



40,000 messages beg for cruise restart

AUSTRALIAN politicians must now be fully aware of the grass-roots push for a cruise restart, with more than 40,000 emails sent to state and federal MPs as part of the *Ready, Set, Sail* campaign launched by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia (**CW 12 May**).

CLIA MD Joel Katz said the response to the campaign, which had targeted travel agents, industry stakeholders and other members of Australia's extensive cruise community, had been beyond expectations.

"Australia has always been one of the world's most passionate cruise markets, and the number of supporters who have joined our campaign is a sign of that passion," he said.

"It's also a reflection of the many thousands of people whose livelihoods have been jeopardised by the suspension of cruising,



which ordinarily supports more than 18,000 jobs around the country," Katz added.

He said many supporters had received replies from their MPs, indicating that the messages were being heard - despite last week's disappointing extension of the cruise ban with no indication of a way forward (**CW 11 Jun**).

"There can no longer be any doubt about how extensive the Australian cruise community is, so we will work hard to maintain the momentum and ensure MPs

know how important cruising is to the Australian economy," he said.

Katz said CLIA and its cruise line members continued to undertake ongoing discussions with governments across the country, calling for agreement upon a detailed framework for cruising's resumption - backed by the industry's extensive new global health protocols which are driving successful restarts in many other markets.

The CLIA Australia MD said the industry was pushing for the implementation of these protocols as part of a phased resumption which begins with domestic cruising for Australians, within a domestic bubble.

Mainstream media also appears to be getting the message, with a report on the *Channel 7* news last night also referencing strong support from the cruising community for CLIA's restart push.

Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

1,000 Viking dates!

NO, THAT'S not the name of a new Norwegian reality TV show, but actually the rollout of Viking Cruises' entire 2023 river voyage program.

The company said the move was a "sure sign of a strong global return to cruising," featuring popular itineraries along the Rhine, Main, Danube and Douro Rivers as well as the iconic Volga voyage between Moscow and St Petersburg.

"This is the first time we have opened a whole season this far in advance," said Michelle Black, Viking MD Australia/NZ.

"It is definitely a positive indication of global demand and the return to cruise that we have all been waiting for."

Black said the early release represented a great opportunity for local agents and their clients to forward plan well into 2023 while patiently awaiting the reopening of borders.

All of the newly released departure dates can be found at vikingrivercruises.com.au, while the newly updated brochure, which also features some 2024 departures, can be viewed by **CLICKING HERE**.

More info on 138 747 (AU) or 0800 447 913 (NZ).

Splendida is back

MSC Cruises has resumed sailings out of Trieste, Italy with *MSC Splendida* now offering a seven-night Eastern Mediterranean itinerary.

Destinations include Ancona, Dubrovnik, Bari, Corfu and Kotor or Split, and pax can board in any of the Italian ports.

On embarkation day transfer shuttles for MSC guests will operate from Venice Airport to the ship in Trieste.

Windstar on sale - with bonus bubbly!

TRAVEL The World has launched a Come Sail Away sale for Australian travel agents, with a bottle of Veuve Clicquot Champagne for every booking made on behalf of clients.

Passengers will also have the choice of an Easy Stay hotel night including breakfast, wi-fi and hotel to pier (or vice versa) transfer, or up to US\$1,000 shipboard credit per stateroom, depending on cabin type and

sailing duration.

In addition, all sailings of 14 nights or more will include free laundry for guests on board.

Itineraries available feature Tahiti, Iceland, Alaska, the Mediterranean and Central America, with fares also including all non-alcoholic beverages, water sports, and all onboard dining options including 24-hour room service - reservations@windstar.com.au.

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Two more American newbuilds



AMERICAN Cruise Line (ACL) has confirmed orders with Maryland-based Chesapeake Shipbuilding for the construction of two more “modern riverboats” which will boost the cruise line’s river fleet to six vessels next year. ACL’s rapid expansion has seen it more than double in size since 2017, with other vessels including five small ships and four classic paddlewheelers.

Chief Executive Officer Charles Robertson said the orders

demonstrated ACL’s commitment to growth and “leading the US small ship market”.

The two newbuilds will be sister ships to the 175-passenger *American Melody* which is scheduled to commence operations on the Mississippi River this Aug.

The ships offer 100% private balcony staterooms and five decks, including a cantilevered “Skywalk” (**pictured**) above an outdoor cafe and lounge.

Viking US restart

VIKING has continued its restart, welcoming its first American guests back on board in Bermuda.

