



Carnival Australia CEO Ann Sherry And Timor-Leste Special Adviser Steve Bracks Hail First Cruise Ship Visit to Dili

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In a stunning demonstration of Timor-Leste's progress as a free and independent nation, P&O Cruises' Pacific Jewel at the weekend made the first ever cruise ship visit to the national capital Dili.

Carnival Australia CEO Ann Sherry and Steve Bracks, special adviser on governance to the Timor-Leste Prime Minister, hailed Pacific Jewel's visit as a significant step forward for the country.

"After years of struggle, Timor-Leste finally won its independence only in 2002, but even five years ago few could have imagined nearly 2000 cruise tourists going ashore in Dili," Ms Sherry said.

"Australia has strong ties to Timor-Leste on its path to nationhood and there is no doubt that Australians have been willing the Timorese people and their country to succeed.

"So, the arrival of the first cruise ship is an affirmation of Timor-Leste's potential as an attractive cruise destination and the part tourism can play to build its economy."

Saturday's Timor-Leste call during Pacific Jewel's return from dry dock and major refurbishment in Singapore was an opportunity to test Dili's capacity to host a superliner visit.

The tender call was eagerly anticipated by the Dili community who were excited to welcome their first ever cruise tourists.

On the eve of the visit, former Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks, who, since 2007, has been a special adviser to the Timor-Leste Prime Minister, said it sent a powerful signal about the country's progress.

"Having hundreds of cruise visitors come ashore in Dili to experience the sights, sounds and culture of Timor-Leste is another positive stepping stone in the country's progress as a free and independent nation," Mr Bracks said.

"Pacific Jewel's visit to Dili has been keenly anticipated by the government and the local community who are keen to make tourism a much valued feature of the local economy in a country that has so much to offer visitors in cultural experiences.

"It will also be an enriching experience for the cruise visitors who will no doubt come away with memories that will last a lifetime. Congratulations to everyone in Timor-Leste and Australia for their efforts to make this inaugural visit a success, which I hope will also be the first of more to come."

In May 2002, Timor-Leste became the first sovereign state of the 21st century following a long and traumatic struggle for independence. Australia played a key part leading up to independence. In 1999, current Governor General, Sir Peter Cosgrove, led an international peacekeeping force which oversaw the transition to independence.

Ms Sherry said Pacific Jewel's Dili call was consistent with Carnival Australia's efforts in recent years to open up new cruise destinations in countries such as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

"In addition to taking our passengers to otherwise remote destinations offering fabulous scenery and cultural experiences, cruise tourism can become a valuable part of island economies," Ms Sherry said. "I hope that Timor-Leste's potential to take its place on the cruising map can be realised."

A second P&O Cruises' call to Timor-Leste is scheduled for September 2016 when Pacific Eden will visit Dili.

In another initiative enabling remote communities to participate in the economic benefits of cruising, the P&O Pacific Partnership with Save the Children raises funds for education and health facilities in the South Pacific.

Carnival Corporation also recently unveiled a tenth cruise brand – fathom – introducing 'social impact travel' enabling people to work with communities on economic, environmental and educational needs. fathom's maiden voyage from Miami on a seven-day cruise cycle to the Dominican Republic will depart in April next year.