

FEBRUARY, 2020 VOLUME XXXVII, # II

Friday, FEBRUARY 21, 2020 – 6:30 PM

## MARITIME PHOTOGRAPHY

By Jonathan Atkin

The National Opera Center, 330 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 29<sup>th</sup> Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Manhattan

Captain Jonathan Atkin specializes in meticulously choreographed aerial photography for the maritime industry. Early in his career he had numerous photos published in The Washington Post, and later produced over 850 assignments for the Arts/Leisure and Travel sections of The New York Times. His first aerial assignment for The Times was photographing Royal Caribbean's abrupt departure from the Manhattan Cruise Terminal for Bayonne, NJ. He soon became the "go-to photographer" for the Travel section anytime a new cruise ship had its debut.

Jonathan later turned to corporate aerial maritime photography for Cunard, Carnival, Royal Caribbean, numerous cargo companies and the workboat community. His aerial photography relies on robust helicopters supplemented by a fleet of professional drones to create immersive images for maritime clients.

Jonathan has been photographing Carnival Corporation ships for decades, beginning with a Bermuda sailing aboard the QUEEN ELIZABETH 2 for The New York Times, creating his first aerial photos of that vessel with an industrial kite. Flying from the helo deck on Friday the 13th while in the Bermuda Triangle, he managed to fracture his wrist in the effort. In NY Harbor, his first "real" aerial of the QE2 was achieved on a foggy morning by hanging from a parasail backwards, a technique he perfected for Holland America Line at Half Moon Cay. In 2003, traveling to St. Nazaire, he photographed the QUEEN MARY 2 under construction, beginning a love affair with that beautiful ship. In Florida, at the debut of CARNIVAL GLORY, former Carnival President, Bob Dickenson quipped, "It isn't an inaugural if Jonathan isn't here."



SCENIC ECLIPSE departing New York, September 2019.

(Jonathan Atkin)

**NEXT EVENTS:** Membership meetings: March 27 - "Icon of Identity: The ILE DE FRANCE on the World Stage," by Christian Roden; April 24, May 28, June 26, 2020 - Programs TBA. PONY Branch cruise: December 8, 2020 on the QUEEN MARY 2.

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NYK Line's AMADEA in New York, October 15, 2019.

(Bob Allen)

**ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES**

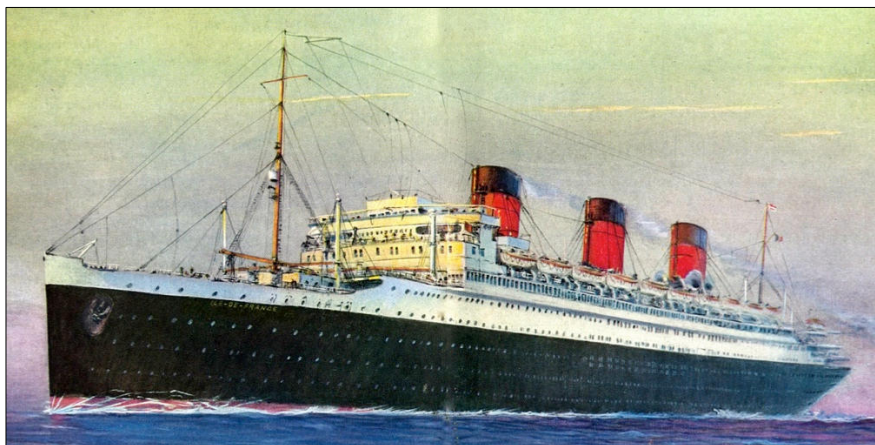
Please send in your winter cruise travels for publication in "ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES!"

**PREVIEW, MARCH 27, 2020: "ICON OF IDENTITY: THE ILE DE FRANCE ON THE WORLD STAGE"**

**By Christian Roden**

At The National Opera Center, 330 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 29<sup>th</sup> Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Manhattan – 6:30 PM

Christian Roden will present a fascinating program on the design, history and cultural significance of the French Line's legendary ILE DE FRANCE of 1927. He will share little known stories of the ILE DE FRANCE, which he researched at the Association French Line archives.

