

CRUISE

WEEKLY



Thursday 01 September 2011

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Crystal sparkles with 2012 themes

More than one-third of next year's Crystal cruises will have a niche theme.

CRYSTAL Cruises has announced 25 Experiences of Discovery voyages for 2012, available on two ships.

Due to increased demand, its Ocean Views program will be offered on both *Crystal Serenity* and *Crystal Symphony* sailings.

The line is doubling the number of big band and ballroom dancing cruises, and enlisting dozens of professional artists for jazz cruises.

It is also bringing back its popular Emerging Artists theme, but switching the destination from Alaska to Europe, giving guests the opportunity to discover rising talent from Los Angeles Music Center's Spotlight program.

Also in Europe, a golf cruise will see passengers playing on some of the most prestigious championship courses.

A wine and food festival will involve chefs, wine authorities and mixologists to create special meals, cocktails, and presentations related to the region.

For film and theatre fans, a sailing from LA to New York is set to bring Hollywood and Broadway to the seas, with stars and industry experts onboard.

The Comprehensive Creative Learning Institute will also provide an expanded curriculum of music, language, computer and fitness for a

cruise dedicated to enrichment classes.

Other themes include floral design, American football legends, and a president's cruise.

"On Crystal's Experiences of Discovery cruises, sophisticated explorers can expand their knowledge and connect in a luxury environment," said Bret Bullock, vice president, entertainment.

Beginning in the US spring, Crystal Cruises' sailings will include complimentary fine wines and premium spirits throughout the ship, open bar service in all lounges and pre-paid gratuities.

For details see www.wiltrans.com.au.

Kimberley Quest earlybirds

PEARL sea Coastal Cruises has released an earlybird special of 20% off selected cruises on *Kimberley Quest II*, valid for new bookings made from 01 Sep 2011 - 31 Jan 2012.

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ICCA UPDATE

ICCA General Manager,
Brett Jardine

Spotlight: ICCA Cruise Line Member, MSC Cruises

Historically rich St Petersburg, Estonia's Tallinn, Amsterdam and its interesting network of canals, and Copenhagen with its royal links to Australia are among a host of fascinating ports on MSC Cruises' ever-expanding Northern Europe program.

From the ancient routes of the Vikings to the breathtaking Norwegian fjords and the heritage-listed sites in the Baltic, MSC has a range of cruises to delight cruise passengers looking to add or seek alternative programs to the more traditional Mediterranean cruises.

The thoughts of MSC's managing director (AU & NZ) Lynne Clarke, point to exciting times for MSC in Northern Europe with "impressive ports of call and how well cruises are priced".

Lynne says "the itineraries provide a great opportunity to explore a new region and experience something wonderful."

With this region having been quite an expensive option historically, MSC are now able to offer excellent value for Aussies and Kiwis wishing to cruise these exciting waters.

Northern Europe and such colourful destinations as Bergen (Norway), St Petersburg, Stockholm and Copenhagen are sure to appeal to passengers who have before cruised the Mediterranean and are seeking new ports and experiences in Europe.

Four vessels from the MSC fleet are operating in Northern Europe: *MSC Lirica*, *MSC Magnifica*, *MSC Opera* and *MSC Poesia*.

Cruises range from four nights to grand 14-night cruises.

For more information check out www.msccruises.com.au



Wilderness cruising faces change

Two of the world's most pristine cruising regions have this week been subject to significant changes.

AUSTRALIA'S Kimberley and Ecuador's Galapagos are in the midst of transformations that may have an impact on cruise tourism.

Yesterday's heritage-listing of WA's West Kimberley region (**TD** 30 Aug) has been hailed as a breakthrough for domestic tourism, but it is not yet known how it will effect activities of passenger ships.

Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke said the ruling would protect almost 20 million hectares of land including extensive stretches of the coast.

But environment groups have questioned why the site of a huge gas development at James Price Point has been largely excluded.

Meanwhile, in the Galapagos National Park, new rules are set to ban cruise ships from visiting most islands more than once in a 14-day period.

Effective from 01 Feb 2012, the regulations directly involve 50 cruise companies that

operate in the Galapagos.

But tour operators hope the restrictions will improve passengers' experience as they may often be onboard the only ship at some ecologically sensitive sites.

The new rules will also open up wildlife-rich areas such as Tagus Cove, which was closed several years ago to vessels with more than 40 pax.

Snorkelling, kayaking and boat rides will also be regulated, with activities assigned to specific sites and times to avoid overlapping by cruise lines.

SeaDream in the Amazon 2013

SEADREAM Yacht Club has released its early 2013 itineraries for *SeaDream I* and *SeaDream II*, which will see the ships in the Caribbean.

SeaDream II will also offer two 20-night Amazon Highlight voyages in Feb and Mar 2013, following very heavy bookings for the vessel's 2012 Amazon itineraries.

Highlights of the Caribbean sailings include port calls to Mayreau and Bequia Islands in the Grenadines, as well as new Puerto Rico calls to Fajardo Bay, Ponce and Caja de Muertos.

