

CRUISE

WEEKLY



Thursday 19 Feb 2015

Funchal high and dry

PORTUSCALE Cruises has now cancelled its 2015 northern summer season of cruises on the *MV Funchal*, one of three ships currently in its active fleet.

The season axing comes five months after Portuscale cancelled a planned Australia visit which was to see the refurbished ship operate briefly from Newcastle & Geelong this year (CW 04 Sep).

Reasons for the latest season cancellation have not been made clear by the line, however IHS Maritime has reportedly been told that *Funchal's* owner Pearl Cruises Transportes has been "unable to meet the necessary conditions in order to assure its cruise operation in 2015".

Portuscale operates the *Azores* on a charter agreement with Cruise & Maritime Voyages, while two other ships - *Lisboa & Porto* - are understood to be sitting idle in a Lisbon dock.

APT small ship guide

ITINERARIES on the recently acquired and renamed small ship *MS Hebridean Sky* features in a newly released small ship guide released this week by APT.

The vessel will early next year undergo a major refurbishment to bring it to the standard of its sister vessels *MS Caledonian Sky* and *MS Island Sky*.

Holidays featured in the guide sit under the categories of Boutique Collection Cruising for themed or region-specific and Expedition Collection Cruising for 'off the beaten track' voyages.

New itineraries in the guide include an 18-day 'Sailing the Japanese Isles' which takes in Japan, Taiwan & the Philippines.

Cruise strong for Virtuoso

EXPEDITION and river cruising are among the strongest growing segments for Virtuoso agents in Australia, with the group's local gm Michael Londregan telling CW "luxury cruise is doing very well".

Speaking yesterday at the launch of a new Virtuoso survey of high net worth travellers conducted in partnership with qualia, Londregan said there are "so many great products" in the luxury cruise segment.

He added expedition cruising is particularly strong, with local sales up 16% year-on-year.

"It's becoming less about sightseeing and more about gaining a deep understanding of something such as a destination or wildlife," Londregan said.

Some expedition cruisers are "insatiable" in their thirst for knowledge, he said, with Virtuoso continuing to work aggressively with expedition providers to capture demand in the market.

River cruising is also a fast growing sector, both in Australia and the USA, according to

Virtuoso's founder and chief executive Matthew Upchurch, also at yesterday's event.

Upchurch said both river and expedition cruising appealed to clients who like to "collect" destinations, with expedition particularly popular because these vessels typically require no infrastructure in order to explore a new port.

Virtuoso has a strong focus on growing the Australian market, having also recently confirmed the local operation will be a regional hub for expansion into Asia this year.

Profitable year at NCL

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings has described 2014 as a year of "solid growth and game-changing expansion for the company," reporting a 21.6% jump in revenue to US\$3.1 billion.

The line's full year results factored in the acquisition of Prestige Int'l Cruises late last year & outlined future capital projects such as the Norwegian NEXT program of ship enhancements.

CruiseManagers train

HOME-BASED cruise agent network CruiseManagers has held a comprehensive cruise training session for agents in Melbourne.

Nearly 30 members of the TravelManagers cruise offshoot attended, hearing presentations from a range of cruise operators.

The company has reported a 51% year-on-year jump in its overall cruise business for the full year, also confirming it will conduct additional cruise training days for members in other states around Australia.

New ports for P&O

THE regional Australian towns of Eden, Mornington Peninsula and Portland will this week join the P&O Cruises network map, with the line making its inaugural calls to the three ports next week.

A new eight-night food-themed cruise ex Sydney on *Pacific Pearl* departs on Sat, scheduled to visit the ports on 22, 24 and 25 Feb.

The voyage will also include a stop at Kangaroo Island where passengers can enjoy a local food festival.

Dive into the movies

CARNIVAL Cruise Lines has revealed a new Seaside Theatre will be among the new features installed on *Carnival Spirit* during a coming drydock in Singapore.

The 5x3 screen will be fitted near the mid-ship pool and will host dive-in movies while at sea.

Packed issue of CW

Cruise Weekly today features two pages of all the latest news, a **Face-to-Face** chat with Alastair Fernie from Ecrusing on **page 3** and a full page from the **Travel Industry Expo**.

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ASF calls for Qld support

DEVELOPERS of the proposed Gold Coast Integrated Resort and Cruise Ship Terminal have issued a plea statement urging the state government to continue its assessment of the project.

ASF Consortium local project director Tim Poole said the recent state election "has created additional focus for the project team" but that it was unwavering in its commitment to the project.

The firm has written to all elected state representatives that the state now needs to "weigh up the reputation of Queensland as a location for foreign investment".

In its letter, ASF reiterated the benefits of the project both to the economy and employment in construction and on an ongoing

basis, as well as its pledge to deliver the project at no cost to the government or to taxpayers.

It warned that "many millions of dollars" had already been spent on developing the proposal, building partnerships, designing proposals & conducting extensive community consultation.

Poole warned that both Qld and the Gold Coast "could not afford to miss this unique opportunity".

"If the Gold Coast misses the opportunity to attract the Chinese middle class and high net worth tourist, as well as the cruise ship traveller, it will have a hard time recovering in the future."

He added that if the government was to pull the plug on the proposal, "it will create high levels of uncertainty for foreign investors who currently see Queensland and Australia as politically & economically stable".

The project team has also urged supporters of the proposal to "stand up and be heard" through social media, contacting their local MP, phone or email.

A&K cruise portfolio

ABERCROMBIE & Kent has launched its Connections European River Cruise journeys portfolio for 2015, featuring a range of voyages taking place on the Amadeus fleet of river ships.

Itineraries cater to groups of no more than 24 per departure, with city sightseeing offerings prior to and following cruise components, with priority boarding included.

