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SUMMER 2024

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ON THE COVER: Viking Mars, one of the newest ocean ships of Viking, departing Port Everglades
Photo credit: Len Kaufman

Pavilion pool area on two decks and under the glass roof is a multipurpose area on the new Queen Anne of Cunard



Newbuilding activity returning to record high

Earlier this year I wrote that newbuilding activity is returning to pre-pandemic levels. Now roughly six months later, the global cruise ship order book has received a big boost from existing as well as new operators. When Disney revealed its order for four new ships in August, it was even noticed in mainstream media in the U.S. Some analysts specializing in Disney itself were surprised by how well the cruise market has recovered from the pandemic.

The cruise business seems to be mirroring the airline industry. Both suffered badly during the COVID-19 crisis. But since the end of the pandemic, airlines across the globe have returned to buying sprees to replenish and expand their current fleets. In many cases, both Airbus and Boeing have had difficulties keeping up with demand. Aircraft manufacturers, like cruise shipbuilders, still suffer from supply chain challenges, but airlines are making speculative orders well into the future to ensure that they receive the aircraft they need.

This is now the case also in cruise shipbuilding. Globally, there are only three major shipbuilding companies that can construct large megaships: Chantiers de l'Atlantique in France, Fincantieri in Italy (which also operates smaller shipyards in various other countries) and Meyer Group in Finland and Germany. Meanwhile, China has produced its first megaship (Adora Magic City) with assistance from Fincantieri, while Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries has tried to enter the segment three times during the last 35 years and always ended up with heavy losses.

Constructing a large, state-of-the-art passenger vessel requires a lot of expertise, know-how, a large network of specialized suppliers and subcontractors as well as financial strength. Therefore, starting a cruise shipbuilding from scratch can be a highway to disaster. I have seen too many bold entries in cruise shipbuilding during my career end with the closing of the shipyards.

The shift of the cruise line expansion mindset became evident in early April, when Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings announced a long-term deal with Fincantieri to build eight new cruise ships for all three of its brands during the next 12 years. Carnival Corp. & plc, the largest cruise operator in the world, has also returned to newbuilding activity for the first time since the start of the pandemic, ordering two Excel-class ships from Germany's Meyer Werft and later a new class of 230,000-gross-ton ships from Fincantieri consisting of three units. And, there may be more, as the company is going into a higher gear in terms of new ship orders. Viking, which had its successful Initial Public Offering in spring, has had a long-term contract for its ocean ship division in place, too.

Despite new cruise ship contracts, darker clouds remain over the builders. Supply chain problems still exist for materials and equipment, while inflation has also affected prices. In some cases, cruise ship projects have faced major delays. Meanwhile, we have followed closely the financial troubles of Germany's famed Meyer Werft, which may require government assistance to stay afloat. Matters look rosier, however, for Fincantieri. During the first half of 2024, it reported strong performance in all business segments with record total backlog at €41.1 billion with orders booked up to 2032. Fincantieri also reported a 16% year-on-year increase in EBITDA to €214 million in the first half.

It is evident, however, that 200,000-gross-ton-plus cruise ships are becoming a norm in the industry. During the next few years, there will be at least five different cruise corporations operating ships above that size class and, there will be only a few yards capable of building them.

Teijo Niemelä

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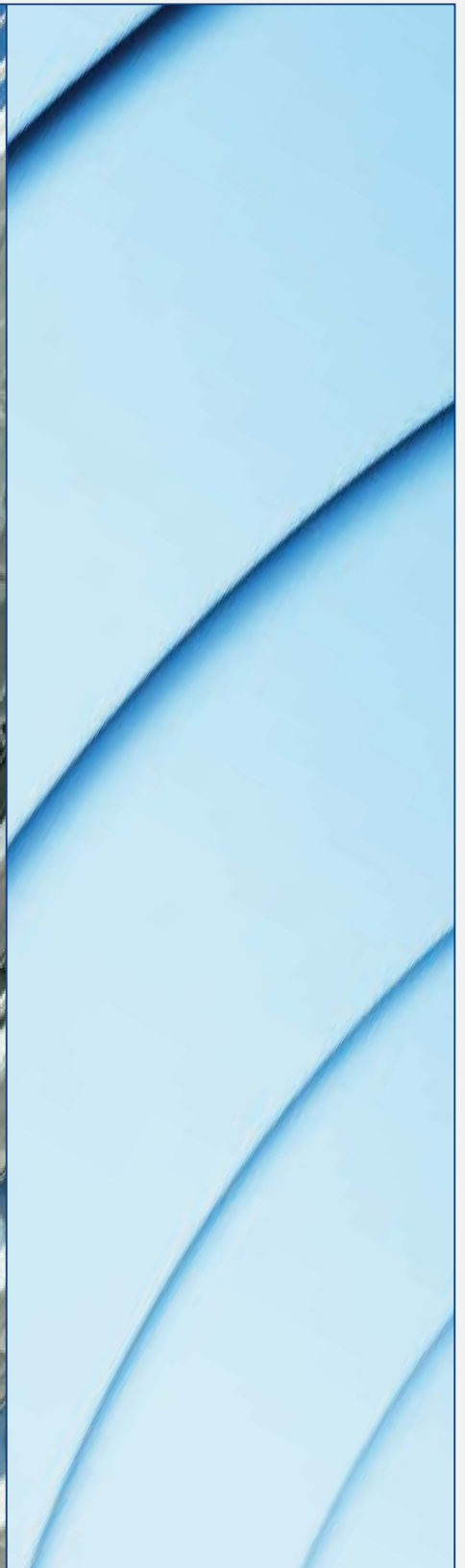
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FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER

Based in Hollywood, Florida, between Port of Miami and Port Everglades, travel photographer **Len Kaufman** is famed for the dramatic images he's made in 93 countries. His advertising photography has been featured by cruise lines, airlines, and tourism destinations around the world. A specialty is still and video aerial photography. His YouTube channel has over 7 million views and 20,000 subscribers.





FUTURE OF CRUISE SHIP ON BOARD

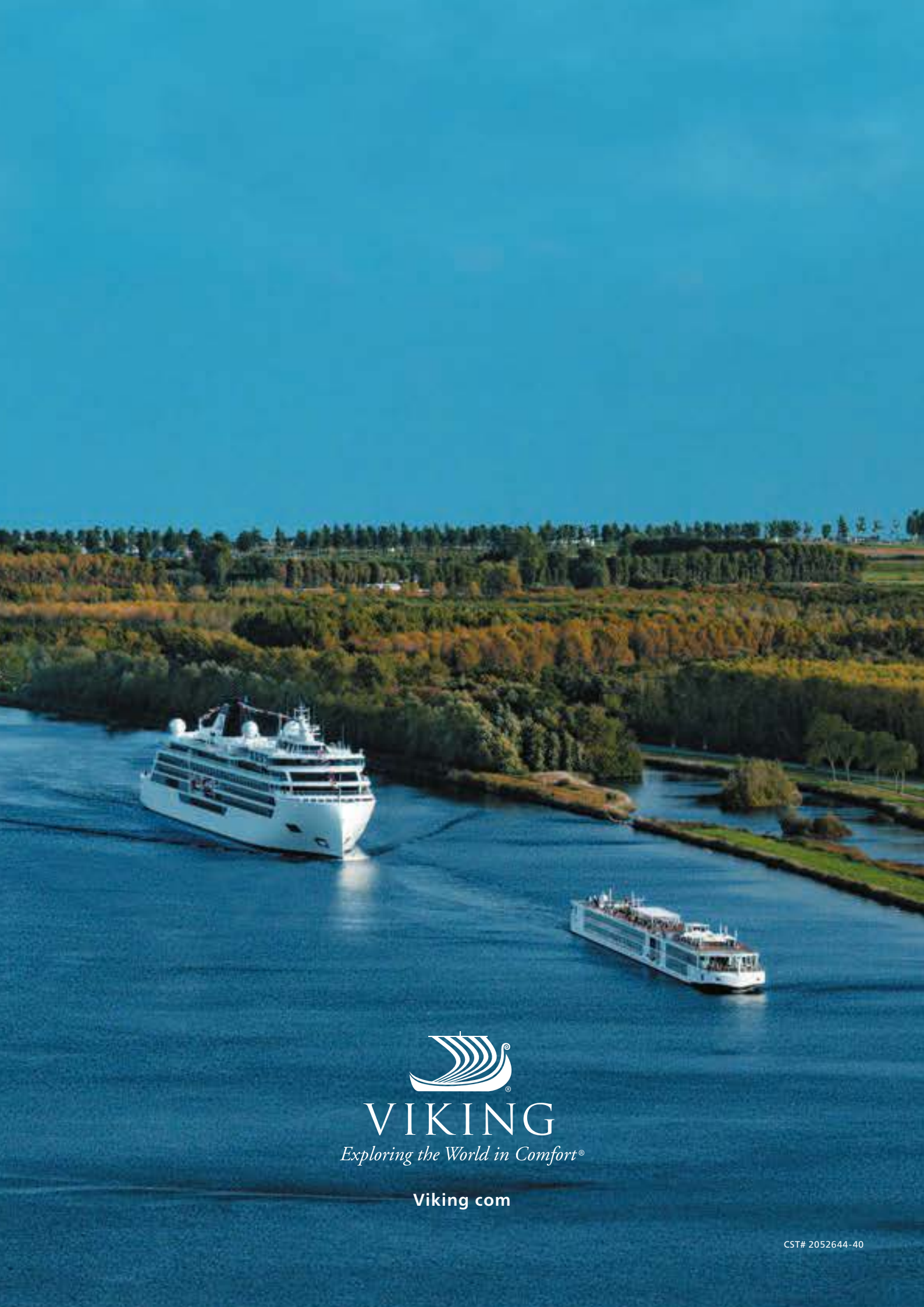
Fincantieri is leader in high technological shipbuilding industry and the global leader in cruise sector. In our shipyards we build a new generation of cruise ships and we work daily to make them be the greatest in the world, integrating new propulsion technologies, new generation fuels, automation, big data and artificial intelligence. To bring a green and digital future on board.

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UPFRONT



Seabourn, Carnival Corp. & plc's upscale brand specializing in expedition and ultra-luxury cruises, named Seabourn Pursuit, its second expedition vessel, in a unique and historic expedition naming ceremony at Ngula Jar Island, Australia, on June 29. With guests on Zodiacs alongside the ship and the onboard team lined up along the decks, the Wunambal Gaambera Traditional Owners named Seabourn Pursuit, marking the first time Traditional Owners named a ship.



