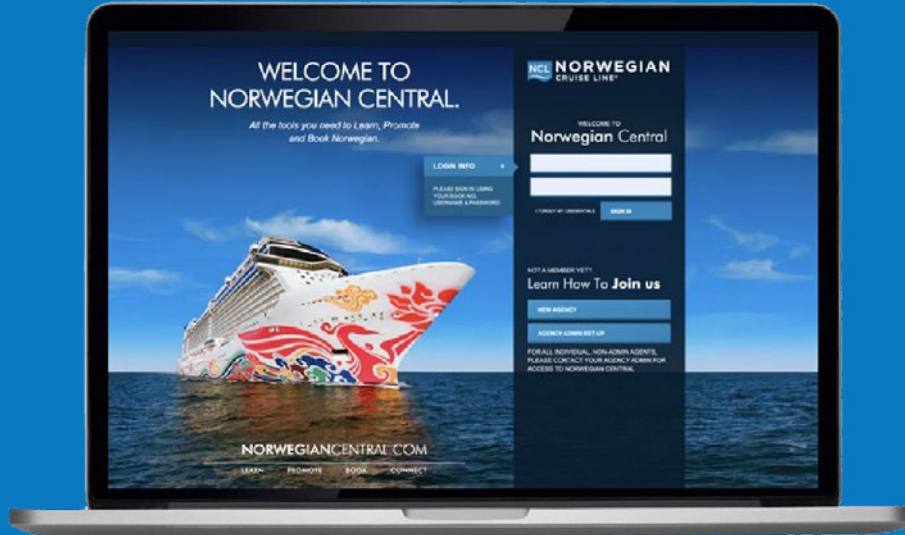


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RCI plots Vanuatu trials

ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI) will next month begin cruise trials to Vanuatu, in partnership with the Vanuatu Tourism Office.

The first arrival will be *Ovation of the Seas* which is scheduled to visit Mystery Island on 12 Nov, followed by an overnight visit to Port Vila on 19 Nov.

Further sailings are planned on both *Ovation* and sister ship *Quantum of the Seas*, which will homeport from Brisbane.

“Royal Caribbean has been working hand in hand with the Department of Tourism and the Vanuatu Tourism Office on the safe and successful resumption of cruising to Vanuatu,” the company said yesterday.

Vanuatu’s Minister of Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Ni-Vanuatu Business, James Bule, said “we look forward to welcoming Royal Caribbean and its guests back to enjoy our island communities

once again - cruising provides a vital economic lifeblood to Vanuatu”.

Geraldine Tari, Acting Director of the country’s Department of Tourism, said “with cruising comes jobs and security for locals who rely on the cruising supply chain, so we look forward to Royal Caribbean’s cruise fleet returning to Vanuatu next month”.

“However there is still some work to do alongside Mystery Island Tourism Holding Ltd, the Vanuatu Government and Royal Caribbean to ensure that Mystery Island as well as our other ports open up to tourists in a sustainable manner with as little ramifications to the environment as possible,” she said.

Nov will also see P&O Cruises Australia’s *Pacific Encounter* and *Pacific Adventure* conduct trial visits to Vanuatu to test protocols and procedures (**CW** 19 Sep).

Cruise key for HLO

THE rebounding cruise market is driving Helloworld Travel’s leisure TTV across the board, according to an update from CEO Andrew Burnes at the company’s AGM yesterday.

“The lifting of the ban on international cruise ships effective 17 Apr 2022 was welcome news,” he said.

“It has been a long time coming, and agents and their clients across Australia were both relieved and thrilled when this ban was finally lifted”.

Burnes noted that pre-pandemic cruise sales made up, on average, “a third or more of most Helloworld agents’ leisure sales, and also contributed significantly to their air and land sales”.

HLO technology initiatives include a rollout of a uniform version of the *Odysseus* platform in the cruise division.

Cruise Weekly today

TODAY’S issue of *Cruise Weekly* features three pages of all the latest cruise news and a cover page from **Norwegian Cruise Line**.

Norwegian Central

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line is today showcasing the benefits for travel agents who utilise its Norwegian Central online marketing hub.

