



Ile de France



The Ile de France was a liner of innovation from the outset. The first large liner built after the conclusion of World War I, she was not so much an engineering marvel as a decorative break from the traditions of passenger ship design. The Ile de France would herald the inception of the modernistic Art Deco designs into passenger shipbuilding and would be the forerunner for the artistic influence which would give birth to the Normandie of later years. The Ile de France would soon become the first ship of the French Line's era of innovation, establishing new precedents in French maritime architecture.



In an agreement drawn up in 1912 between the French Government and the French Line, which called for the construction of four passenger-mail ships to be built. The first would be the Paris of 1921 and the second, the Ile de France. Launched on 14 March 1926 at the Penhoet Shipyard, the Ile de France was greeted into existence by thousands of proud government and company officials, workers, press, and French citizens. The ship would undergo fourteen months of fitting-out and left the shipyards on 29 May for her sea trials.

Following sea trials, the ship sailed to her home port of Le Havre on June 5th. In the following week, acclaim and praise would resonate from the thousands of press and French citizens who flocked to the pier to glimpse visit the new ship. The novelty of Art Deco aboard a ship was an immediate sensation and the reaction of the visiting press would be echoed in favorable reviews the following week.

On June 22, 1927 the Ile de France sailed from Le Havre for her maiden voyage to New York. The acclaim she received in Europe was echoed by the citizens of America. Her popularity was such that by 1935, the ship had carried more First-Class passengers than any other transatlantic liner.

When eventuality of war in Europe became fact, the Ile de France was laid up in September of 1939 at Pier 88 in New York, just opposite the Normandie. The ship would undergo conversion to troopship in 1941, after making several supply runs for the British Admiralty. The Ile would serve the British and American interests until September 1945, when she was decommissioned by the British.

In 1947, the Ile was returned to French possession and immediately went to the Penhoët shipyards for rebuilding. Spanning a period of two years, the refit would change many aspects of the ship both inside and out. To refit her took \$25 million – more than her original cost. But she re-established the French flag in the big-league North Atlantic fleet. The Ile's profile would be forever altered as new streamlined funnels replaced the

old. The aft dummy funnel was forever and the Ile de France was evermore a two funneled liner. The ships accommodations were also altered to 541 First, 577 Cabin, and 227 Tourist class passengers.

From the start of her first post-war maiden passenger voyage in 1949, the Ile de France enjoyed a prosperous decade of service. Her offering of First Class service and accommodation continued to attract passengers who enjoyed the renowned hospitality of the French Line. The Ile de France brushed with notoriety on several occasions during her post-war career. In July 1956, she would aid in the rescue of survivors from the Andrea Doria-Stockholm collision.

By 1959, the jet age was inaugurated and ocean travel was on a rapid decline. Yet another liner to fall victim to this trend, the French Line wished to quietly dispose of the ship and spare the ship any sort of undignified fate. The ship was sold to a Japanese scrapping company and departed Le Havre waters on February 16, 1959. Unceremoniously renamed Furansu Maru for the voyage, the send-off she received was one long remembered in the hearts of those who had occasion to sail aboard the French Line's most popular post-war liner.

Her last public appearance would be as a floating prop for a Hollywood film entitled "The Last Voyage". Partially sunk, and victimized by Hollywood special effects and movie crews, the Ile de France fetched a \$4,000/day lease rate from the Japanese scrapper. After filming was concluded, the ship was refloated and towed to the scrapyards for her final indignity as she was reduced to rubble, her grand interiors to be remembered only as the set of a Hollywood disaster film.



The Ile de France

Builders	Chantiers de l'Atlantique Shipyard, St Nazaire, France
Launched	1927
Gross Registered Tonnage	43,153 (1927), 44,356 (1949) grt
Length	791 feet
Beam	92 feet
Engines	Steam Turbines geared to quadruple screw.
Service Speed	24 knots
First Class	670 Passengers
Cabin Class	408 passengers
Third Class	508 passengers
Demise	Scrapped in Osaka, Japan, 1959.