

# CRUISE

WEEKLY



Thursday 12 April 2012

## Avalon Waterways lifts market share

Avalon Waterways says a strong 2012 performance has seen it take business from its rivals.

**AVALON** marketing manager Christian Schweitzer is champing at the bit for the

release of the 2011 International Cruise Council Australasia statistics at the end of Apr.

That's because he wants to see how big the river cruising business was out of Australia last year, and confirm expectations that Avalon has "taken a greater bite of that pie".

Speaking at a Sydney function to launch the Avalon 2013 brochure yesterday, Schweitzer and md Stewart Williams were bullish about the brand's success which has seen Australian cruisers experience its product in ever greater numbers, with a 40% boost in business over the last 12 months (see today's *Travel Daily*).

The growth has followed the very strong debut of the *Avalon Panorama* in May 2011.

Williams said that the market had now moved beyond what he called the "balcony wars" between rivals Scenic and APT, with Avalon carving out its own territory with a "modern, contemporary product" at a lower price point where passengers choose what activities they want to undertake.

As well as larger cabins and "open air balconies" (large glass sliding doors with a railing), Suite Ship features include a cappucino machine for that post-excursion caffeine fix.

**MEANWHILE** Williams also expressed interest in possibly offering an Australasian small ship cruising product "in due course".

"There may be an opportunity in which we start dabbling in that arena," he said, saying cruises around Australia and to Antarctica would be "quite a nice area to look at".

"It's a particular product that would fall into our niche," he said, with the Globus Family already offering the Galapagos and Mekong.

More from Avalon on **page three**.

## Azamara Quest repairs

**AZAMARA** Quest will return to service on 24 Apr, following the completion of repairs to the ship in the wake of the 30 Mar engine fire which left the vessel drifting in the Indian Ocean.

Quest is currently in Singapore's Sembawang Shipyard with repairs said to be "proceeding as planned".

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## ICCA UPDATE

ICCA General Manager,  
Brett Jardine

## Spotlight on ICCA Itinerary Planning

There are somewhere in the vicinity of 2,000 ports capable of receiving cruise ships around the world so designing the right itinerary that will work for the cruise line as well as catering for the expectations (and opinions) of passengers can be a challenge!

What are they key factors that determine exactly where ships are going to be deployed?

Is it feedback from passengers, the cost of actually docking at particular ports, the return achieved from passengers shore excursions in each location or is it something to do with sailing distances (which impact fuel costs) that ultimately drive itinerary planning?

The primary reason for deployment decisions is based on passenger feedback but increasingly other factors are being taken into consideration to determine the right strategy in maximising passenger enjoyment and economic value to the cruise line.

If a port increases the charges for visiting ships and rising fuel costs are then added to the equation, ultimately the passenger will have to cover the cost via the end price of their cruise holiday – not what we want to see!

The cruise industry does have the ability to make changes fairly quickly so where your clients are given the opportunity to provide feedback it is important for you to encourage them to do so.

Ultimately we want to see more people cruising as this leads to greater benefit, not only for travel agents and cruise lines but also for the many ports of call along the way.



## P&O ventures into Papua New Guinea

For the first time, *Pacific Dawn* will sail from Brisbane to PNG on two special itineraries next season.

P&O Cruises has added a new destination for Australians, with new cruises set to visit the remote islands and towns of Milne Bay in Papua New Guinea.

Departing from Brisbane, *Pacific Dawn* will call at the local capital Alotau as well as the white-sand beaches of Doiini Island and the Trobriand Islands, also known as the Islands of Love, along the northern straits of the bay.

The maiden cruise to Milne Bay in Oct 2013 is timed to coincide with the Canoe and Kundu Festival where local communities compete in canoe races, costume display and cultural performances.

The PNG sailings are priced from \$1,049pp (quad share) for a nine-night cruise.

Ann Sherry, ceo of Carnival Australia, said that P&O was excited to be offering its first dedicated cruises to this “exotic” country.

“Papua New Guinea is one of the most remote and untouched corners of the world – it’s so close to Australia geographically, but a million miles away in terms of culture and scenery,” Sherry said.

“We’re very excited to be able to take Australian holidaymakers from their doorstep and show them this region from the comfort of a superliner for the first time.