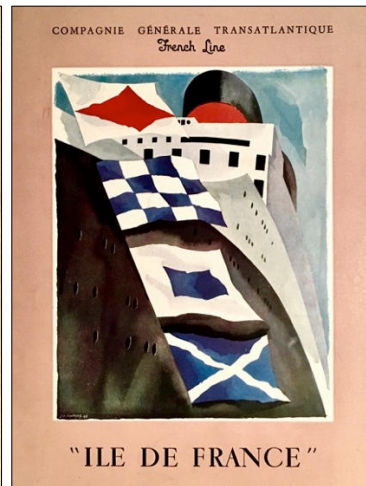
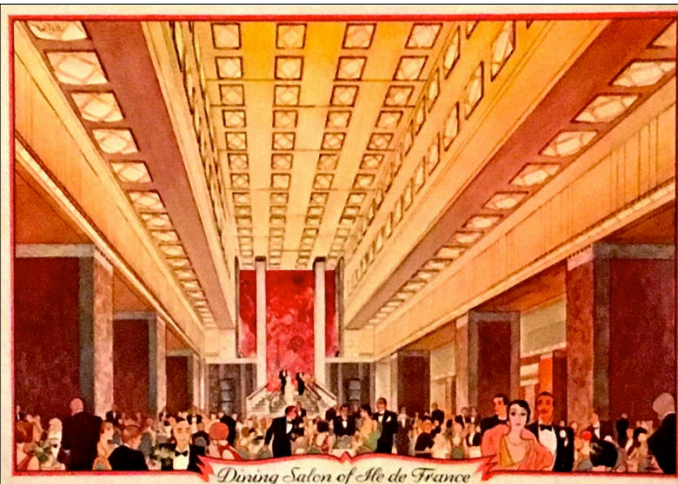


A 1920's rendering of the ILE DE FRANCE (above, left); the first Class Entrance Foyer (above, right)



(CGT/Christian Roden Collection)





ILE DE FRANCE First Class Deck Plan cover (above, left); the First Class Dining Salon (above, center); post-war brochure cover (above, right).  
(CGT/Christian Roden Collection/Bob Allen Collection)

## **WESTERN CARIBBEAN CRUISE ON VIKING OCEAN CRUISES' VIKING SKY, JANUARY 10-17, 2020**

**By David G. Hume**

We had booked a seven-night cruise titled "Turquoise Caribbean Seas" on Viking Ocean Cruises' VIKING SKY commencing on January 10. This cruise had scheduled port calls at Key West, Belize City, Cozumel and Progreso. Although the ship was docked at Terminal J in Miami, Viking routed us to Fort Lauderdale. Upon arrival, a local agent acting on behalf of Viking led a group of us to a mini-bus for the hour-long drive to the Port of Miami.

After going through the security check and getting our key card, we walked on the ship at about 12:30 PM. Since our cabin would not be available until 2:00 PM, we went to the World Café (the Lido restaurant) on Deck 7 for a leisurely lunch. Shortly before 2:00 PM, an announcement on the ship's public address system advised that all cabins were ready for occupancy. We walked down the aft staircase to our cabin on Deck Six.

The VIKING SKY entered service in 2017 as the third in a projected series of 16 sister ships for Viking Ocean Cruises. It was preceded in service by the VIKING STAR and the VIKING SEA. We had previously sailed on the VIKING STAR in 2018, so we were familiar with the layout of the ship. The VIKING SKY is 748 feet, 8 inches in length and has a beam or width of 94 feet, 6 inches. The ship has a gross tonnage of 47,842. There are 465 balcony cabins for a passenger capacity of 930. There are no inside or ocean-view cabins. The ship has a diesel electric propulsion system driving twin propellers. The service speed is 17 knots, with a maximum speed of 20 knots. There are 550 crew.

Viking Ocean Cruises is an upper premium/luxury cruise line. The cost is somewhat higher than other cruise lines such as Carnival, Holland America, Royal Caribbean and Norwegian. However, Viking offers amenities that these lines do not. For instance, wine, beer and soft drinks are free at lunch and dinner. Bottled water is provided free of charge at every port. Every passenger has a balcony cabin. Free Wi-Fi is available to passengers. All meals are open seating. Two specialty restaurants, Manfredi's Italian Restaurant and The Chef's Table, for the chef's selections of the day, are free, although advance reservations are usually required. The only restaurant on board for which there is an extra charge is The Kitchen Table. The heated pool, hot tub, steam room and cold room in The Spa are free to all. In addition, as noted in more detail below, one or more free tours are offered in each port.

