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# Sharp rebound in cruising sentiment

**CRUISE** Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia has released figures demonstrating a strong recovery in public sentiment around cruising.

The data was collected as part of an independent international consumer research project commissioned by CLIA which also showed surging UK demand for cruise holidays (**CW** 27 Sep).

Feedback from Australians showed consumer sentiment among past cruise passengers had returned to pre-pandemic levels, with 81% planning to cruise again in the next few years - a significant uplift from the 73% measured 12 months ago, and close to the 82% pre-pandemic confidence figure recorded in Dec 2019.

Among both cruisers and non-cruisers in Australia, 65% said they were "likely" or "very likely" to book a cruise in the next two years - higher than the 64% pre-

pandemic figure from Dec 2019 and well ahead of the Nov 2021 result of 53%.

Highlighting the economic impact of cruising, 90% of Aussie cruisers stayed on shore at least one night in their embarkation port prior to sailing, while 27% stayed three nights or longer.

CLIA also noted that 82% of Australians who cruised in the last six months had used a travel agent to book - well above the global rate of 65% - while 91% of those who had cruised said they felt "safe" or "very safe" on board.

CLIA MD Joel Katz hailed the results, saying the research was a strong indication of cruising's resilience ahead of the upcoming 2022-23 summer season when 20 CLIA cruise lines will operate in Australasian waters.

"Sentiment has climbed even higher in other countries where cruise operations have been

running for some time, so we can be confident of a similar rise in our region as we move forward."

Katz also highlighted the success of the first Cruise Month initiative since 2019, with the four-week program during Sep bringing cruise lines, travel agents and cruise fans together to mark the return of cruising in local waters.

He said Cruise Month 2022 had been met with a huge wave of support, with a heavy focus on social media which had been strongly supported among the travel industry and cruisers who have "amplified the initiative through their own channels".

"The sight of magnificent international cruise ships back in Australian and New Zealand waters has created a huge sense of anticipation, and cruise lines are reporting good demand for cruising over the coming summer and into the future," he said.

## Royal savings

**ROYAL** Caribbean International is offering up to \$600 in instant savings and free balcony upgrades in a special sale on its upcoming 2022-23 season in Australia.

Fares are being reduced by as much as 30% in the sale which is valid for bookings confirmed by 11 Oct.

Voyages are available ex Brisbane and Sydney, on Royal Caribbean's groundbreaking *Quantum of the Seas* and *Ovation of the Seas* which will operate locally from Oct-Apr - see the **cover page** for more.

## Cruise Weekly today

**Cruise Weekly** today features five pages of all the latest cruise news including a photo page from **The Real Love Boat** and a cover wrap from **Royal Caribbean International**.

*Regent*

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## CRUISE WEEKLY

On location aboard  
*Valiant Lady*

Today's issue of CW is coming to you from the Mediterranean aboard Virgin Voyages' *Valiant Lady*.

THIS week *Cruise Weekly* has been invited on board Virgin Voyages' *Valiant Lady*, the cruise line's second ship and follow up to *Scarlet Lady*, for one of her flagship itineraries, "The Irresistible Med".

Embarking from Barcelona and sailing to some of the Mediterranean's best destinations, our first port of call is Toulon in the French Riviera.

One of the largest ports in southeastern France, Toulon is known for its naval, aeronautical and armament traditions, but also offers access to Marseille and Saint-Tropez, where many of *Valiant's* guests will head on shore excursions.

## NCL eases vax

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line yesterday announced the lifting of all COVID-19 testing and vaccination requirements across its global fleet.

The move is effective immediately, with CEO Harry Sommer citing "significant, positive progress in the public health environment" for the changes, which are still subject to any local requirements in jurisdictions where ships dock.

## Princess celebrates love

**TONIGHT'S** screening of the first episode of *The Real Love Boat* reality TV series is "product placement on steroids," according to Princess Cruises Senior VP Asia-Pacific, UK and Europe, Stuart Allison.

During a special preview event at the Carnival Australia HQ in Sydney last night, Allison told **CW** the Channel 10 show is going to be good for the overall cruise category, appealing to a broad range of viewers and showcasing not just the ship but also a host of Mediterranean destinations.

The show, filmed aboard *Regal Princess*, features TV personality Daniel Doody along with Hannah Ferrier from *Below Deck* and *The Voice* host Darren McMullen, along with a dozen eligible Aussie singles searching for love.

Described by Princess Cruises President John Padgett (**CW** 16

Sep) as featuring elements of *The Bachelor* and *The Amazing Race*, there's also a US version of *The Real Love Boat* which has similarly been created in partnership with Princess Cruises.

Allison said the opportunity to showcase cruising to a mass audience via the show was amazing, given what the sector has been through during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If it gets a whole new generation of people thinking of cruising, and after the last two years when cruise lines really haven't been talking to audiences in Australia, to get a burst of this for the next couple of months, that really is incredible," he said.

