

## MS Columbus

Review: ★★★ +

Size Ship:.....14,903 tons  
Lifestyle:..... Standard  
Cruise Line:..... Hapag-Lloyd Cruises  
Former Names:..... *none*  
Builder:..... MTW Schiffswerft (Germany)  
Original Cost:..... \$69 million  
Entered Service:..... July 1997  
Registry:..... The Bahamas  
Length (ft/m):..... 472.8/144.13  
Beam (ft/m):..... 70.5/21.50  
Draft (ft/m):..... 16.8/5.15  
Propulsion/Propellers:..... diesel (10,560kW)/2  
Passenger Decks:..... 6  
Total  
Crew:.....170

Passengers (lower beds/all berths):.....410/423  
Passenger Space Ratio (lower beds/all berths):.....36.3/35.2  
Crew/Passenger Ratio (lower beds/all berths):.....2.4/2.4  
Navigation Officers:.....German  
Cabins (total):.....205  
Size Range (sq. ft/m):.....129.1-322.9/12.0-30.0  
Cabins (outside view):.....134  
Suites:.....8  
Cabins interior/no view):.....63  
Cabins (for one person):.....0  
Cabins (with private balcony):.....2  
Cabins (wheelchair accessible):.....0  
Cabin Current:.....110 volts  
Elevator:.....3  
Casino:.....No  
Slot Machine:.....No  
Swimming Pools (outdoors):.....1  
Swimming Pools (indoors):.....0  
Whirlpools:.....0  
Sauna/Steam Room:.....Yes/No  
Fitness Center:.....Yes  
Massage:.....Yes  
Self-service Launderette:.....No  
Dedicated Cinema/Seats:.....No  
Library.....Yes

Classification Society:.....Germanischer Lloyd

**OVERALL SCORE 1,383 (OUT OF A POSSIBLE 2,000 POINTS)**

**BERLITZ'S RATINGS:**

	<b>Possible</b>	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>Ship</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>347</b>
<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Food</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>Service</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>Entertainment</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Cruise</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>268</b>

**Accommodation:** The standard cabins are really small, and many of them are interior. All but 10 cabins feature lower berths, but the 16 categories established really are a lot for this size of ship. Except for two forward-facing suites, there are no balcony cabins.

The cabin décor is bright and upbeat, and a good amount of closet and self-space is provided. The bathrooms are fully tiled and have large shower stalls (none have bathtubs). All cabins feature a mini-bar/refrigerator (all items are at extra cost, at a small surcharge).

There eight suites (each is at least double the size of a standard cabin) and each has a curtained partition between its lounging and sleeping areas, with a wall unit for viewing from either the lounge or bedroom. Two of the suites located at the bow each have a

narrow private veranda (with large wall clock) and lounge area separated by a curtain, two televisions and an excellent amount of closet, drawer and shelf space. The cabinetry, with its walnut-finish and birds-eye pattern, makes these suites feel warm and luxurious. All the suites have a small room service menu. The bathrooms have a large shower (it is big enough for two), hairdryer and undersink storage space. There is 24-hour room service. Only a limited room service menu is available for all cabins.

**Dining:** There is one large main dining room located at the stern, with large ocean-view windows on three sides that seats all passengers in a single seating, with assigned tables. There are just two tables for two, but other tables can accommodate up to 16 – good for family reunions. The cuisine, which has an unstuffy presentation, is fairly good, although the menu selection is quite limited (choice of two or three entrees for dinner). There is an excellent selection of fresh-baked breads and rolls everyday.

Breakfast and lunch can be taken in the bright, but casual, setting of the Palm Garden, which is also the ship's very comfortable observation lounge. Light dinners also can be taken in the Palm Garden, where a small dance floor adds another dimension.

**Other Comments:** The *COLUMBUS* has a smart contemporary profile, with a single, large funnel (painted in Hapag-Lloyd's orange/blue colors). Hapag-Lloyd Cruises chartered the ship from the German Company Conti Reederei, the owner.

The ship also features an ice-hardened hull, which is useful for cold-weather cruise areas. In addition, the bridge "wings" can be folded inwards (as do the overhang lights) flush with the ship's side so that the vessel can enter the locks in the US/Canada Great Lakes region, including the St. Lawrence Seaway and Welland Canal, for which the ship was specifically built.

The ship has a good passenger space, ratio. Each deck has a distinctly different color scheme and carpeting, making it easy to find one's way around. There is a reasonable range of public rooms to choose from, most of which are located in a "cake-layer" vertical stacking aft of the accommodation. Although the ceilings in the public rooms are plain and unimaginative (except for the Palm Garden), the décor is really bright and upbeat, and very different to all other ships in the Hapag-Lloyd fleet. The most popular room is arguably the delightful multifunction Palm Garden, which is also the ship's forward-facing observation lounge.

The fit and finish of the ship is a little utilitarian (the mottled gray walls are somewhat cold, but a contrast to the splashes of color found in carpeting and other decorative touches). The artwork chosen is, for the most part, minimal and uncoordinated, yet it still works together to provide cheerful surroundings. Ship buffs will be pleased to find some superb original photographs from the Hapag-Lloyd archives adorning the stairways.

This is a good ship for the standard market German-speaking traveler, and, as such, offers excellent value for the money in very comfortable, unpretentious surroundings. However, you should know that the level of “luxury” is well below that of Hapag-Lloyd’s *EUROPA*, and the experience is completely different (so, of course, is the cruise price). The onboard currency is the euro.

First-time cruise passengers in particular will find that a fresh, comfortable, casual and unpretentious ship for a cruise vacation. You don’t need to buy a new wardrobe, and you can leave your tuxedo at home, for this ship you need only informal and casual clothes.

Well-planned itineraries and destination-intensive cruises are featured. Of particular note are the Great Lakes cruises, which are only possible because of the pencil-slim design of The *COLUMBUS* (the last ocean-going cruise vessel to operate Great Lakes cruises was the *World Discover* in 1974).

**Weak Points:** The swimming pool is small (more like a “dip” pool), as is the open deck space. The standard cabins are also very small. There is no-wrap around promenade deck outdoors. The layout and sight lines (including several pillars) in the show lounge are poor.