

Paolo Toscanelli

The *Paolo Toscanelli* was one of six cargo-passenger ships of the Navigatori class ordered by Italia Line in 1940 for their South American trade. Built by S.A. Ansaldo in Genoa and launched in 1945, she exemplified the post-war transformation of cargo vessels into emigrant carriers, helping thousands of Italians begin new lives across two continents.

Originally conceived as a pure cargo vessel, the severe shortage of passenger berths after World War II led to her completion with an enlarged superstructure accommodating 90 cabin class and 530 third class passengers. Along with her sisters *Ugolino Vivaldi* and *Sebastiano Caboto*, she would serve both South American and Australian routes during the great post-war emigration period.

Ship Information

Built by	S.A. Ansaldo, Genoa
Launched	1945
Completed	1947
Dimensions	485 × 62 ft (149.2 × 19 m)
Tonnage	8,967 GRT
Propulsion	Fiat diesel, single screw
Speed	15 knots
Capacity	90 cabin + 530 third class (later 12 only)
Company	Italia Line
Fate	Scrapped La Spezia 1973
Sister Ships	<i>Ugolino Vivaldi</i> , <i>Sebastiano Caboto</i> , <i>Marco Polo</i> , <i>Amerigo Vespucci</i> , <i>Antoniotto Usodimare</i>
SWI Ref	TBD

Construction and Wartime Delays

Italia Line's ambitious 1940 order for six cargo ships aimed to strengthen their South American trade. The first three vessels were launched in 1942 but laid up incomplete due to the war. The second trio, including *Paolo Toscanelli*, faced delayed construction but were eventually launched in 1945.

Initially named alongside *Ferruccio Buonapace* and *Mario Visentini*, the latter two ships underwent name changes during fitting out. *Ferruccio Buonapace* became *Ugolino Vivaldi* after the great Venetian composer, while *Mario Visentini* was renamed *Sebastiano Caboto* after the outstanding Italian maritime explorer. The three ships launched in 1942 would later enter service in 1948-1949 as *Marco Polo*, *Amerigo Vespucci*, and *Antoniotto Usodimare*, named after great Italian explorers on land and sea.

South American Service

In November 1947, sister ship *Sebastiano Caboto* reopened Italia Line's service from Genoa and Naples to Central America, continuing through the Panama Canal to west coast South American ports as far as Valparaiso. *Paolo Toscanelli* and *Ugolino Vivaldi* soon joined this vital trade route, carrying both cargo and passengers seeking new opportunities in the Americas.

The addition of the three ships completed in 1948-1949 created a surplus of berths on the South American route. This fortunate overcrowding allowed Italia Line to charter two vessels to Lloyd Triestino for their Australian service, though *Paolo Toscanelli* remained on the South American run during this initial period.

Australian Voyages (1955-1956)

By 1955, demand for berths from Italy to Australia exceeded the capacity of regular vessels on the route. Italia Line chartered *Paolo Toscanelli* to Lloyd Triestino in March 1955 for what would become five voyages to Australia. Her first departure carried eager emigrants to Melbourne by April 17 and Sydney two days later.

Over the following year, *Paolo Toscanelli* maintained this vital link between Italy and Australia, with her final departure from Genoa in April 1956 arriving in Sydney on May 27. These voyages carried paying passengers and emigrants

outbound, returning with holds full of Australian goods and minimal passenger loads. After completing this charter service, she returned to Italia Line's South American route.

Conversion to Cargo Service

In 1958, Italia Line's decision to reduce their South American service to only three ships marked the end of *Paolo Toscanelli*'s passenger-carrying days. She was converted to a cargo ship with accommodation for just 12 passengers, remaining with Italia Line while her sisters *Sebastiano Caboto* and *Ugolino Vivaldi* were transferred to Lloyd Triestino for service to East and South Africa.

The remaining three vessels of the Navigatori class underwent similar conversions in 1963, joining Lloyd Triestino's African service while *Paolo Toscanelli* continued her cargo duties with Italia Line.

Final Years

The Italian Government's rationalization of state-supported shipping lines during the 1970s sealed the fate of all six Navigatori class vessels. *Paolo Toscanelli* was the first to go, being laid up at Naples on October 20, 1972. Sold to shipbreakers, she arrived at La Spezia in tow on February 6, 1973, ending 26 years of service that had seen her carry thousands of emigrants to new lives in South America and Australia.

Her five sisters followed within a few years, with *Ugolino Vivaldi* scrapped in Trieste in 1978 and *Sebastiano Caboto* broken up in Taiwan in 1979. Together, these ships had served South America and Australia well, forming a vital bridge during the great post-war emigration period.

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