For further details visit www.SeaDream.com.



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Costa returns to Japan

THE arrival of *Costa Classica* into the Japanese port of Fukuoka this week signalled the resumption of services to the region by Italian shipping giant, Costa Cruises.

Costa pulled out of Japan in the wake of the country's tragic earthquake and nuclear disaster earlier in the year.

"Today marks an important date for Costa Cruises," said Dario Rustico, vp Sales and Marketing, Costa Cruises Pacific Asia Operations.

"*Costa Classica's* arrival in Japan, together with the deployment of an even bigger ship, *Costa Victoria*, into the Asia region and Japan in 2012, demonstrates Costa Cruises' commitment to the region, both in terms of a travel destination as well as a key source market," he added.

Rustico also said that the company "deeply believes in the potential of Japan", and has plans in place to progressively increase calls to the region.

Meanwhile, Costa Cruises has also announced that it will remove both Egypt and Tunis port calls from its 2012 itineraries.

The move is reportedly in response to the "persisting negative perception of Egypt and Tunisia".

HAL's new office open today

HOLLAND America Line has today officially launched its new Australasian office, with a fully staffed call centre at the Carnival Australia building in North Sydney and four state-based business development mgrs.

Sales director Tony Archbold told **CW** last night that the operation aimed to highlight HAL's "affordable luxury" offering, replicating the brand's legendary onboard service with expert support, extended hours, availability via POLAR online and acceptance of credit cards.

The change sees HAL transition from its previous long-standing GSA arrangement with Travel The World, which will continue to sell the Holland America product.

"Holland America Line is receiving fantastic support from Australian travel sellers, and this shows that we're here to provide full service that reflects the high standards we are known for," said HAL executive vp marketing, sales and guest programs, Richard Meadows.

The new operation will also look after the Seabourn brand, with a specialist group among the 22-strong reservations team who are eagerly waiting for the phones to start ringing after extensive training on the products.

The office can be contacted on 1300 987 321.

P O R T H O L E

SLEEP with one eye open.

Holland America Line is breaking the mould with its latest blood-curdling release, a vampire-themed voyage.

Scheduled onboard *ms Zuiderdam*, creatures of the night will enjoy the crypt cold delights of the Inside Passage, as well as a host of ghoulish onboard delights such as a vampire ball (how will anyone be able to get ready for if they can't see themselves in the mirror?), costume contest and vampire trivia games.

Vampire scholar and master of dark tales, John Edgar Browning will also be onboard and will host a vampire movie festival, whilst Dacre Stoker, the beloved great-grandnephew of the infamous Bram Stoker, will also join guests onboard.

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HAL adds GAP workshops

HOLLAND America Line has boosted its Group Amenities Packages to include a new workshop program which can be tailored for educational groups of 15 or more, and includes a free cocktail party and Pinnacle Grill lunch.



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WWW.SWANHELLENIC.COM.AU

Hurtigruten agent incentive

HURTIGRUTEN is giving agents a \$100 Visa gift card for every new double occupancy/twin share Hurtigruten reservation for any Classic Norwegian Coastal Voyage departing in Oct, Nov or Dec 2011.

In addition agents will also receive a \$50 Visa gift card for every new single occupancy Classic Norwegian Coastal Voyage booking for voyages departing in Oct, Nov or Dec 2011.

Agents can look forward to receiving their gift card the week before their clients are due to depart for their voyage.

For details phone 1800 623 267 or email hurtigruten@discovertheworld.com.au.

RCL's shrinking sensations



THE Lawn Club on Royal Caribbean's newest cruiseliner, *Celebrity Silhouette* makes even the biggest men feel small.

Adam Armstrong, RCL's commercial manager Australia, and Tony Soden, national account executive encountered the unique feature onboard during the inaugural two night cruise from Civitavecchia, Italy, late in Jul.

The over-sized chairs are one of a number of modern art pieces located throughout the ship, one of many elements evoking Celebrity's "Modern Luxury" theme.

The Lawn Club features nearly an acre of real grass where guests can picnic, play bowls or lie in the sun.

Small ships has Alaska covered

ALASKA Dream Cruises (*CW* Tue) is represented in Australia by the Small Ship Adventure Company.

For Alaska Dream Cruises details visit www.smallshipadventure.com.

2012 sees a Princess in Alaska

THE new Princess Cruises 2012 Alaska brochure features a line up of seven ships sailing itineraries along the Alaskan coastline taking in William Sound, Glacier Bay National Park and Tracy Arm Fjord.

The brochure also features a selection of 21 combined land and sea itineraries.

Voyage pricing starts at \$799pp for a seven-night Voyage of the Glaciers cruise between Vancouver and Anchorage, whilst 10-day roundtrip Inside passage voyages are now available from three ports: Seattle, San Francisco and Vancouver.

See www.princess.com for details.

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TTW enjoys a quick pub crawl



CANCER got a kick in the pants from Travel the World this week, after a TTW team raised a whopping \$3,000 for their efforts in the Pub to Pub 13km Fun Run.

