immersive experiences, exceptional cuisine, and intimate luxury.

**YOUR WORLD™
INCLUDED**

All Speciality Dining | Shipboard Gratuities | Unlimited WiFi

AFRICA – 2027

LISBON TO CAPE TOWN

24 Nights | 14 Jan 2027 | Oceania Sirena

**From R154 818 pps
in an Inside Stateroom**

(Including gratuities & taxes)

CAPE TOWN TO LISBON

24 Nights | 7 Feb 2027 | Oceania Sirena

**From R167 793 pps
in an Inside Stateroom**

(Including gratuities & taxes)

MEDITERRANEAN – 2027

ISTANBUL TO ROME

9 Nights | 15 May 2027 | Oceania Sirena

**From R37 628 pps
in an Oceanview Stateroom**

(Including gratuities & taxes)

BARCELONA TO ROME

7 Nights | 6 Aug 2027 | Oceania Allura

**From R60 533 pps
in an Veranda Stateroom**

(Including gratuities & taxes)

Terms & Conditions Apply: Fares quoted are per person sharing, based on double occupancy and subject to availability and rate of exchange fluctuations. Oceania Cruises reserves the right to correct errors or omissions and to change any and all fares, fees, offers and surcharges at any time.



EXQUISITELY CRAFTED CUISINE. CURATED TRAVEL EXPERIENCES. SMALL SHIP LUXURY

From page 2

Explora Journeys' capacity to rise 57%

NATASHA SCHMIDT

EXPLORA Journeys expects to increase its passenger capacity by 57% in 2027 as it moves towards a six-ship fleet and expands into new destinations, including Alaska and Asia.

The growth plans were outlined during presentations aboard *Explora III*, the third ship in the MSC Group's luxury ocean travel fleet. Travel advisers and media joined a preview journey from Civitavecchia, the port of Rome, to Barcelona ahead of the ship's naming ceremony on August 1.

Explora III marks the halfway point in the development of the planned six-ship fleet. Two more ships are scheduled to enter service in 2027, followed by *Explora VI* in 2028.

Explora Journeys President **Anna Nash** said the three ships currently in operation were sailing at near-full capacity. "We still have more to build and we still have more room to grow," she said. "Looking ahead to our fleet by 2028, we will be increasing our capacity next year by 57%. It's a huge amount of growth in such a short period of time."

The company was taking a long-term approach to the expansion, Nash said. "We are building a brand for generations to come. We don't think in the short term."

New destinations

The additional ships will allow Explora Journeys to expand its geographical footprint and offer a broader range of itineraries.

"As we grow our fleet, our footprint also grows," Nash said. "First time for us to Alaska, for example. First time to Asia."

Explora III will begin the brand's inaugural Alaska season in mid-May 2027. The ship is also scheduled to travel to Japan as Explora Journeys moves into Asia.

The addition of *Explora VI* would give the brand scope to expand further into South America and Asia. The South American programme could move beyond Explora Journeys' existing Amazon itineraries to include Brazil and Patagonia, with a focus on glaciers, scenic cruising, wildlife and cultural experiences.

The brand also plans to extend its Asian programme deeper into Indonesia and the Far East.

"We don't push into new geographies without thought and intention," said Explora Journeys' Head of Itinerary Planning, Destination Experiences and Ground Handling, **Justin Poulsen**. "We still keep the same favourites that our guests are really gravitating towards, but we push deeper into Indonesia, deeper into the Far East."

Rethinking seasons

Explora Journeys is also expanding outside traditional peak travel periods.

Explora II will remain in the Mediterranean for the 2026/27 winter season, while the company is considering winter Northern European itineraries built around the Northern Lights and Christmas markets.

"The traditional shoulder seasons are starting to become kind of the peak seasons," Poulsen said. "In the Med, it's a little bit cooler in the spring and in the fall. You have fewer people, but you can still enjoy some of those summer activities. You can also do all the cultural things as well."

The winter Mediterranean programme covers 46 destinations across ten countries. It introduces maiden calls including Ceuta, Algiers, La Gomera, Fuerteventura and Palamós, as well as overnight stays in Casablanca, Lisbon, Madeira and Málaga. Itineraries highlighted during the travel-adviser presentation included a five-night journey from Tenerife to Lisbon, a seven-



From left: Port of Barcelona President José Alberto Carbonell, MSC Foundation Executive Director Daniela Picco, *Explora III* Godmother Cristina Ozores and the ship's Master, Captain Serena Melani, celebrate at the naming ceremony in Barcelona on August 1. Photo: Explora Journeys/Ivan Sarfatti

night Venice-to-Athens sailing and a 14-night festive journey from Lisbon to Rome.

A wellness-focused journey, *A Path to Inner Discovery*, will depart aboard *Explora II* on February 11, 2027. The company has also placed a 128-night world journey aboard *Explora I* on sale for 2029.

Poulsen said the expanding fleet would create more scope for non-traditional deployments. "As more ships are added to our fleet, it allows us more options and more creativity. It allows us to offer something like Northern Europe to guests in the summer as well as in the winter, which are two very different but equally compelling experiences."

More space

Explora III is 19,2 metres longer than *Explora I* and *Explora II*, but its guest capacity remains broadly similar. Only two additional suites have been added: a second Owner's Residence



The Astern Pool aboard *Explora III*. Photo: Explora Journeys

and one other suite. The remaining space has been allocated to larger public areas and new onboard facilities.

