



FLORIDA-CARIBBEAN CRUISE ASSOCIATION

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November 7, 2022

Hon. Minister Ivan Eskildsen
Minister of Tourism
Autoridad de Turismo de Panamá (Panamá Tourism Authority)
Panamá City
Republic of Panamá

Dear Minister Eskildsen,

On behalf of Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association (FCCA) and our Member Lines, I want to first praise Panama's partnership with and commitment to cruise tourism. The destination has taken great strides to improve its product and appeal to cruise lines, with recent examples including constructing a new cruise terminal in Fuerte Amador, enhancing Colon 2000 and hosting the FCCA Cruise Conference – and Panama should soon see the results of those efforts, with the number of Member Line cruise guests in 2023 expected to increase by 54% and 30% in Fuerte Amador and Colon, respectively, compared to 2019, along with numerous planned homeporting operations scheduled for the years to come.

In the spirit of this partnership, we must bring your attention to an issue that could threaten the progress. Our Member Lines have had calls affected by the resolution 18765 dated August 16, 2022. Most notably, this resolution implements a US\$5.00 charge for each Shore Pass for crew members (plus an administrative fee), and to further aggravate the situation, this Shore Pass needs to be bought in advance in case any calls fall within a holiday on which the Authority offices are not open, risking not being available to provide the service and making the process more bureaucratic.

In a moment where some of our Member Lines have committed homeport programs for both Colon and Amador, supporting the recent investments made by the country in infrastructure, and not to mention the support of the Executive Decree No 35 – 2019 that provides a promotion incentive for the canal tolls, we find this measure counterproductive towards the collective efforts to raise the economic benefits of cruise tourism in Panama.

An average cruise ship on any given call may have between 200 and 500 crew members wishing to go ashore to enjoy the destination and purchase basic services and staples. These crew members become the greatest onboard ambassadors of your destination if they enjoy it and find it welcoming, sharing their experiences with passengers. This measure makes Panama the only country in the world that imposes a shore pass fee for crew members.

FCCA Member Lines

AIDA Cruises • Azamara • Carnival Cruise Line • Celebrity Cruises • Costa Cruises • Cunard Line • Disney Cruise Line

*Hapag-Lloyd Cruises • Holland America Line • MSC Cruises • Margaritaville at Sea • Norwegian Cruise Line • Oceania Cruises • P&O Cruises • Princess Cruises
Regent Seven Seas Cruises • Royal Caribbean International • Seabourn • SeaDream Yacht Club • Silversea Cruises • TUI Cruises • Virgin Voyages • WindStar Cruises*

It is worth noting that for the 2017/2018 season, Panama received approximately 57,000 crew members with an average spend of US\$66 per person, representing US\$3.72 million of direct expenditures into the economy. This is without mentioning the overall US\$77.75 million in direct cruise tourism expenditures (not including indirect benefits of cruise tourism, such as supplies purchased by tour operators, restaurants and port authorities) in addition to the 1,827 jobs with US\$12.65 million in wage income that cruise tourism generated during the same period.

We remain at your disposal to participate and engage in any meetings with the authorities to understand the need for this measure and to find a suitable solution for both sides that does not jeopardize the reignition of the sector in Panama.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michele M. Paige". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michele" and last name "Paige" being clearly legible, and "M." in the middle.

Michele M. Paige
Chief Executive Officer
Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association