

Floating to the Fair

Crossgates offers high quality, trade fair accommodation with a difference.

Whether you're looking for one or 100 rooms, Crossgates have a solution which is convenient, atmospheric and unusual - hotel ships.

Text: Gaby Rae

Founded in 1974 Crossgates started out as a traditional travel agency and business tour operator selling a full range of services to the general public, and own brand packages to both individuals and corporate clients.

It was Managing Director Max Bolton who had the idea of offering trade fair accommodation on hotel ships, "Unable to find good quality hotel rooms in Frankfurt during a major trade fair, I was sitting by the River Main, contemplating my next step, when a river cruise ship sailed past. What I saw was not a ship, but 60 rooms

capable of being brought into the city centre. Negotiations started and a new idea was born".

Having invented the idea, Crossgates then created the market. When they started out the majority of customers bought hotel ship space only when nothing else was available, partly because of an understandable nervousness towards the idea and partly because standards could vary widely. However, pressure on hotel space at that time was enormous, so the option of additional capacity in a city at trade fair time was generally welcomed.

Over the succeeding years, Crossgates has been able to use its background in shipping (Max

served in the Merchant Navy before his career in the travel industry) not only to source additional products but also to influence dramatic improvements in standards. "Shipping companies have recognised the value of our business and often invite our input and ideas regarding the design and facilities required by today's customer" remarks Max, "We firmly believe that our concentrated and continued efforts to drive up standards, mean that our ships are now a first choice option for many of our customers".

The ships are indeed impressive, from the outside they look like fairly standard river cruise ships, but inside you're met with the kind of luxury you would expect to find in a four or five star hotel. The ships are beautifully decorated, wood panelled in some cases, with luxurious features such as chandeliers, fireplaces, and marble reception areas. Lounges, libraries and other meeting areas offer the perfect places for business meetings throughout fair time. All ships have a bar, lounge, dinner service (not always the case with land hotels), as well as sufficient seating in the breakfast restaurant to ensure immediate service for all guests at the same time. Many ships have sauna, solarium and whirlpool facilities and also offer telephone and e-mail services.

The real benefit of a hotel ship versus a land hotel is location. Crossgates offers not only a first-class product at the same price as a two or three star land hotel – but also, and perhaps more importantly - a location that allows swift access to the fair as well as easy access to local bars, restaurants and entertainment facilities in the city centre. For all fairs Crossgates ensures either dedicated transport to the fair, or to the fair's own transport systems. In Cologne for example, Crossgates charts local tourist trains to carry guests to the Trade Fair ferry.

Hotel ships make an ideal choice for companies and corporations looking for a large amount of accommodation in the same location. A hotel ship can be changed into a unique environment to suit a particular brand or company, offering themed menus, branding in and around the ship, and various tailored media options (such as special newspapers and magazines and access to specified DVD and video channels). The ship also offers a secure environment where social and business interaction amongst employees (often of many different national origins) can take place and where customers and guests can be invited for 'After-Fair-parties' and other entertainment. There is also a full range of banqueting services available (cocktail parties, receptions, dinners etc.). All these facilities make the ships very attractive to corporate customers looking to add a focused social element to their business arrangements.

In fact in excess of 80% of Crossgate's business is actually repeat business from previous clients. "We aim to provide accommodation across the whole spectrum of Trade Fair clients," says MD Max Bolton, "both exhibitor and visitor, from the individual who requires a short stay to the corporate charterer who wants one or more ships". Crossgate's biggest client charters four



Crossgates ships are beautifully furnished

Photo: Crossgates

ships for a single fair, but many individuals book one room for one fair once a year. Blue chip corporations (including GE, Stanley Works and Fuji) recognise the good value, flexibility and exclusivity of Crossgate's ships. Internationally Crossgates deals with specialist agencies in over thirty countries, from Australia to Iceland, who rely on them to provide quality accommodation and service for their business customers.

Crossgates operates across all major German fairs in Cologne, Frankfurt, Hanover and Düsseldorf. Photokina in Cologne is the latest fair where you'll be able to see some of Crossgate's ships. As one of their longest established markets, they'll have nine vessels on charter all of which are repeat bookings. Fuji will be holding their press party on-board one of the Crossgate's ships for the sixth time in succession.

Looking ahead into 2005/2006 Crossgates plans to introduce an online booking facility on their

website, offer more flexibility in booking conditions, continue to improve their products, as well as expanding into the new European Ten and also into the Asian markets. And they are, of course, looking to provide their services during the 2006 World Cup in Germany, "We have plans in place and have contact with major sponsors who currently have ships under option. At the time of writing we await a firm commitment" says Max Bolton. With World Cup venues in Cologne, Düsseldorf and Frankfurt, along with other stadiums in the Ruhr area, it would seem like a good idea to choose Crossgate's accommodation, as all these venues are easily accessible to ships. Where else can you find an exclusive and secure environment with the ability to move between venues?

Rhine Magazine may be putting in an early reservation. If you're interested in finding out more about Crossgates and booking their ships for trade fairs around Cologne and Düsseldorf, then get in contact with Simon Lawday at their London office: 0044-207 836 0364.



Photo: Crossgates

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Crossgates also has an operations office in Pulheim near Cologne.

Main business locations:
Cologne, Düsseldorf and Frankfurt.

CROSSGATES

The Business Hotel Fleet

www.crossgates.co.uk