"Many brands would have decided to put in lots of extra suites. We did not," Nash said. "We decided to give that space back to our guests, back to the public areas."

The ship has a larger collection of Ocean Penthouses and Ocean Residences, two Owner's

Residences, redesigned public spaces and an expanded running track.

New food and beverage venues include Shore Club on 11, a relaxed Mediterranean beach club-style restaurant designed to provide flexible all-day dining, and The Cellar, a wine venue adjoining the lobby.

The ship also has a redesigned lobby and an adults-only Helios Pool.

Ocean Wellness has been reconfigured as an integrated spa and fitness facility on Deck 5. Additions include Technogym equipment, Technogym Reform Pilates equipment, a Sava Sound Pod and an expanded outdoor sports court.

Nash described the vessel as an evolution of the existing product, shaped by guest feedback. "Just little tweaks, but all of this is truly done around the guests' expectations, the guests' feedback," she said.

Explora III is also the brand's first LNG-powered ship, with subsequent vessels expected to use the same propulsion technology.



Two Owner's Suites of around 300 sqm each take up the full width of the stern on decks 7 and 8. Photo: Explora Journeys

Oceania spotlights Wellness Discovery Tours

RESPONDING to growing interest in wellness experiences, Oceania Cruises is now offering more than 50 Wellness Discovery Tours in destinations throughout Asia, Europe and South America.

The signature collection of tours offers opportunities to engage with centuries-old healing traditions, mindfulness practices and local cultures across the globe.

Intended to inspire connection and enrichment, the small-group, wellness-oriented tours bring guests together with local specialists and like-minded travellers.

These shoreside encounters are complemented by onboard experiences such as culinary lectures, hands-on cooking classes, and food and beverage pairing experiences, plus talks by insightful guest speakers, creative workshops in the Artist Loft and performances by local musicians.

- Highlights include:
- Ultimate Traditional Dance Therapy, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Through Kandyan dance, guests learn the moves and rituals of Sri Lanka's national dance in an uplifting group setting.
 - Saigonese Organic Food Tasting, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Travellers savour organic teas and vegetarian

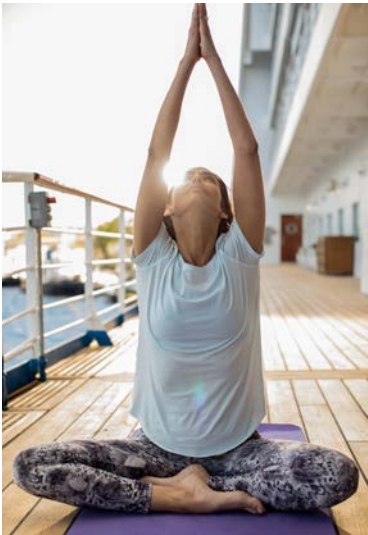


Oceania Vista in Santorini, Greece.

- cuisine, engage with local experts and gain insights into Vietnam's celebrated tea culture.
- Tai Chi at Viharn Sien Park, Bangkok, Thailand. Guests visit a serene urban park in the shadow of the temple Viharn Sien to practise the slow, fluid movements of tai chi, an ancient form of exercise improving strength, flexibility and balance.
 - Healthy Stroll Along the Cliffs and Getxo, Bilbao, Spain. Travellers traverse geologically rich cliff paths, pass 18th-century windmills and fortresses, and experience the

- Basque fishing village of Getxo, with time to enjoy local tapas and authentic culture.
- Thermal Baths of the Popes, Rome (Civitavecchia), Italy. To restore mind and body at Terme dei Papi, guests soak in mineral-rich waters beloved by popes, artists and poets for centuries, in an Italian countryside setting.
 - Traditional Chinese Medicine Experience, Hong Kong, China. Passengers consult with a traditional medicine doctor and try therapies such as acupuncture or cupping, learning ancient methods to promote relaxation and vitality.
 - Yoga & Wine Tasting Overlooking Caldera, Santorini, Greece. A meditative yoga session on a winery terrace, followed by tastings of Santorini's distinct vintages while admiring the breathtaking views.
 - Tai Chi & Vegetarian Lunch at a Monastery, Hanoi, Vietnam. Mindful movement surrounded by natural beauty and spiritual heritage in a Buddhist monastery on Yen Tu Mountain.
 - Volcanic Thermal Pools and Naples/Pompeii, Italy. Guests alternate between hot and cold pools, surrounded by ancient landscapes and timeless healing traditions.

- Patagonian Hot Springs & Fjord Cruise, Puerto Chacabuco, Chile. Cruise guests journey through the Aysén Fjord by catamaran to the secluded Ensenada Perez Hot Springs amid the Patagonian landscape. Oceania Cruises is represented by Cruises International in the South African market.



Yoga and stretch classes are offered on Oceania Cruises' ships. Photos: Oceania Cruises

WHERE LUXURY MEETS THE HEART OF THE WILD



Discover the Baobab Lounge by FedAir at Hoedspruit Eastgate Airport, where refined comfort, warm hospitality and thoughtful touches create a seamless transition from your arrival to the safari experience that awaits.

