



Above: The latest Knud E. Hansen A/S-designed ferries to enter service are the Greek-owned *Blue Star Delos* and *Blue Star Patmos*. The former is seen leaving Piraeus in September 2012. (Bruce Peter)

Below left: The *Blue Star Patmos* changes berths in Piraeus harbour. (Bruce Peter)

Below right: The first sight passengers see on embarking the new Blue Star vessels is a large yellow 'welcome' sign, which also doubles as a seat. Throughout, the interior design by Molindris & Associates is exceptional in terms of quality and detailing. (Bruce Peter)

Bottom left: With its wavy silver leaf-covered ceiling, the restaurant on the *Blue Star Patmos* must rank among the most beautiful and sophisticated spaces on any ship delivered in recent years. (Bruce Peter)

Bottom right: The Goody's fast food restaurant on the *Blue Star Delos*, with a photo mural of cutlery. (Bruce Peter)



The new Blue Stars

In early 2002, Blue Star Ferries had pioneered a new generation of Greek domestic ferry, designed by Deltamarin in Finland and built by Daewoo Shipbuilding and Engineering in South Korea. The *Blue Star Ithaki*, *Blue Star Paros* and *Blue Star Naxos* were to have been followed by a further pair constructed by Hellenic Shipyards in Greece, but severe delays eventually led to Blue Star Ferries abandoning these vessels, the hulls of which were completed for Hellenic Seaways. Once Blue Star Ferries was taken over by the Attica Group, in 2003 Holger Terpet and Costis Stamboulelis began work to design the vessels which eventually materialized in 2011–2012 as the 18,498 gt *Blue Star Delos* and *Blue Star Patmos* – each nearly twice the size of the earlier series. The contract for their construction was delayed because of state legislation regarding domestic ferry services and by the sale of Attica Group by Pericles Panagopoulos in 2007. By the time the project was revived, Holger Terpet unfortunately had died. Stamboulelis observes that his passing 'was a great loss for Knud E. Hansen and most certainly for me.' Thereafter, Stamboulelis worked with Christian Bursche, who progressed the project into the basic design phase and assisted with the shipyard evaluations.

Eventually, two vessels were ordered from Daewoo Shipbuilding and Engineering. Measuring 18,498gt, the new *Blue Star Delos* and *Blue Star Patmos* are notably capacious, even in comparison with the earlier Deltamarin-designed trio for the same operator. In a hull measuring only 145.9 by 23.2 metres, they can carry 427 cars, or a combination of cars and trucks. This is achieved by there being no fewer than five car decks, the lowest two of which are ahead of the engine room, with a main vehicle deck above in which additional platform decks can be lowered with further car capacity in the aft two-thirds on Deck 5 above. Higher still, two entire decks are given over to very comfortable passenger facilities accommodating up to 2,400 in summer, designed by Molindris & Associates. There are also extensive sheltered outdoor deck spaces, features sadly lacking on the fast catamarans with which they compete.

Four MAN B&W diesels generate 32,000 kW of power, enabling 26 knots to be maintained and so the *Blue Star Delos* is able to reach Santorini from Piraeus in just over eight hours, with three stops *en route*, meaning that a daily return circuit can be scheduled. So far as passengers are concerned, the speed advantage of a fast catamaran is marginal, but the operational cost is far higher and so Blue Star Ferries should be well positioned to gain additional market share.

The *Blue Star Patmos* operates from Piraeus to Chios and Mytilene on Lesbos, a longer route requiring more cabins and dining facilities for overnight voyages, but less lounge space. Thus, although externally she is nearly identical to the *Blue Star Delos*, her interior layout is slightly different. Externally and within, the two ferries are of outstandingly smart appearance and represent the best of modern ferry design.



The *Blue Star Delos* leaves Paros on her way between Piraeus and Santorini. Thanks to her high service speed and efficient loading arrangements, she can make day-return trips during the busy summer season. (Bruce Peter)

lorries heading East would instead have to cross by ferry from Italian ports to Igoumenitsa and Patras in Greece. To provide extra capacity, existing ferry companies acquired as much used tonnage as possible, while numerous upstart operators appeared.

