

Mediterranean Sustainable Cruise Charter

Auditee's guide



Context

The Mediterranean coastline is the continental coastal area most concerned by cruise activity. In 2025, it hosted **1,885 calls in France**, as well as **145 calls in Monaco**. Cruise activity in France that year involved a fleet of **147 ships operated by 52 companies**. Among these, 63 ships were expected to call more than 10 times during the year, thus concentrating the majority of traffic.

Created in October 2022, this charter constitutes a unique agreement between a State and the main cruise operators. Its objective is to address the dual challenge of developing this activity while responding to the growing awareness of citizens and authorities regarding environmental and societal issues such as: air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and overcrowding of iconic touristic sites.

The charter is based on voluntary commitments that go beyond regulatory requirements, both in terms of environmental and societal impact.

With the entries into force of North-Western PSSA in 2023, SECA MED in May, 1st 2025, and the partnership of the Principality of Monaco in June 2025, a revision of commitments and monitoring framework was mandatory.

Regulatory developments required a revision of the previous themes (5) and commitments (13). This new version results in updated and new commitments.

20 commitments implement concrete actions across **8 themes** such as:

- Contribute to the **preservation of biodiversity**, promote the use of biodegradable products on board vessels, and minimize the risk of spreading invasive species (commitments 1, 2, and 3).
- **Reduce the risk of collision** between vessels and cetaceans and participate in the reporting of large cetaceans (commitments 4 and 5).
- **Minimize discharges at sea**, in particular scrubber wash waters within 6 nautical miles (as a reminder: prohibited for scrubber wash waters in Monaco territorial waters), chlorinated pool water in French and Monaco territorial waters, as well as untreated sewage in the PSSA under the French jurisdiction (commitments 6, 7, and 8).
- Promote on-board **waste reduction** logistics and shore-based recovery. Reduce food waste and the use of single-use plastics (commitments 9, 10, and 11).
- **Reduce noise and light pollution** from cruise vessels while sailing and during calls (commitments 12 and 13).
- **Reduce emissions of air pollutants and greenhouse gases** while sailing, during calls, and during excursions (commitments 14, 15, 16, and 17).

- **Raise passenger awareness** of environmental protection and communicate about the environmental performance of the company's vessels (commitment 18).
- **Develop a dynamic of collaboration with territories** to limit the environmental impact of calls and excursions (commitments 19 and 20).

1 Stakeholders and Roles

The 2025 version of the charter was signed on 7 June 2025 by **Mr Philippe TABAROT, Minister of Transport of the French Republic, and Ms Céline CARON-DAGIONI, Minister of Public Works, the Environment and Urban Planning of the Principality of Monaco.** The management of the certification process has been entrusted to **DIRM Méditerranée** in collaboration with the **Directorate of Maritime Affairs of the Principality of Monaco.**

This new edition, applicable from 1 January 2026, is issued for the period 2026–2030.

The Charter is addressed to cruise companies as defined by the commercial brand visible to customers and displayed on the ships. The signature of the Charter commitment shall be carried out by a representative of the commercial brand. However, the signature may also be carried out by a representative of the group to which the commercial brand belongs. The signature by a group commits all commercial brands operating ships within the scope of application of the Charter.

