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### New Caledonia on Sale

Aircalin has a New Caledonia airfare sale, with return prices to Noumea of \$509 ex AKL and \$669 ex WLG/CHC for 3 or 7-night stays. Wholesalers have package options.

Travel must be commenced and completed during the period 11JUN-06DEC09, although some closeouts apply. Conditions apply, and seats are limited and may not be available on all Aircalin services. Check details in your CRS or call 09-308 3363 for assistance.

### Adventure World South Pacific Escapes

Adventure World has released more land-only South Pacific specials to entice your clients to escape the autumn blues. They are also paying 12% commission on all South Pacific land bookings, and if agents who book and deposit their clients by 30JUN09, the agent is in with a chance to win a trip to Vanuatu.

- Rarotonga - stay 5 nights at Muri Beach Club Hotel, and pay for 4 nights - plus receive a one day car hire or two day scooter hire, a tropical breakfast daily and return airport transfers - from \$558pp share twin.
- Vanuatu - stay 4 nights at Le Lagon Resort, and pay for 3 nights - plus receive a welcome drink on arrival, intro scuba diving lesson, a full buffet breakfast daily and return airport transfers - from \$764pp share twin.
- Fiji - stay 6 nights at the Shangri-La Fijian Resort and Spa, and pay for 4 nights - plus receive a FJS1000 resort credit per room, breakfast daily and return airport transfers - from \$782pp share twin.

For reservations and quotes phone Adventure World on (09) 539 8105.

### Awaiting the Devaluation Effect

The devaluation of the Fiji dollar is yet to deliver the positive effect expected by the tourism industry according to the Fiji Islands Hotel and Tourism Association. Its president Dixon Seeto told the *Fiji Times Online* that Tourism Fiji had said the devaluation would have immediate and very positive ramifications for the industry and its overseas partners, but the industry was yet to see any effect.

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### Air Fiji Future in Doubt

Air Fiji ceased all operations a week ago, its phones disconnected and its offices closed, with many of its 200 employees reported to be have gone without wages for a fortnight. The *Fiji Times* says that the airline chairman sent a letter dated 24APR to all shareholders advising that to avoid the risk of violating laws related to carrying on business when insolvent, the board had passed a resolution to terminate all the business of the company from last Thursday. The airline's chief executive meanwhile told the paper that Air Fiji was closed as a result of technical difficulties and not because of the letter from the chairman.

*Fijivillage.com* reports that a planned meeting between officials of the Tuvalu government, which owns a majority shareholding in Air Fiji, and Fiji government officials is yet to take place as PM and Minister for Finance Commodore Frank Bainimarama and his Permanent Secretary are out of the country.

Fiji airline Pacific Sun, having been granted the necessary approval, is expected to start flights to Rotuma within a month, following the cessation of Air Fiji operations to the remote island.

### Code Share Deal Terminated

Solomon Airlines, in a press statement, announced that it had terminating its current code-share agreement with Air Niugini for flights on the Solomon Islands - Fiji route effective 04MAY09.

Solomon Airlines cites irreconcilable commercial differences, saying the airline would lose too much money in the revised proposal from Air Niugini.

Air Pacific continues to operate once a week on the route and Air Niugini is yet to indicate its intentions.

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### Current Special

Return Fares - Noumea  
**\$509 ex AKL**  
**\$669 ex WLG/CHC**  
Inclusive of all taxes/levies

Sales to 23 May 09  
 Travel 11 Jun - 06 Dec 09

Conditions and Closeouts apply  
 Check GDS for full information  
 Contact your wholesaler for packages

Reservations (09) 308 3363

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## **Back on board**

*April 4, 2009*

**After a long hiatus, a P&O liner will visit Norfolk Island, writes Mike Heard.**

Norfolk Islanders might say it's been a long time between drinks. P&O Cruises plans to make its second visit to the island next year, 78 years after the first one.

On December 23, 1932, the liner Strathaird left Sydney on a five-day trip to Norfolk Island, which was the first cruise of its kind from the Australian mainland.

On next year's voyage, 70,000-tonne P&O newcomer Pacific Jewel will cruise an area of ocean where the 1789 mutiny on the Bounty is believed to have taken place. Some descendants of the mutineers moved to Norfolk from Pitcairn Island in the 1850s.

The cruise will also visit Fiji, Tonga and New Caledonia. Fares went on sale last week, starting at \$2969 a person, twin share.