Luxury with lasting benefits

DANIELA BOTHA

SOUTH Africa's high-end travellers are showing growing interest in wellness-focused trips as the definition of luxury sways towards a focus on the physical, spiritual and mental health benefits clients stand to gain from the travel experience. According to **Melanie Floor**, Founder and Director of Exclusive Serenity,



Melanie Floor

there is gathering interest among South African luxury travellers in a more comprehensive approach to wellness that goes beyond relaxation and adds value to travellers' health and quality of life. "There is a growing understanding that wellness is not simply about being pampered but about investing in oneself, improving one's health and ultimately enhancing one's quality of life," she says. Floor says that for luxury travellers with the means to travel regularly, the question is becoming less about where they can go and more about how they can make that time meaningful and beneficial. This is driving interest in wellness destinations offering personalised programmes, specialist expertise, diagnostics, technology and science-led health optimisation alongside traditional health or beauty treatments.



The natural setting of Chiva-Som Hua Hin reflects its holistic vision, offering a tranquil space where guests can disconnect. Photo: Exclusive Serenity

Motivations

The motivations behind these trips vary significantly from one traveller to another and from one generation to another, ranging from relaxation and stress management to fitness, performance, weight

management, aesthetics and longevity. The concept of healthspan has entered the luxury wellness conversation, with the focus not simply on adding years to life but on remaining healthy, active and independent for as

long as possible. Many travellers aged 40 and above seek de-stressing, relaxation, rejuvenation and weight management, favouring holistic renewal, spa wellbeing and therapeutic treatments such as

To page 10

TRAVEL IN A CLASS OF YOUR OWN.

Elevate your client's journey with **Avis Luxury Cars and Chauffeur Drive**, and you could **earn up to 40 ClubRed Roses** on every successful booking.

Scan the QR code to book or visit **avis.co.za**

clubred.co.za | 0861 021 111

Windhoek to Zurich direct – comfort and convenience

The Lufthansa Group hosted a Namibian travel trade group on a familiarisation trip to Switzerland during July. *Travel News* was invited along – **Linda van der Pol** reports.



Fondue dinner at Restaurant Alpenclub in Engelberg.

THERE was a celebratory atmosphere as the group boarded the Edelweiss flight at Windhoek, heading for Lucerne and Engelberg in Switzerland as the guests of Lufthansa.

The trip was on one of Edelweiss's new non-stop seasonal flights from Windhoek to Zurich which commenced on June 1.

The route is operated with the Airbus A350, the newest long-haul aircraft in the Edelweiss fleet, which offers a quiet and comfortable travel experience plus high efficiency and lower fuel consumption when compared with earlier generations of aircraft. It has larger windows, pleasant cabin lighting and a modern sense of space.

The Windhoek-Zurich service has three weekly flights continuing until the end of October, operating on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from Windhoek, giving travellers optimal connections within Europe as well as to numerous international destinations.

Flight WK83 departs Windhoek at 21h40, arriving in Zurich at 07h35 the following day.

Flight WK82 departs Zurich at 10h05 arriving in Windhoek at 19h40.

Dense network

The Lufthansa Group has an impressive number of flights to Namibia (ex-Windhoek) and to South Africa (ex-Johannesburg and Cape Town), where it has a dominant position among European carriers. The Group has more flights into South Africa than any other European airline group. The density of its southern African network makes for easy connections to Zurich, Frankfurt, and Munich.

Looking at onward connections, in Europe alone, the airlines of the Lufthansa Group cover over 200 destinations in more than 40 countries.

Ex-Namibia

Edelweiss (WK) – Three weekly flights WDH-ZRH. Airbus A350-900 (seasonal service until late October).

Discover (4Y) – Seven weekly flights WDH-FRA. Airbus A330-300 (year-round service).

Three weekly flights WDH-MUC. Airbus A330-300 (year-round service). From April 2027 this increases to five flights weekly.

Ex-South Africa

Edelweiss (WK) – Up to five weekly flights CPT-ZRH. Airbus A350-900 (seasonal service).

SWISS (LX) – Seven weekly flights JNB-ZRH. Airbus A340 (year-round service). From the end of October 2026, the A350-900 will operate on the JNB route with the all-new SWISS Senses onboard product.

Lufthansa (LH) – Seven weekly flights JNB-FRA. Boeing 747-8i (year-round service).

Three weekly flights JNB-MUC. Airbus A350-900 (year-round service). From the end of October this will increase to five weekly.

Lufthansa (LH) – Five weekly flights CPT-FRA. Boeing 787-9 (year-round service), with the all-new Lufthansa Allegris onboard product. From the end of October this will increase to seven weekly.

Seven weekly flights CPT-MUC. Airbus A350-900 (seasonal service), with the all-new Lufthansa Allegris product.

24 hours in Lucerne

Lucerne is in the heart of central Switzerland and is served by hourly direct train connections from Zurich airport.

It's easy to enjoy a full summer's day in Lucerne. The lake, the fourth largest in Switzerland, at an altitude of

435m, has its own beauty and the Alps make a fabulous backdrop. A boat cruise with lunch included is a popular option.

Lucerne has a famous covered wooden footbridge across the River Reuss, dating back to the 14thC.



In a small public park at Denkmalplatz near the city centre, is the Lion Monument, a rock sculpture created in the 19thC to commemorate the members of the Swiss Guard who were killed in 1792 during the French Revolution. Photo: Lucerne Tourism



Glacier caves experience – the only accessible glacier cave in the area. The cave's 150m-long walkway descends 20 metres below the surface of the glacier.



