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**MSC CRUISES CHRISTENS THE BIGGEST SHIP TO BE BUILT BY A EUROPEAN SHIP OWNER**

*MSC Meraviglia brings wonder to Le Havre as “The Ship For All Seasons” prepares to set sail*

**Le Havre, France, June 3, 2017** - This evening the latest wonder in the MSC Cruises fleet, [***MSC Meraviglia***](https://www.msccruisesusa.com/en-us/Discover-MSC/Cruise-Ships/MSC-Meraviglia.aspx?utm_source=PressRelease&utm_campaign=MSCMeravigliaChristening)will be christened in a glittering ceremony by international screen legend and godmother of all of MSC Cruises’ ships, **Sophia Loren**. At 171,598 GRT and with guest capacity of 5,714 (4,488 at double occupancy), *MSC Meraviglia* is the biggest ship to be built by a European ship owner, MSC Cruises, and also the biggest ship to come into service in 2017.

MSC Cruises, the Swiss-based world’s largest privately-owned cruise line and brand market leader in Europe, South America and South Africa, is hosting the glamorous, high-profile event in **Le Havre**, with entertainment from top international performers and an exclusive gala dinner in the company of special guests, authorities, key partners from the travel industry, global media and top management from MSC Cruises and its parent company MSC Group. Gianluigi Aponte, MSC Group’s founder and executive chairman as well as the ship owner, will attend together with the Aponte and Aponte-Vago families.

*“We have an ambitious vision for the future and MSC Meraviglia marks the start of the second phase of growth for our Company,”* said **Pierfrancesco Vago, MSC Cruises’ Executive Chairman***. “For this reason, this evening is an extremely proud moment for all of us at MSC Cruises as we see the first of our next-generation ships being named.”*

*“The new ships that we are building — between 2017 and 2020 alone, we will receive six new ships — are purpose-built, featuring innovation in both product and design, as well as the very latest-cutting edge marine and consumer-facing technology to create unforgettable holiday experiences at sea for guests of all ages. MSC Meraviglia is the first to make this vision come to life, as it sets a new standard for cruise ships as a destination in itself.”*

*MSC Meraviglia* is the Company’s new flagship and the 13th addition to the MSC Cruises fleet as well as the first new MSC Cruises ship due to come into service under the Company’s industry-unprecedented investment plan.

Both the ship herself and tonight’s event have been inspired by the **wonders of the world**, as Meraviglia literally means *wonder*. The christening ceremony itself will be hosted by one of Europe’s most loved comedians, **Gad Elmaleh.** The audience will also be entertained by internationally renowned artist **Patrick Bruel** who will perform a selection of his most loved songs. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors **Kids United** will be performing to represent a diverse world, promoting peace and tolerance [[1]](#footnote-1).

The crowning moment of the evening will be the parade of the ship’s officers, when Sophia Loren cuts the ribbon and names *MSC Meraviglia* to a time-honored crescendo of champagne and fireworks. Mrs. Loren has held a close relationship with MSC Cruises for over a decade, when she first became godmother of *MSC Lirica*, in 2003. As the MSC Cruises fleet continued to grow, she blessed each and every new ship, reflecting MSC Cruises' belief not only in loyalty, but also in Loren's unique beauty, talent and elegant style — the same elements that distinguish every aspect on board an MSC Cruises ship.

In order to conclude on a note of haute cuisine **Hélène Darroze**, the chef with the 2 Michelin stars has created an exceptional menu for the VIP gala dinner as well as an exclusive dish for all guests. The menu takes inspiration from Chef Daroze’s passion for combining the flavors of France with those of the UK to create a simple yet elegant gourmet experience for the guests. MSC Cruises and Chef Daroze hope to extend the collaboration beyond this evening and work is underway to establish a partnership.

