

CRUISE

WEEKLY



Thursday 16 Apr 2015

Viking Star sets sail

VIKING Ocean Cruises has finally commenced operation, with the much-anticipated *Viking Star* setting forth on her maiden voyage from Istanbul to Venice.

The milestone marks the travel industry's "first entirely new cruise line in a decade," with *Viking Star* to make her way through the Mediterranean and into the Atlantic Ocean en route to Bergen, Norway where she will be officially named on 17 May.

The all-balcony ship carries 930 passengers and offers "clean lines, woven textiles and light wood [to] evoke the Viking spirit of discovery and connection to the natural world," the line said.

Fares include a guided excursion in each port as well as free on-board wi-fi, 24 hour room service, beer and wine with meals and self-service laundry, with a further two Viking ocean vessels under construction.

Travel Industry Exhibition almost full

MORE than 80% of the exhibitor space at the upcoming Travel Industry Exhibition in Sydney has now been taken, with a strong uptake from across the industry and just a few spots left.

Almost three times the number of visitors have also already pre-registered than at the same time last year for the event which also features a series of educational presentations.

The show takes place at Sydney's Luna Park on 16-17 Jul, in the lead-up to the National Travel Industry Awards on Sat 18 Jul - see **page four** for details and to pre-register for the exhibition.

Standing Ovation for RCI



ROYAL Caribbean's decision to deploy its brand new *Ovation of the Seas* in Australasian waters (**CW** breaking news) next year has been hailed across the industry.

And in a stunning endorsement just hours after Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines regional vice president Gavin Smith made the announcement, Cruiseco confirmed it would fully charter the 4,950-passenger vessel on its first voyage into Australia, from Singapore to Sydney in Dec 2016.

Smith, who's **pictured** below with Royal Caribbean sales chief Peter McCormack, told **CW** the deployment is "the single largest investment in Australia by any cruise line."

"We believe that Australians shouldn't need to travel overseas to experience the kind of cruise holiday we stand for; the most innovative and amazing ships anywhere in the world are available right here on your doorstep," he said.

Like sister ships *Quantum of the Seas* and *Anthem of the Seas*, *Ovation* features an array of unique attractions such as sky-diving at sea, bumper cars, roller skating, the "Bionic Bar" with robot cocktail-makers, and of course the "North Star" aerial observatory - which when extended will reach higher than the pylons on the

Sydney Harbour Bridge (**above**).

High speed wi-fi will feature on the ship, allowing guests to remain connected with family and friends on shore, and the high-tech vessel uses electronic wristband technology which does away with the need to carry a cabin key.

An on-board smartphone app allows guests to book experiences from their own device, including booking at any of the 18 onboard restaurants which include Jamie Oliver's "Jamie's Italian".

Five voyages will take place in 2016/17 and Smith said Royal Caribbean would operate many more if capacity during Sydney's busy peak cruise season allowed.

Bookings for *Ovation's* inaugural season in Australia are expected to open late next month.

Smith said Royal Caribbean was now working on 17/18 and 18/19 deployments, with intentions to continue annual Quantum-class summer deployments in Australia for the foreseeable future.



Today's issue of CW

Cruise Weekly today features 3 pages of all the latest cruise news plus a full page from the Travel Industry Exhibition.

Cruise jobs on JITO

ONLINE travel and hospitality portal Jito.co is experiencing strong growth, with hundreds of jobs posted including a significant number in the cruise sector - see www.jito.co for details.



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CRUISE NEWS & VIEWS

with Brett Jardine
GM, CLIA Australasia

Dream Big!

WE have been very lucky in this market over recent years as CLIA Member Lines have continued to unveil exciting initiatives around vessel deployment.

Capacity increases that we have experienced from many CLIA Member brands have continued to be a major factor in our region's growth.

Yesterday's announcement by Royal Caribbean that we will be seeing their 'yet to be built' *Ovation of the Seas* was probably a shock to many, but for those that were paying attention at our Cruis360 conference the writing was on the wall.

