

PRESS establish a cruise service on the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers, and a few small vessels have cruised into the lakes, but no major cruise line operating large ships has been able to start a regular service in the lakes.

Just a few days short of the 30th anniversary of the beginning of SOUTH AMERICAN's last trip, however, your Editor and T.M.H.S. Purser, Bill Wilson, were privileged to be able to ride up Lake Erie from Port Colborne to Toledo on an overnight positioning trip aboard the brand new Hapag-Lloyd cruise ship C. COLUMBUS, which entered the lake in September and completed three nine and ten-night cruises on our inland waters. Your Editor was the only person who was aboard the COLUMBUS trip who also was aboard SOUTH AMERICAN on her last trip back in 1967.

Although only 472.4 feet in length and 70.5 feet in the beam, and 14,000 Tons (small for a modern deep-sea cruise ship), COLUMBUS is a very well designed ship, capable of carrying 420 passengers. She is equipped with retractable bridgewings to facilitate canalling, and her lifeboats are slung in recessed bays on either side of Decks 3 and 4. There are both outside and inside staterooms, together with six large suites and two rooms specially fitted for access by the handicapped. Excellent use is made of every available bit of space aboard, and COLUMBUS is decorated in a modern but extremely attractive manner, each deck and each public space being done in a different style and colour scheme.

On Deck 3 amidships, there is located the purser's office / reception area, with the entire aft end of this deck is occupied by a large, one-sitting diningroom. It is done in attractive wood finishes, with large observation windows at the sides and out over the transom stern, and a well-designed deckhead (which some other cruise lines might do well to study) suppresses the overall sound level while permitting conversation in any passenger's immediate table area.

Aft on Deck 4 is the large Columbus Lounge in which major events are held, while on Deck 5 are located the small library (port side) and Card Room (starboard side), with a gallery-style lounge on either side aft of these rooms, and the Gift Shop in the centre. Aft the Gallery is the small Weinstube (Wine Bar), very attractively set up with intimate tables for two in an extremely small space.

On the Sun Deck are the pool area, fitness facilities, a lido buffet area and right forward, over the pilothouse, is the extremely attractive Palm Garden, which has an open observation terrace across its forward face. There is much open deck space on the Sun Deck and also aft on Deck 5 below, but there is no open promenade all the way around any deck.

A series of seven nine- and ten-night cruises has been scheduled for COLUMBUS on the lakes in 1998, and all are completely sold out, being offered only on the European market. It is hoped that, beginning in 1999, Hapag-Lloyd will have either COLUMBUS or a planned new vessel of similar dimensions, positioned in the lakes all summer. Hopefully, other operators may also see fit to bring ships into the lakes now that Hapag-Lloyd has "broken the ice".

Great credit is due to T.M.H.S. member Christopher Wright who, with his firm, The Mariport Group Ltd., has worked extremely hard to facilitate the entry of Hapag-Lloyd and COLUMBUS into the Great Lakes trade. It was Christopher who arranged the Port Colborne to Toledo positioning trip and who acted, along with Captain Ralf Zander of COLUMBUS, as host for the trip.

And yes, SOUTH AMERICAN has been remembered. A very scenic photo of the Georgian Bay Line steamer docked at Parry Sound was presented to Capt. Zander and now hangs aboard COLUMBUS. It makes a worthy addition to the ship's extensive display of photos of earlier German passenger vessels.