

Oceania Cruises coming out strong

OCEANIA Cruises has emerged from the pandemic in a strong position, with forward bookings in the Asia-Pacific region up 50% compared to pre-COVID levels, according to the Chief Executive Officer Howard Sherman.

Making his first ever visit to Australia this week, Sherman (pictured with Oceania VP Australia & NZ Jason Worth and Steve Odell, MD Asia-Pacific for Oceania and Regent Seven Seas) told *Cruise Weekly* "the business has been fantastic".

"There's lots of pent-up demand overall, but also a strong affinity for our brand...we've come out of the pandemic at a much faster pace because we really didn't stop marketing, selling and spending through the whole period," he said.

Odell concurred, saying as cruising restarts "we're in a race, but the business is so strong that we're not having to discount".

"What we're seeing in the market more generally is a lot of dumping of fares - we haven't had to go down that road."

Other key initiatives have included a range of partnerships with organisations such as Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art and the Queensland Ballet, seeking to introduce Oceania to new clients, with Odell and Worth hinting at an additional culinary partnership to be announced shortly.

The launch earlier this month of Oceania's World and Grand Voyages program for 2025 (**CW** 08 Sep) has seen an exceptional response already, with "millions of dollars in bookings" and strong



interest in the Ultimate Odyssey itinerary, which combines an around-Australia voyage ex-Sydney with flights to South America, and then an exploration of Patagonia, Antarctica, and the Chilean Fjords.

Sherman also highlighted strong anticipation for the launch of the new *Oceania Vista* in May (**inset**), which will be the first newbuild for the brand in 11 years.

With capacity for around 1,200 passengers *Vista* appeals to cruisers wanting a smaller ship experience, and continues Oceania's culinary leadership with the introduction of Ember, a new American-style restaurant complementing existing favourites Red Ginger (Asian fusion), Toscana (Italian) and the Polo Grill steakhouse.

Vista will also feature a high-end pizzeria and milkshake bar,



with Sherman saying Oceania will source special Italian flour to ensure it's the "best crust ever".

MEANWHILE Oceania continues to focus on the travel trade, noting that agencies are understandably focused on short-term business, but need to be aware of the "big opportunity that sits out there for 2025".

Odell said there were many new advisors coming into the industry who are not cruise specialists, and urged agency owners to build expertise within their teams.

He applauded the strategy being pursued by Flight Centre's Travel Associates brand, saying "what they're doing is really drilling down and getting their people to sell the right things" - more in today's issue of *Travel Daily*.

New Swan lands

SWAN Hellenic has introduced its new Business Development Manager for Australia, Julie Jones.

She has previously worked in the cruise industry with Creative Cruising, Ponant, Silversea Cruises, The Cruise Team, and Cruiseabout.

Jones has extensive experience in expeditions, particularly in the Arctic.



WIN
AN UNCRUISE
Adventure
for two!

AT OUR FREE SEMINAR



CRUISE
 Traveller

REGISTER NOW



IT'S TIME TO TREAT YOURSELF

WITH CELEBRITY REWARDS

> EARN > SPEND

LEARN MORE

Terms and conditions apply.

Celebrity  Cruises®



Cruising back in Vic, SA

OCEANIA Cruises CEO Howard Sherman this week highlighted the huge global opportunity for the industry among younger retirees, with improving health demographics meaning people still having plenty of energy to explore the world even after they stop working.

"There's a term we use called the Go Go Years," Sherman said. "And then they have the Slow Go Years. And then the No Go years," he added.

"So our guests are often in the Go Go phase of their life, you know, the first six or seven years after retirement and they want to see the world because they've waited their whole lives to do so."

Oceania APAC MD Steve Odell backed Sherman's analysis, noting that Australian Go Go cruisers generally favour the line's Mediterranean itineraries, while those in the Slow Go category prefer to voyage close to home on Australian homeported departures.

THE current Southern Australia itinerary being sailed by Princess Cruises' *Coral Princess* has signalled the restart of cruising in Victoria and South Australia, with the ship's arrival marking the first passenger voyage to visit both states in more than two-and-a-half years.

Sporting a giant "We love Melbourne" banner on her bow, *Coral* arrived into the Victorian capital on Thu, followed by her maiden post-pandemic call at Kangaroo Island yesterday.

The Melbourne call was met by a welcoming committee of the city's events and arts community, along with a host of Victorian fresh produce and beverage suppliers.

The ship is the vanguard for multiple Carnival Corporation cruise lines basing vessels in the city this season, including P&O Cruises Australia and Carnival Cruise Line, which will play a major role in bringing thousands of interstate visitors to the city's major events, such as the Melbourne Cup and the Australian Open.

Thirteen Carnival-branded ships

will be visiting or home porting in Melbourne this season, making 70 calls between them, including nine overnight stays, with the total economic value expected to reach nearly \$115 million.

"It is great to see cruising return to Melbourne after such a long absence with the city ready to participate in the growth of cruise tourism and the rebuilding of Australia's \$5 billion a year cruise industry," said Carnival Corp President Australia Marguerite Fitzgerald.

Victorian Minister for Tourism Steve Dimopoulos said on the day: "today marks an important milestone for the state's tourism and recovery efforts".

Kangaroo Island has a strong affinity for Princess, which was the first cruise line to visit the destination after the devastation of the 2019-20 bushfires.

Yesterday's *Coral* arrival saw local vendors out in force at the Penneshaw cruise ship markets, while tourism operators have ramped up activity to offer guests the opportunity to explore Kangaroo Island, which will welcome 31 calls this season.

Smithsonian cruises

PONANT has announced next year's small ship expeditions with Smithsonian Journeys, a partnership which is now in its third year (**CW** 15 Apr).

The sailings will feature two Smithsonian Journeys experts per cruise, with 21 departures exploring the islands of Scotland, the fjords of Norway; the Hebrides and the Irish Sea; Southern Spain; and the Americas.

The full list of sailings can be viewed **HERE**.

ACL parks and rivers

AMERICAN Cruise Lines (ACL) has announced a brand-new 15-day National Parks & Legendary Rivers itinerary for next year.

The sailing is one of the largest land-cruise packages in the United States, and one of the first-ever coupling a river cruise with the national parks of the Mountain States.

The voyage operates between Portland, OR, and Jackson, WY - **CLICK HERE**.

EARLY BIRD SALE

Alaska | British Isles | Greenland
Svalbard | Iceland

*Selected sailings, based on twin share. T&Cs apply.



**HURTIGRUTEN
EXPEDITIONS**

Save up to
\$1,500
per cabin*