



# itravel tips its hat to the cruise sector

## EXCLUSIVE

**ITRAVEL** Managing Director Steven Labroski has gushed about the importance of the cruise industry to his business, telling *Cruise Weekly* the support and service his travel agency network received during the pandemic went “above and beyond”.

Speaking during itravel’s 2023 conference in the Hawkesbury over the weekend, Labroski said all segments of cruise sales had been growing for the company in recent months, conceding he wished he moved on getting involved with cruise a lot sooner.

“If I look at our business and where it is today from the cruise side, I wish I was smarter many years ago to play more in the cruise market, the cruise industry has been exceptionally generous to the industry and they’ve been there for us through all of these tough times,” he said.

During the COVID shutdown, Labroski said it was forward-thinking cruise brands that “kept us in the game” and “moving forward”, by proactively reaching out to ensure relationships were being preserved in preparation for the return of travel.

“[Cruise lines] maintained commissions, looked at marketing opportunities, and also helped us move forward with certain funding to protect some of our commissions to make sure that we had enough money to get by, because they still see agents as the future,” he said.

When asked why cruise lines view travel agents as an opportunity for growth when major players in other sectors such as air have taken a different stance, Labroski believes the answer ultimately lies in the abundance of choice out there in the cruise market.

“The biggest difference in cruise is there’s a sailing for everybody, and as an industry we need to understand that when you’re selling a product, you need to be selling the right product to the right customer.

“[Royal Caribbean] doesn’t want someone that’s not a Royal customer on their ship, Celebrity is a different can of fish, so is Viking and every one of these products that are in the market which are very different and unique in what they bring.

“For someone that wasn’t a big cruise person compared to who I am now, I’ve seen that difference, and I understand that you need to qualify the right customer on the right product,” Labroski added.

The itravel chief said he “had to take his hat off to the cruise sector”, saying cruise lines clearly want to grow with the business and see its network succeed.

## Cruise Weekly today

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

## Seabourn 2024 out



**SEABOURN** Cruises has confirmed the deployment of its *Seabourn Pursuit* expedition newbuild in Australia’s Kimberley region, as exclusively flagged by *CW* last year (*CW* 17 Aug 2022).

Seabourn’s 2024 expedition itineraries are now on sale, with *Pursuit* to offer six 10-day voyages between Broome and Darwin from Jul-Aug 2024, along with cruises to Papua New Guinea and West Papua, plus explorations of the Chilean coast and South Pacific.

Sister ship *Seabourn Venture* will head north to the Arctic with cruises exploring Norway, Greenland, Iceland & Canada.


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## In the nicko time

A **40-DAY** Asian Christmas cruise package from Singapore to Sydney aboard German-based Nicko Cruises' 1000-passenger *Vasco Da Gama* is on sale through Cruise Traveller from \$13,435ppts.

A saving and complimentary flights are available as part of the package, with couples able to save \$2,675 and solos \$3,765 - for details [CLICK HERE](#).

## NCL works with CDC

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line (NCL) has confirmed it is working to assist investigations by the US Centers for Disease Control, writing to inform upcoming guests that two passengers who sailed aboard the *Norwegian Prima* last year had been diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease.

NCL said it was writing "out of an abundance of caution", with the diagnosis unlikely to be associated with the passengers' time on the ship.

The cruise line noted that "health and safety is our top priority...we operate to the highest health and sanitation standards" with the CDC's probe including testing of some onboard fixtures as part of attempts to trace the source of the infection.

*Prima* is currently operating a Caribbean program out of Port Canaveral in Florida.

## Poesia visits Aus & NZ



**MSC** Cruises' *MSC Poesia* made her maiden call in Sydney today on her 119-day World Cruise.

The visit from MSC marks only the third ship the cruise line has brought to Australia, with *MSC Magnifica* having visited in 2019 and 2020 (**CW** 29 Nov 2019), and *MSC Orchestra* in 2015 (**CW** 19 Mar 2015).

*Poesia* and her sister ship *Magnifica* departed Genoa on 05 Jan for simultaneous world cruises (**CW** 09 Jan), and after sailing together for the start of the voyages, parted ways at the edge of the Mediterranean for different routes around the globe.

In honour of the maiden call to Sydney, MSC has organised events throughout today to welcome visitors, while media

and travel advisors will familiarise themselves with the cruise line's unique offering via a tour of the ship's features.

"We are thrilled to welcome *MSC Poesia* into Sydney," Commercial Director Lisa Teiotu said, adding "having a ship in port provides a great opportunity for our trade partners and media to experience our Mediterranean hospitality."

After an overnight in Sydney, *Poesia* will make her maiden call in Brisbane on Wed, followed by a visit to Cairns on Fri.

*Magnifica* will reach Australia with a stop in Hobart on 15 Mar.

*Poesia* also made her maiden call to Auckland last week, with NZ-based advisors being welcomed aboard (**pictured**).

## A Charming refit

**SUN-CLASS** ship *Charming*, which formerly sailed for Princess Cruises as *Sea Princess*, is set to undergo a two-month refit in China.

