



## Scenic Tours to enter Burma in 2014

A new partnership with Haimark will see Scenic Tours launch private charters on the *Irrawaddy* as well as the *Mekong*.

**NEW** river cruises are set to be offered next year on two luxurious newbuilds, the 56-pax *Irrawaddy Explorer* and the 68-pax *Mekong Navigator*, which are currently under construction for Haimark, a leading Asian specialist river cruise operator.

Speaking exclusively to **CW**, Scenic Tours product manager Brett Lemish revealed the company would open bookings next month for the new Burma and Mekong programs.

Fares will be "competitively priced", he added. It will be Scenic Tours' first offering in Burma and its first private charters in Vietnam/Cambodia after only small allocations on Mekong vessels in the past.

"We're especially excited to be introducing Burma, the hottest destination in south-east Asia," Lemish said.

"Particularly with the new boat, I believe Burma is now ready for clients who expect Scenic Tours' high standard of service delivery."

The new partnership with Haimark, an American company founded last year by three former Pandaw executives, "will redefine the standard of luxury in Burma", Lemish said.

"With Haimark's experience in Asia and our signature Scenic Enrich and Free Choice programs, I'm confident it will be the most authentic high-end product in the region."

The two vessels are "not the steamboat concept" often seen on these rivers, Lemish told **Cruise Weekly** in India.

Luxurious cabins start at 24 square metres, with private balconies or floor-to-ceiling

windows in all rooms on the *Irrawaddy Explorer* and 88% of the *Mekong Navigator*.

All-inclusive fares include drinks, transfers, tipping, wi-fi, butler service (for all cabins on the *Mekong* and selected suites on the *Irrawaddy*) and all Scenic Enrich and Free Choice activities and excursions.

Scenic Tours is chartering five *Mekong* and two *Irrawaddy* departures between Sep 2014 and Mar 2015, ranging from eight days for cruise only, up to 27 days for packages incorporating a cruise with a land tour itinerary bolted on.

A brochure and earlybird deals are expected to be available in late Oct, following an initial pre-release to past passengers.

### Bonus expedition commission

**LINDBLAD** Expeditions is offering a bonus commission payment of \$500 on top of regular levels for all new 2014 Kimberley voyages aboard the *National Geographic Orion*, with the company saying next year's voyages will offer more inclusions than ever before.

Special personalised postcards promoting voyages to mail out to clients can be ordered by emailing [sales@orionexpeditions.com](mailto:sales@orionexpeditions.com).

To be eligible for bonus commission, which will be paid at the time of departure, agents must first register at [www.bit.ly/LEincentive](http://www.bit.ly/LEincentive).

## Ice snorkelling in Antarctica

**AURORA** Expeditions has become the first operator to offer travellers an opportunity to snorkel among the icebergs and ocean wildlife of the frozen continent - Antarctica.

The Australian adventure company will offer this ground-breaking new activity to passengers on the 54-pax *Polar Pioneer* from this season.

To be operated by the company's dive partners Waterproof Expeditions, this unique experience allows people to swim alongside seals, whales and penguins and to see icebergs below the waterline.

Passengers who purchase the activity (US\$975pp) will receive training and can snorkel daily (weather dependent) in sheltered bays, off-shore islands and around shipwrecks.

Expert polar diving guides using state-of-the-art equipment will accompany divers while undertaking the unique activity.

Provided equipment includes specially designed Waterproof Snorkel-Drysuits to keep passengers warm, gloves, hood, weight belt, fins, mask and snorkel.

Aurora Expeditions was also the first cruise company to introduce scuba diving and camping in Antarctica.

Polar snorkelling is scheduled to operate on voyages departing Feb 2014 and 2015.

Cruise prices start at US\$7,200 per person.

Spaces are limited and must be booked in advance. Visit [www.auroraexpeditions.com.au](http://www.auroraexpeditions.com.au) or call 02 9252 1033.

### A packed CW today!

Today's trade issue of **CW** features four pages of all the latest cruise information.



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## Micro new CLIA associate member

Niche cruise wholesaler  
Micro-Cruising has become an  
associate member of Cruise  
Lines International Association  
Australasia (CLIA).

