



GLOBAL CRUISE INDUSTRY MEETS AT POSIDONIA SEA TOURISM FORUM 2019

EVENT'S GROWING ROLE FUELLED BY GREECE'S STATUS AS TOP CRUISE DESTINATION, IMPENDING PORT PRIVATISATIONS AND A RETURN TO STABILITY OF REGIONAL GEOPOLITICAL HOTSPOTS

The biennial **Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum** has established itself as one of the most influential events for the international cruise industry, thanks to the strategic role of the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea regions in terms of destination diversification, passenger demand and fleet deployment considerations.

This year's event, to be held from May 28-29 at the Domotel Kastri Conference Center, in Athens' northern suburbs, will host over 30 highly influential senior cruise executives responsible for ports and destinations from the world's biggest cruise lines, including **MSC Cruises, Royal Caribbean Cruises, Holland America Group, Disney Cruise Line, Silversea Cruises, Fred Olsen Cruise Lines and Celestyal Cruises** among others.

Many of them will also participate at a meeting of the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) **European Ports and Destinations Advisory Committee**, to be held at the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum for the first time and engage with the region's destination representatives on the exhibition floor and the event's many networking opportunities.

Elisabetta De Nardo, VP Port Development, MSC Cruises and Chairman of CLIA's European Port & Destination Advisory Committee, said: "Greece continues to be a region of great importance for the international cruise industry. In recent years, following geopolitical instability in other areas across the Mediterranean Sea, Greece has assumed an even more prominent role in Eastern Med cruise itineraries. The Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum is the top cruise event in this wonderful and strategic region that is the Eastern Med. I look forward to discussing the challenges and opportunities that we face with other stakeholders."



Some of these opportunities include the impending legislation that kicks-off the 2nd phase of the Greek ports privatisation process, effectively allowing global cruise port operators to invest in cruise terminal concessions across the country, a much-awaited move likely to increase homeporting. These developments have also attracted the interest of leading cruise terminal operators, such as **Global Ports**, who will be present in Athens at the event.

As of May, the first in line port privatisations are Alexandroupoli and Kavala. The list also includes top cruise destinations Corfu and Heraklion, both of which have confirmed their participation as PSTF 2019 exhibitors, together with Piraeus and Rhodes. Their participation at the Forum will enable them to meet with members of the CLIA Ports and Destinations Advisory Committee and other stakeholders.



Having just received the prestigious Best Destination – Leisure award at the recent ITB exhibition in Berlin, Greece is the destination of choice for 35 million tourists annually mainly thanks to its climate and two idyllic island archipelagos, an iconic operational theatre for the world's biggest cruise lines.

An increasing number of arrivals comes from the US; according to Athens International Airport data, the number of American arrivals has increased over 113% during the last five years with many travelling to the country for its varied cruise product options.

In response, the major US cruise lines have increased their 2019 Greek ports of call, and other niche players, such as **Disney Cruises**, are resuming operations in the country as early as next year. Their itineraries include the ports of Piraeus and Katakolon, near ancient Olympia. Also, the islands of Santorini, Mykonos and Crete have been announced as ports of call for the company's 12-night and 9-night cruises next summer, following a five-year absence from the market. Disney has confirmed its participation at the Posidonia Forum and plans to meet with destinations as preparations for its return to the region have started.

Buoyed by stronger tourist arrivals from North America, the renewed long-term commitment of US cruise operators to Greece is matched by a traditionally strong and fast-growing presence of European counterparts. **MSC Cruises** has some 400 calls in Greek port destinations in 2019, making this its busiest year for Greece. Many cruise lines are taking advantage of the popularity of Santorini and Mykonos, with the latter also securing many overnight calls for this summer season. 2020 will also see a return of a number of cruise lines to Turkey's western coastline, as well as to Istanbul.

This year will also see the largest number of small cruise ships with a capacity of under 500 passengers cruising in East Med. This new trend of cruising on small luxury or expedition vessels is especially important for the smaller island or mainland ports that do not have the infrastructure or technical characteristics required for the larger vessels thus opening many more destinations to cruising.

