

# THE WORLD'S LARGEST CRUISE SHIP: BETWEEN DREAMS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRITICISM



Ordered by Royal Caribbean, the Icon of the Seas cruise ship weighs more than 250,000 tons, five times the size of the Titanic. Able to accommodate nearly 10,000 people on board, the Icon of the Seas is scheduled to set sail for its first voyage in January 2024. It is already attracting a lot of criticism.

The Icon of the Seas is an enormous yet, today, the largest cruise ship in the world built at the Turku shipyard in Finland. It has a gross tonnage of 250,800 tons, is 365 meters long, 46 meters high, and has 20 floors, making it look like a small town. In addition to its seven swimming pools, the ship features numerous shops, a water park, a surf simulator, and an ice rink. One of the ship's unique features is a massive glass dome covering its bow, showcasing impressive engineering. Tourists are eager to book their tickets for their first voyage in January 2024, with prices starting at over \$2,000 per person.

## Giants of the Seas criticized

According to Alexis Papathanassis, a professor of cruise management at the University of Applied Sciences in Bremerhaven, Germany, cruise ships have become more prominent over the past decade. However, this trend presents challenges such as overcrowded ports and insufficient crowd management infrastructure. To combat the adverse effects of over-tourism, some cities like Dubrovnik and Mallorca have limited cruise ship arrivals. At the same time, Amsterdam had closed a significant cruise ship terminal in its city center as part of its measures against mass tourism. Dubrovnik, known as the "pearl of the Adriatic," has been rationing the arrival of ships since 2019 due to overwhelming crowds of "Game of Thrones" fans.

## But that saves money

Cruise ship sizes are driven by cost, but reducing crew can make evacuations harder. Large ships offer economic benefits by lowering the cost per passenger. The sector is working to reduce its ecological footprint through waste treatment, emission reduction efforts, and sustainable development initiatives. Cruise professionals aim to achieve carbon-free cruises by 2050 and to reduce emissions by 40% in 2030.

## LNG, hybrid vessels...

Marie-Caroline Laurent suggests using low-carbon fuels like LNG to reduce CO2 emissions by 20% by 2027. Hybrid ships with various forms of energy on board, including sails, are another solution. However, sails may not be practical for cruising as they limit the ability to reach destinations efficiently.

Environmentalists are concerned about the expansion of cruise ships, which are becoming more numerous. While some ships use LNG, which emits less than traditional marine fuels, it causes

methane leaks that have a worse impact on the climate than carbon dioxide. Using LNG also encourages the development of the gas industry. In light of this, some argue that cruise ships are not worth the pollution they emit and could quickly be eliminated.

### **A strong recovery**

Cruise lines are rebounding after the pandemic, with the market returning strongly. The Cruise Lines International Association predicts passenger volumes surpassing pre-pandemic levels by 2023. France, in particular, is recovering strongly, with bookings up 40% from 2019.

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