



Sir Branson to Voyage Down Under

“LET’S start the countdown clock,” Virgin Voyages founder and human headline, Sir Richard Branson shared via video message at the first of the cruise line’s Australian roadshows in Sydney yesterday (**CW** 24 Jul).

Marking 138 days until Virgin Voyage’s newest ship, *Resilient Lady*, arrives in Australia this Dec (**CW** 29 Mar), Branson also announced that he will be heading Down Under for the cruise line’s Aussie debut, even hinting that he might join some lucky patrons aboard.

“Hello Australia, I’ve been missing you, looking forward to coming down in Dec,” the travel magnate said.

“Australia has always held a really special place in the heart of Virgin, and I can’t wait for you to meet the beautiful *Resilient Lady* in Dec.

“I have a feeling you’re going to



love everything about her, and most of all, I’m looking forward to seeing you all on board.”

Held at The Boathouse, Rose Bay, the lunch event was an opportunity for travel advisors and brand partners to hear from Virgin executives about what it means to ‘Set Sail the Virgin Way’.

“It’s really built with Aussies in mind,” shared Vice President of International Sales & Marketing, Shane Lewis-Riley.

“We’re bringing a new way of cruising, in the sense that we are

adult by design.

“We’re able to put hammocks on the balconies, we’re able to have much more elevated dining experiences, we’re able to have much more curated entertainment...it has enabled us to create something completely different,” Lewis-Riley enthused.

Pictured: The excitement was palpable as Nathan Rosenberg, Chief Brand Officer, and Shane Lewis-Riley answered a Q&A hosted by the event’s Captain, TV presenter Teigan Nash.

Cruise Weekly today

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

Singapore Anthem

ROYAL Caribbean

International (RCI) has opened up bookings for *Anthem of the Seas*’ debut Singapore season, which kicks off in Nov 2024.

Itineraries include a new eight-day getaway visiting Celukan Bawang and Benoa in Bali and Lombok, and a 10-night Vietnam and Thailand escape, in addition to popular three- to five-night sailings visiting Penang, Malaysia and Phuket, Thailand.

In celebration of *Anthem*’s Singapore launch, the cruise line is offering 30% off and up to \$600 in savings plus kids sail free on select itineraries for bookings until 31 Aug.

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Virtuoso's Treasure



VIRTUOSO has announced the appointment of former Tourism Australia executive Sophie Treasure as Account Director, Partner Relations for Australia and New Zealand.

Treasure (**pictured**) takes on the role recently vacated by Nikki Glading, with her new position coming alongside Virtuoso promotions for Zoe Dean to Marketing Director, Australia and NZ and Bhavini Aggarwal to Senior Manager, Partner Relations.

Captain Cook announces CLIA partnership

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises Fiji is set to grow its presence in the Australian and New Zealand markets, after announcing a new partnership with Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

The collaboration will see the small ship cruise operator become a CLIA Regional Cruise Line Member in Australasia, taking part in the Association's travel agent training and events program, including the upcoming Cruise360 Australasia conference.

CLIA MD in Australasia Joel Katz believes the partnership will help demonstrate the growing importance of small-ship cruising within the global industry.

"Captain Cook Cruises has been a pioneer of cruising in Fiji for more than 25 years, taking guests to unspoilt islands and remote destinations throughout the Fijian archipelago," he said.

Captain Cook Cruises Chief



Executive Officer Allison Haworth West said the partnership comes at an exciting time, as the cruise line prepares to introduce its newest ship, the *MS Caledonian Sky* (**pictured**) formerly operated by APT, in Nov (**CW** 12 Jul).

"We are very excited about being part of CLIA as it will provide a great opportunity for us to engage and strongly support our travel agent partners as we introduce a new level of luxury small ship expedition cruising

to Fiji with *MS Caledonian Sky*," Haworth West enthused.

The luxury vessel will take guests to islands across the South Pacific, including the unexplored Lau Islands, the volcanic Yasawa Islands, and the company's private island, Tivua.

