

A Brief History of the World's Longest Passenger Steamer
S/S NORWAY



Introduction • A Legendary Liner Crosses to Cruising

The *S/S Norway* is the longest passenger ship in the world today & one of the last great ocean liners still in existence. This grand vessel began life in 1960 as the *S/S France*, flagship & pride of the French Line (CGT).

The *France* was launched on May 11, 1960, the last ocean liner designed exclusively for crossing the Atlantic. Despite that intent, & a sterling reputation as one of the finest ships at sea (renowned for fine service & French cuisine – table wine included, of course), the *France* would be forced to undertake several cruises in an effort to stay afloat financially. The advent of the Jet Age had drawn the curtain on the era of the ocean liner before the *France* ever sailed.

The 1970's oil crisis served as the final straw, causing fuel prices to skyrocket. The French government withdrew financial support of the French Line & turned their attentions to the exciting new supersonic jet, the Concorde. In October 1974, the *France* was taken out of service & mothballed in a Le Havre backwater.

In 1979, NCL (then Norwegian Caribbean Line) purchased the *S/S France* for \$18 million, the scrap value of the metal. After a ten month, \$120 million conversion at the Hapag-Lloyd yards in Bremerhaven, Germany, the ship emerged as the *S/S Norway*. Included in this conversion was the addition of the aft, overhanging "carrier deck" (Pool Deck) with a new outdoor pool. Two of the four engines were disabled & the props removed, part of increasing fuel efficiency.

In May of 1980, the *Norway* made her maiden crossing, this time from Oslo, Norway, to New York with a stop in Southampton, England. From there, it was on to Miami & service in the warm waters of the Caribbean.

In 1990, *Norway* again crossed the Atlantic to the shipyards of West Germany to undergo a major refit & vertical expansion. Two new decks were added & many of the interior spaces were drastically renovated. Part of this included the addition of the Roman Spa where the First Class Pool had been on the *France*.

Norway has now seen her 40th year, an anniversary rarely celebrated by ocean liners. After more than twenty years in the Caribbean, the *Norway* was slated to be re-deployed to Asia, perhaps as a gambling vessel, in September of 2001. The terrorist attack on the World Trade Center during her Farewell Crossing shook the cruise industry & prompted a return to Miami. Her future remains uncertain.

S/S Norway

The letters "S/S" stand for "screw steamship". The steam-driven engines turn propellers, also called "screws", as opposed to a paddle steamer, or "P/S". It is also correct to use T.S.S. *Norway*, the "T" for "Turbine" engines.

Most cruise ships today are designated "MS", or "Motor Ships", driven by diesel or electric engines.

Nautica

If you're facing forward...

Port – is to the left

Starboard – is to the right

Fore – is forward, toward the bow (the pointy end)

Prow – is the foremost part of the bow (or stem)

Amidships – is in the middle of the ship

Aft – is toward the rear of the ship (the stern)

◆◆◆◆◆
Knot – is a nautical mile, or 1.15 land miles

...and it is impolite to call a ship a boat!

S/S NORWAY

Full Steam Ahead

Four of the ship's original eight boilers were removed during conversion to Norway, as were the two outboard propellers. The boilers burn heavy oil to heat water to steam at 932° F (460° C), producing 870 psi pressure (60 Bar) that is used to turn windmill-like blades in the turbines. The original 170,000 HP and 34 knot max. speed has been reduced to 54,000 HP and 25 knots. The ship gets about 33 feet to the gallon of fuel.

Into the Loire & On to the Atlantic

On May 11, 1960, at 4:15 p.m., the *S/S France* is launched. The ship's godmother, Madame Yvonne de Gaulle, performs the honors. The vessel enters the Loire River at a speed of 14 knots. Afterward, President de Gaulle proclaims, "Vive la France! Vive le France!" "Long live France; long live the France!"

It will require an additional eighteen months of fitting out before the superliner is complete.

After 4 years, 3 months and 28 days, *France* is complete. At slightly over 1,035 feet, it is the longest liner in the world. This is 4 feet longer than the *Queen Elizabeth*, 7 feet longer than *Normandie*, some 16 feet longer than the *Queen Mary*, and around 153 feet longer than the infamous *Titanic*.

