



Regent orders new ship, Explorer

Seven Seas Explorer is set to be its most expensive luxury liner ever built, at an estimated price tag of US\$450 million.

ANNOUNCED this morning, Regent Seven Seas Cruises has engaged the Fincantieri shipyard in Italy to construct what it says will be "the most luxurious cruise ship in the era of modern cruising".

Explorer is expected to contain capacity for 738 guests and will be third in the company's all-suite, all-balcony fleet, with delivery currently scheduled to take place during the northern summer of 2016.

The ship will contain 369 suites ranging in size from 300 to 1,500sq-feet, six restaurants offering an open-seating plan, a double storey Explorer Theatre, three boutique outlets and a sizeable spa facility.

Serving as the centrepiece of the craft will be a nine-deck Atrium, also employing state-of-the-art "green" technology aimed at boosting the environmental credential of the ship.

"This new ship order is part of our disciplined growth strategy to expand our footprint in the luxury market," Regent Seven Seas Cruises president Kunal S. Kamalani said.

"Since we purchased the Regent Seven Seas Cruises brand in 2008, the ships have sailed full with industry-leading yields. We strongly believe that now is the right time to expand our fleet as our loyal guests have asked for

a greater array of itineraries and our travel partners have proven that there is pent-up demand for a new Regent ship," he added.

Once completed, *Explorer* will join three other vessels in the Regent Seven Seas fleet consisting of the *Seven Seas Navigator*, *Seven Seas Mariner* and *Seven Seas Voyager*.

Prestige Cruise Holdings chairman and CEO Frank J Del Rio painted a picture of unrivalled luxury to come from the new vessel in the company's announcement.

"The ship's upscale yet timeless design, extreme use of exotic stones and polished woods, designer furniture, rich fabrics and sophisticated lighting combined with what promises to be a museum-quality, eclectic art collection will clearly position *Seven Seas Explorer* as the new standard in luxury cruising," Del Rio envisaged.

"*Seven Seas Explorer* will be the most luxurious cruise ship ever built, boasting one of the highest space ratios and staff-to-guest ratios ever seen in the modern era of cruising enabling us to deliver the highly personalised service and extraordinary experience that is the hallmark of the Regent brand," he added.

Schettino trial starts & stops

A NATIONWIDE strike by lawyers across Italy forced a hasty postponement to the trial of *Costa Concordia* captain Francesco Schettino, which briefly began yesterday in Grosseto, Italy.

Inside a theatre converted to a courtroom to accommodate all the survivors and relatives of the victims, Schettino appeared for a short time before the case was adjourned to 17 Jul.

Prosecutors plan to call as many as 1000 witnesses during the trial, which will see Schettino defend multiple charges of manslaughter, causing environmental damage and abandoning the vessel.

Jammed with cruise news

Today's trade issue of **CW** features four pages of the most up-to-date cruise news.

MSC cancels Egypt port call

CONTINUED unrest in Egypt has seen MSC Cruises cancel previously scheduled visits to Alexandria, according to a schedule update issued late yesterday by the company.

The change is applicable for Mediterranean Winter 2013-14 voyages in Jul sailing aboard the *MSC Fantasia*, with the company citing passenger safety as the reason for the change.

MSC has replaced the stop with a visit to the Greek city of Heraklion on the island of Crete, along with an extended stay in Haifa, Israel, with shore excursions available at both ports.



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New Fijian island ferry launch

SERVICES to the Fijian island of Malolo Lailai will now be operated by a brand new 24m vessel, named *Malolo IV*, launched yesterday by the Fijian Tourism Minister.

The vessel is fully air-conditioned and seats 180 passengers, operating four times daily to the island for guests of Plantation Island, Lomani Island and Musket Cove Resorts, making the journey in 40 minutes.

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Cruise News & Views...

Benefit for local communities

YESTERDAY, I had the pleasure of attending the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Carnival Australia and AusAID, recognising an agreement for sustainable economic development in the South Pacific.

AusAID is the Australian Agency for International Development and prior to the signing, attendees were briefed on the value cruising delivers to small South Pacific communities (having been the most popular destination for Aussie and Kiwi cruise passengers for many years).

