



## POSIDONIA SEA TOURISM FORUM 2025 CALLS FOR BOLD RETHINK OF CRUISE GROWTH IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The 8th Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum (PSTF) concluded in Heraklion, Crete, with a resounding call for stronger collaboration, smarter infrastructure investment, and a more inclusive approach to cruise and short sea development across the Southeast Mediterranean region.

Held under the theme “The Med: A Compelling Need for New Marquee Ports & Destinations”, the two-day forum attracted over 700 industry leaders, policymakers, port authorities, and tourism experts. The event spotlighted the region’s urgent need to expand capacity, enhance port infrastructure, and better align cruise operations with local expectations and environmental commitments.

Discussions challenged common narratives around overtourism, with cruise representatives from CLIA and MedCruise presenting data showing the sector’s relatively light footprint compared to land-based tourism.

Debate surrounding the creation of private islands or cruise-dedicated destinations echoed throughout the forum. While popular in the Caribbean, speakers noted that Europe’s legal and cultural complexities make similar developments challenging. However, innovation and collaboration in how cruise lines engage with ports and communities remain crucial.

Port authorities highlighted that many Mediterranean ports have not evolved in line with newer, larger cruise vessels. Several called for increased public and private investment to upgrade infrastructure, particularly shore power and terminal facilities.

As the host city, Heraklion presented itself as a model for regional port transformation, showcasing efforts to balance commercial viability with local community interests. The Heraklion Port Authority proposed cancellation fees for last-minute berth changes as part of a broader strategy to foster mutual accountability between ports and cruise operators. Local community engagement was a recurring theme, with participants agreeing that the “license to operate” in cruise tourism increasingly depends on building trust and delivering clear benefits to host cities.

In a nutshell, PSTF 2025 presented a comprehensive view of the opportunities and challenges shaping the future of sea tourism in the Mediterranean and beyond. The consensus: responsible growth, strategic innovation, and collaborative planning are essential for the region to maintain its appeal as a global cruise hub.

PSTF delegates were also given the opportunity to network and unwind at various side social events held in prestigious venues at picturesque locations throughout the wider Heraklion Municipality.

## SAILORS' SOCIETY PSTF 2025 OFFICIAL CHARITY

Posidonia is proud to continue its valued partnership with **Sailors' Society**, a long-standing and trusted maritime welfare charity making a meaningful difference in the lives of seafarers around the world. As a long-term charity partner of Posidonia Events, Sailors' Society has used PSTF to raise awareness, build meaningful connections across the shipping sector, and drive conversations around seafarer wellbeing. This year, at the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum 2025, Sailors' Society launched a new membership scheme specifically aimed at the cruise sector. The scheme not only highlights the charity's relevance to the sector but also offers cruise companies and individuals a meaningful opportunity to showcase their commitment to crew welfare, employee wellbeing, and broader ESG and DEI goals.

Sailors' Society offers a wide range of free welfare services to all seagoing employees of cruise companies, with recent initiatives including a 24/7 helpline exclusively for female seafarers and cadets, staffed by trained female personnel, and a dedicated female Peer Support Group. With women now representing around 20% of cruise ship crews-more than any other maritime segment-these services are especially timely and relevant. **Theodore Vokos, Managing Director, Posidonia Exhibitions S.A.**, said: "We are honoured to support Sailors' Society's growing role within the cruise community and proud to provide a platform that amplifies their mission to deliver compassionate, practical support to seafarers and their families".



## HIGH FIVE TO FIVE SENSES

**Five Senses** is a boutique consulting firm, founded in 2015, specializing in transforming ports and destinations into vibrant tourism hubs by integrating local culture, history, and gastronomy into tailored strategies. During the 8th PSTF this May, Five Senses also sponsored one of the event's social and networking highlights, held at a traditional Cretan museum tucked away in a picturesque location in Heraklion, the host city of PSTF 2025. The **CEO and Founder of Five Senses Consulting & Development, Ioannis Bras** said: "Our mission is broader than consulting. We're committed to unlocking the fullest potential of cruise ports and lines globally. PSTF is always an excellent opportunity to meet friends in the industry and establish new relations. This Year, we proudly sponsored a dinner, which took place in a traditional Cretan museum, where everyone had a great time and enjoyed the hospitality, food, and dances. For us, it was an excellent opportunity to showcase new projects and conduct two port inspections." Having worked with over 60 cruise lines, government organisations, destinations and port authorities, amongst others, Five Senses consulting helps clients make informed decisions which enhance visitor satisfaction, improve marketability, and ensure long term success.



