

# CRUISE

WEEKLY

TUESDAY 5TH JULY 2011

www.cruiseweekly.com.au

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## Australians urged to vote in poll

OzCruisingClub has revived its search for Australia's favourite cruise line.

AUSTRALIA'S CRUISING COMMUNITY SITE, OZCC, has launched a poll to find the top cruise line in local waters – and so far, the results are very different to last year.

In OzCC's first poll in 2010, respondents

voted for P&O as the top line, closely followed by Princess Cruises and Royal Caribbean.

At the time of publication this morning, the 2011 responses showed Princess has a clear lead over P&O, Royal Caribbean, Holland America Line and Celebrity Cruises.

Cunard and Classic International Cruises have no votes.

Voting is open until Monday 18 July at [ozcruiseclub.com.au](http://ozcruiseclub.com.au).

Meanwhile, Cruise Critic in the US has named *Oasis of the Seas* as the best overall ship, based on reviews submitted by its members. *Oasis* was also named best ship in the UK's Cruise Critic awards last month (CW, 14 June).

Royal Caribbean and Celebrity Cruises took home the most top honours in the American survey, with Princess and HAL scoring four bests each.

MSC Cruises' "onboard sanctuary" MSC Yacht Club won praise for its cabins with a near-perfect score of 4.9 out of 5.

"To be acknowledged in such a way by the passengers says a great deal about the overall quality of our product," said Lynne Clarke, MD of MSC Cruises (Australia and NZ).

*Celebrity Xpedition* won best overall small ship, and *SeaDream Yacht Club* topped two categories (embarkation and service).

Also in the small ship section, *Regent Seven Seas Cruises* was recognised for its cabins, with *Seven Seas Voyager* and *Seven Seas Mariner* taking first and second place.

RSSC also placed among the top 10 in six other categories.

"We are honoured that the members of Cruise Critic voted for our entire fleet in this category," Catherine Trinnick, sales and marketing manager Australia, RSSC told *Cruise Weekly*.

### TODAY'S CRUISE WEEKLY

Welcome to today's consumer issue of *Cruise Weekly*, featuring four pages of cruise news and photos, plus a full page from Star Cruises (p5).

### CRUISE CALENDAR



SYDNEY

*Pacific Sun*

Sat 09 Jul

BRISBANE

*Pacific Dawn*

Sat 09 Jul

### Star Cruises kids deal

STAR CRUISES IS OFFERING KIDS CRUISE FREE DEALS on its *SuperStar Virgo* - see **page five**.

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## Blue Lagoon scrubs up

BLUE LAGOON CRUISES IS RESTRUCTURING ITS operations in a bid to better suit the boutique cruising market.

The move includes a three-month soft refurbishing of one of its vessels, *MV Mystique Princess* which will commence on 01 October.

During *Mystique Princess*' makeover, Blue Lagoon's *MV Fiji Princess* will operate seven-day/six-night sailings on the first Tuesday of each month, as well as four-day/three-night sailings on Tuesdays, three-day/two-night voyages on Saturdays, and seven-day Historic & Cultural sailings three times a year, (with the next departure scheduled of 15 August, to be followed by a new departure departing 01 November).

*Mystique Princess* will return to service on 01 January 2012, operating seven-day/six-night and four-day/three-night cruises, with *Fiji Princess* (currently up for sale), continuing to operate the three-day/two-night services until she is sold.

For more details, see your travel agent. 🌐

## Costa Favolosa christened in style

The only Australian at the ceremony, Caroline Gladstone reports from Italy.

ITS NAME MEANS 'FABULOUS' IN ITALIAN, AND fittingly the launch of Costa Cruises' latest superliner, the *Favolosa*, lived up to its namesake.

The Italian cruise line's new flagship, and 15<sup>th</sup> vessel in the fleet, was christened in a spectacular ceremony in the historic city of Trieste on Saturday.

More than 2000 guests and thousands of the city's residents gathered in the Piazza Unita d'Italia, one of the largest squares in Europe, to witness an event that included ballerinas and an aerial gymnast tethered to hundreds of white helium balloons.

Guests waved illuminated flags as Italy's tri-colours were beamed across the sky to

not only mark the ship's naming, but to honour the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unification of Italy.

Italian theatre actor Alessandro Rossi recited the 'Hymn to Beauty' as 3D laser images of the floodlit ship were projected onto baroque buildings.



