

MedCruise News

MedCruise centre stage in Brussels



Photo L-R: Cinzia de Marzo (Tourism Policy, DG for Enterprise and Industry), Rhona Fairgrieve (Marine Environment & Water Industry, DG for the Environment), Thanos Pallis (Secretary General, MedCruise), Franz Lamplmair (Mediterranean and Black Sea, DG for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries), Carla Salvadó (President, MedCruise) and Josep Casanovas (Maritime Transport and Logistics Unit (D.I), DG for Mobility and Transport)

MedCruise and European Commission officials from four different Directorates met in Brussels and discussed the best way to advance a pan-European agenda promoting cruise and maritime tourism in Europe and neighbouring countries.

Following an invitation by the European Commission, Carla Salvadó, MedCruise President, and Thanos Pallis, MedCruise Secretary General, traveled to Brussels and presented the trends and current prospects of cruise in the Med and its adjoining seas. They also detailed strategic actions and policy initiatives that would promote in essence the growth and sustainability of cruise in the region and beyond.

MedCruise expressed to European officials representing the Directorate General (DG) for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, the DG for Mobility and Transport, the DG for Enterprise and Industry, and the DG for the Environment, its satisfaction for the fact that the Commission has acknowledged the potential of cruise growth and endorsed a relevant agenda.

It also welcomed the willingness of the European Commission to establish a European form where MedCruise and other port associations, CLIA, and other stakeholders will work together advancing their common interests.

A pan-European dialogue between cruise operators, ports and coastal tourism stakeholders is scheduled to take place in Brussels on March 5th-6th, 2015.

'The European Commission is exploring the best ways to develop synergies in the cruise sector, targeting best practice sharing in innovation, competitiveness and sustainability strategies. MedCruise has happily accepted the invitation of European institutions to be an active contributor. We are looking forward to work further with high level officials of the Commission, as well as other EU institutions, shaping and jointly promoting a structural dialogue bringing together ports, cruise operators and coastal tourism stakeholders. This discussion will help us finding solutions to challenges, and achieve growth potential,' says MedCruise president Carla Salvadó.

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European Commission in Brussels

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Cruise and Ferry Port Network

Stavros Hatzakos, General Manager of Piraeus Port Authority and Honorary President of MedCruise, presided over the first meeting of the newly formed Cruise and Ferry Port Network (CFPN), set up within the European Sea Port Organisation (ESPO), which took place in Brussels on January 29th, 2015.

During the meeting, participants exchanged ideas on the best way to achieve a major improvement of cruise and ferry ports representation to the European institutions.

Another topic of discussion was establishing main goals and activities of CFPN, and working towards developing a ESPO Code of Practice for cruise and ferry ports.

The CFPN was established in November 2014 and brings together the associations of European cruise ports. The associations that took the initiative to launch the Network, ESPO, Cruise Baltic, Cruise Europe, Cruise Norway and MedCruise, welcomed at the meeting Cruise Britain that joined the Network as well.



MedCruise at 3rd Seatrade Winter Cruising Forum, Cartagena, January 21st-22nd



Carla Salvadó, Jose Llorca Ports of Spain and Alberto Garre Regional President of Murcia

MedCruise president Carla Salvadó participated in the opening ceremony making a keynote speech where she applauded the Mediterranean for being ready to host vessels all months of the year, thanks to a concerted effort of infrastructure development and expansion despite political and economic issues. Antonio Sevilla, president, Port Authority of Cartagena welcomed participants to Cartagena and the Murcia region.

Opening the Forum, Giora Israel, svp global ports & destination development, Carnival Corp. & plc and chairman of Cruise Lines International Association's Global Ports Committee said the barriers to year-round cruising in the Mediterranean are falling, just as the pressure to increase calls outside of peak season is rising.

'Experienced cruisers are demanding new itineraries, congestion is a problem in key ports in peak periods, vacation habits are changing in Europe and airlift is becoming more affordable,' Israel told delegates.

'All of these factors support the growth of year-round cruising,' he said.

Statistics prove year-round cruising is already established in the region. The 4.16m passenger movements and 2,246 calls at MedCruise ports from November 2012 to March 2013 represented 15.7% of the total passenger movements and 15.8% of total calls in the 12 months from November 2012, Thanos Pallis, secretary general of

MedCruise, told delegates.

In the three months from December 2012 to February 2013, just 829 or 5.8% of the year's cruise calls were made, with 6.1% of passenger movements.

Despite the low numbers, the winter months were showing increased numbers of calls and passengers year on year, Pallis said.

Kerry Anastassiadis, ceo Louis Cruises,



Cruise line execs meet the ports

said the cruise industry needs to change its own perception and stop referring to 'winter cruising.'

Anastassiadis believes that blaming seasonality strictly on the weather is deceiving. Employing MedCruise statistics Anastassiadis noted Piraeus had 159,000 passengers in the winter season, fewer than

Hamburg. 'If you compare the weather of Piraeus and Hamburg, where would you rather be? Piraeus. So something is not happening,' he remarked.

'We sell the majority of cruises on warmth and weather,' Anastassiadis argued, 'so Med equals summer. So people do not think of it in the winter. It is a summer destination.'

On the final day MedCruise members Port of Cartagena, Costa Brava Ports, Tenerife, and Balearics participated in the workshop sessions with one-to-one meetings with cruise line executives.



Site inspection; cruise line execs with Hortensia Sanchez at Cartagena's cruise berth

MedCruise Professional Development Course marked by success

MedCruise members advanced their professional skills and knowledge during a most successful 2015 edition of the MedCruise Professional Development Course (PDC) that was held from 22 to 25 February 2015.

During three days cruising from Marseille to La Spezia on board Costa Diadema, 30 participants had the opportunity to discuss best practices and attend a rich in terms of content programme.

The first part was devoted to innovative thinking at work and development of organisational skills, discussing several business cases. Port operations were the theme of the second part of the programme, with port professionals learning how to 'deliver what you promised' to the cruise industry. The final part of the MedCruise PDC 2015 was devoted to port marketing and how cruise ports in the Med and its adjoining seas could capture their potential. The instructors of the three sessions were Jorge Bugallo (WIN+WIN Coaching) and Luis de Carvalho, Mark Ittel (Bermello, Ajamil & Partners).