Numerous references were made around the importance of future deployments being dependent or complementary to the rapid change that is being seen in Asia.

My money was on *Quantum of the Seas* being a real chance of heading our way, so I was close!

I will leave all the sales hype to Royal Caribbean but there is something that does strike me as a very important fact in this announcement...

That is the economic impact that a new ship delivers from the two types of passengers that will be cruising on *Ovation of the Seas* – both domestic and international.

OK – so that is obvious, but what is not so obvious is the pulling power of a new ship to experienced cruisers and loyal brand followers from all around the world.

What we will see is many international visitors making the journey to cruise on the new ship from our ports, delivering a boon for our local economies as they spend twice as much on a daily basis as domestic cruisers!



P&O meetings surge

P&O Cruises says it's been "indundated" with requests for information on meetings at sea since launching the new P&O Conferences division at AIME in Feb, with 12 more corporate groups already booked.

Gate 1 Travel cruiser

US travel company Gate 1 Travel is entering the European river cruise market in its own right, with the 2016 debut of the *MS Monarch Empress* which will cruise on Holland's waterways as well as on the Danube.

The ship is the first to be built and operated solely by Gate 1, which opened an Australian office last year (*Travel Daily* 22 Sep 14).

The ship will offer cabins ranging from 140 to 210 square feet, with 80% of staterooms also offering French balconies.

Gate 1 will also next year operate the privately chartered *MS Sound of Music* in Europe.

Disney AmaViola charters

ADDITIONAL details of Disney's European river cruise entry (*CW* Tue) have emerged, with Adventures by Disney set to operate five AmaWaterways charters on the Danube in 2016.

Four seven-night sailings are scheduled for Jul-Aug as well as a one-off Christmas-themed departure in Dec.

Each cruise will operate aboard the brand new 170-passenger *AmaViola* being built specifically with families and featuring six sets of interconnecting cabins.

Some other rooms and suites will also accommodate three and four person families.

The charters will explore four countries - Germany, Austria, Slovakia and Hungary - with each sailing accompanied by eight Adventures by Disney Adventure Guides in addition to the regular AmaWaterways crew.

Onboard activities will also be tailored towards families.

While adults are enjoying wine tasting, music, dancing and other experiences, special Adventures by Disney elements will be made available to kids, such as activity nights, movies, karaoke, relay games, video games and more.

The minimum age is 4 years, but Adventures by Disney has a suggested age of 8 years.

"River cruising is a natural extension for Adventures by Disney, a brand known for providing exceptional service and hands-on, active experiences that

appeal to travellers of all ages," the company said in a release.

"The new Adventures by Disney river cruising departures are designed to meet the needs and interests of all participating family members – allowing grandparents, parents & children alike to make memories that will last a lifetime," Disney said.

Voyages are scheduled to operate between Budapest and Munich on 14, 21 & 28 Jul and 22 Dec, with port calls at Vilshoffen & Passau in Germany, Linz, Melk and Vienna in Austria and Bratislava in Slovakia.

Blue Lagoon exclusive

ECRUISEING.TRAVEL is offering an exclusive free cabin upgrade on selected Blue Lagoon cruise packages aboard *Fiji Princess*, valid for 7 or 10 night itineraries booked before 31 May.

Scenic dropping the "tours"

SCENIC Tours yesterday announced a rebranding, which will see it henceforth known simply as "Scenic".

The change has launched with a fanfare, including an inspirational video outlining the company's vision which can be viewed by clicking on the **TDTV** logo at right.

A year in the making, the change is recognition of the company's evolution over the last 29 years from a domestic coach touring operator to a "luxury global travel company".

Chairman Glen Moroney, pictured above, said the rebrand marks a new era for the company he founded in Newcastle in 1986.



"Today, we're a global company, with a unique perspective on all-inclusive luxury travel," he said.

"Our offering is now much more tailored...our experiences have become unique, handcrafted events. And above all we now have a much clearer idea of our mission - to help our guests discover the incredible wonder in the many locations we visit."

