

ART COLLECTOR'S
Fall Agenda

BESPOKE
Jet Interiors

LUXURY LIVING
On the Course

PRIVATE AIR

LUXURY HOMES

Volume 2 | Issue 5

TOUR ODÉON

Monaco's Newest Gem is A
Tycoon's Ultimate Hide-away





SPLENDOR AT SEA: A CRUISE ON THE EUROPA 2

BY: JOSEPH REANEY

As I step across the threshold, I instantly realize this is not your average cramped cruise cabin. The stunning suite around me is remarkably roomy, with a generous floor space of 28 square meters split between a large bedroom-slash-living room – complete with double bed, corner sofa, television and walk-in wardrobe – and a substantial bathroom. Crossing to the opposite side of

the lounge, I slide open the glass doors to reveal a spacious veranda complete with sun lounger; and so I settle down to watch the ship silently pull out of port.

My four-day stay on the MS Europa 2 has begun.

The latest cruise ship from Hapag-Lloyd has

been regularly billed as the most luxurious small cruise ship on the seven seas, and I'm on board to see precisely what all the fuss is about. The first impression is certainly good – especially considering that my 'veranda suite' is merely the entry-level option; more exclusive suites range all the way up to 114 square meters – but I was eager to see what else the ship had to offer its guests.



As our departure point of Valletta in Malta disappears over the horizon, I decide to spend my first afternoon exploring the ship's pool and spa. Located on the al fresco Deck 9, the 15-meter pool is surrounded by sun-loungers, seating areas and a pool bar serving guests drinks, ice creams and waffles. Following some laps in the energizing salt water, I slip into my dressing gown and head down to the OCEAN SPA. I work up a sweat in the state-of-the-art fitness center, then cool off with a low-temperature herbal sauna, and on the way out I peruse the list of spa therapies available in the eight treatment rooms – booking an Abhyanga massage for tomorrow. On the way out, I briefly foray into the golf simulator... and knock the ball straight into the rough.

Hapag-Lloyd puts it down to design; MS Europa 2 was conceived to offer the greatest space-per-passenger ratio in the cruise industry, notable in its wide corridors, large open areas and smart use of natural lighting. But what I discover over the coming days helps to explain the illusion of exclusivity even more: this is a ship crammed with activities. Diners can choose from eight diverse restaurants (specializing in everything from modern French fare to traditional Thai gastronomy), while late-night revelers can enjoy five different bars and clubs (from cigar lounges to live jazz venues). There is live entertainment in the Belvedere, hit movies in the 75-seat 3D cinema, and a wealth of daytime activities to entertain all the family – from the fun-packed kids and teen clubs to the excellent culinary school.

is able to dock in shallow ports that other vessels cannot – allowing even long-time cruisers access to brand new destinations. During all these stops, the crew were determined to bring the remote locations to life by arranging and managing a variety of activities for guests, from bike and Segway hire to Zodiac (inflatable boat) rides to beach transfers.

The ship will travel far and wide in the coming year, heading beyond Mediterranean shores into Asia and the United States, but the truth is there are many other cruises that offer similar excursions. As I learned during my brief time on board, what really makes MS Europa 2 stand out is the ship itself. Its refreshing roominess, relaxing atmosphere and remarkable range of activities – plus



There's no doubt that the pool and spa facilities on the ship are impressive, but what has struck me most so far is how few people I have seen. The ship isn't far from its full capacity of 516, yet the facilities were close to empty. The trend continues long into the evening, as I enjoy a delicious dinner in sushi restaurant Sakura and live music in the atmospheric Jazz Club – all with few other guests in sight. It is an intrigue that was set to continue throughout the rest of my stay on MS Europa 2, giving me the sense I had the ship all to myself.

No wonder I could never find all the guests in one place.

Naturally, fun also comes in the form of shore excursions. Following an initial half-day exploring Valletta, the second day saw the ship moor in Trapani, Sicily, from which I joined an organized walking tour of the pretty hill-top town of Erice; while on the third day, after arriving in Cagliari, Sardinia, I opted for the bus transfer to the ancient Roman ruins at Nora. With a draft of only 6.3 meters, MS Europa 2

added luxuries including fine artworks on the walls and the complimentary in-room minibar – creates a cruise experience you'll never want to disembark.

Hapag-Lloyd's new MS Europa 2 will visit several new Mediterranean hot spots this year, followed in 2014 by far-flung destinations such as Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong, New York and Miami. Find out more about the itineraries and dates at www.hl-cruises.com/ships/ms-europa-2, or call them on +49 (0)40 3001 4580.

FAST FACTS ABOUT MS EUROPA 2

Maiden Voyage: Departed 11 May 2013
Dimensions: 739 feet long; 87.6 feet wide
Capacity: 516 passengers; 370 crew (1.4:1 ratio)
Passenger-Space Ratio: An industry-leading 77.5

Languages: German and English. Everything is bilingual
Dining: 8 restaurants, inc. Med, French and Asian cuisine
Drinking: 6 bars, including Jazz Club and Cigar Lounge
Entertainment: Theater, Cinema, Kids Clubs, Fitness & Spa