



LOG ENTRY 1

EMBARKATION DAY – SHIP: SMERALDA – PORT: SAVONA

Embarkation Day – Ship: Smeralda – Port: Savona

Everything went smoothly. I was warmly welcomed by the crew (including the Hotel Director, who is right below the Captain) – “aaah, the German host!”

This ship is enormous – 330 meters long, 19 decks high, ultra-modern (including LNG-powered), and the crew vibe is fantastic. Today was all about organizational stuff and safety training – 12 hours nonstop without food or drink, but all good.

Right now, we’re sailing along the coast past San Remo toward Marseille (arrival expected Sunday morning). The sea is whispering, you can see the coastal lights. I’m standing at the railing, breathing in the fresh air. My first moment of relaxing and contemplating. I just had a great meal in the delicious crew restaurant/canteen.





LOG ENTRY 2

FIRST DAY ON THE JOB

INTERNATIONAL HOST – GERMAN

My job is to ensure the well-being of German-speaking guests on board. Work hours are from about 7:30 AM until evening, open-ended, with breaks and training as needed.

I'm part of the Hospitality Team, with an office directly behind reception. My boss is the Hotel Director (just under the Captain), and I have a very experienced German-speaking host as my mentor. We work as a duo (between 300 and 1,400 German guests onboard, currently around 400).

There's a strict etiquette/dress code on board (Italian-style chic). In guest areas (Decks 5 to 19), we're only allowed to be present in uniform (see photo) and when working (no lounging around!).

It was a great first day. More to come.





LOG ENTRY 3

BARCELONA BOARDING DAY + STORM WARNING

We were docked in the port of Barcelona. Mostly Spanish-speaking guests boarded, but also Russian speakers from Kazakhstan, a Korean group, and of course, Germans.

I was assigned—alternating with other multilingual hosts—to welcome guests at the ship's entrance and orient them.

In the evening, just before departure, the Captain made an announcement warning of a stormy night ahead, advising all guests to stay off the decks due to strong winds.

The huge ship rocked gently through the night. We're now attempting to dock in Palma de Mallorca amidst continued strong winds. (Photo)





LOG ENTRY 4

A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

Just a quick live special entry from the port of Palma de Mallorca. While doing my rounds on the mostly empty outdoor Deck 16, I literally ran into the Captain (!) — great guy. I also met Maria and Henrique from Spain, who had just started their week-long journey with us.

An accident had pulled them out of their normal life; she is now bound to a wheelchair. I couldn't immediately answer her question about the pool's water temperature (important for her therapy), but I was able to bring her and her husband some cheerful moments.

Is there anything more fulfilling than that for a host on board? No!





LOG ENTRY 5

APPROACHING PALERMO

Good morning—early today (6 AM here). We had a great sea day yesterday, full of parties (including the Captain's Cocktail), and a peaceful night. Now we're sailing along the Sicilian coast.

I'm standing on Deck 7 near the lifeboats, looking out at Isola delle Femmine and Palermo, where we'll dock around 8 AM.

The sky is just beginning to lighten, I can see the city lights and the dark silhouettes of mountains against a reddening sky with some scattered clouds. The sea beneath me is rushing, it's warm (16°C), and we're approaching the city slowly.

Let me tell you—on days like this, you don't think about 17-hour shifts (like yesterday). You just feel grateful to witness this.

Today's agenda: short office briefing at 8 AM (breakfast before that), then safety training. I've been assigned to the "Command & Control" team, which, in case of an emergency (fire, water ingress, etc.), takes decisions from the bridge and communicates them in multiple languages (my specific role).

But first—docking in Palermo. The ship is now fully floodlit. At the top, the large glowing inscription: SMERALDA.

Yes, we're proud of the fleet's flagship.

It gives you goosebumps. Wow.





LOG ENTRY 6

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME

All roads lead to Rome—and so does ours. We're currently docking in Civitavecchia, the port of Rome.

The weather is... let's say, less than great (cool and grey). For me, today is shore excursion day. But nooo, not a private one! I'm supposed to accompany a Spanish-speaking group on one of our buses (not as a guide, just as Costa's representative).

And yesterday? A "Day of the Heart." I accompanied a totally flu-stricken German family to the ship's hospital, translating between English and German (they were from the Spreewald and spoke "no English"). Through this, tear-streaked, sobbing faces turned into smiles and laughter.

Also: I congratulated "Doris" on her birthday with a special little ice cream cake, made just for her by our excellent pastry chefs (see photo). The result? She transformed from "most annoyed guest #1" into a delighted guest.

Wishing you all a good morning—I've got to run now!





LOG ENTRY 7

FINISHED – FIRST WEEK ON THE SHIP!!!

We're entering Savona right now—our home port—at sunrise, strong wind, and mild temperatures. It's exactly where "everything started" for me one week ago (my embarkation)!

I'm standing outside, way up on Deck 18, all the way forward (right above the bridge), watching this massive ship maneuver its way—within centimeters—into the narrow harbor. We're going to be docked right in the center of town. Incredible.

How was the week? In one sentence, and expressed by this photo: ABSOLUTELY OVERWHELMING (IN THE BEST WAY).

Do I look exhausted? Yes, I do. This picture was taken at 1 AM on my way back to my bunk, after the "White Night Party" (dress code: 100% white) and 18 hours on my feet. Literally: on my feet.

My dear ones, thank you—family, friends, especially my school friend Martina for passing on this job opportunity. Without you, I wouldn't have made this possible. You are what makes a sailor strong: home.

What's next? The same route over and over again for the next seven weeks—Christmas Eve and New Year's at sea, somewhere between Savona and Marseille.

I'll keep you posted!





LOG ENTRY 8

“AND IT CAME TO PASS...”

“And it came to pass...” that Frank sailed the seas. (Or something like that, haha.)

Good morning from Marseille! We’re just docking now at dawn, and I’m sending you all a very Happy Advent back home!

What happened yesterday: I got stuck in a cabin with two Arab women! How so?

They had just boarded, were disoriented, and couldn’t find their cabin or luggage. One of them was in a wheelchair (electric), so they had one of our special cabins for guests with disabilities, equipped with heavy, electrically-operated doors.

Well... those very doors became our trap. After I had stowed all their luggage, the door shut behind us—and never opened again.

After what felt like an eternity (about an hour), we managed to get out. Not ideal for claustrophobics! The kicker? I missed the safety drill with the Captain on the bridge (“Command & Control”).

Feedback (“scolding”) from my mentor on board:

“Frank, that’s not your job (‘Arabs’) as a German host!”

Okay, so next time I’ll just leave “someone like that” at our Advent Campari Bar (see this morning’s photo at 7 AM), whether they’re standing or sitting (i.e., wheelchair!).

What do you think?!





LOG ENTRY 9

PALERMO ARRIVAL AFTER A ROUGH SEA DAY

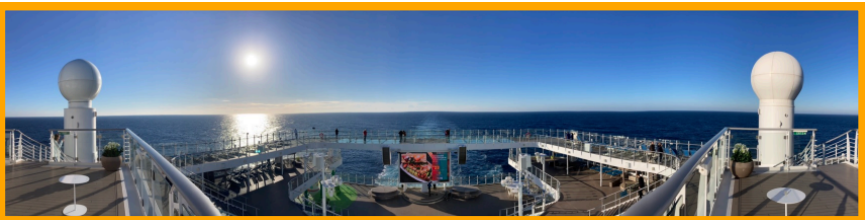
It feels like ages since I last communicated with you. Good morning from Palermo—we're just docking now!

Yesterday we spent the whole day at sea, which meant we crew members had limited internet—but instead, we had breathtaking moments. That's what happens when you have a job like mine, where you're allowed (and supposed) to go outside and everywhere on board!

You can see in the photo the ship's stern, taken from the top deck, looking back over the open sea. You see the big satellite antennas on the sides, a large stage, and the "Skywalk" (a glass bridge at 60 meters height!). The photo was taken as we passed the southern tip of Sardinia, after navigating through several storms during the night and early morning.

Not everyone was back on deck yet (many were seasick). I had a "slightly foggy" head, but otherwise I was fine and continued my mission: helping to bring a little sunshine to those scattered outside. ☀

Wishing you all a beautiful morning too!





LOG ENTRY 10

HARD TIMES AHEAD!

On the early morning TV screen in the crew restaurant (06:30), as we were pulling into Civitavecchia (Rome), there was news: “Germany heading home” (football). Meanwhile, we’ve got a storm warning for our next stop (Savona), and over 6,000 new guests expected at the upcoming ports—if the storm doesn’t mess it all up.

Preparations are in full swing. Yesterday, we had an emergency meeting of all departments (we multilingual hosts are included), led by the Hotel Director (right under the Captain). We got a serious “realignment” (some called it a verbal lashing 😊).

Why? Things aren’t going smoothly enough. We’re getting massive complaints—mainly from Spanish, Italian, and French guests. The Italians arrive in “shock troops,” wildly gesticulating. The French and Spanish are annoyed because “no one” speaks their language—except Frank.

So, I’ve been running around all day speaking five languages, helping colleagues without losing focus on my German duties. Yes, yes—I got the message 😊

The photo? Part of my prep—quick laundry run (no time later). This is part of our crew laundry room (for private use).

Dear ones, my “honeymoon phase” is officially over—wish me strength!





LOG ENTRY 11

HALF-TIME (ONE MONTH AT SEA)

Good morning from Savona, our home port, where I boarded exactly two weeks ago.

By the way—it's "snowing" outside, it's cold and nasty with rising winds (not yet a storm). We docked very early (around 5 AM) to be in port before the bad weather arrives.

All the more cozy and safe it feels inside this massive thing we call a cruise ship. Speaking of which —today's topic: Where does Frank sleep?

Short answer: Excellent! I sleep every night from around midnight until 6 AM.

I share a cabin with a very kind colleague from Italy who works at our reception. But we barely see each other—because I'm basically only in the cabin to sleep.

My bed (top bunk) is super cozy but very narrow (no sitting space), which is fine by me. I do nothing there but sleep anyway 😊

It's an inside cabin (no window), but we have a private bathroom, big closets, and lots of storage. Everything is aesthetic and clean, with daily room and laundry service. We don't have to lift a finger—everything's kept spotless by the amazing Filipino crew!





LOG ENTRY 12

SAFETY FIRST – ITALIAN STYLE

Good morning from Marseille! We're approaching the city now—it's still dark, and I'm outside on Deck 7, where the lifeboats are. "It's not snowing anymore," haha.

Lifeboats—why? Well, a ship this size shouldn't sink... but after Costa Concordia, we know: it can. That tragedy changed a lot in the cruise industry—especially at Costa—for the better.

Now, before every departure (while still in port), we do a safety drill with all newly boarded guests. Yesterday in Savona, that meant over 1,000 people!

And if you think this is done in German military style—nope! This is still an Italian ship. So even in serious matters, what counts here is: The Show!

So all the Italian-speaking guests gather in our massive San Remo Theater (see photo), and the Entertainment Team leads them in a "grand show" preparing them for the unthinkable.

An absolutely hilarious spectacle!





LOG ENTRY 13

BARCELONA – SHORE LEAVE

Good morning! We've just arrived at the port of Barcelona—a huge industrial harbor. It smells of chemicals and oil (well, at least my sensitive nose picks it up 😊).

An impressive sight, how our massive vessel glides through this harbor maze like it's controlled by magic, arriving perfectly at our terminal.

