



Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features two pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

Sealink suspends

SEALINK Travel Group has made the decision to suspend all non-essential travel services following new State and Federal Government travel restrictions coming into effect.

The decision will see Captain Cook Cruises Perth suspend all cruise departures between 24 Mar and 31 May, all Captain Cook Cruises *Murray Princess* cancelled until 31 May, all Sealink Rottneest Island services suspended until further notice, and Sealink departures to Kangaroo Island knocked back until at least 31 May.

"We apologise for the inconvenience this may cause, however, at this time it is important SeaLink Travel Group follows the advice of the relevant authorities," the company said in a statement.

More information [HERE](#).

Royal Caribbean Cruises suspends again

ROYAL Caribbean Cruises has extended its global fleet suspension until 12 May, adding a month to the original resumption date of 11 Apr revealed earlier this month (**CW** 15 Mar).

Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity, Azamara and Silversea voyages will all be affected.

In a statement issued earlier today, the cruise line said it was apologetic for any inconvenience the expanded cancellations would cause to its customers.

"We are working with our guests to address this disruption to their vacations, and we are genuinely sorry for their inconvenience," the line said.

"We are also working with our crew to sort out the issues this decision presents for them."

The 12 May date will apply to all regions except for Alaska, Canada and New England sailings, which will now commence from 01 Jul, a decision taken out of the cruise line's hands when the Canadian Government announced earlier this month that its ports would be closed to any ship carrying more



than 500 passengers until at least Jul in a bid to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Scheduled sailings on board *Voyager of the Seas* will also be knocked back slightly further to Jun due to ongoing port closures.

As a result of the latest cancellations, the line is allocating all affected guests with a 125% future cruise credit to be used for sailings until 31 Dec 2021.

These credits will be automatically issued by email on 30 Apr, and any guests considering a full refund will have up until 31 Dec 2021 to

make up their minds due to the "fluid situation", with funds to be returned within 30 days of making the request.

Air and hotel purchases made through the cruise line will also be fully refunded.

For customers impacted by the first suspension who have since paid more money for a booking during the extended suspension period, they will receive two 125% cruise credits, one for the original booking and another equal to 125% of any funds paid towards a cruise fare as part of a new booking.

Heritage ends early

SMALL ship expedition cruise line Heritage Expeditions has cut short its 31-day Western Pacific Odyssey in Vanuatu only seven days after departure following the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic gripping the world.

Guests disembarked *Spirit of Enderby* in Port Vila where the company made arrangements for their onward international flights home, journeys the line admits have been "very difficult" to organise given the increasing number of border closures.

"Our first priority is the health and safety of our guests, and the health and safety of our expedition team and crew," said General Manager David Bowen.

"In this instance it was a matter of expediting the safe passage home for all our guests."

Passenger passes

A PASSENGER in her 70s who was on board the *Ruby Princess* has died after contracting COVID-19, bringing the total number of Australian fatalities to eight people.

The patient passed away at RPA Hospital in Sydney yesterday, after being transferred to hospital from the *Ruby Princess* on 19 Mar.

"This patient was one of the initial three passengers who were confirmed to be COVID-19 positive following testing of retained specimens from on board the *Ruby Princess*," NSW Health said.

NSW Health also confirmed that no cases of COVID-19 had been detected by doctors on board prior to docking.

Finding it hard to know what's going on?

Visit C-19 Central on our website for the latest updates relating to the coronavirus.

Travel Daily



Tas turns you back

TASMANIA'S Premier Peter Gutwein has warned that any non-essential passengers on board *Spirit of Tasmania* will be told to "turn around and go back" under strict new border control measures.

The policy formally came into force from today, with the ship's operator TT-Line now contacting all bookings of caravans and motorhomes of non-Tasmanian residents to let them know that they will not be allowed to self-isolate in their camping vehicles.

CMV ship preps to dock



CRUISE & Maritime Voyages (CMV) has confirmed *Vasco da Gama*, which is currently carrying 798 Australians and 109 New Zealanders on board, is due to arrive in Fremantle in WA on Fri.

The vessel, which the cruise line stresses has reported no cases of COVID-19, has spent 13 consecutive days at sea and follows an audacious passenger swap operation with *Columbus* off the coast of Thailand last week (**CW** 13 Mar).

The unusual exchange was undertaken at sea in light of ongoing port closures in a bid to expedite the routes home for passengers on both ships.

CMV added that it has been in constant contact with Australian Border Force, which has stated the ship's passengers should not make onward travel plans any earlier than 2pm local time on Fri so that crucial screening procedures can take place.

The West Australian Government has also mandated that all passengers must remain on board *Vasco da Gama*

until arrangements have been made for guests to be privately transported directly either to their homes or to the airport.

To ensure this process happens smoothly, the vessel will remain in Fremantle overnight on Fri 27 Mar, with some guests to remain on board for longer time periods subject to screening outcomes.

The line is also requesting pax who have already arranged flights to their final destination to depart the ship no later than the evening of Sat 28 Mar.

"We would like to thank our guests and staff presently on board *Vasco da Gama*, as well as shore-side officials, those impacted by curtailed or cancelled cruises, and our travel agent partners for their great support, understanding and patience during this time," said CMV Australia MD Dean Brazier.

When the ship arrives in Fremantle, CMV said its 552 crew members will remain on board.

Vasco da Gama originally left Fremantle on 12 Feb on a Grand Northbound Voyage to Britain.

CLIA UPDATE



with Joel Katz
MD, CLIA Australasia

WITH many of us now working from home and dealing with shutdowns, the pressures on Australia's travel community are intense.

Behind the scenes, the cruise industry is working hard in response to global challenges, and our travel agent partners are, as always, a key concern.

CLIA has joined with other bodies including the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA), the Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) and the Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI) to support their messages to government and help convey the level of urgent support needed by the Australian travel industry.

We will continue to advocate, not only on behalf of the cruise sector but also in recognition of the other businesses that help make cruising possible.

The stimulus measures announced in recent days by the Australian Government include initiatives that may be of help to travel agencies and sole traders - **CLICK HERE** for details.

In the meantime, the cruise industry remains focused on the safety of its guests and crew. Cruise lines have overcome enormous challenges to bring dozens of ships back to port and to disembark many thousands of Australian passengers.

There is still work to be done, but we will soon turn our attention to our revival.



IN THIS climate of working from home and self-isolation, leave it to a Frenchman with a penchant for sailing inside giant barrels to deliver the best advice to combat feelings of cabin fever.

"Everyone needs to embrace their passion, this time of isolation can be an opportunity for discovery - start drawing or learn to play the harmonica," Jean-Jacques Savin said.

Sounds like good advice to us, but just as well he travelled solo inside that barrel - the acoustics for a harmonica would be awful.

