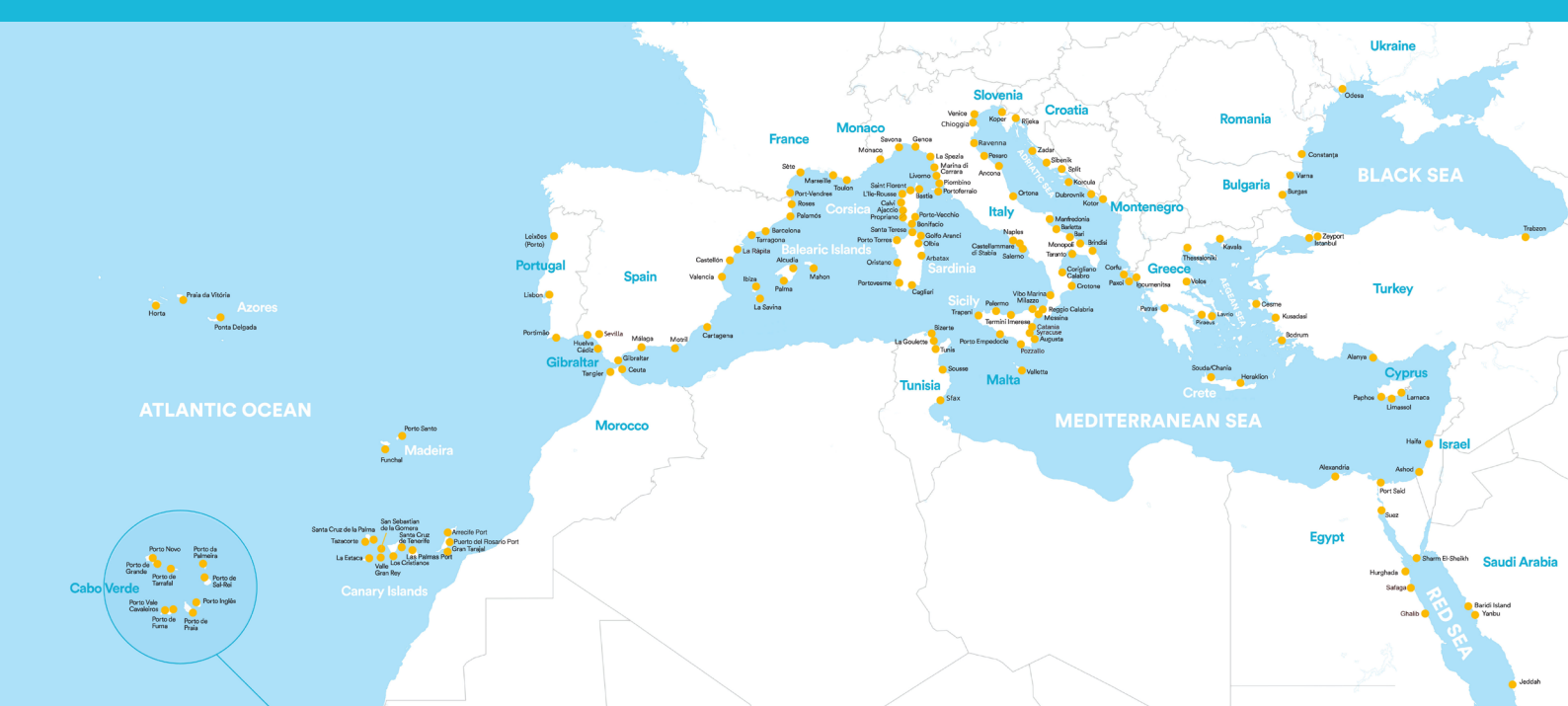


Charting 30 years of MedCruise from the Seatrade Cruise archives



Published by

**Seatrade
 Cruise**

30 years of MedCruise through the eyes of Seatrade Cruise

MedCruise was founded in June 1996 by 11 ports to promote the Mediterranean as a cruise destination centred on the cultural, economic and geographical richness of the region. That number grew to 13 quickly.

The first MedCruise president, Joe Grioli, stepped down from his position as chairman of Malta Maritime Authority following a switch of government and Fabio Capocaccia (from Genoa) took over the association as president in April 1997.

By 2000, the agenda had swiftly moved onto port infrastructure and the growing need to cater for more and more ships of increasing size.

The association celebrated its 20th anniversary during the 48th GA in Odessa, Ukraine. In those 20 years, the number of ports had grown to over 100 and the number of passenger movements within the basin and its adjoining seas had risen from 2.5m to 27.4m.

