

SHIP 2 SHORE

ON LINE MAGAZINE OF MARITIME AND TRANSPORT ECONOMICS



You are in Home » Shipping » Big surprise: a (supposed) newco in the cruise business, right now?

04/05/20 10:56

Shipping

Big surprise: a (supposed) newco in the cruise business, right now?

Wärtsilä announced an order for (up to 6 ships of 200 guests) luxury cruise vessel design for polar and tropical expeditions operated by (mysterious owner) Amundsen Expeditions



by

Angelo Scorza

For sure – supposing the news will become actual reality and not just a single announcement, although the industrial source is certainly reliable – it might be the news of the year, not only in the cruise segment but for the whole shipping sector, in such a dramatic scenario right the one depicted in the first third of the year 2020 by the Covid-19 emergency.

In fact Wärtsilä announced to have received - the contract was signed in the third quarter of 2019 but, surprisingly, it was officialised only now - an order to develop luxury cruise vessel design for polar and tropical cruise expeditions; the Finnish

technology group's in-house ship design capabilities have been recognised with an order to develop a customised design for up to 6 new luxury expedition cruise vessels capable of carrying 200 passengers that will be owned and operated by the totally unknown company Amundsen Expeditions, being targeted primarily at the growing Chinese market.

"Because of the harsh environment and often remote location of the cruise destinations, special attention has been given to ensuring the ships' operational reliability" stated Markku Miinala, General Manager, Ship Design Sales, Wärtsilä Marine, which worked in close cooperation with the owner to develop a concept that meets its precise specifications and requirements.

The vessels are to be fitted with a complete package of Wärtsilä solutions: 32 engines, selective catalytic reduction (SCR) systems for the abatement of nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions, electric propulsion, Nacos Platinum bridge system for navigation and communication, automation solutions. The eventual supply package is to be supported by a 10-year maintenance agreement to ensure the ships' safety, reliability, and efficiency while providing cost assurances for budgeting purposes.

"We have great respect for Wärtsilä's experience and broad portfolio of high quality solutions; this is important to us as these cruise ships are highly complex and require advanced design expertise. The cruise ships will feature all outside guest cabins, presidential suites, winter gardens and the latest environmental equipment" is the official statement attributed to Captain Rajko Zupan, representing Amundsen Expeditions, actively involved in the design since inception of the project.

But who is this gentleman mariner from Croatia? And who is Amundsen Expeditions?

For the second question there is no answer at all for the time being, since we could not track any clue at all by surfing on the internet, not even a website.

On the contrary, Zupan is recognised as a professional master who – as himself describes – along past 30 years has accumulated experience in commanding a wide variety of cruise vessels worldwide. "Over this time I am proud to have achieved excellent safety records and award-winning guest experiences. Currently, I am lecturing at CSMART Center for Simulator Maritime Training in The Netherlands, probably best training academy in the solar system. Together with Wartsila we completed the expedition ship project. In addition, I am the proud owner of Blue Seas Cruises project; finally since 2016 I am Flag state surveyor for the Cook Islands Maritime"

For sure, there is something worth in the CV of this Croatian seafarer who adds "to have been spending quality time living and working in my beloved Pacific lecturing two fantastic generations of young mariners at New Zealand Maritime School in Auckland".

Previously, engaged by Paul Gauguin Cruises for a dozen years, Zupan sailed aboard, worked with the Marketing Dept. to create itineraries all over the world (Mediterranean, Caribbean, Panama, Costa Rica and Atlantic crossing).

Also he oversaw refurbishment and drydock of vessel prior to re-launch in December 2012 of the

Tere Moana, a unique and intimate yacht like vessel carrying only 88 guests with 60 crew. "Together with the team on board we were able to create individual products and experiences for each and every one of the varied charters. Not by chance from 2004 until 2014, Paul Gauguin Cruises was voted #1 Small Ship Cruise Line by readers of Travel and Leisure Magazine, Conde Nast, Porthole.

Still for the same shipowning company the seamaster, who graduated at Nautical Maritime Academy Split in Croatia, had sailed for 8 years along the Pacific (French Polynesia, Cook islands, Fiji, Tonga, Australia) aboard 19,200 GT Paul Gauguin.

Another interesting experience in his track was for NCL Norwegian Cruise Line; from 2000 to 2004 he was Captain of Norwegian Crown and worked closely with the US owners to transform the vessel to fit it at the new Freestyle Cruising concept.

Zupan is no new to the very cold, if not iced, seas.

With Orient Lines he was Captain of Marco Polo and Crown Odyssey along itineraries that included Antarctica, as well as the Amazon River. So in essence he seems well positioned to address the mysterious shipowning company to the designers.

Of course the name of the newco was not chosen by chance.

As everybody can remember, the first expedition to reach the South Pole was led by Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen on 14 December 1911, five weeks ahead of a British party led by Robert Falcon Scott as part of the Terra Nova Expedition. Amundsen and his team returned safely to their base, and later heard that Scott and his four companions had died on their return journey.

Curiously , there is a Roald Amundsen ship in operation.

Bergen-based leading company Hurtigruten, specialised into cabotage service route along the Norwegian coast but also experienced in Antarctica cruising, had had built in 2018 a 140-m long cruise-ferry capable of 350 passengers along its 20,889 GT, the first of two hybrid expedition ships sailing with electrical propulsion.

The Roald Amundsen and its sisterships have been designed by Rolls-Royce, working with Norwegian yacht designer Espen Øino and is pioneer into a new class of specially constructed exploration ships for polar water voyages endowed with strengthened hulls for sailing through ice.

Not by chance, the vessel became famous for being christened with a chunk of ice in honour of its explorer heritage; in fact as the world's first hybrid-powered expedition ship, the Roald Amundsen made history also for being the first ever ship to be christened in the southern continent, as the ship was making her way to the white continent on her maiden Antarctica voyage.

Her maiden season included expedition cruises along the Norwegian coast to Svalbard and Greenland before becoming the first hybrid-powered ship to attempt a traverse of the legendary Northwest Passage, thus following in the wake of compatriot explorer Amundsen's famed voyage.

Will be the 6 ships to be constructed – but at which shipyard? – on account of Amundsen Expeditions and inspired by Roald Amundsen?

We look forward to receive so many answers to meet our obvious curiosity.