Most of the public rooms on the ship are located on Decks 1, 2 and 7. Passenger cabins are located on Decks 3, 4, 5 and 8, with a limited number forward on Deck 7.

At the forward end of Deck 1 is The Spa, with a heated pool with water jets where you can sit on underwater benches and an adjacent hot tub if you prefer hotter water. Five loungers are on each side of the pool available on a first come basis. There are separate locker rooms for men and women. The Spa also has a steam room and a cold room with snow in which to cool off.

Aft of The Spa on the starboard side of Deck 1 are the Fitness Center, Salon and a shop selling perfume, costume jewelry, logo shirts, cameras and tech accessories. Further aft is The Living Room, the lowest level of a three-deck Atrium. On the starboard side, there are three separate areas with couches and chairs and a bar. In the middle of the Atrium is a piano and a dance floor, with a large wide staircase leading to Deck 2. On the port side of Deck 1 is the Business Manager's Office and three other separate areas. One has three passenger service desks, replacing the purser's desk on other ships. Adjacent to this room, there are three desks for booking shore excursions. The third area provides additional seating for passengers listening to live musical performances in the Atrium.

Beyond the Atrium on Deck 1 are three alternative restaurants, Manfredi's Italian Restaurant on the starboard side, The Chef's Table on the port side and, between these two, The Kitchen Table.

On Deck 2 at the bow is The Theater for production shows with four singers and four members of a band. Movies are also shown here. There are two alcoves on either side at the rear of The Theater, which provide additional seating for shows. These alcoves can be closed off and used as individual movie screening rooms. There is a bar athwartship at the entrance to The Theater. During our cruise there were three production shows, "The ABBA Songbook," "Musical Journey-Coast to Coast," and "The Beatles Songbook."

Directly aft of The Theater are two more shops, one on the port side selling clothing and ship souvenirs and one on the starboard side selling watches and fine jewelry. Proceeding aft along a starboard side corridor you come to Torshavn, the ship's nightclub, which has music and dancing at night. Beyond Torshavn is the middle level of the Atrium, where there are tables lining the railings on each side for passengers to listen to the entertainment at the base of the Atrium. On the port side of the Atrium on Deck 2 are electronic game tables, card tables, a puzzle for passengers to work on and a future cruise sales office. Immediately in front of the future cruise sales office is a large cased model of the VIKING SKY.

At the stern of the ship on Deck 2 is The Restaurant. The Restaurant is open for dinner from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM. On each day's menu, new selections are set forth on the right side, while favorites such as steak, salmon and chicken, are always found on the left side. The dress code at night is "elegant casual." There are no formal nights.

An outdoor promenade deck encircles the ship on Deck 2. Four laps equal one mile. There are no deck chairs along the sides of this deck, but there are several at the stern.

The third level of the Atrium on Deck 3 consists of more tables and chairs adjacent to the railings on each side.

At the forward end of Deck 7 is the Explorer's Lounge. This room has two levels, each with chairs facing the sea. The second level on Deck 8 is accessed by staircases on either side of Deck 7. Each level has bookcases with books available to the passengers. The upper level also has cases of maritime artifacts. On the lower level, there is a bar amidships and on the starboard side is Mamsen's, a food counter which offers continental breakfast, light snacks and desserts.

Aft of the Explorer's Lounge is the Winter Garden, where afternoon tea, accompanied by either a pianist or a string duo, is served. Amidships on Deck 7, under a magradome, are the Main Pool and a long hot tub with loungers all around.



VIKING SKY docked in Cozumel, Mexico.

(David Hume)

A large screen at the aft end is sometimes used to show movies under the stars. At the stern of Deck 7 is the World Café. This café has an open area at the stern called the Aquavit Terrace with its own bar. On this terrace there are four round towers providing heat on cool evenings. At the aft end of the Aquavit Terrace are the Infinity Pool and a small Hot Tub. A small promenade is on both sides of the World Café.

