

ARTICLE

Case Study: Pirates Cove Aquapark on board the MSC Seascapes

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17th July 2023 | 6 min read

NEWS

Creating the Longest Ship in the Fleet

[MSC Cruises](#), one of Europe's top entertainment companies, is dedicated to pushing the industry's boundaries. While other cruise ship brands focus on lavish shows and gourmet dining, MSC sets itself apart with exceptional aquatic amenities.

In 2022, [MSC Seascapes](#) underwent a remarkable transformation, expanding its public spaces by an impressive 65%. This extensive renovation made it the longest vessel in MSC's fleet. As the first MSC ship to be christened in New York City, the Seascapes draws inspiration from esteemed American entertainment giants like Universal and the Walt Disney Company to set world-class standards. The Pirates Cove Aquapark on board embraces themed elements, providing a unique experience for guests.



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The Vision for the Water Park

Leading the design of the water park was Anthony Marinakis, Creative Director at WhiteWater, who collaborated closely with MSC Cruises' team to create something truly unique. Initially planned as an intergalactic adventure-themed water park, it was MSC Cruises' Executive Chairman, Pierfrancesco Vago, who pushed the team to dream bigger. As the MSC Seascape was being redesigned to provide guests with a strong connection to the sea, Mr. Vago believed that the water park's theming should also reflect this nautical premise. He recommended incorporating a pirate ship and the imagery of a giant Kraken to better cater to the changing demographics of the cruise industry, which has seen a rise in families as opposed to retirees. The water park needed to evoke a sense of adventure in guests and transport them into another world, making them the main characters in an exciting pirate story.

The Most Immersive Water Park at Sea

Designing a cruise ship comes down to practicalities: size, weight, footprint, and number of crew required to operate while factoring in stability, deck space, and wind force. Having worked together on over 10 cruise ships, MSC knew WhiteWater would carefully consider the unique demands of this venue type and create an epic mix of attractions to serve guests of all ages. The ship's redesign aimed to provide guests with an unparalleled connection to the sea, and this philosophy extends to the water park. The Pirates Cove Aquapark features two [AquaTube](#) water slides spiraling above the deck, utilizing a combination of fiberglass effects to deliver an exceptional ride. [Translucent fiberglass](#), renowned for its clarity and strength, illuminates enclosed flumes, allowing riders to anticipate what lies ahead. Alternating between light and dark sensations, achieved through the pairing of translucent and opaque flumes, adds an element of excitement, keeping riders in suspense as they wonder what awaits around each bend and creating an illusion of suspension above the sea below.

While the AquaTubes bring thrills for guests over 102 cm tall, the water park also offers an [AquaPlay](#) 150 and [Pool Sider](#) for younger sailors. Themed after a pirate ship, the custom-made aquatic play structure uses interactives and a tipping bucket to engage children and create an immersive playground without queues. Complete with 225 square meters of Life Floor safety tiles, the water park uses four different colours of triangles strategically placed to create an effect that emulates a greater depth of water as the guest moves closer to the center of the park. The use of [Life Floor](#) not only adds an aesthetic and additional layer to the park's theming but also improves overall safety, reducing the number of trips and falls with its slip-resistant material.



MSC Seashore, Pirates Cove Aquapark



AquaTube, MSC Seascape, Photo Credit: Cruise Fever / Ben Souza

Mixing Wet & Dry Attractions

Extending the fun into dry attractions, the water park also includes an [Adventure Trail](#). A structure where the entire family can explore together, this high-volume, unharnessed net play structure encourages crisscrossing between soaring towers, rope bridges, climbs, and slides. With enhanced views due to the elevated nature, the Adventure Trail continues the pirate story and creates the effect of placing guests in the "crow's nest" to spot other ships on the horizon.

The most eye-catching aspect of the water park, the Adventure Trail features hand-carved tentacles from the Kraken that wrap around one of the towers from the pool below. This image, combined with the soaring rope bridges, truly paints the scene to bring guests into the realm of audacious pirates.

