

TEST CRUISE ON OUR NEW ECLIPSE SHIP COMPLETED!

By Paul D. Maley

After our original ship contract had been lost because of a routing change by the vendor Direct Travel was able to fortunately charter a brand new ship called the DIANA built for the Swan Hellenic cruise line. I was able to sail on it between May 14 and May 25 off the coast of Norway in order to check it out and insure it would work for us. Even though the ship holds 192 passengers there were only 30 on this 10 day cruise.



The DIANA

This ship has 9 decks and three of them (4, 5, and 6) contain the 96 passenger cabins. I was able to tour all but the most expensive cabin since it was occupied. Each cabin I found to be really well designed with similar amenities but some differences. For example, deck 4 cabins have 2 round windows and no balcony. When you first come aboard you will end up at reception (deck 4). On that deck there are two rows of cabins facing opposing sea directions. In between is the laundry area which contains 3 washer/dryer sets. You would not know this area contained these machines because it is very quiet. The washer/dryers are free of charge and are available 24/7.

There are 2 elevators on the ship and they operate from decks 3-8. What is on each floor is shown in the next image. You must walk up stairs from deck 8 to get to deck 9 as the elevator stops at 8. Deck 9 is called Stargazing and it is from there that I received permission that lights can be turned off at night to view the stars. I could not verify this because during the cruise the Sun was above the horizon almost 24 hours and was never close to being dark. Deck 9 will be one of several locations for eclipse viewing.

For deck 5 cabins there were 6 electrical charging plugs with one being US style, the others European (two round pins). None of the switches in the cabin are labeled so you have to experiment to determine which controls which function.

There is a medical area and their hours are posted on deck 3. Should you be prone to sea sickness I recommend you consider bringing Scopalomine patches (changed each 3 days), placed behind the ear which I have used successfully in all kinds of sea state.

Connectivity: WIFI is available all across the ship but it suffers from partial connectivity depending on the sea state and bandwidth being used. Best for email only and not for uploading/downloading.

If you are an experienced cruiser one thing you likely cannot stand is the constant announcements over the PA system. This ship does not have that. Remarkably, unless there is an urgent need to communicate information you will not hear any announcements. Instead you will get info from your wall-mounted TV.



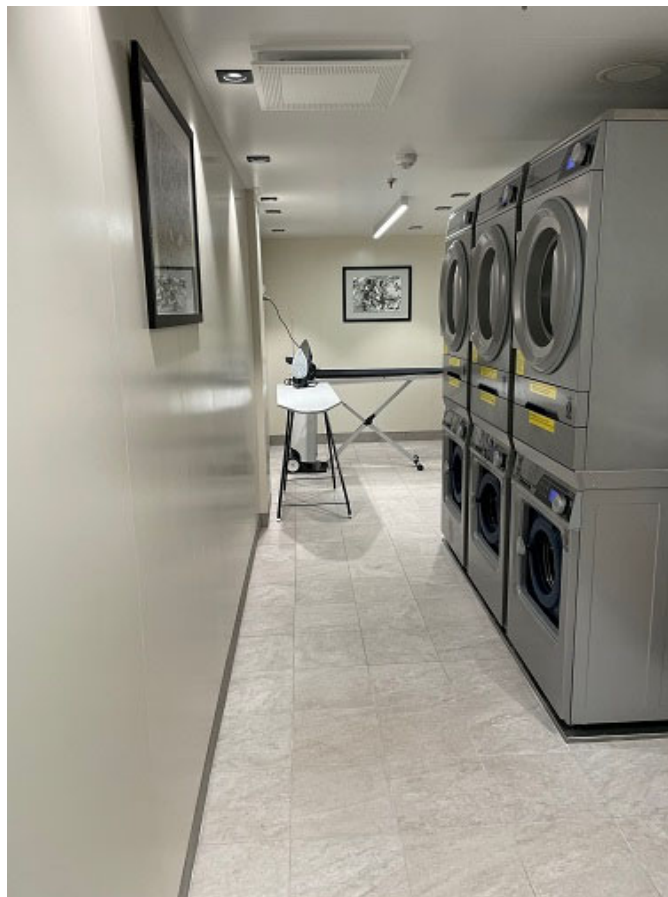
WHAT IS ON EACH FLOOR

Meal times are set but room service is available 24/7 although items are limited depending on time of day. If you have a balcony (decks 5 and 6) you may find the sliding glass door difficult to open at first. Large suitcases can fit under the bed while smaller carry ons can fit in the closets. In each cabin you will find a pair of Nikon binoculars for your use during the cruise. There is a mini-fridge, coffee maker, ice bucket and a small safe as well. The bathroom contains a flush toilet and walk in shower (for suites there is also a tub); for safety both the toilet area and shower have hand holds in case of ship movement. If you have never cruised before you must close the toilet lid before flushing.

