

CRUISE

WEEKLY

Tuesday 11 September 2012

Berlitz reveals highest rated ships

Hapag-Lloyd, Seabourn, SeaDream, Crystal, Celebrity and Cunard are the winners of the most comprehensive annual ranking of cruise ships.

THE top-scoring vessels of the 2013 Berlitz Complete Guide to Cruising and Cruise Ships have been revealed, four days before its official release as an iPhone/iPad app and three weeks before the book is published in October.

Small and boutique ships were again the best rated, with only the premium class of one big ship awarded over 1,700 points out of a possible 2,000.

Hapag-Lloyd's *Europa* retained its number-one spot for the 13th consecutive year, scoring the most points of the 284 ships rated (1,852)

and topping the small ships category.

SeaDream I and *SeaDream II* were the next highest scorers (1,788 and 1,786 respectively), which also placed them in the top two of the boutique ships category, followed by *Seabourn Legend* (1,774).

Seabourn had three ships in the top 10 of this category as well as three in the top 10 small ships, including *Seabourn Quest* (1,776) and *Seabourn Odyssey* (1,775) in second and third place after *Europa*.

Queen Mary 2 (Grill class) dominated the large resort-style ships (1,702), followed by joint runners-up *Celebrity Solstice*, which will be based in Australia this summer, and *Celebrity Equinox* (1,611).

The best of the mid-size ships, according to the Berlitz rating system, was *Crystal Serenity* (1,717).

Oceania Cruises' new *Riviera* (1,702) and Crystal Cruises' other ship *Crystal Symphony* (1,701) came a close second and third.

The reviews, devised by British cruise critic and author Douglas Ward, take into account 400 items based on personal cruises, visits and revisits to almost all of the world's ocean-going ships.

In the new book, Ward also outlines his six biggest cruise line rip-offs and 15 ways that costs are cut.

To get the best value for money, he recommends choosing an older ship and booking through a travel agent.

The 2013 Berlitz Guide app will be available on iTunes on 15 September; the book is due out 1 October.

Captain offers 2 Islands for \$7

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises is opening up Sydney for both locals and visitors alike, offering guests the chance to explore a different side of the city, Fort Denison and Shark Island, for only \$7.

Just in time for the school holidays, the deal allows guests who purchase a 24-hour Sydney Harbour Explorer pass, to purchase a National Park pass (which entitles them to re-boarding at both Fort Denison and Shark Island) for an additional \$7.

The Explorer Pass is valid for 24-hours and allows guests to hop between eight Sydney Harbour attractions, with free re-boarding at Circular Quay, Taronga Zoo, Watson's Bay, Luna Park and Darling Harbour and live onboard commentary.

See www.captaincook.com.au.



Ask The Expert

with Aleisha Fittler

CRUISE Weekly would like to welcome our Expert for the month of September, Aleisha Fittler, Scenic Tours General Manager of Product for Europe and Canada. Every week we will be calling for questions from our readers which we will pass on for Aleisha to answer. So if you have a burning river cruise question, be sure to email it to us at expert@cruiseweekly.com.au.

For Aleisha's answers click on the Facebook link at the end of each question or visit facebook.com/cruiseweekly.

Q1 from Bronwyn King:

Is smoking permitted on your ships, and if so are there specific smoking zones? Also, can guests smoke in their cabins? [f](#)

Q2 from Hazel Rowley:

When I look at river cruises the leg between Amsterdam and Budapest seems to be the most used itinerary, does this mean the segment is crammed with river ships and that at each port there will be lots of guests? [f](#)

Email your questions for Aleisha to expert@cruiseweekly.com.au

A&K cruising in Norway

FOR the first time ever Abercrombie & Kent Australia are giving intrepid adventurers the opportunity to experience the islands of the High Arctic Svalbard archipelago in Norway, with a voyage onboard the *Le Boreal*.

Departing 16 July 2013, the voyage will be accompanied by A&K's seasoned expedition team including marine biologist Larry Hobbs, who will help guests safely seek out polar bears, whales, seabirds, reindeer and walrus, as well as explore Greenland's Bronze Age villages, Eskimo settlements and fishing enclaves.

Le Boreal carries 200 guests, and sports a bunch of eco friendly features such as a computerised positioning system to avoid the need for dropping anchor in fragile environments.

The voyage is priced from US\$11,995 per person twin share (excluding charter flights). See www.abercrombiekent.com.au.

TODAY'S ISSUE OF CW

Today's issue of **CW** features four pages of the latest cruise news, plus a full page from Oceania Cruises detailing six special cruise offers (p5), and see p6 for three Australian and NZ cruise deals from Royal Caribbean.

