



Avalon's Australian sales explode

Forward bookings for Avalon Waterways river cruises have surged by almost 50% in Australia and 35% in NZ.

AVALON Waterways' 2012 sales in Australia are up by almost 50% compared to last year, with Asian cruises booming by almost 400%.

In an interview with *Cruise Weekly*, Globus Family of Brands' Australasian marketing manager Christian Schweitzer said that although the Asian increase was off a small base, the demand for Mekong cruises had prompted the company to offer five times as many sailings in 2013.

Launching next year, *Avalon Angkor* has seven departures scheduled for 2012 but will have 35 departures in 2013.

"Forward sales have filled that ship dozens of times over, so in 2013 we will have an extended selling season in line with this demand," Schweitzer said.

But the main driver of growth was in Europe, where the company is reaping the benefits of repeat passengers.

"We know that once a client experiences a river cruise, they'll be back," Schweitzer said.

"Amsterdam to Budapest is the initial drawcard but we are seeing a significant interest in France for the second-time cruiser."

Sales for China and Egypt cruises were "consistent with previous trends," he said.

Schweitzer urged agents to take advantage of the surge in demand and the generous commissions offered by Avalon Waterways.

"Agents are particularly well rewarded for selling river cruises, and this is also helping to fuel enthusiasm for river cruising."

Schweitzer also predicted a big future for the

New Zealand river cruise market, where business is up 35% up on this time last year, based on forward sales.

"They're currently set to have a record season across the ditch," Schweitzer said.

Meet the 1000th Commodore



KIWI travel agent, Campbell Brown of Flight Centre Blenheim holds the distinction of being the 1000th agent to graduate from the P&O Academy as a Commodore.

The landmark event occurred after Brown, worked his way through the ranks of First Officer and Staff Captain, via the completion of online modules, before undertaking the last eTicketing, Ceremonies at Sea, shore tours, customer service and Australian ports modules to become a Commodore.

P&O Academy launched in Dec 2009, and has since its inception, signed up more than 5,500 travel agents across Australia and New Zealand for online training.

Participation in P&O Academy is free and agents can learn more at www.MyCCS.com.au.

Brown is pictured above showing off his hard earned certificate following his discovery that he was the 1000th P&O Academy Commodore.

TODAY'S ISSUE OF CW

Cruise Weekly's new-look trade issue today features five pages of news and photos, plus see **page six** for details on Fred Olsen Cruise Lines from CruiseAbroad, and see **page seven** for Star Cruises' *SuperStar Virgo* end of season sale.

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ICCA UPDATE

ICCA General Manager,
Brett Jardine

Beautiful Harbours

There wouldn't be too many people that would disagree with Sydney being one of the world's great harbours to enter by cruise ship.

There are certainly many others and with some input from someone who has spent many years cruising the world (Roger Condon, Cruise Sales Manager at Discover the World Marketing – GSA for ICCA Cruise line Member, Hurtigruten), between us we agreed on some notables such as Istanbul, New York and Venice plus many more that won't all fit into this week's column.

Istanbul – the meeting point of "East and West".

In fact the world's only city covering two continents.

Many cruise lines include overnight stays here and during the Eastern Mediterranean high season there will be multiple cruise ships here most days.

Roger describes entering Istanbul harbour as "a visual feast, a journey into a great eastern empire".

New York certainly speaks for itself when arriving by cruise ship with the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building being two notable landmarks that will take your breath away.

A city of high energy and great diversity, New York's cruise history extends back to the hundreds of thousands of immigrants that arrived from Europe on the great liners of the 20th Century.

Personally I have visited Venice on a couple of occasions but long before a career in cruising was on my radar.

I'll take it from my resident expert, Roger, that cruising into Venice is an incredible

experience with ships sailing so close to the Piazza San Marco, St Marks Basilica, Doge's Palace and the Hotel Danieli you can almost touch them!



NCL reports solid growth in Q3

Norwegian Cruise Line's parent company has increased net profits, yields and operating income this year.

NCL Corporation has reported a rise in net profit to US\$110 million in the third quarter (ending 30 Sep 2011), up from US\$93 million in the same period last year, with revenues increasing to US\$666 million from US\$634 million.

Net yield increased 3.8%, largely driven by higher ticket pricing, which in turn saw net revenue grow 4.6% to \$491.6 million from \$469.8 million.

Operating income for the quarter improved 18.3% to \$162.7 million from \$137.6 million and adjusted EBITDA increased 13.4% to \$210.0 million from \$185.2 million, primarily due to strong revenue performance across the fleet.

"A strong summer season resulted in solid top-line growth in the quarter," said Kevin Sheehan, NCL president and ceo.

Pricing was up across the fleet despite several voyages being impacted due to tropical weather in the US northeast and Caribbean, he said.

"Benefits realised from ongoing business improvement initiatives coupled with non-

recurring expenses in the third quarter of 2010 related to the launch of *Norwegian Epic* resulted in a decrease in net cruise cost per capacity day of 2%, after considering a 17.9% increase in the price of fuel in 2010," the company said in a statement.