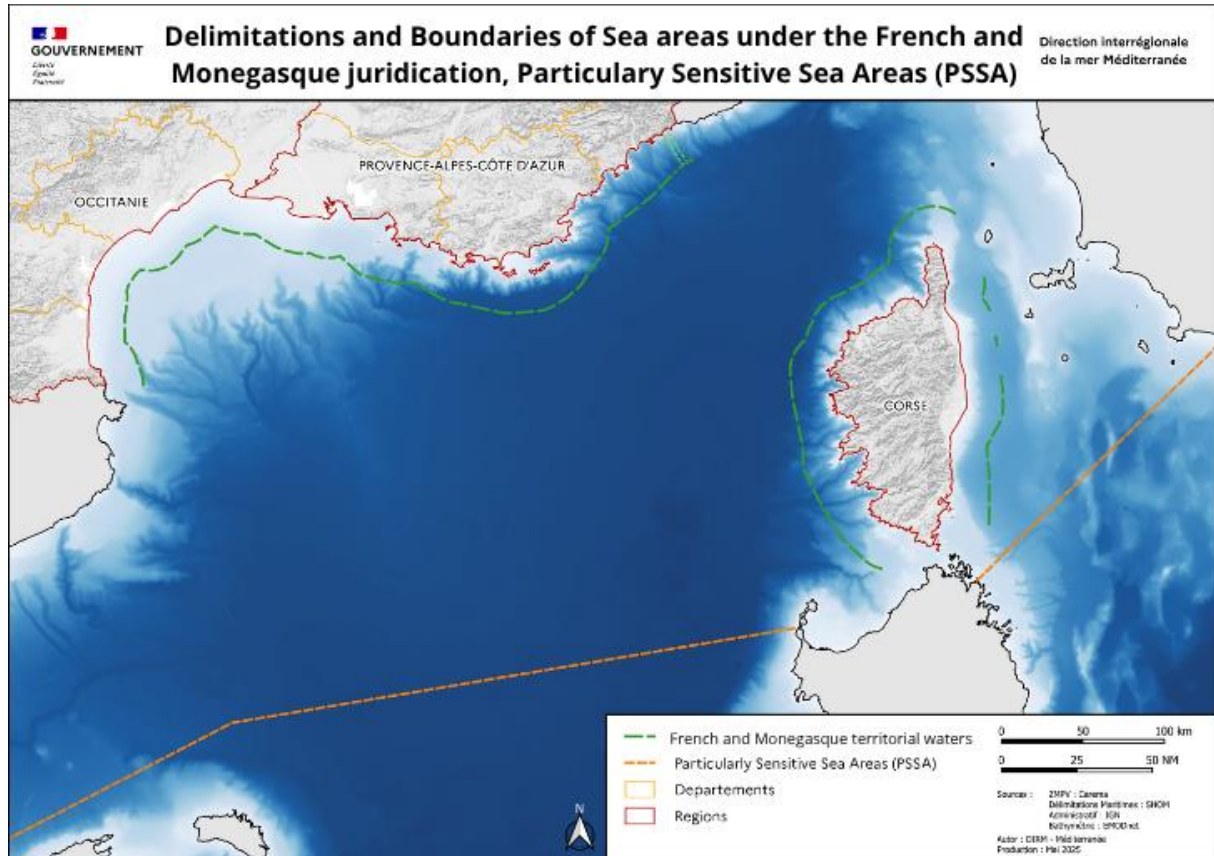
The commitments of the charter apply to all ships of the signatory cruise companies operating in Mediterranean waters under French jurisdiction. Companies that have not yet ratified the charter are invited to do so by completing the membership form provided in Annex 1.

DIRM Méditerranée and the Monaco Directorate of Maritime Affairs form the charter's monitoring committee. The monitoring committee responsible for ensuring the proper application of the **certification framework** to audited vessels, as well as the **technical annexes** for the other ships. The cruise companies, in particular through CLIA, which serves as a liaison between the major companies and the monitoring committee, are consulted to ensure full understanding of the questionnaire. For companies that are not CLIA members, exchanges are conducted directly with the monitoring committee when necessary. The questionnaire is sent to companies' representatives with the names of ships operating for the ongoing year and name of vessel to be audited.

For any inquiry, contact with the charter's monitoring committee can be made through the following email address: dirm-med.cruise-charter@mer.gouv.fr

2 Scope of application

The scope corresponding to the various commitments undertaken under this charter is illustrated on the map below. It indicates the boundaries of French territorial waters and the Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) of the northwestern Mediterranean.



Geographical distribution of commitments :

- **PSSA (under French jurisdiction) : 4 - 5 - 7 – 12**
- **French and Monegasque territorial waters: 6**
- **Port and anchorage : 1 - 15 - 16 - 17 - 19 – 20**
- **No geographical specification : 2 - 3 - 8 - 9 - 10 - 11 - 13 - 14 - 18**

3 Principle of Evaluation

3.1 Presentation of evaluation stages

The “Sustainable Cruise” charter is based on several key steps to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the approach:

