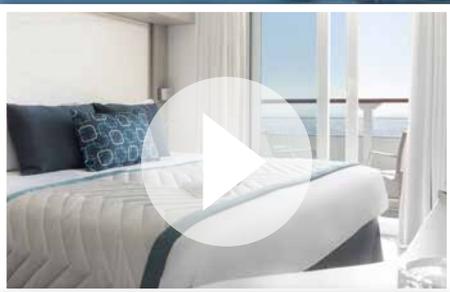




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RCI website refresh

ROYAL Caribbean has this week rolled out a refreshed website featuring a new-look homepage aimed at making the platform easier for users to navigate.

Special offers currently available in market will take centre stage on the new site alongside all of the critical information needed to research a Royal Caribbean cruise.

Effective from early next year, the site will also adopt a more transparent feedback system which will allow users to view real customer reviews to assist in choosing the right ship, itinerary and onboard amenity package.

For guests making their booking via the website, it will offer a more detailed breakdown of daily itineraries, ship information and deals valid for a particular holiday.



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Bliss earmarked for China

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line ceo Frank Del Rio has confirmed long-held speculation that the line's second Breakaway Plus-class ship *Norwegian Bliss* will be destined for China upon its delivery.

The China deployment marks the entry of NCL to the Chinese market on a permanent basis, with the new ship customised to suit Chinese tastes and customs.

Del Rio made the announcement during the CruiseWorld China summit, which is taking place this week in Shanghai.

Construction on *Norwegian Bliss* began last month (**CW** 17 Sep), with the 4,200-passenger ship to enter service early in 2017.

Norwegian's signature style of Freestyle Cruising will be adapted to suit the Chinese market, while still featuring the fully flexible experience across the NCL fleet.

Mandarin, Cantonese and Continental dining will be offered onboard, all of which have been customised with the help of local partners in China.

Information on which port the

new ship will be based as well as itineraries will be released in coming months, the line said.

Norwegian Bliss will be the next Breakaway Plus-class behind *Norwegian Escape*, which will be handed to NCL next week by the Meyer Werft shipyard.

To further support Norwegian's expansion in China, the company has opened new offices in Beijing and Hong Kong representing its suite of three brands which also includes Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

"These offices will provide sales and marketing support to our travel partners whose customers not only wish to sail on our new China-based ship, but also on any of the incredible voyages around the world," Del Rio commented.

Scenic 1st timers brox

INTRODUCTION details to river cruising, what to expect and the best time to go are among those featuring in a newly published guide from Scenic.

Titled 'First Time Wonders - Your Guide to River Cruising', the guide highlights the experience on a Scenic Space-Ship, nuances compared to ocean cruising and the inclusions a client can expect.

Scenic GM Journey Design Aleisha Fittler said she hoped the guide will "debunk any myths and help guests make the choice that is right for them".

Majestic Princess

PRINCESS Cruises late last week revealed the name for its new ship under construction aimed at the Chinese market will be *Majestic Princess*.

The new vessel is the third and final ship in Princess' latest order which has so far delivered *Royal Princess* and *Regal Princess*.

Majestic Princess will be based in China from summer 2017 and like its sisters, will feature multi-storey atrium; glass-floor walkway extending 8 metres beyond the edge of the ship; the Princess Live! interactive studio and the Chef's Table Lumiere.

The 3,560-passenger ship will also carry a Chinese name on the hull which is an interpretation selected by Carnival plc's China employees, which has the suggestive meaning of "Grand World" or "Grand Spirit".

Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news, a front full page from **Ponant** and our latest **Face to Face** interview.

Tweeting to christen

AUSTRALIAN darlings of music and screen Jessica Mauboy and Kate Ritchie have been chosen by P&O Cruises as the Godmothers of *Pacific Aria* and *Pacific Eden*.

In a unique twist, the two stars will carry out their ship naming duties on Twitter by posting the official naming words on their accounts simultaneously and then shared across P&O platforms.

The naming ceremony will take place at Fort Denison in Sydney Harbour on 25 Nov, watched on by P&O's three other vessels.

MEANWHILE, a recent promo campaign starring Hollywood actor Owen Wilson (**CW** 17 Sep) has yielded immediate results for P&O Cruises with over five million views of a three-part video series.

Dubbed *The Conspicuous Awakening of Owen Wilson*, the clips show the star experiencing flashbacks as he recounts his time on *Pacific Aria* and *Pacific Eden*.

Further success for P&O has seen the line enjoy its strongest ever month of passenger figures for Sep 2015, seeing a 25% jump in patronage year-on-year.

P&O attributed the growth to its expanding range of three and four-day P&OSeabreak getaways.

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Cruise Calendar

This week's port calls of cruise ships at various destinations around Australia and New Zealand.

