

## Great Ships of the Seas: *Ile de France*

While never the biggest or fastest of Atlantic liners, the *Ile de France* is still thought of as one of the dream ships of all time. She was distinctive, stylish, magnificently decorated, and very popular, but most noted for her superb service and cuisine. She was often described as “the cheeriest way to cross the Atlantic.” The *Ile de France* had that rare combination of ingredients that created the perfect ship.

A French Line ship, she was built by Chantiers de L’Atlantique, St. Nazaire, France, in 1927. She was 792 feet long and 91 feet wide, with a gross tonnage of 44,356 tons. Powered by steam turbines and a quadruple screw, her service speed was 23.5 knots. She could carry 1,345 passengers (541 first class, 375 cabin class, and 227 tourist class).

The *Ile de France* was engaged in war duty for the Allied forces until September, 1945. She then turned to “austerity service,” sailing between Cherbourg and New York, as well as to troubled French Indo-China. In the spring of 1947, she returned to St. Nazaire for massive remodeling. She steamed into New York Harbor in the summer of 1947, on what amounted to her second maiden voyage, to renewed praise, still very impressive.

The *Ile* settled down to profitable service, uniquely flavored and still newsworthy. On July 26, 1956, she



rescued 753 survivors from the sinking of the *Andrea Doria*. In October of the same year, she was damaged in a huge storm. By November 1958, the great ship had reached retirement. The Hollywood film, *The Last Voyage*, was filmed aboard the *Ile*, in which she was partially destroyed. A few months later, the classic *Ile de France* sailed to Osaka, Japan, for dismantling.