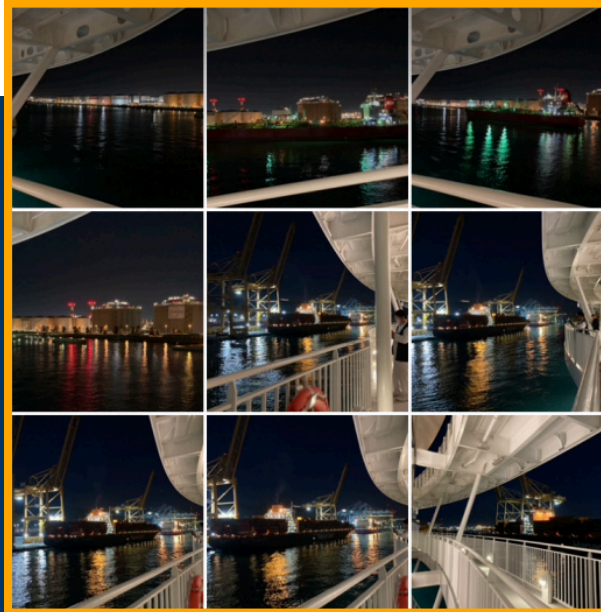
As always when I write these posts, I'm standing outside on our crew-only Deck 7, near the lifeboats. It's cold (6°C), the sky is full of stars (still early). We're drifting past enormous oil and gas depots, and at the Hapag-Lloyd container terminal, ships with names like "Seoul Express" and "Izmir Express" are being loaded and unloaded.

Pretty sure your Amazon Christmas packages are sailing through here 😊

Today I have shore leave (my second in two weeks)! I'm supposed to accompany a Costa-organized city tour of Barcelona.

I've never been here before—they say the city is quite lovely 😊

Have you ever been?





LOG ENTRY 14

GAUDÍ – THE MAN OF CURVES :)

Good morning from Palma de Mallorca!

Sooo, already “got around the curve” (i.e., out of bed)? 😊

Yesterday, on our Barcelona city tour, we got plenty of curves—Gaudí everywhere. What a great city—shame about the Catalans (just kidding!).

I’ll spare you the standard photo spam—the internet is full of better ones than I could ever take. But here’s something different: a curvy view of our ship, docked at the cruise terminal in Barcelona. It’s truly gigantic.

The ship is 330 meters long, 60 meters high (above sea level), and guests board via two ramps at Deck 6 (out of 19 decks!). Yesterday alone, about 1,000 people boarded.

As an admitted cultural Philistine 😊, the best I could say to my group—standing awestruck in front of the Sagrada-whatever-it’s-called—was this:

“If you stood our ship vertically right here, it’d be half the height of that church.”

(For reference: Berlin TV Tower = 150 meters.)

They were floored.

Gaudí, the Frank way. Enjoy.





LOG ENTRY 15

SEA DAY – METAMORPHOSIS

Good morning!

Those of you who've been reading for a while know: Sea Day = no log entry. But today's different. No photos (internet's limited), but here's a special update.

I'm standing on the Fly Bridge, Deck 18—the highest accessible point on the ship. We're in the middle of the Mediterranean, somewhere between Mallorca and Sicily. The sea is calm, it's mild, the full moon just set behind us, and the sun is rising ahead—flanked by powdered clouds.

What could be more beautiful?

Well—maybe this:

Last night, after 2 weeks on the ship, I received my first feedback.

In a circle of 5 + 1 (me), two managers and three experienced colleagues told me:

- ✅ Overall very satisfied
- ✅ I should work fewer hours
- ⚠️ Weakness: office work

Of course! Anyone who knows me knows those two words—office work—are like two little crosses I bear 😊

So, I've been assigned a second mentor to sharpen my “admin skills.”

And I've been given a time frame: 1 week (no more!).

So yes:

“Your Frank” is in metamorphosis (!?)



LOG ENTRY 16

BUONGIORNO SICILIA – TOO MUCH!!!

Wooooow what a spectacle!

We're just arriving in Palermo—mild temperatures, 7 AM. The sea is as flat as Lake Wannsee, and on the right, the full moon is setting, while on the left, the sun is rising. The city lies ahead of us.

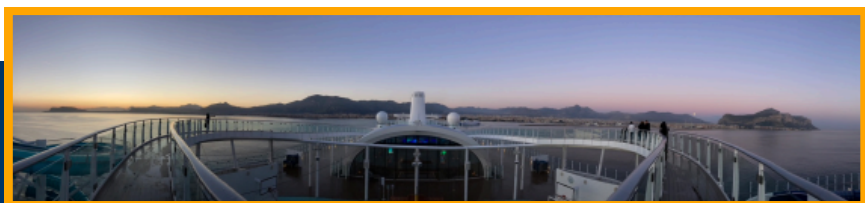
In the center of the photo: the top of our giant indoor swimming pool (glass roof!), plus two of the four huge satellite antennas.

Standing with me on the Fly Bridge, 60 meters above sea level, are a few thrilled guests. I told them to wake up early and come up here—they're crying with joy now. I could join them (but no, dignity!)...

Okay, fine—I'll admit it:

I have tears in my eyes too.

It's just... too much!





LOG ENTRY 17

WHITE NIGHT

Good morning! We're approaching Civitavecchia (the port of Rome), and I'm a little tired. I've been up since 5—short night.

Last night, we had one of our weekly mega events: the White Night. A party in all white (dress code), and I was assigned to make sure guests had a blast—basically the opposite of "office work" 😊

Perfect opportunity to introduce you to our Beach Club: a massive, glass-domed indoor pool area. Big pool, 4 jacuzzis, bars, panoramic lounges—all in the glassed-in 16th and 17th floors, at the very top of the ship. Incredible!

The party? A total bomb! Super elegant, great music and entertainment, guests were blown away.

Yes, this is what Italians do best: SHOW!





LOG ENTRY 18

WELCOME TO REALITY (SHOW)

Good morning from Savona (we just docked).

It's been exactly three weeks since I boarded—and I've now fully arrived in the cruise ship reality, which looks like this:

The Smeralda (our ship) is, along with the Toscana, the newest, biggest, and most modern ship in the Costa fleet—a global flagship.

Which also means:

It has the toughest management, and the most stressful route for the crew (Western Mediterranean, weekly cycle).

We have 1,000+ guest turnarounds per day, and right now we're at nearly 5,000 guests. By Christmas, we'll hit max capacity: 6,500.

And the crew? Already falling apart.

Overwhelmed managers (lacking social skills), hot-headed young team members, and tanking revenue and survey scores (except "us Germans," we're still doing okay 😊).

In short:

IT'S A SHARK TANK. Everyone for themselves.

How am I doing?

GOOD.

Wouldn't trade any of my 60 years of life experience—and I wouldn't trade any of you, either. You made me who I am (thank you!).

Yesterday, during the Argentina match in the sports bar, an important manager pulled me aside and said:

"You are smart. First learn from them, then go your own way."

This was about the increasingly toxic crew environment—my second mentor is apparently already on the "hit list." (Wow.)

Greetings from the Mediterranean!



DON'T MISS IT!

The best Mediterranean themed aquarium



LOG ENTRY 19

CITY TOUR À LA SMERALDA

Good morning from Marseille! We've just docked beneath a glorious sunrise. Right next to us: our beautiful sister ship Diadema from the fleet.

We'll be here all day—guests will explore the city and its surroundings, either on tours or on their own.

Yesterday, we were in Savona, our home port. I've attached a photo: the view from Deck 18, right above the bow—just above the bridge (Deck 16) and the VIP suites.

We're about 60 meters high here. You can judge the height by the buildings in front of us.

Yes, you're seeing it right:

We "park" right in the middle (literally!) of this picturesque coastal town.

What's no longer allowed in Venice (rightly so), is celebrated here. They're proud of Costa Crociere, the global mother of cruise ships—and especially proud of our ship, Smeralda:

UNA BELLEZA!





LOG ENTRY 20

STORIES LIFE WRITES

Good morning! We're approaching Barcelona, and I'm standing all the way aft on Deck 16, breathing deeply—because what I'm about to tell you is deeply emotional.

In the photo, you see me with three women. We were invited by them to our onboard ice cream café.

The woman in the middle is Jenn, my German mentor (a riding instructor!), and the two others are guests—mother and daughter—on my right.

They're frequent cruisers, sailing with Costa for over 40 years.

I met them on my very first day, at the boarding ramp. The mother (82) had gotten tangled up with her walker. Once I helped her out of that "sticky spot," I jokingly reminded her to drive more carefully on board—we have speed limits here! (I pointed to a surveillance camera.)

She looked at me, understood the joke, and burst out laughing—then sped off (of course, far too fast 😊).

She kept seeking me out in the following days. Later, the ship's hairdresser whispered to me that these two had never enjoyed a cruise as much as they did with me.

A small but important detail (only I know this):

That haircut and this cruise might be her last. She's terminally ill, on strong painkillers. Her daughter has a mental disability and doesn't know her mother is dying. She'll only be told... after.

These are the days.

🎵 "Tage wie diese" – Die Toten Hosen





LOG ENTRY 21

BALL, BALLER, BALLERMANN

Good morning from Palma de Mallorca!

It's early (7 AM), still dark, and I'm standing at the top on Deck 18, directly above the bridge. The city of Palma sparkles before me in panoramic glory.

Seems like the perfect moment to share something about our nightlife onboard.

This ship isn't just famous for its excellent cuisine—it's also known for dazzling shows. What you see here is our Colosseo—a massive, round show arena in the middle of the ship, a wonder of design (like everything onboard).

It spans the full width of the ship, spread over multiple decks, fully glassed to the outside. The stage rises in concentric circles toward the “heavens of showtime.”

Behind me (as I took the photo): a gigantic LED screen. Around the arena: light animations everywhere, bars (one entirely Campari-themed), and a sushi restaurant.

Here, day and night (with only short breaks), spectacular shows take place—including, at the moment, live World Cup matches.

BALLERMANN at its finest.





LOG ENTRY 22

ANNIVERSARY

Good morning from the open sea—under a cloudless sunrise and wonderfully mild temperatures, all the way up here on deck.

Today is another sea day, so no photo (limited internet). We're headed toward Palermo, passing by Sardinia later today. We've had a long wave rolling in from the rear since last night—our floating universe rocks gently—it's like a dance. Beautiful.

♪ Same song as before

And that dance of life? It's what I'm thinking of today—because Heike and I are celebrating our 33rd wedding anniversary. (!)

Yes, really. Hard to believe, right?

We've been through storms together. We've raised two wonderful children. And like so many times in these 33 years, we are in different places today.

Places? What are places?

They're points of stillness.

So here I stand, facing a blazing red fireball (the rising sun), and I feel the infinity of that word, that promise we once gave each other.

Thank you, Heike, for your infinity.



LOG ENTRY 23

PALERMO – “LA PIROETTA SICILIANA”

Good morning from the southern Mediterranean—Palermo, Sicily.

It’s already beautifully mild this early morning, and the sun is rising as we enter port.

Honestly, it’s a spectacle every time our dream ship *Smeralda* sails into a harbor, but Savona (day after tomorrow) and especially Palermo take it to a whole other level.

It’s not just the stunning Sicilian mountain scenery, the sunrise, or the glass-smooth sea—it’s also the city itself, laid out before us, and its harbor, which always seems far too small for us.

And that’s where the magic happens—once a week, here in Palermo:

La Piroetta Siciliana (as I call it).

It’s when our giant vessel does a full 360° turn on the spot inside this miniature harbor basin—to then reverse in and dock just meters away from the buildings of the old town.

