

CRUISING, CRUISE SHIPS & THE CORONA VIRUS



WEEKLY NEWS & UPDATES

from Bill Miller
Jan 3rd 2021

Sun Dec 6th Another One Gone! Joining a growing list of ships going prematurely to the scrapheap, Bahamas Paradise Cruise Lines' *Grand Celebration* has been sold to Indian shipbreakers. Previously, the 1,500-bed ship was the *Celebration* for Carnival Cruise Lines, *Grand Celebration* for Spain's Ibero Cruises, and then the *Costa Celebration*

for Costa Cruises. The ship was purchased by Bahamas Paradise in November 2014. Last month, the company confirmed she had been sold to an undisclosed buyer.



Above: Sailing from Marseilles on Messageries Maritimes (1932)



Above: An updated view relayed by Capt Justin Zizes of the 5 cruise ships currently being scrapped at Aliaga in Turkey

Mon Dec 14th Test Cruises: Royal Caribbean now says it is likely that its test cruises would take place in the first quarter of 2021, possibly even January.

Wed Dec 16th Rays of Hope! The availability of COVID-19 vaccines, and not merely additional health and safety protocols, will enable cruising to return in 2021, Royal Caribbean Group Chairman and CEO Richard Fain said yesterday.

More News from Royal Caribbean: Royal Caribbean International announced that the *Empress of the Seas* and *Majesty of the Seas* will

depart its fleet later this month. The ships are the oldest in the company's fleet and have been sold to what Royal Caribbean said was an "undisclosed party, based in Asia-Pacific, that will release details for future sailings at a later time."





MSC SHIP CLASSES



Lirica Class

65,591 tons



Musica Class

95,128 tons



Fantasia Class

139,400 tons



Seaside Class

153,516 tons



Meraviglia Class

181,541 tons

Fri Dec 18th More Protocols! Frank Del Rio, chairman of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, which counts Norwegian, Oceania and Regent Seven Seas among its portfolio of cruise brands, stated that COVID-19 vaccination would be a requirement for all crewmembers, and stated the company is mulling over that requirement for guests as well.



Mon Dec 21st Another One Gone! The *MS Satoshi* project is dead as the former *Regal Princess* and later the Australia-based *Pacific Dawn* has been sold for scrap, according to a statement from Ocean Builders, which was aiming to setup a "floating tech hub" for small businesses with the aim to support crypto currency off the coast of

Panama. After buying the ship, hiring a vessel management company and even completing a class dry docking, the company said they had hit an insurance roadblock. First commissioned in Aug 1991, the 70,000-ton ship was named by Margaret Thatcher in ceremonies held at a terminal in Brooklyn Heights, New York. The former prime minister arrived in a horse-drawn coach to a welcoming reception and impeccably-suited band. I attended and recall Mrs Thatcher waiting in the pool deck buffet line (seems she wanted a hot dog!) and afterward the flag-dressed ship sailed into the Upper Bay, paused off the Statue of Liberty and then slowly made its way up the Hudson to Pier 90. Everyone disembarked by 3 in the afternoon



Wed Dec 23rd Ready to Go! In a survey revealed today, 81% of luxury passengers plan to take a cruise in 2021.

And the Demand is Strong! Even a pandemic hasn't been able to kill demand for elaborate world cruise itineraries. Viking, which already is scheduled to embark on one around-the-world cruise late next year, is adding another with a departure date of December 2022. The 138-day itinerary starts in Florida before sailing through the Panama Canal and along the North American West Coast. The cruise is scheduled to visit 58 ports in 28 countries, stopping overnight in Sydney, Auckland, Bali, Mumbai, and Ho Chi Minh City.



Above: Celebrity Edge & Celebrity Apex

Thu Dec 24th Re-start in New Zealand: A luxury cruise company has been given the green light to begin operating again in New Zealand. French-owned Ponant Cruises has been engaging with the Ministry of Health for months and has received conditional approval for their small luxury expedition vessel, *Le Laperouse*, to recommence operations exclusively in New Zealand waters, only for New Zealanders from February 2021. Ponant and sister company Paul Gauguin Cruises

collectively have operated more than 60 expeditions and cruises over the past six months.



Above: Distinctive funnels onboard the Michelangelo (1965)

Sun Dec 27th Another Re-Start: Norwegian Cruise Lines is now posting Mar & Apr return to cruising dates – and from Miami, New Orleans, New York, etc.

Wed Dec 30th Another One Sold! Less than a year ago, *Carnival Fascination* was sailing Caribbean cruises out of San Juan, Puerto Rico. No one would have ever guessed that a quick turn of events would result in the vessel being taken out of service and sold off to help Carnival Cruise Line weather the worst financial storm they've seen in nearly 50 years of operation. Over the summer, the vessel was laid up in a shipyard in Cadiz, Spain until its fate was decided. In October, the

Fascination was sold to Century Harmony Cruise Limited. A month later, the name of the ship was changed to *Century Harmony* and there were job postings seeking cooks and staff members through different crew staffing agencies. The ship is reportedly slated to be used as a floating hotel in Asia



Above: The Vistafjord at New York, Dec 1975

Thu Dec 31st More Problems! Carnival-owned Aida Cruises is suffering from major IT issues and does seem to be a possible cyberattack. This could now be the third major cyberattack against a cruise line this year and shows a worrying trend on keeping systems.

Twelve Months & Counting! Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings announced on Tuesday that it is canceling all sailings through the end of March. Its business will have been suspended for more than a year when cruises resume.



Could Be, Might Be! Looking at the 2021 list and it shows a possible 30 new cruise ships set to debut. And this number is another 16 more ships that were delivered in 2020, most of which did not see revenue service and sit waiting. The 30 ships expected this year would mean a quick rebound in the cruise industry plus the recovery of the global supply chain of vendors which has been slowed down by the pandemic.



Above: Onboard the Hanseatic, 1961

Sat Jan 2nd News from India: After Carnival Cruise Lines opened for business in early 1972, they commissioned three second hand but converted ships: the *Mardi Gras*, *Carnivale* and, biggest of the threesome, the *Festivale*. The very popular and very successful Company's first new build, the 36,000-ton *Tropicale*, was added in 1981. It was just the beginning, of course. But now, that 40-year-old ship has been sold and to shipbreakers out in Alang, India. The 1,400-passenger liner went on to have a varied life – serving in later years as

the *Costa Tropicale*, then the *Pacific Star* for P&O Australia and finally as the *Ocean Dream* for the Japanese Peace Boat group. She was reportedly renamed *Dream* for her very last weeks and was beached on Jan 1st.



In late 2004, the cruise ship Universe – the former Brasil of 1958 – is seen beached at Alang and ready for the invasion of scrappers.

Sun Jan 3rd Update from those Indian Scrapyards: From over in Holland, our good friend Hans Hoffmann has reported: "The *Marco Polo* was lingering off Dubai for a few weeks but has set course for Alang and the scrappers this morning. Former *Tropicale* beached there last week and former *Celebration* is underway to Alang as well."



Further Onboard Changes: Luxurious Crystal Cruises has announced that it will resume sailings but with something missing: Their popular Ambassador dance hosts. It is all part of rearrangements in the "new" cruise protocols. Furthermore, entertainers & musicians will be placed farther back on stages and that there will be no entertainment in smaller lounges & venues.



Cruising will return! .. but for now, best thanks to friends, readers, reporters & those faraway "maritime secret agents"