From the first wave of cruise expansion in the 1990s to today's era of digitalisation and decarbonisation, MedCruise has been a constant advocate for its members, ensuring that ports of all sizes have a voice in shaping the future of the cruise industry.

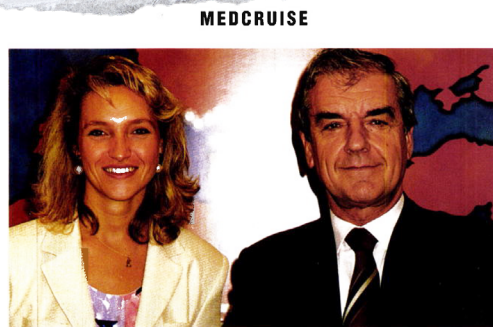
And also ensuring that the Mediterranean remains the world's most inspiring and welcoming cruise destination.

Seatrade Cruise Review December 1997

appear to have cruised an exclusive Med programme. Another 22 are estimated to have incorporated the Med in their programmes while at least 20 more visited the Sea at least once.

1998 is by all accounts going to be better with many lines noting bookings are already ahead on this time last year for 1997. Yet a couple of incidents in the east Med might have caused a setback. Mid-July Costa Classica hit the headlines when it was almost beached on a small Greek island. October 5 it was the turn of the Romantica to hog the front pages after suffering an engine room fire the previous day, 25 miles south of Cyprus.

No one was seriously hurt in either of the incidents but they not only reflect the spectrum of cruising in the Eastern Mediterranean but also, some of the hazards. The Med cruise fleet is comprised of a great



MEDCRUISE

Keeping the momentum going: Santini (left) and Capocaccia

After having doubled membership this year to more than 25 ports representing nine countries, the Association of Mediterranean Cruise Ports...

THE MEDIT

I have had the privilege of following and writing about MedCruise's journey from the outset and through attending over 45 GA's during that time in locations spanning the length and breadth of the basin and its adjoining seas, I have visited multiple ports, islands and countries and met so many dedicated and inspirational people from ports, destinations, towns and cities and cruise service providers, who are passionate and proud of their traditions, history, culture, gastronomy, music and peoples.

It's been an amazing experience, both personally and professionally, to have collaborated with every one of the 12 MedCruise presidents, and also to have shared in the special partnership between MedCruise and Seatrade which is also

celebrating 30 years of running cruise events for the Mediterranean – from the first Seatrade Mediterranean Cruise and Ferry Convention in Genoa in 1996 through to Seatrade Cruise Med 2026 in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria in September.

This 30 year milestone gave me an excuse to delve into the archives to see how our print publications (from 1996) and online digital news Seatrade Cruise News (from 2000) have charted the association's history. It is by no means exhaustive.

Hope you enjoy this potted history from the Seatrade Cruise archives.

Mary Bond,
Group Portfolio Director and Publisher,
Seatrade Cruise



Mary Bond (far right) and invited cruise line executives at the 50th General Assembly in Gibraltar 2017



MedCruise VIP & Speakers' Dinner at Seatrade Cruise Med 2022 Malaga

MedCruise across three decades

The very first mention of MedCruise in Seatrade publications was the August 1996 edition of Seatrade Review Monthly (which at that time covered all sectors of shipping).

Seatrade Review Monthly August 1996

Port of Genoa's Fabio Capocaccia is a man of many hats.

Besides being general secretary of the Port Authority and president and founder of the Stazione Maritima company, which until now has run Genoa's cruise and ferry terminals, he is also SVP of the newly formed Mediterranean cruise ports association, MedCruise.

And just for good measure he heads up the host organising committee for the first Seatrade Mediterranean Cruise and Ferry Convention to be held in Genoa September 17-20, 1996.

Lesser known is the fact music-loving Capocaccia also rejoices in the title of president of the Youth Philharmonic Orchestra of Genoa, which he effectively manages. He studied the cello for 10 years and for the Seatrade event in September, he tells us he is planning a concert in Genoa's grand Palazzo Ducale. It is understood the programme will feature wind instruments, out of homage to shipping's sail origins.

Seatrade Cruise Review 1997

In 1997, Seatrade launched a new quarterly magazine called Seatrade Cruise Review and in the June edition of that year Capocaccia was interviewed.

'Everything that has to be done, has to be done,' said Fabio Capocaccia, MedCruise's new president.

Capocaccia is throwing himself into the task in hand outlining his main objectives as promoting and increasing cruising in the Mediterranean, establishing reliable traffic statistics and defining the standards of regional port quality, safety and security.

MedCruise presently has 17 member ports which Capocaccia would like to grow to at least 30.

