



Bodrum Harbour and Castle, Turkey

and Europe and could do the same for the port's homeporting ambitions.

The nearest airport to Alanya cruise port is less than 30 miles away and it has begun handling international flights for the first time this year. The cruise port has also been privatised through a 25-year operating lease granted to TAV Holding.

Calls fell by nearly a third to 84 in 2008, and passenger numbers by more than a third to 57,000 in 2008, but port director Captain Haluk Sayman said: "Although we expect similar traffic in 2009, there should be 100 calls and 80,000 passengers in 2010.

"We extended the jetty to 533m in 2005 and it will be further expanded and enhanced shortly. There is also a new attraction on its way – the Marine and Shipping Museum being created near the ancient shipyard as part of the Alanya Castle Protection and Development plan."

It is Marmaris, though, that is arguably looking forward to 2010 more than any other Turkish port, following Thomson Cruises' decision to homeport *Thomson Celebration* there for a weekly summer

series to Izmir, Santorini, Alexandria and Ashdod.

With *Thomson Spirit* transferring from Palma to Corfu to replace *Thomson Celebration* on sailings to Venice, Dubrovnik, Athens and Rhodes, this means that – despite Thomson's withdrawal of *Calypso* from its Thessaloniki-based cruises – the operator will be increasing its Eastern Mediterranean capacity by 42%.

The 25 turnarounds by *Thomson Celebration* (fed by flights from 12 UK airports) will mean that Marmaris increases from 90-odd calls in 2009 (including firsts from *AIDAdiva*, *Golden Iris*, *Club Med 2*, *Costa Concordia*, *Costa Mediterranea* and *MSC Splendida*) to well over 100 bringing more than 125,000 passengers.

With mega ships like *MSC Poesia* also calling regularly, it is putting pressure on ministry of tourism approval for the planned new 300m pier, which will increase the simultaneous handling capacity from one mega and one smaller ship to three mega and one smaller.

Once approved, it will be a 10-month build, costing \$8m with the passenger terminal also being refurbished this winter.

Marmaris Cruise Port (MCP) also manages the tiny Didim Cruise Port – gateway to "Land of Oracles". Located between Bodrum and Kusadasi, this has a new pier but still one only suitable for tendering. This limits its callers to smaller cruise ships like *SeaDream One*, *Arion* and *Club Med 2*, which all make maiden calls during 2009.

Looking further ahead, Izmir has the most ambitious growth plans of any Turkish port for it is targeting a million cruise visitors on 250 calls by 2015.

This would mean a trebling of passenger numbers in just seven years as 2008 saw 321,000 cruise visitors to the port. Although this was itself a dramatic growth from the mere 3,000 who visited in 2003, the projected increase is dependent on the creation of a brand new port – Uckuyular – with two piers of 525m and 320m able to handle up to six ships simultaneously.

IZTO (Izmir Chamber of Commerce), which has driven the recent growth through promotional campaigns and – with other local government bodies – the renovation and refurbishment of the existing port, has since partnered with Costa Cruises – 33% (IZTO); 67% (Costa) – for the new \$75m port project which will

take 18 months to complete and will target homeporting as well as transit calls.

The potential positive impact on homeporting is one of the reasons for the latest plan to develop a new cruise port facility at Istanbul. Louis Hellenic is the latest brand to be looking at homeporting there but this iconic marquee port continues to underperform in this respect because of the limitations of the cruise facilities.

There were 370 calls and \$37,000 revenue passengers through Istanbul but only about 120,000 were embarking/disembarking. The annual increase in cruise traffic has been running at 15-20% in recent years and is now running virtually at the full capacity of the current berths (Salpazar and Karakoy) so that growth (primarily in transit calls) is set to be constrained.

The latest plan involves three other wharfs (notably Sarayburnu), the development of

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which could increase Istanbul's capacity to more than 1m cruise visitors.

The Renaissance Group, which has experience in many mixed-use developments in Russia, is behind the latest Istanbul cruise port plan.

Leading ground tour operator Tura Turizm has a small interest in the project and its chief executive officer Erkunt Oner said: "This is a \$1.5bn venture including convention centre, hotels and shopping malls, but the cruise port will be the first element to be finished some 18 months to two years after building starts.

"This could be within three months as the plan is now waiting to clear the final (legal) bureaucratic hurdle. There have been a lot of issues because the site is by the Byzantine walls, but we must have this new port as the one we have is simply not good enough going forward.

"Even in a recession, numbers of calls are increasing to most Turkish ports and we have even seen our sales of shore excursions slightly up on last year."