



On location in
Barcelona, Spain

Today's issue of CW is coming to you courtesy of Royal Caribbean International, as we board the brand new *Wonder of the Seas* on her maiden Mediterranean season.

THE highly anticipated *Wonder of the Seas* launched in the United States just a month ago, and has now arrived in Europe where she will homeport from Barcelona and Rome over the next few months.

Targeting families and travellers of all ages, the Oasis-class vessel has 2,867 staterooms and a host of features spread across eight unique "neighbourhoods".

The seemingly never-ending list of amenities and activities includes mini-golf, the spectacular Aquatheatre water-based performance area, a carousel, jogging track, ice rink, karaoke room, whirlpools, rock climbing walls, zip lines and a Broadway-style theatre.

After all that action guests can relax in the Vitality Spa & Fitness Centre, and replenish their energy at the scores of onboard restaurants, bars and lounges.

Follow our journey as we showcase this spectacular ship over the next few days.

Close-to-home refocus

BOOKING patterns for Oceania Cruises have changed post-pandemic, with Australians changing their focus from Europe to close-to-home.

Speaking to *Cruise Weekly* yesterday, Senior Vice President & Managing Director Asia Pacific Steve Odell and local VP Jason Worth revealed Australian sailings are selling hotly, in place of more traditionally popular markets.

"We normally sell a majority of our product to Europe, so Europe is our main focus, but since the last couple of years, our local product has been more interesting to people in Australia," Worth explained.

"Typically, we've never really sold close to home very well here before COVID," Odell added.

"It was a very small percentage of the total, it was all about Europe, but we've definitely seen a shift in demand."

"The world is still an emerging place, so we're finding a lot of our regulars in the older categories are looking for more closer to home."

Oceania's sold-out circumnavigation of Australia has proved one of the most popular itineraries for Aussies, with a large waitlist to get aboard, and a similar sailing in 2024 set to launch.

However, looking further afield, trans-Tasman sailings & Tahiti are favoured, as is Asia, which

as Odell points out, is far easier for a brand like Oceania to sell post-pandemic than many of the world's largest cruise lines, which have been forced to scale back in the region.

"It's been interesting to see some companies pull out of Asia, but we believe in sticking with it, because while there might be some problems, particularly Hong Kong & Chinese ports, Southeast Asia is open for tourism.

"Even Thailand's test & go programs from 01 May, the ports are open; Singapore is open; Malaysia is open; I think very soon Japan will open, so we're not taking a knee-jerk reaction approach to that.

"I think the challenge for those companies is they're trying to bring three-to-four-thousand people per ship from Europe and North America, and bringing that kind of volume in the current environment is probably a challenge, where we don't have that volume.

"I think the other challenge is still airlift into Asia, a lot of the airlines haven't come back fully, so when you're trying to move 4,000 people to a big ship cruise, I think it's much more challenging; but we don't really have that.

"We think there's going to be a very solid market for Asia, it'll come back."

Asia features heavily in Oceania's 2024 Voyage Collection, featuring in many of the 250 sailings - the cruise line's biggest-ever program (*CW* 29 Apr).

Open for booking tomorrow, the Collection encompasses more than 130 Grand Voyages across seven ships and all seven continents, with Asian destinations including the Philippines.

Hurtigruten names marketing chief

HURTIGRUTEN has wasted no time since announcing its expanded Asia-Pacific structure (*CW* 20 Apr), with local Managing Director Damian Perry confirming Joel Victoria will return in the newly created position of Marketing Director APAC.

Victoria, who stepped away from Hurtigruten during the depths of the pandemic, "now re-enters the company in an even more pivotal role," according to Perry.

He'll be involved with bringing on an expanded regional marketing team as well as participating in Hurtigruten's global brand and communication strategies "working with a global peer network of exceptional talent".

Victoria said he was excited to be able to contribute to the evolution of the brand.

Carnival ticks off

CARNIVAL Cruise Line is celebrating a milestone, with 100% of its United States-based fleet now back on the water.

The final piece of the puzzle was the 23rd ship, *Carnival Splendor*, ironically previously based in Australia but forced to be redeployed due to the extended local cruise ban.

CEO Christine Duffy said the departure of *Splendor* on her first post-pandemic voyage out of Seattle overnight made Carnival the first major operator in the United States to have its full local fleet back in service after COVID-19.

Australians will have to wait just a little longer to experience Carnival, with *Splendor* to return home to Sydney in Sep (*CW* 31 Mar) after completing her current Alaska season.

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

Everyone wins a cruise!



VIRGIN Voyages last night wrapped up its first Australian roadshow since the pandemic, hosting its Sydney date at Event Cinemas George Street.

The roadshow aimed to differ greatly from the typical “death by slideshow” format, soliciting frequent audience participation, and showcasing the Virgin product in new and innovative ways.

However, the undoubted highlight of each night of the roadshow was when all attendees found out they had won a Virgin Mediterranean cruise in a Sea Terrace stateroom, to be used later in the year.

Pictured are Executive Chair of Virgin general sales agent Travel The World Andrew Millmore, Virgin Global Training Manager Luke Day, Travel The World Head of Sales Sharon Hando, Virgin Vice President International Sales Shane Riley, and Travel The World

Chief Executive Officer Andrew Zhang, and **inset**, attendees realise they will be experiencing the Virgin product first-hand on a cruise around the Mediterranean.

A trio of offers

STAR Clippers’ Triple Bonus Offers on select Mediterranean sailings this year offer a 25% cruise fare discount, a cabin upgrade, and a €200 onboard credit.

The cruise line is celebrating the return of *Star Clipper* to the Mediterranean this year, following several seasons based in Southeast Asia.

As part of the offer, travellers will have a choice of six destination-immersive Mediterranean itineraries across 14 departures from Jul through to Oct.

Call 1300 296 161.



FROM its inception, Virgin Voyages has committed to doing things differently, and it certainly proved so in its roadshow last night.

First, attendees were asked to generate their “sailor name” using the helpful chart pictured below:



The audience was also invited to test out Virgin’s “shake for champagne” feature on its application, which allows the user to receive a hand-delivered bottle of bubbles to wherever they are on the ship with a simple jiggle of their phone.

The trial worked particularly well for one travel advisor, who was delivered some champers to his seat, in honour of his birthday.

However, by far the biggest and best reveal of the night was slow-rolling of the grand prize: a cruise for two in the Med.

At first, just one agent was selected for the prize, and following that, the hosts decided an entire row of seats should win a cruise.

However, in an Oprah-style moment, it was then announced that everyone in the audience had won a free cruise - thanks, Richard!



Seatrade takes us forward

LAST week’s Seatrade Cruise Global 2022 conference in Miami provided a fantastic opportunity for our industry to come together at the international level, showing our resilience and our resolve as we work towards recovery.

It also provided a platform for key announcements on our environmental goals. Among these is a commitment by CLIA ocean-going cruise lines to pursue net zero carbon cruising globally by 2050, which will build on progress already underway and translate directly into investment in the tech solutions needed to achieve more.

As part of this, CLIA also announced that by 2035 all ships calling at ports where shoreside electricity is available will be equipped to use these facilities, allowing engines to be switched off while berthed at port.

As cruising emerges from the pandemic, initiatives like these will demonstrate our environmental leadership and help our travel agents to address clients’ sustainability concerns.

Seatrade also provided an opportunity to welcome Australia into cruising’s global recovery, and Tourism Australia’s Managing Director Phillipa Harrison provided a video message to celebrate the return of Australian cruising.

She spoke of the strong demand that can be expected as cruise ships come back to local waters – [CLICK HERE](#) to see her full video.



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