



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **First Inaugural Call of the Season**

L'Austral, the cruise ship operated by French company Compagnie du Ponant, made its inaugural call to Gibraltar on Thursday March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Sister vessel of Le Boréal and Le Soléal, L'Austral was built in 2010 at Fincantieri's Ancona shipyard, Italy, and it entered service on April 20, 2011.

With a gross tonnage of 10,700 tons and a length of 142 metres, the vessel has capacity for 264 passengers and a crew of 136.

As is customary during inaugural cruise calls, Minister for Tourism Samantha Sacramento MP, she took part in a short informal welcome ceremony on board the vessel during which plaques will be exchanged with the visiting captain.

The Minister was accompanied by Captain of the Port, Commodore Bob Sanguinetti and Gibraltar Tourist Board CEO Nicky Guerrero.

Minister Sacramento said: "It gives me great pleasure to welcome L'Austral to the Rock at the opening of what promises to be another magnificent cruise ship season for the Port of Gibraltar. We are confident that Gibraltar's tourist product will once again stand up to the test and that the thousands of cruise passengers that will be visiting our city in 2016, will return home with fond memories and a desire to repeat the experience."

"As in previous years the Government of Gibraltar remains firm in its political commitment to materially support and promote the cruise industry and indeed, all other sectors of the tourist trade, which is a formidable source of income for the local economy.

"Since we were first elected into office back in 2011, we have worked tirelessly, attending prestigious international cruise conferences, engaging decision makers and top executives in the sector, and sparing no effort to ensure that Gibraltar established a solid reputation as a leading cruise port and maritime hub in the western Mediterranean."