The platform includes the “NCLU” training platform with all the latest information on the NCL fleet, destinations, amenities and how to sell to different clientele.

There’s also the Marketing HQ portal with flyers, social media assets and other collateral, while Norwegian Central also gives easy access to the NCL booking system to help manage single or group bookings including pre- and post-cruise arrangements.

More details on the **cover page**.

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Ponant sustainability report release

PONANT Cruises has released its first annual sustainability report, with the cruise line saying the new document showcases “early results that pave the way towards more sustainable and meaningful tourism”.

The report was unveiled during the European Sustainable Development Week, with CEO Herve Gastinel saying “we are sailors for whom the oceans and biodiversity are part of our DNA”.

“We see ourselves as having a responsibility to our guests, our employees and local communities to promote meaningful voyages,” Gastinsel said, adding “we have made lasting and ambitious commitments”.

Ponant aims to decarbonise its cruises, reduce atmospheric emissions, eliminate plastics, recover waste, protect biodiversity, support scientific research aboard its ships and strengthen its partnerships with local communities, he said.

“This first annual report presents the results in figures.”

“The 2021 indicators are in line with commitments to



reduce CO₂ emissions by 15% by 2026 and 30% by 2031, and reduce nitrogen oxide by 85% and sulphur emissions by 98%,” Gastinel said.

Managing water is another key area of progress, with drinking water production, recycling and biological waste treatment systems designed to avoid chemicals and damage to biodiversity.

“On board 100% of waste is separated and sorted, with 60% of it being recycled, compared to

the global average of barely 20%.

“By 2026 this recovery will be up to 80% in conjunction with specialised channels ashore.”

Resale of recyclable waste in Ushuaia has already been helping finance paediatric health missions conducted by the Garrahan Foundation for the last two years, while as of this year single-use plastics have been eliminated across the Ponant fleet.

Other key commitments under Ponant’s Blue Horizon roadmap include considering the whole world as a Sulphur Emission Control Area for all ships in the fleet by 2025, ensuring reuse and traceability of all waste by 2025, embark scientific research teams aboard the high polar expedition ship *Le Commandant Charcot*, and supporting the International Blue Nature Alliance project aiming to create 18 million km² of Marine Protected Areas by 2025.

Ponant is also developing an “eco-designed cruise ship concept that will have no impact on the environment when sailing”.

The full report is available online by **CLICKING HERE**.

MSC Opera FIFA

MSC Cruises has announced that its *MSC Opera* will become a floating hotel in Doha alongside *MSC World Europa* and *MSC Poesia* during the upcoming FIFA World Cup between 19 Nov and 19 Dec.

The new accommodation opportunity for football fans and visitors to Doha can be booked for a minimum of two nights through MSC Cruises Australia and New Zealand - call 1300 028 502 (AU) or 0508 4278 473 (NZ).

Free cruise offer

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises Fiji has launched an incentive offering travel advisors and their partners a free expedition cruise holiday aboard its *MV Reef Endeavour*.

Agents will receive one free night per adult booked on a 3-, 4-, 7- or 11-night Fiji cruise, with credits able to be accumulated for bookings made until Mar 2023.

Additional nights not-yet earned can also be booked at a special industry rate of just \$160 per person per night.

The offer is valid for all bookings made on Captain Cook’s Mamanuca and Yasawa cruises, as well as the Remote North voyages and cruises to the Lau and Kadavu islands.

The *MV Reef Endeavour* features 63 staterooms, with the trips seeing guests explore parts of Fiji and experience local culture not accessible to bigger vessels - for more info see captaincookcruisesfiji.com.

SeaDream 2023/24

SEADREAM Yacht Club has announced its Caribbean deployments for the northern winter 2023/24 season, with *SeaDream II* to homeport in Sint Maarten with a series of voyages through the Leeward and Windward Islands.

SeaDream I will operate four-to eight-day voyages from San Juan in Puerto Rico and St Thomas - seadream.com.

Star Clippers to cut vax requirements

STAR Clippers has announced that it will begin accepting unvaccinated passengers from next month, as well as removing requirements for vaccinated cruisers to provide negative COVID-19 tests.

