

MSC Grandiosa: First Mediterranean cruise sets sail from Genoa

16 August 2020



MSC Grandiosa is set to be the first cruise ship to sail from an Italian port after the long stoppage in operations, with a 7-night voyage in the West Med, calling at Civitavecchia-Rome, Naples, Palermo in Sicily and La Valletta in Malta.

It is an event of profound emotional significance as it marks the return to safe travel across the most beautiful cities in the Mediterranean, and it is seen as a first step towards rebooting a crucial sector of the Italian maritime industry. In addition, the sailing of MSC Grandiosa represents a key test for the cruise industry worldwide, as the close cooperation between the public authorities and private operators has introduced, on board, the implementation of a protocol of stringent health and safety measures to protect all passengers and crew. Following the approval by the government Technical-Scientific Committee of the comprehensive safety protocol submitted by the cruise lines and the Coastguards, the Italian Government gave the go-ahead to cruise ships to resume operations as of 15 August.

MSC Cruises is firmly committed to safeguarding the health of its guests at all times: spanning booking and embarkation procedures, life onboard, shore excursions and through to the return back home, whilst preserving simultaneously the unique full-cruise experience.

Within this framework, the cruise line has set out, in conjunction with a team of international consultants, a rigorous safety and health protocol which meets and exceeds the stringent guidelines provided by the government regulatory committee: including, medical screening and universal Covid-19 tests for all guests and crew prior to boarding, "protected" shore excursions organised exclusively by the cruise line, greater social distancing onboard due to the reduced operational capacity of the ship and the provision of upgraded health services onboard. In addition, RINA, the independent maritime certification company, has verified that the protocol complies with EU guidance to guarantee the maximum protection of guests, crew and, ashore, the local communities in the ports of call-destinations.

For its first voyage since the public health crisis crippled the cruise industry, the operator MSC, with the full support of Stazioni Marittime Terminal, the Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority and all the local public authorities, ensured that, notwithstanding all the new procedures put in place in the Port of Genoa, passengers were welcomed in full comfort and safety.

Paolo Emilio Signorini, President, Western Ligurian Sea Port Authority: "The Ports of Genoa is pleased to welcome MSC Grandiosa as the first cruise ship to set sail on a voyage since March. In 2019 we passed the 2-million cruise passenger threshold for the first time, consolidating our position in the first two months of 2020 amongst the top Mediterranean ports, with a record 150,000 passengers (+32% compared to 2019), confirmation of the considerable potential of the Cruise Ports of the Western Ligurian Sea to develop further. Today's departure of MSC Grandiosa from the Port of

Genoa is the result of our firm commitment to reactivate cruise tourism across the Mediterranean and worldwide, towards new horizons of safety, serenity and prosperity.”

Edoardo Monzani, CEO, Stazioni Marittime SPA: “Today is an historic day for the Port of Genoa; MSC Cruises, leader in the Mediterranean cruise market, has chosen Genoa and Stazioni Marittime to celebrate the revival of cruise activities, following the halt to operations worldwide due to the Covid-19 public health emergency. An important recognition to the port and to the city, which also confirms the high service quality offered by our terminal management company, even in extremely difficult times like these.”

Pierfrancesco Vago, Executive Chairman, MSC Cruises: “Today is a memorable day for Genoa, Italy and the cruise industry. We are proud to set sail from Italy, the home country of our roots, where we are established industry leaders and which represents our main market globally. And we are delighted to sail from Genoa, a city that we carry in our hearts, from the port where we handle more passengers than in any other port in the world and which has honoured its great seafaring tradition by welcoming, thanks to the full support of the local authorities and institutions, a considerable number of laid-up ships, with a degree of professionalism that has been emulated worldwide.”

Giovanni Toti, President, Liguria Region: “Choosing Genoa to resume the first cruise voyage, following the protracted epoch-breaking stoppage due to the Covid-19 emergency, is a recognition of the great work carried out by the cruise industry in Liguria and by the local Liguria authorities for the industry. At the beginning of the year, we saw significant passenger increases within reach of the Ligurian ports, which now jointly rank as the premier cruise cluster in the country. Today, we embark once again from this position, with the distinguishing confidence that has already reaped excellent results in recent years. Cruises are strategic to Liguria’s local economy, gaining more space in our ports, integrating with cargo-handling facilities and a key driver to boosting tourism across the whole region.”

Marco Bucci, Mayor of Genoa “Genoa welcomes the departure of the first cruise ship with great joy. The voyage of MSC Grandiosa across the West Med represents a tangible sign of the comeback on the part of one of the major economic industries of our city. We came to a halt during a period of great growth, as Genoa was establishing its leadership amongst the Mediterranean ports, and we are confident that she will return to the helm. The road has been mapped out and we must look to the future as a new challenge for the whole city, demonstrating, once again, the strength and desire to be a leading player of Genoa and of the Genoese”.