

CASTING OFF



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*The evolution from
steamship transportation
to cruising as a vacation*

Talk about extraordinary shipbuilders! First there was Noah. Noah built the ark because he had been told by God to get all of the animals out of harm's way. Next there was Samuel Cunard. He had been told by the British Post Office that they needed a safe, reliable, regularly scheduled liner to carry mail across the Atlantic. So in 1840 Cunard inaugurated regular mail and passenger service when he formed the British and North American Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, which later took its founder's name and became the Cunard Line. Cunard was mainly interested in building ships that were safe, fast, and reliable. Comfort was important, but only after the first three conditions had been satisfied. Sailing ships that crossed the Atlantic and even the new steam-assisted ships did not meet these conditions. Cunard wanted to offer something new: ships that left and arrived at scheduled times. He did not want ships that were subject to the vagaries of wind and weather, or ships that would run aground. In 1840 and 1841, Cunard commissioned four small steamers, all of which were designed to carry the Royal Mail—and, of course, 115 passengers, for revenue purposes. *Speed* and *safety* were the company's two watchwords. But the company did its best to take care of its passengers as well, although it did not always succeed. The novelist Charles Dickens had been invited to give lectures in America and was a passenger, one of eighty-six, on the first of those ships, the *Britannia*, which sailed on 3 January 1842 from Liverpool for Halifax. Dickens wrote about his experience in *American Notes*. For the most part, he was disappointed. First of all, he hated his cabin, which was nowhere near like the painting he had been shown in the ticket agent's office. In fact, at first he believed the cabin being shown to him was a joke and that his real cabin would be presented to him later by the Captain. It was no joke, as Dickens described the stateroom allotted to him and his wife: "[N]othing smaller for sleeping in was ever made except

coffins,” he wrote. Nor was the food what a modern Cunard passenger might expect:

At one a bell rings, and the stewardess comes down with a steaming dish of baked potatoes and another of roasted apples, and plates of pig’s face, cold ham, salt beef; or perhaps a smoking mess of rare hot collops. We fall-to upon these dainties; eat as much as we can (we have great appetites now); and are as long as possible about it. If the fire will burn (it *will* sometimes) we are pretty cheerful. If it won’t, we all remark to each other that it’s very cold, rub our hands, cover ourselves with coats and cloaks, and lie down again to doze, talk and read (provided as aforesaid), until dinner time.

At five another bell rings, and the stewardess reappears with another dish of potatoes—broiled this time—and a store of hot meat of various kinds; not forgetting the roast pig, to be taken medicinally. We sit down at the table again (rather more cheerfully than before); prolong the meal with a rather mouldy dessert of apples and grapes and oranges, and drink our wine and brandy-and-water.¹

We should remember that Dickens’s trip in 1842 was not really a cruise at all; it was a destination voyage to get from one place to another. The ship was only a means of transportation; in fact, it was the best and *only* means of transportation available at that time. Cruises, which are taken for pleasure, are a different thing altogether.



The First Cruise

It isn’t easy to state authoritatively when the first real cruise set sail, or, for that matter, where it went. While almost everyone agrees that the first travel agent was Thomas Cook, who organized his first Grand Tour of Europe in 1856, historians disagree as to who organized the first cruise. There’s little doubt, however, that it happened in the mid-nineteenth century, when traveling to distant places was becoming safer and more fashionable.

We support Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Company’s claim that it invented cruising. The line, popularly known as P&O, ran ships from Britain to Spain and Portugal on the Iberian Peninsula and to Malay and China in the early 1800s.

¹Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896).

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William Makepeace Thackeray traveled to Malta, Greece, Constantinople, the Holy Land, and Egypt in 1844, utilizing a series of P&O ship connections. He told of his “delightful Mediterranean cruise” in an elegantly written book titled *Diary of a Voyage from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*, which he published under the nom de plume Michael Angelo Titmarah.

Clearly, Thackeray (not unlike most travel writers today) wanted to reward his host's hospitality, but it was not easy to do considering that everyone aboard got seasick crossing the Bay of Biscay, and again going from Gibraltar to Malta. However,

at last the indescribable moans and noises which had been issuing from behind the fine painted doors on each side of the cabin happily ceased. Long before sunrise I had the good fortune to discover that it was no longer necessary to maintain the horizontal posture, and, the very instant this truth was apparent, came on deck, at two o'clock in the morning, to see a noble full moon sinking westward, and millions of the most brilliant stars shining overhead. The ship went rolling over a heavy, sweltering, calm sea. The breeze was a warm and soft one; quite different to the rigid air we had left behind us, off the Isle of Wight.

That was the good part. Thackeray was a bit of a snob, and while he liked the cruise, he didn't enjoy many of the sights on shore. In Athens, he complained about the prices, the bugs, and the lack of pretty women. In Constantinople, he complained that he didn't get to see the dancing dervishes or Saint Sofia or the harem or any of the royal palaces or mosques because it was the month of Ramadan and everything was closed. And in Egypt, he climbed a pyramid but condemned “the swarms of howling beggars, who jostle you about the actual place. And scream in your ears incessantly, and hang on your skirts, and bawl for money.” At the end, however, he granted that he had a good time. “So easy, so charming, and I think profitable—it leaves such a store of pleasant recollections—that I can't think but recommend all persons who have the time and means to make a similar journey.” P&O stopped cruising during the Crimean War but by the 1880s, after the *British Medical Journal* recommended sea voyages as curatives, resumed them and in fact converted one of their ships, the SS *Ceylon*, to a cruising yacht that sailed around the world.²

²For more about the history of P&O and her role in steamship travel, we recommend David Howarth and Stephen Howarth, *The Story of P&O* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 1986).

The first American-originated cruise was probably the 1867 voyage of the paddle-wheel steamer *Quaker City* from New York. Its organizer, an entrepreneur named Charles C. Duncan, advertised this cruise as an “Excursion to the Holy Land, Egypt, the Crimea, Greece, and Intermediate Points of Interest.” We know a good deal about this cruise because the advertisement caught the attention of Mark Twain, who promptly sent in his application, references, and a deposit of 10 percent to join the trip along with 150 “select companions” who would sail from New York and return six months later. The idea that one could visit a number of places in relative ease and safety appealed to Twain, as did the fact that 1867 was the year of the Paris Exposition. He anticipated that this cruise would be a “picnic on a gigantic scale,” and wrote:

They were to sail for months over the breezy Atlantic and sunny Mediterranean; they were to scamper about the decks by day, filling the ship with shouts and laughter—or read novels and poetry in the shade of the smoke-stacks, or watch for the jelly-fish and the nautilus over the side, and the shark, the whale, and other strange monsters of the deep; and at night they were to dance in the open air, on the upper deck, in the midst of a ball-room that stretched from horizon to horizon, and was domed by the bending heavens and lighted by no meaner lamps than the stars and the magnificent moon—dance and promenade, and smoke, and sing, and make love, and search the skies for constellations that never associate with the Big Dipper they were so tired of; and they were to see the ships of twenty navies—the customs and costumes of twenty curious peoples—hold friendly converse with kings and princes, Grand Moguls, and the anointed lords of mighty empires.³

The trip did not turn out as advertised. The *Quaker City* had no sooner cast off and sailed when it encountered a storm which forced it to anchor for two nights in the foot of New York harbor! Twain was proud that he did not get immediately seasick in the heavy weather. “We all like to see people seasick, when we are not, ourselves,” he observed. After the *Quaker City* finally left the harbor, the seas eventually calmed and a more normal pattern of activities emerged. Every evening after dinner, for example, guests would promenade the deck, sing hymns, say prayers, and listen to organ music in the grand saloon or read and write in their

³Samuel Clemens, *Innocents Abroad* (New York: Harper and Row, 1869).

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journals (low-cost entertainment by today's standards). Sometimes they did hold dances on the upper deck to the music of a melodeon, a clarinet, and an accordion, which Twain did not particularly like. "However," he wrote, "the dancing was infinitely worse than the music. When the ship rolled to starboard the whole platoon of dancers came charging down to starboard with it, and brought up in mass at the rail; and when it rolled to port, they went floundering down to port with the same unanimity of sentiment. The Virginia reel as performed on board the *Quaker City* had more genuine reel about it than any reel I ever saw before." Other forms of entertainment consisted of a mock trial where the purser was accused of stealing an overcoat from a passenger's stateroom and other passengers were appointed to serve as judges, lawyers, witnesses, and the jury. The group visited, among other countries, Morocco, France, Italy, the Greek Islands, and Turkey, where they took a shore excursion to Ephesus and had their pictures taken there, just as modern tourists do today. Then they continued to Jerusalem and Egypt, finally returning to New York six months later.

