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Azamara set for further expansion

AZAMARA continues to grow its ranks both globally and locally, with the cruise line charting an independent course under new owners, private equity firm Sycamore Partners, which acquired the brand and its fleet from Royal Caribbean Cruises early last year (*CW* 20 Jan 2021).

Recently appointed Director of Sales Australia/NZ, Victoria Chigwidden (*pictured*), told *Cruise Weekly* the addition of *Azamara Onward* in Apr this year was likely to be just the first stage of growth for the cruise line, which has doubled its shoreside team numbers over the last year.

"Growth is inevitable for us... Sycamore Partners didn't buy Azamara just to stick to three ships," she said.

"Our first present was a brand-new vessel," Chigwidden added, with the ramp-up of activity potentially setting the groundwork for further growth.



Separating from Royal Caribbean has necessitated significant work, but "it's exciting what we can do now as a standalone brand," Chigwidden added, with the opportunity to create trade-friendly systems moving forward.

"We can put into place 100% what will work for the trade," Chigwidden said.

She said Azamara was looking forward to finally being able to

showcase its product locally, with the first post-pandemic visit for the company the 20 Dec arrival of *Azamara Quest* in Fremantle - an occasion which will be celebrated in person by the whole team.

The local season has seen a strong response from domestic passengers, in keeping with the trend to holiday close to home.

However, in recent weeks, Azamara's European voyages for next year have also seen some good bookings.

"Our European market has really lifted over the last few weeks, in particular the last couple of weeks," she said.

Azamara's country-intensive itineraries are proving popular, with Chigwidden saying the pandemic has seen people "really work on what's on their bucket list", meaning clients are keen to do a deep dive into particular destinations such as Greece or South America.

Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features two pages of all the latest cruise news plus a cover page from **Cruise Lines International Association** and a full page for the upcoming **Still, Still Standing** celebration.

Join CLIA in 2023

JOIN Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) in 2023, and access the exclusive benefits and support you need to make the most of the sector's revival.

CLIA members can earn bonus commission & rewards on eligible bookings through the 2023 Travel Agent Reward Program - see **cover page**.

Tas return welcomed

CRUISE Lines International Association's local Managing Director Joel Katz said the return of cruise ships to Tasmania helps signal a much-needed tourism revival for communities throughout the state.

Tasmania welcomed its first cruise ship of the season yesterday - P&O Cruises Australia's *Pacific Explorer* (*pictured*) (*CW* yesterday).

"The return of cruise ships to Tasmania is...a huge step towards normality for the many Tasmanians whose businesses benefit from cruise tourism," Katz said.

"It's a revival that will help Tasmania to re-establish important connections, open up economic opportunities and to strengthen its proud maritime tradition."

TasPorts has been working



with various levels of government and other organisations to facilitate the return of cruise ships to the state's waters, Chief Operating Officer Stephen Casey said.

He declared Tasmania is a key destination for many international and Australia-based cruise lines, with the sector delivering significant economic benefits to local tourism businesses.

"Independent economic research confirms that the contribution of a single medium-sized cruise ship visit to the state is more than \$650,000 per visit," he noted.

Devries' new role

BRIGITA Devries is starting a new position as Swan Hellenic's local GM.

Devries told her LinkedIn followers the opportunity to represent Swan Hellenic brings her "immense pride", especially given the esteemed brand's commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism.

"Offering authentic, luxury expedition cruising to extraordinary remote locations, I look forward to showcasing and educating our valued travel partners on all that Swan Hellenic have to offer," she said.

Devries was formerly Dream Cruises' local Vice President Sales & Marketing, before the line's parent company Genting Hong Kong spectacularly collapsed earlier this year (*CW* 31 Jan).

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ONE of Holland America Line's most valued crew members, Joska the service dog, has sailed into elite status, amassing more than 700 cruise days with the brand.

A ceremony honouring Joska has been held in New York City, during which she was presented with the Platinum Medallion, which recognises Holland America's most frequent cruisers.

Joska brought up her 700th day cruising with Holland America on the line's 150th Anniversary Trans-Atlantic Crossing.

She has sailed on more than 50 Holland America voyages since joining her family in 2014 to assist Cornelia, who is blind.



Valiant to Miami

VIRGIN Voyages will welcome *Valiant Lady* to Miami on Mon.

It will be the first time PortMiami and Terminal V celebrate the arrival of *Valiant*.

She will spend her winter season in the "Cruise Capital of the World", offering six- and eight-night itineraries

World Europa delivered



MSC Cruises has taken delivery of *MSC World Europa* (pictured) at Chantiers de l'Atlantique in Saint-Nazaire.

The world's largest LNG-powered ship is the most environmentally high-performing MSC vessel to date, thanks to a range of technologies and solutions that minimise her impact on the air and marine environment.

World Europa incorporates fuel cell technology which has the potential to deliver significant CO2 emission reductions.

"We are proud to welcome to our fleet *MSC World Europa*, our 20th ship and the first to be LNG-powered," said MSC Cruises Executive Chair Pierfrancesco Vago.

"This groundbreaking vessel represents the next phase in our journey toward net zero and sustainable cruising and a symbol of our unwavering commitment to both.

"*World Europa* represents a major step forward for our Cruise Division, the entire MSC Group, and our industry, with a range of unprecedented innovations in terms of environmental and marine technologies, design and guest-centric features."

Chantiers de l'Atlantique General Manager Laurent Castaing declared: "we have reached a new stage in the cruise industry with *MSC World Europa*, the largest ship ever built for a European shipowner.

"From a technological standpoint, *MSC World Europa*, which is equipped with a liquefied natural gas propulsion system, presents a new level of performance and efficiency of the cruise industry.

"This represents a major milestone in minimising emissions as *MSC World Europa* is the least emitting ship of the entire cruise industry."

World Europa is the world's first contemporary cruise ship to feature brand new solid oxide fuel cell (SOFC) technology, powered by LNG.

The ship will include a 150-kilowatt SOFC demonstrator that will use LNG to produce electricity and heat on board in a highly efficient way by means of an electrochemical reaction.

It will be a testbed to accelerate the development of fuel cell technology for contemporary cruise ships, and offers a potential to enable hybrid propulsion solutions in the future.



Cruise drives tourism

IN PREVIOUS columns we have noted with excitement all the cruise firsts as ships arrived back into our ports.

Another milestone was celebrated yesterday when P&O Australia's flagship *Pacific Explorer* arrived into my hometown, Hobart.

Celebrity Cruises also returned to Australia last weekend with *Celebrity Eclipse* on her inaugural voyage to our region with which will also include Hobart.

We look forward to the return of many of these cruise lines which have called previously but are also preparing to welcome some newcomers to the industry in 2023/24 like Virgin Voyages, Seabourn Cruise Line and Disney Cruise Line – all of which have indicated an interest in putting Tasmania on their itineraries.

As you can imagine the return of cruise to Tasmania is great news for a state that relies heavily on a tourism economy.

It's also important to note that many of the ships visiting the beautiful deepwater port in Hobart this season will overnight, allowing for dispersal of passengers beyond the gateway cities and further afield into regional areas to experience the state's wonderful culinary offerings, amazing landscapes, wildlife experiences and historic sites.

These cruise visits around the country are tangible evidence of the statement made recently by Tourism Australia: cruise will play a vital role in helping to re-start the country's tourism industry.

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