



PSTF 2021 DIGITAL TABLES GLOBAL CRUISE INDUSTRY ISSUES AS GREEK, CYPRIOT AND ISRAELI PORTS PREPARE TO WELCOME PASSENGERS BACK

The chief executives of some of the world's biggest cruise lines will participate in the first virtual panel discussion that will kick off the **6th Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum 2021** on May 25th.

Gianni Onorato, CEO of MSC Cruises, Michael Thamm, Group CEO Costa Group and Carnival Asia, Wybcke Meier, CEO of TUI Cruises, and Chris Theophilides, CEO of Celestyal Cruises will share the screen for the day's first session titled 'The Restart of Cruising in Europe and the Mediterranean'.

Each will share their company's initiatives for post-pandemic cruising, their own vision for the restart and the measures and protocols each cruise line is implementing for the interim period. They will also discuss the reasons for the industry's strong backing of the East Med as this year's cruise hotspot, the region that in 2021 will host the highest number of cruise deployments in Europe.

Aida, Celebrity, Costa, Hapag Lloyd, MSC, Norwegian, Royal Caribbean, Seabourn, Silversea and TUI along with Celestyal Cruises will run considerable East Mediterranean summer programmes this season. The port of Piraeus will be the homeport for vessels from Azamara Cruises, Celebrity Cruises, Celestyal Cruises, Holland America Cruise Line, Norwegian Cruise Line, Seabourn Cruises and Silversea Cruises. Celebrity have chosen Greece's biggest port for the commercial global debut of its newest vessel the Celebrity Apex. Greece's Corfu and Heraklion, Limassol in Cyprus and Israel's Haifa are ports that also feature strongly in the lines' homeporting schedules.

"After all the geopolitical problems that hampered the East Mediterranean's cruise development in recent years, the industry is now choosing the region as a main theatre for its successful restart in Europe," said **Pierfrancesco Vago, Global Chairman of CLIA and Executive Chairman MSC Cruises**, who will keynote the event with his opening remarks about the State of the Industry.

Other sessions during the one-day event will discuss the impact on shore excursions, destination management and delivery under the new health protocols, the environmental challenges ahead and the impact of COVID-19 on port operation and development.

The outlook for the 2021 season for cruising in Greece will be exclusively discussed in a dedicated session as the country banks on international visitor arrivals to revive an economy heavily dependent on tourism revenue. Greece, as well as all cruise destinations, lost much-needed income last year due to the suspension of the bulk of cruise operations world-wide. CLIA estimates the disruption to have caused the world economy US\$77 billion in global economic activity and 518,000 jobs.

"Cruise recovery won't be plain sailing. The waves are high, seas are rough, however the collective minds and will of the industry and its stakeholders are strong enough to weather the storm caused by the pandemic and guide us to calmer waters and safer harbours," said Theodore Vokos, Managing Director, Posidonia Exhibitions S.A, the event's organiser.

"The timing of this year's PSTF is impeccable as we will be able to take the pulse and capture the mood of the global cruise industry almost in real time, within two weeks of the official resumption of commercial operations," he added.

Registration is free of charge for members of the sea tourism and maritime community. Online functionality will enable delegates to ask questions. Recordings of the sessions will be available on demand for all registered users until 10 June, 2021.

Sponsors and exhibitors will showcase their products and services in the virtual 'Exhibition Hall' consisting of digital branded stands and featuring promotional material and video. The PSTF exhibition will be accessible through the platform <https://posidoniaforum2021.com> from 24 May until 10 June, 2021.

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HERAKLION PORT LEADING THE WAY TO CRUISE RESTART



Heraklion Port Authority (HPA) SA has set the bar high as far as cruise passenger arrivals are concerned and it can't wait to reveal its plans during this May's Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum 2021 – even though not in person – as one of the event's main sponsors. "We understand the strong need of the Cruise community to e-meet, exchange views and understand best practices and united to move cruises to the next level. Cruising in the beautiful cruise destinations of Greece will remain the best way to discover the marquee destinations and true hidden gems. We are looking forward to very exciting events and discussions," said **Minas Papadakis, CEO, Heraklion Port Authority**. Already generating a two-digit percentage of its annual revenues through the cruise industry, the biggest port in Crete foresees a significant passenger volume increase in the next five years, allowing it to rank among the top three cruise ports in Greece. And it is making every effort to ensure it reaches its lofty ambitions; last year HPA was a pioneer in cruise operations resumption in the East Med, implementing the strictest Safety and Hygiene protocols, an initiative that received recognition by CLIA and the cruise community in general. And just ahead of the 2021 season, HPA signed a memorandum of cooperation with the University of Thessaly, Laboratory of Hygiene and Epidemiology for continuous monitoring and updating of all protocols according to European Gateways guidelines. The port's privatisation process is underway, and in spite of pandemic-induced delays, it is believed to be completed during the first quarter of 2022.



MED PORTS PRESENT UNITED FRONT AGAINST PANDEMIC

Most Mediterranean cruise ports have seen a dramatic drop in cruise vessel calls since the outbreak. For the entire 2020, **MedCruise**, the ports association, estimates this to be appr. 90% down compared to the year before. To help address the situation in a collective manner, MedCruise formed an internal COVID19 Committee of Experts, closely following and interacting with decision-making institutions and bodies. The Association works closely within the EU Healthy Gateways joint action and has contributed to the formation of a special and updated "Tool for contingency plan development and assessment at ports". The COVID19 Committee collaborates closely with EMSA on the "Revision of the COVID-19 EU Guidance on Cruise Ships". Speaking ahead of her virtual participation at this Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, **Aimilia Papachristou, Secretary General**, said: "The COVID19 outbreak continues to have a major negative impact on our members' activities. Many ports report the 2020 cruise season as 'canceled', with cruise vessels berthing only for lay-up or shipyard. And as we are trying to reimagine the future of cruising in a post pandemic world, the new normal continues to evolve, and making a precise assessment of the longer-term implications is a puzzling task." And she added: "This year's event is vital for all those looking to overcome the challenges produced by a health crisis that has paused cruise industry growth. With this being the most important business platform for cruise and yachting stakeholders in the East Med, the entire MedCruise family is looking forward to the biennial gathering of the industry's experts that will facilitate our adjustment to the new normal."