Twain had mixed feelings about the cruise upon his return. He found the passengers too somber and too old for his taste, with three-fourths of them being between forty and seventy years old, and no young girls, which at that stage of his life was a distinct disappointment. Twain described this historic voyage in his book *Innocents Abroad*, written a year later from his home in San Francisco. His view had become somewhat more positive. "If the *Quaker City* were weighing her anchor to sail away on the very same cruise again, nothing could gratify me more than to be a passenger," he remarked. He particularly liked that he did not have to pack and unpack at every new city and that he could choose friends he had made on board to accompany him on excursions and not be dependent on strangers for companionship. Clearly, while cruises have become a good deal more comfortable and entertaining since those early days, some of the main attractions they offer have stayed the same.

The current popularity of cruise travel can probably still be traced to those original ideas articulated by Twain—that cruise travel is relatively hassle-free because you pack and unpack once, it's safe, and you can make new friends. Twain's notion of cruising as a grand picnic suggests the nonstop diverse festivities—dining, dancing, activities, entertainment, etc.—that characterize today's cruises.

But it would take another century and a whole new technology for that picture to take hold. In 1977, when the *Love Boat* television series was launched and broadcast all over the world, there is little doubt that it increased public awareness of cruising as a romantic and relaxing vacation. The thought of chucking it all and escaping the work-a-day world by going to sea is a fantasy that most of us have entertained at one time or another. Thus, it's no surprise that one of Carnival's most popular ships is

called the *Carnival Legend*, while Royal Caribbean invokes these deep-seated stirrings with the *Freedom of the Seas*. Noel Coward's song "Sail Away" expresses an almost universal sentiment:

When the storm clouds are reigning in the winter sky, sail away.

When the love light is fading in your sweetheart's eyes, sail away.

When you feel your song is orchestrated wrong, why should you prolong your stay? Sail away.⁴

Of course, there were and still are other reasons for sailing away. In August 1896, the Boston *Evening News* included this article, which was copied from a display of marine history on the *Queen Mary 2*:

A few days ago the wife of a well-to-do publican named Beldham, eloped with a cattle salesman named John Archer. . . . Mrs. Beldham appropriated a considerable amount of money belonging to her husband, and also took away the whole of her wardrobe.



The Growth of Transatlantic Travel

From the time of the *Quaker City* until the late 1950s, far more people crossed the Atlantic because they had to rather than for pleasure. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ocean traffic was dominated by immigrant traffic between Europe and America and Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. But this era of immigration contributed nothing to the romance of the sea. Immigrants were not tourists, shipboard conditions were miserable for them, and a long ocean voyage with no intermediate ports of call was something to be endured, not enjoyed. People regarded the ship purely as a means of transportation, carrying them away from political, economic, or social repression to new lands of opportunity.

As commerce between Europe and North America developed in the 1900s, increasing numbers of people took transatlantic voyages. While the elite traveled in the grand style in first-class accommodations on luxurious ocean liners, others did not. Their second- and third-class accommodations were spartan at best: four berths, six berths, and dormitory-style accommodations with crowded public toilet and bath facilities. The rough seas of the North Atlantic, particularly in the winter, combined

⁴Noel Coward, "Sail Away," Bonard Productions, 1962.

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with top-heavy vessels subject to pitching and rolling, caused many to fear or experience severe seasickness. (Remember, this was before modern hull designs and stabilizers.) For those travelers, the voyage lived up to their worst fears, and they hated every minute of it. The stories of both groups contribute to the legend of ocean travel today. On one hand, we have the reality that a modern cruise embraces food, service, activities, entertainment, and ambience on a grand scale, and on the other, the false perception that ocean travel is by definition an uncomfortable experience (the old reality of steamship transportation).

Even the earliest promoters realized that a major factor in popularizing ocean travel was the ocean itself. Because of their fears of the unknown, many people were happy to forget that they were at sea. Ships were therefore designed to nurture the illusion that one was *not* at sea and to shield passengers as much as possible from even being aware of the extremes in weather they might encounter. English architect Arthur Davis, who started designing the great Cunard liners in 1907, put it this way:

The people who use these ships are not pirates, they do not dance hornpipes; they are mostly seasick American ladies, and the one thing they want to forget when they are on the vessel is that they are on a ship at all. . . . If we could get ships to look inside like ships, and get people to enjoy the sea it would be a very good thing; but all we can do as things are is to give them gigantic floating hotels.⁵

This illusion of being in a gigantic floating hotel was, of course, created only for those who were able to afford it, and so it was the glamorous experience of first-class steamship travel that was responsible for the legend of cruising as one of the most luxurious of all vacation experiences.

But look at how modern tastes and new technology have changed things. Today, everyone wants to be as close to the ocean as possible. Thus, modern ships are built with as many balcony cabins and ocean-view cabins as possible, as well as large window areas (to the sea) in public rooms.



The Race for Market Share

By 1897, the German empire was looking with an envious eye at British outposts worldwide. The Germans pursued an expansionist strategy, launching a maritime fleet that would beat the British on all fronts. From

⁵John Maxtone-Graham, *The Only Way To Cross* (New York: Collier, 1972), 112–113.

1897 to 1907, they were on a roll. By 1903, Germany had the four fastest ships on the Atlantic. The new German ships were small by today's standards—they averaged only 15,000 to 20,000 gross tons—compared to today's 100,000 plus tons but they could achieve a speed of 23 knots. Typically, they held around 2,000 passengers, of whom 700 were traveling first class. Despite the best efforts of their designers, however, these vessels were not comfortable. Hamburg-Amerika's *Deutschland* and *Crown Prince William* rolled a good deal because they were built to ride high out of water. As a result, all of the furniture had to be bolted down to keep it in place during inclement weather. But speed was what counted, and in 1900 the *Deutschland* won the Blue Ribband, a prestigious award recognizing its accomplishment as the fastest ship to cross the Atlantic. Not surprisingly, it took a good deal of machinery to propel this vessel at 23 knots. Much of the interior space was taken up by engines and coal bunkers. In fact, only three decks were completely open to the public, and there were just eight cabins with private baths. (*Deutschland* did offer dining tables for two, which was a break from the English tradition of putting everyone at rows of long communal tables.) Moreover, the ship's design, with three large funnels rising from the engine room to the top, made it impossible to incorporate any grand salons except between the funnels, which limited their size.



The Excursion Voyage: The Precursor to Cruising

While most steamship lines of the time were focusing on the highly competitive North Atlantic run, some took their older ships, which were no longer suitable for this service, refurbished them, and sent them on one-of-a-kind excursions. North German Lloyd, Hamburg-Amerika, and Royal Mail were the first lines to initiate this practice toward the end of the nineteenth century. These excursions were clearly a forerunner of modern-day cruising. While still simultaneously going from point A to point B (like their North Atlantic brethren), rather than offering the convenience of round trip, the customer appeal was a touring vacation experience rather than just transportation. Other early forays into cruising included Hamburg-Amerika's initiative of temporarily converting two three-class liners to a one-class cruise service. These ships, the *Cleveland* and the *Cincinnati*, would do extended cruises each winter, including one 125-day world cruise each year. The world cruises were so successful that in 1914 the company began advertising two simultaneous world cruises from New York, one leaving 16 January and the other leaving 31 January 1915. Because of the subsequent outbreak of World War I, however, German passenger ships were banned from the seas, so the cruises never

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got off the ground. Cunard, Canadian Pacific, and Red Star Line also offered world cruises each winter in response to a fall-off in seasonal demand.

Until now, the only cruise or excursion activities available were offered by old ships or during the winter season by transatlantic liners. Those on older ships represented attempts to develop some meager revenue for outdated vessels. These were secondary revenue sources for the lines involved—in theory, it was a better alternative than laying up the vessels. One of the first significant, year-round business commitments to the cruising concept was the conversion of the *Deutschland* to the *Victoria Louise* in 1912. The Hamburg-Amerika Line invested significant sums to remove half its engines, install much more spacious public rooms, and paint the hull white—a first in those days. White was chosen because it better reflects the heat (keeping the ship cooler), as it was destined now to sail in the sunny Caribbean rather than the colder climates of the North Atlantic. White vessels are still favored today because of white's superior heat-reflecting qualities and its fundamental attractiveness. After all, what is more alluring than a sparkling white ship on an azure sea?