After the traditional blessing by the bishop of Trieste, the ship's godmother, Italian actress Margareth Made, performed the official honours as the sky erupted with fireworks.

The *Costa Favolosa*, carrying a maximum of 3,800 passengers, is the fourth ship to be launched by Costa Cruises in just two years.

Costa CEO Pier Luigi Foschi called it an "enchanted castle", and it certainly has many "fairy tale" features including a nine-deck atrium glistening with Swarovski crystal panels, 6000 pieces of art, new spa cabins with private Jacuzzi balconies, and acres of marble, onyx and alabaster.

Its family attractions are a 4D cinema, complete with moving seats, Playstation World, a Grand Prix driving simulator and the world's most advanced golf simulator with more than 30 famous courses.

Between 07 July and late summer 2011, *Favolosa* will cruise out of Venice on 11-day roundtrip itineraries with calls at Bari, Izmir, Istanbul, Mykonos, Piraeus, Olympic and Dubrovnik.

In December she repositions to Dubai for cruises around the United Arab Emirates. 🌐



## Cheaper Xmas cruising

CRUISERS LOOKING TO AVOID THE HASSLES OF Christmas on land, may want to check out Royal Caribbean's newly discounted Christmas and New Year sailings.

Savings are available on three sailings, the first of which is a 10-night South Pacific Christmas cruise onboard *Rhapsody of the Seas*, departing 17 December and priced from \$1,889pp (plus a complimentary oceanview cabin upgrade).

For those looking for a longer voyage Royal Caribbean has discounted a 16-night Christmas and New Year voyage around New Zealand onboard *Radiance of the Seas*, departing on 18 December and priced from \$3,049pp (plus a complimentary oceanview cabin upgrade).

Also reduced is a 13-night New Zealand cruise sailing from Sydney to Auckland onboard *Celebrity Century*, departing on Christmas Eve and priced from \$1,699pp.

See your travel agent for details, or call 1800 754 500. 🌐

## New South American tour

APT HAS ADDED A BRAND NEW 37-DAY SOUTH American cruise-tour package, just three-months after launching its 2011-2012 South America brochure.

The epic Patagonia Lakes, South America, Amazon Lodge and Galapagos cruise-tour departs 17 March 2012, and takes guests to six countries with adventures including an Inca Trail trek, Orient-Express train journey, and a Galapagos cruise, from \$21,995pp.

For more details call 1300 229 804. 🌐

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## New Prestige on the river

VIKING RIVER CRUISES' NEWEST FLEET MEMBER, *Viking Prestige*, was christened last week in Amsterdam by her Godmother Janice Farrar-Titus, wife of the late renowned cruise industry innovator Warren Titus.

Janice officially named the 443-foot river vessel, and bade blessings upon her saying "May you begin your cruising days under a rainbow and sunny skies, and may you follow that rainbow around the bends in the river to the pot of gold".

*Prestige* has since embarked upon her inaugural voyage, the 15-day Grand European Tour, before she kicks off her regular service on the ever-popular eight-day Romantic Danube itinerary which travels Budapest to Nuremberg (or reverse).



## Rivert Cloud II on the Black Sea

by Louise Goldsbury

Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary: not your average venues for a 10-year-old's birthday.

Celebrating a decade of service with a special cruise, *River Cloud II* threw a week-long party by showing off the connections it's developed in Eastern Europe.

When I boarded the voyage halfway, people were still raving about their visit two days ago to Belgrade's White Palace: formerly used by infamous presidents such as Tito and Milosevic, and currently home to Crown Prince Alexander and his family.

The mansion hosted an exclusive concert for *River Cloud II* passengers, with a no-holds-barred tour that was the highlight for many.

"I sat in the chair where Tito had his hair dyed!" said one man.

"I touched, literally touched, a Rembrandt in the prince's study!" said another.

The festivities continued onboard with a rooftop BBQ, and the next night, a gala dinner and piano concert by French pianist Yannael Quenel (who was so popular that one of the Australian passengers set up a Facebook fan page in his honour).

But on an ordinary cruise, sailing along the Danube towards the Black Sea, *River Cloud II* still offers an extraordinary overview of this less-visited region.

Places such as Sulina, which was once a prosperous port but is now a run-down ghost town, are certainly "off the beaten river".

