

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

Opulence and elegance on the high seas

The Peabody Essex Museum revisits the golden era of cruising in its new exhibit

By Christopher Muther
GLOBE STAFF

"I was riveted by the idea that the most opulent hotel spaces one could conceive of were actually created to float on the sea," said Dan Finamore, the Peabody Essex Museum's curator of maritime art and history. "That's really where this exhibit began."

The Peabody Essex maintains an extensive collection of historic maritime technology, but Finamore said there had been little focus on the cultural impact of luxury ocean liners. As he started looking at photographs of the interiors of these grand dames of the ocean, specifically from the mid-19th to the late 20th century, he realized that he had the beginnings of a swanky exhibition. The result of that idea and subsequent research is "Ocean Liners: Glamour, Speed and Style." It debuts in Salem this weekend, and runs through Oct. 9.

"No one had ever really focused on ocean liners as a means of conveying and communicating design ideas, and cultural values," he said. "On top of that, there's the whole promotional side of ocean liners."

The PEM exhibition features nearly 200 works such as paintings, sculpture, models, furniture, lighting, wall panels, textiles, fashion, photographs, posters, and film.

Finamore teamed with a curator from London's Victoria and Albert Museum to create the show, which it is billing as the first of its kind. After its debut at PEM, the show moves to the Victoria and Albert in 2018. We chatted with Finamore about the gilded age of these floating hotels, and what it was like aboard cruise ships before norovirus and waterslides.

Q. At what point did ships start evolving from mere transportation to a posh way to vacation?

A. It was a very long, gradual, transition. From the earliest years these ships were really just viewed as just a means of conveyance for those who had to travel. Over the course of time, immigration is reduced

and they replaced that with a tourist class, so more people are traveling in optional ways. That just ratchets up the competition. You don't have to travel so they need to entice you to travel. The diversity of activity areas really kicks in around the 1930s when you've got a number of different ships that are essentially evoking a nation's values. The Queen Mary is like an English country house at sea.

Soon they try to anticipate every single demand that they think the clients will want. Eventually the destination because almost immaterial.

Q. Was there a decade in the 20th century when the design of ocean liners reached its zenith?

A. I would say that the people have very special affinity for the 1930s because of the Queen Mary and the Normandie. But before World War I there were fabulous Beaux-Arts style boats. It was the floating palaces era. You had the Mauretania, the Titanic, and the Aquitania.

There's also the Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse and all the German ships which were really over-the-top. They were palatial. They had Renaissance revival interiors or Palladian interiors. You might walk from one room to the next and you've gone from Versailles to a medieval castle.

I've also learned over the course of the project is that the 1950s were a pretty good time in ocean liner design as well. And that is

where you see a rise in the Italian and American ships.

Q. People often think of the Titanic when they think of the glamour and glitz of these ships. Did the sinking of the Titanic dampen enthusiasm for cruising?

A. That's an interesting question. I haven't seen any firm documentation that shows that people stopped traveling. It was still the heyday. The things that stopped people from traveling, of course, were things like the Lusitania. Peo-

ple took trips on the Lusitania when the Germans had already announced they were looking to sink an ocean liner.

The Titanic was really shocking in its day. Then there were investigations, and they kept going with the marketing statements that "we fixed it, and everything will be OK now." People always want the biggest, best, latest, and greatest. That's what the Titanic represented. We still see that today with massive cruise ships

that are introduced every year. It was just a different kind of excess 100 years ago."

"Ocean Liners: Glamour, Speed and Style" runs through Oct. 9 at the Peabody Essex Museum. Adults

\$20; seniors \$18; students \$12. www.pem.org, 866-745-1876. Christopher Muther can be reached at muther@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter @Chris_Muther



HERE

MEMORIAL WEEKEND MUSIC FEST DEBUTS

Kick off Memorial Day weekend with the first-ever Dixville Notch Music Festival in Colebrook, N.H. (May 27-28, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.). The family-friendly event features eight live music performances, more than 30 artisan vendors, an art exhibit by the Connecticut River Artisan Group, plus arts and crafts workshops and demonstrations, all taking place at Mohawk Falls, a venue with a post-and-beam pavilion, waterfall, ponds, and manicured lawns and gardens. A Gaelic Americana concert by Kyle Carrey is the headlining act. Additional performers include rock, blues and folk band Old Gold; smooth blues by White Wolf & Friends; piano preludes by Sharon Pearson; an open jam ses-

sion, and more. If you've ever wanted to see live a chainsaw-carving demonstration, now's your chance: Baker River Chainsaw Sculpture artists will be carving all weekend long. Food and drinks are available; no pets allowed. Free. www.dixvillenotchfestival.com

