

CRUISE

WEEKLY

Tuesday 26 March 2013

P&O to sail from SA, WA in 2014-15

For the first time, P&O will offer roundtrip cruises from Adelaide and *Pacific Jewel* will be based in Fremantle.

AUSTRALIA'S leading cruise line is living up to its national name with its latest program featuring departures from every mainland state, including a long-awaited return to the west coast.

P&O will send *Pacific Jewel* to Western Australia for eight cruises in 2015 – the first time the company has based a ship in Perth since *Pacific Sun* left in 2011.

Among the new options are 12-night P&OSeaAsia cruises to Indonesia from Fremantle via Lombok, Bali & Komodo Island, priced from \$1,299 per person quad share.

A 14-night cruise from Fremantle to Singapore, with calls to Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam, is priced from \$1,299 per person quad share.

In South Australia, the line is planning two roundtrip sailings from Adelaide to Tasmania and Victoria, priced from \$1,199 per person for nine nights.

P&O has also announced an extended Melbourne season in 2015, with five roundtrip cruises including several to SA and Tasmania.

Fares for a six-night Southern Getaway from Melbourne to Port Lincoln, Adelaide, Robe and Kangaroo Island are priced from \$799 per person quad share.

Meanwhile, *Pacific Dawn* will feature more Papua New Guinea voyages departing from Brisbane, including a 14-night cruise with maiden visits to the ports of Madang, Kavieng and Rabaul as well as scenic cruising of the Vitu Islands.

Departing 14 February 2015, PNG fares start at \$1,499.

The 2014-15 program also comprises a special Australia Day event involving P&O's three ships in Sydney Harbour and a five-day SeaBreak from Sydney to Melbourne for the Australian Open grand slam tennis tournament. On sale from April 12, see www.pocruises.com.au for details.

Freestyle Coca-Cola on RCCL

ROYAL Caribbean Cruises will offer a unique guest experience from the end of the year when it rolls out its "freestyle" drinks machine across its entire fleet, thanks to a partnership signed with Coca-Cola Amatil.

Users are able to mix up their own custom fizzy beverage via a step-by-step process.

Additionally, guests purchasing the package receive a special souvenir glass embedded with a chip, allowing their favourite beverage to be saved onto the chip for quick and easy dispensing each time the machines are used.

Viking to trawl the Mississippi

VIKING River Cruises has earmarked cruises on the Mississippi River in the US could be operated with a newly built longship.

Reports from the US say a vessel is under construction and will enter service in 2015.

Cruise Calendar

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

SYDNEY	
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	Wed 27 Mar
<i>Celebrity Solstice</i>	Wed 27 Mar
<i>Pacific Jewel</i>	Thu 28 Mar
<i>Ocean Princess</i>	Fri 29 Mar
<i>Dawn Princess</i>	Sun 31 Mar
<i>Pacific Jewel</i>	Sun 31 Mar
<i>Sun Princess</i>	Mon 01 Apr

MELBOURNE	
<i>Dawn Princess</i>	Fri 29 Mar
<i>Radiance of the Seas</i>	Sun 31 Mar

BRISBANE	
<i>Sun Princess</i>	Fri 29 Mar
<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	Sat 30 Mar
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Mon 01 Apr

FREMANTLE	
<i>Queen Mary 2</i>	Tue 26 Mar

CAIRNS	
<i>Orion</i>	Wed 27 Mar
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Wed 27 Mar
<i>Oceanic Discoverer</i>	Sat 30 Mar

HOBART	
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Fri 29 Mar

Voyager concludes Aus season

YESTERDAY'S arrival into Singapore marked the end of the debut Australian season for Royal Caribbean Cruises' *Voyager of the Seas*.

The popularity of the ship ensured it will be a part of the next local season, and is scheduled to return in Nov to sail four new itineraries and two additional sailings, spurred on by strong demand, said Royal Caribbean's commercial director Adam Armstrong.

"Across her season she brought approx \$25m to Sydney's economy alone, and approx \$40m to the Australian economy," Armstrong added.

