

# Cruise Ship Review

## MS Europa 2



MS Europa 2 © Hapag-Lloyd Cruises

Hapag Lloyd Cruises' all-suite, all-balcony Europa 2 is expensive. Sharron Livingston finds out what you get for your money.

"You are the chosen one" said Ulf Wolter, the fair-haired captain, of Europa 2 cruise ship. He was pointing at me. "Return here to the bridge at 6pm tomorrow night just before we set sail and I'll show you what to do".

That was an enticing offer, especially on a ship as stylish as Hapag-Lloyd Cruises' newest offering. Having a tour of the bridge is one thing, every passenger can have one, but pressing the captain's klaxon is quite another. In the meantime though, I had a medium-sized luxury ship to explore.

This was a four-night cruise, sailing from Lisbon to Lanzarote, calling at Morocco's Casablanca and Agadir with a day at sea. It was hardly any time at all, but enough to sometimes forget that I was on a liner. The bright décor, open spaces and easy decorum reminded me of times I had spent in luxury five star hotels.

This ship, probably the most expensive liner around, is not the largest – at most it will carry 500 passengers – but it offers a huge amount of space. Their

motto is "luxury is being able to waste space" and the space often showcases works of art and paintings by acclaimed artists such as Damien Hirst and Hockney.

And there's no need for room envy on this all-suite, all-balcony liner. There are eight grades and even the smallest room is a hefty 28m<sup>2</sup>/301ft<sup>2</sup> (the size of a studio flat). There's plenty of room for a huge double bed, lots of wardrobe space, a living area with a sofa, as well as a desk and tablet, flat panel TV and a mirror TV in the bathroom.

Mine was the spa room defined by a whirlpool and Jacuzzi and its own sauna-cum-shower in the ensuite. The largest suites are a humungous 100m<sup>2</sup>/1066ft<sup>2</sup> (as much space as a small house) with spa bathrooms that are larger than some double bedrooms – these are so luxurious they won't give out the price to idle enquirers.

Though drinks are not included in the fare, there

is a Nespresso machine and a free mini bar with various spirits, beers and soft drinks. Oh, and a welcome pack comprising fruit and bottle of Champagne.

Feeling as effervescent as the bubbly nectar I was now liberating into a flute, I took time to savour the moment on my veranda on the first night as we set sail from Lisbon. I soon settled on the cushioned sunbed, sipping and watching the twinkling city lights until they finally popped out of view.

In communal areas floor-ceiling windows let in lashing of light on all floors, with glass lifts to maintain the flow of light. The wide open reception area is particularly attractive decked in bright white, with comfy seating,



MS Europa 2 Grand Suite © Hapag-Lloyd Cruises



and a small bar with a piano whose melodic tinkering was good to hear even when just passing through.

The ship has a gym and spa, of course, and a pool surrounded by wooden decks where slumber comes easy on oversized sunbeds. From there stairs lead to the 10th floor and to a communal Jacuzzi – the centre point of a most peaceful segment of the ship.

That's where I spent one morning when everyone else had disembarked to visit Agadir (I had been before). I sat there relaxing in the bubbling water warmed the midday sun, so serene and all I wanted to do was sleep off the lethargy in one of the cushioned pods dotted around the deck.

This is a German ship, with unfamiliar sounds of German conversations in the ether. In social areas, such as taking tea at the Belvedere, drinks and nibbles at the Sansibar (a partly alfresco bar on deck 8) or cocktail parties around the pool I found myself, sometimes comically, engaging other cruisers with smiles and body language.

At night, entertainment comprised acrobatics, dance and music, but if the entertainment was a show with a lot of chatter, I was better off tapping toes at the Jazz Club with my favourite tiple.

Though I don't *sprechen Deutsch*, it wasn't a problem service-wise. Staff are multi-lingual and this is



MS Europa 2 Pool deck © Hapag-Lloyd Cruises

important because this year Hapag Lloyd Cruises want to reach out to the English speaking world.

Lunchtime, for me, was best enjoyed at the Yacht Club where a waitress/buffet combo and alfresco tables on the terrace appealed.

For non-meat eaters there's Weltmeere with its large vegetarian options and Sakura sushi restaurant which I liked so much that I joined the sushi making class on sea day. Though what I ended up with looked nothing like what I had been served at Sakura, it was a fun and a brilliant way to encourage camaraderie with other cruisers.

There are other ways to spend time, including a large screen golf simulator, lectures, wine and whiskey

tastings and yoga lessons.

It's good form to dress for dinner, and that fateful night, I'd made a special effort and headed for the bridge for my special pre-dinner role.

"You are just in time" acknowledged the captain. "You will be pressing the horn three times at five second intervals. Don't worry, I will signal you in".

It was simple enough, intensely satisfying and though it was all over quickly it was meaningful. After-all, I was signalling the departure from one port and beckoning in a whole new adventure, starting with a pre-dinner cocktail and ending with a day in Casablanca the next day.

Getting on board:

Cruise only fare from £3,140 per person.

Cruise-only fares include: accommodation in the category booked; full board on the ship; mini-bar in the suite; a different entertainment programme each day; port fees; and gratuities. Plus an onboard beverage credit of Euros 150 per person.

For Reservations: Atlantis Travel on 0208 501 0917, or contact your preferred cruise specialist

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MS Europa 2 Theater © Hapag-Lloyd Cruises