



## THE CRUISE INDUSTRY CONVENES IN CRETE

### CRUISE LINES MEET WITH EAST MED STAKEHOLDERS AT POSIDONIA SEA TOURISM FORUM

The 8th Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum (PSTF 2025) is set to bring together an elite assembly of global cruise industry leaders in Heraklion, Crete, on 6-7 May. With the strong support of the Region of Crete and the Heraklion Port Authority, this premier event will convene executives from the world's major cruise lines, industry associations, destinations and maritime tourism authorities from Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean to engage in high-level discussions on the evolving landscape of cruise tourism. The forum will address a broad spectrum of industry challenges and opportunities, shaping the future of sea tourism in the region. Over the course of two days at the state-of-the-art Mikis Theodorakis Convention Centre, key decision-makers will explore strategies for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the region's most sought-after destinations.

#### Already confirmed speakers include:

- Chris Theophilides, CEO, **Celestyal**
- Theodora Riga, President, **MedCruise**
- Gianluca Suprani, Senior VP, **MSC Cruises**
- Elisabetta De Nardo, Senior VP, Global Port Relations & Commercial Services, **MSC Cruises**
- Manolis Alevropoulos, VP, Marine Ops, **Celebrity Cruises | Royal Caribbean Group**
- Alessandro Carollo, Associate VP, Government Relations, **Royal Caribbean Group**
- Ana Karina Santini, Assoc. VP, Int. Destination Develop., **Royal Caribbean Group**
- Sandi Weir, Sr. Director, Global Government Relations & Public Affairs, **Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings**
- Spyros Almpertis, VP, Port and Destination Operations, Guest Port Services, **The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection**
- Alexander Bieniek, VP, Marine Operations, **Star Clippers**
- Filippos Venetopoulos, CEO, **Variety Cruises**
- Kyriakos Kotsoglou, VG, Tourism, **Region of Crete**
- Ioannis Anastasakis, VG, Climate Change and Urban Mobility, **Region of Crete**
- Samuel Maubanc, Director General, **CLIA Europe**
- Marcus Puttich, Director, Destinations, **TUI Cruises**
- Ligia Balea, Product Manager, Shore Excursions, **Carnival Cruise Line**
- Adria Bono, Director, Destination Experiences, **Crystal Cruises**
- Michele Bosco, Manager, Shore Excursions and Operations, **Princess Cruises**
- Isabelle Côté, International Terminal Operations-Management Consultant, **Virgin Voyages**
- Lars Clasen, CEO, **Cruise Saudi**
- Minas Papadakis, CEO, **Heraklion Port Authority S.A.**
- Loukas Sigalas, CEO, **Minoan Lines**
- Aziz Gungor, Regional Director, East Med Ports, **Global Port Holdings**
- Ioannis Pappas, Director, Med Region & EU Sustainable Destinations, **GSTC**



On Day One, discussions will focus on striking a balance between growing passenger demand and responsible tourism management, as well as fostering collaboration to introduce cruise travellers to emerging ports with marquee potential. With sustainable sea tourism at the forefront, the forum aims to shape a resilient and forward-thinking cruise landscape for the region.

**Elisabetta de Nardo, Senior VP, Global Port Relations & Commercial Services, MSC Cruises**, highlighted the forum's significance: "The Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum is a fantastic opportunity to exchange the knowledge that can help inform and shape our continued growth path. It is in the interests of all cruise lines, ports, destinations, and other tourism industry stakeholders to ensure we work together to address the issues facing us in the Mediterranean, such as ensuring frameworks are in place for the introduction of OPS, and the work underway to mitigate overcrowding, an issue of particular focus in the host nation, Greece. As Europe's leading cruise line, MSC Cruises is committed to a co-operative approach towards responsible tourism, ensuring we meet the needs of our guests while protecting the destinations we visit and the marine environment on which we rely."

One of the must-attend panel discussions on the opening day of PSTF 2025 is the "Small Ships" Panel, introducing a dynamic and rapidly growing market segment to the region. With increasing interest from major hotel conglomerates in ultra-luxury small cruise ships, this panel will explore how these vessels - perfectly suited for the Aegean Sea and Eastern Mediterranean - are reshaping the cruising experience.

**Spyros Almpertis, VP, Port and Destination Operations at Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection**, commented: "We believe that the East Med will play a crucial role in our future plans, as we aim to provide our guests with unique opportunities to explore lesser-known ports while enjoying the highest standards of luxury. The PSTF 2025 is an invaluable forum for connecting with industry leaders and stakeholders. It provides opportunities for dialogue around sustainability, innovation and the future of the maritime industry - values that resonate deeply with the Ritz-Carlton brand. We are excited to introduce our new yacht collection to this dynamic region and are committed to delivering exceptional service while promoting responsible tourism practices that support local communities and preserve the delicate marine environment."