When Costa Diadema called at the Port of Barcelona, participants had the opportunity to visit and discuss operational issues with the cruise terminals operators, whereas during the course the Master of Costa Diadema Nicolò Alba, Alessandro Marossa, Costa Hotel Director, Alessandro Oddi, Costa Shore Excursion Manager, joined and discussed operational and marketing issues with participating ports.

The professional development course, which is organised periodically and offered by MedCruise as part of the services to its port membership, received excellent evaluations by its participants. The 2015 edition was realised with the kind collaboration of Cost Crociere in hosting the event.

MedCruise will announce the content and location of the next edition during the forthcoming 46th General Assembly in Zadar, 3-6 June 2015.



Participants with Costa Diadema

MedCruise off to Zadar



The 46th MedCruise General Assembly will take place 3-6 June, 2015, in Zadar, Croatia.

During the General Assembly meeting, MedCruise member representatives together with other esteemed guests will discuss the latest developments of the cruise sector, as well as the implications and prospects of cruising in the Med and its adjoining seas.

In line with the MedCruise tradition, all regular and associate members will have a first class opportunity to discuss the developments in the region, while they will also devote time in B2B meetings with cruise line executives. The 46th MedCruise General Assembly is hosted by Port of

Zadar, one of the 72 ports that form the MedCruise regular membership.



Invitation to visit MedCruise in Miami



MedCruise will be participating at the following events worldwide in 2015

Office of the Merchant Navy and Ports of Tunisia celebrates 50 years, 06 April, 2015



MedCruise President Carla Salvado is invited to give a speech during the conference.

International Black Sea Cruise Tourism Conference, Trabzon
16-18 April, 2015



The International Black Sea Cruise Tourism Conference is scheduled to be held in Trabzon.

Adriatic Sea Forum, Dubrovnik
23-24 April, 2015



Adriatic Sea Forum is an international event, for meeting, networking, and in-depth analysis.

3rd Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, Athens,
26-27 May, 2015



To be held at Megaron Athens International Conference Centre, in Athens, Greece.

46th MedCruise General Assembly, Zadar,
03-06 June, 2015



MedCruise member representatives together with other esteemed guests will discuss the latest developments of the cruise sector.

Seatrade Europe, Hamburg
09-11 September, 2015



Azores



Among the 160 calls expected in the Azores this year, 16 ships will make first time visits.

The Azores are currently one of the world's largest whale sanctuaries. Among resident and migrant species, common or rare, more than 20 different types of cetaceans can be spotted in the Azores. It is an impressive figure and it corresponds to a third of the total number of existing species. This is an ecosystem with unique characteristics. With majestic whales and friendly dolphins, the blue Atlantic Ocean becomes even more magic around these nine islands and dolphin and whale watching is one of the most popular tour options for cruise passengers.

Also popular is a full day excursion to Furnas Valley with Fire Lake on Sao Miguel island. The genesis of the Azores is found upon 1766 volcanoes, nine of which are still active. Underground, almost three hundred volcanic cavities, including caves, ravines and cracks, have been surveyed. The landscape is filled with dry calderas, craters lakes, fumaroles and thermal water springs. In the sea, there are submarine geothermal springs. The mountain of Pico, majestic and with an intact cone, appears to be protecting all this geological wealth.

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Bari

Bari, which lies in Puglia, a region of southern Italy, is set to welcome 153 ships this year to the sunny, palm-lined promenade and broad boulevards housing designer shops and top-quality restaurants.

Its medieval Old Town with balconied houses, pretty courtyards, Baroque and Romanesque churches, chapels, shops and courtyards is also very popular with passengers. The Old Town food market, fragrant, colourful and bursting with local goodies is not to be missed. Two of Bari's most notable churches – the 11th-century Basilica of St. Nicola and the 12th-century Cathedral of San Sabino – are both based in the Old Town as well as the Norman-Swabian Castle built between 1233 and 1240 by Frederick II.

The New Town is also the best place to find sophisticated shops and department stores selling good-quality clothes, ceramics and giftware. Beyond the city itself lies beautiful Puglia, which is endowed with a sandy coastline, 60 million



olive trees, Roman ruins, vast golden wheat fields and the distinctive whitewashed, grey, conical-roofed houses known as the Trulli.

Thanks to a new dedicated cruise quay of more than 1,300ft long Bari will be able to accommodate cruise ships simultaneously at five berths: two for ships up to 1,200ft; two for ships up to 1,000ft and one for smaller ships.

The infrastructure works costing €20m also include a new 8,000sq mtr terminal divided into three floors.

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Cartagena

Cartagena is expecting over 110 calls and more than 140,000 passengers this year including Britannia, AIDAaura, MSC Sinfonia and MSC Opera, The World, Quantum and Explorer of the Seas, Costa Magica, Norwegian Epic and many more.

In 2014, new works for the expansion of the Cruise Terminal area took place including the filling of a water area between the Marina and the cruise berth, obtaining 1,400sq mtr of additional space, and therefore improving the access zone for passengers and vehicles.

In addition, the Port Authority of Cartagena has decided to enlarge the cruise berth by 150mtr, enabling larger ships to berth simultaneously.

Cruise line executives attending the 3rd Seatrade Winter Cruising Forum in January paid a visit to the nearby city of Murcia, capital of the region, known for its remarkable history and culture (see also Page 2). In the heart of the old city centre we find the Italian-style Bishop's Palace and the Cathedral. The façade is considered to be one of the best examples of baroque architecture in Spain. In the interior the stone tracery of the late Gothic Velez Chapel delights the visitor. Traperia Street will lead visitors to the Casino, a 19th century building which contains Pompeian and Arab style patios and a Rococo assembly room. Enjoy the panoramic city views while visiting the baroque style Sanctuary of the Virgin of the Fuensanta, one of the region's most revered religious sanctuaries. Of particular note are the frescoes on the interior of the dome, depicting the yearly pilgrimage of the statue of the Virgin.

