



Unstoppable Uniworld adds two ships

Australia is one of the main target markets for Uniworld's new *SS Catherine* and *SS Alexandra*, launching in Europe in 2014.

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruises is planning to double its capacity in France with the debut of the *SS Catherine*, to be modelled after its existing French river vessel, the *River Royale*.

Another new ship, the *SS Catherine*, is set to sail on the Rhine, Main and Danube.

John Molinaro, Uniworld's general manager Australia, told *Cruise Weekly* that the *SS Catherine* will be a sister ship to the line's award-winning *SS Antoinette*, which was launched last year.

"*Catherine* will look entirely different."

"Only the basic ship's hull and layout are the same, but we're not revealing any other details yet – this is just a sneak peek," he said.

Both ships will be designed with the same "Red Carnation touches" used by Uniworld's sister hotel company, he confirmed.

According to Molinaro, Australia is expected to be a major source market for the two new-builds.

"Absolutely, France is extremely popular as an itinerary with our clients here, as well as the Rhine and Danube," he said.

Uniworld has announced five new ships in the past two years – also including the *River Saigon* and *River Orchid* on the Mekong and the *Queen Isabel* in Portugal – in addition to its partnerships with *Century Legend* and *Century Paragon* in Asia, and a new route in Italy.

Others in the fleet are currently undergoing

million-dollar refurbishments ahead of the 2013 season.

"You can never have enough five-star ships, destinations and choice of itineraries," Molinaro said.

"We have the greatest amount of choice of itineraries, with five-star ships spread out across the world offering much more than the Amsterdam-to-Budapest route."

He urged travel agents to sell more Uniworld product and enjoy the high rate of returning passengers.

"Uniworld is one of the most widely awarded cruise lines in the world, because we stand by our motto: no request too large, no detail too small."

Ponant Cruises all inclusive

UPMARKET small-ship cruise operator Compagnie du Ponant has announced a simplified fare structure, in which cruise prices will include all meals, gratuities, port charges, taxes, fees and alcoholic drinks.

The company said that under the new plans the only additional charges passengers would incur would be optional excursions, transfers and personal expenses such as airfares.

The change is effective immediately for all new bookings, with the all inclusive offering valid for all ships and itineraries.

Cabins will feature fully stocked mini-bars and 24 hour room service and fares also include a welcome cocktail party and all onboard entertainment options.

At this stage the new structure has only been announced in North America, and it's not clear what the local implications of the move are.

Compagnie du Ponant is represented in Australia by Travel The World.

ALL THE CRUISE NEWS

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Cruise News & Views



Brett Jardine - General Manager, ICCA

Asia on track for cruising revolution

The new head of the Asia Cruise Association has big plans to boost agent cruise training and to introduce new itineraries.

In an exclusive interview with *Cruise Weekly*, Kevin Leong, appointed this month as ACA's first full-time general manager, has outlined his vision for Asian cruising.

His top priority is to address the lack of "cruise qualified" staff in Asian travel agencies through greater training opportunities across the region.

"The practice to date had been to use existing events like Cruise Shipping Asia and Seatrade All Asia Cruise Convention to organise training sessions for travel agent attendees," Leong said.

"This will continue but I will be planning a more comprehensive training schedule that would provide regular training sessions in various cities all over Asia."

ACA's training would equip agents to sell cruises all over the world, not only in Asia, he confirmed.

"I believe once we've introduced Asians to the joys of cruising, we'll not be able to keep them in the region.

"Asia will become a major source market also for the other cruise regions in the world."

Leong's other major focus is the promotion of Asia's port development, with a view to expand the range of itineraries to include calls at more islands, coastal cities and towns.

"Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand have expressed interest in receiving more cruise ships," he said.

"In north Asia, the Chinese have been very proactive in building cruise terminals, and Hong Kong will open theirs next year.

Orion 2013 brochure out today

ORION Expedition Cruises has released its 2013 season brochure, offering 33 bespoke five to 20-night itineraries to 94 destinations.

The program utilises the original, highly acclaimed *Orion* vessel, with *Orion II* leaving the fleet in November.

The 2013 program offers expeditions to Borneo and Sulawesi, the Kimberley Coast, the Great Barrier Reef, Melanesia, New Zealand, the Forgotten Islands of Sunda as well as Papua New Guinea and of course Antarctica.

