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# SEA CLOUD NEWS UPDATE

OFFICIAL CREW NEWSLETTER FROM  
UNICREW MANAGEMENT LTD.

Isn't she a beauty!



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## US restarts cruise, but cautiously

### Foreword

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**US** cruise ships can sail again beginning November under a conditional health order that require a host of measures, including testing and quarantine. Under the new guidelines, no ship will sail with passengers immediately but trial runs with full crew may be allowed to test the effectiveness of the plan.

However, cruise companies must prove they can operate safely with crew onboard by carrying out a simulated voyage, or a series of simulated voyages, with volunteer guests and crew. The simulation itineraries should provide regular onboard services such as meals and entertainment in common areas of the ship while maintaining social distancing.

Crew and passengers will wear masks in public spaces while ships will be required to have COVID-19 testing laboratories on board for conducting tests at regular intervals. Symptomatic travelers on the ship will have to be isolated, and the remaining passengers quarantined.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) outlined the phased approach, acknowledging in a statement that cruising “safely and responsibly during a global

pandemic” would be very challenging. The health agency had tried to extend the no-sail order until next February, but the White House blocked the order in an apparent attempt to avoid alienating the powerful tourism industry in Florida.

The initial phases will consist of testing and additional safeguards for crew members. CDC said it will ensure cruise ship operators have adequate health and safety protections for crew while operators build the laboratory capacity needed to test future passengers. Subsequent phases will include simulated voyages to test cruise ship operators’ ability to mitigate COVID-19 risk, certification for ships that meet specific requirements and a phased return to passenger voyages in a manner that mitigates COVID-19 risk among travelers, crew and US communities.

These phases are subject to change based on public health considerations and cruise operators’ demonstrated ability to mitigate risk. The CDC said it will issue additional orders as needed that will be published in the Federal Register and technical instructions that will be subsequently posted on its website.

The CDC further announced requirements for the initial phases relating to crew

testing. The agency considers adequate crew safeguards as demonstrated through laboratory testing for COVID-19 an integral part of the initial phases prior to beginning passenger operations.

While issuing the conditional sail order, the CDC stated that the recent outbreaks on cruise ships overseas give evidence that cruise ship travel facilitates amplify the transmission of COVID-19 even when the ships sail with a reduced passenger load and would likely spread the disease in US communities if passenger operations were to resume in the United States without public health oversight.

Meanwhile in Europe, even as the CDC took hesitant steps towards full opening of cruise operations, AIDA cancelled all cruise sailing for November as a direct result of Germany announcing a lockdown and adopting far-reaching measures to contain COVID-19. The company said it fully supported the German government’s decision to impose further restrictions on public life and travel to limit the spread of COVID-19. But at the same time, TUI Cruises announced its will not be halted because of the lockdown in Germany. TUI currently has three ships in service, two sailing from German homeports and another operating in Greece.





# Birthday Celebration for Ionel Ianculescu



**Happy Thanksgiving**



**Both vessels try to keep morale and spirits high onboard**



# SEA CLOUDS IN NEWS

## Captain Schöber takes over

Captain Gerald Schöber, Master of Sea Cloud Spirit, who joined in late September, visited the Vigo shipyard in Spain earlier this month to support the final stages of the shipbuilding project and take stock of the finishing touches that would be required before the ship can come out for a test sail. Chief Engineer Koenig, who joined on 11th September, is working closely with Captain Schöber to get the vessel ready for the sailing season.

The 55-year-old Gerald Schöber comes from North Germany and brings with him years of windjammer experience. “It is very special to be the first Captain on such a unique ship,” the Captain said. “At a time when everything seems to be over-the-top, faster and more digital, traditional hand-sailed ships stand for deceleration and relaxation. It is an awe-inspiring experience, when a ship is only moved by wind power.”

Capt. Schöber plans to maintain Sea Cloud’s Open Bridge policy in which guests are welcomed to the bridge for discussions and Q&A sessions with the Captain and other senior crew. Captain Schöber is eager to spend some time on Sea Cloud and Sea Cloud II to learn about the company’s sailing legacy before returning to command his own ship.

## Sea Cloud II in the spotlight

Captain Kathryn Whittaker and her crew were recently in the news as subject of an article on how a cruise ship and its crew are coping with the lockdown and how they are getting ready to sail again. The story appeared in the UK’s Metro News website which gets some 57 million unique

visitors every month. Metro’s readers are a young, mobile-savvy metropolitan audience.

Titled *Captain of one of the world’s finest cruise ships reveals what life is like in lockdown*, the articles the Sea Cloud II story in great detail, beginning with how the ship was caught by surprise while sailing in the Caribbean in March. After



disembarking a group of passengers from the UK, the Sea Cloud II sailed 3,000 miles to Las Palmas, where it has been berthed ever since.

The article captures Captain Whittaker’s unusual predicament of feeling stranded and unable to do anything about it while working hard with her crew of 12 to keep the vessel seaworthy and longing for the open seas. ‘We are all longing for the day when we can unfurl the sails again,’ she told Metro. ‘We normally have plenty of passengers and it’s just incredibly quiet onboard and so unusual to walk around and not see or talk to anybody for a few hours at a time.’ She is concerned about a possible second wave of the pandemic and uncertain about what would happen in March or April when the Sea Cloud II is expected to sail again.

