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Ponant's new BDM

PONANT has announced the appointment of Kristina Sambaher as Business Development Manager (BDM) for NSW and ACT.

Sambaher brings over two decades of travel industry experience, including her most recent role as BDM at Azamara.

Princess kicks off huge local season

PRINCESS Cruises President John Padgett yesterday welcomed a large cohort of senior cruise industry figures to a special event aboard *Royal Princess*, inaugurating the line's biggest-ever Australasian deployment.

For the first time ever Princess will have two Royal-class ships homeported in Sydney over the 2023/24 season, with *Royal* joining sister ship *Majestic Princess* - alongside *Coral Princess* and *Grand Princess* also sailing in local waters this summer.

Collectively that's an overall 44% uplift in capacity in the Australian and NZ market, which is now Princess' second-biggest source of customers after North America, Padgett (**pictured**) said.

"Australia is very important to Princess...we value everyone in Australia, what it means to the industry, what it means to our guests, both local and fly-cruise,



and we invite everyone to come sail and spend their time with Princess," he said.

Padgett also confirmed that in 2025/26 the line's current flagship, *Discovery Princess*, will also operate in Australasian waters (**CW** breaking news yesterday).

"Australia is getting the best of Princess," he enthused.

Padgett also detailed the new

Sun Princess, the first of the line's Sphere-class ships, which is approaching final stages of construction and fit-out prior to launching in early 2024.

Stuart Allison, Princess Senior VP for Asia Pacific, UK and Europe, told **CW** that full details of the line's 2025/26 global deployment were still being finalised, but confirmed *Discovery Princess* would sail here alongside *Crown Princess*, which will replace *Coral Princess* sailing year-round in Australia.

Majestic Princess will operate in the Northern Hemisphere in 2025/26, while *Royal Princess* will cruise on the US West Coast.

"So in 2025/26 we'll have three ships over the summer, but because *Crown Princess* is staying year-round, what it means is the actual overall capacity doesn't change - so you get more with less," Allison said. *BP*

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Spirit of Tassie rises up



SPiRiT of Tasmania (SOT) has delivered a \$21 million tourism boost to Victoria's Greater Geelong and Bellarine region since it moved to GeelongPort one year ago (**CW** 25 Oct 2022).

In fact, a record 450,012 passengers sailed with the ferry during the 2022-23 financial year, on a total of 902 journeys between Geelong and Devonport.

"The uplift in visitor spend since Spirit of Tasmania's move to Geelong is on track to exceed the initial projections of \$57.3 million by 2030," GeelongPort CEO Brett Winter said.

Over the 12-month period, overnight visitors who arrived via SOT spent around \$2.3 million in Greater Geelong, while day trip passengers injected \$18.7 million.

Tourism Greater Geelong and The Bellarine Executive Director, Tracy Carter, pointed out that visitors who arrive in the area via SOT "tend to stay longer in our region, venture further and spend more generously compared to the average".

Business shows no sign of slowing down for Spirit of Tasmania, with two new LNG-powered ships on the horizon (**CW** 08 Mar 2022).

This week, the ferry operator announced the appointment of Tasmanian production company HYPE TV to document the construction of the newbuilds, *Spirit of Tasmania IV* and *Spirit of Tasmania V*.

The vessels, which are being constructed by Rauma Marine Constructions in Finland, will be larger than the current ships, with passenger capacity increased from 1,400 to 1,800.

Additionally, the number of lane metres for passenger and freight vehicles on board will also jump by almost 60%, while guests will enjoy 118 standard seat recliners and 47 business recliners.

Spirit of Tasmania CEO and MD Bernard Dwyer said the fleet expansion "will provide long-term economic growth for Tasmania", and that "given its importance, capturing the progress of the vessels' construction for posterity was critical".

HYPE TV will use video and time lapse cameras along with conducting interviews with project leads, engineers, designers and builders in Finland to document the build.

Once the first ship, *Spirit of Tasmania IV*, is delivered in the first quarter of 2024, the production company will release a documentary that covers the entire journey, from design to the maiden voyage.

Meanwhile, *Spirit of Tasmania V* is expected to be delivered by the end of next year.

