



Compagnie du Ponant keen to grow

The French cruise line wants to carry 1000 Australian passengers a year by 2012.

LUXURY YACHT CRUISE OPERATOR, COMPAGNIE DU Ponant, is the latest to chase the Australian cruising market.

And the company is putting its money where its mouth is, with the newest addition to its fleet, *L'Austral* due to visit Australian waters in March next year for the first time.

L'Austral launched just last month and the

company's international sales director, Stephen Winter, recently visited Sydney to host events with Ponant's local representative, Travel the World.

"Now is a good time to create a buzz in the local market," said Winter, who's pictured at right in fine form during a Sydney industry event.



"Our objective is 1000 passengers by 2012 out of Australia, combining both individuals and groups," he told **CW**.

"We combine luxury and adventure with French style and cuisine".

During a series of lunches earlier this month, Winter showcased the Ponant product for agents with the innovative use of iPads featuring on-board videos and images from the ships which have Swarovski crystal chandeliers, fine French cuisine and of course lots of flowing Champagne.

Compagnie du Ponant had no business from Australia prior to 2009 and its partnership with TTW, but the past two years has been "an easy transition", Winter said.

Next year the 132-cabin *L'Austral* will sail from Noumea to Darwin, with stops along the Gold Coast meaning Aussie cruisers will be able to see her up close.

The mega-yacht offers two restaurants, a sun deck with swimming pool and bar, day spa, crystal chandeliers and spacious staterooms with balconies.

"We combine luxury and adventure with French style and cuisine, we travel to exotic locales worldwide and we do it in small ships of maximum 260 guests," Winter said.

Compagnie du Ponant has four other luxury vessels - *Le Ponant*, *Le Levant*, *Le Diamant* and *Le Boreal*.

TODAY'S CRUISE WEEKLY

Welcome to today's **CW** Trade edition featuring five pages of all the latest cruise industry news, plus two pages from Star Cruises on page 6 and page 7.

Star Cruises specials

STAR CRUISES IS CONTINUING TO PROMOTE special deals for Australian cruisers, including the 'Taste of Asia' offers on board *SuperStar Libra* leading in at \$452 for a three night cruise ex Penang - details on **page six**.

Upgrade offers are also still available on board *SuperStar Virgo* for its Singapore and Ho Chi Minh departures - more info on **p7**.

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Queensland Cruising

Queensland is on my mind this week having spent a couple of days as a guest of Tourism Queensland addressing many of their key tour operators about the state of cruising in Australia.

Queensland has been a popular domestic holiday destination for many years and there wouldn't be too many of us that haven't experienced the "Sunshine State" at some point.

However, how many of us (clients included) have been able to "cruise Queensland" and call into multiple iconic destinations as part of one itinerary.

There are many cruise ships that call into Queensland ports as part of Australian or South Pacific itineraries as well as longer international itineraries – not to mention the number of cruise lines now offering circumnavigations of Australia.

With the continued growth of cruising locally and high percentage of this growth consistently embarking in Australian ports, Queensland is certainly taking up the challenge to attract more cruise business.

The city of Cairns has recently completed a new cruise ship facility that captures the tropical ambience and cultural heritage of the North Queensland region beautifully.

The Brisbane Cruise Terminal offers an excellent example of multipurpose facilities as cruise passengers arrive within a pleasant fashion and dining precinct before discovering Australia's 3rd largest city.

And how could you resist cruising through aqua-blue waters found amongst the Whitsunday's spectacular chain of 74 islands.

Local suppliers of tourism product in Queensland are starting to see some real benefit from what a cruise ship visit can provide and are looking forward to welcoming many more locals from cruise ships in the future.



Brett Jardine
Brett Jardine
General Manager
ICCA

Cruise lines escape volcano chaos

Most European cruises have proceeded with minimal disruption from the volcanic ash spreading from Iceland.

THE ERUPTION OF THE GRIMSVOETN VOLCANO IS causing far less problems than Eyjafjallajökull last year, with airline operations largely returning to normal yesterday.

Cruises have stuck to their schedules, with only a small number of passengers affected by the cancellation of approximately 1,000 flights in Europe.