End of an Era, End of the Line

In 1974, the French government withdrew support from CGT, focusing instead on the new Concorde. The Jet Age had begun well before the first keel plate had been laid. In fact, the liner's inaugural year was to be the first year more people crossed the Atlantic by air than by sea. Within months, 70% of trans-Atlantic travel was by air. By the end of the decade, less than 4% opted for a sea crossing of five days over a flight of hours.

Vive Le France!

In the mid-1950's, the French Line (CGT, or *la Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*) began contemplating the construction of a new ocean liner. The *Normandie* had been lost to fire in 1941. The *He de France* was to be retired in 1958, and *Liberté* (1930's *Europa*) was showing signs of age.

The British *Queens - Mary & Elizabeth* - were providing stiff competition, as was the 1952's speedy *S/S United States*. Talk on both sides of the pond was of potential sister ships, each upward of 75,000 tons.

The CGT's *Pasteur* had been considered for conversion as early as 1939, but had ultimately been rejected. The French also explored the possibility of a pair of 35,000 ton sisters. In the end, it was decided that a single new superliner was to be built to

replace both the *He de France* & *Liberté*. This was to be an enormous challenge, just what President Charles de Gaulle felt would lift the spirit & fuel the patriotism of a country recently ravaged by war. The order for a nearly 70,000 ton, quadruple screw, turbine steamer - to be named *S/S France* - is signed on July 25, 1956.

In September 1957, with an \$80 million budget (\$450 million in modern dollars), the first order for steel is placed at the shipyards of Chantiers de l'Atlantique in St. Nazaire, France. The French Line commits to \$66 million, the French government, to \$14 million. The final cost is not revealed, but the practice of using only the best & latest materials & technology will be evident in the final product.

undaunted, *France* & the celebrants aboard arrive to a gala reception at New York's Pier 88 on Feb. 8, 1962.

For the next twelve years, the ship will ply the Atlantic gaining notoriety as, among other things, the "finest French restaurant in the world", one of the finest ocean liners ever created. During this career, *France* completes 377 crossings & 93 cruises, among them, two around the world. The ship plays host to the likes of Salvador Dali (with his pet octopus), Alfred Hitchcock & the Mona Lisa (she is returned in kind by the *S/S United States*). Rarely will occupancy fall below 90%, but rarely will the ship prove profitable. It will require an annual subsidy of \$14 million from the French government simply to sustain operations.

and provide a 35% wage increase were unreasonable. *France* was never to cross the Atlantic again.

On October 9, 1974, *France* was taken out of service & mothballed in a Le Havre backwater. The dock was known as "Le Quai de l'Oubli" - literally, "The Quay of Oblivion"; figuratively, "The Quay of the Forgotten", as it would remain - well cared after, but no longer with a purpose - for more than four years.

The End of Oblivion

In 1977, an Arab oil millionaire purchased the *France* from the French Government for \$22 million. He also purchased some \$15 million worth of antique French furniture. The intent was to create a unique attraction off Daytona Beach, Florida: part hotel, part casino & part museum dedicated to French culture & history.

These plans never materialized, & the ship was placed on the market. Sales were rumored several times. The

Soviets are said to have considered the ship for a hotel, the Chinese for an industrial trade fair. The most common suitors, though, were scrap merchants, eager to part out the vessel.

Meanwhile, NCL, the innovative Norwegian Caribbean Line, had grown so much as to need another ship. The cruise market was booming & there wasn't time to build a totally new ship. Buying a ship from a competitor in prosperous times usually means paying

too much. Conversion of an existing ship was clearly the ideal solution to quickly expand the fleet.

For a time, the leading candidate was the *S/S United States*, the fastest ocean liner ever created. But the sale was thwarted by the fact that several features of the "Big U" remained classified as U.S. Military secret. This left the *France* at the top of the list.

In 1979, the *France* was purchased by NCL for \$18 million - scrap value.