The Pacific Gets Into the Act

On the other side of the world, liner operations in the Pacific also contributed to the excursion/early cruise phenomenon. Canadian Pacific had three express liners, the *Empresses of Japan*, *China*, and *India*, constructed in Britain to sail between Vancouver and China. Because it had to position the ships in the Pacific Ocean, the line organized round-the-world excursions in connection with each ship delivery. These excursions began in Britain, transited the Suez Canal to India and China, and then finally went on to Vancouver. There, the passengers disembarked and boarded a Canadian Pacific train across Canada to Montreal, where they embarked on yet another Canadian Pacific vessel for the return leg home. These voyages were offered to provide a revenue stream to offset the positioning cost. Positioning cruises continue to be a common practice today; they are rarely profitable to the lines but still help defray costs. They generally offer terrific consumer value, as the lines price these one-of-a-kind cruises very attractively, as they don't wish to spend significant marketing dollars on them.

Moreover, the Pacific operation of the P&O Line, because its unique weather and seasonal demand pattern, created the need for seasonal cruise and excursion activities to utilize ships during periods of slow demand.



Meanwhile...

Back in the North Atlantic, the British were not about to lose their superiority to the Germans. To regain it, they commissioned two new ships, the *Lusitania* and the *Mauretania* (at the time, Cunard liked to name its ships after Roman provinces). These were to be a new generation of express liners. Because each was to be over 30,000 tons, there was space to do something with the interiors besides house machinery to propel the ship. More space meant more elegance. It also meant more money. But British maritime pride was suffering, and the country was militarily vulnerable. Given the times and rising German militarism, the British government saw the need for armed merchant cruisers and troop ships in the event of war. Cunard offered to build these two new steamers to Royal Navy specifications, incorporating a speed of 24½ knots, a double hull, and strong decks on which to mount guns if needed. An important innovation on the *Mauretania* was a propulsion system that had been used experimentally on a few smaller ships, including one Cunard ship, the *Carmania*. This was a steam turbine invented by Charles Parsons. The Parsons steam turbine was not only much more efficient than the conventional steam engine but also had much less vibration and was quieter as well. When launched in 1906 into the Tyne River, the *Mauretania* showed an amazing maximum speed of 26 knots. Britain was now able to regain her lost crown, and the *Mauretania* held the Blue Ribband for the Atlantic speed record for twenty-two years, until 1929. The exterior design of four evenly spaced funnels in a row was unique as well—the Germans used two pairs side by side. The new design gave the British ships a more streamlined look. An interesting side note: There was a perception among both passengers and observers that the more funnels the better. Funnels were equated with power and speed, and they looked good! In later years, when only three funnels were needed to vent more efficient power plants, some ships continued to use a fourth as a dummy because designers felt it added to the vessel's overall favorable impression.

The *Mauretania* also had another important design innovation whose effect on cruise ships continues today. Up until the *Mauretania*, the stern or rear of the vessel had been considered the premium space for all living accommodations. But given her four propellers and giant steam turbine engines, *Mauretania*'s midship area was quieter and had less vibration than the stern. Thus, the best cabins as well as the major public rooms were moved to the middle of the ship. Even with this spacious layout, however, Cunard did not forget the basic principle that had guided it since Samuel Cunard started a speedy transatlantic mail service: Speed always took precedence over comfort. Indeed, speed sold more tickets than comfort back then, as people didn't want to be at sea

any longer than they could help it. So, while luxury had been given a higher priority, passengers were still forced to share tables and public space was sparse. Moreover, the four funnels spaced along the length of the ship and running from top to bottom meant there could be no large, grandiose public rooms. Clearly there was still room for improvement, and that opened the door for Cunard's biggest British competitor, the White Star Line.

White Star's strategy was to build even bigger and safer ships that offered a quieter and more stable ride than ever before possible but were somewhat slower than the *Mauretania* and two other new Cunard liners, the *Lusitania* and the *Aquitania*. The new White Star vessels would not shake you up or roll in normal seas, and passengers could truly forget (except in times of nasty weather) that they were at sea instead of at their country home in Oxford or Bath. White Star decided to build three new ships—over 40,000 tons each—quieter, more stable, and more luxurious than anything that had ever sailed the transatlantic route before. It was a bold scheme and an expensive one, as no facilities to build a ship that size existed, nor were there any piers on either side of the Atlantic big enough to hold them. The ships were to be named the *Olympic*, the *Titanic*, and the *Britannic*. These ships were to be veritable floating palaces with a noble and majestic profile and a good deal of open deck space (the nautical equivalent of palatial gardens). Both requirements were feasible only because safety regulations at the time called for only enough lifeboats to carry half the number of people aboard. More than that might have caused unsightly lines or occupied valuable deck space much more suitable for strolling around on a pleasant day to take in the sea air.

Although these ships were less than 100 feet longer and 4 feet wider than the *Mauretania*, they appeared to be much larger. This was accomplished by purposely designing a ship that would not break speed records. The company thereby freed itself of all kinds of constraints, such as weight and power. Public space and cabin size could be expanded dramatically. If you were one of the lucky 700 first-class passengers, there was always room for everything—whether a private corner to share a brandy or an intimate table for two in the opulent dining room or Ritz restaurant. Indeed, a table for two was an innovative and prized amenity. These dining rooms were the largest afloat and the first to offer small private dining alcoves. The ships also boasted the largest athletic facilities afloat—electric bodybuilding equipment, a squash court with a spectators' gallery, and an indoor pool and sauna. The maiden voyage in 1911 of the first ship of the trio, the *Olympic*, was a roaring success. She was hailed as an unprecedented event in maritime history. The dawn of a new era of sea travel had emerged.

By the time *Olympia's* sister ship, the *Titanic*, was ready to sail on her maiden voyage the following year, the word was out and the rich and famous were lining up to be part of the inaugural celebration. Benjamin Guggenheim was aboard, as was John Jacob Astor. They were accompanied by Bruce Ismay, White Star's managing director. One writer called the event "the millionaire's special." The *Titanic* sailed from Southampton on 10 April 1912 with 2,228 passengers and crew. Only 705 passengers survived the voyage after the ship struck an iceberg the night of 15 April and sank—the saddest day in the history of passenger shipping. At the White Star offices on Canute Road, London, a sign was posted that said it all: "*Titanic* foundered about 2:30 AM April 15th." A woman who survived the tragedy later wrote about that Sunday evening in her diary:

We dined the last night in the Ritz Restaurant. It was the last word in luxury. The tables were gay with pink roses and white daisies, the women in their beautiful shimmering gowns of satin and silk, the men immaculate and well groomed, the stringed orchestra playing music from Puccini and Tchaikovsky. The food was superb—caviar, lobster, quail from Egypt, plover's eggs, and hothouse grapes and fresh peaches. The night was cold and clear, the sea like glass. But in a few short hours every man in the room was dead except J. Bruce Ismay, Gordon Duff, and a Mr. Carter.

The unthinkable had happened. The unsinkable *Titanic* had sunk; the public and the media looked for a scapegoat. They found one in Ismay, who did not go down with his own ship—unlike Captain Edward Smith, who worked for him. Writing in the *Chicago Record-Herald*, Ben Hecht composed these lines:

To hold your place in the ghastly face
Of death on the sea of night
Is a seaman's job, but to flee with the mob
Is an owner's noble right.⁶

In retrospect, the *Titanic* accident should not have happened, and if anyone was to blame it was Captain Smith. In the true Cunard sprit of running on schedule like their early mail boats, Smith decided not to slow down even when he was advised that icebergs were in the area. This

⁶Ibid., 76.

breach of good seamanship and common sense caused the loss of more than 1,500 lives—most of them second-class passengers and immigrants who were kept below, while the first-class women and children filled most of the seats on the few lifeboats provided. After the *Titanic* disaster, a number of changes affecting passenger safety were instituted, including the shifting of the transatlantic routes to a more southerly course, the raising of watertight bulkhead levels, and the addition of more lifeboats.

Meanwhile, in Potsdam, Kaiser Wilhelm II, a grandson of Queen Victoria, was not at all pleased with the idea of Germany losing the superiority of the seas it had won with the *Deutschland* in 1903. He understood that having the fastest or largest navy was not enough. Passenger ships were an important part of the equation that gave the British their sea power and prestige. Hamburg-Amerika's management, as frustrated as their emperor, realized that to compete, Germany needed passenger ships that were bigger, more luxurious, and, in view of the *Titanic* disaster, safer than anything the British had afloat. It seemed logical to engage the services of a top British hotel architect, and they found him in the person of Charles Mewes. Working with famed hotelier César Ritz, Mewes had designed the famous Paris Ritz Hotel on the Place Vendôme and then the Ritz in London. He had also collaborated with Ritz on an earlier German ship, the *Amerika*. If people crossing the Atlantic wanted to travel on a world-class floating luxurious hotel, Hamburg-Amerika, with the backing of Kaiser Wilhelm, would give it to them, and recapture the prestige of the seas for Germany.

