



## **P&O Pioneers More of PNG in Unprecedented Regional Program**

November 9, 2015

One of the most remote island groups in the world – the privately-owned Conflict Islands – is set to be the latest tourism hot spot for Australian holidaymakers with P&O Cruises announcing it will make the first cruise ship calls to the picturesque Papua New Guinea atoll next year.

With its expanded fleet cruising from eight homeports between 2016 and 2018, the cruise line has released details of its latest itineraries which will see P&O continuing to pioneer new cruise destinations including the uninhabited Conflict Islands and Queensland's Fraser Island.

In June 2016, Pacific Jewel will become the first cruise ship to call at the untouched Conflict Islands as part of P&O's Papua New Guinea itineraries. A picturesque group of 21 islands surrounding a blue lagoon that is home to one of the world's most biodiverse reef systems, the name of the archipelago is in stark contrast to the reality, with the Conflict Islands considered one of the most peaceful places on the planet. In a landmark partnership for the region, P&O Cruises has worked with eccentric entrepreneur and passionate conservationist Ian Gowrie-Smith to bring cruise ships to his islands – one of only a few parcels of land owned freehold in Papua New Guinea.

Further bridging the gap with Australia's exotic neighbour, P&O Cruises will offer its first international sea break in 2017 with Pacific Eden's second Cairns season including four-night roundtrip itineraries to Alotau in Papua New Guinea with scenic cruising through Kwanasausau Strait and Milne Bay.

P&O Cruises Senior Vice President Sture Myrmell said P&O was thrilled to be bringing the wonders of Papua New Guinea within reach of more Australian holidaymakers.

"We have been pioneering cruising in the Pacific for eight decades and are still discovering fantastic cruise destinations for our guests. Papua New Guinea is one of the most extraordinary places on earth and even though it's our neighbour, its picturesque islands are relatively untravelled – until now," Mr Myrmell said.

"With the expansion of our fleet between 2015 and 2017, the destination and itinerary possibilities are endless. We're taking modern Australian cruise holidays to the next level in the coming years – it's a very exciting time for local cruising."

The latest program, which goes on sale on November 17, also includes the first cruise calls to Fraser Island, with Pacific Aria and Pacific Eden set to offer short breaks to the pristine Queensland island from Brisbane and Sydney.

Ensuring Queenslanders get a taste of both P&O Cruises' latest ships, Pacific Aria and Pacific Eden will have stints joining Pacific Dawn cruising from Brisbane between July 2017 and March 2018. Among the unprecedented line up of 30 short break departures, the ships will cruise to Aussie favourites including Hamilton Island, the Whitsundays and Newcastle (for the Hunter).

Satisfying Australians' increasing desire to recharge with short breaks, Mr Myrmell said cruises of two to four nights were a standout feature of the new program with a record 85 on offer from five

home ports.

The latest program is the first to include the expanded fleet, with Pacific Explorer set to join the P&O family in 2017, offering a range of Pacific Island, Sea Break, Australia and Main Event itineraries from Sydney. Three ships (Pacific Dawn from Brisbane and Pacific Explorer and Pacific Jewel from Sydney) will cruise to the 2017 Melbourne Cup while in 2018, Pacific Explorer will make her Australia Day debut in Sydney Harbour alongside Pacific Aria and the cruise line will make its fifth appearance at the Australian Open.

In a coup for Western Australia, Pacific Eden will return for an encore Fremantle season from April to June 2017, offering a series of 10 cruises including a new nine-night itinerary featuring P&O Cruises' first scenic cruising along the stunning Kimberley coastline as well as the return of popular Indonesian cruises and short breaks to Esperance and Margaret River.

With the largest local fleet opening up a plethora of program possibilities, the cruise line will also offer its longest summer season in Melbourne. Pacific Jewel will call Victoria home for 109 days from November 2017 until March 2018, offering 18 cruises including a new 12-night New Zealand itinerary which features Stewart Island and Fiordland National Park, a New Year's cruise to the popular Pacific Islands and Sea Breaks to Eden in New South Wales and Kangaroo Island in South Australia. Guests can also combine a six-night Southern Getaway to South Australia and five-night Taste of Tasmania cruise to get the most of the southern coastline.

Asia cruising is also set to heat up in winter 2017 with Pacific Eden returning to Singapore to offer two week-long itineraries around Thailand and the Andaman Islands including calls to Ko Chang and Krabi in Thailand and Sabang in Indonesia. The week-long itineraries can be combined into a 14-night Asia extravaganza.

Meanwhile festive holidaymakers can avoid expensive flights and have a fuss free Christmas and New Year with friends and family on one of 12 cruises departing from three Australian ports over the height of the holiday period in 2017.

The first 100 cabins booked on a new program itinerary will receive special extras including priority check-in and tenders, welcome gift packs and onboard credit.

For more information visit [pocruises.com.au](http://pocruises.com.au), or see a licensed travel agent.

**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. On November 25, 2015, P&O Cruises will welcome two additional ships to its current three-ship fleet becoming the nation's largest cruise line with five ships cruising from eight home ports in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. The addition of Pacific Aria and Pacific Eden has paved the way for exciting new cruise options including deployments from every mainland state in Australia and an extended deployment from Auckland. The pair herald a new era for P&O Cruises, as reflected in its new brand repositioning - P&O Cruises, Like no Place on Earth.

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