

# THE COOPERATION OF MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE PORTS

## SURADNJA MEDITERANSKIH LUKA ZA KRSTARENJA

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### Summary

From a world viewpoint, the Mediterranean is a very significant tourist destination, and once again an evermore attractive cruising region. Contemporary movements in the cruising market are also present in the Mediterranean, which places great challenges on all the participants involved, especially seaports. Ports play a very important role in cruising, as they have a significant role in the activities offered to passengers and are an important infrastructure for the calling of ships. Therefore, ports strive to offer high level services, thereby achieving competitive viability. For this purpose, ports share their information, cooperate in development, investment, and market appearance. With this in mind, MedCruise, the Association of Mediterranean Cruise Ports, was established during the mid-90s, bringing together 38 ports from ten Mediterranean countries. The cooperation of cruise ports could also be an interesting field for the economic and scientific cooperation of countries, as well as the way towards European integration for Croatia.

*Key words:* cruising, cruise ports, cruise ships, co-operation

### Sažetak

Mediterran je sa svjetskog stajališta vrlo značajna turistička destinacija, ali i ponovno sve privlačnije područje za krstarenje. Suvremena kretanja na

tržištu krstarenja prisutna su i na Mediteranu, što pred sve sudionike, a posebno morske luke, stavlja velike izazove. Luke imaju vrlo važnu ulogu u krstarenjima jer su bitan dio sadržaja koji se nude putnicima i važan infrastrukturni objekt brodovima koji u njih pristaju. Zato se luke trude pružiti visoku razinu usluga i tako postići konkurentsku prednost. U tom cilju luke se međusobno informiraju, surađuju u razvoju, investicijama, nastupu na tržištu. S tom namjerom polovicom 90-ih osnovana je MedCruise the Association of Mediterranean Cruise Ports koja danas okuplja 38 luka iz deset mediteranskih zemalja. Suradnja luka za krstarenje može biti i zanimljivo polje međudržavne ekonomske suradnje, ali i znanstvene suradnje, te put Hrvatske prema europskim integracijama.

*Ključne riječi:* krstarenja, luke za krstarenja, brodovi za krstarenje, suradnja.

### Introduction

#### Uvod

The Mediterranean is a region highly ranked by the world during seasonal cruising - a particular kind of marine transport and tourist services. Contemporary trends in the cruising market are present in the Mediterranean as well, which places great challenges on all participants of this very demanding activity, especially concerning ports of call. Today, there is a greater presence of mega ships with about 2000 passengers and almost 1000 crew members, requiring particular organizational, navigational, technical and safety measures. Also, there is a possibility that passengers with various tastes and needs require special embarkation and disembarkation procedures, as well as a variety of

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services in the ports (cities) visited along the way. Traditional or classical cruising is giving way all the more to intensive entertainment and various activities for every cruise participant.

Seaports have a very important role in cruising, as they are basically part of the urban region (cities) that is interesting and attractive to passengers. They are indeed a very significant part of the activities incorporated into the itineraries offered to travelling passengers and/or during cruise departures and arrivals. Therefore, all ports, especially those used in departures and arrivals, strive to create conditions which would extend acceptable services to shipping companies, tour operators, ships, passengers and ship crews. Mediterranean ports, attempting to attract as many ships and passengers as possible, can be recognized in this conformation.

These attempts direct ports towards cooperation by mutually sharing information, development, investment, and market appearance with the basic purpose of strengthening their own competitive viability and achieving the best position possible on the cruise market. The cooperation of cruise ports can be a concrete way of cooperation both scientifically and internationally.

## Cruising in the Mediterranean

### *Krstarenje Mediteranom*

In spite of the relative backwardness of Mediterranean tourism as compared to other regions of the world [6], it is still the most significant world tourist destination and the most touristic part of Europe which attracts about 3/5 of world tourist traffic measured by the arrival of foreign tourists.

The Mediterranean region, strikingly heterogenous in terms of economics and civilization, extending "from the northern olive grove boundaries to the northern palm grove boundaries; the first olive tree found on the road south marks the beginning of the Mediterranean, and the first real palm its end"<sup>1</sup>, will show in 1998 about 110 million foreign tourist arrivals and over US \$ 70 bn in revenue realized from foreign tourists, which is about 18 % in arrivals and about 15 % of revenue from international tourism.<sup>2</sup>

The Mediterranean region is not only significant for its tourist traffic. It ranks high in the world for its special form of sea transport and tourist services, that is, cruising. Namely, following the Caribbean region, the leader of the world cruising market (with about 50%), comes the Mediterranean, having 1/7 of this kind of service [3].

