

Orion to cruise Kimberley in 2023

EXCLUSIVE

NATIONAL *Geographic Orion*, the former flagship of Australia's Orion Expedition Cruises, will return to local shores next year for its first Kimberley season in almost a decade.

Operated by Lindblad Expeditions since its acquisition of Orion nine years ago (**CW** 07 Mar 2013), the much-loved vessel will undertake four 11-day Kimberley coastal departures in Jul next year, as well as a 15-day expedition also taking in Indonesia's Komodo Island and Rowley Shoals on 08 Aug 2023.

Pricing on the Australia's Wild Northwest Kimberley cruise lead in at \$13,540 per person, with *National Geographic Orion* having capacity for just over 100 pax.

More details in today's issue of **Cruise Weekly**, with bookings available through Adventure World on 1300 363 055.

Genting HK wind-up filing

THE future of Crystal Cruises, Dream Cruises and Star Cruises has become even more uncertain this morning, with parent company Genting Hong Kong formally lodging a petition for the business to be wound up and provisional liquidators appointed.

The move has been precipitated by the collapse of the company's German shipyard operations, and an inability to secure financing.

The Genting Board said the company's available cash balances are expected to run out by the end of the month, meaning "the company will imminently be unable to pay its debts as they fall due".

Documents have been lodged at the Supreme Court of Bermuda, which is expected to conduct a hearing on the petitions tomorrow, seeking authorisation for the appointed Joint Provisional Liquidators to help develop a "restructuring

of the Group's indebtedness in a manner designed to allow the company to continue as a going concern...or otherwise be authorised to dispose of all or certain of the company's assets with a view to maximising value and returns for creditors of the company".

An update from Genting today to the Hong Kong Stock Exchange notes that certain business activities of the group, including the operations of Dream Cruises Holding Limited, shall continue in order to preserve and protect the core assets... "however it is anticipated that [the] majority of the group's existing operations will cease to operate".

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has five pages of the latest news plus a full Rocky Mountaineer page from **Entire Travel Group**.

New action group gains momentum

MORE than 1,000 people across the Australian travel and tourism sector have joined the new Aussie Travel Action group on Facebook (**TD** 14 Jan), in the first 24 hours after it was established.

The group is behind planned vigils at the offices of State and Federal parliamentarians across the country next week.

Scheduled for Wed 25 Jan, the gatherings are being held in place of previously planned large "survival rallies" in Sydney and Melbourne, which were responsibly curtailed amid the rise of the Omicron variant.

Organiser Belle Goldie said the campaign aims to amplify the efforts of industry bodies, recognising that MPs around the country still hold the levers, whether it is lifting the travel and cruise ban or unlocking support.

For more info and to join the campaign **CLICK HERE**.



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Seascope is ready for you



BOOKINGS are now open for MSC Cruises' upcoming Seaside EVO class ship, *MSC Seascope* (render pictured), which is scheduled to make her debut in Miami in Dec.

The vessel will offer cruisers two separate seven-night itineraries

CX Economy revamp

CATHAY Pacific has released a new Economy class fare structure for Australia and New Zealand, offering Light, Essential and Flex options to give more choice and flexibility for travellers.

The fares were introduced in other markets late last year, and are now being launched locally.

The carrier, which last week announced it was slashing travel agent commission (**TD** 14 Jan), noted that "Australian and New Zealand customers can now purchase the redesigned Economy fares directly through the Cathay Pacific website".

Tassie lowers wall

FULLY vaccinated travellers who have spent time in high-risk areas will no longer be required to undertake pre-departure COVID-19 testing when travelling to Tasmania from today.

However, the rules remain in place for those who are not vaccinated unless they have a valid medical exemption, the Tasmanian Govt has stressed.

departing PortMiami to choose from during her maiden season, one exploring the eastern Caribbean and another traversing the west, however both voyages will call in at Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve.

Seascope boasts 2,270 cabins, 11 dining venues, 19 bars & lounges, as well as six swimming pools, including an impressive infinity pool featuring sweeping ocean views.

MEANWHILE *MSC Meraviglia* will homeport in Port Canaveral from Oct as part of the cruise line's plan to expand in the region, offering seven-night sailings to places like Cozumel and Costa Maya in Mexico, as well as "mini cruise" options to the Bahamas.

Qld sets a date

QUEENSLAND Premier Palaszczuk has confirmed that fully vaccinated international arrivals to the state would no longer need to quarantine as of 1am this Sat.

