

CRUISE

WEEKLY

Tuesday 29 January 2013

Crystal attracts a younger market

A greater number of Australian travellers in their 50s and 60s are recognising the value and affordability of luxury cruises.

JAMES Patrick, managing director of Wiltrans, which represents Crystal Cruises, Regent Seven Seas and Paul Gauguin Cruises, is upbeat about the luxury cruising market.

"It's been a tough year but it's settling down; 2013 is looking good," he said.

Speaking to *Cruise Weekly* yesterday on board *Crystal Symphony*, en route to Auckland, Patrick said Australia remained the top-selling market outside the United States and Canada.

And it's not all about Crystal Cruises' recent switch to all-inclusive pricing.

"Most people are more interested in the high quality of the product, rather than the included drinks and gratuities," he said.

But the luxury cruise market is changing, according to Patrick.

"The younger demographic is getting stronger and stronger all the time," he said.

One theory is that parents, who used to put aside money for their children, are now spending it on their own holidays.

"So we see more guests in their 50s and 60s replacing the older guests," Patrick said.

They are also booking more spontaneously, he observed.

"I think it has something to do with the focus on work-life balance.

"Younger people are more likely to say 'let's go on holidays' and book almost on a whim."

Older travellers tend to book as far out as 16 to 18 months.

Younger passengers are also more adventurous, Patrick said, which has led to an upsurge in different destinations such as South America, as well as the perennial favourite, the Mediterranean.

The continuing strength of the Australian dollar, along with the "softening" American

market, has pulled down fares for many high-end lines priced in USD.

"People don't realise how cheap the luxury segment is," said Patrick.

"But as the US market picks up, prices will go up."

The trick is to book now for 2013, 2014 and even 2015, while fares are lower for Australians, compared to the days when AUD was 85 cents (or worse) to the US dollar.

"Some people pay in instalments, watching the exchange rate for the best time to pay another \$1000 or \$5000," Patrick said.

For details, see wiltrans.com.au.

Quest through the Northwest

THIS year *Safari Quest* will return to the Pacific Northwest with a new roundtrip itinerary departing from Seattle.

Fresh from her refurbishment, the boutique adventure cruise vessel is scheduled to sail 19 luxury adventures this year during the northern hemisphere spring and fall, including the new Seattle week-long roundtrip which takes guests to the Harmony Islands, Princess Louisa Inlet, Jervis Inlet, Nanaimo, Gulf Islands and Victoria in British Columbia; and the San Juan Islands and Friday Harbor in Washington.

A highlight of the journey is extended time in Princess Louisa Inlet, a stunning fjord with high cliffs rising up from the water and Chatterbox Falls at the head of the inlet.

Whilst in the inlet, the yacht will anchor overnight, allowing guests time to hike ashore and explore by kayak and skiff.

Rates for *Quest's* Pacific Northwest season start from US\$3,995pp.

See your travel agent for details, or visit www.un-cruise.com.

TODAY'S ISSUE OF CW

Today's issue features four pages packed full of cruise news and photos.

Pearl avoids the storm

PACIFIC *Pearl* has delayed her New Zealand cruise which was set to depart from Sydney this morning, in order to avoid heavy swells and rough seas caused by storms.

Instead the voyage will stay overnight in Sydney, with guests able to stay onboard and enjoy the ship, before departing tomorrow.

Meanwhile, *Pacific Jewel's* arrival in Sydney tomorrow, has also been delayed by a day, after the vessel was advised to slow its course to ensure guests safety whilst moving through rough seas.



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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>Pacific Jewel</i>	Wed 30 Jan
<i>Carnival Spirit</i>	Thu 31 Jan
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Fri 01 Feb
<i>Silver Shadow</i>	Fri 01 Feb
<i>Radiance of the Seas</i>	Mon 04 Feb
<i>Celebrity Solstice</i>	Tue 05 Feb
<i>Columbus 2</i>	Tue 05 Feb

BRISBANE

<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	Sat 02 Feb
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MELBOURNE

<i>Silver Shadow</i>	Tue 29 Jan
<i>Seabourn Odyssey</i>	Mon 04 Feb
<i>Seabourn Odyssey</i>	Tue 05 Feb
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	Tue 05 Feb

HOBART

<i>Silver Whisper</i>	Sat 02 Feb
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	Mon 04 Feb

Get fit onboard with Zumba

TWO more cruise lines have signed up to feature popular Latin-styled Zumba dance workout classes, Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) and Celebrity Cruises.

