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On location aboard  
*Seven Seas Grandeur*

Today's issue of CW is coming to you from Miami courtesy of Regent Seven Seas Cruises, which will tonight christen *Seven Seas Grandeur*.

**REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) is this week hosting key industry partners and VIPs for a christening ceremony of its 746-guest *Seven Seas Grandeur*. The latest luxurious vessel to join the RSSC fleet will be celebrated tonight with a cocktail party and gala dinner, prior to the official christening ceremony on board.

*Grandeur* will depart Miami overnight, with guests to wake up tomorrow morning to the sunny skies and crystal clear waters of the Bahamas.

## Celebrity: agents “knocking it out of the park”

**CELEBRITY** Cruises Chief Executive Officer Laura Hodges Bethge has hailed the contribution of Aussie and Kiwi travel advisors to the new Down Under deployment of *Celebrity Edge*, telling trade partners aboard the ship the strong performance of agency sales “gives us good intentions to bring her back and talk about additional capacity over time”.

*Edge* is currently en route to Auckland on her inaugural voyage from Australia, a 12-night Sydney round trip to New Zealand visiting Auckland, Tauranga, Napier, Christchurch and Dunedin.

The ship's arrival - the first time an Edge-class ship has sailed from Sydney - was welcomed with a fanfare last Fri, before a full complement of more than 2,900 passengers, including scores of trade partners and media.

Hodges Bethge, who's pictured with Tim Jones, Celebrity Vice



President APAC, told **Cruise Weekly** “we made a very clear and intentional decision to bring *Edge* here, and I'd love nothing more than for us to have more capacity here”.

The new CEO, who has only been in the role for eight months, stressed Celebrity's reputation for service excellence.

“I've spent a lot of time talking to customers and talking to our travel agent partners... and the words they use to talk

about Celebrity are ‘you're just better, right, you're just a notch above,’” she said, citing internal research indicating that service is five times more important to guests than any other reason for choosing the Celebrity brand.

“It's all about our guests and delivering the best premium vacation experience in the world.”

With the first steel recently cut on the fifth and final Edge-class ship, *Celebrity Xcel*, Hodges Bethge said the line is already dreaming about a new class of ships for delivery in five years.

She said Celebrity is also “thinking about destinations in a few different ways” which could even one day include a private destination for the cruise line similar to sister brand Royal Caribbean International's PerfectDay at Coco Cay, which Celebrity recently added to some of its Caribbean itineraries.

More from *Edge* on page 2. BP

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### Cruise Weekly today

**CRUISE Weekly** today features three pages of the latest cruise industry news, along with a **cover page** from **Virgin Voyages** and a full page from **Windstar Cruises**.

### Lose your Virginity

**AUSTRALIAN** cruisers can experience the inaugural *Virgin Voyages Resilient Lady* local season from just \$149 per person per night. The unbelievably low rates on *Virgin's MerMaiden* Australian deployment include a host of "always included luxuries", such as dining in more than 20 eateries, group fitness classes, wi-fi, all tips and entertainment. Travel advisors can now book their sailors on the voyages, which commenced from Sydney last week (**CW** 06 Dec). Full details are on the **cover page** of today's *Cruise Weekly*.

### Legend of Windstar

**WINDSTAR** Cruises' legendary winter Europe season will expose cruisers to another side of the Med. The new season runs from Dec to Mar, offering the opportunity to discover iconic ports, cultural treasures, gourmet delights, and more. For further information, visit **page 4** of today's **CW**.

## Industry hails its newest Celebrity

**TRADE** partners aboard *Celebrity Edge* have been given an insider's experience of the ship as she makes her Australian debut. Vice President APAC Tim Jones said the arrival is the culmination of a three-year journey for his team, which targeted an Australian-based Edge-class ship as part of a long-term strategy for the cruise line. "To be sitting here now, it's like having all our Christmas presents at once," he said in an onboard trade update over the weekend.



