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MSC ready to set sail

MSC Cruises is in the final stages of resuming operations in the Mediterranean, with its *MSC Magnifica* & *MSC Grandiosa* ready to operate seven-night voyages in the region as soon as guidelines have been approved.

Itineraries will feature Greece and Malta, where ports have already been reopened to cruising amid approval of MSC's health and safety protocols.

Chief Executive Officer Gianni Onorato said the initial phase of commencement will only allow guests who are residents of the Schengen Area, which comprises most of mainland Europe, with ports of call designed to simplify access without needing to make use of public transport or flights.

Onorato said MSC would only resume cruising in the United States once all relevant local and national authorities have approved a return to service,

including the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

Health and safety protocols have been developed for MSC by its "Blue Ribbon Expert Group" (CW 08 Jul), and the line is offering a COVID-19 Protection Plan for Schengen-originating guests which covers them in the event they become infected with the disease prior to their departure, during the cruise for medical expenses, and after the cruise if they later fall sick as a result of the voyage.

Onboard the ships, the "MSC for Me" application will help facilitate the new health and safety measures, and will be used to manage daily activities.

On *MSC Grandiosa* guests will also receive a special wristband which facilitates contactless transactions across the ship, and provides contact and proximity tracing.

Paul Gauguin COVID

A CASE of COVID-19 has been found in an American woman aboard Paul Gauguin Cruises ship *Paul Gauguin*, which is now returning to its homeport in Papeete with all guests confined to their cabins.

An initial pre-departure test was negative, but a second test taken on board by the woman on Sat came back positive.

Paul Gauguin said it tested all the passengers and crew who had been exposed to the infected passenger, with all tests coming back negative.

The 20-year-old woman is now in quarantine with her mother, who she is travelling with.

A company spokesperson said at this stage, Paul Gauguin has not cancelled any other cruises.

Cunard specials

CUNARD is currently hosting its annual savings event, with up to 30% off launch fares and a 5% deposit available until 30 Sep.

See the front page.

Hurtigruten canx

HURTIGRUTEN has confirmed the suspension of all its expedition cruise operations following the positive COVID-19 diagnosis of 36 crew aboard its *Roald Amundsen* (CW yesterday).

A total of four passengers have now been confirmed as having COVID-19, with operations on *Roald Amundsen*, *Fritjof Nansen* and *Spitsbergen* temporarily ceasing until further notice.

Hurtigruten Chief Exec Daniel Skjeldam said the move was "the only responsible choice...until we are absolutely confident we can carry out our operations in line with all requirements".



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WE ALL miss different aspects of our favourite cruise lines and cruise ships, which will make the following news sweet for fans of Disney Cruise Line.

The operator's parent company has released the full "pro-shoot" version of *Tangled: The Musical*, which was originally slated to appear at sea on Disney voyages.

The hour-long, Broadway-style production was filmed in 2015 and features songs from the 2010 film and three new numbers specially created for this stage edition by Alan Menken and Glenn Slater.

CLICK HERE to view.

More ships gone?

CARNIVAL Corporation is disposing of two more ships.

The company said in a news release the unnamed vessels carried values "no longer recoverable when compared to their estimated remaining future cash flows".

In recent weeks, several Carnival ships have been jettisoned, including *Carnival Fantasy* and *Carnival Inspiration* (CW 28 Jul), which are being scrapped in Turkey.

Carnival has also recently rebuffed a rumour it was looking to sell the Cunard and Seabourn brands (CW 31 Jul) as the company looks to get out from under its assets.

Ponant finishing touches



THE final stages in the construction of Ponant's *Le Commandant-Charcot* have begun, with the ship arriving in Saint-Nazaire to be fitted with Azipod propulsion systems.

Le Commandant-Charcot's arrival in France will also see her hull painted, before she returns to the shipyard in Norway for a final fitout.

Delivery is scheduled for 2021, ahead of her inaugural polar voyages in the Bellingshausen Sea in Antarctica, and three expeditions to the North Pole, each departing Longyearbyen in Jul and Aug.

Offered aboard *Le Commandant-Charcot* will be hot air ballooning, kayaking, hiking, a dog-sled ride, ice fishing, snowmobile exploration and polar diving.

Equipped with 135 staterooms, *Le Commandant-Charcot* will be the world's first polar exploration vessel operating on a hybrid electric LNG system.

Ponant will also make *Le Commandant-Charcot* available to

the scientific community, fitting it out with infrastructure such as laboratories & staterooms, as well as other materials, to offer a platform for observation, research and analysis of the water, air, ice and biodiversity in the polar regions to which the ship travels.

The Saga begins

BRITISH operator Saga Cruises is set to take delivery of its new *Spirit of Adventure* before the end of 2020.

The 999-guest vessel has just floated out ahead of sea trials, and is currently in the final stages of construction at Meyer Werft Shipyard in Papenburg.

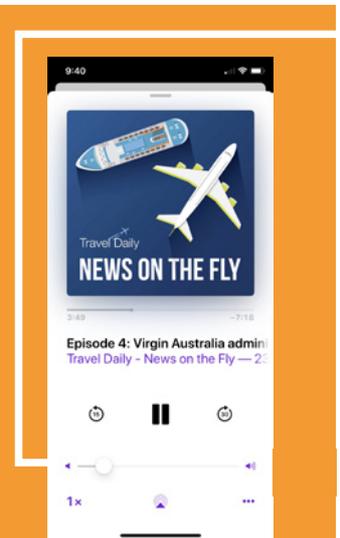
Spirit of Adventure is still currently on course to carry its first paying guests on 05 Nov, sailing to the Mediterranean, although details of a naming ceremony have not yet been released.

The ship had originally been slated to begin sailing in Aug.

New Greek regs

THE Hellenic Ministry of Shipping and Island Policy has increased capacities for ferry travel, shortly after announcing its reopening to cruise ships (CW 30 Jul).

Maximum passenger capacity on ferries will now be 80% up from 60% for ships without cabins, and 85% up from 65% with ships that do, while social distancing also applies.



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