

CRUISE

WEEKLY

Tuesday 24 September 2013

Missed luxury cruise opportunity

Cruising pioneer Sarina Bratton says Australia is missing out on millions of tourism dollars due to its failure to meet the needs of the world's luxury cruising sector.

AUSTRALIA has the potential to be one of the leading expedition and small ship cruise destinations in the world - but outdated legislation and high costs are creating

unnecessary barriers to operators wanting to capitalise on the potential.

Bratton, who sold her remaining stake in Orion Expedition Cruises to Lindblad Expeditions earlier this year, highlighted the 'Coastal Voyage Exemption' which was introduced for cruise ships in the 1990s, in the interests of developing tourism.

However the government definition of a cruise ship is a vessel of more than 5000 tonnes, over 100 passengers and capable of more than 15 knots - which precludes many of the world's "best known and most successful small and expedition cruise ships," according to Bratton.

This would include vessels such as *Seadream I and II*, *Caledonian Sky*, *Orion* and *Le Ponant*, all of which are less than 5000 tonnes.

"A ship like *Orion* must go to the Kimberley via East Timor because it does not qualify for a Coastal Voyage Exemption. How crazy is that?" Bratton said.

"In fact, 80% of the expedition ships in the world are not currently exempt, so we are missing out on an opportunity to reach global databases that could bring thousands of high-yielding tourists and millions of dollars into Australia, particularly remote and regional Australia," she added.

Bratton also highlighted the fact that the Coastal Voyage Exemptions must be renewed every two years - requiring cruise ship operators to "live in faith" that the government will continue the policy when arranging deployments some years out.

And port costs and operational constraints are also an issue, with Bratton contrasting the cost of a port call in Sydney for a 100-150 passenger cruise ship which amounts to more than \$52,000.

That compares to just \$11,660 in Singapore. "On this basis we are not competitive," Bratton said.

She said that if these issues can be addressed "I see Australia in the near future becoming the expedition venue of the world".



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Cruise Calendar



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

SYDNEY

Carnival Spirit (OPT) Fri 27 Sep
Pacific Jewel (WBCT) Mon 30 Sep
Pacific Pearl (OPT) Mon 30 Sep

BRISBANE

Pacific Dawn Sat 28 Sep

FREMANTLE

Sun Princess Sun 29 Sep

DARWIN

Oceanic Discoverer Thur 26 Sep

Carnival to salute the navy

CARNIVAL
Australia's five Sydney-based cruise ships will salute the Royal Australian Navy by flying special



pennant flags from their main mast this week.

The flags (pictured) denote the number 100 to mark the Navy's centenary celebration.

On arrival and departure from Sydney, each of *Pacific Jewel*, *Pacific Pearl*, *Carnival Spirit*, *Sea Princess* and *Dawn Princess* will fly the special salute as they sail past the Navy's home at Garden Island.

The International Fleet Review, which takes place over the October long weekend, will see ships from navies around the world assemble in Sydney for "one of the most spectacular celebrations ever staged on the harbour," according to Carnival Australia ceo Ann Sherry.

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Oceania unveils 2014-15 season

FORTY-FOUR new itineraries have been announced among Oceania Cruises' 2014-15 winter season, including maiden visits to 16 new ports in Asia, Africa and the Americas.

A total of 86 departures will be sailed by the line's fleet of five vessels, including 19 Grand Voyages running between 24-71 days.

Among the new voyages is a 16-night journey around the southern tip of South America and a seven-night Colourful Caribbean sailing including a visit to Trujillo, Honduras, one of the many new ports visited by the line during the season.

The company's vessel *Insignia* will also set sail on a 180-day global circumnavigation departing Miami on 10 Jan 2015 (**CW** 02 Jul).



Did You Know?

Voyages of Discovery

- ◆ *mv Voyager* has a dedicated Bridge Room, enormously popular with our bridge players.
- ◆ The Filipino crew do a splendid folkloric show – much admired and appreciated by the guests.
- ◆ The Sun Deck probably has more space than any other comparably sized vessel – 200+ sun lounges available. Acres of space, with no crowding.
- ◆ Maximum range of the ship at 16 knots with full tanks is 7152 nautical miles.
- ◆ On days at sea, the technical team can produce 180 tonnes of water daily.
- ◆ VOD offers a selection of wines from ten different countries on board *mv Voyager*.
- ◆ In an average year's sailing, the *Voyager* would cover in the region of 72,086 nautical miles, which equates to around 80,000 land miles, the equivalent to going around the world on the equator three times! Also, the distance to the moon is 238,000 miles, so the distance *Voyager* travels in a 12 month period would get you approximately a third of the way to the moon!

India cruises heading upmarket

Travel Indochina is one of several companies planning new luxury cruises along the Hooghly and Ganges rivers.