“Cruising really is the perfect way to explore Papua New Guinea’s idyllic beaches and scenery and discover its ancient customs and history.”

On sale from 23 Apr, P&O’s new 2013-14 program also features 73 departures across

### Expanded Experiences

CRYSTAL Cruises has added 14 themes on 28 cruises next year.

Amongst the Experiences of Discovery are a new photography themed voyage (23 Oct), which will involve professional photographers teaching guests photographic skills and tricks of the trade, as well as leading photo expeditions.

Also in the line-up is an 18 May Grand Prix theme which includes onboard Esprit du Grand Prix Formula One talks and presentations.

For more information visit Wiltrans at [www.wiltrans.com.au](http://www.wiltrans.com.au).

22 different itineraries, with *Pacific Dawn* sailing from Brisbane and *Pacific Jewel* and *Pacific Pearl* from Sydney.

Other highlights of next season include more weekend getaways and short breaks ranging from three to six nights.

Several itineraries are based around lifestyle themes as well as Melbourne Cup and Australia Day cruises.

Short break cruises start from \$529 per person quad share for a three-night cruise from Sydney.

Pacific Islands cruises start from \$699 per person quad share for a seven-night cruise from Brisbane and \$1,099pp/qs for nine-night itineraries from Sydney.

Travel agents can learn more about the new program through free one-hour webinars at 8.30am on 17 and 18 Apr.

To register, visit: [www.myccs.com.au](http://www.myccs.com.au).

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## Avalon unveils 'personalised' cruises

IN 2013 Avalon Waterways will launch Avalon Choice, claimed to be an 'entirely new concept in river cruising'.

Guided bike excursions, on-shore dining and alternative sightseeing options are among the changes to be introduced by Avalon next year.

The company has employed a new guest services team to help passengers choose places to eat and enjoy the local culture off-ship.

They will also be offered Avalon Choice Excursions, available in three tour types: the new 'Essential Sightseeing', as well as 'Traditional' and 'Leisurely' sightseeing options.

Essential Sightseeing provides a basic orientation of the must-sees, then free time for passengers to explore on their own.

Guided bike excursions will be organised in several European ports, as well as Nordic walking sticks.

Also new for 2013, clients can select an alternative sightseeing experience, with help

from the guest services team, allowing them to focus on special interests.

Avalon Choice Dining will also allow greater options at every meal, including the addition of a bistro, "tastings" of the destinations' delicacies, and local chefs coming on board to prepare local dishes.

Also new for the coming season is the Culture & Cruise program featuring activities such as beer tastings, demonstrations by local artisans and talks by local experts.

Avalon Waterways said these developments would "elevate Avalon beyond the ordinary river cruise experience by helping our travellers create an extraordinary small ship cruise vacation".

### Liebmann's Avalon 'retirement'

STEVE Liebmann will no longer be an Avalon Waterways Ambassador after this year, with his role in establishing the brand in the market now complete.

Avalon md Stewart Williams said that enlisting Liebmann along with an "exclusive collection" of voyages for Australian clients had worked extremely well, but it was now time for a change.

The media personality has been associated with Avalon for some years now, with his role including hosting an annual voyage.

Williams said that Liebmann had helped Avalon carve out a point of distinction amidst the so-called "balcony wars" between other operators such as Scenic and APT.



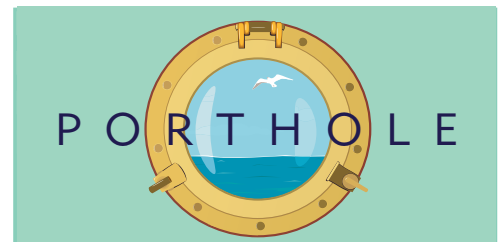
### Another Aussie for Avalon

AVALON Waterways will seek another Australian godmother next year when its fifth 'Suite Ship', *Avalon Artistry II*, is christened in Europe.

MD Stewart Williams said this year's newbuilds, *Avalon Visionary* and *Vista*, will have Canadian and American godmothers, but it's Australia's turn again in 2013.

He said that using Channel 9 *Today Show* host Lisa Wilkinson as godmother of the *Avalon Panorama* last year had been a huge success, generating in excess of \$3.5 million in publicity for the cruise line.

