



RCI looking at year-round cruising

EXCLUSIVE

ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI) is considering deploying ships in Australian waters year-round, with the line's local Vice President & Managing Director Gavin Smith saying the pandemic had created new opportunities to rethink its previous stance on seasonality.

Speaking to *Cruise Weekly* aboard the new *Wonder of the Seas* as she cruised out of Barcelona this week, Smith (pictured) said the other key factor driving such a decision would be the new Brisbane International Cruise Terminal.

"What's important about Brisbane is because of its warm climate, it's an opportunity for us to go year round," he said.

"That's really a longer term opportunity for us," he said, noting that "Royal is a summertime brand".

Similar decisions have already been made in Israel, Cyprus and Panama where RCI has announced the year-round operation of several vessels.

"We've got new deployments because things are different... for instance, all of a sudden, particularly in Israel, there's an incredible number of wealthy Israelis who want to go to Southern Greece and Turkey and are doing so in the safety and beauty of a cruise ship.

"Similarly we're coming out of



Cyprus, where the Brits are going on packaged holidays," he said.

"So yes, I think the opportunity for Brisbane will be for full year cruising with Royal at some point," Smith confirmed.

This year the company will operate *Ovation of the Seas* and *Quantum of the Seas* in local waters from Oct, and in 2023/24 a smaller third ship, *Enchantment of the Seas*, will also cruise in Australia alongside the two ultra-modern Quantum-class ships.

Smith noted the huge opportunity for Aussies to experience the best of the Royal Caribbean product close to home - and for travel advisors to communicate the key differences to their clientele.

MEANWHILE also on board *Wonder*, the cruise line's outgoing Senior Vice President of

International sales, Sean Treacy, said RCI is looking forward to the Oct resumption of cruising locally.

"It was a long time not operating in Australia, but we have a very strong loyal base of cruisers who are very excited about us obviously returning to Sydney with *Ovation*, but also for the first time bringing *Quantum* class to Brisbane...that's a huge story for us," Treacy said.

He also expressed confidence about being able to operate across the Tasman.

"There's currently a lot of dialogue happening with the NZ Government, and I'd say we're quite positive about the opportunity to operate as planned based on where we are today," Treacy added.

Cruise Weekly today

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



On location aboard *Wonder of the Seas*

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

THE second day of our brief *Wonder of the Seas* voyage has taken the ship out to sea, on a "cruise to nowhere" allowing guests to fully experience the huge variety aboard.

Trade partners on the ship are taking part in "immersion" sessions showcasing various elements such as sustainability, the development of F&B offerings, & Royal Caribbean's huge focus on entertainment.

Also on the agenda are tours of the new Suite neighbourhood, an exclusive new enclave including bars, a lounge, restaurant and sundeck only available to Suite guests.

Azzurra godmother

EMERALD Cruises has announced British cruise specialist travel agent Sarah Wikevand will be godmother to its new luxury yacht *Emerald Azzurra*.

Wikevand will formally name the 100-guest superyacht in Venice on 28 May, with Scenic Group Chief Operating Officer, Rob Voss, noting that her ROL Cruise business is one of Emerald's top-performing agencies.

Azzurra began operating on 12 Mar and is currently sailing a Croatia in Depth itinerary.

Princesses return

THREE more Princess Cruises ships are recommencing operations, with the restart of *Crown Princess*, *Island Princess* and *Royal Princess* seeing 12 vessels, or 80% of the overall fleet, having returned to service.

Princess said it expected 100% of its vessels to be in operation by Sep, including *Coral Princess* which will return in Australia on 16 Jun (*CW* 18 Mar).



On Board: *Wonder of the Seas*

"365" - the ice show

Among a myriad of amazing high-energy entertainment options aboard *Wonder of the Seas* is a fabulous display of ice dancing in the onboard ice rink, with this new production evoking the four seasons of the year.

Olympic-class skaters perform acrobatic stunts, defying gravity with high speed choreography to a musical background while cruise guests watch in awe from inches away.



Heritage to Japan

HERITAGE Expeditions has announced three new Japan voyages for its schedule next year.

The new cruises include Beyond Japan's National Parks: Tokyo/Kanazawa to Otaru, including Hokkaido and South Korea; Discover Eternal Japan: Otaru to Kobe, including South Korea; and Exploring Asia's Subtropical Islands: Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines.

Travelling aboard *Heritage Adventurer*, Commercial Director and Expedition Leader Aaron Russ said Japan's combination of rich history, fascinating culture, and diverse wilderness & wildlife made it perfect for expedition cruising.

Cunard 23-24 local season



CUNARD Line is inviting cruisers to explore all corners of the world with its new 2023 and 2024 sailings, which include visits from three of the brand's four-ship fleet.

Australian highlights of the program include a 105-day homeport season from *Queen Elizabeth* (pictured) visits from *Queen Mary 2* and *Queen Victoria*.

More than 110 international voyages will sail on Cunard's iconic fleet between 23 Oct 2023 and 14 May 2024.

The fleet will call at almost 130 ports in more than 50 countries, with voyages ranging from two-night city breaks to a 108-night world voyage.

Queen Elizabeth will start her Australian residency with a six-night voyage from Fremantle on 27 Nov 2023, before embarking on a series of short break and round trip voyages from Melbourne and Sydney, totalling 47 ports of call.

Some of the highlights include an all-new 10-night exploration of

Queensland's coast and islands, *Queen Elizabeth's* inaugural 14-night roundtrip calling into exotic ports of the South Pacific, and a Christmas & New Year voyage to New Zealand.

Queen Elizabeth will then depart Sydney en route to Japan on 10 Mar 2024, completing her season Down Under.

Meanwhile, *Queen Mary 2* will call into Fremantle on 17 Feb 2024 on her 108-night World Voyage, and continue along Australia's southern and eastern coastlines, making overnight calls to Melbourne and Sydney.

Queen Victoria's 107-night World Voyage will also sail to Australia, visiting Sydney.

The cruise line is now making it easier than ever for travel advisors, with guests able to choose from two fares at the season's launch: the Cunard Fare, giving guests greater flexibility & priority; and the new Early Saver Fare, offering a reduced fare for cost-conscious travellers.

For more information about the program release, call 13 24 41.



CRUISE Weekly enjoyed a fascinating behind-the-scenes tour of Royal Caribbean's *Wonder of the Seas* yesterday, including a visit to the garbage management facility deep within the bowels of the ship.

Here crew members painstakingly sort through trash, with items such as glass, aluminium cans and plastic bottles then being crushed into compressed cubes for recycling when the ship returns to shore.

Food waste is also a key focus, with machinery used to chop any leftovers into tiny pieces.

But what about the bones? No problem, we spotted a machine in the corner which is literally a bone crusher (kind of like **CW's** mighty manly handshake?)



Waste not want not!

CARNIVAL Corporation has installed 600 environmentally innovative food waste biodigesters across its fleet.

The company said the investment in processing technology to naturally break down food waste supported its ongoing waste management and reduction efforts, as part of an overall commitment to environmental compliance.

More Arctic trips

SCENIC Luxury Cruises & Tours has unveiled six new voyages in its 2023/24 *Scenic Eclipse Arctic & Fjords* brochure release.

The cruise line's *Scenic Eclipse II* is set to join the fleet next year, enabling 40 new landings throughout the region, including more destinations like Scotland and Canada's High Arctic tundra, giving clients the opportunity to "discover new horizons and venture further than ever before in ultra-luxury".

Travellers can currently enjoy Super Earlybird savings of up to 20% on their suite for selected 2023 and 2024 voyages when paying in full 12 months prior to departure.

For more information or to book, call 1300 173 812.