
media release

Date: 21st April 2017

Ref: 25-2017

MTA WELCOMES EXCELLENT CRUISE INDUSTRY RESULTS FOR Q1 2017

Cruise passenger statistics published yesterday for the period January to March 2017 show a remarkable increase of more than double the volume achieved in the first quarter last year. Total cruise passenger traffic during Quarter 1 2017 amounted to 85,215, i.e. 45,840 more passengers compared to the same period in 2016.

Strong growth was recorded by both EU (+32,079) and non-EU source markets (+13,761). Italy registered the highest growth in volume with an additional 14,570 passengers, followed by France (+6,714), the United States (+4,354) and Germany (+3,532). Furthermore, long haul countries like Australia, Canada and Japan, which only generated a few hundred passengers in 2016, exceeded the one thousand passenger figure this year.

Increases were registered across all the different age groups with the highest percentage increase recorded in the 40-59 year-old age group and the highest volume increase of 16,696 registered in 60-79 year-old age bracket.

In the first quarter of 2017, there were 17 more cruise liner calls than last year. Furthermore, the average number of passengers per vessel increased from 2,316 in 2016 to 2,506 in 2017.

This extraordinary growth is a result of the introduction of new vessels operating to Malta by various cruise companies. 2017 saw the return of Norwegian Cruise Lines company with an itinerary of regular calls by the vessel Norwegian Spirit throughout the first three months of the year. Furthermore, Costa Crociere introduced the operations of the vessel Costa Mediterranea in February 2017 and increased the frequency of calls to Malta compared to last year.

Apart from the substantial economic benefits generated in the immediate term, the cruise industry offers a perfect showcase for Malta as a tourism destination since passengers visiting Malta on cruise are potential tourists for the future. Results also show that the cruise industry is increasingly attracting more passengers from long haul markets. This is of huge benefit for Malta as it increases awareness and exposure for the destination in these far away countries. This is not to be underestimated, as previous experience and recommendation by friends and relatives are still the top motivators for travellers when choosing a holiday destination. The effect of social

media is not to be forgotten either, as thousands of cruise passengers who visit our shores post photos of their time in our Islands on their personal social media profiles, showcasing their experience and the beauty of our Islands to hundreds if not thousands of contacts at a time.

Apart from day cruise visitors who make up the bulk of cruise passenger traffic in our Islands, there is also an economically more important segment of the industry, this being Cruise & Stay and Fly & Cruise passenger flows who fly out to Malta to join the home porting cruise operations of P&O cruises and TUI Mein Schiff. This is an area which the Ministry, MTA, Valletta Cruise Port and partners in the industry are working hard to develop further as it generates even more economic benefits for the country when passengers taking the cruise stay in our Islands for a holiday, pre or post cruise as well as for all the services and products that the cruise ships source in Malta.

Commenting about the results, MTA CEO Mr. Paul Bugeja stated that *“MTA welcomes these results with satisfaction, and firmly believes that by working hand in hand with the Ministry, Valletta Cruise port and industry stakeholders, we can do even better in the future. In fact, following the setting up of a Malta Cruise Forum aimed at bringing together all interested parties in a more organised set up, a professional study and audit of the areas around and leading to Valletta Cruise Port has just been concluded. This report shall be discussed with all concerned and shall serve as the basis of changes and improvements in the upkeep and infrastructure in the area and the management of cruise passenger and traffic flows, with the ultimate objective of aiming to serve an even better experience to all visitors, who have the potential of being tomorrow’s tourists and best ambassadors for our Islands,”* concluded Mr. Bugeja.