It leaves you speechless. You too?





LOG ENTRY 24

LIFE IN FULL COLOR

Good morning from Civitavecchia, the port of Rome.

We sailed through a stormy night filled with lightning. The ship stayed calm—absolutely overwhelming.

Speaking of overwhelming—I know some of you are getting overwhelmed by all these superlatives I keep sending. And yes, it's not just pretty thoughts rising up—there are challenging ones too.

Like the impact of mass tourism.

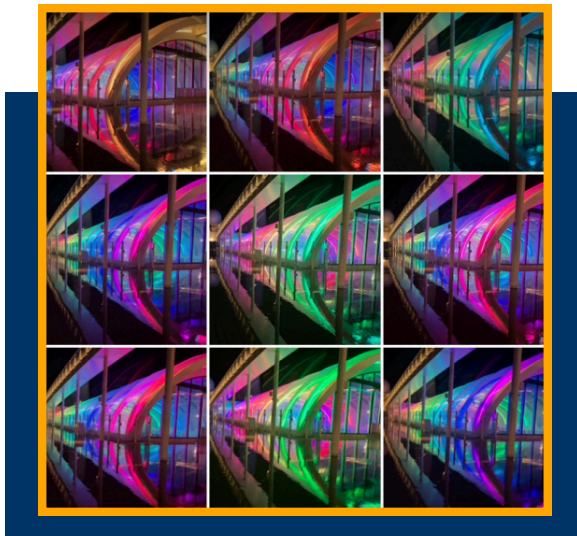
Today, we'll unleash several thousand tourists (just from our ship!) into Rome. They'll flood the streets, bars, and piazzas. Some locals will be annoyed. Others will welcome it. In the end, the city lives from its visitors.

I'd love to hear your thoughts about this—because those are the conversations that spark movement. And as a society, we need movement more urgently than ever.

Speaking of color:

In the picture, you see nine views of our massive, color-changing panoramic swimming pool roof—reflected in the wet deck at night. So full of color...

Just like life itself?





LOG ENTRY 25

MADE IT! (PHEW!)

Good morning from Savona.

It's fresh and clear outside, the sun is rising, and we're pulling in.

Savona is our home port—Costa rules here. We're allowed to dock really deep into the heart of the city. We tie up right next to homes, bars, and shops—crazy and unimaginable in German-style “bureaucratic planning” (think: Berlin Airport 😊).

This is also where my Life 2.0 began—my new life at sea, exactly 4 weeks ago today.

And yes, I've made it. And I'm far from done.

I'm doing great—but also feeling the full stretch.

There are things I still don't know “how to do” (brutal ones too).

Last night (11 PM), during one of my work rounds, a senior manager pulled me aside and dragged me to a bar—just to tell me:

“Headquarters in Genoa (20,000 employees) has a special eye on you. And I expect you to be the one who makes the difference. We need a turnaround—and I need you to grow.”

That hit me hard.

Until now, I've kept a low profile—but it seems they've seen through me anyway:

“Be different.”

They've seen my strengths, but also my weaknesses (like admin stuff).

Where will this all lead...? (Help!)

Photo attached—if you know me, you'll “see it” in my face 😊





LOG ENTRY 26

GOOD MORNING FROM PALMA DE MALLORCA!

It's 7 a.m., the sky is crystal clear with stars, the temperature is mild, and holiday planes are circling above us. I imagine the people looking out their windows are exclaiming,

"Ooooh look down there—what's that? A cruise ship! I want that too...!"

And yes—it really is a dream, being on a floating city like our Smeralda.

Nothing here feels real—it's an entire dream world.

Even for us crew, nothing is "normal" here.

We live in a constant state of exception—around the clock, every single day, for months on end.

Here's a photo from our crew restaurant, where I happened to have dinner with Indonesian colleagues from Bali.

These smiling faces greeting you so warmly? For me, they are true role models.

They (waiters) have one of the toughest jobs onboard.

In this pre-Christmas season, let yourselves be inspired—enlightened—by people who may not share your religion, but still light a candle in another place.

It warms the heart so beautifully. 🕯️





LOG ENTRY 27

WHERE LOVE IS, THE SUN SHINES

Good morning from Palermo!

The sun just rose. The sea is as calm as a pond. The temperature is mild.

Our vessel has just docked—and I have tears in my eyes. It's so beautiful.

I'm up here again, all the way on the upper deck, outside—so I can share this moment with you.

The city lies at our feet.

The Sicilian mountains frame the view.

And all I can say is:

BELLA ITALIA – TI AMO 🇮🇹

👉 Palermo sunrise clip





LOG ENTRY 28

FOR THE GOSSIP LOVERS AMONG YOU 😊

Good morning from Civitavecchia (port of Rome)—where big history has been made. And also here on board our Smeralda—daily. But yesterday was something special.

I saw two women sitting a bit lost and approached them in four languages, starting with “Good morning.” One replied with “Kalimera” (Greek for good morning) and asked me in German where I was from.

I answered freely:

“I am a Berliner.”

Told her my parents were a doctor and nurse working in Greece, that my dad spoke Greek, and that I had traveled there many times as a child.

What I didn’t know was who I was talking to...

The woman was a longtime close employee of the ONASSIS family, and had dined multiple times with the KENNEDYs aboard Onassis’ famous yacht, Christina O.

She’s a highly honored and loyal Costa customer, and was complaining that this time, management didn’t show her enough attention. I replied playfully:

“For us, you’re no less than MAMMA COSTA.”

(A loving nickname based on her Costa loyalty.)

She melted—clapping her hands, the ice was completely broken.

In 10 minutes, she told me her whole life story (a dramatic one!). She even showed me WhatsApp chats with someone named A. from Costa—her “friend.”

Turns out:

That’s the very same senior manager who recently told my bosses here to “keep an eye on Frank.” (Remember that? I wrote about it.)

INSANE.

For the younger readers here:

The Onassis clan was once one of the richest and most powerful families in the world. Through marriage, they became connected to the Kennedys (yes, that Kennedy—U.S. president).

President Kennedy once said in 1963, in defiance of the Berlin Wall:

“Ich bin ein Berliner.”

👉 Watch the speech





LOG ENTRY 29

BUON NATALE

Good morning from Savona, Northern Italy, near Genoa—our home port.

It's Christmas Eve. We've docked for just a few hours—and then we sail on.

How are you celebrating? Send me a message—you are my anchor in this beautifully chaotic life.

What, at home, might count as a holiday disaster (burnt duck, for example)... looks quite different here on board:

We're approaching full capacity—6,200 guests.

Today alone, 2,200 people are boarding in Savona—mostly Italians (hallelujah 🙌).

They all need to be guided, soothed, and reunited with missing luggage.

On top of that, we have a full holiday program rolling out—and pretty much everyone with a name in the Costa company (20,000 employees) is onboard, including the company president, who embarked today with his family for a one-week stay.

Oh—and yesterday we ran out of magnetic keycards for the cabins.

"Excuse me?!?"

Once, I read in the cultural section of a German newspaper:

"Italy is not a country. It's a state of being."

And I'd like to add—based on this photo from the ship:

A very colorful one.





LOG ENTRY 30

...AND IT CAME TO PASS...

Good morning and Merry Christmas from Marseille.

A (very) short night just ended—this log is delayed (I've been working since 7 AM).

What happened?

Something Biblical.

In our San Remo Theater, with several hundred seats, the "Midnight Mass" took place. A priest from the Vatican had been flown in (an Indian priest—Jesus was a man of color, after all).

I stood on the upper balcony, second floor, as he made his way through the rows at midnight, distributing holy bread and blessing the people.

Across from me, on the top level, sat a very old woman in a wheelchair. Her face read only one thing:

"I want to receive it too."

So I went over and, in Italian hand gestures, told her I'd bring her down.

Her (very) old husband joined us. Slowly, his hand on my shoulder, we navigated the ship's labyrinth (elevators, crowds).

I heard him sobbing—he was crying.

Was it her final blessing?

Downstairs, all seats were full—except one had just opened up, right at the front, at the aisle (you can see it in the photo—it's not me behind the glass head 😊).

He could sit right beside her.

I "parked" her there and wiped the seat clean.

After the mass, a woman came up to me—it was their daughter—to thank me deeply. She had sat elsewhere but saw everything.

She read my name tag:

"Ahh..."

I had been recognized.

And then she said, with a knowing look:

“You know who I am...”

She was the mother of that very senior manager who had said:

“Keep an eye on Frank.”

The old couple were her (great-)parents.

IT TRULY WAS A HOLY NIGHT. ✨





LOG ENTRY 31

CURVES

Good morning from Barcelona, the city of Gaudí—master of curves.

We're docking now. It's early, it's crisp, the sky is clear, and the sunrise is unbearably beautiful.

"Curves?" Oh yes—we've got them in every shape and form on this ship.

From "hot" to repellent—human curves in all their glorious diversity.

As for the Smeralda itself—its curves are simply overwhelming.

Here's a snapshot from the stern, taken from Deck 18, nearly 60 meters above sea level, from our Bar Orizzonte, behind the bar counter.

What you're seeing, like through a fisheye lens, is our fully glassed panoramic skywalk (even the floor is glass!), with the massive LED screen of our amphitheater below—and beyond, the open sea.

Why the bar is called "Orizzonte" (Italian for horizon)?

Well... I think the picture says it all.





LOG ENTRY 32

HARD TIMES TO COME

Good afternoon from Palma de Mallorca—holiday paradise for Germans, and escape hatch for many.

As for escaping? Not an option for me.

Honestly, I'd be gone by now—last night was sleepless.

What's happening here on the human level—among crew and guests—goes beyond what's tolerable. Maybe it's just "normal" for large groups of people in organizations...

(To all the doctors, social workers, and corporate folks reading along: I salute you.)

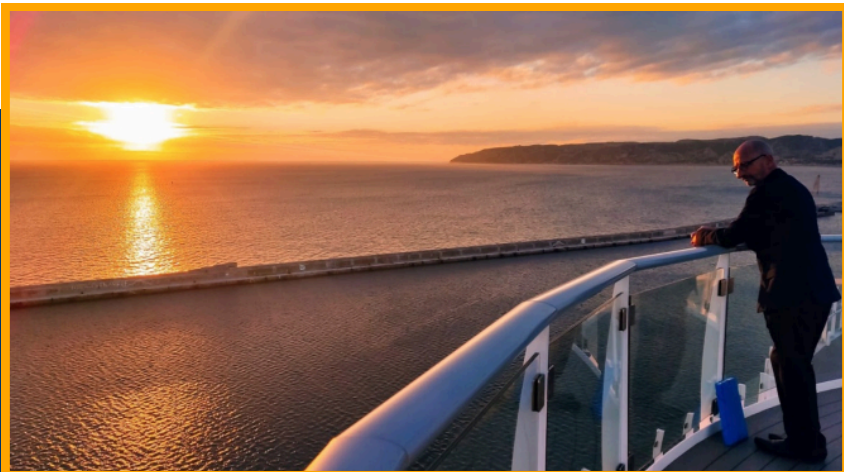
Entitled guests constantly bringing my colleagues at the front desk to tears.

Managers who then publicly shame those same employees instead of checking their own behavior.

And yes—I've been caught in the crossfire too.

May "God's hand" bring me not just wheelchair guests, but also the seventh sense to endure this madness.

Any advice?! 😊





LOG ENTRY 33

TITANIC – REIMAGINED

Good morning from Palermo. The sun is rising, the weather is warm, and I'm standing all the way up on deck, taking it all in. It's just... glorious.