Also present at the event was the Prime Minister of Vanuatu who spoke of how important the cruise industry was to his country and how their community genuinely understood the economic benefit received with each ship visit.

It's important to note that AusAID's involvement in this project with Carnival Australia is not just about our Government handing over taxpayer dollars – far from it.

Their role involves cooperation with Carnival Australia through activity that is aimed at generating interest and commitment from locals who are eager to improve their lifestyle.

Primarily aimed at education and mentoring around business needs and opportunities, the funding provided is used to directly support activity that will have a flow on effect to your cruise clients when visiting these South Pacific communities.

So next time you are booking a client on a South Pacific cruise, take a moment to consider the contribution you are making to a more promising future for the islands we adore - for more, see [page three](#).

RCI heats up for biggest summer

The brochure is out for Royal Caribbean's 2014/15 Australian season, plus new deals for this summer.

NOW available, Royal Caribbean International's 2014/15 summer season brochure includes more than 55 itineraries to New Zealand, Asia, South Pacific, and around Australia.

Cruises range from two-night sample cruises to 18-night sailings, with new options on *Voyager of the Seas*, *Rhapsody of the Seas* and *Radiance of the Seas*.

All three ships offer Earlybird savings for bookings made by 31 Dec 2013.

Rhapsody returns in 2014 after a US\$52 million revitalisation last year, while *Radiance* has 10 unique onboard dining venues.

Caribbean cruise storm alert

CRUISE lines operating in the Caribbean are keeping tabs on the progress of Tropical Storm Chantal, which developed over the last few days but has since been downgraded.

Storm conditions are still expected to cross southern islands in the region but warnings previously issued have now been cancelled.

Norwegian Cruise Lines, Disney Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean have not reported any changes to operating itineraries.

According to a Carnival spokesman, the *Carnival Freedom*, which was on a six night sailing of the region, will visit Cozumel instead of Ocho Rios as a precautionary measure.

Additionally, *Carnival Liberty* has changed the visitation order of some of its intended ports, replacing a visit to St Thomas with Nassau, while *Carnival Victory* replaced a visit to Grand Turk by stopping at Freeport instead.

Voyager of the Seas is all set for a second Australian season, with its ice-rink, full-sized basketball court, mini-golf course and Royal Promenade of shops and cafes.

MEANWHILE, the company has released discounts on its Australia Day Celebration cruise departing Sydney on 19 Jan 2014.

The eight-night sailing on *Radiance of the Seas*, visiting Newcastle, Brisbane and the Great Barrier Reef, has a reduced rate for single supplements - \$1,279 per stateroom for single occupancy (valid for bookings made by 31 Jul 2013).

Twin-share fare starts at \$999 for an interior cabin.

Crystal expanding in Asia

A SIGNIFICANT expansion of its presence in Asia has been announced by Crystal Cruises as part of its 2014 itinerary release.

The company has released 30 additional voyages for sale in Asia next year aboard the *Crystal Serenity* & *Crystal Symphony*, visiting more ports in Thailand, Japan, Singapore, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia ranging in length from 5-29 days.

New destinations including Malacca and Lombok feature, as well as the company returning to ports not called upon for several years such as Koh Samui, Yangon & Okinawa.

Every voyage will offer at least two overnight stays in some ports to allow passengers to explore at greater depth in ports such as Hong Kong, Saigon and Shanghai.

Additionally, Bangkok will for the first time feature as the beginning port for selected cruises, including a New Year's Eve departure.

For time poor travellers, a number of short itineraries of as little as five nights will be available - for more information on the entire range, see www.crystalcruises.com.



AUCKLAND HOP ON, HOP OFF EXPLORER



With Auckland's new Cruise ship terminal opening at Queens Wharf in August this year the Auckland Hop On Hop Off Explorer bus stop is now directly out front of the terminal.

[Click here for more details](#)



THREE couples have paid a combined £140,000 to The Novak Djokovic Foundation to go on a cruise with legendary actress Goldie Hawn and her daughter Kate Hudson. The six lucky winners will spend four days with the Hollywood mother and daughter pair aboard the luxury Silver Angel super yacht, which comes with a staff of 22. Overall, the charity auction event in London raised more than £1.14m to go towards helping disadvantaged children in Djokovic's native Serbia. Other guests at the event included Duchess of York Sarah Ferguson, former Wimbledon winner Boris Becker and Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson.

