

Rising to the technical challenge

Shipyard De Hoop president and CEO Patrick Janssens explains to Rebecca Gibson how the company is well equipped to build river cruise vessels



Amadeus Silver III will have the same features as her sister ships and sail European voyages

Building a river cruise vessel is always an architectural challenge. Not only do the ships need to safely pass through locks and under bridges, they must also offer spacious interiors for the comfort of their guests.

“The maximum height, beam, draft and ballast capacity of river cruise ships is predetermined, so there is only a limited space to fit the engines, HVAC system, piping, electrical cables and other necessary onboard machinery,” explains Janssens. “On top of that, we must find ways to provide operators with the maximum amount of space in the guest rooms and public spaces.”

Despite these challenges, Netherlands-based yard De Hoop is well equipped to build custom-designed river cruise vessels.

“Our team comprises both designers and builders, so we are able to work flexibly and fulfil challenging client requests, regardless of when they arise during the project,” says Janssens. “Most other shipyards are only able to complete the steel build, but our interior fit-out department can carry out

onboard installations, electrical and piping work and create custom furniture in our upgraded onsite carpentry workshop. This allows us to manage all of the different aspects of projects to ensure we deliver high-quality ships on time and within budget.”

These skills have made De Hoop a trusted construction partner for Austrian operator Lüftner Cruises. To date, it has built 11 ships and this February, Lüftner placed an order for a twelfth vessel, which will be a sister to the 2014 Amadeus Silver and the 2015 Amadeus Silver II.

“The Amadeus Silver III order demonstrates that Lüftner values our ability to create innovative and luxurious ships with cost-effective operating systems,” Janssens says. “Since we started our partnership, we’ve gone from building 110m vessels with two and a half decks, to 110m ships with three decks, to 135m ships, with each vessel becoming more innovative.”

Scheduled for delivery in early 2016, the 135m Amadeus Silver will have the same dimensions, operating equipment and propulsion systems as her sister ships. The

newbuild will also feature various public areas, 72 standard cabins with walk-in closets and large shower units, as well as 12 suites with a separate lounge area, a walk-in closet, a balcony and a spacious bathroom. De Hoop also aims to make several minor improvements.

“River cruise operators are expanding their fleets rapidly and competing with one another to create the most comfortable and aesthetically pleasing ships,” says Janssens. “Lüftner aims to do this by improving climate control and reducing onboard noise and vibrations, particularly in the accommodation area. We’ll improve both of these aspects on Amadeus Silver III and also make a few cosmetic upgrades to ensure she’s even more luxurious than previous vessels.”

Currently, Amadeus Silver III is De Hoop’s only confirmed passenger shipping order for 2015, but Janssens is optimistic that it will secure more when the team has completed a series of offshore vessels. “We hope to win some repair, conversion, and possibly expedition cruise ship projects when we have more capacity later this year.” **C&F**