

Question of taste

The logistics puzzle takes on an added dimension as operators penetrate new markets. When catering for international palates, Royal Caribbean Cruise Line's **Jeff Danis** explains to Roger St Pierre why having the right supplies at the right time is a crucial factor of a successful voyage.

As the largest global cruise brand, Royal Caribbean Cruise Line (RCCL) operates 21 super-size ships, with another three currently under construction. Keeping its thousands of guests supplied with food, drink and all the niceties of an enjoyable cruise experience, is a major logistical challenge, especially as new and more adventurous itineraries come on stream.

'The Caribbean and South America are our core business,' says Jeff Danis, RCCL's vice president of supply chain management. 'We've also sailed European waters so our supply lines in those territories are well established. However, our return to Asian waters for 2008 presents many challenges – it's as much a need to adapt to the tastes of our target market for each cruise as it is sourcing supplies in new locations.'

International menu

When it comes to clients, North Americans fill the bulk of RCCL cabins on its established itineraries and, fortunately, the kind of food and beverages they want is familiar to and enjoyed by an

international audience. However, there are also specific national tastes that need to be considered. If a particular itinerary attracts a high number of, for example, Brazilian or Japanese passengers, then there are certain items that will be added to the inventory to cater for their needs.

Keeping thousands of guests supplied with food, drink and all the niceties of an enjoyable cruise experience is a logistical challenge.

'This consideration reaches a new dimension when we sail in the Far East because most of the passengers will be Asian nationals so we have to re-think our food and beverage offer,' says Danis. 'Every nationality has different preferences in food and beverages, and this must be kept in mind when stocking up supplies.'

Making sure these and all the other requisite items are in the right place at the right time is an ongoing logistical challenge, which is heightened when ships visit ports that have never before

A typical Royal Caribbean International Voyager-class cruise consumes:

31,264	orange juice (litres)
21,021	bin liners
5,069	Corona beer (bottles)
1,452	tenderloin steak (kg)
1,325	shrimp (kg)
505	ground coffee (kg)

experienced large cruiseships with a very high volume demand for particular items.

'Fortunately, we now live in a global marketplace,' says Danis. 'The world is shrinking, national tastes are overlapping more and more, and consequently it is amazing what can be found quite easily in the most unlikely locations.'

Just-in-time supplies

Of course, at the start of a cruise, the bulk of a vessel's needs for the entire itinerary are already onboard and stowed ready for



use. But many fresh items, such as dairy produce, have to be replenished throughout the cruise journey.

‘The good news for our suppliers is that we know well in advance exactly where each of our ships will be on any given date,’ says Danis. ‘The bad news is we mean it.’

Timekeeping for deliveries is crucial as cruiseships can’t delay sailing time to wait for a supply truck. Using ocean-going freight carriers is not an ideal option and cruiseships are dependent on air freight for any items that cannot be sourced locally. Detailed forward planning is essential to source the right products of the right quality and to accurately predict the consumption levels of each item.

‘While we have virtually everything in place when we set off on a seven-day cruise, longer itineraries will demand re-supply at ports en-route,’ says Danis. ‘On such occasions we will usually bring between 150 and 200 tonnes of fresh supplies onboard. This will take between five and six hours, but in less sophisticated ports with less efficient loading facilities that require the use of a cage rather than

a fork-lift, loading time might stretch to eight or 10 hours.’

Significant tidal variations and the type of equipment on hand in a port can have an effect on how quickly a vessel can be loaded and must be considered when forward planning. Bunkering is a major concern as fuel quality, availability and prices are often variable, so these elements have to be included when planning where and when the vessel takes fuel onboard.

Modern concept

In 1999, RCCL redefined cruising for the modern traveller by introducing special

onboard amenities to its Voyager ships. These included an ice rink, a rock-climbing wall, mini-golf and the Royal Promenade boulevard of shops, restaurants and lounges that stretches the length of each ship.

‘This concept has been highly successful but is dependent on our maintaining a faultless supply chain,’ says Danis. ‘Sailing into new waters gives us new market opportunities, with an increasingly diverse international clientele – not just in nationality terms, but in age groups and aspiration levels. We see efficient supply chain management as a crucial consideration.’ *wc*

Jeff Danis profile

As vice-president of supply chain management for Royal Caribbean and Celebrity Cruises, Jeff Danis is responsible for a fleet of 34 ships and an annual expenditure of \$1.5 billion. A 20-year veteran in the complex logistical challenge of buying, storing and moving products and services, he has held several management positions at Hughes Electronics, receiving the Marie Curie Award for Innovation while working at that company. Danis then became executive director of worldwide sourcing for Raytheon Systems Company before becoming vice president of global purchasing and logistics for P&O Princess Cruises. He joined Royal Caribbean in May 2003.



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