On our cruise, the Captain was Terje Willasen, the General Manager was Camiel Sleijpen, and the Cruise director was Chris Shafer. The passengers were mostly of retirement age.

As mentioned earlier, the proposed itinerary for our cruise was a stop at Key West, followed by a sea day and then stops at Belize City, Cozumel and Progreso before another sea day and arrival back in Miami. The cruise did not go as planned.

You may recall that the VIKING SKY had suffered an engine failure off the coast of Norway on March 23, 2019 during stormy weather. A large number of passengers were evacuated by helicopter. As it turned out, the ship was also to experience mechanical difficulties during our cruise. The first hint of such difficulties came by letter in our cabin on the day of departure. It said that due to "unfavorable weather conditions approaching the southern coast of Florida", the port of Key West would "not be suitable for tender operations." Accordingly, the call at Key West was cancelled and we proceeded directly to Belize. Instead of



having a day in Key West and a day at sea, we had two days at sea to start our cruise. This early cancellation led me to suspect that there might be mechanical issues affecting the ship's speed.

In Belize, we anchored five miles off Belize City. Several large tenders from the city transported us between ship and shore. Viking Ocean Cruises provides one or more free tours in each port of call, as well as offering other tours at an extra charge. We had found on our previous Viking Ocean cruise that the included tours are very good. From Belize City, we elected to take an included tour to the Mayan ruins at Altun Ha. Here there are five pyramid temples, two of which are fully excavated, one of which is partially excavated and two of which are still largely covered by earth. This site is well worth a visit.

After leaving Belize City, we travelled overnight to Cozumel. We were originally scheduled to be docked from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. However, on the evening of our departure from Belize City, we received another letter in our cabin indicating that we would stay in Cozumel until 10:00 PM. It further stated that, "due to a technical issue, our maximum speed at which we can sail has been reduced" and that the ship "would be unable to achieve the required speed" between the ports of Progreso and Miami. In order to avoid arriving late in Miami and disturbing flight plans, the decision was made to cancel the call at Progreso and instead proceed to Key West, where the port call would be reinstated.

As it happens, the port call at Progreso and the optional tour to the Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza, were the sole reasons we had booked this cruise. Although the other ports were enjoyable, we would not have taken the cruise if we knew in advance that it would not go to Progreso. By an unfortunate coincidence, a similar thing had happened on our prior cruise on the VIKING SKY. On that occasion, a cruise from Rome to Barcelona, the scheduled ports calls at La Goulette in Tunisia and Algiers in Algeria were cancelled prior to the cruise. Here again, we would not have booked the cruise if we knew those ports were to be cancelled, since we had been to all of the other ports, as well as the ports that were substituted for the cancelled ports.

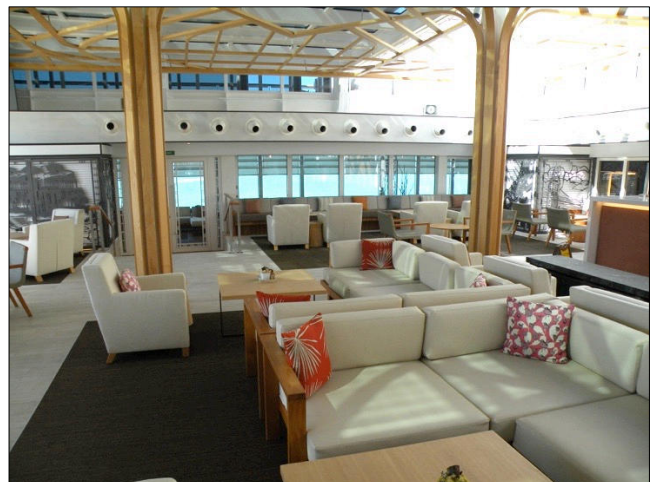
Our stay in Cozumel was pleasant. We were able to dock in port and walk off the ship. We again had elected to take an included tour, this time to the Mayan ruins at San Gervasio. While these ruins were not as impressive as those at Altun Ha, we learned more about the Mayan empire from an excellent local guide.