P&O has also just announced itineraries and fares for the next two years for three other Australia-based ships, including six Pacific Sun cruises from Newcastle in September and October next year. It will be the first time a ship has been based there. The butler will do it

Luxury line Silversea Cruises is taking personal service to new heights. It plans to provide a butler service to every cabin on every ship by the end of the year. As with most cruise lines, such service is currently available only to occupants of the most expensive suites.

### **Safe harbour**

Major cruise lines have voted Southampton the best port in the world for security, customs and baggage-handling efficiency. Hundreds of thousands of Australians have gone via the port over the years, it is also a year-round base for almost a dozen liners, including the P&O British fleet and Cunard's Queen Mary 2 and Queen Victoria.

### **Dine like royalty**

Guests at Nunsmere Hall Hotel in north-west England will dine in September from a menu used on the maiden voyage of the original Queen Mary, now anchored permanently as a museum and hotel at Long Beach in California. The dinner will mark the 75th anniversary of the vessel's launch.

## **Crackdown on crime**

Legislation designed to give greater protection for passengers against shipboard crime and greater transparency in the way cruise lines deal with such incidents at sea has been reintroduced in the US Congress. Amendments include proposals for improved warning capabilities against pirate attacks.

The move came days after a Princess Cruises crew member was charged in the US with sexually assaulting a woman on a cruise between Fort Lauderdale in Florida and Los Angeles, and one year after another sexual assault victim said she was given no assistance by Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines in taking action against her attacker.







# NORFOLK ISLAND

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## SOUTH PACIFIC

### **Norfolk Island Labels Cruise Ship Visits a Tremendous Opportunity**

Norfolk Island Tourism has welcomed P&O Cruises' announcement that its ships will make five visits to the island next year, labeling it a "tremendous opportunity" for the island.

Pacific Sun will call at Norfolk Island four times between March and June, 2010 as part of her South Pacific itineraries from Auckland, while superliner Pacific Jewel will make one call in September, 2010 as part of a longer South Pacific voyage.

Norfolk Island General Manager Terry Watson said each ship visit would inject about \$500,000 into the local economy through port fees, stores and passenger spending, amounting to a total of \$2.5 million over the five visits.

He said preparations were already underway for the visits, which he believed would further boost visitation and employment.

"Tourism is Norfolk Island's lifeblood, so with almost 2000 passengers coming ashore each visit, we see this as a huge opportunity for the island," Mr Watson said.

"The cruises are a great way for people to taste test Norfolk for a day. Our hope is that they will like what they see and come back and visit us another time," he said.

An external territory of Australia, Norfolk Island is just over two hours by air from Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Newcastle. Australian visitors need a valid passport or document of identity that can be obtained from Australia Post.

For information on cruises visiting Norfolk Island visit [www.pocruises.com.au](http://www.pocruises.com.au). For general information and bookings visit [www.norfolkisland.com.au](http://www.norfolkisland.com.au).

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# NEW ZEALAND HERALD

## Cruise: Ship to shore



***The Orion is a small, but perfectly formed, luxury cruise ship. Photo / Supplied***

Sunday Jun 21, 2009 - By Carlyne Meng-Yee

Hearing the theme to *Titanic* echoing around the small but perfectly formed Orion cruise ship as you board is, it has to be said, a little disconcerting.

I shake it off. This is, after all, no trans-Atlantic pilgrimage but rather a 10-day jaunt through the balmy waters of the South Pacific. The prospect of rogue icebergs is, surely, slim.

And to be honest, the bigger immediate threat to my wellbeing is the absence of cellphone coverage, newspapers and TV. I feel a surge of panic. How will the world cope with me being cut off from it for so long? The cold sweat subsides a little with canapes and champagne, and a little more with a look around.

The Orion isn't any old liner - it represents grand luxury, in a small package. Where other cruise ships can accommodate thousands of guests, Orion takes just 106 passengers, plus a crew of 75. That far more manageable number and high crew-to-guest ratio means your needs are never lost in the crowd and the quality of food and service remain impeccable.

The largely Filipino crew all seem to have names such as Renaldo, Dexter, or Edwardo - I feel a *Love Boat* moment coming on. My husband and I are just settling into our roles of "Mr Mike" and "Madame Carlyne" when it's time for our first dinner.

