



Cunard Announces New Australian Partnerships for Record Season Down Under

February 28, 2018

Luxury cruise brand Cunard is about to take on a distinctly Aussie flavour, with the cruise line today announcing an unparalleled series of partnerships with leading Australian companies ahead of a record season Down Under for its luxurious Queen Elizabeth.

Under the move, Cunard will join forces with four key brands during Queen Elizabeth's two-month Australian season in February and March 2019 including:

- Famous fashion brand R.M. Williams
- Australia's iconic Akubra hats
- Award-winning Melbourne-based boutique whisky distillery STARWARD
- Acclaimed national dance company Australian Dance Theatre.

The move will see Cunard's famous Bellboys swap their trademark red and black uniforms for a new Australian outfit to be designed by R.M. Williams and Akubra and worn throughout Queen Elizabeth's local season.

Under its partnership with STARWARD, Queen Elizabeth's top decks will become home to some very special cargo – a 225-litre barrel of Australian whisky, to be known as The Seafarer. Loaded in Sydney yesterday, the whisky will spend 12 months travelling the world on Queen Elizabeth's open decks before it is opened next February at the start of the ship's 2019 Australian season.

Meanwhile, Australia's longest-running contemporary dance company, Australian Dance Theatre (ADT), will also be leaping onboard. The ADT's partnership with Cunard will create the cruise line's first ever special event cruise in Australian waters, featuring a bespoke performance of ADT's latest international work, "The Beginning of Nature", as well as special workshops and movement classes for guests.

Announcing the partnerships onboard Queen Elizabeth in Sydney today, Sture Myrmell, President of Carnival Australia which represents Cunard, said the initiatives broke new ground for Cunard and reflected the cruise line's increasingly strong commitment to the Australian market.

"These partnerships are designed to embrace Australian products and culture and celebrate Queen Elizabeth's 2019 season Down Under, which sets a new record for Cunard's current fleet of Queens," Mr Myrmell said.

"All our partners are respected names in their fields so we're delighted to join forces with them for the season with a range of initiatives which we think will be very popular – and maintain Cunard's tradition of turning heads in this market."

Australians' interest in holidays at sea – and cruises with Cunard – has surged since Cunard's flagship Queen Mary 2 and Queen Elizabeth's predecessor, QE2, brought Sydney to a standstill when they visited the city together in 2007. The number of Australians taking cruise holidays annually has leapt from 251,000 in 2007 to almost 1.3 million in 2016.

Recognising the demand, Cunard decided to base Queen Elizabeth in Australian waters for an unprecedented two months next year, with 27 different cruise itineraries on offer as she sails from Sydney and Melbourne.

The cruise line has this month announced it will go even further the following summer, with Queen Elizabeth set to return to Australian waters for an extraordinary 101 days of cruising, from December 2019 to March 2020.

Details of the new partnerships onboard Queen Elizabeth include:

R.M. Williams and Akubra – The famous clothing brands will collaborate with Cunard to create a new uniform for Queen Elizabeth's Bellboys to wear during their Australian season. While the uniform is yet to be designed, it will incorporate an Akubra hat and R.M. Williams' trademark boots and will reflect the relaxed feel of an Australian summer while still upholding the quality all three brands are known for.

"We are immensely proud of our Australian heritage at R.M. Williams," R.M. Williams Chief Marketing Officer Mathew Hayward said. "This collaboration with Cunard is the chance to unite two iconic brands across land and sea and showcase R.M. Williams onboard Queen Elizabeth during its 2019 season Down Under."

"Akubra hats are an iconic symbol of Australia," Akubra General Manager Sales & Marketing Andrew Angus said "They're made here, but are worn all over the world so we're very excited to be taking them to sea with Cunard next year."

STARWARD – The 225-litre barrel of modern single malt whisky, to be known as The Seafarer, will spend 12 months travelling the world on Queen Elizabeth's decks. Aged for two years previously at STARWARD's Port Melbourne distillery, its maturation will be aided by the motion of the ocean, the salt of the sea air and changing climates along the journey. The barrel will be opened and the whisky made available onboard Queen Elizabeth and at STARWARD's distillery bar once the ship begins her history-making season of cruises from Australia in February 2019. As part of their partnership, STARWARD and Cunard will donate bottles of The Seafarer to raise funds for charity.

"We are so proud of our ambitious local whisky's achievements on the international awards scene," STARWARD founder David Vitale said. "Winning these awards has been a result of our dedication to using quality Australian ingredients, particularly Australian wine barrels. Now this barrel of whisky will travel the world and bring to market a distinctively Australian whisky with a little taste of our global ambition."

Australian Dance Theatre –The award-winning ADT will create a bespoke performance of its latest work *The Beginning of Nature* to be performed onboard Queen Elizabeth during its 2019 Australian season, while the ship's company will also stage workshops and movement classes for ship guests. This will be the first performance at sea for the ADT which is known around the world for its pioneering works.

"Australian Dance Theatre is thrilled to have been chosen alongside some of the nation's most iconic brands to participate in what is a unique opportunity to showcase all things quintessentially Australian on one of the world's most famous cruise ships," Australian Dance Theatre Executive Director Shaun Comerford said.

"Our dancers have performed in some pretty spectacular places, from the Sydney Opera House to the most prestigious theatres of Paris, London and New York, and we are excited to add Cunard's famous Queen Elizabeth to that list."

At 90,900 tonnes, the 2080-guest Queen Elizabeth is the second largest ship ever to sail in Cunard's fleet. Launched in 2010, she is also the youngest in the cruise line's current trio of Queens with features including more than 10 restaurants and cafes, a Games Deck featuring paddle tennis, croquet and bowls, a two-storey library, a ballroom and a three-deck Royal Court Theatre seating 800 guests and offering private boxes.

Press office contact details:

Jessica Cheney: jessica.cheney@fleishman.com.au + 61 2 8584 5765

Jade Glashoff: jade.glashoff@fleishman.com.au +61 401 845 065