As we had noticed earlier during our cruise, the ship had never sailed at its service speed of 17 knots. During our day at sea after leaving Cozumel, the ship did not go faster than about 12 knots.

When we arrived at Key West for our reinstated port call, we were able to dock at the Navy pier. NORWEGIAN SKY was docked close to Mallory Square. Viking provided a shuttle bus throughout the day to take passengers to and from the ship to the corner of Front and Duval Streets. Since we had been to Key West several times recently, we decided to just walk around town rather than re-visit the tourist sites.

While in Key West, we noticed that several engineer/technicians from Fincantieri, the builder of the ship, had come on board and were doing inspections. I can only hope they were able to diagnose and address the engine problems.

We finished our cruise on schedule in Miami and then boarded a bus to Fort Lauderdale and the flight home. No explanation was given why we were flown into and out of Fort Lauderdale instead of Miami, but the drive between the two cities took only an hour, so it was not a hardship.



The Living room (above, left) and The Winter Garden (above, right) are typical of VIKING SKY's Scandinavian design aesthetic. (David Hume)

## **SHIP'S LOG**

**By Bill Miller**

In June 1976, the LEONARDO DA VINCI left New York on the very last Italian Line crossing to Italy. It was an indeed sentimental departure in many ways. But at our January meeting, the Italian Line and its fine fleet of liners were sailing once again. As "commandante," Bill Miller reviewed the company and its ships. They came back to life!

Beginning with the early liners – such as the CONTE VERDE and DUILIO – of the 1920s, Bill looked more closely at the likes of the CONTE BIANCAMANO and CONTE GRANDE and then the SATURNIA and VULCANIA. There was the Cinema Style of the CONTE GRANDE lounges and the rich ornate-ness of staterooms on the SATURNIA.

Created out of the Mussolini Government's merger of the NGL (Navigazione Generale Italiana), Lloyd Sabaudo and the Cosulich Line in 1932, the Italian Line was formed just in time to welcome two super liners: the REX and then the CONTE DI

SAVOIA. Although neither was as successful as intended, they brought Italy to the forefront of the great age of ocean liners. World War II however, all but devastated the Italian liner fleet. Only four liners survived, albeit in American Allied hands, but were fortunately returned, restored and used to revive Mediterranean-New York service. The SATURNIA and VULCANIA were hugely popular and then led to the first post-war newbuilds: the handsome sisters Giulio Cesare and Augustus (in 1951-52), and then the beautiful, bigger-still ANDREA DORIA and CRISTOFORO COLOMBO (1952 and 1954).

As in an Italian opera, the four-year-old DORIA was lost dramatically, Bill recalled, after colliding with Sweden's Stockholm off Nantucket on July 25-26<sup>th</sup> 1956. Bill showed a surviving DORIA lifeboat as well as the former Stockholm, still sailing (in her 72<sup>nd</sup> year) as the cruise ship Astoria.

The DORIA's replacement, the LEONARDO DA VINCI of 1960, seemed to usher in a new age of Italian shipbuilding. It included the likes of the GUGLIELMO MARCONI and GALILEO GALILEI, OCEANIC, EUGENIO C and the stunning pair of MICHELANGELO and RAFFAELLO.

But time was slowly running out, as Bill explained: there was airline competition, as well as soaring fuel oil costs and troublesome, highly unionized Italian crews. By the mid '70s, the Italian Government, as benefactor, pulled the plug. Mournfully, Bill showed the very last Italian liner, the former AUGUSTUS, being scrapped in India in 2011. Bill ended, however, on a very positive note. Today, Italy is producing more than a quarter of all new cruise ships, some of which are as big as 200,000 tons and carrying 5,000-6,000 passengers.



The magnificent sister ships MICHELANGELO and RAFFAELLO of 1965 were built too late for the three-class transatlantic service. Regrettably, their careers lasted only ten years before the Italian Line disposed of them. (Bill Miller Collection)

## **SHIPS IN PORT: THE SHORTEST TRIP TO EUROPE – THE EXCALIBUR**

**By Bill Miller**

The late Frank Braynard, then a maritime reporter, wrote an article about a near-tragedy in New York harbor and called it "The Shortest Trip to Europe." It made other headlines as well. At four in the afternoon of June 27<sup>th</sup> 1950, the EXCALIBUR of American Export Lines cast off from Pier D of Jersey City's Harborside Terminal. Loaded with over 100 passengers, 100 crew and lots of cargo, the 9,644-ton ship was soon all but sinking.

