



New Le Ponant sets sail



ANTICIPATION continues to build towards next year's Australian deployment of Ponant Cruises' three-masted sailing yacht *Le Ponant*, which has emerged from several months of renovation at the San Giorgio del Porto shipyard in Italy.

The massive makeover has seen the newly imagined ship transformed to now accommodate just 32 guests, with a 1:1 passenger to crew ratio.

The vessel previously carried 64 passengers, with the newly refined layout created by Studio Jean-Philippe Nuel and Sterling Design International aiming to "create a sense of luxury, privacy and tranquillity that makes guests feel as if they are on their own private sailing yacht".

Ponant CEO Herve Gastinel said "*Le Ponant* has regained her splendour and more, while setting new eco-responsible navigation standards".

"Aboard *Le Ponant*, the jewel in our fleet's crown, everyone can

reconnect with nature and their own inspirations, as they live out their desires following the wind."

The sailing ship is equipped with the latest technologies to optimise emissions, including the ability to connect to shore power, special filtration systems to eliminate fine particles and cut NOX emissions, advanced waste management and more - not to mention its ability to also operate under wind power.

The 16 spacious staterooms are spread across four passenger decks, while the common areas have been refitted to feature a "panoramic gastronomic restaurant" as well as a spa, wellness area & gym along with a relaxing sun lounge area.

Le Ponant will now undertake a series of itineraries in Greece and Croatia, before heading to the Seychelles for the southern hemisphere summer and then embarking on her Kimberley season which will run from Apr-Oct next year.

Crystal Mozart's Riverside return

A **NEW** ultra-luxury European river cruise line will return the defunct *Crystal Mozart* to operation on the Danube next year, with German hotel group Seaside Collection acquiring the ship which has lain idle since the collapse of Crystal Cruises earlier this year (**CW** 20 Jan).

The double-width vessel was constructed in 1987 but underwent a total transformation in 2016 as it became the first of five ships comprising the former Crystal Cruises river fleet.

Seaside is establishing a new brand called Riverside Luxury Cruises, and will relaunch the ship as *Riverside Mozart* with premium amenities including butler service, targeting the "top luxury segment of international river cruising".

The company is already taking bookings for the 2023 season, featuring a range of pricing models including "full board" and "premium all-inclusive" along with options to bundle shore excursions.

The ship features four restaurants, an indoor pool and all-suite accommodations.

Initially the operation will focus on the German market, but it's understood an Americas office is also being established.

Cruise Weekly today

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

Baltic shore power

CRUISE Baltic has enhanced its website with new transparent information detailing the availability of shore power at its member ports across the Baltic region.

The site now features technical details such as hook-up fees and maximum power provided, with the aim of helping cruise lines to create sustainable itineraries.



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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**.

VALIANT Lady's second port of call on our seven-night 'The Irresistible Med' cruise is Tuscany, where some will head down the coast to Pisa.

Although this central Italian town is known worldwide for its famed Leaning Tower, passengers can also check out the nearby Cathedral and the Baptistery of St. John.

Guests also have the option to head further afield to Florence, the capital of Tuscany, formerly ruled by the House of Medici, whose fingerprints remain all over the city to this day.

WA showcases cruise cred

YESTERDAY the Western Australian Government kicked off the sixth WA Cruise Exchange in Perth, aiming to further raise the state's profile as a "world-class cruise shipping destination".

WA Tourism Minister Roger Cook said the event was particularly timely given the imminent return of major cruise liners to Western Australia.

The four-day conference includes representatives from Carnival Australia, Royal Caribbean Group, MSC Cruises, Ponant and APT, along with several first-time attendees including Heritage Cruises, Coral Expeditions and Viking Cruises.

The event will showcase eight Western Australian cruise destinations: Albany, Broome, Busselton, Dampier, Esperance, Exmouth, Fremantle and Geraldton, while the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism

Operators Council is also highlighting some of the state's Aboriginal tours and experiences.

Cook noted that the Exchange comes ahead of a "bumper summer cruise season" for Western Australia, which will kick off with a maiden call by *Coral Princess* to Fremantle on 28 Oct, followed by Cunard's *Queen Elizabeth* on 07 Nov.

He also highlighted next year's Ponant Kimberley season which will see its luxury *Le Ponant* three-masted sailing vessel (see p1) cruise between Broome and Kuri Bay.