NCL will add Zumba to its 2013 fitness programs whilst Celebrity will offer a range of ZumbaGold (for active older adults), Aqua Zumba, and Zumbatomic (for kids) classes.

Taiwan to boost cruise

TAIWAN is gearing up to welcome more cruise visitors, with the announcement of a US\$300m investment in two new cruise passenger terminals.

Located at Kaohsiung and Keelung the terminals will measure 120,000sq mtrs and 100,000sq mtrs respectively, and will feature a mix of retail shops and hotels.

Ex-Pacific Sun sets sail in China

On Australia Day, the former 'Australia's favourite ship' departed on its maiden Chinese voyage for its new owners.

HNA Tourism Cruise and Yacht Management has commenced operation of China's first and largest cruise ship, the MS Henna.

The vessel was built in 1986 for Carnival Cruise Lines as the MS Jubilee and since 2004 it operated as P&O Australia's *Pacific Sun*.

On 26 January, the ship made its debut for HNA, the first mainland company in China to own a cruise ship, sailing from Sanya-Ha Long Bay to Da Nang.

Sanya and Tianjin will serve as homeports,

with Vietnam and South Korea as destinations.

The maiden voyage of Henna marks HNA's official entering into the cruise tourism market, breaking the monopoly of foreign cruise companies in the Chinese market and providing local tourists with a new choice in cruise holidays.

According to the Chinese brand, a cruise aboard Henna costs the same as the price of accommodation in Sanya.

The ship has a maximum passenger capacity of 1,965 passengers.

From January to April, it will run along three routes: Sanya to Halong Bay; Sanya to Da Nang; and Sanya-Halong Bay-Da Nang.

From May to September, its homeport will be shifted to Tianjin, with a new route launching between Tianjin, Incheon and Jeju Island.

Seven Seas Voyager wows Sydney with her six-star classical style

SEVEN Seas Voyager sashayed herself into Sydney Harbour last Wednesday to give her international guests a taste of the city with an overnight call, and whilst they were ashore, **CW** was lucky enough to get onboard for a sample of what the 'six-star' ship had to offer.

Onboard, what is striking is the ship's understated elegance: there are no loud colour schemes or garish artwork, no bling, and no brash embellishments, but rather a muted palette of creams, browns and umbers, and simple, classical style.

The vessel features all ocean-view suite accommodation for a maximum of 700 guests, and a staff to guest ratio of 1 to 1.5, as well as plenty of dining options, including the main restaurant Compass Rose, Signatures (French food), Prime 7 (steakhouse), and La Veranda (al fresco dining).



Voyager also boasts a two-tiered Constellation Theatre, Card Room, Casino, Connoisseur Club (where guests can enjoy a cognac and a cigar), Voyager Lounge (with live band and dancing), and Canyon Ranch Spa.

There is also an extensive library mid-ship, as well as an expansive pool deck replete with a large pool, hot tubs and Pool Bar and Grill.

"*Seven Seas Voyager* is incredibly popular,

we're almost always fully booked," a spokesperson for Regent Seven Seas said.

"Part of this popularity is that we include everything in the upfront price, all the shore excursions, all the dining, even in specialty restaurants, and all the drinks.

"So our guests can order a drink without being chased with a bill, and they can go out on as many shore excursions as they want without having to pay for the privilege- we just don't do that nickel and diming type of cruising," the spokesperson added.

For more information on the ship, see your local travel agent, or visit www.wiltrans.com.au.

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Scenic Tours releases Europe preview

More than 45 of the most popular 2014 European river cruises will be held for a limited time at 2013 prices.

IN a special pre-release offer on next year's program, Scenic Tours is guaranteeing that people who book now will receive the very best 'earlybird' price available, even if fares reduce in the future.

In addition to holding 2013 prices, guests will enjoy several extra benefits for booking early. Aside from the freedom to choose and secure the departure date that suits them best, before selling out, guests can secure their preferred cabin.

They will also still be able to enjoy any special upgrades released in the full Europe River Cruises and Tours 2014 brochure.

Aleisha Fittler, general manager of product for Europe, said: "We are extremely excited about the year ahead and are thrilled to reveal a sneak peek of what's new to the program for 2014".