Aqaba and Alexandria are the latest ports to apply and he is keen to encourage a wider membership draw even beyond the natural boundaries of the Mediterranean Sea to include the Canary Islands/Azores in the west and eastwards to Black Sea ports. Capocaccia is confident that the Mediterranean cruise market has the potential to grow ten times its present size but he cautions, 'safety and security are a priority.'

It's no good having high security measures in the embarkation port if the next ports of call are not sufficiently equipped. In the December 1997 edition of Seatrade Cruise Review, a Mediterranean Report covered the fledgling MedCruise association providing an update on latest developments

MedCruise held preliminary discussions with both the foreign policy and transportation directorates (DGI and DGVII) of the European Commission at the beginning of the year, and was expected

to have submitted a formal application for \$3m EU funding by November.

Helping guide the association through the corridors of Brussels is new secretary general Ana Karina Santini. Argentine by birth, Santini previously worked for DGI in the unit responsible for economic development cooperation with areas such as Latin America, North Africa and Asia.

If its application is successful, MedCruise says it plans to use the grant towards realising a market study about cruises' potential in all Mediterranean countries, in particular focusing of problems yet to be solved such as 'the need for standardised security and safety measures in passenger terminals and the provision of quality services'.

In a separate development, MedCruise held informal talks with Cruise Europe about possible cooperation during the recent Seatrade North European Cruise and Ferry Convention in Amsterdam. Joint lobbying of bodies such as the EU and IMO would be on the cards, as well as exchange of statistical data.

MedCruise agenda

'Everything that has to be done, has to be done,' says Fabio Capocaccia, MedCruise's new president. The secretary general of Genoa port takes up the Association of Mediterranean Cruise Ports' reins from Malta's Joe Grioli who was the first elected president.

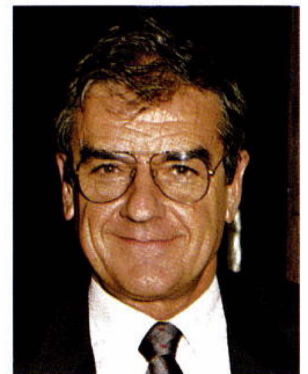
Capocaccia is throwing himself into the task in hand outlining his main objectives as promoting and increasing cruising in the Mediterranean, establishing reliable traffic statistics and defining the standards of regional port quality, safety and security.

MedCruise also hopes to obtain EU-MEDA grants to support its activities on the basis that it encourages communication and exchanges between Europe and North Africa.

MedCruise presently has 17 member ports which Capocaccia would like to grow to at least 30. Aqaba and Alexandria are the latest ports to apply and he is keen to encourage a wider membership draw even beyond the natural boundaries of the Mediterranean Sea to include the Canary Islands/Azores in the west and eastwards to Black Sea ports.

Capocaccia is confident that the Mediterranean cruise market has the potential to grow ten times its present size but he cautions, 'safety and security are a priority.'

'It's no good having high security measures in the embarkation port if the next ports of call are not sufficiently equipped. We must agree on regional standards in order to attract more passengers,' says Capocaccia (pictured below).



Seatrade Cruise Review June 1997

2003

In September 2003, one year after being elected the new MedCruise president, Juan Madrid from Port of Barcelona oversaw the introduction of a decentralisation of power with the establishment of a Board of Directors each with a special responsibility.

2004

An important decision was taken in November 2004 to change the constitution to better reflect the changing evolution of members and to create two additional kinds of membership: associate members and cruise line members.

2005

At the 2005, general assembly in Limassol, Cyprus Laurent Monsaigéon from French Riveira Ports was elected as the new president and Albert Poggio from Gibraltar was re-elected as svp – both for a three-year term.

Leading Mediterranean cruise port Barcelona attained tenth place among worldwide cruise ports with 1.23m passengers, about half of them embarking or disembarking, and 691 port calls.

2006

MedCruise is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2006. The association has grown and matured over the past decade. With membership today swelling to 68 ports

MedCruise president Laurent Monsaigéon at St Basil's Cathedral, Moscow enroute to the Sochi GA, 2007



2008

from 20 countries it is clear the future looks bright for the world's second most popular cruise arena.

Presiding over his first general assembly in Gibraltar in May 2006, Monsaigéon reported membership up to a record 65 ports from 18 countries at the start of the 2006 cruise season. He spoke of a major challenge to provide fresh ideas 'to maintain our region as one of the main cruise destinations' and called for continued co-operation with partner associations and government.

In October, Costa Crociere inaugurated its own Palacruceiros, until now Terminal D. The Italian line has based its newest and largest vessel, the 112,000gt, 3,780 passenger Costa Concordia in Barcelona for the summer of 2006 on seven-night Western Med voyages.

