



## APT hits Kimberley snag

### EXCLUSIVE

APT Travel Group (ATG) has this morning begun advising clients of the cancellation of the first departure of its upcoming Kimberley season on 02 Jun due to "an additional issue that we had not expected" relating to a shortage of qualified staff.

The highly anticipated *Caledonian Sky* program had previously been expected to operate (CW 05 May), with APT confirming that it has all the necessary approvals and licences to cruise in the region.

However "in obtaining the necessary authorisations that we now have from all federal and state government bodies, we had to amend our crew protocols and commit to additional operational requirements," APT told customers in an update obtained by *Cruise Weekly*.

In accordance with advice from the Australian Government, APT is now employing more than 30 Australian crew members for its 2021 Kimberley season.

"However due to a number of challenges, including a tourism and hospitality staff shortage at present the recruitment process has been slower than anticipated," clients and their travel agents are being told.

"This has meant the training required for all crew to meet criteria set by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority has also been delayed.

"Despite our best efforts in engaging with specialist agencies to recruit and deliver training specifically to our APT crew, we have not been able to achieve the desired outcomes in time."

APT said the additional operational requirements imposed by the state and federal government are also inhibiting it from completing its planned departure on time.

"In the last few days, it has become clear that we will be unable to meet the planned sailing schedule...as such we have made the very difficult decision to suspend this sailing," APT said.

Impacted clients are being offered a Future Holiday Credit equal to the amount paid on their booking, valid until the end of 2023.

Just last week ATG confirmed its plans to operate the *Caledonian Sky* season wholly within Western Australia, cruising between Broome and Wyndham, with Managing Director Chris Hall saying the return to service was a "tremendous outcome".

At this stage only the first cruise has been cancelled, with agents and clients keenly anticipating the rest of the season.

The cancellation follows the disappointment of the cancelling of the entire *Scenic Eclipse* Kimberley season due to ongoing uncertainty around the lifting of restrictions on cruising in Australian waters (CW 10 May).

## Prima announced

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line has announced its first new ship in nearly three years, *Norwegian Prima*.

Scheduled to debut Aug 2022 with a 10-night sailing out of Amsterdam, the new ship will initially sail in Northern Europe, before moving to North America.

The 3,215-passenger *Prima* is currently under construction at a shipyard near Venice, and will be the first of the new Leonardo class series of ships that is scheduled to roll out over the next six years.

The Leonardo class will measure around 140,000 tonnes, which is about 15% to 17% smaller than the most recent Breakaway Plus class.

Initial itineraries for *Prima* announced today include a 12-night trans-Atlantic sailing from Southampton to New York City, a five-night roundtrip voyage to Bermuda from New York City, a 12-night Caribbean voyage from New York City to Galveston, an 11-night trip from Galveston to Miami and a seven-night Western Caribbean voyage from Miami.

Further details are expected to be unveiled later this week.

## Mayday to RCI!

**ROYAL** Caribbean International (RCI) has launched a May sale, held in celebration of families.

Offering up to 30% off every guest, savings of up to \$250 per stateroom are available, and kids can sail from \$25 per day - call 1800 260 257.



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## Aurora joins Virtuoso

**AURORA** Expeditions has joined Virtuoso's Regional Preferred Partner Program APAC.

The "by-invitation-only" partnership connects Aurora to more than 1,500 Virtuoso luxury travel advisors in the region, who can now access the cruise line's profile, which includes voyages, pricing sheets, images, trip notes and other relevant collateral via their portal.

"Being invited as a Virtuoso partner is an absolute honour," said Aurora Chief Executive Monique Ponfoort (**pictured**).

"We truly value the unrivalled reputation of Virtuoso member advisors, and we really look forward to offering their clients next-level expedition travel experiences that surpass their expectations."

Aurora Director of Sales APAC Steve McLaughlin added travel advisors play "a key role in our business, so we are thrilled and honoured to be working with Virtuoso's talented, hand-picked team of advisors.

"While the last year has been incredibly challenging for travel advisors, we know the future



is bright and we look forward to welcoming Virtuoso agents and their clients into our Aurora Expeditions community," he said.

Virtuoso Senior Vice President Global Operations Michael Londregan said the network's community in Asia-Pacific is excited to be partnering with a local cruise line.

"Aurora has a rich history of exploration and innovation, which drives unique experiences, and we are looking forward to working with the Aurora team as we get our clients travelling and living their best travel lives," he said.

## P&O Virtual Cruise

**P&O** Cruises Australia yesterday departed on its inaugural virtual cruise aboard flagship *Pacific Explorer*.

The four-night short break from Sydney to Moreton Island will be available via social media.

Guests will be able to enjoy deck parties, trivia quizzes, high teas, and an entertainment package by comedic juggler James Bustar, who has created a highly concentrated version of his stage performance.

Other cruise highlights include a Rock Show performance on Facebook, and a Dragon Lady high tea on Instagram, which will feature recipes to make at home.

Adding to the virtual cruise excitement is a range of Moreton Island shore tours, including a dolphin feeding session via Facebook.

The event follows P&O Australia's successful virtual entertainment month last Jul.

The cruise "disembarks" on Fri morning, having departed 4pm yesterday.

## A FISH-INSPIRED soft robot

has survived a trip to the Mariana Trench, the deepest part of the ocean.

The self-powered underwater robotic fish appears to offer an alternative to previously developed deep-sea equipment, as according to a recent paper, it was able to reach a depth of almost 11 kilometres.

The pressure at the bottom of the trench is more than a thousand times that on the surface of the sea, yet many animals are able to withstand such a staggering amount of pressure.

The morphology and skull structure of one of these marine organisms, the snailfish, is what is reported to have inspired the design of the robot.

The main breakthrough was a specially-designed compliant polymer body which deforms, without breaking, under high pressure - watch the robot in action **HERE**.



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