



### eZAir easier than ever

**TRAVEL** agents will benefit from new functionality and simplified navigation rolled out by Princess Cruises to its cruise supporting airline booking software eZAir.

Improvements include an ability to select departure and return flights separately, add stopovers, compare real-time flexible and restricted fares and build more complex itineraries & schedules.

Agents can filter results based on airlines, fare types, stops, departure times, price and more as well as compare available fares.

The system highlights flights which allow sufficient time for pax to transfer to a departing ship or for flights out after an arrival.

Displays also offer more details on aircraft type and layover times, with some fares also able to have ticketing time limit dates deferred in order to align with cruise payment deadlines.

## Huge demand for *Ovation*

**ROYAL** Caribbean Cruises Ltd saw its reservations technology pushed to breaking point in the hours and days following the start of sales for cabins on *Ovation of the Seas* four Sydney departures, **Cruise Weekly** can reveal.

From the opening bell at 9am on 18 Jun, RCI in Australia saw call volumes over a 24-hour period spike more than 200%.

Online demand was also high, with [www.royalcaribbean.com.au](http://www.royalcaribbean.com.au) website visits soaring 70% and enquiries from travel agents using the new Espresso platform skyrocketing with a 177% spike.

Royal Caribbean Int'l commercial director Sean Treacy told **CW** the response from the cruising public had exceeded his expectations.

"In preparation for the increased level of online activities, our team were on hand

in case of any technical issues, and while the increase in calls, Espresso and website traffic certainly pushed capabilities, we are pleased to report that we've received positive feedback from our friends and fans."

From the time *Ovation* was announced as being based for a short season in Sydney, demand saw over 200,000 people register their details to be kept informed as the sales date approached.

Treacy added the popularity of the ship was testament to the strength and demand of the Australian market for cruising.

"*Ovation of the Seas* is certainly the star of the show this week, but we're also seeing an increase in interest in our brand and fleet more widely in Australia and New Zealand," he added.

The public interest for Royal Caribbean also funnelled through to the line's four other Australian-based ships *Voyager of the Seas*, *Explorer of the Seas*, *Radiance of the Seas* and *Legend of the Seas* as well as *Celebrity Solstice*.

While thousands of bookings on *Ovation* have so far been made, staterooms are still available for the Quantum-class ship.

**MEANWHILE**, RCI's third Quantum-class ship is coming together, with the first block floated out of the Hapag-Lloyd shipyard in Papenburg, Germany.

*Ovation* will be complete mid-next year & will first base in China before reaching Australia in Dec.

### Virgin eyeing Cuba?

**VOYAGES** to Cuba by Virgin Cruises have been labelled as "a great option for our passengers" by Virgin head Richard Branson.

Responding to a question from a reporter, ceo Tom McAlpin said the island would be an ideal port "if it becomes legal for a US-based line to sail there".

McAlpin added there was also demand from its US clientele for sailings in the Mediterranean.

### Floatplane crash pax

**AUTHORITIES** have identified the eight victims of a float plane which crashed near Ketchikan in Alaska while running a shore tour for Holland America Line last Thu.

The four couples were from the US states of California, Nevada, Oregon and Maryland, with the pilot hailing from Idaho, cruising aboard the *MS Westerdam*.

The plane operated by Promech Air crashed into a granite cliff face in Misty Fjord, with bad weather believed to have played a factor.

In separate statements, both HAL and Promech Air expressed their grief & anguish, saying they were working to offer support to the families and friends of those lost "in this tragic accident".

An investigation to ascertain the cause of the crash is underway.



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**CERTIFIED** UK LEGO building firm Bright Bricks has realised a dream by having a replica of the *Queen Mary* cruise liner it made out of LEGO transferred for display on the actual ship itself.

Measuring nearly eight metres in length, the enormous model took four professional builders and over 250,000 LEGO bricks to put together over four months.

