



{rokbox title=|The Cruise Industry is at Full Throttle after the FCCA Conference in Cartagena}images/stories/industria-crucerosbig.jpg{/rokbox}

The 20th annual conference of the Florida Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) held in Cartagena has rekindled the enthusiasm in the Colombian cruise industry, as more ships, passengers and cruise arrivals will be expected in Colombia in 2014.

Held at the historic port of Cartagena on September 30th-October 4th, the FCCA's meeting gathered nearly a thousand attendants, including top company executives from the 15 FCCA member cruise lines that control more than 89.6% of operations in the world.

During their stay, cruise line executives learned about the varied tourism services and port infrastructure available in the city, which encouraged some of them to expand their services in Colombia, in addition to attending conferences and business appointments with each other and with PROCOLOMBIA representatives.

For example, Richard Sasso, President of MSC Cruises, announced that Cartagena de Indias will be part of their new ship Divina travel schedule across the Caribbean, thus increasing their number of cruise arrivals in Colombian ports.

“We are not expanding as quickly as most other companies, but our growth is very well-planned. We have a long-term strategy, which includes adding a few arrivals in Cartagena next year for our ship Divina, thanks to this conference,” claimed Sasso.

The ship, built in 2012 and currently sailing across the Mediterranean Sea, has a capacity for 3,959 passengers and 1,325 crewmembers. For the most part, cruise travelers will come from the United States, Spain, Italy, France, and the United Kingdom.

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In turn, the Royal Caribbean group, under the leadership of Richard Fain, announced its decision to bring its ship Independence of the Seas for the first time to the coasts of the department of Bolivar in 2015, with a capacity for 4,370 passengers and 1,360 crewmembers.

“We are constantly evaluating our cruise routes. Of the many ports around the world, we maintain a presence in more than 100. However, Cartagena has earned a special place in my heart, and we love Colombia”, explained Fain in Cartagena.

Both Royal Caribbean’s Independence of the Seas and MSC Cruises’ Divina surpass the 2,850-passenger capacity of Celebrity’s Equinox, being the ship with most arrivals in the city to date, according to the Cartagena Port Society.

“Certainly, these announcements will positively affect the economic development in the city and the entire country as every cruise traveler who visits Colombia spends an average of \$99 USD in categories including food, shopping and leisure, according to Business Research & Economic Advisors (BREA), which generates revenue for different sectors,” stated President of PROCOLOMBIA, Maria Claudia Lacouture.

Lacouture added that this is in addition to the expenditures of travelers boarding Royal Caribbean and Pullmantur ships, as it happens in Cartagena where, according to estimates by port authorities, last season (2012-2013) brought revenues of over \$3 million USD.

PROCOLOMBIA, the office in charge of promoting international tourism in Colombia, lead the commission that secured the realization of this event in 2011 and also hosted the conference.

The FCCA Also Encouraged Cartagena’s Good Will

Besides these results, the FCCA conference in Cartagena also attained other intangible benefits, including the city’s positioning among the main tourism wholesalers in the continent and grabbing the attention of the international media.

Aiming at promoting the tourist attractions found in the main Colombian ports, PROCOLOMBIA organized a familiarization trip, inviting over a dozen tour operator representatives from Brazil,

Chile, Ecuador, United States and Peru.

After the familiarization trip, the tour operators' interest in destinations like San Andres, Santa Marta and Cartagena grew to such an extent that they have partnered with national companies to design tourism packages and bring more tourists from those strategic markets to the Caribbean Coast.

The same thing happened among international journalists who traveled to Cartagena to cover the conference event, where they learned why "Colombia is magical realism", in the city that inspired Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez to create some of his best works.

The San Felipe de Barajas Castle (Castillo San Felipe de Barajas), for example, captivated a reporter from the Huffington Post, who described in the renowned American news web site the "good conditions" of the fort built more than 500 years ago and the "mind-blowing view" from the top.

Learn more about Colombia:

- [Cartagena: a Colombian destination of history and culture](#)
- [Official video of the tourism campaign](#)
- [Why Colombia for your events?](#)
- [Traditional Fruit Juices on the Caribbean Coast](#)