



The cruise that never ends

The aptly named Life at Sea Cruises, whose MV *Lara* will depart on a three-year round-the-world cruise in November, has noted their customers are so excited about the sailing that they are committing to staying on board. The itinerary will continue to new destinations in the fourth year of sailing. lifeatseacruises.com

A luxury Tassie expedition

Tasmanian lodge Saffire Freycinet has teamed up with expedition cruise operator On Board for a select series of expeditions. You can combine a three-night expedition cruise aboard new boutique catamaran *Odalisque III* through the southwest corner of the of the isle with a three-night stay at Saffire. saffire-freycinet.com.au

Love a fine white?

European Waterways has announced enhanced wine excursions on its French barge sailings. If you love a drop of sauvignon blanc, consider a voyage along the Canal de Briare, which includes a tour and private wine tasting at Sancerre winery La Perrière. europeanwaterways.com



End to Covid-19 rules and confusion



But cruisers must still be mindful, writes Andrea Black

Planning on taking a cruise from Australia this summer? Expect changes with the news that all government-mandated Covid restrictions are no longer, which means you won't have to show negative RAT tests or vaccination information when checking in.

Australia's chief medical officer Paul Kelly said measures had been removed at the federal level after a decision by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC). Other countries have already done away with the measures.

"This gives clarity to cruise passengers ahead of the coming summer cruise season," said Joel Katz, the managing director of Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia.

"As the last major cruise destination to maintain cruise-specific measures, Australia's ongoing testing and vaccination requirements had been causing increasing confusion

among travellers, particularly as measures on land and at airports had been removed."

So, should cruisers be at all concerned that Covid-era measures have been removed on cruise ships? According to Katz, the revival of cruise operations in Australia has been carefully managed since the middle of last year and many hundreds of thousands of Australians have sailed successfully in local waters. With a bumper season scheduled from October to April, and beyond, we'll see cruising return to pre-pandemic levels in Australia.

Katz says the important thing is that the cruise industry will still hold health and safety as its highest priority. During the Covid-era, ships enhanced ventilation, outdoor dining options increased and cruisers will notice more sanitation stations available throughout ships.

"Cruise ships have always had a major focus on health and sanitation procedures, and cruising is the only

form of travel where trained medical professionals and essential medical facilities travel with you," he says. "Cruise lines will continue to abide by their own robust health and safety measures and hygiene standards, and the industry will work closely with health authorities into the future."

Of course, cruisers can also take measures to ensure a healthy cruise – to help protect against Covid, the flu or norovirus – by washing hands thoroughly, spending time outside rather than in enclosed spaces and maintaining a safe distance.

"Covid-19 is still with us and still a part of our lives, on land and at sea, so we all need to be mindful of our health and continue following professional medical advice," Katz says.

"Vaccinations for Covid-19 and other illnesses are still strongly recommended, and it's important to continue following personal hygiene routines. The use of masks is still welcome for anyone who would prefer to. For all people with personal medical considerations, we always recommend discussing travel plans with a doctor before departure."

Cruise lines such as Carnival, P&O Cruises and Princess Cruises have welcomed the change, all noting that the health and safety of guests and crew remains a top priority and that they will be maintaining prevention and control protocols across the fleet.

Above: Celebrity Cruises' *Solstice* approaching the Opera House in Sydney.

SHIP STATS



124

The number of scheduled ship visits to South Australian ports in the 2023-24 season, surpassing last year's tally of 103 cruise and expedition ship visits to the state.

2029

The year that the Port of Turku in Finland has set as a goal to become carbon neutral. For starters, the electricity used by the port will be renewable and the vehicle fleet servicing ships will be changed to electric.

12

The number of itineraries aboard *Norwegian Sun* on her six-month Asia Pacific season for 2024-25, four of which have never been offered before.

ncl.com

SHIP OF THE WEEK



Bound for Borneo

Australian-owned Coral Expeditions has announced a new voyage, the 16-night Into the Wilds of Borneo expedition, which cruises the inky-black waters of the Sekonyer River to arrive at the Camp Leakey orangutan sanctuary and conservation facility. Along the way, discover the cultural traditions of unique coastal cities and

connect with rare fauna and flora in the wild. Travellers have the option to explore the seven ecosystems of Bako National Park on a jungle nature walk and spot native wildlife, such as hornbills and proboscis monkeys. Departing from Singapore and travelling across Christmas and New Year 2024-25 to Makassar in remote Sulawesi, this will be a summer holiday expedition to remember. coralexpeditions.com