Royal Caribbean's even larger 142,000gt, 3,800 passenger Voyager of the Seas has also been a Barcelona-based fixture this summer, again doing the seven-night circuit of Western Med ports. NCL has contributed to the Barcelona-based newbuilding scene Norwegian Jewel, primarily in the seven-night market but also offering two longer end-of-season voyages the length of the Mediterranean to, then back from, Istanbul.

In the Balearic Islands, Palma de Mallorca is by far the leading port, with 463 calls bringing a total of 878,000 passengers in 2005. This year 464 port calls are scheduled.

2007

MedCruise headed to Russian port of Sochi for its GA. Delegates flew to Sochi via Moscow.

2008 has been a year of plenty for the Mediterranean as a record 150+ cruise ships, including 50 for North American brands, sailed in the basin.

European brands targeting locally sourced passengers also reached new heights with 20 Italian ships (Costa 11 and MSC 9), 8 Spanish ships and 6 French ships deployed across the region. About 60% of European (including British) cruise passengers go to the Med where the total number of cruisers is expected to exceed 3.8m in 2008.

What lies ahead in 2009 is anyone's guess with the current economic uncertainty. Whether other North American cruise operators will follow Carnival Cruise Lines and pull ships from Europe in favour of the Caribbean remains to be seen. Med ports and destinations have their fingers crossed that the ships that are planned to visit will be full.

One thing is certain congestion will continue to be a point of discussion between the lines, the port and tourism authorities.

MedCruise Association, whose membership stands at 54 ports representing 70 port in 20 countries, has never avoided discussing the issues of port congestion at its general assemblies where invited cruise line executives have expressed their concerns.

At this year's general assembly in Trieste Roberto Ferrarini, director of marine ops at Costa warned lack of infrastructure and port congestion could affect further growth whilst John Tercek vp commercial development at Royal Caribbean urged ports to discuss with



MedCruise GA Constantza

MedCruise president Stavros Hatzakos, chairing his first GA, thanked hosts, the Merchant Marine Office and Ports (OMMP), one of the founding members of MedCruise in 1996.

Black Sea rising

Over 100 participants attended the MedCruise 36th General Assembly held in Constantza, as **Mary Bond** reports.

Opening the GA Giovanni Spadoni, president of MedCruise announced membership had grown to 60, representing over 80 ports, including four new members: Bourgas (Bulgaria); Lisbon (Portugal); Marseilles (France) and North Sardinian ports of Olbia, Golfo Aranci and Porto Torres (Italy).

Seatrade Cruise Review September 2010

lines before investing in costly new terminals: 'We want to work with you to ensure it suits both our needs,' he advised ports. 'Our intent and vision goes beyond a piece of concrete in the waterfront,' he added.

These concerns has led to a wave of cruise line investment in Med ports to ensure terminals and berthing are suitable to handle larger ships and bigger passenger numbers, particularly in homeports. In the last four years Costa, Royal Caribbean and MSC have all invested in port facilities/terminal management in the Med.

2010

Over 100 participants attended the 36th MedCruise GA in Constantza. Giovanni Spadoni, president of MedCruise announced membership had grown to 60, representing over 80 ports, including four new members: Bourgas (Bulgaria); Lisbon (Portugal); Marseilles (France) and North Sardinian ports of Olbia, Golfo Aranci and Porto Torres (Italy).

During a Mediterranean panel discussion Costa Cruises' Elisabetta de Nardo confirmed the Italian brands' continuing expansion in the region. 'We will operate 324 Med cruises in 2010 using 30 home ports, rising to 370 next year, and make 2,500 calls in the extended Med basin,' she said.

Louis Cruises' Charis Papacharalambos spoke of his company's port-intensive operations in the region with ships visiting more than 100 Med ports on itineraries out of Cyprus, Piraeus, Marseille and Genoa.

using Dalaman airport. 'We are always looking for new transit stops and new ways to gain access to new markets,' he said. Port's commercial manager Andreaa Nistor announced it is cutting passenger tax from €5 to €2.5 whilst Odessa, the port with 150 ocean going ships, spoke of

'The Med continues to grow in importance for Royal Caribbean,' noted John Tercek. Fourteen of the group's ships are sailing in the basin in summer 2010, jumping to 17 next year. He spoke about the need for more and better infrastructure which often takes time to get off the drawing boards, citing Istanbul and Civitavecchia as ports that urgently need new terminals.