Or should I say: funny?

Here's a little throwback to yesterday's sea day, where our guests enthusiastically re-enacted scenes from "Titanic."

But in a very... unique way.

You see, we've got this water slide labyrinth on the top deck.

Sounds standard, right?

Well, the engineers built in a nasty surprise:

One of the tubes ends in a giant funnel, like a roulette table. Guests shoot out, swirl around the bowl, and then get sucked into a hole in the middle.

They scream in terror (mock or not), desperately trying to resist the "certain doom"—to no avail, of course.

At Disney this might seem boring. But on a ship?

Totally different vibe.

After all: "Here it's about survival!" 🤪





LOG ENTRY 34

FRANK IN THE HOSPITAL (ALL GOOD!)

Gooooo morning from Civitavecchia—port of Rome.

From the place where, 2,000 years ago, the foundations of modern civilization were laid (“all roads lead to Rome”), here’s a glimpse from inside our floating monster:

Down on Deck 3, just barely above sea level, we have our medical center—fully equipped with an OR, X-ray, and 20 beds. It’s basically a small hospital.

Yesterday was my third assignment there.

Whenever a German-speaking guest feels unwell, I accompany them as a translator (the doctors speak Italian and English).

I cheer up the patients—and the staff—with humor and warmth. Even the doctors appreciate it.

Yesterday, I accompanied a woman with “flu-like symptoms.”

She’s doing well now.

Another patient recently had to stay on IV fluids for a while.

“She was running on fumes.” 😊





LOG ENTRY 35

31 // 31 – STATE OF EMERGENCY

Good morning from Savona, our home port in northern Italy.

Since last night, we've been dealing with a massive server outage—many computer systems are either malfunctioning or down completely.

And today of all days, 2,000 guests are disembarking and 2,000 new ones boarding.

And without computers, nothing works here...

Hence this post has no photo.

And so, the year ends for me in this rather poetic way:

A year full of surprises—each of you playing a unique and important part in it (thank you for being!).

Who would've thought?

I've now been on the cruise ship COSTA SMERALDA for six weeks, working as a host for German-speaking guests.

TOTAL MADNESS.



LOG ENTRY 36

THE SHOW MUST GO ON!!!

Good morning from Marseille—and HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

We're arriving later than usual today.

Last night, we made a special detour to celebrate New Year's "à lo Grande."

Instead of just sailing past, we anchored off the coast of San Remo—Italy's festival capital—to enjoy the city's famous fireworks display directly from the ship.

And yes—it was a show.

Our floodlit SMERALDA (Smaragd in German) spun in a pirouette, like a dancing lady (ships are traditionally female), turning on her own axis—then presented her open amphitheater stern to the city as a salute to the fireworks.

✳ Our ship's horn blasted: "Boooaaah!"

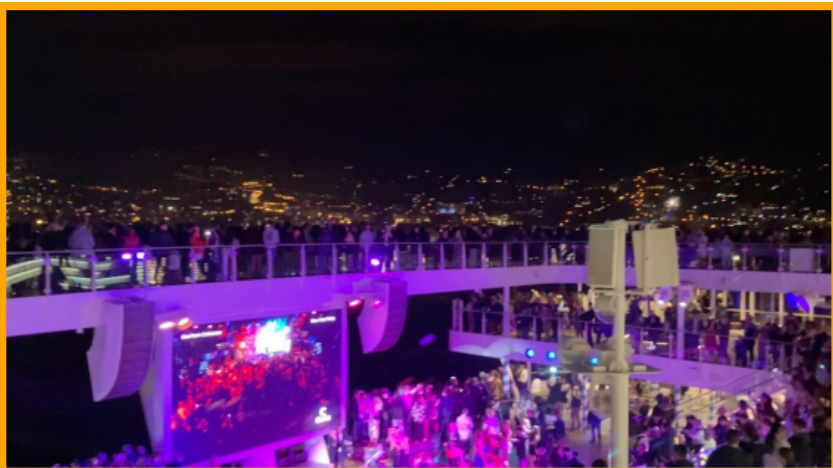
From the distance, other ships responded: "Boaah... Boaah...!"

And I?

I stood there and cried.

(Knowing my sister—reading this—wasn't doing well...)

(Video)





LOG ENTRY 37

INSIGHTS

Good morning from Barcelona!

Here's the story of a man who, through his "curves," made the world more beautiful: Gaudí.

Well, there's enough written about him elsewhere.

Today, I'd like to offer a peek inside our ship—a world whose flowing forms can absolutely hold their own with Gaudí. 😊

The photo shows the corridor leading to and through our Italian Design Museum on board.

It's said we're the only ship with such a museum..

It showcases iconic objects of Italian design: furniture, lighting, fashion (see link).

👉 Costa Smeralda Design Collection

And because money makes the world go round, the museum is directly connected to our casino (you can see it at the center of the photo).

And yes—you can win money here.

(But that's a story for another time.)





LOG ENTRY 38

BREATHE

Good morning from Palma de Mallorca!

It's mild, slightly cloudy. The rising sun is cutting through—it's beautiful.

Today, for the first time in a while, I have a half-day shore excursion—accompanying a German group (part of the job).

A chance to breathe again, finally.

There's a wave of viruses going around onboard.

It's either: wear a mask and stay healthy or go down like many others.

I'm healthy as ever (see photo 😊).

As I've mentioned before, the biggest dangers on a cruise ship are fire and sanitation.

Fortunately, we've got both under control—our ship is spotless, inside and out.

But just in case you ever wonder how quickly things can spiral out of control:

👉 Cruise ship contamination incident





LOG ENTRY 39

SEA DAY = SEE DAY

Good morning from “far away.”

We’re sailing gently toward our next destination: Palermo, Sicily, where we’ll arrive tomorrow morning.

It’s 7:30 AM. A red fireball is rising from the water.

Today is a sea day—unlike all the other days of our Western Med cruise, where we dock in a port during the day (Savona, Marseille, Barcelona, Palma, Palermo, Civitavecchia, etc...).

Sea Day = See Day.

No photo today (limited internet), so I invite you to use your inner vision—to see the things that are always there, yet often invisible to our eyes.

I’m talking about the “in-between human moments”—those that often go unnoticed in the flood of images and noise.

They hide in corners, gain power, and sometimes explode—not always as gently as the sun does now.

I witness this daily.

You probably do too:

People suddenly acting out, behavior that leaves us speechless.

Why is that?

Maybe we need to close our eyes more often—to see within, to see what’s invisible.

SEA DAY = SEE DAY.

That’s what I’m doing now.

Will you do it too—just for a moment?

Close your eyes, and let this radiant warmth I’m sending from here rise within you. See.



LOG ENTRY 40

GOOD MORNING FROM CIVITAVECCHIA (ROME)!

Some of you curious minds have asked how I'm actually accommodated here on board — so here's a little peek:

Currently, there are around 6,300 guests and 1,500 crew members onboard — nearly 8,000 people from about 60 nationalities.

The ship has 19 decks; the lower three (Decks 0, 1, 2 — below the waterline) are reserved for crew.

I'm staying on Deck 6, right at the bow, in a two-person cabin (I've got the upper bunk).

For the past few days, I've had the cabin to myself — before that I shared it with a very kind colleague from reception.

We've got our own bathroom (behind a mirrored door on the right), a TV (no time), and a desk. Everything is new, clean (with daily room service), and quite aesthetic — I feel comfortable!





LOG ENTRY 41

EMERGENCY

Good morning from Savona (northern Italy)!

This is where my cruise adventure began exactly 7 weeks ago — and today, it's once again quite the ride with my fourth medical intervention.

Last night, I was called in to provide language support for a guest who was feeling extremely unwell.

The onboard doctor and emergency team were already dispatched to the cabin.

I was the first to arrive on Deck 15. I knocked — it took a moment before someone opened.

There he was — a middle-aged man, curled on the floor in pain, screaming, pale as chalk, cold sweat. I recognized him.

I asked about his 11-year-old son — “somewhere eating,” he gasped.

I helped him — he crawled — toward the bed. He collapsed between the beds. Eventually, I got him up, gave him a pillow to bite down on — he screamed and screamed, holding his stomach.

I was still alone. I called the emergency number — barely able to communicate over the screaming.

Finally, the doctor and the first response team arrived (I know them). The doctor immediately diagnosed it as an emergency and ordered his transfer to the onboard medical clinic.

My German colleague had also arrived and accompanied him down to Deck 3.

I was supposed to go find the son, but the decision was made to wait until we had more information (we feared the worst).

It turned out to be the right decision — the patient stabilized quickly (connected to cables and tubes) and was back in the cabin before the son returned.

At times I felt like the floor was being pulled out from under me — but I stayed strong (secretly crying), especially because my son had given me a small talisman to carry (see photo from my bunk).





LOG ENTRY 42

A STROKE OF LUCK

Good morning from Marseille!

It's rainy and chilly outside, and we had a bit of swell during the night.

My new roommate (the colleague sharing the cabin) is feeling pretty rough this morning.

Yesterday, we left Savona and sailed along the Italian and French Riviera — past places with glamorous names like San Remo, Monaco, and Cannes. Places of “fortune.”

Speaking of which — that's what one guest experienced in the ship's casino.

He actually approached me recently to ask how and where he could “transfer” a large amount of winnings.

Well, he got lucky. Others, not so much... though they still seemed drawn to the machinecontrolled “lady.”

Clever design: a built-in camera detects someone approaching and triggers the character on the screen to say,

“Hey you... come here.”

(See clip.)





LOG ENTRY 43

SYMBOLS OF OUR LIFESTYLE

Good morning from Barcelona, at sunrise!

We just entered the harbor, passing by massive oil and gas tanks — the air carries a faintly acrid scent.

This is the dirty side of our way of life.

Our ship is a so-called hybrid — driven by electricity! The power comes from four huge 16-cylinder engines on board that can run on either heavy fuel oil or gas.

In port, we can connect to shore power — depending on the harbor's setup.

Our gas reserves last for four full "Western Mediterranean" loops. But we don't always run on gas.

(See link about our subsidiary / AIDA ship.)

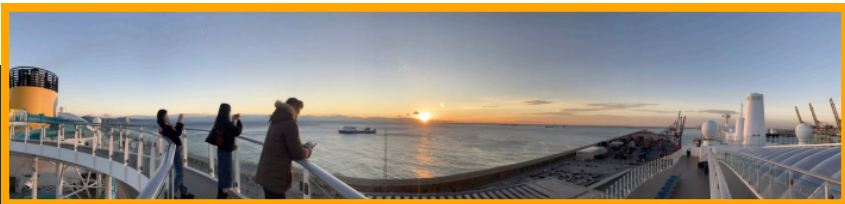
Environmental protection always seems to stop where it hurts.

We need to change our lifestyle — especially where "chimneys" (see photo) and exhaust pipes (cars, motorcycles) still dominate.

These belong to an era that brought us far — through the power of industrialization. But now... what's next?

What will be the symbols of our new lifestyle?

Ideas?





LOG ENTRY 44

FINAL POSTCARD FROM PALMA

Good morning from Palma de Mallorca!

It's still early — a starry sky above, morning glow on the horizon, the air is mild.

I'm standing for you on our panoramic bridge — 60 meters above sea level.

Beneath my feet: the "Beach Club" (which is really our indoor pool).