The first of these new ships, *Imperator*, was completed in late 1912. Because of the *Titanic* disaster, the builders had implemented additional safety regulations, including more secure watertight measures and more lifeboats. Another piece of new technology, a stabilizing system using water ballast tanks, was also installed to make the ship less susceptible to rolling. This huge ship, the largest yet built, carried a maximum of 4,000 passengers and an 1,100-member crew. Mounted on her prow was a grotesque bronze eagle clutching a globe with its claws and the inscription "Mein Feld ist die Welt" ("My Field is the World"). At a time when the proliferation of Prussian imperialism was already a concern, many felt there was more than a little political significance to this figurehead, which in fact looked out of place because the architect who designed the *Imperator* had made no provision for it. Inside the ship, the decoration was eighteenth-century French palatial with a Teutonic flavor. Because there were three funnels instead of four, there was room for a huge social hall with a 30-foot ceiling where all 700 first-class passengers could gather for tea or conversation. From the grand lounge, diners ascended a wide staircase to enter the Ritz-Carlton restaurant in grand style. Formal entertainment, however, was not a prominent feature on

these ships. Listening to music, dancing, reading, watching people, conversation, and playing shuffleboard were the main forms of recreation.

In the following year, 1913, the Germans launched the second ship in the trio, the *Vaterland* (“Fatherland”). In 1914, with the breakout of war, passenger shipping was disrupted. The *Vaterland* was in New York, where she was seized and converted to an American troop ship. Some British ships were converted to armed merchant cruisers, including the *Mauretania* and the *Britannic*; others continued to carry passengers. One of these, Cunard’s *Lusitania*, was torpedoed by the Germans. Her sinking occasioned a national holiday in Germany.

The *Imperator* was in port in Hamburg when the war broke out. The third ship in the series, the *Bismarck*, was still under construction, and so all work was stopped. At the end of the war, the British received the *Imperator* and the *Bismarck* as reparations, while the United States kept the *Vaterland*, which was renamed the *Leviathan*.

Michael A. Musmanno, a lawyer from Philadelphia, traveled home from England aboard the *Leviathan* in 1958 and gives us an account of the ship’s cuisine in those days:

In all the history of good eating, not even King Henry VIII feasted more felicitously than I did during that five-day journey between Southampton and New York. At seven-thirty each morning fruit juice and black coffee appeared like magic in my stateroom. At eight-thirty, in the ship’s dining room, I attacked a matinal repast of cereal, eggs, bacon, potatoes, and hot cakes. At noon the table glowed, smiled, and chuckled with soup, steak, vegetables, salad, dessert, and coffee. At four o’clock tea, little sandwiches and cakes refreshed the oceanic afternoon, and at seven each evening a royal banquet unfolded in the large dining hall where one’s eyes dilated as his belt yielded to appetizers, smoked oysters, celery soup, roast fowl, vegetables, salad, nuts, fruit pie, ice cream, and demitasse. At ten o’clock—I skipped the chaffing-dish supper available to those trenchermen who had the capacity for it.

Musmanno added, “The voyage added nine pounds to my sparse frame.”⁷

After the war, transatlantic traffic resumed on ships that had been refurbished for peacetime use. In the 1920s, the United States curtailed its

⁷Michael A. Musmanno, *Verdict! The Adventures of the Young Lawyer in the Brown Suit*, quoted in *All in the Same Boat*, ed. Robert Wechler (Highland Park, N.J.: Catbird, 1988), 186.

open-door immigration policy. Everyone who was tired and poor was no longer welcome and thus could not be a customer of steamship companies. Even though first-class passage produced pages of news, the major lines earned most of their money from immigrants. When that business dried up, they needed to find new sources of passengers to fill ships. This marketing problem was aggravated by a postwar overbuilding of fleets. Cunard and other lines replaced war losses with more and larger ships in anticipation of an immigration business that never materialized. Thus there was a major change in the kind of passengers these vessels carried. Fortunately, the Great War had spurred a major interest in visiting Europe. With a strong marketing thrust, immigrants were replaced by teachers, students, and tourists who wanted to visit the sites of famous battles or gaze upon Paris, Berlin, and London, which they had viewed for the first time in war newsreels. There was another incentive for transatlantic travel: Prohibition had dried up the United States in 1919. For those who craved a martini, a scotch, or glass of champagne, a transatlantic voyage was a trip to nirvana!

To take advantage of all of these trends, changes in design were necessary. What had been immigrant quarters were turned into third-cabin or tourist-class accommodations. Additional bars and cocktail lounges were added to the vessels, and brochures prominently featured the availability of all kinds of alcoholic beverages on board.

The large luxurious ships were still the most prestigious—patronized by the rich and famous. Newspaper society columns published travel plans of celebrities. It was not uncommon for social climbers to book passage, hoping for the opportunity to reserve a deck chair or a dining room table next to a famous personality. With luck, ambitious parents might even light the spark for a suitable marriage. If one could not meet the right targets by sitting or dining next to them, there were other opportunities as well: Passengers organized games of deck tennis, billiards, potato sack races, and a host of other silly pastimes in which anyone who was willing could participate. Masquerade balls were particularly popular (and still are on some ships), and some guests spent long hours designing and making elaborate costumes with materials brought on board specifically for this event or supplied by the ship's crew.

Although there were no casinos on board, wagering bets on everything from the outcome of games to the ship's daily mileage was a common and widespread pastime. Professional gamblers soon discovered that a five-day voyage with people of means was an easy way to make a living. Lines warned their guests not to play poker with strangers. Nevertheless, these suave, sophisticated adventurers added a certain aura of excitement to the voyages and helped build the image that a large ocean liner was an exciting place to be. In short, spending a week at sea was no

longer something to be avoided but, in fact, *the* fashionable thing to do. This newfound cachet of the ocean voyage, promulgated by the widespread press coverage of the lavish (and expensive) first-class lifestyle—where one could eat sumptuously, drink, and party into the late hours and form significant relationships with desirable companions—shaped the perception that ocean voyages were costly, elitist vacations. Imagine extravagant dining around the clock, drinking and partying into the wee hours, and hobnobbing with the rich and famous! Transatlantic voyages during this era attracted the hoity-toity, the *crème-de-la-crème*, the rich, powerful, and famous from all over the world. What a phenomenal transformation! In a few short years, the ocean voyage went from a dreaded, uncomfortable, and life-threatening experience to the grandest of trips, and the clientele went from the downtrodden to high society.

Sadly however, the pendulum swung too far. Because all the press and public interest centered on the first-class voyage experience, the broadest-held perception was that this type of travel was for a very few. Moreover, those few, to the common man, were stuffy swells, intimidating to be with—or boring—or both.



More Cruises Are Offered

The Great Depression, which began in 1929, prompted many companies, such as Holland America and the Italian Line, to minimize their losses by sending ships cruising, thereby reducing unneeded transatlantic capacity. Given the state of the economy and Prohibition, the market was ripe for short booze cruises to Nova Scotia, Nassau, and Bermuda—cheap respites. The ships that offered these cruises were not, of course, really suited for cruising. They were obsolete and could no longer compete with the newer ocean liners. They lacked the necessary air conditioning for cruising in warm waters, and their dark, enclosed design discouraged sunbathing, swimming, and other resort-type activities.

By the end of the 1930s, these short, inexpensive cruises were but one segment of a larger cruise market. Fancier and more modern ships were redeployed into cruising, and longer, more expensive, and more lavish itineraries were fashioned. Unfortunately, these elaborate cruises reinforced the elitist image that had emerged from the first-class transatlantic voyages of the 1920s. One can just imagine the passenger composition when the French liner *Normandie* sailed in 1939 from New York to Rio de Janeiro on a monthlong cruise chartered by American Express.

Regarded by many as the most beautiful ship of all time, the *Normandie* was the quintessential ocean liner. Built in 1935 at an extravagant cost, she featured the grandest staircase at sea. This grand

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sweep ended in an air-conditioned dining room 400 feet long! Original art commissioned by the French Line for the *Normandie* was the most expensive collection afloat. Every stateroom was uniquely decorated—one was even done in sparkling stainless steel. The suites featured grand pianos and, of course, more original works of art. After the fall of France in 1939, the *Normandie* took refuge in New York Harbor. While undergoing conversion to a troop ship, to be renamed the *Lafayette*, she caught fire, capsized, and was lost.

We give credit for glamorizing warm-weather cruising to the Italians. The Italian Line built two large ships, the *Rex* and the *Conte di Savola*, which began operations with transatlantic cruises from New York to Italy. These itineraries necessarily entailed several days of warm-weather cruising in the Mediterranean. The ships were lighter toned, more open, and thus more resort-like. With unusual marketing savvy for the time, Italian Line posters portrayed visuals of gaily dressed passengers pursuing vacation activities, while the Germans lines showed serious-looking businessmen and their well-dressed spouses strolling the decks.

