

120 years of craftsmanship

Shipyard De Hoop in the Netherlands continues to build on an artisanal tradition established over many decades



Patrick Janssens

Patrick Janssens joined the board of directors of De Hoop in 2004 and led a management buyout of the company in 2007. He now serves as the yard's managing director

In the late 19th century, Dutch shipbuilding was mainly concentrated in the north of the country. In 1889, attracted by the River Rhine's favourable location for trade with Germany, two brothers from Groningen broke with tradition by establishing a shipyard on the river, away from the main shipbuilding region. Since then, Shipyard De Hoop has developed a reputation for building, engineering and designing all types of vessels.

It is significant that all our vessels are custom built or 'one-offs' and all necessary disciplines are provided in house. In recent years, Shipyard De Hoop has seen big advantages from this strategy, such as more flexibility and control over costs. Our Lobith main yard has a staff complement of 130, while our smaller Groningen yard employs 70 people full time. Each yard hires additional workers on a short-term basis as needed.

Over the last 30 years we have built more than 50 purpose-designed river cruise vessels and day passenger vessels and today, we are acknowledged as experts in the expanding river cruise business. A great deal of research goes into these ships, most of which sail almost year-round.

We have developed a reputation for building innovative river vessels that not only look good but are very cost-effective. For Uniworld Cruise Line's River Antoinette, delivered in March 2011, we built a bar and restaurant on top of the ship that can be folded away completely at the touch of a button when the vessel passes under a bridge. Another innovation is the placement of a swimming pool integrated into the engine room so that the mass of water in the pool acts as a noise and vibration-dampening device. The pool also has a glass wall, so that when swimming underwater, people can look out at their surroundings.

In April 2011, we delivered the RheinFantasie, a day passenger 'event ship', for Köln Düsseldorfer. The build time, from keel laying to delivery, was only 16 weeks with a team of 200. This monohull vessel, which can accommodate audiences of up to 1,000 for dinner shows and other events, has at its heart a large open theatre and stage which demanded clever design solutions.

In April 2011, we also delivered the Amadeus Brilliant, the fourth sister vessel of a design conceived for long-term customer Lüftner Reisen. This is our ninth vessel for them in as many years.

We recently signed the contract for a tenth river cruise ship for Lueftner Reisen. This was a special occasion as we have always had the ambition to build more than a kilometre of vessels together and we have now reached this milestone. As this vessel has to be something special, we are working on a completely renewed design, which is being made under the codename Amadeus X.

We are also designing three 135-metre river cruise vessels and a 110-metre vessel to replace our earlier designs for another returning customer, Vantage Travel from Boston. Once again, we have developed a new design and the first one will be delivered soon. This repeat business is a welcome endorsement of our services. **C&F**

De Hoop's main yard in Lobith has built more than 50 river cruise vessels over the last thirty years

