

Ventura

P&O Cruises' move towards cool



The introduction of the 116,017 gross ton Ventura in April was a big step forward for P&O Cruises, the Carnival Corporation & plc unit that is the market leader in Britain. It was the first post-Panamax vessel for the company, which now has six ships and expects to take delivery of a similar ship in 2010. It also widens the appeal of the P&O Cruises brand, as the new ship is the first purpose built with families and children in mind. And if you are looking for a pub or a club lounge, your search will be in vain: Tradition and history are not part of the Ventura's crisp, contemporary offerings.

By Kari Reinikainen

The naming ceremony of the Ventura on 16 April in Southampton was based on a James Bond movie theme, according to Managing Director Nigel Esdale, who felt that with two

other naming ceremonies in the UK that same month, there was an even greater urgency to come across with something special. "There are lots of ship introductions these days, so we need to do something different that would convey a 21st century feel," he says. Past and gone are

the days when pomp and circumstance set the stage – this is now the realm of Cunard – and so P&O Cruises asked Dame Helen Mirren to perform the ceremony, aided by two

Photo credit: Mike O'Dwyer

HAMBURG...

AN EXCITING CRUISE DESTINATION AND YOUR GATEWAY TO BERLIN!



Hamburg is the most beautiful Metropolis in Northern Germany. We welcome our international guests with an impressive skyline, many historic sites, great architecture, superb shopping in excellent galleries, museums, theatres, musicals and many well known hotels. Hamburg is linked to our new capital Berlin by fast trains and by

the Autobahn. In just 90 minutes you arrive in the lively city of Berlin with breathtaking contemporary architecture and with the unique flair of the old quarters. Also half day tours to the medieval cities of Lübeck, Lüneburg, Buxtehude and Stade are an attractive addition to a Hamburg visit. Hamburg is the ideal cruise destination!



HAMBURG CRUISE CENTER e.V.
Steinstraße 7 · D-20095 Hamburg
Tel. +49(0)40-30051-393
Fax +49(0)40-30051-396
www.hamburgcruisecenter.de

Sovereign of the Seas, Seaward, Seabourn Pride, Star Princess, Seabourn Spirit, Club Med I, Fantasy, Westerdam, Nordic Empress, Crown Princess, Horizon, Silja Serenade, Ecstasy, Regal Princess, Monarch of the Seas, Hanseatic, Silja Symphony, Majesty of the Seas, Dreamward, Zenith, Royal Viking Queen, Club Med II, Crown Jewel, Gruziya, Costa Allegra, Barfleur, Normandie, Windward, Crown Dynasty, Costa Romantica, Kazakhstan Thank you for the confidence! II, American Adventure, Kong Harald, Richard With, Nordlys, Oriana, Legend of the Seas, Century, Splendour of the Seas, Sun Princess, Carnival Destiny, Galaxy, Costa Victoria, Grandeur of the Seas, Nordkapp, Princess, Mercury, Enchantment Rhapsody of the Seas, Dawn of the Seas, Nordnorge, Vision of Princess, R One, R Two, Voyager of R Six, R Seven, R Eight, Norwegian Explorer of the Seas, Aurora, Costa Adventurer of the Seas, Carnival Norwegian Sun, Summit, Brilliance Navigator of the Seas, Island Princess, Crystal Serenity, Mariner of the Seas, Serenade of the Seas, Carnival Miracle, Jewel of the Seas, Pont-Aven, Caribbean Princess, Carnival Valor, Pride of America, Norwegian Jewel, Carnival Liberty, Pride of Hawaii, Freedom of the Seas, Crown Princess, MSC Musica, Norwegian Pearl, Liberty of the Seas, Emerald Princess, MSC Orchestra, Norwegian Gem, Ventura, MSC Poesia, Independence of the Seas, Ruby Princess, MSC Fantasia, Celebrity Solstice, MSC Splendida, Oasis of the Seas, Celebrity Equinox, MSC Magnifica



members of the elite Royal Marines who made sure that the bottle really would break.

"We are very keen to push the P&O brand forward and to evolve the brand. The ceremony was intended to do that too. Consumers do not stand still; they have more access to various experiences, think like food at Marks & Spencer or Waitrose." A cruise holiday is a special occasion for most people, and therefore it should offer something that an ordinary Weekend does not. As a result, P&O Cruises needs to screen trends and developments and try to lead rather than lag in introducing them to its customers.

