

Azamara to return in Greece in Aug

AZAMARA has announced its return to sailing in Greece (pictured), with a series of country-intensive voyages starting in Aug.

The program marks Azamara's return to service for the first time as an independent cruise line, with *Azamara Quest* to return beginning 28 Aug.

Five back-to-back country-intensive voyages will be followed by one classic Mediterranean sailing, with each itinerary seven days in length.

The season will also feature 18 late-night stays in port, including Santorini, Rhodes and Heraklion.

Voyages will open for booking on 11 May, with all guests and crews required to be fully vaccinated against coronavirus no later than 14 days prior to departure.

Once the sailings open for booking, Azamara will reveal



further protocol guidelines, led by the Healthy Sail Panel.

"Over the past year, our team – ship to shoreside – continued to connect with our guests and travel partners...our biggest takeaway is the desire everyone has to sail again, and we are excited to share that we can finally make this dream come true," said President Carol Cabezas.

"There's no better way to return to service than in a country Azamara knows best, Greece.

"Our return to sail wouldn't be possible without the support from Honorable Minister Harry Theoharis, the local government and port authorities, and we are extremely grateful for welcoming us back into this beautiful and culturally rich destination."

Theoharis said Greece was looking forward to welcoming Azamara and its guests, and fully supported the line's return to cruising.

All sailings aboard *Azamara Journey* and *Azamara Pursuit* will remain suspended until Sep, and other *Quest* sailings through to 02 Oct are also suspended.

Guests impacted by suspensions will be offered a number of flexible options to rebook or request refunds for current reservations.

Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

Ponant vax ruling

PONANT has added a coronavirus vaccination mandate to its American cruise protocols.

Travel partners were informed in an email by EVP Sales & Marketing Herve Bellaiche that guests who come aboard a Ponant ship will have to be vaccinated.

"Our passengers' trust in our company is vital...94% of them told us that they would like to go back to sea with us, if everyone on board is vaccinated," the email said.

"Vaccination opens up new opportunities and allows us to calmly plan the resumption of our business".



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RCI extends cruise credits

ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI) has extended its future cruise credits, which are now able to be used on the cruise line's newly announced 2022/23 Australia and South Pacific season (**CW** 19 Mar).

This extends the sailing window to 30 Apr 2023, and an additional 61 local cruise holidays.

Future cruise credits need to be redeemed before 30 Apr 2022, and can be combined with current promotions.

Travel partner base commissions also continue to be protected as per the existing Global Suspension and Cruise with Confidence conditions.

There is a future cruise credits redemption guide and FAQs available for travel partners on Homeport - rcihomeport.com.au.

MEANWHILE, Royal Caribbean Group (RCG) has pledged its support to the Shop Local Alaska

program, the first major travel supplier to do so.

Created by Alaskan firms BuyAlaska and Voyij in response to the uncertainty of cruising's return to the state this year, Shop Local Alaska directly generates revenue for port town businesses by marketing AK's products to those interstate.

Shop Local Alaska offers a wide variety of products, including locally-caught fish, jewellery, native art and clothing.

Any Alaskan-owned business can list their products on the Voyij marketplace, with the program to be marketed to RCI and Celebrity Cruises passengers.

"We are thrilled to support the Shop Local Alaska campaign," said RCG Associate VP Government Relations Wendy Lindskoog.

"It is a small way for our cruise lines and guests to stay connected to Alaska".

Iona godmother named



HAYS Travel Chair Irene Hays (**pictured**) will be the godmother of the United Kingdom's P&O Cruises' newest ship, *Iona* (**CW** 15 Oct 2020).

P&O said there is no-one more supportive of cruising or more

ambassadorial for the travel industry than Hays, and no-one more appropriate to take centre stage for the ceremony.

Hays will officially name *Iona* in a special ceremony on 16 May.

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WE KNOW the ocean can be an unforgiving place, but apparently even more so than we once knew, with scientists recently documenting baby starfish cannibalising their siblings for the very first time.

To grow into the adults that can be seen scattered along a beach, juvenile starfish must eat vast quantities of food, and the research suggests eating their siblings offers an advantage.

Because female starfish produce up to 10 million eggs per year, that is a lot of potential competition for a juvenile.

A starfish eating its sibling not only helps them grow, but also removes future competitors from their surroundings.

"We think, anthropomorphizing, that cannibalism is terrible, but in nature, red in tooth and claw, this is something that can be favoured," the Ecological Society of America said.

We need more time!

ROYAL Caribbean Group has asked the Galveston Wharves Board of Trustees for more time to complete its new terminal at the Port of Galveston.

Work has not begun on the new terminal, but the Board of Trustees will meet today to consider giving Royal Caribbean two more months to finish construction of the US\$100 million facility, extending the deadline to 30 Sep 2023.

Destination: Infinity Pool Bar

Indulge in a twilight tippie or two on board *Victoria Mekong*



CRUISE OPERATOR: Wendy Wu Tours.



SHIP: *Victoria Mekong*.

LOCATION: The Sun Deck.

THIRSTY guests wanting to enjoy a beverage while taking in the scenery along the banks of the Mekong River need look

no further than the Infinity Pool Bar, located on the Sun Deck of *Victoria Mekong*, pictured below.

Cruisers can kick back with a drink by the pool, pictured above, or try making their own, with the ship offering its very own cocktail competition.

With a full array of ingredients at their disposal, including spirits, juice, soda, fruit, and spices, wannabe mixologists can try their hand at creating their very own concoction, with crew members on hand to judge the cocktails based on presentation, taste and name.

Creative minds - and tastebuds - unite!



The promise of Eden

WHEN the new Eden Welcome Centre opens this week, it carries the spirit of promise on its shoulders.

The eye-catching new structure, which also will be home to the Visitor Information Centre, is the first new cruise construction project to have been completed in the last 12 months.

As such there will be much room for celebration at the opening event with ACA, CLIA, tourism associations and several cruise line representatives set to attend.

Infrastructure investment is critical for the growth of regional communities, especially those along important cruise routes.

This injection of funds into local economies helps to sustain many communities which dot the Australian coastline.

Based on the NSW Sapphire Coast, Eden is an important stop for cruise ships on the way from Sydney to Melbourne.

In the 2019/2020 cruise season, 22 ships docked in Eden bringing with them passengers and crews who spent money at food and beverage outlets, took tours and purchased souvenirs.

The Centre is the ideal complement to the \$44m cruise wharf, which opened in Aug 2019, with industry hailing the structure as "the perfect location to welcome our cruise passengers when they return."

Congratulations to the Port Authority of NSW and all who supported this project in the local community.

This bellwether will no doubt help to raise the spirits of many in our industry.