In early July, Meyer Werft in Papenburg, Germany, received a surprising order from Japan. The Oriental Land Company, local partner for Disney, contracted to build a 144,000-gross-ton Disney Wish-class ship aimed for the Japanese market. The new ship is scheduled to be delivered in 2028. OLC, which operates the Disney theme parks in Japan, is expected to commence operation of the ship by early 2029. The Oriental Land Company reached a decision to enter into the cruise business in Japan, and has concluded an agreement with Disney to bring the magic of Disney cruise to the Japanese market for the first time. From left: Bernard Meyer and Kenji Yoshida, President and COO of OLC.



Just a month after the order from Japan, Disney Cruise Line and Meyer Werft announced a contract for four new cruise ships to be built in the Papenburg facility between 2027 and 2031. The companies did not disclose the size or exact delivery times of the vessels, but this will increase the size of the Disney Cruise Line fleet from its current five vessels to 13, if any of the current ships are not retired. With this new order, Meyer Werft has received contracts for seven new mega ships for its Papenburg yard this year. On the front, Disney's Thomas Mazloum and Bernard Meyer.





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UPFRONT

Royal Caribbean International and Grammy-winning singer and songwriter Meghan Trainor threw the party of the summer for the new Utopia of the Seas, the sixth vessel in Oasis class, in Port Canaveral, Florida. The ship, designed for short getaways, officially debuted on Friday, July 19, when Utopia began 3-night weekend and 4-night weekday vacations to Royal Caribbean's private destination, Perfect Day at CocoCay and Nassau in the Bahamas.



TUI Cruises officially christened its new 112,982-gross-ton Mein Schiff 7 in Kiel, Germany. The company named its Environmental Officer Genia Galachani as the ship's godmother. From left to right: Mein Schiff 7 Captain Omar Caruana, godmother Fenia Kalachani and Wybcke Meier, CEO TUI Cruises.



Silversea, part of the Royal Caribbean Group, officially named its 55,541-gross-ton second Nova-class ship Silver Ray in Lisbon, Portugal, on June 12. The ceremony was attended by, among others (from left), TV-personality Peter Greenberg, Capt. Alessandro Zanello; Dr. Josefina Olascoaga, ocean scientist and the ship's godmother; Royal Caribbean Group President and CEO Jason Liberty as well Silversea's new President Bert Hernandez.

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Going Further Together

UPFRONT

Fincantieri and Marc-Henry Cruise Holdings LTD, Joint Owner/Operator of Four Seasons Yachts, celebrated at the shipyard in Ancona the keel laying of Four Seasons I on July 9. It is the first ultra-luxury vessel under construction for Four Seasons Yachts, which will be delivered at the end of 2025 and will be setting sail in January 2026. From left: Nadim Ashi, Owner and Executive Chair of Marc-Henry Cruise Holdings LTD; Bart Carnahan, President, Global Business Development, Portfolio Management and Residential, Four Seasons; Luigi Matarazzo, General Manager Fincantieri Merchant Ships Division.



The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection officially took delivery of the first of two yachts, the Ilma, ordered from the French shipyard Chantiers de l'Atlantique. From left to right: Ernesto Fara, President and Chief Financial Officer of The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection; Pascal Favreau,

Ship Erection Manager of the project, Chantiers de l'Atlantique; Sebastien Le Boulluec, Senior Project Manager of the project, Chantiers de l'Atlantique; Jim Murren, Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection; Laurent Castaing, General

Manager of Chantiers de l'Atlantique; Steve MacBeath, Captain of Ilma, The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection; Arnaud Le Joncour, Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing of Chantiers de l'Atlantique and program Director.

On June 17, Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava celebrated the launch of shore power at PortMiami. Shore power allows cruise ships to turn off their engines and plug into landside electrical power while docked, resulting in reduced emissions and noise. When ships are berthed, they need electricity for lights, refrigeration, operating equipment and other vessel functions. Among the participants were Port Director Hydi Webb, Royal Caribbean Group CEO Jason Liberty, Carnival Corp. & plc CEO Josh Weinstein and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings CEO Harry Sommer.



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What's new in the development of Windstar's Star Seeker and Star Explorer?

By Carolyn Spencer Brown

Windstar's announcement that it is acquiring two vessels—the 224-guest Star Seeker and Star Explorer, which debut respectively in December 2025 and 2026—has generated a ton of excitement.

Here's what we already know: The pair of ships (Star Seeker is just now being built, Star Explorer debuted for an expedition line a few years ago) share a design that will be significantly changed to adapt to Windstar's own style. Originally ordered from the West Sea shipyard by Portuguese Mystic Investment, both ships were in the range of 9,935 gross tons. This figure will change due to many changes in design detailed later in the article.

Each ship will feature 112 suites, most of which have full balconies, and a handful with infinity windows. There will be two owner's suites with wraparound balconies. Both Star Seeker and Star Explorer will have a signature Windstar water sports platform, the cozy Yacht Club café and lounge and a gorgeous, expanded two-deck spa and fitness facility.

And Windstar has already announced that Star Seeker's itineraries, in 2026, will include Alaska (May — August) and Japan (September — November).

CHANGES FOR THE WINDSTAR SERVICE

As always, though, don't we all want to know more? This summer, I had a chance to chat with John Gunner, Windstar's Vice President of Expansion Projects, who is leading the effort. Because these ships were either built or designed for an expedition cruise line, he told me, "We're making a lot of changes."

And he offered up some interesting details for those who want to follow along as the ships develop.

"We are transforming Star Seeker and, later on, Star Explorer, in quite a considerable way by making a lot of structural and design transformations. The ship will look quite different, even from a profile perspective, and of course onboard. We're also adapting its interiors; originally designed to sail expeditions, we want to soften her ambience so it resonates with Windstar's existing Star Class ships."

More specifically: From an exterior perspective, "the explorer-style ships don't really look like cruise ships. We're adding a ducktail and what that means is we'll have a super-yacht style stern with a water platform, accessed by steps."

What is a ducktail? It's an appendage, Gunner said, a steel structure attached to the stern: It provides the swimming platform which we definitely wanted, we really wanted to replicate from our Star Class vessels. And it also helps with stability and fuel efficiency. The appendage is being fabricated from steel at the West Sea shipyard, located in Portugal, right now.

"We'll also extend and change the bow to make it narrower and longer, so it looks more yacht-like. Right now it's a bit stubby because it was built originally for tough weather in regions like Antarctica."

WHAT ELSE IS OCCURRING JUST NOW?

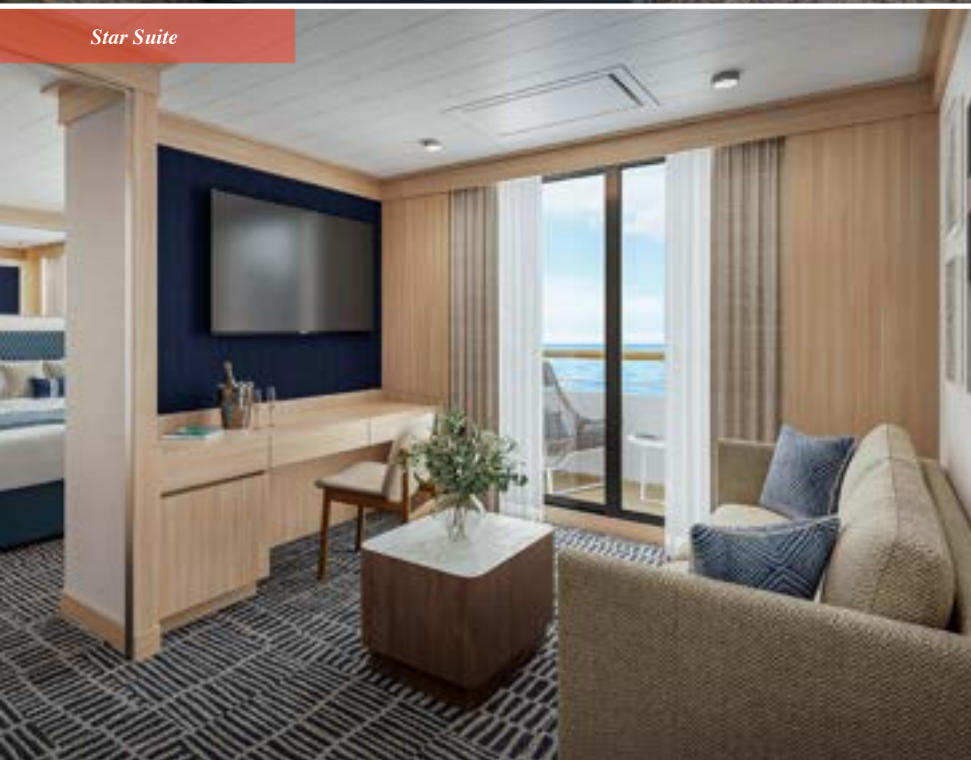
- A two-deck auditorium that's part of the original design is going to be reduced to one deck, Gunner said, noting that the spa is the beneficiary of the extra deck.
- On these ships, the mud room (an integral facility on an expedition ship but not at all important for a classic ocean-going vessel) will be converted to crew accommodations for extra crew. Another alteration: On what has been a helicopter deck (with storage below for Zodiacs), top-class suites with large balconies will be added.
- The pool area will be completely reconstructed, faithful to the design on Star Class pools. And there's more good news: The whirlpool area on Deck 5, forward, that a lot of us love on the Windstar's Star Breeze, Star Legend and Star Pride, will be replicated on the new ships.

Windstar plans to have Star Seeker's new deployment details, including Alaska and Japan, online and bookable in early August 2024.

