

Travel Tales

Star Flyer: Tall Ship Sailing from Malaga to the Canaries Part 1

by

Lew Toulmin

For years a major item on our “dream trip bucket list” has been a voyage to the romantic island groups scattered across the eastern North Atlantic. A cruise from Malaga in Spain in October 2014 aboard the tall sailing cruise ship *Star Flyer* filled part of the bill. Scheduled ports were Malaga, Tangier, Cadiz, Funchal (Madiera), and Las Palmas (Grand Canary).

Star Flyer is part of the three-vessel Star Clipper Line, and all three are modern sailing vessels modeled on old designs, namely barquentines or full-rigged ships with square sails. The ships sail in the Mediterranean in summer and Caribbean in winter. Our cruise attracted 92 sailing enthusiasts and regular passengers from the US, UK, Canada and Germany, partly filling the vessel’s capacity of 160.



The Star Flyer, a modern tall ship, alongside the dock in Malaga, Spain.

Star Flyer has four masts, towering up to 226 feet high, with square sails on the foremast and fore-and-aft sails on the others; a length of 360 feet and beam of 50 feet; and a dramatic bowsprit and profile that is very unusual in the cruising fleet.

Our cabin (number 322) was amidships near the dining room. It was about 12 by 10 feet –spacious compared to many vessels -- with two single beds that were pushed together to form a queen. There was plenty of storage under the bed, and in three narrow closets and a small bureau. A flat screen TV with a DVD player gave us a view of the world via the BBC, and an 18- inch porthole gave us a view of the sea. The nautical décor featured white walls with attractive wooden wainscoting about

three feet high. The en-suite bathroom had a powerful shower with plenty of hot water.

As we departed each port, the dramatic music from Vangelis' (Evangelos Papathanassiou) film score for *1492: Conquest of Paradise* was played, and many or all of the 16 sails were raised. Passengers were allowed to get close to the action and even stand on the bridge as the ship slowly pulled away from the dock, using her own engine or occasionally assisted by tugs. People on shore and on neighboring, sail-less, cruise ships stared and took pictures of the unusual sight.

Typical activities on board include learning how to fold towels into the amazing animals and flowers that would decorate our cabin every night; games and quizzes; the Passenger Talent Show; needlecraft classes; a short movie about rounding Cape Horn with legendary Captain Irving Johnson of *Yankee* and National Geographic fame; dancing; climbing the mast; knot-tying classes; aerobic exercise classes; and lectures on the Vikings, navigation and the state of the oceans by retired Captain Klaus Müller. The *Star Flyer* does not have a theater, and Broadway-style shows are not feasible. But the many activities filled the sea days, and of course the greatest pleasure of all was just looking at the beautiful ocean, sunsets, stars, dolphins and seabirds that surrounded us.



A passenger aboard Star Flyer learns to tie knots from a crew member.



Passengers on Star Flyer relax in the bowsprit netting and enjoy their beautiful surroundings.

Next month we will discuss the food on board, ship's tours, and a change in the sailing schedule.

Lew and Susan Toulmin live in Silver Spring. Star Clippers line can be reached at 760 NW 107th Ave., Suite 100, Miami, FL 33172; 800-442-0551, 305-442-0550; www.starclippers.com; info@starclippers.com.

#end#