



APT enters the ocean cruising game

Australian-owned travel company APT has stretched its wings beyond land touring and river cruising, and entered the ocean cruising market, buying a stake in Noble Caledonia.

BASED in the UK, Noble Caledonia has been in operation for 21 years and offers a selection of river cruising, expedition cruising, small ship cruising and land touring options across 15 world regions, including the Arctic Circle, Alaska, PNG, Greenland, Canada Maritime, Cuba, the White Sea and Asia Pacific, marketed across the northern hemisphere.

The company's stable contains seven small ship vessels which have capacity for between 50 to 160 passengers, two of which it owns and the remainder secured under long-term charters.

Announcing the purchase at an industry lunch this week to celebrate the company's 85th anniversary next year, APT owner, Geoff McGeary said that Noble Caledonia "fitted perfectly" with APT's business platform "providing high quality, high comfort, small group, fully inclusive pricing and professionally escorted travel experiences, primarily for the discerning 50-plus market".

"APT has grown through strategic partnerships with operators who share similar values and are experts in their field," he said.

"We've done this successfully with Aboriginal communities for our Australian 4WD wilderness adventures and wilderness lodges, with river cruising in Europe and Vietnam, train travel across Russia and now with a cruise company that takes us into ocean waters," he

added.

APT did not disclose the price it paid for the stake, nor did McGeary reveal how big a chunk of Noble Caledonia APT now owns, but he did tell **Cruise Weekly** that whilst the shareholding was less than 50% it was nonetheless a "significant" amount.

Speaking to media and trade guests McGeary also said that Noble Caledonia's ocean product was a rival for SeaDream and Orion Expedition Cruises.

APT has already incorporated Noble Caledonia vessels in its 2013 Botanica garden tours, European river cruise program and its most recent Canada-Alaska brochure.

The purchase follows APT's acquisition of a majority stake taken in Golden Eagle Luxury Trains in 2009, with the company also a co-owner of the European river cruise operator AmaWaterways, a partnership which according to the company has seen APT become the largest supplier of European river cruises in the Australian and NZ market.

MEANWHILE coinciding with APT's stakeholding purchase, Noble Caledonia has just welcomed its newest expedition ship, *MS Caledonian Sky* into the fold.

Formally *Hebridean Spirit*, the 116-guest *Caledonian Sky* joined her sistership *MS Island Sky* in the Noble Caledonia fleet following an extensive refurbishment and will now sail around Britain, before heading to the Arctic, then South America, Australasia and the Pacific Rim.

APT has said that it has a number of exclusive sailings onboard *Caledonian Sky*, including its 85th anniversary cruise, hosted by McGeary departing 18 Aug next year from the Philippines to Darwin.

ALL THE CRUISE NEWS

Today's trade issue of **CW** features four pages of all the latest cruise news, **PLUS** today marks the launch of **CW's** River Cruise Guide 2012.

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Brett Jardine - General Manager, ICCA

World Oceans Day

Did you know that last Friday, the 8th of June, was World Oceans Day?

Given our industry relies quite heavily on the oceans we cruise it is certainly worth raising some awareness about this day.

The cruise industry has always demonstrated support for measures that protect the world's oceans and it goes without saying that the long-term success of our industry is dependent on their beauty, something that we often take for granted.

In honour of World Oceans Day, the North American Cruise Industry Charitable Foundation (CICF), which is funded by many of the ICCA's member cruise lines, made a US\$5,000 donation to the Cousteau Society, a non-profit organization founded in 1973 by Jacques Cousteau.

The Cousteau Society raises funds for ocean exploration, research and conservation.

Masters Conference 2012 – Trans Atlantic crossing on QM2

There is exactly one month to go before we will be handing back any unsold space from our Masters Conference cabin allotment to Cunard.

If attendance for this year is on your radar there is not a lot of time left to confirm your place!

The most successful cruise consultants across Australia and New Zealand are ICCA Masters.

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NSW Govt defends new cruise tax

The introduction of a \$20 per passenger fee in Sydney is “fair and reasonable”, says State Minister for Roads and Ports Duncan Gay.

