



MSC experts

MSC Cruises has created a new "Blue Ribbon COVID Expert Group" to consult on health and safety protocols for the resumption of cruising.

The group comprises eminent scientists, physicians and epidemiologists and will complement work done by Aspen Medical, with a specialist maritime classification society also engaged to provide third party verification of compliance.

Big Cruise Podcast

THE latest episode of Barry Downs' Big Cruise Podcast has dropped, featuring an intimate conversation with Captain Kate McCue from *Celebrity Edge*.

Available wherever you get your podcasts, with more information online at thebigcruisepodcast.com.

A big step towards cruise recovery

OPINION

Joel Katz is the Managing Director Australasia of Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).



THE latest health initiatives announced by CLIA cruise lines (**CW** yesterday) are an important landmark along our industry's path to recovery.

Together with the measures announced by other member cruise lines recently, they show the lengths our sector is going to in creating one of the most comprehensive COVID-19 responses of any industry.

The calibre of medical experts engaged, together with the breadth of health measures being developed and announced, proves that cruise lines are serious about maintaining safety as the highest priority and earning the confidence of

governments globally.

There is still work to be done and medical understanding of this virus continues to evolve.

But these latest advances by cruise lines will support CLIA's work to aggregate the health protocols of individual operators to create an industry-wide ocean cruise policy that can be enacted globally.

This is the framework we will use to hold detailed discussions with governments in Australia and elsewhere in our region, so that we can open the way to resumption.

By putting these detailed plans on the table, we can show how cruise operations can resume in a careful, phased approach.

It's still too soon to specify details, but we envisage this will involve a door-to-door concept with precautions and protocols in place from the time of booking

right through until after a passenger returns home.

We also expect it will involve a staged approach, with initial operations restricted to short local cruises and domestic itineraries for Australians only while borders remain closed, and then further afield when the trans-Tasman bubble comes to fruition.

Already, we are engaged with health authorities and governments to ensure they understand the work underway, as well as the impact of the cruise suspension on travel agents and other tourism businesses.

Ultimately, we will be guided by the experts and the authorities on the timing of our resumption, but thanks to the extensive work underway we are now closer to translating this into a global approach that can bring confidence back to cruising.

How CAN WE HELP?

Thanks to the more than 300 travel partners who shared their insights in our first survey. You're helping us to understand how we can support you and your clients during this critical time.

START SURVEY



To learn more, call 1-800-754-500 or visit CruisingPower.com.au



SOUTH Australia's Wooden Boat Festival is staying afloat for 2021 with the local Council pledging \$65,000 in funding.

There were fears of the biannual festival not going ahead next year due to the inability to find a sponsor, but plans are now being put in place to stage the event on the weekend of 17 Apr 2021.

The festival is hosted in the Murray town of Goolwa, and is a huge tourist drawcard for the region, attracting over 14,000 people at its last iteration - because let's face it everyone loves being on the water!

Last year, it was recognised as South Australia's Best Festival at the 2019 SA Tourism Awards.

Celeb survey

PART two of Celebrity Cruises' travel agent survey ends tomorrow.

The four-part series is aimed at bringing awareness to the concerns of travel agents across Australia and New Zealand, ensuring Celebrity is constantly evolving to focus on what agents need most right now.

The second instalment in the series features 12 questions focused on business recovery and current industry concerns, agent and client expectations, and support requirements during and post the COVID-19 pandemic - [CLICK HERE](#).

Pandaw to debut Naga Cruises



PANDAW Cruises has released details of its new offshoot Naga Cruises, launching in Vietnam this Sep with a range of mini-cruises exploring the backwaters and small towns of the Mekong Delta.

Using a former Pandaw vessel, Naga will start out by offering two itineraries operating every weekend from 04 Sep - a one-night Ho Chi Minh City to Phnom Penh journey and a two-night weekend circular cruise operating from Ho Chi Minh City to Chau Doc return.

Lead prices for the one-night product start at US\$98 per person per night, and US\$179 for the two night product, with prices inclusive of Naga's Asian-international fusion cuisine, wi-fi and a nightly cocktail hour.

Naga's 30-cabin ships will come with a gym, spa, library and cocktail lounge, with a colonial-contemporary mix of decor.

"We have long believed that there is a strong demand for exploring the Mekong Delta," said Pandaw founder Paul Strachan.

"Naga Cruises have a short

duration designed for Asian travellers and for Westerners who would rather travel to Cambodia overnight in comfort and style than spend a day in airports and traffic jams," he said.

For more information head to nagacruises.com.

Oceania training

OCEANIA Cruises has launched an online training platform for its travel partners.

The new program comprises six learning modules which end with a multiple-choice quiz to assist with cementing product knowledge.

For a limited time only, travel partners can also receive \$20 in Oceania Trade Rewards points when signing up, and 10 CLIA accredited points.

Oceania is also offering agents who complete the course by 31 Jul a chance to win \$250 worth of Oceania Trade Rewards points.

To register for the platform, [CLICK HERE](#).



Cruise Ready

WHILE none of us knows when we will see the return of cruising in Australia, the Port Authority of NSW is making sure that Eden is "cruise ready" when visitors return.

A new \$5 million Welcome Centre is being built within walking distance of the Eden Cruise Wharf.

This construction comes on top of the extensive \$44 million wharf extension completed in August 2019 enabling cruise ships to berth alongside in Snug Cove, rather than anchoring in Twofold Bay and tendering passengers ashore by boat.

The new Centre will provide visitor information and services, facilitate shuttle bus transportation and host local markets, always popular with visiting cruise passengers.

Despite COVID-19, the project is still on time with completion due around October of this year.

The framework is already taking shape with the slab having been poured and 100-year-old hand cut local timber beams now in place to form the structure.

This major infrastructure project not only marks local and state support for the cruise industry but has provided much needed employment during the past few months.

We look forward to welcoming ships back into this beautiful port on the NSW Sapphire coast.