



Friday, April 29, 2022 –

**LIVE at the National Opera Center, 330 Seventh Avenue  
at 29<sup>th</sup> Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor AND via ZOOM at 6:00 pm**

## **THE CRUISE OF THE BOU EL MOGDAD**

**By Tom Rinaldi**

In Senegal, West Africa, one of the world's most interesting cruise vessels lies hidden in plain sight. Built in 1950 to carry passengers, freight and mail on overnight voyages up and down the Senegal River, the BOU EL MOGDAD today makes weekly trips following more or less the same route she sailed 70 years ago. Based at the old colonial capital of Saint-Louis (now a UNESCO World Heritage City), the BOU winds her way upriver along Senegal's border with Mauritania, stopping at old colonial trading posts where she's been a familiar sight for generations. Nearly scrapped when reliable highways opened parallel to the river in the 1970s, the BOU instead became the subject of a quixotic and unlikely conversion to a luxury cruise vessel. The conversion proved a hit, and despite overwhelming odds the BOU is still sailing today, now back in action following a period of uncertainty during the pandemic. Tom Rinaldi will take us along for one of the BOU's recent voyages on a trip through time well worth the wait.



Tom Rinaldi will present a program about the BOU EL MOGDAD at the April membership meeting.

(Tom Rinaldi)

**NEXT EVENTS:** Membership Meeting at the National Opera Center, New York, NY, and via ZOOM: Friday May 20– The History of the Staten Island Ferry by Pat Salmon

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## MEMBER PHOTO OF THE MONTH



VIKING OCTANTIS arrives on her Maiden Voyage to New York, April 18, 2022.

(Stuart Gewirtzman)

### ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

PLEASE SEND IN YOUR SPRING AND SUMMER CRUISES FOR LISTING IN ARRIVALS & DEPARTURES.

**PREVIEW: FRIDAY, MAY 20 2022, 6:00 PM - LIVE AT THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER,  
NEW YORK, NY AND VIA ZOOM: HISTORY OF THE STATEN ISLAND FERRY**

**By Pat Salmon**

Most people do not realize that ferries have traveled to and from Staten Island since the time of the Lenape. As the island evolved and its transportation system became more elaborate, the ferries that operated also changed. This program features more than 400 years of Staten Island ferry service, including entrepreneurs involved, the ferryboats themselves, and the landings that existed all around this once isolated island.

Patricia M. Salmon retired as Curator of History at the Staten Island Museum in 2012 and has been a Staten Island resident for almost fifty years. Ms. Salmon has authored the books *Realms of History: The Cemeteries of Staten Island*; *The Staten Island Ferry: A History, Murder & Mayhem on Staten Island* and *Staten Island Slayings: Murderers and Mysteries of the Forgotten Borough*.



Pat Salmon will present "The History of the Staten Island Ferry" at the May membership meeting.

(Pat Salmon Collection)



## SHIP'S LOG

SHIP'S LOG will return in The May issue of The Porthole.

### **WSS – PONY BRANCH GOES TO SEA! (... OR AT LEAST TO LONG ISLAND SOUND)**

**By Pat Dacey**

On June 4<sup>th</sup>, the WSS – PONY Branch will be offering its members an exciting excursion to the United States Merchant Marine Museum at Kings Point, located on the grounds of the United States Merchant Marine Academy (see page 4 of this edition). For those who have never been there, here are some details about the museum and grounds. The museum is located on the North Shore of Long Island in an area formerly known as the “Gold Coast” because of the affluence of its residents at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The museum officially opened as a permanent exhibition space in 1979 and is housed in “Elm Point”, the mansion designed by Greville Rickard and built in 1929 for William Slocum Barstow, an associate of Thomas Edison.

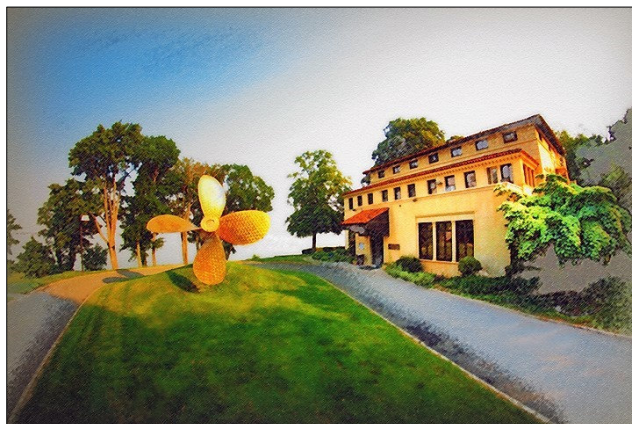
When the museum opened, The New York Times interviewed Frank Braynard, the museum's long-time curator from 1979 until 2003. Frank predicted that it would become one of Long Island's most attractive museums. Inside there are both permanent and temporary collections that trace and honor the history of the US Merchant Marine, the United States Merchant Marine Academy, and the profession of seafaring.