If you choose not to attend a talk, each one may be recorded and can be played back when you desire. The presentation room on Deck 7 is big enough to hold all passengers and has multiple large screen TV's. On the opposite side of that deck is the Club Lounge where breakfast and lunch is taken. Early breakfast is in the Club Lounge.



ONE OF TWO ELEVATORS



WASHER/DRYER AREA WITH IRONING BOARD AND IRON

Cabins: I had a cabin on deck 5 which is representative of most cabins. There were 23 drawers that could be used to store things from your luggage. You may choose from one or two beds. On each side of the bed there is a light switch and

plugs as in the next image. The round area is a rheostat. The oblong switches are on/off switches for certain lights. There are also phone charging ports as can be seen from that photo.



BEDSIDE PANEL



SLIDING YOUR LARGE SUITCASE UNDER A TWIN BED CONFIGURED CABIN

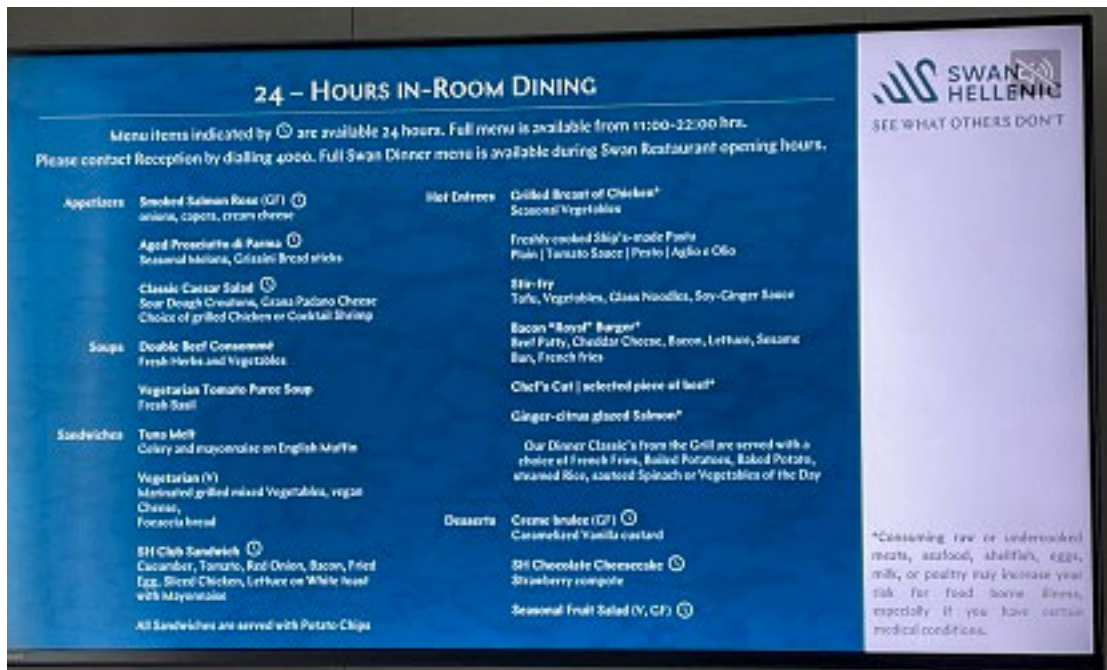


BATHROOM AMENITIES IN THE SHOWER

There are two venues for meals. The first is the Swan Restaurant on deck 4; the other is the Club Lounge with its companion outside bar (hamburgers, hot dogs, pizza) by the pool and for outdoor seating on deck 7. Alternatively there is room service with the selections listed on your cabin big screen TV.



EXAMPLE OF A KEY CARD FOR ROOM ENTRY



ROOM SERVICE MENU



TREADMILLS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT

You will find a small fitness center which is also accessible 24/7 with bikes, weights and treadmills. Also we found deck 8 was good for jogging.

