

Media release
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High NZ costs challenging cruise lines

New Zealand's fuel and port costs are among the highest in the world, according to international cruise line representatives.

Even though cruise passengers regularly rate their experience of New Zealand highly, the high costs of operating here are a challenge for cruise lines, delegates at Cruise New Zealand's recent annual conference in Napier heard.

"More than ever, established products and ports are competing globally. Auckland is competing with Port Canaveral and Barcelona. Napier is competing with Cozumel, Palma and Ushuaia," Royal Caribbean Cruises Associate Vice President – Deployment & Itinerary Planning Christopher Allen said.

Combined with the trend of increasingly bigger ships, there are significant implications for New Zealand as a cruise destination.

New Zealand must be prepared to host the next generation of cruise ships in order to remain competitive, Mr Allen said.

However, Royal Caribbean Cruises was expecting a record number of New Zealand port visits and passenger numbers for the 2015-16 cruise season, up 600% from the 2010-11 season.

Crystal Cruises Vice President – Land Programs, John Stoll agreed but highlighted a range of opportunities for New Zealand's tourism industry to benefit from the growing cruise market.

"Our customers are your customers and when the cruise lines deliver guests to New Zealand ports, it is imperative that we all focus on maximising each opportunity," Mr Stoll said, noting that Crystal guests are always interested in exclusive and intimate experiences that they can't find anywhere else.

Innovative activities and products gave both ships and passengers reason to return.

Crystal Cruises offers its customers the option of tours before and after their cruise, which provides opportunities for tourism operators beyond the ports of call. The company also regularly schedules special shore side events at special venues during World Cruises. Since 2003, Crystal has featured four World Cruise events in New Zealand – in Matamata, Rotorua, Wellington and Napier. An exclusive once-in-a-lifetime event at the Hobbiton Movie Site in Matamata will be featured during Crystal's 2015 World Cruise overnight stay in Tauranga to celebrate the line's 25th Silver Anniversary.

Both the cruise line's reputation and the appeal of the destination played a part in a passenger's decision to take a cruise so all parties needed to work together to maximise the opportunities of this growing sector, Mr Stoll said.

- Miami-based cruise line Royal Caribbean Cruises currently operates two brands in New Zealand. In the 2013-2014 cruise season, Royal Caribbean International's two ships conducted 13 voyages and 60 port calls in New Zealand, while Celebrity Cruises' Celebrity Solstice conducted 12 voyages and made 71 port calls. As a group, Royal Caribbean Cruises is second largest in the world, behind Carnival Group.
- Owned by NYK Line and based in Los Angeles, Crystal Cruises caters to the luxury end of the market. In the 2013-2014 cruise season, Crystal Symphony conducted an exchange voyage (where the cruise begins or ends in New Zealand) and visited 8 ports including an overnight stay in Auckland.

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