



Bratton optimistic on Kimberley '21

PONANT Asia-Pacific Chair Sarina Bratton believes the cruise industry will be successful in operating a Kimberley expedition season this year, after it spent the last 12 months grappling with officialdom on both sides of the Tasman.

Bratton's experiences, including her reaction to the shock 11th-hour decision by Immigration New Zealand authorities to deny visas to two-thirds of the crew on board *Le Laperouse* early last month (**CW** 04 Feb) - are detailed in an extensive cover story published in this month's issue of **Cruise Weekly's** sister publication, **travelBulletin** (pictured).

She cited "encouraging support from certain governments" for a resumption, which is seen as paving the way for the rest of the industry, confirming active discussions are underway with state and federal governments by Cruise Lines International Association and other stakeholders, including Ponant, with the Australian Department of Health understood to be working on a formal framework for the resumption of cruising.

"This staged approach will allow the states and territories to make independent decisions on the scale of operations that they are comfortable to support, with very strict health protocols and risk mitigation," Bratton told **CW**.

Expedition cruising in particular is seen as a way forward, with



Australian officials perceiving it as a more manageable starting point.

Despite small passenger numbers, destinations which have had no cruise visitation for the last year are eager to welcome arrivals, particularly from the high-yielding expedition sector.

In spite of the shock decision which forced the last-minute cancellation of Ponant's New Zealand season, Bratton continues to believe NZ will be a part of the line's itineraries in the future, but perhaps not this year.

"In the short term, I am more concerned about the damage that NZ has done to themselves with the global cruising community.

"We need a whole-of-industry approach to the NZ Government to establish a clear consultation process and map a way forward," Bratton said, adding: "I'm very

concerned about whether there will be a 2021/22 season operating [in New Zealand]."

"Immigration NZ's current processes do not work for the cruise industry," she said.

"Unless these are changed, it will be difficult for the industry to resume activity in the country."

However, Ponant is keen on New Zealand long-term, with Bratton adding, "we want to be in NZ and share the country's beauty with many."

The full story can be seen in this month's issue of **travelBulletin** - travelbulletin.com.au.

Cruise Weekly today

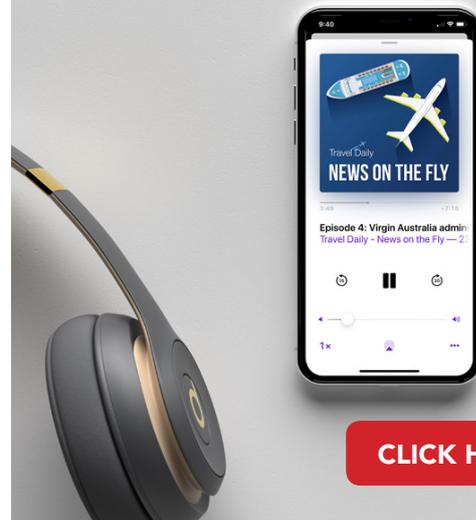
Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

Golding to Ponant

JULIE Golding has taken a new role as a Business Development Manager for Ponant, joining the company after five years with Silversea.

The move sees her rejoin her former Rocky Mountaineer and Globus Family of Brands colleague Julie Rogers, who is Ponant's National BDM for Australia, NZ, India & S.E. Asia.

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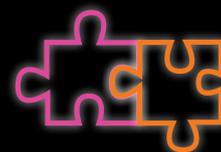
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Main differences

CRUISE Traveller Managing Director Craig Bowen told *Cruise Weekly* one of his motivations for establishing the cruise agency's new venture - The Small Ship Collective (**CW** yesterday) - is to help travel advisors understand the sector.

Bowen explained access to the destinations, rather than the ship being the destination itself, was a key difference between the small ship and large ship sectors, respectively.

"We definitely see the destination as the driving force with the style of traveller that goes on a small ship," he said.

"They're not saying, 'I want to go on a cruise', they're saying 'I want to go to Antarctica' or 'I want to go to the Northwest Passage', or the Amazon River - call 1300 561 001.

RCI's Israeli Odyssey

ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI) is set to launch *Odyssey of the Seas* in Israel in May, marking the first time the cruise line has visited the Middle Eastern nation.

Residents of Israel will be the first guests to cruise on *Odyssey* during its inaugural season, and as stipulated by the country's health and tourism authorities, Royal Caribbean will be the first cruise line in the world to offer fully vaccinated sailings, where both guests and crew members over the age of 16 will be vaccinated against coronavirus.