Scotland was worst hit, and three German airports — Bremen, Hamburg and Berlin — were closed for several hours on Wednesday but have now reopened.

"Aussies on board are able to view the... 'volcanic process'"

MSC Cruises is the only line with a ship scheduled to call at Iceland ports this week.

According to a company spokesperson, *Poesia* is currently in the Faroe Islands and the ship will continue on the same course, with several Aussies on board able to view the intriguing "volcanic process".

Cunard and Saga both had successful departures from Southampton yesterday.

Saga reorganised flights for one passenger who was due to fly from Edinburgh, while some disembarking pax from *Spirit of Adventure* at Greenock were transferred by coach to London.

Royal Caribbean said none of its cruises or passengers had been affected and river cruise operators including Avalon and Uniworld said operations were running normally and that they were closely monitoring the situation.

Meanwhile, a poll by British website Cruise

Critic indicates that the cruise industry is likely to benefit from the disruption caused to travellers' flights.

Over half of respondents said they planned to avoid airports on their next holiday and would instead embark on a cruise from a UK port.

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Hurtigruten extends 50% discount deal

HURTIGRUTEN CRUISES HAS ANNOUNCED THAT ITS 'pay for 1 get 50% off the second passenger' offer will now be available through until the end of next month.

The cruise operator has also added extra departure dates in July, September and November 2011 for which the deal is valid, with the discount cruises now stretching out until 29 November this year.

Passengers on the iconic Norwegian Coastal Voyages will discover quaint hillside villages, breathtaking fjords, spectacular churches and rich Sami culture.

The 'pay 1 get 50% off second passenger' deal is not combinable with any other offers.

For more information contact Hurtigruten's Australian representative, Discover the World Marketing on 1800 623 267.

Little House on the Water

FANS OF THE ICONIC 1970s TV SHOW *LITTLE HOUSE on the Prairie* are set for a cruising treat, with an upcoming *Carnival Splendor* cruise set to be themed around the series.

More than 10 former cast members will be on board, with guests able to mingle with the stars at cocktail parties and other events.

Uniworld launches new Douro cruiser

THE TRAVEL CORPORATION'S UNIWORLD BOUTIQUE River Cruises brand has launched a new ship which will sail the spectacular Douro River Valley in Spain and Portugal this year.

The *Douro Spirit* carries a maximum of 128 guests, with Uniworld gm John Molinaro saying the vessel "introduces a new level of cruising to the Douro River."

"Ours is one of the finest vessels on the water; a luxurious, boutique ship...ensuring the small-ship ambience that we are renowned for," he said.

Staterooms and suites all feature French balconies, and guests are treated with individual climate control, fine linens, bottled water, robes, slippers and L'Occitane bathroom products.

Uniworld offers an 11-day *Portugal, Spain & the Douro River Valley* voyage which cruises from Lisbon to Porto and is priced from \$3583ppts - including three nights at a deluxe hotel in Lisbon with breakfast; a seven night *Douro Spirit* cruise and ten fully hosted shore excursions.

The recent inaugural, which took place at the start of this month, featured a range of dignitaries including Allan J. Katz, who's the US Ambassador to Portugal.

The spectacular Douro River Valley is a listed UNESCO World Heritage region, and Uniworld President Guy Young also noted that National Geographic Traveler had recently recognised the Douro as "one of the World's Great Places".



Fincantieri riots

PROTESTS HAVE ERUPTED ACROSS ITALY THIS WEEK after the Italian government announced plans for cuts at the state-owned Fincantieri shipyard group.

The downsizing plan will see three of Fincantieri's eight shipyards shut down, with the loss of more than 2500 jobs due to a "long term fall in demand".

