



'Rotterdam' with, on the right, 'Veendam' which was introduced in April 1996.

Delivery and dedication



Captain Kees Buckens, Princess Margriet of the Netherlands and on the right, chief mate Nico Corbijn shortly after the hoisting of the Dutch flag.

Early in November 1997, the new cruise liner had been finished and the technical problems had been resolved. In a sober ceremony at the Riva Sette Martiri quay, Venice, the ship was officially handed over on 6 November. Following a crossing without passengers to Barcelona, 'Rotterdam', under the command of Captain Kees Buckens and temporarily under the Bahamas flag, departed on her first commercial voyage on 11 November, this being a 23-day Western Mediterranean and Atlantic cruise. Places visited included Malta, Lisbon, Dakar and St Martin, and on 4 December the ship reached Fort Lauderdale, Florida, the cruise's final destination. Here, the ship's home port was officially changed from Nassau, Bahamas, to Rotterdam.



A few days later on 9 December, the ship's dedication ceremony took place at Fort Lauderdale. During the ceremony, 'Rotterdam' was christened by her 'godmother', Princess Margriet of the Netherlands (then Queen Beatrix's sister).

The Dutch flag was hoisted in the presence of Captain Buckens and many invited guests, including Micky Arison (chairman of Carnival Corporation), Kirk Lanterman (chairman of Holland America Line), Corrado Antonini (chairman of Fincantieri), and Frans Dingemans, the ship's interior designer.

During the inaugural activities for the ship, HAL also presented its private island venture, Half Moon Cay in the Bahamas. The company purchased the uninhabited, 2,400-acre island of Little San Salvador for 6 million dollars in December 1996.





Above: Some key persons of the christening ceremony in Fort Lauderdale. From right to left: Micky Arison (chairman of Carnival Corporation), Captain Kees Buckens, Janet Lanterman (wife of Kirk Lanterman), Princess Margriet of the Netherlands, Kirk Lanterman (Chairman of HAL) and Madeline Arison (wife of Micky Arison).



During the christening ceremony.

Following a couple of voyages for the press and tourist industry, *'Rotterdam'* entered revenue service on a Christmas cruise. When six months in service, she visited her home port for the first time, putting into Rotterdam on 10 June 1998 under the command of captain Jacob W. Dijk.

During the ship's two-day visit, Holland America Line celebrated its 125th anniversary with receptions, a gala dinner, a royal visit (Princess Margriet again) and fireworks. Rotterdam's citizens and ship buffs now got a chance to inspect the ship, allowing inevitable comparisons to be made with her legendary predecessor, ss *'Rotterdam'* (V) (which was still leading her second life as *'Rembrandt'* at this time). In general, the new cruise liner won the admiration of her home town, although her side-by-side funnels were described by some of the pundits as 'throw-away lighters' or 'rusk tins'.

The ship returned to Rotterdam in May 1999, and has continued to visit her nominal home port annually, except in 2001, 2002 and 2010.



Rotterdam is the official home port of 'Rotterdam'.

Below: MS 'Rotterdam' departing Fort Lauderdale.





First call to Rotterdam, on 10 and 11 June 1998.





A tour on the ship

MS 'Rotterdam' departing her home port. On the right the former head office of HAL in Rotterdam, now Hotel New York.

'Rotterdam' (VI) differs from the four 'Statendam' class ships that preceded her in being 4,201 tons larger at the time of entering service, measuring 59,652 gross tons. With a length of 238 metres, she was 18,7 metres longer and could carry 50 extra passengers, bringing capacity to 1,316. She is also 3 knots faster at 25 knots. The higher speed provides greater flexibility in sailing schedules, and allows more and longer port visits to be made during longer cruises.

As a tribute to 'Rotterdam' (V), the ship is fitted with two funnels side-by-side, which are 15,3 metres (50 feet) tall including sub-structure, interconnected by an atwarthships bridge or 'catwalk span'. Each funnel has an area of 16,6 square metres (178 square feet). These unusual twin funnels have at least one advantage - they make 'Rotterdam' easy to recognize, although she could be mistaken for her sister ship, 'Amsterdam', which was commissioned in 2000. Except for a couple of external details and of course the interiors, the two ships are virtually identical to each other.





Grand elaborate clock in The Atrium with on top Hercules carrying the world on his shoulders.

'Rotterdam' has ten passenger decks. The centre of the ship is an oval-shaped atrium, which extends over three decks and contains the communal areas. Standing out in the atrium's so-called Time Square is a clock of 9 metres (30 feet) tall. Dutch architect Frans Dingemans designed the timepiece, inspired by a 17th-century Flemish clock of 90 cm (1 foot). Ornaments, including Florentine column dolphins, frame 14 individual clocks, which indicate the current time in different places in the world. Central on one side of the timepiece is an astrological clock, which shows the position of the stars over the city of Rotterdam. On top of the piece is Hercules (not Atlas as is commonly thought) carrying the world on his shoulders. The piece was produced by the Italian sculptors and artists, Gilbert Lebigre and Corinne Roger.

on the Sports Deck, two decks above the bridge, and provides great views over the sea, serving as an observation lounge and night club. Passengers can have dinner in several locations on the ship, including the Pinnacle Grill (formerly Odyssey Restaurant), seating 88 in Palladian villa style, and the less exclusive La Fontaine Dining Room which can hold 708 guests. The later occupies two decks in the stern, with sea views on three sides. The Showroom at Sea, also known as the theatre, similarly extends over two decks forward, and has 557 seats.

The Wajang Theatre & Culinary Arts Center on the Promenade Deck is a mainly venue for cooking demonstrations, but is also used as a cinema. In addition, lectures, religious services and special gatherings can take place here. Also found on Deck 4 are the Front Office, Shore Excursions Office, a photo and art gallery, a photo shop, and a wine bar and shop. The Upper Promenade Deck has the Explorations Café, the Hudson Room, another art gallery, the casino and the shopping arcade.

HAL's flagship had six lounges when she entered service in 1997, but as of the ship's refit in late 2009 it has five, named Showroom at Sea (formerly Queen's Lounge), Explorer's Lounge, Ocean Bar, Crow's Nest, and the Mix Lounge. Most of the lounges and duty-free shops are found on the Promenade and Upper Promenade Deck (Decks 4 and 5). The Crow's Nest is

The Hudson Room is used for meetings and presentations for groups, and for playing bridge. The aforementioned Mix Lounge contains three special meeting places



Statues aft on Upper Promenade Deck between the Explorer's Lounge and the Explorations Café. The two desks are used by the future cruise manager.



The Spirits & Ales Bar (part of the MIX).