The Chapel Bridge is the oldest covered wooden footbridge in Europe, dating from the 14thC. It spans the Reuss River in Lucerne and has a tower that was a part of the fortifications of the old city. Photo: Lucerne Tourism Board

From page 8

The heights of central Switzerland

ENGELBERG is the highest tourist mountain resort in central Switzerland, only 40 minutes from Lucerne and 70 minutes from Zurich.

Nearby, Mount Titlis is a magnet for those seeking fun in the snow. It offers year-round snow and ice, along with attractions such as:

- Titlis Rotair: The world's first revolving cable car travels up to 3 020 metres above sea level, rotating 360 degrees during the five-minute trip, giving visitors panoramic views of rock faces, crevasses and mountain peaks.
- Glacier Cave: The cave's 150-metre-long walkway descends 20 metres below the surface of the glacier.
- Ice Flyer: The Ice Flyer chairlift promises spectacular views, including views down the 20m-deep crevasses. It operates year round and in the summer months it takes visitors from the summit station to the Glacier Park.
- Titlis Glacier Park: all kinds of fun activities are available on the glacier in summer. Snow tubing is a hit during winter.
- Cliff Walk: The Titlis Cliff Walk is Europe's highest suspension bridge and stretches high above the glacier.



Engelberg – a picturesque base for outdoor alpine activities, winter and summer.



The Titlis Cliff Walk is Europe's highest suspension bridge.



The Benedictine Monastery, founded in 1120, is Engelberg's proudest landmark. On selected days, the monastery offers guided tours into some of the historic rooms in the public area. Highlights include the Baroque Hall, the Guest Refectory and the Monastery Church.



One essential amenity your 5-star accommodation won't have.

To buy your Bryte Travel Insurance, or for more information, go to travelinsurance.brytesa.com, contact your travel agent or the Bryte Travel Customer Care Centre on 0860 737 775.

Bryte Insurance Company Limited is a licensed insurer and authorised FSP (17703). Policy terms and conditions apply.

bryteinsure.co.za

Insurance



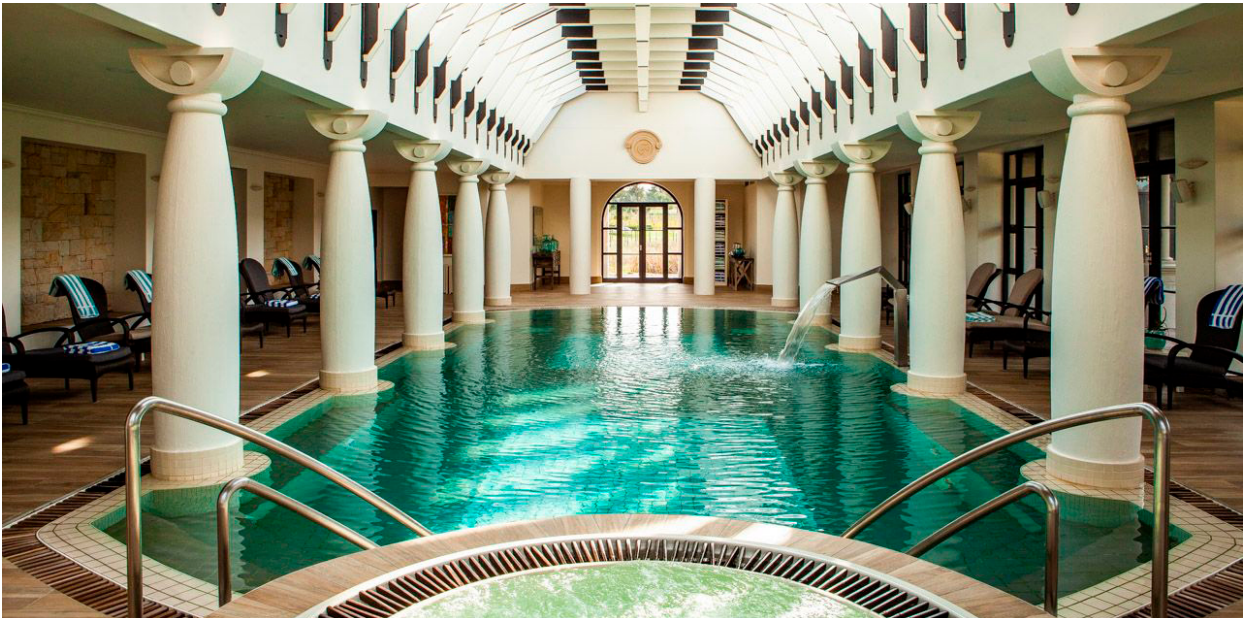
Mt Titlis is a magnet for skiers and snowboard enthusiasts.
Photo: engelberg.ch

Luxury with lasting benefits

From page 7
Pilates, massage and physiotherapy.
Younger travellers want relaxation and weight management but place greater emphasis on improving fitness, natural renewal and optimal performance, with activities such as Pilates, personal training and stretching.
“We see a generational shift from restorative wellness and therapeutic care towards proactive fitness, performance and preventative wellbeing,” says Floor.

