

## Ship Review: Scarlet Lady



There's a lot to like about Virgin Voyages. They offer an approach to cruising that is unconventional and fresh, providing me and Janet with a welcome change to the steady diet of traditional cruise experiences we've come to enjoy over the years. We didn't realize how much of a cruise rut we were in until we took our voyage with Virgin. I knew things would be different...I've spent the last two and a half years following their development. What I didn't know was how different the ship herself would be. Turns out, not that all different once you take away all the gimmicks. She has two and a half decks of public spaces at the bottom, two and a half decks of mostly outdoor public spaces topside, and seven decks chock-a-block full of staterooms sandwiched in between the public decks. Scarlet Lady looks like they sliced through the center of one of the older generation cruise ships, plopped in a hotel, and then glued the upper decks back on. The layout of the public spaces is quite like other cruise ships in service these days. It's what Virgin does with those spaces that makes them so special.

Let's take a closer look at life aboard Virgin Voyages' Scarlet Lady, and I'll point out those gimmicks as I go along with a parenthetical (gimmick alert). Gimmicks aren't a bad thing by the way...on this ship they work quite well. Mostly.

### **By the Numbers**

Year Built: 2017

Launched: 2020

Last Refurbished: N/A  
Length: 909 feet  
Width: 125 feet  
Displacement: 110,000 tons  
Passenger Capacity: 2,770  
Crew: 1,150  
Cabin size

Inside: 105-177 ft<sup>2</sup>, sleeps up to 4 (smallest are studio for 1)  
Oceanview: 130-190 ft<sup>2</sup>, sleeps up to 3  
Balcony: 225-265, sleeps up to 4 (size includes balcony)  
Suite: 352-2147, sleeps up to 4 (size includes balcony)

### **Generalities**

Scarlet Lady is built for Millennials, that much is clear. For starters, they won't have to worry about low battery alerts on any of their portable electronic devices when they are out and



about the ship...there are plenty of power outlets and USB ports. Not just in the cabins but in every lounge, in The Galley (the large food court on deck 15), and in both of the #Starbucksineverythingbutname coffee shops. You'll need those iPhones because you have to use The App or scan QR codes for just about everything, partly because of the COVID-driven move to touchless menus, but also because it's what the Millennials and Gen Z types do.

I'm thinking Virgin Inc. is thrilled old guys like me have taken to the Virgin cruise experience, they surely didn't design her with us in mind. Most of the chairs, benches, Bali beds and the like sit mere inches off the ground. Seats are so low to the ground I was forced to bend at an unnaturally acute angle to sit. I basically executed a poorly controlled fall into the chair each time I sat down, hoping I didn't miss and end up on the deck. Thankfully I didn't. Staying seated wasn't any easier. The part of the seat where you park your bottom seemed unusually long to me, meaning I had to sit mid-seat without resting my back against the seat back. It took all the core strength I could muster to avoid teetering off the chair and onto the deck. Which is basically what I had to do when I wanted to stand up. I pretty much had to roll out of the seat and onto my knees on the deck, grabbing hold of the top of the chair and using it to take pressure off my knees as I arose rather ungracefully and quite tentatively whilst my spinal column slowly decompressed until I was finally able to stand erect. Millennials took to the seats as if they were contoured to their individual bodies, looking completely comfortable and lacking for nothing except a video game controller in their hands.



So...with those two generalities out of the way, here is a deck-by-deck layout of public spaces, moving bottom to top, forward to aft.

#### Deck 4

This deck is mainly non-passenger use. The port disembarkation and tender gangways are located here, and you'll see them each time you leave the ship during a port call which is twice on most of the 4- and 5-night Caribbean itineraries. The medical facility is located on deck 4 forward, but hopefully you won't need to find it. Unless you are post-Booster, pre-Millennial like me, in which case it'll be your first stop after each visit the gym. The remainder of the deck houses ship operations and crew quarters.

#### Deck 5

Deck 5 is home to the first of the public areas, though the forward third of the deck is occupied by staterooms. From there moving aft, the public areas include Redemption Spa and two restaurants, Razzle Dazzle (vegetarian forward dishes with meat cheats for carnivores) and Pink Agave (an elevated treatment of modern Mexican street food).

