

Spotlight on river cruising as Seatrade Europe continues

Hamburg, Germany, 7 September 2017 - Seatrade Europe - the leading trade event for the European cruise and river cruise industry – has put the spotlight on river cruising as part of the discussions at this important industry event running at Hamburg Messe until tomorrow, Friday 8 September 2017.

Delegates heard that river cruising's future is expected to be as diversified as possible, catering to a broader target market, including millennials, with vessels as big and green as possible and in his keynote address, Daniel Thiriet, co-managing director, AmaWaterways, MD, Sea Chefs Group and VP, IG RiverCruise, said: "Future River Cruises' deploys ships larger than today and with a broader choice of facilities including up to five restaurants. Several vessels are powered by battery packs. Eventually, 'Future River Cruises' will extend its operations beyond Europe to new destinations including the Irrawaddy River, the Ganges and even the Congo."

With ship sizes reaching lengths of 175 meters/574 feet and widths of up to 26 meters/85 feet on the Danube, Thiriet also predicted more cabin space for passengers and crew. His imaginative 'Future River Cruises' provides 40 square-meter/431-square-foot staterooms to its guests.

The debate following Thiriet's address confirmed his 10-year lookout has many likely aspects: All panelists agreed that further product diversification is under way and highly important, complete with the integration of new, younger target groups.

Guido Laukamp, chief commercial officer and MD, Nicko Cruises Flussreisen, suggested passengers should rather be identified by, and products tailored to, their interests and tastes rather than their age.

As a fresh and innovative approach to river cruising, Ben Wirz, MD, GRC Global River Cruises, Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection, described the new U by Uniworld initiative of two ships dedicated to millennials.

Itineraries are available on the Seine from/to Paris, from Amsterdam-Frankfurt, Frankfurt-Regensburg, Regensburg-Budapest and from/to Budapest. U by Uniworld offers an up-market, hostel style with activities appealing to a younger clientele, ages 21-45. For example: painting and wine classes, mixology and cooking classes, yoga and a silent disco. Free Wi-Fi is available, too.

Debate erupted around future river vessel propulsion systems: All panelists—along with audience members with shipbuilding background—agreed that LNG is not an option owing to the extensive space required for storage tanks.

Addressing concerns voiced about electrical propulsion, Mário Ferreira, president & CEO of Mystic Invest, revealed its subsidiary, Douro Azul, plans to take delivery of the world's first fully electric river vessel for deployment on the Douro by March 2019.

Mário Ferreira, president & CEO of Mystic Invest and its subsidiary, Douro Azul, announced the groundbreaking investment and said: “the improvement in battery technology—toward smaller, less expensive units—has now made the realisation of an electrically driven river vessel possible,” adding “the ship will carry 126 passengers and 40 crew.”

It is tailored for zero-emission operations on Portugal's Douro and will be connected to the shoreside electrical supply during its stops along the river for battery recharging. Ferreira added that, apart from West Sea, a number of other international partners are involved with the project. Further details about these partners and the new vessel in general will be announced shortly. The development is a major step forward in the river cruise industry's sustainability efforts.

In a separate panel, Daniel Buchmüller, chief services officer, River Advice and president, IG RiverCruise; Monic van der Heyden, commercial manager cruise, Port of Amsterdam; and Lucas Sandmeier, GM operations & administration, Scenic Tours Europe; examined security for the river cruise business.

They agreed that the implementation of an ISPS Code equivalent in river shipping is neither feasible nor necessary, but at the same time concluded that standards in various ports vary widely today.

As a solution, the panel suggested IG RiverCruise should work on uniform industry guidelines defining suggested security standards and measures. They agreed that protection against unauthorized access and theft, increasing the awareness of staff on board and ashore and passenger education are key elements in that context.

Buchmüller confirmed IG RiverCruise is already working on such standards which will help to achieve uniformity without any additional regulatory measures required.

Seatrade Europe continues until Friday 8 September 2017 at Hamburg Messe, Hamburg, Germany.

About Seatrade Europe

Seatrade Europe, the leading trade event of the European cruise and river cruise industry, organised by Hamburg Messe und Congress GmbH, in partnership with Seatrade (UBM EMEA), is held in Hamburg, Germany's famous seaport on the Elbe River. Industry decision-makers and professionals will meet to exchange ideas, set new trends and expand their business networks. Exhibitors include shipyards, ship chandlers, food and beverage suppliers, classification societies, cruise ports and shipbrokers, among others. From small-scale on-board hospitals to huge restaurant kitchens, from waste disposal to entertainment equipment, operations on board a cruise ship are highly complex, requiring perfect logistics. At the conference held in parallel with the exhibition, high-level experts will discuss current industry topics. Seatrade Europe will open doors from Wednesday 6 to Friday 8 September 2017.

Cruise Week in September 2017

From 1 to 10 September 2017, the port of Hamburg will again be transformed into a giant stage for major cruise events. For the second time, Hamburg will be bundling its cruise events and welcoming both the public and industry experts for ten days. The highlights are: Seatrade Europe (6-8 September) – Europe's meeting point for the cruise industry, the Hamburg Cruise Days (8-10 September) – Europe's largest public cruise event as well as two events organised by CLIA (5–6 September), the world's largest cruise association. Throughout the events, the port will again be illuminated and transformed into Blue Port Hamburg by lighting artist Michael Batz (1-10 September).

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