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RCI launches new e-learning modules

Cruising for Excellence now includes training designed for agents across Australia and New Zealand – and the chance to win a cruise.

ROYAL Caribbean has revamped its online training tool to cover its five ships to be based

in Sydney this season as well as an overview of the cruises the company offers overseas. The new modules include *Celebrity Solstice*, *Celebrity Specialty Dining*, *Rhapsody of the Seas* and *Radiance of the Seas*.

According to the Australian office's commercial manager Adam Armstrong, agents will now be better equipped to sell and speak knowledgeably about Royal Caribbean, *Celebrity* and Azamara Club cruises.

"The new information is ship-specific and will give agents unparalleled knowledge to inform their customers of the facilities and amenities available on board," Armstrong told *Cruise Weekly*.

"The program is online, interactive and includes helpful factsheets and videos, so it's fun, quick and easy to learn about our products."

Armstrong said sales were expected to grow as a result of the one-stop-shop training.

"With almost 600 agents signing up on the first day of the new modules becoming available, we do expect sales to increase as more agents discover the wonders of our ships," he said.

Armstrong added that he was "extremely happy" with current bookings for all of RCI's locally based ships.

Agents who complete the training by 12 Oct have the opportunity to win one of eight cruises for two.

First prize is a 14-night cruise with Azamara Club Cruises; second prize is four one-night cruises on *Celebrity Solstice*; and third prize is three one-night cruises on *Voyager of the Seas*.

For terms and conditions visit www.royalcaribbean.com.au/CFE.

Concordia removal revised

IT appears as if the *Costa Concordia* will remain in its watery pew for longer than expected, with the Mayor of Giglio telling media that the removal process has been delayed.

Earlier, salvage experts had said that the removal of *Concordia* from its position off the island of Giglio on Italy's Tuscan coast could begin in early 2013, however at a meeting this week, the Tita-Micoperi salvage consortium presented a time schedule which would see the removal commence towards the middle of the year instead.

The meeting saw the salvage company detail its engineering plan for the phases of *Concordia's* removal, which according to the schedule would see the ship's refloating and vertical realignment kick-off by the end of May 2013.

Wind Star refreshed and ready

SHIPWIDE renovation on *Wind Star* has been completed, with the vessel now sporting new furnishings, upholstery, art, lighting, wall coverings, carpeting, ceiling finishes, window treatments, and floor coverings.

The work is part of a US\$18 million fleet-wide renovation project by Windstar Cruises, and also saw the vessel's restaurant transformed into the Amphora Restaurant; whilst The Veranda's outdoor seating was significantly expanded; a new buffet was installed; the Compass Rose was reconfigured to open up to the adjoining outdoor deck; new hardwood flooring was laid in The Lounge; new sound insulation installed in the Casino; and alfresco seating, a new awning and deck furniture was installed at Candles Grill; whilst the library was also enhanced to promote a more relaxing atmosphere; and Wind Spa received a soft goods update.

All of *Wind Star's* staterooms and suites also enjoyed a full overhaul and as such received new fittings, new carpet and new furnishings.



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Cruise News & Views



Brett Jardine - General Manager, ICCA

National Cruise Week

With preparations for the inaugural National Cruise Week well under way, has your agency put some thought into what you may do to get involved?

As mentioned in last week's column, for National Cruise Week to be a raging success for the cruise industry the critical ingredient is going to be proactive participation at a retail level.

This means co-ordinating your own local promotions and activities in conjunction with the wider national promotion.

At www.nationalcruiseweek.com.au members of the ICCA can now download the National Cruise Week logo for use in your communications with clients, there are standard sized ad templates that can be used to create your own local ads or in store flyers, you can even order an A3 sized poster to display in store or within your local shopping centre or club.

There is also a ready-made press release that can be personalised and sent to your local media letting them know that you are involved with National Cruise Week to add to your efforts.

We are starting to receive some great offers from our Member Cruise Lines and these will be available live in the week leading up to National Cruise Week and the finishing touches are just about in place for our consumer marketing activity.

Participation in National Cruise Week is open to all retail travel agents but you must be a member of the ICCA to access any Member Cruise Line offers.

We will certainly welcome all enquiries at www.cruising.org.au and click on the membership icon.

Peruvian line to add ship on Mekong

Amazon river cruise operator Aqua Expeditions is expanding its business to a completely new region in 2014.

AQUA Expeditions, a company that was started in Peru less than five years ago, has revealed plans to launch a new vessel on the Mekong River.