2012

Tunis hosted the 30th MedCruise GA which saw the addition of three new members ports: Brindisi (Italy), Corfu (Greece) and Kotor (Montenegro) attended by around 80 members from 20 countries.

Seatrade Cruise Review September 2012



MSC Orchestra in La Goulette

MedCruise GA, Tunisia

Small country, big history

Tunis in North Africa hosted the 30th MedCruise General Assembly as **Mary Bond** reports.

The MedCruise meeting, which saw the addition of three new members ports: Brindisi and Kotor (Montenegro) attended by around 80 members from 20 countries.

Talking about drivers of deployment, John Tercek, vp commercial and new business development Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd, said the decision process gets more and more difficult each year, 'whereas before it was instinctive, now its scientific.'

Time, speed and distance is playing a major role in deployment decisions, he remarked. 'Itineraries based on covering up to 252 nautical miles overnight at 15/16 knots is ideal for fuel burning,' he added.

Holland America Line's manager, deployment and itinerary planning, Justin Poulsen said, his line is looking at more open jaw legs compared to closed jaw and for 13-15 knots as an optimum fuel speed.

Turning to sourcing, Eduardo Lopez, vp of land operations at Pullmantur said 'more and more we are sourcing internationally and for this year only 45% of our passengers will be Spanish.' The brand, which also incorporates Croisieres de France, will carry more than the projected 60,000 French passengers in 2012, he said.

Referring to the lifting of cabotage in Greece, Giora Israel, svp, global port and destination development group, Carnival Corp congratulated Greece for taking cruise to the next step further.' He said

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 #OurStrength
 #OurSustainableFuture

www.medcruise.com/medcruiseagenda

2026

congratulated Greece for taking cruise 'one step further'. He said operating itineraries out of Piraeus offered 'endless options' with Adriatic, Black Sea and Turkish ports all likely to benefit.

2013

The 42nd General Assembly in Madeira Portugal, opened by the President of the Regional Government of Madeira Alberto Joao Jardim, and attended by the Regional Minister of Culture Tourism and Transports Conceicao Almeida Estudante.

Discussions during the two days-event focused on the several challenges including accommodation of more traffic, new itineraries, new practices, infrastructure and services demands, programming, but also cancellations.

MedCruise President Stavros Hatzakos told reporters during the post-event press conference:



Stavros Hatzakos media briefing 2013

'All port-members participating in our association recognize the need to collectively promote their efforts to host modern cruise ships. They also acknowledge the need to provide common responses that effectively serve the market, and search for solutions to existing problems.

MedCruise inclusive membership, and the active participation of a growing number of ports in collective activities, provides to the basis to speak as an authoritative association. Our GA confirmed the commitment for MedCruise to be the one-stop hub for all those wanted to learn about and engage with Med ports.'

The General Assembly also welcomed a new member, the port of Huelva, increasing MedCruise members to 72 members plus 30 associate members, and well over 100 cruise



ports in the Mediterranean region, the Black Sea, the Red Sea and the Near Atlantic.

2014

Ports from Southern Europe, gathering in Castellon for the 44th MedCruise General Assembly, heard a broad range of discussion on green ports, deployment issues and shorex revenue in the Med.

MedCruise represents more than 100 ports that collectively host over 28m cruise passenger movements annually. The association added three new members this week: Istanbul, Taranto and Trabzon, plus two new associate members, Allegra Montenegro and B&A Europe.

A first day round table devoted to Sustainable Cruise, saw CLIA Europe secretary general, Rob Ashdown, Costa Cruises' Elisabetta Pinna, MedCruise president Stavros Hatzakos and secretary general Thanos Pallis (pictured right) and a video presentation by Dimitrios Theologitis, director for ports and port policy of the European Commission, explore the potential

of cruise ports and cruise lines to work together to create innovative solutions for waste reception facilities and waste collection practices.

Adam Sharp, manager port operations and guest port services Europe, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd, spoke of an 'exciting 18 months ahead for the brand in the Med' with Oasis of the Seas coming for later this year, Allure of the Seas homeporting in Barcelona in 2015, Anthem of the Seas based in Southampton sailing into the Med, Celebrity Solstice operating out of Istanbul and Athens, Explorer of the Seas returning and Quantum of the Seas passing through the Med en-route to Asia.



Thanos Pallis

He referred to the Oasis-class operations in Europe in 2014 and 2015 as an indication of renewed optimism for the Med but said with it, 'comes a new set of challenges unlike anything we have seen in these waters before'.



Mediterranean MedCruise

Past presidents and the current head of MedCruise gathered in Odessa in June to celebrate the Association of Mediterranean Ports' 20th anniversary during its 48th general assembly.

