



WHAT'S HOT

The optional Princess Premier package offers far more than bottomless booze. Even non-drinkers will find value with included gratuities, unlimited specialty restaurants, wi-fi and more.

WHAT'S NOT

A few taps of the Princess app and – *voilà* – food and drink is delivered wherever you are. It's a miracle, mostly, but occasionally leaves you hangry at the wait. At peak times you might be best to get it yourself.

WE CRUISE ON Discovery Princess

Los Angeles to the Mexican Riviera

Tara Wells previews a new ship that's set to spend Christmas Down Under



There's a school of thought that Australia only receives cruise lines' tired hand-me-down ships, but the impending arrival of *Discovery Princess* in Sydney in December scraps that idea. Still fresh from her 2022 maiden voyage, *Discovery* is Princess's second-newest ship (though she'll bump down to third when *Star Princess* debuts later this year). So what can Aussie cruisers expect?

THE LOWDOWN

Discovery is the sixth Royal-Class ship, marking an evolving yet familiar design for *Majestic* and *Royal Princess* passengers. As far as megaships go, she's a runabout for a mere 3660 guests and there's not a water slide to be seen. Still, at 145,000 tonnes, she's more than seven times bigger than the first Princess ship – the *Pacific Princess* (of TV's *Love Boat* fame) – to arrive in Australia 50 years ago. Knowing that a paper-umbrella-garnished cocktail no longer cuts it, *Discovery* introduces a multi-sensory dining affair with 360: An Extraordinary Experience, transforming a seven-course meal into a digital storytelling journey.

THE LAYOUT

The geographically challenged don't usually love a 19-deck ship. Here's how to join the great un-lost. Nearly every elevator faces forward, meaning port and starboard obediently remain in place each time you step out. Deck seven – containing specialty restaurants, entertainment venues and shops – is the magical walk-through deck. If you're still disoriented, benefit from the ship's 7000 sensors interacting with

your personal medallion to find where you are via the Princess app or at one of many public screens. Then, like Google Maps, it reveals the best path to your desired location.

THE CABINS

Easily score a balcony with more than 80 per cent of the 1830 staterooms opening up to the sea. The remainder are nearly all inside cabins, spurning the neither here nor there oceanview category (there are only eight). Taking balcony love to the extreme are two five-berth Sky Suites with outdoor space wrapping 270 degrees. On Deck 18 partly overlooking the Lido deck, you'll consider these either perfectly among it, or be on high noise alert, depending on your point of view.

AMENITIES

Choose from four pools to match your vibe: two on the busy top deck, the aft's Wakeview pool, and an adults-only Retreat pool. The Enclave, part of the Lotus Spa, offers sauna and bubbles (the hydrotherapy kind). There's also mini golf, sports court and a gym with ample treadmills, even in the mornings. Oh, and there's a wedding chapel, because it really is the Love Boat.

FOOD AND DRINK

The ship feels uncrowded despite being at full capacity on this sailing. But the buffet – World Fresh Marketplace – still heaves at peak times. Head instead to three dining rooms, poolside dining and café included in the base fare (barista coffee extra). The real delights are at specialty restaurants for an additional cost, including

The Catch by Rudi for seafood, Crown Grill & Bar for steak, and Sabatini's Italian Trattoria. There's also gelato authenticated by the Italian government, or switch it up with sushi at Ocean Terrace Seafood Bar.

ENTERTAINMENT

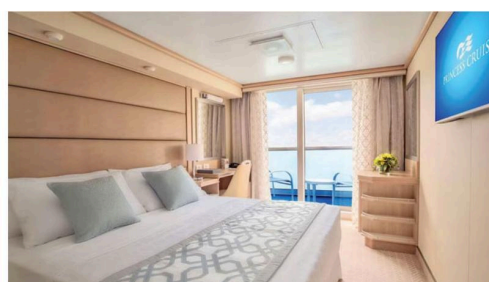
With up to 14 high-energy dancers and singers on stage in the nearly 1000-seat Princess Theatre, the *Discovery* takes stage shows seriously. Or try Vista Lounge for comedians, trivia and bingo. Princess Live is now opened up to passers-by, making game show and karaoke participants all the braver for stepping on stage. The central Piazza buzzes with musical duos, dance classes and – in lieu of a nightclub – is the place to kick on until entertainment wraps around midnight. Movie fans can head to the The Lido deck's open-air cinema.

ON SHORE

The Princess Medallion pays, of course, for on-board expenses. But it's also the first (albeit supercharged) cruise ID card to pay for select restaurants off the ship. Right now Medallion Pay is limited to Alaska, the Caribbean and Mexican Riviera, handy for foreign ports where you may not have the correct cash. It's an incentive to eat beyond the ship's buffet. There are no plans to bring it to Australia or New Zealand.

The writer was a guest of Princess Cruises. Discovery Princess arrives in Sydney in December 2025 for a season of sailings to New Zealand, the South Pacific and Australia. A 14-day New Zealand cruise starts at \$2149 per person. princess.com

From top: *Discovery Princess* will spend next summer in Australia; the International Cafe is one of many dining options.



A Balcony Stateroom with private outdoor space.



THE VERDICT 8/10

Discovery Princess offers the entertainment and dining bounty we expect from megaships, while skipping any sensory overload that could vex some older passengers.



Hydrotherapy pool at The Enclave at Lotus Spa.