This week's conference will see 24 cruise line representatives, along with ground handlers and industry peak bodies, visit ports such as Busselton, Broome and Fremantle and explore attractions in the surrounding regions as the industry pitches destinations for inclusion in itineraries.

Tauck solo savings

TAUCK has once again eliminated the single supplement on its Category 1 European riverboat cabins next season, with the move applying to almost 250 Tauck river cruise departures right across 2023.

The solo supplement has also been reduced by \$1,300 on other selected cabin categories on 63 departures of 20 different river itineraries.

Reductions also apply to selected Tauck land journeys, with Tauck CEO Dan Mahar noting that "planning a solo trip with Tauck is as simple as selecting the itinerary and the departure date...all of the advance planning and other tasks that would normally fall squarely on the shoulders of a solo traveller...[are] all expertly handled by Tauck".

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17 SEP 2023






PORTHOLE

THEY say there's no such thing as bad publicity, and for the cruise industry that hopefully applies to the discovery of the final resting place of a sailing ship lost during a West Australian cyclone in 1911.

The exciting find has been documented in a new Disney+ Original series called *Shipwreck Hunters Australia*, detailing the search for Finnish ship *Glenbank* which disappeared off the coast of WA, going down with all hands (pictured).

The remote deep-water site in the Dampier Marine Park was first located by a group of local anglers, with a dive team from Shipwreck Hunters bringing in the WA Museum to help in the mission confirming it was the *Glenbank*.

The researchers said the steel barque, under charter to carry copper ore from a mine near Balla Balla, capsized when its unsecured cargo shifted during a ferocious storm.

The story of the *Glenbank* shipwreck is documented in the first of six episodes in the new Disney+ series, which went live in full yesterday.



Disney makes agency dream come true

MELBOURNE-BASED travel agency Mr Chocolate's Travel had its busiest day ever last week when it booked more than 100 cabins on next year's highly anticipated Disney Magic at Sea season in Australia and NZ.

The small family business specialises in Disney vacations and is one of the entertainment giant's biggest sellers in Australia, so the arrival of Disney Cruises Down Under was a dream come true, providing a "Disney miracle" for the agency after the disruptions of the pandemic.

Agency owner Rebecca Mason was one of the first to cruise on the recent *Disney Wish* shakedown cruise in the USA (pictured), and is a self-confessed Disney obsessive.

Mason's impressive track record with Disney sales meant Mr Chocolate's Travel was offered a direct booking portal to sell Disney cruises, and she pulled out all stops to rally the team (i.e. daughter Brooke and her boyfriend) at 2am last Thu, when bookings opened early due to the pending closure of the Disney call centre as Hurricane Ian bore down on Florida (CW 30 Sep).



She said it ended up being a "busy and emotional day" as they secured highly sought-after cabins on *Disney Wonder* for all of her pre-approved clients - and continues to work on getting waitlisted pax into any cabins that appear as cancellations filter through the system.

"We've been in the Disney game for a long time so understand the power of Disney but even we were surprised by how desperate Aussie families were to get on a

Disney cruise and give their kids a taste of Disney Down Under.

"For many families, overseas Disney parks are out of reach so there were a lot of tears when we confirmed a coveted spot onboard *Disney Wonder* during its first Australian season.

"We made a lot of Disney dreams come true and that makes me so happy," she said.

Mr Chocolate's Travel is a member of the Australian Travel Agents Cooperative consortium.

Emerald to homeport cruises in Antigua

EMERALD Cruises' *Emerald Azzurra* will operate voyages based in the West Indies island of Antigua in 2023, with roundtrip voyages from St John's kicking off in Nov next year.

A new partnership with the destination will also see the new *Emerald Sakara* visit both Antigua and Barbuda in Jan

2024, with Dona Regis-Prosper, GM of Antigua Cruise Port, saying the move is the result of strategic positioning for the country as the Caribbean's "luxury choice destination", which has seen meticulous attention to elements such as hotel partnerships, airport movements and transfers.

Silversea bonus

SILVERSEA Cruises is offering a bonus commission of A\$365 for any new booking on 2023 voyages, or a double bonus of A\$730 when they book selected close-to-home trips.

The bonus payout, available for bookings confirmed by 31 Oct, will be remitted 45 days after bookings are deposited.