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Ceuta



Ceuta's perfect location makes it the ideal base to explore Morocco, visiting two cities: Tetouan and Tangier.

The medina of Tetouan and its unique network of shaded alleyways, is a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site. Its large mellah (Jewish quarter) was called Little Jerusalem. Tarafin Street, which is lined with jewellery shops, leads to Hassan II square and the Royal Palace, a fine example of Hispano-Mauresque architecture.

The Tangier medina has always fascinated artists. Eugène Delacroix, Henri Matisse, Paul Bowles, Tennessee Williams, Jean Genet... the list is endless. All have fallen for the charm of Petit Socco Square and its cafés, especially the famous Tingis.

In the Place de France in the heart of the

modern town, you will find the celebrated Grand Café de Paris and the El Minzah Hotel which both were haunts of the famous names of arts and literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Planned for next year is a €2.2m renovation of the cruise berth area including new signage, green areas, new security systems, the streamlining of traffic and catering to the handling of larger ships.

Ceuta is a free port resulting in passengers being able to obtain goods such as jewellery, liquors, tobacco and electrical items at lower prices.

Ceuta is expecting 10 calls in 2015.

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Civitavecchia



Passenger numbers at Civitavecchia are expected to increase 6% over the 2.1m who called on 832 ships in 2014.

Similar growth figures are also expected in 2016.

The Port Authority of Civitavecchia, Fiumicino and Gaeta continues to invest heavily in upgrading and expanding its port infrastructure.

The port is able to accommodate up to 12 ships simultaneously and it continues to invest in improving other facilities in the port.

Roma Cruise Terminal (RCT) is the private cruise terminal operator in the port of Civitavecchia. The company is equally owned by Costa Crociere, Marininvest and Royal Caribbean Cruises.

Construction of a new 10,000sq mtr cruise terminal is planned to start later this year. It will feature two retractable fingers and will be capable of handling 4,500 passengers and up to 9,000 pieces of luggage.

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Corfu

Cruise and passenger traffic in Corfu has been growing over the past five years passing the barrier of 600,000 annually.

In 2014, 395 ships and 672,378 visited the Greek port but in 2015 that figure is expected to reach 410 by 37 cruise lines with a variety of new ships listed in the roster.

Among them, six calls by Celebrity Constellation, two by Celestyal Cruises' Celestyal Crystal and four by Ponant Cruises' Le Lyrial. In addition, Viking Star of Viking Ocean Cruises, the newest entrant in the Mediterranean Sea, will call seven times this season.

Costa neoRiviera will visit for the first time in 2015, one of 77 calls by Costa Cruises.

Corfu Port Authority is focusing on three major projects, which shall be operational this year: a seaplane base – the first in Greece offering a connection between the Ionian Islands and rest of Greece, with future development plans in the Mediterranean



region and shorex option; the completion of a new 430mtr pier, which will enable the port to handle seven ships simultaneously, and the completion of a new pier, dedicated to domestic services to better manage passengers, vehicles and cargo traffic.

A new shorex is gastronomy-related with visitors sampling Corfu-grown olives, typical bread and feta cheese accompanied by traditional aperitif ouzo served at one of Corfu's favourite taverns.

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French Riviera Ports



Half a million visitors will visit the French Riviera on a cruise ship this year.

Newcomers include Royal Caribbean International's Anthem of the Seas in Villefranche sur mer and the new ships of Windstar Cruises' Windstar Breeze and

Windstar Legend.

From all five ports the most popular shore excursion is still Monaco, as well as Nice and Saint-Paul de Vence.

Last year the French Riviera Cruise Club launched a new brochure designed to enhance the attractiveness of the region by

revealing some of its hidden flavours.

Featuring menus inspired from specific themes like "musical notes", "outdoor activities", "Flowers and gardens", "Sun drenched cuisine" they are proposed to inspire cruise lines to create new itineraries with the discovery of some less known facets of this glorious destination.

For example, some lines are offering shorex showing a unique way to discover the Riviera, by vintage car combining tradition and leisure. Pictured are the cars welcoming Seadream 2 last May.

This season, visitors disembarking at French Riviera ports will receive welcome information specially created for cruise passengers and crew members, highlighting the best way to discover the French Riviera and the city of arrival. Especially for crew is information on places to play sport, find grocery shops, WiFi and where to watch sport on TV, places to eat and sightseeing.

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Gibraltar



The Mediterranean Steps Walk, a 1,400mtr long walk that takes you from Jews' Gate on the southern end of the Nature Reserve at 180mtr above sea level, up towards O'Hara's Battery at 419mtr, close to the summit of the Rock, is a new shore excursion on offer to passengers visiting Gibraltar. The walk offers views of Gibraltar as well as Spain and Morocco.

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is considering long term plans for the development of the cruise terminal and facilities although currently there is suitable capacity to meet existing demand.

This year sees P&O Cruises' newest ship

Britannia making six calls in Gibraltar, the first on the vessel's maiden voyage. Royal Caribbean International's Anthem of the Seas will call seven times.

An amendment to Port Rules in 2014 allows 'repositioning' calls from the Med to the Caribbean and vice-versa to benefit from a 100% markdown on passenger dues. A discount scheme also operates on the cumulative number of calls made by all vessels of a particular brand during the course of the year.

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Heraklion

Heraklion Port Authority has instigated a series of initiatives focused on reducing its environmental footprint. Along with the commissioning of targeted studies, funds have been allocated to develop systems for the reduction of natural resource wastage and CO₂ emissions.

A new water management system is now in place to control the irrigation of the port's landscaping.

In the area of energy conservation, a special study was recently completed for the installation of a geothermic system to cover the air-conditioning needs of the 2,500sq mtr Passenger Terminal.

Additionally, a new lighting plan has been prepared to replace conventional lighting with LED, with implementation already in progress. Also, all illuminated signage and advertising billboards installed in various locations in the port are now powered by solar energy.