If it were not for climatic and time limitations, which prohibit year-round cruising, generally limiting the period to April-November [10] and the almost

constant presence of high levels of risk due to terrorism and war conflicts on its northeastern, eastern and southern regions, the Mediterranean would surely be more highly represented on the tourist market, especially the cruising market [7].

The last decades of this century will be remembered by the striking changes in cruising. Cruising has become both generally and individually a massive phenomena and a massive entertainment on ship. Among cruise ships, mega ships can be found all the more frequently - entertainment ships with capacities of over 70,000 gt (Table 1), offering passengers more than 2,000 lower berths of various categories and various activities matching everyone's "tastes", and there are already two ships in this fleet with over 100,000 gt and 2,600 cabin berths [8].

Classical cruising, motivated by "peaceful" sailing in traditionally luxurious ambiances, visiting as many coastal cities as possible and sightseeing their historical, cultural and natural curiosities with a leisurely program and longer-lasting journeys, is being squeezed out by more various and intensive programs and by a new kind of passenger seeking great entertainment within a short period of time at relatively low cost [1].

Even though a little tardy, the Mediterranean is participating in contemporary cruising market trends. With special particularities and differences, primarily with respect to the Caribbean supply and demand, and also the market characteristics of other regions, there is a higher percentage of mega ships here - entertainment ships with shorter journeys.<sup>3</sup> There is a tendency seen here of a reorientation towards ships with more categories, as compared to the earlier predominating standard category (three star plus or three star), or economy category (less than three star). This will become all the more apparent when newly-constructed ships are included in traffic and already aging ships are dispensed with, as a consequence of the globalization and policies of large companies and ever greater market competitiveness [2].

All these changes place new challenges on cruise participants, especially ports, as it is necessary to satisfy the needs of shippers, operators, tour operators, ships, numerous crew members, and particularly the large number of passengers with various tastes, demands and potentials.

An important characteristic in cruising the Mediterranean is the exceptionally seasonal oscillations conditioned by climatic and time opportunities. There are great differences in demand and supply, which are interdependent during particular periods of the year. By supply, or rather passenger traffic, the "strongest" months are in summer, late spring and early fall, while during winter, cruising decreases to a symbolic number (Table 2).

**Table 1. Active world cruise fleet by size class**  
**Tablica 1. Aktivna svjetska bijela flota prema klasi**

Size class in gt	1985		1990		1998	
	No	gt-% share	No	gt-% share	No	gt-% share
1000- 5000	22	3.5	24	2.8	32	1.9
5000- 10000	37	12.3	43	11.1	30	3.6
10000- 15000	25	14.1	25	10.9	26	5.2
15000- 20000	25	19.5	24	14.0	23	6.2
20000- 30000	26	27.3	29	22.8	38	14.3
30000- 40000	6	9.3	10	11.4	18	9.8
40000- 50000	4	7.9	9	13.8	13	9.3
50000- 60000	-	-	1	1.8	11	9.4
60000- 70000	1	3.0	2	4.3	6	6.5
70000- 80000	1	3.1	3	7.1	25	29.2
80000- 90000	-	-	-	-	1	1.3
90000-100000	-	-	-	-	-	-
100000 +	-	-	-	-	2	3.3
Total	147	100	170	100	225	100

Source: Compiled based on data from Shipping Statistica and Market Review (1998).  
 No. 7, ISL, Bremen 38

Izvor: Sastavljeno prema podacima iz časopisa Shipping Statistica and Market Review  
 (1998). No. 7, ISL, Bremen 38

**Table 2. Monthly share of the Mediterranean in the world cruise supply, 1997 (% of bed-days)**  
**Tablica 2. Mjesečni udio Mediterana u ponudi svjetskog krstarenja, 1997. (postotak noćenja)**

Region	Month											
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
N. AMERICA	65	63	64	60	51	52	51	52	53	57	65	70
of which Caribbean & Bahamas	57	55	56	50	30	26	26	26	27	44	57	63
EUROPE	4	4	7	18	34	37	39	38	34	27	12	7
of which MEDITERRANEAN	3	3	6	16	24	19	19	22	29	26	11	6
Rest of the world	31	33	29	22	15	10	10	10	13	16	23	23
World	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Compiled according to data from [2]

Izvor: Sastavljeno prema podacima iz [2]