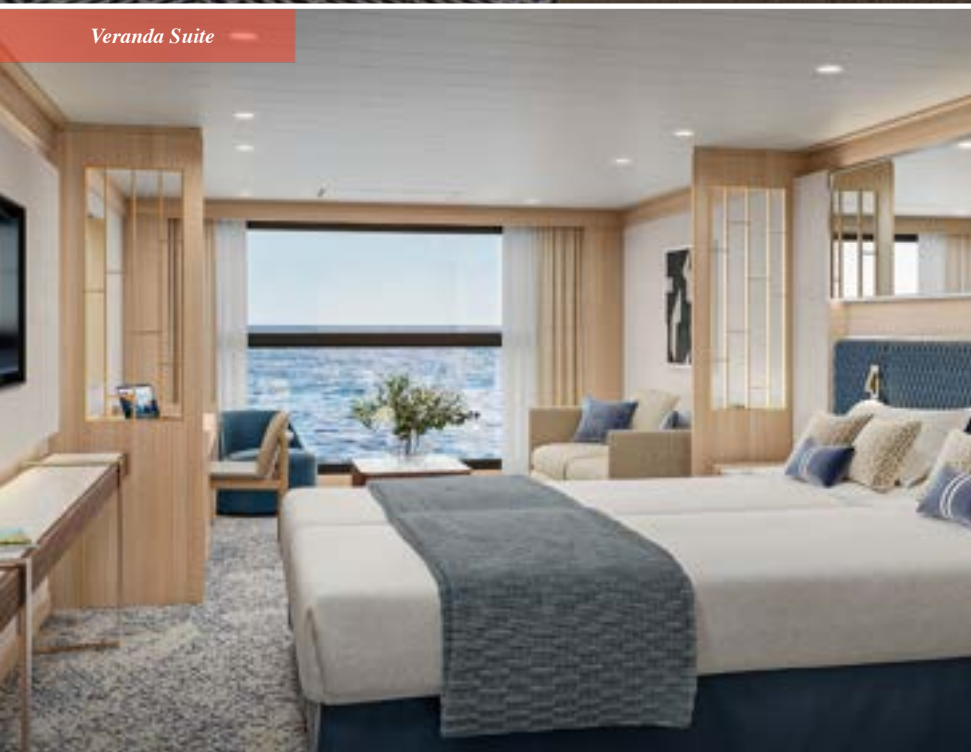
This article was first published on Windstar Cruises' blog (blog.windstarcruises.com)



Star Suite



Veranda Suite



WINDSTAR UNVEILS STAR SEEKER'S 112 SUITES

Windstar Cruises recently unveiled the suites of its upcoming Star Seeker. It will have 112 spacious suites, all but ten featuring a full private veranda or floor-to-ceiling infinity window.

"Guests aboard Star Seeker will experience a sense of tranquility in their suites; they are designed to be an oasis for relaxation," says Stijn Creupelandt, Vice President of Hotel Operations at Windstar Cruises. "We used light wood and a soothing color palette of light blues, greens, and natural browns – elements that reflect our Star Class style. Inspired by the sea, sky, and landscapes, these colors and textures create a serene atmosphere perfect for a relaxing getaway. In the ship's public spaces and restaurants, you'll find more vibrant hues inspired by sunrises and sunsets, including warm yellows, golds, and oranges, ensuring a harmonious blend of elegance and comfort throughout the ship."

Star Seeker features two Horizon Owner's Suites, a new suite category for the line, at the aft of the ship on deck 7, which can be combined with adjacent suites for more space and multi-generational families. Each comes with a wrap-around balcony offering spectacular vistas — perfect for evening cocktails or a private dinner. The two suites are Star Seeker's most luxurious and spacious offerings; however, the ship has a full menu of suite offerings with 12 different accommodation types to choose from, many allowing triple occupancy. Star Seeker has 72 suites with large verandas where guests may sit outside and enjoy the view and fresh air. New for Windstar, 30 infinity suites feature a large floor-to-ceiling infinity window that slides down halfway from the top to open the suite to refreshing sea breezes.

As on all Windstar ships, there are no interior cabins. Star Seeker's 10 Oceanview suites have plenty of natural light and a view of the sea, a walk-in mosaic glass shower, and an inviting queen bed which can be converted into two twins if desired. All suites include a fully stocked mini-bar and refrigerator, interactive TV, safe, fresh fruit, and waffle weave robe and slippers. The four highest suite categories – Horizon, Star, Classic, Deluxe – add other amenities such as an Illy espresso machine, Canapes service, and fresh flowers.

SUSTAINABILITY

Navigating the green horizon: Hybrid solutions for sustainable



Torsten Büssow

Torsten Büssow, Director of Electrical & Power Systems Business at Wärtsilä Marine, explores how hybrid propulsion systems and holistic energy management are revolutionizing the cruise and ferry industry's approach to sustainability. As the sector navigates toward the IMO's ambitious 2050 net-zero target, customized solutions and innovative technologies are key to balancing environmental compliance with operational efficiency.

The maritime industry stands at a critical juncture, with the International Maritime Organization's ambitious target of net-zero emissions by or around 2050 driving rapid change across all sectors. For the cruise and ferry industry, this presents both a significant challenge and a unique opportunity to lead the charge toward a more sustainable future.

As we navigate this transition, it's crucial to recognize that 2050 is merely one vessel lifetime away. This reality underscores the urgency for cruise and ferry operators to adapt their fleets, either by extending the life of existing vessels or by ensuring newbuilds are future-proofed to comply with evolving regulations and requirements.

Hybrid propulsion systems

In this context, hybrid propulsion systems have emerged as a compelling solution, offering a multitude of pathways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These systems, which combine energy storage capabilities with conventional engines, can significantly cut fuel consumption and, consequently, emissions.

A hybrid ropax, for instance, can use between 10 and 15% less fuel compared to its pure diesel-powered counterparts. This reduction in fuel usage translates directly into lower emissions, aligning with the industry's decarbonization goals.

The benefits of hybrid systems extend beyond mere fuel savings. Gensets in hybrid

vessels experience less wear and tear as they can be powered down when the battery takes over, leading to lower maintenance costs. This aspect is particularly attractive for cruise and ferry operators, who must balance environmental considerations with operational efficiency and passenger comfort.

One of the key advantages of hybrid solu-



Render of hybrid solution

cruise and ferry operations



Wärtsilä is currently involved in supplying the electrical systems needed to convert two Scandlines ferries to a plug-in hybrid solution

Photo credit: Matthias Tasler

tions lies in their ability to optimize the installed power base on a ship. Traditionally, when a cruise ship or ferry is built, the installed engine power is designed for the worst-case scenario be it adverse weather conditions, navigating through ice, or maintaining high speeds. However, a modern propulsion system that combines technologies like Power Take-Off/Power Take-In (PTO/PTI) with hybrid propulsion offers a more flexible approach. It can cover these extreme scenarios with alternative power sources, thereby not only reducing capital expenditure but also resulting in more efficient engine usage across various operational conditions.

Moreover, hybrid systems excel in avoiding engine operation at low loads, a common occurrence in cruise and ferry operations during maneuvering or sailing close to land. In these situations, a hybrid system can save fuel by turning off engines that would otherwise need to run for safety reasons, such as providing a backup in case of failure. The battery in a hybrid ship is always on and available to step in within milliseconds, eliminating the need for

constant engine operation. This spinning reserve capability allows the necessary engines to run at higher, more efficient loads, leading to substantial fuel and emission reductions, especially for vessels that frequently engage in maneuvering.

Battery power and electrification

The most exciting frontier for the cruise and ferry sector is the potential for fully electric operations. While complete electrification may still be on the horizon for larger cruise ships and ropax vessels, it's increasingly viable for many ferries, especially those operating on shorter routes. When a vessel can sail on battery power alone either for the entire voyage as with commuter ferries, or during maneuvering and approach to port for larger vessels operators can achieve significant fuel savings and emissions reductions. In these scenarios, fuel is only required for charging the battery, or even better, fuel is not used when batteries are charged from shore-based power sources.

This brings us to another crucial aspect of hybrid propulsion: the ability to charge vessel

batteries with green energy. As we strive to meet increasingly stringent decarbonization targets, it's imperative to utilize renewable energy sources whenever possible. In many European countries today, up to half of the electricity generated comes from renewable sources such as wind, hydro or solar power. By implementing shore power connection systems for battery charging and running on shore power while in port, cruise and ferry operators can potentially operate their hybrid vessels on 50% carbon-free power.

Conversions and innovations

The growing interest in these solutions is evident across the maritime sector, with several notable projects underway. For instance, Wärtsilä is currently involved in supplying the electrical systems needed to convert two Scandlines ferries to a plug-in hybrid solution. The 142-meter Deutschland and Schleswig-Holstein, operating on the route between Germany and Denmark, will see existing engines and systems replaced with new shore-charged electrical systems, including a

large energy storage component. Once completed, this upgrade will allow electricity to contribute approximately 80% of the energy needed for each crossing, marking a significant leap forward in sustainable ferry operations.

Wärtsilä is also offering a complete hybrid propulsion system for the largest hybrid ropax vessel for Stena / Brittany Ferries. The hybrid system will allow the vessel to sail in and out of port on batteries with no need to run engines as a safety reserve. Charging will take place at port.

Together with Meyer Werft, Wärtsilä also enabled the first fuel-cell hybrid cruise ship for Silversea Cruises, which can sail on fuel cells, making it capable of local emission-free operations in port areas.

However, it's crucial to note that the benefits of hybrid solutions can vary depending on the vessel type and its operational profile. While fully electric cruise ships may still be a concept for the future, these vessels can certainly benefit from hybrid systems and leverage technologies like solar energy to enhance their efficiency. For ferries, particularly those plying shorter routes, the combination of limited distances and highly variable power demands often makes electric or hybrid-electric power and propulsion systems more efficient than traditional mechanical drives.

Holistic and flexible approaches

As we look to the future, the need for decarbonization is clearly driving the cruise and ferry sector toward increasingly flexible, electrified and hybridized solutions. Importantly, future fuel readiness is also being built into today's newbuild solutions, ensuring that vessels can

adapt to the evolving energy landscape over their operational lifetimes.

Yet, the journey toward sustainability in the maritime industry extends beyond propulsion systems. A holistic approach to vessel management is essential, combining hybrid propulsion with other innovative technologies and operational strategies. For instance, customized exhaust treatment solutions are playing an increasingly vital role in meeting environmental regulations and improving overall vessel efficiency.

The complexity of cruise and ferry operations, with their varied routes and frequent port calls, demands flexible solutions. Hybrid scrubber systems, for example, offer the ability to operate in both open-loop and closed-loop modes, crucial for vessels traversing waters with varying environmental regulations. This flexibility is particularly important as the industry grapples with the IMO's Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII) and Energy Efficiency Existing Ship Index (EEXI) regulations.