With no road access, locals get around the sandy streets on donkey carts.

We only stop here for an hour but it feels like travelling back a century.

Arriving the next day in Harsova is another landscape altogether, with grass-topped cliffs and fishermen in rowing boats.

Then we transfer by bus to a whole new world, again – Constanta, founded in 600BC, where the National Museum houses one of the most important collections from the Roman era.

Employed by the cruise line, our English-speaking guide is outstanding, and the artefacts are displayed remarkably freely, not encased in glass or roped off from visitors.

The last stop is Mamaia, a fashionable beach resort where we jump at the chance to swim in the Black Sea and are lucky enough to see dolphins.

It's this contrast of experiences that makes a Black Sea cruise so interesting, and while the destinations may not be as slick as in Western Europe, the *River Cloud II* compensates with lashings of luxury.

### Editor's highlights

It's not often that I comment on the food on cruises, as generally it is good with one or two stand-out restaurants (or meals) on each ship.

But the *River Cloud II* deserves a special mention: each dinner is truly five-star quality.

The crew are also exceptional, especially the very entertaining waiters Sven and Sandor.



A large proportion of passengers are German, with some Australian, but English is the dominant language onboard.

I'd probably recommend the Black Sea as a second or third European cruise, or for anybody who likes to travel "off the beaten river".

For information about fares and availability, contact Sea Cloud Cruises on 1300 583 572 or visit [www.seacloud.com](http://www.seacloud.com).

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## Rhapsody to Singapore

ROYAL CARIBBEAN HAS CANCELLED FOUR LOCAL cruises on *Rhapsody of the Seas* and replaced them with two Singapore voyages.

The affected cruises are three South Pacific voyages (departing 01, 10 and 21 March 2012) and a Queensland cruise (02 April 2012).

RCC Australia's Adam Armstrong last week told **CW** the cruises were cancelled to allow for a longer time in drydock, and today he said he was still waiting on the US head office to confirm details about the extension.

The new itineraries now available for *Rhapsody* include a 14-night sailing from Sydney to Singapore, departing 16 February, and a 15-night cruise from Singapore to Sydney, departing 25 March.

Guests booked on the cancelled cruises have been offered alternative cruises with Royal Caribbean. ⚓

## Aussie waters get safer

THE WORLD'S LARGEST MANDATORY SHIP reporting system in the world has just been activated in Australian waters, following the extension of a multi-million-dollar ship tracking system (titled the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait Vessel Traffic Service) to cover the entire Great Barrier Reef from the Torres Strait to Bundaberg.

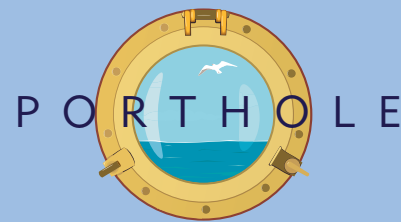
It is hoped that the measure will prevent marine accidents similar to last year's *MV Shen Neng* oil spill in the Barrier Reef.

With the extension, the system now covers 350,000 km<sup>2</sup> of ocean along the Queensland coast.

The system requires all large vessels transiting through the Park, including those carrying oil, chemicals or liquefied gas, to regularly report their location and route to authorities, and also tracks the progress of each vessel by radio and satellite 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In addition the system provides ships with information regarding weather conditions, and the movements of other vessels.

Meanwhile, the Federal Infrastructure and Transport Minister, Anthony Albanese, said he plans to further strengthen Reef protection by introducing into Parliament legislation toughening penalties for breaches of Aussie maritime and environmental laws. ⚓



CELEBRITY SILHOUETTE'S CAPTAIN DIMITRIOS Kafetzis has breathed a huge sigh of relief after the successful completion of first stage of the \$750m vessel's 26 mile reverse park.

Necessary to move *Silhouette* from her Papenburg shipyard to the open sea in Emshaven in the Netherlands, the first stage of the epic journey gave crew more than a few extra grey hairs, with stretches of the river only allowing around 1.5 metres of room on either side of the new vessel.

The geography of the shipyard and the river also forced *Silhouette's* crew to steer the ship backwards out of the yard, assisted by tugboats.



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## Ecruising calls for votes

CRUISE SPECIALIST TRAVEL AGENCY Ecruising.travel is entered in this year's City of Sydney Business Awards, and is hoping that Aussie cruisers will lend it their votes.