The ship set off to a joyous, streamer-filled departure. But within less than a half-hour on that bright, hazy summer afternoon, the captain of the EXCALIBUR decided to veer off course, in fact too close to the Brooklyn shoreline. Then crash! The EXCALIBUR was rammed by the inbound Danish freighter Colombia. There was serious damage to both ships: the EXCALIBUR was badly damaged, holed and down by the bow; the Colombia even caught fire. The 473-ft long EXCALIBUR might even have sunk, in fact, but was fortunately quickly grounded off Gowanus Flats. Tugs and even floating cranes raced to the scene to offer assistance. Passengers, expecting a trip to the sunny Med, were gathered on the aft open decks, wearing lifejackets and prepared to evacuate. Their voyage ended within two hours. Fortunately, all was well – the EXCALIBUR was carefully towed to the nearby Bethlehem Steel shipyard at 56<sup>th</sup> Street in Brooklyn. Repairs were extensive and expensive. In the inquiry that followed, it was discovered that the EXCALIBUR's captain had changed course and gone too close to the shoreline. It was later uncovered that he wanted to wave goodbye to his wife, who was purposely waiting on shore.

The EXCALIBUR was one of American Export's popular "Four Aces" – the others being EXETER, EXCAMBION, and EXOCHORDA. Built in 1944 as military transports for the projected sea invasion of Japan, they were sold to American Export in 1947 and rebuilt as very high standard passenger-cargo liners. They were all first class – and ranked as the world's first fully



air-conditioned passenger ships. The quartet ran 47-day round trips to the Mediterranean – from New York to Barcelona, Marseilles, Naples, Alexandria, Beirut, Iskenderun (Turkey), Latakia (Syria), Beirut, Alexandria, Piraeus, Naples, Genoa, Marseilles, Barcelona and then back to New York.

Although she had a galley fire on an outbound voyage in June 1963 and had to return to New York, the EXCALIBUR endured until 1965. Then she was laid-up at the Todd Shipyard over in Hoboken and offered for sale. Later, she hoisted the Liberian flag for C Y Tung's Orient Overseas Lines and became the ORIENTAL JADE. Now, she shifted to the Pacific, making six-week "cruises" from San Francisco to the Far East. She had reached thirty years of age when she was handed over to ship breakers at Kaohsiung on Taiwan in January 1974.



Down by the bow -- the damaged EXCALIBUR off Gowanus Flats.

(Bill Miller Collection)

### **2020 PONY BRANCH MEMBER CRUISE – QUEEN MARY 2 TRANSATLANTIC CROSSING:**

Join fellow PONY branch members on a thrilling Transatlantic crossing on the QUEEN MARY 2. Details are provided in the flyer included in the January issue of The Porthole. Contact Brad Hatry at Travel Edge for additional information and reservations: [brad.hatry@traveledge.com](mailto:brad.hatry@traveledge.com) or 212-399-6223.

