

Creating a once-in-a-lifetime cruise experience

Dietmar Wertanzl tells Rebecca Gibson how CMI Leisure can help expedition and small-ship operators deliver world-class hotel services, and manage crew and resources

When Miami-based start-up Victory Cruise Lines decided to enter the cruise market in July 2016 with Victory I, it turned to US-based hotel management services provider CMI Leisure for help with developing its entire hotel operations concept. Australia-based polar adventure cruise company Aurora Expeditions is following suit, working with CMI Leisure as it prepares to launch its first purpose-built, ice-class expedition ship in Antarctica in late 2019.

Whether it is working with fledgling operators or a seasoned industry stalwart like Poseidon Expeditions, CMI Leisure can deliver end-to-end turnkey hotel management services, or oversee individual areas such as logistics, housekeeping, food and beverage, crewing and administration.

"Outsourcing services to third-party providers like CMI Leisure is much easier than doing everything in house, particularly for new start-ups or operators with one ship," says Dietmar Wertanzl, company president. "We've got 20 years of experience, the right systems to ensure everything runs smoothly, an expansive network of suppliers, and immediate access to a pool of experienced crew members, so we can customise our services for individual operators."

CMI Leisure is also well-versed in overcoming the challenges associated with operating for around 350 days annually (during both winter and summer seasons) in remote regions where sea and weather conditions can be challenging, and supply chains are limited.

"When operators are sailing short seasons and calling at big ports in places like Florida, there are plenty of opportunities



Aurora Expeditions' newbuild will be the first to feature Ulstein Group's X-BOW hull so she can pierce waves with greater stability, increasing passenger comfort

to restock ships or change crew, but this is difficult when vessels are sailing for long periods in far-flung destinations like Antarctica," says Wertanzl. "We work with suppliers and port agents worldwide, so we can ship containers to larger ports in advance, or airlift supplies to vessels in destinations like the Northwest Passage. We can also help operators plan resources and crew rosters for repositioning voyages."

In 2017-2018, CMI Leisure will manage eight ships – Victory I and Victory II, Sea Endurance, Ocean Atlantic, Sea Spirit, Sea Discoverer, and Sea Adventurer, Ocean Endeavour and Ocean Diamond.

"We're working with both new and long-term clients, and we're hoping to grow organically alongside these customers as they expand their fleets," comments Wertanzl, adding that partner SunStone Ships has already embarked on a newbuild programme. "We also want to help companies who operate mid-size cruise ships."

Wertanzl predicts that as the expedition cruising market continues to grow, providing an onboard experience and hotel services that make vessels stand out will be a priority for operators.

"Guests used to be more focused on the destinations than the onboard offering, but now that players like Crystal Cruises and Scenic Cruises have joined the market, they expect to go on luxury ocean safaris onboard ships with the boutique accommodation, high-quality cuisine and services," he explains. "Crystal, for example, has to deliver the same high-end standards as it does on its ocean and river ships, so other cruise lines are adding more food and beverage choices, developing more onboard enrichment activities and delivering world-class hotel services to remain competitive. Expedition and small-ship cruises may be expensive, but guests know they're going to get value for money and CMI Leisure can help operators deliver that once-in-a-lifetime experience." **C&F**