



## Celebrity seeks to raise pricing

*Solstice* is the most underpriced ship in Australia, according to the line, which wants to attract younger, luxury clients.

**THIS** season may be the last chance to sell bargain cruises on the highest rated locally based superliner, *Celebrity Solstice*.

Speaking to **CW** onboard this week's one-night cruise, Royal Caribbean commercial manager for Australia Adam Armstrong said *Celebrity Solstice* should be priced "so much higher".

"Celebrity Cruises is not terribly well known here, so next year we have to challenge the industry to get guests to pay more," he said.

"*Solstice* is the most underpriced cruise ship this summer, especially for a vessel of this quality and newness."

He said that although the itineraries were similar to other ships in the region, it was "worth paying extra for the upscale hardware".

Armstrong highlighted the superior quality of dining and service, as well as soft furnishings, fixtures and fittings.

"Celebrity is luxurious with a modern twist - we are a W Hotel experience compared to a traditional Four Seasons, an Audi rather than a Mercedes.

"Most of our entertainment is also more of a Cirque de Soleil style rather than traditional cruise show theatre, and we have things out of the ordinary, like the Lawn Club, hot glass show, Martini Bar and Molecular cocktail bar."

Armstrong also revealed that many passengers were older than the line's target market, which was an issue of education for travel agents.

"We are looking for people in their mid-30s to high-50s but also anyone with youngness at heart."

But *Solstice* was selling "really well", he said.

"It's the top performer out of all our ships in Australia this season and it has the best forward bookings, although we still have space

at the back end of the program."

Next season Celebrity Cruises plans to add two South Pacific voyages and a three-night sampler, Armstrong said.

In the meantime, a record number of agents would be invited to experience *Solstice* to help them "understand the brand".

"We're doubling capacity for our biggest ever walkaround program in recognition of the fact that it is such a new product.

"Only two agents came on in Darwin but we had 100 in Brisbane and 300 plus guests in Sydney, and approximately 500 agents who paid to come on."

Unfortunately, many of the one-night passengers experienced a few hiccups with embarkation and disembarkation, but revellers (including Royal Caribbean's Australian general manager Gavin Smith) happily partied into the early morning at Qasar nightclub.

"We probably won't do another one-night cruise again - two or three nights work best," Armstrong said.

## 2013 is looking up for Windstar

**WINDSTAR** Cruises has reported a 60% year-on-year increase on advanced bookings for 2013.

"Based on current pace, 2013 will mark the fourth straight year of increasing revenue for the small-ship cruise line," Windstar said in a statement.

The news comes as the company prepares for the completion of its \$18m in a fleet-wide renovation project which kicked-off last year.

The fleet-wide renovations saw *Wind Star*, *Wind Surf* and *Wind Spirit* upgraded with new décor, furniture, carpeting, upholstery and artwork in all public areas, staterooms and suites, as well as 72,000 square feet of brand new, hand-crafted sails.

Renovations on the *Wind Star* yacht were completed in Apr, while *Wind Surf* and *Wind Spirit* will complete renovations this month.

## ALL THE CRUISE NEWS

Today's trade issue of **CW** features three pages jam packed with all the latest cruise news.

## Sixth Dreamworks ship

**NEXT** year Royal Caribbean will add a sixth ship to its DreamWorks Animation deal, *Mariner of the Seas*.

As such, when she debuts in May, *Mariner* will provide guests the full DreamWorks experience that currently features on *Voyager of the Seas*, *Oasis of the Seas*, *Liberty of the Seas*, *Allure of the Seas* and *Freedom of the Seas*.

**Merry Christmas**

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## Cruise News & Views



Brett Jardine - General Manager, ICCA

Ever been out on deck on a cruise ship with numerous multi-coloured flags flapping around and actually stopped to consider what they mean?

The flying of various flags on ships today is part of the cruise industries heritage and tradition. Flags are essentially a communication tool, despite technology that surpassed their use many years ago. Put simply, flags indicate "who I am, where I'm from and what I'm doing".

Originally used to confirm where the ship was from, ships venturing into foreign ports would not only fly the flag of their home country but also the flag of the country whose waters were being entered to indicate their intentions as "friendly".

In addition to announcing where a ship is from, forty colourful flags represent a total communications system with specific meanings that were developed by international agreement in 1902.