Personalised
South African luxury wellness travellers want credible expertise and personalised solutions that can help them achieve specific outcomes.
There is now more differentiation between a traditional spa retreat and a comprehensive wellness destination, where the experience is structured around the individual and designed to support meaningful lifestyle changes that extend beyond the holiday.
“A wellness stay provides not only the opportunity to make changes, but also the expert guidance, structure, surroundings, nutrition and daily routines that facilitate those changes and make them easier to integrate into everyday life once the guest returns home.”

Tailored
Floor says South African travellers are showing interest in wellness resorts that can tailor



Santé Wellness Retreat & Spa in Paarl offers a personalised approach to health optimisation. Photo: Exclusive Serenity

stays around individual health goals and concerns.
Close to home, Santé Wellness Retreat & Spa in Paarl is attracting interest from guests looking to combine health optimisation with the more indulgent aspects of a luxury wellness stay. Its offering includes a personalised approach, health optimisation and a focus on nourishing cuisine.
Chiva-Som Hua Hin in Thailand is one destination attracting South African travellers, including a number of repeat clients. The Thai resort has developed its wellness offering over more than 30 years and combines expertise across fitness, physiotherapy, nutrition, holistic health, spa and aesthetics, with programmes tailored to individual guests.
REVĪVŌ Wellness Resort in Bali is also gaining momentum in the South African market. Its offering combines modern medical science, diagnostics and biohacking technologies with holistic wellness practices and ancestral Balinese traditions.

Opportunity
Floor says many high-end South Africans currently book their wellness stays directly with resorts. Wellness can involve highly personal health concerns that travellers may not want to discuss with their travel agent. Clients may also be unsure whether their agent understands specialist wellness resorts and the programmes they offer. This results in clients who know what they want researching and booking their stay directly.

This creates a clear opportunity for agents who develop specialist wellness knowledge.
Exclusive Serenity supports the trade with wellness webinars and product training aimed at helping agents understand the differences between hotels offering spa facilities and dedicated wellness destinations, as well as the range of wellness concepts and programmes available.
This is a good commercial opportunity. Floor says wellness trips do generate repeat business as clients return to destinations for further programmes or continue their wellness journey with the same resort. These are also typically higher-value bookings, offering meaningful commission potential.
She believes wellness can therefore develop into a lucrative niche for travel agents, built around longer-term client relationships rather than individual holidays.
The evolution of the sector is also challenging perceptions that travellers need to sacrifice traditional luxury to prioritise their wellbeing. Floor points to the culinary offering as one example, saying wellness cuisine has moved far beyond restrictive perceptions of healthy food.
“Luxury and wellness are no longer mutually exclusive. In fact, wellness travel is becoming an important part of the future of luxury travel.”
For Floor, it’s about the purpose of the trip. Wellness is no longer simply an amenity added to a luxury holiday but, increasingly, the reason for travelling in the first place.

Pole to Pole. In Comfort.

Exploring the world’s most remote regions

- ✓ From Antarctica to the Arctic & beyond
- ✓ Expedition experts & guided landings
- ✓ Small groups. Immersive access
- ✓ Suite accommodation and butler service at sea
- ✓ True expedition. True luxury.

Your Partner for Silversea Expeditions:



Voted the World’s and Africa’s Best Cruise Travel Agency



Admiral's Best Cruise Travel Agency
World's Best Cruise Travel Agency
Admiral's Best Cruise Travel Agency
Admiral's Best Cruise Travel Agency
Admiral's Best Cruise Travel Agency



SILVERSEA

EXPEDITIONS

Adventure everywhere. Luxury always.

011 514 0564 | info@cruise-vacations.co.za | www.cruise-vacations.co.za

Protecting luxury journeys

LUXURY is not only the five-star hotel, private transfer, cruise or bucket-list destination; it is also the comfort of knowing that every detail and eventuality has been catered for, including unexpected trip disruptions.

Anrieth Symon, Head of Travel at Bryte, explains that the more personalised and premium the itinerary, the more important it becomes to protect the financial commitment behind it. This is where travel insurance becomes more than a final add-on before documents are issued.

“For a premium traveller, it is about protecting the full trip: flights, accommodation, deposits, excursions, cruise bookings and special arrangements,” says Symon.



Anrieth Symon

Bryte has continued to refine its insurance offering with these travellers in mind.

“Our plans include benefits that speak to higher-value holidays, including emergency medical and related expenses, cancellation cover, baggage, cruise cover, winter sports, golf cover, public transport carrier delays and more. We cover a range of benefits that may not always be the ones that clients ask about first, but which can matter most when a trip becomes complicated,” says Symon.

Travel risks are changing quickly and weather disruptions, airline schedule changes and geopolitical uncertainty are now part of the conversation.

“A luxury holiday can involve connecting flights, prepaid tours, specialist activities, cruises and non-refundable deposits, so it helps to talk through the cover properly upfront,” advises Symon.

Service plays a big role too. “Travellers want to know that someone can help when they are stuck and unsure what to do next. Bryte Travel Assist gives travellers access to 24-hour worldwide assistance, whether they need medical support, help replacing lost travel documents, emergency travel or accommodation



Comprehensive travel insurance helps protect every stage of a premium journey. Photo: Magnific

arrangements or guidance when plans are disrupted.”

Bryte also continues to refine its processes to make the administration side easier for both the agent and the traveller.