Williams wouldn't be drawn on potential godmothers for *Artistry II*, but revealed that in the past Avalon had considered Aussie movie icon Cate Blanchett as a possibility.



#### KEEPING fit.

One Australian great-grandmother is inspiring older Aussies to keep fit, a trend which may see a rise in demand for onboard fitness programs for older cruise passengers.

The 90-year old Edna Shepherd is a regular at her Melbourne gym, taking an aqua class every day, as well as sweating it out in aerobics, tai chi and body pump classes.

The great grandmother is such a force of nature, that gym junkies a third of her age look up to her for inspiration.

"Maybe it's good genetics, but it is also her attitude to life, that has helped inspire others to be like her," her gym instructor said.

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Voting Closes 27 April 2012



## Want a backstage pass?

ROYAL Caribbean has posted a new video on its website, designed to familiarise holidaymakers with the brand.

Titled "A Royal Caribbean Backstage Pass" the video gives cruisers an exclusive look at cruise ship operations, **CLICK HERE** to view.

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To kick start your **Avalon 2013 sales**

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## Where will all the Queens be next year?

**CUNARD'S** three Queens will offer 106 voyages next year, visiting 99 ports across 35 countries, with highlights including several maiden calls and a sprinkling of overnight stays.

The Voyage Program 2013, announced this month, will see *Queen Mary 2* continue to sail her beloved seven-day Transatlantic voyages between New York and Southampton, with 17 departures planned between May 2013 and Jan 2014.

In addition to the seven-day sailings *QM2* will also debut two eight-day crossings, as well as longer nine- and 10-day Transatlantic sailings between New York and Hamburg.

Next year will also see *QM2's* cruise line-up include maiden calls to Andalsnes, Norway, Antigua and Barbuda; as well as roundtrip voyages from New York to New England and Canada with an overnight stay in Quebec and a visit to the Caribbean.

Meanwhile next year *Queen Victoria* will host voyages from Southampton to the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, Iberia, Morocco and the Atlantic Isles, and will debut new ports of call including Agadir, Morocco; Isafjordur, Iceland; Palau-Costa Smeralda, Italy; Torshavn, Faroe Islands; and Warnemunde,

Germany; as well as overnights in St. Petersburg, Istanbul and Madeira (two nights).

Highlights of her 2013 include Mediterranean voyages ranging from 12- to 17-days, as well as a new 24-day Black Sea and Turkey cruise.

Lastly, *Queen Elizabeth* will feature cruises to Iceland, the Norwegian Fjords, the British Isles and the Baltic Sea.

*QE* will also reposition to the Mediterranean later in the season to host eight voyages from Venice, Rome (Civitavecchia) and Athens (Piraeus).

For more information see [www.cunard.com](http://www.cunard.com).



## High tea with the Captain

**CAPTAIN** Cook Cruises is offering locals and tourists alike the opportunity to explore Sydney in style, with a High Tea Cruise at Sea every Wed and Sat throughout Jul 2012.

Departing at 2.30pm and returning at 4.30pm on Wed and 3.45pm on Sat, the cruise includes a variety of savoury and sweet foods and a huge tea selection, and is priced at \$55.00 per adult (including a glass of champagne) and \$35 for children.

Groups of four or more will receive a 20% discount, see [www.captaincook.com.au](http://www.captaincook.com.au).

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## New cruise kid on the block

A NEW Finnish-based cruise line, Premier Cruises, has purchased its first vessel, Elegant Cruises' 52-year old 118-guest *Andrea*.

Under Premier, *Andrea* is currently undergoing major renovation works and will emerge *Serenissima*, ready to take on guests in Apr 2013.

When she debuts, the four-star *Serenissima* will host voyages around the Mediterranean, British Isles, Black Sea and Norway.

## Antigua's fitness test

GLOBAL Destinations Development has been enlisted by Government authorities in Antigua to assess the Caribbean island's Port of Antigua and Heritage Quay for future cruise use.

The "fitness test" will look at what improvements need to be made to the two areas to make them more attractive for cruise lines and to support an increase in cruise business over the next 15 to 20 years.

## Getting boutique next year

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruise Collection has released its 2013 Boutique River Cruises Preview brochure for agents and consumers.