Celebrity Chief Executive Laura Hodges Bethge and husband Sean, whose career has included senior roles in ship construction with Four Seasons Yachts, Crystal Cruises, and Royal Caribbean Group, are **pictured** above during one of the nightly gatherings at *Edge's* spectacular Eden venue at the rear of the ship, with Celebrity's Lauren Wardle; Noriye Oto from Arrivia; Tim Jones, Celebrity APAC Vice President; Chantelle Sobkowski, Celebrity; and John Williams from Arrivia/OVC.

**Above** are Travel Associates GM Australia/NZ, Rachel Kingswell; Danielle Galloway, Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) Global MD Luxury and Independent; and Joell Ogilvie, FCTG EGM Emerging Businesses.



Nikki Glading, FC Independent; Link's Scott Darlow and Celebrity's Emma Mumford are **pictured** above, while below are FCTG Leisure chief James Kavanagh with Virtuoso's Fiona Dalton. **BP**




On location aboard  
*Celebrity Edge*

Today's issue of *Cruise Weekly* is coming to you courtesy of **Celebrity Cruises**, aboard *Celebrity Edge* as she makes her first ever journey from **Australia to New Zealand**.

**THE** arrival of *Celebrity Edge* marks the first time this class of ship has ever sailed Australian waters, with the ship's unique 'Magic Carpet' platform one of its many distinctive features.

Sitting on the side of the ship, this venue can be raised or lowered to different decks, or even be used as a convenient tender platform to efficiently load and unload guests in ports where *Edge* is docked offshore.

The ship carries just over 2,900 guests in a wide range of accommodations, including two-storey villas with a plunge pool, to staterooms with "infinite verandah" windows. *Edge* is scheduled to make her New Zealand debut tomorrow as she cruises majestically into Auckland Harbour.

## The Chat

with Jenny 

A conversation with **Lisa Pile**  
Regent Seven Seas Cruises

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**CAPTAIN** Matt Karandreas (pictured), who is helming *Celebrity Edge* during her first Australasian season (see p1) greets guests each day with a pithy word of life advice.

During his announcement aboard the ship en route from Sydney to Auckland yesterday, his judicious admonition seemed particularly wise.

*"Remember, you are the CEO of your life, and laughter is the secret ingredient to success."*

*"So, go out there, tackle challenges with a smile, and remember that a good laugh can turn the toughest days into the funniest memories,"*

he said.

Words that are definitely worth putting into practice today!



## Australia feeds Eu rivers



**AUSTRALIA** is an important source market for the European river cruise industry, a sector-wide study has divulged.

Centours' river cruise industry survey for the just-passed northern autumn season has revealed the Australian market to be the fourth most-influential in the business success of European river cruise stakeholders.

Just under a third of respondents (31%) listed Australia/New Zealand, which trailed DACH - Germany/Austria/Switzerland (81%), United States/Canada (46%), and United Kingdom/Ireland (38%).

The Danube is surging in popularity with Australians, with survey respondents indicating patronage from Down Under had

increased between 150-200% this year versus 2022.

This range is far greater than the other key markets surveyed, such as DACH and United States/Canada (up to 150%), and United Kingdom/Ireland and the rest of Europe (similar volume).

Australians could be travelling less on the Rhine though, with the survey suggesting patronage out of our country has taken a hit this year, at just 20% of 2022 levels; however, the survey noted just one respondent assessed its pax numbers from Down Under.

The survey also revealed the general mood in the sector to be confident, with both the river (79%) and land (77%) sides both overwhelmingly affirming their assuredness in the industry. *MS*

## Scenic partnership

**SCENIC** Luxury Cruises & Tours has announced a partnership with the Royal Institution of Australia (RiAus) for the line's Antarctic voyages.

The alliance is aimed at promoting Scenic's unique science citizen discovery tours of Antarctica, and also aligns with the institution's mission of bringing science and discovery to the public.

The collaboration will be highlighted in *Cosmos*, RiAus's key publication, as it aims for its mission of being "a beacon of scientific knowledge and exploration."

"As a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to inform all Australians with science news and information, we need partners to help us resource and fulfil our mission," RiAus Executive Director Will Berryman said.

"We are delighted to be able to work with Scenic on this partnership, especially as we share as organisations a fascination with Antarctica and the science and discovery that all of us can learn."

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