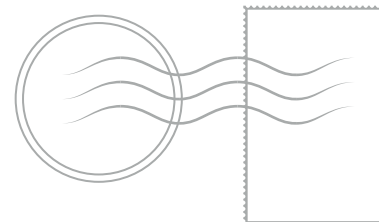


POSTCARD

California



Carnival Panorama is the first new-build based in Long Beach, California, for 25 years. **Harry Kemble** takes its maiden voyage

The lights from old Cunard ship *Queen Mary* – now a hotel – and *Carnival Panorama*, both docked in Long Beach about a mile from my hotel, are dazzling.

That effect could be partly attributed to jet lag from the 11-hour transatlantic flight I'd taken earlier, but having such a celebrated cruise ship alongside a new-build is an enchanting scene, and I feel rather giddy watching the lights twinkle in the distance.

"Welcome to Long Beach," says the attendant, as I arrive at the sleek terminal the next day. More than 4,000 passengers are boarding *Panorama*, the first new-build to be based in Long Beach for a quarter of a century.

Embarkation is stress-free: the staff are friendly and the queues are short. It's easy to see why Carnival has based the ship here, a 25-minute drive from Los Angeles airport.

Panorama, a sister ship to *Carnival Vista* and *Carnival Horizon*, is sailing along the Mexican Riviera to Ensenada on its maiden voyage. While the decision raised eyebrows among some US agents, the line insists replacing *Carnival Splendor* in Long Beach with *Panorama* is part of an effort to wow the West Coast – and with California the world's fifth-largest economy, it makes sense for Carnival to bolster deployment here with its largest-ever ship.

The Heroes Tribute Bar on deck four is a new feature and a nod to the line's dedication to military veterans. But it's the Sky Zone – the first trampoline park at sea – that catches my eye. Basketball and dodgeball are among the games available in the 279sq m space. I throw myself into a game of 'whack the bat' wearing a glow-in-the-dark T-shirt and forget I'm even on a ship.

From the Sky Zone, I head to smokehouse restaurant The Pig & Anchor. The mouthwatering tortilla chips covered in pulled pork, bourbon barbecue sauce and melted cheese fill me up before I even get to the main.

If clients are seeking something different – and not too serious – this is a great option. Carnival knows how to entertain cruisers whose youthful exuberance burns bright – like a light in the middle of the night. **TW**



BOOK IT

A seven-day Mexican Riviera round-trip cruise from Los Angeles on *Carnival Panorama* starts at £519, including all meals and port fees, departing May 9. Flights are not included. carnival.co.uk



FROM TOP: *Carnival Panorama* arrives in Long Beach; the Pig & Anchor