



## CW sails with *Rhapsody of the Seas*

Royal Caribbean's recent \$54 million makeover of *Rhapsody of the Seas* has added three specialty restaurants and 21 more cabins, including an owner's suite, but has also reduced the passenger capacity.

THE month-long refurbishment, said to be the largest dry-dock operation of its type to take place in Singapore, seems designed to raise the vessel to a far more stylish level and appeal to passengers who want affordable cruising but are prepared to pay extra for finer cuisine and exclusive treats.

Despite the extra accommodation the ship now carries 100 less passengers, as cabins

were enlarged by removing the facility for third and fourth berths, and the emphasis is now on couples, with the ship now carrying a maximum of 2000.

It left Sydney on 13 Apr, carrying 1940 people, on an 18-day repositioning voyage to Hawaii, from where it will travel to Alaska for a five-month season.

Part of the upgrade includes a smart, new Concierge Club for top-level Crown and Anchor club members (or frequent cruisers), a quiet sanctuary near the Viking Crown Lounge, complete with a personal attendant and complimentary evening drinks and canapés.

In addition to the three new extra-charge restaurants, the ship now offers a delicatessen style eatery, the Park Café, which is similar to the spa café venues available on RCI's sister line, the 4.5 star Celebrity Cruises.

The trio of surcharge restaurants, Izumi, Chops Grille and Giovanni's Table, specialising in sushi and hot-rock cooking, prime steaks and Italian cuisine respectively, are as good-looking as anything you'd find on land and well priced at around \$20 to \$30 a head.

The latter two are located on Deck 6 in an area previously considered a bit of a 'dead area' on the ship, while Izumi occupies a totally revamped area of Deck 11, also hived off from the previously much-larger Viking Crown lounge.

The refurb has also included a makeover of all cabins and much of the furniture and fittings in public rooms – and it shows.

Cabins are clear and bright with new diaphanous drapes, pleasant carpets, bedding and new flat screen TVs, while all furniture in the Edelweiss dining room has been re-upholstered and there are new carpets virtually throughout the ship.

The biggest change occurred in the redesigned Centrum: the former dramatic (and much-loved according to some guests) sculpture has gone and has been replaced with various chandeliers and big wheels that are used as props for aerial gymnasts and entertainers.

The Centrum area, with its totally jazzy R bar – said to look like the set of *Mad Men*, but I'm not too sure – has been changed into an entertainment area, rather than a quiet place to have a drink.

## Aussie agents on *L'Austral*

20 Australian agents had the opportunity to explore *L'Austral* during ship inspections in Northern Qld and Darwin.

According to feedback from Phil Hoffmann, who was part of the inspections hosted by TTW "*L'Austral*, sets an exceptionally high standard in both luxury and eco-friendliness, combining sleek lines with ultra-chic décor".

"This is 5-star expedition cruising, It feels like you are on your own private yacht," he added.

Pictured below enjoying lunch onboard are Aussie agents Vyvyan Wong and Holger Homann.



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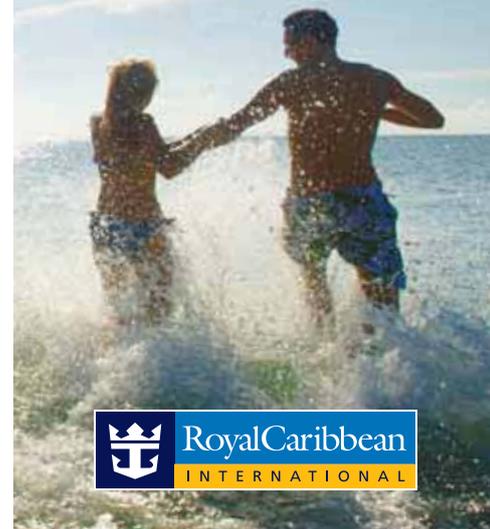
### TODAY'S ISSUE OF CW

Today's trade issue of *Cruise Weekly* features four pages of cruise news and photos.

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## ICCA UPDATE

ICCA General Manager,  
Brett Jardine

### Spotlight on ICCA

#### Cruising and the environment

There is no doubt we all want to have minimal impact on the environment from our daily activities – some may even argue slugging business with a tax will have the desired effect!

The cruise industry is no different when it comes to “doing the right thing” and is totally committed to protecting the fragile environments in which ships operate.