#### Cabins

I won't get into a description of all cabin and suite options other than to say they are all small. Like college dorm small. And the layout in each cabin may be different from others in the same



category. Most cruise lines use a common cabin layout, which requires designing in dead space where the cabins don't fit the contours of the ships. Virgin designed cabins to fit into those contours which means giving up a standard layout for some cabins, their stated reason being to respect the tradition of early cruise ship design where cabins were built right up against the hull (gimmick alert). While that may be true, I think it more likely that they couldn't afford to give any room up to dead space and still fit all the cabins their revenue models called for. The cabins are small...even by cruise ship standards. Virgin made some trade-off decisions to give themselves the capacity they needed to turn a profit, and that is noticeable in the cabin sizes. They thought they could get away with it by

using an "L" shaped couch set-up that converts into a bed at night (gimmick alert). When the bed is set up as a bed, you can't walk past the end to get to the other side of the room without turning sideways and bending slightly forward as you shuffle past to avoid jamming your back into the TV monitor mounted to the wall. The problem is somewhat ameliorated when the bed is reconfigured into the "L" shaped couch, but even with that set up I still scraped my back on the TV monitor.



Storage is a real problem in Scarlet Lady's cabins. There isn't any, or at least not enough. Our balcony stateroom had a small tabletop surface that was barely big enough to fit the charging station for the tablet that controlled the room and video functions. There were two very small cubes each about a foot square next to the refrigerator below the "desk" area. The cabin had a closet that used a curtain instead of a door. Why? Because it was so narrow the only way to hang clothes was for the hanger to sit at a 45-degree angle. And even resting against the back of the closet at that angle, the hangars still stuck out into the room. Which is why the curtain instead of a door...the curtain conformed to the bulging clothes in the closet, a door would not. The actual amount of room in the closet devoted to hanging clothes wasn't bad, even with the loss of space resulting from having to hang things at the aforesaid 45-degree angle.

Our cabin also had a 7-cube storage cabinet on the right side of the closet with each cube being about 12" X 18". The top cube was taken up by your life jackets, a middle cube was taken up by the safe, and the 7th cube was the floor, so good only for shoes. That left just 4 cubes for Janet to stuff her non-hanging clothing and none for me. I had to use the rack on top of the hanging clothes for my clothing. Another challenge was what to do with our luggage. We usually put our luggage under the bed after we unpack, but with the bed designed to double as a couch, that wasn't an option. We found that we had just enough room in the closet under the hanging clothes to store the luggage, but only by packing one back inside the other.

If I thought the cabin was small, the bathroom was even smaller. You could sit on the toilet in our bathroom and brush your teeth at the same time. While I applaud Virgin's designers for encouraging multi-tasking, that isn't a skill I endeavor to master before I die. There is also virtually no storage space in the bathroom, but Virgin says no problem...you don't need to bring toiletries because they provide everything you need (gimmick alert). Not true. Sure, there is a shower mounted body wash/shampoo/conditioner station and maybe that's good enough for Millennials, and me, but not Janet. She brings a small suitcase full of stuff.

So, yeah...the cabins are small and storage space is tight, but we did not let that interfere with our fun. We spent less time in our cabin on Scarlet Lady than we have on any cruise ship. Next time, and there WILL be a next time, we'll just pack light!

### **Redemption Spa**

Redemption Spa is the ship's wellness complex consisting of the reception area, treatment rooms (for massages and treatments), and the Thermal Suite. Although most of the onboard experience with Virgin Voyages is included in the base fare, all spa services are extra. As with most cruise lines, Virgin Voyages contracts their spa services out, so the line has nothing to do with its operation. If you've been to the spa on just about any other cruise line, the operation of Scarlet Lady's Redemption Spa will be familiar. It is run under contract by OneSpaWorld which was bought up by Steiner back in the spring of 2020, and Steiner has operated spas on ships for most of the best-known cruise lines. And if you know the Steiner spa business model you'll know to expect expensive services, followed by a high pressure sales pitch to purchase overpriced spa products. The spa services are wonderful if a bit pricey, and I wouldn't even

mind the product sales pitch if it weren't for the fact that they hit you right in the middle of the afterglow from your treatment. I was disappointed to learn Virgin contracted their spa services out... somehow, I thought they wouldn't. Oh well.

The spa treatment rooms are self-explanatory, but the Thermal Suite requires some further description. It will cost you \$70 per sailor per day to access the hydrotherapy suite so it is best used during sea days, or if you choose to stay on board during a port call so you can make the most of it.