A role for AI and data

Looking ahead, we can anticipate even more sophisticated customization of both propulsion and exhaust treatment solutions for the cruise and ferry sector. This might include AI-driven optimization of scrubber operations based on real-time environmental data, or the integration of exhaust treatment systems with other onboard technologies for holistic emissions management.

The role of data in this new paradigm should not be overlooked. Advanced services, such as Wärtsilä's Expert Insight, utilize artificial intelligence and sophisticated diagnostics to detect even the smallest anomalies that may

indicate a potential problem. This predictive maintenance approach can help prevent unscheduled downtime, saving operators significant sums in repairs and lost revenue—a crucial consideration in the schedule-driven cruise and ferry industry.

Customizing technology

As we navigate toward a more sustainable future, it's clear that one size does not fit all, especially in the diverse world of cruise and ferry operations. The key to success lies in tailoring technology to the specific needs of each vessel and its operational profile. This customized approach, combined with a long-term view of vessel management, will be crucial in ensuring that cruise and ferry operators can continue to provide memorable journeys while minimizing their environmental impact.

The maritime industry stands at a crossroads, and the cruise and ferry sector is well-positioned to lead the way in embracing innovative solutions. By viewing hybrid propulsion, exhaust treatment and other technologies not as stand-alone solutions, but as part of a comprehensive approach to vessel management, operators can make significant strides toward a more sustainable future.

Embracing new propulsion technologies, such as hybrid systems, alongside other innovative solutions, will lay the groundwork for low and eventually net-zero carbon operations in the cruise and ferry sector. As passengers increasingly demand eco-friendly travel options, and as regulations continue to tighten, these tailored, holistic solutions will be crucial in charting a course toward a sustainable and prosperous future for our industry. □



Wärtsilä is supplying complete hybrid package for new Stena ferries



Roxtec supports shipyards and ship owners facing new class requirements

Roxtec cable and pipe transits cover many specific needs on passenger vessels. Its seals for plastic pipes help reduce weight and fuel costs while non-weld solutions simplify installations. On cruise ships, the typical application areas could be air-conditioning, ballast water, bridge, cabin area, cabinet and enclosures, engine room, external lighting and communication, fire sprinkler systems, power generators, motors and thrusters as well as water pipes.

Among the pressing new requirements for the shipyards and ship owners are the new IACS rules, which came into effect on all newbuilds contracted after July 1, 2021. “The updated class requirements define specific criteria for watertight cable transits within the construction regulations. Initially outlined in the unified requirements by IACS, the International Association of Classification Societies, these criteria are now covered by various classification societies under the umbrella of IACS, with minor differences between them. The objective is to ensure a documented and controlled standard of installation quality for watertight cable transits, spanning from initial construction through the lifecycle of the ship,” Roxtec states.

According to **Peter Iverfeldt**, Product Specialist at Roxtec Services, shipyards and ship owners still have rather limited knowledge about the new requirements. “Most of the cruise ships currently being delivered, were contracted before July 1, 2021, so many builders have not yet faced these new demands.”



The requirements for all shipyards include to establish a cable transit seal systems register for watertight cable transits to the Ship Construction File; to ensure the register is complete, correct and updated; to ensure that watertight cable transits are installed and

maintained in accordance with the manufacturer’s installation instructions and the type-approval certification.

Roxtec’s interlinked digital tools are set up to help designers, shipbuilders and owners manage cable and pipe transits online. They can control and document the process, invite class surveyors into the software, and report status in accordance with official standards and regulations. Roxtec Transit Operate, for example, enables systemized control of the transit installation quality, from the initial installations to the latest upgrades and additions. It makes it easy for ship owners and operators to maintain their mandatory cable transit seal systems register and for class surveyors to check the documentation.

According to Iverfeldt, “Our global organization has the knowledge to help shipyards, ship owners and classification societies. We also have a webinar that is recommended for ship owners, ship operators, ship management companies, shipyards, and classification societies.”

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Mein Schiff 7 delivered — TUI Cruises continues steady growth

By Teijo Niemelä

The German cruise market is the largest in Europe with over 2.5 million guests annually. The leaders of the German-speaking market are AIDA Cruises, fully owned by Carnival Corp. & plc and TUI Cruises, a joint venture of Royal Caribbean Group and TUI AG. Additionally, there are smaller operators, whose fleets mostly consist of second-hand tonnage.

TUI Cruises is the younger of the two largest German cruise brands. It started operation in 2008 with one vessel transferred from sister company Celebrity Cruises. Mein Schiff 1 was soon joined by its sister ship Mein Schiff 2, but after that the company chose to expand with new-builds specifically designed for the German taste.

The joint venture developed a new class of cruise ships registering 99,526 gross tons and carrying 2,506 guests (double occupancy). The contract was awarded to STX shipyard in Turku, Finland (now Meyer Turku), which had previously built various classes of cruise ships for sister brand Royal Caribbean International. Since 2014, Turku shipyard

has delivered Mein Schiffs 3, 4, 5 and 6 and developed a stretched class: these 112,982-gross-ton and 2,896-guest vessels are called Mein Schiff 1, 2 and 7.

TUI Cruises transferred its first second-hand ships for Marella Cruises in the UK, which is fully owned by TUI AG, hence creating a rather odd order of the ships' names.

The current fleet of TUI Cruises is therefore young, modern and homogenic. Architect firms, such as cm-DESIGN from Germany, Tillberg Design of Sweden and Wilson Butler Architects from the U.S. have participated to create Mein Schiff design concepts. As an example, all ships have a distinct feature in their aft part: the Diamant. It is a two-deck, diamond-shaped glass structure, which provides day light to Deck 5 and 6. The fleet is also one of the youngest among major cruise lines in the world. Its current lower berth capacity is 18,764. TUI Cruises will continue to expand. Two new 161,400-gross-ton and 3,984-guest vessels are now under construction in Italy at the Fincantieri's Monfalcone shipyard. First of these, Mein Schiff Relax will be delivered in 2025.

In comparison, the largest German cruise line, AIDA, operates currently 11 vessels with the newest one being the 183,774-gross-ton



Diamant in the aft of the ship is one of the focal points of all Mein Schiffs

Mein Schiff 7 features one of the longest pools on the cruise ships



AIDAcosma delivered in 2022. Since the pandemic, it has disposed of its three oldest and smallest ships, but has no further newbuilds in the pipeline yet.

What is more, Royal Caribbean and TUI joint venture in Germany also includes Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, which identifies itself as an ultra-luxury and expedition operator. It sources its guests both from German-speaking and international markets.

What's new onboard the Mein Schiff 7

Despite the fact that the current fleet of TUI Cruises share similar exterior profiles, they are far away identical to each other. Since the first newbuild, both Meyer Turku and TUI Cruises have continued to develop the public spaces and sustainability of the vessels. For example, even Mein Schiff 7 consumes low-emission marine fuel oil, it is the first ship ever produced by Meyer Turku as methanol-ready. Methanol is one of the choices in the future for more sustainable fuels in the shipping industry.

As far as the numbers are concerned, 112,982-gross-ton Mein Schiff 7 is 315.7 meters long with a width of 35.8 meters. It has 1,461 passenger cabins and suites with double occupancy capacity of 2,896.

This gives a passenger ratio of 38.5. Since its founding, TUI Cruises has expanded from the European waters to the Caribbean, Middle East and Asia, providing a lot of longer than 7-night sailings, which requires more space per guest, especially in cabin storage areas. Mein Schiff 7 has 1,034 balconied cabins, but only 170 inside cabins, which makes the ship's accommodation more premium heavy. First onboard the TUI Cruises' vessel is the accommodation for solo travelers consisting of 26 single cabins.

Mein Schiff 7 offers 12 different dining venues, almost all of them included in Mein Schiff Premium inclusive benefits. There are no fixed meal times or seating arrangements. The largest dining complex with a la carte service is the two-deck Atlantik restaurant on Decks 4 and 5, which consist of Classic in the lower level and Mediterranean on the upper level. Anckelmannsplatz on Deck 12 near the main pool area is the ship's expansive buffet restaurant, which offers various food action stations. Completely new concept on the Mein Schiff 7 is Cafe Central on Deck 5: during the day it serves coffee and pastry specialities not found anywhere else onboard, while in the evenings it serves a selection of coffee cocktails. And, all day long, there are available pralines and chocolates.

One of the specialities on the latest Mein Schiffs is the 438-meter-long

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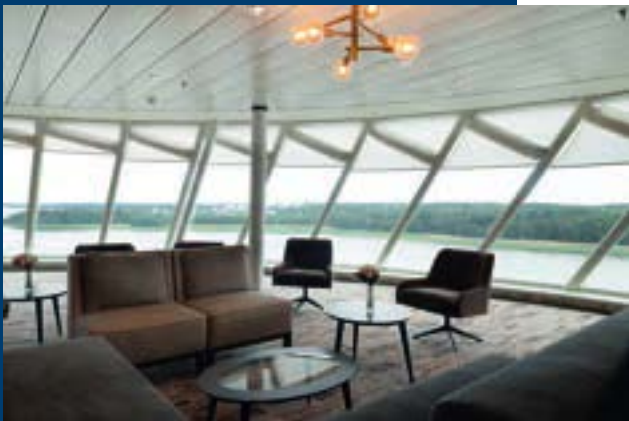
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MEIN SCHIFF 7 - MADE IN FINLAND



Mein Schiff 7 has 26 single cabins



Atlantik Classic is the ship's main dining room

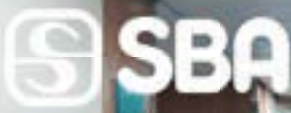


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jogging track, which has an incline of 6.7 degrees. The ships also feature a large arena, which can be used for playing football, volleyball, basketball and indoor cycling.

Sustainability takes the next step

Mein Schiff 7 is the first ship in the Mein Schiff fleet to run exclusively on low-emission marine diesel (sulphur content max. 0.1%) and is equipped with catalytic converters (nitrogen oxide reduction: approx. 75%) and a shore power connection. In addition, Mein Schiff 7 was built in such a way that it can also run on methanol, in future green methanol, which will make the ship's propulsion almost CO2-neutral.

