

## Star-spangled cruises

**AMERICAN** Cruise Lines (ACL) and American Queen Steamboat Company (AQSC) have become the first cruise lines to sail in American waters this year.

Both companies have ships small enough to bypass the current Centers for Disease Control & Prevention orders against sailings, and both operate with American crews.

The cruise lines are also locally flagged, abling them to sail in American waters without a stop in Canada or another foreign port.

ACL's *Independence* departed on the weekend on a seven-night sailing to Charleston with a reduced capacity of 75%, while AQSC started its season earlier this week, with two private charter sailings on its most upscale vessel, *American Duchess*.

ACL requires a negative COVID-19 PCR test for all passengers and crew members, taken within four days of boarding, while AQSC will require all on board to be vaccinated, beginning 01 Jul.

Masks will also be required onboard in public spaces aboard ACL sailings.

Both cruise lines had made plans to return to service at various points last year, but the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic quashed those efforts.

## MSC set for luxury launch

**MSC** overnight unveiled the executive team who will lead the development and launch of its as-yet unnamed luxury brand (**CW** 18 Oct 2018).

The company has four 461-stateroom ships on order for the new operation, with the first scheduled for delivery in 2023, followed by the other three on an annual basis thereafter.

Former Seabourn Cruise Line Vice President Chris Austin will be the new operation's Chief Sales Officer, alongside former Dream Cruises President, Crystal Cruises Asia Managing Director Thatcher Brown, who will serve as Commercial & Strategic Advisor.

Also joining as the new brand's Chief Marketing Officer is Sarah Doyle, who was most recently Bacardi Europe Vice President Marketing, and has previously held senior roles with Starwood Hotels & Resorts, including as Global Brand Director for W Hotels.

Sacha Rougier will be Head

of Itinerary Planning & Shore Experience, moving from her most recent role as Cruise Gate Hamburg Managing Director.

The final addition is John Stoll, the luxury operation's Destination Experience Advisor, who previously worked as Crystal Vice President Land Programs for 17 years, and was also Silversea Cruises' Director Land Programs.

The new brand's Chief Executive Officer Michael Ungerer said the team will "create a luxury and lifestyle travel experience as distinct as it is trailblazing, exceeding the expectations of both discerning cruisers seeking something different to those new to cruising, and 'nextgenlux' travellers curious to start".

"We're getting ready to share our vision of luxury ocean travel with our trade partners, when we will present our fleet, showcase our luxury vessels' innovative designs and demonstrate what I believe will be a best-in-class guest experience," he said.

## Genting profit alert

**GENTING** Hong Kong has told shareholders and investors to "exercise caution when dealing in the securities of the company," warning the Hong Kong Stock Exchange it expects to record a consolidated operating loss of at least US\$600 million (A\$776 million) and a consolidated net loss of US\$1.5 billion (A\$1.9 billion) or more for 2020.

The company attributed the losses to the suspension of fleet-wide operations, as well as a Mar-Oct hiatus shipbuilding operations at MV Werften shipyards in Germany.

With the resumption of *Crystal Serenity* in The Bahamas (**CW** 12 Mar), Genting will have 41% of its entire fleet operational, which is the highest proportion of all cruise companies.

However, Genting said it expected the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact its businesses.

"The Group is unable to predict with certainty the ultimate impact it would have on the Group's business, its financial condition and its financial performance," the warning noted.

## Royal Caribbean flags Los Angeles return

**ROYAL** Caribbean International will resume year-round cruising from Los Angeles next year, overnight unveiling its first California homeport operation in over a decade.

The program will see *Navigator of the Seas* offer 3-, 4-, 5- and 7-night itineraries

including sailings to Ensenada and Catalina Island, voyages to Cabo San Lucas and winter cruises also taking in Puerto Vallarta and Mazatlan.

Sales open shortly, with the ship offering a host of new features following a US\$115 million "amplification".

## Cruise Weekly today

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



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## Catch up on the news of the week

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## TTCH webinar

**THE** Travel Community Hub (TTCH) is hosting a webinar on The Dawn of a New Era for Expedition Cruising.

The webinar will be hosted with Landmark Travel owner & Director Gerd Wilmer, who will explain why expedition ships are the “Teslas of the cruise industry”.

Wilmer will also discuss why, over the last four years, 24 new expedition ships have been launched, with another 18 scheduled in the next 18 months.