The museum houses many items of interest, including a 15-foot model of the United States Lines WASHINGTON, a replica of the Hales Trophy (the original resided there until it was returned to Britain in 1990), a MacArthur “surrender sword”, an extensive collection of shipboard service china, and a new series of ship models that went on display in 2019.

The museum as well as the campus of the United States Merchant Marine Academy is listed on the NPS National Register of Historic Places. Also found on the campus and the National Register is Wiley Hall, formerly known as “Forker House,” once the summer home of Walter P. Chrysler.

Prior to our museum tour, we will visit the 1938-built coastal tanker MARY WHALEN. It is the current home of PortSide New York, an organization with the goal to connect New Yorkers to the benefits of New York Harbor.

There is an Internet link to the United States Merchant Marine Museum and PortSide New York, embedded within the announcement in case you wish to learn more about these organizations. I hope to see you onboard SEA DART II as we set sail on June 4<sup>th</sup>!



The coastal tanker MARY WHALEN (above, left); the campus of the United States Merchant Marine Academy (above, right); the 15-foot model of United States Lines WASHINGTON (1933) (below, left). (Portside New York, United States Merchant Marine Museum, United States Merchant Marine Museum)

**WORLD SHIP SOCIETY-PORT OF NEW YORK BRANCH  
CRUISE TO THE UNITED STATES MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY,  
TOUR THE MERCHANT MARINE MUSEUM AND VISIT THE MARY WHALEN ON SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 2022**



(S. Gewirtzman Photo)

Come aboard Sea Scout Ship 228's flagship, SEA DART II, a Higgins 1953 T-Boat for a round-trip cruise from Clinton Wharf to the United States Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, NY and a guided tour of the Merchant Marine Academy Museum. A picnic lunch will be served onboard and light refreshments will be available throughout the journey. Please note that SEA DART II is a working boat with traditional ladders and high steps and has limited indoor accommodations so plan accordingly for the weather. You might consider bringing a folding chair, as seating is limited on the exterior deck space.

Prior to the cruise, you will have the opportunity to board the historic oil tanker Mary Whalen and hear a presentation about the history and exciting future of [PortSide New York](http://PortSideNewYork.com).

**Please remember to bring a facemask and proof of vaccination as they are required to go inside the MARY WHALEN and may be required on the grounds of the USMMA.**

**Location and Time:** Clinton Wharf, Atlantic Basin, Red Hook, NY (Next to the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal). Check-in: 10:45 AM. Boarding is tentatively scheduled for 11:30 AM and departure at 11:45 AM. The SEA DART II will return at approximately 5:30 P.M. All guests will disembark no later than 6:00 P.M.

**Fares:** \$50 per member; \$65 per non-member guest (maximum of 1 guest). Guests must be accompanied by a member.

**Deadline and Reservations:** Reservations may be made only by mail. The deadline for reservations (subject to space availability) is May 20th. Be sure to reserve early. Please complete and mail the form below with your check or money order payable to **WORLD SHIP SOCIETY** to: **Patrick Dacey, 25 Woodland Heights Circle, Glen Gardner, NJ 08826**.

Confirmations and any additional instructions/directions will be emailed or mailed on or about May 23rd. Questions? Contact Pat at 732-579-7665 or at [wsspony@gmail.com](mailto:wsspony@gmail.com).

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**SEA DART II – CRUISE AND USMMM TOUR, JUNE 4, 2022**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email address for confirmation \_\_\_\_\_

(Confirmation for those without email will be mailed)

Payment enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Members @ \$50 pp \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Guests @ \$65 pp \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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## **OUR FIRST AND ONLY CRYSTAL CRUISE**

**By Karl Zimmermann**

When last October Ben Lyons, landlocked captain, trolled the CRYSTAL SYMPHONY by some of the usual but still Covid-trepidatious faithful, he hooked only two of us, my wife Laurel and me. The particulars proved irresistible: a November 5 seven-night sailing to Bermuda that would leave from the Manhattan Ship Terminal, just across the Hudson from our New Jersey home and therefore sans airplane.