SYDNEY	
<i>Carnival Spirit</i>	14 Oct
<i>Carnival Legend</i>	15 Oct
<i>Radiance of the Seas</i>	17 Oct
<i>Golden Princess</i>	18 Oct
<i>Volendam</i>	19 Oct
BRISBANE	
<i>Sun Princess</i>	15 Oct
<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	17 Oct
AUCKLAND	
<i>Sun Princess</i>	15 Oct
<i>Celebrity Solstice</i>	17 Oct
AKAROA	
<i>Golden Princess</i>	13 Oct
<i>Sun Princess</i>	19 Oct
WELLINGTON	
<i>Sun Princess</i>	18 Oct
TAURANGA	
<i>Sun Princess</i>	16 Oct
FIORDLAND	
<i>Golden Princess</i>	15 Oct

Ponant sale complete

FRENCH holding company Artemis, representing investment interests of the billionaire Pinault family, has completed its buyout of French line Ponant.

Ponant founder Jean-Emmanuel Sauvée said the company was "entering a new phase with a long-term shareholder" to build Ponant into a global player.

The line is currently offering up to 30% in early booking savings - see today's **front full page** for info.

Cruise dest guides

ARRIVALGUIDES will create over 40 destination guides for the world's most popular cruise ports.

The Port Guides will include information on sights and attractions, restaurants and bars, how to get to and around popular cruise hubs from the cruise ship and emergency information.

Port of Miami has been chosen as the launch guide.

Celebrity upgrade

TWO Celebrity Cruises ships, *Celebrity Infinity* and *Celebrity Summit*, will be upgraded to "enhance the modern luxury experience," the line confirmed.

Celebrity Infinity is first in line and will enter drydock on 15 Oct, emerging two weeks later with refurbished Penthouse and Royal Suites boasting new fixtures, marble surfaces, carpeting, drapes and bed linen.

The vessels will be fitted with a new multi-functional Rooftop Terrace venue, located on the 12th deck and opening 05 Dec.

The renovations will convert *Celebrity Infinity's* S.S. United States restaurant into a steakhouse, dubbed Tuscan Grille.

Guests who are currently booked in the S.S. United States for sailings beginning Oct 29 or later will be given the first opportunity to cancel their reservations in order to rebook in Tuscan Grille.

Celebrity Summit will follow in with a similar scheduled drydock from Feb 27 to Mar 12, 2016.

RCI "biggest season ever"

THE arrival into Sydney Harbour last Fri of Royal Caribbean Intl's *Radiance of the Seas* has served as the backdrop to the official launch of the company's 2015/16 wave season, described by the line as its "biggest season ever".

For the first time ever, all three brands under Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's umbrella will visit Australia either as a visitor for the summer or an even shorter stay.

Royal Caribbean celebrated the occasion late last week with an event at Cafe Sydney, overlooking *Radiance* in Circular Quay.

Headlining the occasion aside from *Radiance's* arrival was the official departure from Barcelona of *Explorer of the Seas*, which is now en route to Sydney to work the local summer alongside her sister vessel *Voyager of the Seas*.

Along with *Radiance*, the three liners will be joined further by *Legend of the Seas*, operating no less than 15 cruises to the South Pacific from Brisbane - the first time an RCI ship has been homeported outside of Sydney.

Add to this *Celebrity Solstice* and *Celebrity Millennium* from the Celebrity Cruises fleet as well as the first ever visit by Azamara Club Cruises to Australia.

Azamara Quest will tie-up in Darwin on 28 Dec, marking its first visit to Australian shores.

Together, the seven ships will operate 95 itineraries and carry around 250,000 passengers, of which 60,000 will travel to Australia in order to embark.

Speaking at the event was RCL Cruises Ltd commercial director Adam Armstrong, recently back from international duties for the line, based in Singapore.

Also at the event, his successor Sean Treacy who was saying his farewells to Australia having now relocated to become managing director of RCI's Singapore office.

"I'm very pleased to be back in Australia because it's such an exciting time for the Australian cruise industry and it's a particularly exciting time for Royal Caribbean," Armstrong said.

"It's hard to believe we have come so far from just five years ago when we had just one ship - *Rhapsody of the Seas*," he added.

For Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, Australia is already its third biggest market and is rapidly edging closer to the UK and on track to claim second place behind the United States.



PARENTS, don't be surprised if onboard your next P&O Cruises voyage you see a grown man in the Kids Club enjoying LEGO.

That man is Ryan McNaught, one of only 13 LEGO Certified Professionals - that's right, it's his job to play with LEGO as well as share the joys of the little toy bricks with people of all ages.

McNaught has recently spent much of the recent school holidays onboard *Pacific Pearl* and *Pacific Jewel* enlightening families on new ways to enjoy LEGO and showing off some of his most prized masterpieces.

Dubbed 'The Brick Man', McNaught has been a regular guest onboard P&O ships since 2013, sharing stories from his job and about his greatest projects, as well as teaching new ways to create fun using the bricks.

During his recent time onboard P&O, McNaught taught guests how to make a round ball out of straight-edged LEGO bricks.

Keep an eye out for him on your next P&O Cruises voyage.

Keys to a new OPT handed over



WORK to renovate and improve the Overseas Passenger Terminal at Circular Quay and speed up turnaround times for ships has been completed, with the new facility opened late last week.

