

# CRUISE

WEEKLY

Tuesday 26 November 2013

## Ponant yachts expand to Australia

Two of the French company's "young and sexy" expedition ships could be plying Australian waters by 2016.

**COMPAGNIE** du Ponant's announcement of a new superyacht to be based in Australia from 2015 has been followed today by hints of a second vessel.

The French line revealed over the weekend

that one of its five-star ships would arrive in Australia in early 2015 (*CW* breaking news).

"And we are looking at a larger presence in 2016," the line's newly appointed Australasian chairman, Sarina Bratton, told *Cruise Weekly*.

Bratton, who founded Orion Expedition Cruises in 2004 but sold her shares this year, is driving Ponant's expansion into Australia and the Pacific Islands.

She indicated "an increasing presence of one, maybe more ships" in the local region.

"There is nothing like these beautiful, young and sexy superyachts in Australia," she said.

Ponant has three 264-passenger sister ships, with a fourth under construction, as well as a three-masted sailing vessel, *Le Ponant*.

"Having a three-masted sailing vessel would be an interesting opportunity for us," Bratton said, but added she was unable to comment "until the 2016 itinerary plans are finalised".

The 2015 deployment is yet to be confirmed, although Bratton told *CW* one of the vessels will be in the Asia-Pacific region for around eight months - four or five of which it will likely operate from Australia.

*Le Soleal* (launched July 2013), *L'Austral* (2011) and *Le Boreal* (2010) are among the world's newest expedition vessels.

Bratton said the ships were "remarkably quiet, with no vibrations, French flair - French chefs, cuisine and wines and bilingual crew"

"The average age of other expedition ships is 25 years, so our fleet is the youngest by a long way," Bratton said.

"One of the challenges at Orion was not being able to provide additional ships that were commensurate with the Orion, so having a fleet of brand new ships makes it much easier to give Ponant's loyal passenger base a choice of destinations around the world."

Destinations are expected to include Japan, the Pacific Islands, the Russian Far East "and other itineraries that *Orion II* did", Bratton said.

Reservations can be made through Ponant's partner in Australia, Travel the World - see [www.traveltheworld.com.au](http://www.traveltheworld.com.au).

## Cruise Calendar

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

### SYDNEY

<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Tue 26 Nov
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	Wed 27 Nov
<i>Celebrity Solstice</i>	Thu 28 Nov
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Sat 30 Nov
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Mon 1 Dec
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	Mon 2 Dec

### MELBOURNE

<i>Caledonian Sky</i>	Thu 28 Nov
<i>Celebrity Solstice</i>	Sun 1 Dec
<i>Dawn Princess</i>	Mon 2 Dec

### BRISBANE

<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	Tue 26 Nov
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Thu 28 Nov
<i>Rhapsody of the Seas</i>	Fri 29 Nov
<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	Sat 30 Nov

### CAIRNS

<i>Volendam</i>	Thu 28 Nov
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### DARWIN

<i>Diamond Princess</i>	Tue 26 Nov
<i>Celebrity Millennium</i>	Sat 30 Nov
<i>Volendam</i>	Mon 2 Dec

### HOBART

<i>Celebrity Solstice</i>	Tue 26 Nov
<i>Caledonian Sky</i>	Sat 30 Nov
<i>Caledonian Sky</i>	Sun 1 Dec
<i>Caledonian Sky</i>	Mon 2 Dec

### DEVONPORT

<i>Caledonian Sky</i>	Fri 29 Nov
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### AUCKLAND

<i>Voyager of the Seas</i>	Tue 26 Nov
<i>Costa Neoromantica</i>	Sun 1 Dec

### WELLINGTON

<i>Dawn Princess</i>	Tue 26 Nov
<i>Sun Princess</i>	Thu 28 Nov
<i>Voyager of the Seas</i>	Fri 29 Nov

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## APT to launch new ship in Myanmar

Another river cruise line has jumped on the Burma bandwagon, with pre-registrations now open for departures in 2014 and 2015.

