

Costa Concordia Eyewitness Accounts

Gare Maritime

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Michael Poirier interviews Brandon Warrick and his sister Amanda who survived the sinking of the Costa Concordia in January 2012



The wreck of the Costa Concordia

Photos by Il Fatto Quotidiano



Interview with Brandon Warrick

1. Could you give me an overview of yourselves?

My name is Brandon Warrick and I'm a senior Kinesiology major at UMass Amherst. I play club tennis there and I plan on going into grad school for Physical Therapy.

2. Why did you book passage on the Concordia?

My sister Amanda is studying abroad in Madrid for a year, so we decided to take a family cruise there and also stay in Madrid for a few days after.

3. When did you depart for your trip?

Evening of January 9th

4. What was the itinerary?

It was departure from Barcelona, then Mallorca, Cagliari, Palermo, Rome, Savona, Marseille, then back to Barcelona. Then Madrid for a week, but that was after the cruise.

5. Was this your first cruise?

Our first with Costa/Carnival, but our third overall. The first 2 were with Royal Caribbean.

6. What did you think of the ship when you boarded it? How would you describe the public rooms? Your cabin?

The ship wasn't bad, but I remember thinking it was no Royal Caribbean caliber ship. There was also way too much leniency on smoking. You could practically smoke anywhere. Overall the ship was average, but I would not call it a luxury cruise liner... Our cabin was a typical cruise ship cabin.

7. What were your cabin number assignments?

We were on the second floor, room 2412.

8. How did you occupy your time aboard the ship?

We explored the ship, had some drinks, went to the gym, and went to the formal dinners.

9. Did you make any friends aboard ship or were other acquaintances traveling with you?

Yes, but we became close friends with them because of the accident. It was just the three of us traveling together. We also became friends with one of the crew members who went on our tour in Sicily, Nicki.



10. What were you doing when the ship struck the rocks? What deck were you on?

We were on the 3rd deck for formal dinner.

11. Could you describe the noise?

We didn't hear much of a noise from the actual hit. We heard mostly dishes and glass crashing/breaking.

12. What was the aftermath? Was there an immediate list? Was there panic where you were?

There was panic everywhere, a lot of waiting and yes there was an immediate list.

13. Where did you go from there? Were you able to return to your cabins? If so, did you retrieve any personal items?

We couldn't retrieve much of our things because they told us that everything would be fixed in no time. I thought I could just come back to the cabin after going to the lobby to find out what happened, but that's when panic struck, so by then we had no time to head back.

14. Was there furniture thrown around or was everything still in order as you made your way to the muster station? Was the list noticeable? Did you see water flooding into the ship?

Everything in the stores on the ship had fallen. Pretty much everything that wasn't fastened to the ship fell. The list was very noticeable. At the very end, on our way to a lifeboat that had doubled back for us, the last corner we turned was a hallway with water rushing into it. Amanda fell into it because at that point the ship had tipped considerably more.

15. How would you describe the evacuation procedure? Did you stay in one place or did you try and find the best spot to board a lifeboat?

16. Was there a point when you went from thinking the ship would be ok to the ship was definitely going to sink? Were you thinking you might have to swim to shore?

No, because when the ship first tipped, it never recovered to the upright position, which I deduced as being stuck somehow. I just couldn't think of how an electrical problem could keep the cruise ship on its side. I considered the possibility of having to swim to shore, but it didn't really worry me.



18. How long from the striking of the rocks did it take you to get off the ship?

About 3 hours. We got to shore around midnight.

19. Could you describe how you escaped?

We were on the side of the ship that was higher in the air, and around midnight a few crew members

came up and yelled for people to head to the lower end for the lifeboats that had doubled back to save more people. We held onto the railing and edged down the other because it was so steep. Then we took one more flight of stairs down, turned a corner and that's where we saw the water rushing in. We took a left, sprinted through the water, still holding onto a railing, and jumped onto a lifeboat.

20. What was the attitude of the crew and your fellow passengers? What did you think when you found out the Captain and his officers left before many of the passengers?

The crew was scrambling and doing the best they could to bring order to the passengers, but with no leadership (from the Captain abandoning ship) and no guidance or orders, they were nearly powerless. I was really disappointed in the passengers. It was quite pathetic watching everyone hurt each other and put each other at risk just to get onto a lifeboat. I also thought the captain and whoever left with him who was supposed to stay was pathetic and cowardly, of course.



