

CRUISE SHIP POLLUTION SITUATION TO IMPROVE



The cruise ship industry is very much on the up. 12 million people cruised in waters around the globe in 2006, a figure which is set to increase in years to come. For example, 9.9 million people are expected to set sail in American waters this year alone, an increase of 5% on last year. However, those aware of the damage these huge floating cities can do to the environment tend not to travel with a clear conscience. They know that every time they flush the toilet on board one of the vessels they could be causing a huge amount of damage to fragile reef areas and marine life. Indeed, the cruise industry is responsible for a host of environmental unpleasantries.

Cruise ships are estimated to be responsible for around 25.000 gallons of sewage from toilets every day! This, of course, does not include waste from sinks, on-board swimming pools and kitchens. The ships' giant propellers are said to sometimes scar reef areas and destroy coral. This is most common in shallower areas, where ships are also known to stir up silt which can have a similar detrimental effect on the reef areas and marine life. Many also neglect the damage which cruise ships tend to cause even outside of the water. Air pollution has been identified as a further problem the industry faces and simply must rectify. When taking all these factors into account, it is still somewhat amazing that certain cruise liners, for example in Hawaiian waters, are able to operate without any restrictions or regulations protecting the ocean.

Despite the pessimistic picture, there have been some positive steps made to adjust the situation in favour of the environment. Some ships are now employing a pricey new emission system to control the escaping gases from the ships. Moreover, some cruise companies are now claiming to treat their waste water so thoroughly that it is almost drinkable and say that as the remaining sewage residue is pumped into the water at around 15 knots, there is a high level of mixing of biodegradable product. Perhaps, cruisers can start to travel with a clear conscience after all.

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