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History of Cruise Tourism

The birth of leisure cruising began with the formation of the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company in 1822. The company started out as a shipping line with routes between England and the Iberian Peninsula, adopting the name Peninsular Steam Navigation Company. It won its first contract to deliver mail in 1837. In 1840, it began mail delivery to Alexandria, Egypt, via Gibraltar and Malta.

P&O first introduced passenger cruising services in 1844, advertising sea tours to destinations such as Gibraltar, Malta and Athens, sailing from Southampton. The company later introduced round trips to destinations such as Alexandria and Constantinople. It underwent a period of rapid expansion in the latter half of the 19th century, commissioning larger and more luxurious ships to serve the steadily expanding market. Notable ships of the era include the SS Ravenna built in 1880, which became the first ship to be built with a total steel superstructure, and the SS Valetta built in 1889, which was the first ship to use electric lights.

Some sources mention the "Francesco I", flying the flag of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (Italy), as the first cruise ship. It was built in 1831 and sailed from Naples in early June 1833, preceded by an advertising campaign. The cruise ship was boarded by nobles, authorities, and royal princes from all over Europe. In just over three months, the ship sailed to Taormina, Catania, Syracuse, Malta, Corfu, Patras, Delphi, Zante, Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople.

The first vessel built exclusively for luxury cruising, was the Prinzessin Victoria Luise of Germany, designed by Albert Ballin, general manager of Hamburg-America Line. The ship was completed in 1900.

In the competition for passengers, ocean liners added luxuries – the Titanic being the most famous example — such as fine dining, luxury services, and staterooms with finer appointments. In the late 19th century, Albert Ballin, director of the Hamburg-America Line, was the first to send his transatlantic ships out on long southern cruises during the worst of the winter season of the North Atlantic. Other companies followed him. Some of them built specialized ships designed for easy transformation between summer crossings and winter cruising.

In 1896, there were three luxury liners for transportation, for Europe to America trip. These were European-owned. In 1906, the number had increased to seven. The British Inman Line owned the City of Paris; the Cunard Line had the *Compania* and *Lucania*. The White Star Line owned the *Majestic* and *Teutonic*. *La Lorraine* and *La Savoie* were owned by the French *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*.

With the advent of large passenger jet aircraft in the 1960s, intercontinental travellers switched from ships to planes sending the ocean liner trade into a decline. Certain characteristics of older ocean liners made them unsuitable for cruising duties, such as high fuel consumption, deep draught preventing them from entering shallow ports, and cabins designed to maximize passenger numbers rather than comfort.

Ocean liner services aimed at passengers ceased in 1986, with the notable exception of transatlantic crossings operated by the British shipping company Cunard Line, catering to a niche market of those who appreciated the several days at sea. In an attempt to shift the focus of the market from passenger travel to cruising with entertainment value, Cunard Line pioneered the luxury cruise transatlantic service on board the *Queen Elizabeth 2* ocean liner. International celebrities were hired to perform cabaret acts onboard and the crossing was advertised as a vacation in itself.

The QE2 also inaugurated "one-class cruising" where all passengers received the same quality and facilities. Another ship to make this transition was SS *Norway*, originally the ocean liner SS *France* and later converted to cruising duties as the Caribbean's first "super-ship".

Contemporary cruise ships built in the late 1980s and beyond, such as Sovereign-class which broke the size record held for decades by *Norway*. The Sovereigns were

the first "megaships" to be built; they also were the first series of cruise ships to include a multi-story atrium with glass elevators. They also had a single deck devoted entirely to cabins with private balconies instead of ocean view cabins. Other cruise lines soon launched ships with similar attributes, such as the Fantasy class and Crown Princess.

Most modern cruise ships feature the following facilities:

- Casino – Only open when the ship is at sea to avoid conflict with local laws
- Spa
- Fitness centre
- Shops – Only open when ship is at sea to avoid merchandising licensing and local taxes
- Library
- Theatre with Broadway style shows
- Cinema
- Indoor and/or outdoor swimming pool
- Buffet restaurant
- Lounges
- Gym
- Clubs
- Basketball courts
- Pool tables

References:

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