With a strong record of developing and implementing positive environmental practices, today you will find most ocean going vessels employ senior level staff responsible for environmental programs on board, which includes compliance with applicable international regulations.

These senior staff members are also responsible for the training of crew and implementation of all policies and practices on board that will also see passengers encouraged to play their part.

The cruise industries commitment to sound environmental practices has never been stronger and today many regulations that are applied to cruise ships are not only met but in fact exceeded all over the world when ships are in port and whilst at sea.

Responding to the expectations of customers, cruise ships deliver through a variety of programs that make a difference.

Just a few examples of these include switching to low energy LED lights, recycling engine cooling water to heat passenger cabins, disposing of photo processing chemicals through licensed contractors, and using special window tinting to keep passageways cooler and reduce the need for air conditioning.



## Booking air for cruise just got easier

P&O, Princess Cruises and Carnival Cruise Lines’ new airfare and cruise booking portals allow agents to complete bookings via a single online tool.

**LAUNCHED** this week, Princess Cruises eZAIR, and P&O Cruises’ and Carnival Cruise Lines’ CruiseAir portals produce immediate flight confirmations, and provide a choice of flexible and restricted price options, as well as the ability to customise travel details for passengers.

As part of their functionality the tools allow agents to help holidaymakers select air carriers, flights, preferred cabin and seating, order special meals, and apply for frequent flyer numbers without any added fees, whilst those cruising with Princess will also be able to change flights via eZAIR’s Cruise Personaliser.

“Another major feature is next port protection in the event of flight delays – a service which helps re-route passengers to the next appropriate port of call if they experience a flight delay and miss their ship’s departure,” said Complete Cruise Solution director of sales Don Clark.

The portals offer two airfare options for agents to view side by side, flexible and restricted, with the flexible option being a refundable ticket (up to 45 days before the flight) which allows cruisers to cancel or modify their reservation without charge, whilst the restricted air option is typically cheaper but is non-refundable and fees and charges apply for changes.

The respective portals allow access to flights for purchase or reservation from

approximately 320 days to four days before the date of the cruise departure.

See [www.myccs.com.au](http://www.myccs.com.au).



### New Zealand's Premiership



#### Voyager of the Seas

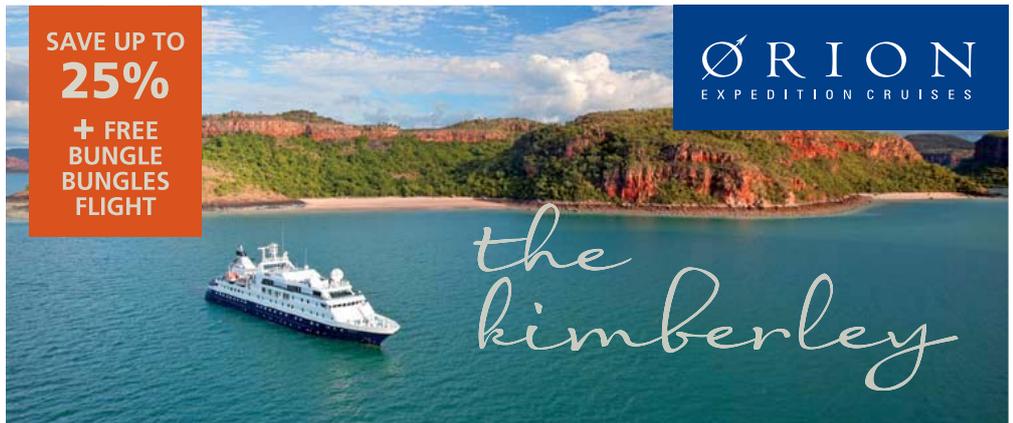
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## Oriana winter in Norway

P&O Cruises Worldwide is hosting its first ever Northern Hemisphere winter cruise in Norway in 2014.

The 12-night cruise onboard *Oriana* will depart 13 Mar 2014 and will include stops in Bergen, Tromso, Alta and Stavanger.

To keep guests busy and ensure they get the most out of the winter voyage, P&O has lined up host of winter shore excursions such as dog sledding and snowmobile safaris.

## SeaDream spa brochure

SEADREAM Yacht Club has published a brochure detailing treatments available in its onboard spas, such as specialised La Prairie facials and Thalgo body wraps.