A **RELATIVELY** new operation, Micro-Cruising first launched to the industry at the beginning of last month (**CW** 01 Aug), specialising in small-ship cruising and niche or themed voyages catering to around 100 pax or fewer.

The burgeoning operation is headed up by managing director Nicola Caygill, and currently, the operation carries more than 300 itineraries in 80 different destinations.

In making the announcement late yesterday, CLIA Australasia general manager Brett Jardine said the wide variety of ships and cruise adventures offered by Micro-Cruising would be further at the forefront of agent's minds through its new associate membership.

"As more and more styles of cruising become accessible, it's important that we ensure agents have a good understanding of the fantastic range of ships and destinations on offer for their clients," Jardine said.

Micro-Cruising plans to kick off its new associate CLIA membership by promoting and running a series of online training sessions for agents to see the wide variety of small ship cruising options out there in the marketplace.

"We are very keen to educate the cruise-focused travel trade on less traditional options available to their clients," Caygill added.

For more details about online training, see [www.micro-cruising.com.au/agent-registration](http://www.micro-cruising.com.au/agent-registration).

### Watch Concordia time-lapse

**THE** most expensive maritime salvage operation in history was successfully carried out this week, with the slanted hull of the *Costa Concordia* finally lifted from its watery grave of 20-months off the coast of Giglio, Italy.

The operation lasted for 19 hours, running through the entirety of Mon this week and well into the evening, with cables used to hoist the ship and tanks that filled with water assisting in restabilising it once it reached "zero degrees".

**BBC News** has released spectacular time-lapse footage capturing the entire 19-hour operation in a little over a minute - **CLICK HERE**.

Now that the vessel has been righted, it will be scoured by investigators for further evidence against the ship's captain Francesco Schettino, who is awaiting trial on 32 counts of manslaughter and abandoning ship, with the next step in the case to be heard next week.

Authorities also hope to recover the two bodies that were never found - those of an Italian passenger and an Indian waiter - as well as any valuables contained in stateroom safes that may be able to be returned to passengers or their families.

### Instagram designed to WOW

**ROYAL** Caribbean International has launched an innovative new social media competition centered around the "Designed for WOW" advertising campaign mantra launched at the beginning of this month (**CW** 05 Sep).

In what the line claims as a world-first, it will host an Instagram Film Festival, in which everyone is invited to create and upload video clips no more than 15-seconds in duration of anything that makes you go "WOW", under the hashtag of #InstaFilmFest.

Entries for the festival opened today, with a grand finale to take place next year aboard one of the line's three vessels visiting Australia, likely to be *Voyager of the Seas*.

The line will appoint special judges for the event, to be named later this year.

Royal Caribbean commercial director Adam Armstrong told **Cruise Weekly** the line wanted to activate the WOW factor outside of the cruise industry, with no restrictions placed on the scope of entrants' imaginations, as long as entries were clean.

"We want to support WOW moments in general, even if they don't happen on a cruise ship," Armstrong said.

Since launching only a few weeks ago, Royal Caribbean's @RoyalCaribbean\_AUNZ instagram account already has nearly 600 followers.

Digital brand and strategy firm Hulsbosch and social media agency Circul8 have both been engaged to facilitate the competition, with more details available on a special micro-site at [www.instafilmfestival.com.au](http://www.instafilmfestival.com.au).

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### Two-for-one on Hurtigruten

**SELECTED** Norway voyages are eligible for special 2-for-1 fares, with Hurtigruten releasing the offer this week for bookings by 30 Sep.

Eligible sailings include 12-day Classic Round voyages departing from Bergen on selected dates from Oct-Dec this year, as well as 11-day and 7-day versions of the same voyages.

Six departures of a 6-day Classic Voyage South departing over the same period of time can attract the deal, departing from Kirkenes.

For more information on the deal and valid departure dates, phone 1800 623 267.

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## The cost of change

**TO SUSTAIN** current record cruise passenger numbers, it is important that cruise line operational costs remain steady to keep pricing attractive. One of the challenges has been the International Maritime Organisation's additional legislation that now places a cap on sulphur in fuel of no greater than 1% in coastal waters, with the limit further reduced to 0.1% in 2015.

