The social engagement of cruise companies

Darmstadt, October 12th, 2017 *** Can traveling by cruise ship really be sustainable? We have already discussed this topic last month where we set the focus on ecological aspects. This week, we want to concentrate on the socio-economic preconditions. An important part, since big cruise companies have often been the center of criticism because of their poor work conditions of onboard personnel. Furthermore, the coastal cities can hardly handle the amount of tourists that rush into the city coming from their ship.

But which measures did the big cruise companies take in order to be sustainable also in a social manner in the future? What do the individual projects and measures look like and what is their reach? Green Pearls® took a look behind the scenes of Royal Caribbean Cruises, TUI and AIDA Cruises and shows some positive approaches.
Socially engaged on board and on land

Worldwide, 25 cruise ships are at sea under the flag of Royal Caribbean Cruises (RCCL). The cruise ship company is committed to the topic of sustainability since the early 90s. In respect of social responsibility especially the support of school and educational projects all over the globe are priorities. RCCL cares about children and adolescents, thus they want to enable access to educational opportunities to young people globally. That’s why the company supports various charity organizations that stand up for achieving this particular goal. Furthermore, signs of the company’s engagement are the expansion of cruise terminals taking into account the local peculiarities of the harbors. In that matter, RCCL invested into the harbor of Roatán in Honduras within a Public-Private Partnership.
Restoring and painting for a good cause

The RCCL employees also contribute a significant part to the support of local communities in the destinations. RCCL employees are asked to help social institutions during various activity days. Whether it is supporting the renovation or restoring work, garden work or simply participating in local runs. In this manner, RCCL encourages the social connection between the communities on board and on land. The main goal is to create consciousness and a common responsibility for a green, sustainable life. Especially when it comes to the conservation of sustainable travel destinations and the respect for the local communities.
Sponsorship projects and green land excursions

TUI Cruises and its six „Mein Schiff“ ships are mainly cruising in the European seas and the Arabic Golf. The fleet is planned to be expanded by two new ships by the year 2019.

A remarkable variety of TUI Cruises land excursions are green and fair. Moreover, guests have the opportunity to learn about the country and its natives in an authentic manner. Special leaflets inform and sensitize passengers about the sustainable issues in the visited destination. Five euro per planned excursion are donated to local sustainable projects. And the social engagement becomes visible in annual sponsorship projects that are being carried out since 2014. With the help of donations from TUI "Mein Schiff" guests and crew members, social projects close to the company’s locations in Hamburg and Berlin can be supported. Crew members are invoked to suggest sponsor projects as well as to collect donations from the crew and guests on board and on land.
**Worldwide support**

This year, the TUI Cruises sponsorship is supporting the Ankerland e.V. in Hamburg, which is committed to helping traumatized children and adolescents. The TUI Cruises sponsor project is not limited to these annual sponsorships. Hence, a part of the donations go to the so called "Spontanhilfe Fond" (spontaneous assistance fond). In this way the company was able to help the Philippines back in 2013, where a lot of crew members and their families were affected by a Taifun catastrophe.
Supporting local initiatives

The engagement of TUI Cruises goes beyond international projects in the several destinations or sponsorships. For example, the Hamburg headquarters obtains their fruit juices from the local initiative "Das Geld hängt an den Bäumen" (money grows on trees). The ecological-social project from the city of Hamburg creates working spaces for people with handicaps: they pick apples that kept hanging on the trees during the harvest. After that they are refined in a Slow-Food fruit press, resulting in natural apple juice. The proceeds from selling these juices flows back directly into the project.
Conservation of local communities

AIDA Cruises currently has 12 ships cruising on the seven seas. By the year 2021 the fleet is expected to expand to a total of 14 ships. At the moment AIDA offers its passengers about 140 sustainable land excursions worldwide, as well as approximately 230 biking- and e-bike excursions at 160 harbors. Every AIDA guest has the opportunity to get a deep knowledge about the destination and its inhabitants and is being enabled to donate for the countries they are visiting. Projects, such as planting trees, producing chocolate or sowing seeds support local communities directly.
Compensation of carbon emissions

Adding to that, AIDA passengers have the opportunity to compensate their carbon emissions of their very own cruise voluntarily on every trip. The money is paid directly to a bio mass plant in northern India. There, the green harvest residue provides electricity for 40,000 regional households, while at the same time creates jobs. For this engagement AIDA passengers receive a personalized climate protection certificate with a donation receipt from Atmosfair. Moreover, all of the carbon emissions of AIDA employee business trips are being balanced by climate protection projects as well.

These examples emphasize the complexity of the sustainable challenges for the cruise ship industry to make cruise travel green and carbon-free travel in the future. Therefore it is not only important to comply with environmental standards, but to taking into account also the social criteria of sustainability.

The German Green Pearls GmbH with place of business in Darmstadt, Germany unifies international tourism companies that support environmental protection and demonstrate social commitment. Thereby, Green Pearls is the first holding company worldwide that consolidates sustainable hotels, destinations and restaurants in a global data source.

Among the criteria of admission to Green Pearls® Unique Places, are a sustainability plan on management level, sustainable architecture, comprehensive water, energy saving and waste recovery measures, the use of seasonal and regional ingredients in the kitchen, as well as a large commitment for the social balance in each of the vacation regions.
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