

SEASON'S FIRST CRUISELINER CALLS AT CAPE TOWN

Inward from Richards Bay and Durban, the ultra-smart *Pacific Princess*, the first cruiseliner in Cape Town this season, berthed at the Waterfront early last Friday morning.

Richards Bay is seeing more of these vessels since it is one of very few ports where, within an hour of boarding their tour buses on the quayside, passengers can be photographing the "big five" in the wild.

Pacific Princess provided a pleasant sight for those along the Atlantic seaboard when she sailed later that day for East London and Durban.

My dockland ears hear that she was originally stemmed to berth at E Berth where little has changed since her previous call : the 60-year-old cargo shed remains an enigma for well-heeled cruiseliner passengers who deserve a better introduction to an otherwise beautiful city. After all, they bring collectively millions of dollars to the economy of the Western Cape and to the country, a fact that is overlooked when the viability of a cruiseliner terminal for Cape Town is discussed.

As the cruise season clashes with the fruit season, the port is not keen on accommodating passengerships at E Berth and plan to use J-K Berths when the bigger liners call. However, it is probably easier to truck pallets of export fruit to another berth than to have hundreds of passengers - and chandlers' lorries - in that area of the harbour where grain is being discharged or where dust from scrap iron being loaded at L Berth will give visitors a rather unpleasant taste to their visit, especially if the south-easter is blowing.

Thus it was a blessing for *Pacific Princess* to berth at the Waterfront to land over 500 passengers and to embark a similar number.

Waterfront restaurateurs and shopkeepers applaud the decision to berth as many liners as possible at No. 2 Jetty. Not only do the passengers spend thousands of dollars in Africa's most popular tourist destination, but, deprived of close contact with ships in the rest of the harbour, locals turn out in numbers to see these liners - and while there, they too contribute to the coffers of the Waterfront stakeholders.

With a smart passengership in the background, amidst what better ambience could one enjoy a meal?

Monterey Schedule Disrupted

Also stemmed to berth at the Waterfront was *Monterey* but alas, the first part of her South African schedule has been cancelled owing to the ship having technical difficulties in the Mediterranean. She will resume her schedule in March. I have lost count of the number of cruises along the Southern African coast that over the years have had to be cancelled or rescheduled because of troubled ships. Besides the *Oceanus* disaster, I recall cruises being terminated at Indian Ocean islands or ships being detained in Durban, leaving passengers in the lurch.

Perhaps passengerships plying local trades should meet more stringent requirements.

Although adequate notice was given of the *Monterey's* rescheduling, disappointment must be rife in households where folks were gearing up for a coastal cruise or a voyage from Durban to the Indian Ocean islands, Mozambique or "into the blue" which, for the shipowner, is a delight as the vessel needs simply to remain out of sight of land for a couple of days - not difficult off the relatively low-lying KwaZulu-Natal coast - and keep the engines ticking over as she steams at a reduced speed for the week-end's cruise.

It is of no consequence to those on board as they revel the time away with sun-worship, non-stop entertainment, gambling, and dining in several restaurants that offer a range of cuisine.

Fortunately, *MSC Melody* - a more modern and larger vessel than the ageing *Monterey* - will be on the coast from November, and some of those whose cruise dreams have been dashed may be able to be accommodated on one of her voyages.

Andrew Weir-managed vessels

Less auspicious but more interesting to many ship-spotters, was the ice-strengthened blue-hulled *Emerald Sea* that berthed initially at F Berth in the Duncan Dock and then shifted to the Landing Wall for a few days.

Formerly Anadyr, she is one of several versatile sisterships designed for ice conditions and built in Finland in the 1980s to the account of the Russians. She has made a few trips to the Antarctic, carrying the Indian polar research team.

Among the survivors of this class are four ships managed by **Andrew Weir Shipping** on a round-the-world service, and **Magdalena Oldendorff** that gained headlines when she was trapped in Antarctic ice four years ago.

The ships had a Maierform ice-breaking bow for operations through ice to Russian ports and their number one hold was specially fitted to carry explosives to the various military or mining outposts of the old Soviet Union. The AWS quartet now have bulbous bows, their number one holds became tanks to increase their capacity to load palm oil at the Pacific islands for the European food and cosmetics industries, while their deep tanks can carry a range of liquids, including fuel with a flashpoint below 60 degrees C.

Their ro-ro ramps are useful for either heavylift cargo or vehicles, including yachts on trailers, bound for Tahiti or other island groups in the South Pacific.

Good news for those who enjoy freighter travel is that the AWS ships carry 12 passengers and during their unique circumnavigation, they call at some exotic islands, an itinerary that seems popular with many for whom time does not matter.

NEW SOUTH AFRICAN VENTURE FOR P&O MARITIME SERVICES

Setting up shop in South Africa is P&O Maritime Services, an Australian-based company that offers various services to the shipping world.

Based in **Hobart, Tasmania**, and with an operations centre in Galway, Ireland, the government shipping services division owns and operates research and supply ships, as well as fisheries patrol vessels.

Their customers include the Australian Antarctic Division, customs service and several companies involved in offshore oil and gas activities.

Via a joint venture company, P&O Maritime Services' Defence & Port Services unit oversees port operations and small craft support for the Royal Australian Navy.

Shipbroking is done through the Anderson Hughes Group, and P&O Maritime Services also has an interest in both Carpentaria Shipping Services - a bulk operation centered around the McArthur Mine in Northern Territory - and P&O PNG, a specialised bulk cargo and research service operating in Papua New Guinea.

Ships' agency operations in Australia, Papua New Guinea, New Zealand, Fiji, India and Argentina complete the package of services.



A familiar figure among those launching P&O Maritime Services' South African venture in Cape Town last week was their amiable local advisor, Captain Rick van der Krol, formerly of National Port Authority.