As the dominant brand in the UK market, the company has a large footprint: Its fleet of six ships ranges from the 1984-built ms Artemis to the post-Panamax ms Ventura and includes both traditional and contemporary ships in terms of the product. The company has profiled its fleet so that the ms Arcadia, the 82,972 gross ton ship introduced in 2005, caters to grown-ups only in a contemporary ambiance. The Artemis of 44,348 gross tons and of 1984 vintage is a small and traditional vessel that also caters to grown ups only. The ms Oriana and the ms Aurora, of 69,153 and 76,152 gross tons respectively, are traditional, elegant vessels that welcome adults and families with children alike.

Finally, the 77,499-gross-ton Oceana is the most casual vessel in the fleet, and it focuses on the family market. However, this ship was built as the ms Ocean Princess in 2000 and transferred to P&O Cruises three years later.

"Elevation" to retain same DNA through the fleet

Esdale acknowledges that this is an exercise that requires special care. "We need to be careful how far we can stretch the brand: The same DNA must run through all experiences - quality, style, cabins, etc." A multi-million pound programme called "Elevation" aims to accomplish this goal with upgrades to both the hardware and

software on board each ship. "You can compare this with baking a cake. You take a sponge base, but the filling can be anything from blueberries to strawberries and apricot. The icing varies as well, but the basis remains the same."

The Ventura has attracted lots of multi-generational holidaymakers, and Esdale points out that it is difficult to imagine any other kind of holiday where this would work as well as on a large ship. "It could be a little bit difficult to agree that today we all go shopping and tomorrow on the beach," he points out. "Ventura is a one-stop shop. It is easy for travel agents to sell; it offers a sophisticated, contemporary 21st century cruise experience," Esdale says.

A ship like the Ventura appeals to a very broad range of passengers: It targets families with children and first-time cruise passengers, but is well suited for those with more experience taking holidays at sea. The average age of the passengers - excluding kids who would obviously drag the figure down significantly - is around 45, compared with about 53 for the whole P&O Cruises' fleet and the cruise industry overall.

David Dingle, CEO of Carnival UK, says that the ship's many new features highlight its focus on a broad range of cruise holiday makers. A bungee trampoline caters to those who like the feeling of an adrenaline rush, while an art gallery that has been created in cooperation with Tate Modern in London reflects the contemporary sophistication of the ship. An association with **Marco Pierre White**, the celebrity chef, raises the standard of the caterings offered onboard the Ventura.



Principal contemporary UK brand

In purely technical terms, the Ventura is an adaptation of the ms Crown Princess platform of Princess Cruises. The only significant external difference between the P&O Cruises' ship and those of its Princess cousins is the Magrodome above the central swimming pool. This has not been fitted on the latest Princess ships. However, when you board the ship, there is very little to remind you of Princess Cruises. Although the layout closely follows that of its cousins, the Ventura's interior has been designed with the British market in mind. The soft, somewhat pale pastel colours that are a trademark of Princess have given way to a stronger palette of yellow, red and black.

The new ship has very little to remind you of the long history of P&O, which dates back to 1837. As **Philip Price**, Head of Brand Marketing says, the company is now developing its own image and moving away from the historical aspect that played a major role in the designs of the Oriana (1995) and the Aurora (2000). Some critics might say that following the formation of Carnival Corp. & plc in 2003, P&O Cruises is now being "Carnivalised."

P&O Cruises is the main contemporary market brand in the Carnival stable in the UK, while Cunard Line, which now derives more passengers from Britain than the U.S., is the principal premium

market brand. It would be difficult to maintain the identities of the two brands separately if they both capitalized on history; rather let Cunard do that and let P&O Cruises steam ahead with a new identity. Besides, for as long as the Aurora and the Oriana in particular remain in service with the company, that history remains prominently in place – and stay they will. David Dingle says that the introduction of a new ship in 2010 is not meant to lead to the phasing out of any of the existing fleet, and that includes the by-then 26-year-old Artemis.

Product moves ahead with dining and entertainment

A walk around the ship introduces a crisp and fresh design that certainly has not forgotten the doers amongst us. A bungee trampoline out on the uppermost deck and well-built gym instructors in their tight t-shirts clearly suggest an eye towards the 21st century. The same goes for the on-board product when it comes to accommodations and dining. The ship has a total of 1,546 passenger cabins, of which 1,101 are outside (71.2% of the total number) and 880 that come with their own balcony (56.9%), while only 445 are inside cabins (equal to 28.7% of the total figure). The inside cabins are about 160 square feet (17 square meters) in size, while the suites at the other end of the range measure 534 square feet.



