

Destination MEDCRUISE

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Via Sochi

Sochi's winning Olympic bid



Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi has been awarded the 2014 Winter Olympics. The MedCruise member port, which hosted the association's general assembly in May, will be the venue for some of the indoor winter sports events whilst the rest of the Games will be centred in the snow-covered mountains at Krasnaya Polyana (pictured), an hour's drive away.

'For those of us who were in Sochi for our General Assembly in May, this is especially good news, as we had the pleasure to meet the officials responsible for the Olympic bid, including Mayor Kolodyazhny and Mr. Minaev, who sponsored both of our gala dinners, and the Olympic Committee of the Russian Federation, who invited us to the Caucasus mountain ski resort, Krasnaya Polyana, the site of the 2014 Winter Olympics!' remarks MedCruise president Laurent Monsaigneon.

The mayor of Sochi, Victor Kolodyazhny, told delegates at the May MedCruise meeting that \$13bn has been invested in the local economy in the past five years with further funding of \$10bn earmarked if the Olympic bid was successful.

Part of the redevelopment plans include a master plan to extend the cruise facilities in Sochi, including a new marina and new passenger terminal plus a new 2km long quay projecting out into the sea, noted Sochi port director, David Stupelman.

Grigory Minaev, head of the transport and communications department of the Krasnodar Region, confirmed that the project is being studied by the Russian Ministry of Transport. 'We hope to go out to tender next year with completion by 2014,' he noted.

Sochi, Russia's leading resort offers an unprecedented combination of Alpine and Mediterranean climates within a radius of 50 kilometres. For this reason, it is growing rapidly as a cruise destination with around 40 international cruise ships expected to visit this year. Local travel agency, Sochi Holidays Cruise & Travel Agency, whose main activity is providing shore excursions for lines including Costa, Silversea, Holland America Line, Oceania, Hapag Lloyd, P&O, Noble Caledonia and Saga organised shorex tours for more than 7,000 cruise passengers last year.

Things to know about Sochi

- 1) It is the largest resort in Russia
- 2) On the map it is at the same latitude as Toronto, Nice and the Gobi Desert
- 3) Situated between the Caucasian Mountains and the Black Sea, Sochi enjoys the most northern subtropical climate on earth.
- 4) Mount Elbrus (5,642mtr), in the Russian Caucasus, is the highest mountain in Europe
- 5) Sochi normally has 200 sunny days a year. Average summer temperature in +26° and 9° in winter.
- 6) 400,000 people live in Sochi representing over 100 nationalities
- 7) Sochi has over 200,000 hectares of forest and 30 botanical gardens and parks housing over 30,000 plant species.





Via Dubrovnik

Jewel of the Adriatic

The raw beauty of Croatia is displayed to perfection at the Southern port of Dubrovnik – often referred to as ‘the jewel of the Adriatic’.

The bustling old city offers tourists surroundings virtually unchanged since their construction in the 13th century. A stroll along the main street, the Stradun, brings visitors in contact with monuments such as

the Onofrio Fountain, the Orlando Column, the city museum – previously the Rector’s Palace, as well as one of Europe’s oldest functioning pharmacies, in operation since 1391.

Early risers have the option of bartering for a bargain at the morning market in the Gunduliceva Poljana square or travelling 20kms to the Konavle region for horse back riding. Those of a slower pace can stop to



indulge themselves at a number of street café’s under the tranquil gaze of the city patron, St. Blaise, known to locals as Sveti Vlaho. It is also easy to arrange an excursion to Dubrovnik’s three neighbouring islands – Ipan, Lopud and Koločep.

The city has a strong cultural component, with the world-renowned



Dubrovnik Summer Festival featuring music, theatre and dance performances during the summer months and the Dubrovnik International Film Festival that runs for several days at the beginning of October.

The port expects to boost its visitors from its current 600,000 passengers off 500 vessel calls with the construction of a new facility able to accommodate three large vessels by 2008 as well as a new cruise terminal, scheduled for completion in 2010.

Via Zadar

Past and present



The fifth largest city in Croatia, Zadar, has seen 100 cruise calls over the past year, a 15% increase on 2006. In fact, the cruise season at the port has been extended by a month and now runs from February to December.

This is hardly surprising since the attractions of a 3,000-year old city and its five surrounding national parks draw visitors from

across the world. The city offers tourists impressions of the past and present juxtaposed against each other, with ancient walls (some of which date back to Roman times) and city gates surrounding the more modern churches and monasteries that are scattered about the landscape.