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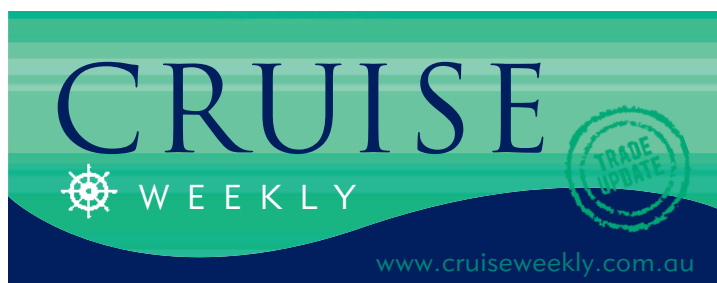
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Sarina Bratton takes delivery of Orion II

AUSSIE CRUISE QUEEN SARINA BRATTON HAS OFFICIALLY taken delivery of her newest vessel, the 100 passenger all-suite luxury expedition cruise ship now named *Orion II*.

Bratton signed the papers for the long term charter of the former *Clelia II* in Curacao in the Caribbean this week, with the move doubling Orion Expedition Cruises' fleet just over five years since the first *Orion* set sail.

"*Orion II* represents another step on a journey that has included many fascinating destinations since *Orion's* first expeditionary voyage from Tahiti to Australia in March 2005," Bratton said.

"Despite difficult global financial conditions, our growth has been solid and this has been enhanced by the support of our loyal guests - many of whom are joining me onboard for the inaugural 24 night voyage," she added.

Before departing on her first commercial cruise as *Orion II*, the ship will visit Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle where she will be previewed to travel trade and consumers.

An official naming ceremony will take place in Seattle, with three godmothers to be named - all of whom are honoured past passengers of Orion Expedition Cruises.

Bratton said the delivery of the second ship is a "further step to fulfilling the company's original vision to have Orion Expedition Cruises regarded as the operator of choice in the Asia Pacific".

The doubling of capacity sees the line able to significantly expand its range of destinations with *Orion II* set to offer itineraries to such exotic places as the Russian Far East, the Ryukyu Islands, the

Inland Sea of Japan as well as Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Bratton said *Orion* and *Orion II* are "two of the most comfortable and capable expedition cruise ships cruising in Australasia".

Orion Expedition Cruises is set for further expansion, with majority owner KSL Capital Partners believed to be supportive of further growth in the fleet in coming years.



Orion II as she will appear after rebranding.

P&O agent incentive

A NEW PROMOTION LAUNCHED BY COMPLETE CRUISE solution this week is offering a grand prize of a seven night *Pacific Dawn* cruise to the top selling travel agent.

The campaign aims to highlight P&O Cruises' new *At P&O Cruises the Aussie Dollar is always strong* advertising, with participating agents able to enter online at www.myccs.com.au every time they book a P&O holiday using POLAR Online between 20 May and 03 Jun.

The agent who books the most cruises during the promotional period will win tickets on the 20 Aug Brisbane departure to New Caledonia and Vanuatu - along with a bonus \$1200 in onboard credit to spend on spa treatments, shore excursions and fine dining in the onboard Salt Grill restaurant.

There are also seven \$500 Westfield Gift Cards which will be drawn at random during the promotion.

Full details plus terms and conditions of the competition can be found at www.myccs.com.au.

South America+Med

MSC CRUISES HAS LAUNCHED AN INNOVATIVE NEW 20 night fly-cruise package which combines Mediterranean cruising with a trans-Atlantic crossing and a cruise in South America.

The deal is priced from just \$4288 per person, including Emirates economy flights ex Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane or Perth to Milan and then a transfer to Genoa to join a 17-night voyage on *MSC Orchestra*.

After the ship finally arrives in Santos, South America, MSC will take passengers on a day-long escorted tour of Sao Paulo including a traditional South American lunch, before passengers board their homeward flight.

Single traveller fares start at \$4725 for a sole occupancy cabin, and the prices also include port charges and airport taxes.

More info 1300 028 502.

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Whale watching returns

CAPTAIN COOK CRUISES WILL OPERATE FOUR DAILY whale watching cruises between now until 11 December, with a 15% discount on offer for bookings at www.captaincook.com.au.

The trips take in the Sydney Opera House, Fort Denison and then out of the heads into the open waters, aiming for wherever the beasts of the sea have been recently sighted.

Most whales are found within 2km of shore, with numbers of Humpback and Southern Right whales passing Sydney on their annual migration north from Antarctica to the Great Barrier Reef expected to peak around the end of June.