Travelmarvel Russian charter

TRAVELMARVEL has secured the exclusive charter of the *ms Yesenin* for its new season of itineraries in Russia next year. Debra Fox, APT general manager marketing, said the company has responded to clients requests for Russia as a must-see destination. "They are intrigued by its history and culture, and with a vast geography, linked by rivers, lakes and canals, river cruising is the perfect way to take it all in."

The 96-pax ship will undergo a soft refurbishment ahead of the 2014 sailings. It features a lounge, bar, library, sun deck with 360° views, and a restaurant, as well as an onboard team of Russian specialist guides. APT's new Russia brochure highlights itineraries ranging from 12 to 21 days duration, with five exclusive sailings from Moscow to St Petersburg.

All cruises are inclusive of 'Insider Experiences' sightseeing tours, most meals, a Travelmarvel cruise director and local guides, complimentary beer, wine and soft drinks with dinner, tea and coffee access, daily bottled water in all cabins, transfers and tipping.

The lead-in cruise is the 12-day 'Treasures of Russia' from Moscow to St Petersburg, priced from \$4,995ppts.

Activities include an onboard vodka and caviar tasting session and the chance to visit the home of a Russian family for traditional pastries and tea.

See www.travelmarvel.com.au for details.

Carnival Australia stamps for sustainability

IN AN historic moment, Carnival Australia yesterday joined forces with AusAID to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to work together on sustainable initiatives in the Pacific.

AusAID is the operating name of the Australian agency for International Development, with Director General Peter Baxter serving as the signatory to the pact.

Also present was Vanuatu Prime Minister the Honourable Moana Carcasses Kalosil, representing his nation, in which local communities will benefit from priority activities and initiatives to be spearheaded through the new cooperation.

Initiatives are also set to benefit communities in Papua New Guinea in addition to Vanuatu.

The signing comes following a three-year collaboration between Carnival Australia and AusAID in which the cruise line contributed to the AusAID Enterprise Challenge Fund.

Under the new agreement, some of the areas for joint cooperation between the parties will include the development of training packages to assist recruitment of local Ni-Vanuatu staff for roles working with Carnival's visiting ships.



In addition, new courses for market vendors and mentoring for new start-up operations will be founded, as well as an accreditation system to see makers of local arts, crafts & handiworks comply with Australian quarantine restrictions to ensure their works are able to be purchased by Australian travellers without concerns as to its legality and ability to enter the country.

"Carnival Australia welcomes this initiative to work with AusAID by combining our resources, networks and experience to leverage opportunities to enhance economic growth in the Pacific region," Carnival Australia ceo Ann Sherry said at the signing ceremony.

"The South Pacific is now at the heart of the world's fastest growing cruise market and the Memorandum of Understanding provides a pathway to transform this growth into lasting benefits from sustainable cruise tourism".

AusAID director general Peter Baxter said he was pleased at the partnership with Carnival Australia and the forthcoming programs.

"The agreement identifies areas where AusAID and Carnival can partner to help translate the economic benefits of tourism to the region into better incomes and employment priorities for Pacific Islanders".

Baxter is **pictured** above left with Ann Sherry and Vanuatu PM Moana Carcasses Kalosil.

Cuba Cruise shore excursions

STARTUP small-ship cruise company Cuba Cruise has launched its range of shore excursions that will be available during its first season of cruises, due to start on 16 Dec 2013.

Sailing aboard the 480-stateroom boutique vessel *Louis Cristal*, guests will be able to book activities including diving, birdwatching, hiking, cultural and historical tours as well as guided tours in classic 1940's American vehicles.

Visits to cigar and rum factories or sugar and coffee plantations are also available, along with tours of up to six UNESCO World Heritage listed sites - see www.yourcubacruise.com.

Un-Cruises heads to Hawaii

A NEW week-long itinerary sailing between the Hawaiian islands of Moloka'i & the Big Island has launched by Un-Cruise Adventures.

The itinerary will operate from Nov this year until Apr 2014 on the 36-pax *Safari Explorer* and offers activities and tours on four islands.