Salon services also include eyelash tinting, waxing, haircuts and hair coloring by Wella, as well as manicure and pedicure options, and each yacht features eight therapists.

For details see [www.SeaDream.com](http://www.SeaDream.com).

## Royal Caribbean in Australia

ROYAL Caribbean's 2013-14 Australasian program will see three of the cruise line's vessels, *Voyager of the Seas*, *Radiance of the Seas* and *Rhapsody of the Seas* sail a total of 53 itineraries over 55 sailings between Sep 2013 and Apr 2014.

Calling at 56 Australian, New Zealand and South Pacific ports, the season will feature itineraries ranging from two- to 18-nights, including favourites such as the Round Australia and New Zealand voyages.

During her second season down under *Voyager* will debut four new itineraries and two additional sailings (a 10% increase on her maiden season), including a new 14-night cruise from Singapore to Sydney on 24 Oct and a new two-night sampler from Sydney.

Meanwhile highlights of *Radiance's* season will include a new eight-night cruise to Queensland departing on Australia Day, whilst *Rhapsody* will feature a new 15-night Queensland and South Pacific New Year cruise.

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



**THIS** week passengers onboard *Balmoral* and *Azamara Journey* marked the 100th anniversary of the *Titanic's* tragic sinking, at moving ceremonies held onboard the respective vessels in the exact location where the grand dame went down.

Both vessels began their tributes at 11.40pm on 14 Apr, at the time when the *Titanic* began to go under.

Sitting only a few hundred metres from each other, with the black expanse of freezing ocean in between, the vessels observed a moment of silence, followed by prayers and the casting of wreaths.

Many passengers onboard the vessels were direct descendants of those that travelled on *Titanic's* fateful inauguration and were moved to tears during the services, whilst others described the experience as "ghostly" as the ships rocked and swayed silently to the backdrop of the pitch black sea and sky.

One band member who played during the service onboard *Azamara Journey* told journalists that the experience was one of his greatest honours, given the actions of the musicians onboard *Titanic*, who sacrificed their lives to keep playing and calm passengers as the ship went down.

## Mega Indochina increase

TRAVEL Indochina has experienced a whopping 400% year-on-year increase in cruise passenger numbers since the debut of its inaugural River Cruising brochure.

The announcement comes on the eve of the release of the company's second River Cruising brochure, Asia River Cruising 2012-14, which has been designed to keep up with the extreme growth.

As such the new brochure has upped its pages from 36 to 52, and also features a swathe of new destinations such as Burma.

Four itineraries feature in the new Burma product range including a four-day Highlights of Burma Yangon-Mandalay-Sagaing-Bagan-Yangon option and an eight-day Ayeyarwady Adventure.

Vessels servicing the Burma itineraries include the *RV Paukan* and *The Road to Mandalay*.

Other new features of the latest Asia 2012-14 program include two new seven- and 11-day Laos itineraries, and new multi-country itineraries across Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, including the 22-day All Along the Mekong voyage from Siem Reap to Saigon.

"The strong growth in the category is partially attributable to the great new product and itineraries available to highly desirable destinations like Burma and Indochina," said md of Travel Indochina, Paul Hole.

See [www.travelindochina.com.au](http://www.travelindochina.com.au).

## Whale watching back for 2012

**CAPTAIN** Cook Cruises has announced it will offer its hugely popular daily Whale Watching cruises from 18 May until 31 Oct this year.

The scenic voyage takes guests past the Sydney Opera House and Fort Denison and out of the heads into open waters where the vessel's direction is dependent on where whales have been spotted.

The company offers a guarantee that if a whale is not spotted on the voyage, passengers can cruise again for free.

CCC's Whale Watching cruises depart from Darling Harbour at 9.30am, from Jetty 6 Circular Quay at 10.00am, and from Manly at 10.30am; whilst additional weekend voyages depart from Darling Harbour at 1.30pm, and from Circular Quay at 2.00pm.

The voyages are priced at \$79 (adult), \$65 (concession), \$50 (child aged 5-14) and \$215 (for two adults + two children) including coffee, tea and biscuits.

See [www.captaincook.com.au](http://www.captaincook.com.au).

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## McDonald's Heritage

**HERITAGE** Expeditions will host a voyage to Heard and McDonald Islands in the South Indian Ocean in Nov this year.

Described as one of the last great journeys of the world, the 25-day voyage to the Federal Nature Reserve and World Heritage sites will be accompanied by staff from the Australian Antarctic Division, and will depart on 08 Nov 2012.