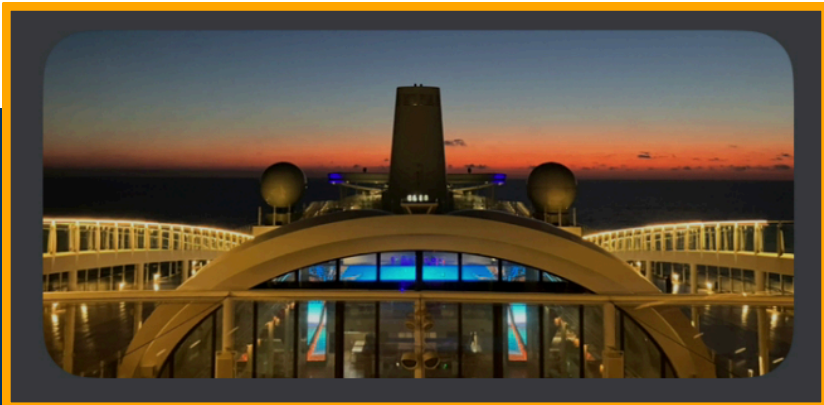
This will be the last time I report from Mallorca — because in the next few days, I'll be disembarking in Rome.

I'll be transferred to another ship in a different part of the world.

Where? What? Why? How?

I won't say just yet — don't want to overwhelm you (or myself).

Just this much: breathtaking.



Breaking News

Just in:

Starting January 15, I'll be working for one month aboard the Costa Pacifica in the Caribbean! (See route via link.)

January 13: Disembarkation in Civitavecchia / Rome

January 15: Embarkation in La Romana / Dominican Republic

More on the background soon – but first, time to breathe (Hallelujah)!

[Link to cruise route]



LOG ENTRY 45

BACKGROUND STORY

Good morning from the open sea!

It's 7:30 AM. We're just off the southern tip of Sardinia, gently swaying in the swell. The sky is bright blue with a few small clouds.

I'm standing at the top deck, outside, awaiting the sunrise.

That sunrise is a metaphor for this entry — as always, written from the high seas (no image due to limited internet).

So what happened? (The background):

About 8 weeks ago (on November 19), I began a new adventure — working as an International Host for German-speaking guests aboard the Costa Smeralda.

The Smeralda, one of the world's largest cruise ships, was launched in 2019 — just two months before the pandemic. What followed were dark times for both guests and crew. There were even fatalities — on both sides.

The ship introduced a new service concept — “cool,” but it never quite found its soul.

Instead, it remained disjointed and, yes, cold. It continues to wear people out: constant waves of complaints, burned-out staff.

The management reflects this — and so does the crew (up to 1,500 strong, with up to 6,500 guests on board).

That's where my strengths — eager, friendly, colorful — didn't land well with certain supervisors. I felt more like a thorn in the eye than a valuable asset.

I was on the verge of drowning — caught in a swirl of my own mistakes and real workplace bullying (yes, really).

Until I chose to fight back — because sometimes attack is the best defense.

I made a bold move: contacted the right person on land (Costa employs over 20,000 people) and wrote a clear but firm message.

That triggered a small earthquake — in a good way.

The result: immediate transfer to the Costa Pacifica, currently stationed in the Caribbean — the dream destination for any crew member.

(Smeralda, in contrast, is internally known as “punishment post.”)

And those who land in the Caribbean after just two months on board?

They're seen as someone special — others wait a long time for that.

But now I'll be under even more scrutiny.

I brought this on myself: all or nothing.

I feel that I'm wanted — but I also feel I'll need to “play along” to truly succeed. Four more weeks of trial lie ahead...

Dear friends, please keep supporting me. Your presence means the world.

Without you... I don't know what I'd do.

Keep your fingers crossed.

Send your thoughts.

That's what keeps me going.



LOG ENTRY 46

SICILIA, GRAZIE MILLE

Good morning from Palermo!

We sailed through rough weather during the night (see photo – dark skies). The Smeralda let us feel it – but I'm doing fine!

Here's one last look from our flybridge – 60 meters high, with a glass floor(!), at the very back of the ship just before docking.

The port is right in the city – even large ferries dock here (see right side of the photo).

From up here, they look like toys.

Our Smeralda just spun a full circle – pirouetting inside a harbor basin that seems far too small – now gently gliding just a few meters away from balconies and waterfront homes.

A spectacular moment – live from Sicily – and with a big heartfelt thank you for all your comments and support.





LOG ENTRY 47

FULL SPEED AHEAD!

Good morning from Civitavecchia, near Rome!

Eight weeks ago, my cruise ship adventure began — and it's become so much more than that.

It's a reinvention of myself.

Today I disembark — and in two days, I'll board another ship in the Caribbean (Costa Pacifica).

It's both a second chance and a promotion.

(Caribbean = top internal reward.)

In these past weeks, I stepped into every trap imaginable (even caught an officer cheating on his wife) — and stumbled past others, only to get hit harder later.

One reason?

Lack of team spirit — at least that's how it's seen when you skip the wild, boozy nights in the crew lounge.

That didn't sit well with some.

But all of this only drives me harder to grow.

I feel stronger than ever — the oldest on board, and somehow also the youngest.

So: full speed ahead!

Caribbean — here I come.





LOG ENTRY 48

REFLECTION (STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART)

Good morning from Rome Airport.

After eight weeks on the ship, I've spent my first night back on land.

In a few hours, I'll fly to the Caribbean (Dominican Republic), where I'll board the Costa Pacifica tomorrow (15.01.).

Time to reflect on these past weeks as an International Host on the Costa Smeralda:

The people:

Yes, I've seen it all.

Humanity in every shade.

And yes — I wouldn't trade places with anyone. I'm happy with who I've become.

Gratitude:

A word that often loses its meaning.

But here, on board, I felt it deeply — many guests were so incredibly grateful for what I made possible for them.

Care:

Such a beautiful and essential human quality — and one that seems to be vanishing in our modern, self-centered world (even on the ship).

I try to hold the line.

Sometimes care comes back to me. Sometimes not.

But maybe that's why I'm now heading to the Caribbean... (see entry from Christmas Day).

Humor:

The best way to deal with life as it is.

I heard some devastating life stories here — people open up to me quickly.

And still, time and again, it's laughter that makes even the heaviest moments bearable.

I'm laughing more again — and taking David Bowie as an example (though that nearly got me into trouble ::))

So: laugh with me.

And look forward to what's coming.

Stay tuned.

A photograph of David Bowie performing on stage. He is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, holding a microphone and singing. The background is a deep blue with some smoke or light effects. The image is framed by a thick orange border.

K

**»Ich bin immer
erstaunt, dass
Menschen ernst
nehmen, was ich
sage. Ich nehme
nicht einmal ernst,
was ich bin.«**

DAVID BOWIE

Vielleicht sollten
wir uns alle nicht
immer so ernst
nehmen.

Bild: picture alliance / hans H. Kirner | Hans H. Kirner



LOG ENTRY 49

THE (COMPLETELY NORMAL) MADNESS

Good morning from the Caribbean!!

It's 7 AM here (2 PM in Germany), the sun is rising through scattered clouds, and it's warm.

We're on open sea—somewhere between the Dominican Republic and Port Castries, where we'll dock tomorrow, January 17. (Google it—it's near Barbados, eastern Caribbean, Lesser Antilles, off the South American coast.)

The night was stormy.


Our "old tub" Costa Pacifica (built 2009), about half the size of the Smeralda, is gently rocking in the waves.

I'm fine!

I'm standing outside, right at the top of the ship, above the bridge and spa, shielded by tall glass panels—otherwise the wind would blow me away. The howling of the storm in the rigging and radar is deafening.

And that's pretty much how my journey has been since leaving Rome and joining my second ship:

High drama!

 The flight:

On the plane with me—almost next to me—was the Costa manager who made this ship transfer possible. We'll spend a few days together on board. (Coincidence?)

 First day on board:

I boarded around noon. Had to get my bearings quickly, settle into my cabin, attend the safety drill, and introduce myself to my new supervisor (warm welcome!).

And then: straight into action. I was assigned for the entire evening to "Frecchia" ("Arrowhead")—our term for the ones standing in front of reception, fielding the worst guest attacks.

In plain German: frontline combat.

And yes—it was needed.

Elsewhere on the ship: a physical fight between several guests.

 This morning (6 AM):

My cabinmate's company phone rang.

He was still asleep. Emergency call.

A woman wants to end her life—claims she's pregnant by one of the crew.

And to end this post with a little humor...

🗣️ Anecdote of the day (only me, of course):

I went to the restroom—public one. I'm sitting there and thinking, "Wait, what are they saying?"

Turns out: I was in the ladies' room. 😬

Time to get out—fast!

But as I leave, I drop my name badge (metal, our ID).

I don't see it. I bend down—and there it is, under another toilet.

I go retrieve it—amidst the giggles of all the women present.

Ha haaa-lelujah! 😂

And how am I otherwise?

Fantastic.

The ship? Old school.

Full of life—right up to the edge of kitsch.

No images today—data's too limited.

But yes: we've officially crossed the ocean.



LOG ENTRY 50

PORT CASTRIES - ST. LUCIA

So, the first Caribbean stage is complete. We're docked at Port Castries (see photo), and it feels a bit like "walking in Columbus' footsteps." The population here is of African descent, the language is English, and they drive on the left side of the road!

It's now 2:45 PM, wonderfully tropical with sunshine and occasional rain showers. The approach to the island this morning was a dream (was it the same for Columbus?).

On these Caribbean islands, world history was once made, when the Spanish "discovery of America" completely shifted the global order. I don't think our guests are aware of this today—or care, for that matter (the same goes for the crew)—it's all about "Aperol Spritz!"

This morning, as usual, I was almost the only one up on deck, this time to witness that unique and incredible "Columbus moment" (>Laaand ahead

For the next six weeks, I'll repeatedly circle back (on three two-week trips) within this historical context, adorned with endless beauty and on a clean ship (compare our emissions at the front to that American behemoth in the background!).

And the work? Brutally hard. Barely any time or peace for "enjoyment." (More on that in upcoming posts—stay tuned!)





LOG ENTRY 51

ALEXANDER V. HUMBOLDT

Of course, it's all about Columbus... but what about Humboldt?! A great German world traveler and naturalist, after whom the famous university in Berlin is named. My father was expelled from that university as a medical student because he walked in with a Western newspaper under his arm (the university was in East Berlin at the time).

Here in Bridgetown Harbor (Barbados), right after our arrival, the German sailing expedition ship Alexander von Humboldt II docked right behind us (see link). I went over to take a closer look (see photo), watched the crew loading supplies, and had a quick chat—such a nice touch of home!

After that, I wandered further through the harbor, soaking in impressions, including a size comparison of the two ships (see second photo). It makes you think: we sailed for millennia, then a few years of steaming and diesel engines—and now?!

What do you think comes next?

<https://alex-2.de>







LOG ENTRY 52

THE SUN IS ROUND (IS GOD TOO?)

Good morning, and what a morning it is! I've been out on deck since 5:45 AM, right under the bridge, to capture this sunrise for you.

We're approaching the island of Guadeloupe. It's tropically warm with a gentle breeze, light swells (long waves), little clouds here and there—and, well, this incredible sun!

Staring at this fiery ball that brings energy to all of us, I can't help but reflect on how humans have always believed in gods or higher powers (long before science or knowledge). Otherwise, how could we cope with the incomprehensible beauty and power of things like this? (Is it "true"?)

Seeking meaning: Overwhelmed and contemplative, I stand here, trying to believe in "something greater" (whatever brought me here). And in those often-repeated words, without which much in life would feel "pointless": "Thank God!"