New Solar Eclipse departure

FRED Olsen Cruise Lines has added a third departure timed to maximise viewing of the next total solar eclipse, due on 20 Mar 2015.

The voyage aboard *Braemar* departs from Dover, England on 11 Mar 2015 and will be off the Faroe Islands to witness the eclipse.

Cabins aboard the company's *Boudicca* and *Black Watch* vessels are already fully sold out.

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CCC offer UnionPay in Sydney

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises has added Chinese credit card Union Pay as an accepted method of payment for online bookings of dining and sightseeing cruises on Sydney Harbour.

The company said it considered the move vital to continue to boost Chinese visitation.

MEANWHILE, CCC has said it will be donating 10% of each Sydney Harbour High Tea Cruise and Top Deck Lunch Cruise sold between 31 Aug-30 Sep to the McGrath Foundation.

For more information, see Captain Cook Cruises' special "Turn Sydney Harbour Pink" page online at www.captaincook.com.au.

China expansion for Princess

PRINCESS Cruises has opened five new offices in China to help it facilitate expansion plans in the Chinese market.

The new offices, located in Shanghai, Beijing, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Chengdu, will be managed by newly appointed Country Director for China, Cherry Wang, based in Shanghai.

QEII to be converted in China

RETIRED cruise liner *Queen Elizabeth II* will later this year set sail under its own steam to China, where it will be converted into a luxury floating hotel by the end of next year.

Seven of the ship's nine engines have been restored by its new owner, QE2 Shipping, an entity of the Dubai Government, prior to its journey to the Far East.

A group of private investors will spend US\$90m on the transformation project, which will see the iconic vessel become a 400-room hotel, although its final destination has not yet been determined.

"This is going to be an iconic concept in the global market," QE2 Shipping chairman Khamis Juma Buamim said.

"There is huge potential in Asia and the Far East and many countries would like to host such a ship".

Seabourn Penthouse Suites

FOUR new Penthouse Spa Suites have been installed onboard *Seabourn Quest*, which has now emerged from dry dock.

Located directly above the Spa at Seabourn facility, guests of the Penthouses have unlimited access to the Spa's serene area during their voyage via a spiral staircase.

The penthouses, designed by Norwegian architecture firm Yran & Storbraaten, will be added to *Seabourn Odyssey* and *Seabourn Sojourn* during upcoming scheduled dry dock refurbishment works.

MEANWHILE, following the article 'Weakening dollar yet to impact sales' (*CW* 20 Jun), Seabourn would like to clarify that its cruises for Australians are priced in AUD.

Mega-liners to visit Bermuda

TWO cruise companies have earmarked the Caribbean nation of Bermuda to feature heavily in coming cruise seasons.

Upcoming Royal Caribbean Int'l vessel *Quantum of the Seas* will include regular visits to the Caribbean nation from 2015, according to the RCCL website.

Additionally, Norwegian Cruise Lines' recently launched vessel *Breakaway* has also scheduled visits in its current season and beyond.

Plugging in while in port

AUTHORITIES in the Canadian port of Halifax, Nova Scotia have unveiled a plan to offer cruise liners docking in port the ability to connect to a local electricity supply as a measure to reduce engine output while in port.

A special power rate will be developed for ships choosing to connect to the source, with a local government spokesperson saying the ships will generate income to help the city.

Amadeus signs with Griffin

TRAVEL technology giant Amadeus has signed a new multi-year agreement with marine, offshore and cruise industry agency group, the Griffin Global Group.

Under the plan, Griffin agents will be able to access Amadeus content via the Amadeus Selling Platform and Amadeus Web Services.

Jewish lecturer sailing Avalon

RENOWNED Jewish author Inge Auerbacher will act as a guest lecturer aboard the annual 13-day Avalon Waterways Jewish Heritage Cruise, which departs in Oct.

As a child, Auerbacher was imprisoned with her family in a Czechoslovakia concentration camp during World War II, but emigrated to her current home in the United States in 1946 after surviving the war.

Now retired, Auerbacher travels the world speaking on human rights, her childhood in Germany during the war and personal experiences during the Holocaust.

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This week **Cruise Weekly** and **BLUE MAN GROUP** are giving you the chance to win a double pass to one of their wildly popular theatrical productions on 11th Aug at the Sydney Lyric Theatre.

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