

Cruise Weekly today

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

Princess Americas

PRINCESS Cruises overnight released details of its 2023/24 Americas cruise season, including significant South Pacific deployments taking in Hawaii, Fiji and Tahiti.

Discovery Princess will sail two 15-day Hawaii cruises, her first ever to the state, featuring overnight stays in Honolulu and visits to four Hawaiian islands, while *Sapphire Princess* is offering a new 32-day South Pacific Islands itinerary roundtrip from Los Angeles, including her first ever port call in Fiji.

Overall it's the most expansive Americas schedule ever for Princess, featuring 47 itineraries across 214 departures from seven North American homeports.

Roundtrip voyages will be available from Los Angeles, Fort Lauderdale, San Francisco, Seattle, Galveston & Vancouver, as well as one open-jaw departure from New York, and Princess will sail in Mexico, the Caribbean and along the California Coast.

Princess Cruises President, John Padgett, was enthusiastic about the offering, saying "no one can match our unique combination of unparalleled itinerary choices with the authentic, personalised MedallionClass experience that makes a Princess cruise so special and memorable".

Norwegian Prima selling strongly

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's (NCL) new *Norwegian Prima* is driving strong results for the company, with VP and MD APAC Ben Angell yesterday confirming the innovative vessel is the "most in-demand ship in the company's 55-year history".

Excitement within NCL is at fever pitch in anticipation of *Prima's* maiden voyage, with the company to formally take delivery of the newbuild in Italy today.

At a celebratory event in Sydney yesterday, Angell noted that the ship is the first new class for NCL in a decade, with *Prima* the first in a series which will see sister vessels arrive on an annual basis for the next six years.

"It's a real milestone for our organisation...she is an absolute step change for our brand.

"*Prima* will really elevate our brand from, I'll call it 'contemporary premium', to 'premium contemporary'," Angell said, adding "she is a truly spectacular vessel".

"She's been built with our guest-first philosophy at the centre of every decision.

"We've always listened to our guests, taken all the learnings and designed the ship with what they



tell us, what they want at the centre of every decision.

"NCL has all the bells and whistles like the three-storey racetrack and the fastest slides at sea, but we also innovate with purpose," he said.

"So it's no surprise that *Prima* is resonating extremely well with Australian and New Zealand guests," Angell added.

Prima is a "ship of firsts," he said, with the vessel designed with characteristic attention to detail from Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings President Frank Del Rio.

Features include a reimagined "keycard access ship-within-a-ship" Haven enclave, the

Ocean Boulevard with a host of outdoor dining options, a huge variety of entertainment and upmarket restaurants, while Angell said NCL's destination-rich itineraries in northern Europe were also proving popular.

Europe is a key focus for the company, which has eight ships in the region this year, increasing to nine in 2023 with the addition of *Prima* to the line-up.

Norwegian Prima will be christened by godmother Katy Perry in Reykjavik, Iceland at the end of next month.

Angell is pictured right with NCL Director of Sales, Damian Borg, at yesterday's preview event.

Royal Caribbean Group narrows losses

ROYAL Caribbean Group recorded US\$2.2 billion in sales for the three months to 30 Jun, with CEO Jason Liberty saying "we continue to see a robust and accelerating demand environment for cruising and onboard spend".

In a financial update Liberty

also revealed fleetwide load factors of 82%, and said the company expects to return to profit next quarter for the first time since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RCG cruises are now on offer in all key destinations apart from China.

Silversea 2024/25

SILVERSEA Cruises has unveiled its 2024/25 program, including the inaugural season of *Silver Ray*, revealed as the line's second Nova-class ship.

There are 25 Australian and NZ departures, including local deployments for *Silver Nova*, *Silver Muse* and *Silver Cloud*.

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Osmic leaves Azamara Cruises

EXCLUSIVE

BELLE Osmic (pictured) has departed from her role leading Azamara in the Australian and New Zealand markets, leaving the industry to work with her husband "DJ Enis" in their Osmic Productions business.

The highly regarded Osmic has been in the cruise sector for more than 16 years, and overnight revealed her big change saying "cruise...it's been life-changing".

She's been with the Azamara brand for more than five years (*Travel Daily* 29 Jun 2017), initially when it was part of the Royal Caribbean Group and more recently building the expanded team under Azamara's new ownership in the early stages of



the pandemic (*CW* 16 Oct 2020).

"It's time to move on to working with the most dedicated and hard-working person I ever met...he has built a professional company here in Australia and I'm so proud of what he has achieved," she said.

"Thanks to everyone who has supported my journey thus far and I hope to work with you in

the future in my new role as Director of Sales, Marketing and Experience Design," Osmic added.

Osmic's role at Azamara will be taken on by Victoria Chigwidden, who will be taking over as Director of Sales from 08 Aug.

Chigwidden joins Azamara from her current role as District Sales Manager SA/NT at Royal Caribbean Group, with her career also including positions at Globus, Garuda Indonesia and a decade as Flight Centre Area Leader for South Australia.

Azamara Cruises is now owned by private equity firm Sycamore Partners, and earlier this year boosted its fleet to four sister ships with the addition of *Azamara Onward* (*CW* 03 May).



TAKING out a world record is quite an achievement, so there must be massive excitement in the aquatic realm this month at news that whale sharks have dethroned the fearsome Kodiak bear as "the world's largest omnivore".

Apparently marine scientists have always thought whale sharks were strictly carnivorous, feeding on a diet of small fish, prawns and plankton, reports *Australian Geographic*.

Not so - after studying the whale shark population off Ningaloo Reef in Western Australia, CSIRO researchers have found they also ingest a type of seaweed.

The mind-boggling breakthrough was achieved by analysing biopsy samples from the huge marine creatures and then comparing them with amino acids and fatty acids found in possible food sources.

They also confirmed the findings by catching whale poo in a net and going through it - probably a job given to an enthusiastic intern, we suspect.

Because whale sharks can grow up to 18m in length, that now makes them the world's largest omnivore - a title previously held by *Ursus arctos middendorffi*, "a unique subspecies of brown bear endemic to the Kodiak Archipelago south of Alaska".

The findings were reported in the *Ecology* scientific journal in a paper simply titled "The world's largest omnivore is a fish".



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RCG drops testing

ROYAL Caribbean Group (RCG) is expected to shortly announce it will no longer require pre-embarkation COVID-19 testing for vaccinated guests on cruises of five days or less.

The change, which will still be subject to local regulations in each destination, was revealed by CEO Jason Liberty during a financial update (see p1).

Liberty said RCG would still require testing for unvaccinated guests, adding he expected to remove testing for vaccinated pax on longer cruises in the "near future".

It's understood the change will apply to all brands incl Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity and Silversea Cruises.