



TA lures cruise execs to Australia

Tourism Australia has invited a group of the cruise industry's biggest global players abroad to sample Australia first-hand, as it steps up support for the country's fastest growing tourism sector.

SEVENTEEN senior executives from cruise companies in the US and UK have been courted to Australian shores in Sep, Tourism Australia's Manager of Industry Development, Leigh Sorenson revealed to *Cruise Weekly*.

Speaking to *CW* at the Australian Tourism Exchange in Perth, Sorenson said key objectives for handling cruise growth at TA

over the next 12 months included improving cruise data collection and building stronger relationships with cruise liners.

Through this partnership with Qantas and state tourism boards, senior cruise planners from the likes of Carnival & Royal Caribbean will meet in Sydney in late Sep, before being dispersed around the country on tailor-made itineraries of their choice.

The famils provides cruise itinerary decision-makers the opportunity to see for themselves the port facilities, attractions and sightseeing options, "getting local tour operators involved."

Sorenson said the initiative gives the execs time to experience up to three ports during their travels over seven days.

"If they want to do Brisbane, Cairns and Perth, or Darwin, Perth and Adelaide cause they've already seen the east coast, we'll do it for them," he said.

"Instead of telling them what they are going to be doing, we're going to provide them with customised itineraries to suit."

The concept aims to tempt cruise lines to stay longer and visit more ports while in Australian waters, or when passing through.

The initiative was originally considered to be tied in with ATE, giving participants a day at the Australia showcase, but Sorenson said TA encountered "challenges" with the concept this year being hosted in Perth.

"The Australian Tourism Exchange is such a broad tourism event, we thought this year we'd make it a standalone cruise specific event to give it some prestige."

The hope is to run the executive famils annually, linked with ATE from 2013 onwards.

ALL THE CRUISE NEWS

Today's trade issue of *CW* features four pages of all the latest cruise news.

CIC awards its agents

MORE than 60 West Australian agents, wholesalers and industry members turned up to a special 2012/13 brochure launch and awards ceremony hosted by Classic International Cruises recently.

The event, held at Fremantle Cruise Passenger Terminal, was designed as a thank-you for the many travel agents who had helped make the 2011/12 season for *Athena* the best ever for the cruise line.

The night saw CIC present awards to its top five agencies: Bicton Travel/CruiseFinder, Best Cruises, Cathie Rice Travel, RAC West Perth and Champagne Travel Mandurah; whilst Misha Howlett from Cathie Rice Travel took out the award for CIC's 'Consultant of the Year'.

Pictured below (from left) is: Grant Hunter, md of CIC; Diane Garbin, Floreat World of Travel; Jamie O'Brien, Asia Escape Holidays; and Geoff Houston, World Travel Professionals.



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Cruise News & Views



Brett Jardine - General Manager, ICCA

Newbies enliven busy Europe season

Europe is set to welcome 20 new ships, more than 200 in total, and three new cruise lines this summer.

There's no excuse for not finding the perfect European cruise for your clients – this summer season will see 206 ships operated by 64 lines in 528 destinations.

Also, four new destinations have opened to cruise ships: Lyme Regis (UK); Vlissingen (Holland); and Brac and Makarska (Croatia).

As the 2012 summer program gets underway, 79 ships are on their way back from winter routes in Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and Africa.

They will be joined by 20 vessels sailing for the first time in Europe, including 13 ships re-entering service for new operators.

Five of the brand-new ships were christened in May, achieving a record number of European-built vessels launched in one month.

The debuts included *Costa Fascinosa* (in Venice, Italy), *MSC Divina* (Marseilles, France) *AmaCerto* (Vilshofen, Germany) and *AIDAMar* (Hamburg, Germany), while the *Carnival Breeze* sailed on its maiden voyage from Venice to Barcelona before crossing the Atlantic for a christening ceremony in Miami.

According to other statistics compiled for the European Cruise Council (ECC) and Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), 45 lines will operate in the Eastern Mediterranean, 44 in the Western Med, 40 in Central Med, 43 in Norway/the Arctic, 40 in the Baltic, 30 in the Atlantic islands and 44 in other Northern Europe regions.

"The number of new destinations, new lines and new ships entering service in Europe this

year are all further evidence of how cruising is growing and will continue to grow in the region, drawing on Europe's unique offering in terms of its rich culture, its varied geography and its long maritime traditions, and its expertise in hospitality and service," said Manfredi Lefebvre d'Ovidio, ECC chairman.

Christine Duffy, president and CEO of CLIA, said: "Seeing so many ships arriving in European ports for the start of the summer cruising season underlines how the European cruise sector is an integral and growing part of the global cruise industry that offers consumers high-value holiday options and economic benefits to hundreds of communities."

