



Ponant orders ship for Australia/NZ

Compagnie du Ponant is planning a new luxury vessel expected to sail in local waters in 2015-16.

AFTER years of hinting about it, the French cruise line appears to have finally committed to a summer season down under.

According to the Fincantieri shipyard, Ponant has signed the contract to build a 264-passenger sister ship to *Le Soleal*, which debuted last month.

In a news release issued overnight, Fincantieri said the 11,000 GRT small ship will cruise in Alaska during its summer season and then in Australia and New Zealand.

Ponant has previously included ports in Queensland and Northern Territory on a handful of itineraries, but this would be the first season based in the region.

The unnamed luxury ship is set to have 132 oceanview cabins and suites, and 95% with a balcony.

Ponant is renowned for its sophisticated design, attentive service and fine dining, with destinations including smaller ports in destinations such as the Arctic, Antarctica, Europe, Asia and the Americas.

More details about the local program will be revealed soon.

Fincantieri CEO Giuseppe Bono said the new order and continuing relationship with Ponant indicated that luxury cruising was a "very promising business segment".

"This encouraging achievement, coming shortly after other new orders, has been realised in a still difficult market and has been possible also thanks to the greater cohesion achieved within the company that bodes well for the necessary improvement in efficiency and competitiveness," he said.

Egypt gone from HAL port list

HOLLAND America Line yesterday dropped Egypt from its 2013 cruise program due to the continued political unrest in the country.

In doing so, it is in the process of advising affected travel agents and guests that its ship, *MS Noordam* will no longer call at Cairo, Port Said and Alexandria until further notice, while the *MS Rotterdam* has added a stop at Rhodes in Greece to replace a previous Egyptian stop.

"At HAL, the safety of our guests and crew is our top priority," said HAL from its Seattle HQ's.

Port Said & Alexandria, Egypt will be replaced by Ashdod (Jerusalem) and Haifa (Tel Aviv).

HAL said the order of ports on some cruises may also have been changed - for specific changes and information on affected cruises, see www.hollandamerica.com.

Packed issue of CW today

Today's trade issue of **CW** features three pages of all the latest cruise information.

NCW 2013 approaching soon

AFTER a successful debut last year, CLIA's National Cruise Week 2013 is returning in 2013, bigger & better and set to run 02-09 Sep.

The week will see a multitude of special offers released by CLIA member lines operating all over the world, with offers made available exclusively to CLIA member travel agencies.

A wide variety of destinations accessible via ocean-going cruises, small-ship adventures, river cruises and expedition voyages are set to be promoted during the week.

CLIA general manager Brett Jardine said the event would provide opportunities for travel agents to engage with their client bases and to really speak passionately about the benefits of a cruising holiday.

"The event is designed to get as many people as possible talking about cruise throughout this designated week".

He challenged agents to "reach out to their existing cruise clients and get them to introduce a non-cruising friend to the possibilities that exist for different types of cruising all over the world.

"National Cruise Week gives travel agents another good reason to engage with their client base and to really speak passionately about the benefits of a cruise holiday".

Agents seeking more information, promotion ideas or marketing material can contact CLIA for assistance via email at info@cruising.org.au or via phone by calling 02 9964 9600.

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NCL orders \$1b Breakaway Plus ship

Norwegian Cruise Line has confirmed a second 4,200-passenger ship to be delivered in 2017.

SHORTLY after the debut of *Norwegian Breakaway* in New York this year, the company has announced its third ship to be launched over the next four years.

Breakaway's sister ship *Norwegian Getaway* is due in Jan 2014, the first "Breakaway Plus" vessel is set for 2015, with a second expected to follow two years later.

The total cost of the two Breakaway Plus ships is about €1.4 billion euros, or slightly under AU\$2 billion, with export credit financing in place for 80% of the contract price.

As the largest in the line's fleet, at approximately 163,000 GRT and 4,200 passenger berths each, the two ships will be similar in design to the current Breakaway class but with an extra deck.

"The incredible response we've received from guests, travel agents and media regarding

Norwegian Breakaway only reinforced our decision to add a second Breakaway Plus vessel to our fleet," NCL ceo Kevin Sheehan stated.

"With groundbreaking elements, yet to be announced, and an additional deck to incorporate further innovations, our two Breakaway Plus ships will provide guests even more ways to experience all that the new Norwegian has to offer."

Meyer Werft has been confirmed again as the shipyard contracted for the latest newbuild.

Highlights are expected to be similar to the 4,000-passenger *Norwegian Breakaway*, which has distinctive hull art design, a seafood restaurant, a bakery, and an entertainment line-up including the Rockettes and three Broadway shows: *Rock of Ages*, *Burn the Floor* and *Cirque Dreams*.

More Lindblad info sessions

LINDBLAD Expeditions is encouraging agents in Canberra, Adelaide and Perth to accompany or recommend their clients to learn more about its voyages at three remaining information nights on its current national tour.

Full commissions are available to agents even if their passengers book direct on the night.

Sessions have already taken place in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney, with Canberra now added to the schedule and taking place at the Hyatt Canberra Hotel at 2pm & 6pm on 14 Aug.

Sessions in Adelaide and Perth are still to come on this current tour, and for more details, see www.orionexpeditions.com/events.

Blue Man Group comp winner

CONGRATS to Astrid Maier from The Cruise Team who was the industry winner of *Cruise Weekly's* Blue Man Group competition which featured in last week's issue.

Astrid is now off to see long-running US percussion performance troupe The Blue Man Group at Sydney's Lyric Theatre on 11 Aug.



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Cruise News
& Views...