Themed voyages also feature in the guide, including the 10-day World War II Amsterdam to Basel sailing and the 10-day Classical Music on the Rhine.

The guide also details sailings on the Rhine, Danube, Main, Saône, Rhône and Moselle rivers.



CRUISE NEWS & VIEWS

with Peter Kollar
CLIA Australasia

Did you know?

TAX time may well be another 14 weeks away, but with conferences, training, and membership renewals in full swing, it is a good time to discuss deductions - especially deductions that are often missed by taxpayers like you.

E-Tax accounts surveyed their senior accountants and asked them "what are the top 5 forgotten deductions?" That is, deductions people can claim, but often forget or don't know about...

Listed as second most missed are union/membership fees, such as trade memberships like that of CLIA - the official body of the cruise industry.

If you're a travel agency, or independent travel agent, you'll first need to ask yourself if they can be proven to be directly relevant to your job, or to earning your income, which CLIA does by providing training specifically on the cruise sector and related retail skills that help you sell cruise holidays. Other items you could claim are:

- Formal education courses provided by professional associations.
- Seminars.
- Conferences or education workshops (like cruise3sixty).

Claims totalling more than \$300 need to be accompanied by written evidence such as invoices.

So if you are unsure whether to take part in a conference, or join a trade industry association, keep in mind the above and seek the advice of your accountant. You've got nothing to lose!



AUSTRALIA'S largest whale swim cruise operator Majestic Whale Encounters is adding its weight to a major campaign to free whales and dolphins from captivity, and needs your help.

The company is twisting the concept of a 'selfie' and asking wildlife lovers to send in a 'whalefie', in other words, a photo of oneself either with a real or toy whale or dolphin.

Supporters can post their #whalefie online, with the campaign to reach its crescendo on 14-15 Mar.

Known as WhaleFest, the social media movement is aimed at raising awareness of dolphins & whales in captivity.

Send your 'whalefies' to Majestic - [CLICK HERE](#) for info.

Book your own seat

NEW systems allowing guests to pre-reserve theatre seats will be among the improvements coming soon to Italian line MSC Cruises' fleet of Lirica-class ships.


As part of its 'Renaissance Program', passengers travelling on the newly extended ships will be able to book seats at the performance of their choice via their smartphone on the ship's onboard wi-fi connection.

Ten touch screens will also be installed for the same purpose, with MSC also saying it will add extra performances to meet passenger demand if necessary.


MEANWHILE, MSC has been named as the 'Official Cruise Carrier' of Expo Milano 2015.

Tickets to the expo will be able to be purchased onboard MSC ships, while shore excursions to visit the expo will run when ships dock in Genoa or Le Spezia.

The Universal Exposition held every five years will open in the Italian city of Milan on 01 May, running through until 31 Oct.



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FACE : FACE

ALASTAIR FERNIE

Executive General Manager - Ecrusing



Welcome to Face to Face, where we chat to cruise industry leaders.

How/why did you get into the cruise industry?

When I took over management of Harvey's Choice Holidays there was a very small cruise department. I made the decision that we had to be either serious about cruise or get out of it. We made the right decision and grew to become the third largest cruise wholesaler in Australia!

Where do you see the company in five years?

The cruise industry continues to evolve and Ecrusing will change with it to continue its lead as the preeminent online cruise agent in Australia.

What is the key to your success?

Hard work plus a willingness to embrace change and take risks!

How many cruises have you been on in the past year/five years?

I have been on 31 cruises and spent 141 nights at sea in the 7 years since I got into this great business.

What is your favourite cruise destination, and why?

Anywhere I have my family with me. I love sharing travel with my wife and kids.

What was your most memorable moment on a cruise?

My 50th birthday weekend cruise on *Dawn Princess* with a group of friends - the whole weekend was a blast!

How do you spend days at sea?

Anywhere on deck. I like watching the ocean and enjoying the complete relaxation you get at sea. Afternoon tea served in your steamer chair on the promenade deck on *QM2* hits the spot!

What is the next "hot spot" in cruising destinations?

Europe continues to be really popular and the Baltics are getting much more attention.

What is the most important issue in the cruise industry today & why?

Despite the growth in popularity, the biggest problem continues to be the lack of consumer awareness of the broad range of cruise experiences available. There is still work to be done on changing some of the outdated perceptions of cruising.

How can cruising continue to grow in the current financial climate?

The value for money of all cruise holidays irrespective of cruise line will ensure cruise continue to be a great holiday option no matter what the financial climate.

How can cruising attract more young people and families?

I think P&O, Carnival, Royal Caribbean and Norwegian are doing a great job for families in the mainstream market. I think there are more opportunities for the premium and luxury market where there is still good demand for family travel from people in that demographic.

What do you think is the most under-rated aspect of cruising?

The most underrated aspect is still the wonderful value for money.

What is something you wish more agents knew about cruising?

The wonderful range of options, and again the value for money.

What is your best tip for combating sea-sickness?

I don't get seasick but I'd recommend anyone who does to hit the deck and enjoy the fresh air!

What is your prediction for the future of cruising?

Continued growth and diversification.

What tips would you give those who would like a job such as yours?

Be flexible and willing to work hard!



Alastair's Cruise Favourites

Ship: Tough call, either *Celebrity Solstice* or *QM2*. My wife had to be dragged off *Silver Spirit* but to be honest I've enjoyed every ship I've been on.

Ship Activity: Evenings of cocktails, dinner and a show.

Region: Europe for history and culture, and the Caribbean for rest and relaxation.

Port: Sydney or New York

Onboard food/drink: At a specialty restaurant on any ship - they are all wonderful value for money with exceptional service.

Perk of the job: Getting to test all of these wonderful cruises!

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