Speaking at Virtuoso Travel Week in Las Vegas, the line's founder and CEO Francesco Galli Zugaro said his luxury product had been so popular that he decided to introduce it to

Vietnam and Cambodia.

Zugaro said he selected the destination because the combination of river cruising with visits to Angkor Wat was similar to how his company combines Amazon cruises with visits to Machu Picchu.

Aqua Expeditions currently has two vessels on the Amazon: the 24-passenger *Aqua* (used by Scenic Tours) and the 32-passenger *Aria*.

The new 40-passenger ship will offer sailings between Siem Reap and Ho Chi Minh City from Jan 2014.

Designed by Vietnam-based Noor, it will feature a modern design with an Asian style, 20 suites, a spa and fitness center, dining room, library, screening room and observation deck with pool and lounge bar.

Itinerary options are expected to include varied durations of three, four and seven nights.

A local celebrity chef will also be recruited for "culinary creations", Zugaro said.

Half price mates rates

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises is encouraging friendship, with a 'take a mate for half price' deal on its three, four and seven night Yasawa Islands and Northern Fiji cruises.

Sailing onboard the 120-passenger *MV Reef Endeavour*, the voyages treat guests to authentic Fijian experiences with visits to villages, schools, churches and handicraft markets, as well as a traditional village sevusevu ceremonies.

Guests will also have loads of opportunities for snorkelling, laying on sandy beaches, swimming in blue lagoons and enjoying *Endeavour's* Senikai Spa.

The take a mate for half price deal is valid for sale until 31 Oct 2012, for travel from 1 Oct 2012 until 31 Mar 2013.

Prices start from AU\$656pp/ts for the three-night Discovery Yasawa Island Cruise.

See captaincook.com.fj or call 1300 863 454.

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Pictured is Jodie Payne from TravelManagers with Russell Crowe.

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Royal Caribbean launches local sale

The one-week Flagship Sale will offer onboard credit and half-price fares to boost bookings for the upcoming season.

ROYAL Caribbean is preparing for its biggest sale of the year this weekend.

The Flagship Sale includes bonus ship credits of up to US\$200 and 50% off for second passengers in each booking for selected 2012/13 sailings.

Clients also have the benefit of only paying a half-price deposit for all passengers.

Commercial director Adam Armstrong told *Cruise Weekly* that the sale was designed to get people across the line.

"We expect those passengers who have been thinking about cruising to take advantage of our great one-week-only offers," he said.

"The feedback we have had from agents is

that they are looking forward to it too."

Launching on Sunday, the Flagship offer is available on all Australia, NZ and South Pacific 2012/2013 season sailings of five nights and over and applies to new and individual bookings made between 19-25 Aug 2012.

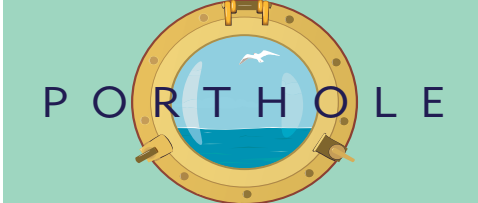
Lead fares for an eight-night 'Pacific Island Escape' on *Rhapsody of the Seas*, departing 29 Nov 2012 start from \$995pp – a saving of \$910pp.

This sailing also includes \$US100 of bonus onboard credit.

Lead fares for the Flagship Sale plus half-price for second passenger deal include an 11-night Tropical Queensland cruise on *Rhapsody of the Seas*, departing 7 Dec 2012.

Fares start at \$1,299pp for an interior cabin, with the second passenger for \$649.50, plus \$US100 onboard credit.

A 14-night 'New Zealand Discovery' on *Voyager of the Seas*, departing 24 Nov 2012, also offers the half-priced fare for a second guest, with fares for the first pax from \$1,599pp and the second pax from \$799.50 for an interior cabin.



PORTHOLE

VOLCANIC ice shelf at sea?


A New Zealand navy ship sailing around 1,000kms from kiwi shores was shocked to come across a huge chunk of solidified lava stones (pumice) clumped together, which strongly resembled an ice shelf, moving up and down with the ocean's swell.

"The rock looked to be sitting two foot above the surface of the waves and lit up a brilliant white colour in the spotlight," said Lieutenant Tim Oscar.

"It looked exactly like the edge of an ice shelf [and it was] the weirdest thing I've seen in 18 years at sea," he added.