"I just want to be on a ship, and this is a nice one," Ben had emailed, "and a lot of time at sea!" So there we were, Laurel and I and Ben and his wife Kathryn Harrison, comfortably ensconced in the SYMPHONY's Palm Court, the forward observation lounge, awaiting a six o'clock sailing—just 15 minutes past sunset, during the magical l'heure bleue. We moved to the forward deck outside, where it was cold but dazzling. The Manhattan skyline shimmered, and the southwestern sky was streaked in orange—magnificent, and the last time we'd see the sun until after we'd reached Bermuda.

Laurel and I were Crystal newbies, but we jumped on this heavily discounted, reputedly two-thirds empty sailing as a chance for affordable luxury—and little did we know it would be our last chance for this particular version of it. By the time we added Bermuda's substantial taxes and port fees (\$730) plus insurance, it wasn't dirt cheap, but with no air, free drinks, prepaid gratuities, free internet, and two complementary visits to the upsell restaurants it was a bargain. In fact, it was a challenge to spend our \$250 onboard credit, but Laurel did it with a visit to the Crystal Life Spa & Salon.

We were Covid-tested (shortly before departure, a Bermuda requirement), retested on the pier (a Crystal requirement), and tested yet again en route (another Bermuda edict, with the tests shuttled into Hamilton as a back-haul on the pilot boat). We were all required to wear or carry contact-tracing devices in case someone did test positive. Any Covid on the ship would have blocked shoreside visits for all. These precautions meant that masks were optional for passengers (crew of course were masked); few of us wore them, a wonderfully liberating experience amid the Covid pandemic that wouldn't go away,

Throughout the first day at sea rain came down and wind howled, a bad omen for anyone (e.g. Laurel) for whom the pool and walking the beautiful teak Promenade Deck were central to the week's plans. The deck was roped off and too slippery for us to navigate safely. Ben and Kathryn, intrepid and far more sure-footed than we, logged many laps. There was a lot to do inside over the week, however, and here is a sampling.

White-glove teas in the Palm Court were elegant, with splendid ocean views. But for cocktails, since darkness made views irrelevant, we quickly settled on the woody, clubby Avenue Saloon. There we bonded with an affable steward, a pleasure largely lost to the freedom of open seating dining, in this case in no fewer than five different restaurants. (This seems the time to note that our cabin stewardess was unaccountably truculent, a first for us after many, many sailings.)

For convenience we had most breakfasts and lunches at the Marketplace buffet, always hankering to take our meals out to the adjacent deck aft but being mostly stymied by the weather. For dinners, seven nights were barely enough to exhaust the possibilities. The highlight was a feast at Umi Uma with Japanese cuisine by Nobu Mashahisa (one of the two extra-fee restaurants). Knowledgeable and eager to help, Kathryn took charge of ordering, and plates for sharing, large and small, kept coming and coming, each too tasty to resist. And sake the same.



The CRYSTAL SYMPHONY seen from the deck of the Royal Dockyard – Hamilton Ferry.

(Karl Zimmermann)

Churrascaria, held in the Marketplace space, was reservation-only but offered a variety of tapas followed by the traditional Brazilian march of spear-carrying waiters, each with a different meat to fork off onto our plates. Selections got better and better, ending with filet mignon. Without prior knowledge that the best would be last, we ate it all and again waddled off to bed. Neither the extra-fee Italian Prego nor Waterside, the main dining room, left that much of an impression, but we found the Chinese-flavored Silk Kitchen and Bar worth revisiting for lunch and two dinners.

The “Crystal on Broadway” production show we thought was perhaps the best we’d ever seen at sea, partly because, of the three musicals excerpted, one (“West Side Story”) was among our favorite classics and another (“Something Rotten”) a recent favorite.

