



P&O Becomes First Cruise Line to Showcase Vanuatu Products

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P&O Cruises Australia is strengthening its relationship with the Vanuatu community by becoming the first cruise line to sell locally made products onboard its ships.

Guests on cruises calling to Vanuatu's capital, Vila, will now have the opportunity to buy handicrafts such as woven bags, a range of skincare products and soaps, specialty coffee, chocolate, spices and the nation's popular vanilla at a special onboard pop-up stall dedicated to locally made products.

The stall will be progressively introduced onto P&O's five ships early next year as part of a trial developed in conjunction with the International Finance Corporation, part of the World Bank group.

P&O Cruises yesterday launched the trial at a special lunch onboard Pacific Aria in Vila attended by Vanuatu's Deputy Prime Minister The Hon. Joe Natuman as well as local producers and community representatives.

More than 400,000 Australians cruise to the South Pacific each year, many with P&O Cruises, which visits Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji.

P&O Cruises President Sture Myrmell said the pop-up stalls, which will open after the ship leaves the port of Vila, were a way of giving passengers one last chance of purchasing an authentic memento of Vanuatu.

"Many of our guests are repeat passengers who love to visit Vanuatu because of its idyllic location, culture and warmth of its people," Mr Myrmell said.

"There is always a real buzz onboard when our guests return from day tours in Vila and its surrounds and there is a genuine affection for the place. This initiative is a way of keeping that feeling going and, at the same time, showcasing the locally made handicrafts, spices, roasted coffee and other products that Vanuatu has to offer.

"We hope that our guests will buy a gift that is authentic to Vanuatu for themselves or friends and family so that the memories of their visit stay with them long after we sail. At the same time, every sale helps support business in Vanuatu and ensures communities benefit from the growth of cruising.

"Many of these vendors either employ local people or source materials from local communities to make their products. Giving our guests the opportunity to purchase local-made products raises the profile of Vanuatu as a destination and the skill of its people."

The stall, which has its own 'local made' branding, will be set up in the main shopping area of the

ship in conjunction with Hardings Retail, which operates retail outlets on behalf of P&O.

Mr Myrmell thanked the International Finance Corporation for working with P&O and Hardings to establish the initiative.

IFC Pacific Country Manager Tom Jacobs said it could be difficult for Vanuatu businesses to get their goods to market but cruise ships meant the passengers, or the market, came to Vanuatu.

"By retailing the products on board, up to 2000 passengers can buy these products, which will boost the profits of the businesses supplying them as well as those of the farmers and handicraft makers who produce the goods," Mr Jacobs said.

Two years ago, IFC, the Australian Government and Carnival Australia, which represents P&O Cruises, undertook an economic impact study of the cruise sector in Vanuatu. It showed cruising contributed more than \$50 million (\$34.6 million direct and \$18.6 million indirect) to the national economy. Cruise passenger, company and crew spending amounted to 10 per cent of Vanuatu's total annual exports.

In addition to port fees and associated costs, Carnival Australia has contributed about \$1.65million on destination management plans to support sustainable tourism in Vanuatu, contributed to the cost of infrastructure and passenger amenities and worked with island communities to build cruise tourism related business ventures.

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