

SA ports getting ready for a busy 2016/17 cruise season

With at least 14 luxury cruise lines and 20 vessels of all sizes set to ferry domestic and international tourists across the country's port cities, South Africa's ports are getting ready for another busy cruise season kicking off on 1 November.

MSC SINFONIA – the largest and most popular cruise ship in the local cruise calendar - will be a highlight when she arrives in her home port of Durban in the early hours of Tuesday, 1 November on a journey from Venice, Italy, carrying 2,600 European and South African passengers.



MSC Sinfonia

The ship has been accommodated at the Port of Durban's longer M-berth since last year after being lengthened by 24 metres and undergoing a multi-million Euro revamp.

Also returning this season are Oceania Cruises with its vessels INSIGNIA and NAUTICA, Regent Seven Sea Cruises with VOYAGER, Silversea Cruises with SILVER CLOUD, MS AMADEA, owned by Amadea Shipping Company, and Hapag-Lloyd Cruises' EUROPA.

Cunard Lines will again bring two prestigious vessels to the country this year, QUEEN MARY 2 and QUEEN ELIZABETH, both of which will call at Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.



Queen Elizabeth

Australian ship, OCEAN DREAM, chartered by Peace Boat, and Semester at Sea's charter ship, WORLD ODYSSEY, once again make once-off calls this season to Cape Town, bringing international students to the country as part of their respective global study programmes.



Peace Boat in Cape Town 2015-16

Newcomers

New vessels this season includes LE LYRIAL, which was built only last year for Compagnie du Ponant. The vessel will call at Durban and Cape Town.

Another newcomer is AZAMARA run by Azamara Club Cruises, which will call at Cape Town. Germany-based travel agency Phoenix Reisen which sailed South Africa last season with the MS ALBATROS will bring its MV ARTANIA to Cape Town this season.

Upgraded N-Shed

In Durban, cruise vessels other than MSC SINFONIA continue to use the port's N-Shed, which was upgraded ahead of the 2015/16 cruise season in a joint exercise between TNPA and MSC Cruises. N-Shed now boasts a number of new features for an improved passenger experience such as new signage, immigration and check-in desks, a new fast track lounge, new baggage scanners and conveyor belt, an air-conditioning system, extra seating, balustrades, turnstiles and sail shades,

new ramps and a backup generator and UPS in the event of load shedding. TNPA has also made a number of changes to its operational processes to ensure visitors to the passenger terminal enjoy a smoother boarding and disembarkation.

The Port of Durban is set to award its tender for the development a new passenger terminal by February 2017.

Enhancing the cruise passenger experience

Meanwhile, in Cape Town, the V&A Waterfront (Pty) Ltd has taken over operation of the passenger terminal as part of its contract for operation, maintenance and transfer of ownership of the Cape Town passenger terminal back to TNPA after a period of 20 years. The Cape Town facility will remain at E-berth, Duncan Dock, in the Port of Cape Town. V&A Waterfront's focus is primarily on enhancing the cruise passenger experience. The operator completed the first phase of improvements at the terminal ahead of the last cruise season as part of a three-phase growth plan.

Both passenger terminal projects fall under the Section 56 allowance of the National Ports Act 12 of 2005 which mandates TNPA to enter into agreements with private companies to design, develop, construct, maintain and operate facilities to ensure the provision of port services.

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