The Dawn of a New Era for Expedition Cruises is the second in a series of webinars with Wilmer about cruising.

The series will see him demystify concepts like “ice classes” and “polar codes”.

The webinar is a Travel Community Hub member-only event - sign up [HERE](#).

## Paul Gauguin upgrades



**PAUL** Gauguin Cruises has unveiled its renovated flagship *Paul Gauguin*.

A range of luxurious enhancements took place aboard *Paul Gauguin* during her drydock, which was completed earlier this month in Singapore.

“The vision of the renovation was to enhance the *Gauguin’s* elegant Polynesian signature with a chic and fresh style to enrich

guests’ experience sailing the islands of Tahiti, French Polynesia, Fiji and the South Pacific,” the cruise line said.

Large environmental upgrades have also been made, including water treatment and consumption optimisation, along with energy-saving initiatives.

## Virgin vax policy

**VIRGIN** Voyages will require all crews and passengers to be vaccinated for coronavirus on all cruises.

The cruise line’s President & Chief Executive Officer Tom McAlpin said Virgin Voyages was encouraged by the latest rollout plans in the May time frame from the Biden administration, adding the future was about vaccinations.

“Our goal is to ensure we’re providing the safest travel experience, which means vaccinations for both our crew and passengers,” McAlpin said.

“This is a step toward the safe return to sailing and is the right decision for Virgin Voyages.”

The cruise line said it hasn’t finalised details on what kind of vaccination proof the company will require from those on board its ships.





## SEABOURN®

### NEW 2022 ITINERARIES

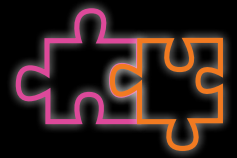
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Travel Daily



**JUST** when you thought it was safe to go back on the water...

Warning - cruise lovers may want to avert their eyes from an upcoming documentary about to be released by US pay television network HBO.

*The Last Cruise*, which will air in the United States on 30 Mar, promises sensational never-before-seen footage from the coronavirus outbreak aboard *Diamond Princess* as she was moored off the coast of Japan in the early days of the pandemic.

"Using intimate footage recorded by passengers and crew, *The Last Cruise* is a first-person account of the nightmare that transpired aboard the ill-fated *Diamond Princess*, which set sail from Japan on the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic," the trailer breathlessly promises.

The on-board outbreak, which mesmerised the world in the initial stages of the coronavirus' spread, led to about 700 cases and a dozen deaths.

A *USA Today* review said the show highlights the onboard emotions of anxiety, frustration and fear, but also notes that "something is missing: input from health and industry officials" - see the preview at [cruiseweekly.com.au/videos](http://cruiseweekly.com.au/videos).



## New Heritage trips



**HERITAGE** Expeditions has announced the first voyages on board its new expedition yacht (CW 02 Mar).

The new 18-guest expedition yacht *Heritage Explorer* (pictured) will set sail on her maiden voyage next month on an all-new Discover Marlborough Sounds voyage.

The seven-day exploration will include Queen Charlotte Sound and Pelorus Sound, as well as French Pass and d'Urville Island.

Travelling from Blenheim return, the voyage leads in at NZ\$4,200 per person, and departs on 11 Apr and 08 & 14 May.

This trip will be followed by The Top of the South, a nine-day expedition cruise exploring the hidden coves, beaches, waterways, and wildlife of the top of the South Island.

Other upcoming itineraries, including Fiordland, the Hauraki Gulf, Bay of Islands and Stewart Island will be released shortly.

Heritage Expeditions Commercial Director & Expedition Leader Aaron Russ said the new

voyages announced both a return to the boutique New Zealand adventures Heritage was founded on, and a domestic expansion of its expedition repertoire.

## Lindblad launches

**LINDBLAD** Expeditions has launched new expeditions for 2021, with a range of novel experiences including visiting Vietnam's coastal villages or penguin-spotting in the Subantarctic isles.

The cruise line will also be returning to the Raja Ampat Islands and Franz Josef Land, as it debuts its two new polar vessels, *National Geographic Endurance* and *National Geographic Resolution*.

A highlight of the new season is a two-itinerary New Zealand deployment, with travellers able to take in both of the country's North and South islands, or its Subantarctic Islands - talk to Lindblad on 1300 361 012.

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