



CRUISE RUSES

Mention cruises and it's always the same scepticism: "Isn't it boring?", "I wouldn't want to be cooped up with people I don't like", "Only geriatrics go on cruises", "Too expensive for me". But just get these doubters on the right ship and their views will almost certainly change. However, matching horses with courses is critical. Aunt Lavinia is not likely to feel happy on a Caribbean fun-run and Sharon and Ron are unlikely to be impressed by antiquity lectures.

To answer the objections: boring is the last thing a cruise should be. Under the cabin door every morning comes the daily programme. Shall it be wine-tasting or a golf lesson, bridge or bingo, a tour of the galley or a talk on tomorrow's excursions? Have we time for a Pina Colada before heading off to the jacuzzi?



MSC Opera in a Norwegian Fjord: [cruises.about.com](http://cruises.about.com)

The chronically idle need do none of these. They can stay prone most of the day—room service on the balcony, sunbathe by the pool, relax in the spa, then it's time for cocktails. Those of the opposite persuasion are free to jog, swim, exercise in the gym and walk 25 times round the deck. Boozers can imbibe non-stop through from Bloody Marys to nightcaps, gourmands can guzzle all day from earlybird snacks to midnight buffet. It's whatever turns you on.

But the main incentive to cruise is to pack a chunk of the world into the shortest time, with minimum effort. Regard the almost daily arrival in a new port as a *dégustation* and if you like what you see then plan another, longer trip there, if you don't, tick it off the list. And there is absolutely no compulsion to be lumbered with 'incompts' as you can choose from a range of excursions to suit everyone from the infirm (coach sightseeing) to the hyper-active (white water rafting). You can cram a lot into a whole day from trekking in the jungle to landing on a glacier. Visit fascinating cities, catch immense fish in the fjords, barbecue on tropical beaches, visit a different island every day. Or take a lazy break and simply enjoy the beautiful wonders of the Arctic and Antarctic from your chair.

Taken for granted are the spacious cabins (sorry—staterooms), marble bathrooms, 24-hour service, extravagant entertainment, glitzy casino and service that will spoil you for hotels for ever after. Value for money is extraordinary: £600 can buy two weeks afloat—compare that with a land-based package and you will comprehend the attraction.

The cruising industry is polarising into big/bigger/biggest and small/select/swankiest. Each line is constantly searching for new attractions: passengers in the larger ships (sometimes upwards of 5,000 of them) enjoy on-board attractions such as the 'hard-to-believe' skating rink featuring ice shows; a climbing wall; a top deck covered in real glass; an avenue of shops. However, the sheer bulk of the giants limits them to larger ports, where the influx of several thousand prospective shoppers changes the town's character completely. The more compact vessels push their huge advantage of an ability to infiltrate

narrow rivers and small harbours that are inaccessible to floating hotel blocks. Their shore excursions reward passengers with a glimpse of local life unpolluted by thousands of fellow cruisers.

So choose the ship that suits you. A no-fly deal from and back to Southampton eliminates the airport torture and gets the holiday off to a fine start. Now, what about the itinerary? Will you choose a sticky, tropical adventure with cold showers and air conditioning aboard or a European voyage with the cultural highlights of Venice or Rome? On the popular Arctic or Antarctic cruises a balcony is a must-have—sailing through that dazzling blue whiteness, spotting a polar bear, an eagle or a whale, seeing a glacier ‘calve’ is the stuff memories are made of. Or take a typical Mediterranean voyage of discovery—set sail for Pireaus on an itinerary that combines one small unspoiled Greek island, a canal, two of the world’s most favourite archeological sites, two volcanoes, an enchanting Sicilian town and a final cruising day along what is probably the most spectacular coastline in the world: Patmos, Corinth, Delphi, Olympus, Etna and Stromboli, Taormina, Amalfi, Capri and Ischia. Call that boring?

And in reply to the people who think cruising is for geriatrics, the average age of cruise passengers has dropped dramatically because of the new attractions for children. Take the offspring on board and reckon on not seeing them again for a week while their every need is catered for, from nannies to disc-jockeys!

The next trend to discover is river cruising, which is becoming increasingly popular. “Up the Po” follows in a future issue of *Bosham Life*.

***Patricia Fenn***