



CRUISE

WEEKLY

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Monday 20th Mar 2023

Virtuoso flags “bumper year” for cruise

THE Virtuoso luxury travel agency network is expecting cruise sales to surge even further in 2023, off the back of a very strong year of recovery in 2022.

Speaking in Fiji at the Virtuoso Owner Managers Forum yesterday, the organisation’s Australia/NZ GM, Fiona Dalton, said cruise has continued its “strong and vital recovery”, with 27% more business on the books for preferred cruise partners at the start of the year than at the commencement of 2019.

“That’s well ahead of Virtuoso nonpreferred cruise, and with an uplift in every category, most especially in luxury ocean, river and of course here in our region, where expedition has outstripped 2019 levels by 109%,” she said.

Figures revealed during the opening session of the conference showed that across the Virtuoso network in Australia



and NZ, advance cruise bookings as at 2022 already stand at 129% of 2019 sales in the premium category, 133% for luxury ocean voyages, 143% for river cruising, and a whopping 219% for expedition.

There are almost 190 attendees at the sold-out Virtuoso Forum taking place over the next couple of days at the Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa, including 90 agency owner-managers and 45 suppliers.

Yesterday’s opening session included an enthusiastic

presentation from Explora Journeys Chief Sales Officer Chris Austin, showcasing the multi-billion dollar investment in the luxury startup by MSC Group.

Austin also took part in a panel session convened by agency owner Anthony Goldman, which noted the key role cruise can play in travel agency profitability.

“If you’re not selling cruise today, then make sure you sell it tomorrow because it’s a fantastic opportunity,” said.

More from Virtuoso on **page 2**.

Cruise Weekly today

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

Ponant Antarctic

PONANT’S 2024-2025

Antarctic expeditions have been released.

The first departure of the season is scheduled for 19 Oct, with 26 sailings across three ships - *Le Lyrial*, *L’Austral*, and *Le Boreal*.

Nov is special as this is when the penguins breeding and nesting take place on the Antarctic Peninsula against a backdrop of snow-covered mountain peaks where icebergs drift in the distance.

In Jan, new-born penguins are a sight to behold, while by Feb, chicks are growing, and the end of summer snow makes hiking easier.

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Bula! Fiji welcomes Virtuoso Forum 2023

Tuesday 14th March 2023

THE 2023 Virtuoso Owners and Managers Forum kicked off in fine style last night at the Sofitel Fiji Resort & Spa, which pulled out all stops to host a stellar welcome function on the shores of Denarau Island. After an intensive opening session during which the almost 200 delegates were updated on a host of upcoming Virtuoso initiatives, guests were ready to let their hair down and celebrate being together during the group's first Australia and NZ offshore conference since 2019.

Participants include travel agency owners and managers from across Australia and New Zealand along with a strong contingent of cruise suppliers and senior Virtuoso executives from the USA.



ANTHONY Goldman from Goldman Travel Corporation with Amber Wilson of Hurtigruten Cruises and Alice Ager of Uniworld Boutique River Cruises.



VIRTUOSO Senior VP Sales & Partnerships, Cory Hagopian; Jennifer Campbell, Senior VP Network Products & Events; GM Australia/NZ Fiona Dalton; Senior VP Global Operations, Michael Londregan; and Chief Operating Officer, Brad Bourland.



BRETT and Louise Dann from Hunter Travel Group raise a glass to Virtuoso with Ponant's Julie Golding.

SARAH Clark from Holland Clarke & Beatson with Andrew Bowman of NZ Travel Brokers and Jason Worth of Oceania Cruises.



ANNA McMurtrie from Wentworth Travel with Gil McLachlan, McLachlan Travel Group.



REECE Farmilo, Out and About Travel; Sharyn Kitchener, Mosman Travel; and Jigsaw Travel's Felicity Moss.



STEVE Labroski of itravel with Angela Middleton, Norwegian Cruise Line.



ZOE Dean and Fiona Dalton from Virtuoso with Sheron Konig from Travel Associates Rockhampton, who was last week named Cruise Consultant of the Year by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).



DANIELLE Galloway, Flight Centre Travel Group Global MD Luxury & Independent Brands with Sarah-Louise Scales of Quark Expeditions.



CARNIVAL Cruise Line Brand Ambassador John Heald recently revealed one of the more surprising requests he receives from guests.

Heald said he is shocked at how often guests request the brand's Serenity Deck - an adults-only area - should allow for topless sunbathing - especially given Carnival's reputation as a family friendly cruise line.

Carnival used to reserve one of its pool decks for topless sunbathing, but that policy has long since changed.