"We are looking forward to working with member agents to open up and share many previously unexplored destinations in remote Fiji," Haworth West said.

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Crystal sets itself up for expansion

CRYSTAL Cruises is in advanced stages of appointing a new key account manager in Sydney, along with an Australian call centre which will be located in new Melbourne offices of sister company Abercrombie & Kent.

The growth of the local Crystal team is being spearheaded by Tony Archbold, the company's Asia-Pacific Vice President of Sales, who is also planning to appoint a new salesperson in Asia as well as a support resource closer to home.

Speaking on board the first voyage of *Crystal Serenity* following its acquisition by A&K Travel Group last year, Archbold also confirmed he would be relocating to a Melbourne base under the One A&K strategy, which sees him reporting to A&K MD Australasia, Debra Fox.

He expects the call centre, initially with three to four staff, to be in full operation in the next few months, with the flurry of activity coming ahead of the expected imminent release of



Crystal's 2025 programs.

Archbold's territory extends from India right through to Japan, Australia, New Zealand and all the way to French Polynesia, and he is expecting a very busy cruise season Down Under, with keen interest from the trade wanting to inspect *Crystal Symphony* when she cruises in local waters this coming Dec (**CW** 02 Feb).

Crystal is also undergoing changes in its distribution in the

UK, Europe, Middle East and Africa regions, where previously it had been represented by GSAs but is now switching to having its own presence led by former Hurtigruten EMEA Head of Sales, Andrew Magowan.

Crystal Chairman and major shareholder Manfredi Lefebvre d'Ovidio was escorted aboard *Serenity* in Dubrovnik yesterday by A&K Travel Group CEO Cristina Levis, sparking speculation that a major announcement about further growth for Crystal may be in the offing during a planned trade briefing later this week.

Archbold is **pictured** at right with Mary-Beth Meadowcroft, A&K Group Senior VP of Sales and Reservations (who also happens to be another Aussie), A&K Travel Group CEO Cristina Levis and A&K MD Australasia Debra Fox.



CRUISE
WEEKLY

On location in
the Mediterranean

Today's issue of CW is coming to you courtesy of *Crystal Cruises*, aboard *Crystal Serenity* during her first voyage under new ownership.

CRYSTAL Serenity is now voyaging to Naples, Italy after a brief afternoon stop in Dubrovnik - her maiden port of call after a major makeover under the ownership of A&K Travel Group.

Guests are making the most of the onboard facilities, with many enjoying treatments at the brand-new Aurora Spa as well as exquisite cuisine in the famed Umi Uma by Nobu specialty restaurant.

Last night's onboard entertainment left many humming familiar tunes after a spectacular Billy Joel tribute performance by James Fox, who has long been associated with the famed Piano Man.

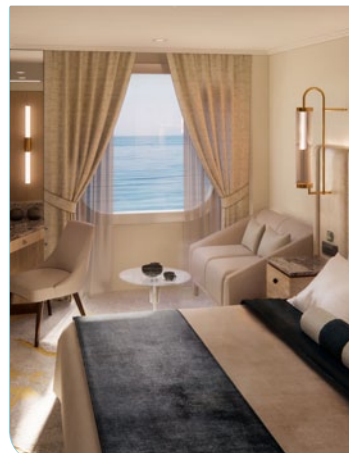
A day at sea tomorrow sees *Serenity* cruise from the Adriatic around the "boot" of Italy to Naples, where the action really amps up with a spectacular evening planned at Macchio Angioino Castle, one of the city's leading architectural landmarks.

More Aussies enjoy the *Serenity*



THIS pair of lovely ladies were spotted last night dining at the exclusive Umi Uma by Nobu restaurant aboard *Crystal Serenity* as she's cruising the Adriatic on her first voyage after a major makeover.

Signature Nobu dishes on offer for dinner included delicate sushi, sashimi and his famed blackened cod, with the deliciousness enjoyed by Clean Cruising's Tracey Bremner and Martine Hero.




