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The Rhode Island Fast Ferry christens its newest fast ferry the "Ava Pearl" at the Quonset Business Park

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The Rhode Island Fast Ferry christened its newest fast ferry the "Ava Pearl," to begin serving travelers on July 5. The \$6 million dollar vessel was under construction since last August at the Gladding-Hearn Shipyard in Somerset, Mass. and sailed on its maiden voyage to the island of Martha's Vineyard on July 5. "We are excited to be able to provide the latest in fast ferry technology to the visitors of Martha's Vineyard traveling from Quonset, Rhode Island to Oak Bluffs Martha's Vineyard during the busy summer months. We will be celebrating our tenth season and our passengers will truly be benefiting from our success," said president Charles Donadio, Jr.

The 150-passenger ferry "Ava Pearl," designed by Incat Crowther of Australia, is replacing the current 400 passenger "Millennium" catamaran. The Ava Pearl has the latest in technology including two EPA Tier 2-approved diesel engines, an "S" bow hull configuration and a large dynamic active trim-tab ride-control system which gives the ferry the latest in seakeeping technology to enhance passenger comfort. The plush interior cabin space is all business-class service with more leg room, luxurious Beurteaux seating, along with a snack bar, two restrooms, and five flat-screen TV monitors.

There is a separate luggage area forward and rear as well as space for bicycles on the aft deck. Exterior seating is on the forward bow and upper deck featuring an outside sundeck as well as protected outdoor seating.

Donadio said the new Martha's Vineyard ferry will set the bar to the highest level with comfort, amenities, seakeeping technology, and customer service. The company and its employees are excited to be on the cutting edge of high-speed ferry technology.

The 400-passenger Millennium catamaran will be put into daily sightseeing tours expanding the Rhode Island Lighthouse Cruises on Narragansett Bay and Newport Harbor. Donadio said that the new ferry will now allow him to really expand the sightseeing services. During the last four years the lighthouse cruises were only available three days a week. This summer they are offering the cruises seven days a week along with sunset cruises and corporate charters.

Rhode Island Fast Ferry is also increasing its workforce to around 50 employees for the summer months hiring qualified captains, engineers, licensed mates, deckhands, and customer service agents. More information can be found on the tour website at www.rhodeislandbaycruises.com

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