A **CONTROVERSIAL** new head tax for cruise passengers visiting Sydney, set to be introduced next year and increased annually until 2015/16, is quadruple the amount proposed by the cruise industry, according to peak body TTF.

But the State Government, which announced the \$20pp fee yesterday, said it was required to “allow a greater investment in cruise infrastructure”.

State Minister for Roads and Ports Duncan Gay said the current charge of \$250 an hour to berth in Sydney was “not economically sustainable” and it was time for the industry to cough up.

“The NSW Government had already launched an \$87 million program to improve infrastructure to support the State's booming cruise ship industry and it's only fair to ask the cruise industry to help meet the costs,” Gay said.

“There is no reason to suggest cruise growth in Sydney will be impacted by this new, fair and transparent fee,” he added.

But as a TTF spokesperson explained to **Cruise Weekly**, the increase in Sydney Harbour's wharfing costs has gone too far.

“An average P&O ship would use eight hours at most, leaving it liable for \$2000, which divided between 2000 passengers is \$1,” he said.

“Clearly that was too low and the industry had been talking to the Government to work out a rise, but we feel the \$20/pax from 2013,

Across the Wallace Line

ORION'S 10-night Across the Wallace Line voyage is currently priced from \$7,335 (brochure fare \$8,150) per person, for an ocean view Category B suite.

Departing 22 Sep 2012, the ten-night voyage takes passengers from Tawau to Bali via the eastern side of Borneo, including calls at Pulau Kakaban, Pulau Sangalaki, Sungai Sangatta, and Samboja in Kalimantan; Lampuko Mampie Wetlands, Pare Pare (for overnight trip to Tana Toraja), and Makassar in Sulawesi.

See www.orionexpeditions.com.

then \$25 in 2014 and then \$30 in 2015 is unjustifiable.”

The cruise industry had proposed a passenger charge of around \$5 per head, he said.

TTF chief executive John Lee also condemned the fee as “a tax on success”.

“The cruise industry recognises that it should pay its fair share but this new charge goes beyond cost recovery and is designed to give Sydney Ports a new profit stream,” Lee said.

“Overnight, Sydney Harbour will become one of the world's most expensive for cruise ships.”

Lee said TTF was particularly concerned that other states may follow NSW's lead, leading to massive increases for passengers visiting multiple Australian ports.

“TTF urges the NSW Government to undertake genuine consultations with the industry before the tax commences in 2013 to devise a system that more fairly recovers costs,” Lee said.

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Variety becomes Preferred

VARIETY Cruises' newest mega-yacht, the 223-foot *Variety Voyager*, which debuted last month, has become the first ocean vessel to join the membership ranks of the 'Preferred Hotels & Resorts' organisation.

Launched on 02 May the €29 million mega-yacht features accommodation for 72 guests, and 28 crew, and is presently operating a series of charters and scheduled cruises in the Adriatic, before heading to the West Mediterranean in Jul for a four month cruise season with sailings from Nice and Salerno.

Features of *Variety Voyager* include an indoor restaurant, outdoor restaurant, Deck Bar Lounge, Wellness Zone and Internet Corner and library.

See www.discovertheworld.com.au.



Voyager at sunset

Marseille's new bridge

THE four month project to lengthen Berth 2 at Portsmouth International Port has now been completed, with the work adding around 50 metres to the berth which previously measured 210 metres.

"The extension to Berth 2 has already proved its worth, demonstrating the added flexibility we need to attract customers in a competitive market," port manager of Portsmouth International Port, Martin Putman told media.

"To successfully handle eight cruise ships in a week, alongside our busy ferry and cargo operations, shows that we can continue to grow our business in Portsmouth," he added.

New Puget Sound cruise

BUILDING on the success of its Pacific Northwest cruise collection American Cruise Lines has announced an additional itinerary for its 2013 line-up, a Puget Sound and San Juan Islands cruise.

