

The future of expeditions

Rebecca Gibson catches up with CMI Leisure president and CEO Dietmar Wertanzl for an update on the evolution of the small-ship and expedition cruise market

While operators like Carnival Cruise Line and Royal Caribbean International are creating large vessels that are akin to floating Las Vegas-style resorts, small ship operators are differentiating themselves by offering access to remote destinations, unique shore excursions and a boutique hotel-style onboard experience.

“Experience is everything, so cruise guests want to explore off-the-beaten track destinations that they’ve never been to before, and this is exactly what small-ship operators offer,” says Dietmar Wertanzl. “Most remote ports don’t have the huge port infrastructure to cater for larger cruise



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Image: Michael Baynes



Aurora Expeditions' guests are looking for adventure through activities like kayaking in Spitsbergen, Norway

ships but can easily accommodate small expedition vessels. These smaller ships also offer a better guest to crew ratio and therefore, a highly personalised service.”

For operators that want to stand out from the competition, it can help to outsource logistics, crewing, supply chains and hotel services to a third party like CMI Leisure.

“When operators only have two or three small ships, it’s easier and more cost effective to outsource to well-established companies like CMI Leisure, rather than doing it themselves,” comments Wertanzl. “We work with several small-ship operators, so we have economies of scale, extensive supply chains and a pool of experienced crew members. All our partners share five key values: commitment; consistency; good communication; reliability; and quality. We know they’ll deliver the best services to our cruise clients for the best price.”

CMI Leisure can also help operators to design their ships. “Our vast experience means we’ve got plenty of insights and best practices that will help our clients cost-effectively create the best possible ships for both their guests and crew,” explains Wertanzl. “For example, we know that guests on small expedition ships still want choice, space and quality. By working with cruise

lines from the design stage, we can show them how to increase storage, create more spacious cabins, and develop multi-functional venues so they can offer both speciality restaurants and entertainment space. We can also indicate where to place equipment to empower the crew to work efficiently.”

CMI Leisure is helping Australia-based Aurora Expeditions to develop the overall guest experience for its first purpose-built, ice-class expedition ship, which will debut as Greg Mortimer in November 2019.

“We started working with Aurora two years ago, helping the company to configure the overall guest experience, develop the culinary offering, plan the hotel services, organise crewing logistics, and design and equip the galleys,” Wertanzl comments.

Albatross Expeditions, Adventure Canada, Quark Expeditions, Iceland Pro Cruises, Poseidon Expeditions, Victory Cruise Line and Zegrahm Expeditions will also benefit from CMI Leisure’s expertise in 2018.

“Expedition and small-ship cruising offers unique destinations, authentic cultural immersion excursions and real-life adventure and wildlife, so they’re here to stay,” says Wertanzl. “CMI Leisure helps clients understand exactly what these cruise guests want, and how they can deliver it every single time.” **C&F**