Heraklion Port Authority president and managing director Ioannis Bras stated: 'We declare our full commitment to environmental stewardship with a view to an integrated green port model for Crete and thus help improve the quality of life of its citizens and visitors.'

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Huelva



Representatives from local businesses, tourism and transportation companies, the City of Huelva, the local tourist board, Onubense Chamber of Commerce and Employers Federation, shipping agents, shipping companies, guides, agents of the State Security Forces, the Maritime and Port Authorities and other institutions have agreed to establish the Huelva Cruise Network.

This year sees eight cruise ships bringing around 10,000 passengers and crew to the Spanish port.

This number is expected to rise to 13 in 2016, representing a significant leap for a port that joined the cruising map only a couple of years ago.

At a workshop organised by The Port Authority of Huelva and attended by 50 local

professionals involved in cruise tourism, president of the port, Manuela de Paz, stressed the authority's aim to diversify its activities by growing its cruise business and in doing so also generate added value for the city and province.

The City of Huelva is working on a more concise map of the city including detailed information for cruise passengers.

Creating a destination brand was discussed highlighting Huelva's role as the starting port for Columbus' discovery of America, its natural resources, access to Seville and the Portuguese Algarve.

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Kavala



Kavala is built on the slopes of Mt. Symvolos forming one of the most picturesque cities in Greece. According to archaeological finds, the city's history dates back to Prehistoric times.

The landmark of the Old City is the Mohamed Ali square, dominated by its statue and the church of Panayia, built in 1965 on the ruins of an older post-Byzantine three-aisled basilica.

Kavala boasts a unique character reflecting its recent past: neoclassical mansions and big tobacco warehouses evoke the memory of a distant past when a wealthy bourgeoisie was dominating the city.

The city's most popular meeting point is Eleftherias Square while the most buzzing point is Megalou Alexandrou Pedestrian Street featuring chic shops, cafes, bars and

shopping centre.

Kamarees, meaning arches, are the trademark of Kavala and a listed monument. It is an aqueduct built in 1550 by the Sultan Suleiman II, the Magnificent and repaired in the 19th century by Mehmet Ali to serve the water supply needs of the City. It is a monumental construction, 52mtr high, consisting of 60 arches.

The Acropolis was built by the Ottomans between 1425 and 1530 on the ruins of a Byzantine castle. It consisted of the inner and the outer walls, which connected the Acropolis to the peninsula's walls fortifying the lower part of the hill on the side of the port.

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Istanbul

Istanbul Port is expecting 362 calls and nearly 650,000 passengers in 2015 including maiden calls of Viking Star, Funchal, Gemini, Asuka II, Rhapsody of the Seas, Club Med 2, Artemis and Zenith. This represents an increase of 45% in turnarounds and 15% in overall passenger traffic.

In the past year, Istanbul Port has renovated the 4,000sq mtr passenger terminal building and developed a second terminal of 4,000sq mtr for turnaround operations, including lost and found and luggage storage area. New services have been added within the terminal such as, coffee shops, duty free, ATM, mailbox and first aid room. A special contract has been signed with a taxi company so independent guests can hire proper, professional taxis. A security and mooring boat conducts patrols upon arrival, departure and during ships' stay.



Long-term plans include regeneration of the waterfront into a hospitality and recreational district with hotels, museums, open spaces and squares. The current pier length is 1,115mtr and the width of the berth will be extended by 10mtr towards the sea. A brand new 19,000sq mtr passenger terminal is also part of the redevelopment project.

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Koper



Berlin, MSC Musica, Silver Cloud, Celebrity Constellation, Aurora, Le Lyrial, and Artania are among new visitors to the Port of Koper this year, which is expecting around 50 calls.

The port and region offers more than 50 different shore excursions. The most popular are Ljubljana the capital of Slovenia, Lake Bled, Postojna caves, Lipica stud farm and city of Piran.

Piran is a very special city – the best preserved cultural monument of Slovenia with architecture influenced by the Venetian Republic, which left its mark on most Istrian towns.

Throughout time, Piran maintained the clustered medieval structure of narrow winding streets, houses huddled close together, rising in cascades, and in contact with the sea, numerous squares and churches.



Tartini Square is the gem found in the very centre of Piran. It was named after the famous violinist and composer Giuseppe Tartini, who made the town world-famous. His statue is located in the centre of the square. The city is surrounded by a circular wall.

Piran is a member of the European Walled Cities Association. The Church of St. George, the patron saint of Piran, rises above the town. From its lookout tower you have a wonderful view of Piran and its surroundings and all the way across the sea to the Croatian and Italian Coast.

Koper is currently investing in a cruise terminal building of 1,600sq mtr and is keen to promote homeporting from 2016. The planned investment is for €3m.

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Kusadasi, Bodrum and Antalya

Turkish ports of Kusadasi, Bodrum and Antalya are preparing to welcome over 650 calls and 850,000 passengers this year. Kusadasi expects 580,000 passengers representing 40% of all cruise traffic in Turkey.

Although 65% of the passengers calling in Kusadasi are repeaters, over 80% of them go on tour when they visit. Ephesus remains a popular destination attracting over 1,250,000 visitors annually ranking it as Turkey's third most popular attraction.

Ephesus is a spectacular ancient metropolitan city, which used to have a population of 250,000 people. For over 160 years, there have been ongoing excavations allowing passengers to take advantage of discovering new sections of Ephesus. For instance, excavations at Ephesus Terrace Houses will start again this May, to reveal new historical treasures.

St. Peter's Castle, a medieval castle of the Knights of St John, built from stones that once were part of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: The Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, is a 15 minute drive from Bodrum Cruise Port. It has stood guard to protect the entrance of Bodrum's dazzling blue harbour for centuries.



Kusadasi

The ancient city of Aspendos is located on Turkey's southern Mediterranean coast and it is 47km from Antalya. The theatre of Aspendos is one of the best preserved theatres of the Roman world, which was built during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD) and hosts the International Aspendos Opera and Ballet Festival every year since 1994. The festival is organised with the collaboration of the Culture and Tourism Ministry and the State Opera and Ballet General Directorate.