One such ambitious newcomer was Superfast, owned by Knud E. Hansen A/S' long-standing client Pericles Panagopoulos. When the cruise industry consolidated from the latter 1980s onwards, Pericles Panagopoulos decided to sell his Royal Cruise Line, retaining only a few senior employees, including Costis Stamboulelis, to assist in establishing Magna Marine, a company owning and operating dry bulk carriers. Even although the sale of Royal Cruise Line to Kloster contained a clause forbidding Panagopoulos from re-entering the cruise industry for five years, Stamboulelis began working with Steen Nielsen of Knud E. Hansen A/S to develop a new 2,500-passenger cruise ship, the idea being that an order would be placed as soon as the five year term had elapsed. The project was code-named 'Pan Max' and was analysed with both diesel and gas turbine propulsion. When quotations came in from shipyards, however, it became clear that it would cost nearly as much to build as Panagopoulos had earned by selling Royal Cruise Line and so the scheme was abandoned. This notwithstanding, the idea of using gas turbine propulsion was prescient and subsequently it became briefly fashionable on cruise ships, with vessels for Celebrity Cruises, Royal Caribbean and Cunard all being gas-propelled.

Instead, Costis Stamboulelis observed that, with Greece's increasing participation in trade with its fellow European Union members, it would be sensible to develop a high speed ro-pax ferry service on the 504-nautical-mile route between Ancona, on northern Italy's Adriatic coast, and the Greek mainland port of Patras. The idea came to him during a two-night Adriatic crossing by Minoan Lines' *King Minos*, which he thought was frustratingly slow. Alexander Panagopoulos, the son of Pericles, was quickly persuaded about the merits of the idea and became the driving force behind the project's development. Meanwhile, in 1993 Panagopoulos Senior purchased Attica Enterprises, a Greek business conglomerate which he re-named Attica Group. Within this, Superfast was developed as a new ferry brand to operate fast 20-hour Ancona-Patras crossings.

In November 1993, an order was placed with Schichau Seebeckwerft in Bremerhaven for two ships for this service, the 23,663gt *Superfast I* and *Superfast II* which were the first ferries to be purpose-

Opposite top: Irish Ferries' impressive flagship *Ulysses*, with external styling by the architect Klaus Horn, working in collaboration with Knud E. Hansen A/S. (Bruce Peter)

Opposite bottom: Seen here leaving the mouth of Loch Ryan, P&O Irish Sea's *European Causeway* is one of three ferries built in Japan with input and external styling from Knud E. Hansen A/S. (Bruce Peter)

Below left: The *Superfast V*, at speed off Patras in 2007. (Bruce Peter)

Below right: A stern-quarter view of the *Superfast VI* at Patras in 2003. (Bruce Peter)

Bottom left: The *Superfast IX* leaves Rosyth at the start of a North Sea crossing to Zeebrugge. (Bruce Peter)

Bottom right: The *Superfast XII* passes the rocky Greek coast between Patras and Igoumenitsa. (Bruce Peter)



built for Adriatic service since the early 1960s. The overall structural resolution of these was derived from the shipyard's earlier ro-ro freighters *Nils Dacke* and *Robin Hood*, built for TT-Line in 1988–89 and P&O's Dover Strait vessels *European Seaway*, *European Highway*, *European Pathway* and *Pride of Burgundy*, introduced in 1991–93. To provide the required 25.5-knot service speed, four powerful Wärtsilä Sulzer 12-cylinder diesels were specified and the hull had a particularly fine-lined bow configuration above the waterline while the underwater form was copied from that of the 1986–87-built *Peter Pan* and *Nils Holgersson*. All of these vessels had hull lines supplied to Schichau Seebeckwerft by Knud E. Hansen A/S.

The majority of the hull and superstructure volume on the Superfast vessels was given over to two commodious freight decks arranged around centre casings with additional space ahead of the engine room, giving 1,850 lane metres. Above, there were three passenger decks, designed to accommodate a very wide diversity of travellers ranging from budget-conscious backpackers to tourists and truck drivers, the latter in particular being an increasingly important and discerning clientele for ferries within the expanded European Union. All cabins were forward-located and outfitted to a very high standard. Public rooms were towards the stern and arranged around a U-shaped circulation plan.

