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Aboard the world's 'most hi-tech' cruise ship



"Make mine a double." In the Quantum of the Seas Bionic Bar, robotic arms are in charge of mixing the drinks. (Courtesy)

By **KARLA CRIPPS**
CNN

What's longer than five Boeing 747 jetliners, 2.5 times taller than the Great Pyramid of Giza and uses robot bartenders to pour your drinks?

That'll be Royal Caribbean's new Quantum of the Seas, which the cruise brand bills as the world's most technologically advanced cruise ship.

The highly hyped ship is now in the middle of its inaugural voyage, an eight-day cruise from the UK port of Southampton to New York.

The cruise line says Quantum of the Seas, which weighs 67,800 gross registered tons, has 16 guest decks filled with 2,090 of the brand's largest and most advanced staterooms, which can occupy 4,180 guests.

Couldn't score a room with an ocean view?

No problem. Passengers in interior staterooms get virtual balconies that offer real-time views of the ocean and destinations on large screens.

In terms of connectivity, Royal Caribbean has partnered with service provider O3b Networks and claims to offer "more bandwidth than every other cruise ship in the world combined."

Other high-tech features include the use of electronic wristbands that serve as room keys and allow passengers to navigate the ship and make onboard purchases.

But what seems to be getting all the attention are on board attractions such as the iFly skydiving simulator, those aforementioned robot bartenders in the "Bionic Bar", North Star — a sky pod that allows guests to rise 300 feet above the ship in a retractable crane — bumper cars and interactive art created by digital and video artists.

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Instead of having one main dining room and a few alternatives there are 18 restaurants, five of which are complimentary venues.

Tipsy robot bartenders?

Despite claiming to be the most high tech ship in the world, the Quantum of the Seas launch wasn't hitch free.

"Its 'super-fast' internet that is said to allow passengers to stream video, Skype and download emails simultaneously at speeds they would on shore, did not work as smoothly as it should have," says a report on the UK's Daily Telegraph about the ship's brief Southampton visit.

"Royal Caribbean was also not having much luck with the two robots at the Bionic Bar," says the report.

"The robotic arms failed to stand glasses upright on a number of occasions. Cocktails are meant to be mixed in one minute but as waiting times rose to 20 minutes the IT team pulled the plug — literally — and went back to the drawing board."

However, the report suggested these issues will likely be resolved by the time the cruise docks in New York on November 10, blaming the patchy WiFi on the fact service provider O3b Networks does not yet have a satellite covering the UK.

Once the trans-Atlantic cruise is complete, Quantum will spend the winter cruising the eastern Caribbean, with trips departing from New Jersey.

From next June, the mega-ship will operate year-round out of Shanghai.

Sister-ship Anthem of the Seas will debut in Southampton in April 2015 and sail Mediterranean itineraries.

Construction on the third Quantum class ship, Ovation of the Seas, started in September and is due to be delivered in the fall of 2016, says the company.

According to Cruisecritic.com, the Quantum Class of ships represents a significant reduction in size compared with Royal Caribbean's Oasis Class ships, which measure 225,282 tons and carry 5,400 passengers at double occupancy.

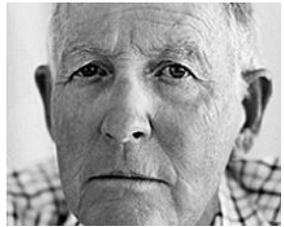
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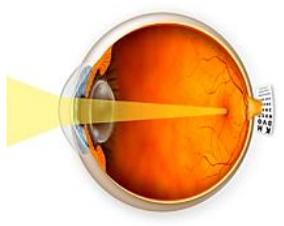
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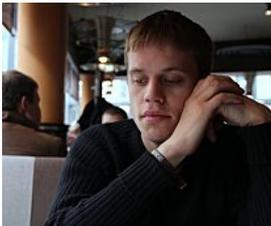
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Matt Damon • 6 days ago
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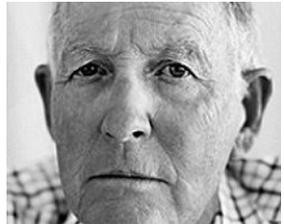
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