APT and partner AmaWaterways have announced a newly built ship, *AmaPura*, will start joint operations next November on Myanmar's Ayeyarwaddy (Irrawaddy) River. Itineraries of ten and fourteen nights make up the operator's new program in the country. Two APT-only sailings are also planned for Australian travellers in February & April 2015.

Debra Fox, APT's general manager marketing, said it was "exciting times" to be exploring one of the world's most secretive, mysterious and fascinating places.

"It's a unique and spellbinding destination and one that has previously been out of reach to the Australian travelling public, therefore we are anticipating high demand and would encourage guests to pre-register their interest early," she said.

"We're looking forward to helping our guests explore this fascinating destination in depth while enjoying the all-inclusive luxury signature style that is synonymous with an APT river cruise."

Fox pointed to a centuries-old culture and the variety of architectural marvels and sacred sights in Myanmar as among the features that will appeal to more travellers from Australia.

The itineraries cover the country's highlights, such as the "Golden City" of Mandalay, the 2,200 temples of Bagan, Mount Popa and colonial Yangon (Rangoon).

The 56-passenger all-suite *AmaPura* will combine modern and traditional designs, with a pool, spa, restaurant, lounge and bar.

All suites have a French balcony, full balcony or twin balconies and deluxe bathrooms.

Full details of itineraries and pricing will be made available in January.

To pre-register your interest before the brochure release, call 1300 278 278.

## Instagram film festival judges

**PHOTOGRAPHER** Lauren Bath, blogger Pauly Vella, documentary maker Tim Charody and NZ pop culture journalist David Farrier have been selected as the judges for the upcoming Royal Caribbean Instagram film-festival.

Entries for the competition are being submitted at a rapid rate, with the final to be held aboard one of the cruise operator's superliners in Sydney Harbour early next year.

Collectively, the three judges preside over an Instagram following of more than 700,000 fans.

The world-first festival is based on Royal Caribbean's mantra of "Designed for WOW", with judges looking for 15-second examples of "wow" moments, whatever they may be, with a cruise and other fantastic prizes up for grabs.

More details at [www.instafilmfestival.com.au](http://www.instafilmfestival.com.au).

**MEANWHILE**, Southampton will become the home port for the second of Royal Caribbean International's new Quantum class of ship - *Anthem of the Seas* - from its Apr 2015 debut.

Cruises to the Mediterranean will be offered by *Anthem* during its inaugural season before it relocates to Fort Lauderdale during the northern winter months.

"Our business has a long history with the port of Southampton, and over the last ten years we have annually increased the number of cruise opportunities from the port," RCCL president and ceo Adam Goldstein said.

"We are now eyeing more growth with the introduction of *Anthem of the Seas* to the UK market in spring 2015".

## Did You Know?

### Princess Cruises

- ◆ The name Princess Cruises came from the name of the first vessel the company chartered from Canada, *Princess Patricia*, which was owned by the Canadian Pacific Railroad.
- ◆ Princess Cruises first set sail in 1965 with a single ship cruising to Mexico.
- ◆ Princess Cruises was catapulted to stardom in 1977 when one of its ships, *Pacific Princess*, was cast in a starring role on a new television show called "The Love Boat".
- ◆ The company's newest ship, *Royal Princess* has 14,000KW of transverse (sideways) thruster power. The original Love Boat, *Pacific Princess* had a forward propulsion power of about 13,500KW so *Royal Princess* can go faster sideways than *Pacific Princess* could go forward!
- ◆ Princess Cruises is the Alaska expert! The cruise line is the largest cruise and tour operator in the state, operating its very own Direct-to-the-Wilderness Alaskan rail service, and four beautiful Wilderness Lodges for its guests.

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## Crew Profile

This week **Cruise Weekly** speaks with **Samuel Jake A. Barabad, Maitre' D Hotel** onboard **Orion Expedition Cruises' MV Orion**.

**How long have you been working on cruise ships?**

11 Years.

**When did you join Orion Expedition Cruises?**

In 2011 when we used to have the *Orion II*. Currently I am on board *MV Orion* which I joined last February.



**What is the best thing about working onboard MV Orion?**

It's the family oriented atmosphere amongst the crew that makes it a solid and happy ship. We have such a high return rate of crew that completes the family onboard, resulting in a memorable experiences for both guest & crew.