Most major lines (except Costa Cruises) ban topless sunbathing for women in common areas and on balconies, but Virgin Voyages does have an area on deck 17 known as 'The Perch' where the practice is allowed.

Azamara savings

AN ULTRA-LUXURY New Zealand voyage with Azamara is available with savings and complimentary flights through Cruise Traveller.

Save \$860 on the 2024 voyage which explores both of New Zealand's islands, when booking by the end of Apr.

The luxury voyage from Melbourne to Auckland aboard *Azamara Journey* sails for 17 days.

CLICK HERE for more.

An enhanced *Endeavour*

SILVERSEA Cruises has unveiled details of its "enhanced and enriched", all-new suite categories aboard *Silver Endeavour*.

Following a successful inaugural season in Antarctica, Silversea's newest expedition ship will enter the San Giorgio del Porto shipyard in Genova on 03 Apr, emerging with an array of enhancements that will evolve the onboard and expedition experiences for guests.

Endeavour's enhancements during its upcoming refurbishment will include 10 new guest suites, responding to high demand for the ship's most spacious accommodations.

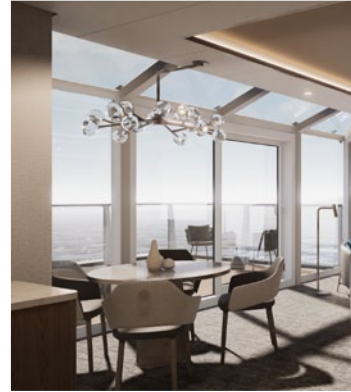
Silversea will craft six new upper suites on deck eight, as well as four new suites on deck five, and will introducing two new suite categories: two Master Suites and four Signature Suites, replacing the former helicopter hangar amidships.

Starboard side on deck five, four Classic Veranda Suites will replace the Medical Centre, which will relocate to the space currently occupied by the Casino.

Enhancements will also include the installation of handcrafted Lalique crystal panels in La Dame, Silversea's signature French restaurant.

"*Endeavour's* refurbishment will strengthen her status as the world's most luxurious expedition ship," Senior Vice President of Marine Operations Roberto Bruzzone said.

"With our guests' cruise experience in mind, we are broadening her range of



accommodation options by introducing two new suite categories, enriching a selection of public venues, and creating space for addition crew members to maintain one of the industry's highest crew-to-guest ratios."

MEANWHILE, Silversea has returned to Japanese seas after close to three years.

Silver Muse arrived in Kagoshima on a 14-day voyage from Singapore.

Muse was welcomed in a celebratory manner by local government and port authorities in Japan, with folk music events, as well as pier ceremonies, in which Silversea's staff were presented with welcome gifts in both Kagoshima and Osaka.

It is from the latter city *Muse* will make her first Japan-intensive sailing from 15 Mar, with a 14-day voyage, cruising round trip.

On the sailing, which includes calls in Kanazawa, Niigata, Akita, Aomari, Hokkaido, and Tokyo, travellers on board *Muse* will experience the cherry blossom gardens of Kagoshima, and discover some of the less-explored regions of the country.

Cruise Calendar

Current ports of call in Australia and New Zealand.

SYDNEY	
<i>Pacific Adventure</i>	20 Mar
<i>Seabourn Odyssey</i>	20 Mar
<i>Viking Mars</i>	20 Mar
<i>Seabourn Odyssey</i>	21 Mar
MELBOURNE	
<i>Grand Princess</i>	21 Mar
BRISBANE	
<i>Europa</i>	21 Mar
BROOME	
<i>Coral Princess</i>	20 Mar
BUSSELTON	
<i>Queen Mary 2</i>	20 Mar
<i>Majestic Princess</i>	21 Mar
FREMANTLE	
<i>Seabourn Sojourn</i>	20 Mar
<i>Queen Mary 2</i>	21 Mar
AUCKLAND	
<i>Pacific Encounter</i>	21 Mar
CHRISTCHURCH	
<i>Norwegian Spirit</i>	20 Mar
<i>Celebrity Eclipse</i>	21 Mar
WELLINGTON	
<i>Celebrity Eclipse</i>	20 Mar
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	20 Mar
<i>Noordam</i>	21 Mar
DUNEDIN	
<i>Norwegian Spirit</i>	21 Mar
NAPIER	
<i>Quantum of the Seas</i>	20 Mar
PICTON	
<i>Noordam</i>	20 Mar
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	21 Mar
TAURANGA	
<i>Pacific Encounter</i>	20 Mar
<i>Quantum of the Seas</i>	21 Mar
WELLINGTON	
<i>Celebrity Eclipse</i>	20 Mar
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	20 Mar
<i>Noordam</i>	21 Mar