

# *Largest Cruise Ship Arrives in Havana*

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Havana, December 19 (RHC-PL) -- With a displacement of over 59,000 tons and 2,600 passengers, the MSC Opera cruise ship Friday arrived in Cuba -- the largest ever docking in the island.

The cruise ship arrived at Terminal No.1 in the Bay of Havana amid great expectation of impressed residents. Measuring 251.25 meters long, 28.80 meters wide and with a draft of 6.60 meters, the ship is propelled by four engines with a speed of 21 knots.

It is operated by MSC Cruises S.A. (Mediterranean Shipping Company), one of the world's top four largest companies of its kind, with 12 cruise ships and the annual transportation of 1.7 million passengers.

The firm's CEO, Gianni Onorato, said to be very happy for this dream come true, mainly thanks to Cuban authorities' support. He said this is the largest ship arriving in Cuba directly from Italy after 22 days sailing.

It will enter the Bay of Havana 16 times through to April, on an agenda aimed at the passengers' contact with this country's tourism, culture, traditions and, above all, with its people.

He added they have plans to carry out seven-day journeys, with stays in Havana from Tuesdays to Thursdays and then include also passengers arriving on flights chartered by MSC, coming from Italy, France, Germany and Spain.

He said this first trip included people from Genoa (Italy), Barcelona (Spain) and Marseilles (France). They will later be joined by Canadians, Mexicans, Argentinians and Brazilians for a journey also including Cozumel (Mexico), Grand Cayman and Montego Bay (Jamaica). This company allows boarding in any port, he added.

He said the Italian-Swiss family firm MSC is the only one in the sector not belonging to a US corporation. It is the world's second largest shipping company with a 17 percent stake in the market.

The MSC Opera, built in 2004, has a crew of over 700. The company was founded in 1987 from the former Flotta Lauro Lines firm (1970).

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