LOG ENTRY 53

KABOOM

Good morning from Antigua! A small “island” on the eastern edge of the Caribbean —fluffy clouds, blue skies, a rosy dawn, and warm weather outside. I don’t want to bore you (but yes, the views just keep repeating themselves, hahaha).

So, here’s a story from the ship and what happens when the crew on the bridge “needs to make a swerve”: Yesterday, kilometers off the island, a small fishing boat (about the size of a paddleboat) got in our way. I was up on deck for the sunrise (see photo, directly under the bridge) and “saw it coming.” But of course, the lookouts up on the bridge did too, and we managed to steer away—just barely! We passed so close that I could see into the little boat from above. Incredible!

The aftermath (later in the crew restaurant): stacks of trays toppled over, broken dishes, and food all over the floor. The ship’s evasive maneuver had tilted it just enough to make everything go flying—“kaboom!”

I’ve heard that after maneuvers like this, there are often “explosions” between the navigation officers and guest operations teams (“Can’t you watch where you’re going?!”). So, a bit of chaos on the ship (but thankfully, only on the ship).





LOG ENTRY 54

AS FAR AS MY LEGS CAN CARRY ME

Good morning from La Romana, one of the most important cities in the Dominican Republic, alongside Santo Domingo.

At 6 AM, in glorious warmth, we're still at sea. Ahead of me, under the dark night sky, are the city's lights. The stars are fading in the rising dawn, and the ship is brightly lit (for safety—those “fishermen” in their tiny boats!).

Exactly nine weeks ago today, my cruise adventure began. For the past week, I've been following the tracks of our European ancestors through the Caribbean. They (the Europeans) once started here, leaving their DNA in this region and shaping today's world order—with all its good and bad (conflicts included).

I'm grateful that my DNA gave me legs that carry me through these 16-hour days with ease. Here's a photo of me in our “tour uniform” (for guest-accompanied shore excursions). Thank you, legs!





LOG ENTRY 55

HIGH-PROFILE VISIT

Good morning from Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, located on the island that's half Haiti.

What does "is" even mean, you might wonder, when everyone living on these "islands" today shares African ancestry, the same "European discovery story" (slavery), and far more commonalities than differences (or so it seems, right?).

Geopolitical topics from a distant past that still shape the present far more than we often realize (social unrest being one example).

Today, history is being written again. While docked in the city's harbor, we're expecting high-profile visitors onboard. First Lady Arbaje Raquel, accompanied by a large delegation, will be attending a reception in support of Italy's bid for Expo2030. We'll all have to be at attention (against a backdrop of "Italian art," see photo of the staircase).





LOG ENTRY 56

BREAKTHROUGH - WELL DONE

Good morning to you all! It's late evening here, and I have some fresh, important news:

Today, I broke free! Freed myself from the shackles of a suffocating system that, for the past nine weeks, celebrated my weaknesses while ignoring my strengths, pushing me to my lowest point.

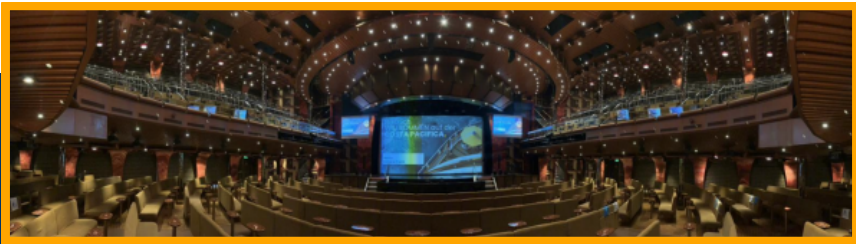
The breakthrough:

My German colleague (and now mentor here) was "down and out" with a bad cold, and I was asked if I could deliver the critical "Welcome Talk" on the ship to about 200 newly embarked German guests ("off the cuff").

I immediately said "yes," knowing this was a one-time opportunity—to either rise or crash and burn.

And I rose to the occasion! In our massive theater at the bow of the ship, which spans three decks and seats about 2,000 people (see photo), I captivated and "reoriented" the usually rowdy and complaining "party crowd" during a 15-minute presentation (slides were pre-prepared). My theme: "In the Footsteps of Columbus."

There was applause, the usual waves of complaints at the reception desk didn't materialize, and the feedback from my colleagues? "Well done!"





LOG ENTRY 57

“ONLY SOMETHING LIKE THIS CAN HAPPEN TO ME”

Good morning to all of you! It's midnight here (00:00), and I just laid down in bed after a mega long (since 6 AM) but also mega good day (including the Captain's Cocktail) comes to an end.

Anecdote of the day:

I was just taking a picture of an art installation here (see photo, haha) and wanted to take another one when two people suddenly jumped into the frame (encouraged by me) and pulled funny faces (2nd photo).

We laughed together, and then one of them joked, “I know that guy, don't I?” (at that point, it was still just a joke), approached me, and started tugging at my mask (we're currently trying to contain a virus outbreak on board).

I noticed they were speaking Castellano (Argentinian Spanish), so I responded accordingly. And then, in a dramatically unfolding moment, it turned out that the person standing in front of me was a (very beloved) employee from our company MoviTrack in Argentina, and the woman with him was a travel agent who, of course, also knew our company inside out!!!

INSANE (right?!)





LOG ENTRY 58

PARTY - JAMAICA, HERE WE COME!

A very good morning to our South American readers, a good day to the Germans, and a wonderful evening to our Asian friends—hi there! 😊

Here it is, you know the drill: a rosy dawn, warm air—classic Caribbean vibes—and a ship cruising between Cuba and Jamaica after a wild night.

Wild? Oh, absolutely! We've reached that point where cruise passengers feel right at home—the party zone! After “taming” my German-speaking “flock,” they've transitioned into the “it's not so bad” mode and are now attempting the classic “I don't want to complain, but...” routine. ::))

Fired up by our amazing animation team (compared to them, I'm a total bore), people are dancing and even shouting across the room, gesturing wildly, “Frank, come over here, we have something to discuss...” (🤔🤔).

I joined in until midnight (after yet another 18-hour day), keeping everyone happy. Here's a clip from our lobby bar with its glass elevators for you to enjoy—no complaints, okay? ::)))





LOG ENTRY 59

JAMAICA

Good morning (from here) in Jamaica! Everything here is just as Bob Marley promised—a dream come true to finally be here (for the first time in my life).

Today, I'm heading ashore with Costa and our guests for an excursion. I was one of the first to disembark, joining a team to guide hundreds of guests to their respective buses (and then heading to the waterfalls myself).

The ship stands majestically in the early (7:00 AM) morning sun (see photo), with the sky, fluffy clouds, and warm air creating a perfect scene.

A DREAM, right?!!







LOG ENTRY 60

AS FAR AS THE WINGS WILL CARRY

Good morning to you all, from me here far out on the open sea, somewhere between Jamaica and the Dominican Republic.

I'm standing at the very front, right under the bridge, on an open deck, watching a solitary seabird glide effortlessly alongside us, hunting for prey without a single wingbeat.

I'm in awe of this "lightness of being," so completely unlike us humans, who only manage to reach our goals through immense (energy-consuming) effort.

May our wings carry us far, dear albatross, show us how it's done—will we ever learn?

These lines come from a man who is "flying" toward another important (perhaps pivotal) day today.

Dear ones, give me lift—you are the albatross's "invisible force" for me.





LOG ENTRY 61

I'LL BUILD YOU A CASTLE

I've just passed Trial by Fire 2.0 in the following scenario:

Two days ago, a decision came down from the highest ranks (one below the Captain) to let Frank take on the "Holy Grail" (I guess they're betting on me).

Translation: Today, I presented the disembarkation briefing—15 minutes of live speaking in the grand theater—providing important information and, most critically, bidding the guests departing tomorrow a heartfelt "see you again" while casting Costa in the best possible light.

All of this without preparation or training (a total "no-go"), with a hostile key figure in the audience, and in front of a sometimes rowdy, heckling crowd (our beloved "never-again Costa" guests—not an easy crowd).

And I nailed it! (Word is, they want me to keep doing it.) Sure, I missed a few major details and had a wrong slide in there (uff, crap), but I still pulled it off.

How did I do it? Like this:

From the very first second, I went on the offensive—a firework of heart, humor, and genuine honesty ("a big perdon to you, my dear guests!"). Any potential hecklers? Isolated and checkmated.

The whole thing (especially the opening) was accompanied by the song "Ich bau Dir ein Schloss" by Jürgen Drews (see link). The mostly older guests were over the moon—and so was the top-ranking boss who was in attendance.

https://youtu.be/zUh_tg6VPNU



LOG ENTRY 62

A BEAUTIFUL SUNDAY

Dear ones, wishing all of you, near and far across the globe, a wonderful Sunday— how did you spend yours? (Tell me!)

Me? Oh, you know, just the Caribbean life (haha🤔). After weeks of being “in a whirlwind,” it’s time to take stock:

Prompted by a school friend and supported by you—family and friends—I’ve now been working as an International Host for German-speaking guests on Costa cruise ships for exactly 10 weeks (currently on the Costa Pacifica).

What does that mean? Entertaining my guests, anticipating their wishes, and transforming discomfort into positive energy (and let me tell you, we’ve had way too many complaints overall).

Probation: I’m still in my probation period, dealing with intense bullying while simultaneously earning solid support “from above” (hard-earned). It’s a demanding balancing act.

Outlook: This is my life, this is my job, and I don’t want to leave. Moments like the ones captured in this photo from yesterday show the glow that’s starting to return within me.

Companionship: You are my everything—please stay with me. Thank you so much!





LOG ENTRY 63

COSTA PACIFICA

Hello, helloooo, broadcasting from the middle of the Caribbean, out here on the high seas. Wishing you all a lovely day—though for most of you, it's probably evening.

Fitting for the time of day, here's a little info about the ship itself:

She (ships are always referred to as "she," just a side note on the gender topic::) was built in 2009 and, at 300 meters long, is now considered medium-sized.

With 1,000 crew members and up to 3,700 guests, she provides everything people need—and more—because, after all, we're in (luxury) vacation mode. There are countless restaurants, bars, and lounges, plus a massive spa located at the very front above the bridge (the whole black-glass-covered nose).

Check out the photo of the ship's detailed model in one of the bars, and feel free to ask me for details—I'd love to satisfy your curiosity!

P.S.: I'm currently sitting outside at the very top, sheltered from the wind, enjoying the view of the endless blue Caribbean. Close your eyes, and maybe you'll see it too. 💙





LOG ENTRY 64

MORNINGS IN THE CARIBBEAN - SO BEAUTIFUL

Gooooood morning from here in the Caribbean, wherever you are—starting your morning or your day!

How am I?

Well, standing here in this scenery (live at 7:40 AM) at the bow, on the open deck under the bridge, with 20+ degree warm air, a fresh breeze, and a kind sun on my face, there's really only one answer:

I'm feeling great!

Not just because of what this scene shows outwardly, but also because of what's happening inwardly: Knowing I haven't officially passed my probation yet, the signs are pointing in a positive direction.

The management doesn't want me to leave the ship (my probation contract ends on February 26), and it seems negotiations are happening behind closed doors (this position was originally assigned to another colleague).

We never know what's coming, so let's take in what we have: stunning moments in the Caribbean. Today, the island of Saint Lucia is ahead of us (see photo), part of the Lesser Antilles in the eastern Caribbean. We're just about to enter its harbor— through a super narrow passage.

