



Cruise Weekly today

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

NCL in the Spirit

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) VP and MD APAC, Ben Angell, has welcomed the return of *Norwegian Spirit* as the final in the line's fleet to resume operations (**CW** yesterday), noting that the ship will return to local waters at the end of the year.

He said when *Spirit* finally debuts here "she'll showcase the most extensive and expensive revitalisation in our company's 55-year history".

The makeover has created an "adult-centric oasis for sea," Angell added, giving Aussies and Kiwis the opportunity to experience NCL's style of "laidback luxury sailing".

Pacific Explorer hosts business chiefs

THE top echelon of the NSW business community gathered onboard P&O's *Pacific Explorer* last night, with the ship docked at Sydney's Overseas Passenger Terminal hosting its first formal event in more than two years.

The Business Sydney reception featured NSW Minister for Tourism, Stuart Ayres (pictured with CLIA MD Joel Katz) along with cruise leaders such as Carnival Australia President Marguerite Fitzgerald, her predecessor Ann Sherry and many other senior members of the corporate sector.

Business Sydney Executive Director, Paul Nicolaou, thanked attendees for helping to "rejoice the homecoming of the cruise industry in Australia after two years of forced COVID lockdown".

Ayres highlighted the current economic situation and in particular the low unemployment



rate, saying that means "you've got more people with dollars in their pocket to spend...that's more people travelling on holidays and more people booking cruises".

"It is an incredibly exciting time; the mere presence of this ship in this spectacular location sends a really strong signal," he said.

"We all know we're going to have to live alongside COVID, so let's set the rules, let's let consumers make decisions, let

them understand what they're buying and put the decision back in their hands.

"That's exactly what we've done here in NSW, that's why this ship is here...and why the long journey we've all been on in the last two years is seeing much brighter days ahead," Ayres said, adding that the engagement of *Explorer's* crew with guests was "telling everyone that Sydney and Australia are open for business".

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River cruise firms positive for 2023

AUSTRALIAN and New Zealand river cruise and tour operators selling products on the Danube River in Europe are generally confident about a strong recovery in 2023, but have expressed significant reservations about prospects for the current year.

The results of a new sentiment study conducted by Brigitte Franz from the University of Passau's Centouris Centre for Data-Based Insights (**pictured**) cites a range of issues for 2022, including the Ukraine conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic, staffing problems, climate change and inflationary pressures.

The report says about 66% of the ships with an Australian/NZ audience are expected to be sailing the Danube this year compared to 2019, with passenger numbers from the local market forecast to be just over half (54%) of pre-pandemic levels.



River Cruise Industry Survey
Spring 2022



"Even though the current business situation (focusing on the Danube) is assessed positively by just under 17% of respondents, they are at least very positive (92%) about the next season in 2023," Franz noted.

She said the experts within the Australian and NZ audience firmly believe there will eventually be a return to "normality" on the Danube, but not before the

2023 season at the earliest, and possibly not until 2024".

The report is based on a survey conducted in Mar this year, including about 130 respondents from across the industry.

While two-thirds of Australia/NZ focused capacity is expected to operate this year, the overall global market is expected to see 77% of pre-pandemic vessels operating for the 2022 season.

Accor QE2 deal

GUESTS will once again be able to enjoy Cunard's former iconic *Queen Elizabeth 2* liner, after hospitality giant Accor announced that the now floating hotel in Dubai will join its MGallery Hotel Collection.

The decommissioned ship reopened as a hotel in 2018 under the Dubai Government-owned Port, Customs and Free Zone Corporation (PCFC).

Accor will oversee further upgrades and renovations before adding the *QE2* to its global portfolio.

PCFC CEO Saeed Al-Bannai said "The *Queen Elizabeth 2*, as we know her, has made history and we are confident that Accor will keep her legacy alive while her strong heritage and notoriety will remain a destination in itself, where guests and visitors alike can enjoy a unique experience".



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HAL on cloud nine

HOLLAND America Line's (HAL) *Oosterdam* is back to cruising, as the ninth ship in the fleet to return to service.

Oosterdam embarked guests in Trieste for the first time since the industry-wide pause began in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ship departed on a 12-day "Holy Lands and Ancient Kingdoms" cruise.

MSC shorex goes sustainable

MSC Cruises has announced a revamped suite of almost 1,400 shore excursions for the upcoming northern summer 2022 season, with the program having "its strongest ever focus on minimising the environmental impact of land-based tours and supporting nature-positive activities".

An increased number of electric and hybrid shuttle buses will be used to transport guests from ports to places of interest in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Spain and Sweden, as part of an initiative to increase the use of green ground transportation.

Low-carbon footprint excursions will include 150 bike tours in 21 countries, and more of the "Protectours" suite of sustainable shore excursions which feature walking, hiking, canoeing and kayaking alongside initiatives like tree planting, beekeeping, organic roof farming and even "stone cleaning".

IAATO's new Chair

THE International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) has appointed a new Chair to its Executive Committee, Tudor Morgan.

The new appointee is Hurtigruten's Vice President Government & Industry Relations, who takes the reins from Robyn Woodhead, who steps down after five years on the Committee, the last one as Chair.

VIVA has found the ONE



GERMAN river cruise operator VIVA Cruises has launched its first-ever new build ship, *VIVA ONE* (pictured), which features environmentally friendly hybrid technology and a host of other sustainability features.

Viva's fleet currently includes a range of older vessels, with the addition of a newbuild seen as a significant innovation for the firm.

The brand new vessel will be sailing on the Rhine and Moselle rivers throughout the year, after she was christened in her home port of Düsseldorf recently, in a ceremony attended by more than 160 guests, including Chief Operating Officer Andrea Kruse; Arno Reitsma, Chief Executive Officer of VIVA's parent company Scylla; Mayor of Dusseldorf Josef Hinkel; and German journalist and television presenter Judith Rakers, who is the ship's godmother.

VIVA ONE has 88 modern cabins for 176 guests – including double beds and Junior suites (most of them equipped with French balconies) and four suites featuring balconies with a table and two chairs.

The new ship features VIVA's

existing look and feel, including a modern design in blue tones, wooden furniture and a casual atmosphere.

Guests will be able to enjoy a spacious sun deck, a spa and wellness area, and the Riverside and Bistro onboard restaurants offering both formal and casual dining options as well as a selection of snacks available right throughout the day.

The ship has 68 solar cells distributed on the sun deck; she uses sulphur-free GTL fuel, which significantly reduces CO2 consumption and emissions; and features an improved autopilot function which both simplifies navigation and helps to reduce the consumption of fuel.

Guests will be able to refill their reusable water bottles and cut down the use of cups using *VIVA One's* two water stations.

All *VIVA ONE* itineraries will feature the cruise line's signature All-Inclusive product, which includes snacks, high-quality alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, self-service coffee stations & water stations, minibar, beauty products, wi-fi, and all tips and gratuities.



HEY TikTokers, have you ever wanted to be godmother to a cruise ship?

Royal Caribbean is on the hunt for a godmother for its newest ship, *Wonder of the Seas*.

A #SearchForWonderMom TikTok contest has launched allowing users to nominate ladies for the role, with the one selected given the honour of bestowing a blessing of safekeeping on *Wonder*, her crew, and the millions of guests who will sail aboard her in the years to come, during the new ship's naming ceremony in Port Canaveral in Dec.

The honoree and their family will also set sail on an exclusive cruise to the cruise line's private island destination, Perfect Day at CocoCay in The Bahamas - in the ship's Ultimate Family Suite (CW 05 May) of course.

Unfortunately, the contest is open to American-based mothers, so mum's the word on this one in Australia and NZ.