

SOUTH PACIFIC CRUISE STRATEGY LAUNCHED

Cruising is booming. It's a little over 60 years since the end of the War that has become a legendary part of Pacific history. Children of returned warriors to Japan, America, Australasia, and Europe are now retiring. They are the kids who grew up in the golden ages – 1950s and 60s in USA and Australasia, 70s and 80s in Japan. No sub-prime worries for this group – they are real estate freehold, kids have graduated from college. Retiring, they have time and money. And they want to see the world from the luxury of a ship.

Global cruise passengers have exploded from less than 4 million in 1990 to over 11 million by 2005 – an almost threefold increase over 15 years. Cruise Lines International Association notes that a further 17% capacity increase is locked in until 2009 in terms of ships actually under construction. Talk of new mega-liners, carrying 4000 passengers, being unleashed into the Caribbean means that many of the current smaller ships working there will need to be redeployed. And what better place than the South Pacific. In the words of Japan's *Nippon Maru* owners (Mitsui OSK) – “the South Pacific has an image of paradise and our cruisers want more of it.”

So regional tourism organisation south-pacific.travel, with support from ProInvest, has drafted a cruise strategy for the region – see www.south-pacific.travel. Former Pacific Asia Travel Association VP Peter Semone lead the strategy development. Semone has identified four Beacons to enable the South Pacific to capture its due share of the global cruise boom.

Beacon 1 is about shore excursions and land based services. People want interesting things to do ashore after days at sea, so ports of call need to ensure a variety of creative shore excursions.

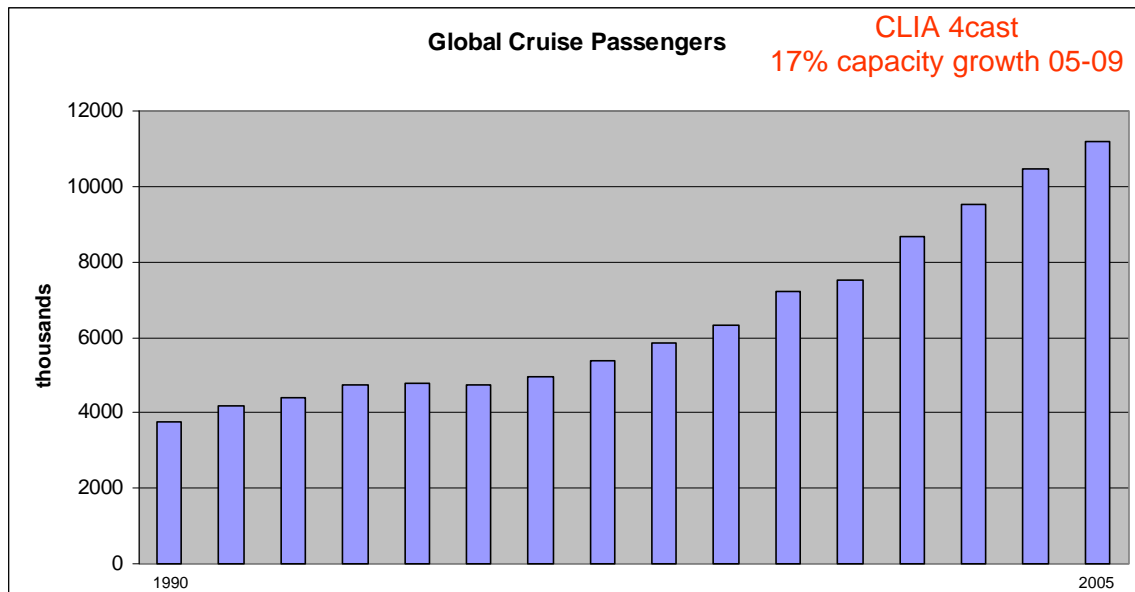
Beacon 2 covers marine infrastructure and support services. It's the big money one. Landing infrastructure needs investment in some places.

Beacon 3 looks at institutional management and cooperative frameworks. Most importantly, cruise is truly a South Pacific-wide regional activity. No vessel will steam to the South Pacific, visit one country, and go home. If it does we're really missing opportunities. The benefits of a single cruise accrue to more than one country so let's share our scarce resources and work on it together.

Beacon 4 considers marketing. The Strategy recommends establishing Cruise South Pacific to carry this out properly. Not another stand-alone bureaucracy, but simply part of the existing south-pacific.travel.

south-pacific.travel Chief Executive Tony Everitt said “So where to now? Developing a Strategy is the easy part. Doing it is the hard bit. The next step is promoting the Strategy through forums like Fiji’s own cruise conference in January 2008. That process will help identify interested sponsors. south-pacific.travel is also looking at how to lead the marketing.”

south-pacific.travel is a not-for-profit regional organisation charged with marketing and developing tourism. It has fifteen country members and over 200 financial private sector members, including the world’s largest cruise company – Carnival Cruises.



For further information contact teveritt@south-pacific.travel

Level 3, FNPF Place, 343-359 Victoria Parade, PO Box 13119, Suva, Fiji Islands
Telephone: (679) 3304 177, Facsimile: (679) 3301 995