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Ship Review

CUNARD QUEEN MARY II

In May of 2004, Mrs. Holmes and I sailed aboard the then. Very new, CUNARD QUEEN MARY II from New York's battered and well worn Westside pier 92 at 12th Ave and 50th St.

I mention this because unlike so many other cruise departure homeports, little or nothing has changed here since the pre World War II transatlantic liner days!



Cunard bills the QMI as the grandest, most magnificent ocean liner ever built! Surely much of what is claimed is indeed fact but it is perhaps a slightly overstated claim. Certainly unlike most modern day cruise ships, QMII looks like a liner and sails with the majestic grace of a former era liner. Her 14 decks are replete with historical reference and perhaps no single area on the ship reflects this than the Queens Room, a ballroom with elegance from stem to stern. We went to an event in this room dressed in our best formals and we truly felt transported back to another age at sea.

The Britannia Restaurant was our assigned eatery and it was very nicely done with split levels and the feeling of special treatment even if it was not the prime restaurant on the ship. We had absolutely no complaints here and enjoyed every meal. There are two other restaurants as well as the TODD ENGLISH specialty restaurant by reservations only. We did find the buffet restaurant to be always crowded and very poorly laid out as far as traffic flow was concerned. Because of this good food was often eaten with poor attitude because of a sub-par venue.

Our cabin was very pleasant, light, warm and cheery and probably quite adequate for a long ocean voyage. Robes and slippers are issued to all occupants

regardless of class of travel and impeccable service is the expected norm but not always evident. The in cabin Wi-Fi availability was much appreciated and worked very well.

Public rooms including the magnificent library are all laid out and outfitted in traditional elegance and events therein are well planned and operated. The Planetarium is an only one at sea classic and events there were well attended and appreciated. Of the five pools, 2 are indoors and can be used in any weather. For folks on transatlantic crossings the QMII even has a kennel facility onboard so you can bring Fido on your trip to London (if you can find a hotel there that takes dogs!) The kennels are not available on Caribbean cruises however.

Clearly the claim as the largest cruise ship afloat will not last long but I suspect that the grand elegance of the QMII will outlast the size supremacy. Certainly we will opt to sail on the QMII again but I suspect it will be on a "crossing" or other special longer voyage and not a Caribbean port-to-port vacation. You need to sail on this ship at least once!

We give the CUNARD QUEEN MARY II a 97 on a scale from 1 to 100

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