"The agreement to display our model on the ship (pictured) is the perfect end to a wonderful LEGO adventure," Bright Bricks co-founder Ed Diment said.

The ship will open as part of an onboard exhibition, dubbed The Shipyard, on 04 Jul, surrounded by photos of children playing on the original *Queen Mary*.

Along with the model, kids visiting the exhibition will be able to build their own LEGO items at one of four tables to be set up around the model.



## New HAL Denali base

**HOLLAND** America Line has started construction on a new "base camp" facility at the entrance to the Denali National Park in Alaska in time for the start of next year's northern summer.

The camp is designed as a central hub for cruise passengers enjoying a HAL Land+Sea journey of up to three nights after their Alaskan sea voyage.

It will be positioned between the main accom hub which also features the reception hall, dining facilities and guest rooms and the riverfront guest room complex.

A number of fire pits will be built for passengers to enjoy along with outdoor seating, retail shops and an artist-in-residence cabin.

## Geelong a long-term plan

**SIGNIFICANT** work is still required on developing facilities in Geelong which could appeal to more cruise ship operators, a tour operator from the region has said.

Speaking exclusively to *Cruise Weekly* at Australian Tourism Exchange in Melbourne last week, Great Southern Touring Route director Roger Grant said challenges exist both on land as well as in the harbour itself.

"At the moment there has been a detailed plan done with consultants to look at the redevelopment of [the Yarra St Pier]. Reality is it will be at least a 10 year project," he lamented.

In addition, a big challenge was that the harbour needed dredging to open up access to larger ships.

Discussions with the Victorian Government have identified that the pier's redevelopment is not a short-term project, but long-term.

Larger cruise lines such as P&O Cruises have reached out to Geelong to add visits, however the depth and width of the harbour's channels prevented any of its ships from berthing.

"We'll continue to work very closely with the cruise ship companies to encourage them to continue to come in and include Geelong as a stop in their future itineraries," Grant added.

Despite the struggle to attract larger ships, Grant said small ship operators had no such troubles, able to directly deliver passengers to local experience operators.

However, numbers are small, with Grant saying Geelong only saw around 3-5 ships last year

## Daughter to christen

**VIKING** Ocean Cruises founder and chairman Torstein Hagen has selected his daughter Karine Hagen as Godmother to the line's second ocean ship *Viking Sea*.

The younger Hagen will next year carry out formal christening duties for the ship, which met water for the first time over the weekend at the Fincantieri yard.

amid a target of between 20-24.

Lines visiting include seasonal tenants such as Silversea, Oceania and Seabourn, which have all tied up at Geelong in recent years.

These visits by higher spending pax has seen an increase in shore excursions to the Bellarine Peninsula, which has been more popular than the Great Ocean Rd.

However, a hangover was still lingering in the air from an abrupt cancellation of several calls by European line Portuscale Cruises last year (*CW* 04 Sep), a feeling exacerbated by talk the line could have based an operation in Vic.

Grant added work has been put in to keep local merchants operating at a very high standard for pax arriving on cruise ships.

"We've had to train the industry here also to make sure they understand the standard cruise ships expect so they can deliver in this manner, e.g. train wineries how to deliver their product to cruise visitors," Grant said.

"Cruise ships are an important part of our strategy, we have a very passionate Mayor (Darryn Lyons) [who is an] ambassador for cruising and Geelong as a destination."

## Calamity for Celestyal

**MORE** than 1,200 passengers and crew had to be evacuated from *Celestyal Crystal* over the weekend after it collided with a tanker ship off the Turkish coast.

No injuries were reported on either ship, however images of the ship show some serious damage to the bow (pictured).

The incident occurred after 1am as *Celestyal Crystal* was travelling from Greece to Istanbul.



## Features on Seaside

**AMENITIES** including a bowling alley and water park with five slides will be among those starring on MSC Cruises' next-generation liner *MSC Seaside* when the ship makes its debut in Dec 2017.