See orionexpeditions.com/ebrochure.

"I would like to see two or three new itineraries from Singapore to around Indonesia, longer ones from Malaysia to Vietnam via Thailand or Cambodia, itineraries that would connect the Philippines to East Malaysia, and so on.

"Also, cruises from Hong Kong to Vietnam might help to extend the summer season in North Asia," he said.

Leong, a former chair of the ASEAN Cruise Working Group who spent 36 years with the Singapore Tourism Board, including six years in the Sydney office, said it would be "wonderful" to see more cruising between Asia and Australia.

"It may take some time, during which we will be working on expanding the numbers of ports of call within South East Asia, but the Indonesians are already keen to link up with Australia from Bali, and when that happens, cruise traffic to and fro will be a reality."

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Masters Accreditation

THERE is still a small window of opportunity for consultants to register for our 2012 Masters Conference, so I thought it would be timely to share my response to a question I was asked recently: **How do I benefit by attending the ICCA Masters Conference?**

Every individual's circumstances are a little different but there are a number of great reasons to become a Master Cruise Consultant (MCC)

- ✓ The MCC Accreditation is issued by the Cruise Council on behalf of the Cruise Line Members of the association – the very cruise lines that you are selling day to day
- ✓ You are officially endorsed by the cruise industry body as the most qualified consultant to be advising your clients about cruise holidays
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- ✓ 80 per cent of Australia's and New Zealand's top cruise consultants now hold Masters Accreditation
- ✓ You will receive priority listing in Cruise Passenger Magazine's agent listings
- ✓ Last but not least – your annual ICCA membership fee will be reduced.

The 2012 Masters Conference will take place on Cunard's *Queen Mary 2* during a 7-night transatlantic voyage in October.

For more information click on the Masters Conference tab from our home page www.cruiseweekly.com.au

CRUISE WEEKLY



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Beyond Russian addition

BEYOND Travel is offering a 12 day *Volga Dream* deluxe cruise tour which will operate year round in 2013.

It includes six nights on board the 56-cabin vessel plus touring and accom in Moscow and St Petersburg from \$3325ppts - 1300 363 554.

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Avalon super suite savings

AVALON Waterways is offering savings of \$1000 per couple in conjunction with the launch of its 2013 Suite Ship brochure.

Next year the fleet will grow from three to five of the specially designed vessels which offer two full decks of all-suite accom and 30% more cabin space than the average competitor.

The \$1000 savings are on the inaugural sailings of the new *Avalon Artistry II* and *Avalon Expression* - info 1300 230 234.

CroisiEurope into Asia

MAJOR European river cruise operator CroisiEurope is the latest river cruise firm to expand into Indochina, with a new Mekong cruise program launching this week.

The company is operating the Asian program under the brand CroisiVoyages to distinguish its operations outside of Europe, which are set to also include new cruise ventures in Africa, India and Russia.


CroisiVoyages has chartered the *RV Indochine*, a four star 24 ensuite cabin vessel in French Colonial Style which was constructed specifically for the Mekong in 2008 with a low superstructure and comparatively shallow draft, allowing it to sail under low bridges.

CroisiVoyages will operate a series of voyages between Ho Chi Minh City and Angkor, with itineraries starting at A\$2125 for an eight night cruise plus two nights First Class hotel accommodation in Siem Reap and all meals, including complimentary beer and soft drinks.

Unlike cruise vessels operated by some other companies, the construction of the vessel allows *RV Indochine* to fit under a low bridge south of Saigon which sees it sail right into the city through the Chao Gao canal which is a highlight of the cruise.

CroisiEurope is represented in Australia by Cruise Abroad - more info 1300 669 369.

PORTHOLE



THE things you see at sea...

Californian sun-lovers visiting San Onofre State Beach in Orange County have become accustomed to the fairly unusual sight of two goats riding a surfboard.

The animals' owner, Dana McGregor, started taking them on his regular trips to catch a wave and this week decided to put them on a board.

Goatee and Pismo managed to stay upright for a few waves, but eventually had enough and swam to shore.

The goat-surfing action has been captured on a video which can now be viewed on our website at cruiseweekly.com.au/videos.

THERE'S no doubting the cruising commitment of Aussie billionaire Clive Palmer, who has this week unveiled more of his plans for a replica *Titanic* (CW 01 May).