Mevlevihane, which is located at Antalya's Yiyli Minare Mosque, is undergoing restoration to preserve its original state. It will open as a museum in the first half of 2015.

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Málaga

60km from Port of Malaga is the Caminito del Rey (The King's Pathway) which is offered as a new shore excursion for visiting cruise passengers. The area provides 6km of active tourism and a hanging bridge over 100mtr high.

The route which covers four municipalities and was built in 1905, has been restored and is re-opening in March 2015.

It has been built with sustainable materials and respecting the original layout. A Glass floor will be included in some sections as viewing points.

Also opening in March is the New Pompidou Centre. It will be the first international branch of the French museum

and will be located in The Cube, a striking €5m glass building in the city's new Muelle Uno harbour development, with permanent and temporary exhibitions including works by Picasso, Ernst, Bacon, Magritte, Attia and Frida Kahlo.

On the port operations-side, a new bunkering station with latest technology including high-speed supply is scheduled to open in July this year.

On offer there will be four points on the berthing line to take bunkers plus a high-speed 5,000 ton barge.

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Mersin



Mersin is one of the warmest and most beautiful cities of the eastern Mediterranean region offering authentic flavours and beautiful beaches at any time of the year.

Mersin is one of the most developed cities of the region with an ever-growing tourism potential welcoming thousands of visitors particularly during the summer season.

The Taurus Mountains provide a spectacular backdrop, surrounded with lush green forests where you can enjoy scenic beauty and taste numerous citrus fruits.

The city is a beautiful seaside province with a unique cultural background. Mersin offers a rich menu of gastronomy in many traditional and modern restaurants located along the coast and downtown, ranging from fresh meat to seafood, where fish cuisine is a specialty.

In the nearby surroundings of Capadoccia is St Paul's sacred place in Tarsus as well as numerous historical sites and ruins such as The Gate of Cleopatra and the Temple of Zeus.

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Messina

140 ships including maiden visits by Costa Fortuna, Emerald Princess, Vision of the Seas, Rhapsody of the Seas and Zuiderdam are expected in Messina this year.

A commission is currently evaluating the projects for the new cruise terminal. It should be built in the next two years.

Popular with visiting passengers is Milazzo Castle, a fortified ensemble located on the summit of a hill overlooking the town. It's origin is unknown, although it could date back to Arabic times. It was later enlarged in medieval and more recent periods and is now a National Monument of Italy. The castle was more precisely a fortified town or citadel which housed several public and private edifices, such as a Cathedral (built from 1607), a Benedictine convent, the Juror's palace and an older church of Santa Maria. The entrance is from the Santa Maria bastion, which together with the so-called Bastione delle Isole, is part of the massive Spanish 16th century walls.

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Monaco

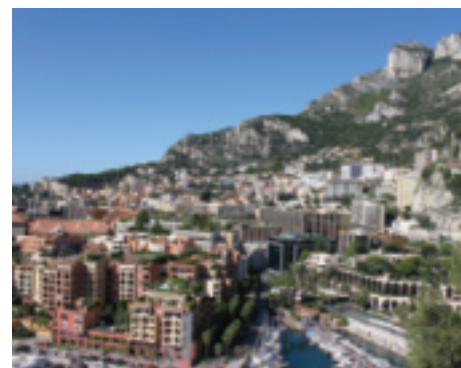
In this day and age a new craze for gardens has emerged. Without doubt, the Principality of Monaco and its surrounding harbour offers real treasures in this field.

Careful not to lose its roots under urban development, the Principality has established a solid policy of garden and park development, with more than 250,000sq mtr for a city-state of 195 hectare, which puts its second in Europe, just after Vienna.

Everywhere precious rare species mix in harmony with flowers and plants symbolically simple and fresh.

At the Exotic Gardens and Observation Cave are found several million species of succulent plants. It was opened in 1933 and was boldly planted on the rocky mountainside where it blooms superbly; it has today become the object of worldwide admiration. 60mtr below ground, a prehistoric cave reveals its spectacular stalagmites and stalactites formed over millennia.

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Odessa

63 ship calls at Odessa Sea Port are scheduled for the 2015 cruise season including Artemis, Rhapsody of the Seas, Sea Dream II, Thomson Spirit and Zenith all scheduled to visit for the first time.

A new mobile app 'The OFFICIAL Odessa Tour Guide' is available for iOS and Android devices. It will help visitors find places to interest, to have a snack and experience a good time.

The in-game "check-in-around Odessa" also provides a chance to win prizes: CHECK-IN to 10 sites – win a set of postcards; CHECK-IN to 15 sites – win a Tourist Information Directory; CHECK-IN to 20 sites – win an Odessa T-shirt with logo.

The app provides information about the history of Odessa. A GPS-navigator will help you find all museums, theaters, monuments and landmarks whilst the calendar of events is updated in a weekly basis.

New shorex include a gastronomic tour, an eco tour by bus and discover Odessa by Segway. The culture, history and traditions of Odessa are inseparably linked with gastronomy. New shorex include a gastronomic tour, an eco tour by bus and Odessa Segway Tour.

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North Sardinian Ports

Port Authority of North Sardinia is expecting 177 ships this year, with Olbia attracting the lion's share of 95 vessels, whilst Golfo Aranci and Porto Torres will welcome 11 calls each.

TUI Cruises' Mein Schiff in April and Pullmantur's Sovereign and Empress will visit Porto Torres for the first time.

The most popular shore excursion from Olbia and Golfo Aranci as Costa Smeralda covering an area of 80km of coastline with a hinterland of rolling granite hills interspersed with maquis shrubland and wild olive groves.

At the heart of Costa Smeralda is Porto Cervo, a prestigious village with multi-coloured buildings where passengers can stroll and browse in the exclusive shopping district.

From Porto Torres, tours generally focus on Alghero, a town surrounded by old towers and walls and built by the Doria family from Genoa in the 12th century. Shops selling coral and filigree handicrafts are well visited.