21. Did you see the ship go over on its side?

Not completely, but it was certainly on its way to being on its side the last time i saw it.

22. Is it true the shipping line hasn't offered much help in getting to your destination or regarding lost luggage?

Regarding our lost luggage, we have literally no information. However, we received a lot of help getting to Rome and then to Barcelona where our parents were. They also got my sister a plane ticket home to states so she could see family and friends for a week or so (she was supposed to go back to school in Madrid) with only a day's notice, which I thought was impressive. Not only getting a hold of a ticket, but the prices are around \$2500-3000 at such short notice.



Left: In the cabin donning lifebelts, right: at the muster station

23. Did you save anything from the ship? Room key? menu? any pictures or video?

We have a lot of pictures because of all the waiting we did after all the lifeboats were gone. I only saved my iPhone and my glasses because I'm almost legally blind without contacts/glasses. I really wish that they hadn't told us everything would be fine "in no time." I agree that they should have said something like an electrical failure was the problem, but they should have said "but just in case, pack your valuables" instead of basically guaranteeing us that everything was fine...

24. Would you ever sail again?

Yes, but not with Carnival or any other middle ground cruiseline. Royal Caribbean I would be totally fine sailing with again. Safety is truly their number one priority and you know it because of how thorough the practice drills are and the fact that they force every passenger to be there - they check your rooms, scan the whole boat, everything. Costa did nothing of the sort.

25. How has the disaster affected you?

I'm actually thankful for this disaster. It has really changed me for the better and I have such a positive, happy perspective on life now. I'm cherishing every moment and I hope this change is permanent. Given the chance, I wouldn't change a thing if I knew it would change me this way.

26. Will you keep up with the official inquiry into the shipwreck?

Probably, but I'm probably not going to do much more than keep tabs.



Photo by Darkroom Productions



Interview with Amanda Warrick

1. Could you give me an overview of yourselves?

My name is Amanda Warrick, I'm 18 years old from Braintree, MA

2. Why did you book passage on the Concordia?

I am currently studying abroad in Madrid, Spain for my freshman year of college and my family decided to come visit me for a couple of weeks.

3. When did you depart for your trip?

We departed the 9th of January, 2012

4. What was the itinerary?

Depart from Barcelona, then Palma de Mallorca, Cagliari, Palermo, Rome, Savona, and Marseille

5. Was this your first cruise?

Our first with Costa, but third all in all (the two others were with Royal Caribbean)

6. What did you think of the ship when you boarded it? How would you describe the public rooms? Your cabin?

Huge, haha. We actually didn't think the layout of the ship was very well done, getting around to different dining rooms, gym, etc was pretty confusing. The cabin was nice, though.

7. What were your cabin number assignments?

We were all in 2412. We were an outside cabin. It is currently under water.



Amanda Warwick's Costa Concordia Key

8. How did you occupy your time aboard the ship?

We didn't really spend much time on the ship other than eating our meals, using the gym, going to shows or the bars.

9. Did you make any friends aboard ship or were other acquaintances traveling with you?

We met a few other people, on excursions into the different ports, mostly American.

10. What were you doing when the ship struck the rocks? What deck were you on?

We were at dinner, in the middle of our 2nd course when the ship struck rocks. This was on deck 4

11. Could you describe the noise?

I couldn't actually hear the noise of the ship striking the rock, probably because we weren't close to it, but I just remember feeling the entire ship shake, tilt, and lights flicker.

12. What was the aftermath? Was there an immediate list? Was there panic where you were?

After the first tilt, no one panicked, they thought it was just rough seas, but after the second, when glasses and tables started falling, people got up and started to panic. No one knew what was going on, although while some were panicking, others were still sitting at their dinner tables, eating.

13. Where did you go from there? Were you able to return to your cabins? If so, did you retrieve any personal items?

After about 10 minutes of waiting for any information and not getting any, we decided on our own to return to our cabins and get our life jackets, just in case, since we saw others doing the same. At this point, we were doing this just as a precaution, we didn't think there would really be any need for them. Upon arrival at our room, I retrieved my laptop, camera, and my purse with my wallet, license, debit cards, etc. Adrian packed his backpack with the same items. Brandon, who thought he would be able to return to our cabin in case of an actual emergency since there was just a "technical difficulty" did not pack

anything except his iPhone and iPod, wearing shorts and a tshirt.