While there I had several meetings with Captain Kai and we discussed our requirements for observing the eclipse. The ship has a drone and he indicated that it would be available for use should we need it.



WATER REFILL STATION ON DECK 3



Paul meets with Captain Kai



PRESENTATION AREA

There are two pools on the ship. Both are small and one is heated. Also available 24/7.



THE POOL ON DECK 7 AFT



DECK 7 OUTSIDE CLUB LOUNGE SEATING AREA



OUTDOOR SNACK BAR DECK 7



SAMPLE OF PART OF BREAKFAST BAR

ALWAYS AVAILABLE

CAESAR SALAD
Garlic croutons, anchovies
grated parmesan

PASTA
Choice of pesto Genovese or tomato sauce

GRILLED ATLANTIC SALMON*(GF)
Herb butter


GRILLED CHICKEN BREAST* (GF)
Rosemary jus

CHEF'S CUT* (GF)
Selected piece of beef, sauce

CHOICE OF SIDINGS
French fries, baked potato, vegetable of the day

SWAN HELLENIC'S CULINARY AMBASSADORS' SELECTION

Swan Hellenic has teamed up with a trio of top Chefs to deliver world-class on-board gastronomy. Consultant Chefs Andrea Ribaldone and Sang Keun Oh, together with our onboard Executive Chef Eddy Barretto bring internationally acclaimed expertise.

Hand-selected items are marked with 

SOMMELIER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>LUMA Grillo 2020 Italy</p> <p>LIVIO PAVESE Barbera 2021 Italy</p> | <p>RYDER Chardonnay 2020 USA</p> <p>ALTADO Monastrell 2019 Spain</p> |
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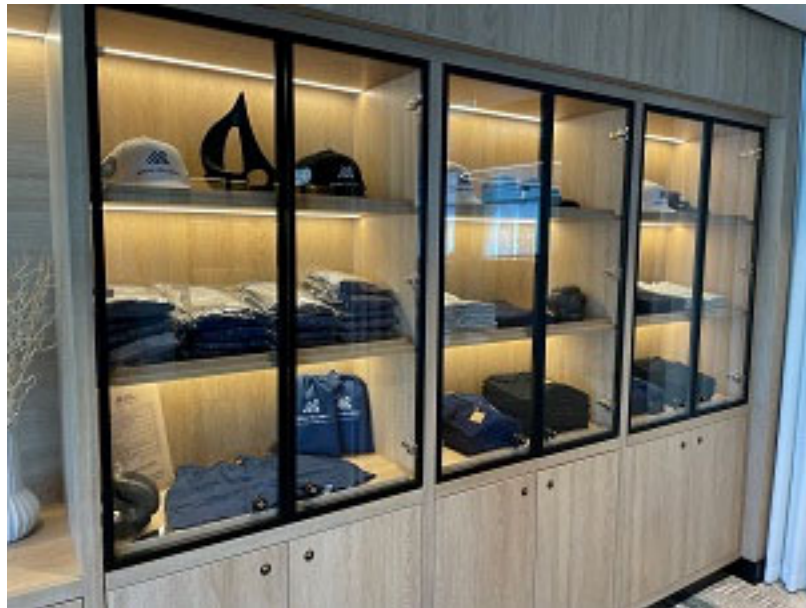
PAUL HOBBS RUSSIAN RIVER
Chardonnay 2018
USA- \$75.00

VEGA SICILIA VALBUENA
Tempranillo, Merlot 2017
Spain- \$240.00

DINNER MENU OF ITEMS ALWAYS AVAILABLE. INCLUDES HOUSE WINES AS WELL AS PREMIUM WINES AT COST.



SAMPLE OF LUNCH BAR



PART OF SHIP'S STORE WITH SWAN HELLENIC ITEMS FOR SALE



2 SETS OF STAIRS (8 STEPS EACH) BETWEEN FLOORS



OUTSTANDING DINNER ENTREES INCLUDED WASABI SHRIMP



LUNCH ENTRÉE SPAGHETTI WITH GARLIC TOAST



SEAFOOD BUFFET

In summary, I have sailed on over 50 cruises and this one was one of the best from the standpoint of operations, design, interior comfort, food quality and customer service. For the solar eclipse I continue to work the planning in order to assure that we are completely successful in getting into the path and surmounting any potential weather issues.