From France to Norway

In August 1979, the *France* was rechristened "Norway" before Dutch tugs towed her to the Hapag-Lloyd Shipyards at Bremerhaven, West Germany. Upon arrival, the giant letters "FRANCE" were removed & returned to the French.

Some \$120 million (some reports say as high as \$130 million) would be necessary to convert the indoor trans-Atlantic liner into an outdoor Caribbean cruise ship. The black paint of the hull would be replaced by deep, sparkling blue. The red & black funnels would be painted in the NCL theme of the time, dark blue with a crescent slash of light cornflower blue over white.

Speeds over 30 knots may be needed for crossing the Atlantic quickly, but cruising is a leisurely pursuit. The two outboard props were removed, along with their shafts. New four-bladed screws replaced the inside five-bladed props. Two engines were disengaged & four boilers removed. *Norway* could now achieve 25 knots, if needed, but would operate most economically at 18 knots. An 800 ton per day oil consumption fell by a quarter, to around 200 tons per day.

Five diesel generators were added to provide electricity. Working with six of the original steam turbine generators, they produce up to 25,000 kW of power, enough for a city of 30,000 people.

Near the bow, the forward cargo hatches were covered over to create storage cradles for two custom made tenders (named *Little Norway I & II*). These 72 ton, 87 foot long craft can shuttle 450 passengers at a time from the ship to shore. This allows *Norway* access to most any port in the world.

Below the water, electric lateral thrusters were installed, three in the bow, two aft (3 are 1,750 hp, 2 are 3,000 hp). The tight turn radius & ability to pivot or move sideways eliminates the need for tugs in most ports.

Inside the ship, changes were made to increase passenger capacity to 2,181, up from the 2,044 of the *France*. Crew was reduced from 1,100 to 900. The balcony in the theatre was extended to accommodate (in the process, the original film projector was disabled; plans to relocate it so as to project from under the extended balcony could not be put into action as, it was discovered too late, that the room had been built around it & it could not be removed). Public areas were redecorated to provide a more festive environment. Air conditioning was upgraded (a system that supplements facilities for creating 530,000 gallons of water each day).

The most dramatic changes took place aft. Where once there had been a glass roof covering the Tourist Class swimming pool, now lies an outdoor pool & vast sun deck. Sometimes called the "carrier deck" extension, this overhanging expanse is considered quite a feat of naval architecture.

A deck below, the swimming pool itself became the dance floor for a dance club called "Dazzles". Slightly forward in the ship, the Tourist Class Smoking Room became the Monte Carlo Casino. Farther forward, just behind the first funnel, what had been an open courtyard for first class cabins provided a ready-made well for yet another outdoor pool.

The entire conversion was completed in just ten months. In early May 1980, the new *Norway* made her first port of call in her namesake country at Kristiansand, then on to the capitol at Oslo. After a brief visit to Southampton, she crossed to New York, arriving May 16th & departing to Miami the May 17th - Norwegian Independence Day.

She would maintain an almost exclusive seven-day service to St. Thomas, Nassau & the Bahamas until crossing for refit in 1990.

S/S NORWAY

Why Ships are Called "She"

When the French proudly refer to the *France*, they use the masculine pronoun "he". Outside of the French language, however, ships are more often referred to in the feminine, as "she". This is intended to be respectful, but wily sailors many years ago came up with this explanation:

A ship should be called "she" because she...
... often has a bustle around her
... always has a gang of men about
... has a waist & stays
... needs a lot of paint to keep her looking good
... doesn't break you with the initial expense, rather with the upkeep
... can be all decked out
... needs an experienced man to handle her
... always shows her topsides, hides her bottom end, when coming into port, heads for the buoys!

Pampered Pets

Pets on the *France* were provided a daily menu & fully carpeted kennels. An outdoor walk featured a Paris lamp-post for Euro-Pets & a fire hydrant for American Canine.

Flotsam...

