



## **P&O Cruises flagship Pacific Explorer sails into Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland as first cruise ship back to Aotearoa New Zealand marking restart of cruise tourism**

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Following an absence of more than two years, P&O Cruises flagship Pacific Explorer sailed into Waitemata Harbour, Auckland this morning becoming the first cruise ship to return to New Zealand marking the restart of cruise tourism following the reopening of maritime borders.

Pacific Explorer and her guests, currently on a 12-night round-trip cruise from Sydney to New Zealand and Fiji, were accorded a traditional Māori welcome after berthing at Queen's Wharf. Guests also received a spectacular greeting as they emerged from the Cloud to fan out across Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland and the district on locally run tours.

Among those welcoming Pacific Explorer were local business owners covering a wide range including hospitality, tours and transport, who have been looking forward to the restoration of the economic opportunities associated with cruise tourism. Pacific Explorer's welcoming group also included Julie McEwen, a young New Zealand citizen who is building an international reputation as a cruise director on board P&O ships.

President of Carnival Australia and P&O Cruises Australia Marguerite Fitzgerald thanked the Ardern Government for enabling cruising to be a part of New Zealand's move to reconnect with the world following the challenges of the pandemic.

"Pacific Explorer's arrival in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland today is a signal that cruise tourism is poised to make a significant contribution to the restoration of the tourism economy," Ms Fitzgerald said.

"Looking further afield to the reopening of maritime borders in other parts of the Pacific, it is entirely appropriate that Pacific Explorer is on an itinerary that includes calls in Fiji.

"We are looking forward to our ships also being able to return to beautiful destinations in New Caledonia and Vanuatu and to the progressive return to New Zealand ports of ships from our other cruise lines as the tourism sector continues to rebuild."

A number of local business operators welcomed the arrival of Pacific Explorer and the impetus cruise tourism offers to the economy and the Auckland CBD in particular. They included:

- David Lee owns five eateries in Commercial Bay, the shopping and hospitality precinct in the heart of Auckland City. "When we opened our businesses, we were expecting cruise ship tourists from around the world. All our menus and the concepts for our restaurants were designed with tourists in mind. And then the first day we opened in March 2020, New Zealand went into Level 4 lockdown for the first time," Mr Lee said. "Without tourists, it was really hard to keep our restaurants afloat. Our projected revenue amounted to less than half of what it should have been – we hung on by the skin of our teeth. The return of cruise ships and the tourists they bring has given me hope for our businesses. I can't wait to see the city abuzz with tourists and energy again."
- Scott Koetsier, Head of New Zealand Natural Ice Cream, which for years has had its signature ice cream parlours on board P&O Cruises ships making them one of the biggest outlets for their product. "P&O's cruise ships play a huge role for us in getting consumers to see and try our products," Mr Koetsier said. "Without cruising and P&O's ships, we lost revenue and sales volume. We are so thrilled and excited to once again be sharing our ice creams with P&O passengers."
- Chetan Chhita, Managing Director of Chevalier Wholesale Produce with a 50-year history of supplying New Zealand produce nationally and internationally and 40 years of supplying the cruise industry. "We saw steady growth in the number of cruise ships calling in around the South Pacific and into New Zealand contributing to expanding ports, new destinations and increased activity in the hospitality and food service sectors. After 28 months, it will be delightful to welcome cruise passengers back enjoying local cuisine, finding unique gifts, or experiencing some of the breath-taking views, sights and rich heritage that New Zealand has to offer."
- Clinton Farley, General Manager The Hotel Britomart, a boutique hotel in the heart of downtown Auckland and its Britomart precinct, which was previously in high demand among cruise passengers. "Along with our industry peers, we are extremely excited to see the maritime border reopening and tourists returning – they are such an important part of the fabric within our community," Mr Farley said. "Tourists are crucial not just to the hotel but also to the wider Britomart precinct and the New Zealand economy. The return of cruise is a big part of our reopening to the world, and we are thrilled to see

downtown Auckland coming back to life.”

- Julie McEwen, Cruise Director P&O Cruises, whose dream of working at sea began when her family embarked on a P&O cruise when she was 16 years old. “I distinctly remember seeing Zoltina-J, the cruise director on stage, and saying to my Mum, ‘I want to be a cruise director one day.’ Years later, my Mum and I were on another P&O cruise and at the same time I was busy submitting my application to join the entertainment team.”

Ms Fitzgerald said P&O was already planning for Pacific Explorer’s return to Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland in 2023 for its first home ported cruise season in three years. “This is an exciting day for P&O and an exciting day for cruising and we thank New Zealand for today’s warm welcome,” Ms Fitzgerald said.

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Please find all images from Pacific Explorer’s arrival [HERE](#).

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#### **About P&O Cruises Australia**

For 90 years, P&O Cruises (Australia) has taken Australians & New Zealanders on dream holidays to amazing destinations along the Australian coast as well as the idyllic South Pacific. The home-grown cruise line delivers a holiday with great entertainment, world-class dining and unforgettable onboard experiences while sailing to some of the most incredible destinations in the Pacific. Delivered in the Aussie way, you can choose to do everything, or nothing at all, with P&O Cruises Australia.