AUSTRALIANS can look forward to a new way to explore India with the launch of a high-end 28-suite river vessel, the *Ganges Voyager* (pictured) which is set to debut in January 2015.

Currently under construction by Haimark, a leading Asian river cruise specialist, the modern boutique-style ship will be chartered by a number of companies including several Australian and American operators.

While most of these companies are yet to officially announce their plans, Australia's Travel Indochina has committed to four departures from Calcutta.

Steve Brady, general manager commercial, Travel Indochina, revealed to **Cruise Weekly** that new cruise-land packages would soon be released in the local market, combining seven-night cruises with accommodation in five-star hotels and touring of iconic attractions, such as the Taj Mahal.

"For 20 years Travel Indochina has been looking for new destinations to pioneer and



this is the first time we've found something on the Ganges that is suitable for the Australian cruise market – from the itinerary to the style of the boat, the cabin sizes, the great food and amenities and facilities onboard," he said.

"We've been running small group tours and independent holidays in India for many years, but this river is a place where people can experience the real India away from the tourist crowds," he said.

Brady expects strong demand for "out of the ordinary" river cruises in India.

"I think it will appeal to people who have already experienced river cruising in Asia or multiple other destinations around the world, and who have an interest in the culture and the sights of India," he said.

Details of itineraries and pricing will be announced in coming weeks.

Prospective passengers can register their interest in the voyages with their travel agents or calling 1300 138 755.

New QM2 Cunard sectors

CUNARD has released a new selection of shorter sectors on *Queen Mary 2's* Royal Circumnavigation of Australia next February.

The options include a 13-night cruise from Brisbane to Fremantle departing 21 Feb, priced from \$3,249 per person twin share; a 15-night Sydney-Fremantle voyage departing 19 Feb from \$3,719 per person; and a 19-night Sydney-Adelaide voyage departing 19 Feb, priced from \$4,699 per person twin share.

Fares on the full circumnavigation are still available, priced from \$5,699 per person twin share and departing 19 Feb.

The full voyage will visit Fremantle, Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Darwin, Bali, Adelaide and the Whitsundays.

WW1 commemorative cruise

A SPECIAL river cruise to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War will be operated by European Waterways, scheduled to depart on 18 May next year.

The week-long sailing will be operated by the 12-passenger *Panache* vessel and will sail the River Lys to Ypres, visiting battlefields, war cemeteries, monuments & museums marking the scene of battles between the German and Allied forces.

The themed voyage will also visit the Forest of Compiègne, where the Armistice to end the war was signed in 1918.

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Crystal launches 'custom celebrations'

CRYSTAL Cruises is claiming a cruise industry first, with the debut of a new on-board service offering "ultra-luxury international party-planning assistance".

Crystal has teamed up with global events organiser Imagine VIP, which can work with passengers to organise celebrations on board or ashore across the globe.

It's not just for weddings - Crystal says the program can be used for any milestone, from graduation parties right through to golden wedding anniversaries.

"Many of our guests sail with us to celebrate special occasions and create 'bucket list' travel memories with family and friends," said Crystal Cruises senior vice president for operations, Thomas Mazloum.

"With our Six-Star service, applauding life's special moments with loved ones is now elevated to even greater heights".

The process starts before the cruise embarks, with a consultant working with guests to select

the perfect location either on board or an "extraordinary venue in or near a port of call".

Events are only limited by passengers' imagination, but there is a range of pre-planned Crystal Celebration packages which start at US\$2,095 for a Crystal Vow Renewal Celebration, and US\$3,795 for a Crystal Celebration Ashore.

Those prices don't include cruise fares, of course, and there are lots of options including customisable decor packages, flowers, shipboard photography and more.

There are a limited number of events per cruise, and bookings must be confirmed no later than 45 days prior to sailing.

For more information see the website at www.crystalcruises.com/crystalcelebrations.

From game shows to show VP

ROYAL Caribbean International has named British game-show presenter Nick Weir as its new vice-president of entertainment.

Weir, who spent much of his younger years living in Sydney, hosted the UK version of Catchphrase from 2000 to 2002 before serving as the cruise launch director for Celebrity Cruises fleet of Solstice ships.

In his new role, Weir will lead development of onboard entertainment on all Royal Caribbean International vessels including the soon to launch *Quantum of the Seas* and the upcoming third Oasis-class vessel.

Three new shows on Europa 2

A TROUPE of 10 performers from the Berlin production house Phase 7 will present three brand new productions aboard Hapag-Lloyd's *Europa 2* vessel as part of a two month stay.

Two of the performances will play on a rotational basis for the duration of the group's residency on the ship.

The first show in the rotation range is named "Symphony for a ship", and is made up of a mixture of light, sound and dance moves projected on an 8m x 6m LED wall.