The announcement coincides with Qld expecting to reach its 90% vaccination milestone for those aged 16.

"This gives certainty to the airlines, it gives certainty to incoming travellers...we'll get through this wave and hopefully it will encourage people to travel...around Australia but also travel overseas," Palaszczuk said.

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Sharp rise in departures

OVERSEAS departures from Australia increased by roughly 250% in Dec 2021 when compared to the previous month, provisional Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows.

The spike in travel departures coincided with a relaxing of Australia's tight border controls, with 229,000 people recorded as having travelled overseas during the month, up from just 91,000 in Nov.

Arrivals into Australia also increased significantly in Dec, almost tripling to 196,000 in contrast to Nov numbers, with confirmed figures for Nov 2021 showing that 72,250 travellers arrived in the country.

Of those Nov arrivals, close to 21,000 were overseas short-term visitors, 5,390 were long-term visitors and close to 40,000 were Australian resident returns, with the total number representing an increase of 56,500 trips on the prior month of Oct.

Leading source markets for short-term arrivals in Nov was Singapore with 3,170 trips, followed by the United Kingdom

(2,790), India (2,310), the United States (1,710) and New Zealand with 1,060.

While almost all countries recorded higher numbers in 2021 than 2020 comparisons, New Zealand bucked the trend with 600 fewer arrivals.

NSW proved to be far and away the most popular state for short-term visitors in Nov, taking in 15,370 arrivals, dwarfing second place which was Victoria with 2,970 travellers.

Western Australia was next with 690, followed by Queensland (650) South Australia (230), the ACT (280) and Tasmania (210).

Nov also saw 770 international student arrivals to Australia, an increase of 620 students compared with the corresponding month of the previous year, but still down a whopping 98% when contrasted with the same period before the pandemic.

For the 2020-21 period, the most frequently stated reason to visit Australia was to see friends/relatives (54.1%), followed by taking a business trip (12.1%) and seeking employment (11.1%).

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Travel Daily



VA realigns Economy fares

NEW Virgin Australia fare levels will become visible in travel agent GDS platforms from this Sat 22 Jan, with additional classes added to VA economy fare inventory.

The changes finalise the introduction of the previously announced Economy Choice and Economy Flex fare brands (**TD 20 Aug 2021**), realigning the airline's existing fare classes "as part of an ongoing commitment to deliver better value and choice for customers when they fly with Virgin Australia".

Under the update, F, I, R, O and P class will now be available to book under the Economy Choice fare brand, while W class will be offered under the Economy Flex fare brand.

The revamped Virgin Australia fare structure introduced last year added seat-only Economy Lite fares, reflecting feedback that about a third of customers did not use their included checked

baggage allowance.

Economy Choice and Economy Flex fares continue to include 23kg of baggage, with Choice offering bonus Velocity Frequent Flyer points and Status Credits, and booking flexibility for changes up to 14 days prior to departure.

MEANWHILE Virgin Australia has this week further extended the tier status of members in its Velocity loyalty program.

Previously extended for 12 months, emails to existing members confirmed that they will retain their current status through until Sep this year.

Tokyo webinar

TOKYO Tourism will host a webinar on 27 Jan on "travel insights to Tokyo in the new normal" featuring updates on safety, hygiene, hotels, culture and culinary offerings - for info and to register **CLICK HERE**.

Azamara cancels

AZAMARA Cruises has this morning advised travel partners of the suspension of *Azamara Journey* departures from 08 Feb through until 19 May this year.

The line's President, Carol Cabezas, said the move was due to the Omicron variant of COVID-19 which had changed the pandemic's dynamics once again.

A total of 11 departures are impacted, including voyages in the Canary Islands, Mediterranean, Adriatic and Greek Islands.

Cabezas said *Journey* would restart again on 26 May from Athens, while *Azamara Quest* and *Azamara Pursuit* will sail as planned - along with the launch of *Azamara Onward* which is scheduled for late Apr.

Guests impacted by the *Journey* pause are being offered a range of options including future cruise credits, "lift and shift" to a similar voyage or a 100% refund.



Window Seat

FLYING is not always about us humans, sometimes it's about the plight of our special avian wildlife friends.

One carrier who understands this more than most is Air New Zealand, whose partnership with the country's Department of Conservation often sees it participate in important environmental projects.