Ventura is a one-stop shop. It is easy for travel agents to sell; it offers a sophisticated, contemporary 21st century cruise experience.

– Nigel Esdale –

- Uses **LESS** water and power
- Weighs **LESS**
- Takes up **LESS** space
- **LESS** visible
- Costs **LESS**



FLEXIFOG® MICRO - SOMETIMES LESS IS MORE

The new water mist nozzle for accommodation areas

Autronica Fire and Security AS has developed the next generation nozzle for the FlexiFOG® water mist system – a number one solution providing a highly efficient water mist fire suppression system with low weight, easy installation and state-of-the-art design.



A UTC Fire & Security Company

Division Maritime ■ Tel. +47 31 29 55 00 ■ www.autronicafire.com

CRUISE *business* REVIEW

Please visit CBR's website at

www.cruisebusiness.com

for daily updates on the most important developments in the cruise industry

(about 55 square meters). On a double-occupancy basis, the Ventura can accommodate 3,080 passengers, and when all spare beds are taken into use, the figure rises to 3,574. All cabins feature Slumberland Gold Seal pocket-sprung mattresses with Egyptian cotton bedding and duvets.

The introduction of the Ventura marks a significant leap forward for the dining concept of P&O Cruises: The ship has 11 places to eat and is the first of the company's ships to introduce balcony dining, an adaptation from Princess Cruises, which will be rolled out to the remainder of the fleet through the course of the summer. The flagship dining venue is the White Room aft on Sports Deck (number 17). It offers a view over the stern of the ship, while the cuisine delivers Mediterranean flavours at lunchtime and dinner under the tutorship of Marco Pierre White, the Michelin-rated British chef. The adjacent Metropolis night club serves as a bar for pre-dinner drinks.

The Beach House, an informal venue aft on Lido Deck (15) that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner, targets families with children; it has high-backed chairs and cutlery designed for young cruise-goers in particular. The menu was developed in association with Marco Pierre White. Forward from here is The Waterside, a buffet area with seaside chic ambiance, as P&O puts it, with sun-bleached wood and sky-blue coloured décor. East, the Pacific Rim-inspired restaurant aft on the Promenade Deck (7), offers an Asian-fusion menu in an almost minimalist setting of red, black and white. Continuing on an ethnic theme, Ramblas, forward of the Atrium on the same deck, is the ship's tapas-and-wine venue that provides entertainment to the tunes of a Spanish guitar.

Tazzine, on the lowermost deck of the three-story Atrium, doubles as a daytime café and night time cocktail bar. Marco Pierre White has again been in charge of the offerings of this place. Frankie's Grill and Pizzeria by the Laguna pool midships on the Lido Deck provides a casual lunch option. Finally, the ship has three main restaurants, called The Saffron, Bay Tree and Cinnamon respectively. The Bay Tree caters to those who wish to dine at the same time each night, and the other two feature Freedom Dining, whereby you choose the time, venue and company for



East Restaurant

your dinner each evening. In addition, 24-hour room service and balcony dining, with a menu influenced by Marco Pierre White, complete the food-service options.

The principal entertainment venues on the Ventura include Metropolis, a jazz bar overlooking the stern of the ship on Sky Deck (18). It features a 20-meter plasma screen video wall that displays famous cityscapes from around the world – sunset in Paris and views of Las Vegas, New York, Hong Kong, Sydney and London each night. At daytime, major sporting events are screened here.

The 785-seat Arena forward of Promenade and F decks (7 and 6) is the home of the ship's theatrical company. Havana, in brisk black and yellow colours aft on the Promenade Deck, acts as the principal night club of the ship with Cuban-inspired entertainment such as salsa. Daytime, this is the venue for game shows and dance classes. The Tamarind Club, again on the Promenade Deck, has red and gold as its most prominent colours and features huge chandeliers in the shape of Indian parasols. It acts as the comedy club of the ship.

The Red Bar, next forward on the port side of the same deck, is a sophisticated cocktail bar with Marco Pierre White

again in charge of the canapés and cocktails. The Exchange, forward of the Atrium on F Deck (6) is an urban-design warehouse bar, where sporting events and music videos are displayed on plasma screens. A casino, called Fortunes, is located on the starboard side of the bar: It is small when compared to ships catering to the American market in recognition of the fact that British passengers are not great gamblers. The increasing use of outer decks at night time is a trend in cruising that has found its way onto the Ventura as well: The ship's theatrical company stages a sound-and-light performance out on deck on some nights. Additionally, a huge plasma screen has been outfitted on the aft wall of the Laguna Pool.