Even though the focus was beginning to shift from crossing the Atlantic to cruising and despite the fact that the passengers were mostly Americans, the steamship business was still dominated by European interests. American companies were generally not trendsetters, as they never really competed for the transatlantic market.

There were, however, several niches that American-owned steamship companies filled nicely. The Matson Line offered service from San Francisco to Hawaii and the South Pacific. The Grace Line sailed to the Caribbean and South America. Moore McCormick also sailed to South America. American Export Lines did manage to offer transatlantic voyages as well as extended cruises to the Mediterranean.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the cruise business was also being developed for the same reasons as in America—too many ships and not enough passengers and immigrants to fill them. Seasonally, cruises went from England, France, Italy, and Germany to Scandinavia and the Mediterranean. Had World War II not intervened, cruising in Europe might have become far more developed than it is today.

Annual world cruises were offered by Cunard, Canadian Pacific, and the Red Star Line, a subsidiary of the same group that owned White Star. A look at the brochures for these cruises shows that they stressed the ports that would be visited rather than the experience of being aboard the ship. In 1935, Cole Porter and Moss Hart went around the world on Cunard's *Franconia*, which was one of the ships built to replace war losses. One pivotal ship during this period was the 40,000-ton *Empress of Britain*. Built by Canadian Pacific, she was the first major liner built for a dual purpose. In the winter, she would take a world cruise carrying

only 400 passengers, while in the summer she operated express service from Southampton to Quebec with a passenger load of 1,100—many, of course, traveling second and third class. The *Empress* was a truly elegant ship that was influenced by the same design characteristic of Canadian Pacific's grand hotels built during the same period. Her amenities included a full-sized tennis court. Unfortunately, her funnels were not tall enough and often scattered soot over the passengers. Canadian Pacific also used the *Empress of Australia* for world cruises; she was one of the ships taken from Germany as part of war reparations. Britain's largest passenger shipping company in those years was the venerable Cunard Line. While Cunard's transatlantic fleet was extensive, its two largest and most notable liners were the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth*. The *Queen Mary*, built in 1934, had the ambience and glamour of a stately London hotel. Today she is a tourist attraction berthed in Long Beach, California. While somewhat modified, a tour of her today at the dock can still provide the flavor of crossing the Atlantic in those days. She is the only surviving liner from this era.

Her sister, the *Queen Elizabeth*, was, when launched in 1940, the largest passenger ship ever built—a vessel of 80,000 tons. Her size has been significantly eclipsed, however, with well over a dozen ships in excess of 100,000 gross registered tons, including the *Queen Mary 2*, at 150,000 tons, and the *Freedom of the Seas*, at 158,000 tons.

With the outbreak of World War II, all of the major steamship lines converted their ships to troop carriers or stayed in port, except the Swedish Line, whose country was neutral. Eventually, however, everything afloat was taken over for troop transfer. Even the *Gripsholm* was sold to the United States for that purpose. Crossing and cruising closed down for the duration of the war and would never be the same again.

After the war came the postwar boom. The rebuilding of Europe spurred a growing demand for transportation to Europe for both tourists and business travelers. There were also many refugees to be resettled in the United States and Canada. The steamship business became enormously profitable. But all the profits were going to Cunard, the French Line, and other European lines. Why was the United States left out of this picture? The answer is simple: The European lines were operating ships whose construction had been heavily subsidized by their governments. The United States, on the other hand, had no significant passenger fleet because government shipbuilding subsidies strictly applied to the U.S. Navy only. The war, however, had clearly demonstrated the need for ships that could be quickly converted to troop carriers. Something had to be done.

The United States realized it might need additional troop ships and thus subsidized the building and operation of some new vessels.

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American Export Lines built two ships in 1951: the *Independence* and the *Constitution* at Bethlehem Steel's Ford River Shipyard in Quincy, Massachusetts. These were 30,000-ton vessels. Specifications for both required that they be able to sail at 25 knots from Norfolk, Virginia, to Capetown, South Africa, without refueling. American Export quickly established itself as a luxury American ship line. While the *Independence* crossed the North Atlantic and cruised the world, the *Constitution* cruised from New York to Italy, visiting the ports of Gibraltar and Cannes en route. In 1956, when actress Grace Kelly became the Princess of Monaco, she sailed on the *Constitution* with her wedding party. Eventually, these two ships were retired from service in 1967, when American Export discontinued its passenger service.

Subsequently, Congress appropriated the funds to subsidize the building of a state-of-the-art transatlantic liner, the *United States*. This ship was designed with two purposes in mind. The first was to provide fast troop ship capability after quick conversion. The second was to display (albeit late to the party) superior American ingenuity and technology to the world. This was one of the country's more significant ego trips. Many of her design and performance details were kept confidential to ensure that other governments would not try to steal her thunder. Because she was designed and built to be faster than any other passenger ship afloat, concessions had to be made. Consequently, despite the owners' desire to make her a luxury liner, the *United States* was, in fact, quite austere. She offered little open deck space (which obviously would be of little use as a troop carrier), and her watertight doors were not disguised or concealed. All of these elements contributed to her spartan look. But she could do 40 knots, and on her first crossing in the summer of 1952 she beat the *Queen Mary's* record by a full ten hours, completing her eastbound voyage in 3 days, 10 hours, and 40 minutes. As a result, she finally secured the Blue Ribband for the United States—which held for fifty years because of that singular performance! Since 1998, the Blue Ribband has been held by a Dutch catamaran ferry, CAT-LINK V, which crossed the Atlantic in just 2 days, 20 hours, and 9 minutes!

By the 1950s, the future of the steamship business seemed clearly established. Companies like Swedish American built new ships with spacious cabins and marketed them heavily to the tourist trade. Another American line, Moore McCormack, launched the *Argentina* and *Brazil*, both in 1957. These ships operated liner and cruise routes to South America, as did Grace Line, whose passenger-cargo ships all carried the "Santa M" nomenclature (*Santa Maria*, *Santa Mercedes*, etc.). The *Argentina* and *Brazil* later operated as the *Veendam* and *Volendam* for Holland American; the *Monarch Sun* and *Monarch Star* of Monarch Cruise Lines (now defunct), and the *Enchanted Isle* and *Enchanted Seas* of Commodore Cruise Lines (also defunct).

The transatlantic passenger boardings built steadily after World War II, reaching their peak in 1957. In 1958, however, Pan American offered the first nonstop transatlantic crossing with a Boeing 707 jet. The plane left New York's Idlewild airport in the evening and touched down early the next morning. This seminal event effectively sounded the death knell of the transatlantic steamship business. While a few ships built after 1958 were aimed at the transatlantic market (most notably the *Empress of Canada* in 1960, the S.S. *France* in 1962, the *Queen Elizabeth* in 1967, and the *Mikhail Lermontov* in 1973), the majority of new ship construction was built with cruising in mind. Examples include Holland America's *Rotterdam* (1959; 38,645 tons) and Norwegian American's *Saga fjord* (1965; 25,147 tons) and *Vista fjord* (1973; 24,492 tons). Other cruise-specific vessels included Ingres's *Victoria* and Chandris's *Amerikanis*.

As the transatlantic boardings declined in the 1960s, the companies that did not redeploy their fleets began to take on water. The list of fatalities include Canadian Pacific, Furness Bermuda, United States Lines, Hamburg American Line, and Swedish American Line.



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In 1966, Ted Arison, a young Israeli from Tel Aviv who had fought in Israel's War of Independence as a colonel in the Israeli army and subsequently retired after starting and then losing two air cargo businesses, was calling on friends in the shipping business who owned two car ferries that were under charter as cruise ships in Miami—the *Bilu* and the *Nili*. The charterer was a Miami cruise pioneer, Leslie Frazer. While Arison was in their office they received a telex from Frazer advising them that his business was not doing well and facing serious financial problems. Arison volunteered that this was clearly a negotiating tactic by Frazer to secure a lower charter fee and suggested that as he knew the charter business, he would be glad to go to Miami take over their ships and run them. "He was basically bluffing," recalls his son Micky, now CEO of Carnival Corporation, "because he in fact knew nothing about the passenger cruise business." Sure enough, a day later Frazer sent another telex asking for a lower fee, and rather than accept this, Frazer's charter was canceled and Arison flew to Miami to manage the ships.