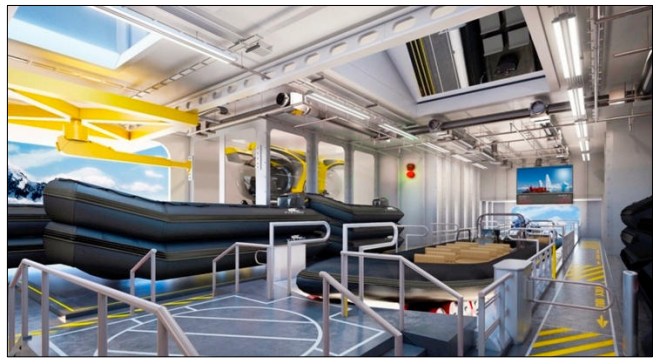
### **SHIP NEWS**

**By Bob Allen**

**CORONAVIRUS DISRUPTS THE CRUISE INDUSTRY:** The lethal Coronavirus, which was first reported in the central Chinese city of Wuhan on December 31, has affected many cruise lines and departures in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, at least one cruise ship has become a breeding ground for the flu-like condition. Princess Cruises' DIAMOND PRINCESS has reported 218 cases on board as of February 12. The 3,600 passengers on the vessel docked in Yokohama, Japan, are quarantined and can only leave their cabins for short, escorted walks on deck; meals are delivered to staterooms. On Saturday, February 15, the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo announced that chartered aircraft would soon begin evacuating the 400 American passengers; other countries are considering the same. The growing list of cancelled or altered Asia cruises include Princess Cruises' SAPPHERE PRINCESS, Royal Caribbean's QUANTUM OF THE SEAS and SPECTRUM OF THE SEAS, Dream Cruises' WORLD DREAM, Norwegian Cruise Line's NORWEGIAN JADE and NORWEGIAN SPIRIT, Celebrity Cruises' MILLENIUM and CONSTELLATION, and CMV's ASTOR. Holland America's WESTERDAM, despite confirmation that there was no Coronavirus onboard, was denied disembarkation in Bangkok, Thailand. She diverted to Cambodia, where arrangements were made to disembark passengers on February 13. QUEEN MARY 2, en route from Dubai to Hong Kong, was diverted to Freemantle, Australia and skipped seven port calls in Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and China. The voyage was part of her 113-day, four-continent winter cruise. The Coronavirus situation remains fluid, as cruise cancellations continue to mount. International media and the Internet are reporting on the effect of the virus outbreak on the cruise industry, including a front-page article appearing in the New York Times on February 13. It was reported that some travel agents are reporting up to a 15 percent decrease in sales since the outbreak began. The major cruise lines have not commented on loss of business, only releasing statements prioritizing the importance of keeping passengers and crew protected from infection. Following a 53% increase in Asia cruise deployments between 2103 and 2017, business in the region could take years to recover. Also, this situation is likely to remind the traveling public of shipboard norovirus outbreaks, tales of unruly passengers, the COSTA CONCORDIA disaster, and other negative stories, which create an unsavory view of the cruise vacation.

**VIKING REVEALS EXPEDITION SHIP DETAILS:** VIKING has announced some intriguing details of its expedition ships VIKING POLARIS and VIKING OCTANTIS, now under construction. In an industry first, Viking has announced that small boats (RIBs) used for exploring remote locations will be stored in a venue called The Hangar at the stern of the vessel, and will roll down a ramp to water level. This will allow passengers to embark and disembark on a stable interior surface, rather than the open ocean. The Aula is a glass enclosed lecture hall overlooking the ship's stern, with sliding doors opening onto the adjacent aft deck. This area – the Finse Terrace – will feature lava rock fire pits surrounded by built-in banquettes for panoramic viewing. Overlooking the bow, the Explorers' Lounge will be a double-level observation area, similar to those on the VIKING STAR Class.





On board the VIKING OCTANTIS and VIKING POLARIS, clockwise from top left: RIBs slide down an 85-foot ramp from the vessel's stern into the ocean; The Hangar will allow passengers to board the RIBs in comfort; The Explorer's Lounge will offer spectacular views over the bow; Finse Terrace, with its recessed fire pits, is seen through double-height glass walls surrounding the Aula lecture venue. (Viking Ocean Cruises)

**VIRGIN DELIVERY:** Virgin Voyages took delivery of its first vessel, the SCARLET LADY, on February 13. The 110,00-ton, 2,770-passenger vessel was built at Fincantieri in Italy, and will debut in Miami in late March. Virgin, a new cruise operator, is very concerned about climate change and its effect on the world's oceans. It has designed its ships to be extremely energy efficient. Any climate change emissions will be offset by the purchase of carbon offsets, making Virgin to be the first cruise line to be carbon-neutral for direct emissions from its first voyage. Virgin Group founder Sir Richard Branson stated: "It's wonderful to welcome Scarlet Lady today. I'm so proud that as we start this exciting journey, we also bring to life Virgin Voyages' commitment to preserving the ocean and the first of many steps towards a net zero carbon future."



Proudly boasting carbon-neutral emissions, Virgin Voyages SCARLET LADY will begin service from Miami in late March. (Virgin Voyages)

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