Sailing on the 100-guest *American Safari* roundtrip from Seattle, the cruise will take guests to Anacortes, Friday Harbor, Port Townsend and Poulsbo, with the inaugural voyage to take place on 06 Apr 2013.

See www.americancruiselines.com.

Seven day Norwegian sale

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line is hosting a Seven Day Europe Sailing sale, with reduced fares on selected European sailings between Jun 2012 and Apr 2014.

Reduced fares are being offered for:

Norwegian Epic's Western Mediterranean and repositionings; *Norwegian Jade's* Adriatic, Greek Isles & Turkey & Holy Land sailings; *Norwegian Spirit's* Grand Mediterranean & Canary Islands cruises; and *Norwegian Sun's* Baltic Capitals and repositionings.

The sale period is between 18 and 25 Jun 2012, see www.ncl.com for details.

Not long left to save with RSS

REGENT Seven Seas is reminding agents that there is only 18 days left before fares increase on its cruise product, with prices set to increase from 01 Jul.

Savings apply to 2012 cruises and include reduced single supplements of 50% on selected voyages, see www.wiltrans.com.au for details.

Fantasea sells operation

FANTASEA Cruises has agreed to sell its Whitsundays tourism operation to Cruise Whitsundays.

Effective date is expected to be 29 Jun, however this may extend to 16 Jul subject to contractual conditions.

Cruise Whitsundays will take over Fantasea's rights to service Hamilton Island, the two Reefworld platforms on Hardy Reef, the vessel *Charmer*, and the land and marina holdings at Port of Airlie.

The Fantasea brand will continue to operate elsewhere, including Sydney, Palm Beach Ferries and the Townsville Magnetic Island ferry service.

Cruise Whitsundays owners Chris Jacobs and Roger Dold said the acquisition would allow their business to reach its full potential.

"With the additional passengers and services we have acquired from Fantasea, the economics of the business will be stronger and will allow us to focus on growth and innovation in these challenging times," they said in a statement.

Glenn Bourke, ceo of Hamilton Island, said he had been consulted throughout the process and was fully supportive of the move.

Fantasea Cruises has won a number of regional, state and national tourism awards and was the only Queensland operator to win an award at the 2011 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.



THE real world?

An online game lover is in desperate need of a holiday, preferably a cruise far away from any computers, after admitting that he has spent the last 10 years playing the computer game *Civilisation* where he created his own world.

Known online as Lycerius, the game fanatic has said that his "virtual world" is now approaching 4000AD and is a "hellish nightmare of suffering and devastation" ruled by three superpowers.

"Roughly 90% of the world's population has died either from nuclear annihilation or famine caused by the global warming that has left absolutely zero arable land to farm," he said, adding "I was forced to do away with democracy roughly a thousand years ago because it was endangering my empire".

Carnival replaces tour operators

CARNIVAL Australia has appointed two new shore tour operators to manage passenger excursions for its locally based cruise ships.

Bob Wood Cruise Group (BWCG) will manage shore tours in Queensland, South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and Northern Territory for P&O Cruises, Princess Cruises and Carnival Cruise Lines, while Australian Shoreside Management (ASM) will oversee shore tours in Western Australia and New South Wales.

The two companies will also provide shore tours for Princess Cruises' international ships visiting Australia.

BWCG and ASM are both already used by a number of Carnival's international brands including P&O Cruises World Cruising, Holland America and Seabourn.

The appointments end the contracts of AOT and Heritage Tours Australia, which had provided shore excursion services to Carnival Australia for the past three years.

Marseille's new bridge

THE Grand Port Maritime in Marseille has enlisted TEAM Ports & Marine to supply its ferry terminal with a new PEGASUS-type Passenger Boarding Bridge, for installation in 2013.

RCI bonus onboard credit

ROYAL Caribbean International's Global WOW Sale offers guests bonus onboard credit and half-price deposits for all RCI worldwide cruises sailing from 15 Aug 2012.

"The Global WOW Sale is our way of rewarding guests who choose to sail on our innovative and exciting ships," said Adam Armstrong, commercial manager, Royal Caribbean Cruises Australia.

