



Splendida is well on the way to completion and pictured top right is sister ship Fantasia

Splendid addition

*MSC Splendida, arriving in July, will be the second of two post-Panamaxes in service for MSC Cruises, as **Mary Bond** reports.*

With the arrival of MSC Splendida in July, a sister ship to Fantasia, MSC Cruises will have increased its capacity by over 6,500 lower berths in just seven months.

Dubbed by the line's ceo Pierfrancesco Vago as 'the most beautiful ships in the world,' the pair of STX-built vessels boast some innovative features for the brand including luxury six-star accommodation in the exclusive MSC Yacht Club and eco-friendly technology, both below and above deck, designed to conserve and safeguard the environment.

Designed by Studio de Jurio International and with 27,000sq mtr of public areas spread across 14 decks, Splendida like her sister includes a 1,700 sq mtr Aurea Spa (authentic Balinese) with solarium, a 1,603-seater Theatre (The Strand) spread over three levels



Balinese Aurea Spa covers 1,700sq mtr

and a 99-cabin private Yacht Club complete with butler service, private pool and check-in.

New, and a first for MSC, is a mini bowling alley with two lanes located in the Sports Bar. Designed to cater to families, the facility uses smaller (than the standard heavy bowling) balls and has a laminate floor making it completely accessible to participants across all ages, as they are not required to wear specialist shoes. An interactive video, displays the games and scores on LCD screens.



West and East Mediterranean itineraries begin and end in Genoa

The successful Italian-style shop-lined Piazza area selling ice creams, coffees and cakes also appears on Splendida but this time the design is Neopolitan rather than Fantasia's Ligurian inspired style.

Two new specialty restaurants appear on Splendida – L'Olivo serving a la carte Mediterranean dishes featuring a different country each day with rotating menu and Sante Fe, a Mexican restaurant with show galley.

On the upper decks are found four pools including one with retractable roof, 12 jacuzzis, squash court and special children's area with pool and aquapark.

MSC Splendida will be named in Barcelona on July 12 once again by the line's resident godmother Sophia Loren and will then operate seven day itineraries on an anti-clockwise rotation in the West Med from Genoa with calls in Marseille, Barcelona, Tunis, Malta, Messina, Civitavecchia and back to Genoa. This programme will run until November before Splendida undertakes a winter programme of 11-night cruises from Genoa to the eastern Med with stops in Greece, Israel, Egypt, Tunisia and back to Genoa.

In adding a second purpose-built year-round ship in the Med next winter the Italian operator is able to expand its

offering stretching out into the East Med as well as the more traditional winter cruise routing visiting the Canaries, Madeira and Morocco. This latter itinerary will be operated by Fantasia from January through to March 2010. Starting in March 2010, and through to November, the 333mtr long Splendida will revert back to her weeklong summer itinerary in the West Med. ●

MSC Splendida will be the second of the line's ships to be granted Bureau Veritas' 'Six Golden Pearls' designation, setting standards in the areas of quality, health, safety and environment.

These cover special attention paid during design and building to air, water and waste and, during operation, to environmental, safety and food care.

Sistership MSC Fantasia also achieved BV's highest voluntary notation for environmental protection, CLEANSHIP-AWT. Key aspects include advanced wastewater treatment and the capability to retain all grey and black water for two days' full operation. Additional bilge water capacity is built in to provide full two-day retention for treated bilge water.

The main and auxiliary engines have been certified for NOx emission in accordance with the latest IMO-MARPOL Annex VI requirements. Further, flue gas from shipboard incinerators is controlled and ozone-depleting substances prohibited.

Solid wastes do not need to be discharged at sea due to MSC Fantasia's high incineration capacity, and additional storage facilities for more than two days' full operation for the remaining ashes, glass, tins, cold and wet garbage are built in.

MSC also opted for ISO 22000, the highest standard for a food safety management system. Audits were carried out on the entire cruise fleet and certification was granted last June. As MSC newbuildings are delivered, ISO 22000 is implemented.

Partnership

The future is looking bright at MSC Cruises. 9 brand new ships custom built for our fleet over the last five years and super-cruiser MSC Splendida due for delivery this year. And we build green. Our eco-friendly ships have won countless awards from prestigious international bodies for their successful commitment to safeguarding the environment. Then our new MSC Fantasia has launched the ultimate cruise experience with our luxury MSC Yacht Club exclusive area, the place to enjoy service at its best on board the most modern fleet in the world. Our agents, suppliers and guests know they are partnering the future with MSC Cruises.



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