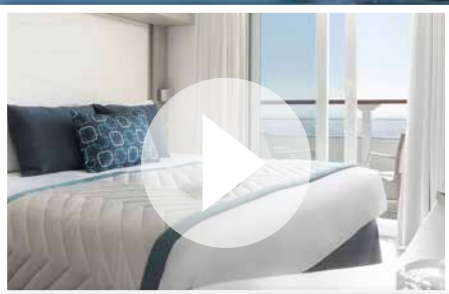




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CRUISE

WEEKLY



Tuesday 06 Oct 2015

Counsellors milestone

RECORD cruise sales have been reported by home-based agent group Travel Counsellors on the back of its Cruise Month promo.

The company saw a 57% year-on-year jump in cruise sales for Sep and a 32% climb in the year-to-date as of the end of Sep.

On top of a dedicated cruise brochure, Travel Counsellors said it achieved its high sales through regular emails to clients featuring special offers along with live-broadcast webinars, social media, incentives and competitions.

Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news plus a front full page from **Ponant**.

Norwegian riding the wave

A STRONG pipeline of newbuilds across the three Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings brands of Norwegian, Oceania and Regent Seven Seas is part of the rationale for the establishment of a dedicated Australasian office (**CW** Thu) according to NCL executive vp of international business development Harry Sommer.

Sommer told **CW** the initiative is part of a vision by ceo Frank Del Rio to significantly boost international passenger numbers, with the upcoming *Norwegian Escape* to be joined by Oceania's *Sirena* and the *Regent Seven Seas Explorer* next year - and two more "Breakaway-Plus" class ships on

order for delivery in 2018 & 2019.

Australasian ceo Steve Odell is confident about prospects for the operation, saying "we firmly believe we are the leader in all three markets where we operate."

He said while Norwegian had previously worked mainly through wholesalers, the huge local expansion would see retail travel agents targeted, citing significant growth opportunities including Hawaii, Alaska and longer Mediterranean cruises.

While there are no plans in the short term for extending the down-under deployments of the group's brands, "with five more ships coming in the future we will be assessing the best places to put them," Sommer said.

Sirena specialties

OCEANIA Cruises has confirmed that its new *Sirena* will feature two new specialty restaurants when it debuts in Apr 2016.

"Tuscan Steak" and "Red Ginger" will complement the Grand Dining Room's transformation into "Jacques Bistro" for lunch.

APT small ship videos

A PAIR of short clips showcasing its Boutique and Expedition small ship cruise product have been released by APT.

The videos look at a range of the destinations visited, shore trips and onboard amenities.

To view Boutique - **CLICK HERE**.
For Expedition - **CLICK HERE**.

Ponant earlybirds

PONANT is offering earlybird savings of up to 30% on its global collection of voyages.

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With knowledgeable guides and lecturers, agents and clients can also register to receive Ponant news and event invitations.

For more information see the **cover page** of today's **CW**.

'Who dat CCL nation'

CARNIVAL Cruise Line has inked a deal to become the Official Cruise Line of the New Orleans Saints NFL franchise.

The multi-year deal will see CCL offer a free cruise to a fan at each home game via a variety of promotional games and activities.



Brochure Spotlight

HISTORY

will be made in a few short months when Azamara Club Cruises marks its

first deployment to Australia.

Royal Caribbean's boutique *Azamara Quest* will tie up for the first time in Australia when it reaches Darwin on 28 Dec before cruising the east coast & berthing in Sydney on 14 Jan.

Two whole nights will be spent in the NSW capital on *Azamara Quest's* first visit to Sydney, berthed over at White Bay.

Quest's arrival is bound to tempt the tastebuds of boutique cruise lovers, who will be keen to get their hands on the line's 2016/17 brochure, out now.

Detailing the adventures of *Quest* and sister-ship *Azamara Journey*, the guide takes readers onboard to view the array of stateroom categories, onboard dining and entertainment.

However, it is what occurs off the ship which is worth shouting about, with Azamara all about destination immersion for its guests in far-flung ports & cities.

The guide looks also at Insider Access behind-the-scenes shore tours, the AzAmazing Evenings cultural celebrations and the romantic and private Exclusive Nights in Cool Places program of sleeping under the stars.