Captured here for you—take it all in!





LOG ENTRY 65

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE CARIBBEAN

Good day to everyone! Here in Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados (an island in the eastern Caribbean), I'd like to address a question (or rather a playful jab 🤔😏) that came up in our group yesterday:

"So, this is what you call work...!?!"

To clarify, I've attached my schedule from yesterday (see photo, plan to the right under the brochure). Here's how my day went:

- 6:00 AM: Wake up
- 6:30 AM: Breakfast
- 7:00 AM: "Bridge" (outside) logbook update
- 8:30-9:00 AM: "Bus dispatch" (guiding guests to excursion buses)
- 9:00-10:30 AM: Emergency drill on the bridge (my task: announcements in German)
- 12:00-4:00 PM: Free time (spent "getting inspired" on the island—see brochure)
- 4:00-5:00 PM: Freccia ("close combat" with guests at/near reception)
- 5:00-6:00 PM: Theoretically free (but actually not)
- 6:00-7:00 PM: Office hours
- 7:00-7:30 PM: Dinner
- 7:30-9:30 PM: Entertaining guests in lounges/bars/restaurants
- 9:30-10:30 PM: Writing daily reports, etc.

That's the theory. In reality, I finished at 11:30 PM, got to bed at midnight, and fell asleep by 12:30 AM.

This morning? Up at 6:00 AM again, breakfast, bus dispatch, and then straight to a half-day excursion (escorting guests, quality control, and writing reports).

Now, I have a few hours off (sitting by the harbor, under palm trees, near the sea 🌴😌). Later, the same program as yesterday awaits...

Everyone can interpret this however they like (work or not🙌).

The truth is, I don't see it as "work"—it feels more like fulfillment. 🙏

As for the increasingly heavy bullying—I take it in stride. The stakes are being raised... maybe more on that tomorrow.

Excuse me for now ("the palm tree is calling"🌴🥵🥵).





LOG ENTRY 66

ENJOY IN GOOD HEALTH!

A lovely good day from France! How so? We've docked on the island of Guadeloupe in the eastern Caribbean — and it belongs to French territory!

I can't go ashore today because I'm on watch duty. What does that mean? When the ship is in port, a minimum number of crew members must remain on board — in case of an emergency. Today, I'm on duty.

My task is to appear on the bridge at lightning speed if something happens, in order to make announcements over the ship-wide PA system in German. It's all about choosing the right words in the right tone, because things can quickly turn into mass panic otherwise.

But I don't only do emergency announcements (just in case), I also regularly make announcements about the onboard programs every few days.

Today, a very refined Swiss couple came up to me to thank me for exactly those announcements, saying they gave them a great sense of trust and reassurance.

That kind of praise really goes down like butter — and so, as we lie in port, I'm enjoying the view from high up on the aft deck, looking out over the city. On the right side of the view, two guests are sunbathing — presumably with that same sense of calm and trust.

Enjoy in good health!





LOG ENTRY 67

TORTOLA – BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

A beautiful good morning to everyone!

This Saturday we'll be docking in Tortola, part of the British Virgin Islands. I'll once again be joining an excursion as an escort – in other words, "keeping an eye on the flock."

The description (with photo) from our Costa app speaks for itself, so I'll just share it with you as is today:

THE TROPICAL PARADISE OF CANE GARDEN BAY

Leaving the port aboard a bus, we drive along a panoramic road that offers us magical views of the island and breathtaking glimpses of the sea.

Before long, we stop for photos – to capture the wonders of Tortola, so we'll never forget them.

The tour then takes us to the magnificent beach of Cane Garden Bay on the Atlantic side of Tortola.

Before our eyes unfolds a paradisiacal scene: a long, crescent-shaped beach with powdery white sand, kissed by the blue sea and lined with green palm trees, behind which lush tropical vegetation stretches out.

During the time available to us, we can fully enjoy the enchanting waters of the Virgin Islands, work on our tan, or take a relaxing stroll along the beach.





LOG ENTRY 68

THOSE MOMENTS WHEN...

Good evening to the German crowd, and a lovely afternoon to those in the Americas, with this “shot” (photo).

Yes, it’s these images that our eyes capture and then transform into deeply personal pictures in our minds, as each of us sees things differently.

It’s the same here on the ship, where the (great) art of being a host lies in helping guests not miss these “warm moments” and encouraging them to truly experience them (instead of, say, throwing their suitcases across the reception desk ::)).

So, let this photo’s glow warm you—it comes from someone who has turned “suitcase throwers” into “gentle kittens” on board (and yes, the boss is happy). But it takes energy, which is why there was a bit of radio silence yesterday—perdon 🙏🧘 .





LOG ENTRY 69

CARIBBEAN SHARK TANK

Greetings from Jamaica! Today we docked in Ocho Rios, and it was a very important day for me, as it ended with a six-eyed meeting with the Hotel Director and my supervisor.

I'm nearing the end of my probation period (February 19), and they provided me with feedback and a "realignment":

They acknowledged the bullying I've experienced, praised me for my de-escalating approach to these situations, and expressed their support for my continued progress (specifically commending my work with guests). The team loves me, and they personally want me on their fleet assignments in the future.

However: I need to brush up on some theoretical knowledge to officially pass. And even they don't yet know how things will proceed (assuming I pass)—whether there will be an immediate follow-up contract—since bookings for Germanspeaking guests have dropped significantly in the coming weeks.

So, the suspense continues—in this "Caribbean shark tank."

Stay tuned!





LOG ENTRY 70

THROUGH THE NIGHT WITH 100,000 HORSEPOWER

Greetings from somewhere in the Caribbean between Cuba and Haiti—it's storming out here!

Since leaving Jamaica today, our steamer has been plowing through heavy seas with its 100,000 horsepower. The guests dancing in the many bars and lounges barely notice it. Only occasionally do you hear a crash when a big wave slams into the 2.5 cm thick steel-reinforced bow.

100,000 horsepower? Yes, that's right—generated by six diesel engines powering generators, which produce electricity for the two large electric motors that drive the ship's twin propellers.

Today, Thursday, I'll be accompanying my first ship tour as a translator, guiding guests behind the scenes, including a visit to the bridge—but not the engine rooms (for safety reasons).

I'll certainly tell them about how those 100,000 horsepower are generated. After all, engines are my specialty as an engineer (I even got a perfect score in that subject back in school!).

P.S.: By the way, in stormy nights like this, the ship and surrounding water are brightly illuminated—in case someone falls overboard (fun fact: over 3,000 cases occur annually in the cruise industry).





LOG ENTRY 71

FULL SPEED AHEAD!

Greetings! What an extraordinary day this has been. Due to the relentless storm, we had to cancel our planned port stop—and the backup alternative as well.

Strong winds and rough seas made safe harbor entry or anchoring offshore with tendering impossible.

At one point, things got pretty dramatic: just before entering a harbor, the captain had to make a sharp turn, causing the ship to tilt significantly. We saw the cliffs and massive waves up close, and now the running joke in the hallways is "Captain Stecchino sends his regards" (a reference to the captain of the ill-fated Concordia...).

Otherwise, it's been a day of lots of paperwork (I want to pass probation, after all), translating and delivering the captain's announcements ("Ladies and gentlemen, I speak on behalf of the captain") and calming worried guests ("Mr. Neumann, is this still normal?!").

Meanwhile, the ship creaks as we navigate the long, high Atlantic swells with the occasional harsh breakers. The engines are running at 95% capacity (I was on the bridge), and we're battling wind and waves to ensure we reach the next port safely and on time.

I'm feeling great! This morning, I also managed the ship tour (guiding guests behind the scenes) with flying colors (see photo before entering the main kitchen).

I'm hitting my stride—fingers crossed it's enough!





LOG ENTRY 72

1492 - HISTORY WITHIN REACH

Greetings from Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. It was right here that Columbus established his first settlement in the New World!

Yes, we've left the storm behind, entered the city's harbor, and I accompanied a Costa excursion to the historic sites.

It was here, over 500 years ago, that history was made and the modern world order of the Western world was established—a fascinating story (see link) that completely captivates me and is now, quite literally, within my reach.

Reach for it yourselves and take a piece of this significant history into your own lives!

<https://youtu.be/Csl8Y1Mw8VY>





LOG ENTRY 73

THIS IS CRUISING 🌴

Greetings from turquoise paradise (see photo)! We've anchored off Catalina Island (Dominican Republic) and tendered to the island, which Columbus named in 1494 after the daughter of Queen Isabella of Castile.

It was that queen who boldly financed his voyages, helping to open this new chapter of world history. If she knew today what would come of it all, what would she think?!

Today, there wasn't much thought given to history—instead, it was a day of pure relaxation and enjoyment. This tiny island is exclusively set up for cruise and yacht travelers, with restaurant facilities and other amenities. But all the food for the roughly 2,500 guests today was brought over from the ship—a logistical marvel!

Otherwise, there's nothing but nature: crystal-clear turquoise water and white sandy beaches.

SIMPLY PARADISE, isn't it?!







LOG ENTRY 74

SOMEWHERE ONLY WE KNOW

Greetings! Yesterday was an intense day, including the emergency disembarkation of a German guest—here's what happened:

At 6 PM, while docked in La Romana (Dominican Republic), I was called via the company's emergency phone to assist in the onboard medical station as a translator. This kind of call (24/7) means dropping everything immediately—it can come down to minutes, as it did this time

A 74-year-old guest had tripped over a curb during a private excursion in the city. Despite the pain, he managed to make it back to the ship. The immediate diagnosis: a broken hip (his leg was visibly misaligned) and a massive hematoma (bruise). It's safe to say he was lucky to make it this far without bleeding out.

He was promptly disembarked and rushed to the hospital by ambulance. End of the cruise for him, and hopefully, a "Caribbean" new hip awaits him.

As we said goodbye, I looked him deeply in the eyes, held his hand warmly (he was profoundly grateful), and thought of my father, who, at the same age, suffered a fall he never fully recovered from.

Photo Credit Frank:

"Somewhere only I know"

<https://youtu.be/S2D-2eYrfro>





LOG ENTRY 75

JUST A NORMAL (SEA)DAY

Greetings to you — good morning to some!

Today was just a completely ordinary cruise day at sea.

Meaning: we weren't in port or anchored near some island, but rather out in open water, making our way to Saint Lucia — a small island on the southeastern edge of the Caribbean (the Lesser Antilles).

The photo shows the outer deck 3, with lifeboats above. I'm sitting here with my back to our office, looking out into the distance in the late afternoon.

It's absolutely quiet outside — all you can hear is the sound of the waves crashing.

I'm thinking... well, what am I thinking about? I don't really know... just gazing out into the vastness... and honestly, not really thinking at all.

Just a completely ordinary day at sea (see photo).

Then a guest walks by and says, "You should be playing Andrea Bocelli right now" — and suddenly I was reminded of our Movitrack days, when we played the Three Tenors as we descended the mountain passes, with overwhelming effect (guests in tears).

So now, just for you — what the guest didn't get — a little something in memory of a time that was anything but ordinary, and never truly fades.





LOG ENTRY 76

PROBATION (HALF) PASSED

So, it's official: I've half passed my probation!!

Why half?

Because my bullying mentor failed me, but my supervisor passed me. Now the final decision will be made at the central offices in Genoa. ::))

What happens next? The coming days will reveal everything.

How am I? Exhausted, but good!

What do I believe in? The bigger picture!





LOG ENTRY 77

REWARD: CARIBBEAN BEACH

Greetings, and perhaps good morning?! After taking a sober look at everything today and consulting with my colleagues (who all hold me in high regard), I can confidently say:

I PASSED!