All currently possible technical equipment, such as tanks and pipe systems for methanol or green methanol propulsion, have been installed for the commissioning of Mein Schiff 7. TUI Cruises is currently developing the missing technical component for the methanol propulsion of four-stroke engines, which does not yet exist. The shipping company plans for Mein Schiff 7 to be equipped and commissioned so that it can be one of the first cruise ships to run on methanol in the year 2026. A conversion to methanol propulsion is also an option in the future for the other ships of this modern fleet. Mein Schiff 7 plays a central role in demonstrating that this propulsion system works in real ship operations. Based on these findings, TUI Cruises will decide on possible retrofits.

In order to achieve even more efficient waste processing, Mein Schiff 7 has been equipped with an innovative system that shreds organic waste by means of thermal treatment and can process it for further use on land. "HydroTreat", an innovative system for the treatment of biological waste: The liquid parts of the waste are separated using heat and pressure and channeled into the ship's own wastewater treatment system. At the end of the process, wastewater is treated to the same standard as the most modern onshore sewage treatment plants. The solid parts of the waste are transformed into so-called BioChar, which is considered a multi-talent in agriculture, used for example to improve the soil or as a feed additive. □

SHIP REVIEW



Utopia of the Seas is the first Oasis-class ship using LNG as its fuel, and the fourth on the entire fleet of Royal Caribbean Group



Utopia of the Seas RECORD-BREAKING SHIP IN THE SHORT CRUISE MARKET

Royal Caribbean International, the largest brand of Royal Caribbean Group, has made history in 2024. During a single year, it put into service two vessels which exceed 200,000 gross tons: first, Icon of the Seas in January, and then Utopia of the Seas in July. Utopia is also the largest ship ever deployed in the 3- and 4-night market year-round.

By Teijo Niemelä

Oasis-class has become a great success story in the cruise industry. Since 2009, Royal Caribbean International has introduced six vessels in this class: first the namesake Oasis of the Seas in 2009 and afterward its sister ship Allure of the Seas. Both were constructed at STX Finland,

which today is Meyer Turku. The next four ships were built at Chantiers de l'Atlantique in Saint-Nazaire, France. This winter, Royal Caribbean contracted for a seventh vessel in the class, which makes Oasis-class the largest and longest series of ships in the company fleet. As a matter of fact, when the next unit is delivered in 2027, the first in class will be already 18 years old.

At 236,473 gross tons and 5,668 passengers (double occupancy), Utopia of the Seas is the second-largest cruise ship in the world, surpassed only by the 248,663-gross-ton Icon of the Seas. Royal Caribbean International has really focused on the large units of Oasis and Icon-class, but during the inaugural of the Utopia, company leadership touted plans to develop a smaller class of the vessels, called the Discovery-class. These would be needed to replace the current Vision-class ships (four vessels delivered during years 1996-1998) and Radiance-class (four ships delivered between 2001 and 2004). Royal Caribbean International would require smaller ships for various markets

One of the 40-plus ways to dine and drink on a short getaway is the tried-and-true Trellis Bar. Nestled in Central Park amid more than 20,000 real plants, the hot spot serves up pre- or after-dinner cocktails, wine and bubbly.

Photo credit, all photos: shw-photo



Royal Caribbean's signature Izumi returns on Utopia of the Seas with double the teppanyaki tables and the brand's first omakase-inspired private experience, which features multiple courses paired with sake cocktails.



Now spanning two stories, Giovanni's Italian Kitchen & Wine Bar serves up authentic Italian dishes, varietals, cocktails and an added twist: Gio's Terrazza, an outside terrace that overlooks the signature Boardwalk, one of the six neighborhoods



From the Wild West to far-off destinations around the world, Royal Caribbean's Utopia of the Seas also features the first Royal Railway. Royal Railway — Utopia Station is a one-of-a-kind dining experience that combines adventure, food and technology to take vacationers on a virtual trip — by train — to any place and time.



Utopia's more than three dozen venues for dining, drinking and partying include the first Pesky Parrot. The new Caribbean tiki bar on the Royal Promenade serves up fruit-based cocktails, frozen drinks and surprises.



The vibes across Utopia's five pools range from upbeat to low key. At one resort-style pool, The Lime & Coconut bar offers spots to grab a bite to eat at the center of the party. Another poolside venue is The Spare Tire, the first food truck at sea. And the adults-only Solarium is a tranquil retreat where vacationers can recharge in pools and whirlpools and enjoy panoramic ocean views, a dedicated bar, in-water loungers, daybeds and the Solarium Bistro restaurant.

due to port infrastructure limitations. These include height restrictions in Baltimore and Tampa homeports. However, during the presstime, Royal Caribbean contracted with Meyer Turku shipyard to build the fourth Icon-class ship with options for two more.

Largest ship in the short cruise market

Until 1990, the short cruise market was overlooked by major cruise brands. It was where they sent their oldest and smallest vessels. The market shifted in 1990, when Carnival introduced its newest and larg-

est ship, 70,367-gross-ton Fantasy, into the short cruise market instead of using it for traditional 7-night voyages. This was followed by Royal Caribbean with the brand-new Empress of the Seas same year.

Another reason for the popularity of short cruises is the short distance between Port Canaveral and Orlando's many theme parks. With the help of Disney Cruise Line, Port Canaveral has become the epicenter of shorter cruises. Another factor in the popularity is the availability of nearby private island experiences, such as Royal Caribbean's own CoCoCay in the Bahamas. □

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PortMiami is SHORE-POWER READY



Miami-Dade County Mayor **Daniella Levine Cava** celebrated the launch of shore power at PortMiami on June 17. Shore power allows cruise ships to turn off their engines and plug into landside electrical power while docked, resulting in reduced emissions and noise. When ships are berthed, they need electricity for lights, air-conditioning, operating equipment and other vessel functions.

"As mayor, I vowed to protect our environment; shore power has been my personal dream and initiative. We embarked on this journey in 2021, thanks to an innovative partnership with our major cruise line partners and Florida Power & Light Company," Cava said. "Shore power is a great example of progress in tourism and clean energy converging. Together, we are creating jobs, expanding our economy and preparing to meet the dynamic needs of tomorrow."

PortMiami is the first major cruise port on the U.S. eastern seaboard offering shore power capability at five cruise berths. The project is a partnership between Miami-Dade County, Carnival Corporation & plc, MSC Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, Royal Caribbean Group, Virgin Voyages and Florida Power & Light Company. In the coming year, 21 cruise ships will be outfitted for shore power and the ability to connect in Miami. The seaport will have more than 350 vessel calls plugging into the shore power system.

"We are committed to being a sustainable global gateway," said **Hydi Webb**, PortMiami Director and CEO. "We thank our mayor, county commissioners, and port partners for their continued support of our resilience initiatives."

"Plugging into shoreside electricity allows cruise ship engines to be switched off, reducing emissions by up to 98%. The annual emission reduction estimate associated with the connection to shore power at one terminal is equivalent to the emission reduction associated with the removal of 7,500 cars from the road."

Miami-Dade County's mission is to operate one of Florida's most active seaports in a way that supports economic development and sustainability. PortMiami has a \$4.2 billion capital improvement program centered around NetZero efforts.

PortMiami is recognized as the Cruise Capital of the World and Global Gateway of the Americas. The Port is among Miami-Dade County's largest economic engines contributing \$61 billion annually to the local economy and supporting more than 340,000 jobs. For more information, please visit www.portmiami.biz



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MedCruise's 64th General Assembly: **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Human Tower

The 64th General Assembly of MedCruise was held in June in Tarragona, Spain. CruiseBusiness.com's Carolyn Spencer Brown covered the conference from a variety of perspectives. She shares highlights from the six-day event, which attracted executives from cruise lines including Holland America, Seabourn, Silversea, Crystal, Viking, Royal Caribbean Group, Carnival, Princess, Four Seasons Yachts and Norwegian Cruise Line, among others.

The core conference portion of MedCruise lasted about 2 ½ days (with familiarization tours to round out the rest). What was intriguing about the lineup of panels and speakers was a storytelling thread that ran through them. Here's what caught my eye:

- "Woman Power in the Waters": Did you know that of some 1.25 million seafarers around the world, just 2% (2%!) are women? And that, according to our MedCruise program, female captains make up just 3%. And yet: In the cruise industry (as opposed to onboard leadership), some 57% consist of women. So this conversation,
- Expedition-style cruise travel in the Mediterranean is a small but potentially growing niche in our industry as more travelers look for indelible and unusual experiences. How can Mediterranean ports map more possibilities? How must they evaluate regulatory and environmental challenges in more off-the-grid destinations that are better suited

between Celebrity's Capt. Kate McCue, CLIA Europe's Marie-Caroline Laurent, and MedCruise President Figen Ayan, looked at how to broaden the appeal of the maritime industry to attract a higher percentage of women. More details are below.

to an expedition voyage? Panelists included Hugues Lamy from Swan Hellenic and Spiros Almpertis at Crystal.

Exploring beyond town limits

One of the activities that's integral to this (and other) conferences is promoting the host city, in this case in and around Tarragona to cruise line executives, most of whom play oversight roles in creating itineraries and shore excursions.

Cruise lines calling here this summer already include MSC Fantasia, a regular visitor. You'll see Silversea, Noble Caledonia, Marella and Costa making occasional in-transit visits, according to the Port of Tarragona. And if the tours and port match with cruise line psychographics and demographics, you might see even more cruise lines and ship calls slated for Tarragona in the future.

One wonderful excursion took us to the neighboring city of Reus, about 20 minutes south of Tarragona. It's a delightful, historic place, with 100,000 inhabitants. Our guide told us that its appeal was, for many European travelers, the shopping. For me, it's the kind of delightful, relatively peaceful city with two big squares (Plaça Prim and especially Plaça Mercadal) that are lined with cafes that just tease you to stop, sip a vermouth (the region's best-known spirit) or a coffee. But the place you



New cruise terminal in Tarragona is operated by Global Ports Holding

really need to go in this town that claims to be Antonio Gaudi's birthplace (not proven, but a delightful anecdote) is Casa Navàs.

It's an art nouveau building, constructed between 1902 and 1908, located on the city's prime plaza, but that's not the only reason it's worth a trek from Tarragona. The incredible stained glass walls and ceilings are also magical, as is a serene courtyard, two floors above the city streets, with murals representing history. Still, the reason Casa Navàs was so fascinating for so many of us on the tour was that the couple that built the house left it with all original furnishings. It's like stepping back in time. And, incidentally, they were so ahead of the times — remember we're talking about the first decade of the 20th century — that they had installed electric lights, a "whirlpool" bath with rainfall shower and a telephone. Its story is really about what it was like, if you were wealthy, to live in a house in the art nouveau era.