**Chris Theophilides, CEO of Celestyal**, a PSTF supporter since its launch, highlighted the importance of the East Med and shared his vision: "The Central and Eastern Mediterranean remains a core region for Celestyal, with our beloved Iconic Greek Islands, Idyllic Greece, and Heavenly Greece, Italy & Croatia itineraries. Coupled with our fleetwide year-round operations now in place, we are excited to present our upgraded brand, enhanced services, and expanded itineraries. Our investment in both our fleet and guest experience underscores our commitment to delivering exceptional, destination-rich cruises. With our recent expansion into the Arabian Gulf, offering new year-round itineraries, we are thrilled to bring Celestyal's signature experience to even more travellers. The Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum is a great opportunity to connect with industry partners, explore new collaborations, and showcase our vision for the future. I am looking forward to meeting industry peers, partners, and local authorities to discuss the exciting opportunities ahead."

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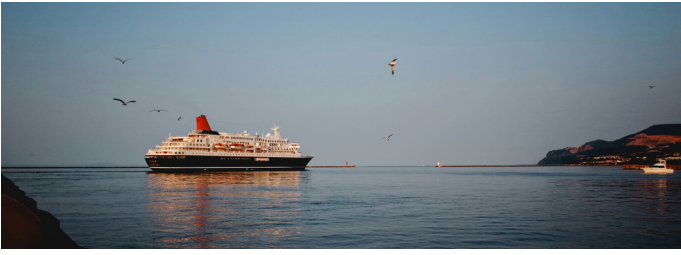


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## CRUISING THROUGH TIME: ODAP BRINGS GREECE'S CULTURAL LEGACY TO PSTF 2025

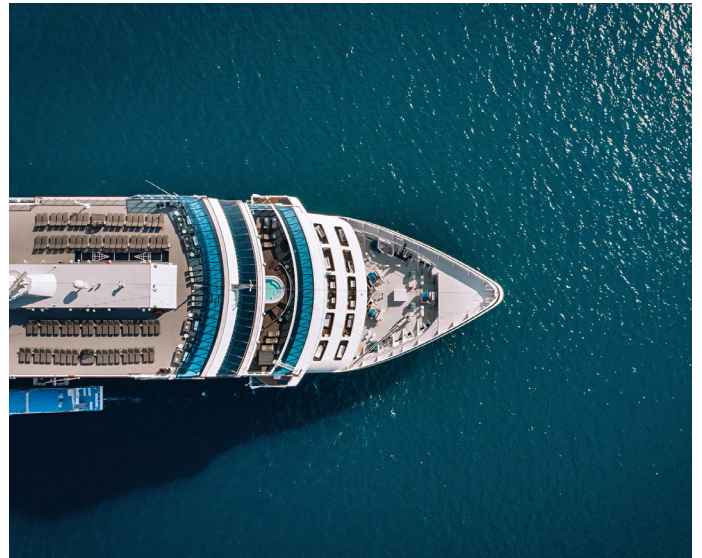
The enduring love affair between cruise passengers and Greece's cultural, archaeological, and historical sites is set to grow even stronger thanks to modernization efforts by **ODAP (Hellenic Organisation of Cultural Resources Development)**. Dedicated to enhancing visitor experiences, ODAP will make its debut as an exhibitor at the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, promoting Greek cultural heritage through sustainable initiatives. The organization aims to engage with cruise and sea tourism leaders, highlight lesser-known archaeological sites, and position itself as a key enabler of cultural tourism. Among its initiatives are e-tickets for over 100 locations, expanded heritage outlets, media and event showcases, scholarly publications, and heritage-inspired souvenirs. **Nikoletta Divari-Valakou, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, ODAP**, stated: "Our participation at PSTF 2025 reflects ODAP's mission to protect, promote and share Greece's unparalleled cultural heritage with the world. For millennia, the Greek people have cultivated a profound relationship with the sea, shaping history, culture, and civilization. From ancient maritime trade routes to myths and artistic achievements inspired by the Aegean and Mediterranean, the sea has been a cornerstone of Greek identity and storytelling. Through this rich legacy, ODAP aims to build bridges between Greece's cultural treasures and the global cruise industry. By offering seamless access to over 250 archaeological sites and museums, electronic ticketing, and curated cultural experiences, we aim to elevate the cruise traveller's journey while reinforcing the timeless bond between Greece and the sea. Our presence at this year's event in Crete underscores our commitment to sustainable tourism, fostering global partnerships, and inspiring new audiences to engage with the beauty and diversity of our cultural heritage."

