

interview

Meeting innovators in the global cruise industry



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International Cruise Ship Industry

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In another of our series of Q&As with cruise shipping leaders, we talk with Tom Boardley, Secretary General in Europe for Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) to gain his views on the industry and what he perceives CLIA's role to be.

Q. How do you see your role developing at CLIA Europe? With the number of ships ordered increasing year-on-year, do you see your role becoming more important in representing the interests of the cruise ship industry and all its spin-offs?

A. As the cruise industry increases in size, and gains a higher profile, it is attracting more attention in the destinations it serves. This will require more political regional, national and local engagement to those impacted by the presence of more and bigger ships.

Q. Are there any particular issues arising at present?

A. There are two key issues at the moment, excluding specific geopolitical issues, such as Cuba.

One is the environmental performance of cruise ships and the impact of air emissions, particularly on the air quality in port cities. In this respect the cruise ships represent one of the most visible manifestations of the maritime industry, and some see it as a luxury discretion, as opposed to the cargo ships, which fulfill a basic need.

The second is the impact of tourism on destinations, and what happens when the number of visitors begins to negatively affect the quality of life of residents in those locations.

Often cruise passengers only represent a small proportion of the total visitor figures, but they seem to attract a disproportionate amount of attention.

Q. What is CLIA Europe's geographic areas of operation? Does it include the various other satellite organisations, such as MedCruise and if so, how does this work?

A. CLIA Europe looks after the continent of Europe, including the Mediterranean near east and the coast of North Africa. We work with other cruise port related organisations, such as Cruise Europe, Medcruise, etc.

Q. Do you also have different working groups/sub-committees looking after the river cruise sector and other areas such as expedition ships, which has experienced a couple of nasty incidents recently?

A. The River segment is affiliated to CLIA, and we do arrange some travel industry forums that include river cruise. Expedition cruising is very much part of our portfolio.

Q. How often are meetings held?

A. CLIA Europe has a number of committees on specific topics, as well as a General Assembly that meets twice a year, and an Executive that meets about six times a year.

Q. With geopolitical events affecting areas such as the eastern Mediterranean, does CLIA Europe see itself as a political organisation when looking after cruise interests?

A. CLIA Europe looks to represent the interests of its Membership, which includes most of the major Cruise Lines.

This can take the form of promotion of Cruise as a vacation, creating networking events to bring the Cruise community together, as well as the primary task of promoting the interests of the cruise industry and its freedom to operate.

Q. Is CLIA Europe involved in consultancy type work for the cruise operators or training when it comes to agents?

A. We do not normally provide consultancy service to Cruise operators, however our expertise on governmental and regulatory matters is often called upon.

We do arrange generic training for travel agents to introduce them to the cruise sector, given its diverse and comprehensive product range.

Q. In general passenger handling logistics are improving, obviously helped by new technology. However, some ports are still lacking proper terminal facilities, or have facilities that are basic to say the least. Is CLIA Europe trying to improve the embarkation/disembarkation experience, especially where there are several thousand passengers and crew involved with more than one large ship at a terminal?

A. Generally CLIA does not become involved in the specific logistics of individual terminals. We do stage events where terminal operators and Cruise Lines have the opportunity to discuss these issues.

Q. Security is now on everyone's lips. Is this one of the areas that Clia Europe tries to address with stakeholders and ports? (nobody likes to be in a slow moving customs/security queue but I guess digitalisation can help here with passenger and crew details forwarded in advance).

A. This can be a key area, if immigration or customs in a specific port are causing disruption to the smooth flow of passengers embarking and disembarking. CLIA will seek to represent the industry as a whole to find solutions.

Q. How do you work within the EU, as a lobbying group? The same for individual countries?

A. Much of our work is lobbying in the fields of government affairs and maritime policy. We maintain close links at EU, national and local level when issues such as taxes or new regulations are being proposed. We are involved in the Amsterdam City Tourist Tax situation, and

the impact it has had on their business.

Q. Is Clia Europe still forecasting a rise in passenger numbers going forward?

With the newbuilding programme in all segments of the cruise tourism sector at an all-time high, the industry will need to fill the forthcoming growth in beds. Very few older ships are recycled today, as they seem to find new homes with other operators quite easily.

A. Passenger volumes globally are predicted to grow in line with berth capacity over the next five to 10 years.

The range of destinations continues to grow, as does the nature of the on board experience.

The fastest growth in passenger numbers is from new source markets such as China and India, as the population of the world's middle class continues to grow, as does the market for tourism.

Tom Boardley is the Secretary General in Europe for Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the world's largest cruise industry trade association, providing a unified voice and leading authority of the global cruise community.

From 2009 to 2018, Tom led the Lloyd's Register (LR) Marine business as its Director, responsible for worldwide operations, strategy and business development, and latterly developed an external affairs function for the Group.

Prior to joining LR in 2009, Tom had accumulated 30 years' experience in the container shipping, ports and logistics business.

Commencing his career with the container shipping division of P&O, originally trading as OCL and subsequently as P&O Nedlloyd, he held various management roles in the UK, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan before being appointed as Director for Australia and New Zealand, based in Sydney in 1996.

Tom left P&O in 2004, joining the Japanese shipping and logistic company NYK, heading their European Container Line operations.

He is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Mission to Seafarers, and is also a member of the UK Department for Transport's

Maritime 2050 Expert Panel. Previously, Tom was the President of the UK Chamber of Shipping (2015/2016) and served as Chairman of IACS (International Association of Classification Societies) for the 2012/2013 year.

He is an engineering graduate of Oxford University and is a fellow of the Royal Institution of Naval Architects.

Boardley is currently based in Brussels and splits his time between London and the Belgian capital.



Tom Boardley