

CRUISE

WEEKLY

Tuesday 11 December 2012

Australia's top cruise agent named

Lorraine Herring, Australia's leading cruise consultant for 2012, talks to *Cruise Weekly* about her confidence in the future of local cruising.

A PART-time travel agent at Escape Travel Blacktown (NSW) has held onto her crown as the most knowledgeable cruise consultant in the country.

Based on the amount of education and practical shipboard experience undertaken throughout her career, Lorraine Herring is recognised as the industry's leading 'Master' by the International Cruise Council Australasia.

Herring joined the travel industry in 2004 and took her first cruise two years later.

"I have now done 14 cruises," she said.

"That's right - one cruise and you're addicted."

Herring acknowledges that she decided to specialise in cruising at the ideal time.

"I am very excited about this cruise season and it's exciting to see some new ships coming into our waters," she said.

"I do believe there is enough interest [to fill the expanding capacity] and this was proven to me at our recent cruise expo in Darling Harbour, where it was amazing to see the turnout of people that came through the

Costa Diadema begins

THE journey of *Costa Diadema* has begun this week, with work commencing on Costa Cruises future flagship at Fincantieri's Marghera shipyard.

Speaking at a ceremony to mark the start of construction, Costa Crociere CEO Michael Thamm said "The construction of the *Costa Diadema* is a tangible commitment to the future growth of our Company".

"The *Costa Diadema* consolidates our alliance with Fincantieri, which has already resulted in the building of 10 new ships for us since 2000, worth a total of almost 5 billion euros with the creation of wealth and employment for the country as a whole," he added.

The ceremony also saw the first 504-ton block of the ship lifted into place, which measuring 15.7 meters in breadth and 29 meters in length, will form the central part of the ship.

Diadema will be in construction until the end of October 2014 when she is due for delivery.

doors and sat in on the presentations."

Herring has seen a big increase in bookings among Australian customers.

"And not just out of Sydney," she said.

"A lot more people are also adding cruising into their Europe travel plans, which is fantastic."

The best part, according to Herring, is that cruises are better value than ever.

"I think prices have definitely come down, and it's great to see such a wide choice of affordable holidays for Australians, whether it be cheap and cheerful or much more luxurious."

Her hottest tip for travellers is choosing the right ship: "Know what you want out of a cruise in terms of standard of accommodation and activities you like, which will then help the consultant make recommendations to suit your needs."

For families, she recommends *Carnival Spirit*, *Voyager of the Seas*, *Rhapsody of the Seas* and *Radiance of the Seas*; for older couples, her pick is Princess Cruises to New Zealand.

Herring's personal favourite was an Alaskan cruise with Holland America Line, and her dream voyage is either Antarctica or the Kimberley region with Orion Expedition Cruises.

Serenade returns to the sea

SERENADE of the Seas has emerged from her three-week Spanish drydock renovations sporting a host of new dining and entertainment options.

The US\$29m makeover included a doubling of the ship's dining options, with five new eateries, including: Giovanni's Table, Izumi Asian Cuisine, Park Café, Rita's Cantina, and Chef's Table.

Serenade's five-story Centrum was also transformed during the works into a whole new public space, with the addition of the 60's-inspired R Bar, as well as space for a program of day and nighttime entertainment activities such as an aerial gymnastics display.

The ship also now features the Crown and Castle Pub and the ever popular Royal Babies and Tots Nursery, as well as Wi-Fi availability throughout the ship, flat-panel TVs in all staterooms, an outdoor LED movie screen on the pool deck, and a digital way-finding system.

Following her makeover, *Serenade* is now sailing in the Mediterranean, before moving to Dubai in February 2013 where she will host seven-night sailings until April 2013.

TODAY'S ISSUE OF CW

Today's issue of *CW* features four pages of all the latest cruise news and photos.

PLUS see **page five** of today's issue for a link to receive Oceania Cruises company's 2013 brochure.

12-12-12 Royal Caribbean sale

ROYAL Caribbean is celebrating tomorrow's 12th December 2012 date (12-12-12), by launching a one-day sale for all of its 2013 ships, sailings and destinations worldwide.

As part of the sale bookings for 2013 cruises made between 12.01am to 11.59pm on 12-12-12 will receive additional daily onboard credit - in multiples of US\$12.

In addition, those booking Interior, Oceanview or Balcony cabins will receive US\$12 per day per cabin; whilst Suite bookings will receive US\$24 in onboard credit, per day per cabin.

See www.royalcaribbean.com.au.



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Cruise Calendar

Cruise Weekly's cruise calendar details upcoming port calls of passenger cruise ships at various destinations in Australia.