"Excluding fuel expense, net cruise cost per capacity day decreased 5.3%, or 6.2% on a constant currency basis."

The line will launch *Norwegian Breakaway* in April 2013 followed by *Norwegian Getaway* in 2014, with both ships to include the popular studio single cabins.

Escape Paris to Normandy



LAST week Escape Travel agents from across Australia enjoyed an eight-day sojourn in France, courtesy of Avalon Waterways.

The voyage departed Paris to Normandy onboard Avalon Waterways' *Creativity*, and took agents to quaint villages along the Seine, Vincent van Gogh's Auvers-sur-Oise, Claude Monet's gardens in Giverny, Joan of Arc's Rouen and the poignant WWII D-Day landing beaches.

The agents are pictured above on Omaha Beach (from left) Shaun Caratozzolo, Clinton Hearn, Joe Temczuk, Bianca Robertson, Dean Brierley, Natasha Bennett, Simone Vance and Melissa Jeffrey.

APT offers flights for a steal

CRUISERS who book and deposit any of APT's 12-, 15- and 16-day Vietnam, Cambodia and Mekong cruise holidays, departing Jun 2012-Apr 2013, before 31 Mar 2012 will fly return for \$599pp.

For details see www.aptourig.com.au.

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Carnival Cruise Lines WAKE UP TO SOMETHING NEW

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Ponant set for major down under push

COMPAGNIE du Ponant is set to give Aussie agents a true experience of its offerings, with next year's Cruiseco conference in Port Douglas coinciding with a visit to Australasian waters by its *L'Austral* luxury vessel.

In Australia last week, Ponant's commercial director Philippe Mahouin told **TD** that Australia is a key focus for the line, and hailed the efforts of its local representative, Travel The World.

"We're seeing continuing extraordinary growth out of Australia," he said, with popular itineraries incl the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Great North.

L'Austral will undertake a northern Australian itinerary at the end of Mar, crossing from French Polynesia to call in Cairns, Cooktown, Townsville and Darwin before heading on to Bali and Singapore - and while here agents will have the opportunity for inspections.



"This is the first step to greater awareness," Mahouin said, with Ponant expanding capacity with a recently ordered third vessel which will be a sister ship to the 132-passenger *L'Austral* and *Le Boreal*.

Mahouin is pictured above at Sydney's Rockpool restaurant with TTW's Michelle Taylor.



P O R T H O L E

FANCY a crabby patty with Spongebob? Arguably one of the strangest yet beloved children's characters, SpongeBob SquarePants, is in high demand on the seven seas - so much so that Norwegian Cruise Line is introducing him onboard *Norwegian Gem* in Feb next year.

Part of Norwegian's Nickelodeon themed entertainment offering, the yellow sponge man will entertain children and perplex adults alike on *Gem's* year round New York sailings, alongside fellow Nickelodeon characters such as Dora the Explorer.

And if just glimpsing the sea sponge on deck is not enough, guests will be able to book in to share a bite with him as part of *Gem's* "Breakfast with Nickelodeon" package.

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P&O's new Guest email service

FROM the moment guests pay the initial deposit on their P&O Cruises voyage, they will begin to receive a tailored series of emails to help build excitement during the countdown to their adventure, following the launch of a new P&O personalised passenger email program.

The emails will contain a host of useful information and tips from Carnival Australia ceo Ann Sherry, the ship's captain, the cruise director and the shore tour manager.

"We think passengers will really love getting emails about their holiday. Not only will they be useful, they'll also help to build excitement," said Jenny Lourey, Senior Vice President of Carnival Australia.

Relais & Chateaux cooking

SILVERSEA will feature Relais & Chateaux cooking schools on twenty voyages in 2012. The schools will include demonstrations, presentations, knife skills, baking techniques and regional recipe preparations. For details see www.silversea.com.

Make an NCL Freestyle Dash

BETWEEN 09 and 12 Nov Norwegian Cruise Line is hosting a Freestyle Dash promotion which offers guests who book sailings of three days or longer (for all ships and destinations) up to US\$250 on-board credit per stateroom. Contact your preferred supplier for details.

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Earlybird Easter cruise deals

SEA Cloud Cruises is offering a 5% discount off the cruise-only price when booking two cabins onboard river yacht voyages along the Dutch and Belgian waterways or *Sea Cloud* voyages around Sicily and the Peloponnese, over the 2012 Easter period.

10% discounts will also be offered off the cruise-only price when booking three cabins, whilst children aged 6-18 years will receive a 50% discount off the cruise-only rate when staying in their own cabin.

Bookings must be made by 31 Jan 2012.

Carnival ups tipping guide

CRUISERS onboard Carnival Cruise Line vessels will soon be advised to increase their tipping rates by 15%.

According to recent reports the cruise line is amending its tipping guidelines from 01 Dec, with guests to pay US\$11.50 per passenger per day, instead of the current US\$10.