“Policies can be issued electronically, documents are delivered digitally and customers can register and submit claims online. It may not be the exciting part of travel, but when something goes wrong, a straightforward

and simple process makes a difference to stress levels.”

Symon believes the best advice is to bring insurance into the conversation early.

“Discuss the full itinerary, cruise elements, deposits, connecting flights, planned activities, pre-existing medical conditions and non-refundable costs. Also explain the limits and exclusions clearly so the client understands the cover before they travel, rather

than only when they need to claim.

“Luxury travellers invest time, money and energy into creating memorable experiences. While insurance cannot replace the effort that goes into planning a special holiday, the right travel insurance helps protect the financial investment behind it and gives them comfort that if plans change, they are not left trying to manage matters on their own,” Symon says.



EMERALD
YACHT CRUISES



Not Cruising.
Yachting.

Seychelles, Middle East, Mediterranean & Caribbean

- ✓ Boutique yacht experience
- ✓ Marina platform & water sports included
- ✓ Flexible, relaxed onboard style
- ✓ Smaller ports & hidden harbours
- ✓ The newest trend in luxury travel

Your partner for
Emerald Yachts:



Cruise Vacations®

Voted the World's and Africa's Best Cruise Travel Agency



011 514 0564 | info@cruise-vacations.co.za | www.cruise-vacations.co.za

Coming features in



Premium/Business class



14 October 2026

Booking deadline:
16 September 2026

Early Bird Specials 2027



EARLY BIRD
SPECIAL OFFER

28 October 2026

Booking deadline:
30 September 2026

To book, please contact sales@travelnews.co.za

Tee time aboard Silversea

CRUISE Vacations is delighted to welcome Silversea's newly announced partnership with PerryGolf.

Gaynor Neill, CEO of Cruise Vacations, which represents Silversea in South Africa, tells *Travel News* that the partnership brings together one of the world's leading luxury cruise lines with one of the most respected names in international golf travel.

The new collection of PerryGolf Voyages gives guests the opportunity to play some of the world's most iconic golf courses while enjoying Silversea's all-inclusive luxury experience on its intimate ocean-going ships. Every aspect of the golfing experience has been thoughtfully arranged, allowing guests to simply enjoy both the journey and the game.

"We've often spoken

about the opportunity to create truly exceptional golf travel experiences. This new collaboration between Silversea and PerryGolf gives us exactly that, a seamless, professionally managed programme that combines world-class golf with one of the finest luxury cruise experiences available. It's a wonderful fit for discerning South African travellers who appreciate outstanding golf just as much as they value exceptional service and unforgettable destinations," says Neill.

She says the new collection complements Cruise Vacations' philosophy of creating highly personalised luxury journeys.

"Luxury today is about experiences. Whether you're standing on the cliffs overlooking Cape Kidnappers,

walking the fairways of Royal Liverpool or enjoying sunset cocktails back on board after a memorable round, these voyages offer something genuinely special. We believe they'll appeal not only to passionate golfers, but also to couples where one partner enjoys golf while the other enjoys the destination and luxury lifestyle that Silversea is renowned for."

Itineraries

Initial itineraries explore golfing experiences across:

- The British Isles aboard *Silver Spirit*, featuring Royal Liverpool, Prince's Golf Club, Portstewart, Castle Stuart and Dumbarnie Links.
- The Mediterranean aboard *Silver Ray*, including Camiral Stadium Course and Las Colinas.
- Australia and New Zealand



Silver Ray will sail the Mediterranean, including a stop at Camiral Stadium Course in Spain. Photo: Cruise Vacations

aboard *Silver Moon*, combining coastal cruising with championship courses including Cape Kidnappers and Kauri Cliffs.

The programme includes guaranteed tee times, green fees, luxury transfers, equipment handling, practice

facilities, on-course hospitality and dedicated PerryGolf hosts throughout each voyage.

The launch marks the beginning of an expanding collection of PerryGolf Voyages with more departures expected to be announced for 2028.

Shangri-La unveils festive programme

FOR clients who want to build sandcastles instead of snowmen this festive season, World Leisure Holidays is offering festive season stays at Shangri-La Le Touessrok, Mauritius.

Guests will have access to a programme of dining, entertainment and family activities throughout December and into January.

Under the theme 'The Island of Wonder', the resort's festive programme combines Mauritian experiences with special dinners, private island experiences, fireworks and activities for children, **Ramagodi Dikotla**, Marketing Assistant at World Leisure Holidays told *Travel News*.

According to Dikotla,



Ramagodi Dikotla

celebrations begin on December 22 with a tree-lighting ceremony, followed by The Grill Club on December 23.

Christmas Eve will feature

a dinner and fireworks, and Christmas Day includes a Christmas brunch and Il Giardino dinner. An Ultimate Mauritian Night follows on December 26, with a private island truffle and lobster dinner on December 27.

White Night

The resort's Annual White Night takes place on December 29, followed by a Michelin-star dinner with Chef **Louis Linster** on December 30.

New Year's Eve will be marked with a party on December 31, followed by a special breakfast and beach barbecue on January 1.

The programme continues into January with another

Michelin-star dinner with Chef **Louis Linster** on January 2, a private island dinner under the stars on January 3 and Mauritian Night on January 4.

Orthodox Christmas will be celebrated with fireworks on January 6, followed by an Il Giardino dinner on January 7 and The Grill Club on January 8.

