

### Cruise Weekly today

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

### Earle aboard Earle

**MARINE** biologist Sylvia Earle will be aboard Aurora Expedition's voyage on her namesake ship *Sylvia Earle* to Baja California & Sea of Cortez in May 2022.

During the voyage, guests will hear once-in-a-lifetime lectures directly from Earle on ocean conservation, climate change and more, as well as the opportunity to join her in the Citizen Science Centre aboard the ship.

When Earle founded Mission Blue, the Sea of Cortez was the organisation's very first Hope Spot, identified as a place scientifically specified as critical to the health of the ocean - **CLICK HERE**.

## Celebrity confirms Australasia 2022/23

**CELEBRITY** Cruises has this morning announced *Celebrity Eclipse* (pictured) will operate in Australia and New Zealand next year, with a total of 19 departures ex Sydney and Auckland from Sep 2022 through until Apr 2023.

It will be the second season in a row for *Eclipse* in the region, with plans also in place for a 19-voyage deployment from Oct this year (**CW** 19 Nov 2020).

The 2022/23 deployment will feature Celebrity's recently announced themed experiences, such as Sun & Beach Escapes, Food & Wine Classics and Five Star Getaways, which will "provide deeper immersion into the region's unique culture".

Enhanced onboard and shoreside programming will complement the themes, such as an overnight in Cairns with the option to sleep under the stars on a private pontoon on



the Great Barrier Reef, as well as Celebrity's first ever Australian food and wine itinerary taking in Melbourne, Adelaide and Hobart.

Voyages also include the return of the popular Auckland to Fiji voyage operating in Jan 2023, as well as three South Pacific island itineraries taking in Fiji, New Caledonia and Vanuatu.

The announcement follows the recent introduction of simplified

pricing for Celebrity's voyages, switching to the Always Included model featuring wi-fi, drinks and gratuities on all fares.

Travel advisors keen to find out more about the season can join a product training webinar taking place Tue, hosted by the Celebrity Cruises sales team.

Registration details and selling tools can be accessed at [thecelebritycommitment.com.au](https://thecelebritycommitment.com.au).

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## Nash defers to immigration

**NEW** Zealand Minister of Tourism Stuart Nash (**pictured**) has declined to formally comment on the shock New Zealand Government decision to deny entry to Ponant's *Le Laperouse* to Kiwi waters (**CW** yesterday), with a response from his office simply noting that "the Government spokesperson on this is the Minister of Immigration".

The 11th-hour move has put in jeopardy the upcoming season of domestic voyages which are understood to be fully sold out, just a week before the first cruise is set to depart.

Frantic efforts have been made to resolve the issues, which centre around the last-minute denial of visas to 61 of the 90 crew members on board, apparently on the basis they are non-essential workers such as hairdressers, bartenders and masseuses, whose onboard jobs could be done by New Zealanders.

As well as highlighting the fact the crew members are multi-skilled and also trained in ship safety procedures, Ponant is believed to have attempted to recruit alternative staff from New Zealand, in addition to the 16 Kiwis who had already been contracted for the season.

Despite New Zealand's heavy focus on pivoting its tourism sector to domestic, Nash is not adding any additional commentary about the latest slap in the face to the industry.

"The Minister echoes the



comments of the Minister of Immigration...we have a very strict set of rules around the border which have served us well and kept us safe from the pandemic," a spokesperson for Nash's office told **Cruise Weekly**.

"They have protected our health and our economy," the spokesperson added.

It's believed a final decision will be made today, with the ship currently in New Caledonia after having cruised almost 4,000 nautical miles since approval for the New Zealand season was granted in mid-Dec by the Ministry of Health after detailed submissions including the numbers and nationality makeup of the crew.

New Zealand Cruise Association Chief Exec Kevin O'Sullivan said the organisation was "shocked and bewildered" by the decision, which will have significant impacts on the industry.

Ponant says as well as hitting New Zealand businesses in the cruise supply chain, more than \$1 million in commission will be lost to the trade if the season is canx.

Tourism operators eager to welcome visitors at ports around the country will also miss out.