The unbalanced traffic of ships and passengers throughout the year creates great problems for travel organizers, shipping companies, and especially for the ports-of-call. While ships pass the out-of-season period in other regions, thereby engaging their capacities, tour operators engage themselves in other tourist business or cruising programs, whereas ports with their buildings (coast, terminals, vehicle parking) and equipment (used for the embarking/disembarking of passengers) lay

abandoned, "produce" expenses and wait for a season that can be either short or long. That is, the ships and passengers must receive top service in spite of the previous months of "drought". This is a condition for survival on a market dominated by fierce competition, as all ports in the business have their own prosperity in view, as well as significant benefits for the region and national economy to which they belong [5].



## The role of seaports

### *Uloga morskih luka*

Alongside the efforts of certain shipping companies who offer passengers "everything" onboard, a very important role in cruising is taken on by seaports, which are in fact a part of the urban or city region and interesting and attractive to passengers - tourists. That is why ports treated as ports-of-call are indeed an important part of the itinerary offered to passengers within the program framework.

Besides this, the registration and embarkation of passengers is carried out in ports of departure, and their disembarkation and dispatch at the end port, even though more often than not, the terminal port of embarkation at the journey's end is the port of disembarkation. Registration and embarkation, or rather the disembarkation and dispatch of passengers are complex and very demanding, especially when thousands of passengers are registered, embarked, disembarked and dispatched on more than one mega ship.

Passenger registration, collection of port taxes, baggage storage, directing passengers and baggage, as well as numerous other formalities, are responsibilities requiring supreme organization, fast, accurate and safe handling. As any negligence and error slow down the process and negatively influences the level of overall services, that is, how the journey is generally perceived.

Therefore, all ports, especially those of departure and arrival, strive to create conditions where quality services are offered and at costs acceptable to shipping companies, tour operators, passengers and crew members [2].

Ports invest large sums of money in buildings, terminals, infrastructure, parking, and equipment, in order to offer high level services to passengers, ships, crew and other participants, thereby remaining attractive to all those involved who decide on business and cruising programs or who enable their realization.<sup>4</sup>

This is the main reason why ports, in attempting to maintain an ever greater presence and involvement in the cruising market, always go "hand in hand" with ships that fit them, or rather with their mother companies or tour operators who organize journeys and who determine the ship's sailing and docking itinerary [12].

## Cooperation of seaports

### *Suradnja morskih luka*

In attempting to attract as many ships as possible, or rather that cruise organizers (shipping companies, commercial operators, tourist agencies) insert them in cruising programs, ports are interconnected and

appear jointly on the market, offering their services and programs to interested passengers, around which everything revolves and for whom anything is carried out.

Cooperation between ports is especially evident in Europe, where jointly organized commercial tourism was started (in England 1845, Thomas Cook Agency) and the first cruise (1844) organized by the British and the today well-known and influential shipping company P&O (Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company).

The cooperation of European ports has the aim of strengthening competitive viability with respect to other regions and to demonstrate authority by using concrete activities, drawing the attention of all cruise participants in greater measure towards the northwestern regions, the Baltic and the Mediterranean.

With this in mind, Cruise Europa Organisatio was established, which gathers all ports on the European Atlantic coast, Northern, Norwegian and Baltic Sea coasts, as well as Great Britain and Ireland. This organization included the membership (mid 1997) of 60 ports from 12 European Union member countries [4].

MedCruise, The Association of Mediterranean Cruise Ports founded in June of 1996 in Rome, based today in Genoa, has the same goal and has gathered (mid 1998) 38 ports from ten Mediterranean countries [13].

The fundamental task of these two associations is to inform thoroughly and constantly the member ports, as well as all those who carry out cruising decisions, in order to convince them of the existence of less well-known ports that are not any less attractive, besides the well-known ports offering quality service, historical, cultural and other curiosities of the cities and regions to which they belong. Alongside this, member ports, by various forms of cooperation and support, attempt to advance and equalize the service levels offered to ships, create the best possible navigational, manoeuvring, technical, spatial, safety and organizational conditions for the arrival and dispatch of ships, or rather, the embarkation and disembarkation of passengers [9].

MedCruise, using aggressive and systematic marketing, is attempting to prolong the cruising season, that is, to soften the existing great seasonal variations. Money for promotion, especially significant investment procedures, always present a problem, as port funds are inadequate for serious undertakings of this kind. In order that this financial problem be resolved at least partially, steps are being taken to gradually activate funds within the MedCruise framework, whereby, primarily through EU financial support, funds would be secured for the support of member ports and their investments in order that the services they offer on the cruising market be in harmony with the ever increasing demands of all the participants involved in this very demanding business.