As the 2015/16 cruise season NSW Minister for Roads, Maritime and Freight Duncan Gay officially

unveiled a plaque, saying the new OPT "would give international visitors & local travellers the best possible experience in Sydney".

Works included a 60m wharf extension and new berth dolphin.

Minister Gay is **pictured** above right with Port Authority of NSW chief executive Grant Gilfillan.

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FACE : FACE

MONIQUE PONFOORT
Vice-President Australasia - Ponant



How did you get into the cruise industry?

Timing was my great fortune. I had known Sarina Bratton for many years and had called her for advice. At that time Sarina was planning to create the Australasian entity. My background in airline, retail and online experience gave me the attributes to be able to work in this industry.

What is the key to your success?

Having an exceptional product and a driven team who strive to achieve their personal best plus more – nothing can beat that! We have embraced our Australian travel partners and this has led to strong growth & success.

What is your favourite cruise destination and why?

Hard to answer this question as I have two strong favourites. Europe is one of my favourites and one of the best cruise destinations in the world with every day bringing a new experience, culture and history. On the other hand, an expedition in Antarctica is impossible to overlook. Antarctica is on everyone's bucket list and Ponant carries more guests to this stunning region than any other operator.

What is your most memorable moment on a cruise?

Swimming off the marina deck onboard *Le Soleal* in the Mediterranean with the captain, officers and staff. All of the guests onboard really loved this unique experience.

How do you spend days at sea?

Apart from the mandatory continuous eating that takes up most of my time, I get a chance to catch up on my reading either in a quiet corner on the ship or on deck. The Sothy's Spa onboard offers the best treatments I have encountered on any ship. Book me in now!

What is the next "hot spot" in cruising destinations?

The Polar regions and remote tropical areas are certainly the "hottest" destinations and I think you will see far greater presence from us in Asia Pacific in times to come.

What is the most important issue in the cruise industry today & why?

Care for the Environment is vital. As we move forward, the standards required to operate ships in pristine regions like the two Poles, Alaska & remote areas like the Sub Antarctic Islands are quite rightly becoming more stringent. Ponant has the highest environmental standards ensuring we have the minimum impact on all destinations we operate in.

What do you think is the most underrated aspect of cruising?

The approach of one-size-fits-all with large cruise ships can sometimes dominate the perception of the cruising market. Smaller ship operators with uniquely different experiences have to work hard to gain exposure.

Monique's Cruise Favourites

Ship: *Le Soleal* - she is beautiful from stem to stern.

Ship Activity: Any Sothy's spa treatment.

Shore excursion: Mount Bromo in Indonesia.

Region: Mediterranean.

Port: Venice - so much to see and great history.

Onboard food/drink: Caviar and Foie Gras with a glass of Veuve Clicquot.

Perk of the job: All of the above!

Port Zayed cruise season spike

ABU Dhabi Ports (ADP) is expecting double digit growth for this year's cruise season, with Zayed Port scheduled to welcome 112



ship calls between mid-Sep & mid-May next year, up 19% on the 2014/15 season.

Around 205,000 passengers are expected aboard the 112 vessels due in during the cruise season, a five-fold increase on the number of passengers to visit the Abu Dhabi cruise port in its inaugural season in 2006/07.

Growth is projected to continue into the 2016/17 season, with 130 ship calls scheduled, bringing an estimated 300,000 passengers.

The cruise port developer and operator is also on track to open a new state-of-the-art terminal before the end of the year.

Construction of the eco-friendly facility is 60% complete and the main passenger hall 30% ready.

All major cruise lines were consulted on the design of the terminal to ensure a flexible design which can accommodate "any future requirements of cruise operators," ADP's said.

An artist's impression of the new Port Zayed terminal is pictured.

Puerta Maya expands

OVER \$20m has been invested by Carnival Corporation's on a new pier at Puerta Maya, Mexico which was opened last week.

To mark the occasion, *Carnival Breeze*, *Carnival Freedom* and *Carnival Triumph* arrived to become the first trio of ships to use the new three-berth pier, accessible to any ship across Carnival Corporation's 10 brands.

MEANWHILE, the Dominican Republic's new northern coast port of Amber Cove welcomed its first ship, *Carnival Victory* late last week.

Amber Cove will serve as an entry point to the Puerto Plata region, marking the return of regular cruise ships to the region for the first time in 30-odd years.

An official ceremony will be held on 02 Nov to induct Amber Cove.

Carnival family focus

CARNIVAL Cruise Line's new kids club zone on *Carnival Spirit* is being put through its paces since its recent launch under the US\$44 million refit of the vessel.

Onboard *Spirit* last week, vice president Australia & NZ Jennifer Vandekreeke said Carnival Cruise Line was "very comfortable that we are the family friendly cruise line in Australia".

Vandekreeke told **Cruise Weekly** the vast majority of the line's guests were between the age bracket of 30-50, with and without children.

Dubbed *Camp Ocean*, the new ocean-themed camp caters for kids aged 2-11, features three zones for kids two-to-five, six-to-eight and eight-to-eleven, and is open until 1am each night.

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