As in Arison's other ventures, Lady Luck was not with him, and his Israeli partners went bankrupt as a result of other business interests they had in Europe. The Israeli government, which held a first mortgage on the ships, foreclosed and ordered the ships back to Israeli waters, where they would be available in case of a military emergency. This move left Arison with a cruise line consisting of a sales and marketing organization but no ships. While perusing a stack of trade publications—the remnants of his now defunct shipping business—he saw a picture in *Travel Weekly*

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of a brand-new ship, the *Sunward*, which had been purpose-built by a Norwegian, Knut Kloster, to sail to Gibraltar. However, Gibraltar was having political difficulties, and the ship was unable to operate. Arison called Kloster and explained that Kloster's ship was very much like the *Nili*, which he had just lost, and that he had future passenger bookings but no vessel to carry them. He suggested that if Kloster would send the *Sunward* to Miami, they could both make some money. Kloster agreed, but only on the condition that Arison guarantee him a half-million dollars a year in profit; Arison agreed. Of course, he didn't have the money, but Kloster didn't know that, and the *Sunward* moved to Florida. It entered service on 19 December 1966, offering three- and four-day cruises. This arrangement between Arison and Kloster was really a partnership between Arison Shipping Company, Arison's management company, which was a general sales agency, and Kloster Rederi, Knut Kloster's Norwegian firm, which owned the *Sunward*. While they did business under the name Norwegian Caribbean Lines (NCL), in reality there was no such company.

By 1968, business was good enough that a second ship, the *Starward*, was added to the fleet. It had two decks of ferry space, so passenger cabins were located on the outer hull of the ship, where the portholes were, while the inner spaces were utilized for a roll-on, roll-off cargo service between Florida and Jamaica. Business continued to expand, and two more ships were soon added: the *Skyward* in 1969 and the *Southward* in 1971. With her fleet of four modern cruise ships operating regularly from Miami on a year-round basis, Norwegian Caribbean's enterprise represented the beginning of the contemporary cruise business as we know it today.

From the start, Arison and Kloster realized that a national marketing campaign would be key to their success. There were simply not enough prospects living in Florida to fill their cabins every week. The large (at the time) weekly capacity of 3,000-plus berths forced NCL to reach out for prospects in other parts of the country, thereby transforming South Florida contemporary cruising from a regionally marketed hodgepodge of very old ships built originally to weather the North Atlantic waters to a nationally marketed contemporary vacation product featuring brand-new vessels designed for Caribbean cruising.

Like any successful new concept, this fast-growing new market quickly attracted competition. Sandy Chobol, a Miami real estate developer and hotelier, recognized the potential for converting hotel landlubbers to sailors and founded Commodore Cruise Lines. He brought in a brand-new combination ferry-cruiser, the *Bohème* in 1968 on year-round seven-day cruises. The *Bohème* was built in Finland and owned by a man named Olaf Wallenis who liked opera names. At the time she was named the *Aïda*. Chobol and his general manger, Ed Stephan, did not like the

name, so it was agreed to change it to the *Bohème*, which was also an opera—but suggested a carefree, Bohemian way of life. The ship was an overnight success.

After leaving Commodore Cruise Lines, Ed Stephan decided to pursue his dream of starting his own line. Stephan, originally from Madison, Wisconsin, had started in the hotel business as a bell captain at the Casablanca Hotel on Miami Beach and worked his way up to general manager of the Biscayne Terrace Hotel while teaching hotel management at Lindsey Hopkins Vocational School. In time, he was offered the job of general manager for Yarmouth Cruise Lines by Jules Sokoloff, a Canadian living in Jamaica. Yarmouth had two ships, the *Yarmouth* and the *Yarmouth Castle*.

History buffs may recall that on 13 November 1962, the *Yarmouth Castle* burned and sank, killing eighty-nine people. While the cause of the fire was never pinpointed, several officials felt it was the work of an arsonist. This deduction was based on cross-referencing employment records; it was found that one crew member on board the *Yarmouth Castle* had previously worked on other cruise ships that had experienced unexplained fires. Fortunately, this was the last major catastrophe involving cruise ship passengers in North American waters. The ship was old, built in 1929, and of largely wooden construction. It would not have been allowed to sail, let alone carry passengers, under today's much tougher safety standards.

During this period between jobs, Stephan produced some designs and plans for a new cruise line. In 1967, at the suggestion of a shipbroker employed by Fearnley and Egar, Stephan took these plans to Oslo, Norway, where they impressed two prominent Norwegian shipping executives, Sigor Skaugen and Anders Wilhelmsen. They decided to invest in Stephan's concept, which was the beginning of another industry giant, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines (RCCL). Later, Gotaas Larsen, a subsidiary of International Utilities in Canada, bought in for a one-third share. Harry Larsen, the chairman, had to pay one-third of all expenses since the beginning of the company to consummate the deal, we were told.

The company quickly launched a modern fleet of three vessels destined for year-round Caribbean sailings from Miami. These vessels incorporated Ed Stephan's design innovations, including a sleek, yacht-like profile and an observation lounge located in the ship's funnel, high above the superstructure—inspired by Seattle's Space Needle. The first, *Song of Norway*, entered weekly service in 1970. She was followed by the *Nordic Prince* and the *Sun Viking* in 1971 and 1972. These latter ships were originally deployed to offer fourteen-day cruises departing from Miami on alternate Saturdays. From an operation and marketing standpoint, the plan was simplicity itself: Every Saturday would see two RCCL ships

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debarking and embarking passengers in Miami. Travel agents and customers alike quickly understood that each and every week you could take a one- or two-week Royal Caribbean cruise. The marketing was further simplified by several other innovative ideas. First, unlike previous entrants to the marketplace, Royal Caribbean started promoting her ships a full year before the first one went into service. This provided enough time to fill the ships well before they operated. In contrast, the *Sunward* had had only a few weeks of advance marketing.

Next, rather than scattering their promotional efforts over a large area, Royal Caribbean concentrated on two major markets. This allowed for maximized efficiency of sales and promotional efforts and reduced costs by chartering and filling back-to-back wide-bodied aircraft departing weekly from Los Angeles and San Francisco. Royal Caribbean passed on these savings to their guests, creating what was a terrific travel bargain at the time.

While RCCL was building ships for cruising in the Caribbean, another group of Norwegian investors, headed by Bergen Line, decided to launch a new cruise line of ships built especially for world cruising. They recruited Warren Titus, the first president of P&O Lines in North America, to found their company, which was to be called Royal Viking Line. Their concept was to operate worldwide cruises that were expensive but luxurious. Royal Viking soon had a fleet of three ships: the *Royal Viking Star*, brought into service in 1972, and the *Royal Viking Sky* and *Royal Viking Sea*, in 1973. Unlike the other lines operating at the time, says Titus, "Our marketing approach was based not only on tapping existing markets, but going after and rewarding those people who cruised with us repeatedly." Their method was to introduce the Skald Club at the outset, which recognized and offered special programs for repeat passengers. (Remember, this was ten years before the first airline frequent flyer program.) Titus recalls that by the time he left the company in 1987 to found Seabourn Cruise Lines, their repeat factor was well over 50 percent per average cruise and 65 to 70 percent on their longer cruises.

An incredibly complex web of relationships spawned the rapid growth of the cruise line industry. Going back to Yarmouth Cruise Lines, it is important to note that the *Yarmouth* had been acquired from a Canadian-born Seattle businessman, Stanley B. McDonald, who ran package tours combining the cruise with land options—California to Oregon, British Columbia, and the Seattle World's Fair. McDonald's venture had been so successful that it inspired him to try winter cruises to Mexico. In 1965 he chartered another ship, Canadian Pacific's 6,000-ton *Princess Patricia*, and named his company Princess Cruises. During the winters of 1965 and 1966, the *Princess Pat* pioneered cruising to Mexico's West Coast and became an overnight success. After two highly successful seasons

and demand far exceeding the capacity of the small vessel, Princess Cruises chartered the newly completed Italian ship M/S *Italia* and re-named her the *Princess Italia*.

By 1972, Princess had added two more ships to their fleet, the *Princess Carla* and the *Island Princess* (formerly the *Island Venture* of Ingres Line). But then came the recession and the Arab oil embargo. The cash-strapped company was saved by a takeover bid from the London-based Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, the same P&O that in 1844 had pioneered the business by offering the world's first cruise. P&O decided to keep the newer *Island Princess* but replace the older ships with two newer ones—the *Sun Princess* and the *Pacific Princess* (the sister to the *Island Princess*, the former *Sea Venture*).