- 1) At the beginning of each year, forecasts of ships calls to ports on the French Mediterranean and Monaco coast are compiled by **DIRM MED** through dedicated contact points (port authorities, cruise clubs, Chambers of Commerce and Industry, etc.). The aim is to **characterize the fleet operated by the companies calling on the French Mediterranean and Monaco ports**. This data also helps the monitoring committee establish the audit schedule and select the vessels to be audited.
- 2) The monitoring committee identifies, for each company, one vessel that may be subject to an audit during the year, with priority given to vessels making **at least five port calls** in the region during the year.
- 3) **The company questionnaire and technical annex** is sent each year by January 31, to company representative of each signatory company together with the identification of ships expected to call at French and Monegasque Mediterranean ports and the expected ship to be audited.
- 4) The company questionnaire is completed or updated and sent each year by March, 1st by each signatory company, along with the technical annexes relating to the vessels scheduled to call on ports in the French Mediterranean and Monaco coastline.
- 6) Only one self-assessment of ship questionnaire is required for the ship to be audited. The self-assessment must be provided before the onboard audit at least one week before.
- 7) The organization and schedule of the audit (date and port) are handled by the monitoring committee in coordination with the company. The audits are carried out by **auditors approved by the monitoring committee**.
- 8) **The onboard audit** is conducted, on the basis of the company and ship questionnaires. The audit is an on-site and independent verification of compliance (company and ship questionnaires).
- 9) After the audit, a report is prepared by the auditors and reviewed for validation by the monitoring committee. A draft report is sent to the company within 14 days following the onboard audit.

10) In the event that non-compliances with the Charter Commitments are identified, an action plan is required.

11) After the minimum score has been reached and any required action plan has been reviewed, a **certificate of compliance can be issued by the monitoring committee**. Failing this, a follow-up audit may be required to meet the conditions for issuing the certificate of compliance.

3.2 The technical annex

The purpose of the technical annex is to:

- **Summarize the technical characteristics of the fleet,**
- **Establish the range of ship shore power energy requirements,**
- **Establish an overview of fleet technologies/innovations.**

It is therefore possible that some questions overlap with those of the audit questionnaire: this is intentional, since the technical annex must also cover vessels that are not audited.

This technical annex is not scored, but it aims to summarize fleet characteristics, as well as to assess and highlight the efforts of companies relative to the Charter Commitments.

Some questions record the regulatory references of onboard equipment and identify the solutions implemented by companies to reduce the environmental impact of vessels (GHG, air pollutants, etc.). More broadly, this data will contribute to a better monitoring of companies' efforts in sustainability and promotion of environmental innovations relative to the Charter Commitments.

This annex also fulfills another goal of the Charter: **servicing as a link between shipowners and port authorities**. A better understanding of the fleet and its needs will make it possible to develop more suitable infrastructures and strengthen cooperation among stakeholders. For example, questions relating to energy consumption help **promote port investments in shore power connections** and objectify the benefits of their use.

Finally, the results of the questionnaire will be used for statistical purposes at the fleet level, and not vessel by vessel.

3.3 Onboard Audits

The date and port proposed for conducting the vessel audits are determined by the monitoring committee in coordination with the companies. An audit decision specifying the identity of the auditors will be provided with **one month's notice**.

The audit will be carried out on board during the ship's call in a port along the French or Monegasque Mediterranean coastline. The audit will focus on verifying the measures implemented to meet the commitments set out as requirements.

The auditor will collect, through sampling, factual evidence enabling the assessment of company's and ship's compliance with each commitment. Supporting documents mentioned in the questionnaires, or any other relevant documents provided by the company, must be made available to the auditor on the day of the audit.

- The scoring system of questionnaires is binary: compliant or non-compliant with each question of questionnaires. Each question follows a confidential weighting established by the monitoring committee.
- A draft audit report will be prepared, qualifying the ship's compliance with the commitments. The report will be provided to the company within 14 days following the on-board audit.

3.4 Management of Non-Compliances and Action Plans

Three score levels are established:

- **100%:** Compliance with all commitments is recognized.
- **Between 80% and 100%:** Compliance with most commitments is recognized. To receive Certificate of Compliance company must provide corrective action plan addressing the non-compliances identified during the audit.
- **Below 80%:** Compliance is not achieved. Company must establish a corrective action plan addressing non-compliances identified during the audit.

Where applicable, company must submit proposal of corrective action plans to Monitoring Committee within one month following the receipt of an audit report. In the event the audit score is **below 80%**, the ship may be subject to follow up audit the following year to verify compliance and the implementation of the corrective action plan. Monitoring Committee will notify company at the end of the year if a company ship has been selected for a follow up audit the following year. Failure to implement a corrective action plan may result in company's removal from the Charter.

For vessels **scoring between 80% and 100%**, a follow-up of the validated action plans will be carried out. Correction of a non-compliance will be validated next year during the audit of next ship to be audited.