## A CRETAN AFFAIR: FROM HERAKLION TO CHANIA & AG. NIKOLAOS, STEPPING ONTO THE GLOBAL STAGE

**The Gelasakis Group**, a leading player in travel, maritime, and hospitality services, will once again participate at the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, reinforcing its long-standing commitment to the sector. With headquarters in Piraeus and a significant operational presence in Crete's Chania Souda port, the company has reaped substantial benefits from past PSTF events. "Posidonia has helped us network with industry leaders, discover new business opportunities, and stay ahead of emerging trends. In 2025, we aim to expand our network further, explore new opportunities, and engage in discussions about sustainability and technological advancements," said **Antonis Gelasakis, Owner & CEO at Gelasakis Group of Companies, Travel & Hospitality Divisions**. At PSTF 2025, the company will showcase its latest innovations, highlight its operational capabilities, and discuss how its services continue to meet the evolving needs of the industry. "This forum is an unparalleled opportunity to connect, share insights, and collectively drive the industry forward. We look forward to strengthening relationships, staying ahead of trends, and demonstrating our dedication to maritime tourism. The 2025 PSTF will be a key platform for collaboration, growth and innovation," added Gelasakis.

## MEDCRUISE CHARTS COURSE FOR GROWTH AT PSTF 2025

**MedCruise** is set to make its seventh appearance at the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, reinforcing the event's significance for key stakeholders in the international cruise industry. "Posidonia is the ideal platform for connecting with industry leaders, showcasing innovations, and exploring collaborative solutions to challenges in the cruise sector," said **Theodora Riga, President of MedCruise**. Founded in Rome in 1996 through a collaborative agreement between 16 ports across seven countries, MedCruise now spans 22 countries across three continents -Africa, Asia, and Europe- representing more than 160 ports, including Heraklion, the host city of PSTF 2025. **Anne-Marie Spinosi, Senior Vice President of the Association**, emphasized the value of the event: "Our participation in previous forums has strengthened relationships with key industry players, highlighted the unique value of MedCruise members, and provided insights into evolving trends. At PSTF 2025, we aim to elevate our visibility, forge new strategic partnerships, and promote the diverse offerings of MedCruise ports."



## SMART MARINAS AND TECH-DRIVEN YACHTING SOLUTIONS AT PSTF 2025

Yachting is a crucial pillar of Greece's sea tourism economy, supporting not just its harbours but a vast ecosystem of maritime professionals. To remain competitive, Greek marinas must integrate cutting-edge infrastructure to accommodate recreational boats and luxury yachts from across the globe. PSTF 2025 will showcase the latest in marina technology, including fully automated service pillars, vending machines, fire hose cabinets, and advanced control software solutions. Chalkida-based **SMARTMARINAS L.C.** is one of the companies that, during its PSTF debut, will be introducing its innovative marina infrastructure solutions. "The Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum offers an ideal platform to present our cutting-edge products, which are designed to enhance operational efficiency, sustainability and smart port management," said **Antonis Kalamakidis, CEO of SMARTMARINAS**.

The company's automated pillars ensure seamless water and electricity supply to vessels while enabling real-time consumption monitoring through a user-friendly prepaid card system and smartphone app. By optimizing resource usage and generating significant revenue for port authorities, this technology plays a crucial role in supporting the sustainability of island communities and advancing the future of smart ports.

## The Med: A Compelling Need for New Marquee Ports and Destinations

DAY 1 | Tuesday 6 May 2025

09:15-09:50 Morning coffee - Registration

09:50-10:10 Welcome messages

### 10:10-11:30 The cruise industry: A culprit or a victim of the over-tourism debate?

- Global tourism has witnessed a spectacular recovery in the last two years and it is expected that the industry will continue on a growth path for the foreseeable future. Over the next three years 40 new cruise ships will be delivered adding another 90,000 berths to global capacity. Is this increase enough to meet the expected rise in demand for ocean travel?
- On the flip side, there has been extensive press coverage relating to over-tourism in a number of cities and destinations throughout the Mediterranean that are also marquee cruise ports. Negative public sentiment relates to high inner city rental prices and increased people and vehicle traffic. To what degree is cruise activity responsible and what action can the industry take to help mitigate over-crowding and public opinion?
- As marquee destinations will probably continue to experience very high tourist arrivals, some central and local governments are moving to impose daily caps or taxes in an effort to control arrivals. Will such restrictive measures impact cruise activity?