In 1977, an event occurred that would catapult Princess into becoming the best-known cruise line in North America at the time and popularize the idea of cruising as a mass-market vacation to the extent that virtually every cruise ship afloat at the time benefited. A television producer, Aaron Spelling, suggested that a luxury cruise ship would be an ideal setting for a TV series. He had successfully produced *Love, American Style* and saw this new show as a logical iteration. They approached Princess, as they were located on the West Coast near Hollywood. Princess agreed to make their two ships, the *Island Princess* and the *Pacific Princess*, available. Veteran actor Gavin MacLeod (known for his portrayal of Murray on the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*) was cast as Captain Merrill Stubing after two previous TV pilots with other actors in the role failed to be sold. The name *Stubing* was picked by a writer who was a baseball fan and remembered a great ballplayer with the same name. “Thank God, I hit a home run,” MacLeod says. The show's producer, Douglas Cramer, told MacLeod that every episode would consist of three stories—a sophisticated one, a farce, and a poignant one. MacLeod liked the idea but insisted that every story in every show have a happy ending. As the captain, he wanted to play the paternal figure that at the end would make everyone feel good. He felt then, as he does today, that television should offer programs that help people who are trapped at home in dull jobs to escape, to travel and become vicarious adventurers. “Today there's nothing on TV that makes me cheer,” he says wistfully. When filming began, MacLeod, who had never set foot on a cruise ship, recalls that they far exceeded his expectations. He was absolutely astounded that the ships had real elevators. The *Love Boat* series attracted a worldwide audience and a public relations bonanza for Princess and the fledgling cruise industry. “It made you feel good,” says MacLeod, “and that's very important.” The series continued in production for ten years and six months and is still in syndication today.

Another important pioneer that revolutionized the cruise business in those early days was a company that traces its roots to 1860, to an Italian

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olive oil producer named Giacomo Costa. The Costa family's business prospered so much that by 1924 they had bought their first freighter to ship their olive oil. In 1948, they entered the passenger business with the *Anna C.*, the first postwar Italian luxury liner. In 1959, the company moved into the U.S. market with the *Franca C.*, offering thirteen-day cruises from Miami. By 1968, Costa was firmly established in the U.S. market and decided to reposition the *Franca C.* to San Juan, Puerto Rico, and offer lower Caribbean cruises from there. There was only one problem to solve—how to induce people from the Northeast to go to San Juan to embark on a cruise. The answer was logical and earthshaking in its ultimate impact: Sell the cruise together with the airplane trip as an air/sea packaged vacation. Costa did just that by teaming up with Simmons Group Journeys of New York and pioneering weekly air/sea programs from Puerto Rico. Air/sea programs were without doubt a key component in the success of today's cruise industry. They are now offered by all cruise lines in one form or another. Basically, the cruise is packaged with a round-trip airfare between the passenger's home city and the port of embarkation. A hotel room is also included if necessary because of flight scheduling, as well as ground transfers between the airport and the seaport. However, new technology is clouding the future of air/sea packages. The culprit is the Internet. With websites like Travelocity, Expedia, and Orbitz, consumers have enough information to purchase their own air tickets and frequently save money doing just that.

While the year-round cruising business was building a steady stream of regular customers from the East Coast, in the western part of the country a young tour operator named Chuck West was building a seasonal cruise operation along Alaska's Inside Passage. A former bush pilot for Wein Airlines, West had originally founded a travel agency to promote Alaska tour packages. He soon realized that the best way to see Alaska was by sea, and so he first chartered and then bought a fleet of ships under the banner of Alaska Cruise Lines. These ships departed from Vancouver, British Columbia, and visited Glacier Bay and other ports in combination with a railway trip through the mountains. West's cruise line was part of his overall tour operation, which was called Westours. West was popularly referred to as "Mr. Alaska," served as president of the American Society of Travel Agents, and owned four small cruise ships, a motorcoach company, and several hotels in Alaska. He opened up Alaska not only to mass tourism but also to the cruise industry, as visitors returned with stories of seeing glaciers calving, bald eagles nesting, and herds of moose grazing contentedly—up front and personal from their vantage points on cruise ships.

Unfortunately, by expanding so rapidly, West overextended himself, and by 1970 he was over his head financially. His controller, Kirk

Lanterman, was forced to chop personnel by one-third and institute other cost-saving measures, but they were not enough. West had a \$1 million payment due on his newest ship, the *West Star*, and no funds to make it with. The 1970 World Congress of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA), over which West presided, was held in Amsterdam. During a social event he met Nico Van der Vorm, of the venerable Holland America Line, who expressed an interest in buying Westours. “The Dutch possessed the one cruise-tour component that was vital to the future of Westours and which I had not been able to supply,” said West. “Large efficient ships. They knew how to manage those ships economically and profitably.” West sold his company to Holland America that same fall. He left the company shortly after the sale but remained in the cruise tour business in Alaska for many years. He started a new company called Alaska Sightseeing/Cruise West, now headed by his son Richard. Chuck West died in 2005.

In the summer of 1971, a schism formed between Knut Kloster and Ted Arison. Kloster served notice that they intended to cancel Arison’s ten-year contract at the end of the year. The contract was set up in such a way that if Kloster didn’t make \$1.5 million two years in a row, they had the option to cancel the deal. Meanwhile, a jealousy had been slowly forming in Miami between Kloster’s Norwegian employees and Arison’s Americans. According to Micky Arison, even though the Norwegian company was profitable, the Norwegians felt their American partners were making too much money. A simple plan was devised for getting rid of Arison. It was alleged that the Norwegians, aware of the contract provision, decided to sabotage Arison’s profits by purchasing equipment such as deck chairs and engine parts and then throwing them overboard. This ensured that the inventory would not exist on the ship, throwing a shadow on Arison’s integrity and guaranteeing that he would not be able to deliver the agreed-on profit goals, as the nonexistent inventory would not show up on the balance sheet. (These facts later came out in the discovery process of a lawsuit between the two parties.) As a result of these actions, Arison did not meet his profit commitment, and Kloster, as predicted, canceled the contract. Because Arison Shipping Company’s cash flow stemmed from NCL’s advance ticket sales, the company quickly moved to protect itself by seizing all advance moneys on hand at NCL sales offices around the country. Arison believed the cancellation of his contract was invalid and that he was entitled to his commission, which amounted to 18 percent of the gross revenue. The lawsuit was eventually settled out of court, with Arison agreeing to return half of the funds he had seized, the rest legitimately belonging to him as a result of the Norwegian’s actions.

As 1971 was drawing to a close, Arison once again found himself with a cruise line but no ships. With the funds he had withdrawn from NCL

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bank accounts, he immediately set off for Europe, where he had learned that two older Cunard ships, the *Carmania* and the *Franconia*, had been retired from service and were laid up in England. Wasting no time, he prepared ads for his new “golden fleet” of two ships. He asked his employees to stick with him, have faith, and he said he would soon start a new company. Most didn’t believe him. Micky Arison remembers standing with his father on the last day of business as former employees and friends filed out of the building. Only a handful took Arison at his word; the others knew Kloster had the ships, and they wanted to get paid at the end of the week. But a few loyal employees, including Mike Zonis, Carnival’s former long-time senior vice president of operations, decided to abandon the security of Kloster-NCL for the uncharted waters of a nameless, shipless company.

However, Arison was unable to work out a deal with Cunard, and his plan had to be abandoned. Depressed, Arison talked to his friend Jacob Victor, of Technical Marine Planning, a firm of naval architects. Victor suggested he look at another laid-up vessel, the ex-Canadian Pacific liner *Empress of Canada*. Lacking the capital to buy it, Arison turned to his old schoolmate and pal from Israel, Meshulam Riklis, an ultrasuccessful entrepreneur at the time, who assembled and chaired a multibillion-dollar conglomerate, Rapid American Corporation. Riklis was also the principal shareholder in a Boston-based travel operation called American International Travel Service. This latter company operated group and individual tours to Hawaii, South America, Europe, and other destinations using the name Carnival. For example, they had a Hawaiian Carnival program, a Rio Carnival program, and others. Arison convinced Riklis to set up an American International Travel Service (AITS) subsidiary, Carnival Cruise Lines, to own and operate the *Empress of Canada*, which would be financed by the \$1 million he had seized from NCL. They renamed the ship the *Mardi Gras*, consistent with the Carnival name. Arison’s sales and marketing team, remnants of the NCL management, positioned the *Mardi Gras* as “the Flagship of the Golden Fleet,” based on their expectation of obtaining the two Cunard ships. These were painted yellow, and two of them could be considered a fleet. Unfortunately, the *Empress of Canada* wasn’t golden, she was white, and of course there was no longer a fleet. But it was too late to change anything.

