



MSC Grandiosa – first cruise ship to resume sailings from an Italian port



Costa Cruises restarted out of Trieste with Costa Deliziosa

# First movers

By Luca Peruzzi

**A**fter a temporary halt to cruise operations for five months or so, a formal green light for restarting big ship cruising in the Mediterranean came from the Italian government on August 7.

With pre-embark swab tests for everyone, MSC Cruises' MSC Grandiosa was the first cruise ship to resume sailings from an Italian port departing Genoa on August 16 for a 7-night cruise in the Western Mediterranean, with interporting stops in Civitavecchia, Naples, Palermo and a transit call in Valletta (Malta). Schengen passengers from 26 countries were able to sail although the majority of the first few cruises were Italians.

At each embarkation port 15-20 manned medical stations and clearance to board is being provided within 60-90 minutes of arrival.

Costa Cruises' restart followed soon after when Costa Deliziosa left Trieste on September 6 for a seven-day cruise with stops at Bari, Brindisi and Corigliano-Rossano on the Adriatic and Ionian Sea port of Siracusa and Catania in Sicily.

Italian ports, terminals and destinations and the entire service chain worked hard with numerous authorities over the summer in support of MSC Cruises and Costa Cruises preparations to welcome guests back on board and apply the national protocol and the higher standards requested by the individual lines.

Both companies' scientific teams have made an effort to give passengers and crews an increased level of biological risk mitigation.

Both companies also worked with RINA to verify their protocol compliance. Both require rigorous crew screening/pre-embarkation and throughout the cruise duration. Both are travelling with reduced occupancy and enhanced sanitation protocols.

MSC Cruises said feedback from the thousands of passengers who've sailed so far has been 'extremely positive.'

The safeguarding rules applied during excursions, highlighted the robustness and flexibility of the applied procedures and protocols, notwithstanding the fluid

situation being encountered due to the evolving pandemic limitations.

Guest response to the new look post-COVID cruise product has spurred both MSC and Costa to push forward with programmes in the Med for the coming winter.

With the exception of Italians only during Costa Deliziosa's first three cruises, through September 20, and the first sailing of Costa Diadema on September 19 from Genoa, this winter season 2020/21 – starting September 27 – will be open to residents of European countries included in the Italian government's September 7 decree.

These (List A and List B countries) include Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Hungary, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and the UK. Costa will adapt should the government make changes.

Costa Firenze, under construction at Fincantieri's Marghera shipyard and designed for China, initially will be sailing in the Mediterranean into next year. Starting December 27, 2020, it will operate a weeklong cruise including Savona, La Spezia, Naples, Valencia, Barcelona and Marseille.

Starting from November, Costa Diadema will offer two different itineraries: a 12-day sailing to the Canary Islands and a 14-day cruise to Egypt and Greece. Costa Deliziosa will continue one-week itineraries from Trieste to Greece until October 10. A world cruise is also confirmed with Costa Deliziosa, departing on January 3, 2021, for its 13th edition.

MSC Magnifica will commence from Bari to Italian and Greek destinations starting on October 19 and the ship will sail longer (10-night) cruises to both the Western and Eastern Mediterranean, instead of just to the Eastern Med.

MSC Magnifica's new itinerary from Genoa has calls at Livorno, Messina (Sicily), Valletta (Malta), Piraeus and Katakolon in Greece and Civitavecchia (Rome). In early 2021, the ship is scheduled to embark on its second consecutive annual world cruise.