

CRUISE

WEEKLY

Tuesday 3 December 2013

Island Escape opens up NZ fiords

The refurbished *Island Passage* has added facilities and crew to explore a different part of New Zealand's fiordlands.

FOLLOWING a significant upgrade, the 24-passenger small ship *Island Passage* has started operating cruises that venture beyond the usual Milford Sound region.

"The big ships have spoiled the remoteness of Milford Sound and Dusky Sound," Peter Bissett, founder of Island Escape Cruises told *Cruise Weekly*.

"Our new itinerary is in the northern fiords, such as Nancy Sound and George Sound, where nobody else is operating."

The *Island Passage*, which also has cruises in the more travelled sections of the World Heritage Fiordland National Park, as well as

New Zealand's Bay of Islands and Vanuatu, recently underwent a six-week \$500,000 refit.

The vessel has a more contemporary look, with new carpet, textiles, furniture and bed linens in suites and staterooms, and L'Occitane toiletries in the upgraded bathrooms.

For the first time, an onboard cruise director has been appointed to improve the passenger experience, along with a chief stewardess and a new marine biologist.

"People love our cruises to pieces but we want to surprise them with a higher level of service and make *Island Passage* the best little ship in this part of the world," Bissett said.

Planned in time for the 2014 Vanuatu season, the helicopter deck will be converted into an outdoor undercover lounge with alfresco dining, six steamer chairs and a king-size bed that guests can reserve for a night "sleeping under the stars".

Other changes already implemented include new menus and updated wine selections, new tableware and a fresh paint job.

All NZ fiordland packages include a pre-cruise night at Queenstown Heritage Hotel, helicopter transfers and scenic flights.

For more information and to make a booking, see www.islandescapecruises.com.

Biggest RCCL special sale ever

ROYAL Caribbean, along with sister brands Celebrity Cruises and Azamara Club Cruises have launched a new sale, with new offers available across all three lines.

Offers including reduced fares, half-price deposits, onboard credits and free gratuities on selected sailings departing after 14 Jan next year through to Mar 2015.

Special deals are on sale until 06 Dec or until sold out - book with your local travel agent.



A RECENT meeting between Royal Caribbean's *Voyager of the Seas* and Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Solstice* in the New Zealand ports of Tauranga and Wellington brought out a bit of friendly rivalry among crew and passengers.

Combined, the crews on the two ships engaged with passengers and even some locals in the two cities to play some beach cricket, footy & even an improved shot-put contest involving shoes - or "shoe-put".

Staff from the two ships also took the opportunity to collect gold coin donations to contribute to relief efforts for survivors of the Philippines' recent Typhoon Haiyan.

Quick river cruises on Pandaw

PANDAW River Expeditions has released a range of one and two-night short cruises between Mandalay and Pagan, designed for travellers without time for a longer voyage.

Two of the line's ships will operate the short departures - one in each direction - due to commence from Oct next year, with full board and an afternoon excursion included in fares.

MSC Cruises Christmas offers

PASSENGERS booking a selection of MSC Cruises' 2014 departures in Northern Europe, the Caribbean or Mediterranean can select from one of five gifts as a bonus.

Offers include onboard credit of AUD\$100, free drinks packages, cabin upgrades or one of three in-cabin wine, canapes or fruit packages.

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EXPLORER

The Auckland Hop On Hop Off Explorer bus stop is directly out front of the new Queens Wharf cruise ship terminal

[Click here for more details](#)

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HAL launches 2014/15 special cruises

Holland America Line's new brochure includes 14-night Indonesian voyages and an 83-night Africa circumnavigation.

THE company's recently created 'On Location' destination program is the focus of its new-look 2014/15 brochure, which details seven ships operating Alaskan cruises, new Singapore roundtrips and more Arctic voyages.

The On Location activity program, which gives passengers a more localised onboard experience, includes themed entertainment and local food and products to complement each cruise's ports of call.

Among the new activities are stargazing with an astronomer in the South Pacific, tai chi on deck with a master in Asia, and playing a didgeridoo in Australia.

Further abroad, itinerary highlights include an epic new journey from Southampton around Africa via the Seychelles, Mauritius, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Ghana, The Gambia, Senegal, Morocco and Egypt, as well as Jordan, Oman, UAE, Israel and the Canaries.

The full circumnavigation is priced from \$12,549 per person twin-share, with shorter sectors also available for sale.