**What is your favourite cruising destination?**

My favourite is Asia as it is a place where east & west meets; its unique culture, people, & rich history creates a supernatural experience.

**Briefly explain what your job entails.**

To create a lasting impression & a memorable dining experience. I ensure guest comfort as well as personalised service where saying "no" isn't in our language.

**What do you enjoy most about your job?**

Meeting different people, seeing them enjoying and giving commendations to our efforts. It is a delightful feeling that our guest is looking forward to each Orion experience.

**Who is the most famous person you've served?**

Prince Albert of Monaco.

**What is the most interesting request you've received from a passenger?**

One of our guests was celebrating their 25th anniversary. I was requested to help set up the occasion with a theme "somewhere in time" at the Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island in Michigan.

**Do you have any embarrassing cruise stories you can share with us?**

I saw a very enthusiastic obese lady try to weigh herself at the passenger gym using our glass top weighing scale. Suddenly I heard a thud, and when I saw the scale it was cracked and almost cut into half.

**How do you spend your holidays/vacation when you return home?**

Sleep a lot, eat a lot and spending quality time with my family and friends!

## Three new Windstar casinos

**WINDSTAR** Cruises will expand its agreement with Century Casinos for the installation of new gaming centres on each of its three ships.

The first of the line's recently acquired vessels - *Star Pride* - will be relaunched with its new casino in Apr next year, with *Star Legend* and *Star Spirit* to follow suit in early 2015 upon the completion of renovations.

## Tassie Seafood Seduction tour

A NEW marine eco-tourism attraction known as the Seafood Seduction Tour has been launched in Tasmania, spearheaded by local tourism identity Rob Pennicott.

Custom-designed vessels to operate the gourmet adventure have been built utilising a \$506,000 grant from the state government's Tasmanian Innovation and Investment Fund, with 14 local jobs created as a result.

## New True North sail schedule

**NORTH** Star Cruises Australia has issued an updated 2015 sailing schedule for its expedition vessel *True North*.

The adjusted timetable sees the entire West Papua regional cruises rescheduled to new dates, with associated pricing also adjusted.

Subsequently, the line has amended some of the dates for its Papua New Guinea voyages, while Kimberley sailings have not changed.

To view the revised schedule, **CLICK HERE**.

## Original RCI ship sold for scrap

A CHINESE scrap metal yard has purchased the 22,945-tonne *Formosa Queen*, once known as the *Song of Norway* - the very first cruise passenger ship operated by Royal Caribbean when the line first commenced in 1970.

The vessel was the first of three used by the line to begin operations and has gone through a number of changes in ownership since being taken out of service by RCCL in the mid 1990s.

## Kimberley cruise firm rebrand

**THE** organisation formerly known as Pearl Sea Coastal Cruises, who operated small-ship cruising in the Kimberley region, has taken on a brand new identity as Kimberley Quest.

Complete with a new logo, the rename comes amid a renewed focus on the future of the business in an increasingly competitive part of the world for expedition operators.

Kimberley Quest now sports a new look website, live availability for online bookings and an earlybird offer of 15% off Kimberley departures in 2014 if booked by 31 Dec.

## Fresh thinking in P&O guide

**DETAILS** on the onboard cuisine varieties on offer on P&O Cruises Australian voyages will be made available to passengers at the time of booking via a 16-page food guide (**CW** Thu).

Entitled *Fresh Thinking*, the guide forms part of the line's latest brochure and includes fresh a la carte seafood, shared platters from the Waterfront restaurant and fine dining offerings of celebrity chef Luke Mangan's Salt grill.

Information on family meal times, the line's produce suppliers and P&O Edge adventure parks are also included in the new brochure.

The brochure itself offers a guide to P&O's new SeaBreaks range from Margaret River, which debut in 2015 upon the positioning of *Pacific Jewel* for two sailings from Busselton in Apr and May 2015 (**CW** 20 Aug).



**TWO** Cairns-based scuba-diving tour operators last weekend escorted customers out on the Great Barrier Reef to witness the largest live sex show on the planet.