The unmissable first episode screens tonight in Australia at 7.30pm on the Ten Network - see **page four** for lots of pics from last night's launch party.

## HAL 150th birthday

**HOLLAND** America Line will kick off a year of celebrations for its 150th anniversary in 2023 with a special transatlantic crossing which departs next week.

The special cruise from Rotterdam to New York city aboard HAL's *Rotterdam* flagship, guests on board will enjoy the re-creation of a bygone cruising era.

A highlight of the crossing will be the performance of a specially composed musical piece by Emmy Award winner Steven Schoenberg, along with a short film about the cruise line's journey, debuting 26 Oct.

## Blue Lagoon deal

**FIJI'S** Blue Lagoon Cruises is offering 20% off cruise fares for travel 01 Apr 2023-31 Mar 2024, as well as a free cabin upgrade subject to availability at time of booking.

The earlybird deal applies to one of Blue Lagoon's three-, four- or seven-night cruises in Fiji's Mamanuca and Yasawa Islands, and can be booked through wholesalers, inbound operators or directly via the Blue Lagoon Cruises agent portal or reservations team.

Book using the promo code **DOUBLE** or call 1800 007 129 (AU) or 0800 293 766 (NZ) - marketing collateral **HERE**.

## NFS UnCruise draw

**TRAVEL** advisors who join one of two upcoming webinars with Natural Focus Safaris and UnCruise Adventures will be entered into a competition to win an eight day cruise for two.

The free sessions take place on Tue 11 Oct and Tue 18 Oct, and feature Natural Focus' Marketing Manager Rolf Huber and UnCruise Adventures' Yolanda Grimes - **CLICK HERE**.



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## Baby steps for Hong Kong

**RESTRICTIONS** on cruising out of Hong Kong's Kai Tak Cruise Terminal will ease somewhat later this week, with officials confirming that suspected COVID-19 cases on board will no longer result in impacted voyages being cancelled.

A "suspension mechanism", which halted operations aboard a cruise ship for some weeks if positive cases were discovered, is being abolished by the Hong Kong Health Bureau.

However significant rules still apply, including all foreign port calls being banned, meaning only "cruises to nowhere" are allowed.

Full vaccination is also still mandatory and a 75% capacity limit is being imposed, along with as-yet-unspecified testing requirements under the somewhat relaxed regime.

Jeff Bent, MD of Kai Tak operator Worldwide Cruise

Terminals, welcomed the changes as a "positive step," but noted there were still many restrictions meaning it was unlikely that cruise lines would be attracted back to Hong Kong.

"The cruise lines can send ships anywhere they want to in the world, they don't have to come to Hong Kong," he told *RTHK*.

"If the restrictions in Hong Kong are tougher and tighter, they send the ships to wherever they can operate the best," Bent said.

He highlighted contrasting rules which apply to cruise over and above requirements for international arrivals to HKG which now only require a RAT test on arrival.

He said the return of Hong Kong cruising to pre-pandemic levels, when dozens of lines visited, would require the destination to "conform to international norms" by lifting all restrictions.

## Fred's free drinks

**FRED.OLSEN** Cruise Lines is offering free beverage packages on 42 European cruises in 2023.

The offer is valid for bookings confirmed by 31 Oct, and follows the recent appointment of Cruise Traveller as the line's exclusive local distributor (*CW* 26 Aug).

Cruise Traveller has also launched the first dedicated Australian website for the line at [fredolsenbycruisetraveller.com.au](http://fredolsenbycruisetraveller.com.au), and will shortly release a dedicated brochure for the local market, covering voyages in 2023 and 2024.

The 42 round-trip sailings featuring the drinks package range from six to 16 nights and depart from Liverpool, Newcastle or Southampton in the UK, across its four-ship fleet including *Braemar*, *Balmoral*, *Bolette* and *Borealis*.

## Oceania events

**OCEANIA** Cruises has kicked off an exclusive "event series" across Australia and NZ, with the first taking place today on the Gold Coast.

Travel advisors and their clients as well as loyal past guests are being invited to the sessions hosted by the Oceania sales team to highlight features such as the brand's hallmark small ship luxury and destination immersion as well as its Finest Cuisine at Sea culinary concept.

Jason Worth, VP Australia and NZ for Oceania, said "there's nothing like a face-to-face event to inspire trade partners and their clients with news of our exceptional itineraries," with the discussion highlights to also focus on the 2023 debut of the new 1,200-guest *Oceania Vista*.

Events will continue through until late Nov, with the full list of dates and locations plus rego details available by [CLICKING HERE](#).

## EARLY BIRD SALE

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**\$1,500**  
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\*Selected sailings, based on twin share. T&Cs apply.

# The Real Love Boat sets sail tonight

Tuesday 05th Oct 2022

**PRINCESS** Cruises last night hosted some of its key industry partners at a special preview event for the new reality TV series recently filmed aboard its *Regal Princess* as she cruised in the Mediterranean.