Across the plaça — and also worth a look, particularly if you've seen Gaudi's architectural creations in Barcelona — is the Gaudi Centre, which offers interpretative and interactive insights into his life's work.

Reus' proximity to Barcelona, which lies 45 nautical miles to the north, is both a blessing and a curse, says a cruise line itinerary executive who was on the tour. The curse? Barcelona is the marquee port, the place everyone

wants to visit. Recent restrictions on cruise traffic in that city have complicated calls, as do increasing costs for lines to use it as a center for provisioning.

The 64th MedCruise General Assembly kickoff

At an unveiling of Tarragona's new cruise terminal, Figen Ayan, MedCruise's President, welcomed members, cruise line executives, media and other travel influencers to the 64th MedCruise General Assembly.



Figen Ayan

It was a nice surprise to learn, Ayan told us, that this marks the 28th anniversary in MedCruise's history. Sixteen visionary port members founded MedCruise 28 years ago in

Rome, she says, noting something else: This is also a special General Assembly because a record number of cruise lines — 26 cruise executives and decision-makers from 23 cruise lines attended.

Tarragona Cruise Port officially opens

In conjunction with MedCruise's General Assembly, Tarragona Cruise Port, the newest cruise terminal in the Mediterranean, officially opened.

In a wonderful surprise for those who knew him as Norwegian Cruise Line's longtime president and CEO, Andy Stuart joined the team of officials to comment on the new facility. "As far as Tarragona is concerned, it's super exciting to see this investment here," he told the assembled crowd. Stuart, now a member of the board of Global Port Holdings, which developed and will operate the port facility, noted that its existence means the future is really, really bright, and I would anticipate seeing a lot of capacity coming to this beautiful city in the short term and midterm, and [there will be] tremendous growth in the long term."

Indeed, Ayan noted that Tarragona has grown from 13 cruise calls in 2013 to 57 visits in 2023.

The Tarragona Port Cruise Terminal was de-

signed with the environment and sustainability in mind. Located about 10 minutes from the heart of Tarragona, its services include the usual facilities, such as security screening, restrooms, a café, shop, customer service and complimentary Wi-Fi. Extra attention was paid to incorporating features for those travelers with limited mobility. Shuttle service which will be needed as the terminal is located at the end of a very long stretch of the industrial port area — is, according to officials, available upon request. Our favorite surprise about the terminal is the serenity of its outdoor spaces, where there's a covered terrace that leads to beautiful (new) gardens that look out onto the harbor.

Exploring the mountains of Montsant, outside of Tarragona

One of the most useful elements of this conference, especially if you're considering building Tarragona into your Mediterranean itineraries, is the chance to try out shore excursion possibilities that travelers who visit the port of Tarragona will get to experience. On this day, we headed deep into the area's mountainous wine country, on a trek to the Cartoixa d'Escaladei. The folks at Costa Durauda, the tourism office for this part of Spain, said it means "ladder or stairs to God," and you'll believe it from the long, winding and slow drive through the mountains to get there (it reminds me of a trip along California's Route 1 to Big Sur).

Located near Montsant, the Carthusian Monastery of Santa Maria d'Escaladei, dating back to the 12th century, was the first to be built on the Iberian Peninsula. It ultimately was abandoned by monks in the mid-19th century and a fire decimated it — but it's the beautiful restoration of buildings and grounds that we've come here to experience.

Afterward, we repaired to the village of Escaladei, just a short distance away, for a wine tasting at Scala Dei, a working winery that took over when the monks, who'd previous-



Carthusian Monastery

ly grown their own grapes, fled the region. (This, the Priorat DOC, is the only Qualified Denomination of Origin in Catalonia and one of the two in Spain with this designation.) We took a tour through the winery, which produces blends of grenache, Carignan and other Rhone-style varietals, and then headed to the cellar, for a tasting and meal of tapas.

Who's this tour going to appeal to? While on the experience, we chatted with numerous cruise line executives who craft shore excursions and who participated. Here are some tips:

- Because of the remote location and the mountainous and winding roads, only small buses can traverse the terrain. As a result, it's a small group tour option.
- Obviously fans of wine and ruins will love this tour — but it's also a good outing for adventurous travelers who want to see a remote part of Catalonia they might not otherwise experience.
- It's definitely not a good option for any traveler with impaired mobility. Comfortable

shoes and an ability to walk on uneven terrain, particularly at the monastery, is critical when it comes to enjoying this outing.

- Our experience was listed as a half-day excursion. It's not. It's a full day tour.

Bottom line? We loved the mystical beauty of the monastery, the soulful restoration of the ruins, and the elegantly rustic atmosphere surrounding the cellar for our wine tasting.

Panel recap: Women power in the waters

- This panel started out with a sentiment that may have surprised some participants: This is not going to be a feminist discussion because none of the panelists [all women, of course] like that approach," said Ayan, the MedCruise President. Indeed, highlights of the conversation revolved around the importance of seeing colleagues and crew as individuals rather than by gender. Still, there were some excellent points of advice for women wanting to grow in the cruise industry — from women who already occupy top rungs, both onboard and onshore, in the business.
- Teach your staff "human value," said CLIA Europe's Marie-Caroline Laurent: See the human beings in front of you. You don't have a 'female' captain, just a captain."
- Aspiring professionals need to promote themselves in an appropriate manner. When you are looking at how can I get a job on a cruise ship regardless of position — social media has become a pivotal tool," said Capt. McCue, who helms Celebrity Cruises' Celebrity Beyond.
- More on the power of utilizing social media tools. Cruise line executives and onboard leadership need to share their own stories so that women aspiring to grow within the cruise industry understand what's possible. "If you can see it, you can be it,"

Panel: Women Power in the Waters



Panel on new shore experiences



McCue told us. “Opportunities are plentiful. There are more ships, more opportunities. So why not? But there’s a lack of representation that makes us visible, and that’s on all of us.”

- Today, the world is more inclusive, and that’s critical, Ayan said. “When you have a diversity of ports, islands, secluded, big, medium and small, you have to have a holistic approach, an inclusive approach.”
- And make the best possible use of communication tools. CLIA Europe, Laurent said, is creating a new platform on its website that aims to put all interested in the cruise workforce in touch with potential opportunities. It should be live soon.

**Panel recap: Decoding charm
Integrating medium-sized
ports into itineraries**

The most consistent message we heard from panelists on the “Decoding Charm” port-focused panel, was this: Know your market, understand the needs of your client cruise lines, invest in appropriate infrastructure and commit to self-promotion.

Interesting takeaways from panelists (including other destination executives we’ve met on this trip) when talking to other-than-marquee ports about encouraging cruise line visits:

- “Customize your approaches,” said Giovanna Dipasquale, Ambassador Cruise Line’s Head of Itinerary Management. “Understand what infrastructure is necessary.” Ambassador markets to an older, more sedentary travel demographic, and so requiring its ships to anchor, or not providing seamless on-off service between ship and port, is a critical starter. “A pier doesn’t make a cruise port,” she added. “And a shed doesn’t make a terminal.”
- Another cruise line executive, just chatting

casually with CruiseBusiness.com, told us it is critical for ports to custom-skew their pitches to cruise lines in a way that shows you understand their psychographic and demographic makeup.

- Ports “should communicate better,” said Francesco Rossiello, Senior Manager of Deployment and Itinerary Planning for Holland America Group. The reality, said Stewart Chiron, a cruise industry expert who is known as “The Cruise Guy,” is that cruise lines bring the passengers to the ports. The ports have to do a better job getting people to explore off the ship.”

**Why was the H10 Imperial
Tarraco Hotel a great home
away from home?**

When you work in the cruise business, hotels tend to take a back seat. They shouldn’t, especially during conferences when they are your home for almost a week. In Tarragona, at MedCruise in June 2024, I’m giving a huge shout-out to our host hotel, the H10 Imperial Tarraco (the ancient name for Tarragona). Almost every room has a balcony with a view to the Mediterranean Sea (even better, my view combined the ancient amphitheater, a beach and the Med).

The room was so very comfortable, with all the attendant mod-cons. But it’s not just the room, or the amenities (pool on ground level, bar/splash pool on the sixth floor, overlooking everything). The location is superb, with the old city a few blocks to one side, the new city (Rambla Nova) to the other, and lots of gorgeous gardens. I discovered, in the few moments when we weren’t being hosted by MedCruise, some marvelous restaurants nearby.

Human towers

It’s Saturday night, MedCruise has ended, and

I’m taking one last, long stroll through the old city. There’s this one charming and quiet, “out of the way” (quotes intended) square, where I thought I might take a table and sip an Estrella Damm. Instead, on this early Saturday evening, it turned out to be heaving with people. After a week here in Tarragona, I immediately recognized why after spotting several groups wearing uniforms with different colored fabrics at the waistline. They were here rehearsing the local tradition of building human towers.

Tarragona is famous for these human towers. It’s so famous that MedCruise dedicated one slot in its program to bring in locals to teach us about them. Those of us who are first-time visitors here can be forgiven for not really knowing what it is. The towers which literally consist of a column of people standing on top of one another’s shoulders — evolved from a tradition of folk dancing and now the tradition of what they call “castells” is part of the fabric of life here. Indeed, they’ve been awarded UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity designation.

We were lucky we got to see this in person. Before our gala dinner, one club demonstrated the feat, which involves a human tower made up of six to 10 people high, with many more serving as the base. You know they’re getting to the end when young kids, wearing helmets, begin to scamper up to the top and then immediately turn around and slide back down again.

Beyond our private showing in Tarragona, there are scheduled competitions between clubs that you can buy tickets for or you might just get lucky and see one forming as you wander through a town square. □





Cruising North America's Great Lakes

Photo credit: Viking

Viking expedition ship in Welland Canal

Cruising in the North American Great Lakes is still a niche product in the cruise market, but it has great potential. CruiseBusiness Magazine sampled the region when Editor Teijo Niemelä sailed seven days from Toronto, Ontario, to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on the Viking Octantis. With a gross tonnage of 30,150 and passenger capacity of 378, Viking Octantis and its sister ship Viking Polaris are the largest cruise ships plying the route.

The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway is a shared U.S. and Canadian waterway system that connects the Atlantic with the Great Lakes while accommodating both river and ocean cruising. But due to size limitations in the docks of the Welland Canal, the market is limited to ships with a maximum length of 225.50 meters, beam of 23.77 meters and draft of 8.08 meters.