Special significance is given to richness, originality, durability and program costs, as well as to the services offered to passengers in port and/or in the surroundings (city). All these services together create a unique product used in the promotion of ports, or that which is offered on the cruising market. This port product is part of the "main" product, that is, sea cruising.

Therefore, ports are indeed an important part of the supply offered in sea cruising markets. Their entrepreneurship and the coordinated activities of all participants in the various surrounding programs depends, of course, upon how much economic gain they or the region to which they belong will have from such sea transport and tourist services, and as such, in what measure will they be able to contribute towards the development of passenger shipping, tourism and finally, the national economy.

From all the aforementioned, it can be concluded how the cruising industry, especially one segment of this industry, that is, ports-of-call, can be a very important area of cooperation for Mediterranean countries. This could be in the field of scientific and professional cooperation, which would use scientifically-based principles in defining the goals and strategies for the general development of tourism and the cruise industry as well. Including paying special attention to cruising as part of sea transport, tourist and port services.

The possibility and need for developing scientific cooperation is strongly emphasized here as a manner in which to discover practical ways for the affirmation of ports used in cruising. Precisely, the sea transport and tourist services which are in expansion today are growing faster than international tourism and trade.

For this kind of cooperation, Croatia has the outstanding potential of using the "sea", the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, in integrating more strongly with the regional economy, or of including itself more rapidly in European integration. This, of course, is also an opportunity for cooperation that is more fruitful, concrete, professional and scientific.

## Conclusion

### Zaključak

The Mediterranean region is not only known throughout the world for its tourism. It also has a significant position in the world cruising market. The participation of the Mediterranean would be even greater, if there were no climatic and time limitations, which make year-round cruising impossible and which determine the strong seasonal oscillations.

Even though somewhat late, the Mediterranean has successfully managed to include itself in

contemporary world cruise market movements. Along with certain particularities and differences, more and more ships of higher categories are being represented here, mega ships - entertainment ships, massive cruising with short journeys. These changes will be emphasized all the more by the introduction of newly constructed ships in traffic and a retraction of the old. The innovations greatly challenge all the participants in the cruising industry, especially seaports, as it is important to satisfy the demands and needs of shipping companies, operators, tour operators, ships, crews and especially, the large number of passengers having various tastes, demands and potentials.

Seaports have a very important role in cruising, and are basically part of the urban (city) core, both interesting and attractive to passengers. The ports in which journeys commence and finish, as well as ports-of-call, are an extremely important segment of the programs offered as packages to passengers. For this reason, ports strive to create conditions for the extension of excellent services, which would satisfy all cruise participants, thereby achieving a competitive advantage.

Ports interact and appear jointly on the market, in order for cruise organizers to include ports in their programs. The cooperation of cruise ports is strikingly evident in western and northwestern Europe and the Mediterranean. The aim of this cooperation is to strengthen competitive viability with respect to other regions and to bear influence using concrete activities, so that the attention of all cruise participants is directed in greater measure towards the Mediterranean. The cooperation of ports harboring ships cruising the Mediterranean can be within the realm of an economic and scientific cooperation between countries, and also, Croatia's path towards a European integration.

## Notes

### Bilješke

<sup>1</sup> Fernand Braudel (1904-1985), the French historian, picturesquely defined the Mediterranean in *Mediteran i mediteranski svijet u doba Filipa II.*

<sup>2</sup> The author's estimates are based on WTO statistics from previous tourist traffic movements and revenue from international tourism.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the largest and most expensive (US \$ 450m) cruise ship *Grand Princess* of P&O Cruises (UK) launched in 1998, capacity of 109,000 gt with 1,300 cabins, 2,600 lower berths and 1,100 crew members, cruises the Mediterranean (from Southampton to Istanbul, calling at some Mediterranean ports) - cf. *Lloyd's Cruise International* (1998). Iss. 23. pp. 13-17

<sup>4</sup> All major world ports, where cruise ships call, invest large sums of money in the construction of terminals and in the procurement of top and highly sophisticated equipment for the registration and dispatch of passengers. This is also being done by those Mediterranean ports seeking a better market position, in answer to the challenges of the times - cf. *Lloyd's Cruise International* (1997). Iss. 21. p. 3,7,9,17,32

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