Fabio Capocacchia, president between 1997-2002, was unable to be present but joined from Olbia via skype during a holiday break. Joe Grioli, founding president from Malta, who is no longer in the industry, sent his best wishes in a letter.

Kristijan Pavic who took the helm this year told members when the association was founded he was a maritime faculty student. 'Later, when I was involved in managing a cruise port and become active in the life of the association, I realised how important MedCruise is for our ports.' He called the last 20 years 'a long journey putting the Med at the centre of the world where it historically belongs.'

In those 20 years, the number of ports has grown from 15 (from 13 founding members) to over 100 and the number of passenger movements within the basin and its adjoining seas has risen from 2.5m to 27.4m.

Capocacchia, then representing Genoa port, told how he started to talk to Seatrade chairman Chris Hayman in 1995 about organising a cruise event focussing just on the Med and about forming a regional association of ports to help grow awareness with the cruise lines. The first Seatrade Med took place in Genoa in 1996 and just prior to that MedCruise was founded in Rome on June 11, the same year.

During Capocacchia's time at the helm, membership rose to 67 ports and cruising activity in the Med doubled.

Barcelona's Juan Madrid was president from 2002-2005 where he championed the development of more ports, more varied shore excursions and the extension of the season to year-round cruising.

The presidency then switched to France with French Riviera's Laurent Monsaingeon steered the association between 2006-2009, a period when he encouraged smaller ports



Pavic (left) and three past presidents pictured in Odessa

MedCruise 20 years old

to join and learn best practices from the marquee ports. He also started an associate membership scheme. 'We also tackled issues that we knew were important to the cruise lines such as port and destination congestion and berthing allocations before they became bigger problems.'

The presidency returned to Italy when Livorno's Giovanni Spadoni took over between 2009-2011. 'It was a time to encourage an expansion of membership to the seas adjoining the Med and also to try and tempt some of the founding members to come back which we achieved,' he told the Odessa GA.

In 2011, the presidency and secretariat moved to Greece under Piraeus' Stavros Hatzakos charge to 2014. 'We have had a great journey so far and we can go further rising from the second most popular destination to the first,' he stated. During his time in office, Hatzakos encouraged the

association to grow its voice in Brussels and its partnership with CLIA and focus on the areas where ports needed to improve.

The leadership returned to Barcelona in 2014-15 when Carla Salvado took the helm, although the secretariat, under Thanos Pallis, remained in Piraeus where it continues today. Salvado said, 'I grew professionally with MedCruise starting in 2003 as secretary general, then as a member of the board and had the honour to lead the Association for a short but challenging period of time.'

Salvado saw that cruising in the Med was facing challenges from outside such as ships moving to Asia. 'It was a time to open our minds to encourage those source markets to consider a cruise in the Med as a natural step after tasting the product locally.'

As well as leading delegations, attending events and sponsoring travel agent training in Asia, Salvado pushed for promotional literature in Chinese and Korean language to spread the Med's offering. Closer to home, MedCruise established travel agent training programmes, together with CLIA, for agents in Spain and France focussing on the Med as a destination.

Pavic and his predecessors cut a special 20th anniversary birthday cake at the closing gala dinner last night which was shared out. He thanked the 100 plus participants for 'making your way to Odessa and supporting a member who is having a difficult time.' He added, 'that is what being part of a big family is all about and I believe we all have a bright future.'



L-R: Pavic, Monsaingeon, Madrid, Hatzakos, Spadoni and Salvado



2017

The 50th MedCruise General Assembly took place in Gibraltar in June with around 120 representatives from MedCruise members, cruise line executives and media meeting to discuss latest developments and prospects of cruising in and around the Mediterranean.

It was the second time that Gibraltar hosted the General Assembly, the last time was in 2006. 'Eleven years ago around 60 delegates gathered for the GA, whilst today that number has doubled, underscoring both the expansion of the association's membership and also our willingness to travel to meet and discuss areas of mutual co-operation,' noted Nicky Guererro, chief executive, Gibraltar Tourist Board.

In 2016, MedCruise membership welcomed 27.4m cruise passenger movements and 13,500 cruise calls. MedCruise has grown to a membership of more than 100 ports in 20 countries and 34 associate members.

2018

Addressing the 52nd MedCruise General Assembly in Malta, his first as president of the port association, Airam Diaz Pastor remarked, 'We are living in a golden age.'

Over 140 member ports, destinations and service providers from across the Mediterranean and its adjoining seas gathered in Valletta heard Diaz Pastor list capacity growth, closer collaboration

between MedCruise and the cruise lines, and with the EU, the amount of investment being spent on new port infrastructure across the Med, as positives.

