

### I <3 MSC Cruises

MSC Cruises is inviting travellers to share their love in the Mediterranean, with guests able to book a 2022 cruise in the region with 50% off the second passenger.

Launching today, the offer is valid for selected sailings in the Mediterranean from 26 Mar 2022 to 20 Nov 2022 on all cabin categories, except MSC Yacht Club.

Future cruise credit holders are welcome to book, with any new booking made up until 31 Mar able to be cancelled for a full refund up to 15 days prior to cruise departure, or moved free of charge.

The 50% off second passenger offer ends 12 Mar.

### Cruise Weekly today

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

## Aus snaps up NZ's Ponant season

PONANT has announced eight new Australian coastal voyages for later this year, following the termination of its New Zealand cruise season (CW 04 Feb).

*Le Laperouse* and *Le Soleal* will be deployed in Australian waters for eight immersive itineraries featuring the New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Tas coastlines, after the New Zealand Government's shock decision to deny the cruise line entry to the country's waters.

Each new itinerary will offer back-to-back voyage opportunities, with visits to Dirk Hartog Island, Shark Bay and the Houtman Abrolhos, and highlights such as dropping in on rare Australian sea lion colonies, experiencing the National Anzac Centre in Albany, exploring the former penal colony at Maria Island or viewing Australia's



highest sea cliffs at Cape Hauy.

The seven-to-15-night itineraries have been created by Expedition Manager Asia Pacific Mick Fogg, with General Manager Sales & Marketing Asia Pacific Deb Corbett picking her favourite highlights as the visits to Port Lincoln, McLaren Vale and the Tamar Valley.

She added Ponant had already received an extraordinary

response from travellers registering expressions of interest.

"Acting promptly will secure access to the widest range of available accommodation on each of the eight differing itineraries as well as the highest Ponant Bonus advance purchase incentive - currently as much as 30% savings," she said.

Start planning [HERE](#).

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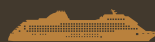
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**MSC Cruises** has introduced its Starship Club, which will feature the world's first humanoid robotic bartender at sea (pictured).

Launching on new flagship *MSC Virtuosa*, 'Rob' will be available to serve his "cosmic cocktails" when *Virtuosa* comes into service from 16 Apr.

Rob has been trained to mix and serve his signature alcoholic and non-alcoholic cocktails, and a range of personalised drinks, while engaging the guests with his voice and human-like expressions for a fully immersive bar experience.



## New Avalon protocols



**AVALON** Waterways plans to safeguard travellers with new pre-trip health & safety measures, including proof of COVID-19 vaccination, or a negative test result, in order to join its river cruises.

The protocols have been handed down by Avalon's parent company Globus, and will require travellers to offer proof of COVID-19 vaccination at least 14 days prior to travel, or proof of a negative COVID-19 test result within 72 hours of travel, or proof of recovery from a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis within three months of travel.

In addition to unveiling new COVID-19 parameters required at the start of each holiday departure, Globus has announced it will facilitate and cover additional COVID-19 testing, if required, for guests to return to their home country, as well as tests on the trip if guests show symptoms.

The new protocols will take effect in Apr, with Globus now

also offering guests more payment flexibility, shortening the final payment window for all brands to 45 days prior to departure.

## Shipload of Love

**VIRGIN** Voyages has unveiled its Shipload of Love promise, gifting 2,021 voyages, launching on Valentine's Day.

Travellers are asked to nominate those who have "inspired you, cared for you and helped you to navigate this past year for the vacation of a lifetime."

Virgin said Shipload of Love would be its first foray into a year-long, multilayered giveaway effort, with submissions for the first 1,000 voyages to be accepted through to 16 Mar.

The cruise line also said it would soon share an update on Lady Ship 3, unveiling her name and new itineraries - [www.virginvoyages.com](http://www.virginvoyages.com).

## Vega named

**SWAN** Hellenic has announced *Vega* as the name of the second of its ships at its keel-laying ceremony.

The second of three purpose-designed ice-class expedition cruise ships being built at Helsinki Shipyard, *Vega* is named after the first vessel to navigate the Northeast Passage, and is a sister to the recently-named *Minerva* (CW 28 Sep 2020).



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