Twenty six flags indicate each letter of the alphabet, ten of them represent numerals from 0 - 9, one is set aside specifically for "answering" and there are three substitutes.

A few examples of flags and their meanings include....

The half red, half white flag represents the letter "H" or well known in the travel industry as "Hotel".

When flying, this means there is a pilot on board as a ship is entering or leaving a port.

A flag with a white square against a dark blue background, "P", indicates the ship will be pushing off within 24 hours.

A flag on its own with descending blue, white and red squares, "W" indicates a medical emergency onboard.

If you ever see the diagonally divided red and yellow flag "O", flying on its own, have a look over the side, as this means "man overboard"!!!

## Smith reappointed, Sherry new deputy

ICCA has announced its 2013 Board following its AGM in Sydney yesterday.

**ROYAL** Caribbean Cruises regional vice president Asia Pacific Gavin Smith will remain as Chairman of the International Cruise Council Australasia.

Meanwhile, Carnival Australia chief executive Ann Sherry has joined the board, taking up one of the two deputy chairman positions, alongside long-serving board member Andrew Millmore.

Sherry replaces Carnival Australia director of sales Don Clark.

APT CEO Chris Hall continues as treasurer, while Viking River Cruises managing director Teresia Fors will serve again as Secretary.

Francis Travel Marketing's Tony Smith, representing Holland America Line in New Zealand, has also been retained as the NZ representative.

ICCA general manager Brett Jardine said the

appointments did not require a membership vote as everyone had been nominated unopposed.

"As the popularity of cruising grows in Australia and New Zealand, so too does the work of the Board," Jardine said.

"The industry has a big year ahead in 2013 and I'm delighted that the Council will go into the New Year with such strong representation on its Board."

## Agents' Solstice verdict

**HUNDREDS** of agents from across the nation flocked to be a part of *Celebrity Solstice's* inaugural one-nighter from Sydney last Sunday night.

During the evening agents enjoyed a host of activities including a comedy show, an Aussie Boys musical revue, and a hot glass blowing show, as well as the numerous bars and eateries, such as the very popular Martini Bar.

According to a *Celebrity Cruises* spokesperson, the cruise line has since received "glowing reports from agencies that were onboard, such as Travel the World, Travelscene and Just Cruises - all saying that design, décor and the food were fantastic".

Pictured below at the Martini Bar is Heather Pryde, Courtney Goodsell, Sharon Grant from Flight Centre.



## New HKTB cruise head

**THE** Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has appointed Kenneth Wong as the new general manager of Cruise and MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions).

Wong's appointment is effective immediately and will see him oversee the formulation and implementation of business strategies of the Meetings and Exhibitions Hong Kong (MEHK) Office, and develop strategic plans to grow the cruise business in Hong Kong.

Prior to his appointment, Wong was head of Product Marketing at the HKTB head office in Hong Kong.

## Norovirus on the Rhine

**OVER** 40% of passengers onboard the popular European river cruise ship, *Ms Bellriva*, fell victim to the dreaded norovirus over the weekend.

Scourge of cruise lines worldwide, the norovirus struck *Bellriva* guests as it was sailing through Germany on the Rhine River as part of a three-night Christmas markets voyage, complete with a pax load of with 146 guests.

The ship was quarantined by German authorities at anchor in the district of Wiesbaden Biebrich on Saturday.

After spending the night onboard, guests were bussed back to Cologne where the voyage was due to conclude on Sunday.

*Bellriva* will now undergo a full sanitation work-over before her next voyage.

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## China shipbuilding directory

**BUSINESS** Data International has published the world's first English-language *China Shipbuilding Industry Directory 2013*.

The 362-page directory includes info on the Chinese shipbuilding industry, and is priced at US\$199.50 from [www.ibizdata.com](http://www.ibizdata.com).

## Croc attack in PNG

**A PASSENGER** has had a lucky escape aboard *Oceanic Discoverer* (under charter to US-based Lindblad Expeditions).

On 07 Nov, the American citizen went for a swim off Crown Island, near Madang, and was bitten on the leg by a crocodile.

After several attempts to obtain details from the company and the ship's operator, Coral Princess Cruises, **CW** contributor Rod Eime received an email this week from Lindblad's public relations representative.