Follow this link to read the full article: <https://metro.co.uk/2020/10/30/captain-of-one-of-the-worlds-finest-cruise-ships-reveals-what-life-is-like-in-lockdown-13509340/>

# CRUISE NEWS

## Sailing Schedule

### 2020-2021

Revised sailing schedule has been announced for all three Sea Cloud vessels now that we have a definite timeline for the completion of Sea Cloud Spirit. Of course, this is a proposed schedule for the 2021 Sea Cloud fleet calendar and will depend on how the global pandemic situation evolves in the coming months.

**SEA CLOUD** sets sail on 2nd April, 2021 from Piraeus, Greece

**SEA CLOUD II** sets sail on 17th March, 2021 from Las Palmas, Spain

**SEA CLOUD SPIRIT** inauguration and inaugural sail on 13th April 2021 from Malaga, Spain.

Sea Cloud Spirit is scheduled to be delivered 28th February 2021 based on the actual building status. Sea trials begin in early February.

## More cruise cancellations expected in Europe

European cruise lines that recently restarted operations will now have to rethink their sailing itineraries because of fresh lockdowns in Italy and the United Kingdom, and a spate of travel restrictions in Germany and France owing to the fresh resurgence of COVID-19 cases across the continent.

Costa Cruises has been forced to put the brakes on its resumption of service. The company's plans to start Caribbean cruises this winter were canceled as well as the previously announced world cruise. Costa also postponed 14-day cruises planned for the Mediterranean till April 2021 and the launch of

its newest ship, the Costa Firenze till February 28, 2021. Costa, however, said it will not put off taking delivery of the new vessel in December 2020.

Costa currently has two cruise ships in operation — Costa Deliziosa and Costa Smeralda — and the company announced changes to the planned itineraries for both vessels. Costa Smeralda will continue her current trips only to Italian ports, instead of stopovers in France and Spain which were earlier added to the itinerary. Similarly, Costa Deliziosa continues her cruises from Trieste, Italy to Katakolon, Piraeus, and Heraklion in Greece and Bari instead of visiting Montenegro and Croatia as planned earlier.

So far, none of the cruise lines have been forced to suspend operations. Germany's TUI is operating short sea cruises from Germany to the North Sea. However, since starting in July, the company has not been able to add new ports to the itineraries. TUI operated air-sea cruises to Greece and has announced plans for cruises around the Canary Islands in November. Hapag Cruises has also been using its ships for short cruises from Germany, which have included stops in Gothenburg, Sweden. MSC also continues to operate its cruises from Italy and on 19th October, the second cruise ship, MSC Magnifica, returned to service. This ship is offering 10-day cruises from Genoa combining ports in Italy and Greece.

Each of the cruise lines is confident that with the current safety protocols they have in place, they can continue to operate successfully.

### Crew Change October 2020 / Sea Cloud

Fitter Nicolae Jitea, [Joined 10th October](#)

### Crew Change October 2020 / Sea Cloud II

Captain Kathryn Whittaker, [Joined 3rd October](#)

Captain Christian Pfenninger, [Disembarked 5th October](#)



## From Jason's Desk

Crew change has seen no improvement and we are already in the second wave of the pandemic. Some 400,000 seafarers are still waiting to go home after having spent months on board over their actual contract tenure. Port authorities won't allow them to disembark fearing new Covid-19 infections. One Filipino assistant engineer had been on the same ship for nearly 16 months, not having set foot on land since a short leave in August 2019. He said he had daily jobs and reports to complete which made it impossible to take a day off. Nine of his colleagues had been on board for just as long. It was turning into a mental health crisis for them.

Since my short visit to Manila in March, I have watched in horror and consternation how crew safety has been ignored by the higher ups in the shipping industry to keep cargo moving from port to port. I continue to highlight this issue through this newsletter of ours. Crew safety cannot be compromised, and crew welfare cannot be overlooked. The pandemic gave us a clear picture of where we are all going wrong and what should be done immediately to set the course right.

INTERCARGO, the trade body representing dry bulk says that in a number of instances, dry bulk

charterers have prevented crew change during the charter period despite the owner's readiness to accept the costs. This "flies in the face of industry-wide efforts to offer seafarers the essential rest that they have been so long without during the COVID-19 pandemic, and which is essential to the safe operation of the shipping sector."

More recently, misleading newspapers headlines were busy creating a smokescreen of assurance by claiming some cruise lines promise 100% testing of guests and crew. Most of these headlines appeared after this year's Seatrade Cruise Convention. However, COVID-19 tests are not 100% accurate, nor are cruise lines responsible for all the testing. Rapid tests are not available to all guests. There is no 100% consistency between the testing of guests and crew. Where all this hype of 100% testing come from is anybody's guess, but unless all crew are administered the best possible testing on board, before embarkation and after disembarkation, crew safety remains a questionable debate in this pandemic.

Finally, now that we have a start date for cruises, crew planning for all three Sea Cloud vessels will begin December 2020. All crew should indicate availability by email to [info@unicrew.co.uk](mailto:info@unicrew.co.uk).

**Photo Captions:** Page 1, Crew Art installation from Sea Cloud II. Page 4, AIDA cruise ship, AIDAblu, just before the cancellation of the remaining 2020 season. Page 3-4, Crew having a ball at Electrician Ionel Ianculescu's birthday. Page 5, Sea Cloud Spirit in the final stages of building. Page 6, Captain Gerald Schober admiring a miniature model of his ship, Sea Cloud Spirit. Page 8, The birthday bash and Electrician Ianculescu's in the background.