



### New comms mgr for Viking Cruises

**NICOLE** Henry is returning to the travel industry after having been appointed as Communications Manager for Viking Cruises.

Henry's career has included time as Trade Marketing Manager for Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours and more recently as Head of Marketing at Express Travel Group.

### Boosters needed

**SEVERAL** cruise lines have begun updating their COVID-19 protocols to require a third vaccination against the coronavirus.

Full vaccinations, including a booster at least seven days prior to embarkation, are now being mandated by Cunard, as well as P&O UK, TUI Cruises and Hapag-Lloyd Cruises.

## NCLH opts in for new CDC program

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) has become the first major operator to confirm its participation in the new voluntary Centers for Disease Control (CDC) program (**CW** 14 Jan) which is now in effect following the expiration of the temporary Conditional Sale Order on Sat.

The company said its three brands - Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises - would opt into the voluntary risk mitigation scheme for foreign-flagged cruise ships operating in US waters.

CEO Frank Del Rio said "the health and safety of our guests, crew and communities we visit is our number one priority".

"We have demonstrated this commitment since our return to service in Jul of last year, with protocols that exceeded those required by regulatory agencies, including 100% vaccination of

guests and crew, universal testing of all guests prior to embarkation and routine testing of crew.

"Furthering our commitment to health and safety, with the expiration of the CDC's Conditional Sail Order, our three brands have opted into the CDC's voluntary program, which provides the cruise industry with a set of operating provisions to protect the health and safety of guests and crew," Del Rio added.

He said adopting the CDC

program would give guests, crew, travel partners and other stakeholders "the assurance that our brands will continue to meet and exceed the provisions laid out by the CDC".

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings' COVID-19 response is informed by its SailSAFE health and safety program, with a Global Health and Wellness Council chaired by Dr Scott Gottlieb, former head of the US Food and Drug Administration.



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## Azzurra to debut in Mar

**SCENIC** Group has confirmed that its new *Emerald Azzurra* (**CW** 03 Feb 2020) will commence operations on 11 Mar with a departure from Aqaba, Jordan.

That's about seven months later than originally announced, and a six-week delay from her most recent launch announcement which had the inaugural scheduled from 28 Jan.

Emerald Cruises confirmed it had made the "difficult decision to adjust the inaugural sailings of our new luxury yacht, *Emerald Azzurra*," citing the "continually changing travel landscape".

The move means five previously scheduled Red Sea sailings have been cancelled, with the company saying all impacted guests had been contacted and offered alternative departures.

The 100-passenger superyacht, which was built in Vietnam by The Halong Shipbuilding



Company, will now initially undertake two eight-day Red Sea itineraries before heading to the Mediterranean and Adriatic for her 2022 northern spring and summer season which will commence as previously planned on 29 Mar with an Athens departure.

Sister ship *Emerald Sakara* recently had her keel laid (**CW** 03 Nov 2021) and is currently planned for an early 2023 debut in the Seychelles.

## Windstar special

**WINDSTAR** Cruises has released details of its 2022 "Wave Season Offer," giving clients the choice of up to \$1,000 onboard credit per stateroom, or up to two free Easy Stay hotel nights including transfers and breakfast.

Guests may pick either complimentary option, and returning passengers who are members of the Windstar Yacht Club will also earn double referral credits when they introduce a friend.

Travel advisors introducing new guests to the cruise line will receive a \$100 per booking bonus commission or a \$100 Visa gift card.

The offers are valid until 28 Feb 2022, with Windstar President Christopher Prelog saying departures in the end of 2022 and into 2023 are "booking extremely well".

## Celebrity cancels

**CELEBRITY** Cruises has announced the cancellation of four upcoming US West Coast cruises on its *Celebrity Eclipse*, which is also set to cruise Australasian waters in the 2022/23 local season commencing in Oct this year.

The cruises which have been cancelled were all scheduled to depart from Los Angeles between late Mar and mid-Apr - the first three to cruise south to ports in California and Mexico, and the fourth a repositioning voyage northward to Vancouver.

Celebrity told impacted guests it had been "working closely with health and government authorities, in each country we sail from, to continuously evaluate our operational plans and ship itineraries...as a result we will be suspending four *Celebrity Eclipse* sailings departing Mar 26, 2022 through Apr 16, 2022".



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**PASSENGERS** aboard Murray River cruises may in the future be able to spot some truly unique aquatic wildlife - robotic fish created to handle one of Australia's most invasive species.

A paper published in the *IScience* journal last month detailed the development of the bionic fish by an international team of engineers and biologists from Australia, the USA and Italy.

The decoy is an automated version of the largemouth bass - the natural predator of mosquitofish which the researchers at the University of Western Australia described as "one of the most problematic animals on the planet".

Also known as Gambusia, the fish were introduced about a century ago to combat mosquitos, but has thrived so much that it's become a major threat to native species.

The study details how the robotic bass was able to alter the behaviour, physiology and fertility of the invasive fish, ultimately "scaring it to death".

"We made their worst nightmare become real - a robot that scares the mosquitofish but not the other animals around it," said report author Giovanni Polverino, adding that the novel approach was an alternative to "killing them one by one".

## Planets continue to align for Viking

**VIKING** Cruises has confirmed that its new *Viking Neptune* which was floated out from the Ancona shipyard in Italy last week (**CW** 14 Jan) is set to debut in Nov, with a maiden season in the Mediterranean.

The new 930-passenger vessel (**pictured**) will also be used for the company's 2023-24 Viking World Cruise, a 138-day journey from Fort Lauderdale to London spanning 28 countries and 57 ports - including overnight stays in 11 cities.

"It is always a special day when a new ship meets water for the first time, and we look forward to welcoming guests on board the *Viking Neptune*," said Viking Chairman Torstein Hagen.

"We are marking several milestones in 2022, including our 25th anniversary and the 10th year since starting our ocean



project," he said.

"With the arrival of the *Viking Neptune* and her identical sister ship, the *Viking Mars*, this year - along with the debut of our two new expedition ships and new river ships - we are

proud to firmly establish Viking as the leading small ship travel company," Hagen enthused.

*Mars* is set for a formal handover this coming May, while *Viking Saturn* is scheduled for delivery early in 2023.

## Cruise lines sued over Cuba berths

**CARNIVAL** Corporation, Royal Caribbean Group, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings and MSC Cruises have banded together in a request for a US court to reject a claim that they "trafficked in stolen property" by using cruise facilities in Cuba.

The cruise giants are all being sued under America's Helms-Burton Act, with Havana Docks Corp holding a US-certified claim to several piers in Havana which were nationalised after the Cuban revolution in 1959.

Former US President Donald Trump controversially banned cruising to Cuba two years ago (**CW** 07 Jun 2019), and at the

same time activated a section of the legislation which allows entities with their principal place of business in America to seek compensation for property which was appropriated by the Castro regime.

Carnival Corporation was the first in the firing line (**CW** 30 Aug 2019), followed by a series of subsequent lawsuits against the other operators.

A hearing in Miami last week saw a consolidated brief arguing that the use of the Havana piers was legal and encouraged by the US Government at the time, with the cruise lines seeking a pre-trial summary judgement.

## Brazil voluntary pause extended

**CRUISE** Lines International Association has announced that the voluntary suspension of cruising by its members in Brazil (**CW** 06 Jan) will be extended for two more weeks, until 04 Feb.

The pause was implemented after authorities highlighted "inconsistencies" in the interpretation of COVID protocols which require full vaccination of all passengers, negative tests pre-boarding, continuous testing during voyages, the use of masks, social distancing and reduced occupancy.