**Boomer tip:** This is *our* space. Millennials have no idea what to do with it. We do.

The Thermal Suite is an enclave in the ship's interior that includes a hydrotherapy pool, two cold water immersion tubs and one warm water tub. The tubs and the hydrotherapy pool are



still water, so no flowing water, no jacuzzi, no jets, and no bubbles. The spa includes a traditional Swedish sauna with portholes giving a nice relaxing view of the ocean and lined in meticulously cut wood to include curved wooden slats lining the inside rim of the portholes. The large hydrotherapy pool is surrounded by electrically heated flat marble beds, and more traditional cushioned chairs with separate footrest. The suite also includes a steam room, a salt room which is lined with Himalayan Sea salt, and a mud room which is

nothing more than a second steam room with wall mounted showers to wash the mud off with. Each guest is given a small cup of mud to use however they choose in the mud room. Although Scarlet Lady is an adult only ship, you are expected to have all the important body parts covered through your time in the hydrotherapy suite and all its rooms.

### **Sailor Services**

What passes for a guest relations desk is labeled Sailor Services and is located midship on the starboard side. With so much of the hotel side of the ship being conducted through The App this is one of the loneliest jobs on the ship, except the last night when everyone wants to sort out their onboard account because The App doesn't do that.

### **Deck 6**

Deck 6 is chock-a-block full of public areas, beginning all the way forward with the Red Room, what passes for a main theater on Scarlet Lady. The Red Room has reconfigurable seating allowing the ship to customize seating configuration to maximize the effect of shows hosted there. Deck 6 is where the lower level and bulk of space dedicated to the Red Room is situated. Just outside of the Red Room there is a space known as The Den. It is a multipurpose room used as flex space for things like meetings, group events, and more.

### **Casino and Smoking Room**

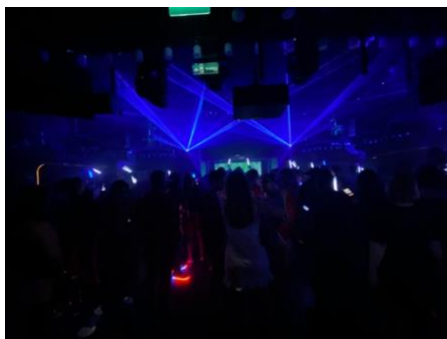
Scarlet Lady's small-ish casino is positioned on the starboard side of the ship, across from The Manor and stretching all the way back to midship. It offers the usual array of slots and gaming tables, and its own bar so gamblers need never leave the area. Except to smoke. The casino is a non-smoking area, but the one and only interior space on the ship where smoking is permitted is located adjacent to it. And if you just can't bear the idea of missing out on the slot machines while you get your nicotine fix, there is a convenient bank of slot machines inside the smoking room. Cigarette, cigars and vaping are permitted in the Smoking Room, but pipe smoking is not.

### **The Manor**

Moving from forward toward midship, just inside the casino you'll find the entrance to The Manor, Scarlet Lady's 2-level Disco and Nightclub. The NYC-based design studio Roman & Williams designed The Manor Ballroom. The innovative venue offers live entertainment, dancing, music, and themed fun activities. The Manor Nightclub was inspired by Richard Branson's first Virgin music studio (The Manor) and is expertly outfitted with dance platforms, dynamic lighting that includes overhead lasers, and cozy seating corners. The entrance to The Manor is a fun hall of mirrors and glitzy lights which makes it easy to get disoriented. This passageway is one of the most Instagramable spots on the entire ship. If you come across it when it is unoccupied take advantage for your own selfie.



**Pro tip:** If you can get someone to take the shot for you, have them take at least one while they kneel, and you stand. The upward perspective works well with the mirrors and gives the picture a depth of field that will be different from everyone else posting their Instagram glam shot.



Once you figure out how to get inside The Manor (here's a clue...bear to the right) you'll find it home to a range of activities such as the VHS group aerobics class in the daytime...think a Millennial version of Richard Simmons, cabaret shows in the evening, and dance parties that go late into the night. It is one of the most happening spots on the ship, but the music is loud with a relentless bass line. If you are into clubbing, you'll appreciate that. If not, you won't.