Details on additional health and safety measures will be announced at a later date.

Odyssey of the Seas will offer a combination of three-to-seven-night cruises sailing roundtrip from Haifa, visiting the Greek Isles and Cyprus.

On sale from Mon, *Odyssey* will

visit destinations such as Rhodes, Santorini, Mykonos and Athens, Greece and Limassol.

Odyssey's highlights include a two-level pool deck, a two-level indoor and outdoor activity complex, and a lineup of complimentary & specialty restaurants.

Entertainment throughout the ship will be punctuated by high-tech signature productions in the Royal Theater and Two70, where "art & multimedia merge for jaw-dropping performances found only on *Odyssey*", according to Royal Caribbean.

"Israeli travellers will be looking to get away, relax with total peace of mind, and enjoy the travel experiences they are missing dearly; and that is what we do best," President & Chief Executive Michael Bayley said of the launch.

Silversea support

SILVERSEA Cruises has extended additional support to its travel partners, offering \$270 of bonus commissions on all bookings through to the end of Apr.

The cruise line has also included more voyages as eligible for this commission, now available on any Silversea voyage departing on or after 01 Oct through to 30 Jun 2022.

Travel partners can now receive bonus commissions on 275 voyage options.

Silversea has also enhanced flexibility for guests by extending its cruise with confidence policy and its reduced deposit initiative.

Cruisers can still cancel their booking up to 30 days prior to departure without penalties when selecting a 100% future cruise credit for the amount paid - 1300 306 872.



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THIS would be a hell of an off-ship excursion!

A team of divers have stolen 700L of beer from the ocean floor, which was in the process of being aged.

The dark ale was being left next to a vessel marooned 20 metres below the surface off the coast of Argentina.

The beer belonged to three local breweries, and was discovered as stolen by their own divers, who were commissioned as part of a months-long experiment in deep-water brewing.

It took more than a year to obtain the necessary permits to age the beer underwater, before the COVID-19 pandemic slowed the endeavour, with the team finally beginning the experiment on 22 Nov.

They were thought to be challenging Coors' mantle of "the world's most refreshing beer".

Heritage's new Explorer



HERITAGE Expeditions has welcomed a new 18-guest yacht (pictured) to its fleet.

The cruise line's new vessel, *Heritage Explorer* is almost 30 metres in length, and is New Zealand-flagged, meaning it will form the basis of expanded domestic operations for Heritage.

Formerly sailing as *Suwannee River* and *Kalibobo Spirit*, *Heritage Explorer's* arrival also marked the expansion of the cruise line's expedition repertoire, Director & Expedition Leader Aaron Russ said.

"Operating a Kiwis-only summer season has shown us that New Zealanders are as passionate as ever about exploring our amazing backyard and *Heritage Explorer* will offer a more accessible and intimate variation of our traditional voyages," said Russ.

"We are really excited to bring a new style of voyage to destinations we know intimately, and offer more in-depth exploration experiences of NZ."

Heritage Explorer is currently being prepared for her maiden voyage with the cruise line, with new itineraries and destinations being finalised, set to include the Hauraki Gulf, the Bay of Islands, Marlborough Sounds, Stewart Island and Fiordland.

The ship will also be available for private charter, and includes a Master Suite, as well as Double, Twin and Single options, all featuring private en suites, windows or portholes, climate controlled air conditioning, PABX satellite telephone and televisions, with access to the *Heritage Explorer's* GPS.

A numbers game

THE one number that will indicate when cruising will resume will be coronavirus case numbers, according to Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings President & Chief Executive Officer Frank Del Rio.

The cruise line's boss told analysts last week (**CW** 26 Feb) COVID-19 returning to manageable levels will be the most important measure.

"We believe based on all the experts that we talked to, we're going to see a continuation of the significant drop in cases as we enter spring and summer, as we continue to vaccinate over 1.5 million Americans a day, as more people get infected and recover," Del Rio said.

"All those things point into a direction where the prevalence of COVID-19 should drop considerably, giving us a better opportunity to restart operations."

MRPS adds dates

THREE new departure dates are open for two different Murray River Paddlesteamers' (MRPS) cruises.

The six-night All the Rivers Run itinerary will now also depart 30 Aug and 15 Nov, cruising from \$3,350pp.

The four-night Explorer Cruise has also added a 07 Jun cruise, from \$1,935 per person, with guests currently able to save 10%.

Both cruises depart with complimentary wine & beer with dinner - 03 5482 5244.

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