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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>Sun Princess</i>	Wed 12 Sep
<i>Pacific Jewel</i>	Sat 15 Sep
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	Sat 15 Sep
BRISBANE	
<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	Sat 15 Sep

Fly free to Canada with APT

APT has extended its free return flights to Canada until 19 October.

The deal is applicable for APT's 18 Day Canadian Experience and Alaska Cruise holiday departing in April 2013, and offers guests free return flights (including taxes of up to \$820) to Canada.

The cruise/tour is priced from \$9,695pp, and includes 11 days in Canada with a two-day VIA Rail journey from Vancouver to Jasper and then touring to Lake Louise, Banff, Kelowna and Whistler before a seven nights' Alaskan Inside Passage cruise to Glacier Bay

See your travel agent for details.

Orion to waive single supp

ORION Expedition Cruises has said it will drop the single supplement surcharge on brochure fares for a selection of voyages throughout 2012 and 2013.

The move is in direct response to enquiries from potential solo travellers, and is applicable on the following *Orion II* voyages: 12 Sep 2012 Borneo Secrets of Sabah, 22 Sep 2012 Borneo Across the Wallace Line, and 02 Oct 2012 Borneo Camp Leakey Faces in the Forest.

The cruise line will also ditch the solo supplement for the following *Orion* voyages: 21 Nov 2012 Tasman Discoverer, 24 Feb 2013 South Pacific Splendour, 06 Mar 2012 Melanesian Discovery, 07 Apr 2013 West Papua & Maluku, 28 Apr 2013 Kimberley Expedition, 26 Aug 2013 Kimberley Expedition, 05 Sep 2013 Kimberley Expedition, 28 Nov 2013 Forgotten Islands Photography, 08 Dec 2013 Great Barrier Reef & Islands Food and Wine, and 13 Dec 2013 Tasman Discoverer Food and Wine.

For details see your travel agent or phone 1300 361 012.

Sea Cloud sails into the new year

Sea Cloud Cruises has unveiled its 2013 sailing and river cruise program, which includes voyages onboard its historic *Sea Cloud*, as well as the *Sea Cloud II* and *River Cloud II* vessels.

FOR those of you not acquainted with the German cruise line, the company boasts three unique vessels, the first of which, *Sea Cloud*, is an 81 year old luxury yacht, which at the time of her launch in 1931 was "the most magnificent sailing yacht in the world".

Sea Cloud was originally owned by the heiress Marjorie Merriweather Post, and under her patronage played host to politicians, diplomats, Hollywood stars and playboys.

Now days, the four masted yacht has been lovingly restored by Sea Cloud Cruises to hark back to those luxuriant days, and features two owners cabins and eight original cabins, each individually styled- some with marble fireplaces, as well as 24 outside cabins, and other historical highlights such as an oak panelled restaurant.

Sea Cloud II is a 2001 redesign of *Sea Cloud* but features a more modern design and can carry a maximum of 94 passengers.

Crew onboard both windjammers not only serve haute cuisine, and beverages, and attend to guests needs, but they also climb the masts and yard arms to set the sails, as well as maintain the varnish, and adhere to the traditional activities and atmosphere of tall ship sailing.

Meanwhile the company's *River Cloud II* was built in 2001, carries 88 guests, and features 44 outside cabins, seated dining, panoramic views library, bar, teak sundeck and lido bar.

According to Sea Cloud, *River Cloud II* has "all the trimmings you would expect of a vessel of a previous era, with teak and varnish touches" as well as modern finishes and service.

Now that you are acquainted with the company, Sea Cloud's 2013 line up sees both windjammers pass through the Panama Canal, to cruise Central America, Cuba, the Lesser Antilles and the British Virgin Islands through the northern hemisphere winter, before heading to Europe at the first sign of spring and sailing through the Azores, Balearic Islands, the coasts of Spain and France and the Mediterranean.

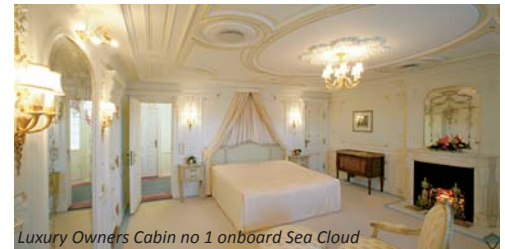
2013 will also see *Sea Cloud* debut two

voyages without a fixed schedule from Malta to Piraeus (departing 01 May) and from Piraeus to Venice (departing 11 July) where only the start and finish points are mapped out, with the rest determined by the wind, the weather and whim.

