

Fire panel issue may impact 45 ships

MORE than 40 cruise ships are potentially sailing the world's oceans without required certifications for onboard fire insulating panels, after products from a key supplier failed recent safety tests.

The issue is believed to be behind the abrupt cancellation of the maiden voyage of Explora Journeys' new *Explora I* (pictured) (CW 07 Jul) which had been due for handover by shipbuilder Fincantieri last week.

The *Financial Times* reported fire insulation panel manufacturer Paroc has informed Fincantieri two types of its panels have lost their safety certifications.

This will mean *Explora I* will stay at the shipyard for a few more



weeks for remedial work.

The faulty panels have been installed in 45 cruise ships, with Paroc a key supplier to both Fincantieri and Meyer Werft, which manufacture vessels for Carnival Corporation, Royal Caribbean Group, Virgin Voyages, MSC, and more.

It's unclear which vessels are impacted at this stage, but at least one ship sailing for Carnival Corp and MSC's new *MSC Euribia* (CW 13 Jun) are believed to have the uncertified panels fitted.

Explora Chief Executive Michael Ungerer told travel advisors the shipbuilder had "identified a critical issue that must receive immediate attention".

"Certain materials from a third-party supplier do not meet the required safety certifications

and we therefore could not take delivery of the ship as planned," he said.

The panel certifications were issued in 2020 and had been due to expire in 2025, with the *Financial Times* saying it is unclear why fresh tests were conducted this year.

Under European Union safety regulations, new panels cannot be fitted on ships until the correct safety certification is in place, although ships already sailing did hold the required registrations at the time that they launched.

Global regulator the International Maritime Organisation said the determination of whether vessels are fit to sail is up to the nations where individual ships are flagged.

No Irish tenders

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line has modified an itinerary which had been set to visit seven ports in Ireland in 2024.

The alteration is due to a change in policy which has banned tendering in the country between Oct and Apr. Destinations scheduled included Waterford, Dingle, Galway, Killybegs, Belfast, Dublin, and Cork - the last two of which are tender ports.

A completely new voyage is now planned, visiting a series of ports in Northern Europe.

Anderson retires

JACK Anderson has stepped down as President of the relaunched Crystal Cruises, with A&K Group CEO Cristina Levis to continue to oversee the brand from Monaco.

Kim Berman, formerly with the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection and Silversea, will oversee Crystal's Florida office.

Cruise Weekly today

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

Starlink on AIDA

AIDA Cruises has successfully installed SpaceX's Starlink on three of its ships.

The roll-out across all vessels is expected to take place faster than anticipated, with travellers and crews to benefit from more bandwidth and faster internet connections by Oct.

Senior Vice President Guest Experience & OBR Steffi Heinicke said AIDA's field test was very convincing.

"Guests and crew appreciate the faster internet connections and enjoy the more comfortable web surfing," she said.

"Digital work on board is also made easier."



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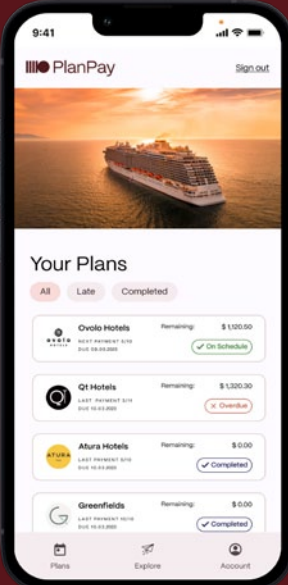




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Ruby Princess repairs completed

PRINCESS Cruises has confirmed repairs on *Ruby Princess* have been completed after the ship's hard landing at her home port in San Francisco last week.

Following an inspection and certification by the United States Coast Guard, *Ruby* is safe and fit to sail.

Her next cruise is a seven-day Pacific Northwest/Alaska voyage, returning to San Francisco on 16 Jul for disembarkation as originally scheduled.

The contact with the pier reportedly punctured the hull on *Ruby's* stern, well above the waterline.

The ship is now sailing with 2,677 guests, which is reportedly almost 600 fewer passengers than was initially scheduled to depart.

AQV launches Aussie brox

AMERICAN Queen Voyages (AQV) has launched a flagship Australian brochure for next year's program.

