

Cruise Weekly today

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

More cancellations

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL), Holland America Line, Seabourn and MSC Cruises have all extended their global fleet pauses.

NCL will not welcome guests until 11 May, Holland America Line and Seabourn are cancelling all departures through to 14 May, and MSC has extended its cancellation to 29 May.

Overnight, Cunard also announced the extension of its pause, until 15 May, as did Viking, which will halt all sailings until 30 Jun.

For all COVID-19 updates, including information on cancellation policies, **CLICK HERE** to access our regularly updated portal.

People come first: CLIA's Joel Katz

OPINION

Joel Katz is Managing Director, Australasia for Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

AROUND the world right now, cruise lines and CLIA are battling on behalf of our passengers and crew. Not only are we fighting against COVID-19, we're also dealing with fear and knee-jerk reactions.

In Australia, all cruise ships have already disembarked their passengers and suspended operations in a careful and staged response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

This has been a huge operation here and across the world, with teams of staff working day and night to coordinate a safe and orderly return to port for hundreds of ships and hundreds of thousands of passengers.

Of course there have been setbacks, but the focus has remained steadfastly on the health and safety of passengers



and crew, and cruise lines have worked under the direction of governments and health authorities at every step.

While there has been a great deal of attention on passengers who disembarked from specific ships, government and health authorities have confirmed their protocols were correctly followed by cruise lines.

Despite this, there are still a few cases where cruise lines are struggling against emotion and politics, and have been prevented from bringing passengers to shore.

Ironically, while our own government has been working to

help Australians caught in such situations overseas, people have suffered similar uncertainty in our own waters.

Regardless of whether someone has travelled by land, by air or by sea, they deserve the same commitment to their wellbeing.

If it's possible to process people at airports in an orderly way - and with isolation precautions in place - then we can also process cruise passengers and crew with a similarly sensible approach.

Cruise lines are very close to achieving a complete and unprecedented suspension of international operations globally.

The impact on the travel industry and our travel agent community will be enormous.

But, whatever the cost, we can't lose sight of the most important factor when making decisions on the fate of cruise passengers or crew – we're dealing with people, who deserve the same care and respect as others.

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THERE are a lot of ships around the world at the moment with no passengers, but how about a vessel still sailing with no crew?

The captain of a motorboat sailing the Potomac River in Washington DC was thrown from his vessel yesterday, and was thankfully wearing a personal flotation device, but his vessel just kept on trucking.

Almost in a display of defiance to her vanquished master, the boat started doing doughnuts by the shore (**pictured below**), where the situation was thoroughly chortled at by passers-by, before DC Fire & EMS came to the man's rescue.

CLICK HERE to view.



Seattle supports

THE Northwest Seaport Alliance and Port of Seattle will make sections of Terminal 46 available to support the country's Army Field Hospital 10, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis.

Trailers, container equipment and storage needs will all be made available at the facility, with the Field Hospital being set up at nearby CenturyLink Field Event Center.

The temporary hospital facilities will be for non-COVID patients.

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Every Thu we publish our consumer newsletter – **Travel & Cruise Weekly** - sign up free at www.travelandcruiseweekly.com.au.

Viking Mississippi launch



VIKING Cruises has today unveiled details of its hotly anticipated new Mississippi River cruise product (**CW** 27 Feb), with the company's Chairman Torstein Hagen releasing itineraries for sale to past passengers effective from 15 Apr.

In a video update in which he also confirmed Viking was extending its global suspension of river and ocean cruising for two more months until 30 Jun (**TD** breaking news), Hagen assured customers the company was firmly focused on the future.

"Viking is a private company, and thanks to our great guests we had an outstanding year in 2019.

"In addition to me and my family we have two private shareholders - TPG and the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board, and they are standing firmly behind us."

He said guests on cancelled trips would continue to receive a 125% future cruise credit, or could also elect to take a refund.

"We are standing by to help you book your next voyage," he said, also assuring passengers that Viking was firmly focused on health and safety and was proud

to have been the first cruise line to suspend operations to protect passengers and guests as the COVID-19 crisis escalated.

Hagen said during the hiatus Viking was working on "further scientific steps to reduce any health concerns about cruising.

"I can assure you we will only sail again when it is safe," he said.

Speaking about the new *Viking Mississippi* (**pictured**), Hagen described it as having an "elegant, modern design - with no paddlewheels, real or fake".

The ship will host 386 guests in 193 all-outside staterooms in seven categories.

Familiar features include the Explorers' Lounge, River Cafe, The Restaurant and the Aquavit Terrace, Sun Terrace with an infinity plunge pool, complimentary shore excursions and other inclusions - see renders at facebook.com/cruiseweekly.

MEANWHILE to keep inspiring travel during the COVID-19 hiatus, Viking has launched a new dedicated online TV channel.

Available now at viking.tv, it will feature destination content, concerts, live-streamed messages from Viking crew, and more.

Aussies in Uruguay

A TOTAL of 134 Australians are onboard *Ocean Atlantic*, currently docked in Montevideo, Uruguay, awaiting a commercial charter back to Australia.

The charter was originally organised by Chimu Adventures for those aboard *Ocean Atlantic*, as well as Aurora's Expeditions' *Greg Mortimer*, which was refused entry to Montevideo, meaning the price for the charter flight almost doubled for the *Ocean Atlantic* passengers.

An open letter to Scott Morrison read: "Prime Minister, we need you to act quickly as we do not know how long we will be allowed to stay moored at Montevideo and we don't know what will happen to us after that."

Last night, Foreign Minister Marise Payne said the Government would assist with the increased ticket price.

Cruise sinking

CRUISE stocks have plummeted after missing out on the US' economic relief bill aimed at sectors hit hard by COVID-19.

President Donald Trump signed the bill on the weekend, which offered US "organised" companies loans or loan guarantees.

Said companies must also have a majority of their employees based in the US, with neither stipulation helping out overseas-based Carnival Corp nor Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings.

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