The preview offers a bunch of cruise deals such as 2012 pricing for 2013 departures, as well as pay in full and earlybird discounts.

Highlights of the preview include six new itineraries such as the 13-day Splendours of Italy cruise/tour which includes a seven-night cruise onboard the refurbished *River Countess*, as well as two-nights in a hotel in Florence and three-nights in a hotel in Rome.

Other new itineraries debuting in the preview include an eight-day cruise-only Venice and the Po River voyage onboard the *River Countess*, priced from \$3,379pp/ts; an eight-day Highlights of Eastern Europe cruise along the Danube River visiting Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest, Vukovar and Belgrade, from \$3,225pp/ts; a 17-day Grand Danube and Prague cruise, from \$6,830pp/ts; a 22-day Grand European Highlights journey from Belgrade to Basel, priced from \$9,188pp/ts; and an 11-day Enchanting Christmas & New Year's Cruise priced from \$4,190pp/ts.

In addition to the new offerings, the brochure contains tried and true favourites such as the Imperial Waterways of Russia voyage from Moscow to St Petersburg, priced from \$5,495pp/ts; the eight-day Enchanting Danube from Budapest to Passau from \$2,695pp/ts; and the 15-day Timeless Wonders of Vietnam, Cambodia & the Mekong voyage along the Mekong River, from \$4,852pp/ts.

Agents who want to get a sneak peek at Uniworld's 2013 fleet additions *Queen Isabel* and *River Orchid* will also not be disappointed, with the preview detailing their adventures down the UNESCO World Heritage Douro River and the Mekong.

See [www.uniworldcruises.com.au](http://www.uniworldcruises.com.au) for details.

## Latin America on Riviera

OCEANIA Cruises' *Riviera* will wow guests and industry alike with a collection of Latin America's finest contemporary art when she launches later in the year.

A nod to the heritage of Oceania's founder, Frank Del Rio, the collection will include original works by renowned artists from Cuba's Vanguard Movement (1927 to 1950).

According to the cruise line "Del Rio went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that every inch of the ship was designed to showcase paintings, glassworks and sculpture that will spark conversation and contemplation among our guests".

## Amelia rises for Phoenix

SWISS shipping company Scylla has launched its newest river cruise vessel, the 220-guest *Amelia* in Cologne.

Chartered exclusively by German cruise line, Phoenix Reisen, *Amelia* will now host voyages along the Rhine and Danube Rivers.

## Liverpool misses deadline

THE decision as to whether the UK port of Liverpool will be able to offer itself as a turnaround port has been delayed until at least May, after British transport ministers missed a paperwork deadline.

The furore over Liverpool's request has been fueled primarily by Southampton authorities who are arguing that Liverpool must pay back public monies it was given for its cruise terminal before being allowed to act as a homeport for vessels.

Despite the delay and lack of final decision, Liverpool is seemingly forging ahead with its plans to act as a turnaround port from 29 May.

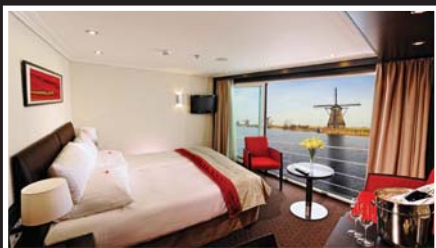
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## Agents get into the Cabo San Lucas Spirit

**AHEAD** of her Aussie debut this Oct, a group of lucky Australian agents from Flight Centre, Jetset Travelworld, Online Republic and Ozcruising had the chance to walk aboard the decks of *Carnival Spirit*, during a famil cruise in Cabo San Lucas.

As part of the *Spirit* experience, agents sailed out of San Diego to San Lucas for five fabulous nights, enjoying a tour of the ship's entertainment and youth activities, and dinner at the Captain's table with senior officers.

The lucky agents are pictured below with the CCS team (from back, L to R): Shane Gibbons, Trevor Thwaites, Sally-Anne Matthews, Lance Dye, Ryan Posa, Stacey Crawford, Fiona Taylor, Joanne Rea, Lenore Kennedy, Nicola Giles, Craig Chisholm, Sophie Cattana, Logan McEwan, Brydie McKay, Anne Maree Calder, Julene Montgomery, Sharon Grant, Helen Mezzan, Andrew Thwaites, Ryan Taibel, Kimberley Neville, Alana Freeman-Gibbs, Anneke Irik, Rachaelle Tyrrell, Katherine Bradey, David Clark, Cindy Lee and Angus Mackay.



