

LIVES OF THE LINERS: CRUISING, CRUISE SHIPS & THE COVID PANDEMIC



From Bill Miller

April 2021

Sun Apr 4th Miami Mayor Daniella Levine Cava posted on social media that she had a conversation with the CDC Director, who informed her the agency will be providing cruise lines "shortly" with new guidance.



Wed Apr 7th Miami The president of Carnival Cruise Line, the world's largest cruise company, is turning up the volume on warnings that the

company will move its ships out of the U.S. With no end in sight to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's cruise industry shutdown, cruise companies say it's a matter of survival to get business somewhere else. Carnival Cruise Line has more ships based at Port Canaveral than any other cruise company, making its cancellation of all cruises at least through June 30 a big deal. An even bigger deal is its threat to take its ships out of U.S. ports because of the CDC's cruise industry shutdown.



Thu Apr 8th Cancellations! Cruise fans on Tuesday faced another barrage of cruise cancellations from some of the world's biggest cruise lines. Industry giant Carnival Cruise Line said it had pushed back its return to service by another month with the cancellation of all June sailings. Also canceling all June sailings was Disney Cruise Line, and Disney also canceled all of its Europe sailings through Sep 18.



More cancellations also came on Tuesday from fast-growing Viking, which canceled all June and July sailings that had been on its schedule. In their place, the line announced plans to operate a very small number of voyages out of Bermuda and Reykjavik, Iceland, in addition to a handful of U.K. sailings.

In addition, as part of a return-to-service plan announced early Tuesday, Norwegian Cruise Line canceled all July and August sailings aboard eight of its 17 ships: *Norwegian Breakaway*, *Norwegian Dawn*, *Norwegian Escape*, *Norwegian Getaway*, *Norwegian Sky*, *Norwegian Spirit*, *Norwegian Star* and *Norwegian Sun*. Norwegian also canceled voyages on two more ships — *Norwegian Epic* and *Norwegian Pearl* — through Sep 1st and Nov 7th, respectively. For now, Norwegian only plans to restart operations over the summer with three vessels.



Norwegian's two sister brands, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises, also canceled more voyages on Tuesday, removing all July sailings from their schedules. Both lines now plan to restart operations in August.

The flurry of cancellations came even as more cruise lines announce plans to restart cruise departures in very limited ways over the summer. Norwegian's announcement on Tuesday included plans for new sailings out of Jamaica, the Dominican Republic and Greece starting in July and August.

Also on Tuesday, Seabourn revealed plans to restart cruising in July with sailings of a single ship operating out of Piraeus, Greece (the port for Athens).

Royal Caribbean, Celebrity Cruises & Crystal Cruises in recent days also have announced new or expanded restart plans that involve a small number of ships.





Fri Apr 9th Virgin Voyages is the latest cruise line moving sailings abroad as the timeline to resume cruising in U.S. waters remains unclear. "Virgin Voyages has been looking forward to sailing, and we're so excited to announce our plans to sail from the UK," said Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Group, in a statement.

The cruise line had a slow start because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which squashed Virgin's plans to launch in April 2020. But after multiple delays, its first ship, *Scarlet Lady*, will make its debut in August in the United Kingdom with a series of voyages open to residents of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The *Scarlet Lady* will be departing from Portsmouth, England, with all passengers and crew required to be fully vaccinated.

Viking Ocean Cruises will require all passengers to be vaccinated for its summer cruises, making it the latest cruise line to make the job mandatory on board. The cruise line will open up summer sailings to Bermuda and Iceland in June, requiring guests to be both inoculated as well as undergo saliva PCR tests at embarkation and "frequent" testing

throughout the journey. Additionally, Viking will add more sailings to its "England's Scenic Shores" cruises in the United Kingdom, which it started offering in May for British citizens.





Carnival Corporation will have nine ships operating soon between its AIDA, Costa, Cunard, Princess, P&O UK and Seabourn brands, and hopes to continue with a staggered restart. How many ships will it take before the financials start looking better? Using 2019 as a baseline, a fleet of 25 ships operating may be the magic number, according to David Bernstein, chief financial officer, speaking on the company's first quarter business update call on Wednesday.