"You can't walk into Pirate's Cove Aquapark without a huge smile on your face," said Trevor Young, VP New Building Department at MSC. "WhiteWater did a great job with the giant kraken tentacles and pirate play structure; they really help to bring the park's story to life. The theming combined with the picturesque sea around the ship really brings guests into this narrative of an epic pirate adventure."

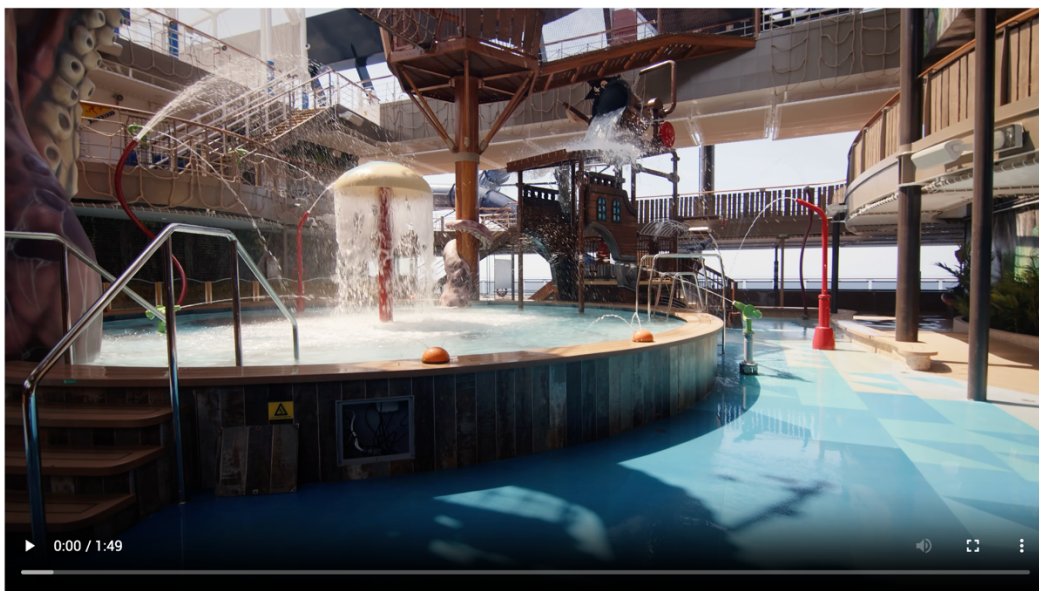
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Image Credit: MSC Cruises

Water Slide Experiences of the Future

With guests boarding the vessel for up to seven nights at a time, MSC knew it was important to offer an activity that was not only unique but repeatable, entertaining travelers throughout the length of their journey. This is where WhiteWater came in. The water park manufacturer created a custom sound and light package for the cruise line company. At the push of a button, the water slide plays music and uses LED rings that change colour, creating a different ride every time so the guest would notice new song lyrics or a different colour on display as they soar through the Giant AquaTube.



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Generating More Sustainable Sailings

A shared priority between the two companies, WhiteWater worked with MSC to enable the ship's water park to operate in the most sustainable way possible. Because of the unique venue type, WhiteWater's designers analyzed many elements not traditionally included in a water park, including the vibrations and the movements of the vessel. Water usage is an important factor in these calculations as it contributes towards the weight of the ship, affecting not only how much water the park would use but also how heavy the mechanical equipment would have to be to operate the attractions.

To [mitigate water consumption](#), WhiteWater used 3D modeling and simulations during the design process to calculate exactly how much water will be used and not over-specify the pumps. By applying low-entry tubs and wave catchers in the run-out lanes, the manufacturer was also able to help protect against water loss during the park's operations. Other notable sustainability efforts on the ship include cutting-edge hybrid exhaust gas cleaning systems, selective catalytic reduction systems, achieving a 98% reduction of sulfur oxide emissions, and reducing nitrogen oxide emissions by 90%.



Pool Sider, MSC Seascape, Photo Credit: Cruise Fever

Looking Ahead

Marrying together technology, sustainability, and theming, Pirates Cove Aquapark has been redesigned to generate a more impactful guest experience, helping to set the standard of what cruise ship water parks should be.