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Palermo

Palermo, town of art, can offer lots of places of interest and monumental itineraries. If you love "street food", we suggest a visit to the old markets of Vucciria, Capo, Ballarò and Borgo.

They are the most characteristic places to include, without fail, in a tourist itinerary because they are rooted in the past. There you can find the same atmosphere, smells and colours that the Arab merchants of the 10th century were familiar with.

In the markets of Palermo the fresh produce can be freely sniffed in straw

baskets or wooden crates. Visitors can taste fried cakes, croquettes, sfincione, arancine, or boiled octopus.

Another must-try is locally made sweets such as cassata, nougat and almond pastries.

Don't forget within walking distance are the archeological sites of Castello a Mare and Cala, the old port of Palermo.

Palermo's passenger terminal is under going a €28m renovation. The facade of the building, dating back to the late '40s, will be preserved but inside a series of refurbishments will see improvements to

passenger comfort and increase terminal efficiency to European standards.

The interior design includes a large departure lounge with panoramic restaurants, café, a shopping area, ticket offices, safety services and areas for maritime operators. The newly renovated cruise terminal will be ready in 2016.

This year the Sicilian port is expected 200 ships.

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Souda/Chania



Port of Souda and destination Chania are expecting more than 70 calls bringing more than 90,000 passengers in 2015, including three new cruise lines and 10 maiden ship visits.

They will be able to enjoy newly renovated facilities such as an open-air recreational area for passengers and crew.

Chania is ideal for cruise passengers with limited available time to spend, providing a unique variety of historical, cultural, environmental and gastronomy themed tours around the Port of Souda.

The best attraction and very popular is the Chania Venetian Old Port which is included in the majority of shore excursions

provided by the cruise lines. Also the Samaria Gorge excursion is one of the very best tour choices for cruise guests who want to get a taste of one of Europe's unique natural and environmental reserve.

Port of Souda is among the safest ports of call in the south east Mediterranean with a great track record. On three occasions in 2014 the port was selected as an alternative call due to weather conditions in the region, and was able to provide a full range of port services, and necessary facilities at short notice.

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Palamós

The ports of Palamós and Roses from Costa Brava Cruise Ports brand, are expecting 46 calls and 40,000 passengers this year. Year after year the ports of Palamós and Roses consolidate their position on the west Mediterranean itineraries, and the Costa Brava, the region where they are located, a recognised cruise destination.

Most popular shore excursion from Palamós is Figueres with a visit to the Dalí Museum combined with Jewish Quarter in Girona.

Most popular shore excursions from Roses is a trip to Cadaqués. Passengers will experience a nice and welcoming atmosphere and will be able to relax and have an aperitif or a snack facing the sea, like a great number of

intellectuals did, such as Salvador Dalí or Marcel Duchamp among others. Some of these bars have photographs of famous people hanging on their walls, which is a sign of the fascinating glamour of Cadaqués.

Some tours combine Cadaqués with a wine tasting in the middle of a vineyard surrounded by mountains and sea.

There are plans and investment in place to improve tender pier arrivals at Roses, which this year welcomes Paul Gauguin and Le Ponant for the first time. Mein Schiff 2, Costa Magica, Seven Seas Mariner and Riviera are making maiden calls at Palamós.

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Sibenik



Sibenik welcomed 93 ships and over 12,700 passengers in 2014 and expects the number of arrivals to rise 5% in 2015 and number of passengers to rise 50%.

Most popular excursion is the Krka National Park lying 20km from the port and can be toured by water, by road or by foot on many hiking trails.

Aside from the multitude of waterfalls there are many cultural and historical monuments such as archaeological sites, medieval fortresses, ethnography – cultural and historical monuments (mills), and monuments of religious heritage.

Skradinski Buk is one of Croatia's best known natural features, made up of travertine cascades, islands and lakes. It is one of the most unusual and beautiful landscapes in the Krka National Park.



Also popular is a visit to Ozidana cave – a place of outstanding natural, cultural and historical value. There is a record of continuous human presence in the cave from 5000 to 1500 BC. An in situ archaeological collection has been put on display in the cave.

If you prefer a boat ride, then a tour of Visovac island – among the most important natural and cultural places in Croatia is a must. Since 1445, this has been the site of the Franciscan monastery of Our Lady of Mercy, and the Church of Our Lady of Visovac. With their magnificent grounds and surrounded by Visovac Lake, this forms a unique entity.

Vrulje Quay, with a length of 510mtr, has been completely renewed at an investment of around €10m and can accommodate cruise ships of up to 260mtr long.

The next phase of the Maritime Passenger Terminal Project is the construction of a new two-storey terminal, which should start next year and be finished by 2017.

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Tarragona

Tarragona Cruise Port located in the Costa Daurada region of Spain is anticipating 8,000 passengers in 2015, a significant increase on the almost 2,000 cruise visitors arriving last year.

Cruise ships of less than 140mtr in length berth at Marina Port Tarraco, located on Tarragona seafront, or longer vessels can tie alongside at the Levante Dock.

As Tarragona pushes to be one of Mediterranean's regular cruise destinations, work has begun on building a new dedicated cruise terminal, planned to be operational in 2018.

Consultant Bermello Ajamil & Partners Europe has been contracted to technically assess the drafting of the development plan of the new terminal, envisaged to receive 50,000 cruise passengers a year, in the medium term.

Tarragona offers access to a wide variety of tourist attractions, from UNESCO World Heritage sites dating to Roman times, to 'Castells' or Human Towers, the monastery of Poblet, and Mediterranean gastronomy.



There is an extensive range of wine producers in the area, with five denominations of origin of wine, including Priorat. On the leisure side, the area boasts seven golf courses.

Another popular attraction is PortAventura, one of the Europe's top theme parks welcoming 4m visitors annually.

In 2016 there are plans to open Costa Daurada Ferrari Land; a new 75,000sq mtr theme park alongside the first Ferrari-themed hotel in the world.

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Split

Port of Split, Croatia is expecting a record breaking 276 cruise ship calls and around 250,000 passengers in 2015.

