

WORK STARTS ON NEW SUPERLINER

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Construction work has begun on a 3,100-passenger British superliner due to enter service in 2010.

The keel of the 116,000-tonne P&O vessel Azura was laid last week at the Monfalcone shipyard of Fincantieri near Trieste in Italy where the liner is being built.

The ship will take to the water for the first time next summer and is due to be delivered to Southampton-based P&O in spring 2010.

Amenities on the vessel will include 15 public decks, 11 restaurants, five boutiques, four pools, two lounges and more than 900 private balconies.

Azura will depart on its maiden voyage in late spring 2010. P&O said details of this first sailing will be announced early next year.

While the building of the Azura continues in Italy, Southampton is preparing to bid an emotional farewell to the Cunard vessel the QE2.

The Duke of Edinburgh will visit the ship on November 11 in the hours before it sets sail on its final voyage to Dubai where it will be turned into a floating hotel attraction.

Thousands of people are expected to flock to Southampton's Mayflower Park to witness a celebratory firework display and to wave the ship off.

Launched by the Queen on the Clyde in Scotland in 1967, the QE2 will call at Portugal, Gibraltar, Italy, Malta and Egypt before arriving in Dubai on November 27.

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