



COSTA SMERALDA LIVES UP TO HER NAME

COSTA SMERALDA is not only the newest, biggest and most environmentally friendly vessel in the current Costa fleet, its building at Meyer Turku also marked the return of Costa to Finland where it had already built two vessels in the early 2000s.

TEXT: KAI ORTEL PHOTOS: COSTA CROCIERE

Hot on the heels of the June 2015 order for two LNG-powered mega cruise ships for its German brand Aida Cruises, Carnival Corporation ordered two more units based on the 'Helios' platform for its Costa Crociere brand. By then the Carnival Corporation had already recognized that LNG was "the world's cleanest burning fossil fuel", preventing emissions of particulate matters and sulphur oxides almost entirely, and also reducing the emissions of NO_x and CO₂. The order was split between Meyer Papenburg (Aida) and Meyer Turku (Costa) with the delivery of the two Costa ships originally scheduled for 2019

and 2020, respectively.

Concurrent with the first steel cutting on 13 July 2017, the name COSTA SMERALDA was revealed and her introduction into service announced for 20 October 2019. Meanwhile the Helios Class had grown to nine ships with three vessels earmarked for Aida Cruises, two units for Costa, two for Carnival Cruise Line and a further two for P&O Cruises. Each vessel features the same basic hull form, overall dimensions and propulsion, but is designed and fitted out differently according to the standards, trademarks and demands of each respective national brand.

COSTA SMERALDA's assembly started on 4 July 2018 and the construction at first progressed according to schedule with the float-out on 15 March 2019. Four days later there was a small fire which could be quickly contained. The origin of the fire was never cleared, but in June Meyer Turku confirmed three cases of attempted sabotage. Although none resulted in significant damage to the ship itself or disrupted its building schedule, on 17 September Costa was forced to postpone the planned October debut of the ship by four weeks. The delay meant that five cruises had to be cancelled and the vessel's new



La Spiaggia, the swimming pool area amidships on deck 17, is named after a beach at Sardinia' Costa Smeralda.



With the „CoDe”, COSTA SMERALDA features her own onboard design museum.

maiden voyage was now set to start on 30 November from Savona. But this deadline could not be kept either; on 29 October another three-week delay was announced. In both cases, no reasons for the delay were given, but as with AIDAnova, which had suffered a similar setback one year before, the installation of the complex LNG system was regarded as the main challenge in construction.

After completing a second set of sea trials in mid-November, COSTA SMERALDA was handed over in Turku on 5 December 2019. The next day, the vessel embarked on its positioning voyage to the Mediterranean, finally setting sail for its maiden voyage on 21 December. In doing so, COSTA SMERALDA wrapped up an eventful year for the Carnival Corporation which had seen no less than three more newbuildings being delivered to its various brands within a ten-month period: CARNIVAL PANORAMA, SKY PRINCESS and COSTA VENEZIA. Since then, the new flagship of Costa Crociere has been sailing on a repetitive year-round seven-day itinerary which includes

Savona, Marseille, Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca, Civitavecchia and La Spezia.

Italy's finest

The ‘leitmotif’ for the interior outfitting of the new Costa flagship was to express Italy’s finest, Costa’s definition of true Italian shipboard architecture and design. COSTA SMERALDA, at a building cost of approximately USD 950 million, was to become an “ambassador for Italy at sea”. In February 2016, Costa had already presented the ship’s creative director, Adam D. Tihany, who had earlier been involved in other Carnival projects, notably KONGSDAM and SEABOURN ENCORE. For the vessel’s cabins and various public spaces, Costa hired a team of four firms to share the task of interior design: Jeffrey Beers International, Dordoni Architetti, Partner Ship Design and Rockwell Group. With the exception of German-based Partner Ship Design, all members in the COSTA SMERALDA team had vast experience in hotel and restaurant design, but not so much in ship design. This would guarantee the fresh and unbiased approach Costa

was looking for. In early May 2018, before Meyer Turku had even laid its keel, Costa Crociere presented the first virtual reality preview of the vessel, highlighting it as an “authentic tribute to Italy”.

The finished product has indeed become nothing less than that. It starts with the deck plan which reads like a tour of Italy. All the decks are named after Italian cities from the south to the north, so you can climb your way (if you’re fit enough) from Palermo (Deck 4) to Trieste (Deck 20). With regard to the cabins themselves, Dordoni Architetti – in charge of cabin design – made sure that the colours and photographs in both the corridors and the cabins would capture the spirit of each respective city after which the deck was named. Furthermore, all of the furnishings, lightings, fabrics and accessories on board COSTA SMERALDA were ‘made in Italy’, with many items especially commissioned for the ship. Costa Crociere also highlighted that although in Italy it could often take months for subcontractors to reply to an offer, those asked to contribute to the prestigious COSTA SMERALDA project all confirmed their engagement within three days!