This calibre of fuel is not easy to source, let alone cheap, and has the potential to shoot cruise ticketing prices upwards.

The good news is that cruise lines have been looking at ways to lower their carbon footprint by developing advanced emission control technology, namely "scrubbers".

Along with diesel filters, these 'clean' the emissions on their way out at better than required levels. In fact, some cruise ships have started to install trial versions of this expensive modification.

The news this month that Carnival Corp. has come to an agreement with The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S Coast Guard with their proposed US\$180 million to upgrade 32 of their 102 ships (CW 17 Sep) is extremely positive.

It forms a platform for them to integrate these systems gradually throughout their other 70 owned ships and lead the way for other cruise lines to follow suit.

These changes, as well as others using LPG & shore power at berth are paramount for keeping the value proposition of cruising as strong as it is.

Now if only respective Governmental bodies could address port taxes and infrastructure, we could take our local cruising numbers to the next level.

## Yachting joins Globus program

**MEDITERRANEAN** yacht excursions from Greece and Italy are among the newest inclusions in the 2014 Globus Europe holiday range, alongside four brand new itineraries and a host of new experiences available.

Variety Cruises' fleet of three 25-berth boats including *Voyager*, *Harmony V* and *Panorama* will operate the sail segments, which form part of some 70 premium tours featuring in the latest collection.

Highlighted tours include the 15-day Classical Greece with Adriatic Odyssey Cruise, which tours many popular Greek landmarks before setting sail for Albania, Montenegro & Croatia.

Pre-paid optional excursions, which were introduced to great success this year & helped to boost agency commissions and save on foreign currency conversion charges, will form part of the 2014 range, Globus marketing manager Christian Schweitzer said.

"All signs are that demand will remain strong in the Australian market," Schweitzer said.

## New Uniworld agent incentive

**AUSTRALIAN-BASED** agents booking Uniworld Boutique River Cruise departures will go into a draw to win a French river cruise as part of a new incentive launched by the line.

River cruise departures in 2014 booked before 31 Oct will earn agents an entry into the draw, with first prize being a choice of either a sailing through Burgundy & Provence on the company's newest ship in the region - the SS *Catherine*, or a cruise in Uniworld's newest region of Bordeaux on the *River Royale*.

Uniworld general manager Australia John Molinaro said next year will be "a big year for Uniworld in France and we're excited to share this with our travel agent partners".

Discounts for early and quick paying clients can be up to \$2,400 per couple, with these bookings counting towards the incentive.

## A&K adds river cruise product

**ABERCROMBIE & Kent** has announced the introduction of a new series of "Connections European River Cruise Journeys," as part of the lower-priced Connections division which launched last year.

The new itineraries will be operated using Luftner Cruises' Amadeus fleet, combining A&K's small group touring expertise with the Amadeus river cruising experience.

Under the venture, A&K tour directors will escort shore excursions for groups of 24 or less people, with the assistance of local guides.

"With our own offices in Europe we are able to guarantee 'by invitation only' access to authentic encounters, providing guests with a deeper understanding of each destination, made possible through genuine local knowledge and experience," Abercrombie & Kent president Phil Otterson said.

The program includes 'Cruising Holland & Belgium in Bloom', 'Music and Maestros of the Danube', 'Christmas Markets on the Danube', 'Paris, Burgundy and a South of France Cruise' and 'Discovering the Rhine'.

## More Norwegian Pride suites

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line has unveiled the final stage of a major enhancement to its Hawaii-based *Pride of America*, including eight additional staterooms and 24 new suites.

There are four new inside staterooms and four Studio staterooms for solo travellers, while the additional suites, located on Deck 13, include two 566-square foot Owner's Suites which can sleep up to four people.

The other 22 new suites, also on Deck 13, are all Penthouse Suites, sleeping up to six and ranging from 363 to 459 square feet each.

All *Pride of America* suites offer butler and concierge service, Lavazza espresso makers, Elemis bath products and private dining for breakfast and lunch service.