"We want guests to get the most out of their holiday and use the bonus onboard credit to indulge in extra luxuries such as pampering spa treatments, shore excursions, delicious cocktails or meals at specialty restaurants.

"What's more, you can choose any cruise, on any of our 22 ships, sailing in six continents of the world, departing from 15 August – and you will qualify for both offers. It's very rare to have an offer that reaches so far and so wide," he added.

The Global WOW sale deals are applicable on bookings made between 17 and 19 Jun, with onboard credit amounts varying depending on the length of the voyage.

As such, guests who book a cruise of three to five nights will receive \$US50 onboard credit per cabin, cruises between six to nine nights will receive \$US100 per cabin and cruises of 10 or more nights will receive an onboard credit of \$US200 per cabin.

See www.royalcaribbean.com.au.

MSC gets real time tracking

MSC Cruises has installed a new real-time vessel tracking, tracing and emergency monitoring system on every ship in its fleet.

The system, designed by MSC in partnership with software design company Quality Positioning Services now allows the cruise line to implement route analysis, and to track every vessel in its fleet with an update rate of one second and accuracy of under five metres.

"By providing this additional back-up system, we are able to make sure that our crew are 100% supported at all times and in all circumstances," said MSC's Emilio La Scala.

Orion ship for sale?

AN inside source has whispered to *Cruise Weekly* that *Orion I* has been placed on the market.

While it was less of a surprise to see Orion Expedition Cruises dump *Orion II* from its 2013 program (*Cruise Weekly*, 08 Mar), it seems the owner of its original ship is now seeking to sell.

According to an advertisement on a marine sales website, which includes a photo of *Orion* in Sydney Harbour with the ship's name blacked out, the estimated price is US\$50 million or "make offer".

Directly underneath the ad, the old *Orion II* is also listed for sale for \$22 million, "available from spring 2013".

Rumours that representatives of Orion have recently inspected Seabourn and Hapag-Lloyd vessels suggest that Orion may be considering a shift to a single, larger ship for future operations.

Stay tuned to **CW** for updates.

Want to go on a Variety famil?

VARIETY Cruises is giving agents the opportunity to participate in a famil on their choice of more than 10 itineraries and 40 dates.

Cruise itineraries include: Classical Greece, Aegean Odyssey, Jewels of the Cyclades, Dodecanese Mosaic, Romantic Rivas, Treasures of South Italy, Garden of Eden, Rivers of West Africa and Antiquity to Byzantium.

Spaces on the voyages are limited, and cost €150pp in a double cabin (plus port taxes) for a seven-night cruise, whilst an added €50 is applicable for cruises on *Variety Voyager*.

For details and dates call 02 9959 3696.

Hurtigruten half board

HURTIGRUTEN is offering special half-board fares on a selection of its Autumn voyages.

The half-board fares include accommodation, brekkie and dinner, leaving guests to get lunch.

Half-board fares start from €711 (approx AU\$898), phone 1800 623 267 for details.

Agents invited to take a voyage on the seas with RCI



Pictured left onboard *Voyager* with none other than Puss in Boots, is Peter McCormack, national sales manager at Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines Australia, who accompanied the group.

RECENTLY Royal Caribbean hosted its first group of Australian agents onboard *Voyager of the Seas*, for a four night Asian cruise.

Departing Singapore on 29 May, the agents enjoyed port calls in Malaysia and Thailand, and had the chance to experience Royal Caribbean's DreamWorks Experience at sea ahead of *Voyager's* arrival in Australia in Nov this year.

Highlights of the voyage included the flash DreamWorks parade, meals at the specialty dining restaurant Portofino and shore excursions at Port Kelang and Phuket.

According to an informer at Royal Caribbean, one Aussie agent, who shall remain nameless, also enjoyed the entertainment at the Schooner Bar so much so that after it finished they returned to the bar, switched the microphone back on and put on their own little show, the only shame being that there was no one left in the bar to enjoy the songs.

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