

Eastern Med: High expectations



Expectations are high that there will be a period of sustained growth of cruise tourism to the region. Tony Peisley investigates what evidence there is to support such optimism.

Private enterprise is leading the way in driving cruise traffic expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean with Turkey the main beneficiary.

Elsewhere in this issue, the various ways of funding cruise port developments are discussed, but the most effective route – if it can be achieved – is to engage the interest of a well-resourced private company (preferably supported by a major cruise company) and ensure flexibility from the national, regional and local government agencies involved in facilitating its cruise infrastructure plans.

Global Investment Holding's Global Ports owns 72.5% of Ege Ports (Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd owns the rest) which itself owns 40% of Port Akdeniz (Antalya) and 60% of the Bodrum cruise port operating company. Also – since 2003 – it has held a 30-year lease on Kusadasi,

now the most-visited cruise port in Turkey, with 467,000 passengers on 613 calls in 2007 having risen sharply to 610,000 (635) in 2008, with 2009 expected to bring more than 640,000.

In 2006, Global and its partners (including Celebi Holdings, which operates the nearby international airport and also the largest private ground handler in

It is Marmaris, though, which is arguably looking forward to 2010 more than any other Turkish port following Thomson Cruises' decision to homeport *Thomson Celebration* there."

Turkey) secured 22-year operating rights for Port Akdeniz.

A \$2m terminal is part of an \$8m development plan for the cruise port which is currently handling about 45 calls but will more than double that in 2010 following AIDA Cruises's decision to homeport *AIDAdiva* there for 30 alternating weekly cruises. This will bring an extra 120,000 extra revenue passengers.

Bodrum was privatised in 2004 with a 12-year BOT (Build Operate Transfer) contract effective from 2007, and it has a terminal complex and newly built 240m pier, with a minimum 9m draft capable of handling two large or four smaller cruise ships simultaneously.

In its first year (2008) as a private operation, it attracted 163 calls and 109,000 passengers – way ahead of the 60 calls and 14,000 passengers in 2007.

The cruise port is walking distance from the city, and the Milas international airport, which is just 22 miles away, has already helped grow the city resort's popularity with package holidaymakers from the UK