

# CRUISE

WEEKLY

Tuesday 27 March 2012

## Viking launches early booking deals

Viking River Cruises is offering cheap flights to Europe and \$1,000 discounts for its new 2013 itineraries.

A WEEK after christening four new longships, and with two more on the way this year, Viking River Cruises has announced big savings for people who book a 2013 sailing before 31 July 2012.

Couples can save up to \$1,000 on cruises in Europe, Russia and China, as well as purchase a cut-price airfare exclusively arranged for Australians and New Zealanders.

For \$995 per person (including taxes and seasonal surcharges), travellers receive a return economy airfare to a wide range of European cities from all major gateways in Australia.

The company this week released its World Wide Journeys, featuring 12 new vessels, several ship refurbishments and eight new itineraries, ranging from eight to 29 days.

Priced in Australian dollars, this is the fifth consecutive brochure Viking has produced for the local market.

According to Viking, the new cruises have been tailored "to suit the tastes and needs of the experienced Australian and New Zealand traveler", including use of the newest longships and new destinations such as Monte Carlo, Lucerne and Zurich.

Old European favourites such as Paris, Prague and Budapest have been given more prominence through longer city stays incorporated into the tour.

For the 2013 season, Viking is introducing an eight-day Rhine River cruise through Holland, Germany, France and Switzerland, with hotel nights in Lucerne and Zurich, and an 11-day Rhine Discovery, from \$3,995pp twin-share.

The 13-day Danube Explorer, from \$4,095pp, is bookended by hotel nights in Prague and Budapest; and the 14-day Treasures of Southern France, from \$5,395pp, explores French wine and produce, plus hotel nights in Paris and Nice.

Viking offers two 18-day itineraries which include cruising between Amsterdam and Budapest: Treasures of Europe, with three nights in Paris, priced from \$6,295pp; and Imperial Cities of Europe, from \$5,795pp, with three nights in Prague.

The 21-day European Odyssey is bookended by hotel nights in both Paris and Prague; while

the 23-day European Sojourn visits seven countries: Holland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania.

The 29-day Ultimate European Adventure, from \$11,195pp, has hotel stays in Paris, Bucharest and Brasov alongside a 21-night river cruise from Amsterdam to Bucharest.

Teresia Fors, Managing Director Australia & New Zealand, Viking River Cruises, said the current deals were the best ever early booking discounts offered by the company.

"The appeal of river cruising in Australia is continuing to grow and we certainly see more and more travellers finding our product meeting their needs for in-depth cultural experiences enjoyed in absolute comfort and delivered by the experts of the category," she said.

For details, call 1800 829 138 (Australia), 0800 447 913 (NZ) or see [www.vikingrivercruises.com.au](http://www.vikingrivercruises.com.au).

## Seabourn's Europe 2013

**BETWEEN** April and October next year, Seabourn will host more than 100 European departures onboard its six ships, carrying passengers to more than 180 ports.

New itineraries in the line-up include a 21-day cruise beyond the Arctic Circle on *Seabourn Pride*, as well as 10 and 11-day Mediterranean cruises round-trip from Venice on *Seabourn Spirit*, and 10-day Mediterranean cruises from Athens, Monte Carlo and Barcelona onboard *Seabourn Quest*.

Seabourn has also spiced up the season with a smattering of overnight stays in popular cities, such as St. Petersburg, Amsterdam, Bordeaux, Venice, Malta, Barcelona, Istanbul, Edinburgh and Dublin.

The season will also see *Seabourn Legend* offer alternating 10-day Western Mediterranean voyages between Monte Carlo and Rome.

*Seabourn Odyssey* will explore the Greek Isles and Turkey on seven-day cruises alternating between Athens and Istanbul, and Venice and Athens; whilst *Seabourn Sojourn* will offer seven-day Baltic cruises between Copenhagen and Stockholm; as well as a pair of Norwegian fjords cruises, and a 21-day cruise from Dover to Montreal.

Meanwhile *Seabourn Pride* will offer longer 12 and 14-day Baltic voyages that include overnight stays in St. Petersburg.

For more info see your travel agent, or visit [www.seabourn.com](http://www.seabourn.com).

## TODAY'S ISSUE OF CW

Today's issue of *Cruise Weekly* features four pages of all the latest cruise news.

## Tell us about your own cruise

**REMEMBER** to send **CW** your own cruising stories for your chance to see them published in an upcoming issue, as well as score movie tickets, - send your stories to [mycruise@cruiseweekly.com.au](mailto:mycruise@cruiseweekly.com.au).