TODAY'S ISSUE OF CW

Cruise Weekly today features three pages packed full of all the latest cruise news.

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[^]FOR MORE DETAILS
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Ten new river ships to meet demand

Viking River Cruises will easily fill the 10 longships launched last week and the 12 more to come next year.

THE popularity of European river cruising is so hot right now that Viking has only 1% of cabins left to sell this season.

Despite increasing its capacity by 40% in 2013, the line reports barely any availability.

"If you go on our website and try to make a booking for Europe this year, you'll find that, through the end of October, out of 50,000 cabins that we had for sale, we only have 600 left," said Torstein Hagen, chairman of Viking River Cruises, at last week's christening of 10 newly built ships.

"It's jam-packed full."

Viking entered the Guinness Book of Records on 20 March for 'most ships inaugurated on

one day by one company', although two of the vessels were excluded as they started sailing late last year before being officially named.

The first-of-its-kind simultaneous christening ceremony in Amsterdam debuted the *Viking Aegir, Atla, Bragi, Embla, Forseti, Jarl, Rinda, Skadi, Tor* and *Var*, with six of the ships named via satellite from the shipyard in Germany.

Teresa Fors, the company's Australian managing director, said it was a "proud moment for us proud Vikings".

"Obviously, it's a show of strength but it is really meeting the demand.

"We can't build the ships fast enough."

Fors urged Australians to book early – in March, April or May – for 2014.

"You're not going to get a better deal later, you need to commit early or else you won't get on board," she said.

The 190-passenger ships feature energy-efficient hybrid engines that reduce vibrations, an indoor/outdoor dining area, the two largest river cruise suites in Europe, seven two-room veranda suites, 39 cabins with full-size verandas, and 22 French balcony cabins.

The new ships will sail the line's most popular European itineraries: Tulips & Windmills (10 days, Amsterdam-Antwerp-Amsterdam); Passage to Eastern Europe (11 days, Budapest-Bucharest); Romantic Danube (8 days, Budapest-Nuremberg); Grand European Tour (15 days, Amsterdam-Budapest); Danube Waltz (8 days, Passau-Budapest) and Rhine Getaway (8 days, Amsterdam-Basel).

On all Viking river cruises, Australian passengers have an open bar and no tipping. See www.vikingrivercruises.com.au.

Loren christens MSC Preziosa

GODMOTHER to the MSC Cruises fleet, actress and screen siren Sophia Loren has officially christened the newest addition to the MSC Cruises fleet - the *MSC Preziosa*.

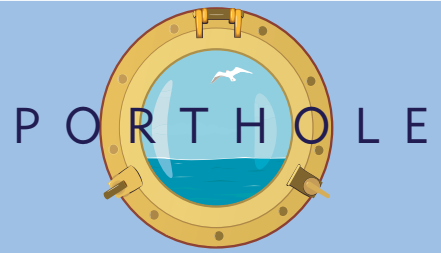
The liner features 1,751 cabins, 21 bars, four pools with waterslide, bowling alley & a casino.

Queenstown packrafting tour

A **NEW** river rafting adventure has launched in Queenstown, New Zealand, offering guests a mixed water and land-based adventure.

Expedition X is a new day tour priced at \$299 per person in which guests learn to pack and unpack an inflatable boat before journeying up into the hills, before rafting back to base.

For more details, see www.expeditionx.co.nz.



WHERE would be the last place you would expect to find a live seal?

The Swedish forest, perhaps?

A baby seal has somehow managed to find its way six kilometres from open water, turning up in a dense Swedish forest area, found by a hiker walking in the woods.

Local police inspector Henrik Pedersen said he thought the hiker was joking when he called to say he had found a seal in the bush.

Police believe the pup had become separated from its mother and mistakingly travelled in the wrong direction over three kilometres of snow and three in the forest.

The seal happily swam away when authorities collected it and released into the nearby Dalaelven river system after giving it a quick health check by a local veterinarian.

Carnival Dream back in action

FOLLOWING repairs to its diesel back-up generator, *Carnival Dream* has resumed service, departing from Port Canaveral on a seven night voyage, Carnival Cruise Lines has confirmed.

