

Luxury under sail

PHOTO FEATURE

Steve Newman takes a look at sailing ships that take cruise passengers and offer their clients a different experience afloat, while also providing five-star luxury.

STAR FLYER

Star Flyer and her identical sistership, Star Clipper, were built in the Scheepswerven van Langerbrugge yard in Ghent, Belgium in 1991 and 1992 respectively. They were the first clipper sailing ships since 1911 to be granted the certificate of highest quality by Lloyd's. Both are four-masted barquentines with only the foremast square-rigged, which means the single mast of square sails offers long distance speed and dramatic appearance in port, while the remaining masts are rigged fore and aft. Both are fitted with two 1,360hp Caterpillar 3512 engines.

They are fitted with stabilisers and propeller blades that fold almost flat against the hull to reduce water resistance when the vessels are in sailing mode. Both ships can take a maximum of 170 passengers and both have sunbathing space on extensive teak decks, two plunge pools, an outdoor bar, a piano lounge, Thai massage, water sports equipment and an open seating dining room.

The cruise companies have realised that more and more people want to be environmentally friendly when they take a cruise these days and you can not get much greener than a sailing ship, especially one that has been converted into a five-star luxury cruise liner.

Sails and cruise ships – are we being serious? Absolutely! With their teak-lined decks and billowing white sails, luxurious amenities, gourmet cuisine, exceptional service and only 150 to 300 guests, these vessels allow clients to soak up the ambience of almost owning their own private yacht. The real beauty of these ships, however, is that because they are smaller than conventional cruise ships they can call into

ports not visited by larger craft.

Stabilisers are installed on these ships, as are engines for manoeuvring in port and keeping to schedule when the wind drops, and for other safety reasons. Some ships use mechanical winches to control the sails, whereas others have crew specially employed to operate the sails and rigging, with assistance from mechanical winches.

Interestingly enough another old skill is also being maintained as some of the sail ships have their own sail makers on board.

The author was on *Royal Clipper* off the coast of Amalfi when 30mph winds ripped two of her topgallants and the sailmaker spent the morning with the sails spread out on the deck, watched by an admiring crowd of guests.





ROYAL CLIPPER

Royal Clipper, the 227-passenger flagship of the Star Clippers fleet, holds the Guinness World Record as being the biggest five-masted ship in the world. The vessel was inspired by Preussen, the pride and joy of Germany's famed Flying P Line in the early years of the 20th century. With her steel hull, Royal Clipper carries 227 passengers. Her warm Edwardian interiors were designed by Donald Starkey, who has created the décor for many of the world's most admired mega-yachts.

Royal Clipper was built at the Merwede shipyard in Rotterdam, Netherlands and launched in 2000; she carries the highest rating possible with Den Norske Veritas and is designed to meet all safety and equipment ratings of the United Nations, as well as all US Coast Guard safety requirements. Her highest mast stands at 54m and includes a 6m hinged top section that can be folded down for passing under bridges and power lines. Although she uses sail wherever possible, she has engines if there is not enough wind, allowing her to keep to her sailing schedules. The main engines are two 2,500bhp Caterpillar 3516B with two auxiliary Caterpillar 3512B of 1,200KW.

The ratio of engine power to sail on most voyages is usually about 60-40. There are no computerised sails on Royal Clipper. The Captain and crew are very experienced square-rigger sailors who are trained both on modern technology found on Star Clippers' ships and old-fashioned, traditional methods. Some winches are electric-powered but muscle-powered winches are used.

PREUSSEN

The full-rigged Preussen was the inspiration for Royal Clipper and was the flagship of the Flying P Line, being the biggest sailing ship ever built at that time. Tragically, this magnificent vessel met an inglorious end in the Channel in 1910 when she was in collision with a steam-powered mail boat, which forced her to be beached on the rocks near Dover.

The Flying P-Liners were the sailing ships of the German shipping company F. Laeisz of Hamburg, a company was founded in 1824 by Ferdinand Laeisz as a hat manufacturing company. Preussen was built in 1902 and was a huge full-rigged ship with a length of 147m, 5,081grt and over 7,800 tons deadweight. She could sail at speeds greater than 18 knots and her best 24-hour distance was 392 miles in 1908 during a voyage to Yokohama. The Laeisz shipping company still exists today, operating freighters under traditional names.