## Celebrate your mum at sea

**THIS** year Captain Cook Cruises is helping Sydneysiders celebrate their mums, with a special Mother's Day Long Lunch cruise.

The three-hour voyage around Sydney harbour includes a three course lunch and is priced from \$85pp.

See [www.captaincook.com.au](http://www.captaincook.com.au).



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[WWW.VIKINGRIVERCRUISES.COM.AU](http://WWW.VIKINGRIVERCRUISES.COM.AU)

## Last chance to save with RCI

**TODAY** is the last chance to snap up savings of up to \$1,080 on any Royal Caribbean International cruise sailing anywhere in the world.

The WOW sale is valid until sold out for all new, individual bookings on any of Royal Caribbean's 22 ships, and also includes up to US\$200 onboard credit for departures sailing from 01 June 2012.

To be eligible, bookings for cruises must be made by today, and the required deposit must be paid by close of business on Friday 30 March.

Prices start from \$845pp for eight nights on *Rhapsody of the Seas* departing 29 November 2012.

For more details speak to your travel agent, or visit [www.royalcaribbean.com.au/wowsale](http://www.royalcaribbean.com.au/wowsale).



## Cruise Calendar

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

|                                   |            |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| SYDNEY                            |            |
| <i>Pacific Jewel (Barangaroo)</i> | Wed 28 Mar |
| <i>Pacific Pearl (OPT)</i>        | Wed 28 Mar |
| <i>Regatta</i>                    | Thu 29 Mar |
| <i>Sun Princess (Barangaroo)</i>  | Fri 30 Mar |
| BRISBANE                          |            |
| <i>Regatta</i>                    | Tue 27 Mar |
| <i>Pacific Sun</i>                | Thu 29 Mar |
| <i>Pacific Dawn</i>               | Sat 31 Mar |
| <i>Pacific Sun</i>                | Sun 01 Apr |
| MELBOURNE                         |            |
| <i>Regatta</i>                    | Sat 31 Mar |
| FREMANTLE                         |            |
| <i>Dawn Princess</i>              | Sun 01 Apr |
| HOBART                            |            |
| <i>Regatta</i>                    | Tue 03 Apr |
| DARWIN                            |            |
| <i>L' Austral</i>                 | Sat 31 Mar |
| AUCKLAND                          |            |
| <i>Volendam</i>                   | Tue 27 Mar |
| <i>The World</i>                  | Tue 27 Mar |
| <i>Sun Princess</i>               | Tue 03 Apr |

## Australians advancing on Azamara

Australia is the third biggest market for Azamara Club Cruises and the top choice of destination if a third ship is added to the fleet.

**THE** growth in local sales for the upmarket Azamara Club has been "monumental", according to Edie Bornstein, the company's Senior Vice President, who visited Sydney last week.

"Azamara is really resonating with Aussies," she said in an interview with **Cruise Weekly**.

"On the recent Singapore to Shanghai cruise, over 200 guests were Australian – about one-third of the capacity of the ship."

Asia is our favourite choice, she said, but there is also "a high number" of Australians on all sailings in Europe and South America.

However, there are no solid plans to base a vessel in Australia in the near future – not until a third ship is ordered.

"We would certainly love to be here but we would need to grow beyond the two vessels, and as we grow the fleet, Australia would be the number-one goal," Bornstein said.

Azamara is Royal Caribbean's premium line and operates "destination-immersive" voyages aboard the 694-passenger *Quest* and *Journey*.

Although not priced as a top-level luxury cruise, Azamara's perks include complimentary wine with lunch and dinner, overnight port stays, and 50% off shore excursions if booked online at least four days prior to departure.

## Voyage to the end of the earth

**AURORA** Expeditions has announced it is the only small ship tour operator to visit Novaya Zemlya and Franz Josef Land this year, during its 14 day 'Voyage to the End of the Earth' cruise, departing from Murmansk on 08 September, see [www.auroraexpeditions.com.au](http://www.auroraexpeditions.com.au).

## Love for Sail with NCL

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Lines vessels have been selected to host a new US reality dating TV series, *Love for Sail*, which follows four women and a group of single men.

NCL Cruise Directors will help organise events for the ladies and their suitors, including romantic dates onboard and in port.

*Norwegian Epic*, *Norwegian Pearl* and *Norwegian Star* will all appear in the show.

See [www.ncl.com/loveforsail](http://www.ncl.com/loveforsail) for more details.

"It's tremendous value," Bornstein said.

Many passengers are first-timers, she added, as "just under 22% have never cruised before, and many of them are seasoned travellers who thought they'd never cruise."