'However it can only be a golden age if it is golden for everyone and currently that is not the case for the ports in the East Med, Black Sea and North Africa,' he reminded.

There are positive signs that the Eastern Med is slowly starting to return to the map, noted Diaz Pastor, with some cruise lines planning calls to Turkey for 2018/2019 and more commitments beyond.

Michel Nestour, vp global ports & destination development, Carnival Corp also reiterated the 'golden age' theme but asked ports if they are ready for the huge hike in capacity that is coming?

'If you remove all newbuilds under 600 lower berths from the equation you are left with 68 ships arriving between now and end 2027: that is one new medium to large ship every 47 days and whilst we are seeing investments in new terminals ranging from Lisbon and Barcelona, to Civitavecchia and Limassol, it takes a long time from planning a new facility to becoming operational,'

A return to Black Sea cruising is only likely when Istanbul comes back on the scene, panellists agreed.

Diaz Pastor praised the resilience and patience of Black Sea port members



2018 – Diaz Pastor with first MedCruise president Joe Grioli

despite having limited or no calls in recent years: 'they have never stopped coming to our meetings and we have 14 Black Sea representatives at this GA in Malta promoting the region.'

He gave a nod to Istanbul, Odessa and Burgas, 'for spending money during the lean times to improve their facilities.'

2018 is a year with no ocean cruise ships sailing in the Black Sea, notes Constantza Port's Theodor Patrichi, MedCruise board director for the Black Sea.

A working group of representatives from Constanta, Odessa, Burgas and Varna ports are meeting in Odessa to create an action plan.

2019



2019 – Airam Diaz Pastor and Mary Bond

Seatrade signed a renewal of the contract with MedCruise (running for over 25 years) for the provision of marketing and promotional services across Seatrade Cruise events and publications.



2018- MedCruise Black Sea Working Group

2021 – MedCruise publications in delegate wallets at Seatrade Cruise Global



record of the association and its members and is on a mission to prove small changes make all the difference.

An example of MedCruise’s efforts to unite around sustainability comes in the form of its collaboration with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to discover how its member ports can help drive environmentally mindful shore excursions.

2023

Over 160 delegates gathered for the 62nd MedCruise GA in Corfu in May 2023. Sustainable tourism, improvements to accessibility, crew-friendly facilities and the impact of new EU boarder rules were among topics discussed. ‘MedCruise is active in the EU, and cross international platforms in order to become the point of reference in the cruise industry for our ports but also to be able to generate new ideas, as well as inspire techniques and approaches.

Cesme in Turkey was named the latest port member of MedCruise bringing the total number of ports to 76 plus 54 associate members. Anne Marie Spinosi board member shared that 37% of MedCruise ports are situated on islands facing different challenges depending on geographical position and level of industrial infrastructure.



Figen Ayan presents MedCruise Trends Report at Seatrade Cruise Global 2023

Aris Batsoulis is the new president of MedCruise.

Batsoulis, representing the port of Corfu and SVP of MedCruise since 2017, takes on the role from outgoing president Airam Díaz who is leaving his post as commercial director of the Port Authority of Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Batsoulis said: ‘I am committing and looking forward to working alongside my skilled colleagues, members of the MedCruise Board of Directors and the secretariat, to serve members ports and associate members and collaborate with all the stakeholders of the cruise industry towards a responsible and sustainable growth. #PortsTogether and #WorkTogether are meaningful today, more than ever.’

Now an honorary president of MedCruise, Diaz Pastor thanked the Secretariat team, Jordi Caballé, Anja Lohrum and Sara Valls, and encouraged them ‘to keep working hard’.

Batsoulis is a mechanical engineer MSc and worked at the Corfu Port Authority since 2003 in security and development and, since 2007, has headed the cruise department.

MedCruise membership spreads across 21 countries representing more than 140 ports and 34 cruise-related companies and associations. In 2019, MedCruise members welcomed more than 31m cruise passengers and more than 13,600 cruise calls.

2021

MedCruise’s new board of directors has been announced, including the appointment of Figen Ayan, chief port officer, Galataport Istanbul as the association’s new president.



Aris Batsoulis

Ayan succeeds Aris Batsoulis who completed a year-long term.

Reappointed as MedCruise’s secretary general is Aimilia Papachristou.

The association represents 140 cruise ports from 21 countries in the Mediterranean and its adjoining seas.

