

Making Cruise Tourism a Model for Sustainable and Responsible Travel

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Around the world, the cruise industry is showing its resilience and responsiveness. It is an industry rebounding in destinations across the globe and setting an agenda for the future.

In 2023, global passenger volumes are forecast to rise beyond the levels that had been achieved before the pandemic in 2019, reaching a new record of about 31.5 million guests worldwide.

This is the result of an incredibly swift and well-managed recovery, made possible by close partnerships – among cruise lines, port operators, governments, ground operators, travel agents, and a host of industry suppliers.

These partnerships are now key to much greater challenges ahead, and as an industry we will continue to rely on the relationships and collaborations we have built worldwide.

Without doubt, the greatest of these challenges is in the area of sustainability, and the leadership role our industry has taken in the maritime sector pursuing net-zero carbon cruising by 2050.

Around the world, cruise lines are making enormous investments in the decarbonization of cruising. They are investing in the future, but also demonstrating real advances today.

2023 will deliver the youngest, cleanest and most technologically advanced fleet that has ever sailed.

Each new cruise ship brings with it greater efficiencies, lower emissions, advances in design and propulsion, and sophisticated technologies that optimize energy use.

At the same time, cruise lines are working with shipyards and manufacturers to equip the next generation of ships with even better low-emission technologies.

Underway right now are a huge range of new joint ventures, new R&D projects and new test operations, all focused on perfecting sustainable fuels and power sources – possibilities like biofuel, methanol, hydrogen, and hybrid propulsion.

These fuels are a sign of what is ahead, and already 75% of the CLIA-member fleet can utilize sustainable fuels once they're available at scale.

But there is a lot to be done before sustainable fuels can be accessed widely – and this will require work with and by ports, governments and other stakeholders to get the right infrastructure on land.

This will become an increasingly important part of any destination's cruise development plan.

The challenge now is not only to attract and foster the cruise operations of today, but to plan for and supply the needs of the low-emission ships of tomorrow.

A good example is in the advancement of shoreside electricity. Right now, 40% of global cruise capacity can operate on shoreside electricity in ports where it is provided, and the number of ships fitted with shoreside systems will more than double by 2028.

Shore power allows ships to plug-in to sustainably sourced electricity, enabling them to shut down their main engines and virtually eliminate emissions while at berth.

But on the other side of the equation, less than 2% of the world's cruise ports have onshore power available. We need this figure to grow significantly.

Elsewhere, we want to be at the forefront when it comes to responsible tourism and supporting the communities our ships visit.

Alongside CLIA's Maritime Policies covering operations at sea, cruise lines are also focused on the shared values we have for activities on shore – aligned with the United Nations World Tourism Organization's definition of sustainable tourism.

This includes:

- Respecting the environment in the communities that ships visit.
- Respecting the quality of life, and the cultural & natural heritage of communities.
- Contributing to the economic wellbeing of host communities and protecting public health.
- And supporting rewarding work opportunities for a diverse community of workers.

Cruise tourism is managed tourism – planned and scheduled well in advance.

This results in scheduling and dispersal practices that better manage tourism flows and help spread the economic benefits of cruising beyond port.

Collaborations are at the heart – among tourism authorities, local and national governments, cruise lines, tourism operators, port operators, ground operators, suppliers, food producers, technical support providers, local chambers of commerce, and retail associations – the list goes on.

What successful cruise destinations have in common is a comprehensive Cruise Tourism Strategy – a vision, or a roadmap to ensure cruise tourism continues to grow in a way that is aligned with the destination's needs and aspirations. It will seek commercial opportunities for locals; promote gateway ports as key destinations; and promote other cruise tourism destinations to foster itinerary development and allow the dispersal of economic benefits across a region.

Around the world, we're seeing a great passion for cruising and an enormous amount of creativity within communities as they work to support and develop cruise tourism.

As an industry, the cruise sector is focused on a clear vision for the future – one that is prosperous, productive, sustainable and able to deliver positive results as it connects communities around the world.