Meanwhile from 2013 onward all voyages onboard the company's river yacht, *River Cloud II*, will be themed, and will be accompanied by an artist, a scientist or a lecturer, with themes ranging between maritime, culinary, historical, and cultural.

In terms of itineraries, the vessel will spend 2013 cruising between the IJssel Sea in the Netherlands and the Danube delta, with highlights including a Maritime themed voyage from Amsterdam to the cities on the IJssel Sea and small kingdoms, accompanied by the director of the International Maritime Museum in Hamburg.

For more details on the program, or to grab a brochure, see your local travel agent, or visit www.seacloud.com.



Luxury Owners Cabin no 1 onboard Sea Cloud



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:

12-night Venice to Athens cruise onboard *Pacific Princess*

- **From:** \$4,829pp
- **Departs:** 27 October 2012
- **Visits:** Venice and Ravenna (Italy), Dubrovnik (Croatia), Kotor (Montenegro), Mykonos (Greece), Istanbul and Ephesus (Turkey), Santorini and Athens (Greece)
- **Includes:** return flights, 12-night cruise, two night Dubai stopover, two nights Athens accommodation, and half day Athens tour.
- **Contact:** www.ecruising.travel

Hapag-Lloyd expedition

HAPAG-Lloyd Cruises is setting its focus on luxury and expedition voyages, confirming that its future strategy involves growing these segments.

“By consistently focusing on these two pillars, we strive to enhance further our strength and our leading position as regards quality in these segments and at the same time we will address new markets”, said Dr Wolfgang Flägel, Managing Director of Hapag-Lloyd Cruises.

To this end, The newly-built *Europa 2* will be positioned in the five-star luxury segment as of May 2013, whilst the company has also pledged to identify and evaluate growth opportunities in the expedition segment.

“With *Europa 2*, we will put into service a ship designed to offer an international flair and address a sophisticated, cosmopolitan target group, planning in future to increase market share in English-speaking countries such as the USA, UK and Benelux,” said Flägel.

“The first English-language *Europa 2* brochure is due to be published in mid September,” he added.

Meanwhile the company also confirmed it has secured a two-year charter contract for the 698 guest *MS Columbus 2* from Oceania Cruises, and as such will be hosting voyages on the vessel until April 2014.

MS Columbus 2 features 11 decks replete with a putting green, library, jogging track, observation lounge, spa and several eateries.

See your travel agent for details.

Journey and Quest makeover

AZAMARA Club Cruises is gearing up to makeover its *Azamara Journey* and *Azamara Quest* vessels over the next two years.

During their respective makeovers the sisterships will score new carpets, upholstery, new mattresses, new veranda furniture for suites and staterooms, new sun loungers, new pool towels, new colour palettes in their public areas, and their pools will be resurfaced.

Meanwhile their Casino bars will be expanded and enhanced with new furniture, their Spas will receive new steam rooms, and their fitness centres will score new cardio equipment.

The vessels will also receive a new caviar and champagne bar *Aqualina*.

Quest will go into drydock on 07 November 2012, whilst *Journey* will begin her makeover on 06 January 2013.

MSC's free upgrades

AUSTRALIANS who pay \$1,219 (per person, twin share) for a category 12 balcony suite on a seven-night Western Mediterranean cruise on *MSC Splendida* will be upgraded to a deluxe suite in the ship's MSC Yacht Club.

This hot offer, a saving of \$1,280 per person, applies to bookings made before 30 September 2012 for cruises until November this year.

MSC Yacht Club features 24-hour butler service, priority check-in and complimentary refreshments in its venues and mini-bars.

The cruise from Genoa calls at Barcelona, Tunis, Valetta, Messina and Civitavecchia (Rome).

Further upgrades to the MSC Yacht Club apply to seven-night Eastern Med cruises aboard *MSC Divina*, priced from \$2,259pp, twin share (a saving of \$550pp) and Western Med cruises on *MSC Fantasia*, priced from \$2,309pp, twin share (a saving of \$360pp).

For details, call 1300 028502.

Fly free to Vietnam

APT is offering free flights, including taxes, on Mekong River cruise packages of 12 days or longer for bookings made by 31 March 2013.

The 12-day Vietnam and Cambodia Highlights, for example, is priced from \$4,095pp for a June 2013 departure, including cruising between Saigon and Siem Reap, five-star hotels in both cities, excursions, local wine, beer and spirits, an APT tour director, transfers and tipping.

Butler service is also provided for 90% of suites on the *RV AmaLotus* for the 2013-14 season.

For more details, call 1300 229 804.