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Amras “a different offering” for Australia

MCLACHLAN Tours general manager Peter Smith says the company will be hitting the market hard to promote the Amras Cruises brand next year, labelling it a “different product”.

The American resell brand of European river operator Luftner Cruises, Amras soft launched into the Australian market earlier this year (**CW** 26 Feb), selling inventory onboard Luftner’s fleet of Amadeus flagged river ships.

In line with the recent release of Amras’ first AUD brochure, Smith spoke to **Cruise Weekly** during a visit to Sydney by Luftner founders Wolfgang and Martina Luftner.

The brand has reported strongly positive feedback from a quiet launch into the market so far, but Smith said the brand plans to get much louder in early 2016.

“We had a nice introductory sampling of clients who have now returned with some great reviews

so we’re excited to be there at the start of 2016,” Smith said.

Luftner said the company has been keeping a close eye on the Australian travel market for some 25 years as the heyday of coach touring in Europe has given way somewhat to river cruising.

“We’ve followed very closely the success of river cruises in Australia. We’ve seen many Aussies come to Europe and do river cruises so we are quite well aware of the potential for river cruises in Australia,” he said.

Smith added that key to the brand’s success was to ensure it stood out from the crowd as a truly European experience.

“We didn’t want to try and go head-to-head with the big guys here because we’d lose that battle straight away before we’d started, so why we like this product so much is that it’s not just Aussies, it’s English speaking but from all markets.

“Plus, the way the Luftner family are doing this is they are designating about half their cruise ships to the Amras product and half to the regular Luftner river cruising program so there is going to be a mix of different nationalities onboard.

The Amadeus fleet consists of 13 ships at present, with the Amras brochure featuring AUD pricing, while McLachlan sales teams on the road are promoting the brand to the trade.

“From our side it allows us to cross-sell across our program ranges very nicely because battlefield touring of Europe has suddenly come of age again.

“While it is a niche product, it’s very topical niche now with the whole centenaries and anniversaries of World War I.

“We saw that with Gallipoli back in Anzac Day earlier this year where we ended up taking 2,000



people across to Gallipoli.

Amras Cruises began life in Australia with five itineraries on sale including the highly popular Amsterdam to Budapest route.

This has now swelled to seven, with adventures on the Rhine, Danube, Rhone and Seine rivers, which Smith said were “all delightful places to cruise and not currently so popular for Aussies”.

The McLachlan gm said Amras would stand out as an alternative to APT, Scenic, Uniworld and Avalon Waterways, with three key elements working in its favour.

“The three sale points that I need people to think are ‘Look us up as an alternative to the mainstream ones if the dates don’t fit or they’re full’.

“Or secondly, if price is an issue, you’ve only got to start looking in the brochure and you’ll see it’s up to \$2,000 difference. So while the product is extremely similar, what we don’t have is an open bar throughout the whole day. It’s very European to have wine and beer included with the meals but if you want a beer at 4 o’clock, you go to the bar and buy it yourself, but how much beer can you drink for \$2,000?

“The third area to look at is if you don’t want to travel with a shipload of just Aussies,” he said.

Luftner added he felt the Amras brand was “strong enough to compete with everybody”.

“We came up with a different product, more European, more based on Austrian hospitality.

“We can go further against whoever else is in market.

“We are very confident,” he said.

PORTHOLE



A LUNCH menu saved from the original Titanic, still in good condition considering its plight, has managed to fetch US\$88,000 at auction last week.

The story behind the menu says that the guest saving the item was onboard “The Money Boat” - a lifeboat where the crew were allegedly bribed to row away from the vessel instead of returning to rescue more people in the water.