The voyage is priced from US\$16,000pp including transfers, meals, shore excursions and permits.

See [www.heritage-expeditions.com](http://www.heritage-expeditions.com).

## The end of APT's deals

**APT** is reminding agents that the deadline for its Europe river cruising 2013 preview brochure deals is 30 Apr 2012.

The deals include 2013 cruising at 2012 prices, with APT's general manager marketing Deb Fox saying "many cruise prices and select cabin upgrades are set to increase on 01 May so there are savings to be had before then for clients planning an APT cruise next year".

In terms of the response of Australian cruisers to APT's European 2013 Preview deals, Fox said "there has been really good take-up on this offer".

To view the brochure, or for more information see [www.aptouring.com.au](http://www.aptouring.com.au).

## Princess seven day sale

**PRINCESS** Cruises launched its seven-day New Zealand sale yesterday, which offers deals such as a 13-night roundtrip cruise to NZ, sailing from Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane priced from \$1,599pp/ts.

Other deals featured in the sale include a 33-night roundtrip Australia and New Zealand cruise on *Sea Princess*, sailing from Sydney priced from \$3,999pp/ts.

As a bonus, cruisers who book during the sale (18-24 Apr) will receive \$100 worth of onboard credit per stateroom for NZ voyages.

For information see [www.myccs.com.au](http://www.myccs.com.au).

## Tauck small group rising

**THE** decision taken by Tauck to increase the number of its small group departures has paid off, with the company reporting a booking increase of at least 40% for the past three consecutive years.

"Over the past three years we've dramatically boosted the number of small group departures we've offered, and our guests have responded," said Tauck ceo Dan Mahar.

"Our small group bookings are growing faster than any destination or region, or any other segment of our business," he added.

This year the company will operate over 230 small group departures spread among 46 different Tauck itineraries worldwide.

## Solstice to stay longer in 2014

**CELEBRITY** Cruises will place *Celebrity Solstice* in Aussie waters for an extended 2013/14 season, with the cruise line announcing the vessel will kick-off her regional voyages on 04 Oct 2013.

*Solstice's* Aussie season will comprise of 15 sailings (three more than the 2012/13 line-up), and will include 10 itineraries.

Highlights of the season include a new three-night sampler cruise from Sydney in Jan 2014, as well as the cruise line's first South Pacific island cruises sailing roundtrip from Sydney.

Other itineraries scheduled for 2013/14 season include: eight 12-night New Zealand cruises between Auckland and Sydney; two 14-night NZ cruises between Auckland and Sydney; two Round Australia voyages: an 18-night Auckland to Fremantle cruise and a 17-night Top End (which can be combined for a grand 35-night voyage); and two 18-night Trans-Pacific Hawaii and Tahiti.

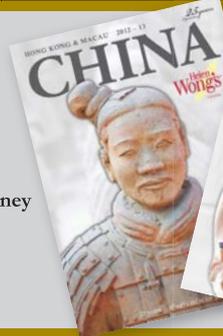
"It's Celebrity's broadest ever range of local cruises – with a destination and duration for everyone," said Adam Armstrong, commercial manager, Celebrity Cruises Australia.

To celebrate the launch, Celebrity is offering Early Bird deals of up to \$1,000 off per person (depending on cabin type and cruise duration) as well as upgrades from \$25pp per night.

Prices for a three-night sampler cruise start from \$525pp, see [www.celebritycruises.com.au](http://www.celebritycruises.com.au).

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**Cruise Weekly** is free and is sent to subscribers via email as an Adobe Acrobat PDF document.

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PO Box 1010, Epping, NSW 1710

Phone: 1300 799 220 Fax: 1300 799 221

**Publisher/Managing Editor:** Bruce Piper

**Editor:** Louise Goldsbury

**Assistant Editor:** Amanda Collins

**Contributors:** Roderick Eime, Chantel Long and Guy Dundas

Email: [info@cruiseweekly.com.au](mailto:info@cruiseweekly.com.au)

**Cruise Weekly is part of the**  **Travel Daily Group:**

**Advertising and Marketing:** Christie-Lee Lachance, Lisa Martin and Magda Herdzik

Email: [advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au](mailto:advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au)

**Business Manager:** Jenny Piper

Email: [accounts@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:accounts@traveldaily.com.au)

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