"We made a landing with our guests on a pristine beach not known to inhabit crocodiles, and a complete departure from their normal environment of mangroves and muddy rivers," the email said.

"As a normal caution, guests were directed to swim in a certain protected area with the group, but one guest disregarded the naturalist's directions and went off on his own for an exercise swim.

"Staff members repeatedly tried to get him to return to the shore, and when their yells from the beach were ignored they radioed to the ship to send out a Zodiac to bring him back.

"The ship immediately dispatched a boat but by time it reached our guest he had been attacked by the crocodile and suffered non-life threatening wounds."

The man was immediately treated by several doctors onboard and then taken to hospital.

"He is home in the US and doing fine," the PR rep said.

The incident comes after Kimberley operator, North Star Cruises, saw crewmember Tara Hawkes attacked north of Broome in Apr.

Hawkes survived thanks to quick action by fellow crew and passengers and the cruise line was subsequently cleared by a WorkSafe inquiry.

## Alaskan experts to join cruises

**AMERICAN** Cruise Lines has announced its 2013 line-up of guest speakers set to accompany the cruise line's Alaska Inside Passage cruises.

Speakers will include: Todd Weber, a river-running historian who will provide insight into the stamina, ingenuity and character that existed in those who braved the Last Frontier; as well as Ian Sampson, professional natural resources interpreter and historian, who will help guests gain an understanding of the history, culture, geology, geography, flora, and fauna of each area visited.

The final guest speaker is Tom Stanley, a well respected biologist with over 35 years of professional experience.

In addition to the guest speakers, when visiting Glacier Bay, a park service ranger and native cultural interpreter will join passengers aboard to provide added narration and insight.

## AdventureSmith expansion

**THIRTEEN** new itineraries have been added to AdventureSmith Explorations' 2013 portfolio.

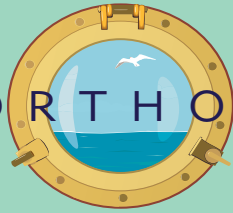
The company currently represents more than 65 vessels worldwide, and the new itineraries cover destinations such as Alaska, Hawaii, the Arctic, Belize and the Adriatic Sea.

Examples of the new itineraries include a 15-day Fabled Lands of the North: Greenland, Baffin Island, Newfoundland & Labrador cruise (priced from \$13,470pp) departing 24 Aug 2013 onboard a small expedition ship, accompanied by Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell, and National Geographic photographer Michael Melford.

**MEANWHILE** speaking about the company's 2012 roundup, Todd Smith, owner and founder of AdventureSmith Explorations said that this year three quarters of the company's clients were first time small ship cruisers.


Smith also added that 2012 sales are up 30 percent over 2011 and that 2013 sales are already 20 percent ahead of this point last year.

See [adventuresmithexplorations.com](http://adventuresmithexplorations.com).



## P O R T H O L E

**END** of the world is no problem for Noah's Ark. A Dutch businessman, Johan Huibers, has finally fulfilled his 20-year old dream, of building his very own Noah's Ark. Just in time for the end of the world on 21 Dec this year, the Ark is 130m long, 29m wide and 23m high, and takes its design and dimensions, according to Huibers, from descriptions of the original Ark in the Bible. Rather than gathering two of each animal onboard however, Huibers is hoping to turn his enormous life raft into a tourist attraction to draw up to 3,000 visitors a day to where it is docked in the Netherlands.



*You know the end is nigh when someone builds an Ark...*

## Getting up close to Hawaii

**THE** Hawaiian Islands are getting a thorough inspection as part of InnerSea Discoveries' new AdventureBound Hawaii-a weeklong Active Adventure.

Described as an "Un-Cruise", the voyage will take place onboard the 76-guest *Wilderness Explorer* and will include adventure activities by sea and ashore for up-close explorations of sea life and four islands of Oahu, Maui, Lana'i and the Big Island of Hawaii.

The seven-night itinerary will run from Nov 2013 through Apr 2014 between Oahu and the Big Island and reverse, and will take guests to Ka'ena Point State Park, Wai'anae Harbor, Maui, Molokini, Lana'i, Honomalino Bay, Opihahai and Kailua-Kona.

Guests will also enjoy whale watching in the Humpback National Marine Sanctuary.

Rates begin at US\$2,495 per person, see [innerseadiscoveries.com](http://innerseadiscoveries.com).

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