

Inside view:

A SHIP WITH HEART

A conversation with Captain Gus Andersson,
Hotel Director Michael Landry and Guest Services Manager
Snezana Katic

By

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Enchantment of the Seas is not the newest or the largest ship in the Royal Caribbean fleet but those who know her have no hesitancy in pointing out that she is a special ship.

“We don't have all the bells and whistles [of the larger ships] but the crew members want to work here. We don't have the 3D theater, we don't have the ice skating rink but we have the crew and that is what we are selling and that is what we are working with,” Captain Gus Andersson explained.

“Enchantment has a good reputation when it comes to the performance of the crew and with the intimacy that we provide. We have a fantastic crew, a very service minded crew, a very intimate crew. If you don't like to do that then maybe the Enchantment is not what you should go on. But if you like the familiarity, the open hospitable crew members on the ship, then Enchantment is the ship for you.”

Michael Landry, Hotel Director on

Enchantment, agreed: “It is a familial feel. The crew that we work with onboard really adds to the tapestry of someone's vacation. It is a unique experience to be amongst all these many cultures and to watch them work side by side day in and day out for the success of the vacation experience. When I speak to people I say the difference between ships is not the steel. It is the people on board that make the difference.”

Guest Services Manager Snezana Katic elaborated: “I truly love the Enchantment for the product that it is and the team that we have. We don't have the bells and whistles as the bigger ships but we really do have the heart, the heart of the crew.”

“When you work on a smaller vessel, you become a family. We are always with each other and our relationships are built very strongly. We care about our environment and for each other and the guests see that the moment they come on board.”

“We have quite a high count of repeat

[passengers] and they come for us. They know that they will see the same crew members and they will feel they are at home. That is exactly what we give; that is what they expect. It truly is an amazing product. We are to a lot of our guests their family away from home. We are their extended family and that is the product that we give.”

The familial feeling is not just extended to repeat passengers but extends to newcomers as well. Take the Guest Relations Desk for example. It is the place where guests go if they have a question or if they are having a problem. On too many ships, the guests encounter a defensive response from those behind the desk. But not so on Enchantment.

“Every time a guest approaches the desk we treat them as one of our own, as a family member. We want to address their concern immediately and take care of them as we would ourselves. They see that we care as much as they do.”

“We understand that regardless of where you go, what airline you take, what hotel you book and the reputation that they have, things can go wrong. We take every concern as an individual concern. To that individual [the issue presented] could be the biggest concern that they have ever had, they have never experienced something like that before. I always say, 'put yourself in their shoes.' I know it may sound simple but it really helps them. I think that is what helps give that genuine service and that friendly service.”

But what motivates people to come together as a group and create such an atmosphere? “They have to come to us first with that drive and that ambition.” Mr. Landry responded.

“As a leader, you always look for opportunities to promote and advance those who distinguish themselves. I ensure that those folks who have exceeded far beyond the expectations and requirements of the job get the notice that they deserve. It is what companies should be

doing. We are really good at that. The hotel director that takes my place when I go on vacation, came up through the ranks. He started with us back in the 80s as an assistant waiter and now he is hotel director. I think that really speaks well of the industry and of the company.”

“But it is the combined talents of everyone on board that forges those people into a productive member of the team. The great thing about ships is the homogenizing, the blending back and forth of skill sets and cultures. As we sail, it is the combined efforts and talents of the crew that form the crew into a better and better more effective group.”

“There is a feeling of accomplishment when that team exceeds its goals and the response back from the guests is so very positive. That is a motivating experience for a lot of our crew members. It is that return, that feeling of family and having folks come back. You remember them and they remember you. It is unique.”

Enchantment is going through a time of transition. In December 2012, the ship is scheduled for a major drydock in Freeport in The Bahamas. During this drydock, areas will be refurbished and new features added. Much of this work as well as training and maintenance will be carried out by the crew in a relatively short period of time. At the end, Enchantment will have changed physically but will her personality remain intact?

“I don't think it is going to change the personality at all. If anything, it might bring us a little closer together,” Mr. Landry asserted. “Drydock is a very intense time. As always, when the team faces intense times, we come out the better for it. We come out a stronger group because we have had to combine our collective talents to make something happen. I think dry dock will be very good for this ship, not just from a physical standpoint but from a team building standpoint.”

Immediately after the drydock, Enchantment will return to Baltimore for the

winter season. However, in the Spring 2013, she will change her homeport to Port Canaveral, Florida, where she will be doing three and four day cruises to The Bahamas. “Grandeur [of the Seas] will take over the run we have here and the Grandeur will become the obvious choice for the people around Baltimore. We would be the obvious choice, I hope, for the people from the central Florida area,” commented Captain Andersson.

The reason for this hope is confidence that Enchantment’s familial personality will

remain despite this change. Ships maintain their personalities over time, despite such changes in itinerary and despite changes in the senior management. Mr. Landry explained: “It is because [the personality is the product] of the massed talents of all on board. We have 853 on board right now. Because of that number of people, if the captain changes, if the hotel director changes, if guest services manager or food and beverage manager or chief engineer changes, it doesn't mean the entire personality of the ship will change.”