PIRAEUS PORT PREPARES FOR MID-MAY RESUMPTION OF CRUISES

Piraeus Port Authority (PPA) SA is gearing up for the official opening of the tourism season on May 14, hoping to revive a sector, which in the pre-pandemic 2019 season had seen it serve 622 calls and welcome over one million passengers before it suffered a 84% drop in cruise-related revenues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. **Weng Lin, Deputy CEO of Piraeus Port Authority SA** said: "The cruise sector plays a significant role for our revenues, as Piraeus port is an important hub for cruise ships in the Mediterranean Sea with 9-11 berthing slots for the simultaneous berthing of vessels of any size. The COVID19 outbreak in 2020 negatively affected all cruise industry stakeholders. In 2020, Piraeus port accommodated 76 cruise arrivals and most of them were technical calls for supplies and for crew repatriation purposes." At this stage, Piraeus port is in close cooperation with all the involved parties to follow all the required health protocols procedures based on the EU HEALTHY GATEWAYS. In response to the pandemic, PPA SA recently acquired a passenger disembarkation platform for emergency circumstances, which was constructed taking into consideration also the dimensions of the cruise ships which operate in the wider area and will be used in cases of inability to use the ship's own means. PPA is participating at this year's Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum to catch up with the latest sector developments, interact and engage with customers, promote the port's facilities, services and destination to a wider audience and to garner customer insights and feedback.

THESSALONIKI PORT IS AN IDEAL DESTINATION FOR CRUISE SHIPS, LOCATED IN THE HEART OF THE CITY OF THESSALONIKI

The Port of Thessaloniki (ThPA SA) will participate in the online version of the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum 2021 to promote Greece's second largest city as an ideal destination for cruise ships in northern Greece. The port has implemented all the necessary health and safety precautionary measures and responded effectively to the recommendations of the National, Regional Health and Civil Protection Authorities, ensuring the smooth operation of the port. It was the first port to officially request priority vaccinations for all port personnel whilst also providing unlimited Covid-19 testing to all personnel and is fully compliant with the necessary health and safety protocols. Furthermore, in line with its cruising ambitions, its multi million investment plan includes the upgrade of the infrastructure of its Passenger Terminal. **Ioannis Fetanis, Chief Commercial Officer** said: "The cruise industry is currently a minimal portion of ThPA SA revenue stream, that we believe can increase exponentially since our Port is strategically located in the heart of the city of Thessaloniki with numerous options for nearby excursions and a local community eager to welcome cruise passengers."

CYPRUS READY TO WELCOME BACK THE CRUISE INDUSTRY

The pandemic has dealt a massive blow to cruise homeporting and call destinations around the world and the **Republic of Cyprus** couldn't be any different, as the island of Aphrodite has witnessed a knock-on effect caused by the cancellation of calls and homeporting operations, and the ongoing instability of cruise programmes which in turn affects agents and port flow. The tourism body of the East-Med EU member will participate at this year's digital Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum through which it hopes to inform the international cruise community about the preparations it has made to safely welcome cruise ships back as soon as possible. The country has implemented a raft of anti-virus measures including cruise line health protocols as well as a comprehensive review of entry requirements and the introduction of a Cyprus Pass online registration for passengers. **Savvas Perdios, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Republic of Cyprus**, remains upbeat: "Cyprus is a natural bridge to eastern and western destinations; an exceptional destination, endowed with a rich 11,000 year-long historical legacy and UNESCO sites and characterised by a safe environment, warm hospitality and a continuous commitment to the highest standards in the cruise market. Cyprus is placed amongst the premier cruising centres of the Mediterranean and serves as a call point for international cruise itineraries and for fly-cruise and stay operations."



CELESTYAL RESUMES ITINERARIES WITH FRESH BRAND, PRODUCT AND BOOKING SYSTEMS

Celestyal Cruises, which holds more than 60% of home porting in Greece, will be part of the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum this May, scheduled to take place just a few days after the Athens-based company resumes its Aegean islands cruises. Celestyal didn't stand still during the lengthy pause and instead implemented an investment programme designed to improve brand, product and customer experience. The addition of Celestyal Experience - a mid-size cruise vessel – to the company's existing fleet was the highlight of a series of enhancements. The ship is also well-suited for visiting smaller ports, a key differentiator for Celestyal, with destinations that remain off-limits to larger vessels. "While the pandemic brought a temporary pause to our operations, it was important that we look to the future with optimism and continue to deliver on our strategic plan to grow the business and enhance the award winning Celestyal experience," said **Chris Theophilides – CEO**. Celestyal recently relaunched its own brand and corporate identity in line with current trends and in line with its strategic objective to target a younger demographic. Celestyal also unveiled its Seaware Reservations Platform that will provide advanced revenue management performance, a powerful pricing and business policy engine and a robust customer loyalty programme for both consumers and travel planners. **Theophilides added:** "We are delighted to be participating in the Posidonia 2021 Sea Forum which is particularly important for Celestyal Cruises as Athens is our home. The timing of the event signifies the positive developments towards the responsible restart of the cruise industry that has been hugely affected over the last 12 months, and the great global importance of Greece as a safe and highly demanded destination."

