

New fuel-frugal Bluebridge ferry arrives

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SAILING IN: Straitsman, right, the new Bluebridge Cook Strait ferry, arrives in Wellington with the Wellington tug Tiaki and sister ship Santa Regina

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Wellington's new ferry may be painted blue and white but it is really quite green.

Bluebridge's Cook Strait ferry cruised into Wellington Harbour yesterday, under a fountain of sea spray from a guiding tug.

The five-year-old Straitsman, which weighs almost 14,000 gross tonnes, can carry cargo and up to 400 passengers in a high level of comfort.

But its standout feature is the fuel consumption – burning 15 per cent less fuel than its predecessor, the Monte Stello.

The vessel also uses waste heat for heating hot water and passenger areas.

Strait Shipping managing director Sheryl Ellison said the vessel offered a perfect mix of space and sustainability.

"It will provide us with 50 per cent increased freight and vehicle capacity and space for a third more passengers than the vessel it replaces – while burning significantly less fuel. We're delighted to have the vessel here in time to meet peak passenger and freight demand through summer and also next year's Rugby World Cup." Manufactured in a Dutch shipyard in 2005, the ship has modern cabins, reclining seating, a cafeteria, reception area, shop, a family area, viewing lounge and allergy free zone. Big screens will be installed to allow for free movies.

The vessel, which will begin crossing the Cook Strait around the middle of this month, is equipped with high-tech navigation aids and two powerful bow thrusters and "in-line high lift flap rudders" to ensure efficient manoeuvrability.

The Straitsman will be open to the public from 11am to 3pm on December 11 to raise funds for Wellington Children's Hospital through a gold coin donation entry.