

# Windstar Cruises Email Rebrand Case Study



## Overview

As part of Windstar Cruises' broader 2024 brand refresh, I helped transition promotional email campaigns from legacy layouts and styling into a more modern, elevated, and conversion-focused experience aligned with updated creative guidelines.

This evolution can be seen by comparing an earlier Northern Europe promotional campaign with a later Warm Weather promotional email developed after the rollout of the refreshed brand system. The project required close collaboration between marketing, creative, and development teams to ensure the new visual identity translated effectively into responsive HTML email experiences across devices and inbox clients.

## The Challenge

The older Northern Europe promotional email relied heavily on Windstar's previous visual system. While effective at the time, the layout used denser content structures, heavier navigation treatments, and more segmented promotional blocks that competed visually with the primary campaign messaging. Typography and spacing were more utilitarian, and the overall reading experience felt more promotional than experiential.

As the rebrand launched, there was a need to modernize the email experience and better reflect Windstar's luxury small-ship positioning. The updated direction emphasized cleaner layouts, elevated typography, immersive destination storytelling, and a more editorial-inspired visual approach designed to emotionally connect with travelers before presenting promotional offers.

The challenge was not only redesigning the experience visually, but also translating those updated branding standards into scalable, responsive email templates that rendered consistently across inbox clients and mobile devices.

## My Background

Shannon Adams  
HTML E-mail Developer for  
Windstar Cruises

## My Role

My role extended beyond simply coding the emails themselves. I was responsible for helping bridge the gap between creative vision and technical execution while ensuring the final product maintained both brand consistency and responsive functionality.

Responsibilities included:

- Responsive HTML development
- UI/UX optimization
- Figma-to-HTML production
- CTA and content hierarchy
- Cross-client QA testing
- Creative collaboration
- Modular template development

## My Approach

Another major creative shift involved moving away from purely promotion-driven layouts toward more immersive destination storytelling.

The Warm Weather campaign leaned more heavily into aspirational imagery, emotional positioning, and softer luxury presentation. Rather than immediately presenting offers or pricing, the email focused first on selling the experience itself — allowing users to emotionally connect with the destinations before being driven toward itinerary exploration and conversion actions.

This approach aligned more closely with Windstar's updated luxury brand positioning and helped elevate the overall feel of the campaign experience.

# Collaboration & Creative Workflow

During the redesign process, I worked closely with the creative team using Figma to translate newly established branding guidelines into scalable and responsive email modules.

This collaboration involved reviewing updated typography systems, spacing standards, color palettes, CTA treatments, and content pacing while adapting web-inspired UI concepts into email-safe development patterns.

Because email development carries far more technical limitations than web design, much of the process involved balancing visual sophistication with rendering consistency across platforms such as:

Gmail, Outlook, Apple Mail, Mobile inbox environments, Dark mode experiences

A large portion of the work focused on preserving the elevated feel of the new branding while ensuring accessibility, responsiveness, and performance across all major clients.

## ✓ Results & Impact

The Warm Weather campaign represented a meaningful evolution in both Windstar's email UX strategy and its broader digital brand presentation.

The redesign helped:

- Improve click-through engagement
- Strengthen alignment with Windstar's luxury rebrand
- Create cleaner user journeys from email to booking pages
- Improve mobile readability and usability
- Establish a more scalable development system
- Strengthen collaboration between creative and development teams

Beyond a single campaign, the project helped establish a more modern and conversion-focused promotional email framework that could continue scaling across future initiatives and brand campaigns.

3.12%

Click-Through Rate (CTR) increase on all ad-hoc promotional emails from 2024-2025.

5.46%

Conversion rate increase on all ad-hoc promotional emails from 2024-2025.

## UI/UX Improvements

One of the most immediate improvements in the newer Warm Weather campaign was the simplification of the visual hierarchy. The redesigned campaign introduced a cleaner and more minimal header structure with improved spacing and less visual noise. This allowed users to focus more quickly on the hero imagery and primary campaign messaging without distraction.



## CTA Positioning & Engagement Strategy

CTA placement and interaction flow were also re-evaluated during the redesign process.

The updated template:

- Reduced visual clutter around buttons and promotional links
- Positioned CTAs closer to emotionally engaging content
- Improved mobile tap accessibility
- Created stronger sectional separation
- Established clearer interaction pathways

Promotional sections and destination links were also reordered to better match user browsing behavior and reading patterns.

These refinements contributed to stronger engagement patterns and improved click-through performance compared to older promotional layouts.

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So, where will you go for a refreshing change of pace this summer?

- **Belgium:** Start the day with a Belgian waffle at a local café in Bruges and step into a chocolatier's workshop to watch artisans handcraft chocolates up close.
- **Norway:** Stroll the Art Nouveau streets of Alesund before stopping by a rustic fish-market hall for some pan-seared Arctic char.
- **British Isles:** Explore the ruins of Dunollie Castle just outside the Scottish town of Oban, perched above the bay on a site fortified since the Bronze Age.
- **Iceland:** In Seydisfjörður, grab coffee and a pastry at one of Iceland's oldest buildings and head to the Blue Church for a complimentary folk artist showcase.

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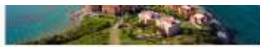
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