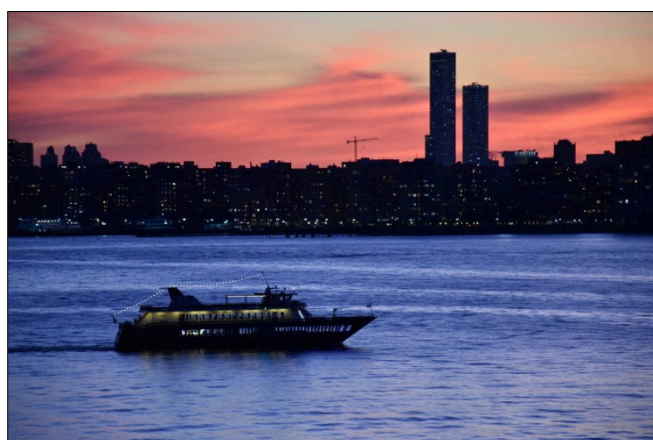
Prior to Bermuda arrival, all passengers were summoned to the theater for Covid tests. Though we docked at King’s Wharf at the Royal Navy Dockyards midafternoon as scheduled after the previous full day at sea, we were locked down on board until the following morning, by which time all tests had been found negative. Fortunately our balcony offered good views of the stone Dockyard structures, handsomely restored for adaptive reuse, and the small harbor.

When the announcement came the next day that our 3:30 p.m. sailing from Bermuda following day had been pushed back to the next morning to avoid rough seas, it probably pleased many—but not us, since we wanted sea-time-to-the-max and were not averse to some weather. When we did sail we didn’t actually get far, as barely two hours from Bermuda we turned tail and steamed back so a seriously ailing passenger could be rushed by tender through the cut into Hamilton. Even with this lengthy procedure and a delayed departure we easily arrived on time in New York.

En route home, a large blurb in “Reflections,” the daily bulletin caught both Ben’s and my eyes. Just announced was a March 26 SYMPHONY transatlantic Miami-Lisbon for just \$1,999 apiece all-inclusive, “including Book Now Savings of \$1000 when booked by November 3.” Oddly, this offer appeared in the November 10 bulletin. Assuming a typo or that the offer had been extended, I hiked it down to the Future Cruise Sales Consultant and was quoted fares in a different stratosphere, so that was that.

On January 25 came an email from Ben: “Aren’t you glad now you didn’t book that Crystal transatlantic?!” I was puzzled at first but a quick Google search told me of Crystal’s demise.

We typically bring home cruise souvenirs—a ship model, a tee or polo shirt—but there was no model and the shirts seemed unnecessarily expensive in the Apropos shop. Instead we chose a boxed set of old-fashioned glasses with Crystal’s facing-seahorses logo—a bargain at \$14.49, half price. At home we put them to immediate use, but after one hand washing the logos began to fade, and after two they were gone entirely. As a former English major and later English teacher I’m alert to symbolism, and when looking back at this vanishing act two months later it seemed too sadly perfect.



A beautiful sunset and shimmering city lights reflecting on the Hudson River highlighted sailing day from New York.

(Karl Zimmermann)



The lovely teak promenade deck (left) and the open aft deck adjacent to The Marketplace (right) was a favorite breakfast and lunch spot, but too often closed by inclement weather.

(Karl Zimmermann)





Elegant entrance – The Atrium and Crystal Cove (left); The Palm Court, with views over the ship's bow (right).

(Karl Zimmermann)



The Avenue Saloon was our favorite watering hole!

(Karl Zimmermann)



The excellent library (left); the delightful Silk Restaurant (right).

(Karl Zimmermann)





Laurel and Ben enjoying mealtime at Silk (left); Covid tests are rushed ashore for processing at Hamilton via pilot boat (right). (Karl Zimmermann)



Two views of the CRYSTAL SYMPHONY docked at King's Wharf in the Royal Dockyard.

(Karl Zimmermann)



Laurel snaps a sunset from our stateroom balcony (left); early morning return to New York (right).

(Karl Zimmermann)



## **SHIPS IN PORT: CARIBBEAN CRUISING ON THE BIANCA C**

**By Bill Miller**

By the late 1950s, the writing was beginning to appear on the wall – the airlines were poised to surpass the Atlantic ocean liner trade. Speed was the new name-of-the-game. The future of passenger ships was, for the most part, in all one-class cruising, mostly to sunny destinations such as Bermuda, the Bahamas, and most of all, the Caribbean. Companies such as Cunard, the French and Italian Lines, and the United States Lines would soon be reckoning not just with change, but great change. But before, small operators, even travel agents themselves, saw opportunities in cruising, if only for part of the year. In 1959, New York City-based Simmons Tours hopped on the cruising wagon and chartered the newly refitted Italian liner BIANCA C for a series of Caribbean itineraries beginning that December. Both Simmons and the BIANCA C were largely unknown, but it all seemed worthwhile and a promising venture in the beginning.

