

AIDAluna off Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg's new landmark



PHOTO: ANDREAS VALLBRACHT-CRUISE GATE HAMBURG GMBH

Elbphilharmonie and sustainability

Ahead of Seatrade Europe, Sacha Rougier md Cruise Gate Hamburg, talks to **Frederik Erdmann** about year-round cruising and managing growth.

Before joining Cruise Gate Hamburg (CGH) as md in February 2015, Sacha Rougier had been working for the Port of Marseille over a 15-year period.

The way she decided on a professional future in Hamburg reveals two aspects of Rougier's character: At first, her structured and strategic approach to things, and secondly, her passion to turn new tasks into a success.

'When I was offered the position in Hamburg, I of course analysed the potential of the city along with the requirements of the job – and after that I accepted the task at the drop of a hat.'

The 51-year-old praises the positive attitude towards cruise tourism in Hamburg: 'The city supports cruising. Politics and local economy pulled together when the cruise business was reorganised with a transparent organisational structure and a jointly accepted berth assignment policy.'

Besides, CGH's md points at Hamburg's in-time investments preparing the port for bigger ships, the pioneer work done in the environmental sector – and the local population's passion for cruising.

'No other port in the world succeeds to attract as many spectators to events such as the annual Port Anniversary, the Cruise Days, Blue Port and cruise ship christenings. This passion of Hamburg's population impresses our international partners – also myself – again and again.'

With regards to the port's market position, Rougier is not short of optimism:

'The trend to cruising continues and will turn 2017 into another record year for Hamburg. We expect about 200 calls with some 800,000 cruise passengers.'

'Hamburg is an attractive port, no matter if a cruise starts, finishes or calls at the port. The Elbphilharmonie concert hall as Hamburg's new landmark is turning into a new door opener abroad.'

'In addition, Hamburg has become firmly established as a year-round destination: The 2017 season started with a call of Queen Elizabeth on January 5, and it will close only on December 31 with a visit of Aurora.'

'Capacity utilisation of the ships in winter is very good, and we see cruise lines enquiring increasingly about calls in the cold months of the year,' she adds.

After the success of AIDAprima, we will certainly be able to welcome more operators

in Hamburg year-round, she continues.

'After all, the German market has a significant demand for vacation trips without lengthy flights.'

CGH's md also points at the vast presence of cruise ships during the Port Anniversary this May and the Hamburg Cruise Days in September, which reflect the interest of international cruise lines. In total, 16 cruise ships will be present during both events.

The creation of CGH back in 2014 led to a complete restructuring of cruise operations at Hamburg – a move which Rougier evaluates as positive even in retrospect: 'The cruise reorganisation has led to a transparent berthing policy at Hamburg's three terminals – with regulations published on our website and equal for all cruise lines. We as terminal operator act as a central point of contact for the cruise lines and as a coordinator for the calls. We have opened up the market; operators can choose now the handling agent and stevedores they wish to work with.'

'We have implemented an accreditation process at our terminals, ensuring a continuously high quality of service.'

When Rougier joined CGH, the company was jointly owned by the Hamburg Port Authority (HPA) and Hamburg Airport.

'Our new Steinwerder Terminal was realised in very short time. The combination of expertise and experience on the side of HPA with the airport's competence in passenger handling was a perfect solution for the smooth establishment of the terminal,' she commented about the



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Sacha Rougier, md Cruise Gate Hamburg