PROVIDENCE ARTS EXTRAVAGANZA

Enjoy a four-day celebration of the arts at the PVDfest (June 1-4). Artists, dancers, musicians, and other performers (below) from Providence and around the globe will converge in the city's public spaces, parks, and other outdoor arenas for free multicultural and multimedia events. Programming includes vertical dance troupe BANDALOOP, which will use the façade of a downtown building to fly, float, cartwheel and backflip in midair across the city skyline; Las Caf-

eteras, an East Los Angeles band combining the rhythms of Mexican folk music and Afro-Caribbean urban beats; and En Masse, composer and violinist Daniel Bernard Roumain's new composition performed with a 500-plus musician collective. Additional collaborative events include a Global Food Village, Maker Faire (featuring engineers, artists, scientists and crafters), daylong craft markets and block parties, and more. pvdffest.com

THERE

LUXE TRAIN TRAVERSES PERUVIAN ANDES

All aboard! Train aficionados will want to check out the new Belmond Andean Explorer, South America's first luxury sleeper train. Traversing the highest plains of the Peruvian Andes, travelers journey from

Cusco, the ancient capital of the Inca Empire, to Lake Titicaca. You can choose to explore the vast Colca Canyon before continuing to the city of Arequipa, a UNESCO World Heritage site. An alternative itinerary can be scheduled in reverse from Arequipa to Cusco. Ferrying up to 48 passengers, the train offers a piano bar car, observation car with open-air deck, library, and two elegant dining cars featuring seasonal dishes of locally sourced ingredients from the chefs at Belmond Hotel Monasterio, Cusco. Prices from \$480 per person, double occupancy, for the one-night Spirits of the Andes journey. Rates include meals, an open bar, and scheduled excursions. www.belmond.com/belmond-andean-explorer/

UK SPA DEBUTS IN USA

Fans of UK-based Bamford Haybarn Spas can leave their passports at home when scheduling their next holistic body treatments and massages at 1 Hotel South Beach in Miami, the first Bamford spa in the United States. Known for its natural beauty and wellness products crafted by Carole Bamford, the new 4,500-square-foot spa features 12 treatment rooms, two suites for couples' treatments, three manicure and pedicure stations and a relaxation area with central water fountain designed to cre-

ate a serene atmosphere. The spa reflects the "green" vision of 1 Hotel, a luxury oceanfront destination that takes nature and ecology seriously, using reclaimed and recycled materials as much as possible in its public spaces and guest rooms. Body treatments from \$125. Seasonal hotel rates from \$369. 866-615-1111, www.1hotels.com/south-beach/spa

EVERYWHERE

ONLINE BOOKING TOOL WITH PERSONALIZED SERVICE

So many fabulous hotels and destinations. So little time. How to choose the best trip? Virtuoso, the global network of luxury travel agencies, has launched an online booking tool for its 1,205 hotels, resorts, lodges, spas, luxury camps, and villas across 100 countries. Several key differences from do-it-yourself sites include access to an adviser with extensive personal knowledge of destinations and products, and perks synonymous with Virtuoso such as complimentary room upgrades, hotel credit, and late checkout — equaling up to \$450 per stay. Enjoy the ease of online booking while still having 24/7 support to resolve any issues that may arise before, during or after your stay. The adviser can also assist with planning other aspects of your

trip, including exclusive experiences and private tours. www.virtuoso.com/luxury-hotels

MUSICAL CD FOR TRAVELING DOGS

Do Fido or Skippy get stressed when traveling? Los Angeles-based record label Laurel Canyon Animal Co. may have a solution for you and your pup. Created by Skip Haynes and Dana Walden, Songs to Make Dogs Happy (followed by sequel "More Songs to Make Dogs Happy") is a collection of tunes billed as a "musical album for traveling with dogs approved by dogs." Indeed, these songs were crafted after canine focus groups — selected from more than 200 dogs nationwide — were questioned by their communicator as to their preference in music and content. The dog's responses were then used as guides for the creation of the music and lyrics resulting in a unique album of songs such as "Squeaky Deakey," "Scratch My Back," and "I'm Your Doggie." It can also help ease separation anxiety when leaving your dog in kennel, and is used in shelters and by veterinarians for dogs in recovery. CD (\$6.99); digital download for individual songs (\$1.29). laurelcanyonanimalcompany.com/product/make-dogs-happy

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