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MESSAGE FROM MEDCRUISE



The MedCruise Association will be present again and have an active role at the 5th Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, with this year's theme 'Creating a New Vision for Sea Tourism in the East Med'.

Ports, terminals and destinations from the East Med, Black Sea and Red Sea are experiencing an increase in cruise passengers and calls and cruise lines are confirming their itineraries for 2020 and 2021 in the region. Moreover, both turnaround and transit calls are coming back to Turkey, which will have a positive impact in the whole region.

In this context, and to promote a sustainable cruise business in these regions, MedCruise has launched two Working Groups composed by port members and associated members. One Working Group is focused on Black Sea region and another one on North Africa; main aim of both Working Groups is to promote these regions as cruise destinations. We believe that the recovery of the cruise business in these regions will have a positive impact on the surrounding areas. It means that Greece, located at the center of the East Med, will benefit from the growth in cruise activities in North Africa and Black Sea as well as in the Adriatic.

Moreover, MedCruise keeps working on promoting the Med and adjoining seas in the Asian market to attract potential new cruise passengers to our region. For MedCruise ports, the rise of the new Asian cruise destinations and deployments have been an opportunity to keep growing in terms of passengers and cruise calls.

In the forthcoming edition, to be held in Athens, Greece on 28 and 29 May 2019, the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum will provide an excellent opportunity for networking. The MedCruise family, the biggest cruise port association of the world, will be there supporting our members and promoting our region as the best cruise destination worldwide.

Airam Diaz Pastor,
President of the Association of Mediterranean Cruise Ports (MedCruise)

MARITIME & SUPERYACHT ACADEMY

At its second Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, the **Metropolitan College** - the largest UKTNE provider in Greece - will launch its Superyacht Academy certification programmes, offered in Greece in collaboration with Warsash Superyacht Academy of Solent University in Southampton, UK. It will also present its lifelong learning courses for the Yachting Hospitality professionals, offered in collaboration with PYA (Professional Yachting Association) and IAMI (International Association of Maritime Institutions). Romanos Rodopoulos, Member of the Board, said: "With our 2019 participation in the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum we aim to present and promote our Maritime and Superyacht Academy academic and lifelong learning programmes, ideal both for professionals in the Shipping and Yachting industry, and young people wishing to pursue a career in the sector. We believe that the Forum's international profile will contribute in showcasing the strong potential of Southeast Europe in the Sea Tourism sector, and more specifically, in the Yachting sector." Metropolitan College launched in 2018 its Maritime Academy in partnership with Solent University, giving the opportunity to young people to attend one of the world's leading maritime academies without leaving Greece.

CELESTYAL CRUISES TO ADD NEW GREEK CRUISE ITINERARIES FROM 2020

Niche cruise operator **Celestyal Cruises** is gearing up for its fifth consecutive Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum participation, where it hopes to further cement its reputation as the world's foremost Greek cruise specialist. At this May's event, Celestyal Cruises will unveil details of its ongoing efforts to extend the cruise season in Greece and announce new itineraries from 2020 and beyond.

"Since we are operating in an area with a lot of geopolitical challenges, our focus is a sustainable and viable operation with our mid-size vessels which is the right size for this part of the world," said Chris Theophilides, CEO Celestyal Cruises, which is headquartered in Piraeus. And he added: "It is a great pleasure for us to participate at the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum once again, an event which highlights the dynamic growth of the cruising sector and its potential to our operating region. Moreover, as Celestyal Cruises is one of Greece's main homeporting cruise lines, we are proud to systematically contribute to our national economy and support initiatives that promote cruising in East Med."



SHAPING INTERNATIONAL DISCOURSE

Inchcape Shipping Services is cruising to its third consecutive participation at this May's Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, where it aims to reinforce its reputation as a key contributor to the growth of the cruise sector in South Europe and help shape the discourse of the industry's future development. Christos Makrialeas, VP Marine Services South Europe, said: "We are very happy to participate at the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, which we have supported since the very beginning, as we believe that it helps promote the reputation of cruising to a diverse stakeholder audience in the region and also globally." The cruise industry is very important to the ISS group, which invests in people and new products offered on a worldwide basis, taking advantage of the continued growth of the industry, therefore events like the PSTF are essential to their global strategy.

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