New 14-day Indonesian Discovery voyages from Singapore are unveiled, including one departure on the *MS Volendam* and a longer series of sailings on the *MS Rotterdam* in 2014.

These cruises include calls at Jakarta; Semarang (Java); Lembar (Lombok); Komodo Island; Makassar (Sulawesi); Probolinggo and Suabaya (Java), as well as an overnight stay at Bali – fares start at \$1,899pp.

HAL's Alaskan schedule is offered from Seattle and Vancouver, with a selection of 'Land+Sea Journeys' also available for guests to spend up to three nights in Denali National Park.

In Northern Europe, the line's smallest ship, *MS Prinsendam*, will now depart from Ijmuiden (Amsterdam) and will also embark on more Arctic cruises.

Once more, *MS Volendam* & *MS Oosterdam* will return to our shores for the entire 2014/15 season, visiting more than 50 ports of call in Australia, New Zealand the South Pacific.

For a brochure, call 1300 987 322 or visit www.hollandamerica.com.au.

Dancing Queens on RCI vessel

MULTIPLE international award-winning stageshow *Mamma Mia!* will perform to passengers on Royal Caribbean International's *Quantum of the Seas* upon the ship's debut in November next year.

The stage musical, set to the music of Swedish supergroup ABBA, has also been turned into a critically acclaimed feature film.

More than 54 million people around the world have witnessed *Mamma Mia!* onstage since it made its London debut in 1999, with the show having since toured multiple times around the world.

"Since introducing *Hairspray* onboard *Oasis of the Seas* in 2009, our Tony award-winning musical productions have been incredibly well-received by guests, and we are proud to expand our Broadway at sea offerings with our fourth licensed main-stage production - more than any other cruise line," Royal Caribbean International executive vice president of operations Lisa Lutoff said.

Exclusive fly free cruise deals

ONLINE boutique cruise retailer Cruise Traveller has released three exclusive 'Fly Free' deals to Europe for bookings on selected sailings aboard Voyages to Antiquity luxury small-ship *Aegean Odyssey* departing in 2014. For more information, phone 1800 507 777.

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> (WB)	Wed 4 Dec
<i>Costa neo Romantica</i> (WB)	Thu 5 Dec
<i>Carnival Spirit</i> (OPT)	Thu 5 Dec
<i>Pacific Jewel</i> (WB)	Thu 5 Dec
<i>Voyager of The Seas</i> (OPT)	Sat 7 Dec
<i>Oosterdam</i> (OPT)	Sun 8 Dec
<i>Pacific Jewel</i> (WB)	Mon 9 Dec

BRISBANE	
<i>Sea Princess</i>	Tue 3 Dec
<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	Sat 7 Dec
<i>Pacific Jewel</i> (MIA)	Sat 7 Dec

MELBOURNE	
<i>Voyager of the Seas</i>	Thu 5 Dec
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	Thu 5 Dec
<i>Voyager of the Seas</i>	Mon 9 Dec
<i>Costa neo Romantica</i>	Mon 9 Dec

CAIRNS	
<i>Orion</i>	Sun 8 Dec

PORT DOUGLAS	
<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	Wed 4 Dec

HOBART	
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	Sat 7 Dec
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	Sun 8 Dec
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	Mon 9 Dec

AUCKLAND	
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	Fri 6 Dec
<i>Dawn Princess</i>	Fri 6 Dec
<i>Sea Princess</i>	Sat 7 Dec
<i>Sun Princess</i>	Sun 8 Dec

WELLINGTON	
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	Tue 3 Dec
<i>Celebrity Solstice</i>	Sat 7 Dec
<i>Dawn Princess</i>	Mon 9 Dec

TAURANGA	
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	Thu 5 Dec
<i>Dawn Princess</i>	Sat 7 Dec
<i>Sea Princess</i>	Sun 8 Dec
<i>Sun Princess</i>	Mon 9 Dec
<i>Celebrity Solstice</i>	Mon 9 Dec

Giveaway

Today, **Cruise Weekly** is giving away four **Sea Siren Cosmetics** collections including Enchanting Exotics, Bewitching Brights,

Captivating Classics & Dreamy Delights - in both sizes (Ocean Bubbles & Wanderlust Minis). Sea Siren Cosmetics, a new Australian-owned company, has cast off the ropes and launched a range of premium-quality nautically-themed nail polish, made in Australia.

Elegantly packaged, the launch collection offers 25 "sealicious" colours in two sizes to cater for the cruise traveller. The nail polish is also cruelty-free, vegan-friendly and free of 5 nasty toxins.