The 17,500-ton BIANCA C was in fact not a newcomer to the Port of New York. Just before, in 1957-58, she'd been visiting as the AROSA Sky, flagship of the Swiss-owned Arosa Line. But then after being bought by Italy's Costa Line (in October 1958), she had a lengthy refit in a Genoa shipyard. Her décor was greatly enhanced and, for example, given a good supply of modern Italian art. All her public rooms looked new and modern. The cabins were enhanced as well and many more were given private bathrooms. And up on the deck, a vast lido was created, dominated by two kidney-bean-shaped pools and a string of colorful umbrellas and cushioned recliners. On the outside, the 594-ft long liner was repainted entirely in tropical white and, on her wide, single stack, a big blue "C" was painted. The Costa Line, it seemed, liked older liners, rebuilding and refitting them, and became something of an expert in ship transformations.

The BIANCA C was not a new ship, however. Her keel was actually laid down in 1939 at a shipyard in La Ciotat in France. But then World War II erupted, France was invaded and construction ceased. The Nazi invaders launched her as the MARECHAL PETAIN in June 1944, but then, in their retreat, deliberately sank her two months later. After the War's end, in 1946, the unfinished hull was raised and towed to Toulon for repairs and then completion. But steel, other goods and especially monies were in short supply in post-war France and so the restoration took three years. She was finally completed, in August 1949, as the LA MARSEILLAISE, flagship as well as fastest and finest liner for Marseilles-based Messageries Maritimes. She was assigned to their colonial run to French Indochina, from Marseilles via Suez to Saigon.

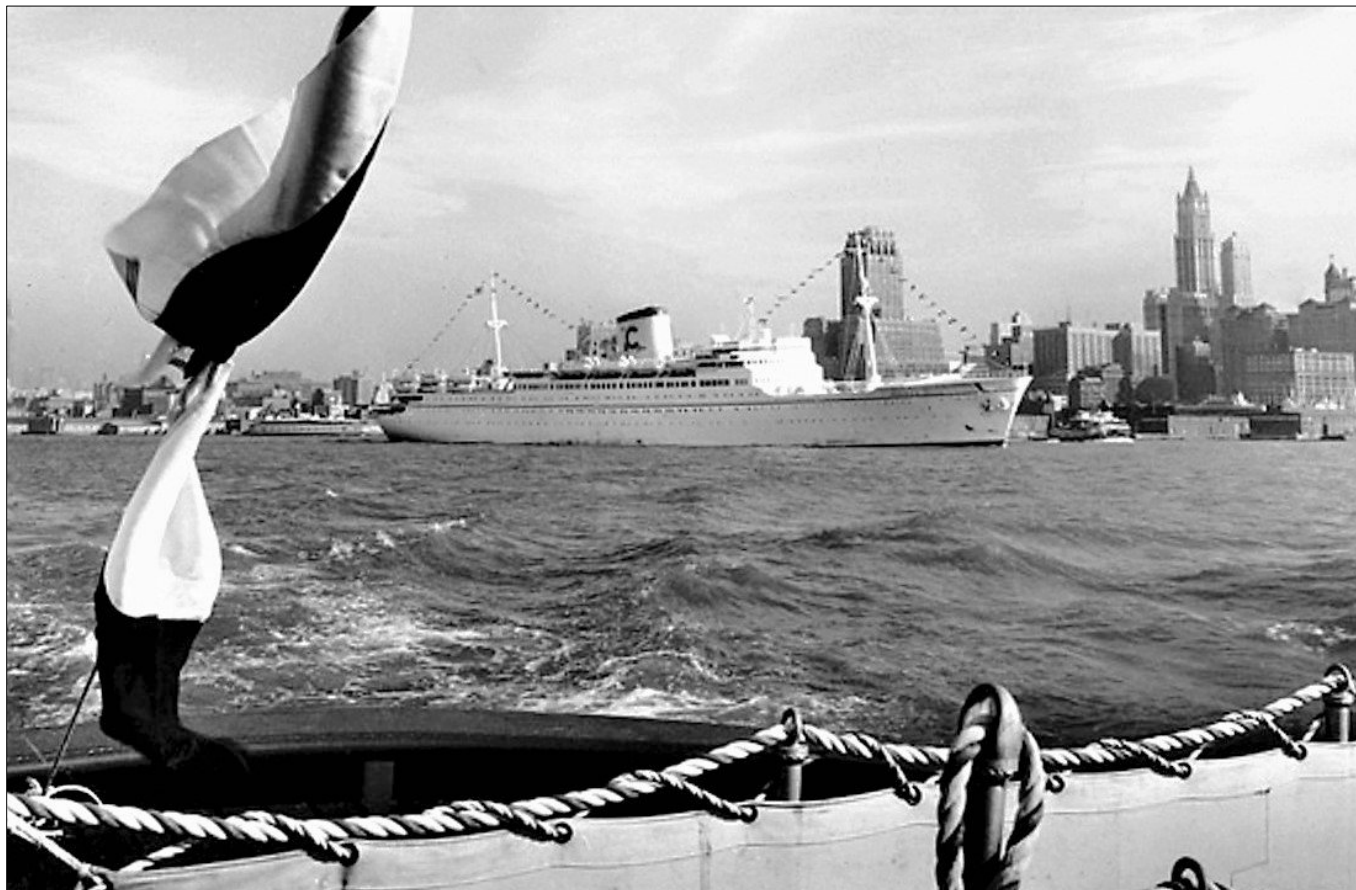
However, that colonial service declined quickly in the 50s and, within eight years, the LA MARSEILLAISE was put up for sale. The Arosa Line bought her for \$6 ½ million and soon she was refitted as the Panamanian-registered Arosa Sky. While her owners were Swiss, she carried a largely German crew and was aimed purposely at the German passenger market. Her new service, begun in May 1957, was from Bremerhaven to New York via Le Havre, Southampton and Halifax (westbound only). Her passenger configuration had been rearranged in trans-Atlantic style: 64 in a small, upper-deck first class and then 834 in tourist class and in 85% of the ship's passenger spaces.

