



CARNIVAL'S new Celebration Key private destination has experienced minor teething issues as guests were welcomed for the first time this week - understandable for a new facility.

However, road traffic probably wasn't one of the problems considered.

The first few days at the new destination has seen a few minor golf cart skirmishes, near misses, and scooter accidents as people got a bit excited about experiencing all the fun Celebration Key has to offer.

This has prompted Brand Ambassador John Heald to ask his loyal army of social media followers to take care when riding the scooters and golf carts around the island.

"We did have a scooter incident today when somebody was driving very quickly and banged into another guest.

"So I have been asked by 'the beards' (Heald's nickname for Carnival management) to please remind all of our scooter riders to please drive slowly when you are at this wonderful resort."

True to form, Heald has also fielded his share of nonsensical questions on the new island.

Perhaps the best would be whether the lagoon-style swimming pool was heated - to which the answer is yes - by the sun.

Ponant doubles Spirit-class



A SECOND catamaran has been added to Ponant's Spirit-class fleet, as the French line further develops its micro-ship division.

Known as *La Desirade*, the new vessel is 23m long, and caters to nine travellers and four staff, including the captain, a private chef, first mate, and hostess.

The all-inclusive experience will see *La Desirade* sail seven- and 14-night itineraries initially, from Corsica to Sardinia through to Oct, before the ship repositions to the Caribbean, where she will operate in the winter.

Like her fleetmate *Spirit of Ponant*, which debuted in Apr last year (**CW** 08 Apr 2024), the new ship will offer suggested but fully customisable itineraries, within weather and safety limitations.

Guests can craft both the sailing pace and ports of call, along with daily menu options, with the chef drawing on fresh local ingredients and flavours showcasing the regions the ship visits.

Daily shore excursions are also tailored to guests' wishes.

With four itineraries, including

an Owner's Suite complete with a suspended floating terrace, *La Desirade* features a spacious indoor communal lounge, two outdoor lounges, an open-plan kitchen, and trampolines.

Guests can participate in a range of water sports including standup paddleboarding, snorkelling, water skiing, underwater scootering, and wing foiling from an inflatable dinghy. **ML**

Two at Celebration

CARNIVAL Cruise Line is putting its new Celebration Key private island (**CW** 21 Jul) through its paces, with two ships docking yesterday for the line's first 'Double Fun' day.

Carnival Glory and *Carnival Conquest* delivered nearly 7,000 guests to the new 26-hectare destination on Grand Bahama for the day.

Later this week, Carnival's first Excel ship *Mardi Gras* will become the fleet's largest vessel to dock at Celebration Key, alongside *Carnival Pride*.



Cruise momentum builds in Victoria

THIS week I've had the pleasure of joining cruise line and inbound partners in Victoria for a series of cruise industry workshops and family activities across Phillip Island, Geelong, and Melbourne.

It's been a fantastic opportunity to engage with local operators and regional tourism bodies who are eager to grow their involvement in the cruise sector.

Victoria's cruise industry continues to expand, generating \$637 million in total economic output last season.

Melbourne remains a key turnaround port, particularly for new market entrants, while Geelong, Phillip Island, and Portland are growing.

Following the recent announcement by Minister for Tourism Steve Dimopoulos that Victoria is developing a Cruise Shipping Strategy, I've welcomed the opportunity to engage in the consultation process and contribute to shaping a plan that supports sustainable growth across the state.

This week's workshops have provided a platform to discuss global trends including new ship builds and evolving expectations, and explore opportunities for alignment between local product and cruise line needs.

A big thank you to Visit Victoria and our regional hosts for such a warm welcome.

The quality of product, passion and professionalism on display this week confirms that Victoria is well positioned for future growth.