To generate excitement for the upcoming vessels, SOT has published an eight-part series called *The Journey to Bass Strait* - watch the intro episode **HERE**. *JM*

Oceania has good taste



OCEANIA Cruises last night hosted some of its key industry partners for a lavish culinary celebration at the Art Gallery of NSW's new Sydney Modern.

The 2024 Good Food Guide Awards honoured top eateries from across NSW and the ACT, and Oceania is a key sponsor of the event which has very strong brand alignment with its mantra of the "finest food at sea".

Oceania VP of International Sales, Jason Worth, who's **pictured** with Jodie Hart, PR and Partnerships Manager for

Oceania and Regent, presented three of the awards: Drinks List of the Year which went to *Yellow Billy Restaurant*; the Service Excellence Award which went to Alice Dwyer of *Pipit*; and the prestigious Chef of the Year who was named as Josh Niland, the creative genius behind *Charcoal Dish*, *Fish Butchery*, *Peterman* and *Saint Peter* plus a soon to open "fish steakhouse" eatery at Singapore's Edition Hotel.

"At Oceania Cruises, we try to do a little bit of what you do, at sea," Worth said. *BP*

Explora appoints

EXPLORA Journeys has welcomed two new additions to its executive leadership team, including Koray Savas as Vice President Hotel.

Savas joins from sister company MSC Cruises, where he worked as Brand Performance Director for the past two years.

The luxury brand has also announced the promotion of Senior Lead Culinary Operation, Alban Gjoka, who will now take on the role of VP Food and Beverage.

Kudav to Silversea

ANOUH Kudav has joined Silversea Cruises as its new Sydney-based National Accounts Manager.

Kudav's CV includes an eight-year tenure at Globus family of brands Australasia, where she initially worked as Sales Coordinator before becoming National Operations Manager in Apr 2022 and departing earlier this year after the company restructured.



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SCIENTISTS are reportedly bemused at a random fishy corpse which washed up in Papua New Guinea last week, with the unidentified aquatic object described simply as a "mermaid globster".

The remains (pictured) were discovered by locals on PNG's remote Simberi Island, with investigations somewhat hampered by a quick burial of the rather stinky remains.

Based on photos, experts are postulating it's perhaps a remnant of a whale, or more likely a long-dead dugong which has been feasted upon by other sea creatures to cause its unusual appearance.



Brilliance sails into Sydney



ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI) has brought its *Brilliance of the Seas* Down Under, with the Radiance-class ship arriving in Sydney this week for the first time to kick off a huge line-up of 2023-24 voyages in Australia.

The 2,543-pax vessel will offer five- to 18-night cruises for the next six months, visiting 40 sunny destinations across Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, including Port Douglas, Kangaroo Island, the Loyalty Islands, Fiji, and Vanuatu.

Standout itineraries include 16- and 18-night holidays along Australia's Top End and West

Coast, as well as the New Zealand Sounds, with the two itineraries able to be combined for an epic 34-night adventure.

"This is just the beginning of a bold summer as we look forward to a bumper season packed with three ships delivering the best family holiday experiences from Australia," RCI VP and MD Australia and New Zealand Gavin Smith commented.

Brilliance will be joined shortly by RCI's *Quantum of the Seas*, which returns to Brisbane on 28 Oct, and *Ovation of the Seas*, which will sail into Sydney Harbour on 03 Nov. *JM*

A-Rosa on a theme

A-ROSA River Cruises has unveiled its biggest collection of themed cruises to date for 2024, featuring new themes Dance, Jazz & Swing and Beauty & Spa.

Existing themes of Yoga & Nutrition, Meditation, Create & Illustrate and Photography will also return next year.

The special voyages, all five nights in duration, will sail the Rhine and Danube rivers on selected departure dates in Mar and Nov 2024.

Cruisers can save 30% off their fare using the code "HALLOWEEN" when they book before 31 Oct **HERE**.

Chimu for a cause

CHIMU Adventures is auctioning off two spots on a 14-day cruise to the Antarctic Circle departing Feb 2024, valued at A\$38,058.

All proceeds raised from the sale will be donated to the Cancel Council, with bidding starting at A\$15,000 - **CLICK HERE** to make a bid.



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