The proposed vessel, which is hoped to be cruising by 2016, will not be exactly the same as its namesake, with a special new safety deck featuring "proper lifeboats."

"This is to ensure the vessel is fully compliant with current regulations...it will also increase the passenger amenity area of the vessel," Palmer said.

Public rooms, stairs and cabins will be reminiscent of the original *Titanic* and he will also offer a casino.

But when it comes to the cost of the project, it appears the sky is the limit, with Palmer saying "all the money I've got is the budget, so it should be enough".

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HAL welcomes Oosterdam

THE upcoming down under deployment of Holland America Line's *ms Oosterdam* is a big jump in local capacity for the cruise line - but the market can easily support the larger vessel, says HAL director of sales, Tony Archbold.

Oosterdam carries 1900 passengers, up about 33% on the 1400-pax *ms Volendam* which will also return to Australasia this year.

Volendam will conduct a circumnavigation of Australia, while *Oosterdam* will take over the line's trans-Tasman and South Pacific program.

Archbold told **CW** this week that "head office is very happy" with the performance of the fledgling Australian operation, which has this week celebrated its first birthday.

He said HAL has seen consistent growth out of Australia, with Aussie cruisers favouring voyages in Europe and Alaska plus at home.

Archbold said that there's still significant potential for travel agents to grow their cruise sales, with HAL offering a consistent popular product encouraging strong repeat business.

"Lots of agents still aren't selling cruise," he said, with Holland America offerings such as Select Sailings offer significant opportunities for agents to differentiate themselves.

HAL is also promoting its Alaska cruise-tours which combine land content and voyages in the ever-popular destination for Aussies.

Blue Lagoon Cruises set for 're-invigoration'

A MAJOR deal in Fiji has seen the merger of Blue Lagoon Cruises with South Sea Cruises and Awesome Adventures, and while it's business as usual in most cases the company says it has "exciting plans for re-invigorating Blue Lagoon Cruises".

The new owner is investment company Fiji Holdings Limited, with South Sea Cruises owners Roger Dold and Chris Jacobs entering into a long term management agreement to continue to develop the businesses which will now be majority owned by Fijians.

South Sea Cruises has been part of the

Marine Tourism Holdings Group (MTH), and Blue Lagoon Cruises will now become part of the portfolio represented by the MTH network of sales executives and GSAs.

Jacobs said that Blue Lagoon is a "very very good fit" with the existing business, saying that for now Blue Lagoon will continue to operate its brochured Yasawa cruises and a smooth transition will be ensured when changes occur.

"We are pretty sure the industry and consumers will love what is to come," he said.

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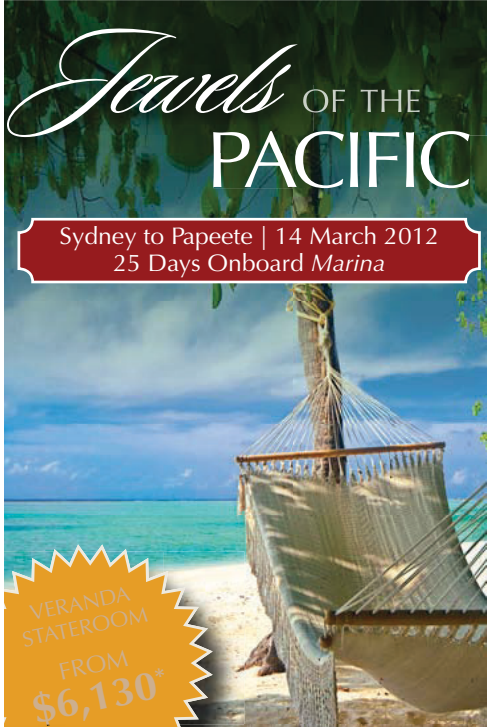
CRUISERS sailing on *Seabourn Quest's* 116-day World Quest next year will enjoy ten exceptional on-shore experiences during their voyage - such as afternoon tea in the members' enclosure at a Hong Kong racetrack, a desert sunset in the world's highest restaurant in Dubai's Burj Khalifa, and a "privileged viewing" of the Panama Canal's Miraflores Lock operation.

The voyage departs Fort Lauderdale on 06 Jan 2013 and includes 49 ports in the South Pacific, Australia, Southeast Asia, India, Arabia and the Mediterranean, where it wraps up in Venice on 03 May.

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