



Cruise Report

Ship: Superstar Virgo
Dates: 25 April 2003
Itinerary: Cruise to Nowhere ex Fremantle
Duration: 3 Days
Add-ons: Nil

By way of background information ..

In April 2003 the SARS epidemic was at its peak in Asia. People were not travelling through that part of the world and certainly not holidaying there. Star Cruises <http://www.starcruises.com/> decided to reposition the Superstars Virgo and Leo to Australia. The Virgo was based in Fremantle, West Coast and the Leo was positioned in Sydney, East Coast.

Repositioning took 10 days, which was the quarantine time for SARS. During the cruise the ship apparently manned down and new crew boarded in Australia.

Bookings

The first cruise that the Virgo undertook was a 3 day Cruise to Nowhere and we booked it the morning that tickets went on sale. We went for an outside cabin with porthole and [for the first and only time on a ship] we were upgraded to a balcony, deck 10 port and aft. The story goes that they over-sold this category and upgraded the early purchasers – i.e. me. Good story with a happy ending.

The cabin was everything that you'd expect, done out in a rich cherry timber [veneer] with deep colors and of course as this was a relatively new ship, built 1999, was in good repair.



Fremantle Boarding

One of the reasons we wanted to take this trip, if we needed more than the obvious [it's a ship, it's available] was that we wanted to sail in and/or out of Fremantle Harbour, being our home port. <http://www.fremantleports.com.au/>

We boarded just after lunch, got there early and beat the crowds of course, with a scheduled 6pm sailing. The quay was a hive of activity all afternoon and we could see the lines of traffic entering and disgorging passengers from our vantage point on board.

The Vantage Point was actually at the bow, where the Virgo has a place you can go and do the Titanic thing – stand at the pointy end with your arms open wide and scream into the wind. <http://www.titanicmovie.com/>.

For safety sake this isn't available when you're at sea so all of those people that didn't get there early – tough! I thought I made a pretty good Leonardo de Crappie, if I do say so myself.

Note: Without wanting to be picky here, L de C was in 'steerage' and would never have been allowed anywhere near the bow. If he made it there the bridge would clearly have spotted him and dragged his arse off in a nanosecond. And while I'm at it he certainly wouldn't have been dining in first class looking like a male model in a borrowed tux. BUT it's just a movie, right.

Fremantle is one of those old fashioned harbours where they have a brass band playing for the couple of hours before cast-off and today was no exception.

Note: I've mentioned the band in TW@F. I have concerns that all the musicians are really *old* and that the band will eventually cease to exist because no new blood is joining. The soloist does a lovely Vera Lynn medley.

By 6pm it was dark. As we cast off, the band was playing; the terminal was packed with people waving and throwing streamers. As we moved slowly through the harbour people lined the shore waving and shouting, and as we moved to the mouth of the harbour all manner of vehicles were there, flashing lights and tooting horns. It was something really special and the sail-away band and the cold beer just topped it all off nicely.

Ship Statistics	
Name	Superstar Virgo
Built	1999
Size	76,8000 tonnes
Length	268 metres
Width	32 metres
Speed	24 knots
Cabins	980
Passengers	1960

Dining on Board

We spread ourselves about to experience as many of the offerings as possible, whilst trying to limit ourselves to 1 breakfast, lunch and dinner each day.

Our first dinner was chaotic, it seemed as though the ship and crew were overwhelmed with a full house. So to wile away the time we had a glass of wine. We ended up with 3 bottles of wine, two we ordered, one that was a double up, one that was complimentary [or was that 2] .. and I think I ended up paying for 1 of them. Again, the formal breakfast was a shambles the next day, a combination of a new crew and a full compliment of passengers ? But there was always the buffet and things started to settle down a bit on day 2.

Star Cruises invented free-style dining and the alternative spots that you can pay a bit extra and have something special. So it was with dinner on the second night. We booked for Tepanyaki and it was brilliant. A grill that seated 8 people, 2 little girls serving us and 1 chef doing all the fancy stuff with the knives and the food, especially the eggs which he caught in his chefs hat.

Note: I've since tried this trick and don't recommend that you try it at home children as raw egg does not make good hair conditioner.

In addition there were Italian, Indian, Chinese and French specialty restaurants on board plus a café and taverna that charged for all services, all day.

Entertainment

Is something that Star Cruises always do well and the shows and the bands that we saw were excellent. It was a shame that they didn't have the strolling entertainment that we experienced on the Gemini. [Wherever a group of people seemed to congregate be it a bar or a queue, a couple of guys with a guitar or a bunch of cruise crew kids would turn up and start singing.] But it was still good.

I dropped in on a couple of cooking demonstrations, one was sushi making, and the other was dragon beard candy, Chinese delicacy. A very relaxing and enjoyable way to spend an hour I must say, with good tastings.

Robyn and I both visited the Library one afternoon. I have a ships library theory, which I'll share with you. These rooms are the hidden gems on many ships and if you want a quiet spot to read or snooze, this is the place. We both settled into great armchairs, with a view of the ocean and did the latter. We took turns waking each other up in case our snoring disturbed others. Brilliant.



The Casino opened for about 18 hours – we had to leave Australian waters before it could open and had to close it when we re-entered – but hardly anyone bothered to go in. I heard that on subsequent cruises they didn't bother opening it at all.

A final word about entertainment, the Virgo was **BIG** on Karaoke and in addition to a sizeable crowd being entertained by the wannabees, there were about 10 private Karaoke rooms where you could go and warble the night away with your own private groupies [or not].

The Weather

The weather was good [blue skies and sunshine] albeit there was a significant swell which had the swimming pool and the spas splashing water all over the place.

Note: One spa was occupied for the whole 3 days by a group that makes you ashamed to be Australian. They were loud and drunken, brought their own alcohol on board, broke glass around the pool area, and truly played their role in being ugly Australians. I was surprised and disappointed that the ship did nothing to curtail this.

I have since spoken to people that cruised later in the season and their stories are predominantly of people getting sea sick. Probably a first for this ship, which usually cruises in the Straits of Malacca where the seas are as flat as the proverbial mill pond.

Coming Home

We returned to Fremantle for a midday berthing which gave us time to enjoy the morning, before watching the docking procedure. The Virgo has bow and stern thrusters which enabled her to sail straight in, rotate 180 degrees and slide in sideways, unassisted. Sweet as.

Did we enjoy it ? .. of course we did !!!..

We love any excuse to go cruising.

We enjoyed sailing out of and back into Fremantle, tick that one off the list of things we must do.

We didn't meet any new people but funnily enough I did bump into a couple of people that I hadn't seen for many years.

We confirmed [once again] that we are definitely in that group of people that sees the ship as the destination .. as distinct to those that see the ship as the transportation between the destinations.

So in Conclusion

What a great way to spend a long weekend ..