## Travel Managers breaks records

**FEBRUARY** was a bumper month for Travel Managers' cruise sales, with it becoming the company's best cruise trading month since it began seven years ago.

The month began with a bang, when between 05 and 11 Feb the company clocked its biggest ever cruise sales week.

However this record was then topped consecutively by the weeks 12-18 February and 19-25 February which bettered cruise sales, and led to the record breaking month.

"It's been incredible, with 43 ICCA accredited personal travel managers, 11 of whom are masters, February 2012 was TravelManagers highest ever sales for Cruising up 105%," said Joe Araullo, ce of TravelManagers.

In addition to record sales, Feb also saw the company deliver its highest ever commission to TravelManagers' personal travel manager network.

"Our personal travel manager sales for Feb 2012 compared to Feb 2011 are increased by 56% and commissions are up 58%," said Araullo.

"Pleasingly commission growth outstripped sales growth by two percentage points so we have a number of very happy personal travel managers out there!" he added.

## SS United States new purpose

**AN** application has been lodged to repurpose the historic *SS United States* into a waterfront attraction, with the hopes that it would end up in either the port of New York or Miami, featuring restaurants, accommodation and a museum dedicated to the vessel's iconic American history.

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Applicants are required to address the selection criteria and quote position number 20120001.

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# CRUISE

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Thursday 12 April 2012



## Face to Face: Marc Letourneau National Sales Manager, Club Med

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

#### How and why did you get into the cruise industry?

I started working for Club Med in 1998 and it was a dream of mine since I holidayed with my family as a kid. I always wanted to travel in life. I have been offered this transfer from Canada six years ago now and loving Australia!

#### What is the key to your success?

I believe in working with a great team that has both the experience and creativity.

#### How many cruises have you been on in the past five years?

My first cruise was last August aboard *Club Med 2*, a trip of a lifetime!

#### What is your favourite destination, and why?

On this cruise, I visited Santorini as part of a Turkey-Greek islands cruise. The 8am Santorini arrival was sensational.

#### What was your most memorable moment on a cruise?

On *Club Med 2*, every evening when the ship sails off, they play the Christopher Columbus movie song while the sails go up. Everybody sips champagne and you can't help but thinking we are pretty fortunate to experience such moments. All the locals wave you goodbye as you sail off on that majestic white sail ship.

#### How do you spend days at sea?

A mix of local tours some days and others just staying aboard enjoying the pools and watersports on offer. *Club Med 2* does not travel during the day so it allows for waterski and sailing from the back of the ship when anchored at bay.

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

*Club Med 2* has a unique positioning with a fully all-inclusive concept and consumers certainly get real value for money. New destinations is always of interest.

#### What do you think is the most underrated/overrated aspect of cruising?

I think many people I know think that being on a cruise means they can't get out and experience local cultures which is not the case at all. Most overrated is when consumers believe cruising is all-inclusive and is not always the case.

#### What is your best tip for sea-sickness?

Don't party too "hard" on your first night ... get plenty of sleep to make sure you start the cruise well rested.

#### What is your prediction for the future of cruising?

I believe cruise consumers will be interested a lot more in boutique sailing ships vs mega-cruiseliners.

#### What advice would you give other people who want a job like yours?

You must like to travel and understand that tourism industry is very resilient so good to persevere as there is always goods news and new destinations to discover!



### Marc's Cruise Favourites!

**Favourite Ship:** Club Med 2 sailing ship of course

**Favourite ship activity:** Snorkelling trips in the bay where the ship is anchored.

**Favourite shore excursion:** Especially loved driving around Santorini on a quad bike with friends

**Favourite region:** Europe in summer

**Favourite port:** Santorini (so far ...)

**Favourite onboard food:** Fresh lobsters ... can't do better than that

**Favourite perk of the job:** Travelling around the world

**Cruise Weekly** is Australia's favourite online cruising publication. In production since 2007, **Cruise Weekly** is published each Tuesday, with a further travel industry update each Thursday.

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