



Protocols underpinning MSC's success

EXCLUSIVE

MSC Cruises Managing Director Australasia Alessandro Guerrieri believes the success of the cruise line's restart has come off the back of its unflinching health & safety protocols.

Speaking to *Cruise Weekly* yesterday, Guerrieri said MSC's protocols were continuing to evolve alongside the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning the cruise line had been able to continue sailing without incident.

"We have set the standard for health and safety," Guerrieri said.

"Our protocols are changing and adapting to consider the evolution of the pandemic.

"In the short-term, we are doing whatever we can to show our health and safety protocols are strong enough to cruise, and *Grandiosa* is a strong example."

Showcasing the flexibility of MSC's health & safety operations is the expansion of its coronavirus testing regime, which has been doubled to two tests per passenger per voyage (*CW* 06 Nov 2020), up from the single test



implemented on the cruise line's restart in Aug (*CW* 04 Aug 2020).

"Since Nov, we've started to introduce a second test...now you get tested prior to embarkation, and guests on board get tested after four days of navigation, and our crew members are tested once a week," Guerrieri said.

"The second thing we're doing is elevated sanitation and cleaning measures...we've introduced new cleaning methods, we

use hospital-grade sanitation products," the MD added.

"When it's not possible to secure social distancing, we're requesting the use of masks.

"We've enhanced our medical facilities with highly qualified staff, there is ongoing health monitoring, guests and crew are having their temperature checked daily either when they return from ashore or dedicated stations around the ship - and we keep a bubble even when we go on excursion."

Asked if MSC would potentially follow other cruise lines into requiring vaccinations for their passengers, Guerrieri said the company was satisfied with its current protocols, which have seen 40,000 guests cruise safely.

"We're happy with what we're doing right now," he said.

"There are options outside vaccination and we believe our way is the right one."

MSC also took delivery of flagship-to-be *MSC Virtuosa* earlier this week (*CW* 03 Feb) with the traditional flag ceremony held Wed at Chantiers de l'Atlantique in Saint Nazaire.

Vaccines mandatory aboard two lines

HORNBLOWER Group's American Queen Steamboat Company and Victory Cruise Lines have announced that being vaccinated against coronavirus will be mandatory for all guests and crew members aboard its ships.

Coming into effect from Jul, the mandate will apply to non-shipboard employees also, and will expand upon the health & safety measures of the cruise lines, which includes pre-cruise coronavirus testing of all guests and crews, and mandatory masks in all public areas where social distancing is not possible, the US-based cruise operator said.

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Year-long Canada big ship cruise ban

AUTHORITIES in Canada have banned cruise ships carrying 100 or more people for the next year.

The shock move was announced by the country's Minister of Transport, Omar Alghabra (**pictured**), in the form of new Interim Orders which prohibit pleasure craft in Canadian Arctic waters and cruise vessels in all Canadian waters through until 28 Feb 2022.

"With these prohibitions in place, public health authorities will be able to continue focusing on the most pressing issues, including the vaccine rollout and new COVID-19 variants," the Minister said in a statement.

He also added that the Government of Canada continues to advise Canadian citizens and permanent residents to "avoid



all travel on cruise ships outside Canada until further notice".

"Cruise vessels in Canadian waters pose a risk to our health care systems," he said, stressing that keeping Canadians and transportation workers safe and healthy are "top priorities for Transport Canada".

"The Government of Canada will continue to evaluate the situation and make changes as necessary...should the COVID-19 pandemic sufficiently improve

to allow the resumption of these activities, the Minister of Transport has the ability to rescind the Interim Orders."

Previously temporary measures for pleasure craft and cruise ships had been scheduled to end on 28 Feb 2021.

The Minister warned that those who do not comply with the passenger vessel prohibition could be liable on summary conviction to a fine of up to \$1 million, or imprisonment for a term of up to 18 months, or both.

There is no national ban for smaller cruise ships certified to carry 100 or fewer people, but they must follow provincial, territorial, local and regional health authority protocols for timelines and processes around their operations.

Cruise Saudi roles

SAUDI Arabia's fledgling cruise organisation is beefing up its expertise with the appointment of two highly experienced cruising experts.

Cruise Saudi has appointed Mark Robinson, previously of Global Ports Holding and InterCruises, as Chief Commercial and Operations Officer, while former Royal Caribbean Group Director of Port Business Development Miguel Reyna is Cruise Saudi's new Chief of Development and Asset Management Officer.