### **The Roundabout and Glam Central Station**

Scarlet Lady's version of an atrium is the Roundabout. It is a two-deck spiral stairway with seating and decorator features that make it a nice place to chill. It is also where you find the On the Rocks bar, Scarlet Lady's mixology central. If you want a complicated cocktail, this is the place to go. On the starboard side of the ship opposite The Roundabout you'll find what I have dubbed Glam Central Station. It is a collection of shops all about glamming you up. It starts with Squid Ink, the first ever tattoo parlor at sea. Next to that you'll



find Makeup Porthole, Scarlet Lady's MAC makeup bar. You won't find that piece of glam on a mass market cruise ship. Next, you'll find the old-style barber shop, Stubble and Groom, where you can get a cut and trim or shave or relax in a sea-facing chair for a male pedicure. One thing I'll say about the Millennials...they've brought the glam back into men's grooming. This joint is all about them, but I stole a little time for myself and discovered what I've been missing all these years right about the time the barber laid the third hot towel on my face. Ahhhhh. For the well-endowed sailor, and by that I mean follically well-endowed, there is Dry Dock hair styling salon. You can get a wash and up do, cut and color...whatever your hair and scalp need to get you red carpet ready.

The Virgin Voyage cruise fare is all-inclusive...except when it isn't. These glam services are one of those "when it isn't" moments. Glam services are run by the spa which means you'll have to pay extra. And you'll get the hard sell on spa products for your scalp, hair, face...whatever they think they can sell to you. I'm not against any cruise line making money but be careful. Aside from not doing what they advertise, cruise ship spa products aren't regulated by any U.S. entity. You just don't know what you're getting.

### **Ship's Shops**

The midship area on deck 6 is devoted to the ship's shops which are on par with what you find on other cruise ships. One of the more popular souvenirs for purchase is a handwoven hammock from Yellow Leaf Hammocks, an eco-friendly, socially conscious small business based in California...the same company that provides the hammocks on each of Scarlet Lady's balconies and at the Bimini Beach Club. The crew can always tell when sailors discover how comfortable the hammocks on their balconies are by the uptick in hammock sales. You can get hammocks to fit one or two people and in a variety of colors, but the shop staff advise that you get yours early in your cruise. Especially if the last day of your voyage is on Bimini...the ship's shops close during all port calls including Bimini, and with Miami located only two inches away on the map, they don't reopen for the remainder of the voyage. If you don't buy your hammock before reaching Bimini, you'll have to wait until your next Virgin Voyage (gimmick alert). They really are that comfortable, but there's no need to panic if you don't manage to get one from the ship's shops...you can get them from Amazon.com. You can get practically anything from Amazon.com, usually for less.... Millennials know this, Boomers not so much. Janet bought one on the ship.

**Note:** Time to wax cynical for just a bit. The story behind these handwoven hammocks is one of social responsibility benefitting poor women from the Mlabri tribe in Thailand. That was true back in 2011 when the company that sells the hammocks first started using their co-op of Thai weavers, but at some point, social responsibility turns into exploitatively outsourcing labor. I am concerned this hammock operation may have crossed that line. Yellow Leaf Hammocks decided sometime in 2020, or perhaps even late 2019, to sell a 7% equity share in their company to investors from...wait for it...Shark Tank. Which is why you can now purchase one of their hammocks on Amazon.com. As Virgin keeps using this "socially responsible" partnership in their marketing, I hope they do their due diligence to ensure that claim of social responsibility remains valid going forward.

## **Restaurants**

On the port side of deck 6 aft you find my favorite place of all on Scarlet Lady, The Test Kitchen. The Test Kitchen is Virgin Voyages' signature cooking lab/restaurant and experimental bar. This laboratory-like eatery features metallic furniture, beakers, test tubes and offers "avant-garde" food made with molecular gastronomy. Chef-driven menus are presented as ingredient lists to passengers to discover how the chef combines the flavors throughout the course of each meal. Diner service consists of a six-course tasting menu with optional wine or cocktail pairings. A non-alcoholic cocktail pairing is listed on the menu, but I was disappointed that it wasn't available for our sailing. We were just the second sailing out of Miami and yet already Virgin was experiencing supply chain problems. That's a bit worrisome but hopefully it isn't representative of any larger issue. I'll go on about our Test Kitchen experience in a separate food review that



