

CRUISE SHIPS

## The first roller coaster on a cruise ship is ready to go - but Covid is preventing its start.

by Sina Osterholt  
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Carnival Cruise Line is equipped and ready with its Maurer roller coaster.

**Originally, a roller coaster on the cruise ship was to be the mega-attraction in 2020 if Covid hadn't gotten in the way. Like many, a business in pause.**

From zero to one hundred like in a Formula 1 race car, but on a ship, passengers can control the speed themselves. For the cruise line, it was to become the mega-attraction for the cruise business, requiring a great deal of expertise to build. Since the movements on a ship are constant, there is no reliance on gravity for our vehicle. If the ship moves on its axis, the vehicle might not be able to handle the next incline or go too fast into the next turn. That's why each ride is equipped with its own motor and drive wheel. In addition, a toothed rack ensures that the driving force of the electric motor is transmitted at every point on the track - even in tight curves and on vertical sections.

Maurer Rides sees a big opportunity in roller coasters for cruise ships. So far, the roller coaster manufacturer is the only supplier on the market. According to project manager Marco Hartwig, the drive concept is so far the only way to build a roller coaster on a ship - and no one but Maurer Rides is allowed to use this design. The company has a patent on it.

The construction has many challenges: The environmental conditions for a ship on the high seas are, of course, completely different and the preparations are correspondingly complex. To withstand the salty sea air, the behavior of the vehicle components must be tested in advance in a salt spray test. The swell on the high seas leads to subtle deck changes in the ship and thus to additional dynamics into the roller coaster structure, which must be taken into account in the static design.



Dream Cruise Line's roller coaster has already passed its test runs.



Before the roller coaster is put on the ship, it has to pass a test run on land.

Due to the differences between ship and steel structure tolerances, Mr. Hartwig says it is necessary to assemble the complete roller coaster on land in advance. This allows the assembly methodology to be tested. The effort is reflected in the price: The interactive roller coaster on the ship costs „a single-digit million amount,“ says Mr. Hartwig. The Maurer-Rides project manager does not want to give more precise details. But for comparison: Germany’s fastest and highest roller coaster, the „Silver Star“ at Europapark, cost 14 million euros.

Originally, the world’s first roller coaster installed on a ship, with a length of 220 meters (721 feet,) was to celebrate its premiere on Carnival Cruise Line’s new „Mardi Gras“ - the shipping company’s newest and largest ship - in the Fall of 2020. And the second ride from the Maurer-Rides production is also in the starting blocks: On the mainland in Güstrow, Germany, „Global Dream“ has already successfully passed its 300-meter (984 feet) test runs and now only needs to be installed onto the ship of the Dream Cruises shipping company. Then the voyages could begin. Theoretically. If it weren’t for Covid.

The future is uncertain. Globally, countries are handling the pandemic differently. In many, lockdown regulations currently allow cruises only sporadically, if at all. In Norway, cruises will be limited and with greatly reduced visitor numbers until at least May. Portuguese ports remain closed to cruise ships. With one exception: the island of Madeira. Health authorities will decide whether shore excursions are possible based on the infection situation. Caribbean trips and Atlantic crossings with starting ports in the U.S. are still paused. In addition, an entry ban for Europeans to the U.S. has already been in effect there since March 2020.

Although the ban on cruise ships docking in the U.S. expired on Oct. 31, 2020, it has been replaced by strict requirements that shipping companies must meet. In addition, the health authorities have declared a warning level for cruises. As a result, some operators do not plan to sail in the U.S. again until April at the earliest. There are also fixed port closures on the island of Seychelles in Africa until the end of the year and in Canada until the end of February 2022. Some Asian cruises are being offered again on a limited basis. Departures from German ports are currently not possible at all due to an accommodation (hotel room) ban. In Norway, cruises will be offered only on a limited basis and with greatly reduced visitor numbers until at least May. Portuguese ports remain closed to cruise ships with one exception, the island of Madeira. Health authorities will decide whether shore excursions are possible based on the infection situation.

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The roller coaster premiere ship „Mardi Gras“ is expected to begin its first voyage in May, „Global Dream“ not until November. Both launches have already been postponed several times.

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