Bernstein said that using 2019 numbers, if the company had its top 25 ships operating, at full occupancy, they would generate enough cash flow to cover the pause costs of 60 to 65 other ships. Full occupancy will take time however, as Arnold Donald, CEO, said that initial sailings from the UK would start at modest occupancy levels.



Sat Apr 10th The Long Beach City Council moved forward this week on a plan to possibly transfer control of the land that encompasses the iconic but financially beleaguered *Queen Mary* to the Long Beach Harbor Commission, which governs the Port of Long Beach.





Cruising remains the only sector of the economy that is prohibited by the U.S. Government from operating at this time. This is due to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Conditional Sailing Order, which bans cruise ships from sailing from ports in this country.

This has been a great source of frustration not only to cruise lines and cruise fans but also to the State of Florida, where many homeports, such as Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Port Canaveral, are located. On Thursday, TPG reported that the state of Florida had filed suit against the federal government to force it to allow cruise lines to resume sailing out of U.S. ports.

Celebrity and the Sunshine State aren't alone in this fight, though. Major players in the industry, from Norwegian Cruise Line to Royal Caribbean to the industry's CLIA association, are all asking Congress to take action. They believe it's necessary to restart cruising from U.S. ports and their customers agree. According to Celebrity's email, more than 300,000 jobs have been lost in the U.S. because of the suspension of cruise travel.



Royal Caribbean Group and Carnival Cruise Lines are sending empty ocean liners to the eastern Caribbean island of St. Vincent to assist with the evacuation of thousands of people as an eruption from La Soufriere volcano appears likely.

“An explosive phase of the eruption may begin with very little warning,” the University of the West Indies Seismic Research Center said in a statement to the Associated Press. The *Carnival Legend* and *Carnival Paradise* vessels along with Royal Caribbean's *Serenade of the Seas* and Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Reflection* (RC and Celebrity have the same parent company) are expected to dock at the island Friday to

help transport some of the 16,000 people who live within the volcano's red zone and have been forced to evacuate.



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis announced Thursday the state will file a lawsuit against the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, demanding cruise ships be allowed to resume sailing immediately.



Princess Cruises has announced that it will be leveraging new satellites for what it's calling "super-charged internet connectivity," and is now promoting its ships as the perfect "remote workstation" for virtual workers who need fast internet for their jobs.



Upon its return to sailing, every ship in the Princess Cruises fleet will feature land-like connectivity as part of its MedallionNet wifi service.

MedallionNet's seamless integration will ensure that passengers can work from their deck chairs as efficiently as in their office back home, with access to their cloud-based applications such as storage, videoconferencing, and email.

There will be an access point in every stateroom and every public area across the ships, meaning passengers wishing to go online won't have to be sitting in that *one* corner of the lounge to get high-speed wifi.



Crystal Cruises: Less than a month after announcing its roundtrip Bahamas sailings for this summer, Crystal is back with another 2021 cruise option: Iceland. The *Crystal Endeavor* is Crystal Expedition Cruises' very first ship, and she will be spending her inaugural season circumnavigating the beautiful landscapes of Iceland. The vessel will operate five 10-night immersive voyages in the region beginning July 17th.



More from Crystal: Crystal continues to be at the forefront of the cruise industry's return as the company announced that the *Crystal Symphony* will sail a series of 15 10-night *Luxury Caribbean Escapes* round-trip from St. John's, becoming the first ship ever to homeport in Antigua. Beginning August 5 through December, including a holiday sailing on December 23, the *Crystal Symphony* will visit the island locales of Barbados, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago*, St. Maarten and British Virgin Islands, offering travelers tropical luxuries and ample wide-open spaces to discover the local cultures with plentiful air options from most major U.S. cities. *Crystal Symphony's* return to sailing marks the resumption of service for 97 percent of Crystal's oceangoing fleet in the summer of 2021.



Out of the old shoebox: Above: *Independence* at Pier 84, New York, 1966;
below: *Angelina Lauro* at Capetown.



Thank you to all our readers, correspondents, those “agents” in faraway places!