

# 1939 World Cruise RMS Franconia

**RMS Franconia** launched  
21st October 1922.  
Maiden voyage Liverpool to  
New York June 23, 1923.  
20,341 tons, 623 feet long,  
crew of 414, twin screw



**RMS Franconia** in  
'Cruising White' at  
Trinidad,  
as shown on promotional  
postcard by Kenneth  
Shoemith

This is a unique display type exhibit following the 1939 World Cruise of the R.M.S. Franconia, a Cunard White Star passenger liner in conjunction with Thos Cook & Son. The Franconia, built in 1922, plied the Atlantic Route but in Winter was transferred into Cruise configuration. She had undertaken World Cruises annually from 1923 except for 1933 when replaced by her sister ship the Carinthia while the Franconia underwent a refit and painted white. The 1939 Cruise was to be the last of these epic journeys as WW2 disrupted travel. The 5-month trip sailed over 40,000 miles, crossing the equator four times while visiting 36 Ports, departing from and returning to New York. There were 163 passengers at embarkation in New York.

The story is told using materials from Cunard White Star and Thos Cook - promotional brochures, Cruise notes, information leaflets and extracts from the Log Book issued to each participant. Supplementing this general information are the eyewitness accounts from: Frank Ross, author of Journeys West and East Bound; Barbara Hammons, a young passenger who wrote a series of letters; Miss E Meinardi, stewardess, who sent postcards from Ports along the trip. All this is supported by passenger mail, postcards, postage stamps, letterheads, envelopes, luggage labels.

The display demonstrates where the Cruise parties went, how they were transported, what they saw, where they had meals and where they stayed. I have largely avoided comments on personalities encountered both on board and ashore. It covers both the shore excursions as well as the various optional tours that were available. It is presented chronologically.

The comments included from the Cruise participants reveal many tour highlights and special moments such as the Victoria Falls excursion. There are many unique items included such as photographs of the raft at Tristan da Cunha, an original Proclamation for "Crossing the Line" [in copy], the Menu for the Cruise Luncheon at Raffles Hotel in Singapore, special postcards for the visit to Tristan da Cunha and for Tin Can Mail, the original laundry and provision statistics for the Cruise.



**Frank Ross** [on the right] - a man of 60+ years - seen in a rickshaw at Durban from **Journeys West and East Bound, Part IV - Journey Around the World 1939** opposite P 29. The book is Copyright 1940 by the author. 113 pages in length it has a good number of illustrations supporting the many chapters.

The book commences *"Down through the years I have allowed myself to dream ... Now 'At Long Last' a dream of sixty years is about to be realised as I walk up the gang plank of the S.S. Franconia, Cunard White Star Liner."*

Throughout the exhibit direct quotes from Frank Ross' publication are shown in ***Bold Italics and deep red.***

Photograph of **Barbara Hammons** with her father taken in front of the Giant Demon at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok and made into a postcard .

Barbara was 13 when she embarked at New York having her 14th birthday a few days later. She wrote a number of interesting **letters** to her best friend **Betty Barron in Maine USA.**

Her letters and envelopes are included sold to me by the daughter of Betty in 2019. Her diary, unfortunately has not been located.

Her early comments include: *Well, tomorrow we sail, but I won't believe it 'til I see mother safely on the boat... We've just been down to see the boat! Honestly it's smooth! All white and absolutely huge.*

Throughout the exhibit direct quotes from Barbara's letter are shown in ***Bold Italics and blue.***



**Miss E Meinardi**, a stewardess on the Cruise who wrote a series of postcards to her friend **Miss R Hawkins, St John's Wood, London.**

Quotes from these postcards are shown in ***Bold Italics and Black***

Letter mailed St John's Wood London 30 MAY 1939 to **Miss Meinardi "FRANCONIA" Cunard Line**, New York. 1/3d air mail service. Received Cunard at Cunard North Pier mail Depot June 5th