The revamped protocols will see unvaccinated guests still required to provide a negative RAT or PCR test before boarding.

The line said it was delighted

to be announcing the change, adding the update “will come as a huge relief to new guests and existing passengers alike.”

“Star Clippers will continue to follow strict health and hygiene policies on board, closely following public health guidelines, as we have always done so,” a statement noted.

“This news is a dramatic step forward in our recovery.”



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OCEAN Builders, the futuristic organisation which is plotting future communities at sea - including the attempted purchase and Panama deployment of the former P&O Cruises *Pacific Dawn* as a floating cryptocurrency enclave (*CW* 05 Nov 2020) - has had a somewhat embarrassing debut for its latest innovation.

The company last month held a global online unveiling of a floating home called the SeaPod, but unfortunately a technical hitch saw the structure become partially submerged right at the critical moment (**pictured**).

The prototype SeaPod features three "half floors" suspended about 3m above the surface supported by underwater air-filled steel tubes, said to give the residence "superior comfort and stability because you are floating above the waves".

Sadly the "floating" part of that claim proved not to be quite accurate after a "ballast tank and pumping system malfunction" but the company stressed there were no injuries as a result of "what we're referring to as 'The Tilt'".



Viking Valhalla club winners



ROBYN Sinfield from Home Travel Company - **pictured** with Viking Cruises' Ramon Drew - says she's in "great company" having been named as one of the winners of the Viking Valhalla

Club 2022.

The so-called Viking Hall of Fame showcases top sellers of Viking cruises over the last 12 months, with other winners including Georgie Walpole and Hannah Campbell of Global Journeys, Debbie Eyers from Flight Centre Narellan, Jonathan House of Travel Associates Runaway Bay, Travel The World's Michael Sing, Kathy Pavlidis of Travel Associates Kew and Bicton Travel's Phil Smethurst and Nadia Redman (*CW* 07 Oct).

Also honoured as Viking's " Mightiest Marketer" is Louise McCarthy from TravelManagers.

All of the winners will receive a place on a Viking Mediterranean voyage in Mar 2023 including business class flights with Finnair.

Honorary top sellers in the incentive also included Alison Lord from Travel Associates Turramurra, Chantelle Power of RACV Travel, Bicton Travel's Byron Horne, and Vicki Lactret from Helloworld Coolangatta.

New Scenic UK MD

FORMER Azamara Cruises UK Managing Director, Richard Twynam, has been appointed as Scenic Group's new Managing Director UK & Ireland.

Twynam, who is well known to the cruise sector through former roles as UK MD at Virgin Holidays Cruises and leading cruise at Kuoni UK, will be based in Manchester.

Overseeing both the Scenic and Emerald Cruises brands in the UK/Ireland market, he joins the group from his most recent role at healthcare business Prenetics, where he is currently MD of Cruise and Travel Testing.



Go West!

MORE great cruise news to celebrate as the Pacific ports continue to open up again to cruise from NZ to Fiji and then late last week - Papua New Guinea.

Coral Princess has just marked her maiden visit to the country with a call at the Conflict Islands and P&O's *Pacific Encounter* has sailed into Milne Bay Province. *Pacific Explorer* will also be the first ship to arrive back into New Caledonia.

Closer to home, I was privileged to be involved in the WA Cruise Exchange last week which continues to improve year on year.

Ahead of cruise returning to the state with the arrival of *Coral Princess* on 28 Oct, you could feel the excitement of all the attendees.

The forum welcomed eight major cruise line executives including Nicolai Skogland, Executive Director of Viking Cruises on his first visit to Australia, tourism organisations, ground handlers and associations.

There were numerous highlights - a B2B session with the RTOs and cruise focused operators; a wonderful welcome dinner with Tourism WA execs, Cruise WA committee members and WA Port CEOs, and some amazing opportunities to explore the state.

Host city, Perth showed off a wide range of great cruise product as did the buzzing regional destinations - Fremantle, Busselton and Margaret River which proudly showcased their attractions and, in some cases, their plans for upgrades.

A shout out to Cape Naturaliste Vineyard owned by ACA member, Captain Craig Brent-White - Kimberley Coastal Pilots.