Island escape

Shangri-La Le Touessrok at Trou d'Eau Douce offers more than 4km of coastline across six beaches surrounded by a turquoise lagoon, says Dikotla.

Accommodation includes beachfront villas and suites. Guests also have exclusive access to Ilot Mangénie

island, the resort's private island.

Guests can enjoy a variety of watersports including snorkelling, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, water skiing, pedal boating, windsurfing, glass-bottom boat tours and wakeboarding.

Alternatively, those looking for a more relaxing experience can unwind at Chi, the Spa.

The dining offering includes Mediterranean, Mauritian, Indian, Japanese and international cuisine.

Golfers can play at two 18-hole championship courses, Ile aux Cerfs Golf Club and Anahita Golf.

And kiddies will not be bored – the resort has a kids' club.

The World. In Ultra-Luxury.

900+ destinations across all 7 continents

✓ Access beyond the mainstream
✓ More time in iconic ports
✓ Spacious all-suite comfort
✓ Personalised butler service
✓ Seamless, all-inclusive value

Your Silversea Partner:

Cruise Vacations®

Voted the World's and Africa's Best Cruise Travel Agency

011 514 0564 | info@cruise-vacations.co.za |
www.cruise-vacations.co.za

FedAir invests in seamless safaris

FEDERAL Airlines (FedAir) has expanded its fleet and enhanced its airport offering as part of its continued investment in redefining luxury safari travel across Southern Africa.

Earlier this year the airline welcomed two new Cessna Grand Caravan EX aircraft, strengthening its shuttle services and VIP charter operations.

“The finest safari experiences deserve an equally exceptional journey,” says FedAir’s **Nicole Schickerling**, Commercial General Manager – Shuttle.

Configured for both scheduled shuttles and exclusive VIP charters, the new aircraft combine spacious cabins with the ability to access remote bush airstrips that larger commercial aircraft cannot reach.

“For guests seeking greater privacy and flexibility, the VIP charter configuration offers a tailored travel experience built around individual itineraries,” she adds.



Nicole Schickerling

Baobab Lounge
FedAir has expanded its ground offering with the opening of its new Baobab Lounge at Hoedspruit Eastgate Airport. According to Schickerling, the lounge is the first premium airport lounge of its kind at Hoedspruit and marks a significant enhancement to the Lowveld travel experience.

Open to all travellers passing through the airport, not only FedAir guests, the lounge provides a space to relax, refresh and prepare for the next stage of their journey.

Strengthening connections
The new aircraft and lounge form part of FedAir’s continued investment in the Lowveld, strengthening connectivity between South Africa’s major commercial gateways and some of its leading safari destinations.

By aligning its shuttle schedules with commercial arrivals from Johannesburg and Cape Town into



The new Baobab Lounge at Hoedspruit Eastgate Airport, open to all travellers.

Photo: Federal Airlines

Hoedspruit, Skukuza and Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, FedAir provides onward connections to more than 80 luxury safari lodges across the region.

“The result is less time spent in transit and more time enjoying the safari experience,” says

Schickerling.
“For us, luxury is never about extravagance alone. It’s about removing complexity, creating comfort and ensuring every guest enjoys a seamless journey from international arrival to safari lodge.”

Ancestral Passage in Okavango

Xigera Safari Lodge has introduced a new two-day, one-night experience in Botswana’s Okavango Delta – The Delta’s Ancestral Passage – available from May 2027.

Offered exclusively to guests booking a stay of four nights or more at Xigera, the experience takes guests through the Delta’s waterways by mokoro, accompanied by

guides whose families have lived alongside the waterways for generations. The journey incorporates stories and ancestral knowledge of the Delta. Guests then spend the evening around the fire and sleep overnight in the wilderness.

The experience was shaped by the conservation work of National Geographic Explorer

Steve Boyes and Nkashi Trust, which combines conservation, community and culture.

The Delta’s Ancestral Passage will be available from May to September and is designed for a maximum of six guests at a time. It can also be booked on an exclusive-use basis.

Reservations are now open for travel from May 2027.



A journey through Okavango Delta waterways by mokoro.

Photo: Xigera

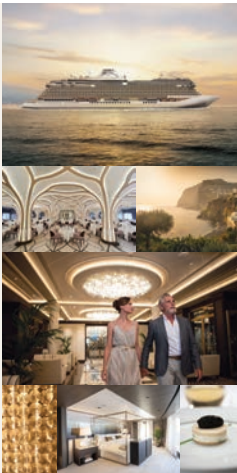


NOBODY DOES IT BETTER™

- Spaciously Intimate All-Suite, All-Balcony Ships
- Welcoming No More Than 822 Guests
- Nearly One Dedicated Crew Member Per Guest
- Exquisite Fine Dining, Wines and Spirits
- Sailing the World with Over 4,000 Included Excursions
- One All-Inclusive Fare

CRUISE IN ALL-INCLUSIVE, UNRIVALLED LUXURY

Call 012 664 0925 • email: janinep@encorecruises.co.za • www.encorecruises.co.za
Established Travel Partner for 30 Years. Specialising in Regent Seven Seas Cruises.



TN26D0797S

Scenic's next-generation yacht arrives in 2028

BOOKINGS are now open for the inaugural season of *Scenic Ikon*, the newest addition to the Scenic Discovery Yacht fleet. Launching in April 2028, *Scenic Ikon* will introduce a new era of ultra-luxury discovery, sailing through the Mediterranean, Aegean, northern Europe and Antarctica in its maiden season.