The pair will join the Cruise Saudi business in Jeddah in the coming weeks, and will guide the infrastructure development and suite of cruise and passenger services in the organisation's preliminary business phase.

Island Escape Reef debut

NEW Zealand's Island Escape Cruises will be offering voyages in Australia this season, exploring the Great Barrier Reef on the maiden voyage of its soon-to-be-delivered ship *Island Escape* (**CW** 06 Nov 2020).

The cruise line has announced a 10-night Cairns to Brisbane (**pictured**) and vice versa voyage, despite late last year making public a 2021-22 season based entirely in New Zealand.

Island Escape was set to kick off its 2021-22 season with three heli-golf cruises departing from Auckland aboard the new ship, but Island Escape is now selling northbound and southbound Great Barrier Reef itineraries, beginning 11 Aug from A\$9,855 per person.

Calls on the cruise will include Fitzroy Island, Sudbury Reef, Palm Islands, Whitsunday Islands, Percy Island, Swains Reef, Fraser Island and Moreton Island, before arriving in Brisbane.



An earlybird discount of 10% applies to all bookings confirmed by May, and paid in full within seven days of booking.

Highlights of the itinerary include visits to Fraser Island, Great Sandy National Park and Orpheus Island.

Also listed as a new destination on Island Escape's website is 'South Pacific', with a mouseover reading "more information coming soon".

For more info, **CLICK HERE**.

Viking promo a trade smash

THE Viking Cruises sales team hit the road last month, delivering "Chocolate Smashpagnes" to more than 20 top travel agents in NSW & Qld.

The chocolate champagne bottles were packed with sweet delicacies and presented in a fancy pinewood box - complete with a matching smashing utensil and a customised message from Viking "Cheers to a Smashing 2021".

One of the recipients, Deborah Ortado from Wentworth Travel in Sydney thanked the team for the gift and for Viking's ongoing support, saying "you have an amazing product...and your help with refunds has been wonderful".

Pictured at top is Viking's Ramon Drew with Dianne Stockley from italktravel Blue Mountains in NSW while at **right** Leon Hill from Viking hands over the booty to Kristen Cahill and Wendy Hopping from Gregor and Lewis Bespoke Travel.





CRUISERS missing aquatic encounters may be interested in a new Valentine's Day offering from Sydney Aquarium.

However rather than the traditional shipboard romance, the SEA LIFE special is giving jilted lovers the opportunity to vent their angst, with the help of some fairly revolting denizens of the deep.

The aquarium's resident hagfish apparently feed on any yukky leftovers on the ocean floor, and under the promotion burned flames are invited to name a fish carcass after their "slimy ex" and then watch as it is devoured by the creatures during their daily feed.

"We don't have the power to heal a broken heart, but perhaps this unique form of therapy will deliver some closure and provide singles with a reason to celebrate this Valentine's Day," said SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium Aquarist, Penelope Carbia-Kolevski - more info [HERE](#).

Coral appointment

FORMER UK MD of Azamara, Richard Twynam, has joined Coral Expeditions as a non-executive Director.

The appointment of the well-respected cruise executive, who has also worked with TUI and Riviera Travel River Cruises, coincides with the new investment in Coral from the NRMA (*CW* 02 Feb).

P&O's Encounter getting close



P&O Cruises Australia's latest ship, *Pacific Encounter* (**pictured**), is now sporting the cruise line's iconic livery and funnel logo, after leaving the shipyard in Singapore.

Encounter departed the wet dock having completed the transformation, which also included a fit-out of other P&O Australia features in her public spaces, including new carpet, artworks, accessories, a new badge (*CW* 21 Jan), and The Lobby multi-storey atrium.

Dining outlets include the Waterfront Restaurant, Dragon Lady and Angelo's, the summer-inspired pub Encounter Hotel, as well as new dining outlets from Australian chefs Luke Mangan and Johnny Di Francesco.

Encounter will complete her renovations over the coming months before joining *Pacific Adventure* and *Pacific Explorer*.

Love the Captain!

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises is encouraging love from both singles and couples this Valentine's Day, with a range of Sydney Harbour trips.

Romantic dining cruises for couples, and a selection of Love Yourself celebrations for singles and groups are available this Valentine's Day, featuring a la carte dining, a selection of wine and more.

There are three dinner cruises available, with a choice of three-, four- or six-course menus, pick-ups at 5:00pm or 7:00pm, and a comprehensive wine and cocktail list.

Prices range from \$79 to \$249 per person - for further information and bookings call 02 9206 1111.

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