CRUISE
WEEKLY

On Board: *Crystal Serenity*
Ocean View single guest room

This new stateroom type provides a perfect option for solo travellers. It's the same size as a standard guest room but with no balcony, offering a spacious bathroom and wardrobe, sitting area and full-sized bed.

Created to tap into the rising demand from single cruisers, it's also an affordable step-up from premium cruise brands into the luxury space with no solo supplement payable.

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POP culture aficionados are being invited to “sail through the pages of their favourite comics” on an upcoming cruise aboard Royal Caribbean’s *Serenade of the Seas*.

Fares for Comic-Con: The Cruise lead in at US\$990 for the four-night round-trip voyage from Tampa, Florida in Feb 2025, with the full ship charter seeing the entire vessel taken over for the character-filled event at sea.

Every night will have a different theme, providing plenty of excuses to dress up, while famed, yet-to-be-revealed “talent” will also be on board to interact with guests in meet & greets, panels and Q&A sessions.

See comicconthecruise.com.

Hapag-Lloyd adds English



EUROPEAN cruise operator Hapag-Lloyd has confirmed it will once again offer cruises in both German and English, with the significant change targeting cruisers from Australia and Asia.

For some years the ultra-premium cruise line has catered only to the German-speaking market, with the return of English on board coming alongside an easing of formality.

“*MS Europa* has shed its traditional reputation of formal wear and ambience.

“Today, there are no set dining times, and male guests can leave their tuxedos and suits at home,” according to the line’s local representative, Gerd Wilmer from Landmark Travel.

The changes have seen a significant drop in the age of guests aboard the 5-star Berlitz Guide to Cruising rated brand.

Wilmer noted that the ship had retained its reputation for outstanding service and culinary experiences, including the onboard *The Globe* restaurant run by three-star Michelin chef Kevin Fehling, alongside the unique *Pearls* which serves caviar accompanied by delicacies from all over the world.

A range of two-for-one offers are available on upcoming Australian

and Asian deployments, including a voyage from Melbourne to Bali departing 07 Jan 2024, which leads in at A\$8,384 per person twin share.

The line has also launched a new beverage menu aboard *Europa* and *Europa 2* (pictured), described as “the largest selection at sea”.

Despite limited storage facilities on the small luxury vessels, the cruises offer a selection of 550 premium international products including a whopping 150 sparkling wines & Champagnes.

Vintages as old as 1954 are on offer, and rare tipples like Dom Perignon and Krug Grand Cuvee are available by the glass.

More info via Gerd Wilmer on gerd@landmarktravel.com.au.

Ascent new culinary experiences

CELEBRITY Cruises has outlined some of the specialty dining options aboard its new *Celebrity Ascent*, including the second iteration of celebrity chef Daniel Boulud’s *Le Voyage* fine dining venue in an all-new design and a global menu crafted by Boulud’s personal travels across the globe.

Also onboard will be the multi-use *Eden* offering a new seven-course plant-based menu.

The ship will feature expanded offerings at its four main dining restaurants, with a combined total of 84 dishes.

An all-new four-course dining show will feature at the high-tech *Le Petit Chef* dinner experience, which brings dishes to life with the help of colourful and fun animations of a miniature chef.

Ascent will also feature a new partnership with WhistlePig Whisky, offering two hand-selected barrels made exclusively for *Celebrity Cruises* and available at the onboard Craft Social bar.

Travelmarvel Africa

TRAVELMARVEL has introduced its 2024 Africa program, which includes an optional river cruise upgrade on the Chobe River.

The itineraries include a Southern Africa tour, an East Africa tour, a combination of the two, and a Cape Winelands Extension which can be added onto itineraries beginning in South Africa.

Guests can save up to \$3,500 per couple when they take advantage of Travelmarvel’s Earlybird offer - [CLICK HERE](#).

The Chat with Jenny



A Conversation with Nicola Veltman
1000 Mile Travel Group

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