I'll post to Tidewater Travel's blog. On the starboard side of the ship across from Test Kitchen you find the Italian restaurant Extra Virgin. Extra Virgin is Scarlet Lady's signature casual Italian Restaurant and Wine Bar (trattoria restaurant) serving traditional Italian food specialties, including fresh (handmade on the ship) pasta. There is one more restaurant on deck 6, The Wake, or as it is more properly known, The Wake Glamorous Steak & Seafood Restaurant and Martini Bar. The Wake is a steakhouse-seafood restaurant and its location at the stern of the ship gives excellent views of the ocean and the ship's wake. According to Virgin Voyages marketing department, The Wake restaurant serves "theatrical" food inspired by the premium chophouse The Grill New York (NYC) and The Wolseley (cafe restaurant in Mayfair, London). The Wake is located on deck 6 aft of the other two premium restaurants, but you can't get to it from deck 6. The space between Test Kitchen/Extra Virgin and The Wake is occupied by the restaurants' respective galleys. To get to The Wake you have to go up to deck 7 at the midship elevator bank, walk aft crossing over the top of the galleys below on deck 6 until you reach the aft elevator bank, and then you go back down to deck 6. Or you can just stay on deck 7 and keep going aft until you run into the upper entrance for The Wake, which is essentially just a staircase inside the restaurant down to deck 6.

## **Deck 7**

This deck is home to more public areas, starting with the upper floors of both The Red Room and The Manor. I addressed those in the deck 6 areas, so I won't repeat anything here.

## **Groupie**

If you've seen the movie "Lost in Translation" starring Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson, then you'll appreciate what Sir Richard was going for in this venue. It has the look and feel of a naughty brothel, an area surrounded in plum-colored curtains with a central reception area and multiple small rooms labeled "The Red Room", "The Blue Room", and "The Purple Room". These rooms are not sex cabinets...they are small karaoke rooms which you can





reserve throughout the voyage. It allows you to keep your karaoke talent a closely guarded secret among your friends (gimmick alert, but who cares...its karaoke!).

### **Bars and Lounges**

Deck 7 is home to a variety of lounges starting with Sip, a Champagne and Caviar bar and lounge on the forward starboard side of the ship. The bar is at the forward end of the space, and comfortable seating divided into several more intimate seating areas allows for quiet conversation as well as an opportunity to get to know others that happen by.

Moving to the port side midships you'll find Draught House, a microbrewery taphouse. Draught Haus features eight beers on tap, a variety of boilermakers, a limited selection of cocktails, and straight up shots if that's what floats your boat. Deck 7 is where the spiral stairs from The Roundabout lead you, and at the top of the stairs you'll find Voyage Vinyl (gimmick alert). This is a small area that is Sir Richard's homage to his formative years in the music production business when everything was about the vinyl. Voyage Vinyl has a small selection of vinyl albums and some turntables to try them out on as well as a DJ station for organized fun. The



future cruise booking desk and sailor's help desks are located next to each other in an area known as the Chart Room, on the starboard side of midships. Go back to the port side midships and you find one of my favorite places on the ship, Lick Me Till...Ice Cream. The whimsically named ice cream truck has a limited number of flavors, but what they have are delicious and decadent. You can get your ice cream in a cup or in appropriately colored and flavored cones with three options to choose from...vanilla, red velvet, and blue corn. If you aren't sure what flavor of ice cream you want you can ask for a sample, and once you decide you can get as much as you want and as many flavors as your palate can handle. Watch out for the brain freeze though!

Further aft of midships, still on the port side, you come to The Pizza Place. You can't get individual slices of pizza here...they make small personal sized pizzas to order. Pizza can be ordered to eat in or in a take-out box. The Pizza Place is one of the few food venues on board that stays open past midnight. On the starboard side of deck 7 midship you find the Grounds Club, an upscale #Starbucksineverythingbutname coffee bar that provides a range of coffee products made from "thoughtfully sourced" beans. The expert baristas create hand-crafted Intelligentsia Coffee brews, and you can get complimentary cakes and light bites to go. Retail items (bags of Intelligentsia Coffee and JoJo loose-leaf teas, kettles, coffee cups, and other) are available for purchase. There is a second coffee bar, Grounds Club Too (get it?), on deck 15 in The Galley.

Back to the port side of deck 7 you find my favorite bar on the ship, The Loose Cannon. This is a nautical/pirate themed lounge, small and set off from the rest of the deck space a semi-private room. It gains a following from the outset of the voyage and becomes the go to place for many.

Starting midship and moving aft you find The Social Club which is a combination of a game room, bar, diner, and social club. You can't help but dance as you pass through the area to tunes like Devo's "Whip It" and Ricky Martin's "La Vida Loca". Games include tabletop shuffleboard, foosball, air hockey, and there is an adjacent arcade with vintage video game machines like Pacman. The Social Club eatery is situated in the middle of the game spaces, and it is the one place on the ship you can get a hot dog. They also offer alcohol-laced milkshakes which seemed to be quite popular. For me, it was the 10:30 PM freshly baked pretzels that drew me and kept me coming back.