Cruise Calendar	
This week’s port calls of cruise ships at various destinations around Australia and New Zealand.	
SYDNEY	
<i>Carnival Spirit</i>	06 Oct
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	08 Oct
<i>Pacific Jewel</i>	09 Oct
<i>Radiance of the Seas</i>	09 Oct
<i>Pacific Jewel</i>	12 Oct
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	12 Oct
BRISBANE	
<i>Pacific Pearl</i>	06 Oct
<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	07 Oct
<i>Sun Princess</i>	11 Oct
DARWIN	
<i>Coral Princess</i>	09 Oct
YORKEYS KNOB	
<i>Pacific Dawn</i>	22 Sep
PORT DOUGLAS	
<i>Sun Princess</i>	08 Oct
TAURANGA	
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	07 Oct
AUCKLAND	
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	08 Oct
<i>Golden Princess</i>	10 Oct



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Explorer prepares for Aus voyage



ABOVE: Royal Caribbean's *Explorer of the Seas* is pictured being greeted by its larger fleet-mate *Anthem of the Seas*, docked in Southampton and preparing to set off on its 42-day relocation voyage to Sydney, Australia.

The twin sister to *Voyager of the Seas* has now set off, venturing eastbound through Europe and Dubai to India and Asia before arriving in Perth on 13 Nov.

Explorer's first Australian cruise will be a 16-night tour around the south of Australia from Perth, arriving in Sydney on 28 Nov.

Both Voyager-class vessels will meet in Sydney Harbour on this date either side of Fort Denison.

Just months after its sister, *Explorer of the Seas* underwent a major revitalisation which saw the addition of a FlowRider surf simulator, three new restaurants, Virtual Balcony-fitted cabins and Panoramic Staterooms.

Other facilities include a full size basketball court, ice-skating rink, mini-golf and Royal Promenade which runs nearly the length of the ship, hosting parades and evening entertainment.

Fathom outlines Cuba

CARNIVAL Corporation has released some of the activities guests on its new social impact line Fathom will be able to enjoy during itineraries to Cuba.

On the table are visits to a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, meeting independent Cuban book sellers and attending an Afro-Cuban Community Meeting.

Opportunities to dine in private restaurants and private homes will also be part of the itinerary.

The seven-day voyages ex Miami will visit Havana, Cienfuegos and Santiago de Cuba (**CW** 07 Sep).

MEANWHILE, Carnival Australia has confirmed Fathom itineraries are not available to book through the Polar system in Australia, with agents requested to ring the US call centre on +1-855-932-8466.

Star Princess cleanup

PRINCESS Cruises' *Star Princess* has undergone deep cleaning in Vancouver, Canada after 61 passengers were sickened by gastro bug norovirus during a 15 day voyage to Hawaii.

Indonesia relaxing cruise laws

FOREIGN cruise ships will soon be able to call into five big Indonesian ports, after the govt relaxed its restrictions on foreign vessels in a bid to boost tourism.

The Transportation Ministry has chosen the biggest ports - Tanjung Priok in Jakarta; Tanjung Perak in Surabaya, East Java; Belawan in Medan, North Sumatra; Makassar in South Sulawesi and Benoa in Bali as the places where foreign cruise ships can drop off and pick up tourists, the *Jakarta Post* reports.

Under the new regulation, tourists can disembark at these ports and tour the area, while ships can stop at tourist spots and collect tourists.

The Ministry's director general for sea transportation Bobby Mamahit said the policy "will help the economy as the govt is also

trying to boost tourist visits."

Previously, under the cabotage principle, each domestic state in Indonesia was entitled to forbid and restrict foreign vessels to sail and to conduct business in the area of the state.

Under the principal, every ship had to obtain a permit to cross & to enter the territory of a state.

The changes will allow domestic tourists, who previously had to go to neighbouring countries such as Singapore for cruising, to embark on cruises in Indonesia.

HAL jacks gratuities

DAILY service fees will increase across the Holland America Line fleet for sailings departing after 01 Dec, the line has said.

For non-suite guests, gratuities charged daily will climb from US\$11.50 per day to \$12.50, while those in higher categories will be charged \$13.50, up \$1.50.

Newbuilds for Saga

BRITISH cruise line Saga Cruises has set a course for expansion, signing a deal with Meyer Werft in Germany for the building of its first brand new ship.

Saga Cruises was founded in 1996 using chartered ships.

The agreement calls for one ship with an option for a second, due for delivery from 2019.

Up to 1,000 passengers would be accommodated on the vessels.



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Part of the Travel Daily group of publications.