Norovirus on Dawn Princess

A SUSPECTED outbreak of Norovirus has affected more than 120 people on *Dawn Princess*, according to the US-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Australian-based ship was sailing in Asia and Alaska as part of its 75-day Grand Pacific World Cruise.

CDC issued an investigation update, reporting that 114 passengers and 11 crew members had been ill with vomiting and diarrhea.

Two CDC officers boarded the *Dawn Princess* in Juneau on Friday to conduct an environmental health assessment and to evaluate the outbreak.

The latest media report said only two cases remained when the ship was docked in Juneau.

The ship's crew had also taken preventative action including increased cleaning and disinfection procedures, as well as collecting stool specimens for Norovirus testing.



WHAT not to do on your Antarctic cruise.

Many people cruise to the Antarctic to experience its pristine untouched wilderness, however there are always some that have different ideas.

One such bunch were busted dispersing barley seeds whilst enjoying a walk on Deception Island in the Antarctic Peninsula.

According to reports, the group was travelling onboard *MS Expedition* last year, and decided to sow the seeds despite having been instructed not to leave anything on the island, or take anything away, by guides during a pre-landing briefing.

According to the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators “The dispersed seeds were collected and the severity of the offence explained to the passengers”.

“Additional seeds were confiscated. The group was carefully monitored during future landings,” IAATO added.

Like bridge? Play it at sea

COVE Travel has put together a special interest bridge group itinerary onboard *Crystal Symphony's* 13-night Kiwis and Koalas cruise from Auckland to Sydney, departing on 28 January 2013.

The itinerary will be hosted by leading Brisbane-based bridge teacher Joan Butts, and renowned player Paul Wyer, both of whom have represented Australia in competitions internationally.

The program will include 10 modern bridge lessons and 13 tournaments and games for players of all levels (from beginners to advanced).

Meanwhile the voyage itself will visit: Tauranga, Napier, Wellington, Picton, Christchurch and Dunedin, and will also spend two days exploring breathtaking Dusky, Doubtful and Milford Sounds.

For more details about the bridge itinerary and the voyage, visit Cove travel's website www.covetravel.com.au, or phone (07) 5577 9211.

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Follow us on:

Just one click away from keeping up to date with all the breaking news as it comes to hand...



Top 5 five-star family cruises

by: Louise Goldsbury

Luxury lines are the latest to lure parents and grandparents into bringing the kids on cruises, sometimes for no extra charge, with new facilities and bonuses also sweetening the deal.

1. Hapag-Lloyd Cruises

Family pricing has been introduced on the world's highest rated ship, *Europa*, and the new *Europa 2* (launching next year).

From April 2013, children under 12 sail for free if they share a cabin with two adults paying full price.

Other perks include Baby Welcome hampers, kids and teens clubs, and entertainment by Käpt'n Knopf.

The German line has also added children's areas to its other ship, *Columbus 2*.

For details of dedicated family cruises, with child-friendly shore excursions, see www.hl-cruises.com.

2. Crystal Cruises

On selected departures, if six full-fare guests pay in full together, the group receives a shipboard credit of US\$200 per person, as well as a free third berth for kids (under 17) when sharing with two full-fare guests.

As an added attraction, *Crystal Serenity* and *Crystal Symphony* became all-inclusive this year, which means parents can relax with complimentary drinks while the kids enjoy free snacks, shakes and soft drinks from the poolside grill.

Both ships also have Xbox games and activities such as karaoke and pizza-making classes. See www.wiltrans.com.au.

3. Regent Seven Seas

Regent is the only ocean-going cruise line to include free shore excursions for everybody in every port, which is a great saving for families.

The Club Mariner Youth Program is offered on selected cruises in Europe.

On some of these departures in 2013, kids fares have been discounted. See www.wiltrans.com.au.

4. Paul Gauguin Cruises

Regular promotions include half-price fares and one child sails free when sharing a room with two adults.

On several French Polynesian voyages, the *Paul Gauguin* also runs Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ambassadors of the Environment program, which teaches children about the ocean through snorkelling and canoe classes (US\$299 per child aged 9-17).

Water-sports are organised at the line's private beaches and the ship has an onboard marina. See www.wiltrans.com.au.

5. River cruises

River vessels lack children's clubs and activities but some good deals are now available for families travelling in Europe.

Sea Cloud Cruises' *River Cloud II* allows children (aged up to 13) to sail for free when sharing a cabin with their parents, while two teenagers (aged 13-18) can have their own cabin for 65% of the advertised rate.

Other discounts are offered for a single parent with one or two children.

In addition, shore excursions are free for kids, and fares include wine, beer and soft drinks during lunch and dinner. See www.seacloud.com.

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises has also expanded its 'multigenerational departures' to suit Australian school holidays.