The name change brings a new logo (**below**) and a black and gold colour palette which will roll out across all of Scenic's collateral and river ships in the coming months.



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Princess agent video

PRINCESS Cruises has produced a special video for travel agents highlighting special features of the 2016/17 program including its South America circumnavigation.

See cruiseweekly.com.au/videos.

A&K cruising website for ANZ

ABERCROMBIE & Kent is creating greater awareness of its cruise offering, launching a new dedicated portal for the market.

The new website provides a platform for the bespoke travel operator to list its full suite of cruise products, covering small ships, river cruises, expeditions, barging and private charters.

Users of www.akcruising.com.au can filter a cruise product search based on destinations, under categories Antarctica, Arctic,

Australasia & Pacific, Europe, North Africa & Middle East, South America and The Orient.

MD for Australia/New Zealand Sujata Raman told *Cruise Weekly* the site was an Australian-born and bred initiative for the firm.

"We have significant cruise product in our portfolio including Sanctuary cruises on the Yangtze, Irrawaddy and the Nile, as well as our Polar charters.

"Given the popularity of cruising amongst Australians, it made sense for us to isolate all our cruising product on a unique website, to make it consumer-friendly for the cruise traveller.

"The product is largely river cruising (apart from Antarctica and the Arctic), but there are also cruises to Japan and additional regions are being added continuously," she told *CW*.

MSC unlimited drinks

MSC Cruises is offering a free "Allegrissimo Drinks Package" aboard selected 2015 departures on Mediterranean and northern Europe voyages, with the offer valid for bookings until the end of Apr.

The package allows cruisers to enjoy unlimited wine by the glass from a special "Allegrissimo" selection of the menu as well as draught beer, soft drinks, mineral water and cocktails as well as take-away ice cream.

The package is valued at \$280pp on a seven night voyage, and \$440pp on an 11 night cruise.

Ponant Pacific brox

PONANT has released a new "Pacific Collection" brochure of 2015/16 voyages in the Pacific region, aboard its *L'Austral* and *L'Soleal*, comprising 13 itineraries across the region.



THE Australian Financial Review may need some education about the cruise industry - and certainly won't be popular with one Ann Sherry, head of Carnival Australia this morning.

An *AFR* report in today's issue on the down under deployment of *Ovation of the Seas* (see p1) describes Royal Caribbean as "the world's largest cruise company" - not quite correct given that Carnival Corporation has more than 100 vessels across around nine brands - compared to RCCL's 45 ships and 3 brands.

However RCI's *Ovation* will be the largest cruise ship ever deployed in Australian waters "apart from some smelly oil tanker," according to Royal Caribbean's Gavin Smith.

CARNIVAL Cruise Lines is definitely cranking up the volume with a series of on-board concerts featuring some of the world's top (ageing) music acts.

The Carnival LIVE series sees the artists perform aboard the line's vessels while docked in one of three Caribbean ports of call - Cozumel, Nassau and St Thomas.

One of the headliners is none other than Lionel Richie, who Carnival promises will have cruisers "dancing on the ceiling" aboard *Carnival Freedom* and *Carnival Pride* in Nassau.

Also on the list are rock superstars BOSTON as well as the legendary Heart, who were inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2013.

Styx and Smokey Robinson are also appearing during the series, with tickets able to be booked in conjunction with cruises.



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TRAVELMARVEL has welcomed its newest river cruise fleet-mate this month, with the refurbished *Travelmarvel Sapphire* presented during a special event this month.

The 135' vessel has a capacity of 164 guests, with all Category C and above cabins featuring

French Balconies.

A renaming ceremony held in Koln, Germany was attended by Travelmarvel's European team.

Company vice president sales & marketing North America, UK & Europe Nicole De Wilde will act as *Travel Sapphire's* godmother.

Cruise Weekly is Australia's leading travel industry cruise publication. An industry-focused PDF edition of *Cruise Weekly* is published every Tue and Thu, and there's also a consumer-facing email newsletter published each Wed - sign up free at www.cruiseweekly.com.au.

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