The Social Club blends into another, quieter club as you continue aft, The Dock House. This nautically themed venue is styled after a yachtie's dock house club where you might go to swap sailing stories over a martini. The Dock House is probably the quietest public lounge and bar on the ship...it was even quite on Scarlet Night. The Dock House carries on to the exterior on the aft of deck 7 in the form of The Dock, a comfortable seating area with wooden deckchairs, daybeds, and loungers. The Dock has its own bar, and there is a grill on the port side where snacks and mezzes are prepared. When you want something to eat just raise the flag on a placard placed at each sitting area and a server will come by to take your order. Bar service is also tableside.

## **Decks 8-14**

These decks are all guest cabins with no public areas.

## **Deck 15**

This deck is all about outdoor activities. Well, mostly. Rockstar suites occupy the forward third of deck 15. There is additional multipurpose space on the port side just past the suites, and on the starboard side you'll find The Tune Up, a mani/pedi salon (gimmick alert).

## **The Aquatic Center**



The central third of the deck is where you'll find fitness activities and the ship's two pools. Scarlet Lady has the smallest pools I've ever seen on a cruise ship. It looks to be an OK size at first glance, but when you look closer you see most of the space is ankle-deep water where you would lay out with the pool water barely covering your body. What I would consider the pool proper is not much bigger than a plunge pool. You certainly won't be swimming laps in the thing. It was busy enough during our cruise which sailed at half the passenger capacity...I can't imagine what it will be like when Scarlet Lady starts sailing full. There weren't all that many lounge chairs set up in the

Aquatic Center either, but that's intentional. The Aquatic Center is intended to be a fun area where you can dance on deck day and night without having to jockey around lounge chairs packed in so tight you feel like a sardine can. Serious sun bathers will find plenty of room up on deck 16, the Sun Deck.

Aft of the main pool you'll find a circular bar area. The forward portion of the bar is the Aquatic Bar, and the backside is the Gym and Tonic bar. The Gym and Tonic bar is so named because it looks out onto the fitness area of the ship. Virgin's marketing machine classifies Gym and Tonic as part of the ship's Wellness offerings. They describe it a place you can get a drink that is, "healthy in spirit while putting the spirit in healthy" (gimmick alert). There is a second pool in this area, still midship but aft of the main pool. This thing is even smaller than the main pool...it is essentially a glorified whirlpool tub that is supposed to have jets...it looks like it does...but I never saw them in use.

### **B-Complex**

The portside aft of the Aquatic Center is dedicated to the usual cruise ship fitness center, but with a twist. Instead of cramming cardio and weight facilities together in one room Scarlet Lady has two generously sized areas each with its own separate classroom area. Scarlet Lady offers group classes to include spin classes and balance classes, and the group classes are complimentary. You can schedule a personal training session focusing on any of the fitness areas and equipment, but that would be an additional cost.

The port side is the B-Complex Bike and Burn gym where you'll find all the cardio equipment and a studio for spin classes. There are 15 or so state of the art treadmills on one side of the room with a view of the sea. The opposite side has rowing machines and elliptical trainers facing a mirror that gives a reflected view of the sea. Over on the starboard side of the ship you find B-Complex Build and Balance. This area is equipped with state of the art weightlifting machines that include built in sensors with feedback on monitors to let you know whether you are lifting too fast or too slow, depending on your goals. There is an area that has a decent set of dumb bell free weights and two weight benches...both benches were in use when I visited but the free weights I needed were not. Apparently, I'm one of the few people who lift weights that light. You'll need to be flexible with your workout routine as both the machines and the free weights are in high demand. This is also where you find the balance studio with several workout aids intended to help you build core strength. Around the backside of the main pool, you find The Beast, an outdoor workout area patterned after fitness equipment and stations that you would find if you hit the work out circuit on Miami Beach. Think crunch benches and deck mounted push up rings along with some more playful things like an adult teeter-totter.