Arosa Line had three other converted passenger ships, but soon found itself over-extended. The best of the fleet, the AROSA SKY, had to go. After only sixteen months of service, she was sold to Costa for \$8 million in October 1958. The Italians wanted her for their Genoa-West Indies-Venezuela service.

The Simmons charter in late 1959 brought the 21-knot ship back to New York, using Moore-McCormack's Pier 32 at the foot of Canal Street. Her Caribbean itineraries were 9-18 days and seemed popular. The charter was not renewed, however, for the 1960-61 winter season. Instead, the BIANCA C was used fulltime in Costa service. It was on one of these voyages to the Caribbean that the liner met her end. She caught fire off Grenada in the British West Indies on October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1961, burned out and then, two days later, sank in deep water.



In her previous life, the BIANCA C visited New York as the AROSA SKY and is seen in this view, dated May 1957 at Pier 88, with French Line's LIBERTE behind.  
(Bill Miller Collection)



The all-white BIANCA C outbound off Lower Manhattan in December 1959.

(Bill Miller Collection)

## SHIP NEWS

By Bob Allen

**MSC LOVES NYC:** SEASCAPE, MSC's next SEASIDE EVO-Class cruise ship, will be christened at the New York City Passenger Terminal on December 7, 2022. This will be the 18<sup>th</sup> MSC christening performed by the ship's godmother, legendary Academy Award-winning actress Sophia Loren, and the first in New York City. Although SEASCAPE will sail directly to her Miami base following the naming, MSC will introduce year-round cruise departures from New York on the MERAVIGLIA in April 2023. While the line has offered sporadic cruises from New York in the past, this will be its first time basing a ship in the city. In related news, MSC's upscale Explora division has announced deployment for its first vessel, EXPLORA 1, due in May 2023. The ship will visit New York during September and October next year.