14. Was there furniture thrown around or was everything still in order as you made your way to the muster station? Was the list noticeable? Did you see water flooding into the ship? As we passed stores on ship, glass display cases were smashed, clothes racks were fallen over, signs were also fallen over. At this point the list was definitely noticeable, noticeable since initial crash at dinner. At the muster stations, there was no water flooding in, the only time we saw water flooding in (probably the scariest part) was the very end at the decks where the lifeboats had come back for us.



15. How would you describe the evacuation procedure? Did you stay in one place or did you try and find the best spot to board a lifeboat?

Chaotic. Navigating the outside decks was difficult just because of the disregard people had for other people. Instead of doing anything to get to a lifeboat first, i.e. pushing, shoving, my brothers and I stayed calm, and just tried to get to each lifeboat accordingly, which is ultimately why we missed the initial ones and ended up having to wait about an hour and a half. The siren had 7 loud beeps followed by one long one. This was supposed to be what was known as the "abandon ship" signal.

16. Was there a point when you went from thinking the ship would be ok to the ship was definitely going to sink? Were you thinking you might have to swim to shore?

From the time we got outside to the decks and saw the chaos and people actually getting into lifeboats I knew that something was seriously wrong and that the boat was sinking. Everything from jumping off the side of the ship to swimming ashore went through my mind.

18. How long from the striking of the rocks did it take you to get off the ship?

About 3 hours total.

19. Could you describe how you escaped?

We were at the side of the ship highest from the water, waiting, and after about an hour and a half of standing there waiting for any kind of instruction, crew members started shouting at us to run to the other

side of the ship. Holding onto the railings, my brothers and I started running through the ship, which was tilting at a dangerous angle, to get to the other side. I couldn't even tell what part of the ship we were on, it was so dark, and obviously I couldn't really pay attention, but all I know is we ran through a hallway, past a few staircases, always holding onto the railing. There was nothing blocking our path. We got to the side of the ship nearest to shore/sinking into the water and ran down a small set of stairs, slipped and fell into water that was flowing onto the deck. (It was) about knee-high deep. It didn't increase noticeably, but we never waited at that point, we were basically running across the deck, still holding onto the railing, otherwise we would have definitely slipped and fallen either against the outer railing or into the water (as there were some open spots)A crew member shouted for us to get to the side of the ship with the railing, and run down further to where a lifeboat would come to the side of the ship. We ran, briefly getting separated from Adrian for a minute (which was scary) and finally, a lifeboat came, the crew on the boat threw a rope and tied it to the railing, and the remaining passengers were helped onto the boat and we were off to the port.

20. What was the attitude of the crew and your fellow passengers? What did you think when you found out the Captain and his officers left before many of the passengers?

I have to commend the crew operating the boat on how efficient they were in getting to the ship and getting passengers off the Concordia. The crew on the cruise ship, although without the leadership of a captain, I felt did the best they could in handling the passengers and helping people. As far as doing their job, they did it well. The passengers were a different story. No one cared for anyone but themselves. It was basically a free for all and a competition to see who could get to the boats first. It's understandable that in a situation as this, people will panic and things won't go perfectly fine, but I feel that there could have been more order and more respect for one another.



Adrian, Brandon and Amanda in the lifeboat

21. Did you see the ship go over on its side?

Yes, while waiting at the port of Giglio for a few hours, all you could do was wait, and watch the ship slowly sink further into the water and more onto its side.

22. Is it true the shipping line hasn't offered much help in getting to your destination or regarding lost luggage?

The cruise ship line did a good job in arranging flights to where we needed to go, but we haven't heard any further information regarding lost luggage.

23. Did you save anything from the ship? Room key? menu? any pictures or video?

Yes. I have my room key, some receipts from excursions booked through the ship (some we weren't able to get on for obvious reasons), and I have a bunch of pictures on my dad's camera that I saved.

24. Would you ever sail again? Would you say it was like Titanic or is that too easy a comparison?

Yes, but not for a while! No, it was definitely just like Titanic!

25. How has the disaster affected you?

Given me a different perspective on life. I realize how much material things don't matter (sounds cliché, but trust me..it's true) and how much more family matters.

26. Will you keep up with the official inquiry into the shipwreck?

Yes. I mostly just want to see if there are any more people found on the ship/ how many are still missing.

An earlier shipwreck and another dramatic rescue



Above and left: The *Principessa Jolanda Vestris* began taking on water in a storm.

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