11:30-11:50 Networking coffee break for Speakers, Delegates and Press



### 11:50-13:10 The future of cruise destination development

- Enticing cruise passengers to new or emerging destinations with marquee potential has been recognised by all as vital for the growth of cruise tourism. Can cooperative efforts between cruise lines and destinations for infrastructure upgrades and marketing campaigns offer a quicker path for alternative ports-of-call to be introduced to mainstream itineraries?
- What criteria would justify earmarking certain emerging or new destinations for future cruise development and how should these be prioritized?
- Does the model of "Private Islands" or getaways offer a solution for Europe's popular island destinations such as the Balearics and the Cyclades?
- In 2024, the Mediterranean experienced the hottest summer in recorded history. How will climate change impact future cruise ship deployment and itinerary planning?
- Demographics: What will the next generation of cruise passengers be looking for in destination experiences and delivery?
- New destination marketing and Cruise Saudi's experience: Successes and Challenges.

13:10-14:10 Networking lunch for Speakers, Delegates and Press

### 14:30-15:45 Small ship cruising: A different perspective

- Ocean cruising in recent years has attracted interest from major hotel conglomerates to invest in the construction and operation of ultra-luxury small cruise ships. Apart from offering features that reflect their particular brand identity, small cruise ships offer a more personable on-board experience for passengers. Will the demand and construction of this type of cruisehips continue?
- Small cruise ships also offer a greater flexibility in itinerary design. What are the operational challenges that need to be solved when calling at small and off-the-beaten track ports and destinations?
- Apart from the actual ship size and itinerary design flexibility, what other characteristics differentiate this niche sector from mainstream cruising?

15:45-16:05 Networking coffee break for Speakers, Delegates and Press

### 16:05-17:20 Cruising towards sustainability: Partnering with destinations on the net zero pathways

- Maritime decarbonisation will need a holistic approach with collaboration across the supply chain. As the cruise industry charts its pathways to net zero, cruise lines, ports and terminals, local society and supply, together with the local (DMMO) and national authorities will need to work together if we are to achieve our collective climate ambitions.
- Latest developments, next steps, and what's on the horizon, connected also with necessary tool to be developed, especially with Regulations, Sustainability Standards and Assessments, as well as capacity building of the engaged stakeholders will be at centre of discussions.
- What investments are needed to meet our policy objectives, from landside infrastructure such as onshore power supply, to facilitating production and accessibility of new sustainable fuels, the roll out of new technologies, and improved energy efficiencies?
- Given the scale of the challenge, practical ways that the maritime and port ecosystem can partner to make progress on the net zero pathways will be explored.

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**15% discount**  
on fares to Heraklion when booking their tickets on [www.skyexpress.gr](http://www.skyexpress.gr) using  
promo code  
**POSIDONIA2025**

Booking period: Until 05/05/2025  
Passengers: 1-4  
Fare types: sky joy+, sky enjoy, business class  
Routes: Valid for all routes to/from Heraklion (including routes that transit in Athens).



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## DAY 2 | Wednesday 7 May 2025

09:15-09:50 Morning coffee - Registration

09:50-10:00 Opening Statements

### 10:00-11:20 Cruise ports: Can infrastructure keep up with demand?

- When designing cruise ship deployment, itinerary planners must take into consideration a multitude of parameters including port suitability and berth availability. As the newly constructed cruise ships become increasingly sophisticated, can ports deliver the additional infrastructure required and still be competitive?
- Berth allocation is a port's responsibility, but is it actually a port problem in its entirety? Are Port Authorities and Destination Management Organizations cooperating adequately so as to achieve manageable daily passenger arrivals or is berth allocation based only on port limitations? Can a well-designed and fully transparent berth allocation system optimise the use of existing port infrastructure and increase port revenue?
- More and more ports are investing in shore power installations, as well as in gearing up for the clean energy transition and port cities are already seeing significant reductions of carbon and sulphur emissions. For the many smaller ports that mainly rely on cruise and ferry traffic, what technical solutions and financing tools are available to them to achieve some level of environmental protection for their port and local community?
- Earlier in the year, Greece's Asset Development Fund announced tenders for interest in operating and developing the cruise ports of Katakolon, the Old Port of Patras and the City Port of Kavala over a 30-year period. How successful are these types of concession agreements in the short and long terms?