2022

MedCruise president Figen Ayan is determined to enhance the sustainability



Human towers at the 2022 Palamos GA gala dinner



Some of the Board of Directors at Seatrade Cruise Med, Malaga 2024



2025 – MedCruise Board of directors

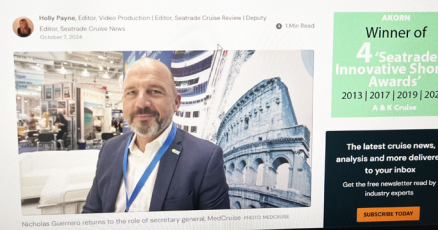
Dželalija underlined the importance of responsible growth, noting, ‘So cruise, yes, but in a way that suits the local community. That is generally the topic of this association and that is what we will be discussing and trying to improve here.’

2024

The 65th MedCruise General Assembly took place in Malaga during the 2024 Seatrade Cruise Med. Theodora Riga CCO and director of strategic communications at the Port of Thessaloniki, was declared the association’s 2024–27 president.

Nicky Guerrero returning to former MedCruise role

Nicky Guerrero, MedCruise’s secretary general from January–November 2023, will return to the position with immediate effect under its new president, Theodora Riga.



Seatrade Cruise News October 2024

2025

Passenger movements at MedCruise members reached 39.75m in 2025, according to data presented by MedCruise President Theodora Riga at Seatrade Cruise Global in Miami.

The figures represent a 10.5% increase from 2024’s 35.98m passengers, marking continued recovery and expansion in the region’s cruise sector. This growth trajectory follows an even more dramatic 27.61% surge between 2022 and 2023, when passenger numbers jumped from 24.37m to 32.94m.

Cartagena served as the host of the 66th MedCruise GA coinciding with the ports 150th anniversary celebrations. The industry gathering attracted 165 participants, including 27 cruise line executives, 47 port members and 22 associate members plus media.

A key focus was sustainability and the second phase of the AVIP–MedCruise working group focusing on port–city interactions, where Jose Sanchezm director of Agenda AIVP 2030 noted that while environmental challenges are being addressed through technology, managing growing passenger numbers remains critical for sustainable tourism.

PRESIDENTIAL ROSTER 1996–today

1996	Joe Grioli
1997–2002	Fabio Capocaccia
2002–2006	Juan Madrid
2006–2009	Laurent Monsaingeon
2009–2011	Giovanni Spadoni
2011–2014	Stavros Hatzakos
2014–2015	Carla Salvado
2016–2017	Kristijan Pavic
2017–2020	Airam Diaz Pastor
2020–2021	Aris Batsoulis
2021–2024	Figen Ayan
2024–2027	Theodora Riga

The 67th MedCruise General Assembly opened in Šibenik, Croatia, as delegates gathered at the medieval St Michael’s Fortress for an inaugural celebration featuring performances by a live orchestra on an open–air stage.

MedCruise President Theodora Riga highlighted the role of the event, saying, ‘Our General Assemblies are milestones shaping the future of Mediterranean cruising. We are delighted to bring our members and partners to Šibenik, a city that beautifully reflects the heritage, innovation and hospitality that define our regions.’

Port of Šibenik Authority GM Paško



Theodora Riga

2026

As MedCruise approaches its 30th anniversary in 2026, the Association continues to stand as a vital platform for cooperation, dialogue and progress among Mediterranean and adjoining seas’ cruise ports.

Founded on the principle of unity in diversity, MedCruise today connects more than 160 ports and 59 associate members across 22 countries, reflecting the cultural, economic and geographical richness of the region.

One of MedCruise’s strategic priorities is fostering international cooperation with fellow organisations such as Cruise Europe, Cruise Britain, Cruise Norway and Cruise Baltic, as well as with global industry partners like CLIA, ESPO and AIVP. By deepening these ties, we strengthen our collective voice in policy discussions, environmental initiatives, and tourism development. The Mediterranean is part of a global network and collaboration across regions helps us share best practices, coordinate sustainability goals and anticipate new market trends.

As we prepare for the milestone of ‘30 Years of MedCruise,’ the road ahead is defined by transformation: alternative fuels, shore power, circular economy initiatives and new forms of collaboration that will redefine the cruise experience.

MedCruise’s vision is clear, to support our members in becoming smart, green, and people–centred ports, ready to lead the cruise sector towards a more resilient and responsible future.



Theodora Riga (far left) speaking at the European Port Associations panel at Seatrade Cruise Global 2026

PHOTO: SEATRADE CRUISE



MedCruise

The Association of Mediterranean Cruise Ports

30 Years

Working for the Cruise Industry in the Med and Adjoining Seas

Bringing together a diverse network of ports and partners to strengthen cruise tourism and support sustainable growth for our destinations and communities.

#OurDiversity
#OurStrength
#OurSustainableFuture



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