



P&O Reports Rise in Corporate Events at Sea Following Fleet Expansion

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P&O Cruises has reported a surge in corporate event bookings since the launch of its two latest ships last November, including a marked increase in incentive groups. <?xml:namespace prefix="o" ns="urn:schemas-microsoft-com:office:office"?>

P&O's forward bookings for 2016 already exceed the total it achieved in 2015, putting its target of 12,000 delegates for this year well within reach.

Following recent announcements that a further two cruise ships will join its fleet in 2017 and 2019, P&O is forecasting more growth next year and beyond.

Speaking at the Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Expo (AIME) in Melbourne today, P&O Director of Sales Ryan Taibel said the cruise line had been delighted by the strong response to the launch of its new corporate events offering last February.

"Bookings rose solidly throughout 2015 following the launch, and once Pacific Aria and Pacific Eden joined our existing three-ship fleet in November we saw a further surge in interest," Mr Taibel said.

Mr Taibel said while 60 per cent of delegates in 2015 and 2016 had been onboard for meetings, the remaining 40 per cent were part of incentive groups. The cruise line has also seen rising interest in charter bookings.

"With their stylish, modern Australian look and feel, our two latest ships, Pacific Aria and Pacific Eden, have clearly caught the eye of incentive planners as well as meeting organisers and made them think about cruising as an enticing reward.

"It seems there is a real appetite for an incentive with a difference, so our seven-night cruises from ports such as Singapore and Cairns and our shorter Main Event cruises, incorporating experiences like the Australian Open and the Melbourne Cup, are generating strong interest among incentive planners," Mr Taibel said.

Meanwhile, P&O's extensive range of itineraries is also attracting organisers.

"Thanks to our fleet expansion, P&O now has an unprecedented range of itineraries sailing from ports around the country. So whether you are planning a three-day meeting at sea sailing from Sydney or Fremantle, or a one-week incentive cruise to the exotic islands of Papua New Guinea from Cairns, there are some exciting options available," Mr Taibel said.

Mr Taibel said that while 98 per cent of companies chose itineraries from Sydney and Brisbane in 2015, in 2016, 30 per cent of clients had selected cruise itineraries from P&O's other ports – Melbourne, Adelaide, Fremantle, Cairns, Auckland and Singapore.

Mr Taibel said Pacific Aria and Pacific Eden accounted for 70 per cent of delegate bookings in 2016 and 2017.

“We are expecting similar enthusiasm for the next two ships to join our fleet - Pacific Explorer, which will debut in May 2017, and P&O's first new build, a 135,500-tonne ship designed exclusively for the Australian market, which will be launched in 2019.

“These two ships will be part of the continued evolution of the P&O brand and will offer a range of exciting new features which will no doubt appeal to the corporate events market,” Mr Taibel said.

According to Mr Taibel, value remains a key attraction, with an event at sea costing about \$325 a day – far less than a comparable event on land.

“Organisers are very excited when they see the numbers. Not only is the cruise fare all inclusive – covering meeting space, accommodation, main meals and entertainment – an event at sea is incredibly easy to organise. Everyone is on the ship, so there's no time wasted or hassle involved with travelling between different venues and locations.”

Mr Taibel said bookings had come from a range of industries, with clients including companies from the retail, pharmaceutical, manufacturing and association sectors as well as franchisee and marketing networks.

He said P&O intended to build on its corporate meetings activity in 2016 with a series of special showcases in ports around Australia to enable organisers to see the cruise line's latest ships firsthand.

For more information call 1300 366 168, email mice@pocruises.com.au or visit www.pocruises.com.au/experiences/groups/corporate

Notes to editors: The region's largest and longest-serving cruise operator, P&O Cruises Australia leads the way in cruising as Australasia's only 'home brand' and its favourite cruise line. P&O Cruises has been sailing the region for more than 80 years, and has pioneered new destinations around Australia, the Pacific and Asia including Papua New Guinea, as reported in the New York Times' 52 top destinations for 2015. P&O Cruises is the nation's largest cruise line with five ships cruising from eight home ports in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. In November 2015 Pacific Aria and Pacific Eden were added to the cruise line's existing three-ship fleet and in 2017 P&O Cruises will welcome its latest ship – Pacific Explorer. In another milestone, P&O will become the first cruise line to build a ship specifically for the local market, launching a brand new 135,500-tonne ship in 2019 - the biggest cruise ship ever to be based fulltime in Australia.

For media images, P&O Corporate's brochure and case studies see <http://bit.ly/1Ufewkc>

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