4 Issuance of the Certificate of Compliance

The Certificate of Compliance, endorsed by the Interregional Directorate for the Mediterranean Sea or by the Directorate of Maritime Affairs of the Principality of Monaco, will be issued as follows:

- For ships achieving an audit score of 100% - within 1 month following the issuance of audit report
- For ships achieving an audit score between 80% and 100% - within one month following the **validation by monitoring committee** of corrective action plan from the cruise company addressing any non-compliances identified during the onboard audit.
- For ships scoring below 80% - Certificate of Compliance cannot be issued.

5 Implementation of the Charter

5.1 Governance and Perspectives

An updated framework validated for 5 years:

- A Steering Committee to ensure the monitoring of the charter, the integration of contextual elements, and the presentation of annual results.
- The follow-up of collaboration with cities and port and local authorities within the framework of actions related to the “sustainable calls” commitments.
- Interface between CLIA member companies and DIRM MED ensured by CLIA Europe.
- For non-CLIA member companies, communication is handled directly by DIRM MED.

5.2 Communication

Cruise companies commit to complying with this charter and to providing transparent information on the conditions of its implementation.

Both signatory and non-signatory companies are identified on the DIRM MED website. The list of signatory vessels is made available to port authorities for possible incentive or prioritization measures.

A visual identity (logo, poster, film, and photo exhibition) and awareness-raising tools are also available to members and partners of the charter.

The teams in charge of the charter commit to **guaranteeing the confidentiality** of information collected during audits. Data collected through the **technical annexes** will be used exclusively for statistical purposes and may be published with the aim of

informing the public. The information made public will be **fully anonymized** and presented in the form of consolidated averages covering the entire fleet.

In accordance, with commitment 16, results of SOx inspections carried out in France on board a cruise ship of a company member of the charter will be published nominally on DIRM MED website.

6 Terms and definitions

6.1 Coastal Maritime Authority

CROSS MED (MRCC) is the point of contact for coastal authorities for any reports related to damage or a collision with a cetacean, as well as for anchoring requests.

6.2 Port authorities

The port authority is:

- 1° In major seaports (GPM), the president of the executive board;
- 2° In other seaports under State jurisdiction, the administrative authority;
- 3° In commercial, fishing, or recreational seaports under the jurisdiction of local or regional authorities or their groupings, the executive of the competent authority or grouping.(Article L5331-5 of the Transport Code)

6.3 Maritime Port (More than 70 calls planned in 2024)

Ports identified at the end of 2024 as hosting more than 70 port calls and for which shore-side electricity connection for ships is planned. These ports will be monitored during the five years of the Charter's implementation.

- Ajaccio (178 calls)
- Cannes (175 calls)
- Villefranche-sur-Mer (103 calls)
- Saint-Tropez (80 calls)

6.4 Waste Management Service Providers

Any service provider involved in the reception or disposal of ship-generated waste shall provide the port authority, and upon request the administrative authority, with the technical and financial information necessary to understand the nature and conditions of their operations. These providers must demonstrate to the port authority that they hold the necessary approvals or authorizations required to carry out their activities. They must comply with the obligations set out in port regulations and in the port-specific waste reception and handling plans.

6.5 Sewage (according to MARPOL Annex IV)

Sewage refers to black water and other waste originating from any type of toilets and urinals, water from washbasins, bathtubs, and pipes located in medical areas (infirmary, treatment rooms, etc.), water from spaces used for the transport of live animals, and any other water mixed with the above types (in accordance with Annex IV of MARPOL).

Untreated sewage refers to black water that has not passed through an approved treatment system (in accordance with Regulation 9 of MARPOL Annex IV).

Note: in line with international regulations, there is currently no classification of sludge from wastewater systems. Consequently, the Charter does not exclude its discharge beyond 12 NM.

6.6 AWTS (Advanced Wastewater Treatment System)

A sewage treatment plant that employs advanced wastewater treatment technology, including but not limited to biological reactors, ultra-filtration, ultraviolet sanitization and advanced oxidation processes.

6.7 PSSA (Particularly Sensitive Sea Area)

A Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) is an area that, due to its significance determined on the basis of recognized ecological, socio-economic, or scientific criteria—requires special protection through measures adopted by the IMO and may be vulnerable to damage from international maritime activities. In the French Mediterranean, two PSSAs have been designated: the Northwestern Mediterranean PSSA, established on 7 July 2023, and the Bonifacio Strait PSSA, designated in August 2011.

