

## 500,000th cruise passenger fêted at Valletta Waterfront

by Annaliza Borg

The Valletta Waterfront yesterday welcomed Shannon Berg, of Jacksonville, Florida, the 500,000th cruise passenger to call at Grand Harbour this year.

Ms Berg, who arrived together with her husband Stephen on the Norwegian Gem, was excited shooting photos while planning on returning to Malta – they were to leave the island in the afternoon. She said her “dream had come true” and that Malta was to remain her lucky charm.



The Bergs were fêted to mark the record arrival number, which is being considered an important milestone for the local cruise industry, awarded a return flight from a destination operated by Air Malta, and a seven-night stay at The Palace boutique hotel in Sliema, together with spa treatments. They also received a Malta 360° book and a commemorative plaque by Bristow Potteries.

Mr and Mrs Berg as well as four friends from Kentucky and Chicago whom they met on board, yesterday received VIP treatment coordinated by Viset Malta plc, operators of the Valletta Waterfront. They were taken on a personal guided tour to Tarxien Temples and St John’s Co-Cathedral and treated to lunch at the Valletta Waterfront.

During a welcome address, Viset director Joe Demajo spoke of the cruise liner business

as a “significant contributor to Malta’s tourism industry” and one which was gaining a steady momentum with more cruise liners including Malta among their ports of call.

“This is good news not only for Viset but also for the trade and the rest of country as visiting passengers leave revenue in other sectors and, even more importantly, collect Malta’s business card to visit again for a longer stay.”

By the end of the year, 530,000 cruise passengers are expected to have come to the country. This will be a good increase over last year, when 478,893 cruise liner passengers visited Malta. The number of passenger arrivals increased consistently since the opening of Valletta Waterfront in 2005 when a total of 313,611 passengers had arrived, Mr Demajo said.

The Norwegian Gem was yesterday on its 28th visit to Malta since it started operating in May. During this period, the Norwegian Gem alone brought some 75,000 passengers. Meanwhile, the total embarking passengers this year amounted to almost 6,000, confirming Malta’s potential as a homeport and its suitability for turnaround operations, said Mr Demajo.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information, Chris Said who was present to celebrate the special occasion attributed Viset’s success primarily to their “hard work” as well as “their ability to read market signals and their consistent belief that Malta’s geographical and logistical position had the potential to make Malta one of the top players in the Mediterranean cruise industry.”

Dr Said also wished the Bergs an excellent holiday during which they would visit more of Malta and Gozo.

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