SYDNEY

<i>Radiance of the Seas</i>	Wed 12 Dec
<i>Dawn Princess</i>	Thu 13 Dec
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	Thu 13 Dec
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	Fri 14 Dec
<i>Costa Neo Romantica</i>	Sat 15 Dec
<i>Costa Neo Romantica</i>	Sun 16 Dec
<i>Carnival Spirit</i>	Sun 16 Dec
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	Mon 17 Dec
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Tue 18 Dec
<i>Pacific Jewel</i>	Tue 18 Dec

BRISBANE

<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	Sat 15 Dec
<i>Sun Princess</i>	Sun 16 Dec
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Sun 16 Dec

CAIRNS

<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Tue 11 Dec
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Tauck unveils 2013 Europe options

The latest collection includes river cruises and small ship cruises in a new-look brochure.

TAUCK has released almost 70 land and cruise itineraries for Europe, which emphasise the theme "How You See The World Matters."

River itineraries include Amsterdam to Budapest, Budapest to the Black Sea, the Danube, Belgium and Holland, Paris to Monte Carlo and the Rhone, on the *ms Treasures* (2011), *ms Swiss Jewel* (2009), *ms Swiss Sapphire* (2008) and *ms Swiss Emerald* (2006).

Small ship cruising in Europe is aboard luxury yachts operated by French line Compagnie Du Ponant.

The new offerings are featured in a 148-page brochure that highlights the company's four key elements, according to Tauck CEO Dan Mahar.

Mahar said those elements are innovative "insider" access to unique experiences; the high level of service provided by the company's directors, the all-inclusive value, and the convenience of having Tauck handle all the details of holiday planning.

He said the new theme underscores that the way in which travellers experience a place is as important as the place itself.

"Travel decisions are typically destination-focused, yet 'how' you experience any destination is just as critical to your overall experience as where you travel," Mahar said.

Tauck is offering two free hotel nights to enjoy before or after all tours (except

Christmas Markets river cruising, Tauck Events and Cuba) for bookings made before 28 December 2012.

MEANWHILE, Kiki Tauck Mahar, the wife of Tauck CEO Dan Mahar and the daughter of Chairman Arthur Tauck, has been announced as the Godmother to Compagnie Du Ponant's new 264-passenger *Le Soléal*, which is due to be christened next July.

Le Soléal will operate luxury cruises from Venice to Barcelona, Lisbon to Reykjavik, Greenland to Russia and Japan.

For details, see www.traveltheworld.com.au or call 1300 950 622.

Princess 2014 winter release

PRINCESS Cruises 2014 winter program features the first world cruise from Australia to South America, with maiden calls to Peru, Ecuador and Easter Island.

Departing Sydney on 18 May 2014, the 104-night roundtrip world cruise on *Dawn Princess* will visit 40 destinations in 27 countries, with highlights including an optional overland excursion to Machu Pichu and a voyage through the iconic Panama Canal, as well as maiden visits to Yangon in Myanmar, Sri Lanka's capital Colombo, New London, Connecticut and a scenic cruise past Pitcairn Island.

"Australians will be able to explore exciting locations around the globe while enjoying all the hallmarks of a Princess cruise, from great entertainment and cuisine through to special features like Movies Under the Stars and The Sanctuary retreat," said Princess Cruises Commercial Director in Australia, Alan Stuart.

MEANWHILE other highlights of the winter 2014 program include week-long itineraries on *Sea Princess* departing Brisbane every Sunday from 18 May to 15 June (including two cruises to the Great Barrier Reef and three cruises to New Caledonia and Vanuatu); as well as a 20-day Papua New Guinea cruise on *Dawn Princess* featuring maiden calls to the ports of Alotau, Doini Island and Kiriwina Island which departs from Sydney on 31 August.

Other highlights include a 15-night *Sea Princess* roundtrip Indonesian sailing departing Fremantle on 03 August, with inaugural calls to Sulawesi Island, and Indonesia's second largest city, Surabaya, as well as a visit to Komodo Island.

See your travel agent for details, or visit www.princesscruises.com.au.

Quark Antarctic savings

QUARK Expeditions has extended its Antarctica Season 13/14 Early Bird Discounts of 20% (25% Suites) until the 15 February 2013 as well as its 50% off 2nd passenger deal for this Antarctic season 12/13.

For details see your travel agent, or visit www.quarkexpeditions.com.

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Sydney experiences summer Solstice

IT was a blustery welcome for the last of the big home-porting ships to arrive in Sydney for the summer 2012/13 season, *Celebrity Solstice*, with the slate grey skies threatening rain whilst the wind whipped away at guests hair and skirts, but not their smiles.

The debut one night cruise kicked off on Sunday afternoon, with guests, including **CW**, pouring in from across the country to experience *Solstice's* famed modern luxury.

At only four years of age, *Solstice* is well within the glow of her youth, and once on board it is easy to see why she has created such a stir.