Options include a 10-day roundtrip from Paris cruising through Normandy (28 June and 12 July 2013 sailings) and a Christmas Markets cruise.

Pay-in-full savings of up to \$1,000 per couple are available until 31 October 2012, plus a discount of 25% off the adult price and upgrades for children aged 4-18.

Fares include wine, beer and soft drinks during lunch and dinner, shore excursions, use of bicycles, and transfers.

See www.uniworldcruises.com.au.



Crystal's cookie classes



Paul Gauguin's youth program



Hapag-Lloyd's Käpt'n Knopf

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VENICE TO BARCELONA
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PORTS: Venice, Dubrovnik, Corfu, Messina, Sorrento/Capri, Rome (Civitavecchia), Florence/Pisa/Tuscany (Livorno), Monte Carlo, Provence (Marseille), Barcelona

	Veranda from*	Concierge Veranda from*
SALE FARES	\$2,455pp	\$3,140pp

BONUS: US\$500 SHIPBOARD CREDIT**

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Mayan Mystique

MIAMI TO MIAMI
10 DAYS | 10 DEC 2012 | *Riviera*



PORTS: Miami, George Town, Cozumel, Belize City, Santo Thomas, Roatan, Costa Maya, Key West, Miami

	Veranda from*	Concierge level from*
SALE FARES	\$2,670pp	\$2,885pp

BONUS: US\$500 SHIPBOARD CREDIT**

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS](#)

Voyage of the Connoisseurs

BANGKOK TO DUBAI
25 DAYS | 04 APR 2013 | *Nautica*



PORTS: Bangkok, Koh Samui, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang), Phuket, Colombo, Malé, Cochin, Mumbai, Muscat, Fujairah, Abu Dhabi, Dubai

	Inside from*	Deluxe Outside from*
SALE FARES	\$4,495	\$5,195

BONUS: US\$500 SHIPBOARD CREDIT**

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS](#)

Enchanted Grandeur

ATHENS TO ROME
10 DAYS | 14 OCT 12 | *Riviera*

PORTS: Athens (Pireaus), Ephesus (Kusadasi), Monemvasia, Argostoli (Cephalonia), Taormina (Sicily), Florence/Pisa/Tuscany (Livorno), Provence (Marseille), Monte Carlo, Rome (Civitavecchia)

	Veranda from*	Concierge Veranda from*
SALE FARES	\$2,455	\$2,615

BONUS: US\$500 SHIPBOARD CREDIT**

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS](#)

Aegean Marvels

ISTANBUL TO ATHENS
7 DAYS | 01 NOV 2012 | *Marina*

PORTS: Istanbul, Pergamum (Dikili), Volos, Ephesus (Kusadasi), Rhodes, Aghios Nikolas (Crete), Athens (Pireaus).

	Veranda from*	Concierge Veranda from*
SALE FARES	\$1,715	\$1,835

BONUS: US\$500 SHIPBOARD CREDIT**

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS](#)

Fjords & Wonders

RIO DE JANEIRO TO VALPARAISO
17 DAYS | 10 DEC 2012 | *Marina*

PORTS: Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo (Santos), Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Ushuaia, Cruising the Chilean Fjords (Estero, Aysen & Straight of Magellan), Puerto Chacabuco, Puerto Montt, Valparaiso.

	Inside from*	Veranda level from*
SALE FARES	\$3,065	\$4,170

BONUS: US\$300 SHIPBOARD CREDIT**

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TERMS & CONDITIONS: Offers expire 30 September 2012. All fares listed are in AUS per person based on double occupancy and include non-commissionable fares. Cruise related government fees and Taxes are included. All advertised offers shown are per person based on double occupancy unless otherwise indicated, are subject to availability at time of booking, may not be combinable with other offers, are capacity controlled and may be withdrawn without prior notice. **Shipboard credit are per stateroom, is not redeemable for cash or further discounts off the cruise fare. It may only be used for onboard services. Any unused credit will be forfeited at the end of the cruise. Oceania Cruises reserves the right to correct errors or omissions and to change fares, fees and surcharges at any time. Further terms and conditions can be found in the Explore Your World brochure.

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BALCONY From \$1995* per person twin share

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Cruise departs 27 Jan 13.
Offer ends 16 Sep 12, unless sold out prior.



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From \$749~ 2nd Passenger

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Cruise departs 07 Dec 12.
Offer ends 16 Sep 12, unless sold out prior.



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OCEAN VIEW From \$1995* per person twin share
BALCONY From \$2495* per person twin share

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Cruise departs 28 Oct 12.
Offer ends 16 Sep 12, unless sold out prior.

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