The vessel was forced to end a cruise early & cancel a subsequent voyage after becoming stranded in the Caribbean port of St Maartens and chartering aircraft to fly passengers home.

Carnival officials have said all necessary repairs have been performed and certified.

Tall ship to visit Grand Cayman

STAR Clippers will visit Grand Cayman and Jamaica later this year for the first time on a sailing operated by its *Star Flyer* vessel.

The visit will be part of a 21-night voyage from Costa Rica to Barbados, which will also see the vessel transit the Panama Canal.

Celebrity offers healthy dining

A **RANGE** of new, healthier options will be available on Celebrity Cruises vessels after the liner signed a partnership with SPE Certified, who aim to improve the nutritional quality of meals without compromising on taste.

SPE Certified's rigorous food quality control measures will be applied to more than 60 dishes available in Celebrity's main eateries, starting on *Celebrity Reflection* April 6.



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Shore excursion: Phang Nga Bay, Thailand

by: Roderick Eime

Movie trivia buffs, how many movie locations in Thailand can you visit on a shore excursion from your cruise ship?

Well there are probably dozens, but to start the ball rolling let's begin with what is probably the most famous marine landscape in Thailand, Phang Nga Bay, just off the island of Phuket. Up until 1974, the area was just a fishing ground for local villagers who would catch shrimp, lobster, cod and cuttlefish. That all changed when production designer for 'Man with the Golden Gun', the late Peter Murton, saw Phang Nga Bay in a magazine and convinced producer Cubby Broccoli (easily as it turned out) that it would be simpler to access than Halong Bay, then North Vietnam.

Nowadays, tourists turn up in their thousands to see Khao Phing Kan (now known simply as James Bond Island) and its distinctive monolith, Ko Tapu. Fans will recognise this from the beach duel scene with Francisco Scaramanga (played by Sir Christopher Lee) and James Bond (Roger Moore). In fact the whole island is the evil Scaramanga's lair, where 007 had arrived earlier by small seaplane (for spotters, a WWII-era Republic RC-3 Seabee) after a panoramic view of the whole bay from the air.

For visitors arriving at the mainland village of Phang Nga, northeast of Phuket, the first you'll see is a fleet of traditional 'long tail' speedboats ferrying passengers out to the floating Muslim fishing village of Koh Panyee where there's food and shopping in abundance plus the option to canoe among the limestone karst canyons at nearby Koh Talu Nok. Apart from the usual ubiquitous tacky souvenirs, there are some half-decent pearl jewellery stalls. Just remember to bargain hard.

In 1997, James Bond 007 (this time with Pierce Brosnan) returned to Phang Nga Bay for 'Tomorrow Never Dies'. Ironically it's to shoot the closing scene, set in Ha Long Bay. Bond still has trouble getting into Vietnam and the Saigon scenes earlier in the movie are actually shot in Bangkok.

Not far away, 50km south-east of Phuket in Krabi province, are the Phi Phi Islands made famous in the 2000 movie 'The Beach' starring Leonardo DiCaprio. There was some controversy during the making of this movie when the movie's producers decided they needed to remodel the beach with a bulldozer resulting in lawsuits that dragged on for years after. The famous waterfall scene is actually Haeo Suwat Falls in Khao Yai National Park, three hours by road from Bangkok.

Other recent movies to have used Phuket and the Andaman Coast include 'Star Wars Episode III' (2005), 'Bridget Jones: the Edge of Reason' (2004), 'The Phantom' (1996) and 'Rescue Dawn' (2005).

Let's not forget either that this whole region, including the coast north to Khao Lak, was devastated by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, so much of the infrastructure you see is less than ten years old. Be sure to pay your respects at one of the many memorials.

Cruise lines offering shore excursions at Phuket where you can take either a Phi Phi Islands or Phang Nga Bay tour include Royal Caribbean, Seabourn, Star Cruises, Regent Seven Seas and Princess.

More info on Phuket and Thailand: www.thailand.net.au.



James Bond Phang Nga Bay



Phang Nga Bay



The Beach, Phang Nga Bay

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