Baring the advertising standard of 'modern luxury', the ship delivers on this promise, with 16 levels of style and sophistication, offering guests a good selection of food and entertainment options to choose from, including an impressive hot glass show where glass artists mould elegant glassware in front of an audience using a furnace which rages at over 1000 degrees.

Then there is the sophisticated Martini Bar where guests can order from a three page list of Martinis and watch the impressive spectacle



Celebrity Solstice

Viking adds longships in 2013

NEXT year Viking River Cruises will add two new longships to its European river cruising fleet, *Viking Baldur* and *Viking Magni*.

Named after Norse Gods, the new additions bring Viking's ship tally up to 10 for 2013: *Viking Aegir*, *Viking Idun*, *Viking Odin*, *Viking Freya*, *Viking Embla*, *Viking Atla*, *Viking Forseti*, *Viking Njord*, *Viking Magni*, and *Viking Baldur*.

Meanwhile, the company has also announced extra river cruises and dates for its ever popular Christmas Cruises of Europe (eight-day Romantic Danube, eight day Rhine Getaway and wight day Danube Waltz), priced from \$2,495pp.

See www.vikingrivercruises.com.au.

of their creation; the Lawn Club where sun lovers can soak up some UV whilst lounging on real (very soft) growing grass, play a small game of golf or even have a picnic; or Celebrity Central theatre which offers a range of comedy and musical performances.

Meanwhile for the big shows there's the Solstice Theatre, and for those that want a break, the Sky Observation Lounge offers a quiet refuge for sea gazing in comfort with floor to ceiling windows.

Then there is Cellarmasters, which takes visitors on a 'global wine tour' of tastes; as well as the outdoor and indoor pools and spas; the Ensemble Lounge, Champagne Bar, Michael's Club and the Sunset Bar.

As for the food, *Solstice* has ten exceptional dining choices including the exotic Silk Harvest Restaurant offering Asian fusion food served 'family style' meaning that everyone shares each dish; as well as the luxurious main restaurant, the Grand Epernay Dining Room with its two-storey glass wine tower and magnificent chandeliers.

And the list goes on...

Even the deck chairs exude style on this ship, and there seems to be no shortage of these scattered around the decks either.

Speaking to **CW** onboard Adam Armstrong, Commercial Manager, Royal Caribbean Cruises Australia said "Australians and New Zealanders have responded very well to *Solstice's* inaugural season".

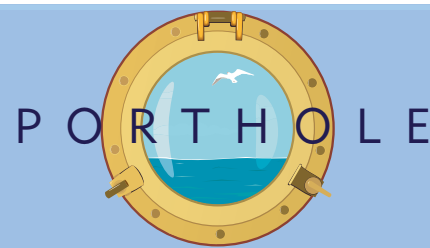
"This is the best performing ship of our five ships this summer, and it has had the best forward sales of any of our ships," he added.

Explaining the interest, Armstrong said that partially it is due to *Solstice's* youth, saying cruisers were eager to see a "practically brand new ship".

"There's such excitement around this quality of hardware," he said, adding that the ship's international flavour was also a drawcard.

"You come on a brand like Celebrity to have an international experience, not an Aussie experience, and that's what makes us a bit different, we're not trying to be an Australian cruise line," he said.

Interestingly, it seems that *Solstice* is also drawing a large contingent of US and UK passengers to Australian shores, with Armstrong confirming that, for this season, around 50% of *Solstice's* guests are international.



THE next big thing in cruise?

Cruise lines are always looking for the next unique feature to set their vessels apart, and if the popularity of this new coffee trend is anything to go by, well then we may just see a Black Ivory Coffee house onboard in the near future.

However, it must be noted that this coffee may not be to everyone's taste, as it requires a certain stomach to get past its origin, which is.....elephant dung.

Yes that's right, the latest craze in caffeinated beverages, Black Ivory Coffee, comes by way of an elephant's gut.

To create the "smooth" taste, a herd of 30 elephants enjoy a diet of coffee beans and fresh fruit, which together with the stomach acid helps to break down proteins in the coffee beans which make them bitter.

After they have passed out of the elephant, the beans are cleaned and then roasted, and according to coffee aficionados, once ground and made into a cup of coffee create a "milk chocolate, nutty, earthy flavour, with hints of spice and red berries".

"You end up with a cup that's very smooth without the bitterness of regular coffee," said one expert.

Plan ahead for Valentine's Day

SINGLE men and women are being invited to 'celebrate being single' with Captain Cook Cruises on Valentine's Day 2013, with a special Cocktail Cruise, on the Show Deck of the *MV Sydney 2000*.

To get the party started, guests will be supplied with a welcome cocktail, after which they will enjoy an array of hot and cold canapés, before hitting the dance floor to groove the night away with beats supplied by a resident DJ.