- ✦ Norway is the only ship flying the flag of the United Nations, a privilege granted by a special decree to honor the more than 52 nationalities represented within her crew.
- ✦ The keel of the ship has a double bottom that can store 3,653 tons of fuel, 117 tons diesel oil, & 682 tons of water; as a liner, a round-trip crossing did not require refueling.
- ✦ The graceful hull is made of 30" steel plates ranging from 1" to 2 1/4" thick welded together. None are perfectly flat.
- ✦ From the bridge, the horizon is approximately 10 nautical miles.
- ✦ The ship is both too long and too wide for the Panama Canal.
- ✦ The 3 forward anchors weigh 16 tons each; the aft anchor is 7 tons. Each link of chain is 250 lbs.
- ✦ Both propellers have four blades, and are 18 tons, with 18' diameters.
- ✦ Despite being the longest passenger ship in the world, the ship has no aft docking bridge.
- ✦ Today, the ship has 14 decks in total; 11 of these are above water.
- ✦ There are 12 elevators throughout the ship.
- ✦ The wardrobe room behind the stage of the Saga Theatre was originally a chapel; the "Porthole" kid's room was originally the outdoor dog walk and kennel.

The New Millennium

In May of the year 2000, *Norway* celebrated 40 years afloat. Just prior to this momentous milestone, NCL was purchased by Star Cruises of Asia. Under the new ownership, it was decided that the *Norway* was to be transferred out of the NCL fleet.



This image is taken from a commemorative embossed gold foil "print" issued by NCL in the 1980's. Aside from the tenders on the forward well deck and the overhanging "carrier deck" aft, *Norway* appeared outside much the same as she had as the *France* until the vertical expansion in 1990.

Onward & Upward: 1990 Refit

After a decade of cruising the Caribbean, it was time to grow again. In the fall of 1990, *Norway* journeyed once more to West Germany for a second major refurbishment.

The most ambitious of these changes was yet another triumph of naval architecture: two complete decks, the Sky Deck & Sun Deck (creating the open Star Deck atop) were added. This helped to create an additional 135 luxury suites & staterooms, increasing her capacity to 2,565. It also increased her tonnage to 76,049 GRT.

Two decks below, a 360' jogging track was wrapped around the Oslo Deck. Aft on this same deck, a new glass enclosure became the fitness room & gym. With these additions – and the success of several sports & fitness theme cruises – this deck was renamed "Olympic Deck".

The fitness center had previously been located on the Dolphin Deck, deep within the ship. This had been the First Class swimming pool in the days of the *France*. But a dramatic change would take place in this area. This was to become the new Roman Spa. Dressing rooms & the gym area were converted into massage rooms & saunas. A much smaller pool would now occupy the center of the room.

Just aft of the North Cape Lounge, the Lido Lounge was converted into a new

cattery called Le Bistro. The balcony in the Leeward Dining Room was enhanced, & several interior cabins were converted into grand deluxe staterooms.

The Monte Carlo Casino was reworked, displacing the Deco bar from the days of the *France* & with it one of the last outwardly visible traces of the original liner.

The unique, circular Isben Library & the adjacent card room gave way to retail space, the library being moved forward on International Deck to what had been the teen game room on the *France*.

Renewed once more, after enjoying some time in European waters, *Norway* returned to Miami & the Caribbean. Her service through the 90's would be similar to the previous decade. Routes within the Caribbean would change slightly now & again &, on occasion, she would cross the Atlantic for a brief visit & maintenance.

Other subtle changes came in the 1990's, as well. The letters on her stern indicating the port of registry as Oslo changed to Nassau. The bright green outdoor carpet on her uppermost decks was replaced by deep blue. The mostly white funnels became solid navy, sporting a new, gold NCL logo.

What would not change would be the ship's status as the longest, & one of the most unique, cruise ships in the world.

On September 2, 2001, the *Norway* departed Miami for what was to have been the final time. *Norway* was to be re-deployed in Asia. Rumors abounded that the ship would become a casino, still sailing, but in what state?

Things changed on September 11th.

when terrorist attacks on the U.S. shook the world & the cruise industry. Shortly after completing her "Farewell Crossing" it was announced *Norway* would return to Miami.