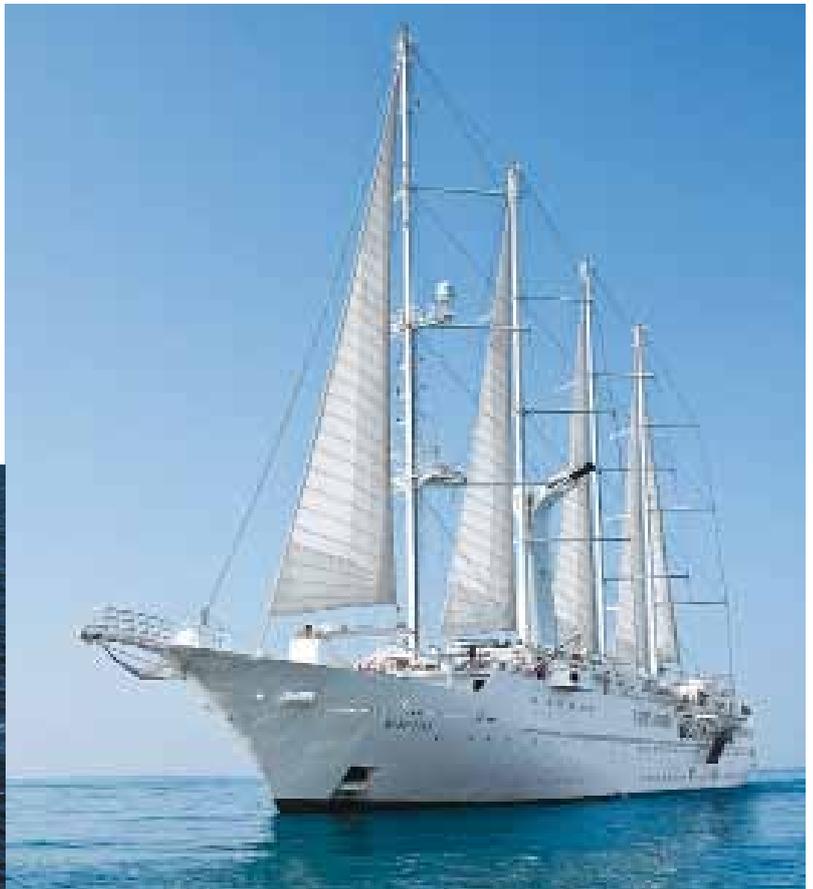


LE PONANT

Built in 1991SFCN-Villeneuve-la-Garenne yard in France and owned by Compagnie du Ponant, the French cruise ship operator, the three masted barque Le Ponant was the company's first operational vessel. As well as her five sails she has Deutz TBD620 1,600KW engines and a cruising speed of ten knots. She has four decks and takes up to 64 passengers in 32 cabins. Her home port is Matautu in Samoa and spends Northern Hemisphere summers in the Mediterranean, and Northern Hemisphere winters in the Caribbean, visiting Martinique, Guadeloupe, the British Virgin Islands, St Barts and the Dominican Republic.

WIND STAR AND WIND SPIRIT

The two smaller vessels operated by Windstar are Wind Star, built in 1986, and Wind Spirit, built in 1988. Like the company's flagship Wind Surf, they have undergone several extensive renovations, in 2003, 2006, 2010 and 2012. Taking a maximum of 148 passengers each, both ships have six triangular, self-furling, bridge-operated sails with an area of 21,500ft² on four 204ft masts. They have three diesel-electric generating Wärtsilä Vasa 22 and one electrical propulsion motors, giving a speed of ten knots with engines only and up to 15.8 knots with a good prevailing wind. Two sets of ACH Engineering stabilisers are fitted, with a sails control system and a 142,653 gallon/540 CBM sea water hydraulic ballast system to limit heel when sailing.



THE COMPANIES

STAR CLIPPERS has three ships in its fleet and all are modern, high-tech recreations of the classic clipper sailing ships that dominated the oceans during the 19th century. Star Flyer, Star Clipper and the five-masted Royal Clipper sail on voyages in the Caribbean, South East Asia and Mediterranean and, more recently, the islands of French Polynesia. All three ships sail under the Maltese flag.

SEA CLOUD CRUISES of Hamburg operate two five-star sailing ships. Sea Cloud and Sea Cloud II are both windjammers with the sails still set by hand by trained riggers, but with some mechanical winches.

WINDSTAR is a high-end cruise line and also operates three sailing ships. These are more of a luxury yacht style with sails. The line was established as Windstar Sail Cruises in 1984, and its first ship, Wind Star, launched in 1986, was followed by Wind Song and Wind Spirit. The ships are registered in the Bahamas. They cruise all over Europe, including the Baltic and the Med, with the winter seasons being spent in the Caribbean, Costa Rica and Panama, and Tahiti.

COMPANGIE DE PONANT, the French cruise line, are renowned for their high-end luxury cruise yachts, but in fact Le Ponant was their first vessel. The company was founded in April 1988 by officers of the French Merchant Navy and operates four ships, all of which sail under the French flag.

SEA CLOUD/SEA CLOUD II

Sea Cloud was built in 1931 and was originally named Hussar. She was not only the largest private sailing yacht in the world, she was also the last private four-masted ship to be built. She served as a weather ship for the United States Coast Guard and United States Navy during World War II and was also the presidential yacht of the Dominican Republic for a while. A four-masted square rigger with 20 sails covering 30,000ft² of canvas, she was purchased by her current

operators in 1978 and spent eight months undergoing repairs in the yard which built her. Her main engines twin 770KW SKL 2 x 8VD 24/16 AL-1 with two auxiliary HD1 MAN D 2840 LE 301 engines.

Sea Cloud II (pictured) is a large three-masted barque specifically built as a cruise ship by the company due to the success of Sea Cloud. The top of her main-mast is 187ft above deck. Her 23 sails have a total area of approximately 32,000ft² and she is fitted with eight watertight bulkheads. On engine power, she can achieve a top speed of about 13 knots, and she is also equipped with a bow thruster. She sails mainly in the Mediterranean in summer and in the Caribbean in winter. Her Atlantic crossings between these two regions are also marketed as cruises.



WIND SURF

In 1998 Windstar acquired the sail cruiser Club Med I from Club Med Cruises, and rechristened her to her original name, Wind Surf, and had her extensively renovated, first in 1998 and then again in 2000, 2003, 2006, 2010 and 2012. The company's 310 guest flagship has seven triangular, self-furling, computer operated sails with 26,881ft² of surface area on five 164ft high masts. She is equipped with four diesel electric generating sets, Wärtsilä Vasa 32 and two electrical propulsion motors, giving her a speed of ten to 12 knots with engines only, and up to 15 knots with a prevailing wind. She has two sets of ACH Engineering stabilisers, sails control system and a 266,814 gallon/10'10 CBM sea water hydraulic ballast system to limit heel when sailing.