The publication, which includes Australian dollar pricing, is the first full-season brochure produced by AQV, after Journey Beyond welcomed the cruise line into its collection of brands earlier this year (**CW** 23 Feb).

The brochure includes fleet information, cabin details, cruise highlights, and an outline of life on board.

There's also a useful "Trip Finder", profiling AQV's waterways, itineraries, and destination highlights, simplifying the decision process for guests.

The brochure is available to order through TIFS of Templar.

Lead cruises include a historic adventure through the heartland of the United States, the iconic Memphis to New Orleans

itinerary along the Mississippi River on one of AQV's flagships *American Queen*.

To celebrate the program launch, AQV is also offering guests a free category stateroom or suite upgrade with up to AU\$4,000 savings, plus US\$200 "Your Choice" onboard credit per stateroom on selected departures.

Travel advisors are able to become AQV Specialists by arranging training through their local Journey Beyond business development manager and taking the Experience Learning training course on the Journey Beyond Experience Hub.

For further agent support, there is a dedicated Australian Travel Centre based in Adelaide, with agents able to book and pay in Aussie dollars.

Call the dedicated local AQV team on 1800 076 290.

White Island operators plea

WHITE Island helicopter operators have pleaded guilty to charges brought by WorkSafe New Zealand for health and safety failings related to the 2019 eruption which killed dozens of cruise passengers (**CW** 10 Dec 2019).

WorkSafe charged Volcanic Air Safaris Limited, Kahu NZ Limited and Aerius Limited under New Zealand's *Health & Safety at Work Act 2015* following a near 12-month investigation.

The hearing into the incident begins today, and is expected to take about 16 weeks.

In a statement released following the guilty pleas, WorkSafe Chief Executive Phil Parkes said the survivors and the families of those who have passed will be in many people's thoughts.



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A SAILOR who was attempting a record-breaking circumnavigation of Australia has blamed an ocean sunfish for an incident which required him to be rescued off the coast of Western Australia.

Xavier Doerr claims the creature, which is one of the largest species of bony fish in the world, hit his boat, forcing him into wild waters off the WA coast.

Ocean sunfish can weigh up to 1,000 kilograms, making it easy to believe it would have been capable of taking out Doerr's six-and-a-half-metre yacht.

The ocean sunfish is a constant source of oceanic comedy, with one having once knocked a vessel out of the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race.

It has attracted a number of cruel nicknames over the years, including "floating garbage", and "the world's dumbest fish".

Viking Melbourne dinner



VIKING held a special dinner at Entrecote in Victoria on Wed for its top travel advisors (**pictured**).

The cruise line's Melbourne partners were celebrated by Managing Director Michelle Black, Director of Sales & Revenue Keira Smith, and Director of Trade Marketing & Customer Communications Lee Siefken.

A fabulous four-course French feast was accompanied by a private sommelier-led wine pairing, with the evening also

marking the one-year anniversary for Commercial Manager VIC & SA Joanne Cullen.

It was also a chance to introduce Viking's new National Commercial Manager Shaun Kavanagh to its partners.

The 20 hand-picked advisors left with full bellies and a bottle of French champagne to remember the night.

The cruise line is also hosting a premium Viking Explorer lunch later this month in Canberra (**CW** 07 Jul).

Princess pilates

PRINCESS Cruises guests can experience the wonder of Alaska and top-rated fitness activities with the first-ever Club Pilates at Sea sailing.

The cruise line's *Royal Princess* will operate a week-long cruise round tripping from Seattle from 02-09 Sep.

Guests can explore Juneau, Skagway, and Ketchikan, as well as scenic cruising of Glacier National Park, and a visit to Victoria.

While on board, guests can also enjoy a full range of Pilates and other Xponential fitness classes led by top instructors offering tips, encouragement, and more.

"We're beyond thrilled to partner with Princess Cruises - Alaska's number one cruise operator - on our first-ever Club Pilates cruise which offers our members and, those interested in fitness, a unique opportunity to enjoy classes led by the best instructors in fitness, meet new people, and marvel at Alaska's pristine natural beauty," Club Pilates President Mike Gray said.



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