Captain Cook Cruises is offering two vessel types for the trips - smaller ones catering for up to 75 passengers, and for busier cruises a maximum capacity of 260 on the larger ships.

The company is also offering a 'whale guarantee' under which if a whale is not sighted during a trip passengers can cruise again for free.

Adult prices start at \$75pp - for more information call 1800 804 843.

Royal Caribbean France

ROYAL CARIBBEAN CRUISES IS CONTINUING ITS PUSH for international growth, with the opening of a new office in France set to open in July.

The company said it was responding to increasing local demand, with the new operation to employ sales, marketing and commercial operations staff representing the Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises and Azamara Club Cruises brands.

Previously Royal Caribbean operated in France via a gsa called Latitude Sud.

River cruise "taster"

EWATERWAYS IS OFFERING A 3-DAY 'TASTER' EUROPEAN river cruise on board the *Royal Crown* "luxury river yacht" priced from just \$333pp.

The cruise travels from Cologne to Koblenz to offer a "concentrated mix of culture, sightseeing and leisure".

It's the first taster cruise to be offered by *Royal Crown*, with the bargain price also exempt from single supplements on departures 26 Jul, 28 Jul and a four day 23 Jul option costing from \$508pp.

The *Royal Crown* carries a maximum of 88 guests in 44 cabins with flat screen TVs and "fully stocked mini bars" for an all inclusive cruise holiday.

More info 1300 968 980.

New Silversea planner

SILVERSEA CRUISES HAS CONFIRMED THE APPOINTMENT of Mike Pawlus as its new director of strategic itinerary planning and scheduling.

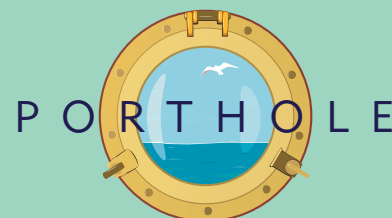
Pawlus was most recently director of revenue planning for Carnival Corporation's Seabourn brand, but didn't relocate when the Seabourn office moved from Miami to Seattle recently.

\$200 RSSC bonus

REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES IS OFFERING A \$200 WISH gift card for every 2011 RSSC booking by a Cruiseco consultant between 05 May and the end of the month.

But you'll have to be quick, with the special bonus incentive due to end next Tuesday.

For more information on the incentive see <http://bit.ly/regentpromotion>.



ADVENTUROUS CRUISERS WANTING TO DO something really different should consider buying a seat on an upcoming circumnavigation of Australia.

The owner/operator of Tasmanian cruise business Pennicott Wilderness Journeys will next Tuesday depart from Sydney's Darling Harbour on the "adventure of a lifetime".

He plans to spend the next three months circumnavigating Australia in his 5.4m long vessel to help raise money to eradicate polio, which continues to affect people in some of the world's poorest countries.

Robert Pennicott has divided his voyage up into 77 segments, and is offering two seats on 48 of the sectors to the highest bidders via an online auction.

A special website promoting the journey is now online at follow.theyellowboatroad.com.

BUT EVEN THAT FEAT DOESN'T COME CLOSE TO a plan by a limbless Frenchman who plans to swim several hundred kilometres across waters connecting five continents.

Next time you're afloat, look out to sea for 43-year-old Philippe Croizon, who lost both his arms and legs in an electrical accident 17 years ago.

He's already famous for crossing the English Channel, and his next feat is scheduled to take place between May and August next year.

"My crossing of the Channel was a message of hope and of life to all my fellow companions in misfortune.

"Since the Channel swim I received many moving stories of handicapped people from all over the world...I know that I have given hope back to many," the inspirational swimmer said.

Croizon swims using special prostheses and flippers, with next year's adventure including a 20km jaunt between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia; 25km in the Gulf of Aqaba from Jordan to Egypt; a swim across the Strait of Gibraltar; and a final icy adventure crossing the Bering Strait.

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Inside Cabin	\$457
Window Cabin	\$555
Deluxe Oceanview	\$597

8 Night Cruise & Stay from Phuket

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Deluxe Oceanview	\$794

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Selected departures from
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