"For travel advisers already familiar with *Scenic Eclipse* and *Scenic Eclipse II*, *Ikon* builds on everything guests love while introducing an enhanced onboard experience, expanded dining and entertainment venues and even more opportunities for immersive exploration," **Gaynor Neill**, CEO of Cruise Vacations tells *Travel News*.

The inaugural season will see *Ikon* visit 110 ports across 21 countries, including 26 new destinations, taking guests from the Mediterranean and Egypt to Cape Verde, Dakar, Antarctica, the Falkland Islands and the Chilean Fjords.

Indulgence

Purpose-built for both warm-water cruising and polar expeditions, *Scenic Ikon* will accommodate just 270 guests in 135 all-verandah suites, each featuring personalised



A rendering of *Scenic Ikon*, which will sail a maiden season in April 2028. Image: Cruise Vacations

butler service, a separate lounge and bedroom, luxurious spa-inspired bathrooms and Scenic's signature all-inclusive Butler Bar.

"As with every Scenic Discovery Yacht, guests will enjoy truly all-inclusive ultra-luxury, complemented by an expert Discovery Team, two on-board helicopters and the custom-built submersible, delivering experiences unavailable on conventional luxury cruise ships," says Neill.

One of the standout distinctions on *Scenic Ikon* is its extraordinary culinary offering. Guests can choose from 15 all-inclusive dining venues, ranging from elegant fine dining and international cuisine to relaxed cafés and poolside dining.

New concepts include Alkemia, centred on an interactive open kitchen with plant-based cuisine, alongside the Artisanal Gelato & Café Bar and the Azure Café & Bar. The expanded culinary programme is complemented by eight bars and lounges, creating one of the most diverse dining experiences available on a luxury expedition yacht.

"For advisers, *Scenic Ikon* represents an exciting opportunity to introduce existing luxury cruise clients to Scenic's next generation of Discovery Yachts while appealing to expedition travellers seeking exceptional inclusions, world-class dining and genuine once-in-a-lifetime experiences," adds Neill.

Antarctica tops luxury wishlists

ANTARCTICA continues to dominate the world's most sought-after luxury travel experiences, and Cruise Vacations is helping travellers navigate the journey to the White Continent with expert guidance built on nearly two decades of experience.

"When Hollywood star **Nicole Kidman** recently chose Antarctica for her own once-in-a-lifetime journey, it once again highlighted the growing appeal of the White Continent as one of the world's most extraordinary luxury travel experiences," says **Gaynor Neill**, CEO of Cruise Vacations.

Having introduced Silversea Expeditions to the South African market almost 20 years ago, Cruise Vacations has helped hundreds of guests realise their dream of visiting Antarctica.

"Antarctica is unlike a traditional cruise holiday; every itinerary, every landing and every expedition requires careful planning, making expert advice invaluable," says Neill.

Luxury expeditions

Silversea's expedition fleet combines expedition capability with personalised service and luxurious accommodation, says Neill.

Silver Endeavour, a purpose-built Polar Class 6 expedition vessel, offers spacious all-suite accommodation and an exceptional crew-to-guest ratio.

Silver Cloud – Neill calls this the ship that redefined luxury expedition cruising – combines an intimate atmosphere with strong expedition credentials, while *Silver Wind* has been enhanced for polar

exploration and remains one of Silversea's most popular Antarctic ships.

Guests should expect to experience Zodiac cruises among towering icebergs, close encounters with penguins, seals and whales, expert-led lectures, guided landings, magnificent glaciers and pristine wilderness.

"No two expeditions are ever the same," says Neill.

The forthcoming opening of *The Cormorant* at 55 South in Puerto Williams will also provide Silversea guests with a seamless start and finish to the Fly Cruise Antarctica experience, adding another layer of comfort to the journey.

Personal support

Cruise Vacations provides guidance throughout the booking process, from helping travellers select the most suitable voyage and ship to advising on Fly Cruise and traditional crossings.

The company also assists with pre- and post-cruise planning, packing and expedition preparation, as well as visa and documentation guidance, while offering personal support from the initial enquiry through to departure.

"As interest in Antarctica continues to grow, demand for luxury expedition voyages has never been stronger," says Neill.

"Whether your clients are aboard *Silver Wind*, *Silver Cloud* or *Silver Endeavour*, Antarctica remains one of the world's most sought-after luxury travel experiences, where breathtaking wilderness meets uncompromising comfort," she adds. ■



Expeditions on *Silver Endeavour* offer guests close encounters with penguins. Photo: Cruise Vacations

Ultra-Luxury.

On the World's Great Rivers.

Central Europe, France, Portugal & Southeast Asia

Luxury river cruising. Seamlessly sold.

Your partner for Scenic Cruises:

Cruise Vacations®

Voted the World's and Africa's Best Cruise Travel Agency

011 514 0564 | info@cruise-vacations.co.za | www.cruise-vacations.co.za

SCENIC®
LUXURY CRUISES & TOURS

- ✓ Contemporary, new-build fleet
- ✓ Door-to-door ultra-luxury
- ✓ Personalised butler service
- ✓ Flexible dining & excursion choices
- ✓ Exclusive cultural access