



## Orion Kimberley return

### EXCLUSIVE

**LINDBLAD** Expeditions has announced that the *National Geographic Orion* will return to Australasian waters next year.

The much-loved vessel, which formerly sailed as the flagship of the Sarina Bratton-founded Orion Expedition Cruises, will operate voyages in the Kimberley and to Indonesia, according to Neil Rodgers, MD of Adventure World which represents Lindblad in the local market.

"It's quite a big deal to be seeing the *National Geographic Orion* returning to Australian waters," he told *Cruise Weekly*.

Two itineraries will be on offer: an 11-day Australia's Wild Northwest voyage which will have three departures in Jul 2023, and a 15-day cruise departing 08 Aug next year taking in Northwest Australia and Indonesia, including a visit to Komodo National Park

as well as diving remote reefs and Australia's pristine Rowley Shoals.

Bookings on the newly announced Kimberley program are open now on 1300 363 055.

**MEANWHILE** the Lindblad Expeditions website also details several *Orion* voyages based in New Zealand for the 2022/23 season, including a 20-day Southern Odyssey ex Auckland cruising the NZ North and South islands as well as visits to Macquarie, Campbell, Stewart, Enderby and Adams Islands, scheduled to depart 29 Dec 2022.

There are also two *Orion* Coastal New Zealand itineraries departing 03 Feb and 15 Feb 2023, with more details on 0800 444 462 (NZ) or 1300 361 012 (AU).

*Orion* joined the Lindblad fleet almost a decade ago after Orion Expedition Cruises was acquired by the US-based small ship specialist (*CW* 07 Mar 2013).

## Azamara suspends

**AZAMARA** Cruises has announced the cancellation of 11 upcoming scheduled *Azamara Journey* voyages, with departures now suspended until 26 May.

"Due to the ongoing complexities of operating *Azamara Journey* during the dynamic COVID environment, we do not believe we can provide the guest experience that would be up to Azamara standards," the cruise line said.

Azamara President, Carol Cabezas, confirmed *Azamara Quest* and *Azamara Pursuit* would continue to sail as planned, while the line is also looking forward to launching *Azamara Onward* in late Apr.

### Cruise Weekly today

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

## Genting insolvent?

**GENTING** Hong Kong, the parent firm of Crystal, Dream and Star Cruises, has once again suspended trading in its shares, warning investors it will "potentially proceed with a filing of provisional liquidation of the company".

The announcement follows the bankruptcy declaration of Genting's German shipyards last week (*CW* 12 Jan) after a state bailout was rejected.

"The Board believes that the appointment of provisional liquidators is essential and in the interests of the Company, its shareholders and its creditors in order to maximise the chance of success of the financial restructuring and to provide a moratorium on claims," the firm said in a stock market update.

**MEANWHILE** three of the company's independent non-executive directors have resigned, effective immediately.



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**IT WASN'T** your usual river cruise holiday snap, but a woman who drove her car on a frozen river in Canada managed to grab a quick selfie (pictured) to remember the moment as she was rescued while the vehicle was sinking after cracking through the ice.

Reported by *CNN*, the dramatic incident on the Rideau River near Manitowick, Ontario was captured by stunned onlookers, who saw the vehicle crossing the river at high speed before beginning to sink, at which point they grabbed kayaks to save her.



## No cruise progress at all

THE cruise industry supplier delegation which travelled to Canberra last year pressing for a restart plan (*CW* 18 Jun 2021) has expressed "bitter disappointment that another month has elapsed without any progress".

The group, including Clean Cruising's Dan Russell, Graeme Blackman from Inter-Marine, Graeme Gillies of Grayboy Entertainment, Select Fresh Providores chief Steven Biviano and Jay McKenzie from Bob Wood Cruise Group, noted that when the cruise ban was extended to 17 Feb, Health Minister Greg Hunt had promised to review the restrictions on a monthly basis.

However with no update this week, "it is obvious the Government has no intention of... having a serious discussion with the industry about a pathway back," they said.

"It is increasingly frustrating that the Government is not listening to the industry or what we have been saying as suppliers with businesses that depend on cruising.

"We are not talking about

cruise ships returning to Australia net week or next month...it will be months before cruising can resume," they said.

"What we are looking for is some certainty so that our businesses can hang on until cruise operations resume in Australia," the suppliers added.

"As a group we are disappointed that there has been no progress towards the resumption of such an important part of the tourism economy...this is particularly disappointing with overseas experience already confirming that cruise ships can operate safely in a well-managed COVID environment," they added.

The supplier group noted the lifting of formal health orders in the USA by the Centers for Disease Control, allowing them to transition to a voluntary system.

### MSC goes all in

MSC Cruises has launched an "All in at Sea" promotion, with an included Easy Drinks package, wi-fi and up to \$200 onboard credit per person, valid on all northern hemisphere Summer 2022 departures.

Single supplements have also been reduced to 120% for May, Jun, Sep and Oct and 150% for Jul and Aug.

All bookings are eligible for MSC Cruises' Flexible Booking Program, which allows guests to change travel plans free of charge up to 15 days prior to cruise departure.

The promo is valid for sales to 31 Mar - 1300 028 502 (AU) or 0508 4278 473 (NZ).



### Outlook

AS AUSTRALIANS slowly return to work following the summer break, we are still living with COVID and wondering what 2022 will bring.

No industry has been able to avoid the impact of the virus but the cruise industry continues to remain flexible and respond accordingly with sailing schedules amended both internationally and in Australia to align with the current environment.

The big data globally suggests that COVID transmission onboard ships, even with the spread of Omicron, is around 0.02% which is substantially lower than land-based rates.

CLIA has also said "the majority of those cases are asymptomatic or mild in nature, posing little to no burden on medical resources onboard or onshore."

Cruising has observed the most stringent of science-based protocols including testing, vaccination for both crew and guests, onboard sanitation, screening and masking which has delivered a high mitigation rate.

In 2022, ACA will continue to participate in discussions with the Federal Government regarding the re-opening of our international border scheduled for 17 Feb.

We remain optimistic and on the back of our first successful roadshow series in Qld late last year, we are now planning the next one which will be held in Vic in Mar.

We are looking forward to visiting Melbourne as well as some of our important regional destination partners such as Phillip Island where cruise has had an important economic impact for this community.

## REWARDS by VIKING

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