Completion of AustalÂ’s groundbreaking trimaran for Fred. Olsen draws near

Construction of the world's largest aluminium ship - a 126.7 metre long ferry based on a revolutionary new trimaran hullform - is progressing well at shipbuilder Austal's shipyard in Western Australia.


Ordered in June last year, the 126.7 metre long cargo-vehicle-passenger ferry will sail at loaded speeds in excess of 40 knots, providing capacity for 1350 passengers, over 340 cars and more than 400 freight lane metres. When delivered it will be the largest aluminium ship ever built. More importantly, the newly developed trimaran hull form will provide a significant improvement in seakeeping performance and passenger comfort over existing fast ferries.

Construction has proceeded smoothly and is on schedule. To date, the main aluminium structure has been proceeding to a point where it completely filled one of the vast shipbuilding halls at AustalÂ’s facility in Henderson, Western Australia. In an adjacent building hall the fabrication of the bow section and wheelhouse have been taking shape in parallel.

A major milestone in the construction of this groundbreaking ship was achieved in mid-July when the bow section, itself measuring some 32 metres in length, 15 metres high and weighing 120 tonnes, was moved out of its building hall and united with the main structure. This revealed the true size and scale of the ferry to the outside world for the first time, with the giant vessel protruding from the 110 metre long building hall by some 30 metres.

Expressing the views of all concerned with the trimaran, AustalÂ’s Chairman Mr John Rothwell said he was both fascinated and extremely proud to see the results of the achievement of joining the bow to the main section.

Â“The sight of this gigantic ship, the largest aluminium vessel to ever be built in the world, caused me to stop and reflect on where we have come from and what our future potential is,Â” Mr Rothwell said. Â“At 127 metres this huge vessel is 4.25 times longer than the first Austal-built live-aboard dive catamaran of just 30 metres. Travelling some 9,500 nautical miles the trimaran will be delivered half way across the world to the Canary Islands, whereas the catamaran was delivered 3,500 nautical miles across Australia to Queensland. At the height of construction approximately 430 people have worked on the trimaran with construction taking 12 months plus two months for commissioning and sea trials. The 30 metre cat was built in approximately six months with just 30 people.Â”

With the bow section fitted the next major milestone was the installation of the shipÂ’s machinery plant and this was followed by the rollout of the vessel from her birthplace into the bright Western Australian sunshine on August 16.

The vessel is now 80% complete and with large sections of the structure gleaming in Fred. OlsenÂ’s eye-catching livery it will be a dominant feature on the Henderson skyline until its launch in late September.
After it is delivered later this year, the new trimaran will operate in the Canary Islands on the routes from Los Cristianos, Tenerife to San Sebastian, Gomera and the island of Palma, bringing a new age in transport to the ferry industry.

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