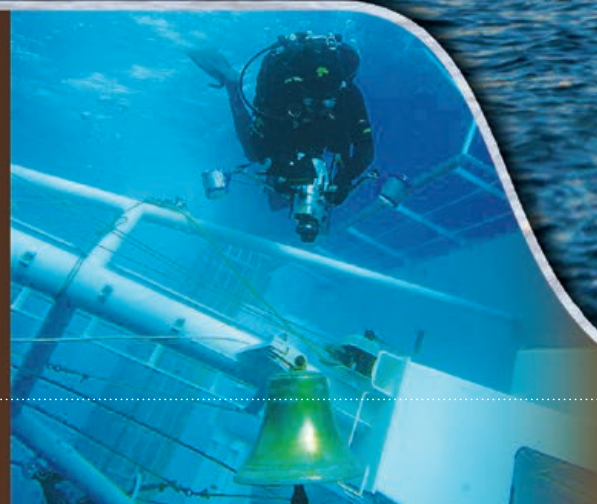


Costa Concordia: A Modern Day *Titanic* Story

The Five Hour Battle for Life on the Sinking *Costa Concordia*, a Maritime Disaster of Epic Proportions

The *Costa Concordia*, one of the largest ships ever built, was in many ways a modern day *Titanic*—except it was larger, more luxurious and outfitted with the latest technology designed to make it impervious to any conceivable maritime peril. Yet, a mere three months before the centennial anniversary of the sinking of the *Titanic*, the *Costa Concordia* capsized, reminding the world that there is no such thing as an “unsinkable ship.” Read the awesome account of the life-and-death struggle on the night this gigantic cruise ship capsized. Learn how this marvel of modern technology narrowly avoided a second *Titanic* disaster in terms of loss of human life thanks to . . . the prevailing winds.



On April 15, 2012, the world commemorated the centennial of the *Titanic* tragedy, where more than 1,500 people perished. The *Titanic*'s sinking humbled a world entering an age that believed in the absolute power of modern technology's capacity to control human destiny.

In its day, the *Titanic* was the largest ship ever built and offered every luxury imaginable. It was also considered the most indestructible ship ever built, with 16 watertight compartments to keep it afloat, even in the unlikely event of a hull rupture. The *Titanic*'s operators were so convinced of the ship's invincibility that they provided it with only a token number of lifeboats, just enough to satisfy the minimal legal requirements. After all, there was no real danger of the ship sinking.

Then, on its maiden voyage, disaster struck. The "unsinkable ship" rammed into an iceberg and sank in under three hours. Of the 2,224 people aboard, 1,502 perished.

No trace was left of this wonder of human ingenuity and invincibility.

Undersea exploration and sophisticated computer analysis in the late 1990s startled the world by proving the "unthinkable." The total area of the ship's hull ripped open by the iceberg was only 12 square feet! That minor damage to strategic spots, combined with flaws in the steel used for the hull, proved sufficient to send the vessel plunging to the ocean floor.

When more than 4,000 passengers and crew members boarded the *Costa Concordia* on January 13, 2012, it is doubtful that any of them had the *Titanic* in mind—even though news of the upcoming centennial of the *Titanic* disaster was receiving widespread media attention. No one could believe that the lesson of the *Titanic* applied to them. They would be traveling the Mediterranean where icebergs are non-existent, and since modern ships are categorically safer than the *Titanic*, there was certainly no need for concern.



The *Costa Concordia*, one of the largest cruise ships in the world.



One of *Costa Concordia*'s halls.

In a dialogue between *Costa Concordia*'s Captain Francesco Schettino and a Czech reporter aboard his ship, Schettino said, "I wouldn't want to be the captain of the *Titanic*, forced to navigate between icebergs. But I think that with the right preparation any situation can be overcome and any problem prevented."

Costa Concordia—which belonged to Costa Cruises, the Italian branch of the Anglo-American Carnival company—had no home port. Instead, it was open to passengers at any port where it docked. It followed a fixed circular route that began in Civitavecchia, 40 miles northwest of Rome. From there it sailed to the port of Savona, situated on the Italian Riviera. Then it sailed to Marseilles, France; Barcelona, Spain; the Spanish island of Majorca and the Italian islands of Sardinia and Sicily. After that, it would return to Civitavecchia to begin the route again. The entire circuit took one week.

This was a classic cruise line, docking in the Mediterranean's most exotic ports and offering unmatched luxuries along the way. Cruises have remained an extremely popular form of entertainment. Many cruise companies have continued raking in profits despite the economic downturn. Last year

alone, no fewer than 15 million Americans took expensive vacations on luxury cruise ships.

The *Costa Concordia* entered service in 2006. It was one of the largest cruise ships ever built. It measured 951 feet from bow to stern, making it 70 feet longer than the *Titanic*. It provided lodgings for over 4,000 passengers. *Costa Concordia*'s 17 decks rose proudly over 100 feet above the sea.

Costa Concordia belonged to a new generation of cruise ships designed to transport thousands of passengers at a time. It was powered by six diesel-driven turbines, each the size of a school bus. Together they produced an incredible 100,000 horsepower.



The *Costa Concordia* sailed a seven day circular route.