The port infrastructure will be further enhanced by the construction of two additional berths for cruise ships on the outer side of the City Port breakwater. The works are on-going and are to be completed in 2016.

From 2017, the two new berths will accommodate cruise ships with a maximum length of 320mtr and 270mtr respectively, with 10.5mtr maximum draft and will significantly increase the port's existing capacity to accept



large cruise ships and raise the level of service, safety and security for all the passengers.

Among many shore excursion destinations that are accessible from Split are the ruins of Salona – the ancient Roman capital of the Province of Dalmatia, the historic Fortress of Klis, the UNESCO listed picturesque town of Trogir, the unforgettable experience of rafting on the magnificent Cetina River and the remarkable Krka River National Park.

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Tenerife ports

504 cruise ships are heading to Tenerife in 2015, with the Port of Santa Cruz set to welcome several new visitors including Britannia, Norwegian Epic and Mein Schiff 4.

New on the shorex front is a visit to Palmetum, a 12 hectare Palm Botanical Garden in the old Santa Cruz de Tenerife district. The Palm garden is next to the Auditorium and the Maritime Park. The garden has more than 400 palm species. This visit includes a theatrical recreation of Horatio Nelson's defeat in Tenerife in 1797. During the English assault, he lost his right arm and the island won the battle.

Ports of Tenerife is developing a new 8,473sq mtr cruise passenger terminal to be operational for the 2016-2017 season. The facility will include a 3,300sq mtr luggage area, 50 check in desks, lounge area, restrooms, mechanical ramps, an aerial

gangway, scanners and security arches, Port Police control according to ISPS, a crew internet corner, a wide bus parking area, and taxi line. The berthing line is 395mtr with 10mtr draft.

Ports of Tenerife has developed an app with 360° virtual tour of the Port of Santa Cruz <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/puertos-de-tenerife/id905738294?mt=8> including pictures and information on services and facilities for cruise lines and passengers.

A Diin app <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.insoftcan.diin> provides passengers with information as soon as they arrive at the port (distances, restaurants, events...). The app could be downloaded before the cruise and used offline.

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Trabzon



Turkish Black Sea port of Trabzon is expecting 19 cruise ships this year, all repeaters.

Mentioned in the memoirs of Marco Polo and Evliya Çelebi, Trabzon, with its cultural and natural riches, is a lively city throughout all seasons.

The city, which was initially named as Trazepos, lies in a beautiful countryside between the Black Sea coast and the Zigane mountains.

The city, which had lived under the reign of many civilizations throughout centuries, was taken by Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror during the Ottoman Conquest. It eventually became a city of the Republic of Turkey that was founded in 1923.

The festivities and activities organised in this city, famous for its folk dances and authentic instrument, the fiddle, provide for great entertainment.

Trabzon attracts the attention primarily for its silver and gold processing; and is famous for its specially designed bracelets called 'Trabzon Bileziği'.

Apart from the city itself, popular tours include a visit to the Karaca Caves (full day), and half day trips to Uzungöl, Hıdırnebi Plateau or Kuştur Monastery.

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Tunisian ports

Tunisia's Office of the Merchant Navy and Ports (Office de la Marine Marchande et des Ports – OMMP) is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Originally established as the Office of National Ports on February 12th, 1965, it was set up as a public and commercial institution to oversee operations (including pilots, tugs, berth management and security) at the ports of Bizerte, La Goulette/Tunis, Sousse and Sfax.

Since then the number of ports under its management has expanded to seven including Rades, Gabes, and Zarzis.

Today 30m tons of cargo representing

more than 95% of Tunisia's foreign trade now passes across the berths under the control of the Office of the Merchant Navy and Ports, renamed in 1998.

Cruise traffic is also a significant part of OMMP's business with the ports of La Goulette, Sousse and Bizerte part of the Tunisian Ports membership of MedCruise. They welcomed 175 calls and 440,4560 passengers last year.

Today around 1,500 OMMP employees are working at Tunisia's ports.

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MedCruise is to hold its next General Assembly in Zadar on June 3rd to 5th, 2015. The Croatian port is expecting 90-100 calls in 2015 and more than 70,000 passengers about a 40% increase on last year's traffic. Norwegian Jade will visit for the first time in Zadar, as well as Queen Victoria, Riveira, Marina and Seven Seas Mariner.

All infrastructure work at the new port of Gazeinica, situated just 3km from the city centre is now completed.

Popular tours from the port are the Plitvice Lakes – an UNESCO protected area since 1947, the Krka waterfalls, Island od Pag, the Ancient city of Nin, Kornati Islands and the Old city of Zadar.

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Carnival Cruise Line

Carnival Cruise Line will be returning to Europe after a three-year gap when Carnival Vista debuts in May 2016 with the first of 18 Mediterranean voyages before repositioning to New York.

Following its handover from Fincantieri's Monfalcone yard, Carnival Vista will operate an inaugural 13-day voyage from Trieste to Barcelona. The cruise begins May 1 and calls at Dubrovnik, Piraeus, Izmir, Heraklion (Crete), Valletta, Palermo, Civitavecchia (Rome),

Livorno (Florence/Pisa) and Marseilles.

Then Carnival Vista will sail from Barcelona and Piraeus (Athens) through October 21 on cruises that feature a number of new ports including Heraklion, Corfu, Valletta, Palermo (Sicily), Cagliari (Sardinia) and Gibraltar.

On October 21, the ship will depart Barcelona for New York on a 13-day voyage calling at Gibraltar, Ponta Delgada and Bermuda (overnight).



Carnival Cruise Line back in Med

SeaDream Yacht Club

After successfully debuting wine voyages in 2014, SeaDream Yacht Club added eight dates in 2015 that showcase Mediterranean ports. Each dedicated five- to nine-day wine sailing features tastings from wineries in the regions visited, a Wine Master Class Tasting led by an internationally recognised expert and one tasting held by a top winemaker. At an exclusive Winemaker's Dinner on board, the chef will craft a special menu to match the wine of the winemaker joining for the evening.