Of all the ships in Europe, 33 will each carry more than 2,500 passengers, 62 will carry between 1,000 and 2,500 passengers, 31 will have 500 to 1,000, and 80 ships will carry less than 500.

Transatlantic cruising

One cruise region that features as a prominent part of history is certainly a "Transatlantic Voyage".

The romantic side of cruising portrayed by the ill-fated *Titanic* is certainly not lost on today's cruise ships which now also feature all the modern conveniences (and enough life boats to ensure the safety of all).

As short as six days or as long as two weeks or more, these crossings between Europe and America feature the endless pleasures of leisurely days at sea that experienced cruise passengers treasure - rather than the constant interruption of calls into various ports along the way!

Looking at putting together a "round world" itinerary for clients? What a great way to get from the USA to Europe! If you are in a hurry, make sure you are on an East bound cruise as you will lose an hour a day due to travel through different time zones.

On the contrary, if you want some extra "deck time" head west (toward the USA) and take advantage of extra time with your clock going back an hour each night!

With limited (if any) ports of call along the way, your ship is the destination with plenty of time for doing as little as possible.

Endless hours of reading and staring at the horizon (with cocktail in hand) is, in the eyes of many, what cruising is all about!

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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Antarctica on the rise

TOURISM in Antarctica is on the rise according to the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO), with an estimated 34,950 Antarctic passengers set to be carried overall by IAATO operators during the 2012-13 season.

This figure follows four years of declining pax numbers to the region (which has been put down to the effects of the GFC and the ban on heavy fuel in Antarctic waters) and is up from the 2011-12 passenger numbers of 26,519, but still below the 46,265 carried during the 2007-08 Antarctic season.



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Tauck talks up Australian campaign

The premium operator of small-ship and river cruises is striving to extend its reach in its top international market.

LAST week's appointment of Ita Buttrose as Australian ambassador and the launch of a local brochure were the first two steps in Tauck's renewed promotional activity in Australia.

Michelle Taylor, general manager - Sales & Marketing, Travel the World, told **CW** today that there is more to come.

"We've only really begun to make our mark," Taylor said.

"We're excited to be taking steps to better serve our Australian guests, and we're committed to supporting the Australian market going forward."

The company is completing a series of events around Australia educating both agents

and consumers on Tauck's "unique offerings" in addition to a comprehensive marketing campaign partnering with agents, Taylor said.

Tauck also plans to continue its educational program for the next six months, after hosting a record number of Australian agents over the past year.

"We currently have a group of agents in Paris experiencing Tauck," Taylor said.

"We also have a number of collateral items to assist agents in selling Tauck to clients, including a DVD incorporating Ita Buttrose.

"Agents will see over the next quarter a number of initiatives to assist them in recommending Tauck to their clients."

Australia is already Tauck's number-one international source market, which is a success that TTW intends to maintain.

"The number of Australians travelling on Tauck continues to increase year-on-year, but we still need to educate a larger segment of the Australian market on the full breadth of our offerings," Taylor said.

In terms of cruising, Tauck offers destination-focused small-ship and river cruises in Europe, Egypt, China, Central America and Antarctica, with the current European river-cruise program "generating incredible interest", she said.

"One easily quantifiable difference is that Tauck riverboats have a maximum capacity of just 118 guests.

"Our ships also have four dedicated Tauck service staff devoted solely to the care and comfort of our guests, and that's more staff catering to fewer passengers than any other line."

"Our river cruises are also all-inclusive so virtually everything is paid for in advance."

Taylor advised agents to book clients before 28 Dec to take advantage of the "Time on Tauck" offer, exclusive to the Australian market, which provides passengers with two complimentary hotel nights pre- or post-cruise.



PORTHOLE

AUSTRALIA gets a Sea Shepherd.

Hardline environmental activist organisation, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, has offered its expertise, vessels, and resources to help patrol and protect Australia's newly established and world's largest marine reserve, the Coral Sea, in an effort to "help safeguard this magnificent ocean resource and its marine life".

Renowned for its no holds barred approach to protecting the ocean and the animals which inhabit it, Sea Shepherd has reached out its hand to the Australian Government, offering its assistance to "collaborate and employ its resources and expertise to protect the waters from foreign fishing vessels illegally operating inside the new Coral Sea marine sanctuary, providing an enforcement solution that would be at no cost to the Australian taxpayer".

"We stand ready to put our enforcement expertise to work for Australia's Coral Sea for the long term," Sea Shepherd said.

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P&O Overnight experience

CRUISERS onboard three of *Pacific Dawn's* 11-night Pacific Islands cruises now have a chance to extend their time in port, with the launch of a new overnight Port Vila experience.

