

The American Queen Steamboat is back - Posted on May 18, 2012 - by MACKENZIE DOMINGUES - Staff Writer

The American Queen Steamboat was not only the largest steamboat ever built but also the largest passenger holding steamboat on the Mississippi River. Although the Queen is filled with modern improvements, the rooms and accommodations display the historic era in which it was built in. The inside is filled with woodwork, flowers, and antiques and the outside displays lacy filigree.

In 2008, the American Queen was repossessed by the United States Maritime Administration, the government agency that originally built the ship for \$78 million. She has remained untouched in Beaumont, Texas for over three years with a \$30 million price tag.

In 2010, a group of Mississippi men made an offer to buy the boat for \$15 million. The MARAD accepted the offer and the group of men established a corporation called the Great American Steamboat Company. In order to revamp the steamboat and get it back up and running, the GASC needed money. Finally, with the help of a loan from the city of Memphis, they gained a \$33 million loan locating their headquarters and hiring most of their workers from there.

Now, for the first time in four years, the Queen is offering regular overnight cruises again. The American Queen stands at six decks tall, 418 feet long, 90 feet wide, with a passenger capacity of 436. She is about three times larger than the stranded paddlewheel boat that was found in Texas. The paddlewheel turns at 13 rpm and is powered by twin 750 hp steam engines rebuilt from a salvaged 1932 steamboat. A new edition to the steamboat is the pair of modern 1500 hp "Z-drive" pod propellers, one on each side of the paddlewheel and side thrusters in the bow.

While you're on board the American Queen you may enjoy five decks of entertainment. Each level includes classically American-themed staterooms that are upgraded with flat-screen TV's and free wireless Internet access. Their public areas include a movie theater, a gentleman's card room, ladies' tea room, a two-story showroom with balcony box seats, a chart room, and a glassed-in "front porch" with food and coffee available all day. A swimming pool, an exercise room and dozens of nooks and crannies for people to enjoy the river ride. Select a volume from the Mark Twain gallery, the boat's library, enjoy a sing-along on the Main Deck Lounge, or join in a toe tapping show in the two-deck-tall Grand Saloon, which is said to be the most elegant showplace on the river.

The idea of the newly renovated steamboat is to bring the luxury style cruising to America's rivers. For example they offer complimentary bottled water and soft drinks throughout your voyage, complementary wines and beers at dinner, and daily lectures by a Riverlorian, an onboard river historian. They also offer shore excursions in every port of call, and a pre-cruise hotel stay are included in the fare. These ideas came from the European river cruise lines, now the fastest growing segment of the entire cruise industry.

For more information about the American Queen Steamboat, you can visit <http://www.americanqueensteamboatcompany.com/> for more information.