*MSC Meraviglia* is able to call in most of the world’s international cruise ports and is set to become one of the hottest destinations at sea. Some of the unique features that set MSC Cruises’ newest flagship apart include:

* **World-class entertainment** from Cirque du Soleil with two exclusive [*Cirque du Soleil at Sea*](https://www.msccruises.com/en-gl/Partnerships/MSC-Cruises-Cirque-Du-Soleil-Partnership.aspx?utm_source=PressRelease&utm_campaign=MSCMeravigliaChristening) shows created just for *MSC Meraviglia* withtwo performances six nights a week, guests can enjoy a unique [show & dinner](https://www.msccruises.com/en-gl/Discover-MSC/Dining-Experience.aspx) or cocktail & show experience
* **Widest range of dining options** and bars on any MSC Cruises ship to-date with 12 dining venues and 20 bars
* As a family-owned company, kids’ activities and services are at the very core of the guest offering and the **dedicated family deck area** includes a brand new entertainment offering and cutting-edge facilities for the whole family.
* [*MSC for Me*](https://www.msccruisesusa.com/en-us/Discover-MSC/MSC-For-Me.aspx?utm_source=PressRelease&utm_campaign=MSCMeravigliaChristening), the new digital experience designed for guests to get the most out of their vacation, connecting them to the experiences that matter to them
* The **MSC Yacht Club** with new features and luxurious accommodations spanning three decks, private facilities and butler service round-the-clock
* The **longest LED Sky Screen** at Sea at 262 feet long encompassing a stunning 315 foot long Mediterranean-style promenade, designed to become the social hub of the ship
* **Comfortable and innovative accommodations to meet every need** demonstrating the way that MSC Cruises puts the guest at the heart of its designs and ship building and with 10 different types of staterooms to choose from, there really is something for everyone.

**To watch the ceremony live visit** [**here**](https://goo.gl/KdFQiM) **from 2:45 EST**

*MSC Meraviglia* will commence her maiden voyage from Le Havre to Genoa on June 4 and then her summer itinerary from Genoa from June 11. *MSC Meraviglia* will offer multiple embarkation ports in the Western Mediterranean including the popular ports of Genoa, Marseille and Barcelona as well as visit other much sought after Mediterranean destinations including Naples, Messina in Sicily and Valetta in Malta. For more information and bookings visit [here](https://www.msccruisesusa.com/en-us/Homepage.aspx?utm_source=PressRelease&utm_campaign=MSCMeravigliaChristening).

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**For all supporting media materials please visit** [**here**](http://www.mscpressarea.com/en_US/christening/mscmeraviglia?utm_source=PressRelease&utm_campaign=MSCMeravigliaChristening)

Supporting materials include:

A complete guide to MSC Meraviglia

100 Facts about MSC Meraviglia

Biographies of the artists and executives

Latest photos

**ABOUT MSC CRUISES**

MSC Cruises is the number one cruise line in Europe, South America and South Africa, and sails year-round in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. Seasonal itineraries cover northern Europe, the Atlantic Ocean, Cuba and the French Antilles, South America, southern Africa, and Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sir Bani Yas.

In 2014, MSC Cruises launched an investment plan to support the second phase of its growth through the order of two ships of the Meraviglia Class and two others of the Seaside Class (plus an option for a third one) and in February 2016, confirmed the existing options to build a further two now Meraviglia-Plus Class ships with an even greater capacity. In April 2016 this rose to €9 billion (nearly $10 billion) with the announcement of signing of the slot reservation agreement to build a further four ships, each with next-generation LNG propulsion technology. MSC Cruises is the first global cruise line brand to develop an investment plan of this length and magnitude, that between 2017 and 2020 will have already delivered six new cruise ships.

The MSC Cruise experience embodies the elegant side of the Mediterranean to create unique and unforgettable emotions for guests, through discovery of the world’s cultures, beauties and tastes. Its fleet comprises 13 modern ships: MSC Meraviglia, MSC Preziosa; MSC Divina; MSC Splendida; MSC Fantasia; MSC Magnifica; MSC Poesia; MSC Orchestra; MSC Musica; MSC Sinfonia; MSC Armonia; MSC Opera and MSC Lirica.

MSC Cruises feels a deep responsibility for the environments in which it operates, and was the first company ever to earn the Bureau Veritas "7 Golden Pearls" for superior management and environmental stewardship. In 2009, MSC Cruises began an enduring partnership with UNICEF to support various programmes assisting children worldwide. So far, more than €6.5 million (about $7 million) has been collected in voluntary guest donations. More information at http://www.mscpressarea.com.

1. MSC Cruises supports UNICEF through their joint “Get on Board for Children” initiative and has raised to-date in excess of €6.5 million thanks to the generous contributions of MSC Cruises’ guests, impacting the lives of nearly 67,000 children who are malnourished in developing countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)