The visit allows guests to choose from three evening tours including a Vila sunset cruise, Melanesian feast and cultural performance and the A Toast of Vila experience which shows off the best of local cuisine- see www.myccs.com.au for details.

InnerSea adds to Hawaii

INNERSEA Discoveries has added its 76-guest *Wilderness Explorer* to its Hawaiian Islands program in 2013.

Wilderness Explorer will join the company's 36-guest *Safari Explorer* in the region, and will operate seven-night AdventureBound Hawaii cruises between Oahu and the Big Island (and reverse) from Nov 2013 to Apr 2014.

Priced from \$2,495pp twin share, the seven-night itinerary includes visits to Ka'ena Point State Park, Wai'anae Harbor, Maui, Lana'i, Honomalino Bay, Opihihali and Kailua-Kona, as well as scenic cruising and whale and dolphin watching in the Humpback National Marine Sanctuary.

"We are sending the *Wilderness Explorer* to Hawaii to add another option for travelers seeking an active island adventure at a moderate price," said Tim Jacox, executive vice president of sales and marketing.

"It's a tremendous value when you add in all the included activities and the ability to explore multiple scenic islands," he added.

For more details see www.innerseadiscoveries.com.

Celebrity's Winter Solstice

CELEBRITY Cruises is celebrating the chilly season with a new Winter Solstice offer giving guests who book any cruise of four days or more up to US\$300 onboard credit, as well as a fifty percent reduced deposit.

The deal is applicable for any Celebrity sailing between Aug 2012 and May 2014 (with the exception of *Celebrity Xpedition*), made and deposited on before 29 Jun 2012.

Bookings for Interior or Oceanview cabins will receive \$50 onboard credit, Balcony cabin bookings will score \$100, Concierge and Aqua class guests will receive \$150 and Suite guests will receive \$300.

Costa cruise fares rebound

AN analyst for UBS Investment Research, Robin Farley, has told media that Costa Croisiere cruise fares are on the rebound, following drops after the *Costa Concordia* disaster.

According to a report written by Farley, fares for Costa have been on the rise since Apr (when the cruise line cut fares).

Explaining the rise Farley said it "seems an encouraging indication that incoming booking volumes have been satisfactory."

Farley also posited that Costa's Apr-May year on year bookings may be up by as much as 28%, a figure which he attributes to the company's "pricing actions" driving booking volume.

Lebanon gets a new ship

LEBANESE cruise company Abou Merhi Lines has purchased a new 700-guest cruise ship which, according to reports, will enter service in Jul this year.

The ship will run itineraries which will include calls to Limassol, Rhodes, Mykonos, Bodrum and Marmaris.

Speaking to media in the wake of the announcement Abou Merhi Lines ceo, Merhi Abou Merhi, said that the cruise vessel is destined to bolster Lebanon's position as a tourist destination and as a hub for tourism in the Mediterranean.

Silver Spirit upgrades

HOLIDAYMAKERS who book selected Mediterranean sailings aboard *Silver Spirit* between Jul and Oct this year will receive a complimentary suite upgrade.

Announcing the deal Silversea said that guests booking a vista suite on the selected sailings will be upgraded to a veranda suite; whilst those who book a veranda suite will be upgraded to a mid-ship veranda suite.

Silver Spirit's 2012 Mediterranean line up will see her sail a series of seven-day voyages between such Venice and Monte Carlo, Istanbul and Athens, and Barcelona and Rome, priced from US\$2,199pp (for bookings made by 31 Jul). See www.silversea.com.

Viking's State of Origin

THE team at Viking River Cruises have caught State of Origin footy fever, and are giving away Chanel nail polish in agents' team colours (Blue or Maroon) for all new deposited bookings made between 19 Jun 04 Jul 2012.

"We have been caught up in a State of Origin-frenzy, with state lines being clearly defined amongst the sales reps and all at the Sydney head office," a representative from the company said.

To score your Blues or Maroons Chanel nail polish (valued at \$30) email your booking number, mailing address and preference in colour to: Ivana.krunes@vikingrivercruises.com before 04 Jul.

Pictured below, clearly in the Blues camp (from left), is Viking River Cruises' Ivana Krunes, Linda Pezzano, Natalie Vincent and Teresia Fors.




Voyager calls on Hong Kong

ROYAL Caribbean's *Voyager of the Seas* made its maiden visit to Hong Kong on Friday – the megaliner's first overnight stay of its inaugural Asian season.

An official plaque and key ceremony was conducted onboard with the ship's master and local tourism and shipping executives.


Dr Liu Zinan, Royal Caribbean's MD of China and Asia, said the company was "optimistic that her arrival will help push for more and faster infrastructure development for larger cruise ships across the region".

Hong Kong is set to open a new cruise terminal in mid-2013.



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