Bornstein said Azamara competes with boutique hotels rather than other cruise lines "because our distinction is that we have longer stays, more overnights and night touring."

A recent overnight 'Land Discovery' took cruise passengers from Bangkok to Angkor Wat in Cambodia.

The company also offers charters for group bookings of a minimum 250 couples.

"We would love to do an Australian charter," Bornstein said.

The biggest markets for Azamara are the US (about 50% of passengers), UK and Australia, followed by Canada and Germany.

For details, see your travel agent or visit [www.azamaraclubcruises.com](http://www.azamaraclubcruises.com).



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## Last Minute Deals

This weekly column highlights hot deals on cruises departing soon – ideal for our spontaneous readers.

Check out this week's cruise bargain:

### 7-night Pacific Dawn Brisbane roundtrip

- **From:** \$1,193pp
- **Departs:** 31 March 2012
- **Visits:** Airlie Beach, Yorkeys Knob, Port Douglas and Willis Island (Australia)
- **Includes:** seven-nights cruising and all onboard meals and entertainment.
- **Contact:** [www.cruise guru.com.au](http://www.cruise guru.com.au)

## The secrets of Alaskan cooking

**THE** author of *The Winterlake Lodge Cookbook* (for which she won the Best Female Chef USA award), Kirsten Dixon, has agreed to host a Culinary Arts enrichment program aboard *Silver Shadow* from 17-31 May 2012 sailing from Tokyo, Japan to Seward, Alaska.

Along with her family, Dixon operates three remote wilderness lodges in south central Alaska; as well as the Cooking School at Tutka Bay and La Baleine, and a café in Homer, Alaska.

Dixon gained her cooking qualifications at the Cordon Bleu in Paris, and also has a master's degree in gastronomy from Adelaide University.

Dixon has been cooking in the backcountry of Alaska for more than 20 years, and will share tips and recipes with guests onboard *Shadow* during a series of cooking demonstrations.

The 15-day *Silver Shadow* voyage is priced from US\$4,599pp twin share.

See your travel agent for details or visit [www.silversea.com](http://www.silversea.com).

## Shoot in the wild like a pro

**RENOWNED** wildlife photographer, Martin Bailey, has signed on to run workshops onboard five of Aurora Expeditions' 13- and 14-day wilderness voyages in the High Arctic, Russian Arctic and the Russian Far East departing in June, July and August this year.

Bailey's list of accomplishments include his debut in the 30 Most Influential Photographers of the Decade list.

For information on the workshops and voyages **CLICK HERE.**



## Kids get looked after with MSC

**IN** a bid to attract more families, MSC Cruises has revamped its Kids Club offering to satisfy all age groups, and now features four separate programs: the Mini Club (3-6 years), Junior Club (7-11 years), the Y Team (12-14 years) and MSC Generation Teen Club (15-17 year olds).

Extended hours for the operation of the Mini and Junior clubs have also been put in place (9am - 11pm); whilst sporting tournaments, parades, dance competitions and parties will also be on offer for kids with bags of energy.

The choice of games onboard has also been expanded, with teen areas now equipped with Xbox Kinetics and Nintendo Wiis.

Kids who love to write or draw can also now contribute to the new kids' newspaper; whilst children under 12 and their families can enjoy a special theatre performance featuring characters such as Cinderella and Tarzan.

In addition, staff onboard MSC vessels will host a 'nanny's hour' program for children aged 10 to 36 months, where they will organise games and activities.

The cruise line has also increased its staff to children ratio and has established new criteria for the hiring of counsellors (including the requirement of a college degree in recreation or child care, or equivalent experience); whilst new dedicated welcome desks for security bracelets have been set up, and pagers and beepers will be available for rent for guests with children who are three to five years old, or who have medical conditions or special needs.

## See Scenic South America

**SCENIC** Tours' new 2012/13 South and Central America brochure features a number of new all-inclusive itineraries exploring the rich cultures and history of the region, including a month-long Spectacular South America and Luxury Patagonian Fjords Cruise.

Spanning 34 days, the new cruise-tour includes a 13-night cruise onboard the 5-star *Le Boréal* through the Patagonian fjords.

Cruising the Patagonian fjords visitors will see glaciers and inner passages guarded by the peaks of the Paine, and will also be able to witness sea lions, fur seals and dolphins in their natural habitat up close and personal via guided zodiac expeditions.

To sweeten the deal cruisers who book the adventure by 31 October 2012 will also receive free flights to South America for the second person travelling.

For more information, see your travel agent, or visit [www.scenictours.com.au](http://www.scenictours.com.au).