Attention to youngsters

The Ventura features five different areas for youngsters. Children under two have a play area specifically for them, under parental supervision, for the first time on a P&O Cruises' ship. The Reef, an area catering to all youngsters with its own Reef Rangers, is based on an ocean theme. Two- to four-year-olds have their own games area called Splashers, while five- to eight-year-olds will "be able to act out their radical side as Surfers." Those age nine to 12 will be Scubas and the 13 to 17 generation that P&O Cruises refers to as "uber cools" trade as H2O. "Edutainment"





BayTree Restaurant

in the form of film shows to drama workshops, arts and crafts, sports sessions and dancing are aimed to keep the rising generations entertained. Noddy, a favourite character of kids, will bop up at events tailored to two- to four-year-olds, while a rock school promises to offer a day of fame to teenagers - plus the opportunity to play various instruments. Cirque Ventura brings the world of circus to the ship, and this targets those young at heart as well as youngsters themselves. A Scalextric miniature-car racing track in Grand Prix F1 style completes the offerings for youngsters.

While it is obvious that a ship targeting families will be in demand during school holidays, Carnival UK's Dingle points out that kids of pre-school age and their parents are a significant customer group outside those holiday periods. As a whole, the Ventura is aimed at a younger age group in general than other ships in the fleet. Esdale adds that the introduction of the new ship has not cannibalized sales for cruises on the company's other vessels, despite coming at a time when the general economic outlook is less encouraging than in the recent past. Besides, a cruise

holiday fare includes many items that are not usually included in the cost of most other types of vacation, so that cruising has a value-for-money aspect as well.

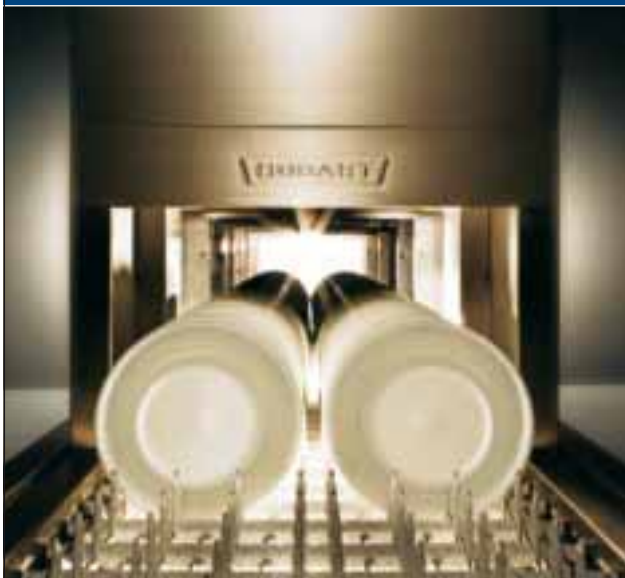
Designer's brief: "Make cruising cool"

Nick Munro, the British designer in charge of coordinating the architectural aspects on the Ventura, describes his job as "Magic Mountain." He had never taken a cruise before and learned that P&O Cruises actually wanted to give the job to somebody with no previous cruise-industry experience, "The scale of it was the most exciting detail. Price had a very short brief - to make cruising cool." The task was a learning experience, Munro says, adding that although "it had its moments," he would do it again.

The second ship of the Ventura class will be delivered in two years, which means there is time to evaluate the performance of the Ventura before decisions are made regarding the offerings of that vessel, Esdale points out. "Ventura is now on its fifth cruise, and we are now building a picture how the ship performs." Issues that are under consideration at this time include whether the second ship should also feature Cirque Ventura or if something else should take its place, or if Metropolis should become a signature item of the P&O Cruises brand or not. ■

HOBART

www.hobartglobalmarine.com



PREMAX – THE AWARD-WINNING TECHNOLOGY

Our new technologies and innovations will define - and even revolutionize - the market of the future.

HOBART offers the most efficient use of energy, water and floor space in the industry.

Winner of the FCSI European Award and Seatrade Insider Cruise Award.

Today, 4 out of 5 cruise vessels in operation rely on HOBART warewash equipment.

Decide for the future. Decide for HOBART.

WAREWASHING

WASTE TREATMENT

COOKING

FOOD PREPARATION

SERVICE