



Vandekreeke: we're with you, agents

CARNIVAL Cruise Line (CCL) Australia Vice President & General Manager Jennifer Vandekreeke has reinforced to *Cruise Weekly* how proud she and CCL are of being a part of the Australian cruise market's growth over the past decade.

As Carnival prepares to celebrate its 10-year anniversary in Australia next year, as well as its 50th as a cruise line, Vandekreeke spoke of CCL's unflinching commitment to the Aussie cruise market and the country's travel advisors, with both facing an uncertain future.

"We fully support the efforts by the Tourism & Transport Forum to try to get support to the trade so they can make it through, because we don't see the borders opening any time soon, and our travel agents are such a critical and crucial part of this entire industry," Vandekreeke said.

"It's heartbreaking to watch the impact to the trade...we need them back... we are doing everything we can to help the travel agents keep some cash in their pockets.

"It's pretty obvious with all the work we did on *Splendor* before she came down, we plan on having that ship here for a while."

Travel advisors have not gone unattended to by Carnival during the COVID-19 pandemic, with Vandekreeke explaining her sales team is now back full-time, and out on the road meeting agents.

Other efforts to support advisors include the development of a future cruise credit toolkit, designed to help convert FCCs into bookings.

Having been tasked with leading Carnival's first international homeport in Australia in 2012, Vandekreeke has been at the forefront of the country's cruise

industry the past decade, which has been spurred on by its similarity to the American market.

"I knew it was going to be a slam dunk to get Australians to sail with us," she enthused.

"Intention to cruise is really high...it's a really great value proposition any way you look at it.

"One of our secrets to our success in the United States is we spread homeports all around the US...there's so much of the American population that can drive to a Carnival homeport.

"When you look at where we source our guests from in the US, it's very much along the coast, and when you look at where Australians live, it's very much along the coast."

A plethora of celebrations are planned for next year's milestone, including a range of 'Sailabratations' - **CLICK HERE.**

P&O names new ship *Arvia*

P&O Cruises UK has named its new ship *Arvia*, with it set to join the fleet in Dec 2022.

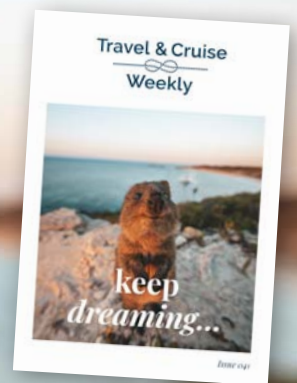
The cruise line's second LNG-powered Excel class ship has been designed to travel year-round, sun-laden voyages, and to maximise views of the ocean and the seashore from everywhere on board, according to President Paul Ludlow.

"The rejuvenating and restorative qualities of a walk on the beach and invigorating sea air will be reflected in the experiences both on board and on shore," Ludlow explained.

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FRED. Olsen Cruise Lines recently celebrated Valentine's Day on board *Balmoral*.

Even though guests couldn't join them, that did not stop crews making the most of the occasion with a Valentine's-themed buffet, which included this sumptuous cake (pictured).



Uniworld adds rail-only

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruises has released a new train-only itinerary, as part of its Cruise & Rail program for next year.

The operator will be offering guests a rail-only journey on the Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian Express from Moscow to Vladivostok, as one of the boldest itineraries in its second year of its Cruise & Rail program.

Following the success of last year's rail-also itineraries, guests can now ride across Russia from east to west through the Ural Mountains and along the shore of the largest freshwater lake in the world, Lake Baikal.

The world's longest single-train journey, the 15-day itinerary stops in Kazan, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Lake Baikal,

Ulan Ude and Khabarovsk, and even ventures into Mongolia, to visit the capital, Ulaanbaatar.

The itinerary includes stays at two five-star hotels - the Four Seasons Hotel Moscow and Lotte Hotel Vladivostok.

Departure dates are 27 Jul 2022 and 06 & 21 Aug 2022.

Other new experiences in the Cruise & Rail program for next year include the Castles of Transylvania, which will connect the Golden Eagle's Danube Express train with Uniworld's Enchanting Danube cruise onboard *Maria Theresa*.

Eight different departures for this itinerary are offered next year, with guests able to choose from either a 12-night pre-cruise rail option starting with a one-night hotel stay in Budapest, or a post-cruise rail option for an 11-night trip starting in Passau.

Highlights on this trip include visits to three castles, dinner at Bran Castle of Dracula fame, and a visit to the capital of the Transylvania region, Cluj-Napoca.

Uniworld's second new Cruise & Rail itinerary connects the all-new *La Venezia* with the current four-night Zurich to Venice Cruise & Rail itinerary.

The company will also operate a Venice to Istanbul and vice eight-night itinerary from Jul to Sep, travelling through nine countries including Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia and Bulgaria, and including a two-night hotel stay in Istanbul.

Uniworld also now offers "Total Flexibility", with a bonus 12% early payment saving on cruises paid in full and booked by 31 Mar - **CLICK HERE.**

New role for Duffy

CARNIVAL Cruise Line President Christine Duffy has added the role of US Travel Association National Chair to her responsibilities.

Duffy most recently served on the board as First Vice Chair, and will now lead an executive committee and board representing a cross-section of the United States' travel business sectors.

She will guide the board and association's efforts to expand engagement with businesses and organisations to drive advocacy initiatives and unite the industry under one voice to inform the opinions and actions of elected leaders.

Costa Cruises to return from Mar

COSTA Cruises is restarting with a new program from 27 Mar in the Mediterranean.

The first of the cruise line's ships to recommence will be *Costa Smeralda*, followed by *Luminosa* from 02 May.

Sailing with enhanced health and safety protocols, *Smeralda* will depart on an unchanged itinerary, sailing guests around Italy with three- and four-day mini-cruises or alternatively a seven-day cruise, calling at Savona, La Spezia, Civitavecchia, Naples, Messina and Cagliari.

Luminosa will also be back in service departing from Trieste from 02 May, and the following day from Bari, with one-week cruises in Greece and Croatia.

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