

EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WITH THE LARGEST CRUISE MARKETS IN 2016



The global cruise market has been growing exponentially, especially in the past year. The number of Europeans cruising in Europe increased by 3.4 percent in 2016 despite the geopolitical challenges experienced in Germany, UK and Ireland.

In 2016, Germany became Europe's largest cruise market; with about 2.02 million passengers. The 11% rise in the German cruise industry is said to have been driven by a host of factors.

In a survey carried out by the CLIA, **it was observed that the sector's revenue grew by stunning 18% to about €3.4 billion (excluding on-board sales)**. The growth which comprised the daily price increase from €182 to €187 and the slight increase in cruise length is believed to be a result of a combination of passenger growth and increase in the number of cruise ships.

Statistics show that North European destinations were most popular amongst the customers. The amount of cruisers opting for the North American or Caribbean cruise (11%) remained the same. These statistics placed the German cruise behind the USA. Even though there is room for potential growth, the German cruise market faces certain challenges in this aspect which range from attracting first time travelers to convincing vacationers that cruise tours are neither boring nor expensive.

With respect to UK and Ireland, the cruise market has been growing too. 1.9 million - that is the number of British and Irish holidaymakers in 2016, representing a growth from 1.7 million in 2015 (about 5.6%). The percentage of British cruise passengers taking holidays at sea is higher than that of German travelers (about 27,000 per thousand); even though the population of German cruise passengers is over 2 million more than that of the UK.

For the British cruisers, the Mediterranean remains the most prominent region amongst passenger destinations (about 272,000). The continued investment in the Irish and UK ships as well as on-board and ashore experiences all point to further growth in the future with the Mediterranean being the most popular destination of European passengers followed by Northern Europe. Besides Germany, Britain and Ireland, other countries such as Spain reported growth of 4.2 per cent confirming a two-year recovery after the slump of 2014.

There are a few market trends that cruise lines and destinations in the industry should be fully aware of. Specialization was the major trend in 2016. **With cruise lines offering specialized services focusing on family, educational and recreational themes the demand of repeat cruisers increased.** This trend also provides various opportunities for developing countries which may be able to partner with the cruise lines to provide culture and health cruises.

Tech advancement has affected lots of industries and the cruise market is no exception. With services like wireless internet passengers are able to search information about attractions at their various destinations. Many cruise destinations invest in online marketing as it can greatly increase their sales and patronage.

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