

Shipyard De Hoop stays ahead of the game

In a time when shipyards are scrambling for contracts, The Netherlands-based Shipyard De Hoop appears to be staying buoyant in turbulent times

Last year saw the delivery of, *River Discovery II*, the first in a series of three river cruise vessels for American operator Vantage Deluxe Travel with the other two sister vessels *River Splendor* just delivered and the *River Venture* scheduled for delivery a few weeks later.

However, it doesn't stop there for De Hoop Shipyard. "We are finishing another vessel for Lueftner Cruises, *Amadeus Silver* which is a complete new design as previous vessels for this company have been 110m in length, *Amadeus Silver* will 135m and will include new features onboard. The vessel is scheduled to be delivered in April", says Patrick Janssens, chief executive officer, De Hoop Shipyard.

Furthermore, the yard is working on 12 'upgrades' and conversions of existing river cruise vessels, such as the complete interior conversion of *River Navigator* (for Vantage Travel) and the 'French Balconies' conversion of *Amadeus Classic* (for Lueftner Cruises). Next year the yard has, besides various orders for offshore vessels, recently acquired new orders to build two 135m river cruise vessels (*Riva Royale* and *Riva Princess*) for Riva Waterways and one luxury 110m river cruise vessel for Scenic Cruises.

Janssens remarks that the inland cruise market has seen substantial growth over the past couple of years, with more river cruise vessels coming onto the market. De Hoop Shipyard aims to stay ahead in today's market by keeping up with the demand for more innovative designs, which is being pushed by the growing competition in this market.

"We see that, in general, the credit crisis as well as the increasing competition have really accelerated innovation in ship design, as it's no longer a case of just copying the same designs or doing what you have always been doing. In general shipbuilding has seen many innovations in the area of propulsion, as vessels will now need to meet new regulations, such as IMO tier III (US tier III and IV). We are, for example, also looking at hybrid propulsion for other vessels that we construct where there is increasing demand for lower fuel



De Hoop Shipyard has had a good start to 2013. Patrick Janssens, chief executive, Fré Drenth, technical director, Johan Fasel, director of operations, (from front to back)

consumption", says Janssens. He adds that there is also a lot of development in the area of waste heat and how to reuse this lost energy.

Also, on the rivers, competition is stronger. However, the biggest challenge at the moment is the shipowners taking up on these 'green' solutions, says Janssens. As we have seen in other areas such as the ballast water convention, shipowners are not quick to respond to installing energy efficient solutions onboard that may make their vessels greener and can save costs, but have a long

payback time. Janssens explains that it is about discussing and explaining the savings with shipowners, as if they burn less fuel they will cut emissions and also save costs.

Most innovations in this market remain nevertheless focussed on bringing more comfort and more possibilities for the customers onboard.

Innovations that focus on the environment are still difficult. The rules and regulations are driving the demand for the solutions to be installed in this market. In many sectors there is demand for vessels to be more environmental, but it is not being valued by similar earning power.

Janssens also comments that in the future with all the river cruise vessels under construction, there could be over capacity in the market, as we see in other sectors. He believes that if this scenario is realised we could see river cruise operators looking to start tours in other regions. "Other rivers are opening up such as China and India. These will be a challenge as these are different rivers and the countries have different regulations", comments Janssens.

Also, De Hoop shipyard is keeping busy in other markets such as offshore, conversion and fast crew supply vessels for the Mexican Gulf. Janssens notes that in some areas the economy has picked up, but it is still hard out there for other shipyards and it is difficult to say when shipbuilding will return to the pre-2009 standards. **NA**

River Discovery II, the first in a series of three for Vantage Travel