Peter Kollar - Training & Development Manager

Cruise Evolution

THIS week has seen a further three announcements of new cruise vessels to be launched, once again demonstrating the strong state of the cruise industry.

- Norwegian Cruise Line confirmed an order for a second 'Breakaway Plus' (4200 pax) for delivery in autumn 2017.
- Regent Seven Seas' largest vessel (738 pax) is due for winter 2016.
- Compagnie du Ponant elaborated on earlier news to build a twin to *Le Soléal* for autumn 2015 (132 pax), the fourth of these vessels.

These, along with numerous others that have been revealed in the past years, are changing the face of ocean and river cruising with their new innovative designs that are altering the passenger experience.

Last month, Royal Caribbean announced a third Quantum class ship for 2016 that wowed industry followers. Dodgem cars, skydiving, and inside cabins that had balcony views via an 80 inch LED display on the wall (to name a few) drew a new line in the sand when it came to onboard concepts.

This evolution over the past few years means that someone who cruised just 5-10 years ago may not necessarily have experienced what a cruise holiday is like today onboard new ships such as *Royal Princess* and *Norwegian Breakaway*.

This change of experience ALSO applies to existing cruise ships, as it's not only about the design evolution taking place on new builds, but cruise lines have also been busily contracting third party sources of entertainment, celebrity chefs, and educational institutes to bring their own personality to once generic activities.

Overall, the cruise game is changing quickly in many ways. Whether you are a consultant, wholesaler, or BDM, it's essential to stay on top of the changes and encourage past passengers that their next cruise will feel like their first!

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Carnival confident of Legend success

Agents will have plenty of “strong talking points” when selling CCL’s second Sydney-based ship.

SUCH are the long-term plans for Carnival Legend in Australia, it’s booked into the Overseas Passenger Terminal until 2021.

With sales opened this week for its first local season in 2014-15, Carnival Cruise Lines has unveiled the revamps planned for the ship’s upcoming drydock.

A Japanese restaurant, a lolly shop and the fleet’s popular RedFrog Pub are among additions that will give it a point of difference to *Carnival Spirit* and other local vessels.

Legend will also include the most popular features of *Spirit*, such as the Green Thunder waterslide, the Waterworks area, no tipping, Australian power points, new menu items and better coffee.

“*Carnival Legend* will be stacked with exciting features for Aussie guests, providing strong talking points for agents looking to sell new and exciting holiday experiences,” CCL director for Australia and New Zealand, Jennifer Vandekreeke said.

“We’re proud that around 60% of *Carnival Spirit* bookings are with those new to cruising, which is further proof of the increasing

interest in cruise holidays.”

Vandekreeke also acknowledged local consultants’ role in the latest deployment.

“We’re grateful for the support of our travel agents, as it’s their enthusiastic and ongoing support that’s allowed us to bring a second ship into this market.”

CCL selected the upgrades for *Legend* based on insights into Australian passengers’ preferences garnered since *Spirit* started sailing from Sydney last year.

The RedFrog – a southern hemisphere first, and set to feature live music – reflects that the pub is “a cornerstone of Aussie culture”.

The Japanese-inspired restaurant, Bonsai Sushi, will cater to Australians’ liking for Asian food, while those with a sweet tooth can shop at the Cherry on Top “candy-and-more-store”.

Agents can now book *Carnival Legend* holidays in POLAR, with the first Sydney sailing scheduled for 22 Sep 2014.

Qld calls for CDU registrations

TOURISM & Events Queensland is inviting Qld industry businesses to register to attend the 2013 Cruise Down Under Conference, to be held in Cairns from 11-13 Sep.

A number of guest speakers will provide insights into the industry, and for more details, see www.cruisedownunder.com/conferences.



THE geeks may not yet be inheriting the earth, but for 14-nights, they will practically inherit the *Seven Seas Mariner*.

Poindexters and nerds the world over can join with the cast and crew of popular US science series *Nova* aboard a special charter of the ship in Jan next year sailing from Miami, Florida to Lima, Peru.

Producers and on-screen personalities from the series will be on board to host a variety of interactive presentations & panel discussions during the voyage as its travels through the Panama Canal and other ports.

Stops include Curacao, Aruba, Colombia and Ecuador, with shore excursions, dinners & receptions allowing travellers to engage with stars from the show.

For details on the upcoming themed voyage, see www.artfultravelers.com.

Uniworld for safe water plans

THE Travel Corporation’s not-for-profit tourism sustainability organisation The Treadright Foundation and TTC brand Uniworld have pledged their support of the new global Whole World Water program.

As the newest supporter of the scheme, Uniworld will contribute \$1 per passenger to support community water development and the establishment of clean and safe drinking water sources in developing nations.

G Adventures Antarctic deals

DISCOUNTS of up to 15% on a selection of expedition voyages in Antarctica have been released in line with G Adventures new 2013-15 brochure launch for the region this week.

The deals apply to Category 3-5 cabins on four voyages departing between Nov & Mar 2014 - for details, see www.bit.ly/GAdvonice.

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PO Box 1010, Epping, NSW 1710

Phone: 1300 799 220 Fax: 1300 799 221

Advertising and Marketing: Christie-Lee Lachance, Magda Herdzik and Lisa Martin
Email: advertising@cruiseweekly.com.au

Business Manager: Jenny Piper
Email: accounts@traveldaily.com.au

Part of the Travel Daily group of publications.

Publisher/Managing Editor: Bruce Piper
Editor: Louise Goldsbury

Production Editor: Matt Lennon
Contributors: Roderick Eime, Barry Matheson and Chantel Housler

Email: info@cruiseweekly.com.au



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