Pioneering a new era

Together with her somewhat older ‘cousin’ AIDAnova, COSTA SMERALDA is pioneering LNG propulsion in cruise shipping, the four MaK 16 M 46 DF dual fuel engines having a total output of 61,760kW. The LNG, supplied by Shell Western LNG BV, is stored in three tanks which generate 100% of the power required both at sea and in port. The tanks were built by Meyer’s German subsidiary Neptun Werft in Rostock. Two of the tanks each measure around 35m in length and 8m in diameter, each with a capacity of 1,525m³. A third tank, measuring 5m in diameter, is 28m long and has a capacity of around 520m³. All three tanks were built using cryogenic steel covered with special insulating ma-



1 - Campari Bar (deck 7), 2 - Wine Bar Ferrari (deck 6), 3 - Il Bacaro Bar (deck 8), 4 - LAB Restaurant (deck 8), 5 - Rugantino Restaurant (deck 7).

terials, and installed in specific protected places on board. One full LNG tank is able to power COSTA SMERALDA for at least two weeks. LNG refuelling takes place in Barcelona, and in addition to AIDAnova and COSTA SMERALDA, her sister ship COSTA TOSCANA will also use the Spanish port for refuelling once in service in 2021.

Costa Crociere calls the COSTA SMERALDA a “smart city” and emphasizes the “big leap in sustainability” her introduction means to the fleet. Both her passengers and crew members alike are regarded as “citizens at sea” who are not

least responsible for undertaking steps towards sustainability themselves. Furthermore, COSTA SMERALDA, although designed to run solely on LNG, is also equipped with all the necessary technology to receive shore power if needed or required.

What's new on board?

The focal point of the ship where passengers congregate is the Colosseo. This is the equivalent of the signature Theatrium, a combination of theatre and atrium, on AIDAnova. The new Costa ship has been designed with a slightly amended version

of the Theatrium, the Colosseo being a three-storey atrium with various entertainment features, LED screens on the walls and ceiling, and the popular panoramic views of the sea on both sides. It is surrounded by themed lounges and bars and is regarded as the ‘heart’ of the ship.

Italian hospitality and cuisine have always been the centre of attention for Costa Crociere and remain a fundamental and distinctive element of the Costa brand. Especially with regard to the dining experiences, COSTA SMERALDA has taken this philosophy to a new level. There are 16 restaurants/places to eat and



Tutti a Tavola Restaurant (deck 11) and Piazza Trastevere (deck 8).



19 bars in total; these include the Tutti a Tavola, a new family restaurant with entertainment elements, the Teppanyaki, a Japanese-themed specialty restaurant, and even a dedicated Nutella Café. The most innovative one is the LAB Restaurant. Derived from its full name ‘Laboratorio del Gusto’, the LAB is a restaurant with 24 cooking stations and 48 seats where

As well as using LNG as its fuel and thereby reducing vessel emissions, a whole series of other technological innovations have been designed to support environmentally friendly operations:

- A modern desalination system enables the ship to source its daily water requirements directly from the sea.
- 100% of the waste produced is being separated. Aluminium, glass, metal and plastic are later recycled, whilst surplus edible food is donated to people in need in the ports of call.
- Broad initiatives have been undertaken to minimize energy consumption; the ship’s ‘intelligent energy efficiency concept’ includes LED lighting, and an innovative hull design that significantly reduces frictional drag.
- Both the ship’s engines and galley ovens are able to recover generated heat.
- The vessel’s elevators can also recover energy by feeding it back into the onboard electricity system.

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passengers can prepare their own dishes under the guidance of the ship’s own chefs. The LAB Restaurant gives its guests a unique edutainment experience, but also offers a holistic approach to developing responsible food consumption. It is run in cooperation with the University of Gastro-nomic Sciences in Piedmont.

Another unique feature is the CoDe. The abbreviation stands for ‘Costa Design Collection’, a fully-fledged museum on Deck 7, celebrating Italian design in general and that of COSTA SMERALDA in particular. The 400 m² area was curated by the Italian architect Matteo Vercelloni and is marketed by Costa as a “self portrait of Italy through time”.

Last but not least, Costa has also

completely redesigned the outside decks compared to her cousin AIDA nova. At the stern (decks 16-18), you can find the large Piazza di Spagna, a terrace-shaped stairway on three decks facing aft, which includes an open-air balcony on the top deck and a large LED screen for open air cinema screenings. Just like the Colloseo, the spacious Piazza di Spagna is another focal point that brings people together – quite a contrast to other recent cruise vessels where this space has been given over to large aqua parks, laser-tag arenas or adult-only lounges. Not least in this respect, the new Costa flagship stands in the best tradition of Costa Crociere as a family-friendly and cosmopolitan pan-European cruise line. ■

Main particulars

IMO	9781889
Class	RINA
Length oa	337.0m
Beam	42.0m
Draft	8.80m
GT	183,731
Main engines	4 x MaK 16 M 46 DF - 15,440 kW each
Service speed	17 knots
Max passenger capacity	6,518
Passengers (double occupancy)	5,224 in 2,612 cabins
Crew	1,682

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