## POSIDONIA PROUD TO SUPPORT HERAKLION PORT FIRE STATION - A PILLAR OF MARITIME SAFETY

Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum is proud to support the **Heraklion Port Fire Station**, a vital force in safeguarding life and infrastructure across one of Greece's most important cruise hubs. Part of the Greek Fire Brigade under the Ministry of Climate Crisis and Civil Protection, the Heraklion Port Fire Station operates on a 24/7 basis to protect vessels, port facilities, and people - whether docked or at sea. From tackling fires aboard cruise ships and cargo vessels to intervening in flooding incidents and supporting rescue operations in coordination with the Hellenic Coast Guard, their mission is clear: to save lives and protect the maritime community. At the core of their operations is "MACEDONIA," a 33-meter FiFi II-class firefighting ship specially equipped to handle high-risk fire emergencies on the water. The station's highly trained team is equally prepared to respond on land, with rapid deployment capabilities throughout the port and coastal areas. "We are honoured to work alongside the Heraklion Port Fire Station, whose unwavering commitment to maritime safety is both admirable and essential," said **Theodore Vokos, Managing Director of Posidonia Exhibitions S.A.** "Their presence reinforces the trust and confidence of the cruise lines and passengers who visit this beautiful gateway to Crete. Our partnership reflects Posidonia's ongoing commitment to supporting every pillar that strengthens the maritime and cruise ecosystem."



**Spyros Almpertis, VP Port and Destination Operations, The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection**

Participating in the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum is always a remarkable experience. It's a unique platform that brings together industry leaders to discuss the future of cruising. The opportunity to share insights and engage in meaningful dialogue on pressing issues facing our sector is invaluable. Being part of a panel at such a prestigious forum allowed me to contribute my perspectives and learn from fellow experts. Together, we explored innovative strategies to navigate the challenges our industry faces, from sustainability to technology integration. PSTF also serves as a fantastic networking opportunity, fostering connections between various stakeholders. These conversations can lead to collaborative solutions benefiting the cruising community. Events like PSTF are crucial for shaping the conversation about our industry's direction. I believe our collective efforts in these discussions will pave the way for a more sustainable, efficient, and inclusive cruising sector in the future.



**Maria Deligianni, Regional Director, Eastern Mediterranean, CLIA**

Congratulations and well done for another very successful Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum! The panels were exceptionally engaging, and the whole event was organized with professionalism - as always! It was a pleasure to represent CLIA at this year's Forum, which continues to be a key platform for dialogue on the future of cruise tourism in our region. The Forum theme this year -A Compelling Need for New Marquee Ports & Destinations- was especially timely. There is a clear opportunity to promote and invest in alternative ports across the region. I was also particularly pleased with the remarks of European Commissioner Mr. Apostolos Tzitzikostas, who emphasized that cruise tourism is a driving force of the European economy and expressed his commitment to working with us to protect and grow this vital sector. Several of our members once again remarked on the exceptional networking opportunities that PSTF consistently provides. The event truly brings together the key voices of our industry, and I look forward to seeing its continued success in the years to come.

**Andreas Stylianopoulos, CEO, Navigator**

This year's PSTF was the most compelling and dynamic edition I've attended since the inaugural event. The panel discussions were exceptionally insightful, sparking meaningful conversations that continued well into the networking events. It was more than just a forum - it was a genuine exchange of ideas and energy among industry leaders.

**Nazlı Hamitoğlu, Marketing Department, Marmaris Cruise Port**

The organization of the event was highly professional and the support provided to attendees-both before and during the Forum-was greatly appreciated. Marmaris Cruise Port was proud to represent the only foreign port stand at PSTF. As the company that manages the port and operates ferry services to neighbouring Greek islands, we were delighted to engage with our counterparts, port authorities, and representatives from cruise companies. The discussions throughout the Forum were insightful and valuable. As industry stakeholders, we are-both literally and metaphorically-all in the same boat. The maritime sector remains incredibly dynamic, constantly adapting to economic, environmental, and political shifts. Yet, customer needs continue to be at the core of our planning efforts. While the appeal of traditional offerings remains strong, there is still great potential for innovation in the sector. By embracing fresh ideas and exploring new routes, we can develop entirely new markets. Striking a balance between responding to customer demands and offering visionary experiences is key to achieving optimal satisfaction and sustainable growth.

**Theodora Riga, President, MedCruise and Corfu Port Authority**

MedCruise was honored to actively participate in this year's PSTF in Heraklion, showcasing the strength of collaboration across Mediterranean cruise ports. The forum offered a valuable platform for strategic dialogue, sustainability priorities, and future-oriented partnerships. Our full delegation reflected the growing momentum of MedCruise's initiatives and the shared commitment to advancing cruise tourism in the region. We extend our warm thanks to the Posidonia team and Heraklion Port Authority for their excellent hospitality and organization.



**Spyros Vougiou, Director, Shipping Programs, Alba**

Alba Graduate Business School proudly participated in the Posidonia Sea Tourism Forum, held in Heraklion, Crete. As a key event for the cruise and maritime tourism sectors, the forum provided a valuable platform for dialogue on industry challenges and opportunities. At our dedicated booth, we engaged with prospective students and industry professionals, shared insights from our academic programs and research initiatives, and explored opportunities for future collaboration. Our presence reaffirmed Alba's commitment to supporting sustainable growth and innovation in the maritime and tourism industries through education.

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