



First Mercy Ships Volunteer on Board a Costa Group's ship

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Costa offers the opportunity for Officers and Engineers of Mercy Ships to gain sea-service/experience on board Costa Group ships

Genoa – 15 March 2018 – As part of the cooperation announced on 2017 between **Mercy Ships** and **Costa Group** the joint **volunteer program** is proceeding with the first crew-member from *Africa Mercy* who recently embarked on board *Costa neoRomantica*.

Rodrigo Souza Fraga, a 38-year-old Spanish national, embarked as a 3rd Officer on board to gain sea service and experience. Reporting to the ship's Officer on Watch, Rodrigo is actually serving as member of the bridge staff for navigation and watch keeping aspects.

Rodrigo is the 2nd Officer of the *Africa Mercy*, the largest non-governmental hospital ship in the world which provides free surgical and dental care to patients with urgent medical needs. It crews over 400 volunteers from more than 40 nations. The Mercy Ship delivers this surgical expertise for 10 months at a time in African ports, sailing to and from new destinations each year to maximise time in port so actual time at sea for maritime crew is much less than other ships.

"My time onboard the *Costa neoRomantica* is very challenging yet very fulfilling," stated Rodrigo Souza Fraga. "There are many positive aspects of the daily work that I'm learning and can be beneficial for Mercy Ships. But what catches my attention the most is how well people are trained. At the end of this 4-month commitment I will have the opportunity to upgrade my Officer's license. Being able to spend a substantial amount of time at sea is helping me to sharpen up my sailing skills."

The volunteer program is only one of several activities that Costa Group and Mercy Ships agreed on in their partnership. The group will furthermore sensitize guests travelling on board the Costa Group fleet for Mercy Ships and its activities. In addition, to grant immediate help, Costa Group already donated 100,000 € to Mercy Ships.

Mercy Ships

Mercy Ships uses hospital ships to deliver free, world-class healthcare services, capacity building and sustainable development to those with little access in the developing world. Founded in 1978 by Don and Deyon Stephens, Mercy Ships has worked in more than 70 countries providing services valued at more than \$1.3 billion, treating more than 2.56 million direct beneficiaries. The Africa Mercy is crewed by 400 volunteers from up to 40 nations, an average of 1000 each year. Professionals including surgeons, dentists, nurses, healthcare trainers, teachers, cooks, seamen, engineers, and agriculturalists donate their time and skills to the effort. With offices in 16 nations, Mercy Ships seeks to transform individuals and serve nations one at a time. For more information click on www.mercyships.org.

Costa Group

The Costa Group is the leading cruise company in Europe, headquartered in Genoa (Italy). The 26 ships of the brands Costa Cruises, AIDA Cruises and Costa Asia together have a total capacity of 76,000 beds. The fleet will be further strengthened by 7 new vessels by 2023. The company has a global workforce of 27,000 employees working onboard and in its 20 offices in 14 countries. In 2014 the company introduced the Costa Crociere Foundation, an independently-run, non-profit organization generating a positive impact on the society and the marine environment, currently through 22 ongoing projects.

Contact:

Costa Press Office - Tel. +39 010 5483523/010 5483068 – costapressoffice@costa.it

Gabriele Baroni – Communication Director – mobile 3497668013 – baroni@costa.it

AIDA Cruises: Hansjörg Kunze, Vice President Communication & Sustainability, Tel. +49 (0) 381 / 444-8020, presse@aida.de

Diane Rickard; Int'l Media Relations Manager Mercy Ships; Diane.rickard@mercyships.org