The team was one of the largest fundraisers in the event, with all proceeds going to the Cure Cancer charity.

The TTW runners are pictured above (front row): Fabienne Pereria and Michelle Taylor; (second row): Leighton Schembri, Magdalena Janowska, Juliana Higgins, Jackie Sievers, Alexandra Spinolo, Helen Eves; (third Row): Marshall Livingston (Seabourn), Ethan Larkin and Danny Robinson.

Cruise lines should promote shore excursions - Vass

ONE of the speakers at last week's Cruise Down Under conference (**CW** 25 Aug) urged cruise lines to band together and create a non-profit group which espouses the value-for-money of ship-organised shore excursions.

David Vass, who has had an extensive career across the industry and is now vice president, Destination & Enrichment Programs for the residential cruise ship *The World*, told delegates that with the internet passengers are now able to easily compare locally available tours, meaning it's important to point out the advantages of booking onboard.

He cited areas such as safety, being assured that tours will have departure and return times coordinated to ship schedules, English speaking guides and having sightseeing and activities vetted by cruise lines.

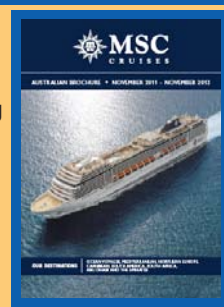
Vass also provided guidance for tour operators wanting to target the cruise market, urging them to be fully transparent when dealing with cruise lines including explaining details of menus, timing breakdowns, being "candid" about the quality of venues and embracing a "realistic profit margin".

Brochure Spotlight

The new brochure from MSC Cruises features a plethora of new offerings including a new ship, *MSC Divina*, which joins the fleet in May, and a new cabin category.

Over 105 itineraries on 12 vessels are included in the 2011-12 line-up, as well as a bunch of family and group friendly promotions.

Specials featured in the brochure include Prima Prices on the seven Med night, with prices starting at just \$659pp for 2012 voyages. See www.msccruises.com.au.



ICCA upcoming training

THE next ICCA training dates are as follows: 6-7 Sep BNE, 20-21 Sep MEL, 5-7 Oct PER, 11-12 Oct ADL and 17-18 Oct SYD.

See www.cruising.org.au.

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Face to Face: Roger Condon

Sales Manager - Cruise, Discover the World Marketing

Welcome to Face to Face, where we chat to cruise industry leaders.

How did you get into the cruise industry?

Where do I begin? And yes, I did watch the Love Boat! Being at sea was always my dream since before I can remember. Interestingly, I was in the process of joining the Navy when at the last minute a fortuitous meeting offered me the opportunity to join Seabourn. It was a no-brainer, the Navy or one of the world's ultra-luxury cruise lines.

What is the key to your success?

Understanding the industry and above all, the cruise passenger/guest. Passion goes a long way, as does unwavering honesty, destination knowledge and the ability to deliver it in a way that ignites the imagination.

How many cruises have you been on in the past five years?

Probably 50 if you count my last year at sea.

What is your favourite destination, and why?

Impossible question! Shanghai – the sail up the Huang Pu attacks the senses. Portofino for the Gnocchi al pesto. Cape Town for its access to the great game reserves. Inside Passage for its beauty... I could go on.

What was your most memorable moment on a cruise?

While hosting a dinner table aboard *Seabourn Spirit*, a guest came across the room to the table and asked one of my guests his name. After a flood of overwhelming emotion, it turned out they were brothers who hadn't seen each other for 37 years. Everyone ended up in tears.

How can cruising continue to grow in the current financial climate?

Cruising is without doubt the definition of *innovation*. Cruising has changed its face so much since my first *Arcadia* cruise from Sydney in 1978, that it's almost unrecognisable from those days. The past 15 years has seen more change than ever before. Given the still low percentage of people who have cruised, there is loads of scope to widen the net to capture those who still think they'd get bored or claustrophobic on a cruise.

What do you think is the most underrated aspect of cruising?

Although many cruises offer some or many days at sea, which are great, cruising also offers in many destinations the very best and most in-depth sightseeing opportunities. Travellers these days are more challenging to please and they want to see and experience everything. Many people don't realise that you can do and see as much, and at times even more on a cruise, such as a Mediterranean cruise, where you're in port every day, while someone else does the driving at night.

What makes Australians different to other cruise passengers?

Quite simply, their casual nature. When I worked onboard, I always said that if a tour bus gets a flat tyre, everyone else would sit on the bus and fume with anger, waiting to head back for their refunds, but the Aussies would get the esky out, make the most of it, laugh and give the driver a hand.

What is your best tip for sea-sickness?

Don't go locking yourself in your cabin if you start feeling ill. As soon as you feel a little under the weather, head into the fresh air on deck.



Roger's Cruise Favourites!

Ship: *Seabourn Spirit*

Ship activity: Enrichment lectures

Shore Excursion: Four night tour to Singita

Region: Europe

Port: Sydney (docked at Circular Quay)

Onboard Food/Drink: Filet mignon/champagne

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