

Arnie Weissmann: Involvement in China is a lesson in the correlation between opportunity and challenge. **18**



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# TRAVEL WEEKLY

THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY HANDBOOK

[ OPPORTUNITY TO UPSELL CLIENTS ]

## Agents pleased by NCL's buying Prestige Cruise

By Tom Stieghorst

The cruise industry's third multibrand company got a warm reception from travel agents after it was announced last week that Prestige Cruise Holdings would be acquired by Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings for \$3.03 billion.

Agents said they were looking forward to opportunities to sell Norwegian customers on the two Prestige brands: Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

However, some were less enthusiastic about moving clients in the other direction — i.e., selling Norwegian to upscale premium and luxury clients.

**The merged company will have three cruise lines, 21 ships, 40,092 berths and annual revenue of more than \$4 billion.**

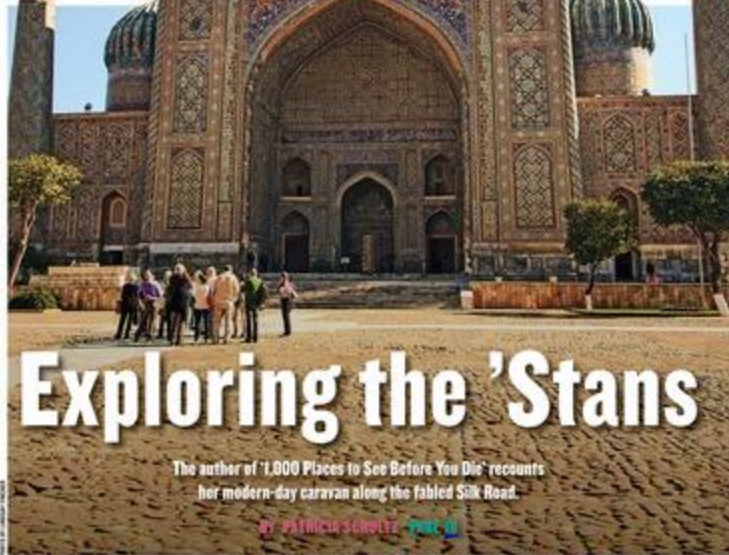
"My Oceania clients are very happy with that product," said Deborah Waggoner, an agent at Preferred Travel of Naples, in Naples, Fla. "I'm not sure I can [even] move my Oceania clients up to Regent," she said.

The acquisition will create a company with 21 ships, 40,092 berths and pro forma annual revenue of more than \$4 billion.

In a webinar for travel agents the day of the announcement, Andy Stuart, Norwegian's executive vice president for global sales, and Prestige President Kunal Kamlan stressed that there were no plans to fold Oceania or Regent into Norwegian or to water down the two lines' quality standards.

"The value of the company, the \$3 billion, lies in the distinction of these brands and the

See **PRESTIGE** on Page 28



## Exploring the 'Stans

The author of '1,000 Places to See Before You Die' recounts her modern-day caravan along the fabled Silk Road.

By **PATRICK SCHULTZ** **TRAVEL**

## RCCL gets leg up in China with Ctrip deal

By Tom Stieghorst

The sale of the Celebrity Century to the Chinese travel agency Ctrip opens a second way for Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. (RCCL) to develop a passenger business in the world's most populous country. Starting next year, the 19-year-old Century

will sail for a new venture owned by Ctrip, a Shanghai-based online travel agency (OTA) that also supplies certain travel products and services.

In a statement, Ctrip said an affiliate will own the Century and that the affiliate will form a joint venture with RCCL to manage the ship's operations. The companies have a memorandum of understanding to set up the venture "and potentially broaden the relationship," the statement said.

While RCCL will recognize a \$20 million loss on the ship's disposal, company Chairman Richard Fain nevertheless called the sale "an excellent business opportunity for both Royal Caribbean and Ctrip" that will generate "strong value for both companies' shareholders."

RCCL had previously decided to get rid of the Century, the last remaining ship in Celebrity's Century class. At one point, See **CHINA** on Page 20

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Brand USA's president, Chris Thompson, talks about promoting the U.S. as a destination. **4**

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### EDITORIAL

Whatever the aftershocks, the marriage of Norwegian and Prestige is an OK union. **76**

## Best New Restaurant: Crush at MGM Grand Hotel & Casino

In a never-ending quest to keep up with  
See **BEST BETS** on Page 66

## BEST BETS

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food trends and evolving tastes, casino-resorts here have tasked their restaurateurs with delivering interesting dining concepts to clientele with increasingly sophisticated palates.

At Crush, chef William DeMarco has crafted innovative and complex small plates whose ingredients mesh harmoniously, thus befitting the eatery's tagline: Eat, drink, love. His Sea Scallop Benny, topped with a quail egg, is a perfect blend of quality and presentation that typifies the impressive menu.

Visit [www.mgmgrand.com/restaurants/crush.aspx](http://www.mgmgrand.com/restaurants/crush.aspx).