

Two of Portugal's leading ladies name Viking's Douro Longships duo



Viking Hemming godmother Laura Ferreira speaks about the Douro as Douro Azul Comandante Hugo Bastos and Viking's Torstein Hagen look on

PHOTO ANNE MALOSH

Laura Ferreira, the wife of Portuguese Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho, and **Ana Moura**, a first lady of the fado, served as godmothers for Viking Cruises' two new Douro River ships at a soulful ceremony in Porto.

In naming Viking Hemming, Ferreira called the Douro a national heritage treasure and noted her husband is from the region. And after doing the honors for Viking Torgil, Moura—whose father hails from the Douro—expressed her emotions in several moving songs.

'The Douro and Porto have become a very popular destination,' Viking Cruises chairman Torstein Hagen told the glamorous, high-powered audience that included Secretary of State for Tourism Adolfo Mesquita

Nunes, Economic Minister António Pires de Lima and Porto Mayor Rui Moreira. The ceremony was covered by national television stations.

The Douro vessels, built by the Portuguese company Douro Azul, are 'a nice blend of Scandinavian and Portuguese tastes and style,' Hagen said. 'The ships are great. The quality of the work done on these two vessels is on par with the best done at Europe's leading shipyards.'

Hagen said Viking Hemming and Viking Torgil had sold out their inaugural season only three months after appearing in the Viking catalog, and he hinted at the possibility of talking about more Douro vessels. Hagen also complimented the Portuguese staff of the two ships and the nearly 100 Portuguese workers on other Viking ships who are 'very friendly, totally competent and completely reliable.'

Viking Hemming and Viking Torgil are similar but smaller than the 16 other Longships Viking Cruises named a few days ago in Avignon, Rostock and Amsterdam, breaking the company's own **world record** for number of ships inaugurated by a single company in one day.

'These are baby Longships or mini Longships. They are longish,' Hagen quipped.

Interior architect Pilar Paiva de Sousa of PPS, a specialist in hotel design, told Seatrade Insider it was natural to work for Viking, since the company takes a hotel approach and wants to incorporate local elements. She said her vision for Viking Hemming and Viking Torgil mingled 'Portuguese and Viking culture.' For example, hand-crafted Portuguese tiles custom-made for the vessels' suites have Viking symbols.

Each godmother snipped a cord that sent a magnum of Pommery champagne smashing against the hulls of their side-by-side ships. They received Cartier watches and necklaces with large golden filigree hearts. Moura put hers on before singing.

Ferreira stayed for the christening dinner on board Viking Hemming where she was seated with Hagen and his wife, among other VIP guests. Moura had to leave to perform a concert but was due to return afterward and stay overnight on her vessel, Viking Torgil.

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