This week it was helping three kiwi chicks relocate to their new home on Motuara Island, a predator-free habitat in the Queen Charlotte Sound.



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Three more added

DISCOVER Aboriginal Experiences collective, part of Tourism Australia's Signature Experiences of Australia program, has added three new members to its growing guided tour stocks.

The Burrawa Indigenous Climb Experience offers guests climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge insights from an Aboriginal storyteller, while the Firescreek Aboriginal Storytelling and Wine Tasting Experience led by Darkinjung Elder Kevin 'Gavi' Duncan pairs Dreaming stories, bush food and wine tasting.

The third company to join is WA's Waringarri Aboriginal Arts & Tours, offering travellers the chance to engage with Miriwoong culture and Country via a range of immersive guided experiences.

The Discover Aboriginal Experiences collective's main objective is to further promote outstanding indigenous tourism experiences, and currently boasts 47 members and 185 tours.

Recovery by Easter?

A **FULL** recovery in domestic travel could eventuate before the peak Easter period, CAPA - Centre for Aviation believes.

The aviation body claims that while international travel remains complex due to ongoing restrictions/protocols associated with COVID, and Omicron is likely to reach its peak in Australia by Feb, Aussies will be turning to the Easter period for a local holiday.

CAPA also noted the key difference between the latest wave and previous outbreaks was that most states have not added the extra complication of border closures, meaning airlines can plan capacity on the basis of demand expectations and not be spooked by the Premiers.

"Now all the airlines can do is wait to see when the Omicron wave subsides, and ratchet capacity levels up or down as needed," CAPA said.

WA is also expected to reopen by Easter, adding to demand.

Alex to propel small ship focus



CRUISE Traveller has appointed its first Business Development Manager to head up the brand's post-pandemic recovery mission, with Alex Stragalinos (pictured) joining the team this month.

The focus of his new role will be to promote Cruise Traveller's custom web solution, The Small Ship Collective, whose goal is to help agents sell small ship cruises.

"There are significant opportunities for us to develop group space business aboard small ships and Alex will steer that endeavour but his other major focus will be the expansion of The Small Ship Collective," Cruise Traveller Managing Director Craig Bowen said.

Cut pre-arrival tests

INBOUND travellers from overseas should no longer be required to present the government with a negative pre-departure COVID test, Melbourne Airport's Chief of Aviation Lorie Argus argues.

Speaking with the *SMH* this morning, Argus claimed the tests were doing little to protect the public's health from COVID in the current wave anyway, and only served to disincentivise Aussies from travelling overseas for fear of being stranded or having their flights delayed.

The Federal Govt requires tests three days prior to entry.



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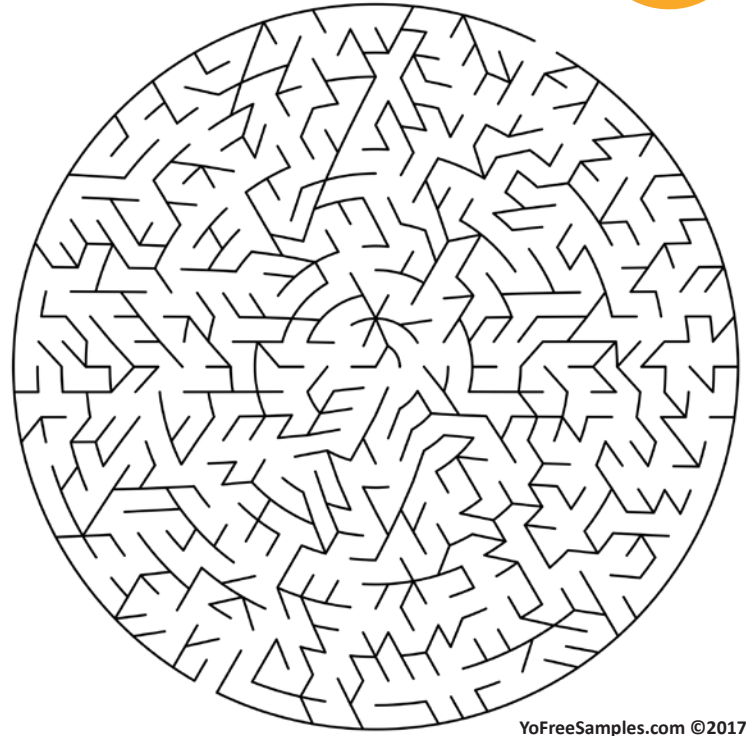
NEW PORT-TO-PORT ALL-INCLUSIVE FARES

On bookings made between 6 December 2021 through 28 February 2022. Door-to-Door All-Inclusive fares increase 1 March 2022. Port-to-Port all-inclusive fares expire 28 February 2022.