*Seaside* will offer nine eateries including a pizzeria, steakhouse, seafood outlet and Japanese teppanyaki, while a heat recovery system will be employed to warm onboard swimming pools.



## Brochure Spotlight

**SUCH** is the demand for river cruising in France, APT has introduced its first-ever dedicated brochure for the burgeoning destination.

River cruising in the Bordeaux region is still yet to begin for APT, coming online next year and offering voyages on the Garonne and Dordogne rivers.

Spanning 11 itineraries, the new guide features details on both the French wine stronghold as well as the Seine.

A wide range of seven-night itineraries taking in Bordeaux, the Rhine, Rhône and Seine are detailed, as well as special event and themed sailings.

Headlining the range is the 11-day Bordeaux River Cruise, which also includes a three-night stay in a luxury Paris hotel and dinner at the Moulin Rouge.

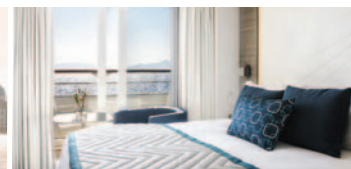
Signature invitations are a hallmark of an APT itinerary, with off-ship activities including dinner at Château Pape Clément matched with first class wines.

Plenty of wine tasting shore excursions and a visit to a family coopage are also included.

For the keen bookers, four SuperDeals are now in market including a 'Fly Free to France including air taxes' and Early Payment Deals on select tours.







## Silversea pax online

**SILVERSEA** has expanded a recent policy to offer free wi-fi internet to pax on Mediterranean sailings (**CW** 20 Jan), opening it to all passengers on all voyages.

Effective 01 Jan 2016, the policy affords each guest one hour of wi-fi internet per day, although a number of higher-end categories (varying by ship) provide pax with unlimited internet access.

**MEANWHILE**, a two-night pre-cruise hotel stay, port transfers, shore excursions and wi-fi are all included on 2016 *Silver Shadow* cruises in Asia, the line has said.

Guests will be booked for their pre-cruise stay at Shangri-La hotels in Singapore, Hong Kong or Tokyo, with fares for a seven-night sailing starting from \$3,950pp.

## Don sailing Botanica

**GARDENING** author and TV presenter Monty Don has been confirmed as a special guest with Botanica on an upcoming sailing.

Don will be onboard an 11-day British Isles itinerary, departing 27 May 2016 and travelling from Edinburgh to Portsmouth on APT small ship *MS Hebridean Sky*.

## Smooth jazz on QM2

**GRAMMY** Award winning singer Natalie Cole has been secured by Cunard to headline its first-ever Blue Note Jazz cruise sailing on *Queen Mary 2*.

Cole will be one of a number of well-known jazz luminaries to perform on the transatlantic trip, departing New York on 29 Oct.

## Lindblad opens Polar

**SALES** are now open for the 2016/17 Antarctic season for Lindblad Expeditions, which will be the line's 50th anniversary of operating in the polar region.

Three itineraries ranging in length from 12-22 days will take place, two visiting South Georgia and the Falkland Islands, priced from \$14,410pp twin share.

Voyages will be operated by the *National Geographic Explorer* and the *National Geographic Orion*.

## Vista rolled to water

**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line has celebrated the rollout of its new ship *Carnival Vista* at Fincantieri's shipyard in Monfalcone, Italy, with the ship set to debut next year.



## Cruise Calendar

This week's port calls of cruise ships at various destinations around Australia.

**SYDNEY**  
*Carnival Spirit* 30 Jun  
*Sun Princess* 04 Jul  
*Pacific Pearl* 06 Jul

**BRISBANE**  
*Pacific Dawn* 04 Jul  
*Pacific Jewel* 05 Jul

**YORKEYS KNOB**  
*Pacific Dawn* 30 Jun

**PORT DOUGLAS**  
*Pacific Dawn* 01 Jul

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Departing from 09 Dec 2015

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(Indonesia), Johor (Malaysia), Singapore

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BALCONY: \$2936pp

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