

RESEARCH REVEALS STORMY SEAS AHEAD FOR CRUISE SHIP PASSENGERS WITHOUT ADEQUATE INSURANCE

Half of Australian cruise-goers are leaving themselves exposed to huge bills of hundreds of thousands of dollars by failing to understand the importance of travel insurance.

The alarming finding coincides with new data showing the number of Australians set to take a cruise will top two million by 2020 – more than double the number who chose cruising in 2015.

Despite the rising popularity of booking a cruise, new research has found 48 per cent of recent cruise-goers embarked without knowing if they had specific cover for their cruise, or for the countries they were visiting.

The research, commissioned by www.understandinsurance.com.au and smartraveller.gov.au, also revealed that during the time they were on board, many mistakenly believed Medicare or their private health insurer would cover any medical expenses. Nearly a third incorrectly assumed the Federal Government would pay if they needed to be medically evacuated from a cruise ship.

It also found 70 per cent of cruise-goers were exposing themselves to significant risk because they believed there was less chance of losing their luggage than on a flight, or that their voyage would be cancelled or delayed.

Young adults were most at risk, with 61 per cent of those aged 18-24 and 71 per cent aged 25-29 revealing they may have travelled on their last cruise without adequate insurance.

All respondents aged 18-24 wrongly believed cruise cover was standard in travel insurance policies.

Other key findings of Quantum Market Research's Understand Insurance/smartraveller.gov.au survey included:

- More than a third of cruise-goers believed travel insurance was less important for cruises than other overseas holidays because cruise ships have doctor to treat passengers if they get sick
- Thirty-eight per cent of cruise-goers aged 65 and over bought travel insurance policies that might not have adequately covered them
- 65-year-olds and over had a better than average understanding of cruise insurance, but a large proportion thought travel insurance covered cruises as standard, leading to underinsurance or non-insurance.

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Understand
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QUOTES ATTRIBUTABLE TO *Understand Insurance* spokesman Campbell Fuller:

“Unfortunately, 53 per cent of cruise ship passengers and cruise intenders in the next two years believe they can rely on medical care on board their ship, and that if they fall critically ill the Australian Government will pay for their care and their evacuation back home. That is not the case,” he said.

“Medical treatment, hospital stays and medical evacuations back home can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. Too often, Australia’s consular officials in foreign ports have to help ill or injured passengers who are either not insured or have not bought the right insurance cover.

“When cruise passengers book their trip, they should make sure they buy travel insurance that covers them for their cruise, and for all destinations they intend to go. Travellers who have pre-existing medical conditions should also let their insurer know beforehand.”

-ENDS-

Editor’s note: For state-by-state breakdown data and case studies please contact Andrew Holmes 0411 024 405 or andrew@truthagency.com.au

Case Study 1:

Margaret was on a Pacific cruise a few months ago with her daughter when she had a heart attack after departing Vanuatu. She was treated in the ship’s on-board hospital for two days until she needed more acute, intensive medical care. New Caledonian authorities dispatched a helicopter to evacuate Margaret from the ship, strapping her to a stretcher and slowly winching her up. She was taken to a hospital in Noumea, where she was admitted for three weeks. During this time, she received consular assistance from DFAT’s staff in Noumea. Her travel insurer, InsureandGo Travel Insurance, covered her medical and repatriation costs. They put her daughter up in five-star accommodation in Noumea and even picked up her taxi fares to and from the hospital each day. InsureandGo Travel Insurance then sent an Australian doctor to Noumea who accompanied the pair as they flew business class back to Australia. Without travel insurance, Margaret would have been liable for \$41,667 in medical and other expenses, and would have had to sell her home on the Gold Coast.

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Case Study 2:

Dennis and his wife Kim were on a cruise from Sydney to Hawaii in April this year when Dennis fell off a pier during an excursion to an island in French Polynesia. He broke multiple ribs, punctured a lung and broke a hand. He was taken by ambulance to hospital, then evacuated by helicopter to the capital where he spent 10 days in hospital, then another two weeks on the island before he was allowed to fly home. Dennis and his family were grateful for the consular assistance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade during this time. Their travel insurer, InsureandGo Travel Insurance, stayed in constant touch throughout the ordeal. The insurer covered all medical expenses, as well as the cost of emergency accommodation and flights home – a total of \$87,674.37.

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Did you know:

- A day in an international hospital can cost \$10,000, often required to be paid prior to admission
- Medical evacuation to Australia from abroad can cost \$100,000

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