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Big plans for Accor in 2022

ACCOR continues to embark on a rapid growth strategy in Asia, this week revealing more details about a number of new openings scheduled in 2022.

In Singapore, Accor will welcome its first Pullman hotel from around Jun, offering guests 308 rooms inside the Pullman Singapore Orchard which will be located in the heart of the city's shopping and dining district.

In Thailand the hotelier plans to open the doors to the Mercure Rayong Lomtalay in the first quarter of this year, boasting ambitions of becoming the "trendiest destination beach resort" in the country.

Accompanying the hotel in Thailand will be the ibis Styles Bangkok Silom located on Silom Road in the central part of the CBD, and offering amenities such

as a rooftop infinity pool and state-of-the-art fitness centre.

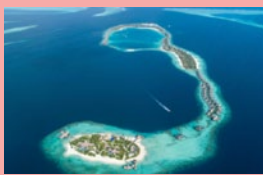
This year will also see the launch of two big openings in Vietnam, with Movenpick Phan Thiet and Mercure Da Lat Resort planning to open their doors soon.

The 248-room Movenpick Phan Thiet will feature two restaurants, an executive lounge, as well as wellness facilities including a swimming pool, a fitness centre and yoga studio, while the Mercure Da Lat Resort, due to open in mid-2022, will offer guests a heritage building nestled among lush gardens in the Old Train Station area, and perfect for explorations of the highlands of Vietnam's Central region.

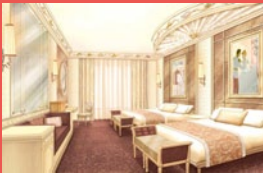
Meanwhile in the Philippines, Accor will open The Admiral Hotel Manila - MGallery and the Swissotel Clark further north.

ACCOMMODATION

WELCOME to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wed feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au.



The Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi has unveiled the debut of contemporary Japanese restaurant Zuma at the resort, joining 10 other eateries at the luxury accommodation. The latest restaurant features an island bar, robata and sushi counter which takes centre stage and forms the focal point for diners.



The Disneyland Hotel located within Disneyland Paris is currently undergoing an extensive refurbishment. The famous family accommodation will be updated "into a fairy tale kingdom fit for our beloved Disney princesses and princes", Disney said.

When completed, the hotel will feature decor and rooms themed on classics like *Beauty and the Beast*, *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*, as well as more recent hits like *Frozen* and *Tangled*.

Barge in on France

CROISIEUROPE has introduced a new seven-day barge cruise adventure in Paris along the Seine which departs from Oct aboard the 11-cabin *MS Raymonde*.

Highlights of the cruise includes visits to Evry, Melun and Saint Mammes, with cruise passengers able to enjoy explorations of the Chateau de Fontainebleau and its gardens, as well as the Chateau de Vaux le Vicomte.

Multiple Champagne tastings are also on offer, in addition to ample time to check out the iconic tourist attractions of Paris, such as the Place de la Republique, the grand boulevards, the Opera, the Madeleine, the Place Vendome, and the Louvre.

Prices for the sailing start from around \$3,976 per person, and includes all meals and drinks, port fees, wi-fi, welcome cocktails, repatriation insurance and a special gala dinner evening.

More details on offer [HERE](#).

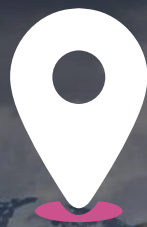
UA's plea to Biden

UNITED Airlines has released an impassioned plea to the US Government to take stronger measures regarding the rollout of the country's 5G network, warning a lack of action will lead to hundreds of thousands of flight cancellations in 2022.

"We won't compromise on safety - full stop," the carrier declared in a statement overnight, adding that when deployed next to runways, the 5G signals could interfere with the key safety equipment that pilots rely on to take off and land in inclement weather.

UA said the safety threat would result in significant restrictions on 787s, 777s, 737s and regional aircraft in major cities like Houston, Newark, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago.

"We implore [President Biden] to act quickly and apply the same common sense solutions here that have clearly worked around the world," the airline stated.



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