6.8 SECA MED (Sulphur Emission Control Area – Mediterranean)

The SECA MED (Sulphur Emission Control Area – Mediterranean) is a regulated maritime area in which sulphur dioxide (SO_x) and particulate matter emission standards from ships require the use of fuel with a sulphur content of less than 0.1%, or the use of abatement systems.

6.9 Drought

Drought is defined as a condition in which an environment experiences a prolonged and significant lack of water, with impacts on flora, fauna, and society. The state of drought is officially declared by a prefectural decree.

6.10 SCR (Selective Catalytic Reduction System)

The Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) reactor is a technology used to comply with the nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emission limits set by IMO Tier III standards.

The SCR system works by injecting a urea-based fluid into the exhaust gas stream. This fluid reacts, in the presence of a catalyst, to convert nitrogen oxides (NO_x) into nitrogen (N₂) and water vapor (H₂O), both of which are harmless to the environment.

6.11 Exhaust Gas Cleaning System (EGCS)

Exhaust Gas Cleaning System (EGCS) - so-called "scrubbers" - using wet scrubbing technology installed on engines, boilers, or turbines, designed to reduce SO_x emissions to a level equivalent to the sulphur limits set by MARPOL Annex VI (IMO MEPC.340(77)).

There are three modes of operation under MARPOL:

Open-loop mode: In this mode, wash water—typically seawater—is used once in the EGC unit and then discharged into the sea as rinse water.

Closed-loop mode: In this mode, the wash water is recirculated multiple times within the EGC unit. The pH is typically adjusted (e.g., by adding NaOH), and a portion of the water is discharged after treatment.

Hybrid mode: A system capable of operating in either open-loop or closed-loop mode, depending on the conditions.

6.12 Air pollution peak

An air pollution peak (or episode) is said to occur when the information and recommendation threshold or the alert threshold defined by national regulations is exceeded or is at risk of being exceeded. At the local level, exceeding or the risk of exceeding one of these thresholds triggers prefectural procedures that lead to the implementation of various measures.

6.13 Air pollution

Air pollution, within the meaning of this section, refers to the direct or indirect introduction by humans, or the presence, in the atmosphere or in enclosed spaces, of chemical, biological, or physical agents that have harmful effects likely to endanger human health, damage biological resources and ecosystems, influence climate change, deteriorate material goods, or cause excessive olfactory nuisances (Environmental Code).

6.14 Recyclable waste

Any waste, including organic waste, that can be recovered in order to be reprocessed into substances, materials, or products for their original function or for other purposes. Energy recovery operations, waste-to-fuel conversion processes, and backfilling operations cannot be considered recycling operations (Environmental Code).

6.15 Safety Data Sheet (SDS)

A regulatory document accompanying a chemical mixture and providing essential information on properties, hazards, safe handling, storage, transport, preventive measures, and emergency measures.

6.16 Low-Toxicity and Biodegradable Cleaning Products

A product may be considered non-toxic and biodegradable if the SDS specifies the following:

- **Section 12.1: not harmful for marine life or low toxicity**
- **Section 12.2: readily biodegradable or equivalent.**

6.17 Seagrass Meadows

Seagrass beds are groupings of flowering plants (not algae) belonging to one of the following four families: Zosteraceae, Posidoniaceae, Cymodoceaceae, and Hydrocharitaceae (French Biodiversity Office – OFB). In the Mediterranean, the main seagrass beds are those of *Posidonia Oceanica*.

6.18 Large Cetaceans

Two main species in the Mediterranean:

- Fin whale;
- Sperm whale.

6.19 Biodegradable and Low-Toxicity Oil

Oils that are biodegradable and not harmful to the marine life. Oils approved under the VGP are recognized as compliant.

6.20 OTSI (Oil-to-Sea Interface)

Oil-to-sea interface' refers to the interface within a mechanical system that can lead to lubricant leakage into the marine environment in the event of failure or malfunction.

Annex 1 : Application Form

Application form of Mediterranean sustainable cruise charter (edition 2025)

The cruise company:

Main office located:

.....

Declare to be informed of the requirements of the revision of Mediterranean Sustainable Cruise Charter to enter into force on January, 1st 2026

By endorsing the charter, the company commits to comply with the obligations and principles of the Charter and to implement the 20 commitments contained therein on its ships.

Cruise lines are able to confirm the signature, conditioned by their agreement with the audit methodology and questionnaire to be finalized at a later stage.

The representative of the company

Name, first name

Position

Email of contact

Date

Stamp / Logo

Application form to be sent at : dirm-med.cruise-charter@mer.gouv.fr