



Primed to dine

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) is serving up elevated epicurean experiences aboard its new Prima class.

The upcoming *Norwegian Prima* and *Norwegian Viva* will “push the boundaries of traditional cruise cuisine,” according to NCL, hosting nine new food & beverage venues including Metropolitan Bar, the line’s first sustainably-focused bar; its first three-level atrium (pictured); and revamped main dining offerings.

There will also be enhancements to NCL’s guest-favourite culinary staples, such as Le Bistro, Cagney’s Steakhouse, and more.



NZCA hopes for summer

THE New Zealand Cruise Association (NZCA) says working through the details for the return of passenger cruising to the country’s waters continues to be a long, slow, and financially burdensome process, “but we are still hopeful that the 2022-23 cruise season will begin in Oct”.

An update from the organisation noted the recent cancellation of P&O’s entire Auckland deployment for this year (*CW* 24 Feb), which impacted 21 departures between Jul and Nov, had cost the city dearly.

In a RNZ interview this week, Auckland Unlimited’s Head of Visitor Economy Annie Dundas said the pullout had cost the city an estimated NZD\$200 million, “and that’s pretty hard to come back from”.

“We as a city are looking to welcome those cruise passengers back, because they do provide

vibrancy and the do also get out and about across the regions.”

NZCA said the cancellation of P&O’s operations in Auckland this year underscored the need for the process to accelerate, with ongoing uncertainty on when cruise will return to the country continuing to have an impact on deployment scheduling for lines.

In anticipation of a restart, NZCA will also visit major ports and regions across the country “to discuss details of the return of cruise and work with ports and operators on what will have to be in place”.

The first regional visits are expected to begin in late May.

The importance of cruise to the New Zealand visitor economy was further highlighted last week, when NZCA strengthened its relationship with Tourism NZ, with both organisations to focus on the industry’s recovery.

Cruise Weekly today

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

Aurora cancels Russian sailings

AURORA Expeditions has cancelled its Russian itineraries.

The Aurora team is now reviewing its deployment in the region, and will advise travel agents and guests of those changes in the near future.

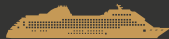
Aurora will continue to offer its flexible policies to accommodate for the evolving conditions.

Any booked guests and trade partners of affected sailings will receive updates, and specific details applicable to their booking, which will be available shortly.

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THE Wooden Boat Festival of Geelong is returning to the city's waterfront later this month. The biennial Festival takes place in the waters of Corio Bay, with an array of wooden vessels coming from around Australia.

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New Viking ship floats



VIKING'S *Viking Mississippi* (pictured) has touched water in Louisiana, ahead of the cruise line's modern river voyages, which begin in the northern summer.

Sailing the Mississippi River, the 396-guest ship is set to debut in Jun, cruising between New Orleans and St. Paul.

The traditional float out took place at Edison Chouest Offshore's LaShip shipyard in Houma.

In keeping with maritime tradition, *Mississippi's* ceremonial godmother Dionne Chouest, General Counsel of Edison Chouest Offshore, assisted with the float out.

Mississippi will feature elegant Scandinavian design, as well as public spaces familiar to guests, but reimagined for voyages aboard the River.

Purpose-built for the Mississippi, the five-deck ship's expansive windows and comfortable amenities will make it the largest and most modern ship in the region.

"It is a proud moment that this new ship has met an American waterway for the first time," said Viking Chair Torstein Hagen.

"Our guests have long wanted to sail the Mississippi River with Viking, and we very much look forward to welcoming them on board this summer.

"We are grateful to our American partner, Edison Chouest Offshore, who has helped bring to life our vision of exploring the Mississippi in the Viking way."

The cruise line's arrival to the Mississippi will represent a major commitment to tourism & economic development in many communities along the river, with the new voyages expected to bring more than 7,500 guests to the region this year, and more than 17,600 during the first full sailing season in 2023.

Currently scheduled ports of call on Viking's new Mississippi River itineraries comprise seven American states, including Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Missouri, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.



CLIA UPDATE

with Joel Katz
MD, CLIA Australasia

Ready to set sail

GOVERNMENT discussions over the revival of cruising in Australia have been gathering pace, giving the cruise industry greater confidence that we may see a green light in the near future.

Since last month's National Cabinet announcement, CLIA and cruise lines have been having more frequent and detailed talks with the mainland eastern states, working through the details of new health protocols and exactly how they will be applied.

Given the countless discussions over the past 18 months, it is gratifying to now be making meaningful progress.

Recent weeks have brought significant breakthroughs, thanks in part to our industry's plans that have been proven in other countries, as well as the backing we've received from key political leaders like NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet.

Undoubtedly this backing has been won with the help of thousands of travel agents and other cruise supporters who have joined our campaigns and the grass-roots movements within the travel industry.

Your support has been invaluable in changing the conversation around cruising.

We are increasingly confident Australia will soon have a path forward for cruising.

