

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Orion Expedition Cruises

14th April, 2008

Ghizo donations

Orion's guests help rebuild the fabric of life in Ghizo

When Orion returned to Gizo in the Solomon Islands in early April, Captain Sven Gaertner presented, on behalf of all Orion guests, a cheque for \$10,000 for use by the local community to help rebuild some of the social structure lost after last years' destructive tsunami.

The funds represented monies donated by Orion guests and Orion Expedition Cruises.

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Many will recall waking just over a year ago to hear the horrific news of an earthquake, followed by a tsunami, striking the western Solomon Islands.

Gizo, a small fishing town and diving centre on Ghizo island just 45km from the epicenter, was hit by waves several metres high, swamping buildings, leaving large boats lying in the middle of the town and washing people out to sea.

The quake, measuring 8.0, hit Gizo at 0740 local time on Monday 2nd April, 2007 and witnesses described the following tsunami as reaching 50-70 metres inland. Over three thousand homes on the island were destroyed.

The expedition cruise ship *Orion* had visited Gizo for the first time just ten days prior and guests were quick to contact Orion's Sydney offices to express dismay and offer assistance in any way possible.

In the days that followed world aid agencies and defence forces moved swiftly to assist in providing crucial infra structure. Ghizo's provincial member the Hon. Danny Kennedy advised Orion Expedition Cruises that it was now possible for Orion's guests to contribute in a meaningful way to assist in the establishment of smaller socially important projects.

During March and April, *Orion* was once again in Gizo, as part of her Melanesian Discovery expeditions Guests were informed of the opportunity to assist in funding a much-needed communal women's sewing facility. Sewing was not only a means of providing clothing for their families; in many cases it provided a social arena and more importantly income generation for the family and small businesses All the sewing machines in the village were ruined by the sea water rushing through the village. This would be an important contribution to allow the women of Gizo to once again sew clothes for their families, make uniforms for the school children and to sell their wares in the local markets.



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Sarina Bratton, Managing Director of Orion Expedition Cruises, offered to contribute any short fall required to build a wooden "Sewing House" and to provide hand powered sewing machines for the project.

Within hours total funding was achieved through the generous donations of Orion guests and Orion Expedition Cruises corporate contribution.

When Orion returned to Gizo on April 1, 2008, Captain Gaertner, on behalf of all Orion guests, presented a cheque for \$10,000 to the Hon. Danny Kennedy.

This is another example of Orion's community partnership policy of giving back to communities in ways that assist in the improvement of their social and economic structure while at the same time sensitive to local cultural requirements.

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Ranked #2 expedition cruise ship in the world in the current Berlitz Cruise Guide, Orion is Australia's only purpose-built luxury expedition cruise ship, featuring an unmatched range of onboard facilities.

With 75 crew and a maximum of just 106 passengers Orion offers the highest staff to guest ratio and guest to public space ratio of any ship based in Australian waters.

Further information on Orion Expedition Cruises can be obtained by visiting the website www.orioncruises.com.au

For reservations or to obtain a brochure call Orion Expedition Cruises: 61-2 9033 8777 (Sydney callers) 1300 361 012 (regional and interstate) or your travel agent. Email: info@orioncruises.com.au

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