Voting is open until 22 July, and people who vote also have the opportunity to win a \$1500 cash prize.

Ecruising.travel is one of the biggest cruise travel agencies in Australia and is based in the Sydney CBD.

To register your support for the business vote at <http://bit.ly/cruisevote>. ⚓

## Tauck's new program

SMALL SHIP SPECIALIST, TAUCK, HAS RELEASED ITS 2012 brochure program, offering guests intimate voyages onboard a range of yachts and expedition ships, to a host of destinations including: Venice, Iceland, Russia, Greece, The Mediterranean, Sicily, Rome, Antarctica and Costa Rica.

For a copy, see your local travel agent. ⚓

## Want to cook like a chef?

THREE FOOD MASTER CLASSES LED BY NEW Zealand celebrity chef, Simon Gault, will be held onboard Captain Cook Cruises' four-Night Northern Yasawa Islands Fiji Cruise departing Tuesday 08 November 2011.

Gault, a judge on NZ's own *Masterchef* television program, has received numerous accolades for his cuisine, with his restaurant most recently having been awarded New Zealand's Restaurant of the Year, and having been included in *Conde Nast* New York magazine's top 50 restaurants of the world.

"With just 120 places available on the cruise, food lovers would need to move quickly to guarantee their place on board," says Jackie Charlton, Managing Director, Captain Cook Cruises.

"Every passenger will have the opportunity to meet Simon personally – both during the master classes and also as part of the various daily cruise activities," she added.

The voyage is priced from \$1,147pp, and guests can extend to a seven night cruise from an extra \$331pp.

Call 1800 804 843 for details. ⚓



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	<b>5 NIGHT SPECIAL CRUISES</b> Ultimate Upgrade offer	Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, Pulau Redang <i>Departing 11 Sept 2011</i>	Book Inside Cabin Book Window Cabin 25% off Balcony Cabins	<b>\$1249 – Free upgrade to Window Cabin</b> <b>\$1474 – Free upgrade to Balcony Cabin</b> <b>Plus Bonus F&amp;B credit SGD\$400</b> <b>\$1916 – Receive SGD\$400 F&amp;B Credit</b>
<b>7 NIGHT SPECIAL CRUISES</b> Ultimate Upgrade offer	Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, Pulau Redang, Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang) <i>Departing 11 Sept 2011</i>	Book Inside Cabin Book Window Cabin 25% off Balcony Cabins	<b>\$1724 – Free upgrade to Window Cabin</b> <b>\$2035 – Free upgrade to Balcony Cabin</b> <b>Plus Bonus F&amp;B credit SGD\$500</b> <b>\$2755 – Receive SGD\$500 F&amp;B Credit</b>	

**Cruises include all meals<sup>^</sup> and entertainment onboard plus port and fuel charges.  
For bookings & further information, contact your preferred Travel Agent**

\*CONDITIONS APPLY: All prices are cruise only, AUD, per person twin share and subject to change and availability. Prices based on following cabin categories: Inside Cabin DC, Window Cabin CB, Balcony Cabin BC. Single passengers must pay a single supplement. Every effort is made to ensure advertisement accuracy, however Star Cruises cannot be held responsible for printing or typographical errors or errors arising from unforeseen circumstances. Pricing correct as at 28 June 2011. Pricing & bonus credit valid until 30 Sept 2011 & can be withdrawn at any time without notice. Price includes port charges and fuel surcharge. Holiday surcharge imposed on Peak Sailings Dates: 23 Dec 2011; 01 Jan 2012. Vietnam Visa surcharge applicable to Ho Chi Minh sailings at \$30 per person. <sup>^</sup>Meals included in selected restaurants. #Kids Cruise Free - Applicable for Children 12 years & below & is based upon 2 full paying passengers under 3rd & 4th passenger in the same cabin. Passenger Handling charges, Fuel Surcharges & Visa where applicable will still apply. Based only on 5 & 7 night itineraries for departures 4,11,18,25 Sept, 2,9,16,23, 20 Oct, 4,11,18,25 Dec 2011 & 1,8,15,22,29 Jan 2012. Strict cancellation fees apply. Please note that a surcharge may be imposed on credit card transactions. A service fee will be charged. SCS 25862