### SERIOUS deck chairs.

A British sculptor, Stuart Murdoch, is hoping to take the title of World's Biggest Deck Chair for his six-tonne, eight and a half metre high chair creation.

The sculpture could possibly be a 'first' for one of the new mega ships currently being dreamt up by cruise companies, however at present it has made its home on land in the seaside town of Bournemouth in the UK.



They got up there, now how do they get down?

## Save with the Captain

**CAPTAIN** Cook Cruises is offering a 25% discount off its Murray River cruises which depart between June and August this year.

The voyages take place onboard CCC's modern replica of an 1800's paddle wheeler, the *PS Murray Princess*- which comes complete with two spacious lounges, polished wood and gold trimmings and an elegant spiral staircase.

In terms of what guests can expect of the Murray this winter, CCC says the river's higher than normal water levels, combined with its usual winter activity, will result in an abundance of wildlife including swans, swamp hens, wood ducks, as well as thriving flora including flowering Lignum bushes.

Guests will be able to make the most of this abundance, via guided nature walks and eco-tours, and will also enjoy day trips to historic ports, sacred Aboriginal sites, a sheep station and woolshed and even a native wildlife shelter, as well as cellar door tastings and an Aussie-style campfire barbecue on the river bank one night.

Inclusive of the discount, CCC's three-night Discovery Cruise is priced from \$599pp, the four-night Outback Cruise is priced from \$799pp and the seven-night Murraylands & Wildlife Cruise is priced from \$1,223pp.

See your travel agent for details, or visit [www.captaincook.com.au](http://www.captaincook.com.au).

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## Review: Fred Olsen's Black Watch

by: Louise Goldsbury

A quick glance at the prices onboard the 800-passenger *Black Watch* gives a clear indication of the difference between this British line and others.

A pint of beer is £3.10 (\$4.70) or £2.75 (\$4.20) for a Heineken. The daily special (a can of Tiger) is £2.20 (\$3.30). Cocktails are a crazy £4 each (\$6). A bottle of duty-free Johnnie Walker (Red Label) is £14.30 (\$21). Speciality coffees range from £1.50 (\$2.30) for an espresso to £1.95 (\$2.95) for a cappuccino.

Even the day spa is reasonable, with prices similar to land-based salons in Australia. Massages and facials are about half the price of other ships. Foot massages are £15 (\$23), which are great for reviving after a long day of walking in port. A shampoo and blow-dry starts at £22 (\$33); add a cut for an extra £13 (\$20). Men's dry cuts are only £10 (\$15).

Shore excursions are among the cheapest I've ever seen for sale.

Docked in Sydney in February, *Black Watch* was offering a harbour cruise for £46 (\$70) which is around what you would pay direct from the operator.

Then the ship was heading to Peru (via New Caledonia, Fiji and Tahiti) where a Lima city tour was only £25 (\$38).

Fred Olsen prides itself on its good value and lack of "price gouging" and "nickel-and-dimeing", as the Americans call it, where passengers may get rockbottom-priced cruises but then pay up big for drinks, coffees, specialty restaurants, tours and other activities.

Fred Olsen also offers some of the best itineraries in the business, with unique routes and lots of overnight stays.

When I inspected *Black Watch*, it was in Sydney for three days, which is extremely unusual.

Most passengers were British (135 were classified as "internationals", including a few Australians) and aged over 60.

Almost half of the guests were "all rounders", taking the full three-month world cruise, and 120 had done it before.

Many solo travellers choose Fred Olsen because it has several single cabins and singles events, as well as male and female dance hosts.

Single cabin prices can be around the same as a 'per person' rate in a twin cabin, and some have balconies.

Other points of difference include a café, pool and spas situated at the stern, which enables ocean views – strangely not a common feature on many ships, where everything is blocked from the sea.

The décor on the 1972-built *Black Watch* is not fancy, and it doesn't bother with the bells and whistles of modern vessels, but if you are more interested in great destinations and a relaxed onboard atmosphere, this is the cruise for you.

There are plenty of bars, lounges, shows and friendly people to keep you entertained too.

### Bookings

In 2012-13, *Black Watch* is sailing in Europe, the Caribbean and Africa. Brochure fares start at \$1,532 per person for nine nights around the Norwegian fjords.

One of the shortest sectors on Fred Olsen's next world cruise via Australia, aboard *Balmoral* in 2013, is Sydney to Thailand – 22 nights from \$4,098 pp.

See [www.fredolsencruises.com](http://www.fredolsencruises.com), call (02) 9900 7200 or see your travel agent.



Black Watch's pool area



Black Watch at the Geiranger Fjord, Norway



Black Watch's Golf Nets

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