The cruise line’s *Viking Orion* is currently sailing the first of eight Bermuda Escape roundtrip departures from Hamilton, offered as part of its Welcome Back collection (**CW 07** May).

Exclusively for vaccinated guests, the eight-day journey will sail around the North Atlantic British Overseas Territory, with an overnight call in King’s Wharf.

“We applaud the government of Bermuda for its collaboration and support as we have restarted our operations,” said Chairman Torstein Hagen.

“Bermuda has been a favourite destination among our guests since our ocean ships began calling there”.

RCG to raise funds

ROYAL Caribbean Group (RCG) has announced a US\$650 million capital raising through a private offering of senior unsecured notes, due 2026.

RCG intends to use the proceeds from the sale to fund the redemption in full of approximately US\$619.8 million aggregate principal amount of the 7.25% senior secured notes due 2025, issued by Silversea Cruises, including call premiums, fees and expenses in connection with the redemption.

The remaining balance will be used for general corporate purposes, RCG said.

MEANWHILE, the company has named Rosanna Fiske as Global Chief Communications Officer.

She will report to Donna Hrinak, SVP of Corporate Affairs, and will lead RCG’s global corporate communications strategy with internal and external stakeholders.




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Did you know?

Travel & Cruise Weekly's fortnightly consumer magazine called *Keep Dreaming* is specially designed for agents to send their clients.



WEARING face masks may or may not be necessary on your next cruise - but if you need one, why not try out the latest Japanese innovation, which combines COVID-19 safety with a delicious snack.

The innovation (pictured) is a face mask made out of the country's famous "melon pan bread" created by Goku No Kimochi The Labo.

The raw materials are being provided by famous Tokyo bread store Melon de Melon, and while they are somewhat quirky the tasty face masks have also undergone certification at Untika Garmentec Research which says the melon pan masks provide equivalent or better protection than conventional face masks.

Unfortunately they're only available within Japan at this stage - but with a number of cruise lines recently releasing Japanese itineraries, they could be the perfect option for some shoreside shopping.



AQSC returns to the river



THE American Queen Steamboat Company (AQSC) has debuted the first sailing of the 2021 Pacific Northwest season aboard its *American Empress*.

The departure is the first overnight river cruise with 100% COVID-19 vaccinated guests and crew in the USA, and also marks a return to cruising on the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

The popular Pacific Northwest Splendor itinerary cruises between Portland, Oregon and Spokane, Washington and "showcases the lush natural beauty and historic sites of the region," AQSC said.

The company's 100% vaccination policy for guests and crew will go into effect fleetwide, including Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Cumberland river departures effective 01 Jul.

Other measures include pre-cruise COVID-19 testing of all guests and crew, however masks are no longer required onboard for guests after embarkation.

Passengers must continue wearing masks on shore excursion motorcoaches, in line with the current CDC federal transportation mandate.

For more info on the voyages see www.aqsc.com.au.

Celestyal Cruises resumes in Aegean

CELESTYAL Cruises has successfully restarted operations, debuting its seven-night Idyllic Aegean itinerary aboard *Celestyal Crystal*.

CEO Chris Theophilides said he was "beyond thrilled to be welcoming guests back onboard...this was no small task and is due to the unwavering

dedication and unified teamwork of the Celestyal team, both shoreside and onboard, and the support from our strategic partners".

Next up will be the deployment of *Celestyal Olympia* which is scheduled to set sail on 28 Jun on the new Legendary Archipelago itinerary.

CLIA UPDATE



with Joel Katz
MD, CLIA Australasia

End the inaction!

IN THE past few days, the number of passengers who have cruised internationally reached 550,000 since operations resumed last year – yet another important milestone for our industry.

Frustratingly, none of these passengers sailed from Australia, and we are now the only major cruise market in the world where the government has made no progress towards a resumption.

Last week's decision to extend the cruise suspension for another three months was not unexpected, but the absence of any plan for the future has come as a further blow to an industry that has spent months in discussions with government.

Recent comments by federal Minister for Tourism Dan Tehan in support of cruising have been encouraging and perhaps reflect the campaigning our sector has been doing alongside that of the wider travel and tourism industry.

However, it would be good to see these words translate into a concrete plan, without which 18,000 Australian jobs are in doubt.

Cruise Lines International Association has voiced its alarm at the lack of progress in Australia and is calling on state and federal govts to take real steps forward.

Our industry's new health measures are already in place and working successfully in other countries.

It's now time to break the cycle of inaction in Australia and work towards achieving this here too.

