

US cruise report hails COVID response

THE global cruise sector has been lauded for the changes it has introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in a major final report released by US Federal Maritime Commissioner, Louis Sola.

In Apr 2020 Sola was ordered to prepare the report into the impact of the pandemic on the cruise sector, based on a mandated Fact Finding Investigation which charged him to work with key industry stakeholders to help identify commercial measures to mitigate COVID-19 impacts to the passenger cruise sector.

In his final report handed down late last week Sola detailed his investigations, including estimates of US\$39 billion in total economic loss in the first year of the pandemic, including more than 300,000 lost jobs.

The Commissioner also

highlighted the massive impact on a host of businesses and their staff who rely on the work they do for cruise lines and the port communities that support them - "not to mention the cruise consumers who wish to take cruises for vacation, leisure or celebrating important events in their lives".

"The cruise industry plays a unique role in the American economy...the industry's broad national, interdependent supply chain of US companies encompasses ports, travel agents, airlines, hotels, retailers and farmers," he noted.

Sola traced the gradual resumption of US cruising, initially under the Centers for Disease Control Conditional Sail Order, which has now transitioned to a voluntary arrangement (**CW** 14 Jan) - despite the rise of the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

He commended the decision to allow cruise lines to operate as long as they employ best practices that are reasonable and customary for the hospitality and transportation industry.

"The cruise lines continue to adapt to the circumstances presented by new variations of COVID-19 and modify their actions as needed to mitigate harm," he said, adding: "one thing is certain...as a result of this unprecedented pandemic there has been an improvement in industry health and safety practices, and regulations have been modified to the benefit of both the consumer and industry".

Sola noted that in times when people in the cruise sector need a hand, "regulators should be "nimble, adaptive and willing to provide relief where it can make a difference".

See the full report at fmc.gov.

Ponant on TV

PONANT'S documentary film "Beyond the Polar Circle" (**CW** 05 Oct 2021) will be aired on free-to-air TV this weekend across a range of Prime 7 regional channels.

To be screened at 1pm on Sat 22 Jan, the show documents a Ponant journey to Antarctica undertaken by the company's brand ambassador, TV personality Andrew Daddo.

SeaDream upgrade

SEADREAM Yacht Club has unveiled a US\$10m refurbishment project on its fleet, which is seeing public areas and staterooms taken back to "bare steel" according to Executive VP, Andreas Brynestad.

The project is complete on *SeaDream II* and will now roll out on sister ship *SeaDream I*.

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ICONIC Aussie rock band AC/DC haven't taken to the seas for a themed cruise - but maybe they should, given the debut of Carnival Cruise Line's latest marketing tagline in the USA.

Carnival's ambassador, famous basketballer Shaquille O'Neal, is leading the launch of "Funderstruck" which sounds suspiciously like one of AC/DC's many hits, *Thunderstruck*.

O'Neal, whose official title is now Carnivals' Chief Fun Officer, surprised a crowd at a Miami Heat game last weekend by giving away a cruise to help celebrate Carnival's 50th birthday in Mar this year - coincidentally also when Shaq himself will hit the big 5-0.

Carnival's recently introduced Choose Fun brand platform has included the creation of Funderstruck as an "entirely new word...to describe the feeling uniquely experienced when choosing fun on Carnival," according to CEO Christine Duffy.

Oceania appoints

OCEANIA Cruises has announced the appointment of Ryan McPherson as the key point of contact for travel partners in NSW, Vic, ACT & Tas.

The new BDM was with Flight Centre Travel Group in various roles including at Travel Associates for about a decade, before more recently working as Regional Sales Manager for Abercrombie & Kent.

MEANWHILE Oceania is giving travel advisors a sneak peek at its upcoming Australia Day Sale offer, with guests offered a US\$100 shipboard credit for free on 25 select 2022 sailings in the Mediterranean, Baltic, Asia, Alaska and the Pacific Coast.

The sale will run from 21 Jan-01 Feb, with the deal coming alongside a new Upfront Bonus Commission offer for travel agents who introduce new guests to the brand.

Valid for all new bookings prior to 28 Feb, for guests who haven't previously sailed with Oceania, the deal includes a \$150 Visa gift card - for more information **CLICK HERE**.

Galapagos reserve grows



LISSO Guillermo, President of Ecuador, has signed an official declaration which expands the boundaries of the Galapagos Marine Reserve by a further 60,000 square kilometres.

The initiative was announced in Nov last year during the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow, with the ceremony formally creating the Hermandad Marine Reserve which links Ecuador's waters with other protected areas in Costa Rica including the Cocos Islands Marine Protected Area.

"This new reserve will ensure a safe pathway for the many amazing creatures travelling to and from Costa Rica's Cocos Island, where marine protection was also recently extended," said

President Guillermo.

"Together, Costa Rica and Ecuador now work to connect two of the world's most biologically significant and productive marine habitats," he added, calling on other nations to join collective efforts to preserve the ocean's "irreplaceable biological treasures".

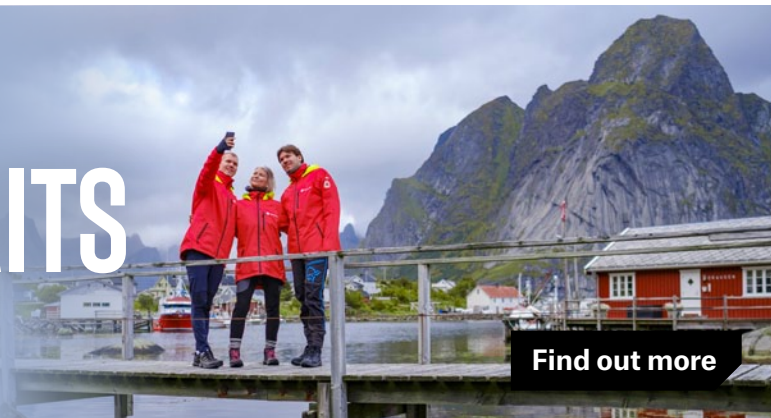
The signing event was attended by Dr Sylvia Earle, whose namesake vessel is the second in Aurora Expeditions fleet, as well as Lindblad Expeditions founder Sven Lindblad and former US President Bill Clinton, all of whom are **pictured** with Ecuador President Guillermo Lasso and some of his senior Government colleagues.

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