## Why Choose Helen Wong's Tours for Cruising China?

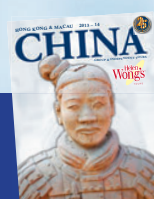
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## Glasses tipped on Cruise Abroad wine famil

**EUROPE'S** longest running river cruise operation CroisiEurope recently hosted this group of Australian agents to a famil in France, with the trip coordinated by the line's Australian representative Cruise Abroad.

The group flew to Paris with Vietnam Airlines, enjoying some time in Paris first before boarding the TGV for a high-speed rail trip to Bordeaux.

Once at St Jean, right in the middle of wine-country, a short taxi ride took the group to Chartrons Quai where the CroisiEurope vessel *Cyrano De Bergerac* was moored and waiting for them.

Over the course of the next week, the group enjoyed walking tours of a number of quaint little villages, medieval churches, ancient castles and exquisitely manicured gardens.

Courses in wine-making were enjoyed along with many opportunities to taste the fruits



(literally) of the region.

Whilst on board, the agents toured the ship, inspecting many different types of staterooms, enjoyed plenty of fine food and took plenty of positive experiences and tips to pass on to their clients back in Australia.

**Pictured** above at one of the visited wineries from left is Poh Poh Tan, Grand Travel; Karen Walkley, Flower Travel; Margot Knispel, World Wide Cruise Centre; Kane Cox, Cruise Abroad; Christa Randall, Cover Travel; Karen Millar, Diploma Travel; Emma Whiting, Emma Whiting Travel; Michelle Cook, Noosa Cruise & Travel; Denise Proud, The Travel Store and Lisa Killen from Cruise Marketing Group.

## Tibet/Chengdu on shore plans

**FIVE-NIGHT** land add-on itineraries to Tibet and Chengdu have been released by Crystal Cruises in conjunction with two upcoming voyages visiting China.

The add-ons valid with *Crystal Symphony's* 13-day Hong Kong to Beijing voyage on 09 Apr and a 16 Apr sailing from Beijing to Tokyo and include first-class air to/from Chengdu & Lhasa.

Highlights of the itineraries include a visit to Chengdu's Giant Panda research base, Potala Palace and the Drepung Monastery, which is difficult to access and home to 10,000 monks.

## Cruise Shipping APAC sponsor

**ASIAN** cruise port operator Singapore Cruise Centre will serve as the Gold Sponsor for the 2013 Cruise Shipping Asia-Pacific conference and tradeshow, taking place at the Marina Bay Sands in Singapore from 09-10 Oct.

The company operates the HarbourFront cruise terminal, which last year underwent a S\$14m renovation to increase terminal space.



**COUNCILLORS** in the Thames-adjacent English town of Sonning, in the county of Wokingham have said they will be forced to remove a traditional red mailbox which mysteriously appeared just above the waterline attached to the buttress of a small bridge (**pictured** below).

The mailbox, which in its current position is only accessible by boat, violates town planning rules and must be removed, local officials say.

Theories as to how the mailbox got there in the first place are being thrown around, with the literally inclined thinkers noticing a remarkably similar box that was attached to the local pub having recently disappeared.

The more radical, such as a three-decade long resident, believing the mailbox is linked to the ghost of a child wandering the bridge.

However, the general consensus is that the mailbox's location is merely the result of an elaborately executed alcohol-induced prank.



## New Caledonia sailors rescued

**P&O CRUISES** vessel *Pacific Pearl* has safely picked up a crew of five sailors aboard a New Caledonia yacht which yesterday began taking on water and sinking late yesterday.

At the time, *Pearl* was 12 nautical miles away and upon receiving the vessel's mayday distress signal, deployed one of its tenders to rescue the sailors and bring them onboard, according to a Facebook update from P&O.

## Onboard illness costs Princess

**PRINCESS** Cruises' parents company Carnival Corporation has paid damages totalling more than £100,000 to numerous passengers who became sick while cruising on *Grand Princess* over a six-month period from Apr to Aug 2010.

The affected pax said they became sick with stomach cramps after eating food they believed was not hygienically stored or served.

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