



# Form and function

Cruising may seem like the glamorous side of shipping, but it takes more than a pretty face to make a successful voyage. Shirley Accini talks to **Christian Schönrock** of AIDA Cruises and Partner Ship Design's **Siegfried Schindler** and **Kai Bunge** about AIDA's latest addition to its fleet.

The smiling red lips that adorn the bows of AIDA ships are perhaps symbolic of the cruise line's outlook, even during an economic downturn.

Cruising represents only 1% of all European holiday activities, which, according to Christian Schönrock, director of new building, AIDA Cruises, means there is strong potential for growth. 'The downturn has not affected us. We are almost fully booked for 2009 and we expect our new ships to be fully booked,' he says.

AIDA is halfway through a fleet expansion and in April this year celebrated the launch of *AIDAluna*, the third ship of its Sphinx class, in Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

AIDA ships were first known as 'club ships', recognisable by the 'hot lips' design emblazoned on their bows. This refers back to the line's beginnings in the 1990s when it introduced an informal style of cruising aimed at a younger, fun-loving clientele who wanted on board organised entertainment and to whom visiting destination countries was not a priority.

'AIDA has grown up since then,' says Schönrock. 'We have retained those passengers, but now they are bringing their children, parents and friends, and AIDA has matured with them.'

## Design, space and functionality

This new approach is reflected in the decor and layout of *AIDAluna*, which has been designed to appeal to passengers of all ages.

While the colour scheme is still vibrant, the overall design follows a more sophisticated style that cleverly manages space and functionality.

Hamburg-based Partner Ship Design (PSD) has worked with AIDA Cruises since 1993. 'The remit for *AIDAluna* was to build a compact ship,' says Kai Bunge, senior partner at PSD. 'The owners wanted increased passenger space, more cabins and better use of all the areas.'

With space at a premium, PSD faced a major challenge keeping the vessel compact.

'It was important to make the passengers feel as though they have lots of space,' says Siegfried Schindler, senior partner at PSD.

This meant focusing on logistics, creatively using open-plan spaces with carefully arranged furnishings and lighting to guide passengers throughout the vessel.

'We divided the space into smaller areas, not with solid walls, but with barriers such as palm trees or the bridge on deck 11, which

separates the traffic area from the machines in the fitness area,' says Schindler. 'Creating smaller rooms this way creates a warmer atmosphere and gives the passenger the feeling of being connected to other areas of the ship.'

Another example of this approach is the three-tiered Theatrium, an amalgamation of an atrium and a theatre. Traditionally, the theatre is an area that is used for only a few hours each night for shows. On *Luna*, the Theatrium can be used day and night for events such as auctions and lectures. Because all the walls are windows, the space enjoys sea views and is filled with natural light.

### Guidance and encouragement

On *Luna* there are no corridors in the public areas, instead, passengers are guided through areas that flow into each other.

'This is something we have designed into all aspects of the ship,' says Bunge. 'As well as making it easier to get from one place to the other, it also encourages passengers to try other activities.'

For example, on deck 10, after a meal at the Weite Welt or Buffalo Steakhouse



Calm waters: the *Luna* is designed to create a warm and relaxing atmosphere.

restaurants, passengers will walk past the Café Mare or Wine Bar on to the Theatrium where they can watch a show, have a drink or try out the casino.

In the restaurants, the open-plan layout is designed in a way that passengers do not feel they are in a huge, crowded room. The Markt Restaurant, for example, accommodates up to 500 people at a time,

but the seating is divided into smaller areas, creating a more intimate atmosphere.

Bunge adds that the crew and passengers also benefit from having the restaurants, service functions, storage areas and lifts to the pantries and galleys located in the aft of the ship.

'The crew do not have to spend time running from one area to another and it provides easy orientation for passengers,' he says.

### Unique character

As befitting sister ships, the vessels of the Sphinx fleet are almost identical, decorated in the typical AIDA design, but with subtle differences.

'Each AIDA ship has its own design, recreating a dream,' explains Schönrock. 'For the *AIDA Luna* spa, that dream is India, using the country's colours and an atmosphere that is warm and special.'

This use of vibrant colours, harmonious proportions and structures are carried on through the public areas, such as the main reception and entrance level on deck three, which has been transformed into to a welcome area.

'As soon as passengers step onto the ship, they will immediately feel it is different,' says Bunge.

'It is the perfect welcome to the start of their cruise.' wc



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