One of the 2015 wine voyages, August 8 to 15 from Civitavecchia (Rome) to

Dubrovnik on SeaDream I, will feature meals paired with the great wines of Chianti and other regions.

The October 23 to November 1 cruise from Civitavecchia to Málaga will be hosted by Guy de Rivoire, international export director of the Bollinger Champagne house in Monaco. Wine land adventures on this voyage include a visit to the 1,500-acre private estate of Château de Berne, Sanary-sur-Mer, the Cavas Recaredo winery in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, hosted by the winery founder's grandson, Ton Mata, while the ship is docked at Barcelona, and the Simon Coll Chocolate Factory.



Seabourn Cruises

Seabourn's 2016 Europe season sees Seabourn Sojourn returning to the western Mediterranean on seven-, 10- and 11-day voyages between Civitavecchia (Rome) and Barcelona.

Seabourn Odyssey will traverse the eastern Mediterranean on seven-day cruises departing from Piraeus, Istanbul, and Venice.

In various ports the pair of ships will feature the 'Shopping with the Chef' excursion, where a small group of participants accompany the executive chef to markets to learn about local produce and see how fresh ingredients are selected for the ship.

Seabourn Sojourn and Seabourn Odyssey will offer the 'Marina Day' experience in select Mediterranean ports, featuring watersports from the ships' fold-out watersports platform.



Marina Days offered at selected ports

Regent Seven Seas Cruises

Seven Seas Explorer's maiden voyage will be a 14-night sailing from Monte Carlo to Venice on July 20, 2016. The Regent Seven Seas Cruises ship will remain in Europe for its inaugural season, operating 11 voyages that crisscross the Mediterranean and visit destinations like Barcelona, Ibiza, St. Tropez, Venice, Istanbul, Alexandria (Egypt) and Jerusalem. The ship's inaugural Mediterranean season includes destinations in Italy, Montenegro, Croatia, France, Portugal, Turkey, Israel and Morocco.



Regent SS's newest ship to debut in the Med

Costa Cruises



Costa Classica emerged from a €22.5m refurbishment undertaken at the San Giorgio del Porto shipyard in Genoa late last year. After a major restyling, the 53,000gt vessel is joining the Costa neoCollection as Costa neoClassica.

Public areas and cabins were renewed, with a fresh look by Partner Ship Design, reproducing the mood and elegance of the more intimate Costa neoCollection ships.

Following a winter cruising season in the Indian Ocean, Costa neoClassica is scheduled to head back to the Mediterranean in March on a 30-day cruise sailing from Mauritius and calling at Madagascar, the Seychelles,

Oman, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Greece, Croatia and Italy.

From spring, Costa neoClassica will be deployed in the eastern Mediterranean. A first itinerary calling at Italy, Greece, Malta, Montenegro and Croatia will depart on April 8.

From April 20 to June 15 Costa neoClassica will sail two seven-day itineraries between Venice and Istanbul, with calls at Split (Croatia), Corfu (Greece) and Santorini, Athens and Istanbul. The itinerary from Istanbul will call at Mykonos, Santorini and Cefalonia (Greece) and Dubrovnik (Croatia). The ship will stay overnight in Venice and Istanbul.

MSC Cruises

PICS: VALLETTA CRUISE PORT



MSC Cruises has added Valletta, Malta, to a couple of its western Med sailings in spring-summer 2015, to offer seven

ports on a single seven-night cruise. Departing from Genoa, the seven-day itineraries are aboard MSC Preziosa and MSC Fantasia.

MSC Fantasia's spring and summer 2015 itinerary includes Genoa, Naples and Messina, in Italy, Valletta, La Goulette, in Tunisia, Barcelona and Marseille.

MSC Preziosa will sail from Genoa to Civitavecchia and Palermo, in Italy, with stops in La Goulette, Mallorca, Valencia and Marseilles before heading home to Genoa.

In addition, MSC Armonia will visit Italy, Spain and France throughout the summer, calling at Genoa, Salerno and Olbia, Mallorca and Ibiza and Marseille.



Holland America Line



Holland America Line's Koningsdam will debut in February 2016 in the Mediterranean with a seven-day 'premiere voyage' from Civitavecchia followed by a series of 12-day sailings through early May.

The 2,650-berth ship is scheduled for delivery by Fincantieri's Marghera yard next February. Following its repositioning to Civitavecchia (Rome), Koningsdam will sail a seven-day round-trip departing Feb. 20 to Dubrovnik, Croatia; Kérkira (Corfu) and Katakolon (Olympia), Greece; and Naples, Italy.

Koningsdam will operate six 12-day cruises on two alternating itineraries round-trip from Civitavecchia. The first itinerary calls at Katakolon, Piraeus, Rhodes and Crete, Istanbul (overnight) and Kusadasi and Naples. The other itinerary visits Naples, Palermo, Cagliari, Gibraltar, Cádiz, Málaga, Cartagena and Barcelona (overnight).

Azamara Club Cruises

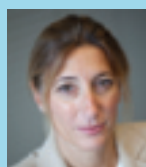
Azamara Club Cruises will offer 65 voyages to 203 ports in 68 countries during 2017. Adding to its destination immersion, Azamara in 2015 will launch its 'Cruise Global, Eat Local' program, providing the opportunity to dine at restaurants serving authentic fare in each port.

Throughout summer and fall 2017, Azamara Quest (above) will sail across the Mediterranean and Black Sea region. One 10-night itinerary from Civitavecchia (Rome) explores the Amalfi coast, Croatia and Greece. While in Italy, passengers will travel to Sorrento and Amalfi then head to Sicily, Malta, Greece, Montenegro and Croatia before disembarking in Venice.

Meanwhile, Azamara Journey (below) will cruise northern and western Europe in the summer and fall, while also offering some voyages to the Mediterranean and Black Sea.

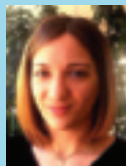


MedCruise News



Left:- Carla Salvadó and Thanos Pallis

Right:- Aimilia Papachristou and Kleopatra Arapi



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