*Charming* was sold to Chinese interests in 2020, and according to local media, the ship recently arrived at the Zhoushan Xinya Shipbuilding Company's shipyard for a two-month-and-a-half drydock.

Xinya sees the project as proof of its "international reputation in ship repair", the shipyard believes.

## Creative has Edge

**CREATIVE** Cruising has introduced a Celebrity Edge Series trade incentive for bookings of seven nights or longer.

Travel advisors can earn a \$100 e-gift card for all Edge Series cruises bookings aboard *Celebrity Edge*, *Celebrity Apex*, and *Celebrity Beyond*.

The offer is limited to the first 40 bookings, and is applicable to all reservations made and deposited in Feb and Mar.

Cruises involved in the offer include a 16-night land and sea package on *Edge* from Singapore to Sydney, and a 13-night Italy, Croatia, and Montenegro 13-night land, sea, and air credit package on *Beyond* - for more visit [creativecruising.com.au](http://creativecruising.com.au).



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## PORThOLE

**AMERICAN** food processing company Heinz wants to find the man who survived nearly a month at sea with nothing but ketchup (**CW** 27 Jan).

Profiled here in Porthole last month, Heinz is now looking for the man, saying it wants to help him buy a new boat.

So far, they have been unable to find him, putting out a message on Instagram in order to try and track the sauce-slurping survivor down.

"We're setting this message adrift into the sea of the internet, because if anyone can help us find him, it's you," Heinz pleaded with its followers.

"If you or anyone you know can help us get in contact with Elvis Francois, please drop us a DM... #FindTheKetchupBoatGuy".

## Glass broken!

**SPAIN'S** 'Glass City' of A Coruna has marked a stellar 2022 of record cruise visitation.

A total of 222,723 passengers arrived on board 136 port calls, up from the previous record of 184,069 passengers and 121 calls in 2017.

Last year also saw 20 double-call days and three triple-call days, and inaugural calls from *Disney Magic*, *Valiant Lady*, *Iona*, and *Carnival Celebration*.

## Weather on Mars looks fine



**VIKING** Cruises' *Viking Mars* last week hosted Channel 9 Australia's *Today* crew for a live broadcast of the morning weather - and a contingent of travel agents joined in the fun.

They took part in a game of baggo on the ship's Atrium stairway (pictured), providing an action-packed backdrop for weather presenter Tim Davies.

Pictured alongside *Viking Mars* guests during the broadcast are Ashley Kidwell and Sally Howarth

from Flight Centre Camden; itravel's Rosyln Ranse; Ellen Goodwin from Flight Centre; TravelManagers' Karryn Bartlett; Keira Hartas of Flight Centre; and itravel's Mayette Gacasan.

## Murray solo offer

**MURRAY** River Paddlesteamers has released a solo traveller special on an itinerary including a cruise aboard *Emmylou*, a visit to the Twelve Apostles, and a trip to Kangaroo Island.

Solos can travel from just \$9,695 in an Upper Deck twin cabin - **CLICK HERE** for more.

## Seventh Sunstone

**SUNSTONE** Ships has placed an order for a seventh in its series of X-Bow vessels, several of which are already in operation with lines including Aurora Expeditions, Albatros Expeditions and American Queen Voyages.

Like its predecessors the Infinity-class newbuild designed by Ulstein will have capacity for just under 200 passengers and 101 crew, and will have panoramic windows around the bow lounge.

The ship will be ICE CLASS 1A certified for polar cruising.

## Cruise Calendar

Current ports of call in Australia and New Zealand.

<b>SYDNEY</b>	
<i>MSC Poesia</i>	27 Feb
<i>Celebrity Eclipse</i>	28 Feb
<i>Oceania Regatta</i>	28 Feb
<b>MELBOURNE</b>	
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	27 Feb
<i>Viking Orion</i>	27 Feb
<b>PORT ADELAIDE</b>	
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	27 Feb
<b>PORT LINCOLN</b>	
<i>Pacific Explorer</i>	28 Feb
<b>BRISBANE</b>	
<i>Majestic Princess</i>	27 Feb
<b>TOWNSVILLE</b>	
<i>Seabourn Sojourn</i>	27 Feb
<i>Silver Whisper</i>	28 Feb
<b>DARWIN</b>	
<i>Island Princess</i>	27 Feb
<b>AUCKLAND</b>	
<i>Nat Geo Orion</i>	28 Feb
<b>CHRISTCHURCH</b>	
<i>Grand Princess</i>	28 Feb
<b>WELLINGTON</b>	
<i>ms Noordam</i>	28 Feb
<b>BAY OF ISLANDS</b>	
<i>Nat Geo Orion</i>	27 Feb
<b>DUNEDIN</b>	
<i>Grand Princess</i>	27 Feb
<i>Seabourn Odyssey</i>	27 Feb
<b>NAPIER</b>	
<i>ms Noordam</i>	27 Feb
<b>TAURANGA</b>	
<i>Europa</i>	28 Feb
<b>TIMARU</b>	
<i>Seabourn Odyssey</i>	28 Feb