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The Riviera is all in a days work



A GROUP of very lucky Australian travel agents had the opportunity to explore the wonders of the Mexican Riviera recently, onboard *Carnival Splendor* as part of a Travel the World, Carnival Cruise Lines and V Australia agent incentive.

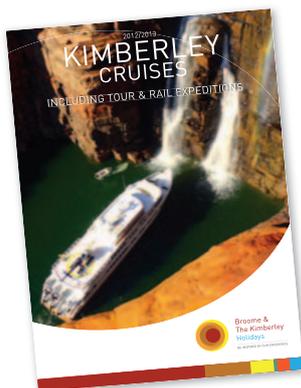
The pampering began for the group with a flight from Sydney to LA with V Australia, before they departed Long Beach onboard *Carnival Splendor* to spend two-days in the celebrity soaked Cabo San Lucas where they swam with dolphins.

Other ports on the menu included the tropical Puerto Vallarta where agents enjoyed zip lining through the jungle.

Onboard agents were spoiled for choice, with countless activities provided each day, fine dining and after dinner dancing.

The agents also enjoyed watching the hairy chest competitions at the main pool, and learning to dance in the 'Speculator, Spectacular' theatre.

The group is pictured above (from left) Leighton Schembri, Travel the World; Dani Trimarchi, V-Australia; Chloe Kenny, Jetset Norwood; Lara Pritchard, HWT Castle Hill; Brooke Sprod, Best Cruises; Sarah Rodgers, East Burwood Travel; Robert Jennings, Travel the World and Jennifer Bishop, Cruise Mart.



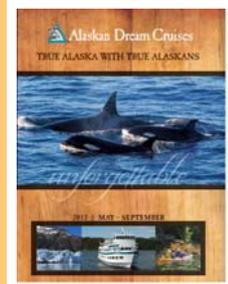
Brochure Spotlight

Alaska's newest Small Ship Cruise Company, Alaska Dream Cruises has released its 2012 cruise brochure, offering 3-, 6-, 8- and 11-day small ship adventures of Alaska's Inside Passage.

Itineraries feature exclusive shore excursions, remote port communities and intimate wildlife viewing with a focus on showcasing "True Alaska by True Alaskans".

Early Booking Savings are also available on six day or more cruise itineraries.

See www.smallshipadventure.com.



Fly Free to Europe with Swan

SWAN Hellenic is celebrating its early 2012 sailings by offering three Fly Free Grand Voyages, including the 28-day Grand Islands, Iberia and Italy cruise departing 02 Mar 2012 from \$9,995pp; the 28-day Grand Mediterranean and Black Sea voyage departing 29 Mar 2012 from \$10,995pp; and the 28-day Grand Western Mediterranean cruise departing 25 Apr 2012 from \$11,995pp.

See www.swanhellenic.com.au.

RCCL lowers its expectations

ROYAL Caribbean Cruises has issued revised guidance on its expected full year earnings per share, saying it expects EPS to be within a range of US\$2.70-\$2.80, down 0.15 on prior forecasts.

The drop is being attributed to the strengthening US dollar and the fuel option revaluation loss.

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Face to Face: Suzannah Crowley Director, Small Ship Adventure Company and Alaska Bound

Welcome to Face to Face, where we chat to cruise industry leaders.

How did you get into the cruise industry?

After a career in broadcasting I joined the family business which has always been focused on small ship cruising.

What is the key to your success?

Our passion for what we sell, we truly try to provide only product that we believe in and do enjoy ourselves.

What is your favourite destination, and why?

Alaska is just addictive, I spent my honeymoon there in winter at a wilderness lodge, snow machining into the backcountry to see the sunset over Mt Mckinley, unforgettable.

What was your most memorable moment on a cruise?

Kayaking in Prince William Sound at the face of a calving glacier with sea lions.

What is the next "hot spot" in cruising destinations?

True cultural experiences at any destination that explore first hand the real history of the towns and wilderness through the eyes of locals, such as Zegrahm Expeditions.

How can cruising continue to grow in the current financial climate?

Focusing on niche areas such as small ship and expedition cruising allow wholesalers like us and travel agents to stand out from the crowd, add to this top product knowledge and service and you can't go wrong.

What makes Australians and Kiwis different to other cruise passengers?

Aussies and Kiwis have a great sense of humour and an adventurous spirit which on small ships allows for spontaneous fun and unexpected memorable moments. Our small ship companies love Aussies and Kiwis on board!

What is your best tip for seasickness?

Take a small ship in Alaska as they stay in sheltered waters!



Suzannah's Cruise Favourites!

Ship: *Safari Explorer*, American Safari Cruises

Ship Activity: Socialising in the Wilderness

Shore Excursion: Meeting locals of any kind for a chat

Port: Haines, Alaska

Onboard Food: Fresh local seafood of any kind

Perk of the Job: Making friends far and wide, and the travel of course

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Selected departures from 2 October 2011 – 25 March 2012

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