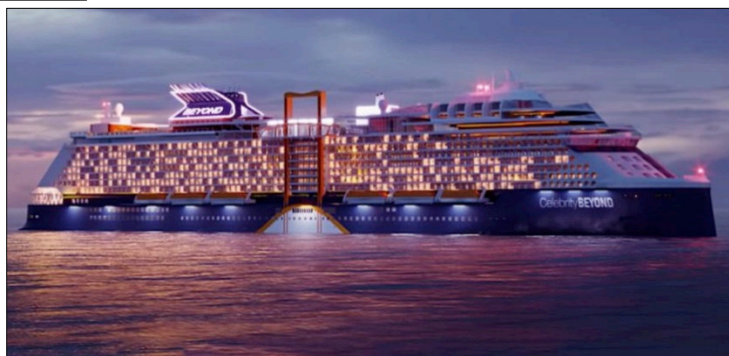
**GOING SOLO ON OCEANIA:** Single travellers will be pleased to learn that globe-trotting Oceania Cruises is adding 14 single occupancy berths on each of its four REGATTA-Class vessels during the fall 2022 season. The line's new VISTA-Class will debut next year with a selection of single cabins as well. Oceania also announced major upgrades of the MARINA (2011) and RIVIERA (2012). This will keep the fleet consistent with the new builds. The REGATTA-Class received a major refurbishment just before the pandemic. According to Oceania, MARINA and RIVIERA's staterooms and suites will have an "even more decadent degree of lavish residential comfort while leaving no surface untouched, no design detail wanting. Lighter, brighter, and even more spacious, every suite and stateroom onboard will glow from a floor-to-ceiling, wall-to-wall re-inspiration." Public areas will also receive much attention, including new carpets, draperies, upholstery and furniture. And more good news for Oceania: its 2024 world cruise, a 180-day voyage on the INSIGNIA, sold out in 30 minutes!

**VIKING LAUNCHES NINE RIVER VESSELS:** Viking River Cruises continues to invest in the burgeoning river cruise market. On March 16, 8 new vessels were christened in Paris, France. Half of these riverboats are purpose-built for service on the Seine and will dock near the Eiffel Tower, while the others will sail the Rhine, Main and Danube Rivers. In addition, VIKING MISSISSIPPI was floated out; she will be the first Viking ship operating in the United States.

**BUILDING BOOM CONTINUES:** With the worst effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic fading fast, cruise lines introduced a remarkable array of new vessels in the first quarter of 2022. Diversity seems to be the key; from a 100-passenger "superyacht" to the largest passenger ship ever built, there's something for everyone in the latest additions to the international cruise fleet. Emerald Cruises introduced the 100-passenger EMERALD AZZURRA, which will be followed by sister EMERALD SAKARA. These are the company's first oceangoing vessels, which have joined a fleet of 9 riverboats. Viking Cruises is a leader in luxury river cruising and has a rapidly growing ocean fleet. It has launched an expedition fleet with the introduction of VIKING OCTANTIS in January, which will be followed by VIKING POLARIS in September. These 378-passenger vessels are rated Polar Class 6, enabling voyages deep into Arctic and Antarctic regions. In the luxury market, Silversea Cruises introduced the SILVER DAWN, third vessel of the MUSE-Class. The 40,700-ton, 596-passenger DAWN set sail in April on her maiden voyage. April also saw the introduction of a new company for the British market, Ambassador Cruises. Ambassador's



management team has connections to the now bankrupt Cruise & Maritime Voyages. The line's first ship, AMBIENCE, was originally Princess Cruises' REGAL PRINCESS (1991), and also sailed for P&O Australia as PACIFIC DAWN. She was to have been purchased by Cruise & Maritime and named AMY JOHNSON after a pioneering 1920's airplane pilot. The refurbished vessel accommodates 1,450 passengers. Royal Caribbean International introduced two new ships in spring 2022. For its upscale, mass-market Celebrity Cruises it introduced CELEBRITY BEYOND, third of the EDGE-Class, which dates from 2018. Accommodating 3,260, she is an enlarged version of the original sisters EDGE and APEX. She will be followed by CELEBRITY ASCENT in 2023 and an unnamed fifth sister in 2025. For mass-market RCCL, the WONDER OF THE SEAS took the title of world's largest passenger ship on her March maiden voyage. The fifth (but not final) unit of the OASIS-Class of 2009, she has a staggering 6,988 maximum passenger capacity; 5,734 can board double-occupancy. Her gross tonnage is 236,857, nearly three times that of the NORMANDIE or QUEEN MARY, the world's largest ships during the heyday of transatlantic liners in the 1930's.



Clockwise from top, left: EMERALD AZZURA; AMBIENCE; CELEBRITY BEYOND; SILVER DAWN; VIKING OCTANTIS; WONDER OF THE SEAS  
(Emerald Cruises; Ambassador Cruises; Celebrity Cruises; Silversea Cruises; Viking Expeditions; Royal Caribbean Cruise Line)

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