

The Queen Mary

The Queen Mary's history trails her like the bejeweled train of an elegant gown. One of the world's largest luxury ocean liners, she has been the resplendent ship of royalty, the dependable resort of statesmen, the speedy savior of soldiers and a tourist destination that has transported millions of visitors to a land of dreams and imagination. Conceived during the Roaring 20s, but constructed during the Depression, she sailed the seas with the grace of the Venus de Mile, and the grit of Joan of Arc.

Cunard Steamship Co., Ltd. began planning the queen in 1926 and in 1930 commissioned John Brown Co., Ltd., of Clydebank, Scotland, to build her. When the *Queen Mary* took her maiden voyage on May 27, 1936, she was beautiful and luxurious beyond compare. The staterooms were enormous, even by today's standards. Her regal, art deco atmosphere was warmed by 56 rare and exotic woods from the far reaches of the British Empire and decorated with fine art and sculpture. Taller than the Eiffel

Tower, more than 1,000 feet long and fitted with four steam turbines that each generated 40,000 horsepower, the *Queen Mary* represented all the pride of the British Isles.

On August 30, 1939, after three years of memorable Atlantic crossings, the sophisticated lady departed Southampton for her final peacetime voyage. The peril of impending war was in the air as the queen set sail with her largest number of civilian passengers, 2,552, and \$44 million in gold bullion.

On the night of September 2nd, the ship's crew blacked out her portholes, and on September 3, 1939, England and France declared war on Germany. One of the ship's passengers, Bob Hope, gave an impromptu performance to help ease the tension felt by all. The following day the *Queen Mary* arrived in New York.

With the war raging in Europe, the graceful lady took off her

LuAi Re" The City and Its People
278

glamorous gown, put on khakis and rolled up her sleeve. The *Queen Mary* sailed to Sydney, Australia, to be fitted out as a troopship. She was painted in gray camouflage and her passenger capacity was increased from 2,140 to 5,500; in fact she carried up to 16,000 troops per voyage.

The Grey Ghost, as the *Queen Mary* was nicknamed, had an unassailable war record. She transported troops around the world, carried the wounded back to the United States and ferried 12,686 war brides and children to safety. The *Queen Mary* served as Winston Churchill's headquarters at sea. Adolph Hitler offered a \$250,000 bounty on Germany's highest military honor to any captain who could sink her. Yet the saucy dame was the fastest ship at sea; she outran all the Nazi U-boats that pursued her and emerged from the conflicts unscathed.

In the years following World War II, the monarch returned to her birthright as Queen of the Atlantic. She once again provided passengers with memorable experiences

majestic journeys. With the advent of commercial air travel, however, the days of the luxury liner were numbered.

After her Atlantic crossing ended, the *Queen Mary* saw some service as a cruise ship during the years 1963-66, but she was not suited for such an idle existence.

The *Queen Mary* was much more substantial than modern cruise ships. She was a huge vessel with

an enormously deep draft. Only three ports in the world could accommodate her: Southampton, England; Cherbourg, France; and New York.

The *Queen Mary* has adapted to the demands of different roles without ever diminishing the quality that makes her unique. Throughout her many distinguished careers she has continued to command admiration and

Many elegant evenings were spent in the Queen's first-class dining room during the years prior to World War II.



The destination that transports





respect, and in December 1967 the celebrated royal sailed into the Port of Long Beach to hold court as a cultural icon.

Now proudly and permanently docked in the port, she receives more than 1.5 million visitors each year. As a tourist attraction and hotel, with 365 beautiful guest staterooms, the *Queen Mary* offers those who visit her an aesthetic, romantic, nostalgic and historic experience that is not only enthralling but authentic.

This is the genuine article, not a replica. Visitors are transported on a magical journey of thoughts and feelings. Fantasy and reality blend. Tourists can discover the art deco elegance of the 30s and the grim determination of the war years; they can stroll through decades of peacetime prosperity and arrive at the exquisite tastes of the present. The *Queen Mary's* award-winning restaurants and incomparable ambience provide an enchanting venue for weddings, receptions and honeymoons.

Any event held on board is transported to the realm of the imagination and beyond. Executives have had corporate seminars while dressed in period costumes from the 30s. Anything is possible. Even ghost sightings are common.

The spirit encounters all appear to have been friendly, or at least benign. The visitors from the specter world are probably happy to find their former habitat so well preserved. Queens Seaport Development, Inc., the vessel's operator since 1993, was granted a 66-year lease in 1998. It has a keen sense of the ship's history and is dedicated to her preservation and restoration.

In addition to the renovation of staterooms and public function rooms, the R.M.S. Queen Mary Preservation Plan, established with the assistance of the state of California's first historical preservation officer, provides a very detailed guideline for the ship's preservation. It includes long-range plans for archives, preservation and historical interpretation. Restoration projects are sensitive to the ship's history and to environmental concerns. Rather than replace the miles of teak in the decking with newly forested wood, the original wood was lifted, cleaned, stripped and turned before being relaid. The restored deck should last 100 years.

The *Queen Mary* has earned the respectful treatment she receives, and she has also earned considerable revenues for her owner, the city of Long Beach. In fact, the *Queen Mary* has always paid her way. She was the only passenger vessel known to show a profit during the Depression. Still holding her head high, the cultural icon contributes more than \$2 million annually to the city of Long Beach and employs more than 800 people. As the centerpiece of a planned 45-acre development featuring family entertainment, special events and attractions, Her Majesty's continued reign is well-assured.

After 1,001 Atlantic crossings and years of acclaimed service transporting millions of passengers to their destinations, the *Queen Mary* is at last a destination herself—the destination that transports.

The Grey Ghost of the sea, she transported thousands of troops during World War II.



'first class cabin'—modern convenience, traditional luxury, all in one place. It's a journey to the realm of imagination.