Without wanting to give too much away, the first episode is set in Barcelona where some initial drama ensues prior to the contestants boarding the ship where the romance kicks off.

Last night's event also featured "Chief Stewardess" Hannah Ferrier and "Entertainment Director" Daniel Doody, who play cupid during the series, and are pictured right with Princess Cruises Senior VP Stuart Allison.

The first episodes of the show screen tonight and tomorrow night in Australia live on the Ten Network as well as the TenPlay streaming channel.



**ALISON** Lord from Travel Associates Turrumurra with Rachael Tyrrell from Princess Cruises and Megan Catterall of itravel.



**LOVE** is in the air for Elly Eves and Heather Pryde from Princess Cruises.



**THE** Helloworld Travel cruise team of Greg Wilson, Josh Duncan, Kristy Johnston and Karen Deveson with Princess Cruises' Heather Pryde.



**STUART** Allison from Princess Cruises belts out the Love Boat theme song - or perhaps he was just introducing the screening and special guests...



**CHIEF** Stewardess Hannah Ferrier grabs a quick selfie with Samantha Cooper from Flight Centre Richmond.



**MESMERISED** trade partners follow the on-screen love action.



## New Caledonia is back



**P&O Cruises' Pacific Explorer** continues to blaze the trail for the resumption of cruising in the Pacific, yesterday becoming the first cruise ship to return to New Caledonia.

The ship sailed into Noumea for an historic overnight stay, following the recent reopening of New Caledonia's maritime borders to cruise tourism.

Carnival Australia President Marguerite Fitzgerald was in Noumea for the ship's arrival, which was the latest in a series of milestones for *Explorer* which was also the first ship to return to Australia in Apr, as well as marking the reopening of cruising in New Zealand and Fiji in Aug.

"P&O Cruises has been sailing to New Caledonia for many decades, and so we are thrilled to return to this beautiful nation," she said.

"Cruise tourism makes an important economic contribution to the island nations of the South Pacific, and we are looking forward to renewing our partnerships with the

governments, businesses and communities of New Caledonia and strengthening them even further as our ships call once again," Fitzgerald added.

She noted that Carnival's various brands were looking at scheduling longer days in Noumea when they visited, because the recent opening of the new Brisbane International Cruise Terminal meant they can reach the destination faster and spend more time visiting the city.

### Croatia charters

**SAIL Croatia** has launched a new full-ship charter experience targeting hens and bucks events, allowing groups to exclusively hire any vessels in the Navigator fleet for a "pre-marital celebration of epic proportions".

Groups of up to 40 can be managed, with the company seeing increasing post-pandemic demand for charters - see [sail-croatia.com](http://sail-croatia.com).



**PRINCESS Cruises** is certainly looking to a new, younger cruise demographic with tonight's kick-off of *The Real Love Boat* (see [page four](#)), with the brand's Senior VP, Stuart Allison, last night confessing he was "just a twinkle in his father's eye" when the original *Love Boat* series aired.

Speaking to guests at an exclusive preview of the first episode of the new reality show filmed aboard *Regal Princess* in the Mediterranean, Allison noted that the Aaron Spelling-produced scripted series was "absolutely panned by the critics" in the 1970s but became so popular that it went for nine seasons and was shown across the world in over 30 different languages.

"I think it's going to present lots of opportunity for people to fall in love with a cruise with Princess," Allison enthused.

Reality TV tragics will also be attracted by one of the Aussie stars of the show, Hannah Ferrier, famous for her role in yachting drama *Below Deck* - **pictured** with one of **CW's** in-house fans, Associate Publisher Anna Piper.



## CLIA UPDATE



with Joel Katz  
MD, CLIA Australasia

Cruise revival gathers pace

**CRUISING'S** revival in Australia and New Zealand is moving into a new phase as more ships return to local waters ahead of the summer season.

Carnival Cruise Lines' *Carnival Splendor* became the latest ship to return on Friday, arriving in Sydney to a greeting from another new arrival, P&O Australia's *Pacific Adventure*.

Other ships are due to arrive this month from Princess Cruises, Royal Caribbean Cruise Line and Celebrity Cruises, joining those already operating in local waters.

In all, 20 CLIA cruise lines are scheduled to sail in Australian waters between now and the end of April, bringing dozens of ships on seasonal deployments and world cruise itineraries.

It's a fitting renaissance for cruising in one of the world's most passionate cruise markets and comes after a successful Cruise Month during which social media and newspaper travel sections have been awash with Cruise Month promotions and coverage.

With consumer sentiment among Australian cruisers now back at pre-pandemic levels, this renewed enthusiasm around cruising can only continue to grow as more ships return.

Thanks to all those who took part in Cruise Month throughout September. Happy sailing in the months ahead.

