

MSC Cruises thanks partners as it returns to service this summer

To mark the restart of its operations, MSC Cruises has created a YouTube video to thank its crew, staff, partners and guests

MSC Cruises has announced that its flagship MSC Grandiosa and MSC Magnifica will resume operations in the Mediterranean starting from August 16 and 29, respectively, offering guests full-experience cruise holidays.

The two ships will be the first to implement a new comprehensive health and safety protocol that has been approved by the relevant national authorities from the countries that the ships will call along their East and West Mediterranean itineraries this summer.

Pierfrancesco Vago, MSC Cruises' Executive Chairman said: "During the pause in our operations we focused on developing a comprehensive operating protocol that builds upon already stringent health and safety measures that have long been in place onboard our ships. We have worked closely with the relevant EU-level, national health and other authorities from the countries that MSC Grandiosa and MSC Magnifica will call along their Mediterranean itineraries to develop a comprehensive set of procedures designed to protect the health and safety of all passengers onboard our ships as well as ashore to ensure that local communities feel comfortable welcoming our guests."

The new procedures include universal COVID-19 testing for all guests and crew before embarkation and protected ashore visits at each destination.

Shopping safely onboard

Head of Retail Adrian Pittaway said: "We have created a comprehensive set of retail protocols with assistance from DFWC [Duty Free World Council], Aspen Medical, our partners and our in-house experts, and we are ready to welcome our loyal guests to shop safely with us onboard.

He added: "This really is the first important step in a long journey back for us, our onboard retail family and all our travel retail trade partners; we look forward to working with the rest of the cruise retail sector to help steer the learnings and develop industry-wide best practice."

MSC Grandiosa, the company's flagship, will offer seven-night cruises in the Western Mediterranean calling at the Italian ports of Genoa, Civitavecchia/Rome, Naples, Palermo and Valletta. MSC Magnifica will offer seven-night cruises in the Eastern Mediterranean departing from the Italian ports of Bari and Trieste, calling at the Greek ports of Corfu, Katakolon and Piraeus.

For this initial phase of the restart of operations, the two ships will initially only welcome guests who are residents in Schengen countries.

In other news, MSC Cruises has canceled all other cruises in the Mediterranean from August 16 through to and including October 31.

MSC Cruises also announced the cancelation of all US cruise departures up to and including October 31, in line with the announcement that Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) members will

voluntarily extend the suspension of cruise operations to this date.

The company has also canceled its Asian cruises from September 10 through to and including October 26.

MSC Cruises has revealed details of its programs starting in late October this year through to November 2021, covering the Winter 2020/2021 and the Summer 2021 seasons. Ships will offer itineraries across all the regions traditionally served by MSC Cruises in the Caribbean, Mediterranean, the Gulf, South Africa, South America and Asia.

About the ships

The company's new flagship, MSC Grandiosa, launched in November 2019 and is the first Meraviglia-plus generation ship. It features a promenade with LED sky screen, a wide choice of international dining options including five specialty restaurants, and an enhanced MSC Yacht Club.

MSC Grandiosa is the second MSC Cruises' ship to feature ZOE, the world's first virtual cruise personal assistant, and an updated MSC for Me digital innovation program.

Meanwhile, MSC Magnifica features a swimming pool with magrodome, a theater, full-scale casino, panoramic discotheque, and 4D cinema.

To mark the restart of its operations, MSC Cruises has created a YouTube video hashtagged #AWorldOfDiscovery to thank its crew, staff, partners and guests. It can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0wNBkqg-Ko>