Those numbers were design parameters when Viking built its new expedition ships, Viking Octantis and Viking Polaris. The sister ships spend the Southern Hemisphere summers in Antarctica, then reposition to the Great Lakes for the summer season there. That schedule differs from other expedition ships, which traditionally head to the Arctic during the northern summer. Viking originally planned to do that as well, but shifted due to the popularity of its Great Lakes itineraries. Viking entered the region for the first time in spring 2022.

Currently the market in the Great Lakes is rather limited, but there is expansion in sight. Pearl Seas Cruises operates in the area with a single ship, Pearl Mist, while Victory Cruise Lines, which this year acquired two coastal ships from the bankruptcy of American Queen Voyages, will re-enter the market next spring. Additionally, the small German cruise ship Hamburg has visited the lakes since the 1990s.

"The Great Lakes region is a phenomenal place that is close to home for many of our guests, but one that few have yet to fully discover. With more than 10,000 miles of coastline, world-class cities and remote wilderness areas, it is truly a destination that is best explored by ship," said **Torstein Hagen**, Chairman and CEO of Viking.

THE ADVANTAGES OF A GREAT LAKES ITINERARY

Great Lakes cruises are attractive because they're an easy reach for most guests from the North American source market. If a cruise starts or ends in Toronto, Pearson International Airport is within easy reach. Our cruise ended in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which is less than a three-hour drive from Chicago O'Hare Airport for travelers who can't fly home from Milwaukee. An experience in itself, the itinerary offers world-renowned attractions, such as Niagara Falls, sailing through eight locks in the Welland Canal, and visiting larger cities like Detroit as well as lesser-known destinations, such as Michigan's Alpena or Mackinac Island, where horse carriages are the sole permitted transportation mode.



Port Colborne and its famous vertical lift bridge



Niagara Falls



Rosa Parks' bus in Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation



Cruise ships dock in the centre of Detroit

Another benefit of the region is that in Canadian waters, cruise lines can offer an “expedition” day, depending on the equipment available onboard. For stops in Point Pelee, Ontario, Viking Octantis and Polarix carry two Special Operations Boats (SOB), which can be used for boat excursions for bird-watching, and a dozen Zodiacs for wet landings on the beach. The use of submarines, however, is not permitted. And because Viking ships are registered in Norway, the U.S. doesn’t allow the use of Zodiacs or SOBs for passenger transportation in its waters.

WHAT TO EXPECT ON A SEVEN-NIGHT CRUISE

Our embarkation day and first night included a transit of the 27-mile-long Welland Canal. It traverses the Niagara Peninsula between Port Weller on Lake Ontario and Port Colborne on Lake Erie. This is the fourth canal Canada has built in the peninsula, and it is equipped with eight locks. There are approximately 3,000 vessel movements a year, which can affect the cruise ship’s schedule. Our arrival in Port Colborne — the gateway to Niagara Falls — was actually several hours early, thanks to light traffic on that night in the canal.

In each port of call, Viking provides complimentary excursions in addition to more exclusive experiences for an extra charge. In the case of Port Colborne, most of the passengers chose a complimentary excursion to Niagara Falls.

Our arrival in Detroit also marked our entry into the U.S. All guests

were required to go through face-to-face immigration inspection. The immigration procedures have been greatly simplified during the last few years, thanks to close cooperation between the stakeholders. As the cruise dock is located above the border tunnel to Canada, the inspection took place in border protection offices rather than onboard. Guests were bussed to the offices and after a quick inspection, they were free to continue their day.

Our complimentary shore excursion included a city tour along with a visit to the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. It is the largest indoor–outdoor museum complex in the U.S. The museum’s extensive collection includes the presidential limousine of John F. Kennedy, Abraham Lincoln’s chair from Ford’s Theatre, the Wright Brothers’ bicycle shop and Rosa Parks’ bus, among other unique items. As our stay in Detroit lasted only a half-day, we were able to enjoy cruising through the Detroit River the rest of the day before arriving at Lake Huron.

The smallest and least-known port of call on this Viking itinerary is Alpena, Michigan. It is a tender port, which only Viking calls on during this season. The town faces Lake Huron’s Thunder Bay, and is home to the Alpena Light, a red steel lighthouse built in 1914. The town is also home to one of the largest limestone quarries in the world.

Our next stop was Mackinac Island, Michigan, which is often called an “island gem” of the Great Lakes. More than 80% of the island is protected as a state park and the town is car-free with horse-drawn carriages taking care of the transportation.

Our cruise ended in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which has been in the



Public transportation in Mackinac Island

news this summer due to high-profile political events. It is known for its breweries and one of the tour highlights is a visit in Harley-Davidson Museum with endless displays of motorcycles from past to present.

VIKING'S EXPANDED SCIENTIFIC PARTNERSHIPS

Viking's third season in the Great Lakes coincided with the company's latest scientific advancement: For the first time ever, phytoplankton is being genetically sequenced at sea. With scientific support from UC San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography and J. Craig Venter Institute, real-time environmental DNA sequencing of phytoplankton is being conducted in the PCR lab on board the Viking Octantis. Visiting scien-

tists contributing to the Genomics at Sea Program are able to monitor the environmental impact on phytoplankton without the need to transport samples to a distant shoreside facility. Viking regularly hosts Scripps scientists on board the ship in the Great Lakes.

Viking has also partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, which conducts innovative research on the dynamic environments and ecosystems of the Great Lakes and coastal regions to provide information for resource use and management decisions that lead to safe and sustainable ecosystems, ecosystem services and human communities. Additionally, Viking's expedition ships have been designated official stations for NOAA-U.S. National Weather Service weather balloons, from which regular launches are undertaken. □



Walking tour in Alpena



Tender operations in Alpena



Harley-Davidson Museum in Milwaukee



Queen Anne calling first time in Liverpool

Queen Anne FIRST NEW SHIP FOR CUNARD IN 14 YEARS

Cunard is one of the most iconic brands in the cruise market. Founded 184 years ago, acquired by Carnival Corp. & plc in 1998, it has remained one of the smallest companies in the group. In April, however, it received a significant boost when it took delivery of the new Queen Anne from Fincantieri s Marghera shipyard, increasing the fleet size to four vessels.

Oasis-class has become a great success story in the cruise industry. When Carnival acquired Cunard in 1998, the plan was to rebuild the brand as a luxury cruise line with British heritage. Its fleet was rather dated, including the famed Queen Elizabeth 2, but Carnival had bold plans to revitalize transatlantic travel. It ordered the 149,215-gross-ton and 2,620-passenger Queen Mary 2 from the French shipyard Chantiers de l'Atlantique, which was delivered in 2004. Currently celebrating 20 years in service, Queen Mary 2 is the last transatlantic liner regularly serving between New York and Southampton.

Britannia Restaurant



Artisan's Food Hall



Pavilion pool area



Photo credit: Cunard

Photo credit: Tejo Ntonelli



Queens Room

While Cunard is best known for its transatlantic crossings, the market was, however, in the upscale segment of formal cruise experience. Queen Elizabeth 2 was retired in 2008, but the brand introduced two Panamax-size vessels, Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth in 2007 and 2010, respectively. Both ships were built in Fincantieri's Marghera shipyard and have been deployed globally. Cunard is a well-respected brand all over the world, including in Europe, North America, Australia and Asia.

While Queen Mary 2 is a one-of-a-kind vessel in service, Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth share the platform with sister company Holland America Line's Vista-class ships. Similarly, the new Queen Anne is derived from Holland America's Pinnacle-class vessels. While the platform and certain parts of the layout are similar to the Koningsdam and its sisters, the interior decor has been designed just for Cunard. The coordinating architect was Adam Tihany of Tihany Design. Other interior design firms involved were David Collins Studio, Richmond International and art consultancy Double Decker.

SECOND-LARGEST IN THE FLEET

Since the expanding of the Panama Canal, Cunard did not need to follow the strict Panamax-size rules, which limited the size of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth in order to do frequent transits. Queen Mary 2, meanwhile, was too large to fit the old locks and was required to circumnavigate South America.

Queen Anne registers 113,000 gross tons, is 322.51 meters long and has a width of 35.6 meters. As for main engines, it is fitted with four Caterpillar-MaK 12V43C engines, each producing 12,600 kW. Propulsion is with two ABB Azipods. The guest capacity is 2,996 (double occupancy)

One of the traditional Cunard mainstays is the "class" system, which means that guests can choose different levels of traveling, from more affordable Britannia staterooms consisting of inside, outdoor and balcony, to more upscale levels of Britannia Club, Princess Grill Suites and Queens Grill Suites. There are also four levels of dining, each class having their own dining rooms. The largest of these is the two-deck Britannia Restaurant on Deck 2 and 3 aft of the vessel. Similarly, there are separate restaurants for Britannia Club (Deck 2 amidships) and Princess Grill and Queens Grill on Deck 10. These two dining facilities also share a private lounge and outdoor deck area dedicated for the suite guests.

With added space compared to Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth, Queen Anne has launched new dining options as well. New to Cunard are Mediterranean-inspired Tramonto and Aranya with Indian cuisine.

Both are tucked behind the expansive, self-serve Artisans Foodhall on Deck 9. Other new dining venues are Sir Samuel's steakhouse and Ai Wa, a Japanese restaurant, both overlooking the pool area at stern. British pub-style lunches are served in Golden Lion Pub — with a menu created in cooperation with Michelin-starred Chef Michelin Roux.

NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

While my visit was short onboard the Queen Anne in early May, there are some striking features that raise the comfort level. Most improved public space is the Pavilion on Deck 9 and 10. It is a multipurpose area under the sliding glass roof with a pool and whirlpools as well as a large movie screen, lounge chairs and a bar. Upper level also accommodates a wellness cafe.

Another improved signature area is the Commodore Club on the forward of Deck 12. It also houses the Churchill Cigar Club. Compared to the three other vessels in the fleet, this area has more space and seating available and the furniture is plush and comfortable, albeit heavy to move.



Commodore Club

I also have to praise the two-deck-high Queens Room on Deck 2 and 3, which was designed with practicality in mind. From daytime dance lessons, afternoon tea and gala evenings to late-night disco parties, this is perhaps the most popular room onboard, and it is also close to other evening venues as well.

