



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



Cruise Sector Heating Back Up

Cruise Month returned to Australia and New Zealand during September, with a range of initiatives held to celebrate the return of the sector to Australasia as well as bring stakeholders together and highlight the latest cruise ideas, promotions and itineraries.

The first Cruise Month since 2019, the “#LoveCruise” themed initiative entailed the following themes:

- ocean cruising (September 4-10)
- river cruising (September 11-17)
- expedition cruising (September 18-24)
- luxury cruising (September 25-October 1)

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia managing director Joel Katz said the return of cruise operations to the region had “reignited the passion of Australian and New Zealand travellers”.

“Cruise Month will be the ideal time to find out what’s on offer in destinations around the world,” he said at the event’s launch.

“A certified CLIA travel agent is the best place to start and has the expert insight needed to guide a traveller as they choose their ideal cruise.”

Cruise Month is understood to have further drawn a spotlight on the sector through cruise line campaigns, newspaper travel features, social media promotions and travel agent initiatives.

It is understood that over 20 CLIA cruise lines will operate in Australasian waters between the start of September and the end of April 2023, with visits to “dozens of ports and destinations throughout the region”.

Cruise Operations Return to New Zealand

Following Australia reopening to the cruise sector with P&O Cruises’ 266-metre and 77,441-GT liner Pacific Explorer’s May 31 departure from Sydney bound for Brisbane, New Zealand has now also reopened with the arrival of the same vessel in Auckland on August 12.

Mr Katz said the arrival of the vessel, which had sailed from Sydney on a South Pacific cruise, marked the recommencement of an industry that had previously been worth almost NZ\$570 million a year to the New Zealand economy.

“New Zealand has now joined the rest of the world in a careful resumption of cruise operations,” he said.



“We now have an opportunity to revive a sector that previously supported many thousands of jobs in communities right around the New Zealand coast.”

Mr Katz emphasised that cruise lines had introduced extensive health and safety protocols in response to the global pandemic, and had worked closely with New Zealand health authorities to confirm requirements for local operations.

“While no setting is immune from COVID-19, the cruise industry’s health measures have been shown to be effective in more than 100 other countries where cruising has already resumed. The experience on cruise ships overseas has shown significantly lower levels of serious illness and hospitalisation than on land.

“The sight of Pacific Explorer in Waitematā Harbour will be cause for celebration for the many New Zealanders who rely on cruise tourism for their livelihoods, and for the wider tourism industry as New Zealand approaches the summer cruise season ahead.”

Cruise 360 Australasia

A sold out delegation of over 550 representatives from travel firms, cruise lines, ports and destinations, industry suppliers and CLIA preferred partners embraced last month’s Cruise 360 Australasia.

Hosted at the Hyatt Regency Sydney, the acclaimed conference and trade show was also opened by Mr Katz, who thanked stakeholders for the role played in “bringing us through the past two-and-a-half years and into recovery”.

“As we learned to terrible effect in recent years, when cruise lines stop operating, a huge range of businesses and people suffer,” he said.

“Through our pandemic response, we’ve shown what we’re capable of when we unite as a truly global community, and how far we can go when we’re confronted with threats to the health and safety of our guests and of our people.

“And as we’ve risen to the challenges presented to us over the past few years, it’s been you – our community of supporters – that has helped provide the unities and the strength needed to align to overcome obstacles and to succeed.”

The address was followed by a “state of the industry” panel discussion which included Carnival Australia and P&O Cruises Australia president Marguerite Fitzgerald and Regent Seven Seas Cruises and Oceania Cruises Asia-Pacific senior vice-president and managing director Steve Odell.

Reminding the audience of the cruise industry’s key challenges before the global pandemic struck, Mr Odell consequently urged action to address capacity constraints in Sydney.

“That issue has to be back on the table soon,” he said.

“When we left this subject at the end of my chair in 2019, we were at the financial analysis stage of Yarra Bay as a potential solution to that. And I think that has to come back on the table, although we all understand the difficulties with that choice.

“You see companies like Virgin coming into the market in Melbourne, you see what’s happening in Brisbane – so there’s no question, given what the projections are. We have to get back to this conversation.”

Ms Fitzgerald shared her thoughts on negative reporting the cruise industry has received from the mainstream media over the past two years.

“There’s so much interest from the media in the cruise industry and yet at times it is a little sensational,” said Ms Fitzgerald.

“But it also shows that there really is interest. I’ve spoken to some of the media companies who say so many of their viewers are cruisers and that’s why they ran the story.”

Ms Fitzgerald added that since cruising in Australia had resumed, cruise passengers have acted fast to shut down negative reports of contained COVID outbreaks onboard ships.

“Our guests came out really strong and said: ‘Why are we talking about this? I’m just as likely to be exposed at Woollies as I am on a cruise ship and in fact, the cruise industry is really taking my health and safety seriously. What is there to see here?’”

Next year’s Cruise 360 – which is billed as the sector’s largest annual professional development and networking opportunity – is to be held at the Broward County Convention Center, Fort Lauderdale (Florida), over April 18-23.

September 2022