The decision by the Austrian rulers in 1873 to convert Zadar’s Venetian reinforced ramparts into elevated

promenades that command extensive views landward as well as out to sea allow visitors any number of photographic opportunities. Landmarks include the Roman Forum (founded by the first Roman Emperor Augustus in the 3rd century), the remains of a Roman aqueduct visible outside the ramparts, and the large number of beautiful churches – one of which, St. Donatus’, contains some of the finest Dalmatian metalwork. Visitors can also arrange for excursions to the beautiful Plitvice Lakes, the breathtaking Krka Waterfalls and the nearby Kornati islands.

A recent addition to the port is the new quay for cruise vessels that boasts a “Sea Organ” – several stairs descending into the sea. The steps, situated 30m away from the new port allow visitors to sit back and enjoy the stunning views with the advantage of a cooling sea breeze.

The port of Zadar also expects to start work on a new passenger terminal catering to large cruise ships in Galenica, just two miles from the old town. Construction on the project is expected to begin by the end of this year and is scheduled for completion by 2010.



Via Cyprus ports

Museums galore

The favourable weather conditions in Cyprus make Lemesos the ideal cruise destination all year round. Although the bulk of calls occur between April and October, there are also a significant number of vessels calling at the port in the first three months of the year and in November.

The port, which can accommodate even the larger cruise ships, has announced that it will build a new passenger terminal that will be operational by 2011 and cater to the consistent increases in passenger throughput. According to the scheduled timetable for vessels calling at the port, it should see a 10% increase in the number of visitors this year as well.

Lemesos' proximity to a large number of scenic historical destinations allows the town to serve as a base from which tourists can travel to local landmarks. History lovers must visit the Cyprus Medieval Museum that is located near the old port. The structure, built

on the site of an earlier Byzantine castle, dates back to the 14th century and is said to be the place where Richard the Lion-Heart married Berengaria of Navarre and crowned her Queen of England in 1191. The nearby Kolossi Castle is also a treat as it served as the Grand Commandery of the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem and subsequently came under the domain of the Knights Templar.

There are a number of museums only a short drive away from the port including the Lemesos District Archaeological Museum that displays antiquities found in the area dating from the Neolithic Age to the Roman period. The nearby Kourion Museum displays a collection of finds from nearby archaeological sites.

Kourion itself is one of the most spectacular archaeological sites on the island, featuring a magnificent 2nd century Greco-Roman Theatre (still in use for musical and theatre performances), and the impressive mosaics and architecture at the House of Eustolios – originally a private Roman villa. Beautiful mosaics depicting scenes from Greek mythology can also be seen on the



floors at Kato Pafos – an area named for the magnificent underground, carved rock royal tombs.

For tourists who prefer to indulge their discerning palates, the area of Krasochoria, meaning 'wine villages,' is found on the south side of the Troodos range. Traditions are kept alive in these villages, where wine making is still the main occupation. The area produces famous dry red wines such as Omodos, Arsos, Vasa and Koilani.

The newest excursion offered at Lemesos is a safari round of the Akamas peninsula, which is a national park known for its unspoiled beauty, wildlife and plants.

Via Sete

300 days of sun

Sète sits like a pearl between the Mediterranean Sea and the Etang de Thau, famous for its oysters. It is separated from Cap d'Agde by 12 kilometres of fine sandy beaches.

Sète has retained all the character of its port, which lies in the heart of town. All year round, you can see the daily comings and goings of the trawlers, followed by crowds of gulls, and watch the cruise ships coming into port for a stopover.

Sète, 'Languedoc's Little Venice', with its typical districts criss-crossed by canals



reflecting the colourful facades on the sun-drenched quays, is both a seaside resort and a busy town whose shops and businesses are open in all seasons.

It's also a centre for gourmets, with an impressive array of local specialities, such as 'bourride', stuffed mussels and squid, 'rouille de seiche', 'tielles', oysters and other types of seafood.

It's a festive place, hosting all the great traditional events of the summer: Saint Peter's Day for the fishermen, Saint Louis for the jousts and a whole host of convivial activities, entertainments and local markets throughout the year.

Sète, capital of the Pays de Thau, bathed in 300 days of sunshine a year, is the ideal point of departure for exploring Languedoc-Roussillon's best-known places of interest.

Ships up to 219mtr in length can be accommodated at Quai d'Alger, near the town centre whilst Colbert Dock can handle vessels with a maximum length of 240mtr. There is also a secure anchorage in the harbour for larger vessels which can

tender passengers, a journey taking 15 minutes. The most popular excursions are the walled city of Carcassonne, Montpellier (day, or half day) and Pezenas (day, or half day).

According to Time Out magazine: 'Montpellier has been transformed from a sleepy university city into the powerhouse of Mediterranean France – and the new darling of the international party set. But it's not all about technology and transformation: Montpellier is an ancient academic city with handsome historic buildings, abundant gardens and an impressively vast central square.'