Perhaps the most technologically impressive is "de-light" in which performers will appear to be dancing with their own delayed shadows using technology and pinpoint choreography.

Finally, the third show will be a retelling of Oscar Wilde's "The Canterville Ghost", with the difference being the play will be performed in total darkness, with each audience member wearing sleeping masks to enhance their awareness and senses.



SURELY the US Air Force could have found a better target than this.

A small metal dinghy, capable of carrying no more than a couple of people, was blown to kingdom-come by a 900kg laser-guided smart bomb by the US Air Force during a routine weapons test in the Gulf of Mexico recently.

The test was allegedly to ascertain the effectiveness of an aircraft attacking a "mobile sea target".



Needless to say, and as the before and after photos clearly show, the US\$24,000 bomb worked to perfection and absolutely annihilated the US\$100 boat.

Thankfully, nobody in the boat was injured in the test, according to online forums.

Alamo into Turks and Caicos

THERE is a new car rental option for cruisers calling into the Caribbean destination of Turks and Caicos, with the appointment of a local franchisee for the Alamo Rent A Car brand.

Turks and Caicos is a popular destination for weddings and honeymoons, and welcomed more than a million visitors last year - almost 70% of whom arrived via cruise ship.

Seadream Dover to Lisbon

THE boutique *SeaDream I* passenger yacht is offering a voyage from Dover in England to Portugal's Lisbon, calling at fascinating small ports such as Jersey, St Malo, Belle Ile, Port-Medoc, San Sebastian, Santander and Cascais.

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Ship Review: *MS Noordam*

by: *Barry Matheson*

WHAT makes a great cruise? Is it the ship, the delicious food, or the exciting ports-of-call? Well, you'll get all of the above, and more on Holland America Line's *Noordam*.

Cruise Weekly recently boarded the ship in Istanbul for an 11-night 'Ancient Mysteries' cruise of the sunny Greek Islands and scenic ports along the Turkish coast.

Right from the start, the 833 crew made you feel most welcome - they even threw a getting-to-know-you BBQ by the pool with free beer and wine for all 1,700 passengers with tasty Turkish treats.

When we sailed through the Dardanelles, *Noordam* hoisted Aussie and Kiwi flags from the bow to remember the Anzacs. A nice touch.

540 Australians were among the passengers on the cruise and they were invited on to the bow to get the best views of where some of the First World War battles took place.

Able to carry some 2,117 passengers, *Noordam* is the newest in Holland America Line's 15-ship fleet. Launched in 2006, she's the fourth and last of the Vista class ships and houses an impressive collection of paintings, sculptures and antiques on its eleven decks, and has beautiful decor throughout.

Eighty-five percent of all cabins are outside, with two thirds of these also including private verandas with tables and chairs.

Deluxe verandah cabins are spacious with comfy new Eurotop beds & ribbon-cut cotton sheets that are simply divine to sleep on.

There's also a flat-screen TV with news and movie channels, a DVD player with 1,000 movies from which to choose, sofa, desk, mini bar, hair dryer. The modern bathroom, while small, is adequate.

On days at sea, there's lots to do from beer and wine tastings to

martini mixology classes and even a pub crawl around the seven bars on the ship. You can brush up on your computer skills with a "Techspert", learn how to cook, play trivia, have a foot massage in the Greenhouse Spa, see a movie in the theatre or work out in the Fitness Centre.

My favourite haunts were the Piano Bar for cocktails and cool music, Explorations Cafe where you can surf the Internet and send emails, and on deck 10, the Crow's Nest for panoramic views.

Dinner is a scrumptious five-course affair with an extensive wine list in the two-level Vista main dining room with early seating at 5.45pm, or a late 8pm seating. But HAL also offers 'As You Wish' dining where you can make an advance reservation, or just walk in.

Make sure you try the two speciality restaurants, Pinnacle Grill for an elegant, sophisticated dining experience, well worth the US\$20pp surcharge, and Canaletto, serving exquisite Italian fare for just US\$10 per person.

The waiters are some of the friendliest I've met at sea, making suggestions on what to order and recommending the right wine.

Nothing too much trouble. By the way, the wines were reasonably priced with a bottle of nice red under US\$40.

After dinner, head to the three-storey Vista Lounge for nightly entertainment and shows, and The Club HAL kids program for 3-17 year olds is fully supervised.

Noordam has an 11-night 'Ancient Mysteries' Athens to Istanbul cruise departing 26 April 2014, priced from \$1,799pp for Interior cabin, Oceanview \$1,999pp and Verandah \$2,199pp twin share.

Call 1300 987 322 or visit www.hollandamerica.com.au.



The majestic ms Noordam



One of Noordam's spacious cabins



Noordam's stunning 'Sea View Pool'

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