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## Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines hosts two-day ‘Closer 2018’ Trade Conference

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines has hosted its first dedicated travel trade conference in over a decade, at The Belfry Hotel & Resort in Sutton Coldfield, near Birmingham. The aim of the ‘**Closer 2018**’ Trade Conference was to provide the trade with a more detailed understanding of Fred. Olsen, its product, mission, unique selling points, and to give a general update on developments within the cruise line.

The highly-successful two-day ‘Closer 2018’ trade event was free to attend, and attracted over 150 delegates, from a wide range of travel agents and tour operators across the UK, as well as a number of non-UK resellers. It was led by Mike Evans, Fred. Olsen’s Head of Sales, supported by event specialists

Dellar Davies, and involved the cruise line's Directors and senior management team, including Kate Wooldridge, Sales and Communications Manager, who acted as moderator.

Mike Evans, Head of Sales for Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, said:

"We would like to thank our trade partners for being so supportive of our 'Closer 2018' Conference; we could not have done it without your enthusiasm and input.

"The main reasons behind hosting this ambitious 'Closer 2018' Trade Conference were firstly, that we wanted to give our trade partners more of an insight into the new 'Fred. Olsen difference', and to highlight the extensive upgrades to our fleet.

"We also hoped to change the trade's perception of what we do and who we are, as a business. By selling the differences that make Fred. Olsen so attractive to our core market of over-55s, who analysis shows are now 'healthier, wealthier and fitter than ever before', our trade partners can bring significant financial rewards to their business.

"In my opinion, we have achieved our objectives, and more. I hope that those who attended the Conference will also agree."

Feedback from the delegates attending the two-day Conference has been very positive:

*"I just wanted to say a big thank-you, I think it's safe to say it was a huge success. We learned so much about Fred. Olsen and feel incredibly positive about the product and agent support available...and I am still in shock about winning a cruise!"* **Lindsay Coleman, Wowcruise**

*"We have learned so much and really looking forward to promoting Fred's ocean cruise programme and especially the Brabant river cruise product."* **Jane Wakefield, Personal Travel Agent, The Midcounties Co-operative**

*"The 'Closer' conference was excellent – and so good to see so many faces and reinforce the loyalty so many have for Fred. Olsen."* **James Hill – Go Cruise franchisee**

*“Thank you for an informative conference. It was a great event.”* **Katie Downing, ROL Cruise**

Business sessions on the first day of the Conference included an introduction to **‘Bringing You Closer’**, explaining how Fred. Olsen specialises in ‘bringing the world closer’ to its guests, the experience, and the destination.

This was followed by **‘Feel The Real’**, outlining the ‘authenticity’ of Fred. Olsen’s cruises and giving delegates a detailed look at how these ‘closer’ itineraries are developed.

**‘The Fleet Renewed’** session showcased the multi-million-Pound investment that Fred. Olsen has made across its ocean fleet to enable it to continue to provide facilities that meet – and exceed – guest expectations.

Fred. Olsen’s five Directors also took part in a moderated panel discussion to provide delegates with answers to their most commonly-asked questions, such as the future direction of the cruise line and the role of the trade in its sales strategy.

Guest speaker Debbie Marshall, Managing Director of Silver Travel Advisor – the 50+ travel specialists – concluded the first day’s business sessions with an insightful presentation on **‘Taking a Closer Look at Later Life’**, focussing on the trends and consumer habits of the growing 50+ travel market.

Finishing the first day in style, Fred. Olsen gave those in attendance an “exclusive” insight into **‘The Big Fred. Olsen Giveaway’**, a-soon-to-be-launched competition for UK travel agents to win a car for Christmas, as well as the chance to win a cruise for two every month up to Christmas. The launch of these fantastic prizes will take place later this month.

Day two of the ‘Closer 2018’ Trade Conference comprised a series of smaller, interactive workshops, which delegates were able to select to suit their individual requirements. Sessions included **‘Get ‘Closer’ to Fred. Olsen Technology’** and **‘Get ‘Closer’ to Fred. Olsen River Cruises’**.

**Photo caption:**

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' Directors take part in a moderated panel discussion at the 'Closer 2018' Trade Conference at The Belfry Hotel & Resort, Sutton Coldfield. Pictured, left to right: Pete Deer – Commercial Director; Justin Stanton – Sales and Marketing Director; Clare Ward – Director of Product and Customer Service; Thomas Rennesland – Hotel Operations Director; and Mike Rodwell – Managing Director.

**For further information on Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines, visit the website at [www.fredolsencruises.com/travel-agent-centre](http://www.fredolsencruises.com/travel-agent-centre), or call the Trade Support Team on 01473 746164.**

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Fred. Olsen Cruise Line operates in the UK with four intimately sized ships for a more personal cruising experience.

## Contacts



**Georgina May**

Press Contact

PR Manager

[georgina.may@fredolsen.co.uk](mailto:georgina.may@fredolsen.co.uk)



**Georgie Long**

Press Contact

PR Executive

[georgie.long@fredolsen.co.uk](mailto:georgie.long@fredolsen.co.uk)