11:20-11:40 Networking coffee break for Speakers, Delegates and Press

### 11:40-13:00 Cruise lines & destinations: The need for an earnest dialogue

- Main Conference Hall

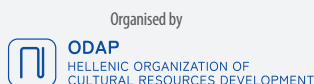
- Is it over-tourism or over-crowding in ports of call that we are actually talking about? Have specific marquee cruise destinations surpassed their visitor carrying or bearing capacity?
- Although there is overall consensus that destinations must strive for long-term sustainability for their tourism to survive, the short-term challenges of over-exposure, over-crowding and in some cases, over-tourism, constitute a reality that needs to be navigated. Is it feasible for destination authorities and cruise lines to discuss and agree on ways to ensure both visitor and local community satisfaction?
- Apart from the need to secure a sustainable future for ultra popular destinations, an earnest dialogue between cruise lines and destinations to seek alternate ways of easing cruise generated traffic to popular and bucket-list sites must take place. Price related measures are theoretically an easy answer, however, are there more effective tools that can be used, such as slots for crowd-management?

## DAY 3 | Thursday 8 May 2025

### 11:00-15:00 Fam trip: An unforgettable journey to Spinalonga island

Get to know a potential high-yield shore destination

Embark on a captivating journey that includes a guided tour through the unique ruined houses and buildings of the settlement that was, from 1903-1957, Greece's official leper colony. The trip is suggested for itinerary and shore excursion cruise executives and open to PSTF Speakers, Delegates, and Press. Pre-registration required.



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ODAP  
HELLENIC ORGANIZATION OF  
CULTURAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

### 11:20-11:40 METAVASEA Port Safety Workshop

-Athena Seminar Room

#### Workshop Agenda

- Introduction to METAVASEA
- Climate Change and Ports
- Cold Ironing in Ports
- Safety Aspects of Maritime Decarbonization in Ports
- Introduction to Soft Skills and their Significance in Maritime Decarbonization
- Q&A, Discussion

Organised by HELMEPA



The METAVASEA project, focusing on People-Centered Transition for Maritime Decarbonization in the East Mediterranean, is coordinated by HELMEPA in collaboration with Lloyd's Register, World Maritime University (WMU), CYMEPA, CMMI, Premium Consulting, MIO-ECSDE, 12 associate partners, and valuable contributions of more than 70 other stakeholders, including Posidonia Exhibitions SA. Supported strategically and financially by Lloyd's Register Foundation, the five-year project aims to map the existing infrastructure for maritime decarbonization in Greece, Cyprus, and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as to empower seafarers, port workers, and maritime executives through the development of flexible training tools for retraining. The program aims to provide for the training and re-skilling/up-skilling of 1,500 employees on issues related to new fuels, enhanced safety culture onboard ships and in ports, digital transition, soft skills, environmental leadership, and marine environmental awareness. Moreover, it seeks to enhance the participation of shipping companies and port organizations in decarbonization initiatives, to measure the level of preparedness of shipping and coastal communities in the use of new fuels, to identify related opportunities, gaps and challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean, to prevent maritime accidents by improving operational efficiency in ship and port operations, and to raise awareness among 10,000 students, 750 teachers and about 2 million inhabitants of the Eastern Mediterranean.

13:00-14:00 Networking lunch for Speakers, Delegates and Press

### 14:00-15:15 Coastal & short sea shipping: Evolving towards a greener future

- Main Conference Hall

- The EU's Fit for 55 and its Fuel EU Maritime Initiative for reduced greenhouse gas emissions in the maritime industry are fast approaching. Will governments and the EU itself, provide the funding mechanisms necessary for ferry operators to renew fleets and ports to complete the "green transition" and meet compliance deadlines?
- To what degree can the cost of domestic fleet replacement be transferred to the consumer with the sector still remain competitive versus other transport options?
- The need for improved berthing and passenger facilities in nearly all Greek island destinations has been an ongoing discussion for decades. As the fleet mix of older conventional ferries and high-speed vessels is changing, the dock requirements have also changed. Can ports keep up with the necessary infrastructure upgrades that will ensure improved marine operations, safety, efficient vehicle and passenger turnarounds and experience quality?

### 14:00-15:15 Yachting today looking at global challenges and its next phase

-Athena Seminar Room

- The perspective end of the war between Ukraine and Russia will create a new world order with positive sign. Will sanctions be lifted?
- The shipyards in Elefsis and Skaramaga will mark a new era in shipbuilding which will soon operate back again. How operationally ready are we for this?
- The future marinas in Attica and the islands will start a new chapter with yachting in Greece, the famous «Home Port». Are they enough for the demand our country has? What can we do in between? Are there any possible solutions to this issue? Can we convince the local communities of the changes that will occur?
- Legislatively, are we ready to welcome these vessels for permanent stay same as the other EU states?
- Are we going to develop the sector with relevant training schools?
- What are we missing in order to be the yachting leaders in the EU?

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15:15-16:30 YES to SEApping

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