

BOUND FOR BOTANY BAY?

Many cruise passengers consider cruising into Sydney Harbour a highlight of their voyages. Unfortunately, Sydney's existing infrastructure can't handle the number of cruise ships now seeking to berth at docks in the city centre.

Until recently, many considered that sharing the harbour's Garden Island naval port was the best solution. In April, however, the Australian Federal Government's Hawke Review concluded that this proposal was unworkable and suggested, among other options, that some ships use the Port Botany Container Terminal instead.

The Hawke Review's conclusions met with considerable criticism. The Hon. Patricia Forsythe, executive director of the Sydney Business Chamber, said the outcome "could see big cruise ships turned away at Sydney Heads". Ann Sherry, CEO of Carnival Australia, which represents

80 per cent of the local cruise industry, spoke of the impact on the nation as a whole: "If port facilities in Sydney aren't right, the whole of Australia suffers, because Sydney is ... the cruising hub for the entire country and for our region."

Royal Caribbean Line's general manager, Gavin Smith, believes it's time to move on. Speaking with *Cruise Weekly* recently, he said the Port Botany Container Terminal is a workable alternative.

"As the Hawke Review has now closed off the option of Garden Island as a solution to Sydney and Australia's cruise terminal capacity issue, RCL encourages all concerned to now focus on the use of the latent capacity created by

the Port Botany Container Terminal expansion for large cruise ship turnarounds," he said.

"Port Botany would offer fast and efficient processing of our guests and stores with better transport access than can be provided in the Garden Island or Circular Quay areas, with convenient access to the airport."



The Harbour City



Venetian masks



New York from the air

EASY EXPLORATION

Viator has launched a website to help cruise passengers find and book shore excursions that sync with their cruise itineraries and cater to their interests.

Featuring 500-plus shore excursions in more than 80 ports around the globe, *shoreexcursions.viator.com* helps you to line up appropriately timed excursions. Simply select your ship's itinerary and the website generates only shore excursions that coincide with your ship's time in that port. User reviews and ratings are also available.

Viator claims that passengers using its convenient service will save up to 60 per cent off the shore excursion rates typically offered by cruise lines. All shore excursions on the site qualify for the company's 'low-price guarantee', so if you find a lower price for the same excursion, you'll be refunded the difference.

The Viator 'worry-free guarantee' ensures that if you miss your ship

because of a Viator excursion, you'll be transported to the next port of call at the company's expense.

"Customers [will] save money, avoid crowds and create experiences that will be envied by their shipmates," said Ms Barrie Seidenberg, CEO and president of Viator.

The easily navigable site details shore excursions from ports around the Western Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean, UK and Northern Europe, Western Caribbean, Eastern Caribbean, Hawaii, Alaska and Pacific North West, and USA and Mexico – all of which Viator claims were selected by local experts.

Examples of shore excursions include: a submarine exploration of Grand Cayman's Underwater Marine Park in the Cayman Islands; a glacier whitewater rafting tour from Juneau, Alaska; a Carnivale mask-making class in Venice; and a helicopter tour over New York.

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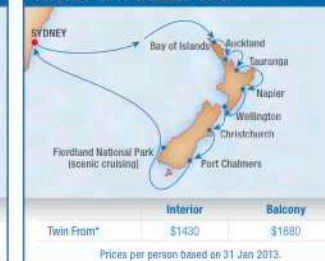
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