The result is clear—both management heads (including the Hotel Director) officially certified in writing that I passed my probation (which, honestly, takes some time to process ::)).

Now, the central office in Genoa (Costa headquarters) will decide how and when things proceed for me. Over the next few days, I'll take some "supportive steps" since my mentor's negative evaluation still holds weight (regarding my next ship assignment and such).

Speaking of which: my mentor—an envious, negative "old goat" with significant influence in the company after more than 20 years—is now losing it completely because the managers overruled her. "Interesting days" lie ahead, to say the least. ::))

Meanwhile, I was rewarded with a beach day on the island of Antigua. I got to accompany an international excursion of 80 guests—four hours of full attention, ensuring the mostly older "flock" didn't get into trouble (like drowning) in such a stunning setting (see photo).





LOG ENTRY 78

ONE MORE TIME: PURE CARIBBEAN

Greetings from La Romana (Dominican Republic). The weather? Well, classic Caribbean—warm, sunny, and simply beautiful! ::))

We're docked at the cruise port, and for me, this is probably the last time I'll be on this ship. In one week, I'll disembark as planned (per my contract), without yet knowing what's next or where I'll be going (last-minute uncertainty is pretty normal here).

This upcoming week includes one more circumnavigation of the Dominican Republic, followed by a visit to Jamaica (2 days).

I'll take you along for the ride again through my logbook (see photo, taken here at the port)—stay tuned!





LOG ENTRY 79

YEAR 1994 - BUENOS AIRES (ARG)

Heike and I wanted to emigrate to Argentina. I went ahead first while she stayed in Germany managing the back office.

One Sunday morning in 1994, I was driving our newly built safari bus (MoviTrack) down a street in Buenos Aires when a small car crashed head-on into the truck (it had veered diagonally into my lane).

Driver dead—car destroyed—truck damaged.

Dramatic scenes unfolded: the driver was the 18-year-old son of an influential local family. Relatives arrived at the accident scene, crying and screaming, glaring at me with looks that said, “You murderer.”

Evidence was tampered with, and I was charged with negligent manslaughter.

One man saved my life and secured our future in Argentina:

The lawyer “Pancho.” He fought a years-long legal battle to free me from the clutches of the justice system. I was (rightly) acquitted. Over the next 15 years of our company’s history, there would be other serious accidents, and each time, Pancho came to the rescue!

In recent years, we’ve lost touch.

FEBRUARY 19, 2023

I’m now working as an International Host on the Costa Pacifica cruise ship. Today was a busy day with hundreds of new guests boarding, including many Argentinians. I was on duty on Deck 11 when five lively (and man-free?) older ladies approached me, full of good spirits. I helped guide them and noticed how excited they were.

As they stepped into the elevator, one of them looked me in the eyes, and I looked into hers. We both realized, “Something’s not right.” I put my foot between the closing doors, and they reopened. She said (no, she shouted in disbelief), “FRAAANK!?!”

IT WAS PANCHO’S WIFE (see photo)!!!





LOG ENTRY 80

CARNIVAL ON THE COSTA PACIFICA

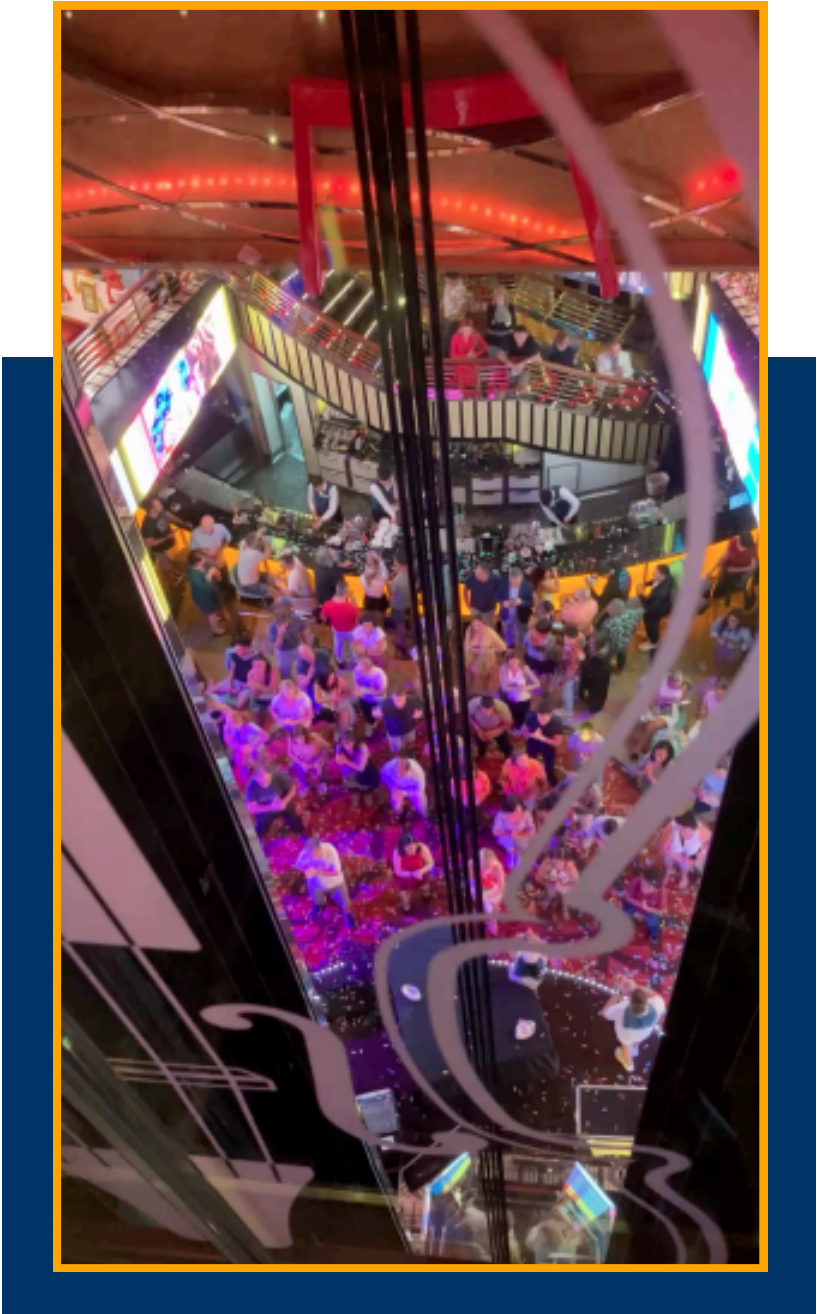
Greetings—or should I say “Helau,” because it’s non-stop partying here—Carnival!

What you see in the clip is a view from the 9th floor of one of our “party zones,” the central lobby bar with a dance floor and stage, where our animators are in full swing.

You’re looking through one of the internal glass elevators, which transport guests up to the 11th floor through a massive atrium, with the 4th and 5th floors featuring a “shopping mall.”

Tonight’s theme is “masks,” but as usual, I made an early exit—don’t want anything to “stick” to me during the revelry. This is a time to let loose!

You can join in the fun here—nothing will go wrong. ::))





LOG ENTRY 81

BRYAN 🖤💛

Greetings from Jamaica, with (seafarer's) news from home (Argentina).

Today, February 22, 2023, our son's beloved little Bryan (see photo) has passed into eternity after a short but wonderful life. He lived a happy life surrounded by family, alongside many other dogs, cats, and chickens—he was loved by all. He now rests in the Neumann family pet cemetery in our garden, alongside so many other dear ones (including horses!).

As a seafarer, I've always known this day could come when I wouldn't be able to be there. And now it has happened.

I'm honoring Bryan's memory by giving my little monkey companion ("Coco") the alias "Bryan" today. Coco alias Bryan, from Barbados, has been accompanying me on Costa excursions for some time now—either perched on my backpack or, as in this photo, snuggled against my chest.

Coco alias Bryan has become a key to unlocking hearts that might otherwise remain closed, a true game changer in connecting with people—just like Bryan was. Bryan, you will live on forever!

Lucas, Paulina, and Heike—sending you a warm embrace!







LOG ENTRY 82

“ARRIVAL AT AMBER COVE (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC) LIVE”

Greetings to you all! After surviving a total power outage (blackout of the entire ship) last evening on the open sea and a medical intervention from 2 to 4 in the morning in the onboard clinic (translation duties), all I can say is: we are feeling absolutely faaaantastic! 🥰🥰!





LOG ENTRY 83

PENULTIMATE DAY IN THE CARIBBEAN

Greetings! Today is my second-to-last day aboard the Costa Pacifica. Tomorrow marks the end of my contract, with disembarkation in La Romana (Dominican Republic) and a (paid) flight back to Germany (via Bogota).

Everyone onboard (including the captain) works up to six months straight on a ship (24/7), followed by 1–2 months of leave (vacation), and then it's back to another ship in the fleet (rarely the same one).

My next assignment will likely be during the European spring/summer season, somewhere in Northern Europe or the Mediterranean. But for today, it's all about pure Caribbean vibes one last time:

We're anchored off our private island, and almost all the guests have been tendered ashore. They're partying under the palms (beach, buffet, music— everything you could want).

The ship is nearly empty, with most of the crew also on the island, helping to serve the massive buffet for 1,500 guests. Only a few of us remain onboard (25%), including me (on watch duty).

Here's a little glimpse from the top deck: a tender boat in the water on the left, the island in the background, and the ship's upper structures, including the large, open sliding roof over the central pool and the outdoor pool with a water slide.

The weather? It's been the same for six weeks—see photo and enjoy! 🌞





LOG ENTRY 84

THIS IS HOW A NEW BEGINNING STARTS - GANDHI LIVES :)

Greetings! Today, I left the ship, the Costa Pacifica, and stepped ashore (Dominican Republic). These 84 entries mark the start of a new chapter in my life and my family's life as well.

Looking back: The kids are grown, my wife and I somewhat scattered, and I, a little lost. It was thanks to the encouragement and persistence of a former school friend that I applied for the role of "International Host" with Costa Cruises in the fall of 2022—and got the job.

On November 19, 2022, I boarded the fleet's largest and most modern ship, the Costa Smeralda (6,500 guests), in Savona, Italy. What followed were seven grueling weeks of adaptation in a militarily organized workforce of 20,000 employees ("Italian Navy"). What carried me through was the belief that I was doing the right thing: making people happy—my dream job!

Afterward came seven weeks in the Caribbean on the smaller Costa Pacifica (3,500 guests, a relatively "old lady" built in 2009), full of charm and a dream travel destination: the Caribbean. I repeatedly visited islands with evocative names like Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Barbados, and the Virgin Islands, to name just a few.

During my time on both ships, I brought laughter to thousands of guests and brought smiles to the teams. I can tell you this:

THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!

Looking ahead: After many heartfelt farewells from guests and crew members today—some even tearful ("Gandhi, you are the best!")—there's no doubt in my mind: I've arrived in this new beginning, and I want more. The past weeks have shown me that there's only one direction to go: forward. There's so much room to grow, and everything I've seen tells me: "It can be done even better!"

I'm now waiting for my next contract with Costa, likely on one of the ships for the European spring/summer season. In the meantime, I'll visit family and friends in Germany and start figuring out how to turn these 84 logbook entries into something tangible (any ideas??)!

P.S.: The nickname "Gandhi" was given to me early on by our Cruise Director. Since then, it's been echoing through the hallways! ::))