Yes, conditions were perfect for what was a primal orgy of coral spawning, with ideal sea temperatures and a late full moon slowing tidal flow and minimising the chance of new coral on the reef being swept out to sea.

According to Tourism and Events Queensland, marine scientists predicted the annual show to be one of the best in years.

Experienced Quicksilver marine biologist Russel Hore (ironic considering the context of this story, but yes, that is his name) described the coral creation show as the "Everest of seeing reproduction in nature".

He added tides, weather and temperatures were perfect in the night session for eggs to fertilise and pop out of the coral while plankton feeders were asleep.

For those unable to bear witness to the show, a second spawn is on track to occur in the week before Christmas in the waters around Lady Elliot Island - approx 1200kms south of Cairns - where the ideal water temperatures occur a little later in the year.

"It's almost like you are experiencing a pregnancy on a really small scale - without the demand for ice cream!" Hore added.

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## Ship Review: *RV Katha Pandaw*

by: Roderick Eime

### VITAL STATISTICS

Passengers: 32 in 16 twin cabins on 2 decks

Crew: 18

Built: 2011, entered service in 2012

**THE *Katha Pandaw*** is one of the new, smaller vessels, (the regular *Pandaw* ships have up to 30 cabins) so has a delightfully private, boutique feel.

**Demographic:** Best for grown up couples and singles with a worldly view. Frequently English and Australians, with the occasional American escaping Disneyland.

**Facilities:** Open-Air Lounge, observation deck, bar, 24-hour hospitality bar, al fresco dining, fair-trade shop, library, wi-fi (where available only, so don't count on it)

**Itineraries:** 7, 14 and 20 night cruises on the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers in Burma between Prome, Katha, Mandalay, Pyay & Homalin.

**Cabins:** While small for ship standards, I estimate about 16sqm, they are authentic and nostalgic, in keeping with the theme of the ship and finished in beautiful timber. The bathrooms are comparatively large and all cabins are twin.

**Food:** Dining is a treat on *Pandaw*. A mix of buffet and plated dishes, the kitchen turns out three super meals each day no matter how far away from civilisation. On *Katha Pandaw*, dining is al fresco on the back deck with removable shades in the event of rain. Chefs are adept at traditional Burmese cuisine, which is lighter and less spicy than Thai or Vietnamese, with an emphasis on fresh locally sourced produce such as fish, greens and vegetables.

**Service:** The Burmese staff can be compared to Thai's or Balinese in so much as they 'get' service. There are always smiles and nothing is

too much trouble. Little things like daily shoe cleaning, prompt drink service and spotless public areas make all the difference. Staff seem to be predominantly male.

**Tipping:** At guests' discretion.

**Entertainment:** While there is no set schedule, local performers like dancers and musicians will frequently come aboard to entertain. The ship has a library, but a well-loaded e-reader or tablet is handy. There is no TV or video aboard.

**Excursions:** These typically take the form of village and temple visits with occasional coach trips farther afield to parks, attractions and crafts like pottery, silk, textiles and artefacts. There is even an ox cart excursion in Katha, the setting for George Orwell's first novel "Burmese Days" and the vessel's namesake.

**Dress code:** I like to call it colonial chic, but be prepared for the tropical humidity and a spot of rain. A nice cool shirt for men and a smart blouse for ladies is all that is required for dinner. Hats, sunglasses and sun protection are important. An umbrella (supplied on board) is handy for both sun and rain. Dress modestly ashore.

**Who would love it:** Nostalgia tragics will die for this, especially if you have a literary streak and a penchant for stuff like *King and I*, Orwell and Kipling. Folks looking for an authentic cultural experience, market shoppers, temple trampers and dinner party loudmouths will wear Burma like a medal.

**Who would hate it:** Tourists looking for spotless, structured activities might find Burma a bit 'raw' and haphazard. Your feet will get dirty and mangy dogs will follow you around. While there isn't the desperate poverty like in India, locals aren't what you'd call affluent. Bookings and information: [www.activetravel.com.au/pandaw](http://www.activetravel.com.au/pandaw).



*RV Katha Pandaw in Mandalay*



*Twin cabin with private facilities*



*No fancy ports - the real Burma*

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