The next chapter in the *Norway's* history is yet to be written. ✦

More to Know About Norway**Crew Information**

The ship's crew of over 900 includes members from over 52 different nationalities. *Norway* is the only commercial ship in the world today allowed to fly the blue and white flag of the United Nations, an honor granted by special decree. On a typical cruise, a sampling of the departments serving aboard looks like such:

• Deck Department.....	56	• Gift Shop Department.....	24
• Engine Department.....	79	• Hotel Department.....	197
• Purers Department.....	17	• Cruise Staff / Entertainment Dept.....	83
• Medical (2 Doctors, 3 Nurses).....	5	• Spa / Salon Staff.....	21
• Dining Room Staff.....	152	• Casino Staff.....	34
• Chefs and Cooks.....	168	• Photographers.....	7
• Bar Department.....	60	• Laundry Staff.....	17

On The Bridge

In days past, navigation of great ocean liners was achieved primarily through the use of crude intercom systems and engine room telegraphs. These telegraphs sent signals to the engineers regarding the speed and direction of port and starboard engines and, in some cases, the direction of the rudder. Although now linked to computer-controlled systems, engine room telegraphs still exist. In fact, the non-computerized rudder control telegraph from the original late 1950's design of the ship remains functional and is centrally located along the back wall of the bridge.

Some of the other systems you'll find on the bridge include...

- **P/A or Paging System** – The Public Address system allows the Captain to make announcements to passengers and crew throughout the ship; it is also of vital service in emergencies (in tandem with the ship's whistle). The bridge P/A will override any other address system on board.
- **VHF Radio** – (Very High Frequency Radio) is used for ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communications, based on the channel selected. Channel 16 is reserved for emergency use. Satellite phone communications are also available.
- **Radar** – Just like the weather radar seen on TV news programs, the ship's radar scans the surrounding area and indicates everything above the water (land, rain, other vessels). This system can calculate data on twenty-four separate objects at a time and can be used to determine course, direction, speed, CPA (closest point of approach).
- **Radio Direction Finder** – Provides directional information by determining bearing to Radio Beacons.
- **Echo Sounder** – A sonar (sound) device to give the depth of the water between the keel and the ocean floor.
- **Electronic Chart** – A computerized version of traditional charts used to plot and track the course of the ship.
- **GPS Navigator** – (Global Positioning System) This device uses information from twenty-four satellites orbiting the Earth to precisely determine the latitude and longitude of the ship; it is accurate to within just a few yards.
- **Bridge Wings** – The extensions on either side of the bridge are used primarily when maneuvering the ship in and out of ports; they provide unobstructed views for the length of the ship. Many of the controls found on the bridge are duplicated on each bridge wing, including engine and rudder controls as well as the five controllers used to operate the three forward and two aft lateral thrusters.
- **Ship's Whistle** – The grand, tri-tone whistle can be set to automatically sound the three-blast traditional departure announcement, the seven-blast emergency stations call, repeated blasts for fog conditions, and other series.
- **Log Book** – The log records the events that take place during each voyage; this includes departure and arrival times, speed, course adjustments, medical or other emergencies, mechanical problems, etc.

Safety and Environment

A great deal of effort is put into making the *Norway* as safe and comfortable as possible. Regular drills are conducted, including training and testing by the U.S. Coast Guard. The ship complies with SOLAS 74, the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, standards. Life jackets are available for all aboard and there are more than enough places on the twenty-two covered lifeboats for all on board (thanks to *Titanic*). Additional inflatable lifeboats supplement their capacity. These lifeboats also have locating beacons and other communication and navigation systems.

Other safety and environmental systems include...

- **Fire Control** – There are seven fire-fighting teams, 4,100 smoke detectors, and extinguishing systems employing Halon, water, powder, foam and carbon dioxide through sprinklers, portable units and fixed installations.
- **Air Conditioning** – A chilled water system with a cooling capacity of 12,500 Kw at 42° F (6° C).
- **Waste Management** – Garbage is separated for incineration or shore disposal or recycling. The Norwegian-made incinerator (Norskhydro brand) was added during conversion for cruising and vents through the forward funnel.