"The pre-release offer of booking 2014 tours at 2013 prices is extremely limited and will sell out fast so we encourage guests to book early

as this will truly be the best deal offered for the season."

Scenic Tours' all-inclusive fares include unlimited beverages, all meals, private butler service, all excursions, events and entertainment; Wi-Fi internet, airport transfers and all tipping and gratuities.

Triumph loses its propulsion

CARNIVAL Triumph was forced to delay its departure from Galveston yesterday due to issues with its propulsion system.

The ship was due to conclude a five-day cruise in Galveston yesterday morning, before embarking on another five day cruise later in the day.

This plan was however ousted after a technical problem with the ship's propulsion, which governs ship cruising speed, which whilst not affecting cruise safety, did slow the ship, making it five hours late into port.

As a result, the following voyage's itinerary has been impacted, and depending on the progress of repairs, the ship will either overnight in Progreso or Cozumel.

All guests who sail will receive a US\$50 per person shipboard credit.



HE would love the ice-cream parlour onboard *Pacific Dawn*!

Prince Harry is once again making headlines after he was supposedly filmed cutting an interview short to run for an ice-cream van.

According to reports, the Prince was speaking to media whilst on military deployment in Afghanistan when hearing a commotion behind him, he stopped talking, unplugged his microphone and took off at a sprint.

A YouTube clip by producetom85, shows the event, and features dubbed ice-cream van music in the background.

Whilst it is certain that the reason for Prince Harry's sudden departure was not a strawberry sundae, since its release the doctored clip has scored over half a million views.

To watch it **CLICK HERE**.

Hurtigruten celebrates their 120th Anniversary in 2013

To celebrate this great milestone, Hurtigruten is offering special Anniversary Celebration Fares on select Norway Classic Voyages – saving up to \$2,925 per couple*!

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Dancing across the Seas

by: Louise Goldsbury

A day in the life of a dance host can start with waltzing lessons in the morning, escorting single ladies on shore excursions, and dancing with a dozen women each night.

Tough job.

Hosts are usually unmarried, professional dance teachers who join cruise ships to accompany the growing number of solo female passengers.

A smaller number of females are also employed to dance with the single men.

Only four cruise lines continue to employ dance hosts: Cunard, which calls them "gentlemen hosts", Crystal Cruises, which calls them "Ambassadors"; Silversea; and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

Ed Murmurian is one of the originals - he started in 1993 with the line that launched the concept of dance hosts, Greek company Royal Cruise Line, based out of San Francisco.

For the past 15 years, he has worked with Crystal Cruises, which employs between four and 12 hosts per voyage.

"Crystal is the best, they treat us so well," he said.

"I go on 18 or 19 cruises a year, but this year I'm only doing 12."

Ed took his first dance lesson at age 15 "because I found out girls like men who dance".

While in college, he taught dancing in a studio in Michigan, USA, and still dances socially five nights a week.

A single parent of two adult children, his dance host career began after he quit his job as a buyer for a shoe business and responded to an ad in the Sunday newspaper travel section.

"It's all about making sure the ladies have fun," he said.

"If you can't dance, if you miss a step, so what? As long as you have

a good time. There are no dance police on board!"

Ed encouraged Australian women to shake off any concerns about travelling alone.

"Crystal makes sure single women are taken care of," he said.

"Especially after they become widowed, they might prefer to come with their daughter or sister, but then they see other single women enjoying themselves and they realise they can come on their own next time."

The obvious question: any 'post-dance romance' with passengers? "We sign a contract not to have any liaisons with guests," Ed said.

"It's best this way as you have to be professional -- and you don't want another lady to get jealous."

Joining a table for dinner is another part of the Ambassador's role. "It's preferred that we don't dine on a one-on-one basis with a lady, so it doesn't appear you have a relationship going," Ed explained.

Sometimes they are propositioned, he admitted, so this may require a polite explanation of company policy.

"But we can take phone numbers or email addresses to keep in touch after we leave the ship," he smiled.

Crystal Cruises dance program

Crystal Symphony and *Crystal Serenity* offer complimentary dance lessons and nightly dancing with the hosts and live music.

According to Ed, transatlantic crossings attract the most solo women.

Single supplements are among the most reasonable in the industry: 125% of the double occupancy fare for stateroom categories C to E; 135% for A and B.

For details, see www.wiltrans.com.au.



Couple enjoy a dance onboard



Trumpeters play for dancing cruisers



Taking a spin across the floor

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