### **The Galley**

On most ships this deck would be known as the Lido Deck and it would be where you find the buffet, but there is no buffet on any of Virgin Voyages' ships. Instead, they have a market style food hall they call The Galley. Food options are mostly made to order augmented by a few grab-and-go stands. Virgin Voyages describes The Galley as a food market like what you might

encounter in Brooklyn on a Saturday afternoon. Not being from Brooklyn I don't know about that, but it worked for me. Cold items are served at the appropriate stand, but you must order warm or hot items from a server who will come by wherever you are seated. Service is prompt and the food comes out nice and hot. Here is a list of the different venues and food types you can get in The Galley:



- Hot Press (paninis, Cubans, etc.)
- Noodle Around (ramen and other noodle types)
- Let's Taco About It (tacos, of course)
- Popsicle Stand
- Bento Baby (Japanese style Bento boxes)
- Diner and Dash (diner food and the only venue that is open 24 hours)
- Burger Bar
- Patisserie & Bakery
- The Daily Mix (soup and salads)
- Grounds Club Too (coffee and snacks)
- QuickEze (grab and go)

### **Gunbae**

Scarlet Lady's remaining premier dining venue is located on the port side of deck 15, just aft of The Galley. This restaurant is Gunbae, a Korean BBQ. Gunbae is a fun place to eat in a format



somewhat like Teppanyaki where dinner prep becomes something of a show. The main difference between Teppanyaki and Gunbae is that each table seats six guests with an authentic Korean BBQ grill serving as the table, and the diners act as their own chefs. Guests are instructed in how to use the grill, and as proteins and veggies are served raw to the table each diner is expected to grill up their own dinner. The format is usually fun, but just to make sure everyone has a good time Gunbae servers offer a complimentary shot of soju (Korean whiskey) as diners arrive, and you are encouraged to sit with strangers to mix things up a bit. Servers will engage the table in icebreakers which, along with the soju, tends to loosen things up.

### **Deck 16**

The forward portion of deck 16 is an access-controlled area exclusive to suite guests known as Richard's Rooftop. It is an outdoor lounge that serves as a sun deck with its own dedicated bar. Access is gained through your band token, and if you aren't in a suite, you won't be allowed entry. Just outside of Richard's Rooftop you have an area open to all sailors known as the Sun Club. It is an area to go if you want to lay out in the sun but don't care for the DJ and music that plays at the main pool on deck 15. The Sun Club is served by its own café on the port side

forward where you can get poke bowls and the like, and its own bar on the starboard side. The entire area stretches to midship with the center being open to the main pool below.

There are more fitness areas on the port side of deck 16, starting with Training Camp. This is a group fitness space where you can find a wide range of complimentary group classes including bungee classes, high-intensity interval training, and breathing classes. It is also where you'll find Scarlet Lady's boxing ring and punching bags. On the starboard side of the ship, you'll find two rows of cabanas open to anyone, offset from one another so each cabana offers a partial ocean view. Scarlet Lady has the obligatory sports court, a two-deck high caged area with basketball hoops for pick-up games. Aft of the sports court is the Athletic Club which Virgin describes as a throwback to the NYC sports clubs of the 1920s (gimmick alert).



At the aft end of deck 16 there is another bar, The Athletic Club bar, and a large horseshoe shaped seating area with some chairs and Bali beds. The center of this area is location of "The Net" (gimmick alert) which is a suspended catamaran net looking down onto the deck below. If I thought getting into some of the chairs on Scarlet Lady was a challenge, getting out onto the net was a net too far for me. And besides...once you get there the only thing there is to do is contemplate how you're going to get back up without making a scene.

## Deck 17

There are only two features on deck 17, the elevated running track known as The Runway, and a meditation/yoga space known as The Perch. Most cruise ships build their track into the structure of their sun or pool decks making it a multi-purpose walking/jogging/walkway track. If you want anything close to a workout you are constantly having to dodge people using the track as a walkway from point A to point B, rarely walking in a straight line. Since the track on Scarlet Lady doesn't go anywhere other than the entrance/exit to the track, problem solved.

The Perch is a portion of deck space surrounded by the running track where you can relax during sunrise meditation, or if you are into yoga this is where the yoga classes are held. It also serves as a great spot for star gazing at night. Vinyasa Flow Yoga classes are complimentary and part of the overall wellness vibe of Scarlet Lady, or you can make your way to The Perch on your own schedule to practice your own style of yoga anytime. Lounge chairs are set out during the day for even more sun worshipping space.

## That's a Wrap

Scarlet Lady is a cruise ship with many features in common with other lines, yet with twists, creative additions, and enough gimmicks to keep things interesting. The physical features of the ship are only part of the magic that makes a Virgin Voyage a unique experience. The rest is up to you.