For your chance to win, check out the range at www.seasiren.com.au and tell us in 25 words or less:

Which colour Sea Siren's nail polish is your favourite, and why?

Email your answer by COB this Friday to:
comp@cruiseweekly.com.au

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New river ships coming in 2014

by: Louise Goldsbury

AUSTRALIAN river cruising fans and first-timers can look forward to an incredible 32 new vessels next year.

On the way are 14 longships from Viking, three from Avalon Waterways and APT, two each from Scenic Tours, Evergreen Tours, Pandaw and Tauck, one each from Uniworld and CroisiEurope, and another two from Haimark Travel that will be chartered by various companies. Phew!

Cruise Weekly has crunched the stats to provide this rundown of debuts, in order of christenings, in 2014.

APT: *AmaPura*

Passengers: 56 Where: Burma/Myanmar

Best bits: Pool; spa; all suites have a French balcony, a full balcony or twin balconies.

APT: *AmaReina & AmaSonata*

Passengers: 164 Where: Europe (Rhine and Danube)

Best bits: Heated pool with swim-up bar; gym and spa; bicycles; large cabins with twin balconies, four 300 sq ft suites.

Viking River Cruises: *Alsvin, Bestla, Buri, Dellig, Eistla, Gullveig, Heimdal, Hermod, Hlin, Idi, Ingvi, Kara, Kvasir & Lif*

Passengers: 190 Where: Europe

Best bits: Top-level suites have two rooms and two balconies; alfresco dining terrace; putting green; walking track; herb garden; solar panels; low-vibration hybrid engine.

Uniworld Boutique River Cruises: *SS Catherine*

Passengers: 159 Where: Europe (Burgundy/Provence)

Best bits: Pool and spa; alfresco dining terrace; casual bistro; two bars; fitness room; boutique; marble bathrooms; higher quality furnishings.

APT & Scenic Tours: *Irrawaddy Explorer & Mekong Navigator*

Passengers: 56 & 68 Where: Myanmar & Vietnam/Cambodia

Best bits: British colonial luxurious style; high quality furnishings and amenities; in-cabin on-demand movie system.

(Also to be chartered by Lüftner Cruises and Vantage Travel in the US.)

Avalon Waterways: *Avalon Impression, Avalon Poetry II & Avalon Illumination*

Passengers: 166 & 128

Where: Europe (Rhine, Danube, Moselle)

Best bits: All-suite accommodation with full-wall floor-to-ceiling windows; spacious bathrooms; casual bistro.

Evergreen Tours: *Emerald Sky & Emerald Star*

Passengers: 182

Where: Europe (Rhine, Danube, Moselle)

Best bits: Pool with a retractable roof that converts into a cinema at night; huge owners suites; alfresco dining terrace; bicycles; gym & salon.

CroisiEurope: *MS Lafayette*

Passengers: 88

Where: Europe (Rhine)

Best bits: Fewer cabins; larger public spaces; modernised design.

Scenic Tours: *Scenic Gem & Scenic Jade*

Passengers: 128 & 169

Where: Europe (France & Rhine, Danube)

Best bits: Balconies that convert into all-weather 'sun lounge'; French restaurant; café; dégustation for guests of the Danube deck.

Tauck: *Savor & Inspire*

Passengers: 128 & 169

Where: Europe (Danube, Rhine, Moselle)

Best bits: One-third of all cabins are 300 square foot suites; other cabins have a raised loft seating area; indoor/outdoor bistro.

Pandaw River Expeditions: *RV Kalaw Pandaw & RV Kindat Pandaw*

Passengers: 40

Launch: Myanmar/Burma

Best bits: 1920s-replica traditional brass & teak style; ultra-shallow drafts. (New five-cabin RY Kalay Pandaw, also available for charter.)



Avalon Expression will mirror new vessels



Stateroom on Uniworld's SS Catherine



Artist's rendering of the future Emerald Star

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PO Box 1010, Epping, NSW 1710

Phone: 1300 799 220 Fax: 1300 799 221

Advertising and Marketing: Christie-Lee Lachance, Magda Herdzik and Lisa Martin
Email: advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au

Business Manager: Jenny Piper

Email: accounts@traveldaily.com.au

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Publisher/Managing Editor: Bruce Piper
Editor: Louise Goldsbury

Production Editor: Matt Lennon

Contributors: Roderick Eime, Guy Dundas and Olivia Archbold

Email: info@cruiseweekly.com.au

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