In keeping with the spirit of the evening, there will also be a host of competitions with fantastic prizes to be won every 30 minutes.

For those who are planning on being single on 14 February 2013, the voyage is priced at \$59pp.

See your travel agent for details or visit www.captaincook.com.au.

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CRUISE
WEEKLY



Australia's spa escape at sea

by: Louise Goldsbury

Celebrity Solstice has this week debuted a new way to cruise in local waters: a spa resort holiday at sea.

The modern superliner extends the day spa experience to 130 AquaClass staterooms and a "clean cuisine" restaurant, Blu.

The idea is that passengers can focus on good health and pampering, avoiding the rest of the ship if they so wish.

I spent the "cruise to nowhere" from Sydney on Sunday sampling the full range of benefits to see if it's worth the upgrade.

On first impressions, the AquaClass cabin looked much the same as a standard balcony room and therefore was less spa-like than I imagined.

It had no bath, let alone a spa bath, and none of the additional toiletries advertised - but this was probably because it was a once-off one-night cruise (not that it should make a difference).

Fortunately, everything else was delivered as promised, including a carafe of flavoured iced tea, a plate of canapés and a confirmed booking for complimentary dinner at Blu.

The restaurant is one of the prettiest on any ship in the world, with white walls engraved into a floral design and white leather chairs.

The menu is much more than salads and soups. Blackened ahi tuna was the standout dish among diners at my table.

It's also open for breakfast, so is a great way to avoid the hordes at the buffet every morning.

However, it would be a shame to not eat elsewhere throughout the cruise, as *Solstice* has several excellent restaurants.

I loved Murano (French) while others raved about Silk Harvest

(Asian).

I also thought the buffet and main dining room were very good.

The main drawcard for AquaClass guests is the proximity to the AquaSpa and gym and unlimited access to the Relaxation Room and Persian Garden aromatherapy steam room, where you can rest on heated mosaic lounges overlooking the ocean.

A day pass, for non-Aqua Class guests, costs US\$20 but not many people seem to use it, so this quiet space is a sweet relief from the public areas catering to 3,000 passengers.

Although it isn't over-the-top fancy, the two-storey spa is lovely and has regular specials, such as US\$99 massages (plus 15% tip).

I had a wonderful massage by Dora.

For around the same price, the 20-20-20 allows a choice of three 20-minute treatments, ranging from a hydrating facial to a lime and ginger full-body exfoliation.

It also offers couples treatments, cosmetic treatments, teeth whitening, acupuncture, reflexology, hair and nail services, a 24-Karat Gold facial, and a lash and brow bar.

Men's services include a 45-minute deep cleanse shave.

Other AquaClass benefits include priority boarding in a separate queue; a personal spa concierge to arrange appointments; meditation and yoga videos on your TV; a five-head shower tower; and premium mattress with Egyptian cotton sheets.

My verdict? AquaClass is a nice (but not huge) step up if you like the idea of the exclusive restaurant and use of relaxation facilities.

If you like extra luxuries, go for a suite.



Blu



Solstice in Sydney



Persian Garden

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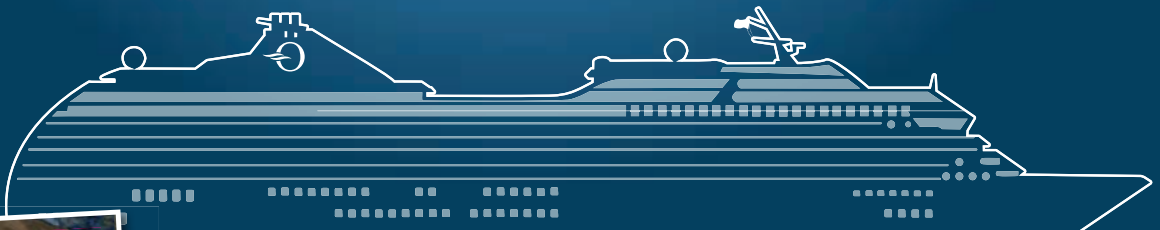


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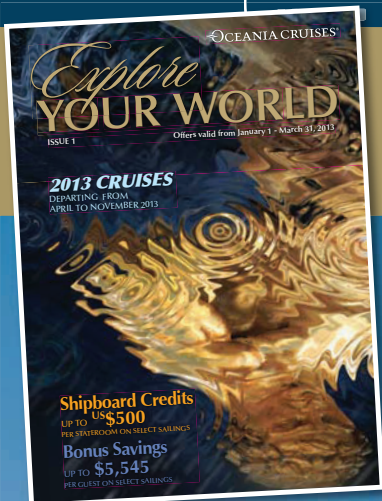
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