During its inaugural season, Queen Anne has been sailing in European waters, including calling on Norway in the north and the Mediterranean in the south. □

Eye-catching design ideas for cruise consideration

By Fabiana Vale Dornelas, Senior Interior Architect, YSA Design



Photo credit: HOMMES Studio

If fresh ideas on fixtures, fittings and furnishing from the wider design world offer guidance on future cruise ship interiors, then trends like sustainability, modularity and 1970s retro-stylings offer new sources of the inspirations to come.

This year's Milan Design Week and Salone del Mobile offered up an abundance of eye-catching designs worthy of attention from leading cruise ship owners, whether their brand values prioritize modernity, sustainability or nostalgia — or all of the above. Today, designs need not only to be aesthetically pleasing but also environmentally conscious and adaptable to changing lifestyles.

The link between design and nature was the overarching theme of the Milan Furniture Fair, with the "Materia Natura" concept emphasizing the way design ideas can drive change.

In a strong signifier of expectations, Salone del Mobile banned non-recyclable drywall materials from the installations making up the exhibition itself. The move was certainly on trend with exhibitors, where sustainable attractions included several examples of furniture constructed of recycled paper pulp.

Among the standouts were established furniture brands, which included refashioned legacy designs using eco-friendly materials. Arper, for example, reissued **Lievore Altherr Molina's** Catifa 53 upright chair, which debuted in 2001, this time constructed using a 'PaperShell' of composite wood byproducts. Using natural resin to bond 29 curved layers

together, the material can be reduced to bio-char at the end of its life — a form of charcoal which retains CO2 sequestered during the material's previous life phases.

"While one material alone cannot save the world, our partnership with Arper will hopefully open doors to new possibilities and inspire other companies to explore sustainable solutions," said PaperShell CEO **Anders Breitholtz**, in a joint interview with Arper CEO **Roberto Monti**.

Contemporary design is also focusing on modularity, and the flexibility to reconfigure furniture for multiple uses is increasingly desirable. One of the effects of COVID-19 was to create more appetite for versatility in interior spaces, where furniture could be moved or adapted without having to rearrange everything.

Attention grabbers in Milan this year included Collina couch designs from de Sede, where backrests are adjustable by location, height, position, and form. Similarly, Pedrali Buddy Oasi couches feature weighted pillows with non-slip fabric bottoms that are freely movable as backrests, or headrests for sleeping. Pedrali has also presented an outdoor version of its Buddy, which stays true to the original design but features removable waterproof fabric.

Retro themes are always seductive, and modular thinking is also being applied as part of this year's revisit to furniture styles from the 1970s, although the resulting overstuffed

shapes are also very much created using 21st century bio-foams.

Fifty years on, makers are re-imagining the decade's arresting colors, spongy roundness and plush comfort with an element of restraint, while also adding the flexibility to change shape to accommodate modern modular design needs. Expansive, multifunctional sofas were out in force at Salone del Mobile, incorporating drinks tables, upholstered logs, detachable ottomans and nested features. Sometimes maligned but now rebooted, the segmented sofa is back!

This is not to say that the minimalist design ideas of recent years are in retreat. However, even here, there appears to be room for a retro spin on clean lines and uncluttered spaces. Stainless steel — that 1970s revelation of kitchen sink durability — is once more described in terms of its sleek appearance as a material for use throughout the domestic kitchen.

Furthermore, in the context of cruise ship interiors, metal was everywhere at Salone del Mobile 2024, with steel featuring on everything from chairs to lighting and open shelving. Designs that turned heads in Milan included the furniture and lighting using stainless steel and aluminum from Kotaro Usugami, for example.

Inexpensive, recyclable and accessible, durable metals just might check all the boxes for the concepts behind Materia Natura in ways that other materials do not. □

SPONSORED CONTENT

Embracing the Korean wave: Why Korea is an emerging cruise destination

By Carolyn Spencer Brown



Have you heard the term “Korean Wave?”

Our cruise line clients are telling us that northern Asia is once more one of the most popular regions. Among those countries travelers are increasingly curious about is Korea.

The country is on the lips of travelers around the world, thanks to its cutting-edge technology, world-class cuisine, chart-topping pop bands and some of the most exciting movies and TV series being made anywhere,” we read in Lonely Planet. Indeed, in 2023, it welcomed more than 11 million international visitors, a 245% increase from 2022, according to the Korea Tourism Organization.

I was one of those 11 million folks who took a trip to the Republic of Korea last year, and it opened my eyes wide to its vast potential as a cruise destination.

Our trip, hosted by the Korea Tourism Organization, New York Office, visited the ports of Incheon (closest port to Seoul), Sokcho, on the northeast coast, Busan, on the southeast coast, and Yeosu, to the south. I spent five days on my own in Seoul before our fam started and I didn’t even scratch the surface. We didn’t make it to Jeju Island on this trip and that’s a place I’ll definitely visit on the next.

The job we were there to do? As Korea is beginning to make inroads in attracting more cruise visitors, it wants to better tell the stories of each place.

What every city had in common

The most powerful commonality that the cities of Seoul, Incheon, Sokcho, Busan and Yeosu had was a strong reverence toward the past, celebrating tradition, while also enthusiastically courting the future. In Seoul, teenage girls don costumes as a way to honor their heritage.

All the travel guides say that while in Busan, you must visit the fish market, but I’d suggest you take a surf lesson instead. Incheon balances its reverence for those who fought in



the Korean War with an ambitious downtown resurrection that has made room for Songdo Central Park and a Zaha Hadid-designed skyscraper along with Wolmido Park, which honors ancient rural traditions, and the Memorial Hall for Incheon Landing Operation, which memorializes the Korean War.



In Sokcho, after a visit to the Swiss-like Seoraksan National Park, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, where we absorbed its spectacular natural wonders, we wound up at Craft Root

Brewery, an emerging brewpub. One compelling instance of the delicate balance of old and new was its market. During the daytime, it operates as a traditional market selling fish and produce. At the end of the workday, it transforms into a bustling spot where young families come to socialize and purchase ready-made dinners.



And in Yeosu, whose geography lends itself to one of the premier tea-planting areas in Korea, you can visit the pastoral Baekrok Tea Garden, where tea is still picked by hand, and then head over to Suncheonman Bay’s National Garden, which celebrates traditional gardens from 12 countries.

What else do you need to know about Korea?

There are other things worth noting about Korea. A number of its restaurants have earned Michelin stars, and its developments in consumer manufacturing, education and technology have earned global recognition, with companies like Samsung, Kia and LG leading the way.

Overall, the country has gone from one of the world’s poorest economies in the 1960s to one of the richest today, ranking in the top 20 economies worldwide. □

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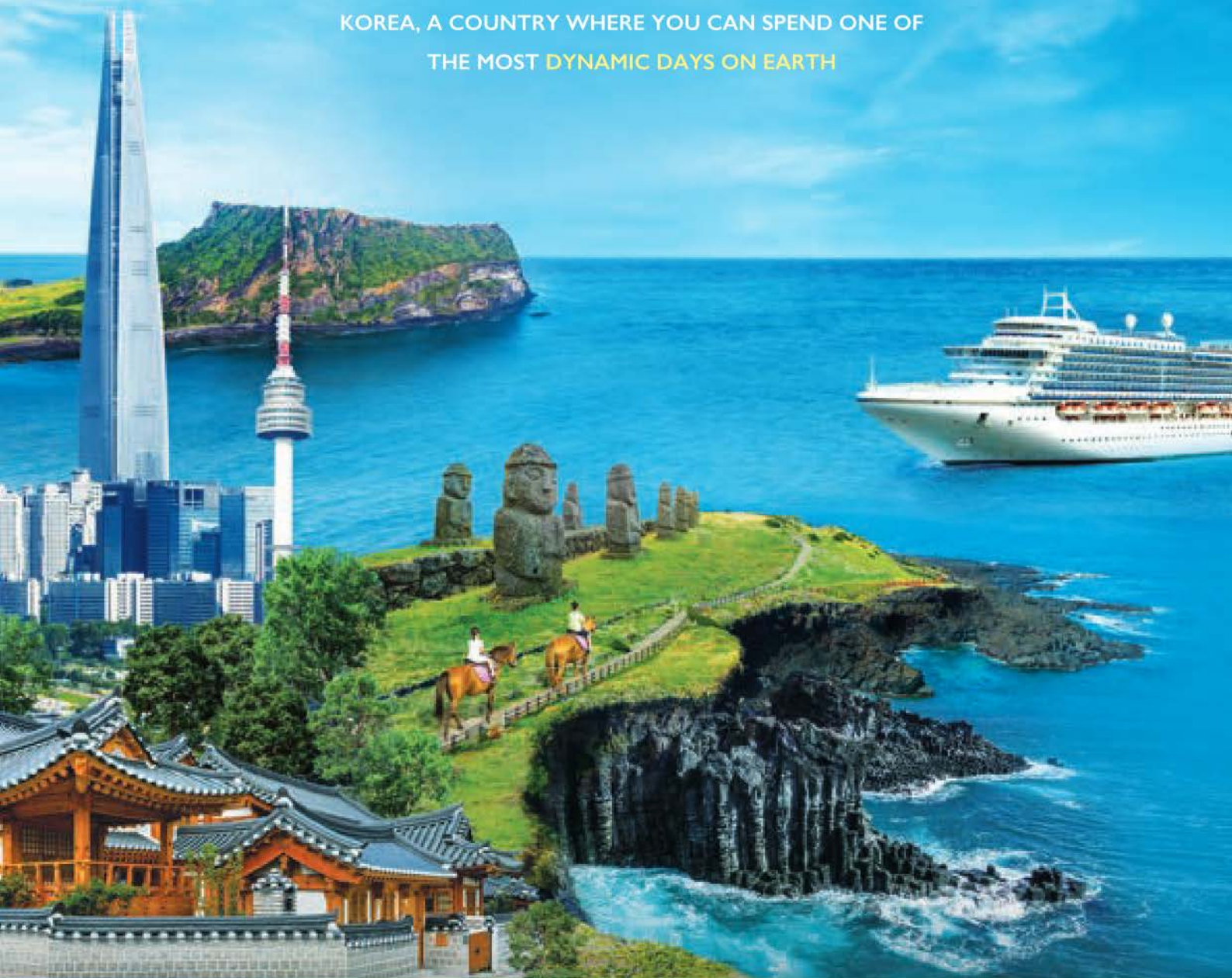
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