It is an occasion where passengers are encouraged to dress up and mingle. There are no tables for two onboard, just for six, which means compulsory mixing. Think of it as speed dating your fellow guests. It can be a little daunting at first but talking about the impressive dinners onboard proves an excellent way to break the ice.

The food is outstanding and quickly becomes a highlight. As does our cabin. Teak-lined, it has a vast window instead of a porthole, a comfy bed and a generous bathroom. It's a perfect spot to retreat to after a day exploring hot islands.

First stop on this cruise, though, is a foggy Russell in the Bay of Islands. After a day exploring via one of the dozen zodiacs that ferry passengers on expeditions, the ship departs New Zealand for Norfolk Island, off the Queensland coast.

Norfolk is a little more challenging, thanks to wet weather, which causes our zodiac to bob perilously on entry. Then I manage to chill the locals' warm welcome by asking to see Cockpit Reserve - of all the historic sights on Norfolk, I ask to visit the site of its first murder in 150 years; the place Janelle Patton was found after she was stabbed by New Zealander Glenn McNeill. Once a journalist always a journalist.

Norfolk Island also boasts plenty of duty-free shopping but my luxury cabin is calling so I reboard the Uranus and head back to Orion for an indulgent afternoon "nana" nap. That's the best thing about travelling this way. There are always off-ship excursions available but

you can do as much or as little as you want. If you don't feel like exploring there are many activities on board to enjoy - yoga, spa treatments, quiz afternoons, or reading in the library.

From Norfolk, the ship heads for New Caledonia and the stunning Isle of Pines. Here, there are few qualms about leaving the onboard luxury for a day of snorkelling.

That proves quite a way to work up an appetite so we decide, back on Orion, to enjoy dinner alfresco, under candle-light. Our dinner companions are Ray, a gregarious former FBI prosecutor, and his wife Valerie. It's a perfect, still night and Orion's executive chef Lothar Greiner is treating us to a six-course degustation menu with matching wines. We've chosen our dinner companions well: they are part owners of Queenstown's Gibbston Valley winery, so we have our own wine experts to guide us through the meal.

From the Isle of Pines we sail north again, to Vanuatu and Tanna Island. As we approach Tanna, we are welcomed with singing and dancing by gorgeous local children.

It's a lovely introduction to the island, although the main sight we've come to see is rather less serene: the active volcano Yasur.

And we are seeing it, but not by sailing past at a safe distance. Oh no. We are seeing it from the lip of the volcano as it casually spits red hot rocks in our direction. I imagine OSH staff all over New Zealand flinching at the very thought. Here, our safety advice is a casual suggestion that should we be caught in a major eruption, we should fight the instinct to run for it. I'm not making any promises.

This is as far from five-star as you get on this trip. To get here we are loaded into the back of all the utes Tanna Island can muster and rattled through dense jungle for 90 minutes. We reach the volcano at dusk and climb for 10 minutes to the crater's edge. At first there is just the odd plume of steam and it all feels slightly underwhelming. But right on nightfall, the fireworks begin and it is a-ma-zing - a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Our other stop in this area is neighbouring Mystery Island, where we have the honour of being the first tourists to meet the locals. We tour the village in steaming tropical heat and watch the making of kava. Three men studiously chew and spit the root, which has been mixed with water, into a bucket. I feel squeamish but Ray takes a swig. He says it tastes like socks. We have no reason to doubt him.

Sadly we're now on the last leg of our cruise, bound for Port Vila after 10 glorious, luxury-drenched days.

As first-time cruise guests, we started this journey with some trepidation. It's a beautiful ship, but initially the thought of being confined onboard made us nervous.

However, as we sail into Port Vila there is sadness that we aren't continuing on the next leg to Papua New Guinea.

We are leaving good people; new friends who challenged a prejudice or two. They reminded us that whatever your age or abilities, you should make the most of life; and that cruises can be so much more than endless rounds of shuffleboard on the lido deck.

The expedition cruises on the Orion are a fantastic way to discover new cultures and places, all wrapped in the luxuries of a high-end resort.

Most importantly it was enforced relaxation - a great panacea for workaholics. As we sail into Port Vila I reluctantly switch on my cellphone. The cacophony of text messages is deafening. First message: 'Where are you?'

It's my boss. Reality beckons.

*Carolyn Meng-Yee was a guest of Orion cruises and returned to New Zealand with Air NZ.*