When the *Mardi Gras* entered service on 7 March 1972, she ran aground on her maiden voyage in Government Cut, at the tip of Miami Beach. She sat there ignominiously for twenty-four hours in plain view of thousands of vacationers who crowded the beach to gawk at her before she was refloated. On her maiden cruise, because of nonexistent cash flow, Ted Arison didn’t have the funds to refuel the ship in San Juan for her voyage home. After unsuccessfully wining and dining his Puerto

Rican suppliers, hoping to obtain credit, he literally collected money from the bar cash registers on board and had the advance deposits for future cruises wired to him from Miami to purchase the fuel he needed to return the *Mardi Gras* to Miami.

For the first year and a half, two of the four decks of passenger cabins were being converted from two-class transatlantic service to one-class cruising. This entailed sailing with a work crew of several hundred plumbers and carpenters installing compact showers and toilets in the cabins. During this period, the company lost millions of dollars as the *Mardi Gras* sailed on a sea of red ink. In the late fall of 1973, the Golden Fleet positioning was scrapped as inappropriate shortly after Bob Dickinson arrived at the company. The question was: What slogan or positioning to replace it with? Dickinson gathered all the available cruise brochures then on the market and noticed that one stood out: Commodore's "Happy Ship," the *Bohème*. This appealed to Dickinson; the cruise slogan applied to a specific ship and not the company—after all, people buy ships and not companies. "Happy" was already taken, and it sounded a bit weak anyhow. What is the one universal need—the one ingredient everyone wants in their vacation? FUN! And, fortunately, the product at the time backed up the slogan. The *Mardi Gras*, being 50 percent larger than her competition, had the space to provide activities and entertainment choices to provide fun for everyone. With the "Fun Ship" position, the ship itself became the destination and the ports of call became green stamps—a total reversal of previous cruise marketing. Cruise marketing up to that time had been destination driven. But in the early 1970s, less than 1 percent of the public had been on a cruise; the vast majority of the population was leery of this unknown concept. By focusing on the ship rather than the ports of call, Carnival was forced to communicate to the public what the experience of the ship and cruising on her was all about. Therefore the story of what a vacationer could expect on board was a salable one. Moreover, Arison recalls that because the *Mardi Gras* was an old ship, Carnival was forced to price her low. The low prices attracted a younger crowd that had previously not been able to afford cruising. They were drawn to the enjoyment Carnival promised, which was viewed as a departure from the typical impression of stodgy cruise ships whose average passenger age was deceased! The "fun" concept became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The repositioning worked, and Carnival turned its first profit in 1975.

Like a man on a roll at a craps table, Arison took the profit and immediately bought the *Mardi Gras*'s sister ship, the *Empress of Britain*, and put her into service on 7 February 1976 as the *Carnivale*. To make room for her at the port of Miami, Carnival shifted the *Mardi Gras* to Sunday sailings. Within the industry, this was a controversial move at the time because no one had offered Sunday departures before. The conven-

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tional wisdom said there would be little demand. Today, almost half of the seven-day cruises sailing from North American ports depart on Sunday.

Incredibly, the *Carnivale* made money in her first year of operation, so Arison, ever the optimist, began scouring the world for a third ship. He found the S.A. *Vaal*, a South African passenger/cargo ship. Without even seeing her, he bought her and negotiated with the Japanese to have her rebuilt in Kobe. This was the first time the Japanese had built or rebuilt a deep-water cruise ship. Taking advantage of their eagerness to get into the business, Arison negotiated an extremely favorable price of \$16–18 million, to be paid in Japanese yen. By the time he took delivery the cost was \$30 million. “We learned our lesson on currency fluctuation,” Micky Arison recalls. “We lost money tremendously because we didn’t hedge the yen, and I’m sure they did too.” At the same time, Carnival was negotiating with the yard on a new building project for about \$40 million. But because of the movement on the yen, by the time the project was finalized the cost was more like \$80–90 million. This was simply too expensive. Carnival was forced to turn to Europe for its shipbuilding needs. Since then, Carnival has spent billions in European shipbuilding contracts, and the Japanese yards have only built a handful of ships for the North American market.

At about the same time Carnival Cruise Lines was being formed, John Bland was charged with the unenviable task of establishing a new North American cruise brand, Sitmar, with two large ex-Cunard vessels that were refurbished and renamed the *Fairwind* and the *Fairsea*. As president of this fledgling operation, he had little time or money to accomplish the task. As a result, early voyages of these 900-plus passenger vessels sailed with few guests. He needed a marketing gimmick, and he devised a great one. He priced his one-week cruises with unusually low air supplements. Sitmar’s air add-on prices were so much lower than the cost of the airline ticket that prospective vacationers could easily grasp the value. For example, Sitmar’s air add-ons from New York to Fort Lauderdale were \$20 per person, about 10 percent of the ticket price. The ships filled almost overnight, and the Sitmar brand gained recognition because of this pricing deal. Once onboard the two Sitmar vessels, passengers quickly appreciated the Italian food and service. Successfully launched, Bland was able, over time, to ratchet up his rates and make a profit. Through pricing actions and a great product, Sitmar was transformed from a bottom feeder priced below the Miami-based cruise lines (the contemporary or mass-market segment of the business) to a higher-priced, premium line.

Cunard, of transatlantic fame, decided to get into the cruise business on a year-round basis by building two 600-passenger vessels, the *Ambassador* and the *Adventurer*, in 1970 and 1971. These operated one-week contemporary cruises from Fort Lauderdale and San Juan,

competing with NCL, Royal Caribbean, and, later, Carnival. Recognizing that the ships were too small to be particularly profitable, Cunard replaced them with new 800-passenger sister vessels, the *Cunard Countess* and the *Cunard Princess*. Cunard had a difficult marketing challenge, as these ships carried the same brand name as the only other ship in their fleet at the time, the *Queen Elizabeth 2*. The hardware was decidedly different and, because of the lower price point, so was the software (food quality, service levels, entertainment, and other amenities).

From 1966 onward, New York was slowly and inexorably losing its grip as the number-one passenger port in the United States. Miami garnered this honor in 1974 and has held it ever since. A good object lesson in the demise of the port of New York is Home Lines. Home Lines first operated the *Homeric* on cruises to Bermuda. In their heyday in the 1960s and 1970s they offered seven-day Bermuda cruises from May to November (some including Nassau as an extra destination) as well as longer cruises to the Caribbean during the fall and winter. But Home Lines identified itself as a Manhattan-based cruise line; not only was its headquarters there but so were the departures of all of its ships. As the market shifted to Miami (which was much closer to the popular Caribbean destinations), Home Lines was slow to reposition its vessels southward.

Perhaps more important, during the late 1970s and into the 1980s, Home Lines focused its marketing and sales efforts in their traditional area, the Northeast—and, critically, to their past passengers. Over time, their market died—literally!

The Miami-based lines had the huge geographical advantage of being two to three days steaming time closer to warm weather. Moreover, they didn't have to traverse the rough seas of the North Atlantic on their way south. Sailing from Miami, ships are in the lee of the Bahamian islands, which protect them from the swells of the open ocean. On the other hand, folks from the Northeast had to fly to Miami. This was not what New York-area cruisers were used to; they expect to drive to their ships. Also, their travel agents typically didn't view them as willing to fly. Consequently, the Miami-based cruise industry had a difficult time penetrating the New York cruise market. The breakthrough came when the Miami lines stopped targeting the traditional New York cruisers and went after the fly/land vacationers.

Until 2004, New York continued to be the seasonal home for Bermuda- and Caribbean-bound cruises, as well as a few seasonally to New England and the Canadian Maritime Provinces. In that year, NCL repioneered year-round cruising from New York. This meant occasionally sailing with a few inches of snow on the deck at departure in the winter! New York's days as the hub for transatlantic travel and the cruise capital of the world are long gone, but a renaissance is in the works. Cunard has built a terminal for the *Queen Mary 2* in Brooklyn, and Royal Caribbean has

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invested in terminal facilities in New Jersey. With faster ships, it is now possible to get to the Caribbean and back in eight days. Some have theorized that the cruise industry benefited from the tragedy of 9/11, as many New Yorkers became leery of flying. Cruising from New York was convenient, hassle-free, and generally less costly than air vacations.

Florida remains the cruise capital of the world and will continue that way well into the foreseeable future. But nothing is forever, and cruise ships, unlike hotels, can be moved as new ports develop, ships are redeployed, and the infrastructure of new home ports evolves. Indeed, since the 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center, cruise lines have accelerated the use of more embarkation ports in the United States to meet a demand for more ports within driving distance of home. In the meanwhile, many of the preemptive strikes in the battle for a larger share of the vacation dollar will be launched by the cruise industry from the port of Miami and its sister Florida ports in Fort Lauderdale, Cape Canaveral, Tampa, and Jacksonville.

