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Ovation – mega ship and mega earner for Kiwi sales

Ovation of the Seas' well-trumpeted arrival into New Zealand waters has more than doubled Kiwi sales for RCL Cruises' three brands this season.

Mark Kinchley, RCL sales manager New Zealand, says sales have risen to 'new heights' year on year since the company set up here with only one ship seven years ago.



Mark Kinchley – enjoying the spoils of a booming industry

But the impact Royal Caribbean's 348m-long mega ship has had on sales across the six vessels it now has in its stable has been nothing short of 'incredible', Kinchley says.

'We are currently running 50 to 60% ahead of sales compared to this time last year,' he says.

Ovation became the largest cruise ship to enter New Zealand waters when it arrived in on 22 December with 6500 passengers and crew on board.

Kinchley acknowledges Ovation's arrival had been a massive undertaking, but he describes the reaction from the public as being beyond his wildest dreams.

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Ovation – mega ship and mega earner for cruise sales

Continued from page 1

‘Everyone worked so hard in preparation for its arrival, so to see it so well received at every port was overwhelming... about 6000 people turned up to farewell the ship in Tauranga alone,’ he says.

‘I remember wearing my Royal Caribbean T-shirt, and having strangers coming up to me to shake my hand. To be honest, those times count as some of the proudest moments I’ve experienced in the industry in 35 years.’

Ovation appears to have been the first milestone in a product-win trifecta few months across RCL Cruises’ three brands.

Luxury ship Azamara Journey, under Azamara Club Cruises, arrived into the

country for the first time fresh from a \$25 million refurbishment.

‘This brand has in the last 18 months been taking on a presence in New Zealand. Kiwis are increasingly understanding Azamara is five-star cruising for people who want to take the speed out of every day life.’

And, on Thursday, the first details of Celebrity Cruises’ first build in five years – Celebrity Edge – was revealed to trade in Auckland.

The ultra-modern ship, which was designed in 3D and features the much hyped Magic Carpet ‘venue’ that rides up and down the vessel as well as split-level villas, will start its Caribbean season in December 2018.

‘I’m delighted we have another

incredible story to tell beyond Celebrity Solstice [assigned to New Zealand each year for four seasons],’ says Kinchley. ‘It delivers an experience many other ships can’t deliver.’

Kinchley predicts the boom times are likely to continue, adding cruising has got the attention of Kiwis who 10 years ago couldn’t buy the quality of product they saw in Europe.

‘The standards are now on a par, and I think they can only get bigger and better.’

And while Kiwi trade has been very supportive, Kinchley says, key tourism stakeholders, such as tour operators, have gotten on board by offering top experiences for passengers.

‘That is just as important as delivering the product itself.’



Ovation of the Seas won Kiwi applause

The six ships that presently call in on New Zealand under RCL Cruises are: Royal Caribbean’s Ovation of the Seas, Voyager of the Seas, Explorer of the Seas and Radiance of the Seas; Azamara Club Cruises’ Azamara Journey and Celebrity Cruises’ Celebrity Solstice.

• **Celebrity Edge already selling in New Zealand, design details page 6.**

– Lisa Bradley

Tourism Malaysia’s new director

Rosli Reshid is the new director of Tourism Malaysia New Zealand.

Reshid, who will oversee the New Zealand marketing and administration operations, replaces Zalina Ahmad, who has returned to Tourism Malaysia’s head office in Putrajaya.

Reshid joined the tourism body in 1990 as part of the marketing team and has since worked in the marketing division, director general’s office and a number of international postings. His most recent position was in Japan.

Commenting on his New Zealand role, Reshid says he promises to ‘make



Rosli Reshid

some noise’ using strategic product initiatives and value-added propositions to demonstrate Malaysia’s value for money content.

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Kiwis agents descend on Victoria

Forty Kiwi agents from Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch flew into Melbourne on Sunday night ready for a week of Victorian exploration. They're part of the New Zealand Travel Trade Mission, hosted by Visit Victoria, which has a full itinerary planned encompassing the best tourism, food and wine, sporting and event features of Melbourne and Victoria.

Monday morning kicked off with the agents variously walking, biking and bussing their way around Melbourne's laneways, cycle ways, top sports venues and 'hidden secrets'. It was all glamour at the official welcome on Monday evening, which took the form of a Melbourne Cup Carnival themed 'night at the races' at Flemington Racecourse.

A Visit Victoria Trade Training Workshop today will bring the agents face to face with 38 tourism regions



Ksenia Ptilidi, helloworld Greytown and Alexandra Joyce, BCD Travel, check into the Crown Promenade on Sunday night, ready for the Travel Trade Mission.

and products from throughout Victoria. Agents will then disperse for four regional family opportunities in Yarra Valley and Mornington Peninsula, Geelong, Bellarine Peninsula and Ballarat, Phillip Island, Great Ocean Road and the Melbourne-Sydney Heritage Drive.

Excitement builds for industry awards

More winners from last year's travel industry awards have come out extolling the virtues of taking part.

Nominations for the Travel Agents Association of New Zealand (TAANZ) National Travel Industry Awards (NTIA) officially open next Monday (27 March) and the build up has well and truly started. (See also TRAVELinc Memo 17 April.)

Last year's Best Industry Representative winner, The Travel Corporation's senior sales manager Marija Tol, is encouraging the industry to get behind the awards both in terms of nominations and voting.

'I'm grateful to all the agents who took the time to put me forward. Being in the final

three was my first goal for the NTIAs. To then win on the night was awesome recognition after my many years on the road working with agents and brokers across the country.'

The Travel Corporation NZ's director of marketing and communications Tony Laskey says TTC is delighted to support the awards sponsoring a category and participating in the relevant award categories.

'We are looking forward to the event later in the year to celebrate industry successes. Contiki and Trafalgar were both finalists in the Best Tour Operator award last year and we are excited about the new Best River Cruise Operator category from a Uniworld Boutique River Cruises perspective.



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