During the development of the Superfast ferry project, Costis Stamboulelis recommended to Schichau Seebeckwerft that they should consult Holger Terpet to evaluate and modify the general arrangement drawings and to participate in the ferries' detailed design. Terpet also designed the distinctive Superfast funnel with upturned winglets on either side, much like those of recent airliners, based on a sketch given to him by Alexander Panagopoulos, who also devised the new ferries' striking Ferrari red and white livery. This was accented by dark grey bands around the windows and 'Superfast' emblazoned on the hull topsides in a slanted and elongated font. This scheme immediately differentiated Panagopoulos' slick new vessels from the majority of existing Greek-flag ferry tonnage, which was decidedly old-fashioned and possibly even slightly dangerous. Indeed, it was a brilliant design identity which transformed perceptions of ferry travel.

Shortly, Attica acquired 16% of the shares in another leading Greek ferry operator, Strintzis Lines. Then, in August 1999, 38.8% of the shares of Strintzis Lines were acquired and, later still, this figure was increased to 48.8% and Alexander Panagopoulos decided to re-brand the company as Blue Star Ferries, taking the colours of the European Union flag for inspiration. This meant that Attica very quickly became the dominant player not only on international ferry routes from Greece, but, through Blue Star Ferries, on domestic services as well.

From the outset, Attica's Superfast operation was a great success, so much so that a further ten examples of the type were ordered for delivery between 1998 and 2003, not only to expand his Adriatic operations, but also to introduce three North European routes – a remarkable initiative for a Greek ship owner. In 1998, the 29,067gt *Superfast III* and *IV* were delivered by Kvaerner Masa (the former Wärtsilä shipyard) in Turku to an improved design which, once again, Holger Terpet was employed to evaluate and adjust with a more sleek forward superstructure treatment. Next, Terpet drew up the basic design for no fewer than six further vessels for Superfast, the *Superfast V* to *X*, all of which were built by Howaldtswerke Deutsche Werft in Kiel in the 2001–2003 period. All of these vessels had interiors designed by Apostolos Molindris, a young architect who had started his career in Michael Katzourakis' AMK Design before starting his own specialist consultancy.

The 32,728gt *Superfast V* and *VI* had a slightly higher service speed of 29 knots to enable time for a call at Igoumenitsa, a Greek port near the border with Albania popular with truck drivers, while *en route* between Patras and Ancona. The subsequent 30,285gt *Superfast VII* to *Superfast X* were also built in Kiel as operations expanded into the Baltic with new services to the former East German port of Rostock from Södertälje in Sweden and Hanko, Finland's nearest port to Continental Europe. On these examples, the internal layout of the passenger decks was changed from a vertical subdivision of cabins and public rooms to a horizontal arrangement with the main lounge facing forward, rather than aft as before, and the decks narrowing towards the stern. Furthermore, they were built to the highest ice class notation for ferries. While the Finland–Germany route performed satisfactorily, the one from Sweden was a flop and so the ferries were quickly redeployed to open a new service from Rosyth in Scotland to Zeebrugge in Belgium. Two final vessels, the 30,902gt *Superfast XI* and *XII*, were delivered in 2002 by Flender Werft's yard in Lübeck, again for the Ancona–Patras service, replacing the original *Superfast I* and *II*. They also adopted the horizontal layout of public rooms and forward outlook of the Baltic ships.

All Superfasts, with the exception of *Superfast XI* and *XII*, were designed for a very efficient double-deck simultaneous loading of trailers, and Holger Terpet designed the interfaces between the linkspans in the ports of Patras, Södertälje, Hanko, Rostock, Rosyth and Zeebrugge and the ferries. While not all of Superfast's routes lived up to expectations, the Superfast concept was widely emulated and revolutionised ferry travel all over the world.

Superfast were the first of several Greek ferry companies to invest heavily in new tonnage during

Opposite top: Seen at Igoumenitsa, Anek Lines' *Lefka Ori* was converted in Greece from the Japanese Higashi Nihon Ferry ro-pax *Hercules*. (Bruce Peter)

Opposite centre: The South Korean-built *Ariadne Palace*, one of three KEH-designed fast ro-pax ferries delivered to Minoan Lines in 2001–2002, is seen off Igoumenitsa. (Bruce Peter)

Opposite bottom left: Anek Lines' *Olympic Champion* arrives at Ancona. (Bruce Peter)

Opposite bottom right: Leaving Bastia, Moby Lines' *Moby Freedom* is a multi-purpose ro-pax ferry built in South Korea for services from Italy to Corsica and Sardinia. Her livery features Warner Bros 'Looney Tunes' cartoon characters. (Bruce Peter)