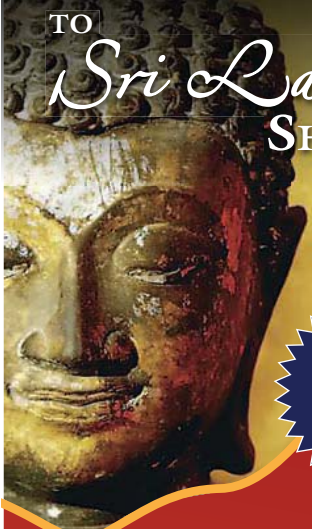
It is believed that the pumice originated from the grumbling eruptions of an underwater volcano named Monowai.

Pictured right is an aerial shot of the pumice island.



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Cycling on River Cloud II

RIVER Cloud II is hosting a bicycle package onboard its seven-night 29 Sep voyage Nuremberg to Basle.

The bicycle package is an additional €695pp, incl five days of cycling along the selected cruise route with guide; support bus with bicycle transport trailer and use of terranova touring cycles; all entrance fees and guided tours led by professional, local guides; picnics and beverages; and a risk coverage certificate.



Brochure Spotlight

Celebrity Cruises new Australia, New Zealand, South Pacific 2013/14 brochure features over 25 new itineraries for the 2013/14 season, as well as an in-depth look at *Celebrity Solstice*.

Returning for a second consecutive season on Australian shores in October 2013, *Celebrity Solstice* will feature 15 sailings over the period, three more than her upcoming 2012/13 season.

To order the brochure call 1800 235 3274, or see www.celebritycruises.com.au.



Allay any childcare worries

AGENTS can now utilise a new Royal Caribbean video to help parents understand how the cruise line looks after infants at sea.

Titled 'Royal Babies and Tots at Sea: Worry-Free Fun with Royal Caribbean', the video illustrates what to expect from the Tots program.

CLICK HERE to access the video.

Hurtigruten's new Portal

HURTIGRUTEN will launch a new interactive (Lufthansa Systems) Guest Service Portal across all of its 12 vessels next year.

The Portal features seven guest modules: Entertain, Book & Shop, Dine, Concierge, Housekeeping, Socialise and Inform, which guests can use to make inquiries, book a service, make dinner reservations or select personal preference settings.

Portal options also allow guests to watch a movie, chat online, or plan an excursion or the next leg of their holiday, as well as to obtain information about the ship's key facilities such as restaurants, spa and fitness center and access the ship's social media page.

The Portal is accessible by guests via their mobile devices such as tablets or laptops, as well as via television and the ship's digital signs.

Scenic hosts its own Expo

SCENIC Tours is inviting cruisers to a series of free information sessions in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide on Europe River Cruises and Tours; Canada, Alaska & USA; South America; and Africa.

In addition to covering Scenic's offerings in these regions, the event will feature special offers and will detail the company's soon-to-end Earlybird deals for Europe; Canada, Alaska & USA; and South America.

The sessions are free, but pre-booking is essential- see scenictours.com.au/world-expo.

Agents in Lotus position



A GROUP of excited South Australian agents were treated to an Asian adventure through Vietnam and Cambodia onboard *RV AmaLotus* recently, courtesy of APT, Travelscene American Express and Singapore Airlines.

The eight-day famil was led by APT's SA BDM, Jennifer Page, who kitted the agents with reed hats on arrival at Saigon.

Highlights included a visit to Cai Be and its floating wholesalers market; a rickshaw ride through Tan Chau; explorations of Phenom Penh's Royal Palace and the little known silk-weaving village of Chong Koh, as well as the hill-top Buddhist monasteries of Oudong.

The group is pictured above making good use of their reed hats (from left): Amanda Partington, Glenelg Travel; Samantha Venables, Go Global Travel; Jennifer Page, APT; Joseph Toleman, Phil Hoffmann Travel; Robert Rault, Phil Hoffmann Travel; Sandra Paddick, Travelscene Kadina; Maurice Baggio, Singapore Airlines; Leah Mullen, Travel O'Connor; (and front row from left) Geoff Nottle, Eyre Travel and Maggie Bootsman TSAX State Manager.

Port Canaveral full speed ahead

A US\$24 million grant from the Florida Department of Transportation is set to push Port Canaveral's harbour widening and deepening project four years ahead of schedule.


The project will see the 400-ft channel widened by 100-ft and deepened by two-ft along the length of the manmade harbor, and will enable the passage of larger cruise and cargo ships.

The project is now expected to be completed towards the end of 2014.

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HAL and Seabourn join ACA

HOLLAND America Line and Seabourn are the latest cruise lines to join the membership ranks of the largest cruise association in Asia, the Asia Cruise Association.

"The ACA is pleased to welcome Holland America Line and Seabourn as our newest members," said ACA Chairman Liu Zinan.

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