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## Coastal WA voyage

**CRUISE** Traveller has released a new luxury expedition package for Aug 2022, sailing Western Australia's coastline.

With complimentary Business class flights and hotels currently on offer, the Silversea Cruises voyage travels between Darwin and Perth across 19 nights.

The Wild Western Australia and the Kimberley voyage offers a Darwin to Perth departure from 02 Aug and a vice versa route from 19 Aug - call 1800 507 777.

## NCL fly-cruises

**CREATIVE** Cruising has launched a series of fly-cruise packages to New Zealand with Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) for Christmas 2022.

The New Zealand Sights & Sounds, the Spirit of NZ, the Christmas & New Zealand New Year and the Taste of NZ itineraries are all currently on sale, featuring a cruise and a hotel stay.

Travellers can also currently enjoy NCL's Take 5 and receive a free beverage package, a free specialty dining package, shore excursion credit and more.

For more, call 1300 362 599.



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**WE ALL** know spiders are dangerous - especially those that call Australia home - but often, their bark is worse than their bite.

A Sydney couple found this out recently, when an arachnid hitching a ride aboard the pair's boat spooked them, causing a crash (pictured).

The vessel was travelling along the Hawkesbury River at North Sackville when the couple spotted the spider, after which they crashed into a seawall.

On arrival, paramedics treated the man and woman for their injuries, with both taken to hospital in a stable condition.

Fortunately, the pair appears to be okay, which means the worst part of this crash is they don't know whether or not the spider is still on their boat!



## CDC says mask up

**THE** Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) is now requiring the wearing of face masks by all travellers to, from or around the United States, including cruise ships.

The mask requirement also applies to travellers in transportation hubs such as seaports.

## Virtuosa delivered



**MSC Cruises** has taken delivery of flagship-to-be *MSC Virtuosa*, with the traditional flag ceremony held yesterday at Chantiers de l'Atlantique in Saint Nazaire (pictured).

*Virtuosa* will become one of the most environmentally conscious ships at sea when she comes into service in Apr.

The ship will arrive in time for the summer season, commencing from 16 Apr, with four cruises in the Mediterranean of three, four and 10 nights, before moving to her new homeport of Kiel, where she will commence Northern Europe itineraries from 08 May.

Yesterday's ceremony was attended in person by Executive Chairman Pierfrancesco Vago and his family, as well as representatives from MSC's new builds team, along with delegates from Chantiers de l'Atlantique.

The ship is one of the most technologically advanced ships at sea, and includes hybrid exhaust gas cleaning, selective catalytic reduction, and

wastewater treatment in line with the International Maritime Organization resolutions.

*Virtuosa* also boasts ship-to-shore power connectivity, and an underwater radiated noise management system, with hull and engine room designs that minimise acoustic sound impact, reducing their potential effects on marine fauna.

The ship is the sister ship of *MSC Grandiosa*, with this year to see the launch of two new next-generation ships (the other being *MSC Seashore*, which will come into service in Aug).

This will bring the fleet total to 19, with a further four to be launched by 2025.

"We remain committed to building each time some of the most innovative ships in the world when it comes to their environmental performance featuring nothing but the most advanced available technology at sea," Vago said, adding each new ship would "push the boundaries".



## Supporting our industry

ACA has jumped "on board" to support a new national campaign Save the Travel Industry to keep pressure on the Australian Government to extend support for our industry after JobKeeper ends on 31 Mar.

As an Association, we believe it is essential our members receive the necessary assistance during the prolonged and ongoing shutdown of the cruise industry.

From tour operators to transport companies and everyone else in between, we want to ensure that companies are still operational when the cruise ships return.

This is particularly important for smaller regional communities where tourism, and cruise in particular, are the backbone of the economy and support the livelihood of many residents.

The Tourism & Transport Forum released a report recently showing that 60-70% of tourism revenue comes from international tourism and we know that our industry will not fully recover until our national border can safely re-open and welcome visitors from other countries.

We also recognise we must continue to encourage the consistent opening of Australian interstate borders to allow for increased domestic tourism.

With the impending rollout of the vaccine, the opportunity to allow that to happen is getting closer.

The extension of financial support is the first and critical step in an industry continuity plan but to be sustainable we must also think long-term and encourage the safe restart of domestic cruising giving Australian travellers the opportunity to support our local business.