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Resilient Lady is here! — and there's still time to get Sailors on board for her MerMaiden season for as low as A\$149 per Sailor per night. From quickie escapes to legendary one-ways, they'll sail with over US\$1,000 worth of Always Included Luxuries — award-winning dining in 20+ eateries, group fitness, all tips, WiFi, entertainment, and essential drinks that never cost extra.

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Cruise Weekly today

CRUISE Weekly today features two pages of all the latest cruise industry news including a cover wrap from **Virgin Voyages**.

Sail like a Virgin

VIRGIN Voyages' Resilient Lady has set sail on her "MerMaiden" voyage from her new home port of Melbourne, and Australians can now experience the cruise line's inaugural local season from just \$149 per night.

The third Virgin ship has set sail for the Bass Strait on her five-day journey to Tasmania, with cruisers on board enjoying a host of "always included luxuries", such as more than 20 eateries, wi-fi, all tips, and entertainment.

For more information on the unbelievably low rates, head to the **cover page**.

One year extension for cruise rules

INTERNATIONAL cruise ships have been granted 12 months of additional certainty about their operations in Australian waters, under a ruling issued yesterday by Minister for Transport & Infrastructure Catherine King.

The cruise sector has been waiting for some months for a decision on the ministerial exemption for cruise shipping to the *Coastal Trading (Revitalising Australian Shipping) Act 2012*, which allows foreign-flagged cruise ships to carry passengers between Australian ports.

Under yesterday's update, the exemption will now apply from 01 Jan-31 Dec 2024, a one year period, replacing the current five-year exemption issued in 2018, which ends later this month.

The ruling applies to vessels in excess of 5,000 gross tonnes which are capable of a speed of at least 15 knots and capable of

carrying at least 100 passengers, "used wholly or primarily for the carriage of passengers between any ports in states or territories, except between Victoria and Tasmania", the document states.

"COVID-19 really affected tourism and the cruise industry, so the Australian Government is continuing to support cruise tourism by guaranteeing another year of the exemption," King said.

"The exemption reduces red tape and costs while supporting THRIVE 2030, our national strategy for the long-term sustainable growth of the visitor economy," she added.

King said the 12-month exemption will provide additional time to consult on potential amendments to the *Act* to aid in the revitalisation of the Australian maritime industry.

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) hailed the

extension of the provisions to give clarity to cruise passengers, cruise lines, and the Australian tourism industry.

However, Managing Director Joel Katz noted that with cruise operations planned and scheduled several years in advance, "CLIA and cruise lines look forward to further urgent consultation with the Australian Government to provide longer-term certainty for cruising and to support the THRIVE 2030 national strategy for the sustainable growth of the visitor economy".

Australian Cruise Association CEO Jill Abel said the extension of the exemption is welcome.

"We look forward to the opportunity for further consultation over the next 12 months to ensure the *Act* delivers the maximum benefits to Australian ports and destinations," she added. *BP*



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On location aboard *Seven Seas Grandeur*

Today's issue of CW is coming to you from aboard the all-new *Seven Seas Grandeur*.

OUR time aboard the beautiful *Seven Seas Grandeur* comes to an end today as we step off the ultra-luxurious vessel and back into reality.

After a highly successful christening voyage, *Seven Seas Grandeur* will now embark on a variety of itineraries in the Caribbean over the coming months, prior to relocating to the Mediterranean in Apr.

No fear for NCLH's Sommer

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) President & Chief Executive Officer Harry Sommer (pictured) is not concerned about his competition, he has boldly declared.

Sommer made the defiant claim aboard *Seven Seas Grandeur*, which earlier this week became the newest ship to join NCLH's ultra-luxury cruise line, Regent Seven Seas Cruises (CW 12 Dec).

"When someone asks me whether I am concerned about capacity with new brands like Ritz Carlton or Explora, the answer is absolutely not," he enthused.

"I think anything that attracts people, and gets people excited about cruising is a huge win for us," Sommer shared.

The NCLH president explained that his philosophy is that luxury cruise lines are not competing with one another, but are fighting together to bring new passengers off shore and on board.

"My competition is not those brands", he said.

"I'm not fighting in the one and a half percent, we have to fight together and win the 98 and a



half percent...what sets Regent Seven Seas Cruises apart is its focus on people first," he added.

"I don't think we have to focus on 85 different priorities to get the product right - make sure our people are dealt with right, get our partnerships right, and we have a winner."

Sommer has also highlighted the great value that Regent Seven Seas Cruises places on its travel agent partners throughout *Seven Seas Grandeur's* christening cruise (CW yesterday). AP

Raise a toast to Quark

QUARK Expeditions is inviting guests to "raise a glass and stay connected" with free wi-fi and bar service available from its Antarctic 2024/25 sailing season.

Beer, standard wines, and spirits, as well as cocktails, will be available to guests at no charge during bar service hours, as well as during dinner, for its Antarctic 2024/25 season, which commences in Nov 2024.

Each guest will also be able to log onto the ship's wi-fi service for free with one device at a time.


The complimentary service will permit basic internet browsing and voice applications, with premium packages available for more data-intensive applications.

More Moran in '25

MATT Moran will return to Cunard Line for the third edition of the Great Australian Culinary Voyage in 2025.

The Australian food icon will headline Cunard's culinary voyage for the third time.

Moran will share his passion for gastronomy during interactive Q&A sessions with guests on the five-night round-trip sailing departing Sydney.



PORTHOLE

MSC Cruises' *MSC World Europa* is set to be the star of new television show *Building the Billion Pound Cruise Ship*. Channel 4 in the United Kingdom is set to air the one-hour show, which follows *World Europa* from her first steel cutting in 2019 to her first guests in late 2022.

Viewers follow the teams of designers, project managers and shipbuilders as they race against a tight schedule to deliver the brand-new ship.

Audiences will also delve behind the scenes to see what it takes to operate the 7,000-passenger ship.

World Europa, which was constructed by Chantiers de L'Atlantique, is powered by liquefied natural gas, and incorporates a host of technologies to minimise the ship's impact on the environment.

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